



GEOECONOMIC CAPABILITIES IMPLEMENTATION: A CONTEMPORARY GEO-STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL PRIMACY (CASE OF CHINA)

Nehme AL Khawly

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**GEOECONOMIC CAPABILITIES IMPLEMENTATION:
A CONTEMPORARY GEO-STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL
PRIMACY
(CASE OF CHINA)**

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WE STATE that the present study, entitled *GEOECONOMIC CAPABILITIES IMPLEMENTATION: A CONTEMPORARY GEO-STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL PRIMACY (CASE OF CHINA)*, presented by NEHME ELIAS AL KHAWLY for the award of the degree of Doctor, has been carried out under our supervision at the Department of Business of this University, and that it fulfils all the requirements to receive the International Doctorate Distinction.

Tarragona, 2nd of June 2021

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Abstract

Besides the shift of economic and financial power from Western to Eastern countries, and particularly to China, a fundamental shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics is recently redefining the international geo-strategies of the states. The thesis discussed how geoeconomics is being applied as a new geo-strategy to attain global order, instead of the traditional military means and warfare. It highlighted the shift that is happening from geopolitics to geoeconomics and studied whether economic means will completely replace military ones in bilateral wars. Specifically, this research explored what has China been aiming for since the collapse of the Soviet Union by implementing its geoeconomic capabilities, and whether by following this geo-strategy it is going to achieve international primacy. The study placed much emphasis on Eurasia, for which most of the geopolitical theoreticians have given great importance to control the destinies of the world, and therefore the region in which China has concentrated its main foreign policy initiatives and promoted its geoeconomic interests. And since Eurasia is Russia's backyard, the thesis studied the impact of China's geo-strategy on its bilateral relations with the Russian Federation, whether in realizing a regional integration or leading to a non-ending rivalry between them. In order to answer all these questions, it was appropriate first to analyze secondary data by adopting the descriptive – analytical and comparative methodology, and then carry out an empirical qualitative research, whereby primary data collected from in-depth interviews were analyzed to validate the findings obtained from the document analysis. The results concluded that China is having an intangible aim to rule the world by reaching a large scope of international primacy, expanding its capabilities, and shaping the future of Eurasia. The Sino-Russian relations are proved to be complex with no clear image regarding their reality. And while results have also shown that there is a shift happening from geopolitics to geoeconomics, it is not yet complete outside China.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

- 1- APEC: Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation
- 2- AIIB: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
- 3- ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- 4- BRI: Belt and Road Initiative
- 5- BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
- 6- BRIEAEU: Belt and Road Initiative – Eurasian Economic Union Alignment
- 7- CCP: Chinese Communist Party
- 8- CFR: Council on Foreign Relations
- 9- ChAFTA: China-Australia Free Trade Agreement
- 10- CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
- 11- CIS: Commonwealth Independent States
- 12- CITIC: China International Trust Investment Corporation
- 13- COPHC: China Overseas Ports Holding Company
- 14- COSCO: China Ocean Shipping Company
- 15- CPEC: China Pakistan Economic Corridor
- 16- ECFA: Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement
- 17- EEU or EAEU: Eurasian Economic Union
- 18- EU: European Union
- 19- FDI: Foreign Direct Investment
- 20- FSU: Former Soviet Union
- 21- FTA: Free Trade Agreement
- 22- GDP: Gross Economic Product
- 23- GEP: Greater Eurasian Partnership
- 24- GFP: Global Fire Powers
- 25- ICBC: Industrial Commercial Bank of China
- 26- IMF: International Monetary Fund
- 27- IPOs: Initials Public Offerings
- 28- ISS: Institute for Security Studies
- 29- KSA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 30- LTO: Light Tight Oil
- 31- MDFA: Martyn Davies of Frontier Advisory
- 32- MENA: Middle East North African Region
- 33- MIKT: Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, and Turkey
- 34- Nareland: Natural Resources Land
- 35- NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- 36- NDB: New Development Bank

- 37- OBOR: One Belt on Road Initiative
- 38- ODI: Overseas Direct Investments
- 39- OPEC: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
- 40- PDVSA: Petroleos de Venezuela S.A (State-owned oil company)
- 41- PRC: People’s Republic of China
- 42- RMB: Renminbi
- 43- SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- 44- SREB: Silk Road Economic Belt
- 45- SSEs: State Scale Entities
- 46- TAIEX: Taiwanese Stock Exchange
- 47- TDPP: Taiwan Democratic Progressive Party
- 48- UNSC: United Nations Security Council
- 49- U.S. – U.S.A.: United States of America
- 50- U.S.S.R: Union of Soviet Socialist Republic
- 51- WEF: World Economic Forum

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Introduction

One century ago, the English geographer Sir. Halford Mackinder affirmed in his famous article “The Geographical Pivot of History” (1904), that the Chinese would expand their power well beyond their borders, and that this process will disturb the rest powers of the World, after explaining that Eurasia - the supercontinent extending from Lisbon to Shanghai or even Jakarta; combining between Europe and Asia - (Maçães, 2018) is the geostrategic fulcrum of World power and mentioning that the Chinese foreign policies “might constitute the yellow peril to the World’s freedom just because they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region” (Mackinder, 1904, p.437).

After eleven years of publishing Mackinder’s article, James Fairgrieve published a book entitled: “Geography and the World Power” (1915) where he strongly asserted that China was in an excellent position to control the interior of Eurasia (Fairgrieve, 1917) ... That was a hundred of years ago, but nowadays, China is truly willing to reshape the World by its specific policies.

Thus, Eurasia is the landmass formed by Europe and Asia; it “stretches from the Atlantic Ocean with bordering countries of Portugal and Spain in the west to Russia's easternmost point, at the Bering Strait between the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. Eurasia's northern frontier consists of Russia, Finland, and Norway bordering the Arctic Ocean in the north. The southern boundaries are the Mediterranean Sea, Africa, and the Indian Ocean. Southern border countries of Eurasia include Spain, Israel, Yemen, India, and continental Malaysia. Eurasia also commonly includes island countries associated with the Eurasian continent such as Sicily, Crete, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, Japan, Philippines and Island Malaysia” (Rosenberg, 2019).

The director of the European council on foreign relations, and the expert in the Chinese affairs, Mark Leonard has noted in his intervention in the World Economic Forum on the Global Agenda Councils on Geoeconomics (2014 - 2016) that: “If the big China story of the past few decades was about growth, exports and investments, the story of the next decade will be about creation of a Chinese economic and political order” (Leonard, 2016, p.3). In other words, China’s fast economic prosperity has propelled it to acquire high economic capacity that will compel China to participate in political actions (Thies, 2015).

Trade, Investments, Finance, Internationalization of the Chinese Currency, and Infrastructure Alliances, most prominently the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, are the five keys instruments of China’s geoeconomic toolkit (Leonard, 2016).

The high rate China is having lately between the world powers is due to a combination of policies adopted by the Chinese government in order to realize the full **Rise of China**. According to Xuetong (2006), scholars admit that the rise of a nation implies a growth in its political power and superpower status. Most of the policies adopted by China are focusing on a geoeconomic discipline, to attain the final objective that all the geopoliticians of the World, especially Alfred Mahan, Sir Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman and Zbigniew Brzezinski, have talked about in their theories: Ruling the World!

Eurasia is being now the center of attention of all those great powers, since controlling its lands may end up in controlling the destinies of the whole World, and this is actually the main purpose of the global policies of the competing states. China is one of the most important competitors in this international World game, and it necessarily has its own special methods and geo-strategies that may lead it to the Euro-Asian throne.

In his turn, Ian Bremmer, president of 'Eurasia Group' affirmed that: "As a non-violent yet unquestionably potent foreign policy tool, Geoeconomics is the perfect weapon for a relationship between frenemies" (Bremmer, 2016, p.18), in his intervention in the World Economic Forum on the Global Agenda Councils on Geoeconomics (2014 - 2016) entitled: "China's Geoeconomic Power and The United States". And China is evidently employing this weapon in its multilateral "relationships", not only with the U.S, but with Russia also, as in geopolitics there are no friends neither enemies; there are "frenemies" demonstrating muscles at all the levels of the game, and competing to win the final battle!

The international system is already being changed by the Chinese ascendancy which is encouraging the development of moderate institutions, stimulating new norms and assumptions better than those established after the Second World War (Leonard, 2016), but what is China aiming for since the collapse of the Soviet Union? And what is its government preparing for the World?

Figure 1: China's Political Map



Source: On The World Map

Regarding the geographical location of China, we have to mention that it has many specificities and qualifications:

- 1- China is on the eastern front of the Euro – Asian continent, in 20° - 40° of latitude, bordering the East China Sea, Korea Bay, Yellow Sea, and South China Sea (The World Factbook, n.d.); It is located between North Korea and Vietnam, and is about: 9,596,960 sq. km (The World Factbook, n.d.), with a land boundary of about 22,800 km (Sandikli, 2010).
- 2- On its land side, China has a great stretch of high ground with the highest stretch of highland in the World, the Tibet (Fairgrieve, 1917).
- 3- On its sea borders curved in the shape of a circle's quarter, there is no part of Asia beyond, and no land of any country till the other side of the pacific (Fairgrieve, 1917).

- 4- The Peoples' Republic of China is the largest country in Asia and the third largest one in the world, after Russia and Canada (Sandikli, 2010).
- 5- "From north to south, the territory of China stretches from the center of the Heilong River north of the town of Mohe to the Zengmu Reef at the southernmost tip of the Nansha Islands, covering a distance of 5,500 km. From east to west, the nation extends from the confluence of the Heilong and Wusuli rivers to the Pamirs, covering a distance of 5,200 km" (Sandikli, 2010, p.1).
- 6- The Chinese territorial seas has an area of 380, 000 sq. km (Sandikli, 2010). Its mainland faces the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea, on the east and south (Sandikli, 2010).
- 7- Its mainland coastline is about 18,000 km, and that of its islands is about 14,000 km; and that gives China a total coastline distance of 32,000 km, making it the eighth longest one in the world (Sandikli, 2010).
- 8- We can also find cultivated lands, forests, grasslands, deserts, and tidelands, all over China, without forgetting the huge number of rivers and lakes across its lands (Sandikli, 2010).
- 9- It is also rich in mineral resources, as geologists have affirmed recently; it has reserves of 158 different minerals that put it in the third rank in the world in term of total mineral reserves (Sandikli, 2010).

Concerning Eurasia, the People's Republic of China has concentrated its main foreign policy initiatives since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and moreover with the American declaration of the War on Terror in 2001 – after the 9/11 attacks, in the promotion of its trade and investments in the Eurasian lands (Guriev, 2016). Its flagship projects: founding two multilateral development banks in mid-2015: the AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) which is headed by China

and backed by 57 countries – members, and the NDB (New Development Bank) also known by the BRICS Bank which is operated on an equal basis between the BRICS nations: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, have done a big shift in the World order from the globalism to the regionalism, in which the “one size fits all” western centric approach is no longer tenable (Dove, 2016).

These multilateral projects are at the core of the Chinese geo-strategies in securing its energy resources for the growth of its economy, in addition to supporting international trade. And to be clear, the Chinese investments in Russia and Central Asian countries are necessary and vital for the “New Silk Road” project that connects China to the leading markets in Europe and the MENA region (Guriev, 2016).

“It’s only a matter of time before China rules the World” (De Jonquières, 2012, p.48) say most of the strategists nowadays, and that is because of the big amount of power that characterizes China. Its growing power in all aspects will definitely result in national and international changes (Rozman, 2013). That economic, financial and political power will absolutely lead this country to the global domination path; and the most repeated quote recently is: “That economic and financial power is shifting from West to East” (De Jonquières, 2012, p.48) ... And this quote is becoming the “mantra” of our age, which is being repeated insistently that it became considered as self-evident (De Jonquières, 2012).

In a speech at the UN General Assembly in April 1974, Den Xiaoping, the paramount leader in the 1980s who lifted China out of backwardness with economic reforms, highlighted by his motto “Hide your strength, bide your time” (Huang, 2018), declared that:

“China is not a superpower, nor will it ever seek to be one. If one day China should change its color and turn into a superpower, if it too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere

subject others to its bullying aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should ... expose it, oppose it, and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it” (Bergsten et al., 2008, p.1).

But nowadays, China cannot anymore refuse to be a superpower! And the entire world has to know much information and details about that economic and political combination that the Chinese government is actually doing in its backstage to transform its country into an emerging superpower which is recently playing an important role in managing the global balance of power at its own desires, and in accordance with its interests.

This powerful country which had a “booming” economy in the last decades, has designed its own spheres of influence, especially in the economic domain, and exercised a high level of affection on the overall balances in the World (Sandikli, 2010).

“With Economic Strength, Come Geoeconomic Influence” (Rediker et al., 2016, p.11) ... Over the past decade, the Chinese rise has been striking nationally and internationally as an economic and trading superpower which competes with the world’s largest economy: The United States. Indeed, its economy has doubled since 2009, and its government has become a motivation to the world, for the Chinese growth has provided a large market, and secured a source of foreign investments and low-cost exports; this growth is now challenging the United States in the global economy (Rediker et al., 2016).

As for the recent period, exactly on March 22nd 2018, Mr. President of the USA Donald Trump, has “narrated”, as mentioned in the New York Times magazine, that the United States has been humiliated by “savvier nations not restrained by naïve notions like global trading rules”, and by these nations he meant China as a primary “villain” and predatory power which has exploited the weakness of the US to steal factory jobs and to sow pessimism (Goodman, 2018).

Because of that, Trump has advanced a policy of combative trade, as a sanction on China, which puts tariffs on steel and aluminum, in addition to the battle of electronics and clothing (Goodman, 2018) where the Trump administration readied \$60 billion worth of tariffs and penalties on the imported goods from China, and put restrictions on Chinese investments in the United States (Myers, 2018). And in its turn, China responded with penalties on around \$3 billion of American products (Zhong & Mozur, 2018).

In these policies Mr. Trump wanted to strengthen the American position in grappling with China, but most of the trade experts have affirmed that they will do the opposite: These policies will weaken America and diminish its place in the world, by “alienating allies, undermining the potential for collective action among countries nursing shared grievances with China” (Goodman, 2018), knowing that only 2% of the aluminum and steel produced in China are used in the United States and the largest supplier is Canada (Goodman, 2018).

The Chinese economical booming was due to its trading policies that exploit the gaps in the global rules and breach them usually; and that is the main cause behind the straggling economic development in the Chinese government, which still supports key industries, state-owned companies, and puts challenges and barriers on the foreign competition path (Goodman, 2018).

By these punitive sanctions unveiled by President Trump, China will face some difficulties in maintaining its rise and realizing its global ambitions... A professor of international relations at Renmin University in Beijing, Shi Yinhong, said that: “People in the U.S. and China have for years said the wolf is coming, the wolf is coming, but the wolf hasn’t come... This time, the wolf is coming” (Myers, 2018).

This dissertation is done to shed light on this special Chinese phenomenon in the world; it will answer many questions about this topic, to know more about the fact behind its ascendance,

the strategies adopted to attain all the targets, the special methods utilized by the Chinese government since the collapse of the Soviet Union, etc... But the most important of all those questions is the one that asks: How will China deal with the ‘Wolf’ attacking its economic and political rise? And how skilled are the Chinese people as policymakers to face it? (Myers, 2018).

Besides, this dissertation will talk about the Eurasian region as a rich subject for the studies and research of the students of Political Sciences and International Relations on one hand, and for the experts, strategists and analysts on the other, knowing that it is a “heavy material” for strategic studies, in addition to the fact that the rise of China is an important phenomenon attracting all the “scientific eyes and brains” of the world to analyze its impacts on their states, and to put and develop strategies in order to confront it or cooperate with it.

And since the international scene is witnessing today unprecedented and unpredictable changes in term of the foreign policies of the states toward each other’s, or in term of their internal strategies of development, this topic was chosen, hoping that this dissertation will add a valuable page to the huge book of international relations, in order to satisfy the curiosity of knowledge we all have.

While there are many warnings in the financial domain blinking in the world, some characteristics of the Chinese government reduce the risks of financial crisis, and give this government all the time it needs to manage the emerging issues if there was an authentic political will in the leadership’s mind (Dollar, 2018).

The main problem statement that this dissertation will turn around is: *What is the Chinese government, through implementing its geoeconomic powers and capabilities as a new geo-strategy to invest in its national and international geopolitical interests, aiming for since the collapse of the Soviet Union? And what are the impacts of this new geo-strategy on its bilateral relations with*

the Russian federation? Will it contribute positively in realizing a regional integration or negatively in leading to a non-ending rivalry between them?

In other words, how is the world's order affected by China's geoeconomic capabilities and potentials? And what are the impacts of its new geo-strategy?

And besides the main problem statement, there are many questions in which their answers will be found in this dissertation:

- 1- Compared to the policies of the Superpowers in this world, why is China having a different point of view and perspective concerning its foreign policy?
- 2- Why is it fixing its strategies with a geoeconomic background instead of a geopolitical one?
- 3- Is replacing geopolitics with geoeconomics in foreign policies a good option? What are the impacts of such a strategic shifting?
- 4- How can geoeconomics be a discipline adopted by a superpower for international primacy?
- 5- How will this Chinese new strategy affect its relations with Russia in the Eurasian area? Will this change lead to cooperation or rivalry between those Superpowers?

In order to treat the presented problem statement, and in an attempt to answer the questions that accompanied it, we found it appropriate first to analyze secondary data by adopting the descriptive – analytical methodology, which will be used beside the comparative one in accordance with the proposed plan of the dissertation. Therefore, books, academic journals and newspapers were used for data collection.

Then we have dedicated a chapter for empirical analysis, in which we have conducted in-depth-interviews with scholars of political sciences and international relations, researchers, diplomats, political analysts, and journalists, in order to validate the findings of our document analysis and cover all the details that we could not get from the secondary data.

There is no doubt that the proposed approach to treat this subject has brought some difficulties especially that it has not been treated in this way before. Therefore, we collected a large number of different references so that we can provide a comprehensive study containing all the required details and covering the various aspects of the topic. Another frontier has faced us and it was about the difficulty in translating the references in Chinese and Russian languages into English.

“The foundation of China’s geopolitical power is its economic might” (Bremmer, 2016). But what are China’s geoeconomic powers? What are its aims and its means? To answer these questions and all the questions above, this study will be divided into three principal parts:

- The first part will present the theoretical difference between geopolitics and geoeconomics in its two chapters, where the first one will display the geopolitics theories and the geoeconomics approaches, and the second one will discuss the shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics in the world.
- The second part will feature the Chinese assets and geo-strategy in its two chapters. The first chapter will discuss the local and foreign assets that build its geoeconomic potential, and the second one will talk about its new geo-strategy for international primacy.
- The third and last part will proffer the integration phenomenon between China and Russia in Eurasia, in its first two chapters. The first one will present the interests of the

two countries in Eurasia, and the second one will discuss their cooperation and competition in this specific geopolitical zone of the world. As for the third chapter, it will involve an empirical analysis, in which information from interviews will be collected, analyzed, and compared with the point of view discussed in this thesis.

This way to study the subject will provide us with much information to answer the problem statement and its hypothesis, in order to attain a sealed conclusion that will be an addition to the studies made in this field.

Part I: Difference between Geopolitics and Geoeconomics

Chapter 1: What are the Geopolitics Theories and the Geoeconomics Approaches?

Chapter 2: The Shift from Geopolitics to Geoeconomics

Chapter 1: What are the Geopolitics Theories and the Geoeconomics Approaches?

Before discussing the geopolitics and geoeconomics disciplines, we should do a brief introduction for the chapter, which will substantially define the “Geopolitics” and “Geoeconomics” concepts, helping us in understanding all the aspects of the subject.

Geopolitics:

At its peak period, Geopolitics was known as “a scientific branch that studies the impacts of the physical and geographical environment on the states’ politics in the seventh and the eighth decades” (Hlihor, 2014) ...

It is important to know that geopolitics has started long decades ago Before Christ, and that the strategic principle of “know your enemy” was originally developed by the Chinese military strategist Sun-Tzu in his famous book “*The Art of War*” written 400 BC; His emphasis on the necessity of understanding the enemy has been rediscovered and valued by the U.S. defense community in the recent decades (Rousseau, 2012).

Rudolf Kjellen, the Swedish - German geography expert has first initiated and circulated the term of Geopolitics in the university and academic world in a public conference on April 1890 (Hlihor, 2014) ... He was known by the “Swedish Father of Geopolitics” (Rudolf Kjellén, 2011).

And Geopolitics has firstly showed itself during the periods of rivalry between the Great powers... It is a branch of social sciences that focuses on analyzing the relations between geography and political powers, and capabilities of the states within the international relations (Hlihor, 2014).

Most of the researchers have agreed on the idea that: “Coming up with a specific definition of geopolitics is notoriously difficult, for the meaning of concepts like geopolitics tends to change as historical periods and structures of world order change” (Tuathail et al., 1998, p. 1).

Geoeconomics:

The “Geoeconomics” term was first mentioned by an American military strategist: Edward Luttwak in 1990, while he was arguing that: “following the Cold war, the importance of military power was giving way to geoeconomic power...” (Petsinger, n.d.).

In his Essay: ‘**From Geopolitics to Geoeconomics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce.**’ Luttwak said: “‘geoeconomics’ is the best term I can think of to describe the admixture of the logic of conflict with the methods of commerce.” (Baru, 2012, p. 3).

After Luttwak, Samuel Huntigton in his Essay: “**Why International Primacy Matters?**” published in 1993, said that: “in a world in which military conflict between major states is unlikely, economic power will be increasingly important in determining the primacy or subordination of states” (Baru, 2012, p. 3).

We can also mention that geoeconomics can be defined in two ways (Baru, 2012, p. 2):

- 1- The relationship between economic policy and the changes in national power and geopolitics (The geopolitical consequences of economic phenomenon).
- 2- The economic consequences of geopolitical trends and national powers.

So, “the trade follows the flag” means that there are economic impacts of the projection of national powers; and “the flag follows the trade” means that there are geopolitical consequences because of economics phenomena” ... These two notions can clarify for now the concept ‘geoeconomics’ as a prelude to its detailed determination in this chapter.

Section 1: Geopolitics' Theories

Because of its correlation to the employment of the states' components in their foreign policies in a particular way, and in the relations between those states in a general one, Geopolitics is not a constant factor, but per contra it changes over time under the effects of the internal circumstances of the states and with the modulation of their foreign policies toward each other.

According to the Center for Research on Geopolitics (2015), The 'Geopolitics' concept first appeared clearly with the Swedish geographer Rudolph Kjellén; He first used this term in a Swedish publication in 1899, and defined it as: "The theory of the state as a geographical organism or phenomenon in space", where power as influence and politics, and space as territory and soil were very important. Professor Kjellén has since that time gotten the surname of the "Father of Geopolitics", and the term of geopolitics has been daily mentioned in international news broadcasts since that time, as indicated by the Center for Research on Geopolitics (2015).

The word "Geopolitics" conjures images up, in another term, it provokes ideas of war, empire and diplomacy... Briefly, it is "The practice of states controlling and competing for territory" (Flint, 2006, p.13). But, it is not only limited to that, it also presents "a way of seeing the world" (Flint, 2006, p.13), and that is why this world has known many geopolitics theoreticians, where each one of them had his own theories in classifying the world into particular regions, and their classifications were based on particular understandings they had absorbed from their countries' points of view (Flint, 2006).

According to the Center for Research on Geopolitics (2015), Geopolitics has passed in many ups and downs during the past decades, especially after the Second World War, because of the German geopolitics that made it a "bad name", with Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolph Kjellén - who

developed Ratzel ideas -, and without forgetting General Karl Haushofer. All of them were aiming to increase the size of the German State eastwards and create a larger state as a final target (Flint 2006). But the Center for Research on Geopolitics (2015) affirms that geopolitics is now witnessing a great revival, and the first reason for that, is the recognition that the recent global political changes are mainly based on the geographical environment.

Besides Kjellén, the American famous admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan was a classical geopolitician who gave the sea power a great importance. His thesis discussed “the relationship between the political control of the sea and the impact of a powerful navy on a state’s foreign policy”, as indicated by the Center for Research on Geopolitics (2015). He demonstrated in his book published in 1890: **The Influence of Sea Power Upon History**, that the sea power has an important role to play in the foreign policies of the States, and he presented for that, the essential elements of sea power that a strong state should have (Center for Research on Geopolitics, 2015).

After Rudolph Kjellén and Alfred Thayer Mahan, one of the founding fathers of classical geopolitics, Halford J. Mackinder (1904), presented a lecture in the “Royal Geographical Society” in London in 1904, and described the core of political power (the Russian federation nowadays) as the “eternal geographical pivot of history”. After that, he published a study entitled: **Democratic Ideals and Reality** in 1919, where he replaced the term “pivot” by the term “heartland”, describing that strategic space of the globe situated in the core of Eurasia. Later on, he became the most well-known and influential geopolitician (Flint, 2006), and we will discuss his theories in this part of the chapter.

Away from the German school of geopolitics, after Mahan and Mackinder, and while the United States began to develop its role as a post-war world power, many geopolitical strategies were generated by some new geopolitics theoreticians (Tuathail et al., 1998): Nicholas J. Spykman

and his “Rimland” theory, Georges Kennan and his “Containment” Doctrine, Francis Fukuyama and his “End of History” theory, Georges W. Bush and “The New World Order” strategy, Samuel Huntington and “The Clash of Civilization” theory, ..., and recently Zbigniew Brzezinski and “The Middle Space” theory in his most famous book “The Grand Chessboard”.

In this chapter we will not talk about all the cited doctrines, strategies and theories, but we will focus on those which will help us in answering the main problematic of the thesis and its related questions.

That is why, this section of the chapter will be allocated to discuss, successively:

- a) Admiral Alfred T. Mahan’s Theory: Seapower
- b) Sir Halford J. Mackinder’s Theory: Heartland / Landpower
- c) Professor Nicholas J. Spykman’s Theory: Rimland
- d) Professor Zbigniew K. Brzezinski’s Theory: Middle Space in the Grand Chessboard

A- Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan’s Theory: Seapower

Alfred Thayer MAHAN (1840-1914), son of Dennis Hart MAHAN, an important instructor at the United States Military Academy at West Point in New York. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1859 and served in the Union Navy for 40 years, according to the editors of Encyclopedia Britannica.

He wrote his first book in 1883: **The Gulf and Inland Waters**, as a study of naval engagement in the Civil War (Sempa, 2014). Stephen Luce, president of the Naval War College, invited Mahan in 1884 to lecture on Naval History and Tactics there... After that in 1886, Mahan became the president of that college until 1889; and in 1890, he published the lectures he has done in the college in his most famous book: **The Influence of Sea Power upon History (1660 – 1783)**

(Encyclopedia Britannica). That book became the “Bible” for many navies around the world, and it was the one who brought him national and international fame (Sempa, 2014). He discussed in it the exponential importance of sea power in national historical supremacy, as indicated by the editors of Encyclopedia Britannica.

In 1892, he published another book: **The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire (1793 – 1812)**. That book “stressed on the interdependence of the military and commercial control of the sea and asserted that the control of seaborne commerce can determine the outcome of wars” (Encyclopedia Britannica).

In 1896, he was retired from the U.S navy, but he was subsequently recalled to service (Encyclopedia Britannica). Then in 1898 he published his third book: **The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future** (Hlihor, 2014). In this book he was aiming to “arouse his fellow Americans to a realization of their maritime responsibilities” (Encyclopedia Britannica).

Those three books are acknowledged today as belonging to Geopolitics (Hlihor, 2014); they have had a great influence in the building up of naval forces before the First World War, especially in Great Britain and Germany, as mentioned in Britannica; and they also revolutionized the strategic thinking for naval operations (Hlihor, 2014).

Beside those books, and four years before his death (1914), he published a great book in 1900: **The Problem of Asia**. In this book, he took the Far East as a zone of analysis, and identified the case of confrontation in the strategic belt situated at 30° - 40° north latitude, between maritime powers on one hand, such as Great Britain and USA; and continental powers on the other, such as Russia (Hlihor, 2014).

The solution he presented to that case was to establish a balance and counterbalance system controlled by the powers from outside Eurasia, by using the fleet and trade, and in accordance with the interests of maritime powers (Hlihor, 2014).

In his studies, Mahan focused on the oceans, and especially on the power that characterizes those who controlled them... He compared the advantages of maritime powers to continental powers in order to prevent aggression as he thought, through the maritime control of the transportation routes and the condition offered by nature in favor of those maritime powers (Hlihor, 2014).

For that professional naval officer Admiral Alfred Mahan, *The road to national greatness was through naval expansionism* (Tuathail et al., 1998) ... For him, the path to that national greatness lays in commercial and naval expansionism, and he argued that all truly great powers were naval powers (Tuathail et al., 1998).

He clarified that, it is not that necessary to occupy all territories, because that will turn to colonialism, and the United States always tries to show its image as an anti-colonial nation; and he explained that what the United States need was “an informal empire based on ‘open door’ trade and a string of overseas naval bases that would give its navy the ability to project power in a troublesome region whenever it needed to do so” (Tuathail et al., 1998, p.18).

Starting from the point that the USA cannot rely and depend only on the security and protection offered by the natural distance, Mahan traced the strategic guidelines of the American defensive policy by recommending an extension of the defensive frontiers to the opposite sides of the oceans shores around the American waterline. He also recommended the construction of strategic bases on the Atlantic and the Pacific’s Islands (Hlihor, 2014). And after that, it became

obvious that the preservation of the American power was the role of the American military and commercial fleets (Hlihor, 2014).

Besides these specific recommendations, and in order to ensure the importance of the Seapower, Mahan visualized a geopolitical scenario known as “**The Anaconda Politics**”. This scenario was all about a policy of surrounding the Eurasian continental mass with a chain of naval bases (Hlihor, 2014).

And because of that scenario, the control of the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean became the core of the United States’ geopolitical policy; and by that, Mahan became “the theoretical light” behind the United States’ move to globalism (Flint, 2006).

Mahan’s Seapower Doctrine started from “The Influence of Seapower upon History”; this book was the basis of almost all of his later work. In its first chapters was Mahan’s thesis about Seapower and his firm belief that “Sea power was the key to national security and World’s dominance”: the theory that Mahan defended in all his future work (Liu, n.d., p.2). In the same context when describing the rise of the maritime security, Bueger and Edmunds (2017) explained that the sea was considered as the platform where geopolitical power is displayed and the space of confrontation between the superpowers.

The first Chapter of Mahan’s book was a discussion of the elements of sea power; Mahan enumerated and explained in it six principal conditions affecting the sea power of nations: I. Geographical Position. II. Physical Conformation (including natural productions and climate). III. Extent of Territory. IV. Number of Population. V. Character of the People. VI. Character of the Government (including the national institutions) (Mahan, 1890).

By Geographical Position, he meant that: “if a nation be so situated that it is neither forced to defend itself by land nor induced to seek extension of its territory by way of the land, it has, by

the very unity of its aim directed upon the sea, an advantage as compared with a people one of whose boundaries is continental". He also affirmed that: "The geographical position of a country may not only favor the concentration of its forces, but give the further strategic advantage of a central position and a good base for hostile operations against its probable enemies" (Mahan, 1890, p.16).

In the Physical Conformation, he described that: "The seaboard of a country is one of its frontiers; and the easier the access offered by the frontier to the regions beyond, in this case the sea, the greater will be the tendency of a people toward intercourse with the rest of the world by it. If a country be imagined having a long seaboard, but entirely without a harbor, such a country can have no sea trade of its own, no shipping, no navy" (Mahan, 1890, p.18).

In explaining the Extent of Territory, he said that: "As regards the development of sea power, it is not the total number of square miles which a country contains, but the length of its coast-line and the character of its harbors that are to be considered. As to these it is to be said that, the geographical and physical conditions being the same, extent of sea-coast is a source of strength or weakness according as the population is large or small" (Mahan, 1890, p.22).

He clarified the condition of the Number of Population, by saying that: "It has been said that in respect of dimensions it is not merely the number of square miles, but the extent and character of the sea-coast that is to be considered with reference to sea power; and so, in point of population, it is not only the grand total, but the number following the sea, or at least readily available for employment on ship-board and for the creation of naval material, that must be counted" (Mahan, 1890, p.22).

By National Character he meant that: “If sea power be really based upon a peaceful and extensive commerce, aptitude for commercial pursuits must be a distinguishing feature of the nations that have at one time or another been great upon the sea” (Mahan, 1890, p.25).

And finally, to clarify the condition of the Character of the Government, Mahan explained that: As the various traits of a country and its people constitute the natural characteristics through which a nation – as a man - begins its career, the conduct of its government in its turn, corresponds to the intelligent will-power implemented in; Herein, the success or failure in a man’s life or in a nation’s history will be determined according to their energetic, wise, and persevering conduct (Mahan, 1890, p.29).

Finally, according to Elson Liu, we can say that Mahan’s doctrine and efforts brought some changes into the naval policies of the super powers in the last decade, especially to the United States, Great Britain, and Japan... Mahan’s impact on global affairs has been distinguished more than that of any other historian (Rodger, 1999). In a review of the United States’ military policies after the Second World War, we found it clear that their foreign policy doctrine was built along the lines of Mahan’s theory so far; and it is relevant to mention here the statement of the U.S state secretary H. L. Stimson: “*Neptune is God, Mahan is his prophet, and the USA navy the only real church*” (Hlihor, 2014) ...

After the death of Mahan in 01 December 1914, the Sea power Doctrine got engaged in most of the foreign policies of the Seapower countries as a new theoretical and geopolitical vision in that time, which helped the states become classified as maritime powers according to the conditions presented by Mahan, in attaining their geostrategic targets.

B- Sir Halford J. Mackinder's Theory: Heartland / Land Power

Sir Halford John Mackinder (1861 – 1947), a British political geographer and son of a physician of Scottish descent, studied natural biology and modern history in the Christ Church – Oxford, and was a president of the principal debating society at the university: The Oxford Union. After leaving Oxford he worked as a lecturer for the Oxford extension movement which gives educational opportunities to people unable to attend university, while he expounded what he called “the new geography”, known for its combination between natural sciences and humanities, and won attention (Crone, 1998).

At that time, and learning of Mackinder's success, the Royal Geographical Society in London, invited him to address it on that “new geography”, where he won the challenge boldly with his paper “The Scopes and Methods of Geography”, which got excellent feedbacks. In 1887 he became the first lecturer of geography at Oxford. And when the Royal Geographical Society established the Oxford School of Geography in 1899, there was not any doubt that Mackinder will be its first director, and that is what happened (Crone, 1998).

But in January 1904, the time when he presented his paper entitled: “The Geographical Pivot of History” at the Geographical Society, that was the time when Mackinder became a central figure of the geopolitical thinking (Hlihor, 2014). In this paper, he was studying the prerequisites for a stable peace settlement during the First World War, and he argued that Interior Asia and East Europe had become the pivot area or the strategic center of the World Island (Asia, Europe, and Africa) because of the decline of sea power against land power (Crone, 1998). He analyzed the differences between the great maritime powers and the continental powers, and realized that the role of a pivot regime in politics and the world history was the key aspect (Hlihor, 2014). But he said that his aim will not be to discuss the influence of any kind of features, or yet to make a study

in regional geography, but to exhibit human history as part of the life of the world organism (Mackinder, 1904).

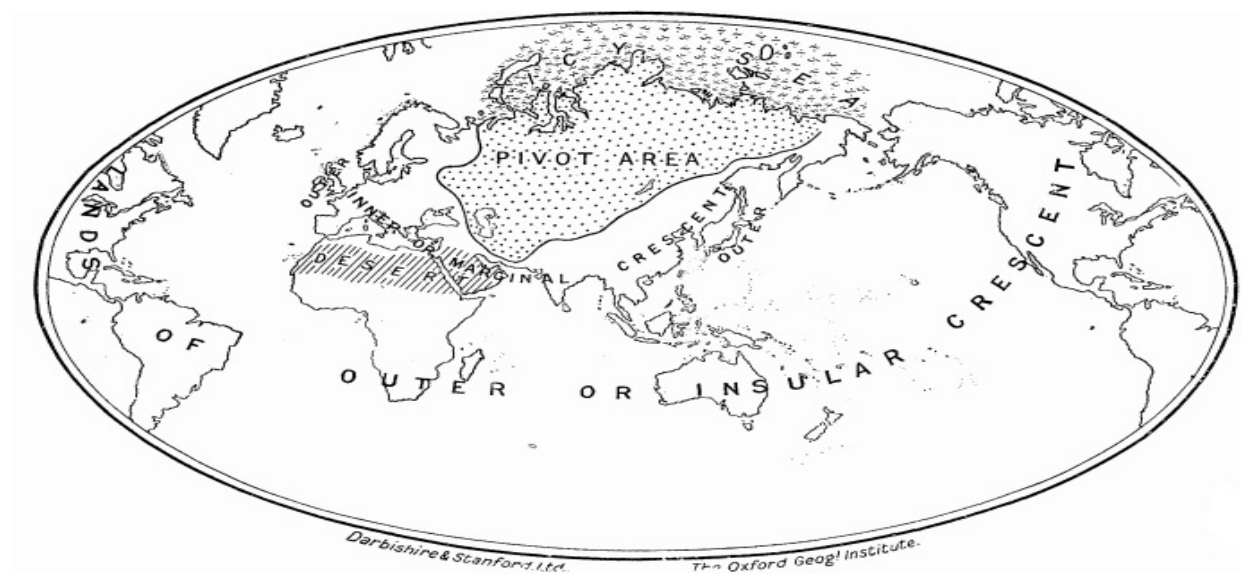
In that paper, he presented a geopolitical formula which would express certain aspects, at any rate, of “geographical causation in universal history” (Mackinder, 1904, p.422), and set into perspective “some of the competing forces in current international politics” (Mackinder, 1904, p.422). He implicitly admitted that: Who rules the Pivot Area, commands the World – Island; and who commands the World – Island, commands the World. Commanding the pivot area requires ruling its inner crescent, and ruling that inner crescent requires ruling the outer one; so commanding the pivot area will lead in its final steps into commanding the World.

Mackinder pictured Europe and Asia as one great continent: “Euro – Asia”, and his argument behind his formula was that Euro – Asia, the pivot area of the world, measures 21 million square miles, more than three times of the North American area, and more than two times the measure of the European continent; The center and north of Euro – Asia, he pointed out, measure “some nine million square miles, (...) have no available waterways to the ocean, but, on the other hand, (...) are generally favorable to the mobility of horsemen” (Mackinder, 1904, p.431). In the North it is ice-girt and water-girt everywhere else; to its east, south and west there are marginal regions accessible to shipmen, ranged in a crescent shape as Mackinder said, and those regions are four in number because of their coincidence with the spheres of the four great religions: Buddhism (Indian Ocean Region), Brahmanism (Pacific Ocean Region), Mohametanism (Nearer East or the Land of the Five Seas), and Christianity (Europe) (Mackinder, 1904).

He also mentioned in this paper that the sea power of Britain, Canada, the United States, South Africa, Australia and Japan are “inaccessible” to the land power of Euro – Asia; but many events have increased the land power significance as he said, and that power still remains

(Mackinder, 1904). “The Tudor century, which saw the expansion of Western Europe over the sea, also saw Russian power carried from Moscow through Siberia” (Mackinder, 1904, p.433), he argued. Thus there were many differences between the modern land power and the sea power, in the sources of their ideals and more in the material conditions of their mobility (Mackinder, 1904).

Figure 2: The Natural Seat of Power as presented by Mackinder



Source: Mackinder, 1904, p.435

And if we get back to the “pivot area” we can see in figure 1 above, that it is that vast large area of Euro – Asia; Outside of it there is its great Inner Crescent which includes: Germany, Austria, Turkey, India and China; and the Outer Crescent includes: Britain, South Africa, Australia, The United States, Canada, and Japan (Mackinder, 1904, p.436).

Mackinder then warned that: “the oversetting of the balance of power in favor of the pivot state, resulting in its expansion over the marginal lands of Euro-Asia, would permit the use of vast

continental resources for fleet-building, and the empire of the world would then be in sight” (Mackinder, 1904, p.436).

In the conclusion of his paper, Mackinder said that even if the control on the pivot zone (Russia) of the pivot area was changed due to the power competition over it, that would not reduce the significance of the pivot position; arguing that either a Russo – German alliance or a Sino – Japanese empire (which conquered Russian territory) could contend for world hegemony. In either case, “oceanic frontage” would be added to “the resources of the great continent”, thereby creating the geopolitical conditions necessary for producing a great power that was supreme both on land and at sea (Mackinder, 1904, p.437).

After the First World War, and exactly in 1919, Sir Halford Mackinder modified and clarified his formula about the pivot region, into a definite theory, in his published book: **“Democratic Ideals and Reality”**, arguably “the most important work on international politics ever written by a geographer” (Sempa, 2002, p.14). He substituted the “pivot area” concept with the “heartland” and pointed in the preface of his new book that “the war has established and not shaken” his former points of view (Mackinder, 1919) ... In the following pages “Mackinder presented a masterful synthesis of historical and geographical analyses that has withstood the test of time” (Sempa, 2002, p.14).

After studying the facts of the world’s geography, Mackinder advised in his book that in order to prevent future world conflicts, we must recognize the geographical realities and take step to counter their influence (Mackinder, 1919) ... And if we get back to the geographical terms, we find that Mackinder’s world as sketched in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* is consisted of 3 main sections (Sempa, 2002, p.14):

- 1- One ocean covering 9/12th of the globe;
- 2- One great continent encompassing Europe, Asia and Africa (World-Island);

- 3- Several smaller islands including Britain, Japan, North America South America, and Australia.

But the most significant feature of the World-Island in Mackinder's theory was the Heartland which he described as: "a great continuous part in the north and center of the continent... from the icy flat shore of Siberia to the torrid, steep coasts of Baluchistan and Persia" (Mackinder, 1919, p.73). This Heartland was "inaccessible to navigation from the ocean" because of its great rivers (Lena, Yenisei, Obi, Volga, and Ural) emptied into the frozen Arctic Ocean, and the others are inland seas (Caspian and Aral) (Sempa, 2002). But in the other hand, the Heartland included one great "lowland" that constituted "a broad gateway from Siberia into Europe", which is suitable to highly mobile land power (Mackinder, 1919, p.74).

Following the defeat of Napoleon, during the nineteenth century, and until the rise of the German empire and the First World War, a geopolitical struggle broke out: the "great game", it was when the British sea power sought to contain Russian land power (Sempa, 2002). During that game, Mackinder perceived a basis for the British policy, where he explained in his book that "We were opposed to... the Russian Czardom (Russian power and authority) because Russia was dominating, threatening force both in East Europe and the Heartland for a half century" (Mackinder, 1919, p.142). He also explained that they were opposed to the German Kaiserdom (German power and authority) because "Germany took the lead from the Czardom, and would have crushed the revolting Slavs, and dominated East Europe and the Heartland" (Mackinder, 1919, p.143). This strategic approach formed the basis of the Second theory of Mackinder: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the World" (Mackinder, 1919, p.194). This theory influenced the British and the German policy makers who adapted it to promote their expansions,

even Karl Haushofer considered Mackinder “the author of the greatest of all geographical world views” (Sempa, 2002, p.17).

Years later and after the Second World War has broken out, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of *Foreign Affairs* journal, asked Mackinder to write an article, where he updated his Heartland Theory, and so it was; Mackinder published an article entitled “*The Round World and The Winning of the Peace*” in July 1943 (Sempa, 2002, p.18), where he wrote that his concept of the Heartland “is more valid and useful today than it was either twenty or forty years ago”, and redefined the Heartland concept in mentioning that it is: “the northern part and the interior of Euro-Asia,” extending “from the Arctic coast down to the central deserts,” flowing westward to “the broad isthmus between the Baltic and Black Seas” (Mackinder, 1943, p.597). He wrote that it was equivalent to the Soviet Union territory minus the east land of the Yenisei River (Sempa, 2002, p.19).

Mackinder estimated a second geographical zone to be of “almost equal significance to the Heartland”: “The Midland Ocean” formed by the eastern half of Canada and the United States, the North Atlantic basin and its “four subsidiaries (Mediterranean, Baltic, Arctic, and Caribbean Seas)”, Britain and France (Mackinder, 1943, p.604). He also wished that Heartland Russia cooperate with the powers of the Midland Ocean to prevent the zone from future aggressions in the postwar world (Sempa, 2002).

Nowadays, strategists, political observers and researchers affirm the influence of Mackinder’s theories in the international relations upon the decades, and declared that the politics of the twentieth century have been shaped by the geopolitical vision of Mackinder (Sempa, 2002). Furthermore, many nations and power have been influenced by Mackinder’s vision: The People’s Republic of China, located at the gates of the “Pivot Region”, has access to the sea and possesses

human and natural resources to rise over Eurasia in the future; and Russia still occupies the Heartland zone currently, and also possesses natural and human resources as well as thousands of nuclear weapons which could help it in the fundamental application of Mackinder's theories (Sempa, 2002). So as MacFarlane (2015) said in their review of the book *Central Asia in International Relations: The Legacies of Halford Mackinder*: "Like it or not, Mackinder, or some variant thereof, is alive and well" (p. 241).

After Mahan and Mackinder, Spykman had got his own geopolitical vision for Eurasia and the World, so the next part of this chapter's section will discuss his theory.

C- Professor Nicholas J. Spykman's Theory: Rimland

Born in Amsterdam, on October 13th 1893, studied and earned his doctorate from the University of California in 1923, Nicholas John Spykman was a Dutch-American instructor in political sciences and sociology from 1923 to 1925 in the university he graduated from, before going to Yale in 1925. Ten years later, he became chairman of the Department of International Relations there and Director of the Yale Institute of International Studies until 1940; he died on 26 June 1943 (Thompson, 1980).

As a young journalist from 1913 to 1920 (Thompson, 1980), sociologist, political scientist, and geopolitician, Nicholas J. Spykman became a "chief among the diffusers of geopolitics from Europe to America" (Wilkinson, 1985, p.77). By his works, he mainly influenced the ideological bases of the foreign policy of the United States since 1941; he was known as a "theoretical geopolitician" for he debated over Mackinder's Heartland doctrine, and counter posed his own Rimland theory (Wilkinson, 1985).

After publishing his book “America’s Strategy in World Politics” during the war in 1942, where he elaborated and developed a geopolitical critique of the American isolationism (Hlihor, 2014), he planned to publish another book “in which he would develop further his views on the subject of power in international relations and on the place of geopolitical analysis in the formulation of a security policy” (Sempa, 2006). The Yale Institute of International Studies decided then to realize Spykman’s plan by publishing a book based on the lectures he gave in the University, his notes correspondence and maps, so Helen R. Nicholl, his research assistant, was tasked with arranging and editing the text and the result was a classical book in the geopolitical analysis field, entitled: “*The Geography of the Peace*” published in 1944, one year after his death (Sempa, 2006).

In that new book, Nicholas Spykman divided the world into two areas: *the Heartland*, and *the Rimland*, and presented a new theory: “Who controls the Rimland dominates Eurasia, Who controls Eurasia controls the world destiny” (Hlihor, 2014, p.29).

Figure 3: Spykman's Rimland



Source: Shian, 2016

If we look at figure 3 and compare Spykman's theory to Mackinder's one, we can notice that Spykman highlighted Mackinder's interpretation grid of world politics (Hlihor, 2014) by replacing *the Inner crescent* with *Rimland* (Flint, 2006), in another meaning Spykman did not present anything new.

It is important to know that Spykman did not oppose Mackinder's geographical concept of the *Heartland*, but disagreed on his overrating of the potential of the region's power (Sempa, 2006). Spykman considered that the key region of world politics was not the *Heartland* but the coastal areas, *the Rimland* which he described as follow:

"The Rimland of the Eurasian land mass must be viewed as an intermediate region, situated...between the heartland and the marginal seas. It functions as a vast buffer zone of conflict"

between sea power and land power. Looking in both directions, it must function amphibiously and defend itself on land and sea” (Spykman, 1944, p.41).

We can notice here that Spykman had given importance to land and maritime power, not only for land power as Mackinder has done, because of the accessibility of the *Rimland* to the *Heartland* and the marginal seas, as it is open landward and seaward.

At the beginning of 1942, a political alliance between Germany and Japan helped both of them to realize their objectives in Eurasia and was a strategic challenge to the United States foreign policy in the Second World War when it was obliged to fight them there.

So Spykman explained that: “The most significant fact... about the situation which confronted us when, at the beginning of 1942, Germany and Japan had achieved a good part of their objectives, was the existence of a political alliance between them. We were then confronted with the possibility of complete encirclement, in which case we might have had to face the unified power of the whole Eurasian land mass. The strength of the power centers of the Eastern Hemisphere would then have been over-powering. It would have been impossible for us to preserve our independence and security” (Spykman, 1944, p.34).

And then he realized that the security of the United States would be threatened if any nation or alliance of nations emerged as dominating power in either *the Heartland* or *the Rimland*; that is why according to Spykman the American policymakers should take this fact as their primordial concern to resolve (Spykman, 1944).

In an analysis of Spykman’s Rimland theory, we can rely on the threat to the U.S security he warned about when he said that: a single power domination of the Eurasian land mass is the great threat to the U.S security (Spykman, 1944), to conclude why he suggested changing Mackinder’s famous dictum about the control of *the Heartland* which will lead to ruling of the

world into his pre-mentioned one: “*Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world*” (Spykman, 1944, p.43).

Away from that, and in his predictions for the postwar period, Spykman expected that China would be the dominant power in the Far East, and the Soviet Union will be its counterpart and the strongest land power on the continent (Sempa, 2006). He also foretold that *the Rimland* regions of Europe, the Middle East and the Far East, which were the battle zones of the Second World War, would remain the areas of greatest strategic significance in the postwar world (Sempa, 2006).

After his predictions, Spykman pointed out that “It is the peace-time relationship between the power factors which will make or mar the security of the world in general and the Western Hemisphere in Particular” (Spykman, 1944, p.51). Those factors had a geopolitical meaning: the U.S was “obliged to safeguard its position by making certain that no overwhelming power is allowed to build itself up in these areas” (Spykman, 1944, p.51).

Spykman agreed with Mackinder about his predictions that the postwar struggle would potentially pit a Heartland nation: Russia, against U.S sea power for control of the Rimland (Sempa, 2018). And if we get back to his predictions for China, he said that one day it would be a “continental power of huge dimensions”, and its size, geographic position, natural resources and population would oblige the U.S to ally with Japan in order to preserve the balance of power in Asia (Sempa, 2018).

And nowadays, just as Spykman predicted more than seventy years ago, the Asiatic Mediterranean has become a geopolitical territory for conflict and battle between the People’s Republic of China, the United States of America, Japan and many other regional powers... The energy resources, the economic influence, the control of important sea lanes, the political control

of territory, and the overall balance of power in the Asia-Pacific Region, all are at stake in this struggle (Sempa, 2015).

As Spykman was presenting instructions for the American policymakers through his writings, he warned them in the end of his book *The Geography of Peace* that the security interests of their nation in the Asia-Pacific region and everywhere else will not be protected nor preserved by the world community, so he advised the statesmen of his day that they shall remain depending on their own national strength and not relying on anyone because “the failure of a great state to consider power means its eventual destruction and conquest. It has meant the downfall of all the empires that have been tempted by the flabby ease of unpreparedness” (Sempa, 2015).

Thereby American foreign policy was based on Spykman’s geopolitical percepts, so the alliances the U.S has done after the war, most prominently NATO, had the objectives of countering direct Soviet pressures on the *Rimland* of Eurasia on one hand, and withstanding Communist China on the other (Sempa, 2002).

After discussing Mahan, Mackinder and Spykman’s geopolitical theories, it is important to talk over modern ones... Thus the next and last part of this chapter’s section will review Zbigniew Brzezinski’s theory.

D- Professor Zbigniew K. Brzezinski's Theory: Middle Space in the Grand Chessboard

One of the most influential figures in the American foreign policy, Zbigniew Kazimierz Brzezinski (1928 – 2017) American – Polish, served as a US national security adviser in the administration of President Jimmy Carter (1977 – 1981) and was the most famous figure among those who held that position at all, as he played the most prominent role in the U.S – U.S.S.R negotiations: SALT II Nuclear Weapon Treaty (1979); and played also key roles in U.S efforts to sustain the rule of the shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, according to the editors of Encyclopedia Britannica.

Z. Brzezinski graduated from McGill University in Montreal in 1949 where he studied economics and political sciences and earned a master's degree there in 1950; then he went to Harvard which granted him a PhD in political sciences in 1953 and appointed him as instructor there; in 1959 he decamped to Columbia University (Lewis, 2017).

Before serving as US national security adviser with President Jimmy Carter, Brzezinski acted as his foreign affairs adviser during his presidential campaign; he was also a foreign affairs adviser to the Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson during the 1960s. And after the mandate of President Carter in 1981, Brzezinski resumed teaching at Columbia's University (1981 – 1989) and then worked as a senior research professor of International Relations at Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at John Hopkins University (from 1989), according to the editors Encyclopedia Britannica.

One of the most important achievements Brzezinski has also done was in his assiduous work to improve the Sino-American relations, and under his advice the United States opened its so first

official embassy in Beijing since the communists assumed power in 1949 (Encyclopedia Britannica).

And it was after the loss of Jimmy Carter to Ronald Regan in 1981 when Brzezinski decided to turn to other things, including becoming a consultant on international affairs and a senior adviser for the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, in addition to his American foreign policy teachings at the University of John Hopkins (BBC News, 2017).

Daniel Lewis (2017) said: “He was, in short, a man who could be counted on to have strong opinions and a boundless eagerness to share them”. And this was the truth, as according to Encyclopedia Britannica, Z. Brzezinski has written many studies and published many successful books: *Between Two Ages: America’s Role in the Technetronic Era* (1970), *Game Plan* (1986), *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (1989); *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* (2004); and *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* (2012); but the most important book, which will be very prominent to our study is: *The Grand Chessboard* (1977) (Sempa, 2002).

In *The Grand Chessboard*, Brzezinski identified Eurasia as “the mega-continent”: the geopolitical stage on which the great powers will vie for predominance in the future (Sempa, 2002, p.113). He believed that this continent has been the “center” of the most resolute, determined and dynamic countries in History... Its political space comprises India and China, the two most powerful and densely populated countries, which are candidates for competing with the United States in its global ascendancy; knowing moreover that the challenges facing U.S strategies came only from this particular Eurasian region (Brzezinski, 1997).

Furthermore, the “next six larger economies and the next six biggest spenders on military weaponry are located in Eurasia” (Brzezinski, 1997, p.31) ... Eurasia contains 75% of the world’s

population, 60% of the GDP, and 75% of the world's energy resources (Hlihor, 2014, p.34). This is in addition to its important strategic geographical position, vicinity to main powers in the neighborhood, and the increasing leverage of external powers (German, 2016). That is why Brzezinski considers this continent as “the CHIEF geopolitical prize” for America (Brzezinski, 1997, p.30).

By its book title *The Grand Chessboard*, Brzezinski wanted to point out that Eurasia was the region where geopolitical and geostrategic battles between black and white kings' teams occurs until the *Checkmate* happened and world political leadership is gained after the game is over. However this game board is oval as Brzezinski pointed out, and not only two players, but several players compete on it; each player and his team possess different amounts of power, and settle mainly in the East, West, Center and South of the board, as each of those four zones has its own advantages and qualifications and the attack-defense games happens in its space (Brzezinski, 1997).

Hence we can see that with Brzezinski, geopolitics has shifted from regional to global dimensions, since according to him: “preponderance over the entire Eurasian continent serves as the central basis for global primacy” (Brzezinski, 1997, p.39) ... From this statement we can conclude Brzezinski geopolitical theory which clearly affirms that: “Who dominates Eurasia, dominates almost automatically The Middle East and Africa” (Brzezinski, 1997, p.31) ...

He presented this theory directly after explaining that: A power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world's three most advanced and economically productive regions (Brzezinski, 1997) ...

And from this geopolitical approach, Brzezinski reached two conclusions of high strategic value to the United States at that time (Hlihor, 2014):

- 1- Developing American policies towards Europe, and different ones towards Asia is not enough anymore, but we must have in view specific policies for Eurasia as a whole;
- 2- Having given that U.S.A had a different geostrategic perspective on which its naval forces depended, interpreting its relations with other states from its situation as “island”, Brzezinski identified the Mediterranean and Central Asian regions as highly instable, and located on the so-called “Arch of Instability or crisis”.

It should be noted here that prior to the Cold War between the Eastern and Western poles, the conflict was mostly happening at the Eurasian Border. The Sino-Russian pole, at that time, controlled most of its territory, but did not control its borders, and that was what opened the doors to the U.S.A to straddle the Eastern and Western coasts of Eurasia, where its self-defense became the first fundamental and strategic step which has subsequently paved the road for the Cold War (Brzezinski, 1997).

As for the third defensive front, which emerged to the south of the continent, it took place in the final phase of the Cold War; and that was followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its American competition through supporting the Afghan local resistance (Brzezinski, 1997).

Since Brzezinski was through his analyses and studies aiming to preserve American interests on the international scene and to keep its position of world global power which controls the affairs of various countries in the long term, he feared from potential rivals that would emerge at any time in the Eurasian continent (Brzezinski, 1997), because every new challenge and all emerging and competing countries have Eurasian roots (Brzezinski, 1997). He sees that focusing on all the major players and the accurate and correct evaluation of their reality should be the starting point in developing the necessary geo-strategy to achieve the American objectives in the Eurasian arena (Brzezinski, 1997).

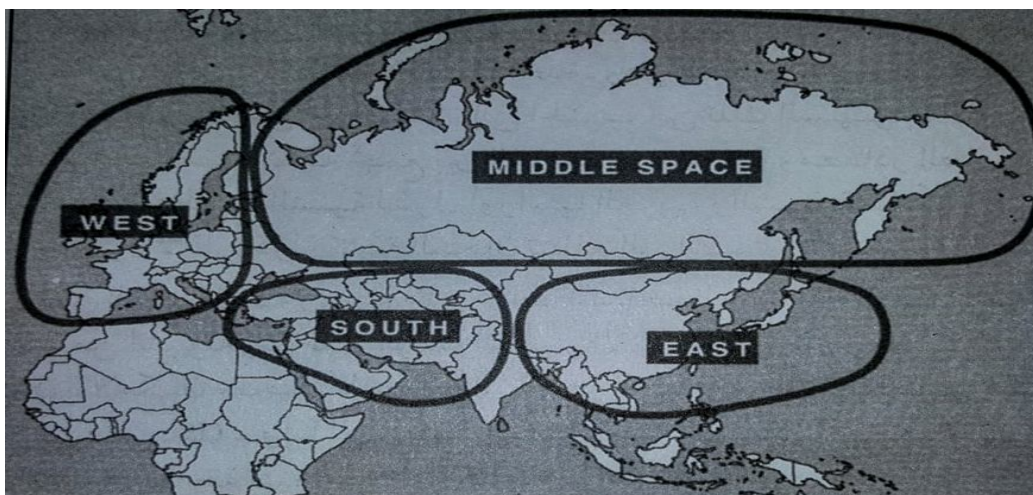
This geo-strategy must benefit from the fact that the United States has a high, if not the highest power range in the world; militarily, it possesses unmatched global capabilities; economically – even if it encounters obstacles and challenges from Germany, China, and Japan – it still maintains its progress compared to the global growth as a whole, and this is the same for technology as well (Brzezinski, 1997).

As for the “*Middle Space*” Theory that Brzezinski described in his book, it indicates that the global domination of the United States remains incomplete unless it is strengthened by the control of the Eurasian continent, which is very similar to the geostrategic vacuum that is expected to be filled in order to complete its global domination. And that is what assures that the Eurasian chessboard is the battle-zone where the game’s objective is to achieve global sovereignty (Brzezinski, 1997).

This *Middle Space* stretches between western and eastern borders of Eurasia, is sparsely populated and politically fluid, and “was formerly occupied by a powerful rival to the U.S preeminence, a rival that was once committed to push America outside of Eurasia”, as Brzezinski said (Brzezinski, 1997, p.34).

But, according to Brzezinski (1997), on this oval-shaped game board which stretches from Lisbon (Far West of Europe) to Vladivostok (Southeastern Russia), there are several players as mentioned above, and the United States dominates the western extremity, few neighboring islands, and half of the peninsula located on the far east of the continent. As for the area on the southern tip of Eurasia, it is "a politically anarchic but energy-rich region" and is of great importance as some of its countries aspire to regional hegemony (Brzezinski, 1997, p.34).

