

A Regional Perspective of Sino-Russian Relations: Regional Russian News Framing of China in the Arctic, Siberia and the Far East

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies
University of Michigan
2022

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Pauline Jones for working on this project with me as my principal advisor and without whose patience, knowledge and guidance I surely would not be graduating. I would also like to thank Professor Javed Ali for his knowledge and expertise in providing feedback as Second Reader. Thank you also to the Center for Russian, Eurasian and Eastern European Studies and the staff at the International Institute for providing much needed logistical and administrative support during the writing of this thesis.

Abstract

This project uses framing theory and a quantitative content analysis of regional Russian news coverage of China between 2013-2022 to investigate the substance behind reports of deepening Russian-Chinese cooperation and the threat it poses to the democratic and liberal values around the world. This project complements a body of growing scholarly and expert research of Sino-Russian relations by offering a bottom-up analysis that emphasizes the behavior and attitudes of Russian regions as key actors in implementing Putin and Xi's top-down efforts to deepen bilateral cooperation. Findings from this project suggest that Russian regions are primarily concerned with how Chinese investments and bilateral projects like the Power of Siberia Pipeline can revitalize stagnant regional economies, and that publicized performances of "friendship" by Putin and Xi without concrete economic agreements do not affect regional perceptions of China. Regional news sentiment towards China was overwhelmingly neutral, caught between optimism for future economic cooperation and established perceptions that Chinese companies use unfair business practices. This project concludes that Sino-Russian cooperation is significantly more complicated than Putin and Xi's rhetoric suggest, and that the US and allied countries should capitalize on underlying regional tensions to drive a wedge between China and Russia.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	12
Chapter 3: Methods	25
Chapter 4: Results/Findings	34
Chapter 5: Implications	70
Bibliography	82
Appendix	88

List of Figures and Tables

Table 1: <i>Sentiment</i> Coding Examples	28
Table 2: Data Corpus Summary Over Time	31
Table 3: Summary Results for Meta-Topics	37
Table 4: Summary Results for Issue-Specific Frames	37
Table 5: Summary Results for <i>Sentiment</i>	40
Table 6: Summary Results for <i>Future Sentiment</i>	40
Table 7: <i>Sentiment</i> and <i>Future Sentiment</i> Crosstabulation	43
Table 8: Summary Results for <i>Billet</i>	44
Table 9: Summary Results for <i>Level</i>	44
Table 10: Inflection Point Analysis Event Summary	47
Table 11: May 2014 Inflection Point Key Variable Results	49
Table 12: May 2014 Inflection Point Issue-Specific Frame Summary Results	49
Table 13: <i>Sentiment</i> and <i>POSP</i> Crosstabulation	50
Table 14: <i>Future Sentiment</i> and <i>POSP</i> Crosstabulation	51
Table 15: May 2015 Inflection Point Key Variable Summary Results	55
Table 16: May 2015 Inflection Point Issue-Specific Frame Summary Results	55
Table 17: June 2016 Inflection Point Key Variable Summary Results	58
Table 18: June 2016 Inflection Point Issue-Specific Frame Summary Results	59
Table 19: April 2019 Inflection Point Key Variable Summary Results	63
Table 20: April 2019 Issue-Specific Frame Summary Results	63
Figure 1: Summary of Reporting Frequency Over Time	65
Figure 2: Inflection Point Summary: <i>Sentiment</i>	67
Figure 3: Inflection Point Summary: <i>Future Sentiment</i>	67
Figure 4: Inflection Point Summary: <i>Level</i>	68

Chapter One: Introduction

On February 4, 2022, as the world anxiously observed Russian troops amassing on the Ukrainian border Russian President Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping released a joint statement announcing that friendship between their two states has “no-limits,” and that there were no “forbidden” areas of cooperation (Putin, 2022). The deliberately provocative language was part of a broader joint-statement that many American and European observers interpreted as an escalation in Sino-Russian attempts to challenge the US-led, liberal, democratic order. In the statement, Russia reaffirmed support of the “One China” policy regarding Taiwan, while both states denounced in not-so-vague language attempts by NATO to incorporate “adjacent regions” like Ukraine into its sphere of influence.

Putin and Xi’s dramatic declaration of friendship is the latest in a series of similar joint-statements made since Putin’s “Pivot to the East” in 2013, which has resulted in a strategic and economic re-orientation of Russia away from the West towards Asia (Lukin, 2017). Although this policy shift is officially billed as a pivot towards the Asian region as a whole, China’s preeminence as an economic and political partner for Russia has led many observers to rename it a pivot to China (Stronski and Ng, 2018). Due to the potentially significant geopolitical ramifications to the US and NATO-aligned countries, Western observers have readily sought to investigate the strength and depth of Sino-Russian relations.

