



НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИЙ  
УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

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# CHINESE INITIATIVES IN CENTRAL ASIA: RESOURCES AND LIMITATIONS

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## QUESTION AND ARGUMENT

How can China's engagement in Central Asia be evaluated from leadership theory perspective?

China's initiatives in Central Asia can best be described as **asymmetric leadership**:

- leadership ambitions in several issue areas;
- varies in terms of institutionalization, overall regional focus and number of followers, participation of other regional powers, scope of contribution, etc.;
- selective and pragmatic approach to leadership.



# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

**Underdal (1991):** leadership is a relationship between a leader and followers, which:

- is associated with the collective pursuit of common good (agenda-setting);
- cannot be based only on coercion;
- requires a platform of shared values and beliefs;
- must be a fairly consistent pattern of interaction extending throughout a certain period of time.

**David Mitrany's** idea of functionalism: a variety of actors can promote themselves as leaders, not necessarily global leaders per se, but leaders **in a specific issue area.**



## 4 ISSUE AREAS AND 5 CRITERIA

- Are there **institutions (1)** established by China with CA states as members, in which China has more influence?
- Does China use **material resources (2)** to create rational stimulus for the followers to join?
- Do these initiatives have **ideational framework (3)**, which is internalized by Central Asian states?
- Do Chinese initiatives address **common goals (4)**?
- What **role** does **Russia (5)** play in China's initiatives?



# COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION

1. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), bilateral ties, new initiatives of a smaller scale
2. Largest share in the SCO budget, other occasional contributions
3. Shanghai spirit, three evils
4. Terrorism as a common security threat
5. Russia has equal position and budget share in the SCO = co-leader



# DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

1. Cooperation within Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) not institutionalized
2. Loans (Silk Road Fund and Chinese banks)
3. Silk Road Spirit, infrastructure is a key to economic prosperity
4. Goals of SREB correlate with interests of Central Asian states. BUT Chinese economic initiatives criticized for damaging or ignoring other important aspects;
5. Russia joined the BRI/SREB, but has its own initiative in the region - Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) = competitor.



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# FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

1. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
2. China has 26.06% of voting shares (75% needed for major decisions)
3. AIIB presented as an alternative financial institution that would address the needs of emerging powers and developing countries
4. Addresses common goal - demand for infrastructure investment in Asia
5. Russia is a member of AIIB = follower



# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1. No specific environmental projects led by China in Central Asia
2. Ambitions to use the BRI as one of the instruments to develop Eurasia in a “green way”
3. China is not a good example for other countries in the sphere of EP.
4. China and Central Asia have common and different environmental problems
5. Russia neither challenges initiatives of other actors nor suggests its own agenda  
= bystander





# SUMMING UP

	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Material resources</b>	<b>Ideational resources</b>	<b>Common goals</b>	<b>Russia</b>
<b>Counter-terrorist cooperation</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Co-leader
<b>Economic cooperation</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Competitor
<b>Financial governance</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Follower
<b>Environmental cooperation</b>	No	No	No	No	Bystander



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

- China's initiatives address common problems and concerns => appealing to potential followers
- No signs that participation in Chinese initiatives is encouraged by coercive methods or that China puts forward any political requirements for its followers
- China's impressive example and outstanding material resources have motivated the latter to support Chinese leadership.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Russia has taken different roles as a co-leader (counterterrorism), follower (financial governance), competitor (economic cooperation) and a bystander (environmental cooperation).
- Russia's role depends on its material resources and willingness to lead.
- Moscow deliberately utilized the SCO to minimize China's role in the region.
- However, even in economic sphere there is symbolic cooperation between leadership projects of Russia and China.



**Thank you for your attention!**