Figure 4: Brzezinski's Middle Space



Source: Brzezinski, 1997, p.34

Brzezinski considered this *Middle Space* as provider of the “Game’s Settings”:

- 1- If there is a possibility of dragging the middle area of the Eurasian continent and annexing it to Western orbit where the American dominate;
- 2- If the South Eurasian side is not subject to the rule of one player;
- 3- If the East is not unified in a manner that prompts the expulsion of America from its offshore bases;

In case all these conditions get achieved, it will be possible to say that America will prevail over the Eurasian continent and thus fill up its geostrategic “vacuum space” and thereby achieve its international sovereignty. But any circumstance contrary to these points will inevitably lead to the removal of the U.S.A and the end of its participation in the Eurasian chess game (Brzezinski, 1997)!

Section 2: Geoeconomics' Approaches

After presenting, explaining, and clarifying the scientific theories of Geopolitics, it is time to shed light on the Geoeconomics approaches, in order to get a clear image that enables us to dive deep into the subject.

As pre-mentioned according to Petsinger (n.d.), the word “Geoeconomics” was first invoked in 1990 by Edward Luttwak, an American strategist who said that the importance of military power was giving way to geoeconomic power after the cold war... He observed that “the methods of commerce were displacing military methods with disposable capitals in lieu of firepower, civilian innovation in lieu of military-technical advancement, and market penetration in lieu of garrisons and bases” (Luttwak, 1990, p.17).

In his 1990 essay “From Geo-politics to Geoeconomics”, Luttwak states: “Geoeconomics... the best term I can think of to describe the admixture of the logic of conflict with the methods of commerce (...) or as Clausewitz would have written, the logic of war in the grammar of commerce” (Luttwak, 1990, p.19) ...

In another side, the main target of Geoeconomics policy is “to improve the state’s geopolitical potential and to use the available instruments of economic policy (and the capacity of the country’s economy) to maximize benefits in external relations” (Grosse, 2014, p.40), and that is what this section is going to clarify gradually.

We all have to know that “Geoeconomics” has become so substantial in the late 20th and early 21st century because of the discovery of a new tool of deterrence, the nuclear weapons, and their destructive powers and abilities, that prompted the nations to consider a new non-military approach to manage their international affairs (Gasimli, 2015) ... That is why Geoeconomics disciplines were found as non-military tools.

In the word “Goeconomics”, three main concepts seem to be acting in the backstage: Geography, Economics, and Politics. Those concepts have influenced each other during the history, and their interrelations have given birth to “Goeconomics”. The geographical location of a nation determines its possession of natural resources, the existence of a specific territory, a defined distance, a particular population, and many other geographical factors which are fundamental in the economic development (Gasimli, 2015); which means that geography is a contributing factor in the formalization of economics, and it absolutely has its impacts on politics.

Herein, Goeconomics is “the study of interrelations of economics, geography and politics” (Gasimli, 2015, p.11) in three different directions (Gasimli, 2015): a) Aironomics: which studies the infinity of the universe from the surface of the earth; b) Surface Studies: which refer to land and water surfaces; c) Undergroundonomics: which studies the underground resources.

This dissertation will only be based on the Surface Studies, and as much as possible on the Undergroundonomics, because the universe’s space will not provide us with any help to resolve the posed problematic for now.

Regardless of that, this research requires focusing on goeconomics; therefore, this section of the chapter will first present many global perspectives on goeconomics; Second, it will present the composing elements of this new discipline; Third, and based on the information provided, it will answer the question: what are the goeconomics capabilities of a nation? And what are the challenges that face the application of goeconomics discipline?

A- Global Perspectives on Geoeconomics

“As a non-violent yet unquestionably potent foreign policy tool, geoeconomics is the perfect weapon for a relationship between frenemies” (Bremmer, 2016) ... Many approaches have been done globally trying to exactly define the meaning of “geoeconomics”, starting with Luttwak and Lorot (1990), passing by Huntington (1993), and many other scholars (...), finishing with the new geoeconomics with Blackwill and Harris (2017) (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ...

This part is going to shed light on those approaches in order to conclude one exact definition which will be used all over the next pages of this dissertation helping us to clearly understand this new concept; because, and as Joseph Nye said, “Geo-economy is like the weather. Everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understand it” (Nye, 2004, p.1).

And while Deudney (1998) in Encyclopedia Britannica defines the notion of geopolitics clearly by saying that it is the “analysis of the geographic influences on power relationships in international relations”, it did not provide any definition of the geoeconomics concept.

But the most important information to know here is the one provided by Grosse, who said that: “from the perspective of geoeconomics, the main target of economic policy is to improve the state’s geopolitical potential and to use the available instruments of economic policy (and the capacity of the country’s economy) to maximize benefits in external relations” (Grosse, 2014, p.45). Meanwhile, the connection between geography, economics, and politics of a nation results in a discipline that aims to positively influence the geopolitics of that nation, and which is named by “geoeconomics”.

Herein, it is necessary to enroll the most popular global approaches on geoeconomics, knowing that they are classified as Luttwakian and Non-Luttwakian Approaches, and to discuss them briefly, in order to conclude a new definition in the end of this part:

1- Edward Luttwak's and Luttwakian Approach

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the American strategist Edward Luttwak used the term “geoeconomics” in an article published in 1990, to describe how the prime territory of rivalry between the nations after the Cold War would be economic rather than military (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018).

Three years later he published his ideas in a book entitled: *“The Endangered American Dream: How to stop the United States from becoming a Third-World Country and How to Win the Geoeconomic Struggle for Industrial Supremacy”*. Edward Luttwak is known for *“The Machiavelli of Maryland”* (Meaney, 2015); he gives consultations for presidents of states, prime ministers, and even for the Dalai Lama, to help them in finding strategic solutions for their states' problems (Meaney, 2015).

“He's a hell of a lot smarter than Clausewitz” (Meaney, 2015), says the former chief of staff of the US air force, Merrill McPeak, who sought Luttwak's advice in 1990 while planning the bombing of Iraq during the first Gulf war (Meaney, 2015). As for Zbigniew Brzezinski, Luttwak is “a strong intellectual, inclined towards categorical assertions, penetrating in many of their insights, but occasionally undermined by the desire to have a shock effect on listeners. Nonetheless, he's almost always worth listening to” (Meaney, 2015) ...

By his writings, he opened a new analytical academic field in International Relations, the “Goeconomics”. Hence, in his article *“From Geopolitics to Goeconomics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce (1990)”* Luttwak (1990) affirmed that “the waning of the Cold War is steadily reducing the importance of military power in world affairs” (p.17). He also stated that the influence of the armed power in the governments dealings over various fields, including economic ones, has greatly declined then, and he predicted that it will decline further in the next period (Luttwak, 1990).

That decline was substituted by the ascension of new methods denying the “old” military ones: “the methods of commerce are displacing military methods – with disposable capital in lieu of firepower, civilian innovation in lieu of military – technical advancement, and market penetration in lieu of garrisons and bases” (Luttwak, 1990, p.17).

And after detecting that substitution of methods, he realized that after the decline of the importance of military power, the left actors in international relations were purely “economic entities” - such as labors – sellers, entrepreneurs and corporations – so Luttwak (1990) stated: “Only the logic of commerce would govern world affairs” (p.17), and World Business through economic interactions will replace World Politics on the international scene.

Those circumstances would lead into “competitive or cooperative” economic alliances “to capitalize ventures, vertically integrate, horizontally co-develop, co-produce, or co-market goods and services”, so the logic of conflict itself would be replaced according to Luttwak (Luttwak, 1990, p.17).

Hence, the witnessed changes and transformations of that period were caused by the emergence of “goeconomics” as it was affirmed by Luttwak (1990) ... And he clarified this “neologism” by saying that “it is the best term I can think of to describe the admixture of the logic of conflict with

the methods of commerce – or, as Clausewitz would have written, *the logic of war in the grammar of commerce*” (Luttwak, 1990, p.19).

The competition between states to achieve their goals increased after the Cold War, and impelled them either to preserve or to enhance their role, so they were urged by that to acquire a geoeconomic substitute for their “decaying” geopolitical role (Luttwak, 1990).

Edward Luttwak (1990) compared between the logic of conflict and that of commerce in case of struggle nationally and internationally “in the past” and after the Cold War, and explained that:

- In the past and on the international scene, if the logic of conflict commanded to cooperate against a common enemy, and on the other hand, the logic of commerce commanded to compete, “the preservation of the alliance was almost given priority” (p.20). But nationally and as much as the cohesion is preserved against divisive tensions, the armed conflict or the threat of it was the best solution to unite nations.
- But after the Cold War, and because of the waning of the military threats and military alliances, “geoeconomic priorities and modalities” (p.20) start dominating in state action; because of the states’ fear of an economic non-ending cycle of punitive measures which could be taken to contain trade quarrels (This is the case of China and U.S.A trade war recently). Political interventions for the strategic preservation of alliance cooperation against a common enemy is no longer suppressing, and “if international cohesion has to be preserved by a unifying threat, that threat must now be economic” (p.20).

Here, and according to Luttwak, it could be said that with the emergence of “Geoeconomics” in the states’ external and internal strategies and policies, quarrels and conflicts could get resolved through reciprocal economic punitive measures, and prevent the world from military wars.

After Luttwak, many scholars have used the term “geoeconomics” with or without referring to his article: Valerie Hudson and her colleagues for example, defined geoeconomics as strategies for controlling territories through economic means (investments and trade...) (Hudson et al., 1991);

As for James Hsiung (2009), geoeconomics is a shift from military concerns to economic security ones (regarding to China's role in the new global politics)...

However, Luttwak faced much opposition because of the geoeconomics failure in entirely replacing military means of statecraft (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018). Many researchers and scholars considered then that geoeconomics and geopolitics may co-exist, and may be used by states depending on what they see appropriate and suitable to face their specific challenges, and statecrafts don't only depend on geoeconomics means (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018). So many approaches, contrary to the Luttwakian one, had been done, and they will be discussed below.

2- Non – Luttwakian Approaches

Most of the scientific publications about “geoeconomics” relate the concept and the studies to Edward Luttwak because he was the first to use this term in the academic field. But after Luttwak, many political and economic analysts discussed “geoeconomics” without approving Luttwak's approach on the concept as economic statecraft, and defined it in a contrary way to his definition (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018).

But before presenting the Non-Luttwakian approaches, it is important to mention that the revival of geoeconomics is a pure French phenomenon, knowing that in the 1980s and 1990s there was a French dominance in the field of geopolitics even when this concept was a taboo, for the French universities admire the art of syntheses, and that manifests also in the French intellectual and academic life (Søilen, 2012). But nowadays, Geoeconomics has become universal, permanent, and its home is the world and not one country of it exclusively anymore (Søilen, 2012).

For now, and concerning geoeconomics approaches that did not agree with Luttwak, many scholars and researchers volunteered, and provided the political academic domain, and the international relations field with their opinions and statements, which will be briefly presented hereafter:

Scholvin and Draper (2012), as well as Scholvin and Malamud (2014) also talked about the impact of material structures in specific geographical spaces on specific regional economic relations.

Contemporary studies are focusing on the fact of how economics is increasingly being critical for power politics (Scholvin and Wigell, 2018). Scholvin and Wigell (2018) explained that in contradiction to Luttwak's approach, geoeconomics has not substituted military means neither in the national policies nor in the international relations, but economic instruments and military means co-exist, and are being applied in the statecrafts.

Domosh (2013) for example considered that the term of "geoeconomics" does not represent a circumstance or describe a situation, but in contrary it evokes many meanings, places and cultures which could help in the description of the actual situation. In other words, Geoeconomics-according to Domosh (2013) – provides a way of understanding the world where economic spatial strategies become rational and eligible.

The most recent approach was done by Robert Blackwill and Jennifer Harris in their book published in 2017: "*War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft*"; they stated that the rising powers nowadays are being attracted to economic instruments due to their influence on geopolitical conflicts in the twenty first century (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); and that is obviously happening in order to compete and challenge the United States' primacy on the globe (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). They also suggested that:

"For today's most sophisticated geoeconomic actors, geoeconomic and military dimensions of statecraft tend to be mutually reinforcing" (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.9).

It is important to mention that many states of rising entities such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and MIKT (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, and Turkey) have adopted degrees of state capitalism, meanwhile they hold economic capabilities which make them able to achieve geopolitical targets, and to compete on the international scene (Troxell, 2018).

And to be clear, “State Capitalism” is: “hybrid economic structures in which large segments of the economy are controlled by the state but operate side-by-side with a largely market-oriented private sector” (Troxell, 2018, p.8).

Most of the scholars did not adopt Luttwak’s ideas, considering that his realist geoeconomic approach is not compatible with the era of liberalism that the world is witnessing since the collapse of the Soviet Union, for the economic integration and cooperation became dominant in the foreign policies of the nations, not the economic conflict or “war of commerce” as Luttwak stated (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018, p.4).

After the analysis of those approaches and depending on how nations practice those disciplines in their foreign policies, and knowing that Liberalism in international relations is more attracting than the Realism concerning the application of the concept of geoeconomics (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018), we can say that geoeconomics is:

A scientific method that studies the internal economic statuses of the nations and their international relations based on concrete elements and components, in order to develop a strategic economic policy that helps those nations in realizing their geopolitical goals, commanding their national situations, and manipulating the ties that bind the states economically together. So, Geoeconomics does not only refer to a foreign policy strategy that represents the implementation of economic means of power to achieve strategic goals, but it also refers to a particular strategic

practice, or a new statecraft which substitutes by its application the use of military power policies nationally and internationally.

This was our definition of the ‘geoeconomics’ concept, but what are those aforementioned elements on which geoeconomics is based? And could geoeconomics methods get practiced and implemented without facing any challenge? The answers to these questions will be provided in the next parts of this section.

B- Elements of Geoeconomics and its Decoding Scale

After obtaining a clear image about ‘geoeconomics’, being aware that in the next decades the geoeconomics domain will represent “the most critical arena for nation – state competition”, appears to be a must (Troxell, 2018, p.18). This is why understanding the components and means related to geoeconomics is also a must in its turn; thus, this part of the section will discuss the elements and components of geoeconomics first, and clarify its decoding scale second.

In one of his published articles, Lorot (2001) stated that geoeconomics brings together all the instruments at the disposal of a State which will be able to mobilize them in order to achieve its assigned objectives.

Sanjaya Baru, who defines geoeconomics as “the mutual impact of economics and geopolitics” (Baru, 2012, p.47), argued in his article “*Geoeconomics and Strategy*” that Japan became in the 1980s an economic power, but it never turned a geoeconomic one, due to its failures in converting its new economic force into military and political power (Baru, 2012).

But what turns out a nation to be a geoeconomic power? In other words, what are the two main elements of geoeconomics which if implemented and applied in statecrafts; transform the nations into geoeconomic ones? The answer to this question will be provided hereafter.

1- The Doctrine of Nareland

Klaus Solberg Søylen, one of the modern researchers in the geoeconomics field, generated in his book *“Geoeconomics”* published in 2012, a new term that replaces the geopolitical terms that are the core idea of the geopolitical doctrines “Heartland” and “Rimland”; the new term of Søylen was: “The Nareland” which means the Natural Resources Land (Søylen, 2012).

Analyzing the idea claiming that “the greatest natural fortress on earth” held by the “Heartland” was the key to rule the world in the main geopolitical doctrines of Mackinder first, then Truman, Eisenhower, and finally Carter (Søylen, 2012); and the idea saying that dominating the coastal areas of Eurasia, the “Rimland” in Spykman’s Doctrine, is an introductory step to dominate the world (Søylen, 2012); Søylen (2012) found himself urged, especially with the shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics, to upgrade the strategic thinking. He stated that “the focus is no longer the Heartland or the Rimland, or any coherent geographical region, but the set of all geographical locations containing economically-important natural resources what we shall call the *Nareland* (Natural Resources Land)” (Søylen, 2012, p.56).

It is clear that this new logic represents a practical shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics; the author divided the geographical places of the world, defined the Lands of Natural Resources, and then stated that those lands are the new strategic goals of the great powers of the world. He validates his theory with the example of the United States’ presence in the Middle East because of the hydrocarbon reserves in its lands, as well as the example of the Chinese interests in the African Countries due to their agricultural and energetic sectors (Søylen, 2012).

2- The Normative Intelligence Analysis

In the second element, Søylen (2012) proclaimed that in the field of geoeconomics, researchers are concerned with studying macro factors that we cannot be certain about, which is different from the field of competitive intelligence that mainly studies micro factors. So, the study and analysis of macro factors, where “guessing is often required” is called: “*Normative Intelligence Analysis*” (Søylen, 2012, p.59).

A large number of problems in social sciences get discarded and ignored due to the uncertainty of their causes that demands “some form or degree of speculation or guessing” from the researchers. This is because “if a question cannot be examined empirically (in that field), it is often easier to choose a different problem than to have to use a less acceptable method” (Søylen, 2012, p.60).

But as Søylen (2012) provided, in intelligence studies, living with speculations to make real decisions is necessary, especially that in some situations “we want to mesh our interests with existing theories” (p.60). And even in today’s world where we have a better access to information, “information asymmetry is the natural state” (Søylen, 2012, p.60); but this problem is not to overcome since using normative intelligence is the only method, and that means that some decision may be wrong, but “there is a little we can do about that” (Søylen, 2012, p.60).

Søylen also argued that the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) for example was ignored for many times from the part of the American presidency (Bill Clinton, Georges W. Bush) that preferred to rely on the military intelligence of the pentagon (Søylen, 2012). That was because of the “error of rationality” – as Søylen described it – when the USA invaded Iraq following the fault predictions provided by the CIA that Saddam Hussein possessed mass destruction’s weapons, which made this agency a “poor intelligence” (Søylen, 2012, p.60). Many other mistakes were

done before the decision of the American administration not to rely on the CIA “precognitions”, and Søylen (2012) considered that the cause of those mistakes was that we cannot assume to have exact information about critical situations happening around the world as this kind of intelligence agencies do; otherwise, our predictions about those situations and events will fail. On the contrary, “the analytical skills which this situation demands of us are closer to those associated with literature students rather than students of political science” (Søylen, 2012, p.60), for the guessing skills are more required than the skills of collecting information and analyzing them in such cases.

Herein, we can say that the administration that knows what kind of norms it should respect in its analysis will definitely make successful decisions in developing suitable strategies in the geoeconomics field, especially that this domain requires a *Normative Intelligence Analysis*; meanwhile, nations “who have the best information will receive the highest economic return” (Søylen, 2012, p.154), so when this element is available and applied in a right manner, the nation becomes technically qualified as a geoeconomic power.

After mentioning that the “Nareland” or the *Natural Resources Land*, and the *Normative Intelligence Analysis* are the main elements of a geoeconomic power, it has become necessary to get a concrete clarification about the scientific scale that measures or decodes the geoeconomic power of a nation, and that is the mission of the State Scale Entities (SSEs).

The State Scale Entities (SSEs):

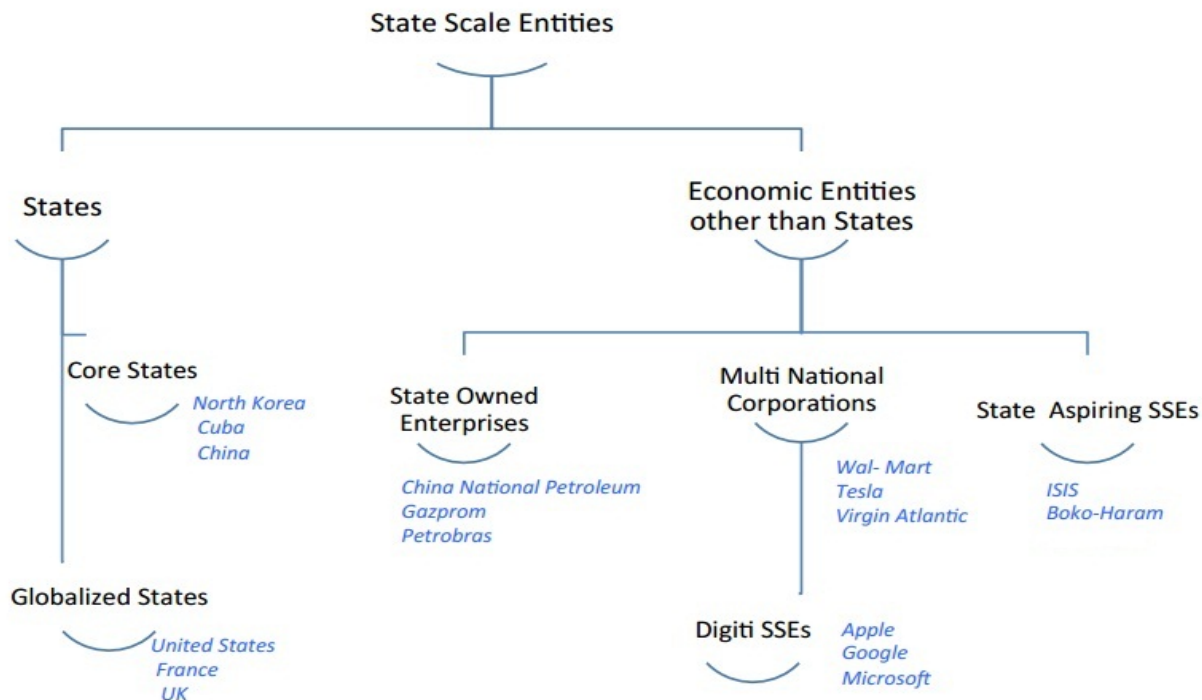
In this dissertation, the evolution of a state is studied as a process indispensable in decoding its geoeconomic qualification. And if we refer to the international law, especially the first article of Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933), we can see that it stipulates that: “The State as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: 1- a

permanent population; 2- a defined territory; 3- a government; and 4- a capacity to enter into relations with other states” (p.3). In other words, an entity is qualified as a state if it possesses the Population, the Ground, the Government, and the Capacity of Interaction. But nowadays, according to the ICMAIF: International Conference on Macroeconomic Analysis and International Finance (2016), those characteristics have evolved into becoming: Human Resources, Markets (Consumers), Hierarchic Governance, and Projection of Power.

But how can a recognized state be qualified as a geoeconomic power? This is the main role of the SSEs, the State Scale Entities. And since Pascal Lorot have mentioned that the purpose of geoeconomics policies is not to control lands as in geopolitics, but to attain supremacy in technology and commerce; and expanded the perspective of Luttwak and included “multinational enterprises as geoeconomic strategists” (ICMAIF, 2016, p.12), the perception of geoeconomics get expanded to include actors other than recognized Nations-States such as Multinational Corporations, State Owned Enterprises, Cyber Giants, and State Mimicking Entities to cover the spectrum of global economic activity (Stergiou, 2015, p.1).

And after the expansion, the taxonomy of the State Scale Entities became as follows:

Figure 5: Taxonomy of State Scale Entities



Source: Stergiou, 2015, p.13

Herein, the SSEs become “the core of the geoeconomic discourse and constitute its main actors” (Stergiou, 2015, p.4). So technically, the entities have to possess certain characteristics in order to be included in the SSEs, those characteristics are the following:

- 1- High skilled, trained and educated human resources which are necessary to face complex economical operations, in other words an economical intelligence is required (Stergiou, 2015);
- 2- Seven basic functions on which the structure of the organization should be based: Administration, Distribution, Economic Intelligence, Finance, Legal, Production, Sustainment-Logistic (Stergiou, 2015);
- 3- Projecting power and influence should be the target of their mode of operation (exclusively in the case of the state), and their actions should affect other SSEs macro and

microeconomics' global environment, or exercise influence on their own actions at least (Stergiou, 2015);

- 4- The ability to adapt to changes in regulatory frameworks is also an essential characteristic for those entities (Stergiou, 2015).

So, mainly, the aforementioned entities (China between them) in the figure 4 conduct geoeconomic operations which have strategic impact on local, regional, and global micro and macroeconomic because they possess the enumerated attributes and characteristics... And in conclusion, *“An SSE is considered any entity with State organization and international conduct, whose size and resources allow it to be capable of implementing independent ‘policy’ actions that project market power and influence at a local, regional and global level”* (Stergiou, 2015, p.4).

In other words, the state capability of implementing independent economic policies locally, regionally and globally is what transforms this state (or entity) into a geoeconomic power; knowing that this capability is obtained through a specific discipline, a strategic power, and economic resources of that state.

Being a geoeconomic power is a status that provides the states with many capabilities that help them in implementing their policies, but those implementations will surely be faced by many challenges; the next and last section of this chapter will clarify the geoeconomic capabilities possessed by a state and explain the challenges that may face its actions.

C- Geoeconomic Capabilities and Probable Challenges

Unfortunately, although geoeconomics has acquired a high level of important features of regional powers' strategic disciplines, the academic field of studies still lack tools to identify and compare those strategies analytically to define the geoeconomic capacity and strength of the competing states when everything will be taken into consideration at the end of the day (Wigell, 2016).

Herein, it is a must to do some efforts in order to clarify what are the capabilities of a state qualified as a geoeconomic power according to the SSEs and what was explained in the previous section. Moreover, this new perspective will definitely help in developing an analytical differentiation in the rank of geoeconomic powers that will contribute in its turn to understand deeply the geoeconomic agenda that China is applying in its local and foreign policies.

Practical geoeconomics, or geoeconomics as a strategic practice, is the application of economic means of power by states in order to attain geostrategic goals and targets; in other words, it is the use of economic means to manipulate and control geopolitical objectives (Morris, 2018). So in the time a state uses economic means in order to achieve geopolitical ends, we can talk about geoeconomics!

Hence, it could be stated that the geoeconomic capabilities of a state arise from economic means which are usually divided into positive and negative actions amongst Trade, Finance, Aid and Policy...

The following figure shows up in details how are they classified:

Figure 6: Economic Instruments

	Positive	Negative
Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant access • Free trade agreements • Government purchase • Licenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanctions—deny access • Embargo/boycott/quotas • Deny licenses • Subsidies • World Trade Organization dispute settlement
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International financial institution (IFI) contributions • Open capital markets • Bailout packages • Debt forgiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freeze assets • Capital controls • Currency manipulation • Financial sanctions—secondary sanctions • Sell foreign debt holdings
	Monetary policy	
Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Development Assistance • Private contributions • Public health programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditional aid • Tied aid
Policy	Regulation	

Source: Troxell, 2018, p.10

If we look deeply into the above figure, we can clearly see the seven tools that Blackwill and Harris thought were suitable for geopolitical application – knowing that they admitted once that “states can and often do design geoeconomic policies that simultaneously have multiple interests: geopolitical, economic, and otherwise” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, pp. 27-31) – those tools are: Trade Policy, Investment Policy, Economic and Financial Sanctions, Financial and Monetary Policy, Cyber, Energy, and Commodities (Blackwill & Harris, 2017)... And as Troxell (2018) stated, “The first five tools are readily recognized as economic activities, and energy and

commodities could just as easily be considered a subset of trade policy representing perhaps a more critical category of tradable goods” (p.11).

So whenever a state possesses those economic tools and has the ability to use them in its policies that have geopolitical objectives whether locally or internationally, we can say that this state has geoeconomic capabilities.

But what do those capabilities look like? Or what are “the geoeconomic states” capable of practically? The answer will be provided in the next paragraph.

1- Geoeconomic Capabilities of a Geoeconomic State

a- Economic Force

“Power is as much a function of prosperity as prosperity is a function of power” (Baru, 2012, p.9), and nowadays power and prosperity are derived from the economic force of the state. By its economic capability, a state can exercise or project more political and military power than what is warranted without the possession of that economic force (Baru, 2012). For the third year in a row, China was the world’s largest economy in 2017 by producing \$ 23.1 Trillion in economic output (according to the World Factbook); the EU ranked in the second place with \$ 19.9 trillion. Those powers together generated 33.9% of the world’s economic output of \$ 127 trillion. And the United States, by generating \$ 19.4 trillion, remained in the third place. These world’s largest economies produced 49% of the world’s total economy (\$ 62.4 trillion of \$ 127 trillion) (Amadeo, 2018). And by their economic forces, these powers are controlling the destiny of the world.

b- Diplomatic – Cultural Influence

The Diplomacy and the Culture of a state are two main pillars of influence especially when they are highly present outside that state, for maintaining a high profile internationally is one of the attributes of world influence (Hudson et al., 1991). Cultural exchange activities (international students' exchange) are recently taking place between states, and are increasingly having positive effects upon their relationships. Those exchange activities work as "Soft Power" tools, helping the powerful actors in implementing their cultural behaviors, languages, and lifestyles in the less developed countries. As for their rivals and competitors, diplomatic means are most convenient to play the influence game, knowing that diplomacy represents the second facet of the soft power's coin which originally aims "to attract and persuade rather than coerce others" (Singh & MacDonald, 2004, p.7). In conclusion, states that have diplomatic capabilities and cultural influence abilities are considered as powerful states on the international scene, since according to Xuetong (2006), soft power is as much important as hard power.

c- Natural Resources Possession – Control / International Trade Competitiveness

The 21st century has known an increasing rise of two other main pillars defining the geoeconomic power of states; those pillars are the Natural Resources and the Competitiveness in International Trade (Hudson et al., 1991), which are reshaping the international relations geoeconomically. These pillars seem as twin factors, where achieving one helps in realizing the other. In other words, possessing or having control over natural resources locally or externally, assists the country in its competition in International Trade. So, the country that has

power to impose control over natural resources in foreign lands, or already possesses natural resources all over its own land will automatically form an important competitor in International trade.

d- General Security Capabilities

“While security is vital, who provides it also matters” (Gompert et al., 2008, p.175) ... If the security environment in a state is too dangerous, none of the improvement activities can be conducted by the government, whether in infrastructure, education, hospitality, or even in politics (elections) (Gompert et al., 2008). Herein, the creation of a safe and secure environment is a necessity in the realization of the prosperity and growth of the state, if it is willing in reality to make fundamental reforms in politics and economics, internally and externally (Gompert et al., 2008). So a secure state is a powerful state, which can also provide security for the less developed countries which suffers from terrorist threats, and can evidently get “acceptance” from those countries, because of the help and assistance it is offering them.

In conclusion, a state that enjoys (beside of its military capability) an economic force, has diplomatic and cultural capabilities, possesses or controls natural resources, and has the ability to provide its own territory and those of foreign states with peace and security is definitely a Geoeconomic State. In other words, Economy, Diplomacy, Culture, Natural Resources, and General Security represent all together the capabilities that a Geoeconomic State enjoys literally. And as an organization cannot build a good future without good Human Resources, nor do the countries if their citizens have no abilities to learn and no capabilities to innovate and participate in the growth of their states; so, a conscious population is also a capability that geoeconomic states enjoy (or should enjoy).

2- Probable Challenges

Due to the competition between great powers, many challenges will face them while trying to achieve their geo-economical goals. These challenges - that will be discussed in the following - are seven as stated in a report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2015 and written by a large number of experts (Bhatia et al., 2015):

a- Economic Warfare

Since the end of the Cold War, the world is witnessing a new kind of war reflected as conflicts between great powers, which are taking trade controls, and sanctions as their main weapons in the face of their “enemies” in the battle. Bhatia and Trenin (2015), stated in their study that: the policymakers in USA consider sanctions as “the drones of the future”, and “highly targeted weapons that can be deployed to devastating effect” (p.5). Fundamentally, those sanctions are the causes behind the outbreak of the recent economic warfare that constitutes a difficult challenge for the emerging geo-economic countries such as China and Russia, knowing that economic sanctions and restrictions can span from “stricter sanitary controls to a full-blown economic blockade” (Bhatia & Trenin, 2015, p.5). These sanctions are also a double-edged sword because they can hurt the country that applied them by damaging its businesses and investments in the targeted country (Bhatia & Trenin, 2015). So, the economic warfare is a big challenge for the geo-economic targets of the states.

b- The Geopoliticization of Trade Talk

The world is also witnessing a new activism between countries, which is talks and negotiations about trade that took place sometimes regionally and others country-by-country (Mitachi, 2015). This kind of talks about trade came as eastern reactions to the western actions of economic warfare through sanctions and restrictions. China and Russia cooperate together in that field in order to challenge the western policies through developing “trade zones” and increasing their influence over their neighbors’ countries. This kind of battle mirrors the competition between the world’s largest economies in far border arenas which includes achieving geopolitical goals to each one of them: Russia is making efforts to exploit the current situation in order to build up its Eurasian Union that challenges the west’s interests, China is constructing the Silk (Trade) Road that has geopolitical results helping China in its expansion all over the world, and the EU and USA are trying to evolve the NATO alliance to provide themselves with an alternative actor to face the eastern offence. So the geopoliticization of trade talks consists of a challenge facing the great powers of the world aiming to realize geoeconomics objectives, because it represents the backdrop of a competitive economic war threatening the security of nations.

c- State Capitalism

The competition between states’ governments has retaken its place after the global financial crisis in 2008, through the emergence of state capitalism. Countries that do not originally accept the idea of the limited intervention of the state adopted by the USA, are playing an important leading role in the “origin, destination, and intermediation of capital via markets and real economic sectors” (Rediker, 2015, p.7). Those countries are attempting to take an

increasing role and to intervene in their markets in order to ensure the prosperity and to limit the busts periods. We can say that this phenomenon is not new in the international scene, but today the governments are expanding their influence in ways more powerful than those used in the past to further their strategic goals (Rediker, 2015). Central Banks are being politicized by the governments to advance national policy interests with global impacts in some cases, and that factor damaged the financial system stability, due to political pressures, alleged monetary policy and supervisory independence (Rediker, 2015). The risk of the emergence of state capitalism is increasing day after day; and advancing national interests is happening through economic and regulatory and other policy tools; this will eliminate the ambitions and aspirations of emerging countries in achieving geoeconomic objectives, for they will be bound to obey the rules set by the great powers and to comply with them.

d- Competition for Gated Markets, Not Natural Resources

Another major challenge or obstacle took its place: the competition between countries became driven by “a quest for markets rather than national resources” (Guriev & Khar, 2015, p.8). While the competition between nations is turning around direct control over lands and seas which contain large amounts of natural resources, and new strange alliances were created - since the Cold War ended - with the leadership of “OIL”, the world economy is suffering because of the global economic crisis and its repercussion of instability; this circumstance is prompting the countries to amend and change the nature of their strategic competition (Guriev & Khar, 2015). Dependence on traditional suppliers of natural resources is diminishing because these resources are becoming cheaper “due to the shale gas and oil revolution and other technological advancements” (Guriev & Khar, 2015, p.8). On the other hand, the

emerging markets that require economic growth and human capital development are turning out to be major sources of global demand and of relatively cheap qualified labors (Gurieiev & Khar, 2015). This fact was the cause behind the great shift that happened in the interests of modern multinational corporations, which superseded their policies from the competition for access to resources, to the competition for inroads into new markets (Gurieiev & Khar, 2015). So the competition over the possession of natural resources shifted into the competition for markets, and this suggests in its turn a big shift in the geo-strategies of the nations, and a full readiness to deter any probable breach attempt; a hard obstacle to pass.

e- The Survival of the Biggest and Hollowing Out of the Periphery

Many “core” countries are getting strengthened and empowered in their respective regions due to the breakdown happening at the global level; they are developing “core-periphery relationships that benefit the core often at the expense of periphery states” (Bremmer, 2015, p.9). It seems clear that this kind of relationships will damage the countries of the periphery and “hollow them out” in order to strengthen the countries of the core and improve their powers. This new phenomenon will negatively influence the geoeconomic powers trying to build stable relationships with foreign nations, for it will ruin their global leadership due to the tarnishing of their autonomy in prompting those peripheral countries to depend on their role (role of the core countries) to ensure the stability and sustainability of their internal situation (Bremmer, 2015). “Three major examples of this hollowing out around the world can be seen today. It is most obvious in Russia’s relationship with its ‘near abroad’. But it also extends to Germany’s role in Europe, as well as a rising China’s disruptive posture in the East and South

China Seas (and beyond)” (Bremmer, 2015, p.10). This is literally a fundamental challenge that countries should succeed in, if they truly want to achieve their geo-economical goals.

f- China’s Infrastructure-Driven Alliances

With its infrastructure projects, China turned out to represent a big challenge for the great powers in the 21st century. The focus of its foreign policy on financing infrastructure projects as a main tool, both in Asia and worldwide, helped China either in getting access to raw materials, or in making its exports attain key markets, with whom it is building “infrastructure alliances”, rather than “genuine geopolitical affinities” (Khanna, 2015, p.10). The People’s Republic of China has increased its investments in “countries where it seeks to enhance access to commodities” in. (Mongolia, Myanmar, Kazakhstan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Eastern Coast of Africa, and some countries in Latin America such as Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela) (Khanna, 2015, p.10). And we can say that China will benefit from this infrastructure connectivity with markets in Asia and worldwide, without forgetting that the exporting country will also benefit from the higher quality infrastructure (Khanna, 2015). Hence, countries would feel it difficult to stand up to China and compete with it in the fields of infrastructure, trade, and natural resources... China itself became a challenge to the geo-economics states, and this is an evident proof of its high geo-economical potential and strength that we will discuss later on.

g- The Decline in Oil Prices

The instability of oil barrel prices is also a big challenge that geoeconomic countries are facing, knowing that oil is critical to three main factors: National Economies, International Security, and Climate Change (Levi, 2015). In 2014, oil prices plunged, dropping from \$ 115 a barrel in June to around \$ 60 by December (and it has been the case of instability in prices for the last decade at least) (Levi, 2015, p.11). When a small excess of world supply over demand happened, the prices have declined, knowing that the feature of oil markets comply with this rule: “An increasing of demand over relative supply could push prices up”. So when oil supply increased more than it was expected to be, and demand decreased, the world anticipated lower oil prices (Levi, 2015). This volatility in oil prices represents bad news to the geoeconomic states relying on natural resources; it influences the economic-policy makers negatively, and it is a sort of confusion for them, because when prices are falling the benefits go for the major importers of oil (China, European Union, and somehow USA), and the troubles affect the exporters (Russia and KSA) (Levi, 2015); and when prices are increasing, the opposite is true. This fact will lead to: an uncertainty in shaping the future oil production, consumption and trade; a confusion in the development of policies and strategies; bad consequences nationally and internationally. This volatility in oil prices represents a geoeconomic challenge with negative geopolitical outcomes.

Amid all these challenges, great powers permanently try to look at issues through a “zero sum lens” (Leonard, 2015, p.12), and Leonard (2015) stated that they only work together “when their interests are very closely aligned” (p.12). Herein, they tried and try to develop methods that ensure their control over their affairs, and Leonard (2015) via the Global Agenda Council on Geoeconomics provided them with five thoughts that, according to him, may help those states in

preventing mistakes in their strategic methods to succeed in passing the probable challenges. These thoughts are the following:

- 1- *States must develop their rules of the road for economic warfare:* By these rules, Leonard meant the “infrastructure” of global economy, for as it was mentioned above, the geoeconomic warfare – via economic sanctions – constitutes a high and hard challenge for the emerging geoeconomic countries. So those states must fortify their economic and political structure as a shield against any probable economic warfare that may appear in the horizon (Leonard, 2015).
- 2- *States must find the right economic role and pursue new forms of engagement:* In order to pursue realizing strategic goals and targets, Leonard (2015) affirmed that nations must “find the right balance between ‘laissez-faire’ and ‘intervention’ through defining the framework of their economic role and activities. Herein, each nation will have its own role on which it will work. China for example, with its model of infrastructure, provides sources of capital and loans that might be alternative to the western assistance through the Monetary Fund. New forms of engagement between states could take places all over the world, and China will definitely lead the majority of those emerging engagement because of its “geoeconomic strength” (Leonard, 2015).
- 3- *Staying attuned to the “survival of the biggest” and the pooling of the weak:* When “core countries” get strengthened over the peripheral ones – as mentioned above - they try to develop “core-periphery relationships that benefit the core often at the expense of periphery states”. This challenge limits the ability of small countries to pivot and maintain economic and strategic options for themselves that makes them dependent and reliant on regional powerhouse, as Leonard (2015) stated. That is why, they have to improve their work in

order to pool their resources and challenge those regional hegemons. As for the powerful states, they should recognize the benefit of having small countries in their neighborhood, for their need to deepen ties with powerful states constitutes a domination and rising opportunity that can give them “breathing rooms” (Leonard, 2015).

4- *Businesses can keep their eye on the global prize but play by new rules in the interim:* In order to minimize the risks caused by geoeconomic challenges, competitions, and variables, businesses have to pursue open globalization (Leonard, 2015). This is because they should be a strong support for trade liberalization and foreign investments “which deepens international bonds and diminishes protectionism and incentives for conflict” as Leonard suggested (Leonard, 2015, p.12). Businesses have to stabilize the global prize, but they also have to work hard in order to be seen as local in different markets. For example, “China may be very sensitive to foreign investment in the telecommunications sector but to combat rising pollution, it may welcome foreign expertise in renewable and alternative energies” (Leonard, 2015, p.12). So businesses must be flexible and wise at the same time in order to secure their margin of competitiveness and combat the probable challenges, especially if their states aim to be geoeconomic powers.

5- *A focus on key regional players and sub global politics rather than worldwide institutions is necessary:* The fifth and last suggestion that Leonard (2015) gave to the emerging geoeconomic powers to combat potential challenges, was mainly for their civil societies, which should – according to him – be more pragmatic in resolving their global problems. They should be careful in looking at regional and sub-regional layers of integration, rather than relying on universal conclusions and lessons. Each nation should have its own way in

combating dangerous and challenging phenomenon happening all over the world, and should rely only on its potentials – and not on global institutions – in order to fight any threat that may adversely affect its growth, without forgetting that pragmatism is the master key that opens all the doors for them (Leonard, 2015).

Chapter 2: The Shift from Geopolitics to Geoeconomics

Besides the shift of economic and financial power from Western to Eastern countries, and specifically to China (De Jonquières, 2012), a fundamental shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics is recently redefining the international geo-strategies of the states. Latest developments indicate the shift of the international order to a Geoeconomic one away from the liberal order of the post-Cold War period (Roberts et al., 2019). And while the globalization mode is turned on, power and control shift from governments to economic entities, and “the role of geoeconomic factors is gradually replacing the magnitude of geopolitical parties” (Alymenko & Bhatti, 2017, p.1).

Recent studies have raised the argument that, after the Cold War, Geoeconomics has acquired great prominence as a new form of power relations (Flint and Xiaotong, 2019). Lately, geoeconomics started to be taken into consideration from the higher levels in the systems of concerns and policies of different states, for in its core it includes “both macro-level of governing the power and micro-level of implications for the economy parties” (Alymenko & Bhatti, 2017, p.2); in other words, geoeconomics is a global statecraft that includes different management strategies that nations may rely on in their policies.

Nowadays, when the highest peak in the history of the exploitation of natural resources had been reached, and while the dangerous environmental threats are increasing, the economic development that comprehends the innovation’s and modernization’s applications on ground has become an essential issue (Gasimli, 2015).

And knowing that geoeconomics is a specific “strategic practice providing an alternative option to military-based power politics” (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018, p.2), states will definitely prefer to adopt it as geostrategic statecraft alternative to the geopolitics one.

Hence, in order to realize their states’ ambitions, the diplomats started holding a double bag, diplomatic and economic, as Dale (1996) stated. As for Pascal Lorot, he affirmed that since this world is becoming more and more globalized, the economic interests of nations are gaining increasing importance over their political interests; and this shift means that a new era is getting released; it is the era of geoeconomics (Lorot, 2009).

Therefore, this chapter is going to discuss the differences between the two concepts of geoeconomics and geopolitics in its first section, and to study the fact of the replacement of geopolitics by the geoeconomics statecraft in its second one.

Section 1: Differences between Geopolitics and Geoeconomics

Many analysts argue that there is no difference between geopolitics and geoeconomics, and that in fact the main core of politics is economics, and economics in the end is all about politics, but even if they are right, their analysis is too simplistic (Søilen, 2012), because it ignores the essence of both concepts.

No one can ignore the emphasis on need-to-know information that both of geopolitics and geoeconomics disciplines have in common, nor on finding vital information: what is *really important to know* as opposed to what is merely *nice to know*. Both focus on what the French call “*Les Grandes Lignes*”, and the important global transformations (Søilen, 2012, p.142).

But recently, and despite of the common points between geopolitics and geoeconomics, and even if politics and economics are related, it is being obvious that disjunctions have taken place between theoretical politics and applied politics on ground (Ebrary, 2012); and that there are disjunctions between theoretical economics and applied economics also. So how will then be the case regarding geopolitics and geoeconomics?

Wigell and Vihma (2016) argue that geopolitics and geoeconomics have exceptionally distinct characteristics and impacts on both the national and international levels. Different points of view, distinct perspectives, diverse core ideas, and various core ideas for both concepts Geopolitics and Geoeconomics, are many divergent starting points in both disciplines that will definitely lead to contrasting conclusions through distinct geo-strategies, means and statecrafts.

Colin flint stated that: “Geopolitics is more than the competition over territory and the means of justifying such actions; Geopolitics is a way of seeing the world” (Flint, 2006, p.13). But no one can deny here that geoeconomics is also a way of seeing the world, but the eyes through which

it sees the world are different from those of geopolitics. The goal of controlling the world is common between both disciplines, but the means and strategies adopted in order to attain and achieve that goal are merely different.

In this section of the chapter, the difference between the core idea of geopolitics and that of geoeconomics will be discussed in the first part; the second part will argue the logic and perspective of these two different concepts. And by the end of the section, a table of comparison will be drawn to show up the main points of difference, in order to help us in framing the next section of the chapter that is directly related to the “famous” shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics.

A- The Core Idea: Heartland vs. Nareland

- The core idea in the geopolitical thinking, the essence of Sir Halford Mackinder geopolitics, the central plan in the Truman Doctrine, the basis of Eisenhower Doctrine, and the Carter Doctrine was literally the *Heartland*, that zone of the planet described by the key zone to controlling the civilized world, as it was discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

As for Spykman, the core idea of his geopolitical theory shifted towards the *Rimland* that dominated the coastal areas of the Euro-Asian continent... Anyway, and by all means, the core idea of the geopolitical thinking was that the powerful state (or group of states) that reaches through its own political and military efforts the potential of controlling the Heartland (or the Rimland), is the state that will control the rest of the

world's destinies regardless of the followed tactics presented by each of the geopoliticians.

And, in his article, "*From geopolitics to geoeconomics*", Luttwak (1990) affirmed that "the waning of the Cold War is steadily reducing the importance of military power in world affairs" (p.17), and that means in other words that the military power was the main mean employed before the cold war, and this literally was the core idea of the geopolitical theories adopted then.

If we take a look at the policies and statecrafts adopted recently in the world, we can recognize the American foreign policy in its attempt to control Iraq and Afghanistan as an application of geopolitical theories, through military means, as an introduction to its next steps in the Eurasian continent, the most strategic geographical zone of the whole planet as confirmed in the theories of Mahan, Mackinder, Spykman, and Brzezinski.

- On the other hand, and as opposed to geopolitics, the core idea of geoeconomics, appeared clearly in the statement of the Chinese strategist Sun-Tzu about the non-military Chinese victories when he said that "the highest excellence is to subdue the enemy's army without fighting at all" (Søilen, 2010, p.2). This is according to Søilen (2010) because wars through military means have high costs over human lives, resources, and morals.

The core idea is in controlling the competitors' resources, instead of using military means in destruction and threatening human lives (Søilen, 2010), in order to make them (the competitors) under the auspices of the state controlling their resources.

In order to attain such goal – controlling the resources of its competitors – in the era of globalization, Søylen (2010) suggested that the state should build economic strength and implement economic control... And obviously this is the logic of geoeconomics discipline.

If we took a look, as we did in the core idea of geopolitics, at the applied policies and strategies of the Superpowers in the world, we see that the United States and the European Union, are still “locked in the rational of geopolitics” in contrast of the Chinese policymakers that have moved to the logic of geoeconomics “because they are able to see clearer and further ahead” (Søylen, 2010, p.2).

We can conclude here that the main aim of the global geo-strategies is no longer a geographical region, whether is it the Heartland or the Rimland, it becomes all geographical locations that contain important natural resources, and that what is named by *Nareland* (Natural Resource Lands).

For many classical authors, such as Smith (Wealth of Nations; 1776), Machiavelli (The Prince; 1935/1952), Polo (The Travels of Marco Polo; 1932), and recently Michael Porter (The Competitive Advantage of Nations 1990), the shift happening in statecrafts and disciplines, from military means to economic ones, “is not only a return to Political Realism but a return to the understanding of competition as the Competitive Advantage of Nations” (Søylen, 2010, p.3).

Herein, Nareland is the core idea of the geoeconomic discipline, knowing that it represents the main factor of power that this discipline studies (Søylen, 2010) and helps states in working on it and controlling it in order to increase the advantage of competitive advantage of that state globally. Briefly, geoeconomics is all about

competition and regulation of statecrafts in order to economically and politically secure and strengthen nations in the international battlefield.

So the core idea of both geopolitics and geoeconomics disciplines is the main difference between them, but actually it is not the only one; logic and perspective also differ from geopolitics to geoeconomics, and that is what will be argued next.

B- The Logic and Perspective

- As James Brunham said in his book *“Suicide of the West”*: Geopolitics is about “effective political control over acreage” (Burnham, 1985, p.14), it is when “international politics takes place within a geographical concept” (Sempa, 2002, p.104).

Each nation had its own logic and perspective within the geopolitical discipline, whether through land or maritime power... But theoreticians who supported land power, and their colleagues who supported naval or maritime power, both believed that “the continent of Eurasia was the principle arena of struggle for the great powers” (Sempa, 2002, p.110).

So, the centrality of the Eurasian continent was the standpoint of all the geopolitical disciplines perspectives. Mackinder named it “The Great Continent”; for Brzezinski it is “The Mega Continent”, since it is the largest landmass that contains most of the resources and people in the globe (Sempa, 2002).

This importance of the Eurasian continent stems from the fact that “most of the key events of the world history occurred on its landmass or on one of its offshore islands”

and that “much of the rest of the world at one time or another became the object of expansion, settlement and colonization by one or more Eurasian or offshore Eurasians powers” (Sempa, 2002, p.111).

Concerning the logic of geopolitical theories and disciplines, the facts show that it is traditionally related to *slowly-changing variables*, such as those of ethnicity, country, religion and language (Ebrary, 2012) ... The Islamophobia, Turkey’s accession to the European Union, the Chinese and Russian language, the Islamic States in Eurasia, and many others, are issues caused or studied by geopolitics.

So the logic and perspective of the geopolitics disciplines are mainly geographical and related to the local and foreign policies of nations adopting them.

- On the other side, the geoeconomics’ perspective and logic pave a different path. The logic here is less focused on ethnic or religious origin, or even on political ideologies, because in its perspective what really matters is the economic performance of the nation (Søilen, 2012), not the geopolitics variables of ethnicity, religion, country and language.

Hence, geoeconomics disciplines are linked to *rapidly-changing variables*, especially those related to technological transformation and developments in global commerce (Ebrary, 2012).

If we take the example of Turkey’s accession to the EU issue and its recent capability of negotiating its membership there, we can know that the cause is obviously economic, due to the fact that nothing has changed in the ethnicity of people, neither in their religion, nor in their language; but the fundamental changes happened when the country achieved “greater stability, development, and fairness” (Søilen, 2012, p.86), which all

are related to economics in their main sight. Here, it shows clearly that ethnic and religious opinions and historical conflicts arguments are secondary considerations compared to the economic one (Søilen, 2012).

Wigell (2016) saw geoeconomics as “the geo-strategic use of economic power” (p.137), so we can conclude from his statement that geoeconomics is based on the strategic frame’s logic (either competitive or cooperative) and on the economic power’s perspective in order to achieve defined goals through defined (and peaceful) means.

In parallel, geoeconomics in its reality is about the strategy of using economic means for the aim of controlling or ruling specific geographical zones and areas “such as a sphere of influence of a regional hegemon” (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018, p.3), that is what justifies the effectiveness of the geoeconomics’ perspective and logic, which are increasingly evolving the power politics practices through economic means instead of military ones.

And while the nations’ competition is currently being “the predominant driver of international relations” (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018, p.2), nations prefer to engage in this global competition through means that are not prevalent military to avoid humane and material losses that might be caused by the actual implementation of those dangerous means.

Many recent cases that happened and are still happening on the international scene such as (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018): China’s initiative “One Belt One Road”; Petro-Diplomacy of Venezuela during Hugo Chávez’s era; Western sanctions against Iran, Russia, and recently China has proven that “military means appear to matter less” (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018, p.1) over the increasing importance of geoeconomics –

especially through its economic means - which is being “more critical to how states exert power” (Scholvin & Wigell, 2018, p.1). Here, the perspective and logic of great powers’ strategies shifted to geoeconomics measures and statecrafts due to the damage that might be caused by the geopolitics perspective, logic, means and measures.

After defining the main differences between geopolitics and geoeconomics, regarding the core idea and the logic and perspective of both of the disciplines, it appears necessary to draw a table that shows clearly and highlights the main differences between them.

Table 1: Differences between Geopolitics and Geoeconomics

Table of Contrast: Geopolitics Vs. Geoeconomics	
Geopolitics	Geoeconomics
Began after the ending of the historical imperial era;	Began in the end of the Cold War;
Develops at a time of declining free trade and increasing national autarchy;	Develops at a time of increasing free trade and decreasing national autarchy
Reflects struggle between territorial states over hegemony over the world system;	Reflects struggles for modality within a global hegemonic system within which the United States has imperious but not fully imperial dominance;
Theoretically propounded by writers linked to the military as Halford Mackinder, Frederic Ratzel, and Spykman...	Theoretically propounded by writers linked to business as Edward Luttwak and Kenichi Ohmae...
High politics focused on dominance and alliance-building for “security”;	High politics focused on competition and partnering for “economic leverage”;
Employs spatial assumptions neatly nested and compartmentalized scales from city to nation to globe;	Employs spatial assumption about networks that relativize discrete scales and accelerate scale jumping between the global and local;
Idealized subjects: citizens and soldiers;	Idealized subjects: customers and investors;
Territorial imaginary organized around blocs, nation states and boundaries like the “iron curtain”;	Territorial imaginary organized around modality, region states and linkages like “the web”;
Fixates on borders, frontiers and place.	Fixates on borderlessness, networks and pace

Source: Sparke, 2014

- a) The Origin and Fact of Geopolitics and Geoeconomics: According to Sparke (2014), and as it has appeared in the previous table, Geopolitics and Geoeconomics have witnessed different beginnings and known various facts. The Geopolitics’ concept has shown itself after the end of the historical era of empires, and get developed when free trade was declining and national autarchy was augmenting. As for the Geoeconomics’ concept, it has risen at the end of the Cold War epoch, and evolved when free trade was increasing and national autarchy was decreasing;

- b) The Theoretical Formulation of Both Concepts: In addition to different origins and facts, each concept was theoretically formulized by distinct specialists thus by different perspectives and different points of view. And while Geopolitics' disciplines - which reflect "the struggle between territorial states over hegemony over the world system" - were theoretically formulated and propounded by analysts linked to military as Ratzel, Mackinder, and Spykman..., the Geoeconomics ones - which reflects "struggles for modality within a global hegemonic system within which the United States has imperious but not fully imperial dominance" - were theoretically formulated and propounded by writers more linked to business than military, as Luttwak, and Ohmae;
- c) Visualized Targets, Goals, and Subjects of Both Concepts: Besides the last differences, each of Geopolitics and Geoeconomics disciplines has its own targets, goals, and subjects to visualize and achieve. While the subjects idealized by Geopolitics theories are citizens and soldiers, they are investors and customers in the Geoeconomics disciplines. And while the major targets to visualize or focus on through Geopolitics are dominance and "alliance-building" to attain the main defined goal which is "security", the major targets to visualize or focus on through Geoeconomics are competition and partnering to achieve the main goal which is "economic leverage";

- d) **Used Means and Tools:** In order to achieve the defined goals, policies implemented by both “statecrafts” should refer to use specified means and tools. Geopolitics “employs spatial assumptions neatly nested and compartmentalized scales from city to nation to globe” through fixating on borders, frontiers and place; As for Geoeconomics, it “employs spatial assumption about networks that relativize discrete scales and accelerate scale jumping between the global and local”, through fixating on borderlessness, networks and pace;
- e) **Territorial Application of Both Disciplines:** Finally, and over and above all what was pre-described, the practical applications of those theories are also distinct. The territorial application of the geopolitics theories turns around blocs nation states and boundaries like the “iron curtain”; as for that of the geoeconomics disciplines, it turns around modality, region states and linkages like “the web”.

Richard Betts said that “Geoeconomics is the study of spatial, cultural and strategic aspects of resources with the aim of gaining a sustainable competitive advantage” (Betts, 2017). He also stated that Geoeconomics is such a continuation of the logic of Geopolitics, but the difference is that Geoeconomics is applied in the era of globalization (Betts, 2017).

Betts studied in details the difference between the disciplines of Geopolitics and those of Geoeconomics, and found that they were different in two fundamental and major ways:

- 1- *Regarding the Topic:* Geoeconomics is primarily concerned with economic activities rather than political and military ones which constitutes the major list of interests of Geopolitics (Betts, 2017);

2- *Regarding the Actors*: The aforementioned activities are done through different actors in those disciplines. According to the Geoeconomics' discipline, they are chiefly undertaken by employees of private sector organizations, who are loyal to the owners of those organizations. But according to the Geopolitics' one, they are chiefly done by individuals representing the nation state (Betts, 2017).

Betts (2017) affirmed that the study of Geoeconomics is more complex than that of Geopolitics where the State is the main actor by itself, but also stated that the study of both disciplines began first of all from a macro perspective to define the nations' interests (Betts, 2017) and keep them on mind before doing any step.

After all what has been clarified, we can honestly affirm that even if Geopolitics and Geoeconomics are both strategies employed by nations to attain global goals in their general view, they have in fact many differences that will definitely lead to various consequences when applied on ground, and this what the next chapters will deeply discuss, especially while talking about the Chinese implementation of its own formulized Geoeconomics statecraft. But before that, it seems essential to argue on the reality of Geoeconomics replacing Geopolitics in many global policies.

Section 2: Geoeconomics Replacing Geopolitics

Recently, and specifically after the end of the cold war, “a new wave of interest in the interplay between commerce and strategy” (Vihma, 2018, p.1) occupied an important position globally, and that was when Geoeconomics became a key concept and a fundamental discipline on the international level.

After learning from the lessons of the past, and especially from the committed mistakes through implementing geopolitical theories and “military overstretch”, Barack Obama himself, tried to replace the US administration strategy with a new one based on expanding economic and financial relations in order to consolidate the US power (Humuza, 2015) ... This US increase in the adoption of economic tools in its geo-strategies, reflects a new Geoeconomic World Order (Whang, 2019). This is due to the fact that no one can deny that the military strategies of the US in Afghanistan and Iraq have failed, and that this failure has shown to all the world the limited capabilities of military means (Humuza, 2015).

Herein, we can say that the failure of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan was the first spark that launched the big shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics, where “the troubled global power (US) has discovered trade agreements as a new mean to protect its hegemony in the international system” (Humuza, 2015, p.1).

By suggesting the implementation of a new strategy, Obama tried “to preserve the US status as the center of the world economy for the foreseeable future” (Humuza, 2015, p.1), for this new geoeconomic strategy, from his perspective, has new sanctioning methods that allow his nation “to exclude even big states from international trade and, more importantly, from the financial system” (Humuza, 2015, p.1).

Besides the United States, the European Union has also shown interest towards the new wave of Geoeconomics; it has employed “trade relations” in order to protect and expand its sphere of influence under the umbrella of cooperating over development (Humuza, 2015). And in order to link the preferential access of the market to political conditions, it exploited association and cooperation agreements as specific means to encourage reforms in the third states (Humuza, 2015). The application of this European vision has a main target beside liberalizing foreign markets to open them for its products, and it was adopting “democratic peace theory” that increases its security and welfare (Humuza, 2015).

Regardless of whether those nations continued to completely adopt and apply this new “unmilitary” strategy or not, we cannot deny that nowadays global powers prefer economic competition over military combats; and that is why “today, nations increasingly carry out geopolitical combat through economic means” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.367).

And after the global financial crisis witnessed in 2008, the emerging powers under the name of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), requested a bigger influence in the global governance, because of the growth of their economic importance internationally (Humuza,2015). And this was when China has clearly risen through its recent capability to establish its own international trade regime (Humzua, 2015), which has threatened the western predominance and hegemony as the only decision maker of the globe.

That financial crisis that hit the world has proven that the nations based on economic policies and means as a fundamental pillar for their own existence, are the most stable nations around the world, in comparison with those based on geopolitics discipline to withstand any potential competition that might face them.

Herein, the 2008's crisis has been an exposure of the weaknesses of the western model of statecrafts, and of the strength of the BRICS' one. Furthermore, and after witnessing the rise of its competitors during and after the global financial crisis, Brussels has directly modulated the strategic vision of its own trade policy (Humuza, 2015) in order to preserve "its status as an economic power, to secure its future access to energy and other important resources, to open new markets for European enterprises, and grab a piece of the pie of economic growth in the emerging markets" (Humuza, 2015, p.1), and through this manner it will eventually increase its own ability to compete economically with other trading powers on the international scene.