Unsurprisingly, most Western scholarly and expert attention has focused on the interpersonal relationship of Putin and Xi Jinping as like-minded autocrats working to align their respective national strategic geopolitical interests to counter those of the US and its allies. Notably overlooked in this focus is the status of interregional cooperation and role of regional

actors in Putin's agenda vis a vis China. As the parties primarily responsible for carrying out the cooperative initiatives directed by Putin and Xi, regional companies, politicians and community leaders occupy a crucial role in the Sino-Russian partnership. Further analysis of regional Russian perspectives of China, like the one proposed in this study, will contribute yet another and oft overlooked dimension to current understandings of Sino-Russian relations.

This project aims to contribute to existing analyses of the Sino-Russian relationship by offering a different perspective based on an analysis of regional Russian media coverage of China during the years of Putin's "Pivot to the East," or more specifically the "Pivot to China." The purpose of this approach is to investigate the role and influence of specific regions that are important to Sino-Russian partnership, such as the Arctic, Siberia and the Russian Far East (RFE). I argue that a "bottom-up" approach contributes to a more holistic picture of the bilateral relationship, which can enhance policy makers' ability to assess the limits and potential of Sino-Russian relations, and its subsequent threat to US interests. Regional Russian interpretations of China can reveal whether local perspectives of Sino-Russian relations match Putin and Xi's official narrative, which describe Russian-Chinese cooperation as a strong, unified challenge to the West. Furthermore, investigating how regional Russian news outlets frame China can help Western observers understand what aspects of Sino-Russian relations are most important to the regions, and use these insights to develop their policy strategies.

This introductory chapter begins with a brief history of Sino-Russian relations, followed by a discussion contextualizing Putin's pivot to China and current relations with China. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of key research objectives, questions, the significance of the research and finally, its limitations.

1.1 History of Sino-Russian Relations

Russian relations with China are marked by a tumultuous and tension riddled history. Early Russian attitudes towards China were characterized by an imperial, colonial mindset and an accompanying presumption of superiority (Filimonova, 2014). Furthermore, for much of the Tsarist period China was of only marginal interest to a majority of Russian elites, who were more preoccupied with relations in Europe, as well as imperial conquests in the Caucasus. Like most major European powers in the 18th and 19th centuries, Russian elites considered non-European cultures backward or inferior, and used this as a premise to justify their colonial conquests.

Perhaps the most important event to occur in Sino-Russian relations during the Imperial-era was the Russian military conquest and annexation of hundreds of square kilometers in the Amur region, then a part of China (Miller, 2021 p.81-83). Eventually known as the 1860 Treaty of Beijing, Russian annexation and settlement of Chinese lands allowed Russia to continue expanding their Empire eastward, and the Amur region is now an important border territory in current Sino-Russian relations.

The colonial history surrounding Russia's presence in the Amur continues to be a source of interregional tension. Chinese nationalist commentators frequently point out that Russia is occupying land that rightfully belongs to China, which has in turn fueled insecurity and speculation among Amur and other residents of the RFE regarding Chinese expansionism (Kashino, 2015). The situation is exacerbated today by an inversion of the historical power dynamic. Chinese regions bordering the Amur are exponentially more developed than their Russian counterparts, featuring skyscrapers and a robust industrial economy. The Russian Amur

region meanwhile suffers from economic stagnation, and decades of unfulfilled promises from the Federal government to reinvest in the region's economic and social infrastructure (Billé and Humphrey, 2021 pp.67-70).

Soviet-Sino relations fared little better in the 20th century than relations during the Imperial era, despite eventually representing the two most powerful communist countries during the Cold War. Although Soviet Russia had abandoned the colonial pretenses of their Imperial predecessors, Russians still viewed China as a subordinate power (Miller, 2021).

Historian Chris Miller, author of *We Shall Be Masters*, offers a unique perspective of Sino-Russian historical relations, arguing that Russian relations with China have been defined by numerous failed attempts to pivot to Asia. Miller argues that since Peter the Great, monarchic and autocratic Russian and Soviet leaders have repeatedly, and without success, turned to Asia in the hopes of capitalizing on Russia's vast territorial holdings and resources on the Asian continent. Miller emphasizes these pivots have traditionally been characterized by misplaced optimism and rarely matched with realized or productive outcomes (Miller, 2021 p.13).