In addition to what was previously discussed, we have to remember that at the beginning of the 1990s, Luttwak (1990) and some strategists affirmed that Geoeconomics started to replace Geopolitics in the core of the globalizing international system. For instance, in his review of the book "Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance" by Jeremy Back, D'Agostino (2017) reveals how geopolitics appeared to lose its charm after the world wars and China's formation of the Eurasian bloc. In addition to that, geopolitics did not tell us much in the cold war about areas outside Europe such as South America, the African continent, or Asia (D'Agostino, 2017).

And within the same context, Pascal Lorot stated: "*Nations are engaged – alongside their national companies – in offensive policies to conquer external markets and to take control of sectors of activity considered to be strategic. For nations today the quest for power and assertion of their rank on the world stage depends more on their economic health, the competitiveness of their companies and the place they occupy in world trade*" (Lorot, 1999).

Hence, the key concerns of the world leaders shifted from security concerns, to prosperity and competitiveness ones (Szabo, 2015). And therefore, a large shift from geopolitics as global

powers' discipline, to geoeconomics as powerful nations' geostrategic statecraft has been witnessed all around the globe.

And in order to get deeply into the details of that emergence, we will discuss its global and local manifestations, argue for the probable implications that it might lead through affecting the course of events in the international arena, and finally shed light on what this emergence has caused as structural changes in the development and operation of nations' foreign policies.

A- Manifestations of the Famous Shift on the International Scene

It is important now to analyze how this shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics has manifested itself in reality, especially that the geoeconomics visions – since their rise – were obviously associated with the transnational business class perspectives, and they had also trans-nationally expanded since then, to replace militaristic concerns and territorial dominance with notions of networks and partnerships for peace all over the world (Sparke, 2014).

Many factors prove the validity of the shift from Geopolitics to Geoeconomics, and here are some of them:

- 1- In lieu of geopolitical concerns about citizens and soldiers, the Geoeconomics statecraft, increased or wanted to increase the level of the investors and customers' entrepreneurial interests (Sparke, 2014);
- 2- In place of focusing on national borders and place, geoeconomics gave the privilege to networks and pace as scope of application of its theories (Sparke, 2014);
- 3- In contrast of doing efforts in building alliances for security through international politics, Geoeconomics concentrates its major efforts on building international ties and partnerships that advance 'growth', 'integration', 'harmonization', and 'efficiency', against the threats of 'traditionalism', 'isolationism', 'anachronism' and 'anarchy' (Sparke, 2014);
- 4- War between the core nations of the globalized system "has become almost unthinkable..." (Szabo, 2015, p.105) because military power and classical diplomacy have lost their historical value in the strategic new arena of world affairs (Szabo, 2015);

- 5- In many countries, especially the European ones, a definite shift in the core idea of international security has been observed, which instead of defending territories against aggression, becomes an issue of maintaining order and stability over the lands (Sheehan, 2008);
- 6- Although wars between states have increasingly diminished, the international order remains reliant on individual territorially defined states that stick to adversarial competition in order to gain power and influence; but with the rise of Geoeconomics, that competition became chiefly channeled by economic means (Szabo, 2015) ... “Today developed states compete in the marketplace not on the battleground” (Aligica 2009);
- 7- A big switch from a territorial state to a trade state invaded the world, because of “the increasing porousness of borders, the growing role of multinational corporations with global strategies and the decline of the national security state” (Szabo, 2015, p.106). Those circumstances led to a shift in the political leaders’ key concerns in the central global core from security to prosperity and competitiveness (Szabo, 2015).

Those manifestations and many others have led or will lead to large implications on the international scene. These implications will be briefly reported hereafter.

B- Implications of the Famous Shift on the International Scene

International political issues turned out to get more economic qualifications, national interests got defined in economic terms, the selective multilateralism replaced the (classic) multilateralism, the predominant role of business shaped the majority of nations' foreign policies, economic interests got elevated over human rights and promotion of democracy, and nations started employing their economic power to impose national preferences on their competitors (Kundnani, 2011) ... All these changes and modifications shaped the international system geoeconomically, and procured many implications:

- 1- The role of political and administrative leaders got reduced, for the major political strategies of nations had undergone alterations and transformations and became strategies of business interests for the sake of the export markets and natural resources which will lead them to domination and hegemony (Szabo, 2015);
- 2- This new model of statecrafts changes the work procedures within the governments by enhancing the role of the chancellor's office, the finance, economics, and technology ministries, and reducing the role of foreign and defense ministries on the other hand (Szabo, 2015);
- 3- The new geoeconomic approach highly promoted around the world decreased the value of non-economic factors such as human rights, and democracy – as previously mentioned – and substituted them with economic ones in order to transform the concerned nations into normative ones (Szabo, 2015);

- 4- Recently, Great Powers became obliged to work on their stability, predictability, and reliability of their reputation as stable economic partners more than ever, for those qualifications became a paramount to ensure their leverage and preserve their influence in the new geoeconomic world (Szabo, 2015);
- 5- The wave of change also affected the instruments of state influence; the hard security and military natures became softer... The classic military roles of protecting the lands from any invasion or insecurity got downgraded: in Germany for example, the main role of the military became “to protect the German access to raw materials and to keep secure the sea lines of communication and other key trading routes” (Szabo, 2015, p.13). And here the statement of Luttwak (1990) “methods of commerce are displacing military methods” (p.17) was actually confirmed (Szabo, 2015);
- 6- Markets got expanded due to the new globalization system, thus competition became at its peak. A large and deeper shift also reached the global distribution of power and the emergence of new powers due to the weakness of other non-economic ones (Szabo, 2015);
- 7- The 2008 financial crisis and the dysfunctions of the American political system downgraded the significance and the influence of the United States on the international scene, and weakened countries’ foreign policies founded on relations and ties to the west (Szabo, 2015) ... New powers emerged, and competition for markets, technology and natural resources got accelerated (Szabo, 2015) due to the new globalization system based on the geoeconomic approach.

In that multi-polar world, and with Geoeconomics replacing Geopolitics, it becomes more and more difficult to unite developing countries and emerging powers on trade issues in forums or international organization due to competition and divergence of interests (Financial Express, 2016). But after seeing the failures of the United States in their military conducted combats and wars since the Second World War (failures were not only from a humanitarian perspective but from an economical one too), the emerging competitive nations started shifting their interests and resources towards SEPT: Science, Education, Production and Trade! This process is geoeconomically named by ‘**the Golden Process**’ (Szabo, 2015).

After the Cold War, at the turn of the 21st century, states started believing that “war is no longer a viable option for remaining in control” (Betts, 2017). This belief will surely prevent the superpowers from engaging in large-scale wars with their competitors in the future, and from intervening in military conflicts with small states (Betts, 2017). But hence what should they do to preserve their influence and hegemony over the world and to increase their competition potential and strength? Here comes the main role of Geoeconomics as a multidisciplinary global way of strategic thinking, used by states to achieve their targets and goals.

It is necessary here to recall the definition of Geoeconomics provided by Blackwill and Harris (2017) in their book ‘*War by Other Means – Geoeconomics and Statecrafts*’ (A **Foreign Affairs** Best Book of the Year 2016), telling that it (Geoeconomics) is: “*The use of economic instruments to promote and defend national interests, and to produce beneficial geopolitical result; and the effects of other nations’ economic actions on a country’s geopolitical goals*” (p.20).

Hence, the recent upgrade that Geoeconomics has known, refers to three main factors as Blackwill and Harris declared in their book:

- 1- In order to project influence and conduct geopolitical combats since the beginning of the twenty first century, emerging powers are getting attracted to use economic instruments rather than military ones (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); Because as the American Historian - Jeremi Suri said: “power turns out to depend less on common displays of charisma and strength, and more on unseen manipulations of markets and money” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.33); *(Practical examples will be provided in the upcoming chapters of the study)*. It is true that “military muscles” became unfashionable or outdated nowadays, and it is also true that nations are increasingly tending to use economic methods to rapidly attain their geopolitical aims, but it is not right to deny that military force remains an important method in how many countries realize their strategic and geopolitical aims (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).
- 2- The second factor lies in that those states adopting the economic instruments for attaining their geopolitical goals, benefit from having vast energy resources at their direct disposal, in comparison to previous eras (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). This emerging phenomenon paved the way to the return of state capitalism (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). And we can honestly say that Governments “are now the largest players in some of the globe’s most important bond markets” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.37). Because of resorting to economic displays of power, state-owned companies are replacing private firms: between 2004 and 2009, in the ranks of Forbes’s list of the world’s biggest 2000 companies, 120 state-owned companies were listed, while 250 private firms were dropped off (Kurlantzick, 2012). And according to the World Investment Report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2013), “80% of China’s stock market, 62% of Russia’s, and 38% of Brazil’s are State-Backed companies”, which “have claimed – since 2005 – more

than half the world's fifteen largest initial public offerings (IPOs)" (Woolridge, 2012). In addition to the fact that "from 2003 to 2010, one-third of the world's FDI (foreign direct investment) came from state-owned firms" (Woolridge, 2012). Blackwill and Harris (2017) have affirmed that recently due to the big shift "from major industries to equity and bond markets, from capital flows to foreign direct investment, the state's hand is visible and growing" (p.37).

This is because in the 2000s the world economy was holding \$ 2 trillion in reserves, but in 2015, that number exceeded \$ 11 trillion (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); and according to the International Monetary Fund (2017) the reserves of emerging nations have increased from just over \$ 700 billion in 2000 to around \$ 7.5 trillion in 2015.

The financial crisis of 2008 has regenerated world leaders' opinions already suspicious of the U.S capacities, economic, diplomatic or strategic; and helped in the emergence of that new model of "non – democratic" but larger, wealthier, and more global capitalist states, in comparison to their predecessors – mainly the USA (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ...

The new sources of power and foreign policy instruments recently laying in the hands of these "emerging" governments were founded by the famous shift that concentrated such wealth and large levers of influence under their control (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

Former U.S secretary of state Hillary Clinton outlined that new phenomenon in explaining that "today's state capitalists are entering markets directly at times shaping themselves not just for profit but to build and exercise power on behalf of the State" (Clinton, 2011) ... So the emergence of the new model of capitalism is the second factor that reveals the modern resurgence of Geoeconomics detected by Blackwill and Harris.

- 3- The third factor is more related to state changes into global markets and has less to do with evolving patterns of state behavior; for today's markets exert more influence over the choices and outcomes of nation's foreign policy – because they are deeper, faster, more leveraged and more integrated than ever before – this influence is increased since they are paying more attention to economic forces along their ways of evolution (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

And besides new statecrafts of using economic instruments to produce geopolitical results, the market forces and economic trend lines are themselves producing strategic outcomes all over the most important national interests of the United States (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

The west's greatest achievement in foreign policies so far in the twentieth century, and the closest U.S foreign policy partner, *the Fate of the European Union*, stayed for many years under the control of bonds markets instead of the European political capitals (Feldstein, 2012).

To conclude, the recent phenomenon of globalizing markets is the third main factor that reflects the authenticity of the shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics, and the revolution of energy is one of many practical examples that confirms that theory: The U.S Government Accountability Office (2012) have done a geological survey, which reported that the availability of recoverable gas resources have augmented more than 680% since 2006, and the production of LTO (light tight oil) increased eighteen-fold between 2007 and 2012... Herein, because of the augmentation of the American LTO, the U.S oil imports declined, so countries rich with energy resources in West and North Africa, and the Middle East will shift their exports to the People's Republic of China – as Blackwill and Harris

(2017) stated. Hence, the foreign policies of those energy producing countries have redrawn themselves exactly as the trade routes have done, in order to leverage their growing economic strength (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

So the energy revolution caused a globalization in the markets and a big change in the foreign policies of the countries, and this constituted the third main factor that explains the rise of geoeconomics in the world.

Therefore we can affirm that geoeconomics' power as geopolitics' power are both a function of certain structural factors and policy choices (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); although as there are levels in state capacities to project geopolitical power, there are certain fundamental lineaments and factors, most specifically: geoeconomic endowments, that define the nation's range of success in implementing geoeconomic tools in their policies (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). These factors were determined previously, but what are the main changes that affected the development and operation of nations adopting the new geoeconomic statecraft? This is the question that will be answered in the following part.

C- Structural Changes in Nations' Foreign Policies

Blackwill and Harris have identified six manners through which the implementation of geoeconomic tools and approaches changed and are still changing the actual geopolitical frame and landscape, in addition to the development and operation of foreign policies themselves. Therefore, these changes will be defined hereafter in details:

1- Geoeconomics Opens the Way for New Policy Choices

The history of the Sino-Russian relationship would make a good example to explain and clarify that point. After the collapse of the USSR, the Russian economy has known fluctuations and inconstancy, knowing that in 1998, with less than \$ 15 billion in official reserves, Moscow was a customer of the IMF (Pinto et al., 2001). But by 2008, the Russian economy has known a big “renaissance”, for Moscow could accumulate more than forty times its 1998 reserve levels, to obtain over \$ 600 billion (Kramer, 2008), which had allowed the Kremlin to disrupt its neighbors (Ukraine and Georgia), and to protect its markets from any fallout (Kramer, 2008). So Russia became then the country that is offering bailouts; and the most iconic example on that is its bailout to the “ailing Yanukovich regime in late 2013” (Kramer, 2008); Russia also wanted to help the EU’s own ranks, especially Greece, Cyprus and Hungary – its weakest links – with packages aimed at shattering the EU and weakening its alliance with the U.S (Higgins, 2015). Although Moscow is now trying to harden its friendships with “deep-pocketed” friends that might protect it from any economic fallout for their own geopolitical reasons; knowing that the Beijing of 1998 or even that of 2004 did not have the financial capability, or even the foreign policy inclination to cushion and advocate Moscow and help it flout the U.S. or the EU, but the Beijing of 2016 - according to Blackwill and Harris (2017) - appeared to be financially and politically susceptible to do so. A new form of Sino – Russian alliance emerged then through energy, finance, and military deals, in order to achieve their own mutual geopolitical goals and to prevent the U.S. from achieving them (Baker, 2014). Briefly, the new geoeconomic statecrafts adopted by Russia and China, the “newly deep coffers, and the willingness to use them for the sake of geopolitics” (Blackwill & Harris,

2017, p.39) all contributed in opening the ways in front of them for making new policy choices, and enabling them to make powerful decisions at odds with the national interests of the United States (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

2- Geoeconomics Opens the Way for Implementing New Foreign Policy Tools

In the same context, because of the large East-West competition, and besides enjoying a new set of policy choices and options, emerging geoeconomic states found that they are possessing new foreign policy tools due to the adoption of that new geoeconomic statecraft (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

As an example of these new tools, the visit of the Chinese president Xi Jinping to Russia in March 2013 seeking a closer cooperation between the two nations (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). This visit had led to a \$ 2 billion loan outlined by China to Rosneft - the Russian oil company – which got a period of twenty-five years to repay China, in Oil and not in Money (Rudnitsky & Bierman, 2013)! This loan has shed light on a new foreign policy tool between those two allies, where the Chinese government guaranteed its access to Russian oil for twenty-five years (since 2013), and a Russian company guaranteed its long term financial support.

And in another example also concerning the Chinese diplomacy and foreign policy tools as well; in April 2011, when Dilma Rousseff – the Brazilian President – officially visited China for her first time and arrived to Beijing, the Chinese president Hu Jintao “greeted her with an order for thirty Brazilian Embraer planes plus five options, executed via three Chinese state-owned airlines” (BBC News, 2011) aiming to strengthen diplomatic ties

between their states (Blackwill & Harris, 2017), knowing that they are two of the BRICS countries.

Herein, that new geoeconomic statecraft is confounding Western governments today “straining their ability to respond” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.41) due to the Eastern adoption of new tools in diplomacy and foreign policies different from those adopted in their states, which intensifies the actual competition.

Recently, Russia’s economic intimidation of Ukraine and China’s economic tactics towards its own region (including Japan) formed such a struggle to U.S. allies, Europe and Japan, on which they could not reply effectively, and that led into a controversy between the United States and the European Union because of their inability to form “a fitting and collective geoeconomic response” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.41).

Here, it could be concluded that the new geoeconomic statecraft opened the way before the emerging geoeconomic state to adopt new foreign policy tools that help them in their international competition through intensifying their strength and evolving their powers to an extent where their competitors will have no ability to reply and confront them.

3- Geoeconomics’ Statecraft Changes the Nature of Diplomacy as well as that of the Markets

Besides changing the nature of states’ diplomacy due to the employment of geoeconomic tools, Blackwill and Harris noticed that the nature of markets has changed as well: The state-owned ICBC (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China) aiming to refocus on Africa via increasing the bilateral cooperation, has bought in 2008, 20% of the stakes from South Africa – based Standard Bank (England & Schafer, 2014), but the deal did not work up, as

per Martyn Davies of Frontier Advisory – A Johannesburg based research firm, 20% of Standard’s stakes were not enough to allow ICBC to compete with fully state-owned entities, as indicated in *The Economist* (2014). MDFA explained that “for regions (like Africa) awash in state-baked deals, counterparties without diplomatic credentials may be at a disadvantage” (*The Economist*, 2014). So, in order to intensify any bilateral cooperation between states, diplomatic platforms for discussion and negotiation are the most appropriate tool to make a direct footprint in their markets and to ensure the final win. Business merits are no longer the basis on which major deals are being decided (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

Returning to Chinese engagements and policies, and to take one more example, it is necessary to discuss Argentina and China’s tit-for-tat dispute that started with an Argentine policy to level new tariffs on low-value-added goods – a policy that looked like directed immediately towards China – on which Beijing responded with a counter policy that imposed spurious safety bans on Argentine beef (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.42). And in order to push China to end this public safety embargo on Argentine beef, Argentina quelled Beijing by ratifying many contracts with Chinese state-owned enterprises, and between them was one for a prime rail project, and that was how the embargo was stopped (*The Economist*, 2011). Knowing that the abstract goal of Argentine officials behind these contracts was not necessarily having the best bid, but calming Beijing down, and that resulted in a class of deals dedicated for more coercive reasons than on market logic; and such deals are only open for a few selected number of firms (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

It is clear that emerging geoeconomic states are behaving today like dealmakers, showing a high willingness to bargain through using uniquely sovereign tools such as: spurious tax

charges, forced joint ventures, police raids, state secrets, incarceration of business rivals (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

Media reports in 2007 announced that Russia's largest private equity fund with a sizeable global presence: the Hermitage Capital had a forfeiture of \$ 230 million in fraudulent tax claims and charges (Harding, 2015).

Business dealings occurring beyond market means or logic of profit, contribute to many changes in the market terms through imposing a level of international commerce unreached by private firms; and also to the creation of a new diplomatic front that might exclude many nations including the United States, as what was stated by Blackwill and Harris (2017).

Such deals with geoeconomic specifications and qualifications might change the entire operation of markets, especially in the sectors with strategic importance: for example the sector of Energy (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ... Beijing's investments in international energy as attempts to "relieve" the risks caused by the insecurity of Chinese energy became a widely agreed fact on the international scene (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Blackwill and Harris (2017) stated here that: "Where such geoeconomic logic is present, it can compel a different sort of deal structure" (pp.42-43).

The example of some states led by China could clarify Blackwill and Harris's point of view: Those states decided not to look to open markets in order to present the best price, but they have chosen to tie-up long term stocks by means of state-led contracts with other states' governments, and to gather the national power in order to secure the best terms (Economy & Levi, 2014).

As for China itself, and when in a wartime scenario, it develops new initiatives and policies to secure its need in petroleum "through equity oil arrangements and closer ties with

exporters like Saudi Arabia” (Kelanic, 2013) because it might find itself then unable to satisfy domestic demand (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

It can be concluded here, that this kind of state-led deal-makings can propagate itself through stimulating other nations and encouraging them “to nationalize defensively, or at least supplying pretext for preexisting nationalization agendas” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.43).

This new behavior of geoeconomic states mirrors how global markets are nowadays operating with large geopolitical dimensions more than they had ever done (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). (Even after the emergence of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), energy markets were driven by private forces of supply and demand, intermediated by mostly private (not state-owned oil companies) (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

Here, we can clearly say that geoeconomic tools have done vast changes to markets’ operation besides those done to the nature of diplomacy.

4- Geoeconomic Deals Became Major Factors in States’ Foreign Policies

The strategic investments made by China across the African continent are being directive and instructive, so we will take some of them as examples to clarify this fourth change made by the emergence of the new geoeconomic statecraft:

- During his trip to Africa in May 2014, the Premier of the State of the Council of the People’s Republic of China, Li Keqiang declared the Chinese intention to expand its credits’ line to many African states from \$ 10 billion to \$ 30 billion, as indicated in The

- Wall Street Journal (2014). And it is obvious that behind such investment lie major development goals (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Even if many times the amounts delivered are well short of those promised, but they were still substantial, and that was done several times with weak and non-democratic states, due to the Chinese opinion which thinks that these huge sums might influence the orientations of the foreign policies and the defined national interests of the governments adopting them (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). So they pragmatically manage the distribution of such sums between states according to their qualifications and specifications, in order to avoid negative ends to their implemented strategies and means.
- Several African countries have received Chinese investments, despite its states policy of non-intervention (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); According to Latin American Herald Tribune (2009), Beijing has slogged along the domestic political process of many African Countries such as Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela, through these investments - whether they were factors to stimulate China's military modernization directly, or to intensify the reasoning of the members inside the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) who had invited for such a spending target for so long (Shinn, 2009)... And these investments helped in executing the buildup operation of the Chinese military through the terms of backstopping their resources overseas (Walker, 2012).
 - The Sudanese example, with its big shift from a historical oil importer to a recent oil exporter with the help of China, may provide the strongest clarification:

With the help of the Chinese government and investors, the Sudanese government was able to build three weapons factories near Khartoum (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); also

with the deployment of 4,000 Chinese troops to Southern Sudan, China helped in guarding the oil pipeline, while re-affirming its purpose to intensify the bilateral military collaboration and exchanges with Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria and Sudan (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ...

This Chinese help has turned Sudan from an importer to an exporter of oil, until it earned some \$ 2 billion in 2005 from oil revenues, half of them came from China (Blair, 2005) ...

And before the independence of South Sudan, about “80% of Sudan’s oil revenue went to the purchase of weapons for use in subduing separatist fighters in the South” (Goodman, 2004) ...

By these tactics, China became the largest trade partner of Africa, and also the largest provider of peacekeepers there of any of the five members of the UN Security Council (Goodman, 2004), through increasing its role in peacekeeping missions in the UN and more than 2000 Chinese peacekeepers contributing in ten mission of peacekeeping in 2014 (Brookes & Shin, 2006).

After briefing some Chinese investments projects in Africa, we can conclude that geoeconomic deals are recently becoming a conspicuous priority in foreign policies of states.

5- Autocrat to Autocrat Negotiated Contracts Bolster the Nations’ Regimes Effectively

As for the fifth change, and as for Blackwill and Harris (2017): “Deals, especially bad ones, can be easier to negotiate autocrat to autocrat, unencumbered by the same levels of

transparency or scrutiny that democratic publics tend to demand. In these cases, the terms might well come with financing for an important political goal” (p.45).

Concerning Chinese policies:

- In 2012, while Hugo Chavez – former president of Venezuela – was a candidate in the presidential elections, PDVSA (the Venezuelan state oil company) agreed on an oil-backed loan of \$ 1.5 billion presented from ICBC (the Chinese state-run bank) in order to execute new housing construction projects – to be also built by a Chinese company: CITIC, which is the largest Chinese state-owned investment company – which appeared as a major part of Chavez’s campaign strategy (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Here, “PDVSA was forced to sell a 10 percent stake in one of its most promising joint ventures (with Chevron) to CITIC as part of the deal” (Crooks & Orozco, 2012).
- Where Beijing and Moscow have embraced and surrounded many autocratic regimes hostile to the western camp, as: Belarus, Uzbekistan, North Korea, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Angola, and recently Myanmar; “the same basic plot lines are found” as Blackwill and Harris stated (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.45) ... Such deals, and “supports” are obviously stimulated by material interests and benefices, “whether China’s need for oil, or Russia’s reliance on the sale of conventional weapons and nuclear reactors as important revenue sources” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.45).

Rationally, if it should be commented on the origin of such deals, it should also be taken into consideration that Russia and China, the leading practitioners of geoeconomics in the world, are ranked as “the most important business partners and financing sources for some

of the world's most brutal autocrats, typically in ways that strengthen the domestic political strength of these regimes" (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.45).

China aims to strengthen the ties with Venezuela, Sudan and Angola in order to preserve its access to oil when in insecurity, and to improve its relations with Myanmar to have access to port facilities in exchange (Kagan, 2006).

6- Security and Economic Tensions Are Reinforcing Each Other to a Greater Degree than that in Previous Eras

The last change stated in the book "*War by Other Means*", was related to large security and economic tensions caused by the fact that emerging states are getting used to "flex geopolitical muscle in economic terms" (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.46) through their adoption of geoeconomic approaches.

Superpowers such as U.S.A, China and Russia are increasingly spreading disagreements with their foreign policies "from export bans on key commodities to cyber-attacks on a country's banking sector" (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, pp.46-47). Russia's Intervention in Georgia in 2008 and Crimea in 2014 (Mälksoo, 2019), China's behavior in the South East and China Seas (Kim, 2016), and America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Martini, 2017) are recent examples of showing up military forces to decrease security threats which have reinforced economic tensions exponentially (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

It is necessary to clarify that security tensions are usually led and motivated by economic targets – such as the access to critical resources – and these cases are not new on the international scene (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Nevertheless, even security tensions that

have no “inner” economic goals are increasingly provoking economic disruptions (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

If we should explain the main reason of the growing security tensions in the region of East Asia, we should mention that they are caused by the Chinese perception of its own economic capabilities (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); and by its belief that the U.S.A., Japan and Korea are economically dependent on its government and reliant on its help to stand behind existing security commitments (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). According to The Economist (2009), these perceptions and beliefs emboldened in their turn aggressive behaviors from the competitors – nations, which have led to many security challenges under economic cover.

The United States’ reactions and behaviors towards China’s threats in East Asia, may clarify what was argued above about occurring security challenges under economic cover: “While many states are repurposing economic tools for geopolitical use, the United States is moving in the reverse direction” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.47). It is using geopolitical tools for economic purpose, because in fact, at the end of the day, it is searching for its economic welfare through developing and executing its foreign policies rather than aiming to invest in geopolitical outcomes (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ... It is recently becoming a major principle that the United States’ foreign policy must be a “force for economic renewal at home” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.47).

More than that, many analysts pointed out that the economic statecraft of the United States will develop and grow in its performance due to its importance to the American geopolitical fortunes than to “its possession of nuclear weapons or its seat in the UN Security Council” (Karp, 1992) ... Admiral Michael Mullen – former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff –

has warned his government many times from debts, considering them “the single greatest threat to national security” (O’Keefe, 2011)! ... Herein, we can understand how a financial crisis can preoccupy foreign policy debates due to its resulting economic insecurities (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

For concluding, we must say that the new emerging geoeconomic forces are now tending to boost the odds of their success through implementing geoeconomic instruments and tools in the service of their major and strategic targets and goals that will definitely determine their effectiveness and leadership all over the international scene and define the new global sovereignty standards.

China is recently heading the list of these emerging geoeconomic states; but for attaining its goals and achieving its targets, it must possess many assets and capabilities in addition to developing a complete and comprehensive geo-strategy that will orientate its authentic performance on ground towards geoeconomics. What is this geo-strategy? What are its essentials? And how the Chinese capabilities will support the government in applying it in reality? The next part of this dissertation will take the task of answering those questions in detail.

Part II: Chinese Assets and Geo-Strategy

Chapter 1: Assets behind China's Geoeconomic Potential

Chapter 2: Chinese Geo-Strategy for International Primacy

Chapter 1: Assets behind China's Geoeconomic Potential

After the Cold War, the international system which has been mainly controlled by the United States, has been trembled by the relative slump of the US economy and concurrent growth of China (Han & Paul, 2020). For instance, in the Monday Briefing published by *The New York Times* on November 19th 2018, the author Alisha Haridasani Gupta wrote: “Imagine two 18-year-olds, one in China, one in the U.S. Who has a better chance at upward mobility? Not too long ago, the answer might have been the teenager in the U.S. But China has risen so quickly that, today, a young person’s chance of improving their living situation vastly exceeds those in the U.S” (Gupta, 2018). The article has also shown the cause behind this rising fact in numbers (Gupta, 2018):

- **800 million:** The number of people in China that have been lifted out of poverty since 1990. That is two and a half times the U.S. population.
- **500 percent:** This is the average per capita income growth in China between 1980 and 2014 (The average per capita income was multiplied by 6).
- **\$12,000:** China’s economic output per capita. A decade ago, it was \$3,500.
- **1/4:** The share of the world’s middle class that was in China in 2016.
- **29:** China’s score on the Gini coefficient, a worldwide measure of inequality, where a lower score represents a more equal economy. The U.S. scores 37.
- Despite that progress, **40 percent** of China’s population still lives on less than \$5.50 a day.

The enormous rise in economic growth typically translates into a comprehensive vigorous influence (Chen, 2018). In other words, a country that enjoys an exponential rise in internal prosperity, fortune and wealth, will definitely benefit from the same rise on the external or

international scene... But this does not happen without the possession of certain local and foreign assets, which present the main reasons leading the country towards the greatest geo-economic success in the future...

It is important to know that the Chinese geopolitics nowadays is over-determined by its maritime borders' affairs and by the Sino - American relations (Duchâtel, 2017). But it is also a necessity to point out that the economic successes of Beijing have been accompanied since the beginning of the 2000s by a considerable expansion of its multilateral commercial ties with the countries in which it is diversifying its own investments (Duchâtel, 2017).

This expansion turned China to become not only the world's factory that attracts foreign capital because of its reduced production costs, but also to become a major actor in the International Economy because of its consumer power, its capital exports and many other important powers and capabilities which globalized the economic and security interests of this superpower (Duchâtel, 2017) ...

And that is how China became a global geo-economic superpower (not the only one, but definitively the most powerful).

So, what are those powers, assets, and capabilities lying behind the greatest historical transformation of China into 'the most powerful global geo-economic superpower'? The answer will be provided in the following sections of the chapter.

Section 1: Local Assets

As the People's Republic of China is growing stronger day after day, its "weight is felt increasingly around the world" (Wang, 2010) ... In fact, Beijing's economic, political and military capabilities and assets are limiting the implementations of its competitors' geo-strategies, whose main threats arise from the Chinese strength.

Many assets have certainly accelerated the geoeconomic rise of China when employed geo-strategically... Most of them are local ones; Herein, this part of the Chapter will discuss in detail each one of them, in order to help us in formulating a comprehensive conclusion about how the Chinese capabilities (the local and the external ones) have formulated China's famous geoeconomic potential and rise:

A- Geographical Factors

Geopolitically speaking, factors related to geography are highly valuable either in offensive or defensive geo-strategies for any nation... As for the Chinese land, according to the Global Fire Power (2018): it is 9,596,961 km² wide, and has a coastline of 14,500 km, with 110,000 km waterways, and 22,450 km shared borders ... In details: China is a country located in the Southeast Asian region, along the Pacific Ocean's coastline; with an area of 9.6 million square kilometers, it constitutes the third largest country after Russia and Canada, and shares its borders with 14 other countries, as indicated in Travel China Guide (2018). According to the Central Intelligence Agency (2018), China is also rich in "coal, iron ore, petroleum, natural gas, mercury, tin, tungsten, antimony, manganese,

molybdenum, vanadium, magnetite, aluminum, lead, zinc, rare earth elements, uranium, hydropower potential (world's largest), arable land”.

According to McColl (n.d.), author at the Center for Global Education - Asia Society, China has a distinct geographic “print” concerning physical and environmental features (climates, soil, topography, and location), and historical and cultural patterns ... But what interests us for now is to understand how that “print” affects the geopolitical being of China.

First it is necessary to know that “Geopolitics is based on geography and politics” (Stratfor, 2012), and “Politics is built on two foundations: military and economic” (Stratfor, 2012). These foundations interact and support each other, but in their core reality are distinct (Stratfor, 2012) ... Thus, economic and military features of China will be discussed in the following points, but what matters now is to clarify how Beijing turned its geography to be a useful capability in its large shift into geo-economy.

Contemporary China is an island not surrounded by water (which borders its eastern flank only), but due to the mountains and jungles and wastelands that border it, forming a terrain that is difficult to traverse, it has been described by Island (Stratfor, 2012). That description reminds us of the statement of Mackinder (1904) in his famous article “*The Geographical Pivot of History*”, after explaining why he considered Eurasia as the “geostrategic fulcrum of world power” (p.473), he supposed that the Chinese should “expand their power well beyond their borders” (p.473) and that “might constitute the yellow peril to the world’s freedom just because they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region” (p.473).

In other words, Mackinder feared that China might one day conquer Russia in Eurasia; he pointed that: whereas Russia “that other Eurasia giant, basically was, and is still a land power with an oceanic front blocked by ice” (Kaplan, 2010), China “owing to a 9,000- mile temperate coastline with many good natural harbors is both a land power and a sea power” (Kaplan, 2010). Herein, it became clearer that China’s geographical location and characteristics constitute a distinguished capability that might be supportive in the execution of the government geo-strategies.

Furthermore, the virtual reach of China dilates from Central Asia region – characterized by its energy resources and wealth (minerals and hydrocarbons) – until the main shipping lanes of the Pacific Ocean (Kaplan, 2010) ... This large extension reminds us also of Mackinder’s prediction in his “*Democratic Ideal and Reality*” about the Chinese eventual will – in coordination with the United States and the United Kingdom – to guide the world through building “for a quarter of humanity a new civilization, neither quite Eastern nor quite Western” (Mackinder, 1919, p.227). This statement was in 1919, one hundred years ago! And China of today is actually aiming to guide the world: Distinct allies, different strategies, but same target!

Finally, it could be honestly stated that the “blessed geography of China”, as Kaplan (2010) described it, is a fact that “tends to get overlooked in discussions of the country’s economic dynamism and national assertiveness” (Kaplan, 2010), and this essentially means that China “will stand at the hub of geopolitics” (Kaplan, 2010) in its path towards global power, due to the strategic value of its geographical factors.

But before closing this argumentation about Chinese geography, we cannot forget the presence of the high critical South China Sea and the repercussions caused by the

international competition over its case... It constitutes an important shipping route and contains rich natural resources, specifically oil and gas (Pemmaraju, 2016). According to Lowy Institute (n.d.) in Sydney, geographically, this Sea significantly plays an important role in the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, for it is a critical commercial gateway for a large number of countries involved in world's merchant shipping (it is bordered by 10 states: Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam) and due to their borders, each one of these countries had "competing claims over islands and smaller features in the South China Sea". Thus, it is a major economic and strategic arena, and this is why it constitutes a site for territorial international disputes which have re-caused the flare up of the conflicts and tensions within the region (Lowy Institute, n.d.).

The striking paradox in this dispute is that, by its official name "South China Sea", the sea is attributed to China especially that the latter claims historical and dominion rights over the sea's islands (Pemmaraju, 2016), and this has its own weight on the geopolitical scene... and on the geoeconomic one as well, because of the Chinese exploitation of its strategic reality as a significant site for international trade, and its serious trials and strategies to take full control over it...

The second chapter of this part will clarify the Chinese pragmatic thinking in benefiting from these geographic factors to improve the capacity of the government to realize its geo-strategic aims...

B- Human Capability – Manpower

After discussing Chinese geography, it is obligatory to talk about the distinguished Chinese population... China is the most populated country in the globe with 1,379,302,711 as per The Global Firepower (2018), and 1.38 billion in July 2017, as stated by the Central Intelligence Agency (2018).

The majority of the population abides the eastern half of the state, for the west half is all about rugged mountains and deserts invalid for habitation; according to the Central Intelligence Agency (2018), that does not mean that there is no population in these western spaces, but they remain sparsely populated. The positive thing is that in spite of this huge population, the density overall the country is less than that of many other in Asia and Europe, it is only found in definitive places such as the Xi Jiang River Delta, the Yangtze and Yellow River Valleys, the Sichuan Basin (around Chengdu), in and around Beijing and in the industrial area around Shenyang (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018) ... And this is a realistic indication of the good urban planning and organization of the Chinese government.

According to a recent study published by *Bloomberg*, “China’s people, the sheer number of highly motivated workers moving off the land and into the urban economy, have been the secret of its extraordinary success until now” (Champion & Leung, 2018). The authors Marc Champion and Adrian Leung were precise in saying ‘until now’ because in their opinion the former policy of “one-child per couple” will cause a decline in that “source of growth” (Champion & Leung, 2018), quoting the United Nations (2017) prospects which stated that “China’s 1.4 billion population is likely to decline sharply, beginning as soon as 2023”.

Champion and Leung stated that the decline and aging of the Chinese population constitutes the biggest risk to the country's ambition in being the world's greatest power and shaping the 21st century through its outsized influence (Champion & Leung, 2018) ... For instance, the shrinking of the working age population against the aging one would lead to public finance imbalances in terms of tax revenues and pension funds (McCann, 2017). Regardless of our acceptance or rejection of this analysis, it indirectly does indicate how important is the Chinese population, and how far can the Chinese people contribute in the growth and success of their country.

Moreover, from another point of view and another article published by *Brookings Institution* in 2010, the author Feng Wang pointed out that the decline of Chinese population (1.33 billion then) will cause a problem to the upcoming economic statecraft putting it under tensions of droppings in mortality and fertility levels "not very different from that of the developed countries (...) the United States, Britain and France" (Wang, 2010) ...

If we objectively re-read what Wang mentioned in that comparison, two questions will arise: Do the mortality and fertility "low" levels negatively influence the developed countries (the United States, Britain and France)? And if that policy of "one-child per couple" – announced 40 years ago - is actually having a negative impact on the growth of China and is affecting it badly, then why have not the policy makers in Beijing taken the decision to amend it until now?

We should confess that, from the Chinese point of view, this state policy has had positive impacts over the general situation in the country and most specifically over the economic one, through reducing the burdens and loads that could result from unlimited

population density which would be the real demographic crisis if the Chinese pragmatic thinking was not on the lookout for it; for rapid population growth can be a main constraint to the Chinese development aiming recently to be the most powerful state ruling the world, and by this limiting policy Beijing devotes itself for realizing its main goal.

We cannot move to the next point without discussing the unique Chinese personality known by “Zhon Guo Ren” (中国人) – Which mean Chinese person – that is recently causing “fevers” to learn it around the world, in addition to the Chinese language taught by the so-called “Confucius Institutes” across the world (Hung & Herman, 2013) ...

Napoleon Bonaparte had some famous statements about China and the Chinese people; he historically referred to them as “a sleeping dragon” (Yutang, 2012), and said “let China sleep... for when she wakes she will shake the world” (Fish, 2016)! And then, since the market reforms were introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 – after the death of Mao Zedong – China witnessed three decades of double-digit economic growth, which increased its influence on international relations (Duchâtel, 2017) ... And in early January 2006, when global markets started to fall “in part because of renewed worries about China’s economic slowdown (...) China shakes the world. And so on” (Fish, 2016), until our days, through its economic “war” with the United States, China is still shaking the world.

Hence, China’s culture has graduated – and is still – Chinese leaders... The Chinese people manifest today certain common characteristics (mental and spiritual) that might be the results of their historical environment which is in one of its parts economic, and in the other cultural (Yutang, 2012). What interests us now is the cultural part, and if we had to enumerate some main qualities – good and bad – of the Chinese people, we should say: 1-

Dexterity; 2- fecundity; 3- indifference; 4- industrial skills; 5- intolerance; 6- love of life, family and nature; 7- old roguishness; 8- patience; 9- sobriety (Yutang, 2012) ...

Herein, the Chinese government knows very well how to motivate its people, how to benefit from its qualities and how to improve them and employ them for its own interests, especially the geoeconomical ones.

C- Economic Health and Financial Stability

And here we come to the main Chinese powerful asset, the Economic Health and Financial Stability... Since ever, Beijing attempts to pursue active efforts in order to protect its economic status in its growth and to always be stable financially. In fact, and as per the Global Fire Power (2018), while China has *3,194,000,000,000 \$* as reserves of foreign exchange and gold in 2018, the United States has *117,300,000,000 \$* in the same year... And while China has *1,649,000,000,000 \$* as external debt in 2018, the United States has *17,910,000,000,000 \$* in the same year (Global Fire Power, 2018). These numbers justify the fact the China's economy is threatening the global sovereignty of the United States, and help us in understanding why the American president Donald Trump is imposing trade taxes on the Chinese government as a prelude to a "cold" trade war...

The Secretary of State - the former director of Trump's CIA also - Mike Pompeo, in his interview with fox news on September 23rd 2018, stated that "the trade war by China against the United States has been going on for years", and that the difference with Trump's administration is that "to the extent, one wants to call this trade war, we are determined to win it" (Re, 2018). What matters for us in this statement is not who will win the war, but

more specifically what they are willing to do to win it, especially that it “has been going on for years” and that it is done “by China against the United States” as Pompeo said.

In another interview on fox news (on September 20th 2018), Pompeo stated that: A highly centralized and non-transparent Chinese government which is aggressive in its military posture with its economic strength and treats intellectual property and religious minorities horribly, poses a far greater threat to US than Russia (Sharma, 2018).

What concerns us now is China’s economic strength, so the following discussion will turn around the economic perspective and factors employed by China in its global strategies elaborating its geoeconomic potential.

In a study published by the WEF (World Economic Forum) on January 2016, the executive Dean of Fudan University Wu Xinbo had his own analysis about China’s geoeconomic power, and considers that its power particularly lies in five areas:

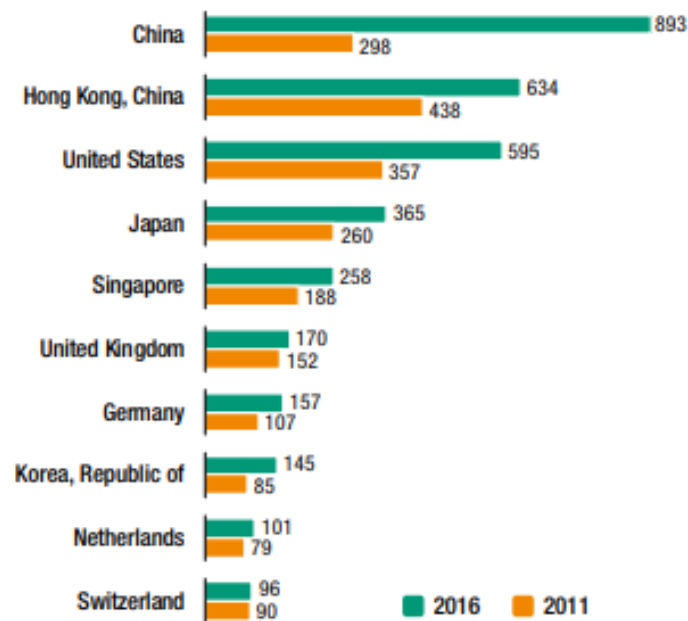
I- Trade: Since the Chinese economy has witnessed openness in the 1970s, China has had a growing influence on the international trade (Wall, 1996). Globally, China is the first global trader, it is actually the largest trading partner to over 130 countries. The Chinese government led trade with regional economies which constitute a major part of the global production chain, and drove up their economic growth (Xinbo, 2016). In fact, 50% of Asia’s economic growth is a result of the Chinese contribution in it, being the most substantial motive for that region. The Chinese economy has become, as per Xinbo (2016), the “significant barometer for the Asian economy”.

II- Investment: The second area of Chinese economic strength is that of investment, for China has become – since 2008’s financial crisis – an active provider of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment). Knowing that ‘Foreign Direct Investment’ “is an investment made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country. Generally, FDI takes place when an investor establishes foreign business operations or acquires foreign business assets, including establishing ownership or controlling interest in a foreign company. Foreign direct investments are distinguished from portfolio investments in which an investor merely purchases equities of foreign-based companies” (Chen, 2020) ... China today has become one of the major outward investors in the world (Sauvant & Nolan, 2015). From 2012 to 2014, China has become the world third largest investor behind the US and Japan (Xinbo, 2016). And according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2018), it is also becoming a major source of inward FDI in transition economies – as per the World Investment Report / 2018 – and its FDI stock in the region has increased from \$8 billion in 2011 to \$23 billion in 2016, which turned it out to be the fourth largest source country in the world. From 2012 to 2016, the outward FDI from China has increased from \$88 billion to \$196 billion, but has declined by approximately 36% in 2017 to \$125 billion as a result to the “policies to clamp down on outward FDI, in reaction to significant capital outflows during 2015-2016” (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2018, p.65).

But that has not changed the fact that China ranked the first in the top 10 investor economies by FDI stock in 2016 with \$893 billion in comparison with the United

States which had invested in \$595 billion in the same year as it appears in the following figure (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2018).

Figure 7: Top 10 Investor Economies by FDI Stock, 2011 and 2016 (Billions of Dollars)



Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2018, p.61

All that confirms the fact that China is the most powerful country in investments, and that it does not miss a chance to take opportunities – and maybe create them - for its own economic growth; for its “growing overseas investment contributes to its geoeconomic power” (Xinbo, 2016, p.6).

III- One Belt, One Road Initiative: The Silk Road Economic Belt, the 21st Maritime Silk Road is a project developed by Beijing under the concept of the “One Belt, One Road Initiative”. “The “Belt” refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt...while the “Road” refers to the 21st century Maritime Silk Road” (Dunford & Liu, 2019,

p.148). The first links China's mainland to West Asia and the Middle East passing through Central Asia, and the second links China through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in one path and to Europe in the other (Ghoury, 2016). And as Xinbo (2016) stated, this initiative "aims at promoting China's economic cooperation with countries in South-East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and Eastern Europe" (p.6), through drawing on Chinese large geographical connections with Eurasian States and wide capabilities and opportunities for economic growth that this region promises (Xinbo, 2016). It is through these connections that China will reach to the western world (Ghoury, 2016). Moreover, the Belt and Road Initiative seeks cultural interchange among the distant civilizations and foster global stability and progress (Dunford & Liu, 2019).

Herein, this initiative presents a recent area where the Chinese economic power lies, for it is planned to facilitate trade and investments, to improve traffic connectivity and to ameliorate trade and monetary cooperation (Xinbo, 2016).

Xinbo affirmed in his report that the Chinese "One Belt, One Road Initiative" will "not only expand China's economic ties with related countries but also enhance China's geoeconomic influence in Eurasia as it effectively transforms China into the hub of an extensive hub-and-spoke system" (Xinbo, 2016, p.6). In other words, this initiative extends China's shade over large areas of Eurasia and major parts of the world, especially in countries in which its involvement has been relatively decent (Ferdinand, 2016).

The main cause behind the effective enhancement of China's geoeconomic influence in the Eurasian region is that many Eurasian countries have expressed

their interests in Beijing contribution in their infrastructure development that will remove the major bottleneck to their economic growth caused by their underdeveloped transport system (Xinbo, 2016). The building of new infrastructure in such countries can enhance trade in the region, provide new market entries, and lead to better living conditions (Nurgozhayeva, 2020). Thus, the Belt and Road Initiative does not only benefit China on the level of global economic influence, but also promote the economic performance of the countries that are mainly connected or part of this initiative (Brakman et al., 2019). Furthermore, this rail connection is of great importance for the economic and environmental reliability it offers to these countries, in comparison with the maritime or air transport (Pomfret, 2019).

Figure 8: The OBOR Initiative



Source: Cai, 2017

The Silk Road Economic Belt represents an economic corridor between China and Pakistan, and between Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar; knowing that for instance, China is helping Pakistan and Kazakhstan to upgrade their railway facilities (Xinbo, 2016). In addition to that, the investment agreements between China and Pakistan reveal a much profound economic consolidation between the two countries (Ghouri, 2016), knowing that the Sino-Pakistan relations have always been characterized by durability (Shaffer, 2018). Likewise, Kazakhstan has occupied a big portion of the Chinese investments due to the crucial role that Kazakhstan plays as China's hub to the European continent (Nurgozhayeva, 2020). This is the reason why, according to Nurgozhayeva (2020), the Belt and Road project was unveiled by the Chinese president during his official call to Kazakhstan in 2013.

The growing commitment to the BRI is stimulated by the ascending Chinese economic and political power in the 21st century, which many consider it will be the Chinese century (Brakman et al., 2019). Therefore, it became clear that the BRI project is helping China to increase its geoeconomic influence in Eurasia, whereof it constitutes a major political and economic capability to the Chinese government, which positions China as "the leader of a new form of globalization" (Hillman, 2018, p.7).

IV- Multilateral Financial Institutions: In order to provide fiscal support to recent development projects such as the OBOR Initiative and the Infrastructure

Maintenance in BRICS countries, Beijing has initiated the establishment of the AIIB: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Knoerich & Urdinez, 2019) and NDB BRICS-led New Development Bank (Stuenkel, 2016).

In the AIIB, China holds over 30% of the shares and 26% of the voting rights; and in the NDB, it holds 41% of the shares – more than any other member (Xinbo, 2016). These percentages clearly reflect the great role of China as a rule maker and developer of operations in these two institutions (Xinbo, 2016), and as Wilson (2019) described it as the country's evolution “from an institution-follower to institution-builder” (p.148). In other words, China is no more interested in joining the current international order, and it is instead building its particular multilateral infrastructure (Stephen, 2020).

People's Republic of China's memberships in these multilateral institutions constitute tremendous opportunities to wield its influence on regional and global finance, economy, development and politics... And exercising its influence within these institutions and over the region's and world's economy exponentially justifies its geoeconomic strength and potential; for China is strategically benefiting from its membership there to prove that it is in reality an economic powerhouse and a political entity to reckon with (Guttal, 2007).

- V- The Internationalization of the Renminbi (RMB):** After the global financial crisis of 2008, and exactly since 2009, Peoples' Republic of China has been working on a policy to internationalize the Renminbi (RMB) in order to encourage and increase its use in international trade and investment, and to pave the way to its

inclusion in the reserve assets held by central banks in other countries (Xinbo, 2016). Jenkins and Zelenbaba (2012) point out the importance of this rational policy, for it is a necessity for the largest exporting country to have its currency exchanged in the international financial market, which enables countries to hold reserves and finance their imports in RMB.

China's policy has succeeded, for it concluded until 2016 as per Xinbo, 10 agreements on direct exchange of RMB with other currencies (Xinbo, 2016), treaties on clearing banks in 15 countries (Xinbo, 2016), and 15 country-specific RMB Qualified Foreign Institutional Investor Quotas (Xinbo, 2016). This is in addition to the fact that since 2010, 37 central banks have entered the Chinese currency in their reserve portfolio (Liao & McDowell, 2016).

The largest number of these policies and agreements have been done in China's neighboring countries; and in addition to main official arrangements, the RMB is already widely used in China's neighborhood from Vietnam to Myanmar, and Mongolia to North Korea, which is – as Xinbo (2016) Stated – RMB internationalization *de facto*. And knowing that China's ODI (Overseas Direct Investments) is exponentially increasing, this will definitely lead to a further expansion of RMB internationalization (Xinbo, 2016).

In view of the rise of the Chinese economy, the Renminbi is expected to play a crucial role in the international monetary system (Eichengreen, 2011). According to Chen (2018), the internationalization of the RMB will change the rules of the game in the world politics and economy. Economically, it will reduce the pressure on China from holding high USD reserves which leaves China susceptible to any

change in the American monetary policy (Chen, 2018). From a political point of view, it will nourish China's economic consolidation which will fortify China's economic and political power on the international scene (Chen, 2018). Herein, it is absolutely obvious that this policy of internationalization of the official Chinese currency is a pure financial policy that positively affects the nation's economy, and that it is mainly a major capacity that is improving China's geoeconomic performance globally.

Therefore, the economic health and financial stability in China reflects a major asset that plays a tremendous role in deducing its geoeconomic statecraft regionally and globally. And as per the conclusion of Xinbo (2016): "Although China's economic growth will gradually slow down, as compared with the past few years, its share of the global economy will continue to climb, as will its foreign trade and overseas investment. This will surely lead to the further expansion of its geoeconomic power in Asia-Pacific and beyond" (p.7).

D- Diversity in Available Means (Aerial, Land, Maritime)

After discussing three main Chinese local assets related to geographical factors, human power, and economic and financial strength, it is time to discuss a different strength point that firmly distinguishes Peoples' Republic of China: the diversity in available means (Aerial, Land, and Maritime).

As per the Global Fire Power (2018), and concerning the airpower of China, its total aircraft strength has increased to 3,035 by 2018, ranking the third internationally after USA (with 13,362 of total aircraft strength), and Russia (with 3,914 of it) by the same year. China is increasing its aircraft due to its valuable importance which is recently expanding on the global battlefield,

because according to the Global Fire Power (2018), “despite all other technological and doctrinal advances made on the modern battlefield, air superiority is still a major component in achieving total victory”.

On the other side, and concerning the land strength, its way of counting differs from that of the aerial craft:

- **The Combat Tanks** value is: 7,716 (2nd in the world after Russia with 20,300; while, as per the Global Fire Power (2018) USA ranked 3rd with 5,884), knowing that “tank strength continues to be the primary symbol of power for any modern land army” (Global Fire Power, 2018).

- **The Armored Fighting Vehicles** according to Global Fire Power (2018), value is: 9,000 (10th in the world; while USA has 38,822 ranking 1st and Russia has 27,400 ranking 2nd), knowing that “the armored fighting vehicles follows to help claim territory” (Global Fire Power, 2018).

- **The Self-Propelled Artillery Strength** value is: 2,000 (3rd in the world after Russia with 5,970 and North Korea with 2,250, as per Global Fire Power (2018)). And “the Self-Propelled Gun is a critical mobile artillery component and regularly found in the inventories of land armies around the world” (Global Fire Power, 2018).

- **The Towed Artillery** according to Global Fire Power (2018), value is: 6,246 (1st in the world; while Russia has 4,466 ranking 2nd and USA has 795 ranking 17th).

- **The Rocket Projectors** value is: 2,050 (3rd in the world, after North Korea with 5,000 ranking 1st and Russia with 3,816 ranking 2nd, while the United States has 1,197 ranking 6th), as per Global Fire Power (2018).

And finally, concerning the maritime strength, China's total naval means, as per the same report of Global Fire power (2018), has increased to 714 in 2018, ranking the 2nd in the world after North Korea with 967, while the United States has 415 as total naval assets ranking the 3rd in the world; and Russia has 352 ranking the 5th.

It is true that Geoeconomics is “the systematic use of economic instruments to accomplish geopolitical objectives” (Blackwill, 2016), and that these means/instruments are more military than economic; and military force is hard power, but we have to remember that it can also generate soft power (Nye, 2011). When a country increases and expands its available military means, it does not only develop its military capability but it shows its strength and ability to compete with its rivals through its large defense budget and consumption; this is Soft Power that China manages masterly...

So a country that is economically powerful, such as China, can consume a large budget on its military means as a soft contribution in the attainment of its defined geopolitical targets, regionally and globally: this is geoeconomics.

E- Nuclear Power

In an article published by “Geopolitical Futures” on April 2017 about *The Geopolitics of Nuclear Weapons*, the authors George Friedman, Xander Snyder, and Cheyenne Ligon stated: “Nuclear bombs have a strange quality: They are a type of weapon that countries spend enormous sums of money to develop but don't actually intend to use” (Friedman et al., 2017).

This kind of weapon fundamentally alters the relations between states due to the fact that they will be forced to think deeper about their rivals' securities imperatives (Friedman et al., 2017).

But it is important to affirm that “no country has detonated a nuclear bomb since the end of the World War II” (Friedman et al., 2017).

The World Nuclear Industry Status Report of 2018 noted that the global nuclear power generation declined for the third year in a row, in contrast with China which has been consistently increasing its development, and ranks the first in the world “in terms of the scale of its nuclear-power programs under construction and is also enthusiastically expanding its international collaborative programs through the ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative” (Han & Zhou, 2018, p.11).

China occupies the third rank in the world in terms of nuclear power, after the United States and France (Andrews-Speed, 2020). And as per the World Nuclear Association (2018), China has about 45 nuclear power reactors operating, about 15 under constructions, and more about to start getting constructed, and “the government's long-term target, as outlined in its Energy Development Strategy Action Plan 2014-2020, is for 58 GWe capacity by 2020, with 30 GWe more under construction” (World Nuclear Association, 2018). China’s nuclear power is expected to overpass that of France soon and occupies the second rank if the country maintains its current growth rate (Andrews-Speed, 2020).

Figure 9: Nuclear Power Plants in China

Nuclear Power Plants in China



Source: World Nuclear Association, 2018

Nuclear power has its own important role and efficacy that exists from the ability of nuclear weapons to “deter aggression, as the potential of massive devastation forces countries to rethink moves that threaten an adversary’s essential national security interests” (Friedman et al., 2017).

Peoples’ Republic of China is not only willing to increase its nuclear capacity, but it is also showing an unprecedented will to achieve the world’s best standards in nuclear safety (World Nuclear Association, 2018). For instance, China has adopted safety standards to reassure its citizens and the international community about its responsibility in controlling nuclear security and safety, and has become a key participant in nuclear conventions and the International Atomic Energy Agency (Andrews-Speed, 2020). After all, nuclear power contributes in expanding the

economic development of the nuclear state, and in the case of China, its nuclear assets both in reserve and under construction are assisting its government in attaining its geoeconomic goals locally, regionally and globally.

F- National Interests, and Relations with Eurasia

China's national interests and its relations with many Eurasian countries are considered a fundamental asset by themselves helping China in building its geoeconomic kingdom... Why? A simple analysis of Blackwill and Harris definition of Geoeconomics will provide us with the answer; they stated that Geoeconomics is "the use of economic instruments to promote and defend national interests and to promote beneficial geopolitical results; and the effects of other nations' economic actions on a country's geopolitical goals" (Blackwill, 2016).

China's governmental acts, politically and economically towards the country's national interests in order to defend them, are the main causes behind its huge local and global success at the economic level... Beijing is 'accumulating' economic power since long time ago, and this accumulation is enabling it to exponentially pursue its long-deferred national security goals (Pollack, 2012). This is how it benefits geopolitically from the application of its economic statecrafts, and this is simply Geoeconomics at its core.

In a study published in 2008 by *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, the author Albert Keidel stated that: "China's likely continued success will eventually bring an end to America's global economic preeminence, requiring strategic reassessment by all major economies, especially the United States, the European Union, Japan, and even China itself" (Keidel, 2008, p.1). That was written since about 13 years ago, and is becoming clearer nowadays with the

American-Chinese geopolitical “trade war” under the banner of ‘a Geoeconomic New World Order’.

China’s institutions – including the political ones – are now mature more than these in the Maoist decade, in ways consistent with its level of economic development and welfare... We can say that China’s economic policies and strategies contributed in attaining this level of strength and stability in its governmental and political institutions as a main geopolitical goal; and this is also Geoeconomics at its core.

In the same study done by Albert Keidel, and under the title: “How Big is China Now? And How Big Could It Become?” Keidel mentioned the conservatives’ opinion: “China will overtake the United States as the largest economy in the world in thirty years’ time” (Keidel, 2008, p.5). And now, - before that thirty years’ time passes - with a simple visit to *CIA World Factbook* website, we can find that in 2018, China has become the largest economy in the world, ranking the first with a GDP of \$ 23 trillion (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018) ... Furthermore, a report done by professional services firm PwC, says that China will have an economy of nearly \$ 58.5 trillion, while India’s will be around \$44.1 trillion and America’s \$ 34.1 trillion by 2050 (PwC, 2017).

Achieving these numbers, does not only represent a strategic goal for the People’s Republic of China, but it will at the same time constitute a powerful economic instrument assisting it in protecting and investing in its national interests, and in attaining its geopolitical goals; in another word, it will establish the fact that China is individually developing a Geoeconomic New World Order, after the Geopolitical one.

Besides its direct defense of its national interests, China has had and is still having ambitions in rearranging its neighborhood, and to provide new ways in cooperating regionally; the New Silk

Road is one of those new ways (Kaczmarek, 2018). This project has provided China with access to new foreign markets, and has also shown its willingness to present public goods and its readiness to share international responsibilities (Kaczmarek, 2018). It is a flexible project with no strict geographical boundaries, because China is interested in the practical benefits of cooperating regionally, and is aiming to prevent its adversaries from establishing political and economic blocs in Eurasia. Here it could be affirmed that this BRI is harmonized with Russia's goals and ambitions in Eurasia for increased economic connectivity... This integration for a "Greater Eurasia" will be discussed in the last chapter of this dissertation...

But for now, we can say that China has launched a new geoeconomic model with this project through its vast foreign reserves utilized to develop "strategic industries, transportation corridors and financial instruments such as international investments banks, trade regimes, and global transaction/payment systems" (Diesen, 2018), and to establish "the Yuan as a trade / reserve currency" (Diesen, 2018).