One such example of these failed Russian pivots occurred in 1950 when President Mao Zedong announced after leaving Moscow that the Soviet Union and PRC shared a "complete understanding and profound friendship." By 1964, the Soviet-Chinese relationship had soured drastically over various disputes, with Mao even calling into question Soviet Russia's claims to the various Siberian cities it had conquered during the Imperial era such as the Amur, claims that are still echoed today by nationalists in Chinese media (Kashino, 2015 p. 215). In nearly every Russian attempt to pivot to Asia, high hopes among Russian elites of attaining power and wealth with countries like China were confounded by the logistical and infrastructure

challenges of developing Eastern Siberia, in addition to political and cultural tensions with their Asian neighbors in the borderlands.

The circumstances surrounding Putin's 21st century pivot to Asia as well as his partnership with Xi Jinping in many ways mirror those of his Imperial and Soviet predecessors. Increasingly cut off culturally, economically and politically from its traditional Western-European orientation, Putin's envisions a new, Asian-oriented Russia built upon energy and natural resources of the RFE and the Arctic, as well as a growing partnership with its like-minded authoritarian neighbor in China—and more recently, a willing partner to help stem the major economic, diplomatic, and battlefield challenges it is experiencing in its war of aggression against Ukraine. Similarly, however, Putin also faces many of the same challenges in successfully pivoting Russia towards China and the rest of Asia, namely a lack of infrastructure and funds to develop energy and transportation projects in the Arctic and RFE, as well as political and cultural tensions simmering beneath the surface of an outwardly friendly, cooperative relationship.

1.2 Putin's Current Pivot to China

Shortly after returning to presidential office in 2012, Russian President Putin emphasized his intention to reorient the economy, as well as Russia's domestic and foreign political focus, towards the "Pacific Ocean," the region encompassing Russia's vast Far Eastern Siberian holdings as well as the wider Asia-Pacific region. The decision to pivot Russia towards Asia between 2012-2013 was reflective of two key objectives: to meet the economic and strategic opportunities and challenges presented by the Asia-Pacific region, driven by rapid growth of countries like China and India, as well as realize a long-held Russian ambition to

capitalize on the economic and diplomatic potential of the RFE. In his 2013 annual Presidential address to the Federal Assembly, Putin succinctly captured these objectives, stating “Russia’s reorientation toward the Pacific Ocean and the dynamic development in all our eastern territories will not only open up new economic opportunities and new horizons, but also provide additional instruments for an active foreign policy (Putin, 2013).” While it has become quite common for analysts to contextualize the Russian-Chinese relationship in relation to US-led Ukraine-related sanctions since 2014, which undoubtedly accelerated Russia’s pivot towards China, it is important to note that Putin’s pivot to Asia was at least initially spurred by motivations seemingly untethered to the conflict in Ukraine.

Putin’s pivot East was forcibly accelerated after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, as US and partners’ sanctions forced Western companies to limit or divest investments in key energy, resource and infrastructure projects, especially in the Arctic and RFE. Suddenly cutoff from key sources of capital and technology, but unable to complete the most important and ambitious projects independently, like the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) extraction and processing plant on the Yamal Peninsula, Putin began personally attracting Chinese investment and partnership. In the fall of 2014, Putin traveled to China to meet with Xi Jinping and sign a deal for the construction and export of Russian gas through Power of Siberia Pipeline, a \$400 billion dollar project that Putin described as “a very important project for both the Russian Federation and the Peoples’ Republic of China” (VSP, 2014). Prior to Putin’s direct intervention in the negotiations for the pipeline, Gazprom and the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) had been in stalled negotiations for nearly a decade, primarily over the price of gas to be exported (Pavlovna, 2014). Putin’s involvement in bringing about a swift conclusion to the

stalled negotiations only months after the annexation of Crimea and subsequent threat of impending sanctions provide a good example of how the Ukraine conflict directly influenced the relevance and speed of Putin's pivot to China.

China also acquired a significant 20% stake in the keystone Yamal LNG in 2013 through the CNPC as well as an additional 9.9% through the Chinese Silk Road Fund in December 2015, with the latter deal providing critical funding relief in the wake of Western sanctions (Leksyutina, 2021). While Russia and Putin have also sought to attract investments from other Asian countries for projects in the Arctic and the Far East, like India, Singapore and South Korea, China remains by far the most important investor and partner. Importantly, Putin is frequently quoted by Russian regional and national news outlets characterizing Chinese cooperative ventures like those in Yamal and the POSP as evidence of the quality and promise of Russia's partnership with China in the face of declining relations with the West.¹ Putin's personal involvement in the deal-making and announcement processes of keystone Chinese-Russian ventures like the POSP, which Gazprom had been reluctant to sign for years based on the price China was demanding, emphasize the top-down nature of Russia's pivot towards China and raise questions about how actors at the local level have responded to the policy shift.

Putin has also made efforts to increase cooperation with China in other areas aside from economic cooperation, such as military and culture, though with less vigor and success. Russia and China are both members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a Eurasian

¹ A few examples of such articles include: "Alexei Miller: The Power of Siberia will have a huge impact on the economy" Yakutskoe-Sakha. (June, 1 2014); "China launches construction of the Power of Siberia gas pipeline" Yakutskoe-Sakha. (June 30, 2015); "The 'Power of Siberia' has a beginning" Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda (September 2, 2014)

economic and security organization whose other members include countries like Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Russia and China have also cooperated on military exercises. Since 2003, Russia and China have participated in at least 78 joint military exercise, over half of which have taken place since 2016 and after Putin's accelerated pivot towards China, many of which notably occurred in the South China Sea (Hart et. al, 2022). Russia has also historically served as a major arms supplier to China; however this dynamic is waning as Chinese technology and production capacity has increased to match or in other cases surpass Russia's.

Despite the notable uptick in Russian-Chinese military cooperation since Putin's accelerated efforts at a pivot towards China in 2014, the countries have eschewed any formal declarations of a military alliance. While both Xi and Putin have been quick to emphasize the cooperative nature of the SCO and publicly lauded plans to integrate their respective regional economic unions (Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union) (Putin and Xi, 2023), China's expanding economic and security influence in Central Asia encroaches on what Russia perceives is its traditional sphere of influence (Stronski and Ng, 2018). Russian elites have also expressed anxiety at the growing asymmetry of the Chinese-Russian relationship, and fear China's leverage as Russia's only partner in light of stricter isolation from the West (Lo, 2015). Meanwhile, Chinese officials and elite share a distrust of Russia's sincerity regarding its "Pivot to the East," with cynics asserting that Russia sees China only as a card to play against the West when relations turn sour (Lo, 2015 pp. 143, 136).

The underlying, longer-term potential for political and security tensions continue to restrain Russia and China from a formal military or political alliance, and for the time being both Putin and Xi are content to issue public statements in support of each other's regional security

and economic ambitions, without initiating any actionable policies that might offend or provoke the other. Putin's drastic escalation of the Ukrainian conflict in 2022 has highlighted the fragility of Russian-Chinese cooperation outside of economic related projects. Although China still participated in the 2022 "Zapad" military exercises, alongside other Asian countries like India, Xi is reticent in responses to questions regarding Chinese support for the war in Ukraine. Xi is unwilling to risk or sacrifice China's more important trade ties with the US and Europe, but must also consider its relationship with Russia, who provides a powerful and politically likeminded authoritarian partner in the context of growing security and economic hostility between China and the West. So far, the Chinese response to Russia's actions in Ukraine resembles an uneasy balance of "wait and see," where the success or failure of Putin's war will likely have an outsized outcome on the Russian-Chinese relationship going forward.

1.3 Significance of the Research

While an overwhelming majority of academic and expert analysis of the Sino-Russian relationship continues to evaluate the behavior and public statements made by Putin, Xi Jinping and other high-level officials, relatively little is known about how regional and local actors in Russia are responding to Russia's rapprochement with China. Regional actors in the RFE and Arctic are ultimately responsible for implementing and living with consequences of Putin's policy shift towards China. As a result, understanding the responses, behavior and perceptions of China in relevant regional media outlets is crucial to rounding out our understanding of the substance and reality of Sino-Russian cooperation beyond the Putin-Xi relationship.

Regional media portrayals of China are likely to offer novel and nuanced perspectives of the Sino-Russian partnership due to their regional-specific readership that are either

overlooked or unpalatable to a national audience. For example, a regional media outlet like Yakutskoe Sakha whose territory includes large stretches of the Arctic may interpret the promise of Chinese capital and investment in the area differently than a Moscow-based news outlet like Kommersant. Likewise, reporting in Amurskaya Pravda, an outlet based in a Chinese border town with a history of anxiety and suspicion towards Chinese expansionism is likely to interpret increased Chinese economic and political influence differently than reporters based in far-away St. Petersburg. Ivan Zuenko (2020) characterizes the difference between regional and metropolitan perspectives of China as one between capital preferences and regional realities. Ultimately, the sentiment and response of regional actors to important shifts in strategic and economic policy in Moscow remain a largely unknown factor in Western assessments of the Sino-Russian relationship. This project's analysis of regional media outlets in the Arctic and RFE hope to contribute towards filling this knowledge gap.