This is how China's geoeconomics is consequently evolving and changing the regional and global distribution of power (Diesen, 2018), and that has incentivized Beijing to take the lead in developing high leveled strategies either in Eurasia or on the international scene... Briefly, China is making new steps and paving new paths through being a pioneer offering imperative assets in modern geoeconomics; it utilizes its own capabilities, invest in them, develop them and benefits from their geopolitical results and geoeconomic revenues.

Looking ahead, China will eventually benefit from its local assets and from other countries' political experiences and economic failures, particularly Germany (Wolf, 2014) and the Soviet Union (Meisels, 2012), for raising and strengthening up its Geoeconomic potential. And recent

phenomenon such as the Sino-American tidal conflict, indicates that Beijing has a big chance of pursuing its “reforming” policies as an introductory to its global sovereignty.

But it should be noted that China’s political and economic statecrafts have also given it additional potentials to invest in foreign assets, turning them out to become Chinese capabilities beyond the Chinese geographical boundaries... The following section of this Chapter will clarify this statement.

Section 2: Foreign Assets

China has invested in many foreign assets - through using many technical, political, economic, and diplomatic policies - in order to ensure the success of its global geo-strategies that are under the process of implementation ... These assets have been transformed into Chinese capabilities out of its geographical boundaries, and became exploited by its government to assist it in formulating its geoeconomic potential.

Chinese leaders consider these capacities of investing in foreign assets for China's own benefit, as integral to its credibility as a major power, and to the protection of its national security interests (Pollack, 2012). These assets had also increased China's role in regional security, representing an authentic and continuing challenge to its adversary, the United States of America, which pushed it to review its geo-strategies and policies, and make necessary amendments and adjustments (Pollack, 2012).

Herein, the Chinese government got involved in many cooperative projects with its neighbors in Asia as first step, passed by Europe through its One Belt One Road project, and had arrived to the African continent recently... In other words, China is gradually expanding its influence and authority throughout the planet to obtain reliable focal points that can constitute the basis for its major geopolitical goals and geoeconomic objectives.

This section of the chapter will introduce the foreign assets China is investing in, in Taiwan and in India-Pakistan, and discuss how China is transforming them into mainstays to its Geoeconomic kingdom, despite of their presence outside of its geographical borders.

A- China's Assets in Taiwan

In his article published in *Foreign Affairs Magazine* on 2010, Leslie Gelb noted that “Beijing has been playing the new geoeconomic game at a maestro level” (Gelb, 2010), it is staying out of wars and political confrontations and zeroing in on business, which helped it exceeding its influence even far more than its existing economic strength (Gelb, 2010).

And because of being “the world’s leading practitioner of geoeconomic”, we will display China’s foreign assets in South Asia, mainly in Taiwan, to understand them as a first step towards understanding their contribution in rising China’s geoeconomic potential.

Taiwan has been a flash point for Chinese communist leaders since their earliest days in power, as Blackwill and Harris (2017) noted in their book.

From Beijing’s perspective, Taiwan constitutes an “inalienable part of China” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.95) and meanwhile, from its own side, Taiwan insists on being a self-governed entity (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Herein China aims for reunification with Taiwan, and understood very well “how the threat of force is far more useful for defending the status quo, than it is for forging any progress toward reunification” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.93).

That is the main cause behind Beijing’s adoption of a “two-prong economic encirclement strategy” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.93) which picked off Taiwan’s allies through implementing many Chinese geoeconomic measures, and putting pressures directly on Taipei at the same time, in order to oblige it to cooperate.

While studying the nature of Taiwan’s geopolitics, Chinese leaders had understood two main facts: 1- In peacetime, Taiwan could restrict China’s ability to develop and project naval power and maritime security (Gilley, 2010); 2- In times of high tension, Taiwan could serve as a base for foreign military operations (Gilley, 2010).

Therefore, Chinese leaders are hoping that adhering to the One-China principle will lead to a peaceful reunification of these nations (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) and to the emergence of “one country, two systems” across the Taiwan strait (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.95). But Beijing will not realize its hope through the use of force despite of the presence of 1,600 missiles pointed at Taiwan which were used as threat of force in a fixture of cross-strait relations for decades (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ... However, this threat of force cannot explain Beijing’s progress in tilting regional and international opinions and perceptions about Taiwan issue in its favor recently (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

Based on that, and supported by its threat of force, Beijing has put pressure on Taipei through geoeconomically using a full package of assets found in the Taiwanese zone to support its desire for reunification. According to Lee and Yin (2017), the economic activities over the years have been rising at a growing rate between China and Taiwan. This would make Taiwan more and more dependent on China (Lee & Yin, 2017), and perhaps could lead the former to support the reunification with China (Wong, 2019).

These instruments are used as practical application to Beijing’s geoeconomic strategy relying on economic encirclement and penetration to urge Taiwan and to increasingly push it towards eventual reunification (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). And this will be clarified in the next chapter of this part.

In a small analysis we can find that the assets of China in Taiwan have two main geoeconomic sides:

- 1- The first reflects the way China uses geoeconomics in its international relationships to advance a One-China policy on its terms; it is multilateral (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ...
- 2- The second is similar to the first, but seen in the way China uses geoeconomics in its direct dealings with Taiwan; it is bilateral (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ...

This clarifies that the case of Taiwan could be studied in a way that helps us understanding the reality of China's assets in Taiwan, and the way it benefits from them in designing its geo-strategy geoeconomically, but also in understanding the way it benefits from its foreign assets in achieving its international objectives, through investing and managing them – the assets – in its proper geoeconomic approach.

After Taiwan presenting here a good example on China's foreign assets to be used as geoeconomic capabilities, the triangular relation between China, Pakistan and India, has raised up its hand for help. So let us see what will-it come up with.

B- China's Assets in the Triangular Relation: China-Pakistan-India

In order to know China's assets in Pakistan and India, one must understand the reality of their trilateral relation first. Furthermore, to understand China's relations with Pakistan, one must understand the relationship of both of them with India on a first sight.

Pakistan was the first country to put an end to the official diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1950 and started an enduring "all weather-friendship" with China (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.121), in spite of the contrasting cultures and political systems of both countries (Shaffer, 2018). But unlike Pakistan, India's relation with China has witnessed many twists and shifts from friendship in the 1950s, passing by the confrontation that has increased with the border war of 1962, to different forms of conflicts and cooperation in the 1990s, which are lasting until now (Wagner, 2012).

Despite the frequent ups and downs, the triangular relations between these three countries had evolved in major ways: Before the rise of India to the ranks of global powers, New Delhi was a land of leverage to each of China and Pakistan which have considered each other for a long time as "a strategic hedge against India" (Sengupta, 2010). But after the evolution of India, New Delhi has also evolved from a simple hedge in the triangle into "a full and direct participant in its own right" (Afridi, 2010);

It can be plainly put here that there is an external force which stimulates the execution of all the dealings between the three countries of the strategic triangle, and that force is certainly the United States...

China's geo-strategy in Pakistan derives from USA's perspective and geo-strategy there, which considers Pakistan a persistent strategic zone of global combat, and is largely focusing on

the Pakistani affairs (Afridi, 2010). In other words, Beijing aims to have a strong relationship with one of the major concerns and interests of the United States – Pakistan – so it can overshadow the American influence there (Afridi, 2010).

Even if the interests of the United States and China are mutual in Pakistan, one major fact remains the same: Pakistan needs China far more than China needs Pakistan (Afridi, 2010); and as long as Pakistan is a continuous “headache” to the United States, Beijing’s influence over Islamabad, will be indirectly reflected as a source of high influence for Beijing in comparison with the United States (Perlez, 2013).

China’s influence is drawn wisely in Pakistan, especially vis-à-vis the United States’ and India’s strategies there... Therefore, when China detects that Pakistan’s acts are incompatible with U.S and India’s interests, it shows up as a ready supplier of large strategic choices and options to Pakistan.

The case of the killing of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 has sifted and garbled the American and Chinese attitude towards Pakistan: While the United States has over and over postponed the submission of F-16s to Islamabad, and has prohibited using them against India; China has accelerated a transact to sell Pakistan fifty more precedent fighter jets (J-10) (Kabraji, 2012) ... This is how China has benefited from the actual situation and used its skills and know-how techniques to increase its influence over Pakistan. And that was when the Pakistani military has authorized China to access the American Stealth Helicopter that has been destroyed and was abandoned during the attack on the compound of Bin Laden in Abbottabad (Kabraji, 2012).

On the other side, the fact that the American-Indian relationship was a subject of development and steady transformation since 2001, has caused the reinforcement of China’s

interest in Pakistan as an indirect barricade or hedge against the United States (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

The United States had recently reinforced its relations with India: In the period between 2008 and 2014, they have signed contracts for defense for over than \$ 9 billion, in comparison with less than \$ 500 million in the years prior to that period, as per the U.S Department of State (2014). Washington has also decided in 2010 to formally back India's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

It is true to think that the U.S support for India to stand out as a democratic power could hide the consequences of China's rise as a superpower, but the new complexities which had emerged to the trilateral relations between India, China and Pakistan due to the pre-mentioned U.S-Indian convergence, could not be overlooked (Tellis, 2014).

In 2013, specifically in May after the visit of Chinese premier Li Keqiang to India, Chinese apprehensions from the enduring strong relations between Washington and Islamabad had clearly manifested (Blackwill & Harris, 2017), and Li stated then that China would not like to know that India is becoming a "tool of other major countries, especially the U.S., to counterbalance, or check, or contain China" (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.123), especially that China engages India in several forums such as the Shanghai Pact (or SCO), BRICS, and through bilateral conferences (Tourangbam, 2020). And after that statement, India explained that New Delhi's policy aims to maintain equal distance between countries and not to be closer to one than the other (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Following this, the relationship between China and India has improved (Bajpae, 2015), and both countries witnessed constant interchange of political and official calls (Panda & Baruah, 2019). It is important to mention here that China's main concern in improving its relations

with India is not primarily to break the close ties between the United States and India, but also because of India's emergence as a rising power in the region (Gancheng, 2016).

Premier Li visited India in his first trip outside China after taking office, and that trip was itself a practical and concrete manifestation of China's geoeconomic power (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

For concluding, it can be stated here that China's choice of geoeconomic policies in its approach to Pakistan and India is obvious, especially that this region is strategic for Beijing (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ...

This fact opens the door for a substantial question about China's geo-strategy to rule the world... What are Beijing's plans, tactics and strategies to control Eurasia at the first sight in preparation for the ultimate control of the world? In the upcoming chapter, we turn to exactly answering these questions.

Chapter 2: Chinese Geo-Strategy for International Primacy

In order to achieve a global domination all over the world, many geopolitical theories were developed to constitute a base for major powers' geo-strategies; and as it has appeared in chapter one of the first part of this dissertation, Eurasia has always been the focal zone of all the main geopolitical theories designed by geopolitical experts: Mahan, Mackinder, Spykman, and Brzezinski, and aiming to form a theoretical commencement for superpowers aspiring for global domination.

And for China, Eurasia constitutes the strategic backyard, and its government has launched many initiatives to strengthen its country's influence over it, mainly the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Rolland, 2019). For the BRI, launched in 2013 by the Chinese President Xi Jinping, comprises two essential sections: The SREB: Silk Road Economic Belt, and the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century. The first road extends from China to Western Europe, and the maritime road prolongs from the Indian Ocean towards the Mediterranean Sea (Rolland, 2019) ... Experts see the inclusive Belt and Road Initiative of China – recognized as “a cross-border infrastructure-development project” (Rolland, 2019, p.10) – in its reality as “a reflection of the Beijing political elite's vision for a boarder, integrated Eurasian region helmed by China” (Rolland, 2019, p.10).

Through this BR Initiative, China has promoted five main factors: 1- Policy Coordination; 2- Infrastructure Construction; 3- Unimpeded Trade; 4- Financial Integration; and 5- People-to-People Exchange (Rolland, 2019). These factors carried with them a fundamental Chinese geo-strategy for a greater Eurasia mainly helmed by its government.

This chapter will hold the mission of discovery and dissection of this Geo-strategy in Eurasia, in order to understand the intellectual and ideological Chinese policies, and the manner in which the government implement them in Eurasia as first territory and then in the whole world...

And since this chapter mainly discusses China's geo-strategy, it is necessary to define the scientific meaning of a Geo-strategy in order to configure an inclusive and clear understanding of this new concept before diving into China's version of it in its foreign policies...

Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his book "**The Grand Chessboard – American Primacy and its Geo-strategic Imperatives**", has defined the concept of geo-strategy in stating that it is "**The strategic management of geopolitical interests**" (Brzezinski, 1997, p.XIV).

Herein, we understand that China's strategic management of its geopolitical interests in Eurasia constitutes by itself its inclusive geo-strategy in the continent. Therefore, this chapter will be divided into three main sections; the first one will present China's geopolitical interests in Eurasia, then discover its strategic management of these interests. In a way, this will help us in concluding the global geo-strategy of China in Eurasia, and can pave the road to the second section where we will understand china's geo-strategy mainly implemented to rule the whole world, through presenting Beijing's geopolitical interests in the Inner and Outer Crescents and describing its strategic way of management of these interests in order to achieve its final geopolitical goal: Achieving the International Primacy. As for the third section, it discusses separately through case studies, the Chinese geo-strategies in each of Taiwan and India-Pakistan.

But before diving into the depths of this chapter, it is necessary to mention that the local and foreign assets of China – as displayed in the previous chapter – meet with its geopolitical interests in a large framework, and configure together the whole image of its geo-strategy. But what differentiates between them, is that the geopolitical interests focus on the political power linked to

the geographical space, while the assets are the collected “instruments or tools”, that when wisely used, help the country to “extract” its geopolitical interests. In brief words, assets lead towards geopolitical interests, and geopolitical interests lead towards geo-strategies when strategically managed.

Section 1: Chinese Geo-strategy in Eurasia

In 1904, Sir Halford Mackinder has theorized that “whichever nation ruled the ‘World-Island’ of Africa, Asia and Europe would command the world” (Daly & Rojansky, 2018). In 2004, the General Secretary of China’s Communist Party, Xi Jinping, declared himself – in Astana, Capital of Kazakhstan – “the prophet, and China the engine of Afro-Eurasian integration” (Daly & Rojansky, 2018). This was when the real era of China’s global rise had begun.

In his same published article in 1904, Mackinder explained that Eurasia is the geostrategic fulcrum of world power and stated that China would expand its power well beyond its borders, in a way that would disturb the rest powers of the World, then mentioned that the Chinese foreign policies “might constitute the yellow peril to the World’s freedom just because they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region” (Mackinder, 1904, p.473).

Anyway, Mackinder continued in developing his geopolitical theory and Spykman followed his steps and theorized that: “Who controls the Rimland, rules Eurasia; and who rules Eurasia, controls the destinies of the world” (Spykman, 1944, p.43) ...

We can understand here that whoever aims to control and rule the destinies of the whole world should first control and rule the destinies of Eurasia... China is working hard on proving that it is one of the most important competitors in this international World game... In its daily challenge it is essentially working on special methods and geo-strategies that should lead it to the Euro-Asian throne, as a pre-step to the global throne.

This fact implicates that China possesses many geopolitical interests in Eurasia, and that its government is strategically managing them in order to finally achieve their fundamental goal of controlling Eurasia.

Hither, in the following parts of this section, we will first define China's geopolitical interests in Eurasia, then show up its strategic management of these interests, which will help us in concluding the whole geo-strategy that Beijing implements in order to achieve the final control overall Eurasia's lands.

A- Geopolitical Interests of China in Eurasia

“Eurasia is home to the most of the world’s politically assertive and dynamic states. All the historical pretenders to global power originated in Eurasia. (...) Eurasia is the world’s axial supercontinent” (Brzezinski, 1997). This is how Zbigniew Brzezinski described Eurasia in his article published on the 1st of September 1997... He also added that “a power that dominated Eurasia would exercise decisive influence over two of the world’s three most economically productive regions, Western Europe and East Asia... A glance at the map also suggests that a country dominant in Eurasia would almost automatically control the Middle East and Africa” (Brzezinski, 1997).

Herein, it appears “normal” that powers race and compete to develop the most distinguished strategy to manage and increase their geopolitical interests on the lands of that “supercontinent”, in order to preserve their position and strengthen them; knowing that there is a prevailing geopolitical pluralism on the map of Eurasia, and Brzezinski himself has designed a strategy to the United States to take advantage of this pluralism for its own benefit... That strategy has been divided into three phases of time:

- In the short term: U.S should consolidate and perpetuate the prevailing pluralism in Eurasia, to strengthen political maneuvering and diplomatic manipulation, in order to prevent the establishment of a hostile alliance that might challenge America’s interests (Brzezinski, 1997);
- In the midterm, the previously mentioned tactics should – if applied – contribute in the emergence of partners strategically compatible with the United States’ perspective;

- which might lead to the formulation of a cooperative system of security in the Eurasian continent (Brzezinski, 1997), that will protect America's geopolitical interests there;
- In the long term, what was previously applied in accordance with the presented steps “could become the global core of genuinely shared political responsibility” (Brzezinski, 1997).

It appears clearly here, that the United States' perspective – as per Brzezinski – aims to keep the existence of the pluralism, and manipulate it in its own way, in order to protect its geopolitical interests there, and prevent its competitors from achieving their own goals...

But China in its turn has its own interests to protect, to invest in, and to increase; and therefore, it has not accepted what has been proposed, and has neither acquiesced nor bowed... In contrary, it has implemented and still, its own way of managing its geopolitical interests, which are many in Eurasia, and which will be exposed in details in the following.

In one of his articles, Philippe Bonnet, has stated that: “From my perspective, Eurasia is becoming something more than a geography thing. From my perspective, Eurasia is becoming a full economic reality, because China is progressively making it count when the West is lagging” (Bonnet, 2018). That means that China played a tremendous role in increasing the geopolitical and geoeconomic importance of Eurasia; we will understand the “why?” and the “how” in the next handling.

- 1) ***The Vacuum of Influence:*** As presented above, there is no focal influencer on Eurasia, but it is the pluralism that governs it. The West's failing bids to settle down the region after the Cold War, in addition to the Soviet collapse, have led to the Eurasian downfall (Tsygankov, 2012). This by itself presents a major geopolitical interest for China... for

who could fill that vacuum of influence other than itself? You might think that Russia or India, or even Japan could do the job, but it is in fact impossible.

- Russia is a “complex patchwork between an energy superpower and a modern dictatorship with dodgy satellite friends” as Bonnet (2018) said. So it constitutes a very complicated mixture, and in addition it is still not a prime industrial partner in the region, therefore it is not certain that it could influence that supercontinent of Eurasia, or dominate the throne of its leadership (Bonnet, 2018).
- As for India, known as the giant manpower, it is true that it has a “huge market potential” (Bonnet, 2018), but it has never shown a will for being a regional leader, and neither has the ability to become one, despite its demographic potential of 1.8 billion people in 2030, as per the expectations (Bonnet, 2018). Furthermore, unlike China, the Indian economy is controlled by the private sector and therefore the government cannot force trade towards states or projects to achieve political goals (Lee & Gill, 2015). Nevertheless, geographically speaking, India does not share borders with any of the five Central Asian countries, and in fact is segregated from them by Afghanistan, the unsettled neighbor, and Pakistan the enemy one (Lee & Gill, 2015). This obviously constitutes a big challenge for India to connect itself to Eurasia, a hurdle that China does not face.
- Concerning Japan, the recent senior trade partner for Europeans and the state of significant economy since the 1980s, if it does not work on building an alliance with China and following its steps, then it will not succeed in its regional ambitions (Bonnet, 2018). On the contrary, Japan has shown its “willingness to follow in the ideological and geopolitical footsteps of the U.S” (Paramonov & Puzanova, 2018, p.141).

Moreover, and in accordance with what was pre-mentioned in the first part of this dissertation - Tokyo has failed since that period, in transforming its emerging economic potential and force into a comprehensive political power, as Baru (2012) stated in his article *Geoeconomics and Strategy*.

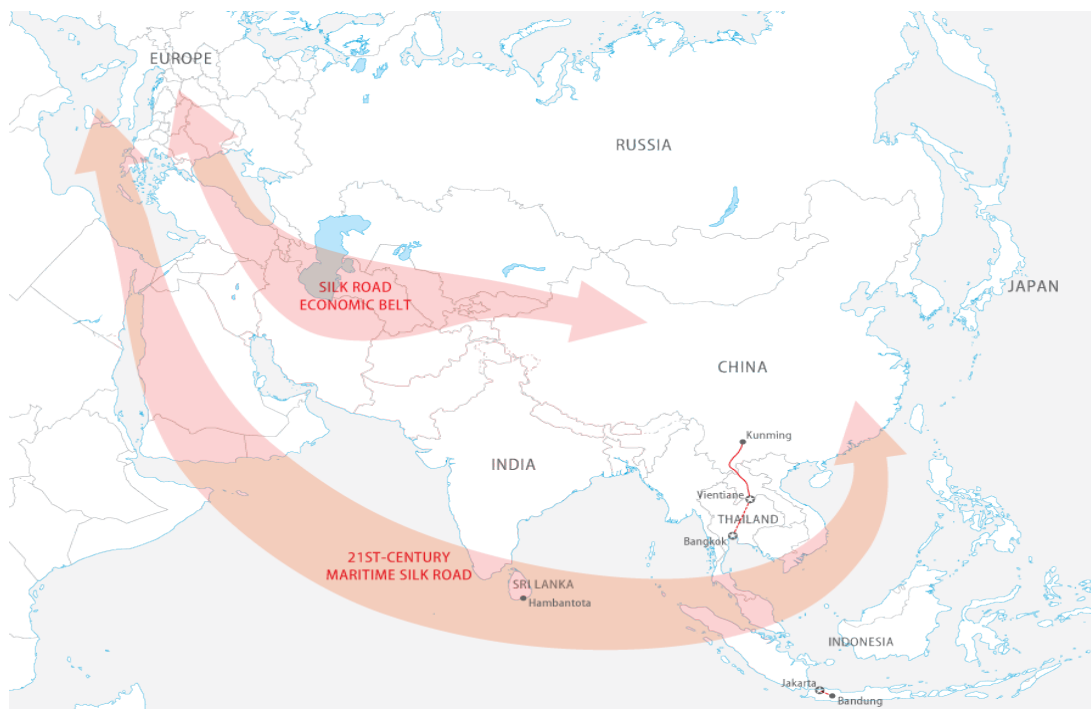
- As for powers and actors other than states, the organizations of APEC and ASEAN, are truly working on improving economic development in the region of Asia, but they also have no ambitions for becoming leaders there (Bonnet, 2018).

Thus, China will ‘fill the blank’ of influence in that region, which will make it (the region) bipolar: China on a side and Europe on the other (Bonnet, 2018) ... This conclusion has led to a new geopolitical interest aiming to strengthen the connections between these two sides of the region!

2) ***The Map of the One Belt One Road Initiative:*** Under this initiative – plainly explained and discussed in the previous sections of this dissertation - China was seeking “to build a network of infrastructure projects across Eurasia to encourage trade” (Chang, 2016). In other words, China sought to profit from the geographical, economic and political conditions, to occupy the Eurasian zone, and build connections between them and Europe under the pretext of trade... We do not deny that China seeks to strengthen its economic ties with Europe, but the main interest China is willing to protect and invest in through this initiative, is that of the real “Road Map” extending between these two sides. This is because the domination of this extent will lead in its turn to the command of the Eurasian continent...

In one of his articles, Moritz Pieper, - a lecturer in International Relations at the University of Salford – said that “an increasingly powerful China is playing its own long game with an eye on creating a new Eurasian order” (Pieper, 2018), controlled by its governmental interests and benefits... China looks able to manage that new geopolitical shift in its own way, and contain any other business interests or growing economic power emerging into the Eurasian lands, for it has protected the extremities of the continent through the OBOR Initiative, and the trade and economic ties “under construction” between Europe and its government... Briefly, China sees in the geographical space extending from its lands and seas to the European lands and seas, a major geopolitical interest, which if invested wisely and rationally, could lead to the creation of many other interests and to the increase of its current economic and political power, because of these two “crescents” it created around that Eurasian continent from the South to the West. (See Figure 10)

Figure 10: China’s Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road



Source: Chang, 2016

3) **Natural Resources:** The primary obsession of the Chinese leadership is the constant and dependable access to energy and natural resources to satisfy China's growing demand (Blank, 2006). As China aims to pursue its impressive economic leverage, its decision makers feature more prominently on their policies agenda, the necessity of the access to natural resources and raw materials (Cohen, 2003). They try to ensure the capability of China to face any main deficiency in resources, through focusing on Eurasia as "a source of major energy resources, water, and food" (Cohen, 2003).

The Chinese government has classified oil, water and grain, as "strategic commodities with maximum influence on economic development" (Cohen, 2003). Although Beijing is the fifth largest oil producer in the world, its demand surpasses its economic production, and as per the expectations, and knowing that China's oil demand is growing 5.8% a year, while its production is growing 1.7% a year; by 2020 it "will not be able to supply itself with oil, iron, steel, aluminum and other minerals" (Cohen, 2003).

Herein, Beijing started cooperating with its Eurasian neighbors in order to prevent its government from any expected insufficiency in oil, gas or raw materials, since their region is rich in these resources.

Chinese imports of these resources come from Russia (the third of its imports), Central Asia and the Caspian Sea, Middle East, Indonesia, Vietnam, and South – China Sea (Cohen, 2003):

- The high importance of the Sino-Russian economic partnership is already known to the international scene of economic relations: China take a pride from its neighboring with Siberia which contains "the large oil fields in Kovykta in the Irkutsk oblast; natural gas fields in Yakutia (Sakha); and coal basins and millions of acres of pristine forests"

(Cohen, 2003). In addition to that, the fastest growing Russian oil company, YUKOS, has agreed on plans to build a pipeline for gas extending to Daiqin, in North-Eastern China (Cohen, 2003).

Figure 11: Oil and Gas Pipelines between China and Russia (2014)



Source: Chang, 2016

- The good economic ties with Russia had also helped China in consolidating its relations with Central Asian countries, to ensure its access to their raw material resources from one side, and to prepare the land and the people there to receive Chinese influence, especially that it lacks strong political power always capable of controlling its hold (with the exception of Kazakhstan) (Coulombe, 2012). Knowing that Central Asia is a

region possessing subsoil rich in oil, natural gas, and minerals, which China is increasingly seeking to appropriate for the sake of its energy security (Coulombe, 2012).

As for Kazakhstan, China has already acquired developments rights for two oil fields in the Kazakh lands, through the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) (Cohen, 2003); and was studying in 2004, a project of 3000 km gas pipeline from Turkmenistan (Cohen, 2003); which became in 2018, according to Wood Mackenzie (2018), one of the largest pipeline projects in the world, consisted of three lines (A, B, and C) delivering gas from Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border to China.

Through connecting these pipelines, and those of Russian and Iran, China is looking to create the “Pan Asian Global Energy Bridge” (Cohen, 2003), a web of energy pipelines connecting oil suppliers in the Arab Gulf, Central Asia and Russia all the way to the Chinese Pacific Coast (Sliwa, 2010).

China and Russia are two superpowers, aiming to cooperate in establishing a “network of railroads and pipelines in Central Asia, building a Pan-Asian transportation corridor (the Silk Road) from the Far East to Europe and the Middle East” (Cohen, 2003).

By these projects and policies, China can ensure its energy security, its consolidated relations with its neighbors, and most importantly, its implicit existence along the entire territories of the region...

So, the geopolitical interest in Eurasian Natural Resources, when invested and developed by China, has under its pretext, paved a main road to its main goal: Imposing Chinese Influence on Eurasia’s Supercontinent.

4) ***Safe and Secure Borders:*** Since their independence from the former Soviet Union, the Central Asian Republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), have suffered from the legacy of a thirty years old problem at the time; the problem of regional and border disputes, which had put China in the face of the Soviet Union for so long (Kellner, 2008).

In 1991, Moscow and Beijing reached a common agreement to resolve the dispute in the Eastern sector of the border, but the one in the Western sector, linked to the Central Asian lands due to their geographical proximity, was not resolved at that time. This was what led to several problems that have undermined the integral relations of China and Xinjiang – a province in the far west of China, on the borders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, known for its separatist tendencies – because of that inheritance (Kellner, 2008).

That crisis has lasted for a long time, and has known no significant developments in terms of finding solutions from both of the conflicting parties' sides, in spite of the Chinese authorities' considerations (agreed by the Central Asian Republics) that resolving this dispute will contribute in mooring transparency on the border problem's issue, as well as in establishing peace and stability in the region (Xing, 1998).

Thus, China has found itself facing a border negotiations' problem, with a nascent political entity on the international scene... And after vigorous efforts and dozens of negotiations' rounds, China and the Republic of Kazakhstan have reached in the 10th of May 2002, the final agreement on resolving the crisis and demarcating the border (Kellner, 2008).

The Kyrgyz Republic was the second country to sign an agreement with the People's Republic of China to re-delineate the border, after undertaking the same stages of

negotiations between China and Kazakhstan, but for a longer period; they signed the final protocol of the agreement in June 2003 (Kellner, 2008).

Finally, for the Republic of Tajikistan and after several political and security obstacles, a final agreement was signed and the process of borders' re-demarcation has started in 2006 (Kellner, 2008).

What we are aiming to clarify from all this, is that China in the Central Asian region, especially in the Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan on its borders, has a high geopolitical interest in safeguarding its national security from any violation. This is because the Chinese province of Xinjiang located in western China, on the borders of these three republics, is a constant spot of instability for China throughout the History, is always condemned to secession, and constantly requires vigorous efforts from the Chinese government to maintain its "rationality". So China's settlement of border disputes with its Central Asian neighbors was primarily to suppress and prevent Uighurs in Xinjiang province to access foreign support (Fravel, 2007), for the sake of achieving national security.

Many analyses and studies have discussed Xinjiang fact; it is a "real colony" (Tesquet, 2009) on the Chinese territory; even though its name means "the new frontier", indicating the inevitability of its separatists' tendencies. It is a predominantly Muslim province which runs counter to the Chinese (Tesquet, 2009), and creates many violent clashes with them.

Briefly, it is a main geopolitical interest for China to maintain good relations with the Central Asian countries, especially with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan - as they border Xinjiang's region - in order to prevent any establishment of Central Asian blocs against China, in case of deteriorated relations with any of them. This is in addition to

prohibiting any infiltration of antagonists into the Chinese lands that would destabilize and violate the national security... Nevertheless, Pakistan (the birthplace of the Taliban) and India border that province from the south-west and this could increase the possibility of stealth of terrorists, drug dealers and saboteurs to the Chinese territory.

That forces China to continuously work on consolidating its relations with the Central Asian Republics, in order to protect its national security from any harm, for if violated and destabilized, all its future projects which are in process of implementation, will stop, and China will lose then all the geopolitical interests that it has tried to invest in and maintain, in the region.

At the end of this paragraph, we can conclude that China's main geopolitical interests in the Eurasian Region are represented by the vacuum of influence, the roadmap of the OBOR, the natural resources of oil, gas and minerals, and finally the maintenance of safe and secure borders, to protect its national security from any term of violation or harassment. This is without forgetting the presence of special interests in its relations with Taiwan from a side, and Pakistan and India from another. But how China manages and will manage these interests strategically, the answer will be provided by the upcoming section.

B- Strategic Management of China's Geopolitical Interests in Eurasia

“Any economic dysfunction has political implications” (Friedman, 2016). This fact has been leading China's strategic management of its geopolitical interests in its domestic and foreign policies; but before diving into that mechanism, one must first realize that China's relations with the majority of the countries of this region are essentially multidimensional and relatively complex since nothing there matters to China more than its geopolitical interests represented by:

1) *The Eurasian Vacuum of Influence:*

Knowing that with the presence of Russia, Japan, Korea and India, the pluralism governs the Eurasian region, but there is no focal influencer over it. This fact by itself has exposed China in front of a new major geopolitical interest. Filling the blank caused by the vacuum of influence in Eurasia is relatively the first geopolitical interest which we are waiting to see how China has been managing strategically.

2) *The Roadmap of the OBOR:*

After filling the vacuum of influence, a new geopolitical interest appears in the geographical space extending from the Chinese lands and seas to the European lands and seas, which could give birth to many other interests if invested wisely and rationally, and could also increase the Chinese current economic and political power, because of the roadmap it created around that Eurasian continent from the South to the West.

3) *The Natural Resources of Oil, Gas, and Minerals:*

The lack of developed investments in the sectors of renewable energies and natural resources existing in the region, fundamentally due in most of the cases to the authorities' weak strategies of control in terms of public facilities, and more specifically in terms of oil, gas, and mineral reserves, constitute a major geopolitical interest ensuring and guaranteeing the energy security of China.

4) *The Maintenance of Safe and Secure Borders:*

China has transformed the security threats against the weak zones of the Eurasian Region into a geopolitical interest that invokes its intervention under the pretext of combating these threats. This kind of intervention assists China in achieving its geopolitical influence over the region, and helps it in ensuring that its geopolitical interests are protected from potential danger and threats.

But we cannot neglect the fact that China has special assets in Taiwan and Pakistan and India – as described in the first chapter of this part – and that these assets are being transformed into geopolitical interests, holding a major attention of China's policy makers, and turning them into a specific geo-strategy for these specific zone of Eurasia. This will be discussed in the part of China's Strategic Management of its Geopolitical Interests in Asia.

Furthermore, and as per Georges Friedman, China has three main strategic imperatives (Friedman, 2016), aiming at safeguarding and investing in its geopolitical interests. Two of these imperatives are internal and the third is external and “unattainable in any meaningful time frame” (Friedman, 2016): First it must maintain its control over the province of Xinjiang and over the

Tibet (Friedman, 2016); second it must preserve its own regime and apply actions of repressions in order to prevent regionalism (Friedman, 2016); and third it must implement a definitive strategy in order to literally realize its main goal: becoming an international superpower.

Recently, according to Jacques (2019), we have witnessed huge transformations' projects in the infrastructure of approximately all the regions of the planet in a sudden and simultaneous way:

- 1) A new deepwater port, as per Jacques (2019), is being linked to a large road and rail network of 2,000 miles in Pakistan;
- 2) Jacques (2019) said that, in Montenegro, the first border-to-border motorway of the country is being laid through the roughest terrain of the nation;
- 3) As for the remote Kazakhstan, around a newly constructed massive rail terminal, a bustling town is springing up (Jacques, 2019);
- 4) A new-built bridge in Laos has recently broken the world record of the longest span between two piers (Jacques, 2019);
- 5) The landlocked country of Rwanda is being connected to the port of Dar El Salam in Tanzania through a new railway (Jacques, 2019);
- 6) Railways systems are being fund in Kenya, Ethiopia, Angola, Djibouti, and Nigeria (Tubei, 2018);

According to Jacques (2019), the common factor between all these projects (and many other more) is that they constitute parts of a global geoeconomic initiative done by one nation: China.

To achieve all that and to “carve out a vast swath of economic influence” (Seidel, 2019) in the entire Eurasian region, China’s government has been developing a geo-strategic plan ... Therefore, in these terms and context, the following will show up that plan in separated texts

starting with the one implemented in Europe, and passing by the Asian one, in a manner that could help us conclude the nomination of that great Chinese geoeconomic project.

1- China's Strategic Management of its Geopolitical Interests in Europe

Europe is constituted of three distinct zones as per Chinese investors: The West, the South, and the East; this portioning is based on variances in economic wealth, technological advancement, geographic location and institutional framework (Zeneli, 2019). And in a related context, China's interests in Europe are various: New technologies access, high-tech assets, knowledge, and most importantly commercial access to the markets, and entrance to third markets – such as the United States – through European corporate networks (Zeneli, 2019).

Herein, China has been increasing its footprint in the European investment in the last decade: “the Chinese FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in the EU has increased by almost 50 times in only eight years from less than \$ 840 million in 2008 to a record high of \$ 42 billion (35 billion euro) in 2016, according to Rhodium Group statistics” (Zeneli, 2019).

Chinese strategists realized then that strategic steps are essential milestones in the path of becoming a “critical player” (Zeneli, 2019) across Europe economically; and through reaching that goal, China could reinforce its inclusive influence all over Europe.

And if we return back to the Chinese strategic portioning of Europe into three main zones, we can easily affirm that Beijing has a diversified strategy for its investments there starting by focusing on “capital investments in the core EU countries” (Zeneli, 2019) and “complemented by large infrastructure development projects on its periphery” (Zeneli, 2019) ... What matters for us in this part, is China's strategy in Southern and Eastern Europe, knowing that its strategy

in Western Europe will be discussed in the forthcoming section, for, according to Zeneli (2019), China targets in that region the strategic assets and research and development networks in the wealthiest countries that are the main cause behind attracting those capital inflows from Beijing. This diversified strategy will be dissected below:

- In Southern Europe, China has strategically mastered how to benefit from the economic crises and its prerequisites through making its companies focus on “large-scale privatization process and post-crisis restructuring”, as per Zeneli (2019). Greece, Portugal and Italy can present a good example on what was pre-mentioned above;

For in Greece, the COSCO holding company (a giant Chinese state-owned enterprise), has earned 67% stake in the port of Piraeus known as the largest passenger port in Europe (Zeneli, 2019). Herein, this port has been considered “**China’s gateway into Europe**”, because, as Zeneli (2019) said, it has done a paradigm shift and has largely shortened the shipping times for Chinese merchandises and commodities by only one week. Through its involvement in European ports, China’s perception in Europe has changed from a merely trade partner to a political influencer (Van der Putten, 2019).

As for Portugal which has become the main receiver of China’s investments especially in energy markets (Pareja-Alcaez, 2016), and in terms of the per capita inflows to Europe, Beijing has taken part in the aftermath of 2010th financial crisis and invested with nearly 9 billion Euros in many assets such as “electricity, transportation, oil, financial services, insurance, health and real estate” (Zeneli, 2019).

And finally concerning Italy, where around 10% of China’s investment in the European stock market is being implemented; Chinese FDI there has approached 5 billion Euros in

2014, and when China gained over Pirelli (a multinational company based in Milan) through its state-owned enterprise ChemChina, Italy became the “top destination of Chinese FDI in Europe” (Zeneli, 2019). This acquisition permitted China to get access to “one of the most important car tires manufacturers globally, and an entry into the replacement market – a segment, until recently, dominated by the major European and Japanese brands” (Zeneli, 2019).

- As for the Eastern and Central Europe, according to Stojanovic (2019) in his article *China's Spreading Influence in Eastern Europe Worries West*, China has invested billions of dollars in different infrastructure projects. It has implemented and led major infrastructure projects in the region such as the high-speed railway from the Hungarian capital, Budapest, to Belgrade in neighboring Serbia (Stojanovic, 2019). This railway will connect with the Chinese-controlled port of Piraeus in Greece (Stojanovic, 2019), to benefit from it in the Chinese trade as an entry point for its goods to Central and Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, China is doing the “16+1 platform” in the Eastern, Southeastern and Central Europe, to combine together the largest number of European Union members and Non-European Union members; in other words, Beijing works on increasing its influential scale in this region knowing that there “acquisition prices are lower, demand for preferential lending is high, human capital is cost-effective, and concessions for Chinese investors are simplified” (Zeneli, 2019). These factors, in addition to the strategic location (above them all) transform the region into an ideal land of investments that attracts China’s strategists to develop plans aiming at attaining the main objectives of their Nation.

These objectives can be understood through remembering the transportation networks made available because of the execution of the One Belt One Road initiative, and through the sub-goals of investments and expansion of further capital within the European Union (Zeneli, 2019).

“Building Roads” was the Chinese great strategy to manage its geopolitical interests! This reminds us of the statement done by the president of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (a Chinese-led institution with more than 80 member countries), Jin Liqun to the Financial Times Magazine: “The Chinese experience illustrates that infrastructure investment paves the way for broad-based economic social development, and poverty alleviation comes as a natural consequence of that” (Frankopan, 2018, p.94). This is how China experienced how policy, infrastructure, and investment, can all together bring political and economic influence wherever they were implemented. This also reminds us of China’s vice minister of foreign affairs, Le Yucheng’s declaration to the Financial Times Magazine: “We Chinese often say that if you want to get rich, build roads first” (Frankopan, 2018, p.95).

He argued as well that the fundamental reason and the main cause of the weakness of some parts of the world is because of the “under-development of infrastructure” (Frankopan, 2018, p.95).

China’s strategy to manage its interests in Eastern Europe wafts from that point of view; that same article of Jamil Andrelini in the Financial Times effectively declared that the Belt and Road Initiative is designed to fix that under-development, flabbiness and slouch of many countries and their infrastructures (Andrelini, 2018).

Herein, the ties between Eastern Europe and China are getting stronger since 2013, the date when the official plan of building a westward economic corridor – the New Silk Road - has been developed (Chen & Mardeusz, 2015). This initiative has led in 2014 to a list of agreements between China and many East European countries such as Hungary, Serbia, Macedonia, to execute rail lines projects designed to reduce internal train travel times, facilitate cross-border transports and tourism, and enlarge and accelerate the movement of commodities and goods between China and Eastern Europe (Chen & Mardeusz, 2015).

These projects of developments, especially the OBOR, represent “a new structure of interactions between the older European economies and a rising Chinese power” (Chen & Mardeusz, 2015).

Many experts have declared that the New Silk Road has led to much transformation in the international politics and economics: “Economies traditionally based on resources extraction are transitioning to become transportation hubs, untouchable backwaters becoming regional centers of manufacturing, and previously irrelevant mid-tier cities becoming catalysts for high-tech innovation and consumerism” (Shepard, 2018). We can admit therefore, that there is literally one main power behind all these transformations and it is the Peoples’ Republic of China; mentioning that those railways and infrastructure development projects in Eurasia constitute a big part of the story (Shepard, 2018).

This conclusion paves the road to the analysis of China’s strategic management of its geopolitical interests in Asia, which might lead to a clear understanding of its whole geo-strategy in Eurasia, and furthermore in the world... Thus, the upcoming paragraph will take the mission of dissecting China’s plan to invest in its interests in Asia.

2- China's Strategic Management of its Geopolitical Interests in Asia

“China is now an economic powerhouse that all of the rest of Asia orients itself towards, and its policies on all matters are of crucial importance for the whole region” (Westad, 2012, p.9). But to attain that stage, China has experienced many strategies and policies, and has also passed many steps and milestones; thus what is distinguished in the Chinese path of evolution over the past 30 years, is its authentic “re-engagement with the rest of Asia” (Westad, 2012, p.8).

The history of China in Asia was so negative in terms of its relations with the Asian countries... According to Westad (2012), three decades ago it was like diplomatically isolated from the whole continent, having close ties with North Korea only. Beijing was even competing for position with Moscow in that period, and had territorial conflicts with all of its neighbors including North Korea (Westad, 2012)! From its perspective it was like that the Asian continent represented the world, and that world expurgated it from its midst (Westad, 2012). “The central kingdom was no longer central; it was distinctly peripheral to the rest of the continent” (Westad, 2012, p.8).

Studies and researches have affirmed that the reason of marginalization of China was mainly its policies contrary to its circumferences, and gradually its weak economic competition capabilities while other Asian economies were acquiring strong economic gains (Westad, 2012).

According to Worldometer (2019), if we compare these stories to what is happening nowadays, it would be very hard to believe that in the 1973 the Chinese GDP per capita was only about \$ 800 with 881.9 million of population, while in 2019 it has become \$ 16 800 with 1.419 billion of population, and projected to trend around \$19 700 in 2020. By mentioning

the population, we aim to shed light on the fact that it equals the double population of the rest of East and Southeast Asia put together (Westad, 2012).

That remarkable evolution happened because of policies China took to revitalize links with its neighbors, first those next-door and in a next step those in the Southern and Western regions of Asia (Westad, 2012).

China became today the second largest economy in the world, but what matters more than this achievement are the policies it has developed and the strategies it has implemented to achieve it, and that is what we are aiming to know from this paragraph.

In a study done by Robert Blackwill, in 2016 under the title of: *China's Strategy for Asia: Maximize Power, Replace America*, it was stated that the recent strategic goal for China is nothing other than “the accumulation of comprehensive national power” (Blackwill, 2016). Chinese strategists are convinced that without amassing the power necessary to ward off, prevent and deter its “enemies” from acting on their own, China could never attain its destiny neither achieve its strategic goals (Blackwill, 2016). This conviction is the main reason behind the will of extending and reinforcing power in all its dimensions: economic, technological, diplomatic, and even military (Blackwill, 2016).

Blackwill also declared that China, that entity which is at the same time an ancient civilization and a modern polity, “grand strategic objectives are not simply about desirable rank orderings in international politics but rather about fundamental conceptions of order” (Blackwill, 2016).

In other words, acquiring comprehensive national power could help China in increasing its internal control over its society, and in enhancing its capabilities in comparison with those of its rivals (Blackwill, 2016). To do so, China has four strategic objectives, fixed since the

revolution, in which it invests its powers even if the tools used to achieve them had varied over time (Blackwill, 2016).

According to Blackwill (2016), the four fixed strategic goals of China are:

- 1) *Maintenance of Internal Order*
- 2) *Sustainability of Economic Growth*
- 3) *Pacification of Extended Geographic Periphery*
- 4) *Reinforcement of the International Status*

However, the Chinese comprehensive strategy in Asia should resolve “the larger tensions between its economic and geopolitical strategies” (Blackwill, 2016). Herein, Xi Jinping’s foreign policy is known by its “willingness to use every instrument of statecraft, from military assets to geoeconomic intimidation, as well as explicit economic rewards” in order to “chase” the diverse geopolitical objectives of his country (Blackwill, 2016).

Xi Jinping’s strategy, as per Blackwill’s approach has been known for its “bullying over territorial issues and selective beneficence on economic matters, with the looming application of geoeconomic coercion ever present” (Blackwill, 2016).

This policy got reflected mostly in the Chinese relations with the Southeastern countries of Asia, which many of them are in territorial conflict with Beijing because of the competition over the South China Sea (Blackwill, 2016). China then tried to benefit from these rivalries over the sea to gain influence within those countries through implementing investments and offering them trade packages (Blackwill, 2016). Those geoeconomic actions, according to Blackwill (2016) were certainly coordinated centrally to protect and enhance China’s geopolitical interests in Southeastern Asia.

Thus, we will divide Asia into five main portions: South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Western Asia in addition to Russia, to easily comprehend China's strategy in all Asia:

- In South Asia shaped like a peninsula and bordered by the Indian Ocean to the South, the Bay of Bengal to the East, and the Arabian Sea to the West (Pariona, 2018), China has been leading – since the 21st century – multi-dimensional cooperation with all the South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Khan, 2018). And its relations with these countries have evolved to attain almost all fields: economic, communication, cultural exchange, energy, and even unprecedented security cooperation (Khan, 2018). It is also important to mention that this region of Asia, covering a total area of 2 million square miles, is distinguished by being the most densely populated area in the world: 1.74 billion which is nearly the quarter of the global population (Pariona, 2018).

By strengthening ties with the countries of this region, China can guarantee its access to the Indian Ocean and increase its presence in it, knowing that it “accounts for half the world's seaborne container traffic and 70 % of the total traffic of the world's petroleum” (Khan, 2018). This ocean constitutes a large geoeconomic interest for China, for it actually is the most used path of transit to a high percentage of oil and commodities (Khan, 2018). Nevertheless, the size of the Indian Ocean as the third largest watercourse in the world and its geographical position realize its significance in the global political sphere (Hassan, 2019). Herein, China's strategy concentrates on boosting its relations with South Asian countries as a part of the global policy aiming to extend its diplomatic and economic influence in Asia (Khan, 2018).

Moreover, China has been making efforts to acquire stronger influence over that ocean to guarantee its access to the natural resources vastly present there in case of any urgent interdiction that might occur due to the highest competition taking place through hostile states or any other opposite actor (Khan, 2018).

In other words, China essentially strives in protecting the lines of communication in the Ocean from any kind of hostility because of the high dependence of its economy on its natural resources (Khan, 2018). Furthermore, its desire to safeguard the ocean's channels of shipping is also due to its rising national interests (Becker, 2020).

Briefly, no one can deny that China has mastered its strategy in the South Asian countries, for it has managed to promote itself as impartial neighbor via its peaceful policies of non-interfering in their internal affairs, and has most importantly offered them billions of dollars through loans with low conditions and chased each opportunity of infrastructural investment (Khan, 2018).

Even India, that considers China's strategy in South Asia as "a design of circumvent", is also interested in expanding economic and commercial ties with China (Khan, 2018). Thus, they have signed 24 agreements and nearly \$ 30 billion business deals (Khan, 2018).

- As for Central Asia, politically divided into five countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan (Pariona, 2018), a specified strategy has been developed under the banner of "good neighboring" and challenging the United States strategic breakthrough which has had negative impacts on China's hard achievements to improve and enhance its relations with the countries of Central Asia, especially after the events of the 11th of September 2001. That breakthrough has also affected its national

security because of the American promotion of the idea of democracy in the independent republics, which has worried Chinese decision-makers from losing their influence there...

And to counter these worries, China sought then to work on improving its bilateral relations with each of the Central Asian countries apart, accompanied with strengthening the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Djalili & Kellner, 2006). And then, it has tried to exploit the cold relations between them and the U.S.A resulting from the “colored revolutions” wave that pervaded the region under the pretext of spreading democracy, in addition to the Iraqi war prerequisites (Djalili & Kellner, 2006).

These circumstances prompted the Central Asian countries to sign cooperation agreements with China: Uzbekistan signed in 2004 a joint declaration with China paving the way to deepening bilateral relations in various fields: politics, economy, energy, minerals, transports, communication, in addition to the mutual action against terrorism (Djalili & Kellner, 2006).

But before passing to another tactic, it is worth mentioning that all what was done has not protected China from the American competition of influence in the region, but it has protected its national security from the threat of separatist Uighur in Xinjiang province as a result of the joint anti-terrorism conventions signed by the Central Asian republics neighboring that province: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (Djalili & Kellner, 2006).

Central Asia, known by “the stans” based on the end of its countries’ names, covering a total area of almost 1.55 square miles with a population over than 69 million individuals, historically played an important role during the Silk Road trade epoch, in transporting

goods between China and Europe (Pariona, 2018). And this role is definitely going to increase in the time being.

- Moving on to East Asia, it is worth mentioning first that China's political influence over this region specifically has been historically enormous before the century of humiliation in which the Chinese dynasty was subjugated by the imperial powers (Beeson & Li, 2015). Over the past 30 years, and particularly since 2001 when it has joined the World Trade Organization, China augmented its engagement in the East Asian economic corporation in order to consolidate its global competitiveness (Guerrero, 2007). A remarkable shift targeted then the diplomatic strategy of the Chinese government, it has turned from that of a "developing country focused on issues of domestic concerns towards one that is taking regional and global leadership" (Guerrero, 2007).

2001 was the year of transition for China, it has then joined the World Trade Organization (Guerrero, 2007), and the Shanghai Co-operation organization was then formed (Cheng, 2013). Since then Chinese leaders became certain that multilateral regional organizations were highly beneficent for their country, because they represent a systematic operational mechanism which will definitely assist its government to manage its interests, increase its influence, and strengthen its soft power, in addition to bolstering multi-polarity (Cheng, 2013), whether in East Asia or all over the globe.

This transitional period was very fruitful, for China has since then developed its well-defined agenda and strategy which we are discussing in this dissertation (Cheng, 2013).

Through organizational multilateral cooperation, China aimed for reducing its threats in the region generally and in East Asia more specifically, for this area is one of the most

complex areas in the world, on the political and security levels (Sørensen, 2010). Taiwan's issue, Korea nuclear crises, North and South China seas conflicts, and many other minor disputes created continuous tension and put many obstacles on the rising road of China (Sørensen, 2010). Herein, Chinese decision-makers decided to pave another road to increase their economic, political and security influence in that region of Challenges. But before discussing the mechanism of paving that road, one must clearly understand the main causes behind China's interests in this specific region of the world, known for its high level of challenges and complexity, which has been definitely defining its policy in East Asia (Sørensen, 2010). The first main cause is that East Asia is the natural region of China, knowing that it is divided into eight countries and regions, which are: China, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau, and that China is the largest country among them all (Pariona, 2018). Second, this region has some of the most advanced technologies of the world, "which fosters economic development" (Pariona, 2018), and almost everything that positively contribute in increasing its economic leverage constitute a major interest for its decision makers. Without forgetting the conflicts and multilateral competition of control over North and South China seas, which had always been urging China to maintain and strengthen its dominance there...

When talking about the multilateral competition over the seas, Taiwan's case came up to mind again. This affair should be studied in one specific section aside as a short case study, to understand how china designs its geo-strategies based on its so-considered geopolitical interests; and this will be done by the end of this chapter.

For now, in short, in the majority of these pre-mentioned countries, or more specifically, in those existing in the strategic and geographic zone of East Asia, China has many

interests; and that is due to competitive visions or policies witnessed to benefit from each interest, which requires from China to design a specific strategy to supports its main aims there, in addition to always being ready to face any challenge that might arise.

- In its turn, Southeast Asia also represents a region of interests to China. First, it is politically divided into 15 countries and territories: Brunei, Cambodia, Christmas Island, Coco Island, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam (Pariona, 2018). Southeast Asia is the only region of the world that is located on both sides of the equator (Pariona, 2018). What characterizes this Southeast Asia the most according to Pariona (2018), is that its economy is rapidly developing, and Indonesia is Southeast Asia's largest economy and the region's only member of the G20.

Southeast Asia covers almost 1.74 million square miles with more than 641 million individuals (Pariona, 2018); and according to the Council on Foreign Relations (2018), China is increasingly becoming a dominant security and economic actor there, for it - according to several participants in a workshop made by the Council on Foreign Relations (2018) on how can the U.S encounter China's rise in Southeast Asia – is facing fewer obstacles there to the goal of being the dominant power, than those faced in any other region in Asia. According to Yunhua (2013), it is dominating and controlling strategic and economic institutions in the region through a comprehensive strategy that includes:

- Maintaining a peaceful surrounding environment;
- Realizing regional integration;
- Maximizing its own national interests;
- Promoting peace, stability and prosperity there.

This distinguished strategy is divided into six main aspects that will be clarified in the following paragraphs:

- 1) **Protecting Chinese Overseas:** China's strategy in Southeast Asia mainly targets protecting the Chinese and their properties in the mentioned region (Yunhua, 2013), for they are approximately 30 million – excluding those who became local citizens after receiving local Southeastern nationalities (Guotu, 2009). And as it is implementing this “going out” strategy, and promoting the subsequent effect of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, its investments in the region will definitively continue to increase, so its citizens and their properties will also do; that is why its duty is to protect them and secure them a stable environment which embrace their development (Yunhua, 2013).
- 2) **Advancing its Presence and Influence in the Region:** Although there are 30 million overseas Chinese living in Southeast Asia since a long period ago, it is only 15 years ago when the Chinese government started to deal with this region (Yunhua, 2013). Knowing that it is after the end of the Cold War, especially in the middle of the 90s when China started its “metamorphosis” to become an important actor which no one can ignore in that region. So due to the “new-born” relationship between China and Southeast Asia, its influence there cannot be compared to that of Japan or United States, this is why Beijing works strategically on advancing its presence and influence there, so it can compete from a position of strength.
- 3) **Safeguarding the Integrity and Unity of its Territorial Lands and Waters:** In its future foreign policy of Southeast Asia, protecting its national lands and waters' integrity and unity constitutes the hardest challenge to face (Yunhua, 2013). Although

all border conflicts between China and Southeast Asia were resolved, and the demarcation of the Beibu Gulf with Vietnam was successfully done, the sea disputes, often called by the South China Sea issue has not known any successful settlement (Yunhua, 2013).

But what is that issue about? According to the reporter of South China Morning Post: *“The South China Sea is a key commercial thoroughfare connecting Asia with Europe and Africa, and its seabed is rich with natural resources. One third of global shipping, or a total of US \$ 3.37 trillion of international trade, passes through the South China Sea. About 80 per cent of China’s oil imports arrive via the Strait of Malacca, in Indonesia, and then sail across the South China Sea to reach China”* (South China Morning Post, 2019). Herein, this Sea is subjected to competitions and rivalries between its river countries to decide who will impose its control and authority over it, and how to divide the shares... It is a historical conflict between China and Southeast Asian countries that has, until now, not known any final solution.

- 4) **Cooperating for a Just, Fair and Reasonable Regional Order:** While major powers: China, United States, India, Japan, and EU are present in the region since a long period ago, and since they are nevertheless competing to increase their presence and influence in the region; Chinese decision-makers work on developing a huge strategy that could create a balance between all of the pre-mentioned powers’ strategies, realize a peaceful coexistence between them, and define their shares of benefits to promote regional peace and development while avoiding further military and political conflicts (Yunhua, 2018).

5) Speeding-up Regional Integration for Mutual Development and Prosperity:

Chinese decision-makers work on transforming their nation into a pioneer country that leads economic cooperation in the region into a sustainable and long lasting development between the Southeast Asian countries and its government (Yunhua, 2018).

Thus, China was the first to put a systematic example for world's superpowers, for it has worked on establishing the Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN, and then Japan, the United States of America, India and South Korea followed its steps (Yunhua, 2018). The concept of FTA represents only the first step towards regional economic cooperation (Yunhua, 2018), and Beijing is evolving this idea to accomplish the development of its whole regional strategy.

6) Mutual Promotion of the New Global Political and Economic Order: Given that China and ASEAN countries shares almost the same interests and concerns, the mutual cooperation to contribute in the establishment of a new fairer, more just and rational political and economic order for the international benefit, is a must and prior issue to work on multilaterally as per the Chinese strategy for its Southeast Asian relations (Yunhua, 2018).

China has succeeded in building special relations with the countries of Southeast Asia, and this has changed their perception of China as a threat and propelled them for more profound political and economic interactions with their powerful neighbor (Astarita, 2008).

- As for Western Asia, located between Africa, Central Asia, and the Southeast of Europe, and covers 2.451 million square miles with 313.4 million individuals, is politically divided into 19 countries - the majority of them is known by the Middle East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, “Israel”, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, in addition to the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt (Pariona, 2018).

What distinguishes West Asia, is that it has several points of large access to water: The Aegean Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea (Pariona, 2018).

Strategically speaking, West Asia constitutes an important part of the economic corridor of the OBOR initiating from China, and passing by Central Asia to finally attain its European destination. That is one of the main causes behind China’s recent positive progress in terms of “policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bond” (Youwei & An, 2018) with West Asian countries.

Herein, and within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative taken by President Xi Jinping, Western Asia region have become prior to China’s foreign policy (Ghiselli, 2018). This Chinese perspective is based on the natural resources existing in Western Asia, more than the rich European markets; In fact, these resources constitute the real targets of the BRI in contrast to what is being publicly promoted about the European markets as main target – as stated by many researchers (Jian, 2017).

Therefore, Chinese presence in Western Asia is most likely a presence of short and long-term trades and investments; economically and diplomatically with a high precision on not

to publicly politicize the carried-out projects in the region. However, its presence in the Middle East seems like a new alternative to that of the United States; and as it expands day after day, every decision of “where to invest or with whom to trade is going to be increasingly politicized” (Ghiselli, 2018). And this cannot be avoided, for China’s capability to influence the course of events there is continuously growing (Ghiselli, 2018), and most of all, unpredictable but without any need to rely on its military power.

- Reliance of major energy producers in the region on China;
- Chinese demonstration that its dependency on the natural resources of the region is decreasing;
- Chinese imposition of its preference in oil contracts;
- Chinese improvement of its energy security...

All these factors above (Ghiselli, 2018), and many others, prove that China is capable to determine the economic future of most of the countries engaged in all the regional hotspots (Ghiselli, 2018). And by any action related to the West Asian countries taken by its government, China will affect the course of events in the region; this is why each and every step should be very deliberate and thoughtful in order not to ruin what was hardly built through efforts of trade and investment in any country of the region.

For example, “China has bought oil and gas from both Sunni and Shiite countries without showing evident preference” (Ghiselli, 2018). It has interacted with both Saudi Arabia and Iran without any distinction (Shichor, 2006), for if it has done otherwise, its policies might be understood, or most precisely might produce impacts similar to military interventions prerequisites. And this is in fact what Chinese decision-makers always aim to avoid.

Before concluding, one must not forget that West Asia, is a “dangerous” region of the world, for its countries “mostly speak the language of hard military power” (Ghiselli, 2018), but China is aware of the challenges and difficulties resulting from investing in these countries. And in their turn, these countries are not objecting or refusing to deal with China, knowing that it has a good reputation among them, for it has never shown them any interest of being significantly present militarily, but at the same time “can already, and will increasingly be able to exert direct influence on their fortunes” (Ghiselli, 2018).

- And here we come to the Russian Federation, the country that occupies and covers all the northern part of Asia’s continent with almost 143 million individuals (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). China’s relationship with this country has evolved since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Burles, 1999). Both countries declared in 1996, a new “strategic partnership”, and since then the strategic aspect of the bilateral relationships “attained a prominence not seen since the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s” (Burles, 1999, p. ix). This course of good relations has not continued for a long period due to the non-stop growing power of China, which has threatened Moscow’s leaders and paved the road behind prolonged tensions and suspicions between these two powers (Burles, 1999). In other words, as China’s power increases, its visualization of the idealistic world order is probably to deviate from Russia’s perspective (Bolt, 2014).

Herein, the framework of China’s strategy in Russia is based on four considerations (Burles, 1999, p.5):

- 1) **China's desire of stability on its borders and frontiers provinces;**
- 2) **China's aim to reinforce the economic development of specific inland regions;**
- 3) **China's growing needs of energy and natural resources;**
- 4) **China's concerns over its regional and international positions after 2001.**

In the light of these factors, Chinese decision-makers give greater attention to strategic considerations such as their foreign policy towards Russia, rather than any other less fundamental country (Burles, 1999).

However, Sino-Russian relation has known many ups and downs, especially when it comes to their relative views on world order (Bolt, 2014). Chinese experts on Russia see that the newest BRI project secures them a foothold in the Russian territory through its eastern stretch; and that will help it to lay the groundwork for specific geopolitical plays in the future (Lian, 2018).

And according to Lian (2018) in her post at the Council on Foreign Relations, even though China strategically works on consolidating its influence in the Russian lands through economic development, it still treads a fine line between Russia the collaborator and Russia the competitor.

But from another side, the Russian competition with the West over Ukraine has weakened its influence there, and has left it with no choice but to rely on Beijing's assistance in finance and economic development (Lian, 2018). This weak and needy Russian position was in its turn a great opportunity for "an energy-hungry China eager to diversify its energy sources and enhance its strategic positioning" (Lian, 2018).

When talking about energy, we should mention that Russia's influence regionally and internationally is in fact dependent on its energy and arms exports, as per Lian (2018). But

what is recently happening in the events course of many regions of the world including the Middle East, Africa and Europe, China is literally challenging Russia's role as a major energy and arms supplier through infrastructure investments as a consolidation of its geopolitical assets in these regions (Lian, 2018).

In short, Sino-Russian relations are an authentic reflection of superpowers' double-standards in cooperating over mutual interests and competing over others. And this issue by itself needs to be studied alone regarding its academic and scientific value; however, it will be discussed in the final section, so it can be presented and clarified in a way that serves the main purpose of this dissertation.

But before that, we should get back to Taiwan's case study, to have one clear image about how china strategically acts in terms of managing its geopolitical interests in one country in Asia, which is Taiwan – as chosen here.

Therefore, we might say that the Chinese regional strategy in Asia is getting reshaped day after day based on its competitors' actions and re-actions, vision and strategies for that region of the world... But what is always stable and fixed is China's goal of stabilizing the rise of its international status as long as it is achieving its geoeconomic goals.

After the Cold War, China has witnessed a rapid rise that pushed its decision-makers to work on a stable region in order to attract sustainable development and prosperity... But what matters the most to China is to transform this stable and peaceful environment into "an important foundation for the country to promote connection and integration with the international political-economic system" (Hsu, 2007, p.47).

As Robert Zoellick stated, China took the role of a “responsible stakeholder” in the international community while pursuing the status and influence of a major power (Zoellick, 2005). Herein, being a “responsible stakeholder in the international community” is not an easy task, for it requires strengthening relations with neighbors while concentrating on its national economic development at the same time. Thus we can clearly understand the cause behind relying on multilateral organizational cooperation...

The recent evolution of China after a decade of marginalization and underdevelopment, transformed it into a fully integrated country in the international community, and even more China became today “the most dynamic country in the world in economic, political and military terms” (Zoellick, 2005, pp.2-3).

But what is really interesting in this concern is that many articles and studies have discussed the probability of China being a revisionist power in East Asia, or contrary being a status-quo power: Alastair Iain Johnston has done a study entitled: “*Is China a Status-Quo Power?*” (Johnston, 2003); Nitchakan Hongkarnjanapong wrote “*Is China a Revisionist or Status-Quo Super Power?*” (Hongkarnjanapong, 2016); Joseph Cheng discussed the same idea in his article “*China’s Regional Strategy and Challenges in East Asia*” (Cheng, 2013), Camilla Sørensen in her turn also talked about this theory in her study: “*China’s Role in East Asia*” (Sørensen, 2010); Suisheng Zhao also treated this problematic in his study: “*China as a Rising Power versus the US-led World Order*” (Zhao, 2016), and recently Graeme Dobell wrote in *The Strategist*: “*The US and China: Status-quo Powers in Revisionist Time*” (Dobell, 2018).

Briefly, and based on the foregoing, although political scientists had a general consensus on the main idea, but there was a range of different perspectives that defined whether China is a status-

quo or a revisionist power. These perspectives will be shortly discussed in the following, after defining the terms of status-quo and revisionist powers.

“Whereas revisionists seek to change the way things are in international politics, status-quo seekers strive to preserve things as they are” (Davidson, 2006).

In other words, the state is described by a status-quo power when it wants things to stay like they are on the international scene, while a state is described by revisionist when it wants to change the existing status-quo. Steve Chan defines a status-quo state as a satisfied one that endorses the present norms of the global order (Chan, 2004). Similarly, Randall Schweller in his book *Deadly Imbalances*, explains the concept of status-quo powers as those which are pleased to keep the fundamental features of the current international system, and he contrasts it with that of the revisionist powers as those which call for changing the already instituted order for the sake of promoting their growth and reputation in the system (Taylor, 2007).

As per Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson: “The policy of the status-quo aims at the maintenance of the distribution of power as it exists at a particular moment in history” (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1978, p.46). They also stated that: “which leave intact the relative power positions of the nations concerned are fully compatible with a policy of the status-quo” (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1978, p.46).

In the same context but from the point of view of the founder of the Power Transition’s Theory A.F.K Organski and the theorist Jacek Kugler, the Status-Quo States are those who put the rules of the game and always work on benefiting from these rules, in contrary to their “challengers” – the Revisionists who do efforts to take a new place for themselves in international society in

accordance with their power; which means that they implement strategies to recreate the rules due to their general dissatisfaction on how the relations among nations are working (Organski & Kugler, 1980).

China is once described by a status-quo power and another by a revisionist one whether in Asia or in the world international community; and that is what we are going to clarify – in short – in the upcoming paragraphs.

In the past few years, specifically in the United States Strategies for National Security as per The White House (2017) and for National Defense as per the U.S. Department of Defense (2018), China was identified (in addition to Russia), as a revisionist state. This statement was done because of the American assessment of the international situations and circumstances which provides that China constitutes a central challenge for the United States because of its intention to reshape the world to be consistent with its authoritarian model (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018).

Thus, in the American perspective, China is described by a revisionist power due to its “leveraging of military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantages” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018, p.2). The National Defense Strategy pursued in clarifying that statement by declaring that “As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018, p.2).

Furthermore, in the Shangri-La Dialogue that took place in Singapore in June 2019, Patrick Shanahan – the acting US Defense Secretary – and while echoing the US Department of Defense’s Report about the Indo-Pacific Strategy (which define China as a revisionist state), has warned the

Asian countries from China, saying that “the greatest long-term threat to their safety and prosperity would be a rising power which seeks to undermine the rules-based international order” (Jiangyu, 2019). In other words, US is warning the world, and most specifically China’s neighbors, from the Chinese policies, identifying China as a revisionist power.

Herein, China refuses these false “accusations”, and in the same Dialogue, Wei FENGHE, the Chinese minister of Defense, had a speech that aimed to reassure the world community, and most specifically its neighbors, that China’s intentions are to pursue the peaceful development, and that its country does not seek hegemony.

However, and for not getting so long in explaining this point, we can say that China is a rising power, and no one can deny it. But what causes different opinions in this concerns, is that China aims daily to become a more dominant player on the international scene; and to do so, it has to take the place of an already existing dominant player.

This fact threatens the United States and constitutes another proof that supports its opinion about China being a “revisionist state”. But, from the Chinese side, the fact that their state is a rising power aiming to extend its dominance does not mean that it is aiming to break up the international recognized rules and customs, or even the international order: “its rise is not a challenge to the World Order” (Jiangyu, 2019).

To conclude, we should say that the two different opinions concerning whether China being a revisionist or status-quo power, are caused by the different understandings of respecting the World Order... As per the American perspective, the international world order was created seventy years ago by their own efforts, and any violation of its policy or any threat that might attain its principles will be considered as a revisionist policy aiming to destroy that order (Drzener, 2019).

In contrary, and as per the Chinese perspective: pursuing wealth, power and influence, becoming richer, stronger, and more advanced than other countries, building partnerships and maintaining harmonious relations with other states for a long term, are not prohibited by the international order (Jiangyu, 2019), thus they are not considered as violation or intentions to destroy it.

However, both perspectives are logically interpreting the point of China being a revisionist or a status-quo power, therefore, both of them are right in their arguments... Thus, in my point of view, China is neither a status-quo power nor a revisionist one... but it should be considered as a neo-revisionist power which seeks dominance without changing the recognized rules of the World's Order:

- 1) Working on its national and regional stabilization;
- 2) Investing in this stability to establish harmonious connections and integration with the international system;
- 3) Geoeconomically influencing the international community, and most specifically the community of its neighbors;
- 4) Concentrating on its economic leverage, political development and military strength.

These four terms justify that China has a rational distinguished geo-strategy implemented to influence the Eurasian part of the globe without being a revisionist power, neither being a “lazy” status-quo one... In conclusion, what was explained in the previous section constitutes the Neo-Revisionist Strategy of the Peoples' Republic of China in the region of Eurasia.

The necessary measures to expand its influence over the Eurasian region of the world appear clearly in its geo-strategy to rule that region, but China does not stop its efforts to protect them,

implement them and enforce them to make a difference in the world's policies in a way that ensure the realization of its achievements leading into a distinguished model of global governance. "Under the Xi Jinping leadership, China has adopted a more assertive foreign policy that, in contrast to the behavior of the past leadership, confidently asserts China's status as a great power" (Wilson, 2019) ... And by analyzing its actions and reactions in implementing its potential to "edit" the international image of the World Order without violating its standards, we can reaffirm that China's geo-strategy in Eurasia is very accurate and requires a high level of precision to get applied... This geo-strategy shall be nominated by the Neo-revisionism.

And now, what are the characteristics of the ones implemented in the remaining regions of the World? In Africa, Australia, Western Europe? Are they similar to that of Eurasia? What about the American continent? This is what the next section of the chapter will be carrying on.

Section 2: Chinese Geo-strategy in Africa, Australia, and Western Europe

The fast and precipitate increase in the economic (and military) capabilities of China, influenced the worldview of Chinese leaders and decision makers, especially that of President Xi Jinping and his lieutenants (Bekkevold, 2016) ... They are assuming that China has economically developed a new “muscle” which “entitles it to a position of greater international respect” (Bekkevold, 2016, p.5). This assumption has had impacts on China’s foreign policies and strategies and turned them into “more assertive” ones (Christensen, 2015).

China has known a big shift in its foreign policies “from being a low-profile player in international affairs to taking a “can-do” approach in her foreign policy” (Bekkevold, 2016, p.5). And since then, Beijing’s strategic thinking is gradually upgrading in the framework of its rise... Chinese peoples had also pushed their leaders to take action in order to enforce the foreign policy of their nation and globally reflect the reality of that great power of China (Bekkevold, 2016). Chinese leaders responded to their peoples’ request for they are conscious of the national stability importance and of its impact on their nation’s position in the international order as superpower.

Hence, in November 2012 and before being elected as President, Mr. Xi Jinping promoted a new slogan “China’s Dream” ... And re-used several times in his first speech to the nation as the head of state on 17 March 2013 (BBC News, 2013) ... Since that, “China’s Dream” slogan turned into a political campaign, then became a demarcation of the Chinese policy internally and externally... But what does this dream mean?

In his first presidential speech according to BBC News (2013), Mr. Xi said: “We must make persistent efforts, press ahead with indomitable will, continue to push forward the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and strive to achieve the Chinese dream of great

rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”. So he was then promoting the “rejuvenation” of China and declaring that it will be his leadership policy in the days to come... He talked about the Chinese spirit highly required to build the Chinese road showing respect of nation and time, and ensuring the implementation of reform in addition to innovation in the future projects policies (BBC News, 2013).

Xi Jinping’s “Dream” is to “make China the world’s dominant power” according to the retired Chinese colonel Liu Mingfu, who published a book in 2010 entitled “*The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-America Era*” (Mingfu, 2015). Jinping has numerously stressed on that dream but has less specified how to practically transform it into reality...

In the last section of the Chapter, we have seen how China is being managing its geopolitical interests in Eurasia as a neo-revisionist power achieving a large part of the dream... And in this section, in order to perceive the geo-strategy of China in the other areas of the globe: Africa, Australia and Western Europe, we will discuss how the remaining part of the dream is being achieved there before overlooking the Chinese presence over the American Continent by its end.

China’s strategies and policies in most of the regions of that planet are being interpreted as attempts to expand its “sphere of influence”; and the world is now witnessing China’s steps towards achieving its DREAM... In order to realize it, China should be expanding the process of spreading and imposing its influence over Africa, Australia, in addition to the West of Europe, and not to limit it in the region of Eurasia exclusively.

Such policy constitutes a mechanism of achieving an increase in power to face any probable encirclement that might be caused by China’s number one rival: The United States of America...

This is why the Chinese decision-makers developed particular geo-strategies and policies related to Africa, Australia and the West of Europe...

In the upcoming paragraphs, China's geopolitical interests in these pre-mentioned areas will be displayed and discussed; paving the road behind treating the way these interests are strategically managed in each region sequentially, starting from Africa, passing by Australia, arriving to the West of Europe with a brief overlook on the American continent.

A- China's Geo-Strategy in Africa

"China has taken the lead in the general competition for the control of the African Wealth (especially in the Congo) to the point that we speak today of the Chinafrica as we do about Françafrique – but with a very important difference: its influence is not limited to a traditional zone of influence, as is the case with France" (Rousset, 2018).

Overall, China is considered as a key player in the global governance... And as stated by Francois Godement, it practices a selective engagement through choosing its battles and investing its diplomatic resources only when clear gains are at stake for its interests (Duchâtel, 2017).

And by taking strategic steps and moves towards Africa, China is being clearly choosing its battles in a way compliant with its main aims and goals... But why choosing that region of the world to lead battles on? What are the reasons behind that "scramble" for Africa? There is no doubt that Beijing has found many geopolitical interests for its nation there, let us define what they are and how is it strategically managing them:

The first primary motivation behind China's move towards Africa are African Raw Materials, that satisfies China's need to secure a solid base of materials strengthening its own rapidly growing economy; in addition to satisfying its desire to increase its global leverage

politically, and economically through benefitting from the major growth opportunity granted by the African emerging economic markets (Maverick, 2018). These interests and their strategic management will be clarified in the below bullet points.

1- African Raw Materials: Fuel for China's Growing Economy

As mentioned above, the rapidly growing economy of China needs fueling to pursue its well-being and growth... That fueling shall be secured by high percentages of raw materials, and due to its rich-abundance in raw materials, Africa became the major destination of China...

Africa's continent is estimated to contain "90% of the entire world supply of platinum and cobalt, 50% of the world's gold supply, two-third of world's manganese, and 35% of the world's uranium" (Maverick, 2018). And what will also help in clarifying the reasons behind China's destination towards Africa is that this continent "Accounts for nearly 75% of the world's Coltan, an important mineral used in electronic devices, including cell phones" (Maverick, 2018). This reminds us of Huawei, the telecommunications enterprises that is one of the largest groups in terms of international contracts (Duchâtel, 2017). Huawei now is more than an enterprise; it is a different way of "geopolitics" ... This thesis has no room to discuss the fierce competition between Apple and Huawei, but it is clear for all that this competition constitutes a tech cold war based on the implementation of geopolitical capabilities in a geoeconomic warfare between two fierce rivals... And one of the main causes behind their scramble for Africa could be understood after knowing that African countries are rich in Coltan.

Chinese decision-makers recognized their nation's need for natural resources, and product markets, that is why they focused on rich Africa and done huge investments in its nations. "By working to secure a solid base of critical raw materials, China strengthens its economy for decades to come" (Maverick, 2018).

And after mentioning the product markets, we opened the door behind another main geopolitical interest for China in Africa, the new emerging economic markets.

2- African New Emerging Economic Markets: A Magnet for Chinese Investments

Known for its economic pragmatism, China has carefully studied all its investments projects before implementing them... Beijing has already heavily invested in Asian markets, as well as in Latin and South American markets (Maverick, 2018), but it is reconsidering now, where its primary benefits, interests and opportunities really exist, in which emerging economic markets...

Chinese leaders found in the African markets, a treasure providing chances "to take advantage of excellent growth opportunities both for political reasons and investment returns" (Maverick, 2018).

Thus, China urged to profit from continuing economic development in Africa, through investing via state-owned investing firms giving their nation a notable competitive edge when it comes to providing support for companies aiming to invest in African countries (Maverick, 2018).

In other words, China became a stakeholder in Africa in terms of investments, assisting companies to execute their projects in addition to monitoring their execution; and these

companies can obtain substantial subsidies from the Chinese government (Maverick, 2018).

This point leads our minds to think about the political interest/benefit for China extracted from its economic existence on the African lands.

3- Underdeveloped Countries of Africa: A Political Motivation for China

In addition to benefiting from African raw materials, and investing in African new emerging markets, China finds in the African continent a primary place to extend its geopolitical influence (Maverick, 2018). We previously concluded in the last section of this Chapter that China is already the preeminent power in Asia, competing with India, Pakistan, Taiwan, Japan, and in a different manner Russia...

And what is new for the international order, is that china is becoming extremely powerful in the African continent also, extracting its political influence there from its large economic investments in African infrastructures...

Holding a considerable political alliance with African underdeveloped nations, make them relying on China's existence there, on its aids, supports, and investments... As a matter of fact, China's foreign investment in Africa is higher in the weak governance countries than those with relatively better governance environments (Chen et al., 2018). And this constitutes a major geopolitical interest exclusively existing on the African lands, leading to a global presence if correctly managed.

In addition to these three main geopolitical interests, China sees in the unsecure environment of Africa, a major opportunity from which it is benefiting and spreading its geopolitical influence

to the nations that really need a strong political and economic control... Thus “a number of African countries (particularly those with natural resource endowments) have come to occupy center stage in Chinese foreign policy, as potential sources of raw materials to fuel China’s growth” (Power & Mohan, 2010, p.1), and as a potential source of competing great powers such as the United States and reaping a distinguished control with respect to the non-interfering standard.

Herein, this is the way used by China to manage and invest in these geopolitical interests strategically ... As for now we will move to displaying its geo-strategy in Australia.

B- China’s Geo-strategy in Australia

China has many attempts at influence over the Australian continent, and in numbers, Beijing benefits from having a large presence there:

- “In 2017, Australian exports to China accounted for 30% of its total exports” (Fournier, 2019);
- “Chinese tourism in Australia grew by 13% in one year, precisely 1.4 million Chinese persons spent more than 8.7 billion Euros” (Fournier, 2019);
- “Of the 500,000 foreign students in the country, 30% are of Chinese origin. They brought 7.8 billion Euros in 2017” (Fournier, 2019).

By looking into Australia, China seeks strategic influence, aiming to become superior in terms of economics and technology, without losing the Australian respect securing its freedom of action to work on attaining its goals (Jakobson, 2019) ... And from the other side, it wants Australia to accommodate its geopolitical interests in a way that helps it to

become more confident in competing with the United States, through constructive and cooperative relations with the Australian nations (Jakobson, 2019).

Chinese leaders and investors see that Australia is safer and more attractive for investments than most other countries (Hendrischke, 2019) ... Their direct investments by industry in 2018 comprehended Healthcare (41.7%), Commercial Real Estate (36.7%), Energy: Oil and Gas (8.8%), Mining (5.6%), Renewable Energy (4.8%), Infrastructure (1.2%), Food and Agribusiness (1%) and other services (0.2%) (Hendrischke, 2019).

However, on the security perspective, China wishes that Australia constitutes a constructive factor for its peaceful rise. On the economic side, China wishes that its relation with Australia secures sufficient and sustainable resources and energy supplies for its needs (Liu & Hao, 2014).

Herein, Chinese geopolitical interests in Australia could be understood through the understanding of its national interests... And they are divided into two major sections as mentioned above: the security interests and the economic ones.

1- Security Interests: China's Main Obsession

The unequal balance between the trilateralism of U.S.-China-Australia, where the United States was a global superpower, China a major power, and Australia a middle power, affirms the validity stating that China's main interest in Australia is the interest of security (Liu & Hao, 2014). And that is because China's presence in Australia is affected by the American factor's influence.

As per the American perspective, the rise of China in the Asia-Pacific region also became a concern for Washington affected by the growth of China's influence there (Liu & Hao, 2014).

Thus, the interests of security are mutual interests between two main rivals, while Australia – being the weakest leg – enjoys its favorable position in dealing with two big competitors (Liu & Hao, 2014).

And since Australia is in the Chinese periphery, and the United States of America is considered the most important strategic ally in the Asia-Pacific Area (Liu & Hao, 2014), Chinese leaders called up to persuade Australia that it has been blindly following the United States, which exposes it to the threat of sustainable exploitation. At the same time, Chinese decision-makers worked on developing a counter policy of building partnerships and friendships with Australia, to ensure a peaceful and secure neighboring.

This counter policy aims to protect China's geopolitical interest of security, knowing that Chinese leaders were precautious from U.S. encirclement for their country, to implement a containment policy targeting its economy and markets due to its safe strong presence in Australia (Liu & Hao, 2014).

2- Australian Resources and Energy Supplies: China's Economic Aims

Australian economic resources of energy play an important role in defining China's geo-strategy there, for they constitute a main geopolitical interest in the eyes of its leaders.... Thus, importing Australian resources became “an important source of raw materials and energy for China's domestic thirst for growth” (Liu & Hao, 2014, p.384).

China became Australia's "largest trading partner, largest export market, and largest import source since 2010" (Liu & Hao, 2014, p.384). And by its economic engagement there, China made Australia highly depending on its trade with it. Herein, we should not forget to mention that ChAFTA (China-Australia Free Trade Agreement), which has been complemented by China and Australia in 2015, has played an important role in achieving this successful economic interaction and considered "as 'a 21st century model' for Asia-Pacific trade agreements" (Hsieh, 2018, p.923). This free trade agreement displayed China's utmost engagement not just with Australia, but with the global economic system (Hsieh, 2018).

China sees in Australia a significant energy provider especially in moments of fast economic leverage, and due to its aim of being an extensive development model, its need for resources and energy has "skyrocketed" (Liu & Hao, 2014, p.386), so Australian decision-makers, and because of the dependence of their state on the Chinese trade, considered that providing China with resources and energy supplies will positively influence and determine the character of their future bilateral relation (Liu & Hao, 2014).

Furthermore, according to Liu and Hao (2014), the two indispensable materials for Chinese industrial development and economic construction: The Ore and Coal are found in Australia. So they became the top two imports of China from Australia.

The iron Ore became highly needed because of the increase in consumption of the crude steel in which the iron ore is major for its manufacturing... Meanwhile, Australia is the top exporter of iron Ore in the world (it provided 40.4% of its global exports in 2011)

(Liu & Hao, 2014). And in 2010, as per Liu and Hao (2014), China has spent almost 80 billion \$ on ore imports, 40% of which were imported from Australia.

This assists us in concluding that China, while building its economic success, is relying on benefiting from each and every opportunity in the world, including Australia. For building good ties with Australia, investing in it and benefiting from its resources and security, helps China in achieving its aim of becoming a strong steady regional power as well as a global power, for Australia is considered as a Western country, not an Eastern one; even if it is located closer to Asia than Europe or North America, and has strong economic ties with Asia...

Is the same way of thinking applicable for Western Europe's case? Does China have geopolitical interests there and draws geo-strategies according to them also? That is what will be clarified in the upcoming paragraph.

C- China's Geo-strategy in Western Europe

In the second half of the last century, the world has witnessed a gradual development in the Sino-European economic relations (Huaqun, 2004). In the last recent years, the contact between China and Western Europe has increased, which represented then, to all political and economic analysts, a big shift in Beijing's strategy towards that region of the world (Bressi, 1972).

By a very simple analysis, that remarkable strengthening of the Sino-West European relations was, in its turn, definitely based on remarkable factors that, most probably, might be new geopolitical interests for China in the Western Europe lands.

According to the World Factbook, released and continuously updated by the CIA, Western Europe is constituted from seven countries: Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Monaco,

Netherlands, and United Kingdom (Kariuki, 2017). Knowing that there are historical, economic, modern, and geographic definitions that shape the CIA main definition, and that is due to the fact the Western Europe is not an official zone, neither an official term such as that of the EU, or EFTA which are specifically defined (Kariuki, 2017).

Therefore, we will rely on the CIA official definition of Western Europe, and investigate China's geo-strategies in each one of these countries.

1- China's Geo-Strategy in Belgium

In an article published by China Daily, under the title of "*Beijing and Brussels Seek Common Areas of Interests*", the author Fraser Cameron affirmed that both Belgium and China are showing readiness to cooperate on connectivity, and that reflects the fact that both of them are enthusiastic to look for areas of mutual interests in order to strengthen and deepen their strategic partnership (Cameron, 2019).

So, what is this area of mutual benefit, and how do these interests reflect themselves actually?

Besides having large economic and diplomatic ties with a variety of countries across the world (Bodnar, 2017), Belgium is known as a highly developed country, due to its stable economic leverage in addition to its improving relations with foreign partners in terms of trade (Bodnar, 2017). In the recent updates, Belgium became the 19th largest exporter on the world basis with 277.7 billion US \$, in the list that contains super and global powers such as China, USA, Germany, Japan, South Korea, France, Hong Kong, Netherlands, UK, etc. (Dillinger, 2019)

...

This obviously leads to mutual cooperation between China and Belgium, for China is like "predator of opportunities" in a state of permanent vigilance looking for control under the pretext of cooperation opportunities and seize them in a way that serves its own interests.

Dating to 1971, the Sino-Belgian ties are of good long-standing friendship and beneficial cooperation, as the Ambassador of China to Belgium CAO Zhongming, stated in one of his interviews (Dietrich, 2019).

But 2014 was the year of rejuvenation in terms of Sino-Belgian relationship, after the President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Belgium... “It was during that visit that our bilateral relations were upgraded to an all-around partnership for friendly cooperation” said Mr. Ambassador (Dietrich, 2019). After that, H.M. King Philip paid a visit back to China in the following year (Dietrich, 2019) ...

To know what really happened during these visits, we are referring back to H.E President Xi Jinping Speech during “Le Soir of Belgium”, as published by the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Ireland on the 23rd of March 2014 (Jinping, 2014):

- 1) Bilateral trade has increased more than 1,000 times; which made Belgium China’s Sixth Largest Trading Partner in the EU (in 2014) (Jinping, 2014);
- 2) The Direct Investments of China in Belgium has grown 10 folds over the five years that preceded 2014, which has contributed in creating new job vacancies for Belgians (Jinping, 2014);
- 3) Also, according to the speech of President Jinping (2014), Cultural and Arts Events, such as the “*Europalia China Art Festival*” between China and Belgium, especially that of the 40th anniversary of China-Belgium diplomatic relations, reinforced ties between the two cultures and the peoples of the two countries.

President Jinping stated that because Belgium – where the EU Headquarters are located – is known as the Heart of Europe, “the more strongly it beats, the more energy it will create for China-Europe cooperation” (Jinping, 2014).

So if we analyze, his speech, and the fact that Belgium “sits at the most geostrategic portion of the North European plain: between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ardennes forests that lead into the foothills of the Eifel mountain range on the present-day German-Belgian border” (Stratfor, 2010), we can clearly understand that China aims to build good relations with Belgium in order not to benefit only in trade and exports, but also to benefit from good relations with the whole European Union on a wider scale.

This is why, according to Yi (2018), Beijing has launched in October 2018 the project of “New Cargo Train Route” linking the Belgian City of Liege, to Zhengzhou, the capital city of Henan province in China. This huge project, is the third of its kind to link cities of the two countries, which clearly marks “their growing interests to nurture closer economic and trade ties” (Yi, 2018).

In the article *China, Belgium Launch New Cargo Train Route*, published by Xinhua net, Yi (2018) states that: “The first cargo train route between China and Belgium was launched in June 2017, connecting China's Daqing city to Zeebrugge Port, followed by the second one in May 2018, linking north China's Tangshan City to Antwerp Port”.

These routes denote the fact that China and Belgium are concentrating on continuous and sustainable goals in upgrading their bilateral policies of development (Yi, 2018), which reflects the presence of strategic interests for both countries.

Even H.E. Ambassador CAO has expressed China’s will to expand its cooperation with Belgium, in areas as e-commerce, belt and road, third party market “so that both sides will

share the benefits of a ‘bigger cake’ of China-Belgium cooperation”, as stated by Dietrich (2019).

2- China’s Geo-Strategy in France

According to Eleanor Albert in her article which discusses the Sino-French relations, “Maintaining stability in ties between Paris, Brussels, and Beijing is very much in China’s interest, especially as tensions between Washington and Beijing continue to simmer” (Albert, 2019), this is how Eleanor Albert concluded her article published in the Diplomat magazine on the 3rd of May 2019 about the tension between China and France.

This article is a result of many ups and downs in the Sino-French relationship lately... In 2015, when Emmanuel Macron was still France’s minister of economy, he pointed out to a conference of German ambassadors in Berlin, that “The world economy is recovering but not as much as we wish. It is a very long process. On the one hand, we have opportunities... but on the other hand, there are many risks, particularly China today”, as per Inge (2015) in her article which addresses the Chinese threats on the world economy. He then considered China as a threat not only to France, but also to the global economy.

But few years later, after he became president of the French republic, and after his sharp resistance to China’s OBOR (DW News, 2019), Macron’s perspective changed... In January 2018, according to Zhen (2018) in her published article in the South China Morning Post, he signaled France’s interests in China’s massive New Silk Road ambitions and plans, and also called for more balanced trade with China.

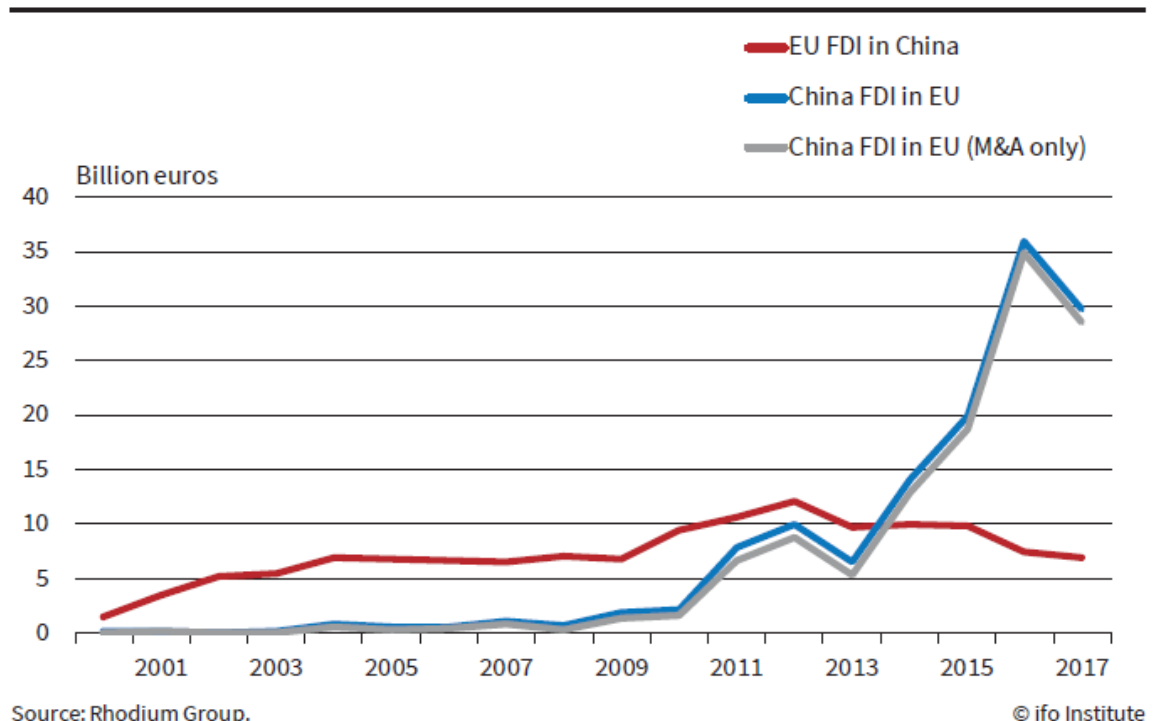
Macron offered France’s support to China in its ambitions to rejuvenate land and sea roads of trade aiming to connect Asia and Europe through massive infrastructure projects (Zhen, 2018).

In his turn, Jinping affirmed that “the world was facing great uncertainties and China would work closely with France on big international issues” (Zhen, 2018).

Since then, according to the article published by France Diplomacy (2019), China became “France’s 7th largest customer (France has a 1.4% market share in China) and 2nd largest supplier (China has a 9% market share in France)”. Herein, Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is focusing on the most advanced economical states in EU, and most importantly on France, Germany, Italy, and Britain (Bickenbach & Liu, 2018) and turn around: transport, utilities, infrastructures, ICT (information and communication technologies), advanced industrial machinery, and equipment (Bichenbach & Liu, 2018). Chinese FDI in the pre-mentioned European states has also known a large increase in the recent years, as it appears in the graphic below.

Figure 12: Bilateral FDI Transaction Values in China and the EU

Bilateral FDI Transaction Values in China and the EU



Source: Bickenbach & Liu, 2018, p.16

And recently, on the 25th of March 2019, President Macron called for a “strong Europe-China partnership”, that was followed by a large bilateral agreement between France and China through a signing of 15 business contracts worth billions of Euros including projects of trade and transportation mainly, as per Norris-Trent (2019).

3- China’s Geo-Strategy in Ireland

“China has long looked to Ireland as a model for its own IT industry” stated in an article about the Sino-Irish relations published by the Irish Times (2008). And it added that Ireland needs a small support from the Chinese market in the fields of healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing projects “to help offset the impact of sluggish demand from Europe and the US” (Irish Times, 2008).

Thus, according to Fan Hong and Jörn-Carsten Gottwald in their article published by Rozenberg Quarterly, China and Ireland have established a good relationship of bilateral cooperation of “joint economic and trade committee as well as groups in the areas of science, technology and education” (Hong & Gottwald, 2009). This cooperation has also extended to “two-way investment in the telecommunication, machinery and software sector” (Hong & Gottwald, 2009).

Herein, and according to an article published by China Daily (2019), the Irish minister of Enterprise and Innovation Heather Humphreys said that “trade and investment are the cornerstone of Ireland-China relationship”.

In a quick look to the built bridges between China and Ireland we can conclude that the connectivity between them has largely and significantly improved, for besides political

exchanges; they also have huge economic and trade deals, and this is what lasts in relations between countries in a way that ensures the interests of both of them.

What also impress are those educational and cultural exchanges, for since 1985 China and Ireland have signed the agreement on cultural cooperation and exchange, but it is until recent years that the two countries have known a large number of students' exchange, and the agreement on education cooperation have been signed in October 2000 (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Ireland, n.d.).

China has also established two Confucius Institutes in UCC and UCD in 2006 in Ireland, in addition to the school of Asian studies in 2009, which has contributed in stimulating cultural and educational developments between them; in a way that assists China in expanding its distinct culture through a soft power policy on the Irish lands and between the Irish people marking the steady start of a new era of Chinese disciplines in Ireland (Hong & Gottwald, 2009).

And finally, since Ireland is an independent trade nation, it benefits from China's interests in strengthening bilateral ties for expanding its influence, to secure future markets for its huge exports (Hong & Gottwald, 2009).

4- China's Geo-Strategy in Luxembourg

Trade, Economy, Culture and Education, are also the key points of China's geo-strategy in Luxembourg... In order to benefit from its advantages, China signed many deals and agreements with Luxembourg as a soft geo-strategy ensuring the achievement of its aims of expansion.

The Bank of China is “one of the largest banks in the world by market capitalization value was the first of seven Chinese banks to have chosen Luxembourg as its regional EU regional hub”, as mentioned by Luxembourg for Finance (2019) in the article entitled: “Bank of China: Why We Chose Luxembourg”.

And while asked about the Sino-Luxembourg relations, the GM of the BOC (Bank of China) Luxembourg Branch, Lihong Zhou stated that these relations “have always been excellent, with strong confidence and economic bond between the two countries” (Zhou, 2019). It is obvious then, that China finds in Luxembourg a secure economic and financial zone to invest in.

Zhou also declared that the aim of that good connectivity through the establishment of BOC in Luxembourg is not only to “expand footprints across Europe” but also to build “a bridge connecting Sino-European businesses and investments while promoting Luxembourg internationally” (Zhou, 2019) ... It could be concluded herein, that China is “offering” Luxembourg an international trend, while obtaining beneficial opportunities to realize its aims and purposes in return.

What makes Luxembourg an attractive country for Chinese business according to Zhou is (Zhou, 2019):

- 1) The Robust Financial Eco-System;
- 2) The Stability;
- 3) The Multiple Cross-Border Business;
- 4) The Multi-Lingual Workforce;
- 5) The Leading Role in Green Bonds;
- 6) Ever-Growing Renminbi Business;
- 7) Perfect Gateway into Europe’s Financial Markets;
- 8) 40% of all FDIs into Europe funnel through the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg as a Base for Strategic Acquisitions.

The last reason is a pure geoeconomical one, knowing that through having good relations with Luxembourg, especially in the financial and trade terms, China could have its proper influence on these FDIs entering Europe, and subsequently a larger influence on the global financial business of all the continent.

It is also important to mention that the good relations between China and Luxembourg is not only in the financial sector, but according to Kinsch (2014) in his article about the importance of the Chinese and Luxembourg relations, China's investments in the recent years have expanded to attain industrial, commercial, and telecommunication companies.

And in 2017 Prime minister of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel, in an interview with Chinese press agency Xinhua, praised the OBOR Chinese initiative and stated that due to the both directions of transport that will be produced as a result of the establishment of that road, a "win-win situation" could be created for both of the states (Mironescu, 2017).

Herein, China's geo-strategy in Luxembourg is implemented through financial business, trade, commerce, and infrastructures...

5- China's Geo-Strategy in Monaco

Although they are geographically far away from each other, China and Monaco are day after day becoming closer geopolitically... During his visit to Monaco in March 2019, President Xi Jinping said that: "China-Monaco relations have been making steady progress with deepening practical cooperation on environmental protection, telecommunication, and mobile payment, becoming a pace-setter and a model for China-Europe cooperation", as mentioned by Belt and Road News (2019).

This reminds us of how China benefited from its good ties with Luxembourg to expand its “footprints across Europe” (Zhou, 2019).

Therefore, and since the pre-mentioned state visit of President Jinping to Prince Albert II, the diplomatic ties between the two countries of China and Monaco are being strengthened, which is positively affecting the commercial and trade relations that have grown remarkably (Jie, 2019).

Since then, the volume of bilateral trade has increased “by a factor of eleven within two decades” (Jie, 2019), in addition to a great improvement in terms of cooperation, for it has expanded into multiple new areas: “from traditional tourism and cultural industries to mobile communications and high-tech fields” as stated by the Monacan minister of Finance and Economy, Jean Castellini (Jie, 2019).

On the other side, and during his multiple state visits to China, Prince Albert II was impressed by “the progress in China’s economic, cultural and social development” (Baijie & Desheng, 2019) and particularly by “the achievements in ecological and environmental conservation” (Baijie & Desheng, 2019).

In addition to what was displayed above, China and Monaco have distinguished educational and cultural exchanges also. They usually organize cultural exhibitions and festivals where teams and bands from both countries participate reciprocally.

And finally, it is mandatory to mention that China has announced in March 2019 its commitment to strengthen ties and deepen cooperation with Monaco in terms of: “environmental protection, climate change, clean energy, low carbon and wildlife protection, under the Belt and Road Initiative” (Bo, 2019).

6- China's Geo-Strategy in Netherlands

In 2014, China and Netherlands have signed a partnership agreement on openness and pragmatism, expressing that “China is willing to work with the Netherlands to strengthen high-level visits and expand cooperation in various areas”, as mentioned by China Daily (2018) in a published article which addresses the China-Netherlands relations.

And since then, the Chinese action in Netherlands has no stop, until it became a direct contributor to the development of the local Dutch economy according to an article published in September 2018 by China Daily, stating: “Direct investment of Chinese enterprises in the Netherlands has contributed to the development of the local economy by increasing employment, promoting international trade and accelerating innovation”, according to China Daily (2018).

As per the Chinese perspective, or more specifically, according to the executive director for China at Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency Roland Brouwer, Netherlands is very strategic and substantial for China, for it constitutes: “an excellent gate for Europe to Chinese investors” (China Daily, 2018). The Netherlands satisfies the distributional position of access to Europe for the Chinese, who in turn perform the assembly and production of goods for the Dutch (Butter & Hayat, 2011). This reminds us also of China's geo-strategy in Luxembourg, Belgium and Monaco benefiting from its good ties there to extend its influence and control over the entire European continent.

Furthermore, Chinese banks (Bank of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, and China Construction Bank) have established their own branches in Netherlands to extend their business there, in addition to the creation of 15 000 jobs for the Dutch people due to the

establishment of over 680 branches of Chinese companies there (until September 2018) (China Daily, 2018).

These numbers demonstrate the fact that the Chinese business is growing fast in Netherlands, and this is definitely due to many geo-strategic reasons and is not done randomly at all ... And according to the minister and deputy head of mission at the embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands to Beijing Bas Pulles, the ties between these two countries are already strong but after adding “business and cooperation in the high tech, pharmaceutical, food, e-commerce industries” (China Daily, 2018) we will “see a boom in the near future”, as mentioned by China Daily (2018) in a published article about the positive impacts of the Chinese investments on the economy of the Netherlands.

In 2018 statistics according to an article published by China Briefing about the Sino-Dutch investment relations and opportunities, China was the second largest non-EU trade partner for the Netherlands, and Netherlands was China’s second largest trade partner within the EU (Fujino, 2018). So Netherlands, besides being the “gateway to Europe” as we said before, it “plays a key role as a connective logistics hub” (Fujino, 2018) for itself seeks a further collaboration and cooperation with China on investment and trade (Fujino, 2018), and this is what China continually works on doing, as it falls under the framework of its own national interests and goals and commensurate with them.

7- China’s Geo-Strategy in the United Kingdom

December 2017 was the date of celebrating the “Golden Era” of relations between the United Kingdom and China, and both countries have signed then agreements on cooperating more closely “in such arenas as financial services, trade and investments” (Turner, 2018).

In 2016, “UK was the EU’s top recipient for Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (€ 23 Billion) and became then China’s second largest trade partner in Europe (€ 62 Billion)” (Le Corre, 2018). In addition to that, China has achieved a “growing presence in the City of London” (Le Corre, 2018), and that was due to the business investments it is developing there: stakes in the most important companies and entities in UK such as Thames Water, Heathrow, Manchester Airports, the Cheesegrater (London’s tallest building), and we should mention that the telecommunication infrastructure company, Huawei (considered as a potential threat to the U.S. national security) is also on the list and is a “major supplier to British Telecom and employs about 1000 staff” (Le Corre, 2018).

This huge flow of Chinese foreign direct investment to the United Kingdom, has reinforced the austerity policy of budget cutting that the Conservative party supports, and therefore has helped the party remain in power for many years (Harris, 2017). Moreover, China’s intervention in the UK has opened new opportunity frameworks for the British leaders to seek, such as an independent foreign policy away from its conventional partners in the North Atlantic, which may have also contributed to the decision of the UK to leave the European Union (Harris, 2017). So, this clearly shows the Chinese influence in the UK and its impact on the politics of the Western world.

But relations between both countries have known a dramatic shift due to two main factors: The U.S-China trade war (Westcott, 2019), and the EU Brexit decision taken by the UK.

Knowing that China’s main aim from building good relation with U.K. – other than having good trade business and commerce – is to maintain a coherent structure to its influence over Europe, and if U.K. leaves EU in the future, this will lead to a decline in their relationship and

subsequently to a disruption of China's ties with the EU, which means creating obstacles on its smooth road towards Europe.

From another perspective, - knowing that more than half of the UK's trade comes from Europe (Westcott, 2019) - the future horizon of UK's trade with the EU is becoming blurry and uncertain day after day due to the Brexit matter (Westcott, 2019). This instability led the UK decision-makers to search wisely for new trading partners as well as new trading opportunities (Westcott, 2019), that might be found in China.

Herein, we can conclude that fluctuations are recently ruling UK-China's relationship; so we should study China's strategy there far away from the Brexit policy and its consequences especially after Boris Johnson's victory as the prime minister of the UK, who seems amicable to China and at the same time aims to build a post-Brexit economy to the UK.

Thus, in a technical analysis according to the UK Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (2017), we can find that Britain "excels in basic science, research and in innovation", in addition to being "a technological lead in a range of sectors"; and in its turn "China's particular strengths lie in the innovation of engineering technologies and in new, innovative business, with a deep pool of talent and unique infrastructure", as per the UK Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (2017).

So in a simple cooperation between these two countries strengths, a new combination between research and innovation might arise a new China-UK bilateral strategy that deepens their collaboration for new "Golden Eras" to come.

This combination gave birth to a joint strategy, between these two nations, for science, technology and innovation cooperation that comprehended all the potential factors between them "from research through to the commercialism of new technologies" (UK Department for

Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, 2017), aiming to improve the efforts done in the fields of research and innovation to enhance the bilateral competitiveness and effectiveness. This new joint strategy marks clearly China's interests in Britain strong points, and reflects its abstract strategy there, and actually leads the way behind many other nations for expanding their relationships to the extents of international cooperation.

So, after the Brexit decision was officially taken, China will not stop prospecting for its geo-strategic interests in the British mines, in a way that supports the achievement of its main grand geo-strategy in the world...

And now, let us get into China's strategy overall the American continent...

D- Overlook on China's Geo-Strategy in the American Continent

People's Republic of China is always looking for innovative ways to expand its influence and control over the largest number of strategic zones in the world; between these zones is that of the American continent: North America, and South America.

1- Northern America

Figure 13: Geographical Map of North America



Source: National Geographic, 2019

In what is related to the Northern America, geographically including: “the enormous island of Greenland in the northeast and the small island countries and territories that dot the Caribbean Sea and Western North Atlantic Ocean” (National Geographic, 2019), in addition to the United States and Mexico ... In details, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (2018), North America is mainly constituted of 23 countries: “Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, United States”.

But what interests China the most in that zone, is the Arctic Ocean, Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and above all the United States.

For example, in June 2019 and according to the Caribbean News Now (2019), Cuba and China have focused on promoting more friendship after signing a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) to promote economic cooperation in December 2018 (China Daily, 2018) ...

Briefly Peoples' Republic of China is the "Caribbean nation's second largest partner with strong economic ties and cooperation in multiple sectors such as renewable energies, agriculture, tourism, mining, transportation and infrastructure" (China Daily, 2018).

As for the remaining zones, China's expansion faces direct competition with its first rival mainly the United States of America in that zone... It is for sure not willing to win a full hegemony there, neither expanding all its influence and control, but it has certainly many prior objectives to achieve:

- **Political Objectives:** China aims at consolidating its global influence there, in addition to being an alternative recourse for the states that are habituated to have recourse to the USA, through offering its funding (Rousset, 2018). What has also a high political influence is the fact that China has two special statuses in two special entities: An Observer Status in the OAS (Organization of the American States), and a membership in the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (Rousset, 2018).
- **Geoeconomic Objectives:** Beijing looks for different ways to expand its control over the resources of that region: the mineral, the energy and the agricultural ones; without forgetting its search for new trade markets to its manufactured products (Rousset, 2018)

...

It is also spending money over infrastructures' investments in that region, and gets involved in the evolution of the security system and the upgrade of the telecommunications' one (Rousset, 2018).

- **Geo-Strategic Objectives:** China is always having eyes on each opportunity that might arise in that region: if country needs assistance, it raises its hand and take the initiative, as it has done that in Haiti, where it has sent a contingent during the UN operations there as a peacekeeping mission (United Nations, 2017) ... And geo-strategically speaking, China was also able to pursue very important objectives such as acquiring an “extra-territorialized base in Patagonia (Argentina) which has the official (and real) aim of preparing the sending of a vessel to land on the hidden side of the moon – run by the army” (Rousset, 2018). And as Pierre Rousset stated, this achievement enables Beijing to “survey the Southern Hemisphere – a precious first” above all (Rousset, 2018).

2- Southern America

Figure 14: Geographical Map of South America



Source: National Geographic, 2019

Concerning China's interests in Southern America's continent composed from twelve countries: "Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Falklands Islands, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela" (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019), an article published on the 15th of August 2019 by Carlos Roa in the National Interests magazine stated that "*the United States is Losing Latin America to China*" (Roa, 2019). Why is that happening and how? What is actually pushing China to overcome that huge geographical

and political “distance” separating it from South America? And what really lies behind all its efforts in there?

It all started with official bilateral states visits from the Chinese President and South American officials and business people (Creutzfeldt, 2019); these steps were able enough to build up a large growth in the bilateral trade value from \$10 billion in 2000 to almost \$280 billion in 2015 (Creutzfeldt, 2019).

China benefited from the financial crisis of 2008 as well, and has enabled sustainable economic growth to the countries of the region after it, through increasing its loans and FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) there (Creutzfeldt, 2019).

It is sure that this region holds the fertile lands of resources China needs in applying its national and international strategies and guaranteeing its sustainable development (Creutzfeldt, 2019); but besides that, and if we look to these countries in a macroscopic way, we can see them as a huge market – to be and have the potential to increasingly grow through China’s involvement and engagement in their internal economic policies.

Besides that, and knowing that the majority of this region’s countries are under the United States sphere of influence (Creutzfeldt, 2019), and that most of their services: education, economy, land ownership, are under the dominance of “powerful elites” sacrificing “national interests and environmental concerns for their own priorities” (Creutzfeldt, 2019), China seizes these “opportunities” to regulate these tendencies and fill in the blank caused by the alarming statuses in terms of financial and political stability there.

Thus, the fact that South America is included in the OBOR initiative is in itself a vital confirmation of China’s perspective for the region, for in my opinion, the OBOR clearly reflects China’s interests, policies, strategies, and above all future geoeconomic ambitions!

Until the date of 29 May 2019, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay and Chile have signed China's Belt and Road Memorandum of Understanding, knowing that Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela have also a Double Tax Treaty with China.

And due to the rapid growth and strength of relations between them, China and the Latin American and Caribbean States, have established on the 17th of July 2014, the China-CELAC Forum: "The Forum of China and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2016, p.3). The South American members of this forum are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (Devonshire-Ellis, 2019).

The main purpose of this forum is to promote "the development of the comprehensive cooperative partnership based on equality, mutual benefit and common development between China and LAC States" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2016, p.5). Briefly, the forum was established due to the mutual perspective of both parties, and the same cooperative vision in terms of partnerships and development opportunities.

For Beijing, this forum has opened the road to expand and deepen its influence over the region from one side, and to reduce that of the United States from the other as well (Devonshire-Ellis, 2019). Herein, Chinese policy makers have stated their strategy showing up their intention to double the bilateral trade with the Southern America's region to \$500 billion in 2025 in addition to increasing the total investments in the region to \$250 billion in 2025 as well (Devonshire-Ellis, 2019).

In Argentina, China is providing infrastructure projects; in Chile it is executing an underwater Fiber-Optic network linking them together; Ecuador has received a reconstruction loan of \$64 million, and a \$30 million non-refundable assistance; Uruguay is benefiting

from China's Belt and Road in terms of agricultural cooperation such as fishing industry, food processing and logistics (Devonshire-Ellis, 2019) ...

Here, we can understand why the article mentioned above stated that the United States is losing Latin America to China; and this could originally be the main aim for China which should not ever be underestimated.

For concluding, it is clear that China is softly invading the world, through expanding its geopolitical control through increasing its geoeconomic influence in each corner of each region of it, as it was clarified in this part of dissertation.

China has a large influence in Asia (North, South, Central, and West), in Europe (East and West), in Africa, in Australia, in the Two Americas; and this is happening while the planet is still thinking that the United States is its only ruler and leader... Its advanced and unique geo-strategies are offering it access to the achievement of its actual and future geo-strategic ambitions without any need for war to fulfill its aims.

Beijing is offering enormous investment projects to assist the largest number of countries in need for development; no one can assume that it is failing or succeeding in achieving what it is seeking; but those huge recent never-ending "battles" between its policy makers and Trump's administration constitute a real evidence justifying China's geoeconomic strength that is threatening the United States' throne.

But, there is a Chess Stone missing in this sensitive Game of Nations between the two kings: China and the United States... That Chess Stone should be the Queen who will evidently change the path and the destiny of that game... Mother Russia! We will discuss the Sino-Russian

integration in details in the next part of the dissertation, after discussing case studies about Chinese geo-strategies in Taiwan and India-Pakistan.

Section 3: Case Studies: Chinese Geo-Strategies in Taiwan and India-Pakistan

A- China's Geo-Strategy in Taiwan

Chinese policymakers has worked on maintaining a distinguished One-China policy, which proclaimed that “Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and countries cannot have relations with both China and Taiwan simultaneously”; They have also worked on extending that policy to the western hemisphere and Africa as well, through normalizing South Africa’s economic relationship with their government as first step.

And from another side, according to Blackwill and Harris (2017), China has adopted a specific policy of sanctions against countries which may engage in measures that support Taiwan’s independent status ... In 2010, after the U.S. announcement of selling \$6.4 billion arms to Taiwan, He Yafei, China’s vice foreign minister threatened Ambassador Jon Huntsman that Beijing would “impose sanctions against (U.S.) companies that (...) engage in arms deliveries to Taiwan” (Browne & Solomon, 2010).

That official declaration of use of economic sanctions has opened the path for more use of sanctions in the future (Reilly, 2012), including import, export, financial or investment sanctions...The Chinese government may extend its sanctions towards Taiwan to a level where it would reduce its interactions with the latter’s economy, which might create an asymmetric vulnerability that exposes Taiwan far more than China (Dean, 2010).

Most probably, and after many ups and downs in the bilateral relations with Beijing through the years, Taipei has become aware of the geoeconomic pressure China can exert upon the island; for in 1995, and after the big loss (of 30%) of the total value of a Taiwanese Stock

Exchange (TAIEX), China was accused to have a direct hand in that loss... But it has officially denied any concrete manipulation, and linked the Taiwanese loss to tense political relations at the time (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). However, that reminded Taiwan of the huge economic costs of political and diplomatic rupture with China; it is when Taiwan first learned an important lesson with the suggestion of President Lee Teng-hui of Taiwanese independence: Political ruptures have economic consequences (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.97).

Whereby, the real policy of China using geoeconomics in its dealings and relations with Taiwan started in 2000, when the Taiwanese President at the time Chen Shui-bian, lifted a ban of fifty years on direct trade and investment with Chinese mainland (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Official governmental reports of Taiwan cited then worries that China would use “economic interaction to force political concessions” (Chan, 1996); so Taipei was aware of the geopolitical risks that could be entailed by that economic opening, but the domestic challenges that were facing its government, such as the unemployment, and the worn-out economy had left no other choice for President Chen (Lander, 2001).

Due to these challenges and risks resulting of political ruptures with China, Taiwan shifted from its “no haste, be patient” stance to one of “aggressive opening, effective management” which scrapped a long-termed ceiling of \$ 50 million on individual investments in China, and allowed offshore units of Taiwanese banks to exchange money to and from China (Chieh-yu, 2000).

After President Chen, and since President Ma Ying-jeou got elected in 2008, Taiwan initialized a series of special agreements that furthered economic ties and relations with China (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). The two countries restored in 2008 the “three direct

links”: postal services, trade and transportation across the strait (Ming, 2008); in 2010, they have signed *The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA)* under the objective of establishing “a systematic mechanism for enhancing cross-strait economic cooperation” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.97), through the full elimination of nearly all cross-strait trade restrictions and opening markets on their sides in “unprecedented ways” (Sui, 2010). Nowadays, Taiwan has opened more than 400 sectors and made them available for Chinese investments that might include manufacturing, services, public construction and finance (Cole, 2013).

We can conclude that the Taiwanese effort on improving the economic ties with China, although when it has no other alternative, became a geoeconomic project with benefits for both sides (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). President Ma Ying-jeou affirmed that in a late 2013 interview with the *Washington Post*, and described the way these new economic policies have changed cross-strait relations from a “vicious cycle” into a “virtuous cycle” enumerating a long list of economic benefits (Ying-jeou, 2013).

But after all, no one can deny that these new – customized ties have kept Taiwan in a position of dependence on China (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ... But these gestures were inevitable, knowing that the Taiwanese market will be negatively affected by hard Chinese geoeconomic consequences, if these gestures have not been adopted.

The results explain Beijing’s vision in leading its dealings in Taiwan through a geoeconomic statecraft:

- 1) By 2003, after three years of lifting the ban on direct trade and investment, China has replaced the United States, and has become Taiwan’s largest trading partner (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

2) By 2020, Taiwan is expecting to send approximately 62% of its exports to the mainland of China which bolsters its substantial trade surplus with Beijing (U.S. Department of State, 2012). This expectation is already being proven, for Taiwan is moving in its direction with China consuming 40% of its exports in 2015 (Rosenthal, 2015).

Concerning the Taiwanese Side, and after two months of signing the ECFA with China, Singapore expressed its willingness to sign an economic cooperation agreement with Taipei, and many other countries have shown their interests in holding talks to economically cooperate with it, as President Ma explained (Rosenthal, 2015).

President Ma has had many statements about the economic cooperation with China, as attempts to fend off criticism over Taiwan's vulnerability to Chinese geoeconomic pressure; but it could not be denied that "all paths to economic and political progress run through Beijing" (Cabestan & De Lisle, 2014, p.86), as Ma and all the twenty-one trade agreements that he signed with China during his first six years in office, made it clear (Cabestan & De Lisle, 2014).

China has taken advantage of Taiwan's economic dependence on it, and gradually imposed its attitude on political and military negotiations (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); during a meeting with Taiwan's envoys in October 2013, the Chinese president Xi Jinping forced to reach "a final resolution on Taiwan's status" and said that the island's political estrangement from the mainland "cannot be passed on from generation to generation" (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, pp.88-89).

In fact, Beijing opposed Taipei's steps towards independence during Chen Shui-bian years (2000-2008) who pushed to rewrite the constitution with an emphasis on the island's

independence while allowing greater economic interdependence (Blackwill & Harris, 2017), pursued the purchase of weapons from the U.S, adopted a name change policy dropping the reference to “China” from the names of many companies and enterprises, and took many steps aimed at solidifying Taiwan’s independent identity as per China (The China Post, 2007).

Chen election and inauguration has caused many negative hits to the Taiwanese market and investments because of concerns that he would inflame the bilateral relations between his state and China. However, it is out of discussion that economic and political dependence could be separated for any purpose, and Chen’s steps toward political independence of Taiwan, has wreaked economic consequences (Chih-yu et al., 2003).

Herein, Chinese officials had taken many steps as geoeconomic sanctions on Taiwan’s new policies: - China has established a ban on investments of pro-Taiwanese-independence businessmen (Kastner, 2009); - China has delayed the granting of visas to some Taiwanese trying to visit the mainland (Tanner, 2007); - China has boycotted the Computex 2004 conference in Taipei (Tanner, 2007); - PRC has also targeted specific companies due to their ties with Taiwan’s Democratic Progressive Party (TDPP) (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Chinese have not been ambiguous about these gestures, but they explained honestly that their government has not stopped encouraging Taiwan investment in the mainland despite the continuous political tension between them, and that the policies they are adopting are based on a strong belief that “closer economic ties will benefit and help accelerate eventual re-unification of the mainland and Taiwan” (China Daily, 2004) ... However, a small number of Taiwan’s investors have not respected these policies, and have funded pro-independence politicians with profits earned from the mainland (China Daily, 2004), which

worsened the situation and pushed the former spokesman with the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office, Zhang Mingqing, to state as per China Daily (2004) that "Beijing does not welcome people who make money on the mainland and return to Taiwan to support independence". After the reelection of President Chen in 2004, Beijing adopted new kind of geoeconomic policies towards the Taiwanese: It offered economic carrots to farmers in rural southern Taiwan who might be interested in gaining access to the Chinese market (Wei, 2013); it also allowed importing 18 types of Taiwanese fruits and gave duty-free status to fruit exports, in addition to its promise to ensure that custom clearance, inspection, and quarantine procedures were expedited (Wei, 2013).