1.4 Research Questions

This project seeks to address three main research questions:

- 1. How have regional media outlets located in the Russian Far East and Arctic responded or interpreted Putin's pivot to the East between 2013 and 2022?*
- 2. Have regional media outlets in the Russian Far East and Arctic between 2013-2022 constructed a narrative or portrayal of China that contradicts or diverges from the "official" discourse in Moscow regarding China as a friend and strategic partner?*
- 3. What are the major concerns and issues raised by regional media outlets in the Russian Far East and Arctic in the context of Russia's pivot to the East between 2013-2022?*

1.5 Limitations of the Research

While this research attempts to capture the behavior and sentiment of regional actors in the Russian Far East and Arctic in response to Putin's reorientation towards China, any evaluation

relying primarily on media coverage in an authoritarian regime faces inevitable limitations. Each of the regional newspapers is at least partially owned by a government-controlled organization. Although this project initially intended to include additional independent regional newspapers, time and personnel restraints constrained the scope to news outlets under government control. Future analyses of regional Russian news coverage of China could improve upon this study by comparing independent and government-operated framing patterns.

Other potential limitations include the data collection methodology. The quantitative content analysis was conducted manually by one researcher. Time and personnel constraints prevented the use of other coders and inter-coder reliability tests, with the result that the data may disproportionately reflect the researcher's biases. For commentary on measures to mitigate potential researcher bias, refer to the methodology chapter.

Utility or relevance of this project's findings and subsequent policy implications are limited by the time scope of the study which only covers regional news through January 2022. Due to the war in Ukraine, Russia's geopolitical and domestic future are very much in flux, and any significant changes could negate the findings from this study.

Lastly, this project's analysis of Sino-Russian relations naturally emphasize the Russian perspective of the bilateral relationship. Understanding Chinese regional and national perceptions of the Sino-Russian partnership are equally critical and would make a valuable addition in future studies.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Sino-Russian relations have attracted increasing scholarly attention since Putin announced a pivot to Asia in 2013. Naturally, there are a variety of approaches and disciplines used by scholars and experts to examine Russian-Chinese partnership. Some studies emphasize the relationship from a broader geopolitical perspective, or the nature of bilateral cooperation in regions like the Arctic, while others debate the relevance of events in Ukraine as a catalyst for pushing Russia closer to China. Rather than a theoretical engagement and review of existing literature, this chapter attempts to highlight and summarize key arguments from several of the most common approaches to analyzing current Sino-Russian relations.

The first section discusses common arguments regarding origins of the current Russian-Chinese partnership, with particular emphasis on the role of the 2014 Ukrainian crisis. The next section provides a brief review of common arguments regarding the future of Sino-Russian relations and possible points of contention. The chapter concludes by discussing existing studies of China in Russian media.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that, across all areas, perspectives and topics in the existing literature analyzing Sino-Russian partnership, most experts approach the subject from a “high politics” perspective. That is, the overwhelming characterization and analysis of Russian and Chinese cooperation is measured by the behavior and decisions of the political and social elite, resulting in a lopsided, top-down perspective of Sino-Russian interaction (Bossuyt and Kaczmarek 2021). This approach, though valuable neglects critical assessment of local actors “on the ground” who are ultimately responsible for interpreting and implementing the policy decisions espoused from the capitals in Moscow and Beijing.

2.1 Sino-Russian Partnership (2013-2022) - Origins

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the major geo-political developments in Eastern Europe between 2013 and 2022, an overwhelming portion of scholarly and expert analyses of the Sino-Russian partnership highlight the significance of the Ukrainian conflict, subsequent US and Western sanctions, and Russia's dependency on natural resource exports as key factors contributing to the progress of Sino-Russian "friendship" in that period (Leksyutina, 2018; Stronski and Ng, 2018; Hsiung, 2016; Dharmaputra, 2021; Lo, 2015). Indeed, few scholars or experts discount the significance of the Ukrainian conflict and subsequent isolation from the West in driving Russia closer towards China, even while acknowledging the fact that Putin's "pivot East" predates the events following Crimea's annexation.