This was still the case, until the President Ma Ying-jeou was elected in 2008, and the TAIEX stock prices soared directly, what reflects the Chinese approval on the country's investments (Bradsher, 2008) ... The fast use of Chinese geoeconomics could be easily detected here, for as Beijing has been quick with geoeconomic sanctions toward the pro-independence administration, it has also shown a quick use of geoeconomic ways to reward the Taiwanese choice of leadership in their new President Ma (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). A new Chinese geoeconomic approach has emerged: "The more economic interdependence there is between the two sides, the less likely Taiwan's bid for independence becomes" (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.100). And this vision was supported by President Ma, and proved by the signing of a cross-strait swap pact in August 2012, which has opened the path for China to use monetary policy in order to influence the Taiwanese behavior globally (Wu, 2013).

Four Chinese state-owned banks have issued in late 2013 the Renminbi-denominated bonds known as "Formosa Bonds", as a booster to the Taiwanese bond market; and have also set

a precedent for other mainland Chinese issuers (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). The first issuance of these bonds, with combined values of RMB 4 billion, has helped China to get a border access to offshore Renminbi funds while the Formosa bonds market continues to develop (Song, 2013). In other words, the reason of these Chinese efforts in currency – either with the issuance of the Formosa bonds, or with the swap agreement – seems to be purely economic (Wu, 2013); but that does not really matter from the Taiwanese perspective, as for them, when the case is related with the dealings with China, it is the “contingencies” that matter (Blackwill & Harris, 2017), because they cannot face any significant fluctuation in the Renminbi’s exchange rate - for average Taiwanese citizens are including Renminbi as part of their assets – that might undermine the financial stability of Taiwan (Wu, 2014). This was a statement done by an economist at National Taiwan University, Kenneth Lin, who also said that: “With the Renminbi’s exchange rate controlled by the government rather than decided by the free market, Beijing could wield it as a weapon” (Wu, 2014).

Another geoeconomic policy has been applied as the 2012 presidential elections in Taiwan approached, especially that China was aware that finding reliable friends across the strait was a hard mission, so it worked on the reelection of Ma (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). That policy aimed to execute another agricultural purchase from Taiwan; and a company based in Wuhan signed then a letter of intent to buy 200 tons of Taiwanese Milkfish and Milkfish products within two years (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ... This geoeconomic gesture does not only visualize helping President Ma to win the elections, but in its latent objectives, it was targeting farmers who are concentrated in a part of the island that historically supports Taiwanese independence and favors Ma’s rival party: the Democratic Progressive Party

(Taipei Times, 2011); Meanwhile, it was implemented in order to support the Chinese government in attaining its geopolitical goals concerning the reunification with Taiwan deterring the liberalization waves showing up in the country.

But, despite China's failure in influencing the voters to elect Ma through that policy – because of the fanfare about how much money does its government spend on buying milkfish from Taiwan that offended its citizens' sense of dignity (Yu, 2012) – one of Taiwan's leading newspaper cautioned against dismissing China's geo-economic tactics, for they might be heavy-handed as they were before (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

But what was really surprising then, was not that China attempted to “buy” geo-economic influence, or that its efforts literally failed but rather that Chinese leaders had a visit to the Taiwanese province to understand the cause behind that failure (Blackwill & Harris, 2017)! This step was explained by the deputy Chairman of the Taiwan Affairs Office, Du Yu, by the evidence that “Beijing is always learning, always seeking out ways to hone its geo-economic techniques” (Yu, 2012).

Chinese goals were not easily achieved in Taiwan, due to the late awareness of its citizens towards the vulnerability of their state to Chinese geo-economic pressure, and the mass manifestations that erupted in Taipei in March 2014 rallying against the acceleration of the cross-strait services trade agreement (Spangler, 2014). However, China has not surrendered, nor has it restricted itself to incentives and rewards only; but the patriotic Chinese army of hackers has used cyber warfare to attack Taiwanese government and infrastructure networks, to disrupt or paralyze Taiwan's financial, transportation, shipping, military and other networks, as mentioned in the newspaper Liberty Times (2000). These attacks convinced Taipei that “a targeted, coordinated cyber-attack could alter the strategic

calculus, possibly determining the tactical landscape before a kinetic Chinese military operation aimed at reunification” (Hsiao, 2013, p.11).

What interests us here is that the use of geoeconomic instruments, such as “the far-reaching use of trade, investment, monetary policy, cyber warfare, aid and the threat of sanctions has helped prevent Taiwanese independence and supported regime behavior favorable to Beijing” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.102). These results will definitively encourage Beijing to continue in its distinguished path using different geoeconomic tools and means to influence Taipei, and to gradually attain its main geopolitical goal in the island: the reunification (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

The vulnerability of Taiwan to the Chinese geoeconomic actions turns this country to be a foreign Chinese zone of capabilities by itself, due to “the financial center that Taiwan represents to the world” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.102), and the international jostle with its competitors Washington, Tokyo, or others in order to achieve one’s national goals and deter Beijing from taking Taiwan and walk its trajectory toward the gradual reunification... Taiwan’s case presented here a good example on China’s geo-strategy, so what is next?

B- China's Geo-Strategy in India-Pakistan

After displaying China's strategic management of its geopolitical interests in Taiwan, it is necessary to show up how it manages its geopolitical interests in India-Pakistan, knowing that there is a special triangular relation that distinguishes this case from any other as mentioned before.

That triangular relation had grown deeper, but also had held with its growth more complex interactions and interests.

Because of this growth and complexity, the triangle has come to rely more on geoeconomic strategies (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). As per Blackwill and Harris (2017), three main factors determine the fact of Geoeconomics being a "preferred medium of influence" (p.102) in the geo-strategies, among China – Pakistan – India:

- 1- Chinese leaders refuse to escalate military tensions and rivalries in order to expand their nation's influence in India and Pakistan - for these means will absolutely draw in the U.S. - therefore, - and learning from their "military" past and its substantial lessons - they "naturally" rely on geoeconomics to complete this mission (Macfie, 2013). The lessons China has learned from its military policies to expand its influence in Pakistan, and from its contribution in building this country's defense potential after the U.S embargo on weapons then, has helped its government to conclude that any cooperation with Pakistan will cause a negative reaction from the United States (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).
- 2- The second factor that "obliges" China to focus on geoeconomic assets in its relations with both countries is that India – due to its growth averages and global ambitions for more than a decade – has become "economically and politically valuable to China to

- risk intensifying tensions” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.121). Especially that many experts had expected then, that New Delhi will overtake Beijing in real growth in 2016 (Crabtree & Mallet, 2015), but that has not happened. Despite that, no one can deny the massive economic power of both of India and China, which is not stopping to grow day after day; meanwhile no one can deny that any Sino-Indian economic cooperation might represent a potent challenge to the United States privileges (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). This bilateral cooperation between China and India, reminds us of the BRICS - a project of cooperation between each of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which is at its core a large geoeconomic strategy facing that of NATO.
- 3- The limitation on China’s more traditional military assets might indirectly be the third reason behind China’s reliance on geoeconomics in its relations with Pakistan (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). It is well known that the United States had blocked any military relationship with Pakistan in the last epoch, and had overshadowed the Chinese military contribution there since the 9/11 (U.S. Department of State, 2014), by consolidating their bilateral relations (US – Pakistan) through collaborating in the War on Terror (Jetly, 2012).

Moreover, the United States had designated Pakistan as a main “Non-NATO ally”, and had put a large economic and military aid to represent a “front-line state in the war on terror” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.122).

Herein, Chinese leaders had found that their government could not match U.S military aid levels that totaled from 2002 to 2012: \$ 15.8 billion (Epstein & Kronstadt, 2013) - knowing that China was known as “Pakistan’s primary supplier of sophisticated military technology” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.122) - that is why they considered

that China will gain more strategic influence in Pakistan through its geoeconomic means (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

It can be plainly put here that there is an external force which stimulates the execution of all the dealings between the three countries of the strategic triangle, and that force is certainly the United States...

This choice of geoeconomic geo-strategy was not only due to intuition, but because of the potential that China has in the region, which enables it to practice geoeconomic influence in its deals with India and Pakistan (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). As per Blackwill and Harris (2017), this potential has been formed due to “China's asymmetric trade relations (China is the largest partner for both India and Pakistan), heavy assistance levels in the case of Pakistan, and sporadic investments in the region” (pp.123-124).

These Chinese geoeconomic policies are accurately exercised, and the following examples aim to explain how that mission has been accomplished:

- China's Xinjiang province has borders with Pakistan, and in March 2012, the Party chairman of this province castigated the ties between the extremist groups of Xinjiang and Taliban forces in Pakistan (Dasgupta, 2012). For its part, Pakistan has not succeeded in persuading China that it will deny the export of extremism across its borders (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Herein, China signaled its dissatisfaction by stopping the ongoing financing for a pipeline of gas promised to be expanded from Iran to Pakistan (Pantucci, 2012).
- From another perspective, China always aims to keep Pakistan in its sphere of influence (Blackwill & Harris, 2017), and that is why it does not lose any opportunity to present its incentives in its dealings with Pakistan (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). The “China-

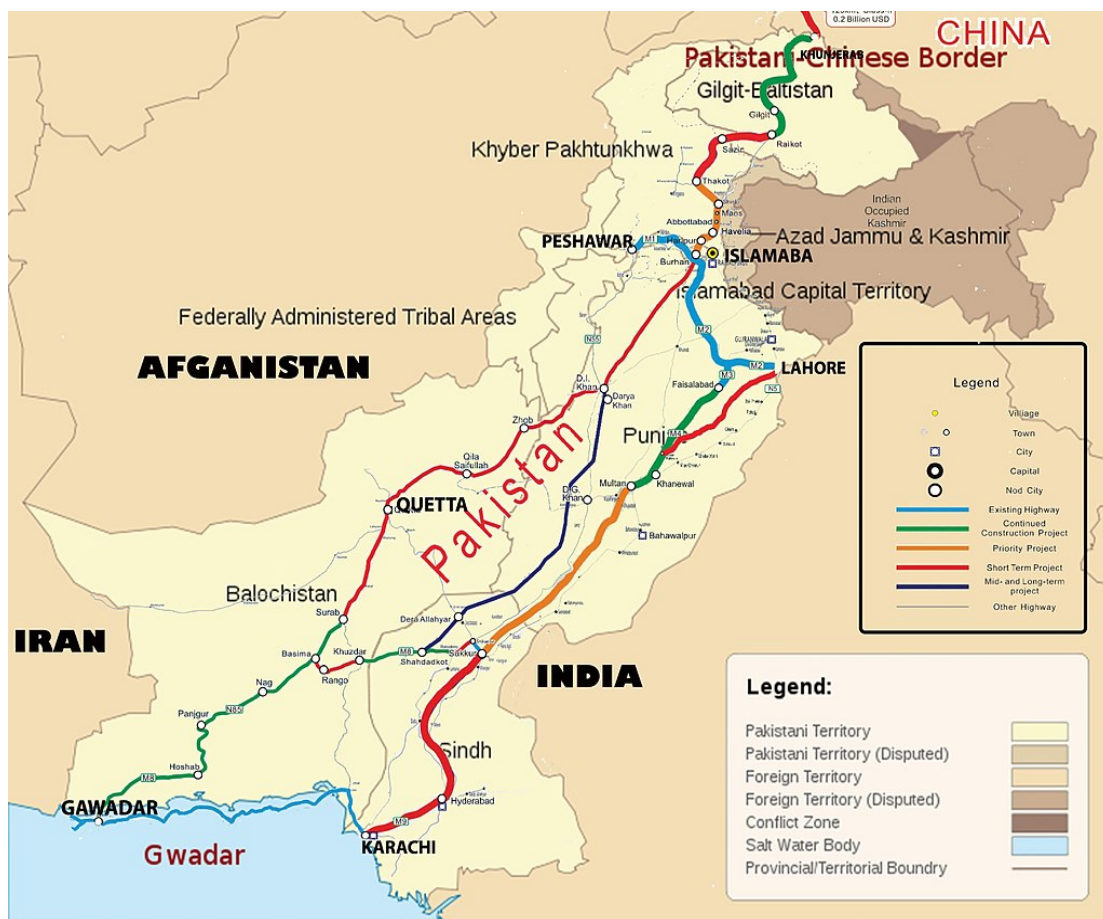
Pakistan Economic Corridor” is one of Beijing’s efforts towards Pakistan – to keep its leverage on it – and it is also the centerpiece of its famous OBOR Initiative (One Belt One Road Initiative) ... The total investment of \$ 46 billion in this “Corridor”, as per the prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, was “an example of the very close friendship between the two countries” (Aftab, 2014). Even many other Pakistani officials have considered this initiative as “the game changer for the entire region” (Menon, 2014).

China’s geoeconomic leverage was outstanding in this specific initiative which included (Blackwill & Harris, 2017):

- a- Promises of enhancement of the Pakistani transportation and trade through constructing an airport at the port of Gwadar, built and managed by China;
- b- Renovating roads and upgrading the rail system between Lahore and Karachi;
- c- Transforming Gwadar into a major international oil port between the Middle East and East Asia;
- d- Building a new nuclear power plant near Karachi;
- e- Modeling new specialized economic zones after China’s Shanghai free trade zone.

In this project’s plan, the Corridor generates at Gwadar, passes by the Karakoram Highway in Pakistan, then goes on to the Pak-China border and on to Urumqi and Western China (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). As estimated, this corridor will not only bring geoeconomic leverage for China over Pakistan, but will also be the path of more than one-quarter of China’s foreign trade (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

Figure 15: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor



Source: Aamir, 2018

China's leverage through that corridor (when accomplished) will expand over the entire region... Even when Gwadar port was built by China, it was intended to be “a nexus between Pakistan, Iran, China and Central Asian States” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.124); through this step, the port will be under the control of the COPHC (China Overseas Ports Holding Company), in order to ensure that the expansive corridor will stay firmly within China's sphere of influence, as stated by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (2015) ...

In their turn, Indian security officials doubted in the good intentions of China from this plan, and considered that the Chinese government is aiming to increase its economic

leverage in South Asia, and feared that Gwadar port was intended to be used as “one of a string of Chinese-financed ports in the region, where [the Chinese] navy could seek shelter and supplies as it expands operations in the Indian Ocean” (Page, 2014).

We cannot deny that the Indian officials are totally right in their fear of the intentions of China, and that is because China always has undeclared hidden goals in any project it plans and aims to execute... For example, one of its hidden targets from the New Silk Road initiative is to decrease its dependence on maritime trade routes that are under the control of the United States (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ... This can help us understand that China’s major strategy in the region is to link land and maritime routes, and to minimize the distance of any maritime leg of Chinese shipping, as Thomas Vien analyzed in his study *“The Grand Design of China’s New Trade Routes”* (Vien, 2015).

Herein, the CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor), will allow Chinese products to be exported overland to Pakistan, which might be helpful, before arriving to Europe through the Gwadar, port constructed and controlled by China (Blackwill & Harris, 2017).

And besides that corridor, China has always applied the same geostrategy in Pakistan, most of all in the energy projects:

- In 2013, Beijing accepted a deal of \$ 9 billion, to construct two nuclear power plants of 1100 megawatt in Karachi “financed largely through a concessional loan from China” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.125);
- In 2015, after a wave of heat in the summer that claimed around 2000 Pakistani lives, Beijing took advantage of that “opportunity” and stated that it would build a power line of 2000 km from the province of Xinjiang to Lahore as a support to the Pakistani surcharged power grid (Haider & Anis, 2015).

From the Pakistani point of view, the Chinese projects are a win-win game, and even the Pakistani government has done big efforts to improve security and stability in the areas where China is willing to invest, which are areas seeking the Chinese investment in fact... This improvement is by the end of the day, a real prevail for China in Pakistan, which considers according to its official that “the success of the Economic Corridor depends on stability” (Page, 2014).

Geoeconomically speaking, China does not respond to any crisis or problem that broke out in Pakistan in a traditional way, and its sway or dominance has technically improved over the years; it even stopped to grant cash outright if the receiving government in Islamabad does not guarantee structural reforms (Perlez, 2008).

China has always been a resort for Islamabad; in the financial crisis of 2008, the U.S.A and many other global nations were preoccupied by their own financial problems, and the traditional ally for Pakistan, K.S.A has also refused to offer it oil concessions... That is why Islamabad has again seen China “as the last port of call before the IMF” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.127).

On the other side, China’s “tough” geoeconomic policies aim more at India than Pakistan, to undermine the political will of India related to territorial conflicts along the Sino-Indian border (Blackwill & Harris, 2017) ... In 2009, Beijing stopped a multilateral aid of \$ 9 billion to India due to tensions that broke up around a region governed by India but claimed by China: Arunachal Pradesh (Blair, 2009).

Due to large consequences on its course of events, India began lately to adopt geoeconomics-led foreign policy (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). Indian Prime Minister Narednar Modi, who took office in 2014, was the leader of this shift of style towards

geo-economics in India, as he considers that economic fundamentals are the surest way on which the country could expand power and influence (Blackwill & Harris, 2017). In one of his speeches in October 2013, Modi stated that: “I believe a strong economy is the driver of an effective foreign policy” (Jaishankar, 2014) ... Many experts had analyzed then that the statements and intentions of Modi to turn India into a geo-economic country are partly a response and reaction to China’s own geo-economic statecraft (Balázs, 2015).

When Modi took office, things got harder for China; and it could not step into the breach previously caused by Modi’s predecessors (Bagga, 2014); Modi’s government billed an upgrade to the long-standing Indian approach “Look East”, and transformed it into “Act East” policy, which aimed to “remedy any regional vacuum left by the previous government” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.126).

This new approach was analyzed by the Indian media and considered as a policy that strengthens “strategic and economic ties with Southeast Asian countries that would possibly act as a counterweight to the influence of China in the region” (Jacob, 2014).

Bilateral relations have become difficult between China and India; especially that Modi has declared at his swearing ceremony, in its strategy of resetting India’s relations with its neighborhood that he aims to secure the participation of most South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation leaders (including Pakistan’s prime minister Nawaz Sharif), and chose Bhutan – a country courted by China – as his first foreign destination after taking office (Sahoo, 2014).

But no one can deny the mutual interests and benefits of good economic ties between China and India, knowing that both countries are aware that they are in mutual need for each other: China needs the big Indian market, and India needs the Chinese investments to

accomplish transit, infrastructure and many other projects essential to its economic revival, as Sahoo (2014) explained ... Herein, it appears clearly, that these neighbors consider economics as “a means of anchoring relations amid rising geopolitical struggles” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.126). That is why New Delhi chose TRADE to be the centerpiece of its policy towards Beijing, despite the acrimony over borders and the geopolitical rivalry in the region (Sahoo, 2014).

Driven by concerns over China’s tough geo-economic policies, India’s priority is to try to rely on good economic ties with the United States and its allies in the region (Blackwill & Harris, 2017); Modi’s efforts are to pave routes of trade for India, and to strengthen ties with big powers necessary to India’s economic revival and geopolitical rise (Kabraji, 2012).

In a strong bilateral act from India’s and United States of America’s part, Modi and President Obama agreed on a joint statement of cooperation on plans to “integrate the subcontinent with the markets of East Asia through an Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor” (Blackwill & Harris, 2017, p.127). This project’s proposal reminds us of the pre-mentioned CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), and it is also similar to China’s project to build a maritime silk road linking the Pacific and Indian Oceans... So India tries to face its own concerns over China’s influence in the region by taking its first steps with the Support of the United States to build its own maritime silk road (Balázs, 2015).

Briefly, and after discussing two main examples of China’s geo-economic displays in Asia: Taiwan and the strategic triangle China – India – Pakistan, we can conclude that China’s foreign geo-economic geo-strategies lie in the hidden layers of its geo-economic assets and policies, and

could be summed up by the ability of these policies to intimidate their competitors, and to threaten them, through employing geoeconomics as a tool to pursue a large range of targets locally, regionally and globally; knowing that a superpower which seeks international control must go for it gradually.

Part III: Integration Between China and Russia in Eurasia

Chapter 1: Russian Interests in Eurasia

Chapter 2: Cooperation or Competition Between China and Russia in Eurasia?

Chapter 3: An Empirical Analysis – Bringing Together Convergent and Divergent

Point of Views

Chapter 1: Russian Interests in Eurasia

As Zbigniew Brzezinski stated, Eurasia is the Great Chessboard where all the superpowers turn into being competitors, for this zone of the world attracts their geo-strategic ambitions and reflects the real balance of world power measuring and indicating the authentic levels of those competitors.

This is the main cause behind choosing Eurasia as a scale to measure the Sino-Russian integration “degrees” either in cooperating or in competing over interests and strategic objectives.

If we contemplate the geographical location of the Eurasian continent, we become aware that it is located in a specific center on the planet, which causes a geopolitical impact beyond its regional domain, turning it out to be the center of the world.

Herein we can conclude that this region does not constitute a strategic depth for only one nation, but superpowers, even those far away geographically – such as the United States – are competing between themselves on the “vital and dynamic depths” they are seeing in its lands... Thus, if this fact is applicable on the distant nation, what will be the case of the near ones? More specifically those located in its geographical arena, on its true lands: China and Russia.

This will evidently cause many ups and downs in the built-up relations between these two countries, knowing that the game of interests flips all equations, and requires at its end a full operation of reconstruction and rehabilitation, where new global, regional and national balances and rivals enter as milestones introducing another game of geopolitics...

This new game will produce new potential of influence to the resulting winner, where the winning phase will depend on the competitors' geo-strategies and their turn in the future geopolitical reconstruction of the world order...

Therefore, the hardest step in winning this nations' game is to expand one's control over the Eurasian Nation, which guarantees in its turn the ability to control the destinies of the entire world.

To understand how this game is being played, we must first have a clear perspective in terms of the Russian geopolitical interests in the Eurasian continent, so we could after that, compare them with China's pre-mentioned ones in the second chapter of the previous part of this thesis, to know if there is a conflict or a mating in their interests; in a way that assists us in elaborating the second chapter of this part, that will in turn study the reality of the Sino-Russian relations in terms of cooperation and competition over the Eurasian continent.

Section 1: Russian Interests in Eurasia

The main task Russia is looking for achieving in the Eurasian continent is to “meet pragmatic goals in the fields of security and development” (Timofeev & Alekseenova, 2015, p.12) ... In the framework of this task we can conclude its main geopolitical and geoeconomic interests there.

A- The Economic and Human “Resources and Energies”

Knowing that its local resources either in the economic or the personnel terms are limited and dependent on different foreign factors, Russia’s policies and foreign diplomacy prudently concentrates on “collecting them” through producing the “greatest possible number of friendly or neutral neighbors” (Timofeev & Alekseenova, 2015, p.12), especially that the geopolitical competition does not have an end in that region which is very rich in all kinds of resources and energies. And if that geopolitical competition gets extended, these resources will be dispersed and therefore “the force that Russia can bring to bear will also be dispersed, and the country will fall behind” (Timofeev & Alekseenova, 2015, p.12).

Herein, another interest sheds its light on the fact that if not having friendly neighbors, at least neutral ones that do not negatively affect the regional stability and participate in the competition wave, which might produce more pressure and tension on Russia and threaten the majority of its interests in Eurasia.

Through the newly-produced “circle of friends”, Russia could strongly face any kind of threats to its security or national interests, and have partners that will ally together and invest in their efforts to solve any problem of development they might face because of the pre-mentioned geopolitical competition.

Therefore, Russia tries to face the competition by a counter-coalition to snuff-out and extinguish its negative impact... And if a coalition is not possible, Russia works on maintaining the existing status of neutrality of the remaining parties, which if they took a negative step against Russia's vision, might affect the developed strategy of achieving its objectives and goals in the region.

B- The Region's Stability

The fact that many fundamental regions of Eurasia - Ukraine, Caucasus, Central Asia - are always under stress of instability, might cause Russia's grappling with a chaos. Especially that these countries are considered as extensive ones, which increases the threat of descending Russia into Chaos. Many social problems will arise then: drug trafficking, spontaneous migration, terrorism, and illegal use of weapons (Timofeev & Alekseenova, 2015, p.13).

Russia finds itself here as the responsible of the region's stability, for the instability will be affecting its national security and interests before anyone else. And from another perspective, Russia has to show up as the security provider for the weak and instable states of the Eurasian region, requesting from its government to deploy its forces along their borders in order to prevent any threat from sneaking into their lands.

This will be an added-value for Russia, a new strength point that will be added to its list, increasing its potential of influence and control in the region, due to the status of security it is ensuring for the states in need.

While there are gaps in the systems and mechanism of preventing any security threat from occupying their lands, Russia works on filling the gaps of these weak countries of Eurasia and

removing the main causes behind turning their lands into grounds of social disorders, terrorism, and extremism threatening their stability.

By assisting its neighbors in reaching stability, Russia will evidently increase its power and protect its borders from any kind of security threats, besides empowering its regional influence and control over the Eurasian lands.

C- The Common Development Theory

Having been given that Russia is not a country that encourages internal or external system changes and amendments; in other words, Russia is mainly a status-quo power, and not a revisionist one: *“Whereas revisionists seek to change the way things are in international politics, status-quo seekers strive to preserve things as they are”* (Davidson, 2006, p.1).

Therefore, Russia prevents internal changes in policies, and supports conservative forces to prevent any political difficulty from releasing and threatening its national security.

Thus, in order to become more effective and efficient, Russian policy makers thought to find other ways to preserve their stability and prevent future problems, especially after the colored revolutions that occurred in Ukraine and Central Asia – Russia’s neighborhood.

These new pragmatic strategies turned around supporting projects of infrastructure in both Russia and its neighboring countries, through sharpening the huge edges between them in a way that removes any barrier blocking the free movement of capital, goods, services and manpower (Reduction of transaction costs); this will lead to a proper common development in the region, through unifying the economic standards there and increasing the world market competitiveness.

Therefore, when the neighbor countries in Eurasia witness that Russian policy makers are treating them as they are treating their own country in its internal economic and developmental policies, they will definitely accept the implementation of that theory named as common development; this is because there are really common development projects between them, implemented reciprocally.

The major example of global initiatives inducing developmental projects in the region is the construction of the Silk Road routes which are traversing the Southern regions of Russia and Central Asian countries; since the new routes are passing by the region, the development projects will be definitively accompanying them.

Hence, Russia – the country that does not have direct outlet to the warm waters - benefitted from a valuable competitive advantage in transporting cargo overland from Western China to Europe, and that has also had a positive impact on both China and Europe through saving their times in terms of exports and imports.

Therefore, new infrastructure is constructed in Russia's Southern region due to that Silk Road project, new working opportunities took places, and new possibilities are being spelled in order to expand markets through the routes of the Silk Road.

Russia's other fundamental interests in Eurasia is to develop a base of firm economic foundations for cooperation with its partners there, under the theory stating that "if integration yields real economic benefits, it will inevitably serve to strengthen political ties between acknowledged equals" (Timofeev & Alekseenova, 2015, p.13). And we can add to this theory that when Russia holds good political and diplomatic ties with its partners in the Eurasian Region, it will inevitably affect their common underdeveloped ground in a positive way to overcome it.

D- Inter-Regional Cooperation Institutions

The step following the process of the Eurasian integration, will be that of external expansion, where Russia and its partners will put all their efforts to benefit from the possibility of developing new political and economic ties with new countries outside the Eurasian borders, that will pave them the path for future cooperation.

One main example of this inter-regional expansion is that of the FTA with Vietnam stipulated in 2015, and many other countries started negotiating chances to join the agreement, such as Egypt recently, knowing that the bilateral exchanges between Egypt and Russia are recently increasing in a way that forced them to build cooperation ties in terms of investments and infrastructure projects in the first place.

A second major example of inter-regional cooperation involves Russian relations with the EU especially that the recent Eurasian economic integration has a huge chance to lead to a renaissance in the bilateral relations between Russia and the EU.

And since Russia is a major member of the EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) – in addition to Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan – (World Data, n.d.), the standards and principles stipulated in the EEU alliance, including: “sovereign equality of the member-states, respect to the specifics of the political set-up of the members to the association, ensuring the mutual benefit in the cooperation, observing the market economy principles and its functioning (as a rule) without exemptions and restrictions” (Greater Europe, 2017); these standards eventually affected the cooperation opportunities between the European countries and those members in the EEU.

So the major interest that Russian policymakers are working on consists of deepening the Eurasian integration, for as it deepens, the European countries will direct their economic policies towards it and its neighbors in a way that convenes with its geopolitical interests.

Therefore, the EU and the EEU has to create a forum for discussing the political differences between them, and upon the results develop a detailed and fixed cooperation strategy.

It is extremely possible that the Eurasian integration processes, such as that of the EEU, will positively affect the idea of “a common space from Lisbon to Vladivostok: that is a greater Europe or a greater Eurasia” (Khristenko, 2015).

To conclude, Russia’s interests in Eurasia – and especially after the cold war, the epoch of deterioration – fall under one main title: Its reputation as a constructive partner...

All the pre-mentioned interests, starting by investing in the economic and human resources and energies of Eurasia, passing by maintaining the region’s stability and implementing the common development theory, and down to establishing the inter-regional cooperation institutions are all about Russia’s main needs to rebuild its image as an “equal, constructive, and reliable partner” from a side, in addition to “throw off its reputation as a state that threatens weaker neighbors and nourishes imperial ambitions towards the former republics of the USSR” (Timofeev & Alekseenova, 2015, p.15).

Russia works on demonstrating its strength through the development projects, knowing that it has failed to do so through media and soft power because of the Western huge information system... But what affects Russia’s task and make it very accurate is the fact that China, the master of soft power, is geographically located in its neighboring, in the same Eurasian region.

Does the fact that China is Russia's neighbor facilitates realizing Russia's objectives and targets, or make them more difficult to achieve? This is what will be clarified in the upcoming section of the Chapter.

Section 2: Conflict of Sino-Russian Interests in Eurasia

At the time when Russia and China are rising or re-emerging as major powers, it is inevitable and natural that bilateral conflicts emerge on their path due to similarity of interests in Eurasia... This similarity definitely increases the competition level between these two Eurasian powers, where they invest in their interests and develop them as a prior step to achieve their regional and international objectives simultaneously.

In view of this, the most appropriate methodology to understand the Sino-Russian Eurasian Interests' status is the comparative one, knowing that we have already discussed in details China's interests in Eurasia in the previous part of the dissertation, in addition to Russia's interests in Eurasia in the previous chapter of this part of the dissertation.

Therefore, the upcoming paragraphs will compare between the interests of these two nations in Eurasia, to conclude what are the similar ones and whether the conflict of interests exist, in a way that clarifies the situation before the final chapter of the thesis discusses the reality of competition or cooperation between China and Russia in Eurasia.

Thus, a clear table displaying each nation's major interests in Eurasia will be developed in the upcoming page, followed by an analysis of their mutual effect on the bilateral Sino-Russian relations.

Table 2: Chinese and Russian Interests in Eurasia

Chinese Interests in Eurasia	Russian Interests in Eurasia
1) The Vacuum of Influence	1) The Region's Stability
2) The Map of the OBOR Initiative	2) Common Development Theory
3) Natural Resources	3) Economic and Human Resources
4) Safe and Secure Borders	4) Inter-Regional Cooperation Institutions

This table clearly shows the similarities and differences between the Sino-Russian interests in Eurasia, but it is necessary to go deep in the geopolitical meaning of each one of them compared to the other so we might conclude the inner essence of their bilateral relation as a prelude to the next and final chapter of the dissertation showing up the competition or cooperation between China and Russia over the Eurasian Continent.

A- Interest Number 1

China's first major interest in Eurasia is to fill in the vacuum of influence existing in the Eurasian supercontinent, for there is no focal influencer there, and it is impossible for Eurasian nations other than China, such as Russia, India or even Japan to do the job as demonstrated in the previous part of the dissertation...

That makes China's dream of dominating the throne of Eurasia's leadership, to begin from filling in that gap or vacuum of influence existing there.

As for Russia's first major geopolitical interest in the region, it is about maintaining its stability to prevent any threat from arising and descending Moscow into chaos and affecting its national security.

So in the same context of that of China, Russia works on providing assistance to its weak neighbors, in a way that leads to stabilizing the whole region, strengthening the weak governments, and preventing any threat from sneaking into its lands.

So, either through filling the gap of influence, or through maintaining the region's stability, China and Russia are seeking geopolitical control over the Eurasian lands in a way that benefits them from existing gaps and faults, and standing up steadily to deploy their forces and powers (hard or soft) wherever and whenever in need.

So this first interest (as well as the upcoming ones) constitutes a valuable material for the following chapter, and analyzing it will shed lights on the Sino-Russian zones of cooperation from one site and competition from the other.

B- Interest Number 2

Concerning the second geopolitical interest of China related to the map of the OBOR initiative, we could say that this is an “extending” interest aiming for geopolitical and geoeconomic expansion from the Chinese lands and seas to the European ones, through building many infrastructure projects across Eurasia to encourage trade, in addition to strengthening its relations with Europe as the second pole of the Eurasian region.

Through pragmatically investing in this geopolitical interest, China could ensure its geoeconomic control over the supercontinent of Eurasia from its two sides East and West!

As for Russia, the corresponding geopolitical interest is that of implementing the common development theory all over the Eurasian lands generally, and with its neighboring countries specifically... It turned out that this interest became a geo-strategy through supporting many infrastructure projects internally and regionally (with the

neighbors) in a way that helps in erasing the differences between them and free out the movement of services, human power, capital and goods.

Russia here spreads unified economic standards in its neighborhood, knowing that it is applying these same standards in its own internal economic policies. This theory increases the trust of the region's countries in Russia's policies, and therefore, increases Russia's control over it.

C- Interest Number 3

Starting with China, accessing and investing in Eurasia's natural resources and raw materials constitute the third main geopolitical interest for its policymakers... In order to face any probable deficiency in resources in the future, they focus on Eurasia as "a source of major energy resources, water, and food" (Cohen, 2003).

This created an additional reason to cooperate with Eurasian countries, and above them all Russia, for most of China's imports of resources (1/3) come from Russia... To achieve its aims, China started building a network of railroads and pipelines to impose its influence over Eurasia, and ensure its access to natural resources and energies whenever needed.

And as per Russia, accessing the economic and human resources and energies, is the third main geopolitical interest to "fight for"; and the reason behind this, is that its local resources in both the economic and personnel terms are limited and unstable... Russia works on "collecting" them through diplomatic and friendly ties with the countries of its neighborhood... And when the "circle of friends" is created, Russia can maintain an evident access to resources from the region, even when the geopolitical competition arises... So it is fundamental for Russia to have "partners" around its borders, in a way that

prevents threats to its national security and interests, in addition to providing support to any one of them that might find any kind of threat in the same context.

If a partnership is not possible, safeguarding the neutrality status could also prevent a negative impact from arising against Russia's operations and goals in the region.

D- Interest Number 4

Maintaining safe and secure borders is China's fourth main geopolitical interests in Eurasia, in order to invoke its intervention in the region, and combat the majority of the security threats against it...

Through intervening in that way and protecting its national security at the same time, China was able to expand its geopolitical control over the threatened countries in the region, and protect its interests there from any probable danger that might occur.

In contrary, concerning Russia's fourth interest, it is all about a jointly external expansion outside Eurasia through mutually developing with its partners, new political and economic ties with countries outside the Eurasian borders, in order to take further steps towards future collaboration and cooperation.

For that aim, the EEU and many other cooperation institutions were established, and many agreements were developed like the Free Trade Agreements recently under process with Vietnam and Egypt... These policies push the interested countries to build cooperation ties with Russia (and its partners) from one side, and reinforce the pre-built political and economic ties with its partners from the other.

Through investments and infrastructure projects, needy countries are mostly attracted; and this could pave the road behind Russia's intervention in their internal policies, and

therefore extending its control over their lands under the pretext of cooperation and development.

After displaying China's and Russia's main geopolitical interests in Eurasia, we can conclude that the two countries have large similarities in their way of thinking to elaborate different convenient strategies aiming at investing in and protecting their geopolitical interests in Eurasia.

While China works on filling the gaps or vacuum of influence existing in Eurasia, Russia from its side puts all its efforts to maintain the region's stability... The two interests are different in appearance but similar in results: expanding control all over the supercontinent of Eurasia, and most specifically through exploiting the fact that most of the Eurasian countries are politically and economically weak, and need assistance to improve their wellbeing.

As per the second interest, and while China is achieving many infrastructure projects from China (lands and seas) to Europe (lands and seas) via the OBOR initiative, Russia is busy implementing the common development theory with its neighboring countries and overall the Eurasian lands, through many developmental projects... Thus, China is encouraging trade in Eurasia, and Russia is working on removing barriers between them, to free out the movement of services, good, and capitals. We can here conclude a new theory stating: Development for Trade, and Trade for Sovereignty.

When we say Development for trade, we mean that the main aim of China and/or Russia – from implementing developmental and infrastructures projects in Eurasia is increasing their trade exchanges with the Eurasian countries in a way that strengthen their economies in the first place... But if we look deeply into their geo-strategies (related to the pre-mentioned interest), we can conclude that in addition to reinforcing their internal economies through investing in this interest,

China and Russia increase their control and supremacy over the Eurasian lands through their infrastructure projects ensuring the exchange of goods, capitals, workforces, and services... and this is why we say Trade for Sovereignty.

On the third level, and while China started building a whole network of railroads and pipelines in Eurasia to ensure its access to natural resources and energies existing in the region and prevent any probable deficiency in the future, Russia works on developing diplomatic and friendly relationships with the countries of its neighborhood to ensure its access to human resources and energies available there due to the limit, lack, and instability of national human personnel and economic resources locally... Therefore, having a good “circle of friends” is Russia’s mean to realize its pre-mentioned aim, and building pipelines and railroads is China’s mean to realize its aim in its turn. Russia uses diplomacy, and China uses geoeconomics: here is a fundamental point of difference, even if the main objective is similar. And this will be discussed later on.

And finally, while China looks for ways to maintain safe and secure borders to prevent its national security from any threat or terrorist permeation to its lands, in addition to protecting Eurasian countries from any probable unsecure situation, Russia is busy establishing inter-regional cooperation institutions that start from Eurasia and cross its geopolitical boundaries; this happens in cooperation with its Eurasian partners with whom it has built diplomatic ties through applying its own geo-strategy to invest in its third main interest clarified above... This is how China invokes its intervention in the region while preventing it from any security threat that might occur, and this is how Russia benefits from its “circle of friends” to expand its control outside the Eurasian borders... What distinguishes China from Russia here, is that the first invests in its interest slowly and pragmatically, while the latter works on it in a faster geo-strategy; and that will also be discussed in the upcoming chapter of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Cooperation or Competition Between China and Russia in Eurasia?

Russia and China have been recently pursuing different and distinct regional cooperation projects in the supercontinent of Eurasia: the EEU and the SREB, respectively; but at the same time they are trying to avoid direct competition in the region... What the world sees about their relationship is really unclear, for some analysts see a harmonization while others see a clash of influence and a conflict of interest at some point.

In a quick glance at the Sino-Russian relations, we can see that the epoch of the Soviet Union collapse and the establishment of the Russian Federation in 1991 was a turnover in that term; these two countries are now recovering from a sizable decline in terms of diplomatic and economic relations at the first decade of the 21st century, and major geopolitical interests are playing an important role in converging both perspectives in order to maintain a good alliance in the face of any “western” enmity...

But when it comes to national security, national interests, and self-esteem, it is inevitable that each country retracts to protect its own objectives, and invest in all its efforts to exclusively fulfill its hopes on the international scene, especially when they are related to its expansionist ambitions...

Herein, knowing that both of China and Russia have the similar aim of expansion – even if each one of them are implementing different strategies to do so – we have to take into consideration that this fact will lead them into another level of “Power Race”, either in Eurasia or outside of its borders...

On another side, the recent development phenomenon emerging on the international scene in what is related to the Russo-American ties and the Putin-Trump relationship, contrary to the Sino-American ties and the trade war between Xi Jinping and Trump, constitute a first look at the complexity of the Sino-Russian relations under the principle of good neighborliness, and in what is compliant with the bilaterally signed treaty of 2001 “friendship and cooperation”, which was the outcome of previous agreements on “constructive partnership” in 1992, and “strategic partnership” in 1996.

In this chapter, we are going to dissect the competition and cooperation areas between these two superpowers, especially in the period following the Chinese adoption of geoeconomic statecraft, in order to answer the problematic of the thesis and conclude how did geoeconomics affect the historical relation between these Eurasian superpowers.

Section 1: Sino-Russian Cooperation in Eurasia

China's and Russia's engagements in the Eurasian theater is testing their abilities to control their differences and create opportunities for cooperation despite all challenges... It is true that each country of them has its projects and strategies, but searching for common ground for cooperation makes things better.

Thus, in the upcoming paragraphs we will be displaying where does China and Russia cooperate in what is related to their pre-mentioned major interests, and analyzing the main reasons behind this cooperation in order to have a clear image that might assist us in understanding the areas of competition that will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

A- Alliance Against Washington – Assimilation of Projects

Since 2014, the time when the Russian conflict with the West got bigger, Moscow and Beijing have entered a new cooperation stage at all levels, military, political, and economy... Thus, due to the increasing tensions with Washington that both nations are suffering from, interdependence between them has been growing, and they always seem like moving closer to an alliance, but number of problems and asymmetries in their relations prevent them to reach a clear and comprehensive one.

What concerns us here, is how does China and Russia cooperate to face the United States' policies of expansionist ambitions towards their region?

Geoeconomics is the answer; it constitutes the main road that both China and Russia are taking to face the U.S. hostility in the Eurasian region.

In April 2019, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin called their states as “good friends” (Jeong-ho, 2019), and that was a translation of their aim to unify their efforts in order to achieve a greater economic integration in the supercontinent of Eurasia during the increasing economic and military competition with the United States (Jeong-ho, 2019).

In the light of this objective, the Chinese president stated that his country counts Russia as “an important partner in co-building the Belt and Road Initiative” (Jeong-ho, 2019), for both countries “have enjoyed the highest level of mutual trust, the closest cooperation, and huge strategic importance” (Jeong-ho, 2019).

From his side, the Russian president stated that China had “built an important platform for expanding international cooperation” (Jeong-ho, 2019), he added that “Russia is willing to strengthen exchanges and cooperation, and work with China in energy, connectivity and other major projects” (Jeong-ho, 2019). By that statement, Putin declared that Russia is offering its support to the Chinese OBOR aiming at boosting economic and trade ties in the region through investments in infrastructure and energy.

In an analysis to what was displayed above, we can see that China and Russia are unifying their efforts together in order to face the threat challenging them from the western side of the planet, specifically from the United States aiming to impose its authority on the Chessboard of the world, Eurasia... Their president’s statements regarding each country’s project in the region, appear like a bilateral “assimilation” to each party’s ambition of expansion...

They encourage each other publicly, on the contrary, every one of them implicitly understands the value of the good relationship with the other, but does not forget that they are in a strategic competition, for Russia fears of depending on China, and China has a traditional distrust with Russia since the Sino-Soviet split during the cold war...

In addition to that, the similarity of interests has not led to any clear alliance between them, and will not lead to, as it appears in the near future, and because of that they could not cooperate to the extreme levels of cooperation in the region, and this will be clearly discussed in the forthcoming section of the chapter.

Therefore, China and Russia used to control the stability of their relationships and manage the strategic gaps between them in order to face their common rival, the United States of America, imposing “growing trends of protectionism, illegitimate sanctions bypassing the United Nations Security Council, and even trade wars” (Jeong-ho, 2019), in a way that slows down the international economy and causes new conflicts...

This was achievable through encouraging each other's projects: Russia supported China's OBOR as we clarified above, and China also supported the Eurasian Economic Union created by Russia with a target of greater economic cooperation and integration on the Eurasian continent.

Thus, Putin affirmed that states gathering under the OBOR and the EAEU have mutual long-term strategic interests under the context of peace and growth (Jeong-ho, 2019); Therefore, each country provides support to its counterpart's projects in order to exchange “legitimacy” between them and in the Eurasian countries in order to face the American hostility that might occur during its expansion trials towards the Eastern part of the globe.

A real turnover has been done in the Sino-Russian relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union; they shifted from being adversaries of the Cold War, into becoming partners commonly aiming to pragmatically interrupt the execution of a western-dominated international system (mainly dominated by the USA).

This policy will ensure China and Russia's control over the Eurasian lands and resources, despite the fact that "China holds the upper hand in the relationship" (Stronski & Ng, 2018, p.1). And even if there were an imbalance between their powers and decisions regarding the "bilateral friendship", China and Russia consider that they can gain more benefit from their cooperation than from their outright competition (Stronski & Ng, 2018).

Finally, we can say that through this cooperation, China and Russia became able to protect and invest in the majority of their main geopolitical interests in the Eurasian continent.

B- China's and Russia's Main Geopolitical Interests in the Eurasian Continent

1- In what is related to China

- China was able to profit from this cooperation, and from the geographical, political and economic conditions to have the legitimacy to its OBOR project and extend its roadmap between the two sides of Eurasia, Europe and Asia to ensure the exchange of the services, goods, resources, and capitals... It is also important to mention that Russia and China are cooperating in terms of education also; and this cooperation and exchanges have increased fast: "both sides have a large number of international students studying in each other's countries" (Jeong-ho, 2019) ... Even president Putin received an honorary doctorate from Tsinghua University in a ceremony following a meeting with President Jinping (Jeong-ho, 2019) ... Education will evidently improve Sino-Russian relations in the future and increase the level of cooperation in specific domains.

- China was able to fill the gap of influence existing in the Eurasian supercontinent, due to the efforts done to evacuate, if we do not want to say eliminate, the western antagonism and hostility represented by the American ambitions to boost in efforts and exercise authority over weak and fragile Eurasian states. So the people of these states felt safe regarding China's protection to their homelands, and they welcomed its own kind of intervention to maintain security and stability in their countries, and to prevent them from any foreign attempt of violation or aggression.
- In addition to that, and through attaining the level of agreement on cooperation with Russia and its president's declaration of support towards the OBOR initiative, China was able to ensure its access to raw materials, and energy resources from Russia and from its neighboring countries in the Eurasian continent, in addition to prevent its nation from any probable deficiency in resources in the future due to the belt and road project, ensuring its connection to the majority of the world map markets, and most specifically to states rich in resources.

2- In what is related to Russia

- Through the cooperation agreement with China, Russia became able to spread its control and authority largely on the Eurasian lands, and implement its common development theory with its neighbors in order to preserve stability in the region and prevent future problems from occurring... The OBOR initiative executed by China, had got the support of the Russian Federation for the outcomes and returns from which it benefits in executing infrastructures and developmental projects within the common

development strategy it is implementing in the Eurasian supercontinent. And since the new roads of this project traverse the southern region of Russia and pass by Central Asia, Russian developmental projects accompany them and benefit from the fact that new trade roads are constructed in its national zone... Therefore, Russia is benefitting from the cooperation with China, for it facilitates the execution of the decided developmental projects inside and outside the Russian borders, in a way that improves Russia's reputation in the region... And the most recent news in these terms is that: "the first direct e-commerce cargo air route was launched on the 30th of October 2019 to link the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou with Moscow, Russia" (Bianji, 2019).

- On the second hand, Russia profited from the cooperation with China to facilitate the access to the economic and human resources existing in the Eurasian region, and that is happening through the Chinese constructed silk road... That built road required a specified and professional personnel to participate in its building, and that has ensured Russia that it will not find itself facing a serious need of manpower initially limited in the country... In addition to that, according to Ren Qi (2019), Putin believes that the BRI is in line with the EAEU goals: The BRI aims to connect Asia and Europe, Africa and Beyond through the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road; In its turn, the EAEU seeks to optimize the flow of goods and services among its members (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia). This pushed the two presidents to sign a "Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Linking the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the Eurasian Economic Union in May 2015" to develop the bilateral relations at a strategic level (Qi, 2019) ... Herein, and under the BRIEAEU alignment, China and Russia have consolidated cooperation in sectors of

- nuclear energy, aerospace and infrastructure; and their trade has exceeded the record of \$ 100 billion in 2018 (Qi, 2019). Finally, we could not forget that this cooperation has facilitated the named “people-to-people exchanges” and has also bolstered the opinion of the Chinese and Russian citizens towards a stronger bilateral relationship, for it has consolidated their stability and ensured their wellbeing. Cultural exchanges, state-level activities, such as: “the Year of Tourism, the China-Russia Fourth Friendly Exchange Year, and the Year of China-Russia Local Cooperation and Exchange” have also positively contributed in the harmony among the two peoples (Qi, 2019).
- Furthermore, and from another perspective, Russia benefited from cooperating with China to protect its interest aiming at safeguarding the stability of the Eurasian region, for any probable challenge that might occur will adversely affect its national security and negatively influence its economic leverage... Therefore, building a strong relationship with China will definitely affect Russia’s reputation in the region and increases its power to take the responsibility of protecting the weak countries from security menaces... In addition to that, when China supports Russia’s idea concerning the greater Eurasian partnership, this automatically bolsters the stability and harmony in the region... The Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP) stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, involving the 4 states of the EAEU, in addition to countries which Russia has close partnership with: China, Pakistan, India, Iran, and the remaining Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) Partners (Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), in addition to other interested countries and associations (Li, 2018). Its main idea is to seek strategic development not only with the EAEU, but also with the majority of the countries region while holding a leading

position; and this is how it started its “Pivot to East”, not only towards China, but also towards all Asia with a special focus on China, and their cooperation has helped a lot in achieving Russia’s aim. This geo-strategy helped Russia to re-win the universal respect and to become a wealthy and powerful country, and this was the first step to link strategies and strengthen bilateral cooperation with China, and efforts were paid off by signing the Joint Declaration on Cooperation on Linking the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union, which has reinforced the practical cooperation between China and the EAEU states as a practical introductory to the realization of Russia’s dream: The Greater Eurasian Partnership.

- From another side, Russia’s intentions are to become the number one security and diplomatic leader in the supercontinent of Eurasia, and to leave the role of economic leader to the People’s Republic of China. In other words, “China would be the bank, and Russia would be the gun” (Standish, 2015). Therefore, it is trying to benefit from its cooperation with China to create a new order for the Eurasian continent where it aspires to become the leader, reflected in its diplomatic efforts to ensure the admission of India and Pakistan to the SCO and in its advocacy to the future membership of Iran... By this – the GEP – Russia tries to present an antithesis to the Western world order, but that will definitely cause a power struggle with China seeing itself as the strongest power in the world. And it is also unexpected that China would accept that its preeminence should be constrained and balanced while Russia’s authority is increasing over the region. And even if it accepted that, no one can forget that China’s economy is eight to nine times bigger than Russia’s economy; and this economic inequality will be reflected as a political one if China ever feels that Russia is threatening its national

or regional geopolitical interests; therefore, it will prevent Russia from attaining its goals, and will stop any term of cooperation with China, hence leading to the loss of all vested interests and to falling down to the lowest layers of power... And this scenario is exactly the one Russia is working hard to prevent itself from falling into... Pragmatically thinking, it is better to have two main powers controlling the Eurasian region and its states, for creating a system of regional balance of power, will make the smaller states of the region never feel that they are under the influence of one dominant power; and that will also transform China and Russia's authority there into a softer and more acceptable one, especially that Post-Soviet Russia is still seen as the state capable of exercising military power beyond its borders, and that will decline Moscow's position in Eurasia. It is also important to mention that it is true that Russia has gained influence over the Eurasian region, but it is also aware that some regional security problems might occur and prevent it from achieving its responsibility in providing security. This is why it has to refer that role to China, which in its turn might decline the request to provide security to central Asian countries due to national security reasons, and this will create a gap of influence that will be exploited by the common rival, the USA, if not managed pragmatically... Herein we understand the importance of the high level of cooperation between Russia and China, in a way that prevents any kind of failure that might occur in the future.

Between China's Dream and Russia's Dream, there lay many differences and similarities, and the bilateral cooperation agreements between them are definitely contributing into achieving their dreams, and are furthermore leading into the globalization of the OBOR and the EAEU, rather

than regionalization... This means that cooperation between two powerful states leads to unexpected results for both parties, who surely want to maintain their political as well as economic influence over the region at the end of the day.

Speaking of cooperation, the linkage of the OBOR and the EAEU projects has not only facilitated their achievement but has also provided a secure background to the mechanism of their achievement, knowing that a strong and solid relationship based on cooperation empowers both of the cooperative parties and unifies their efforts not only to protect their existing geopolitical interests, but to invest in them and increase their strategic outcomes in a way that serves the realization of their dreams.

No one can deny that this kind of cooperation and alignment of projects between China and Russia has entered a new wave of development to every zone of the Eurasian supercontinent... It has also revealed USA's intentions and removed its hands, preventing it from demolishing the so-created bilateral integration in the Eurasian supercontinent, the chessboard where all of the world's power race to compete and checkmate.

From the discussion above, it appears evident that the Sino-Russian cooperation in Eurasia is attracting them closer to each other, knowing that each party understands deeply that this supercontinent cannot be controlled by one single country, despite the fact of how powerful this country is either economically, or politically and diplomatically.

Although both Beijing and Moscow understand the high importance of collaboration and cooperation – especially in the Eurasian region – and however they signed the joint declaration on cooperation and linkage of their projects, they have until now not agreed on a clear strategic alliance to define their future cooperative roles either regionally or globally... And this indirectly

means that both of them have some question marks about their counterpart's geo-strategic behavior.

This also sheds lights on the fact that even if the cooperation was highly-valued by both parties, competition will never leave an empty place without filling it back; At the end of the day, – and as we said before – relationships are important and everyone understands their value, but when it comes to strategic competition over preeminence and geopolitical interests, things ultimately change.

This is what the next chapter comes for: clarifying areas of competition between China and Russia in Eurasia, and analyzing and explaining their main reasons to continue the roadmap leading to the final conclusion that will answer the fundamental problematic of the dissertation.

Section 2: Sino-Russian Competition in Eurasia

It is clearly true that China and Russia are doing great efforts to avoid the highly predicted future of a bilateral open competition between them, but if we read that between the lines we understand that instances of competition are taking front places in their relationship and that should be studied and understood.

The bold question that arises here, is related to the two main projects of China and Russia in Eurasia, the OBOR and the EAEU respectively... What kind of impact are they having on their bilateral relation? And does the intersection of these projects ultimately lead to the feared Sino-Russian competition?

No one can deny China and Russia's initiatives to manage their distinct regional politics, rearrange their neighborhoods and preserve their national stability, but as we said before, all their aspirations, approaches, and agreements have not lead into a clear and unbreakable cooperative friendship.

Russia's dreams and policies to gain authority over China's economic expansion in Eurasia, and China's use of its economic leverage to expand its direct influence over all the region including Russia, in addition to all the unilateral policies developed and implemented by each side without being able to reach an agreement (at the economic level mainly) are being translated and understood as an indirect rivalry status that will be hard to overcome.

Furthermore, the only clear relationship competition experienced by China and Russia after the establishment of the Russian Federation was in their Race Power towards Central Asia in the late 2000s, and precisely towards Turkmenistan's energies and resources (natural gas), and more, over the construction of pipeline routes to benefit from this gas; and this is where the economic

competition restarted years after the adversarial one of the Cold War... Central Asia, the Post-Soviet space reincarnated the rivalry game between these two powers, and that will be further explained in the forthcoming paragraphs.

A- Central Asia

Central Asia, that Post-Soviet Region of Eurasia and the backyard of both China and Russia is the mirror reflecting the actual reality in the bilateral relations between them, whether they cooperate regionally, whether they manage the preserve of their interests under the pretext of “co-existence”, or they leave the ground for conflict of interests and competition... In other words, their interference in Central Asia gives clear hints about their behavior towards each other as partners or adversaries.

Let us briefly see what is the geo-strategic importance of Central Asia for both Russia and China to understand the aspects of competition:

1- For Russia

Besides the historical connection and the Soviet past that embrace Russia to Asia, the infrastructure plays also an important role in strengthening the bond between them. Moscow have realized what is so-called a “monopoly” over the natural gas existing there in Central Asia, and defended its transit to its land by preventing the European Union’s individual access to them in what is compliant with the perspective and policies of the Central Asian states, however China’s OBOR passes by the latters’ lands and arrives into Europe, which puts the natural resources and gas of the region under threat of a “strange exploitation” ...

2- For China

Central Asia constitutes the treasure of energy that should be exploited fast, especially the natural resources of gas and oil in addition to uranium from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. And since China's energy resources are mostly supplied from "less stable countries and through waters largely controlled by the United States" (Zogg, 2019), Chinese policymakers have seen in Central Asia the rope of salvation; they have held it and are still hardly holding on it... In addition to that, and as we explained in the so first sections of this dissertation, Central Asia is considered the stable neighbor of the Xinjiang province that will protect China's national security from the threat of separatist Uyghur, if China succeeded in achieving a sustainable good relationship with its countries... It is also important to mention that Beijing is establishing "re-education camps" at the borders between Xinjiang and each of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to pacify the negative intentions of the Uyghur through improving their behaviors and developing their mentalities; this is without forgetting that Central Asian states constitute a trade "vent" for the less developed countries of Western Asia.

All what was stated above, remind us of when Russia signed an agreement in 2007 with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to establish a new gas pipeline and link it to the Russian gas network, but the agreement was never executed; so China benefited from that matter and issued at the same time agreements with the same Central Asian countries: the agreements stated the construction and transit of gas and oil (Kaczmariski, 2018).

After that, the famous oil and gas prices drop happened in 2009, so Russia put a limit to its import of gas from Turkmenistan and then stopped it when it realized its high cost for Russia's Gazprom during its trials of renegotiating the already existing deal...

This gap represented a big opportunity for China to benefit from, so it directly took a step behind to help Turkmenistan in facing the Russian pressure caused by the decision to stop buying its resources; that step was a loan of \$ 4 billion (Kaczmarski, 2018).

After that step, China approached further when it aimed to achieve the establishment of a gas pipeline extending from the Turkmen's lands to China; and that pipeline started operating in 2009 (Kaczmarski, 2018). This has proportionally led to the Russian gradual limitation of its presence in the sector of energy in that region in the 2010s (Kaczmarski, 2018).

I relied on these examples to say that any gap of influence caused by one party turns out directly to be a strategic opportunity to seize and benefit from by the other; and that clearly means that there is no partnership between China and Russia – at least in Central Asia – for partners do not wait each other's failure in order to build their success on it; on the contrary, partners are the ones who provide support to their associates when in need; and this is not the case for Russia and China in Central Asia, especially at the economic level, and will never be so.

B- The Western World

Without neglecting the mutual efforts made by Russia and China to put pressures on the West ambitions in invading the politics and economy of the region, it is obvious that these efforts “have increased each state's room for manoeuvre in international politics” (Kaczmarski, 2019); and that has subsequently increased each state's intention to compete with the other in order to extend its authority and impose its influence regionally and globally... What confirms this analysis is that Russia and China have until now “not transformed their relationship into a fully-fledged alliance” (Kaczmarski, 2019).

According to Sapolski (2011), it is true that the mil-to-mil alliance between China and Russia have strengthened the economic and political ties between them, and the opinions stating that China directly contributed in the consolidation of Putin's pillars on the international scene at the economic and political levels are also true; and we will not say that it has helped him internally, since Putin was the "crane" which elevated Russia from the deep bottom... Especially that he came directly after the Yeltsin "dark" era marked by corruption, economic collapse, social and political chaos in Russia...

On the other hand, China's recent rise has created a big threat in the Russian minds; they considered it as a menace because of its high economic leverage and evolving military strength over the past decade until now... Concerning the ruling-elite, this rise was still considered publicly as a strong potential for Russia, and a beneficial factor in terms of the bilateral relations, but deep down they figured out that this will diminish their position nationally, regionally and globally; moreover this might be the main cause behind not signing a full partnership agreement and not emerging to a fully-fledged Sino-Russian alliance.

Besides the Race Power and the competition over influence, the large differences in point of views and perspectives regarding the world order in terms of politics and economy, also play, a negative role in expanding the existing gap in the relationship between China and Russia...

Practically, Russia encourages every form of globalization, anti-institutionalism, and populism such as the Brexit deal, and the presidency of Donald Trump... In terms of the Brexit deal, Putin insisted on Theresa May to "fulfill the will of people" (Roth, 2018), and in what is related to the USA's presidential elections in 2016, Putin "have taken unprecedented steps to influence the electoral process" and help Trump becoming a president (McFaul, 2016). And at the beginning of October 2019, and although the ambitions of bilateral partnership between Russia

and the United States have not arrived to a concrete result yet, Putin has praised Trump's economic policies telling that they boosted economic growth in the US, and rebounded their mutual trade from \$20 billion under President Obama era to \$25 billion per annum, as per the CNBC (Srivastava, 2019) ...

In contrary, China prefers not to encourage such perspectives, especially in what is related to the economic globalization, and that is due to its export-oriented economy... At the same level and based on similar examples, we will display China's opinions towards the Brexit deal and Donald Trump's presidency.

1- Brexit

Every passionate about the Chinese policies, knows that it is very rare for Beijing to give an official clear opinion in sovereign affairs related to other states and powers, in accordance to the principle of reciprocity, to protect its domestic preoccupations from any foreign interference or criticism; But in what is related to the Brexit deal, China have quietly tried many times to warn Britain away from leaving the European Union, and when president Xi Jinping visited the UK on October 2015, he privately said that Beijing supported Britain to stay in the EU (Brown, 2016). Xi's arguments in this term, is that it is better to the UK to preserve its friendship with the European Union than to build adversary with it while it is located in its geographical bloc. However, concerning its own national interests, China does not encourage UK to leave the European Union, for this latter constitutes China's pass key to influence all the European continent as what was mentioned before in the section of China's geo-strategy in the United Kingdom. And if the UK leaves Europe, China's effort in expanding its influence in the UK will not be beneficial to achieve its aim in 'proving its economic existence' in the European continent.

2- Donald Trump's Presidency

Concerning the Donald Trump's presidency, it is true that Beijing supported him rather than Hillary Clinton and the Democrats Party, but that happened for more than a specific cause, one of them was that the US media was so biased to Clinton against Trump, and this has been proved by the elections results, because if media represented the reality, Clinton would have been elected. That is why China has supported Trump, for when he succeeds, the US Media would have proved itself to be not credible. This issue will also help China in whatever event it may find necessary to condemn Trump and point out at the failure of the American political spectrum; All this catches the nation's eye and improves the Chinese media credibility over the US one, and therefore in this way China would have achieved the Media credibility victory.

Therefore, supporting Trump against Clinton happened because of a different pragmatic perspective from the Chinese elite which is reflected in four main strategic goals concluded by (Palmer, 2016):

- 1- ***The Geopolitical Triumph:*** Cancel the probability to face a strong opponent experienced in politics like Hillary Clinton; Instead, it faces a simple and ignorant TV character who hardly knows that China is a strategic adversary to the United States, possessing nuclear weapons and has frequently decreased its credibility as a partner in the Eurasian region especially with Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan like strong U.S allies from a side and Vietnam, Myanmar and Philippines from the other; for these countries will definitely neither prefer to partner nor to keep alliance with a country led by a crazy man who ruined their trust in the United States nuclear protection and pushed them to find other alternatives... In other words, in China's eyes Donald Trump will lead to the geopolitical

defeat of the United States in Eurasia, and this formed the main cause behind China's support to Trump in face of Clinton.

2- ***The Leadership Triumph:*** Knowing that China and the USA are always in a race of power to impose their primacy over the world, and that race of power is translated by the toughest contest between the two main poles of the world, the East and the West; where each pole has its own allies and partners, but is respectively led by China and the U.S.A... This non-ending "war" between these two poles definitely needs strong and wise leaders to prevent any defect or failure from manifesting in its ranks. Thus, and from a Chinese point of view, "an electoral system that produces somebody like Trump – utterly inexperienced in governance but a skilled demagogue – is an absurdity, the equivalent of picking a major company's CEO through a horse race" (Palmer, 2016). In contrast, the case in China is very different, besides the known wisdom and strength of Xi Jinping, the procedure to choose leaders there is very picky and careful; yet no one can be nominated for presidency elections if he does not have the experience at every level of the Communist Party system; this is because leading a superpower country is not a digital game satisfying one's desire for leadership of thrones, especially when that throne is the one that used to be leading the world on the international scene... Therefore, Xi Jinping vs. Donald Trump is a definitive victory for China as per their perspectives.

3- ***The Triumph in Human Rights Battle:*** The observer of the Sino-American relations knows very well that every year the United States releases a report about the damages caused by the Chinese governments at the human rights level; and in its turn, China publishes out its own report displaying America's inequality between genders in terms of

salaries and payments, in addition to racism in the treatment of minorities... But this time, things are different, for with Donald Trump, arguments and facts in terms of violating human rights are “fatty” materials for China’s reports, which if used conveniently leads to the wining of the Human Rights Battle. Donald Trump clearly reflects U.S hypocrisy in protecting human rights when he values white nationalist groups among others, attacks the freedom of press, and builds barrier walls against his country’s neighbors, calling for isolation in foreign affairs... That is used in China’s soft power strategies in a way that assists it in turning away the world’s blind eyes to human rights violations in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and drawing all their attention to America’s crackdowns.

- 4- ***The Soft Power Triumph:*** Talking about competitive media reports creating battles between the two superpowers during Donald Trump’s era, has led to the fourth goal or triumph realized by China through supporting Trump to win the American presidential elections... China benefited from the United States’ decreased commitment to global security since Trump’s first step towards the White House, to attract the world’s eyes and prove that it is able to contribute to the global security.

Then, some Chinese scholars and academics tried to promote a more active China through a new international order centered over China and ruled WANGDAO: by Chinese Virtues, instead of BADAQ: by Western coercive force (Xeutong, 2013). These studies, and repeated trials to catch the nations’ eyes fall under the soft power and media credibility of China... It is also important to mention, that Chinese media platforms do not miss any opportunity that helps in condemning Trump and staining his image in order to have their own effect over the political spectrum, without forgetting the American citizens and voters

in a way that produces a double effect inside and outside of America, pointing out to its numerous failings on TV, Radios and Newspapers.

Displaying China's achieved victories because of Donald Trumps' success in the United States presidential elections, urges us to show out how the trade war between America and China increases the competition circle between the latter and Russia, especially that Moscow is working on building bridges of friendship with Washington during Trump's era.

However, Russia would always present a diplomatic hand and a political support to China, but could never compensate Beijing's economic loss from the increasingly open Sino-American rivalry. But at the same time, if Moscow took side with Beijing against Washington in that war, its room for manoeuvre would be limited, and that do not comply with its goals, for it re-creates an inequality in the bilateral relationship with China and takes Russia back to that era when there was no value to its taken decisions.... Yet, if Russia refused to support China in this challenge, that will ruin the built ties between them and will negatively impact their future and their mutual aims and dreams for Eurasia...

The complexity caused by the recent war between China and the United States, is expected to re-divide the world again into two main camps, and to re-dissolve Russia's role in the Chinese one, and to remove away Moscow's dream in multi-polarity. In other words, this war has widened the divergent angle between Beijing and Moscow, and subsequently has promoted the competition between them, even if certain aspects of cooperation appear like strongly tied; but if the course of events will pursue as it started, specific features of that collaboration policies will be subject to change.

Taking a side in this war requires a wise decision, which only Vladimir Putin could take... And here is the difference; Russia's role during this war is not dissolved in China's one, contrary to all expectations, and that is because of Putin's vision. From his perspective, that trade war between China and the USA is beneficial for Russia, even if his country is not directly involved in it. And that reminds us of the famous Arabic proverb: "Some people's disasters are others' benefits". Let us see how that trade war disaster turned out to be beneficial for Russia from Putin's point of view.

As the economic impact of the subsequent fallout caused by the trade war is huge on both America and China, and most specifically on China that is looking for extension of its dominance, Russia turned out suddenly to be a more appreciated partner for China; in other words, Sino-Russian relationship became stronger and ties became closer... Are these emerging new ties going to limit the competition, or hide them under their 'glow'?

Politically, supporting China in the international and regional working groups meetings such as the UNSC, BRICS and others, rebounded Russia in huge economic agreements signed in June 2019 to increase the bilateral integration with China... One of the agreements was from Huawei and aims at developing 5G network in Russia, and the other was about research and technologies development, in addition to deals on natural gas (Bradley, 2019). We do not forget that China is the biggest trade partner for Russia, and Russia is the biggest supplier of weapons for China.

Thus, when Russia and China joined their condemnation of Trump as a protectionist and bully who will negatively affect the international trade and increase the pressure on the world's economy; And when Putin splashed Trump by saying that the BRICS countries are contributing to the economic growth while the wide usage of unfair competition in trade, unilateral sanctions,

protectionism and politically motivated ones are badly influencing the global economy; Washington started thinking twice about the new joint ‘anti-trump campaign’.

In other words, this new trade war between China and the United states of America has given Russia the opportunity to “bolden its stance on the US, meaning Washington could become increasingly under threat from Putin’s political interference at a time when Kremlin is already outthinking the US president on the world’s stage” (Bradley, 2019).

Herein, we could assume that no phenomenon other than the trade war that happened at this specific moment when the relations between Russia – the first supporter of Trump during his electoral campaign for presidency – and the USA started ameliorating, could be so relevant to Russia’s position against the USA specifically and on the global level generally; so Putin is playing on both of the Chinese and American grounds, and each ground requires his contentment and goodwill, in order to prevent him from marking scores in their goal...

In Venezuela, embattled by the USA, Putin has succeeded to seize control, especially that Trump’s efforts to take President Nicolas Maduro off had failed; In Syria, Putin has succeeded in filling the power gap caused by the US after withdrawing its forces from the northeast of the country, which has led to Turkey’s violent intervention; so at that moment, Putin became the power broker in the Middle East. He met with Erdogan and signed a bilateral agreement that stopped the Turkish attack and defined each party’s military control on ground in a way that prevented conflict... In addition to that, the last visits of Putin to the USA allies in the Middle East: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and The United Arab Emirates, and his good ties with Qatar reflect his new emerging role in that region...

And this kind of policies adopted by Russia to fill in the vacuum of power, is recently becoming the first main threat to the United States and its geopolitical interests in Lebanon also when joined with China's efforts, and that was clearly stated by the former US department undersecretary Jeffrey Feltman in his testimony done in light of the popular uprising of the 17th of October 2019, when he said: "Lebanon's three ports and offshore hydrocarbon reserves, if exploited by Russia, would add to the sense that Russia is winning in the eastern and southern Mediterranean, at our expense. With over 400 Chinese nationals in UNIFIL in southern Lebanon, China, too, may see potential in Lebanon's ports and location – and the Lebanese may find China's 5G technology hard to resist, given the sorry state of Lebanon's current telecommunications networks" (Naharnet, 2019).

We have all the right to think that this trade war has consolidated the Sino-Russian relationship and strengthened the Eastern position in Eurasia and is extending it globally, but we will not be wrong if we state that this war could have another effect in upgrading the competition levels between China and Russia, for this latter's economy is evolving increasingly due to its recent policies that resulted an economic growth of 1.1% in 2019; knowing that analysts are also expecting a growth of 1.6% in 2020 (Cordell, 2019). And if these expectations become true, then Russia will gradually stop its reliance on the Chinese economy, and subsequently will extend its marge of independence in decision making and establishing new political ties that might not be compliant with China's standards and perspective.

However, and if we get back to the reality of the relationship between China and Russia in the Eurasian region and mainly in Central Asia, and for concluding the whole section we could clearly say that the emergence of China as the major and only controlling actor in the sectors of energy and infrastructure in Central Asia, in addition to being the "lender of choice" there, will

definitively affect Russia's concerns and would have political prerequisites over its presence there; especially that in the last decade, Russia was the leader of that region, which depended on Moscow to export its goods and natural resources to the international markets... And this is how Russia maintained its control over its sphere of interests and influence.

On the contrary, China today – and not the United States – was the party which broke Russia's control over the Central Asian lands and energies, to protect the built routes - of energy export from the region to its lands - from the Russian monopoly. Moreover, the Belt and Road initiative established by China – and not the United States – is attracting the region and appears to be a new opportunity to link Central Asia to international markets different than the Russian ones (limited by the instable economic leverage) ...

Therefore, the built economic ties between Central Asia and Russia - which has traditionally been Central Asia's number one trading partner – are being undermined over the past decade due to the Chinese interference that has literally replaced Russia's authority there.

For concluding, it seems that China's thrive for natural resources and energies existing in Central Asia is driving much of its policies there, not taking into consideration the interests of Russia, its so-called partner, in the region. And that – if pursued – will lead to negative consequences that will affect Russia and China before any other power. Therefore, each government is unstoppably announcing new projects of infrastructure and development to attract the mind and hearts of the region...

Beijing and Moscow's policies and projects in the Eurasian region are effectively creating a new global activism.

Chapter 3: An Empirical Analysis – Bringing Together Convergent and Divergent Point of Views

After such a long dissertation, including many topics, and treating the actual concrete applications of a “new” politico-economic concept on the international scene – Geoeconomics –, and after all the recent actualities occurring all over the world, having their own repercussions at all levels; we find it necessary to elaborate an empirical study chapter, where all the executed interviews with academic professors, ambassadors, political and economic researchers, strategists, and high-level intelligence agents, will be inserted, analyzed, and compared with the point of view discussed in this thesis.

In this final part of the thesis, appear multiple perspectives and opinions regarding the discussed problematic and the main subject of the dissertation; and in this occasion, allow me please to thank again each and every person who contributed with their cognition, knowledge and above all, their precious time to enrich this research, and assisted me in answering all my questions and queries and obtaining my final conclusion.

This chapter consists of an empirical analysis in order to bring together the convergent and divergent point of views of experts, and compare them to the point of view that we acquired from our document analysis. Therefore, we are going to describe the research methodology conducted in the first section of the chapter, and to display and analyze the data obtained in its second one.

Section 1: Research Methodology

This section involves the research methodology of our study, in which we are going to delineate the research method and approach, data collection method and tools used, and sample selection in which we also discuss the research process, bearing in mind as well the ethical considerations and research limitations.

A- Research Method

1- Research Method

In order to fulfill the purposes of the dissertation, we adopted a qualitative research. It is a research planning that stresses on words rather than numbers in the data collection and analysis (Hammersley, 2013); this would best serve our study, because the geo-strategy of a state and its impact on its foreign policy towards other states on one hand, and on the determination of the state's primacy on the other, cannot be quantified or measured in numbers. Moreover, our topic lies in the field of social sciences, and particularly within the sub-field of political science and international relations. In fact, qualitative research recently has been the most widely used methodology in the field of social sciences in general, and in political science and international relations in particular (Blatter et al., 2016). For instance, our topic in the dissertation is about geopolitics and world order, which also necessitates a thorough qualitative document analysis of historical events and secondary data; and this is what we have done in all the previous parts of our study. According to Sandelowski (2004), qualitative research refers to an arrangement of

viewpoints that are aimed at finding out how individuals perceive, understand, analyze, and make the social world. Interpretivists argue that “social world is not an objectively existing object” (Tsang et al., 2019, p.2); it is rather built by subjectivity (Tsang et al., 2019). And if so, then the actuality and the fact cannot be revealed and obtained through objective scientific methods (Tsang et al., 2019). According to Creswell (2007), subjective truths should only be realized and discovered by approaching people, acknowledging their point of views, and explaining the significances that they offer to the world. The main distinguishing feature of qualitative research, in contrast to quantitative research, is that it presents an absolute interpretation and description of the research topic, without restricting the research extent (Collis and Hussey, 2003); and this is also why we adopted it as a research method in our dissertation.

2- Research Approach

As for the research approach, this study follows an inductive one. In qualitative research, information is acquired through using the inductive approach instead of the deductive one (Lai, 2019), where concepts and perceptions are developed from specimens in the data rather than evaluating predetermined theories after data collection (Taylor et al., 2016). In other words, the inductive approach begins with data collection, from which generalized theories are produced (Blaikie, 2004); it contends from a sequence of details to a universal statement (Maxim, 2004). Herein, this is what we are applying in our study, whether in our document analysis by delving into the details of every case to develop generalizations, or in our analysis of the primary data that we collected from the selected sample of interviewees in order to draw out a general conclusion; and this is what will be displayed in the next section of this chapter. And since we mentioned in

the previous paragraph that the major advantage of the qualitative research is that it displays a thorough analysis and interpretation of the research topic, it is through the inductive method that this analysis is done in order to develop findings and concepts (Whitman-Cobb, 2020). Therefore, it would be essential to adopt the qualitative research method and the inductive approach which best suit our study, for as most scholars of political science also believe that such methodology is more appropriate and pertinent than digits or numerals that could barely convey something outside an econometric or statistical software (Whitman-Cobb, 2020), and which may not serve in any way our research subject in particular.

B- Data Collection

1- Data Collection Method

To achieve the objectives of this research, in-depth interviews were used. Social researchers depend heavily on rhetorical techniques to gain information about the social world (Taylor et al., 2016). And since our research subject is classified within the field of social science, the interview is considered to be the most recommended method to be used by researchers in this field (Benney & Hughes, 1956), and political science researchers particularly often use interviews as their method for collecting data (Lynch, 2013). Cammett (2013) confirms that in-depth interviews comprise a worthy technique for collecting reliable data in political science research.

In-depth interviews involve open-ended and unstructured types of questions (Taylor et al., 2016); which means they are malleable, yet efficient. In terms of efficiency, well-managed

interviews may supply us with information or facts that may not be found in any other source (Lynch, 2013). In-depth interviews help us understand the experience that individuals have lived and the relative significance they have developed out of it (Seidman, 2013). Herein, the purpose behind using in-depth interviews in our dissertation is to search for missing information that could not be readily available in the secondary data we have collected. For instance, China's intentions behind implementing its unique geo-strategy may not be evident; whether it is trying to change the global order and rule this world politically and economically or willing to ruin USA's polarity, this will be better interpreted through interviews. Likewise, the absence of a clear definition of geoeconomics in most academic sources such as books and journals, the question of whether or not military means will be replaced by economic ones, and the lack of a comprehensible description of the Sino-Russian relations, all of which necessitate in-depth interviews to elicit definitive conclusions. We should not forget to mention the outbreak of Covid-19 and its impact on the international relations' track, which is still too fresh and recent to find sources talking about it. This subject however is not within the time frame of our dissertation, but we cannot ignore an important event of this magnitude that has shaken the globe, and not take into consideration its repercussions on the course of international relations. This may have an impact on our discussion especially due to the reciprocal accusations that have intensified between China and USA on one hand, and China and the rest of the world on the other hand; but as we said that this pandemic has erupted outside the time range of our study, so we will only discuss it in general. Therefore, the use of such interviews is crucial because from one side we are given the opportunity to be following up the interviewees' responses and asking them to elaborate particular points (Gillham, 2000), and from another side because they are more inclined to draw out trustworthy answers

(Cammett, 2013), provided of course that interviewers have acquired the essential competences to effectively perform interviews (Fischer, 2006; Kothari, 2004).

Moreover, the role of using in-depth interviews in a dissertation extends to “complement other modes of data collection” (Cammett, 2013, p.134). In other words, in order to benefit from the effectiveness of the data obtained from interviews and reduce as much as possible the shortcomings, interviews are often used jointly with other sort of data to formulate arguments (Lynch, 2013); and this is what we have done in the dissertation. The choice behind adopting in-depth interviews also is to validate the findings we have obtained from our document analysis and have a greater conviction in them. For example, the shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics which we have inferred from our analysis in the second section of the second chapter of the first part of the dissertation, needs to be verified by consulting professors in that research field, particularly the recent one: Geoeconomics. Thus, this open-ended kind of interviews is an enriching substance for the concluding outcome, despite the fact that the preconceived theories may change during the research’s track (Cammett, 2013); in this respect, we should be cautious about the risk of the research’s deviation from its pre-planned objectives (Gill & Johnson, 2010).

2- Data Collection Tools

Concerning the data collection tools, the chosen method should be in accordance with the nature of what the research is asking for (Gillham, 2000). Since our research involves in-depth interviews to yield detailed responses, it should require the use of semi-structured questions. Such questions do not require the interviewer or the researcher to pursue a fixed list of questions (Doyle, 2020). They rather constitute of an interview guide for the researcher that can offer valid

qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This interview guide gives the interviewer the advantage of directing the procedure of gathering information from the participant, with the flexibility to diverge from the formalized scope of questions (Bernard, 1988). In our study, we have prepared a specific list of questions that has guided us in conducting the interviews for the sake of fulfilling the objectives of the research. During the course of the interviews however, additional questions have emerged; this has happened because at the beginning of every interview, the questions would merely serve as topics of enquiry. But later on, and since each interviewee has different knowledge and experience to share, further questions were asked during the interviews to better clarify and illustrate their point of views. Nevertheless, some of these additional questions have become prioritized, in the sense that we have tended to ask them in every other interview, even if they have not existed among the specific set of questions that we have prepared and which we are going to display next in this section.

So, as we were moving on through our interviews, we have been learning and discovering more information that better avail our topic and which we have not even thought of searching for in our secondary data in the first place. As a matter of fact, we have acquired much experience and confidence after conducting each interview, the reason which led us to know more about what to ask in later interviews than earlier ones. Gillham (2000) confirms that “as you find out more, more specific questions emerge” (p.20). He adds that as you are progressing in your research, some subjects become a priority that you want to ask more about, despite the technique used, but specifically for in-depth interviews and semi-structured questions (Gillham, 2000).

The basic semi-structured questions that were involved in our in-depth interviews were the following:

Question 1: *How would you describe China's influence over Eurasia and subsequently (in soft steps) over the world? Is it trying to change the global order and rule this world politically and economically or willing to ruin USA's polarity by attaining and achieving the international primacy?*

Question 2: *How do you see the large shift – led by China – from geopolitics to geoeconomics? And do you think that economic means will completely replace military ones in bilateral “wars” between superpowers in the near future? (Define Geoeconomics Please)*

Question 3: *What is in your opinion the main major capability that differentiates:*

- *China from USA?*
- *China from Russia?*

Question 4: *How do you see the future of the Eurasian region – land of the Grand Chessboard as per Brzezinski – especially that it contains Russia and China on its lands?*

Question 5: *Based on the last question, how do you describe the existing relation between China and Russia? Are they allies or competitors?*

Question 6: *How do you think the OBOR initiative will affect Russia's role in the Eurasia region?*

Question 7: *Finally, and based on your personal estimation:*

- *How will COVID-19 affect the international relations tracks?*
- *Will it assist China in expanding its influence over the world?*
- *What about the European Union's destiny?*
- *How will it affect the American presidency's elections? and do you see any probable "trade war" breaking out again between Beijing and Washington?*

The questions were wisely chosen, and their order was carefully considered. The order of the questions must show some kind of logic, whether topically or sequentially (Gillham, 2000). In other words, questions should be arranged in a series-way in which they seem to follow each other, whether in terms of their themes or in terms of their generality and specificity.

In our dissertation for instance, the questions were asked starting with the most general one. The first question entails a description of the Chinese influence and whether China's intention is to rule the globe or achieve international primacy. In terms of order, this question serves as an introduction for the interviewees about our topic, in which its generality would put them at ease for the sake of bringing out of them the most satisfying responses during the course of the interviews; and in terms of content, the first question constitutes the main essence of our subject or the most important part of our problematic.

The second question is as important as the first one in terms of content, because it embraces the theoretical aspect of the dissertation to whether geoeconomics' approaches will be superseding the classical geopolitical theories and by which military means would be giving their way to geoeconomic power. In this question however, we have moved from "more to less" general by delving into the nature of the geo-strategy that China has followed to display its influence, and inspecting whether it is leading a shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics. Furthermore, an additional question was made encountered here which is about asking the interviewees to give their own definition of geoeconomics, so we had to avail this opportunity in order to add a valuable material to our theoretical part.

Moving on to the third question, the main reason behind asking it is to assess the capabilities of the three powers: China, Russia and the USA, in order to have a clearer idea regarding the vision and objectives of the three of them. Moreover, with this question, we have deepened more our enquiry to explore the capabilities that China enjoys and their importance in the implementation of its geo-strategy. Herein, we have gathered information from our participants' opinions about the major capabilities that differentiates China from the United States on one hand, and China from Russia on the other hand. Whether these opinions were in favor of China or not, they would either support our arguments, or point out the deficiencies that China should fulfill in order to achieve its objectives; in either cases, such information would be an added value to our study.

For the fourth, fifth, and sixth questions, we have narrowed our interrogation to look more into the regional aspect than the international one, without neglecting the fact of its implications on the international scene. As we have devoted a significant portion for Eurasia in our dissertation in which we have proved its strategic value, it was essential to dedicate the fourth question to

support this actuality and visualize the future of this region, especially that it contains on its lands two major players: China and Russia. Herein, the fifth question has come in place to offer responses that would crystallize the nature of the relationship between these two powers, and the sixth question to discuss whether or not Russia's role has dwindled in the Eurasian region as a result of China's expansion, specifically through the Belt and Road Initiative.

The seventh and last question was not intended to be included in our list. As we mentioned previously, the Covid-19 incident is not within the time frame of the dissertation, but we found it necessary to talk and inquire about it to know the extent of its impacts on the course of international relations.

It is worth noting that the order of questions in the interviews is also in accordance with the sequence of subjects treated in the dissertation. While the first question is a general inquiry about our topic and which may correspond to the introduction of our dissertation, the second question refers to the first part (theoretical), the third question to the second part (descriptive), the fourth, fifth, and sixth questions to the third part (analytical).

C- Sample Selection

1- Sampling Method

Selecting our samples from the population of interest is also a matter that requires much attentive concern. For this reason, we have chosen the non-random purposive sampling as a method for the selection of our interviewees. This method, which some sources may call it also judgment sampling, falls under the form of non-probability sampling (Walliman, 2011). It is a type of non-random sampling that requires selecting persons based on their expertise and knowledge that would best serve a research (Freedman et al., 2007), and knowing sufficient information about them to make sure that they are relevant for the topic under study (Lynch, 2013).

Based on that, and to satisfy the objectives of our dissertation, we have chosen our interviewees very carefully and in a balanced way, whether in terms of their nationalities to avoid or at least reduce any political bias, or in terms of their professions to give each question its value and significance. For example, while some questions could be answered by diplomats, political analysts, or journalists, they may require much explanation from academic professors and researchers; or vice versa. For this reason, we chose to interview eleven participants from eight different nationalities, of whom there were four professors, three researchers, one diplomat, one political analyst, one journalist, and one military and political veteran. The nationalities were distributed as such: three Americans, two French, one Chinese, one Spanish, one Italian, one Dutch, one Norwegian, and one Armenian. The following table lists our participants' respective nationalities and professions. *(More detailed information about the participants' profiles including their professions, expertise, and education is available in the thesis annex).*

The interviewees are listed in the table below as blind profiles in order to preserve their privacy and their comfort in expressing their opinions.

Table 3: Interviewees' Nationalities and Professions

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Profession</i>
Interviewee 1	American	Journalist
Interviewee 2	American	Researcher
Interviewee 3	Italian	Professor
Interviewee 4	Norwegian	Author/Professor
Interviewee 5	American	Military/Political Veteran
Interviewee 6	French	Researcher
Interviewee 7	Armenian	Researcher
Interviewee 8	Spanish	Political Analyst
Interviewee 9	Dutch	Diplomat
Interviewee 10	French	Professor
Interviewee 11	Chinese	Author/Professor

When it comes to the pool of interviewees, one will reflect upon their educational background and their relationship to the topic. In the political field and within international relations and affiliated issues, one cannot easily address a topic from an unbiased perspective, as a spectator, due to the extensive interconnectedness that drives international politics. The selection process for my pool of interviewees revolved around various factors. One would notice that the pool only involved one Chinese individual, since involving multiple Chinese nationals would lead

to biased results as those are likely to be driven by their nationalist beliefs and are hence prone to defend and aggrandize the weight of China and its importance when it comes to our topic, which could lead to the assumption that information is cherry-picked to fit the trajectory of the thesis. Additionally, one may also highlight that Russian academics and experts were not part of the pool of the interviewees as I believe that the result presented would not be as transparent and accurate as required for the study or as wanted by the experts in question due to the increasing shift towards authoritarianism in Russia which has led journalists as well as political experts to feel oppressed and incapable of expressing their opinions freely. Hence, the pool of interviewees was centered around individuals from the Western hemisphere as democratic principles and freedoms are protected, which contributes to transparency and diversity of answers as they are inclined to provide their personal observations free of pressure. Additionally, experts from Western countries, notably from Europe and the USA, are capable of assessing the impact of China's rise from the perspective of affected nations and can offer insight on how China's rise has had an impact domestically and regionally without distorting the facts.

2- Research Process

The interviews with the above listed participants were held during the period between March and June of year 2020. And since that period was the primitive stage of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which has resulted in a complete lockdown in nearly all parts of the world, the interviews were conducted remotely. While some participants agreed to hold our discussions live over the phone, Skype, or Zoom, others have only accepted to make it through email. The duration of the live discussions varied from one participant to another, but they lasted approximately between a minimum of 33 minutes and a maximum of 75 minutes. In order to successfully and effectively analyze the gathered data, we have taken notes and recorded the discussions, of course under the consent of each respondent. This is because according to Gillham (2000), interviews cannot be analyzed and therefore yield a meaningful sense if they are not completely recorded or written down.

During the course of the interviews, the interviewees had the ultimate freedom to convey their point of views, even beyond the themes that were included in our specified list of questions; and as we mentioned previously, this is in line with the nature of the qualitative research method in general, and the in-depth and semi-structural interviews in particular. As a whole, we can say that the research process was smooth and gratifying.

3- Ethical Considerations

An essential duty regarding any researcher is to secure the protection, comfort, and respect of the participants in the research study (Brooks, 2013). For this reason, our research was dependent upon certain ethical issues. At first, all the interviewees were reached through email, by which each has confirmed his or her voluntary participation in the interview. However, and as we previously said, the names of our interviewees are not mentioned (blind profiles) in order to protect their privacies and their comforts while expressing their opinions.

Moreover, the interviewees were informed ahead about the contents and objectives of our study, and that their participation and responses are only used for academic reasons and for satisfying the purposes of this study in particular.

4- Research Limitations

As it is the case with every research, there exist some limitations that we have to mention. While interviews may supply potentially important data, they may sometimes be considered a doubted source of proof in the examination of political concepts (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013). In some of our interviews for instance, interviewees refrained from answering certain questions and others may have not genuinely expressed their responses for political reasons; and this is normally the case with any interview that involves a political discussion. However, the choice of adopting non-random persuasive sampling have played an important role in mitigating the extent of bias as much as possible and this is, as we mentioned before, by carefully selecting our interviewees whether according to their nationalities or professions.

Furthermore, the problem of language proficiency is another limitation of our study. Since the interviews were conducted in English, some interviewees, whose native language is not English, have faced some difficulties in expressing their responses. Therefore, it was challenging to often intervene in the discussions and ask the interviewees to elaborate their answers in order to understand their ideas right.

Section 2: Data Analysis

After describing the research methodology in details in the first section of this chapter, we are going to display and analyze the data collected from the interviews in this second section. Since the method adopted for collecting data is in-depth interviews, it may be confusing to show all the collected responses in details. However, we have created a table that involves the main responses of the participants, and this would make it clearer for the reader and for ourselves in the analysis afterwards.

This section will therefore be divided into two parts. In the first one, we are going to display in a table each interviewee's answers, opinions, and analysis, to twelve questions and sub-questions, asked to all of them (in a way that convened their available time) which will make it easy for the reader to compare and contrast among the converging and diverging point of views of each of the participants. The second part of this section however, is dedicated to the analysis of the interview responses.

A- Data Representation

Interviewee Questions	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4	Interviewee 5	Interviewee 6	Interviewee 7	Interviewee 8	Interviewee 9	Interviewee 10	Interviewee 11
	Chinese have instincts that desire power, and they are taking their time slowly, for they have a long view to take, and would like to strategically manage the possible risks that might face their global expansion.	Chinese are dissatisfied with the world order. China and Russia share the desire to weaken the US hegemony and encourage multipolarity. And China wants to do its own aid according to its experience to emphasize more bilateral assistance to countries. Finally, there are aspects of the international order that China is trying to shape; areas like internet governance would be an example of where we do not really have rules for cyber and internet governance.	If you want to relate with me, we can negotiate something that can be potentially with mutual benefits, but I do not impose and judge your political system; in other words, I may look at you as the worst guy in the world, but I do not care about it. I would rather care about the possibility to manage potentially a harmonious relation because your political system is your own political system and China adopted this approach because they do not want to be judged about their own political system; this is the macro picture. So, I believe that our mistake is always looking with zero-sum game approach in international relations and not allowing the possibility that it may be possible to configure and forge different equilibrium in a multipolar world, where no one is the only head of this system but there are groups of countries that will shape reforms of international financial institutions such as China has done with the AIIB.	China is always seeking to re-organize Eurasia to a large extent around itself instead of the United States by the West. The main instrument is also that it cannot achieve this by military, or simply information; it is primarily an economic initiative. I would say they had been doing this for a quite long time, from Belt and Road Initiative to building new transportation corridors, which puts China in the center. Also, China has been engaged in the banking sector, currencies, new industries as well, where American technologies should be replaced with Chinese ones.	Today based on current events, it is going slowly but eventually it will be going back rapidly. China is on the verge of losing tremendous economic support from Europe, Middle East, GCC countries and the USA. That was their main objective (<i>to change the global order and rule this world politically and economically or willing to ruin USA's polarity by attaining and achieving the international primacy</i>), but as the result of Trump becoming president and current events (Corona), which was proven to be made by Chinese laboratories, China is on the verge of losing its economic power. Coronavirus is a major divergent in current events. China created Corona to drain the economic powers who were against the Chinese economic power. Instead, they ended up with the problem.	China does not do geopolitics (polarity, primacy, etc.). They do geoeconomics and geo-technological Cooperation /competition. I do not believe China is interested in rebalancing poles in the world order. What Beijing seeks is slow normative changes in financial regulations and Bretton Woods institutions to make them more 'Chinese business friendly'. China needs the current rules of the game - but also wants to make them more 'Chinese compatible'.	China pivoted towards Eurasia and it rises its influence in entire mainland through its Belt and Road Initiative. China's main aim is to create multi-polar World Order, where it will stand separate political economic pole. It is also creating strong ties with other Eurasian states, that in the era of possible conflict with the West, it will not stay alone.	China is achieving preeminence over Central Asian countries, like Kazakhstan or Pakistan. In Europe, China is having mixed results, building up its influence in the periphery, at the risks of infuriating Germany. Whether China only wants to protect its internal stability or become a global hegemon; it will need to pursue a policy to increase its global power as much as possible. Thus, that means that it would somehow have to tackle the US position down.	China grew for domestic reasons; it's a long history where China's rulers have never been challenged by external forces. China never had an outward looking agenda or reach, but it was basically self-centered in the inward looking and the Chinese dynasties always came from inside, and we relate it to poverty, foods, riots... In addition, now that China has become big it cannot be friends with everybody anymore because there are countries like the US notably that sees China as a rival; it is pure rivalry! So, China cannot afford to be any more friendly with the rest of the world.	I admit that there is some sort of international primacy that China is seeking. It is probable that China wants to get back to what it has been in the past, which was an empire. As China has been humiliated during the nineteenth century, it wants in a way to erase these humiliations, especially that it knows it has the capabilities to do that... China is trying to maintain its unity first, and to be more present and influential on the world stage.	The Western powers' penetration in the region was before China. The Chinese influence is mainly economic and the purchase of the oil, gas, resources, commodities... The Chinese influence is getting higher recently through the Belt and Road project. The Belt and Road project is one of the key strategies through which China is gaining influence in the outside world and in the region. And when the state country reaches a certain level of material power, international primacy will come anyway. "We" Chinese are very strong but self-centered. Also, the OBOR is assisting China through several ways: Most important one is that through the OBOR, it can find its "Spatial Fix". China was the Spatial Fix destination for Europeans and Americans capitalism in the years 1970s-80s. Now it is China's turn! This justifies China's move to Eurasia, partly for the resources, infrastructure, and connectivity, and for its own Spatial Fix.
1	<i>China's influence over Eurasia and over the world</i>										

2	Geoeconomics Definition	To define geoeconomics, it is the idea that you can exercise geopolitical power through non-military means, but through economic means such as trade and blocking trade by imposing sanctions.	I would define geoeconomics as economic trends and how they relate with geopolitics, how they influence and shape geopolitics.	Geoeconomics and geopolitics refer to a much more dynamic analysis on current affairs in comparison to the traditional methods of analysis of economic geography and political geography because it is a current affairs strategic analysis that tries to get understandings about the geographical determinacy in understanding the current dynamic evolution of the international, national, and regional competitive dynamics.	I see Geoeconomics as perceiving a favored role in the balance of dependents. In other words, I see it as a way that other countries should be dependent on you, but you should be less dependent on others; and you can do this through a variety of ways; you can diversify your dependencies					Defining Geoeconomics, it is using your international economic policy tools (international because “geo”) for political reasons. And political reasons do not have to be international political reasons.	Geoeconomics could be defined as the representation into the space of the economic forces. It is a changing map of the economic forces.	
3	Shift from Geopolitics to Geoeconomics	Does not see a real shift, however the Chinese realize the importance of the mixture between economics and military forces, and this is where their power lies.	The successful tools that china uses to promotes its influence around the world, are the economic ones used to build more political tools. They have spent a lot of money to build their “soft power”. But they will keep their military means and modernizes them by 2035 as per Xi Jinping has articulated in the 19 th party congress.	I think that in a much more complex world in terms of population and poles of economic and technological development, conflict, and competitive dynamics also on the political level are played on economic field at a higher extent in comparison to the past because you have much more economic leverage in these global value chain system in NATO society where we can persuade, impose, and retaliate through	I think that Geoeconomics has winds in the sail (challenges) because of the technologies we have. For instance, Geoeconomics has found its way because the military weapons we have cause so much destruction and difficult often to use them for power. Taking the example of nuclear weapons, the costs, and benefits of seeking to expand your power with purely military means have made this weapon to	In China yes (there is a large shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics); in the world no. Japan cannot be a geoeconomic power. They tried, but we Americans stopped them. Plus, japan is small and has always been a follower. Economic means will not replace military ones, but we will never go to a military war because of an economic conflict.	Correct, there is a shift happening. China is accelerating it. Will geoeconomics and geo-technology competition replace the ‘old’ world of geopolitics? No. I do not think so. Because military affairs and war as continuity of politics will not disappear anytime soon. Also, because actors like Russia is here to remind us that ‘old wars’ still exist, whether we like it or not.	Of course, economic influence which China is getting through implementation of its BRI, already bringing it political influence. I do not think that China is going to make a war with the US, or the US will start a war with China, as they are both nuclear powers and it will prevent large scale War between them, but two sides will continue to grow their military potential. China also understands	Geoeconomics has always been around, although, of course, military conflicts caught most of the attention. For instance, China's foreign policy has always had a geoeconomic approach.	Yes, I see a shift, but I think China hardly had a geopolitical tradition. China has always been self-centered, isolated, and building walls. China never had the tradition to colonize; China’s rulers systematically and explicitly have always said if we do not partner with the outside world, the outside world would not partner with us. So, China did not have a geopolitical tradition. In my view, China will	I have worked a little bit on the difference between geoeconomics and geopolitics. I think that geopolitics is in a way the shale of the orange; it’s the surface and what we see. People who officially have power, are representing the political power, but in fact if you look down into the orange, it’s the geo-economics. Geopolitics in fact is led by geoeconomics. Geoeconomics is the heart. This is	I don’t see a shift between the two since both are combined and interrelated. Regarding the second part of your question, I say that military means still have their place. This is because the geoeconomic interest can only be safeguarded by military means; This is a dilemma.

				<p>economic means. This is not new in absolute sense but surely the extent of using economic tools in strategic issues and competing dynamics is bigger nowadays because of the extent of the global economy and complexity in comparison to the past. So, it is nothing new but surely, we have much more conflict based on the economy.</p>	<p>become a less suitable tool; this is also because of the way the technologies have developed the economies to be more interdependent, so there is more ability to draw more power from economic interdependence. However, since there are always changes in the technology, there is a good possibility that military weapons can become again more conducive towards creating or building power.</p>			<p>that the US has a great advantage if we compare armies of two Superpowers. For this reason, Beijing will not try to escalate the situation. I do not think that the US will go to war with China as it is their main trade partner. Of course, the US will try to make political and economic problems for China, so that it does not grow in a level, which will let it to challenge the US for World hegemony, anyway we must take into consideration that these two powers are responsible powers, and they will compete but not go to war which will harm entire the World security.</p>		<p>have to realize that being so big is relevant for the world (not just the world economy) in terms of responsibilities. This is something which China never had (global responsibility). I would not say that there such a shift. There have always been countries that applied geoeconomics. Geoeconomics is nothing new at all.</p>	<p>why, there is no shift; it's just an impression. What already counts I think is only Geo-economics. Regarding whether economic means will replace military means, I would say that now we are in a time of de-globalization. In fact, we are seeing the return of nations and I think the collapse of a sub-liberal order. And we have seen that already in history when you look at Europe, at the end of the fifteenth century when the model of Venice, which is a liberal and internationalized model, collapses and emerges nation states like Florence in Italy.</p>	
4	<p>Major Capability distinguishing China from USA</p>	<p>In addition to its large population, and collective political system positively affecting its economic growth, China and mainly Chinese human capital are smart, they figure out their mistakes and those of their allies and learn from them, and they also work on having access to a lot of information; but china will never be capable of producing the</p>	<p>One of China's capabilities is having a communist party that can make top-down decisions, which in turn can be implemented very rapidly. They can mobilize a great deal of resources, and people very quickly deploy it because they do not have to have the support of the different constituencies in the system or society, in the</p>	<p>the Chinese have a certain sense as population and collectivity because of their civilization, they have a sense of superiority and respect to some parts of the world. But actually, this sense of superiority doesn't manifest like in the US tradition; they don't want to exert this sense of superiority through the brutal forces of Moscow</p>	<p>China has been building its productive capabilities for some time. They officially kept their currency weak or cheap in order to maximize exports; so, they've been able to shift all productive powers into China and meanwhile building huge amounts of foreign reserves, which now they are using to invest in huge</p>	<p>The domestic political system. China never did anything to its people</p>	<p>China is technologically and economically on par with the US, but does not have the same soft power impact than the US</p>	<p>The US military expenditure is approximately 2 time more than Russia's and China's both together. The US also is the largest economy (GDP) and it is leading in the field of Research and Development.</p>	<p>China has a more efficient government and a societal confidence in the future. While the US has a very inefficient government, and it is very mistrustful of technology and new change.</p>	<p>History! The United States is a purely artificial civilization. Therefore, it will not last because it is completely artificial. The Chinese have a deep sense of who they are, their identity, and their history... and this is a big advantage for them to move forward.</p>	<p>First, The Chinese comparative strength is political unity. Second, policy consistency: Third, China has a very strong meritocratic system (Meritocracy). Meritocracy is contrary to the western electoral democracy where legislation is based on elections or voting. The Chinese political system is based on merit, capacity,</p>	

		wealthy person that USA can do, and therefore, will not be able to produce internal stability.	way that the democracy does.	and weapons, but through culture; their sense of superiority is a cultural sense. In technology, China is getting some comparative advantages, telecommunications sectors, infrastructure building, and the revolution of artificial intelligence, big data management, and robotics automatic processes. So, in this field, there is the part of the reason of geo-economics.	infrastructure projects around the world; USA however, is crippled by debt. Americans have lost a lot of their productive capabilities and not producing, they are very much in debt. And moreover, the US became too dependent on military source, while China has built up the economic power.						knowledge, skills, and competence... not based on whether people like you or not Next point is state-market relations: Chinese state has certain power in controlling the market to not go wild.
5	Major Capability distinguishing China from Russia	He stated: It is true that China restricts somehow its human capital as we said in the previous part, but China has done a lot for its human capital, while Russia has done almost nothing. Russia and China are two different worlds!	Russia is a declining power, while China is a growing power. Russia relies mainly on energy exports; it has virtually no soft power; whereas China has enormous economic cloud that Russia does not have.		Military and Economic. China can take over Russia militarily (eventually) and economically.	Russia is a dwarf economically compared to Global West but remains a major military player.	If we want to compare the soft power of both countries in the region, we can say that Russia is much more advanced than China. Most of the Central Asian population speaks Russian very well and are influenced by the Russian media. In addition, millions of Russian citizens live in Central Asia and many Central Asians also reside and work in Moscow. China is a young superpower; Russia is a great power. Together they have enough capabilities for challenging the US in several regions.	Russia is a declining force in all aspects. Nevertheless, Russia has a smart leadership, and it is playing far better than China in the soft-power and information battle. China is still very clumsy on its external propaganda. China, on the other hand, has all the rest, good resources, a dynamic economy, technology, etc.		The common points between the two countries are that they beheaded the elites one century ago or 50 years ago. Both have demographic weakness; both of them want to preserve their identity against globalization... but I think the Chinese have a longer past and they've been able to live throughout history for the last 4000 years without the rest of the world. Whereas the Russians, they have been driven by expansion to the south and the east of the country. I think this is a big geopolitical difference.	I think it is the industrial capacity for China. As for Russia, it is the raw materials. The only comparative advantage of Russia is, as I mentioned, its resources. Russia indeed has a vast resource if you look at Russia's territory, geography, resources: timber, oil, gas... Compared to China, and as I said, China is labeled today by the United Nations as the country that can produce almost every item. China is the world factory.

6	Future of the Eurasian Region	Eurasia is going to become more violent. The communication networks will shrink in space and therefore the people of Eurasia will come in greater conflicts with each other because of the different culture they come from.	It seems to be an area of potential competition between China and Russia, but in which the United States remains almost disinterested		what is different now from the Russian empire in the Soviet Union, is that Russia now does not have the ability or the intention to dominate Eurasia. If they want Eurasian integration, they must be in partnership with China. China is the main economic power in Eurasia, and, they have similar interest; so, they have some common interest and some conflicting interest. The common interest is to become less depending on the west, and the conflicting interest is for example in Central Asia, but this competition is kept under control.	Until now, the Western powers are still dominating Eurasia. According to Mackinder and Brzezinski, it was from a military point of view. Now it is not the case.	Really good question! Eurasia as a region still needs to go through the internal process of post- Soviet 'decolonization' and coming to terms with their own national destinies. So far, we have had continuity in these countries than actual change – save for Ukraine and Georgia, but they paid a high price for it. Short answer, in the medium-term: Balancing between Russia and China, as they already do now - but with higher stakes and less freedom of maneuver. But how to keep Eurasia meaningful as a region? To have 'meaning' is to be able to project a sense of purpose and destiny. I do not think Eurasia – and more specifically the FSU region - will be able to project meaning over the long-term. But who knows what the world will be like in 20-30 years in terms of intra-regional and intra-state fragmentation anyway...		I agree with Brzezinski. Nevertheless, for China, Central Asia and the Middle East are more interesting as markets than battlefields. So, China would like to help to foster some stability in the area, let new markets grow and to sell its products, and China could buy their resources.	First, Eurasian region as such does not exist. I mean geographically maybe, but conceptually it does not exist. For China and OBOR, China realized which countries in the world have shortage in infrastructure, especially in Central Eurasia. And they did this project just to export their infrastructure which has become saturated domestically, and not for any influence. To sum up, there has no countries that became dependent on China because of OBOR; however, they may be more dependent on China than the past. This is because first, they are indebted to China (they must pay China back); Second, if these transport routes through Central Asia are economically prosperous for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, they may become dependent.	Regarding Eurasia, the big advantage of China in Eurasia is its huge population, even though now it is aging. However, for the next 50 years, the Chinese will have the biggest advantage in Eurasia, and this is clear.	If you read Mackinder's theory, then Eurasia is exactly what he delivered as the pivotal area. So, China's spatial fix entering the region is definitely understood by the United States and the European Union as a kind of challenge, there's no wonder.
7	Existing Sino-Russian Relations	China and Russia are only allies to weaken the west and especially US	Glaser said: I am of the view that it is definitely a complex	It is a complex relationship, historically speaking; at the	The Sino-Russian relations are primarily allying I would say. For	Competitors. There are four countries, which if they become	Good question! Forget about the whole 'strategic partnership' or	They are not allies and not competitors, they are strategic	They can be both, allies, and competitors, and in a multipolar	China and Russia do not really look at each other in the eye, they do	For a long time, the two countries had no relations. And when Russia	We should not be fooled by western political experts or professors

		(because the US is a military power and Europe being not much) for two reasons: They want to weaken the west as a geopolitical military rival, and they do not want their populations to see the liberal democracy as “a candle in the dark”, and therefore call for it. China is stronger than Russia in Eurasia for the exception that Russia causes more an immediate threat to western Eurasia or Europe than China does!	relationship and I’m struck by how they are able to compartmentalize their differences and work together where they see or share interest.	same time right now, the current analysis demonstrates that they are building a real strategic alliance. They are more than just partners, and this comes from the agreements of the last years since the building of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization that accelerated this push towards Eurasia integration with the key actors of Russia, Iran, and China however, there is obviously some fear in Russia because of the economic gap. The fear is that Russia can be too much depending on China in terms of technology prevalently and market share. But anyway, I see a peaceful cooperation and strategically even stronger, at least during the last fifteen years but with acceleration in the last years because of the consequences of the Western pressure.	Russia, China now has become the most important ally in terms of re-organizing itself away from the west. Russia can make a life very comfortable or complicated for China; so, which means that the Chinese can either have Russia as their best friend or their worst enemy. China is very sensitive to Russia’s behavior in Central Asia. The extent to which Russia and China can form a partnership will also depend on Russia’s ability to diversify. Russia takes its sovereignty and independence very seriously; it cannot integrate deeply with a more powerful actor. So, it neither wants to become a junior partner of the EU, nor of China.	allies, the United States will fail. These countries are Pakistan, India, China, and Russia. Pakistan and India can never ally. And Russia will never accept to be a junior partner with any country (with China). They are fake partners only to counter the western hegemony. (Fake integration)	‘strategic alliance’ that you can read here and there. It is true Russia and China share the same diagnostics of current international affairs. However, they do not share the same pathway to change and endgame. Russia wants to destroy the current order; China needs the current system but wants to make it more compatible or reshape it to its interest.	partners in the era of changing World Order. In fact, they have divided their duties in the region, with Russia holding security tasks and China focusing basically on the economic growth through investing in infrastructure. I would see that China and Russia choose cooperation over competition which will bring opportunity to both sides and entire region. Both countries realize the importance of consolidating regional integration to withstand the Western hegemony, especially the United States.	system that is going to be more the norm than the exception. They will be allies as long as the US and the EU keep an anti-Russian approach, but they will be watching carefully each other movements in Central Asia.	not really do something together; there is neither rivalry nor partnership. They fear each other to a large extent; they realize that the other part is a size too big to take. It is a very unhappy marriage!	at the end touched China, the relations were complex because I think that the Russians distrust the Chinese. But at the same time, they must cooperate. And if you look at the United States, it had made a huge mistake which is the simultaneous fight against Russia and China. Consequently, both countries allied and constitute a huge adversary for the United States. It should have at least made Russia play against China, or the reverse.	when they talk about the cold war. It is true that during the cold war, Soviet Union and China began to split and somehow, they had a lot of conflicts, which made the possibility of the United States and China to make an alliance or kind of semi-alliance. Russia and China can act as competitors only when it comes in terms of Eurasia as key area and competitors in terms of the influence in North Korea. Also, they can be competitors on issues related to military expansion because if you read about the rankings of the military power, some American think tanks list Russia as number 2, and some other think tanks list China as number 2. This means that some sources consider that China has surpassed Russia in military expansion
8	<i>The OBOR and Russia’s role in Eurasia</i>	It will accentuate (confirm or emerge) the differences between the two countries. China is trying to develop networks to increase its	I think that if China’s economic cloud continues to grow, it is inevitable that there is going to be a security component that must be combined	Russia has these military capabilities that also China needs. So, in terms of oil and gas, military capabilities, China is much more subordinated to	Well, obviously all the Central Asian countries have now China as their main trading partner. So, they have displaced the Russian influence	It absolutely downgraded Russia’s role.	Let us be honest! BRI is not meant to bring local development, or growth, for host countries. BRI is a label only. Also, China can very well decide to	The declaration of what would develop because of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) had raised anticipations that China and Russia would compete	Russia is taking a secondary role in the region. For the moment Russia keeps as a provider of security and arms, while China a provider of	If the OBOR becomes in the long run a network as the Chinese hope for, then Russia becomes isolated.	The connection of China to the Persian Gulf by land and by sea, does not change very much the strategy of Russia. Russia is trying to connect itself with	the western scholars focus very much on Russia’s worry over Belt and Road. However, from a Chinese source, and I have talked about that

		power, whereas Russia that is handicapped as it is by its geography, is not doing even that!	with it; and in a country like Pakistan, for example, Russia is not going to feel threatened if China must introduce private security forces to protect their economic investment, but that would not be true if it is closer to Russia's borders. So, one could envision that over time, China's involvement in Central Asia begins to push against some of Russia's security interest.	Russia. But for the rest, it is the opposite. For the Belt and Road Initiative, it will increase the vision consensus that can create some problems to the Russian ideas and role in Eurasia in this process of integration. But strategically on the long term, they are on the same level because both China and Russia want Eurasia integration as a way to defend the space from western aggression.	on a large extent, and Russians cannot do anything about it; It seems better for the Russians to be working with the Chinese than working against them. But however, the Chinese have taken a very different approach; they tried to go into the region and make sure that they want to expand their economic influence and power, but also, they have been very sensitive not to step on Russia. Their goal is not to exclude Russia from the region, which makes them very different from the Westerns.		bypass Russia completely for BRI infrastructure projects... I would argue Russia's role in Eurasia will be more affected by: • China's bilateral economic and soft power policies towards FSU countries. • China's security inroads in Central Asia specifically. That is definitely the game changers.	for supremacy and dominance in Eurasia. However, the two countries have followed a cooperative approach to counter the United States. Any conflict between Moscow and Beijing over Central Asia or even Eurasia, will result in weakening their ability to resist Washington's power in the neighborhood.	investments and goods. If this relation is going to keep working in the future will depend on the alternative options they have, especially for Russia.		China, in a way to operate a sort of balance in its exportation of oil between Europe and China.	in international conferences that Russia is much more optimistic and calmer towards OBOR, partly because it knows it cannot stop it. They can make a lot of troubles, but they cannot stop this Chinese influence. Rather than stopping it or making troubles, Russia thinks of taking advantage. As for Russia's role, I would see Russia as playing good role in supporting this project; otherwise, China's OBOR will really be a fiasco honestly. If Russia and China had troubles, then this would affect China's strategies in other places of the world, not only in OBOR.
9	<i>Covid-19 and the International Relations Track</i>	It is going to reduce globalization. It is going to weaken super-national or international bodies like the United Nations because the nation states are the actors which can play a role that the international organizations cannot.	one possible scenario is that China presents itself effectively of the new leader of the world, the provider of public goods, the country that has helped all the economies recover from COVID-19 and that the United States is seen as stepping back in global leadership. Another scenario is that through legal investigations of China's cover-up, that the world		I think what this virus will contribute to do is maybe to decouple a lot of international supply chains. You can see how already the Americans are seeking to reduce their dependence on China in terms of everything from making medical equipment to steel, and they are telling their companies to move their productions back home. And	De-globalization. Something that china was not anticipating or accepting.	COVID is a bit of a game changer too. Look how weak superpowers have become internally? US, China, Russia soon. Europe in disarray with no solidarity... It is a brave new world. One thing I am relatively confident about is that there will not be a 'return to normal'. The world as we know it will not be the same.	International society needs to come together, as Covid-19 is already not only Chinese or American security problem, but it is International security issue.	It is still soon to know what is going to happen after COVID19. What we can expect is an acceleration of certain dynamics that have been going on since the Crisis of 2007. On the one hand, strengthening of great power competition, but also the middle's power independence from them.	Again, it will add to the negative image of China. It will certainly not help China to gain confidence. A lot of people said China should have taken more measures; there is still a story that China may have been reacting too late, nobody really knows. Overall, it does not do good for the Chinese in the short run, I think. In the long run, I do not think COVID-19 will affect the world.	Covid-19 is a test for the ability of a government to adapt very quickly to a new challenge. In fact, the COVID-19 is testing the political flexibility of everyone and even the imagination of the leaders. For once, they must decide very quickly; and those who have not decided, they have brought a lot of chaos	Tremendously, there will be fundamental changes.

			blames China for COVID-19.		moreover, I think the virus will contribute to doing this, as we are becoming less dependent on other actors now.					There are much more serious challenges that the 5 superpowers of the world should cope to solve, like the climate change, the energy transition, and global migration for example. I think COVID-19 showed how connected the world is and must be.		
10	<i>Covid-19 and China's influence over the world</i>	China may pull out of it without any catastrophic damages to its system and may get harder in its relations with other countries and fewer countries may be willing to have trade transactions with China. But this does not mean that China will become stronger than before.	I think it is premature to say that COVID-19 is going to take China to the position of global leadership, and I also think that the United States is not going to withdraw into isolation, especially that we have an election later this year.		It could be negative for the Chinese because China is the main benefactor of globalization; they took all productive power, and the more integrated the world is, the better it will be for China. On one hand, that could weaken them; on the other hand, there is a big chance that the Americans will come out very weakened, while the Chinese will come out very strengthened.	Will not assist china in expanding its influence over the world.	The US is crumbling beneath the weight of its own internal deficiencies and social inequalities. European solidarity has been replaced by hard borders and national preference. China is judged between 'destroyer of worlds' and 'the Chinese virus'... well, they will have to do a charm offensive to convince that hiding the epidemic in China for over a month was 'a good thing'...	I think that COVID-19 harmed China's economy and it is continuing to make problems for China, I do not think, that it can help China to expand its influence.		In the short run, it will certainly not help in assisting China to gain influence; even the worse due to this, the whole world will come into recession. The whole idea is that the Chinese economy was already on the verge, seriously and structurally declining. This decline will be speeded up by the global recession tremendously. And I am not saying this with pleasure because the world needs China.	There is a big competition for artificial intelligence between China and USA. Basically, the Chinese have won the battle of the data because they have gathered the most important amount of data, whereas the Americans have gathered the algorithms. But what was interesting is that the virus could be used as to gather medical data of the citizens.	we will witness relatively de-globalization, or further strengthening of nationalization. China's strength is based on globalization; the more globalization, the better it is for China: This is because China is an industrial power that produces everything. So, China occupies many areas of the production chain and value chain; but de-globalization definitely is not good for China. Everything is dialectic (debatable); on the other hand, what is good for China is that de-globalization can push China to move to a consumption-based economy rather than export-based economy. When China

												becomes a consumption-based economy like the United States, China will be the real power.
11	<i>European Union Destiny</i>	Covid-19 will weaken the European Union. Broadly, this is time of a crisis, a time of "less trust of the other" across borders, and the supposed unity in the European Union is not happening.	In recent years, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hold together the European Union. The countries must rely on themselves, and they cannot rely on multilateral institutions that are not going to be there in a crisis, like what we witnessed in COVID-19.		I think the EU is in huge economic problems. Essentially the Geo-economics of the EU is not working anymore; it's not providing enough material benefits for its members, and this is leaving the Union very divided. I do not see a great future for the EU; I think it's going to be struggling in the years to come, from crisis to crisis, and possibly something worse like breaking up. But overall, I think that this Coronavirus crisis has done nothing good for the EU.	It has weakened the EU economically, unemployment, trade, health equipment...	This is a major stress test for European solidarity in time of crisis. So far, we are failing it.	At first the EU could not work in organized manner, but we see, that now it is working very effective and helping not only EU member states, but it has sent aid to other neighbors as well.	Covid-19 affects the EU in which every nation is going to look for itself. In this context, China, Russia, and the US are going to try to increase its influence within EU countries. Maybe Eastern European countries are going to develop stronger ties, because they have a common threat, Russia.		The COVID-19 will possibly weaken the European Union; the EU has been already weakened by the departure of Britain (Brexit). The borders are re-emerging, and in fact it accelerates the collapse of the former liberal order.	I do not have any good optimism towards the EU. Later, the EU will go to a weak direction. This is partly because of the Euro zone, the withdrawal of the UK, and the rise of the rightest way of the population and the populism. So, Europe is already moving to that direction, and the right-wing populism lost elections only with a little margin. For example, During COVID-19, Italy thanked China, which made France and Germany very angry.
12	<i>USA's presidential elections; a new trade war?</i>	I think Covid-19 could hurt Trump but not to the extent of putting him out of office. I think trade wars will keep going on to a certain extent.	It will certainly affect how people view President Trump, and I think he knows that. We could easily end up with a different outcome because of COVID-19; and a change in election, a change in leader in the United States would potentially lead to a dramatic shift in global opinion. The trade war has never been over!		Trump's main platform is dealing with the economy. If the economy falls apart and it shows inability to deal with this virus, that will be playing against him. I think the elections will be mainly on the economy. I think it really depends on how much this administration will deal with this crisis.	Covid-19 has no relevance for Trump's re-election. A boosting economy and a great health system are the most two important reason to re-elect or elect a president, and that what Trump has done or improved. The war started 3 years ago; a year ago we signed a trade agreement with China that was fair for the 2 countries. The second phase was	Trump will be judged on his response to the pandemic internally, not on his foreign policy record. Voters in the US do not care about China right now. They care about surviving (and stockpile guns and toilet paper...). Trade war? both countries do not need Covid-19 for that. It will only get worse before it gets bad.	I do not agree with the term "Trade war", I prefer "Trade conflict" and yes, of course as China is rising superpower, we will see many economic and political conflicts between the main Superpower-the US and young Superpower-China.	The relations between China and the US are going to worsen, the decoupling is going to keep its track, and the trade war is still going on, so yeah it could be worse.		Covid-19 would affect the presidential elections if it had a real effect on the health of the population. But I think naturally that Trump would have been re-elected if the COVID-19 has not out broken. But now, not sure whether yes or no. I think this trade war will never end, and at the same time the United States and China are competing, but	The American voting system is very strange. For instance, Hillary Clinton she won the number of votes, but she lost the number of states. It is the states that matter, not the total voting. I believe the United States is on the way further down. I see a lot of conflicts coming because the Americans want to criticize this coronavirus, they want to seal China

						<p>negotiated at the time when COVID started, so the agreement came to a halt.</p>					<p>they will have to cooperate. It could be also interesting to imagine a sort of alliance between the two countries, or a consensus, or kind of agreement between them.</p>	<p>and ask China to pay the compensations. The Chinese ministry of foreign affairs said if you seal me, I will start to seal you from the beginning: the financial crisis started from you (US), the AIDS disease started from you, the bird flu, and all these damages that happened to the world... So, it is you who must be sealed. The United States is trying to criticize things, and I understand that there will be conflicts especially that this year is a year of elections, so it will be the year of conflicts.</p>
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B- Data Analysis

Before diving into the point of view of each the of the interviewees according to the questions, and as a comment, their participation in my dissertation was an added value regardless of my opinion towards theirs, and all this constitute an enrichment to the subject and the way it got treated. In order to have a clear analysis, this part will be divided into two sub-parts. While the first one is going to be a discussion which entails an in-depth exploration of the responses in order to infer the results, the second one will involve a comprehensive reasoning.