Bobo Lo (2015, p.142) argues that the 2014 Ukrainian crisis represented a "catalyst for a breakthrough," in Sino-Russian relations. According to Lo, Putin's personal involvement in concluding the POSP gas deal with China, later held up as a symbol of Sino-Russian cooperation, was crucial for Putin in signaling to the West that Russia's strategic and economic ambitions would not be compromised by punitive sanctions. Importantly, Lo characterizes Putin's turn towards China not as the natural byproduct of two likeminded regional powers, but as a product of what he terms traditional Russian "instrumentalism" in its policy towards China, whereby Russia utilizes its relationship with China primarily as leverage with their primary diplomatic and trade partners in the West (Lo, p.142). Regarding longer-term prospects for the Sino-Russian partnership Lo is skeptical, arguing that Putin's accelerated pivot to the East after the Ukraine crisis is targeted more towards geopolitical balancing against the US, and re-establishing Russia's independence and identity as a regional center of power (Lo, p.163).

Radityo Dharmaputra (2021) examined changing discourses in Russian identity before and after the 2014 Crimean annexation, arguing that the economic conditions in Russia after the Ukrainian crisis forced Putin's government to enact policy changes, such as the POSP gas deal with China, that resulted in positive transformations of Russian perceptions of China and of Russia itself as an Asian or Eurasian power (p.626). This marked a drastic change, Dharmaputra asserts, from the pre-2014 discourse after Putin's initial rhetoric of a pivot to the East that failed to accompany any realized policy changes or transformations of Russian self-conceptions as an Asian country. Notably, Dharmaputra finds that the policy and identity changes precipitated by the 2014 Ukraine crisis were productive in strengthening Russian-Chinese dialogue, specifically through an increase in references to China as a "friend," but were not enough to force a fundamental shift in away from a European or Western oriented identity (p.627).

Paul Stronski and Nicole Ng (2018) similarly argue that Russia's relationship with China has become a reality only since the dissolution in relations with the West in 2014. However, the authors caution that the Sino-Russian rapprochement since 2014 is largely defined by the personal relationship and policy decisions of Putin and Xi Jinping, with realized outcomes generally limited to "large-scale, top-down investments of Chinese money into key sectors of the Russian economy" (p.1). Stronski and Ng's analysis of the Russian-Chinese relationship affirms its durability in the face of shared opposition to the US-led world order, but questions its capacity to achieve meaningful outcomes, emphasizing competing ambitions in Central Asia, and still unaddressed economic and political hurdles in the RFE and Arctic.

Despite an overwhelming preference among scholars to attribute accelerating Sino-Russian ties post-2014 to the fallout of the Ukrainian conflict, this view is not unanimous. Morena Skalamera (2018) argues the shock of US-led sanctions and isolation from the West is insufficient to explain the progress of Sino-Russian relations post-2014 and does not appropriately account for significant domestic incentives, such as a growing Eurasian nationalist movement and declining prospects in the European gas market pre-2014 (pp.96, 97, 99). Skalamera's argument is also informed from a big-picture, "high-politics" perspective, asserting that ultimately changes in domestic preferences, specifically turning away from an unfavorable orientation to the West in favor of closer relations with China are responsible for the landmark POSP gas deal in 2014 (p.93). Skalamera further contends that Russia's domestic preferences coincided with compatible changes in China's domestic preferences as the Chinese sought new environmentally sustainable alternatives to coal (p.104).

Skalamera's (2018) argument contradicts much of the existing literature's explanations for the dramatic spike in Sino-Russian post-2014 cooperative ventures like the POSP deal and the investments in Yamal LNG. While both address the significance of changing Russian identity discourses during Putin's pivot to the East, Skalamera (2018) and Dharmaputra (2021) dispute the casual relationship between Russia's identity and policy decisions within the Sino-Russian relationship. Dharmaputra argues the 2014 annexation of Ukraine and related sanctions precipitated policy decisions advancing Sino-Russian cooperation, which in turn led to increasingly favorable interpretations of China and Russia's Eurasian identity, whereas Skalamera contends entrenched elite preferences pre-2014 best explain the breakthrough in the POSP deal and other areas of progress between Russia and China. Noted Russian sinologist

Alexander Lukin (2017) also favors the argument that the forces behind Russia's pivot eastwards preceded the 2014 Ukrainian crisis. Lukin argues the strategic pivot was part of a natural, broader shift of global priorities to the Asia-Pacific region, similar to the US pivot to Asia in 2012. While it should be acknowledged that some Russian elites, including Putin himself, had demonstrated a preference for increasing trade and strategic relations with Asian countries prior to 2013, Skalamera and Lukin's argument are ultimately unconvincing.

By 2014, Russian trade and diplomatic infrastructure was still overwhelmingly oriented and dependent on trade with Europe, and to some extent continued to be through 2021. Skalamera neglects to provide any empirical or convincing qualitative evidence suggesting the decade-long deadlock in negotiations for the POSP deal would have occurred without the economic and political shock incurred by the Ukraine conflict. Furthermore, Skalamera's assertion that China's changing domestic preferences regarding environmental concerns influenced Chinese gas-pricing priorities in the POSP negotiations is a weak assessment supported only loosely by anecdotal interviews with anonymous interviews with "industry insiders."

Importantly, although effects of the Ukrainian crisis are widely acknowledged in creating the necessary conditions for greater Sino-Russian cooperation on major energy projects, scholars also point out the Ukraine-effect's potential to negatively impact relations and cooperation in the future (Kaczmariski, 2019; Lo, 2015; Hsuing, 2019). As Hsuing (2019) notes, Chinese foreign investors remain primarily driven by commercial interests rather than political ones, and subsequently value stability and potential return on investment over political or ideological agendas. Hsuing further adds that while Chinese investors may have the funds to

cover Russian losses incurred by Western-sanctions, Chinese oil companies remain years behind Western counterparts in terms of science and technology required for Arctic operations. Indeed, as a result of the Ukraine-incurred sanctions, Chinese companies will lose access to what may have been to them the most valuable asset in the Russian Arctic - Western technology (p.252). Kaczmarek (2019) notes that Chinese ambitions for a Silk Road Economic Belt initiative linking China and Europe through Ukraine, among other economic projects, are compromised as a result of the ongoing conflict there (p.221). Bobo Lo (2015) highlights the adverse effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on engaging with other Asian countries in the context of Putin's pivot eastwards, such as with Japan or South Korea who have largely adhered to US sanctions.

With some exceptions, and without dismissing the relevance of pre-existing geographical, political and cultural ties to Asia, most scholars agree on the significance of the 2014 Ukraine conflict as the catalyst in facilitating the breakthrough on major Sino-Russian cooperative ventures, like the POSP, in addition to the increasingly warm relationship between Putin and Xi Jinping. However, the prominence of Ukraine-related effects as a driver of the Sino-Russian relationship as well as Putin and Xi's personal involvement in forcing resolutions to otherwise contentious or difficult bilateral issues emphasizes the top-down, political elite-led nature of the Sino-Russian rapprochement. Despite sharing one of the world largest continuous land borders, a shared communist past, and an increasingly common vision for a multi-polar world order, there are tellingly few examples of scholarly or expert literature asserting the Russian pivot to the East is due to natural or grass-roots-style commercial and cultural processes.

2.2 Sino-Russian Relations: Assessments and the Future

While the literature approaches near-consensus on the origins of the Sino-Russian partnership between 2013-2022 in the political and economic fallout of the Ukraine crisis, assessments of the substance and future of the partnership vary widely.

One of the more common themes among scholarly interpretations of Sino-Russian relations is that Putin and Xi are prioritizing mutual objectives in geopolitics and ignoring potentially contentious issues that may disrupt their unified challenge to the US (Kaczmarek, 2019; Stronski and Ng, 2018; Balzer, 2021). These arguments highlight the effect of Putin and Xi's personal relationship in enforcing a top-down narrative of Sino-Russian friendship and cooperation, even when the reality on the ground does not match the official narratives. Stronski and Ng (2018) argue that the shared geopolitical objectives combined with both Putin and Xi's increasingly consolidated grasps on power will be enough to preserve the relationship for the near future, while tensions simmer below the surface. Harley Balzer (2021) argues the challenges facing Sino-Russian partnership are more pressing, and that the relationship is past its peak.

One frequently discussed potential point of contention between China and Russia is the integration of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Both initiatives represent their respective nation's ambitions to either preserve or expand economic and political influence on the Eurasian continent. Stronski and Ng argue that since the announcement to cooperate on these initiatives in May 2015, almost no joint-projects have been realized. Defraigne (2021) argues that Russia's weakening influence in Central Asia is creating a vacuum that China's BRI in turn is slowly filling. Although Xi is very careful to refrain

from insulting Putin by acknowledging this power imbalance publicly, many observers suggest the countries will have to acknowledge the reality of the situation at some point in the future. Putin and Xi have regularly referred to the initiative as an example of Sino-Russian partnership (Putin and Xi, 2023). Studies of linking the BRI-EAEU in Russian news are discussed in the next section.