1- Discussion

***Question No. 1:** How would you describe China's influence over Eurasia and subsequently (in soft steps) over the world? Is it trying to change the global order and rule this world politically and economically or willing to ruin USA's polarity by attaining and achieving the international primacy?*

This first question has shown how much academic opinions are divergent towards the thought "accusing" China of having the aim to rule the world, despite its expansion in Eurasia. Many interviewees approved, and many others denied this "accusation", but the ones who approved have expressed "reservations" about it. However, the following paragraph will display the two different opinions:

- **Opinions Agreeing with the Idea that China Aims to Rule the World with Some Reservations:** While the American journalist interviewee stated that China is taking its time slowly, in order for her to release its instincts that desire power, another American researcher considered that China is trying to shape the world order in a way that convenes its interests. In his turn, the Norwegian author affirmed that China is always seeking to organize Eurasia around itself, instead of the West-led by the United States, and that it has been doing that for a quite long time, through its projects such as the OBOR, and China's engagement in the banking sector, currencies, new industries and technologies, which has put China in the center. From his side, an American military and political veteran has confirmed that ruling the world was indeed the objective of China, but it is going on slowly nowadays due to challenging events occurring around the world. Much more, a French interviewee admits that there is some sort of international primacy that China is seeking, for maybe it wants to get its past victory and imperial history back; but he stated that China is trying to maintain its internal unity first, more than being present and influential on the world stage. And Finally, the Chinese professor interviewee, despite denying the theory that China is aiming to rule the world, affirmed that the Chinese influence is getting higher recently through the OBOR, that is a key strategy through which China is gaining influence in the outside world and the region; he admitted that when China reaches a certain level of material power, international primacy will come anyway. Hence, it is apparent that the interviewees consisting of experts from different fields hold a realist approach to the Chinese question in Eurasia, whereas they see China as a threat to the global order and to the instated status quo, and paint China as an entity that seeks to change established norms to fit its ideological, geoeconomic expansionist agenda and to reap greater profits and

influence as part of national interests.

- **Opinions Arguing the Idea that China Aims to Rule the World:**

As for the opposite opinions, our Italian interviewee for example, said that we have to deal with the idea of a multipolar world, where no one is the only head of the system, but there are groups of countries that will shape reforms of international institutions. In his turn, another interviewee believes that China is not interested in rebalancing poles in the world order; in contrary, it seeks slow normative changes in financial regulations and to make the current rules of the game more “Chinese compatible”. And agreeing with the former one, the Armenian researcher considered that China’s main aim is to create a multipolar world order and to strengthen its ties in Eurasia in order to beat the West. Furthermore, the Spanish political analyst that I have interviewed, sees that China only wants to protect its internal stability. He added that in order for China to become a global hegemon, it needs to pursue a policy to increase its global power as much as possible. Having a similar opinion to him, the Dutch diplomat stated that China never had an outward looking agenda or reach, but it was basically centered in the inward looking; and he considered that now China has become “big” and therefore it cannot be friendly anymore with the rest of the world, because there are countries – friends with the US – that sees China as a pure rival!

The main reason behind separating the interviewees opinions in two groups, was the fact that I have faced some surprising reactions while asking the question of China’s aim to rule the world. What I want to display here, is that it might be true that China is probably not expressing publicly its global objective behind all the geo-strategies it is applying, but one thing that I have concluded from combining these point of views and comparing between them, is that China is creating a new phenomenon around the globe, stoking the “enthusiasm” of its rivals. China has

become a hard player in the world game, and confessing it or not, its main aim is to combat the United States of America, through all the possible means it is capable of “inventing” and making use of. We have the right to academically ask ourselves: “what will be the particular undercover geo-strategic goal of China after attaining the revealed one of international primacy?”, knowing that – according to most of our interviewees – China has recently reached a large scope of international primacy, despite all the challenges occurring on the international scene.

Therefore, let us check the interviewees’ answers on the following questions, to compare between the analysis results of each question. But please note that, in order to avoid duplication, the following paragraphs will not show what has been stated in the interviews in detail, but will focus on discussing the main ideas in the given answers, and comparing between them, in order to get the final required conclusion for each question, as milestones towards the comprehensive reasoning of this chapter.

Question No. 2: *How do you see the large shift – led by China – from geopolitics to geoeconomics? And do you think that economic means will completely replace military ones in bilateral “wars” between superpowers in the near future? (Define Geoeconomics Please)*

First of all, and before discussing the shift, many definitions for Geoeconomics have been given through the interviews. But as stated in the dissertation, there is no clear or specific academic definition that clearly explains Geoeconomics. However, displaying some of them might be of help for us to understand the eloquent opinions given in terms of the shift.

- Exercising geopolitical power through economic non-military means.
- Perceiving a favored role in the balance of dependents, where other countries are depending on the state implementing geoeconomics, which in turn should be less dependent on others.

- Using international economic policy tools for political reasons, which do not have to be international political reasons.
- Representing into the space of the economic forces, for it is a changing map of the economic forces.

These divergent definitions, converges in terms of employing economic means to attain geopolitical goals, creating change in the international map, and modifying the power balance.

Back to the core idea of the question, and as expected, interviewees opinions were also categorized in two groups; the first one agrees that there is a shift, and the second one considers that there is no real shift from geopolitics theories to geoeconomics approach in the countries' geo-strategies around the world.

- **The Opinion of the Group Agreeing on the Existence of Such Shift was Based on Many Reasons:** Compared to the past, countries can now persuade, impose, and retaliate through economic means instead of military ones; in addition to the fact that the use of economic tools in strategic issues and competing dynamics appears to be bigger nowadays, because of the extent of the global economy, and that actually most of the international conflicts are based on the economy. Moreover, some consider that economic means have found their way in the international scene because of the negative and destructive effects that have resulted from the use of the military means, such as the nuclear weapon. And they affirm their opinion by stating that the rise of technology has given a push to economics to be more interdependent, and this has increased the rivalry between “technological” countries, in a way that make them susceptible to military wars, while they are trying their best to avoid them; so, in order to protect their power, they replaced the military wars by economic ones. As the cost of war at such high stakes is exorbitant, advanced and developed nations are more likely to pursue their

interests through alternative measures, most notably economic due to the fact that interdependence has been on the rise as a result of globalization.

- **The Opinion of the Group Denying the Existence of Such Shift was also Based on Many Reasons also:** Countries start realizing the importance of mixture between economics and military forces in the world politics, and the fact that while China by itself keeps its military means with the aim to promoting them in the next decade, it is focusing in the present on economic tools to promote its influence over the world. In addition, China might have shifted from geopolitics to geoeconomics, but not the whole world; this is knowing that economic means will never replace military ones, but no country will ever dive into a military war because of economic conflicts. From another side, there were opinions admitting that there is a shift happening, and that China is accelerating it, but they affirmed that whatever happens through this shift, geoeconomics and geo-technology will never replace the “old world of geopolitics”, because “military affairs and war as continuity of politics will not disappear anytime soon”, and because geoeconomic interests can only be protected through military means – according to their perspective.

To conclude, it seems that the shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics is still not complete, at least outside China. This is why analysts do not affirm its existence with perceptible arguments, but what is certain is that even if China and USA are growing up their military potential, they will definitely not make use of it in a bilateral war. And this in turn affirms that there is a large shift happening in the world, whose past is known in the world wars and present has started with the Cold War, while the “wars” of its future seem to be purely economic and technological. Hence, it is apparent that a dichotomy exists when addressing the shift towards geoeconomic strategies,

whereas many believe that the shift has occurred, with China being at the forefront, whilst others are convinced that one cannot eliminate the traditional model of warfare as nations are constantly investing in their military capabilities, even though direct bilateral altercations between major states such as China and the U.S. are unlikely to occur as that would lead to global imbalance.

Question No. 3: *What is in your opinion the main major capability that differentiates:*

- China from USA?

China: Large population - collective political system - economic growth - Chinese smart human capital - Chinese access to information - decision-making communist party - fast implementation of decisions - capability of mobilizing great deals of resources - History - Culture and Civilization - comparative advantages in technology, telecommunications, and internal and external huge infrastructure projects - evolution of Chinese artificial intelligence - big data management - robotics automatic processes - high exports - cheap currency - shifting all productive powers to China - huge amount of foreign reserves - independence on military resources - efficient government - societal confidence in the future - very strong meritocratic system - strong state-market relations.

USA: Internal stability - wealthy citizens - sense of superiority and respect from some parts of the world - stable currency - distinguished soft power impact - large military expenditure - largest economy (GDP) - competing technologies - leading the field of Research and Development - democratic system.

- China from Russia?

China: China has done a lot for its human capital, while Russia has done almost nothing - China is a growing power - enormous economic cloud - young superpower - industrial capacity: China is the world factory

Russia: Energy exports - major military player internationally - regional soft power - Russian language and Russian citizens' invasion of Central Asian countries - great power - smart leadership - strong in information battle - richness in raw materials and resources.

The main reason behind this question, as we mentioned in the previous section, is to assess the capabilities of the three powers: China, Russia and the USA, in order to have a clearer idea regarding the vision and objectives of the three of them. And as it appears clearly, China is expanding the scope of its capabilities, in a way that helps it to become “capable” at all levels, especially where its competitors show a distinguished potential. So China is strong historically, culturally, socially, politically, diplomatically, militarily, technologically, developmentally, in all terms of industrial means, but above all, it is strong economically, locally, regionally, and globally. This affirms the fact that China is geoeconomically changing the map of the world order, even without the need to employ military means; and this is the shift we are talking about.

Question No. 4: How do you see the future of the Eurasian region – land of the Grand Chessboard as per Brzezinski – especially that it contains Russia and China on its lands?

From assessing the three superpowers capabilities, here we come to assess the future of Eurasia in the presence of these superpowers. Thus, many arguments have been given in this term, and these arguments can be categorized into three main ideas:

- **Eurasia will be in Conflict:**

In this point of view, researchers diagnosed the actual reality of Eurasia, and put their perspectives based on that. They see that because of the different cultures existing in Eurasia, and the high competition between superpowers, Eurasia is becoming more “violent”, and that will expose it to greater conflicts.

- **China will be the Main Economic Power in Eurasia with Power Balancing:**

This second argument was the most common point of view between all interviewees. Some considered that the USA is disinterested in this area, which is becoming an area of potential competition between Russia and China. But this competition is still under control, and some saw it as a rational balance of power between them; and this is because – always according to the given answers – Russia does not have the ability, or intention, to dominate Eurasia, but it must be in partnership with China in it. And that was when the French professor interviewee affirmed that China will have the biggest advantage in Eurasia for the upcoming years, one interviewee stated that China will be the main economic power in Eurasia, and another one also considered that China will foster the stability of that area. The balance of power is crucial when addressing Eurasia in terms of regional interests, and this has been maintained even though Chinese influence is on the rise, due to the fact that Russia relies on its natural gas and oil exports to China; hence, concessions are required in Eurasia to maintain its profitable relation with Beijing.

- **Western Powers Are Still Dominating Eurasia:**

In contrast to the previous argument, one of the interviewees considered that Western powers are still dominating Eurasia. And from a similar “Surprising” side, another one stated that Eurasia might exist geographically, but conceptually it does not at all.

After this separation of point of views concerning the future of the Eurasian region, the most accurate argument clearly shows that China will be shaping the future of Eurasia, in partnership with Russia. This is because, from one side, the partnership will help in keeping the situation under control and avoiding any probable conflict that might break out due to any “violent” competition, and for being a tough and solid shield against any western intention of intervention in the region, from another side.

It is true that Eurasia will be exposed to many potential conflicts, but what is not so accurate, is that western powers are still dominating Eurasia. They might still have some existence and influence, but that does not reach the extent of domination.

However, the Sino-Russian relations and the probable bilateral conflict that might break out between them and affect Eurasia – according to some interviewees, was the core of the following question asked to them.

Question No. 5: *Based on the last question, how do you describe the existing relation between China and Russia? Are they allies or competitors?*

In the past question, the Norwegian interviewee assumed that there is a common interest between China and Russia in Eurasia, to become less depending on the west. On the contrary,

the conflicting interest was mainly condensed in Central Asia. But he said that things in this matter were under control. Let us see the kind of that “control”. Is it based on an alliance? Or conversely, on an under-covered competition? Many opinions have been given in this term; and they will be separated into four main categories.

- **China and Russia - Allies Against the West:**

Most of the interviewees have agreed that the Sino-Russian relationship is very complex, not in the present only, but it was historically known as a complex relationship.

One of them deemed that China and Russia are only allies to weaken the west – especially the US – as a geopolitical military rival. Furthermore, he thinks one of the main reasons behind their friendship, is that they agreed on preventing their people from seeing the liberal democracy as a “candle in the dark” and call for it.

As for another interviewee who described their relationship as a historically complex one, he figured that they are currently building a real strategic alliance, to become more than partners. He also stated that this strategic cooperation between them is becoming stronger in the last years, as a consequence to the Western pressure over them...

Moreover, the Norwegian author has his own view herein, where he sees China and Russia as the most important allies in terms of reorganizing themselves away from the West. As previously highlighted, the former statement reaffirms the fact that the symbiotic relationship between China and Russia is necessary to curb Western influence in the region and this is why the relationship still stands, even as frenemies.

- **China and Russia - Competitors:**

One of the interviewees who had this idea, assumed it in stating that if China and Russia were true allies, the United States would have fallen; affirming that there are four countries, which if they become allies, the US will fail... These countries are Pakistan, India, China, and Russia. He also considered that Russia will never accept to be a junior partner with any country, especially with China.

- **China and Russia - Neither Allies, Nor Competitors:**

In her turn, the American researcher whom I interviewed, has also considered the Sino-Russian relationship as complex, and she is “struck” by the methods they are implementing to “compartmentalize their differences and work together where they see or share interest”.

As for the French researcher, one of the interviewees – who did not set a clear word regarding whether they were allies or competitors – it is important to forget about the popular “strategic partnership” or “strategic alliance” between China and Russia, despite having them sharing the same diagnostics of current international affairs; however – and always according to him – they do not share the same pathway to change and endgame. While Russia wants to destroy the current order, China needs it, but wants to make it more compatible with its interests...

Furthermore, the Spanish political analyst clearly stated that there is neither rivalry nor partnership between China and Russia, but what exists between them is a fear to a large extent. Considering that “it is a very unhappy marriage”.

- **China and Russia - Allies and Competitors:**

According to the Armenian researcher, they can be both: As long as the US and the EU keep an anti-Russian approach, they are allies; and in Central Asia, they are competitors who will be carefully watching each other movements.

In addition, the interviewed diplomat sees that the relation between them is very complex, and that the Russians distrust the Chinese, but at the same time they must cooperate. And he considered that the huge mistake made by the United States, in the simultaneous fight against Russia and China, is the reason that made them both allying and constituting a huge adversary against the US.

And finally, the Chinese interviewee's vision is against any "western" fool talking about any cold war breaking out between China and Russia, because that was true in time of the Soviet Union when they began to split somehow and had a lot of conflicts. But currently, Russia and China can act as competitors only when it comes to Eurasia as key area and in terms of the influence in North Korea. They might also be competitors on issues related to military expansion, especially that some think tanks consider that China has surpassed Russia in military expansion, and this can probably cause some kind of political convulsion.

Thus, and based on all the given answers and their analysis, we can clearly see that there is no clear image regarding the reality of the Sino-Russian relationship, per contra, the ties between them are more likely misty and mysterious. However, the most common point of view between all the interviewees is that they are either allies and competitors at one time, or considered neither allies nor competitors.

Anyway, it should be mentioned that because of the complexity of the Sino-Russian relation, their ability to form a long-lasting partnership depends on Russia's flexibility in terms of sovereignty and independence, which are taken seriously and prevent it from deeply integrating with an actor more powerful than itself. And on China's "emotions" towards Russia in each new event occurring at the international scene generally, and in Eurasia – most specifically Central Asia, at the regional level, because of the OBOR effect there.

Question No. 6: *How do you think the OBOR initiative will affect Russia's role in the Eurasia region?*

As concluded in the last question, the Sino-Russian partnership is under control of the OBOR effect, because it is up to China's feelings towards Russia, and Russia's flexibility towards China "breaking through its principles of sovereignty and independence", that the alliance can be built and maintained or destructed and demolished. And therefore, this question came into mind, so let us see what it is hiding behind our interviewees' answers on it.

- **The OBOR will put Russia in Risk:**

Many of the interviewees emphasized the idea that the OBOR is downgrading Russia's role in the region.

Interviewee 1, the American journalist, was one of the interviewees who considered that the OBOR will accentuate the differences between China and Russia, for China is trying to increase its power through developing networks, and this makes Russia powerless because it is already "handicapped by its geography".

That was the much similar view of the other American researcher interviewee, who asserts that over time, China's involvement in Central Asia, especially in terms of economic, infrastructure, and security, will push against some of Russia's security interests.

In his turn, the Norwegian author has unbiasedly described the factual situation in Central Asia, where the countries currently have China as their main trading partner, which has largely displaced the Russian influence, yet Russians cannot do anything about that.

But the French researcher that I have interviewed, was very clear in his point of view, where he marked out that the OBOR is a label hiding Chinese real objectives and aspirations which really affects Russia's role in the region and constitute the definitive game changer there. These objectives are: China's bilateral economic and soft policies towards FSU countries; and China's security inroads in Central Asia.

Concerning the interviewed diplomat, if the OBOR becomes in the long run a network as the Chinese hope for, then Russia becomes isolated.

- **The OBOR will not affect Russia's Position in Eurasia:**

For the Italian professor, it is true that the OBOR can create some problems to Russian ideas and role in Eurasia, but strategically and on the long term, China and Russia are on the same level, because they both want Eurasia integration to defend space from western aggression.

Moreover, and according to the Norwegian interviewee who saw that the Chinese integration has displaced the Russian influence from Central Asia, China will never take any step that will exclude Russia from the region, for they both together constitute a "strong weapon" against the Western goals.

For the Armenian researcher, China and Russia might compete over supremacy in Eurasia, but per contra, these countries have followed a cooperative strategy to encounter the US there. So, any conflict that might occur between them, will result in weakening their capability to resist US's power in the region. Thus, China will keep things under control, working on not to put Russia's position in risk, for the sake of their mutual objective of containing Washington's presence in Eurasia.

Furthermore, the Spanish political analyst considered that China and Russia are sharing roles in Eurasia: Russia is a provider of security and arms, while China is a provider of investments and goods. And this policy will maintain Russia's role in the region, but that will depend on the alternative options they have, especially for Russia.

As for the interviewed French professor, Russia by itself will work on maintaining its position in Eurasia, for it is trying to connect itself to China, in a way to operate a sort of balance in its exportation of oil between Europe and China.

And finally, according to the Chinese vision given by the Chinese interviewee, and in opposite to the fallacies spread on Russia's worry over OBOR, Russia is much more optimistic and calms towards it, "partly because it knows it cannot stop it". For rather than trying to stop it or make troubles, Russia thinks on taking advantages of it. And this interviewee considered that Russia will be playing a good role in supporting the OBOR. He also mentioned that if China and Russia had troubles, this would affect China's strategies in other places of the world, not only in the OBOR.

It can be clearly stated here that it is better for Russia to cooperate with China, than working against it in Eurasia. But none can ever deny that Chinese goal is different from the Westerns', for

they have been very sensitive to step on Russia, and they never want to exclude them from the region. So, both China and Russia are keen to keep their relationship as stable as possible, for both have their own interests, that would be affected if this relationship went into superfluous trouble. Therefore, the OBOR will not put Russia into risk on purpose.

Question No. 7: *Finally, and based on your personal estimation:*

Here we come to questions related to actualities, regardless of the timeframe during which we committed to treat this dissertation's subject. But the main aim behind these questions is to form a comprehensive perspective of the recent events around the world, to compare them with the way we addressed our topic, and to have an accurate conclusion according to that.

- How will COVID-19 affect the international relations tracks?

As a brief combination of the given answers, all the interviewees see that this epidemic will have negative effect on the international relations, it is going to reduce globalization, weaken super-national or international actors. It will contribute to decoupling a lot of international supply chains, and in countries becoming less dependent on other foreign actors.

Some has described Covid-19 as an international security issue, a game changer that has weakened superpowers; and confirmed that there will not be "a return to normal", the world will not be the same.

Hence, I can solely say that Covid-19's effect over the world is similar to the military wars effects at all levels.

- a. On the demographic level in terms of damages, patients, number of deaths, curfews, ...
- b. On the economic level in terms of economic drops and collapses, deficits in trade balances, ...
- c. On the politico-diplomatic level in terms of interruption of in-person relations between countries, competition between superpowers over “vaccines creation”, ...

In other words, Covid-19 has the wars effects, but does not use military means. And this is the new approach that this dissertation is trying to prove, regardless which country is behind the existence of this virus.

Two other scenarios are worth to be mentioned here. According to the American researcher that I have interviewed, it is either that China presents itself effectively as a new leader of the world, the provider of public goods, the country that has helped all economies recover from Covid-19 effect, while the US steps back in global leadership. Or the world blames China after legal investigations for being the responsible of Covid-19 spread.

- Will it assist China in expanding its influence over the world?

After linking Covid-19 scenarios to China positively and/or negatively, it was necessary to get the interviewees opinions in this regard, to know if this virus will act as assistant to China in attaining its aspirations, or as an impediment facing it.

And this is maybe the first question where all the interviewees had the same point of view stating that Covid-19 will have negative effects on China... It may pull out of it without

any catastrophic damages to its system but will not be able to achieve its assigned targets smoothly through the strategies it has designed.

Covid-19 will definitely not take China into the position of global leadership, neither push the US into isolation... We should bear well in mind that China is the main benefactor of globalization, and Covid-19 has made us witness a relatively de-globalization, which harms China's strength based on industrial power, and prevent it from becoming stronger than before.

- What about the European Union's destiny?

In such a time of crisis, one must have a clear image about the European Union's future, which seems not so good according to the given answers after each interview. Some says that Covid-19 has put the unity of the EU at risk, and others considered that it was the economic and political system which was threatened by Covid-19.

- **Unity of the Union at Risk**

Three of the interviewees agreed on the fact that it will be very hard to hold on together the European Union, and that the supposed unity is barely happening. The European countries are relying on themselves, and every nation is going to look for itself especially during Covid-19.

Another interviewee has also stated that this actual situation is a major stress test for the European solidarity in time of crisis, and so far, they are failing it.

- **Economy and Political System of the Union at Risk**

The Eurozone, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, and the rise of the rightest wing of population and populism, knowing that they lost the elections only with little margin. All these are possibly weakening the European Union economically and politically, according to four interviewees of different nationalities: Norwegian, American, French, and Chinese. Hence, the Norwegian author thinks that Covid -19 has done nothing good to the EU, which is in huge economic problems, for its Geoeconomics is not working anymore: it is not providing enough material benefits for its members, and it is leaving the Union very divided. He does not even see a great future for the EU, for he thinks it is going to struggle in the years to come, from one crisis to another, and he expected a possible breakup.

Eventually, the EU was not able to wisely manage the critical situation, but according to one of the interviewees, specifically the Armenian researcher, it is now working very effectively, and helping not only the EU member states, but sending aids to other neighboring countries as well.

- And from another side, how will COVID-19 outbreak affect the American presidency's elections? and do you see any probable "trade war" breaking out again between Beijing and Washington?

What is extremely sure, is that almost no one expected Trump to be put out of office after the last Presidential elections in USA, but Covid-19 was a real game changer in this file. And this is what appeared clearly in the interviewees' answers to this specific question.

And because it is a double question, pointing out not only to the presidential elections, but to the probable trade war that might break out between China and USA, due to the Covid-19 phase, it was more convenient for comparison and analysis processes, that *some* of the given answers be inserted in a table, and followed by a brief conclusion, combining all similar point of views and shedding light on any distinct answer, different from the majority.

Then, the analysis will be done as a conclusion for this specific question.

Table 4: The impact of Covid-19 on US Presidential Elections and Sino-American Trade War

Question	Effects of Covid-19 on USA's Presidential Elections	Will a "trade war" break out between Beijing and Washington?
Interviewee		
Interviewee 1	Covid-19 could hurt Trump, but not to the extent that he will lose the elections.	Trade wars will keep going to a certain extent.
Interviewee 2	We could easily end up with a different outcome because of Covid-19, and a change in election, a change in the US leader would potentially leads to a dramatic shift in global opinion.	Trade war has never been over!
Interviewee 4	The elections will be mainly based on the economy and depends on how wisely the administration will deal with this virus' crisis.	
Interviewee 5	Covid-19 has no relevance for Trump's re-election. Trump has improved the economy and the health system which are the most important reasons to elect or re-elect a president.	Trade war started 3 years ago; 1 year ago, a fair trade agreement was signed. Its second phase was negotiated at the time when Covid-19 started, so the agreement came to a halt.
Interviewee 6	Trump will be judged internally on his response to the pandemic. Voters care about surviving.	Both countries do not need Covid-19 for a trade war. It will only get worse before it gets bad.
Interviewee 7		Trade conflict instead of trade war. And of course, China is a rising superpower, so we will see many economic and political conflicts breaking out between them.
Interviewee 8		The relations between them are going to worsen, the decoupling is going to keep its track, and the trade war is still going on, so it could be worse.
Interviewee 10	Covid-19 will affect the presidential elections, and if it did not breakout, Trump would be re-elected.	This trade war will never end.
Interviewee 11	The American voting system is very strange. For instance, Hillary Clinton she won the number of votes, but she lost the number of states. It is the states that matter, not the total voting. I believe the United States is on the way further down.	I see a lot of conflicts coming, because US wants to seal China with this coronavirus, and ask it to pay the compensations. While the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs stated: if you seal China, we will start sealing you from the beginning: you were the reason behind the financial crisis, the AIDS, the bird flu, and all these damages that happened to the world... so it is you that must be sealed. There will be conflicts, especially that this year is a year of elections, so it will be a year of conflicts.
CONCLUSION	In spite of interviewee 5's point of view, Covid-19 played roughly against Donald Trump's re-election and came up with Joe Biden as a new President for the United States.	Trade war have never stopped to break up again, and Covid-19 quashed any probable kind of agreement. But let us see what Biden's future steps in this term are.

In terms of the presidential elections, we can say that former President Donald Trump has not managed the coronavirus crisis and its ramifications, in a way that could be of help to his electoral campaign, which has been reflected in the results of the elections. Maybe if the coronavirus phase was not accompanying the elections, Trump would have more chance of winning instead of Biden. But this virus has played an exceptional role and went against all expectations. It was definitively a game changer!

As for the trade war that would probably break out between the two superpowers due to Covid-19, everyone has said that it has never stopped to break out again. Some preferred it to be named by a trade conflict - instead of trade war - and expected this year to be a year of conflicts between China and USA, because it was a year of delicate presidential elections that changed the course of events. However, both countries do not need Covid-19 for a trade war, as one of the interviewee stated.

2- Comprehensive Reasoning

Combining between convergent and divergent point of views related to the core subject of this dissertation, which is being displayed in the most recent events occurring all over the world, was the main target behind this chapter, and it has perfectly met it. Different researchers, academics and politico-economic analysts have given their opinions on 12 different questions, which has combined comprehensive data from different perspectives in this term.

Eventually, and as expected, many of the interviewees agreed on the fact that China is having an intangible aim to rule the world – with some reservations, and many others argued with it. But obviously, what China is doing internally, regionally, and internationally around the world has

created some sort of extremely new phenomenon, which made it a hard player using soft economic power in the world game, and mainly against the USA. Assuredly, there is an unrevealed geo-strategic goal behind the exposed one of international primacy, which has been reached despite all challenges and obstacles on the international level. So, what could be the next level to reach after international primacy? A question leaving its answer for the days.

Just in the same way, the shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics has separated interviewees opinions to two groups; the first one agrees that there is a shift, and the second one considers that there is no real shift in this term. However, China and the USA are increasing their military potential since the collapse of the Soviet Union and are not willing to make use of it in a what-so-called military war. This by itself expresses how large is the shift happening, and it is tending to invade the whole world.

With this in mind, it seems that China is expanding its scope of capabilities in a way that helps it to become “capable” at all levels. China is changing the map of the world order without the need to implement military power, and this is the real shift.

Accordingly, even the future of Eurasia is being shaped by China. Because Chinese policymakers are benefitting from its infrastructures – mainly from the OBOR – to “export” its influence to other countries in the Eurasian area, making them indebted to China and depending on it. And even if western powers are still having some existence in there, the 50 years to come are totally Chinese designed.

Moreover, and when assessing that if China and Russia are allies or competitors, the interviewees have spontaneously and without any coordination, evaluated the strength and weakness of each country unbiasedly. Most of them have concluded that China is stronger in Eurasia, and some see a fear in Russia to be dependent on China, because of its internal economic

gap. And China in its turn, is very sensitive to Russia's behavior in Central Asia, which makes it compelled to decide on every event either if Russia is its ally or its rival.

However, Russia's position will not be affected by China in Eurasia according to the interviewees, for it will always take care not to lose its friendship that makes them a stronger shield facing any western intervention in Eurasia. But China's influence is growing up continuously in the region, the fact that can indirectly cause a decrease in Russia's influence there.

On the other hand, and when asked about Covid-19 effects on the international relations track, all agreed that it is a test for the ability of the governments to deal and adapt to a very quick new challenge, testing the political flexibility of everyone and even the imagination of the leaders. This new crisis has had and is still having negative effects all over the world. But what about China?

A question about Covid-19 impacts on China was asked to all the interviewees, and it appeared that China may pull out of this crisis genuinely, without catastrophic damages, but will not be able to expand its influence as it wanted on the long run. Although, the coming out of this crisis is the main evaluation that needs to be done; where until now, China won the battle of medical data, as stated by one of our interviewees, and this crisis has shown how much the world needs China, described by the world's largest factory.

As for the European Union destiny after such a global crisis, most of the interviewees saw that the unity of the Union is at high risk, and not only its unity but its economy. And what is admissible is that the collapse of economy is the main cause threatening the Union of division, which has started with Brexit, and we hope that it will end here.

In a separate context, but under the same pretext, all interviewees were expecting that Ex-President Donald Trump gets re-elected as president of the USA, only if Covid-19 did not

breakout. Covid-19 has also aggravated the tension of the Sino-American relations so much that it has consequently increased the intensity of the trade war already blowing out between them.

All things considered, course of international events is being subject to a large shift in geo-strategies of superpowers, where China plays a major role. It is a multiple players' chess game, and the king's zone in the next level is Eurasia, where different strategies are being applied to attain the hardest level of the world. And the future will tell us who has chased the victory, fought the conflicts, and won the battle of influence.

Conclusions

After the so long domination of the Geopolitics and its manipulation of the international scene in all its details over the past decade, here are we witnessing a radical transformation on this level. Hence, have we ever asked ourselves, why after the WWI, WWII, and the Cold War concluded by the Soviet Union Collapse, all the expectations of a military WWIII were not correct neither achievable? What is stopping the superpowers of the world from waging military wars against each other's, and makes them "satisfied" with economic trade wars?

Therefore, it is well known that the countries' aim behind every rivalry, competition, or war is common between them all, and it is to expand their influence and extend their authorities and sovereignty over the territories; in addition, they seek to establish power and impose control over the world's natural and energy resources... And it is true that this aim is combined with specific geopolitical interests on the ground according to each power alone, but what is fixed is that this aim will never change whatsoever. Thus, what are these superpowers doing nowadays? And what geo-strategies are they adopting to realize their aim, knowing that there is no world war looming, neither in the near perspective nor in the far one?

This is literally what was displayed in this dissertation, when we showed-up the rise of the geoeconomics' approach instead of that of geopolitics, more specifically when China carried its banner. Herein, it was obviously clear that China has had a distinct perspective and different point of view in setting out its foreign policies when developing its geo-strategies, compared to those of the superpowers with which it is competing in this world.

People's Republic of China is being different in geo-strategically acting on the international scene, because it has learned from precedent mistakes in this term, and evacuated an "innovative tool" which when referred for and utilized, could eventually assist it in achieving its ambitions and aims, with minimum probable failures and military losses. Thus, in order to increase the potential of success in protecting and investing in its geopolitical interests nationally and globally, China has adopted this new distinguished approach named by Geoeconomics.

And as we could have concluded after we referred to many definitions and approaches, such as that of Edward Luttwak, Robert Blackwill and Jennifer Harris stating that geoeconomics is "the systematic use of economic instruments to accomplish geopolitical objectives" (Blackwill, 2016). This uprising Geoeconomics approach is proving itself capable of replacing geopolitics theories which purely implements military means to achieve their goals, without neglecting the improvement of one's military capabilities and its importance at the international level of competition.

Here, a question should be asked: Why is China still developing nuclear weapons, and building nuclear shelter until this day if it is adopting the Geoeconomics approach as geo-strategy? And the answer is that: it is true that military force is considered as hard power, but it is also a double-sided coin, or a coin with two faces; in addition to the hard power face, military force holds also a soft power one. And as explained during the dissertation, a country that increases and expands its military assets and acts under the geoeconomic banner, does not aim at implementing its military means in future, but at showing up its strength and increased ability to compete, and this is the case of China, master at Soft Power tactics. Whilst China has shaped its domestic and foreign policies around the concept of geoeconomics, military development is crucial to maintain the balance of power and to secure its interests, maintaining its status as a global competitor that

is not to be undermined for the sake of focusing on geoeconomics rather than military interventionism and expansionist agendas.

Therefore, a country that is characterized by a strong economic leverage, and makes use of it in expanding its military budget and developing its assets to geo-strategically achieve political objectives could be considered as a geopolitical state, but a country holding the same characteristics and making use of its economic strength that is able to increase its military means in order to achieve geo-strategic goals without the use of these means is definitely considered as a geoeconomic country.

In these terms, this geo-strategy was first adopted by China on the international scene. Moreover, China is still developing its tactics, and mastering its practice undergrounds in order to benefit from each and every detail that could assist it in replacing the use of military assets with economic ones, and therefore achieve its goals through the pre-mentioned geo-strategy of geoeconomic statecraft.

And after being able to personally conclude a clear definition of Geoeconomics as displayed in the second section of the first chapter of this dissertation: *“A scientific method that studies the internal economic statuses of the nations and their international relations based on concrete elements and components, in order to develop a strategic economic policy that helps those nations in realizing their geopolitical goals, commanding their national situations, and manipulating the ties that binds the states economically together”*. We were able to affirm that *“Geoeconomics does not only refer to a foreign policy strategy that represents the implementation of economic means of power to achieve strategic goals, but it also refers to a particular strategic practice, or a new*

statecraft which substitutes by its application the use of military power policies nationally and internationally”.

Thus, a power that executes a radical shift in its own statecraft could never be far from applying it either with its allies or its neighbors: and this is precisely the case of China’s bilateral relations with its ally and neighbor, Russia.

Based on the strategic value of Eurasia proved along the thesis, and mainly when we stated that it is now becoming the focus of every great power’s attention, since expanding control over its lands might lead to control the destinies of the whole World; this is actually becoming a Chessboard game as described by Brzezinski - but in an upgraded version combining multiple players and not only two as the standard one - and China constitutes one of the major players in this international game showing its geoeconomic skills to pave its way leading to the Eurasian throne, at first level, and to the international primacy on the long-term. Following the end of the Cold War, succeeded by a period of US hegemony, the international chessboard has shifted from a bipolar scheme towards unipolarity, and today has evolved into a multipartite system in which different states can impact global governance. This is observed in the case of China with its innovative approach to geostrategic interests, which it has been actively pursuing and securing by adopting an economic approach, hence geoeconomics, rather than a traditional military and political interventionist approach as is the pattern observed by the likes of Russia as well as the United States of America.

Indeed, all the geopolitical theories displayed in this dissertation, and accompanied by the explained geoeconomics approaches have indirectly agreed on the same final goal of expanding influence over the world; However, what differentiates them is the HOW. The HOW of geopolitics

is summarized by the military means, while the HOW of the geoeconomics is against the use of these means and replaces them with economic tools. In other words, nations that adopt geoeconomic approaches tend to improve their geopolitical potential and invest in their geopolitical interests to achieve their goals through using their own economic instruments, in order to benefit internally and externally with a zero-sum game.

At the first impression, implementing geoeconomic geo-strategies seems “peaceful” while compared to the military invasions done during the past decade of wars under the pretext of geopolitics; but when we dive deeply into the reality of geoeconomics and in what it is really happening on the international scene between allies before competitors we can understand that Geoeconomics has harder and heavier results at the level of international relations, without neglecting its impact on the national economies of the competing countries. It is true that it does not cost lives, but it loads the states adopting it with complex affairs for the sake of achieving their only one geopolitical dream of global order, using multiple non-ending strategies and methods.

Therefore, it became clear for us, that even geoeconomics is not peaceful at all; and here we remember the fact of “FRENEMIES” as Ian Bremmer described them when clarifying the reality of geoeconomics saying: “As a non-violent yet unquestionably potent foreign policy tool, Geoeconomics is the perfect weapon for a relationship between frenemies” (Bremmer, 2016). This concept reminds us of China and Russia and the fact that they might meet in many international affair, but without becoming allies as Bremmer also stated in one of his famous published studies entitled: “*China may meet Russia for War Games, But That Does Not Make Them Allies*” (Bremmer, 2018).

It is totally true that Beijing and Moscow always seek to advance their strategic objectives and cooperate within the framework of SCO, but their relation stays extremely complicated when it comes to Eurasia, sometimes they appear as friends, and sometimes as enemies; and this literally clarifies why Bremmer described them as frenemies. Geopolitics does not rule China's geo-strategies; However, the geopolitics and geo-strategies of China, in addition to its national and international policies are all ruled by its Geoeconomic approach, which transforms Russia into its frenemy in each and every mutual affair that might get them involved together.

Herein, even if China supported Russia in any affair in the international community, it will not do that to the extreme, for it will always be cautious from any probable betrayal from Russia. This is due to the conflict of interests between them resulting from the divergence of perspective due to the adoption of Geoeconomics from China's side... But if we look at this relation from the positive side, we see that Russia and China are still saving the highest possible levels of friendliness because of adopting Geoeconomics, which has worked as a precaution tool to prevent any probable military war between them due to the effervescence of competition in Eurasia and especially in its core region, the region of Central Asia where China has proved increasing economic power.

Geoeconomics has not only played the role of protecting the already-existing relationship between China and Russia from any bilateral war that might urge, but it has also reinforced their relation to counter any foreign war or menace that might threaten them together, as it has recently happened when they were both threatened by the USA: sanctions over Russia, and tariffs on China... So the harder the pressure was put on them, the more incentive they had to work together, especially in what is related to financial and commercial issues. Plus, they have a complementary relationship based on mutual interests, for "Russia is among the world's leading exporters of oil

and natural gas. And China consumes vast amounts of these commodities” (Bremmer, 2018). Herein, they supported each other to overcome any common foreign threat on their economies. It is thus apparent that both entities are in a symbiotic relationship in which cooperation and concessions are to be made for mutual interests on the one hand, and falling in line with Chinese geo-economic strategies is essential if Russia wishes to preserve its interests, rendering the relationship of both states, one that can be described as “frenemies”.

From another side, the shift of statecraft executed by China from geopolitics to geoeconomics, has indirectly obliged Russia to do so, at least in situations of coping with China... And as we displayed the competition happening in Central Asia’s region, we should mention that to counter-balance China’s increasing economic power there, Russia is working on reaching an FTA between the EAEU - where it plays a predominant role - and India, that was concluded by 2020 as stated in an article for Yuan Jiang published by the Diplomat Magazine (Jiang, 2020).

Jiang analyzed that this convergence between Russia and India, and mainly through linking up India to the EAEU “appears to be a Russian tactic of using India to balance China’s increasing economic power in Central Asia” (Jiang, 2020). And this justifies the fact that Russia is also relying on geoeconomics in its relations with China to prevent any political, diplomatic, or military conflict that might occur between them due to their race of power in the Eurasian region, and more specifically in Central Asia in this example.

To get things clear, we affirm that what combines Russia and China is a very close and distinguished relation that definitely deters them from publicly admitting their desires to restrain each other’s influence either over Central Asia, or even over Eurasia. But at the end of the day, they abstractly work on protecting their interests from any concurrence; and this is what is being

done by Russia while working on integrating India in the EAEU to conclude a “greater economic cooperation” (Jiang, 2020) with it, and create a counter-balance against China there.

We could say here, that after many trials and all over the years, China and Russia have found that they will never become compatible and harmonious partners, and this reality is recently becoming more serious for they are showing intentions to compete rather than cooperate, especially in terms related to ‘Greater Eurasia’.

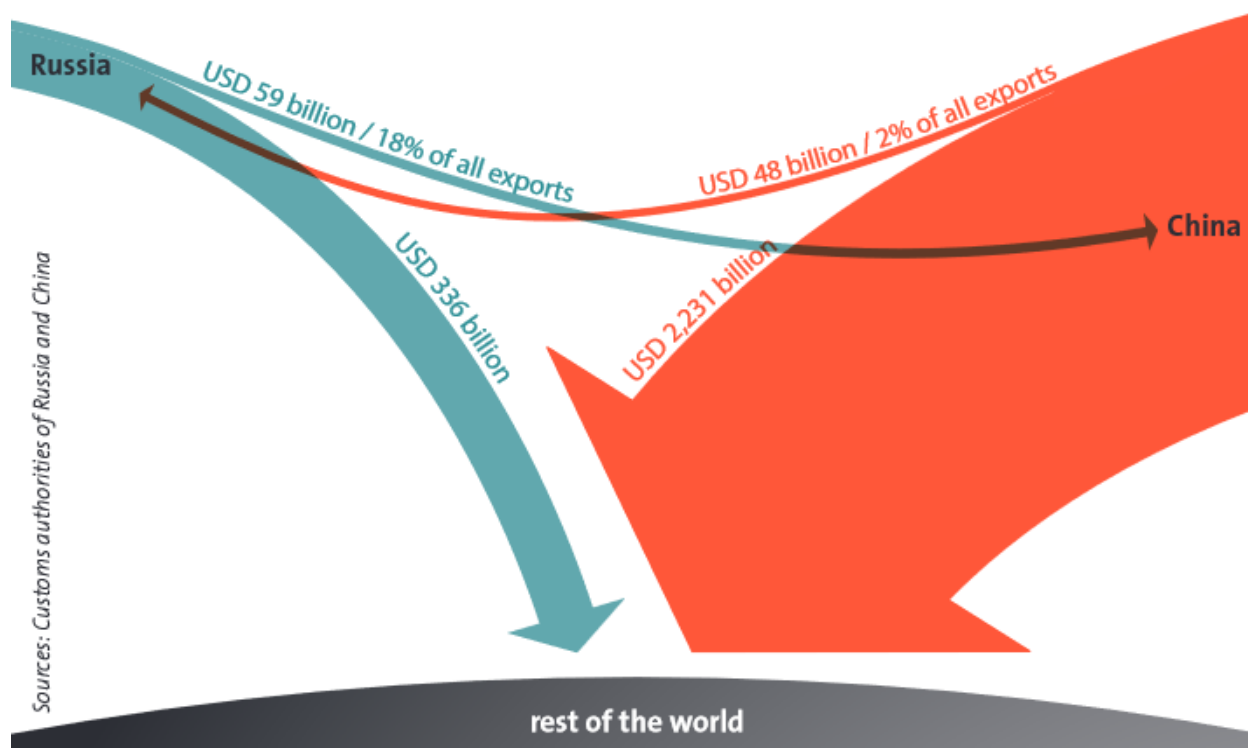
Political news affirms that Putin has not met any head of state more often than President Xi Jinping, and that was because of the crucial role played by China in the context of the Eurasian region where Russia is tending to highlight its power and extend its influence and control. These meetings clarify that there is a unique relationship between these two countries but could not deny the fact of existing complexity due to the conflict of interests and power race invading the region.

Common interests with solid friendship from a side, and conflict of interests with lack of trust from the other are the main factors that describes the Sino-Russian relation; without forgetting that this equation does not rule their relation in all the affairs they are dealing with. However, it is in the most important sphere of this relation that complexity supremely reigns: “It is in the economic sphere that the closer relations, but also the asymmetry between the two powers are most prominent” (Perović & Zogg, 2019, p.2).

And when talking about the Chinese huge BRI that highlights China as a dominant economic superpower over the Eurasian region, we notice that Russia does not have a great role in it, even though it has lobbied to let the trade routes cross its territory with an intention to benefit from them on the high-tech industry level. Moreover, it is true that both states consider the mutual relationship between them as opportunistic ‘partnership’, but despite that, this strategic project of BRI has

increased the lingering mistrust between them due to the large gap in mutual trade of both sides. Figure 16 below shows up the real situation of this existing gap constituting one of the main reasons behind that mistrust; This is because China is normally known as the number one trading partner of Russia, and has executed new shifts at its foreign trade levels and divided it between other directions.

Figure 16: Trade Relations Between Russia and China in 2018



Source: Perović & Zogg, 2019, p.3

Only 2% (48 billion USD) of all China's exports were allocated to Russia compared to 98% (2231 billion USD) to the rest of the world, and from the other side, China imported only 18% of Russia's exports (59 billion USD) while the rest of the world imported the remaining 82%

(336 billion USD). China has managed to do this shift softly since 2009, for one fundamental aim to become the largest trade partner and investor in the Eurasian region through its Belt and Road initiative; and this is its own soft way to “marginalize” Russia from the trade map of the region and compete with it by building strong ties with Central Asian’ republics, investing in their oil and gas through establishing pipelines, and building up infrastructure projects - as mentioned in the dissertation – accompanied with good diplomatic and political relations with each of the five countries, persuading them with its good intentions against the greed of the west.

Therefore, and after all what was mentioned and discussed over all this dissertation, we could definitely conclude that the so unique relation combining China with Russia is literally worth the high geo-strategic importance of Eurasia, proved through all the geopolitical theories of Mackinder, Spykman and Brzezinski; where the international eyes and muscles are focusing their efforts, and competing in order to achieve primacy over its lands. So what could be the case of China and Russia in such situation of power race towards interests and control?

Moreover, and as justified above, exercising control over the Central Asian region is the primary step before extending influence over the whole region of Eurasia. And here it must be said, that the geo-strategic reality of this region requires from Beijing and Moscow to rely on the distinguished capabilities and skills of their countries’ policymakers in a precise and pragmatic way, in order to achieve the goals and targets they expected when applying their own approaches for the sake of domination. And it is for this one same reason that the international scene is witnessing a remarkable elevation in the competition pace between China and Russia in addition to the United States of America and their allies.

It is effectively true that this competition has intensified increasingly after September 2001, not only through the relentless efforts of China and Russia to expand control over the production areas in the Central Asian republics, but also through the direct participation of these republics in expanding the gap of influence between them through signing multiple agreements with China instead of Russia; knowing that these republics constitute a soviet heritage that Russia relies on to restore its image of historic grandeur when necessary.

Things are not that clear in terms of bilateral relation between them, but contrariwise, the Sino-Russian ties are much complex in a way that they might easily constitute a problem statement for a PhD dissertation without any debate...

Furthermore, we can here display the “personal-political” relation combining Putin and Jinping together against Trump; according to the old adage stating that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend”, China’s leader and his Russian counterpart have publicly agreed on December 2019 to increase military and economic cooperation. And beside the economic benefit of this agreement, they see in it a political opportunity to expand their influence at the expense of the United States, and to indirectly defeat Donald Trump, through their “good appearing and appealing friendship”.

And before concluding, many opinions can be given, and many points of view can present an answer to the main problem statement of this thesis, but no one can deny that China is the main responsible of the World Order new shape, and of the course of events currently occurring all over the planet. This world and its history got used to military wars between superpowers for all the previous epochs, but what is happening now, is totally new, in all means. And as one of the people interviewed for this thesis said: “yes! I see a shift, (...) and US is not the respected superpower that rules the world. On the contrary, we are in a multipolar world”.

We can finally say that China is smoothly paving its way for international primacy with its utmost efforts and geo-strategies. It has passed the most difficult levels of world's polarity transformations, from a Unipolar world, to a bipolar then a multipolar world. And if that can simply refer to an emerging international issue, it shows up the multiple efforts China attributes in its seeking for dramatically weakening the United States. On the 3rd of November 2020, contrary to popular expectations, and following a series of controversies, Donald Trump lost the electoral battle to Joe Biden and hence failed to secure a second mandate, which would have been beneficial to the likes of China. Nonetheless, whilst many look forward to Biden's mandate in terms of domestic and foreign policies, one should not expect radical changes when it comes to the economic war with China as that is a matter of national interest that goes beyond partisanship and model of governance per president. As the findings of the interviews convey, the trade war between both entities is set to continue as China aims at pursuing further economic achievements, and the United States is not set on scaling back and watching its hegemony challenged easily. Hence, the situation of China's rising economic power and the United States' stance is not set to change under the newly elected and sworn in President of the US, Joe Biden.

International governance, in my opinion, is described adequately by looking at the realist school of thought which dictates that international relations are shaped by state interactions, their interests, and the balance of power. Nonetheless, when it comes to understanding patterns of interactions and state behavior, one must not undermine the liberal perspective whereas several entities pursue their interests in terms of economic gain rather than military expansionist agendas and do so through non-violent mediums, contrary to traditional approach which revolves around employing hard power. Hence, both realist and liberal schools are complementary to one another in today's world. Both theories are materialized in the rise of China following Western hegemony

and USA supremacy, leveling the playing field into a multipolar system in which it has been capable of fulfilling its interests through different strategies, most notably geoeconomics. As a result, many have addressed the Chinese rise on the global scene as one that is capable of dethroning the United States of America, primarily in terms of economic supremacy. The Chinese model of economic competitiveness is not restricted to certain regions or to certain sectors and can be adapted to innovations in which profitability and recognition can be found.

As the cost of traditional warfare often exceeds the projected or aspired benefits to be reaped, states have been seeking competition and the weakening of one another by aspiring to fulfill the role of innovator and to dominate certain markets. One of those markets in which state competition is rampant is that of technology, all of which has led to coining in the term of *techno-wars*, which points towards the efforts poured into keeping state-of-the-art technology or cutting-edge technology, such as 5G networks, and their diffusion confined in the hands of certain nation(s) in order to present itself as a dominant entity in the field who is to be respected as it holds the reins of technological advance. Up until recently, technological supremacy has been confined in the hands of the likes of the United States of America and its allies, but many have highlighted the fact that China's capabilities to acquire a hypothetical blueprint when it comes to cutting edge technology have been increasing, which has led the likes of the United States to impose sanctions and actively pursue policies to curb Chinese efforts to acquire such capacities as that would constitute an additional setback to the remaining supremacy and hegemony of the United States. If the Far East giant is capable of acquiring such technological capabilities, its geoeconomic strategy would be reinforced and bolstered as it would be capable of spreading this technology in geostrategic regions of the world, increasing its global influence, and reaping massive profits.

As this thesis has previously shown, China relies on the consumption of natural resources to a great extent, a great part of which is sourced from Russia, its frenemy. On the western hemisphere of the globe, the United States of America is “addicted to oil” as its former president George W. Bush put it back in 2006, a reality that is still applicable to date. Natural resources and geostrategic interests are in a proven correlation, as observed by US interventionism for example in the MENA region. The same can be asserted when it comes to geoeconomics as the oil and gas sector is one of the pillars of Chinese geoeconomics strategy, which can be a vulnerability due to the extensive influence of the United States and its allies, such as OPEC member states, on the global market of oil and gas. When it comes to natural resources, the norm has been to look beneath the earth’s soil, but today, states can look up as the prospect of space exploration and mining for resources in outer space is becoming a feasible reality. It is no secret that outer space is rich in resources such as minerals and raw materials, all of which can be used to fuel the geoeconomic outlook of states, most notably China. Hence, this takes us back to a potential race to outer space for space exploration and mining. It is important to highlight the fact that, contrary to terrestrial resources, outer space and all of its aspects cannot be claimed by a certain entity or state according to international law and treaty law, all of which facilitates the process of taking advantage of the untapped resources. Additionally, issues cannot easily arise as with the case of techno-wars due to the fact that international and treaty law protect the freedom to exploit natural resources found in outer-space and hence limitations cannot be enforced to keep China, the global challenger, from contributing to its global standing and assert its geoeconomic supremacy.

Technology, outer space resource exploitation, as well as many emerging innovations should remain on the radars of researchers, economic and political experts and analysts, as well as policymakers and definitely states due to their sheer importance and potential of altering the global

status quo when it comes to governance as well as state interests. All of those innovations and realities have the potential of becoming highly interesting and matters of controversy as well in the near future, all of which supplements the need to address them early on and to shed further light upon them. In a world where most people still predict state behavior according to earth and material objects and resources, attention to the cyberspace as well as outer-space is necessary as emerging realities have the potential of becoming the norm rather than the exception.

As transparency is important when it comes to such research efforts, one must highlight certain limitations that have been experienced throughout the research process and while compiling this dissertation. As this piece is an exploratory study, a topic that has not been addressed sufficiently, the limitations experienced were limited to the diversification of the pool of experts constituting and the number of experts that have contributed to the study. The efforts that have been put in this dissertation could have been bolstered if the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic did not have such a ravaging impact on day-to-day activities as well as professional activity, which has affected the final pool of interviewees and its composition. The aforementioned limitations are to be taken into account as well for future research efforts, such as those concerned with outer-space and resources as well as techno-wars.

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Annex

Interviewees' Profiles

Interviewee 1

<i>Nationality</i>	American
<i>Profession</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journalist and Reporter at The Economist • Lecturer in Geopolitics at HEC – Paris
<i>Expertise</i>	Geopolitics
<i>Education</i>	Political Sociology – <i>University of California, Santa Barbara</i>

Interviewee 2

<i>Nationality</i>	American
<i>Profession</i>	Researcher: Senior Advisor for Asia and Director of China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Studies • Chinese Studies
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master in International Economics – <i>The Johns Hopkins University</i> • Bachelor in Political Science – <i>Boston University</i>

Interviewee 3

<i>Nationality</i>	Italian
<i>Profession</i>	Associate Professor of International Political Economy at China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU) – Beijing
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geopolitics and Geoeconomics • Global Economy • Chinese Studies
<i>Education</i>	PhD in Geopolitics and Geoeconomics – <i>University of Trieste</i>

Interviewee 4

<i>Nationality</i>	Norwegian
<i>Profession</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway • Author
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geoeconomics • Russian Foreign Policy, Russian Conservatism, Neoclassical Realism • Author of books: <i>Russia's Geoeconomic Strategy for a Greater Eurasia</i> (Routledge) / <i>EU and NATO Relations with Russia: After the Collapse of the Soviet Union</i> (Routledge) / <i>The Decay of Western Civilisation and Resurgence of Russia: Between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft</i> (Routledge) / <i>Russia in a Changing World</i> (Palgrave) / <i>Russian Conservatism: Managing Change Under Permanent Revolution</i> (Rowman & Littlefield)
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD in Political Science – <i>Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam</i> • PhD in Political Science – <i>Macquarie University</i> • Master in International Relations and Political Science – <i>Macquarie University</i>

Interviewee 5

<i>Nationality</i>	American
<i>Profession</i>	An American military and political veteran
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and Military Specialist • Expert in Europe and Middle East (Stationed and Worked for 27 years in Europe and the Middle East)
<i>Education</i>	Not Revealed

Interviewee 6

<i>Nationality</i>	French
<i>Profession</i>	Researcher for Russia and Eurasia Programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs – Chatham House
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, security, country-risk analysis, and strategy in Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia • Business diplomacy and consulting on Eurasian countries • Strategic research on Eurasian affairs
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate International Conflict Studies – <i>King's College London</i> • Master in International Security and War Studies – <i>Université Toulouse I Capitole</i> • Master in International Relations – <i>Institute of Political Sciences (IEP) of Toulouse</i>

Interviewee 7

<i>Nationality</i>	Armenian
<i>Profession</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher: Director of China-Eurasia Council for Political and Strategic Research • Assistant Professor at Russian-Armenian University • Lecturer at Yerevan State University
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese and Eurasian Studies • Author of the book: China's Belt and Road Initiative and Armenia (Noravank Foundation)
<i>Education</i>	PhD in International Relations – <i>Nanjing University</i>

Interviewee 8

<i>Nationality</i>	Spanish
<i>Profession</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher and Political Analyst/Consultant • Lecturer in Global Political History at Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI) • Author at The Diplomat
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist in International Relations with a focus on East Asia • Frequent Speaker in conferences about China's current affairs in Barcelona
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master in Chinese Studies – <i>Beijing Foreign Studies University</i> • Master in Chinese Studies – <i>Universitat Pompeu Fabra</i> • Master in International Relations and Security Studies – <i>University of Groningen</i> • Bachelor in Political Sciences and Public Administration – <i>Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona</i>

Interviewee 9

<i>Nationality</i>	Dutch
<i>Profession</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplomat: Former Dutch Ambassador to China, Russia, and Turkey • Former Ambassador of the NATO to Ukraine • International Advisor, Analyst, and Commentator on Geopolitics, Finance, and Economics • Lecturer in Geopolitics at Universities of Groningen and Leiden
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert in Geopolitics, Finance, Trade and Investments • EU, Russia, Turkey, and China Specialist
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master in Economics – <i>University of Amsterdam</i>

Interviewee 10

<i>Nationality</i>	French
<i>Profession</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor at Rennes School of Business • Researcher at Ecole Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Studies • Geopolitics • Interrelations between Iran, China, and Russia
<i>Education</i>	Doctorate in Law – <i>Université de Bordeaux</i>

Interviewee 11

<i>Nationality</i>	Chinese
<i>Profession</i>	Professor of International Relations at the Research Center on Development and International Relations – Aalborg University (Denmark)
<i>Expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author of books: <i>The Rise of China and the Capitalist World Order</i> (Ashgate) / <i>BRICS and Beyond: The International Political Economy of the Emergence of a New World Order</i> (Ashgate) • Expert in Chinese Studies and International Relations
<i>Education</i>	PhD in Development Studies and International Relations – Aalborg University

Interview Questions

Question 1: *How would you describe China's influence over Eurasia and subsequently (in soft steps) over the world? Is it trying to change the global order and rule this world politically and economically or willing to ruin USA's polarity by attaining and achieving the international primacy?*

Question 2: *How do you see the large shift – led by China – from geopolitics to geoeconomics? And do you think that economic means will completely replace military ones in bilateral “wars” between superpowers in the near future? (Define Geoeconomics Please)*

Question 3: *What is in your opinion the main major capability that differentiates:*

- *China from USA?*
- *China from Russia?*

Question 4: *How do you see the future of the Eurasian region – land of the Grand Chessboard as per Brzezinski – especially that it contains Russia and China on its lands?*

Question 5: *Based on the last question, how do you describe the existing relation between China and Russia? Are they allies or competitors?*

Question 6: *How do you think the OBOR initiative will affect Russia's role in the Eurasia region?*

Question 7: *Finally, and based on your personal estimation:*

- *How will COVID-19 affect the international relations tracks?*
- *Will it assist China in expanding its influence over the world?*

- *What about the European Union's destiny?*
- *How will it affect the American presidency's elections? and do you see any probable "trade war" breaking out again between Beijing and Washington?*