Studies approaching Sino-Russian relations from a regional perspective emphasize the contrast between Putin and Xi's official narrative and the reality on the ground in Russian regions (Zuenko, 2020; Billé and Humphrey 2021). Franck Billé and Caroline Humphrey, authors of *On the Edge: Life Along the Russia-China Border*, argue that Sino-Russian economic cooperation is embodied by the fate of planned bridges across the Amur river, which serves as a border between Russia and China. Billed by Putin and Xi as a step towards creating a vibrant cross-border economy, the Chinese quickly constructed their half of the bridge while the Russian side languished unfunded and unfinished for years. Billé and Humphrey describe the Amur river as "where China's Belt and Road Initiative peters out upon meeting the reality of Russia (p.270)."

Regional approaches to examining Sino-Russian relations also discuss the effect cultural tensions, including xenophobia and concerns about Chinese expansionism in Siberia and Russia becoming a resource appendage to their southern neighbors (Zuenko, 2020; Billé and Humphrey 2021). Many sources of regional negative sentiment towards China are frequently debunked by scholarly observers, such as fears in Siberia that Chinese laborers are overtaking regional economies, when in reality there are more Russian workers in China than vice versa (Billé and Humphrey p.13). Other common sources of anti-Chinese sentiment in regions like the

Arctic and Siberia include perceptions that Chinese businesses carelessly harm the environment and that Chinese business practices are unfair and only benefit China or Chinese expat communities. Scholars also note that Russia is not alone in possessing misgivings or negative sentiment towards their neighbor. Chinese business leaders familiar with Russian regions frequently cite an opaque and corrupt business environment, perceived anti-Chinese sentiment, and poor infrastructure as inhibitors to economic cooperation (Zuenko p.10). The general consensus is that skeptical or negative sentiment on both sides of the border contribute to unfavorable economic conditions for fostering cross-border trade, which might in turn invite greater levels of investment from national actors.

2.3 Representations of China in Russian Media

Chinese representations in foreign media have been the subject of frequent study in North American and European countries (Peng, 2007; Allen et. al, 2018; Zhang, 2010; Huang and Leung, 2006). China's rapid rise as an economic superpower and potential challenger to US hegemony, has inspired a noticeable surge in coverage by Western media outlets as well as speculation about the implications for the geopolitical future. In their analysis of Canadian media coverage of China, Allen et. al (2018) note that China is generally perceived negatively in Canadian press, despite Chinese officials careful and sometimes assertive attempts to curate their image in a positive light. Zengjun Peng's (2004) survey of Chinese representations in the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* also indicate a prevailing negative sentiment towards China in US media.

Meanwhile, English-language publications analyzing Chinese representations in Russian media are scarcer, and also tend to demonstrate a more neutral or positive portrayal of China

(Kuteleva and Vasiliev, 2021; Kolosov and Zotova, 2021; Klimenko et. al, 2019; Gristenko, 2016).

Vladimir Kolosov and Maria Zotova's (2021) research investigates the pivot to the East and China in Russian discourse through the lens of critical geopolitics. As the authors note, critical geopolitics involves the deliberate construction of a narrative and reality about countries and political forces as well as ideas about threats to national security, allies, rivals and the pros and cons of foreign policy initiatives. Using the theory of critical geopolitics, Kolosov and Zotova (2021) evaluate, compare and contrast the construction of Russia's pivot to the East and China in 'official' and 'elite' or 'expert' discourse. The units of analyses are over 300 official documents and 2,900 articles from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, published between 2012 and 2019 for the 'official' and 'elite' discourses respectively.

Kolosov and Zotova's (2021) findings indicate a contradiction between the official and elite constructions of the pivot to the East and China, with the official discourse demonstrating a "high appreciation" of Russian relations with China (p.7). Emphasis in the official discourse is placed on Putin's references to Russia and China's "deep historical roots," and that relations between the two countries are currently the best they have ever been. Similarly, optimist contributors to the elite discourse highlight shared long-term geopolitical objectives of Russia and China, the potential for integrating the BRI and EAEU and the advantages of partnership with China in context of deteriorating relations with the West (p.10). In addition, the authors find that federally produced mass televised news, the primary source of news for the Russian population, largely propagates or regurgitates the official discourse (p.16).

On the other hand, skeptic voices in elite discourses express anxiety over the growing asymmetry in the Sino-Russian partnership and how Russia's isolation from the West due to

sanctions weakens Russia's bargaining leverage and ability to achieve favorable results in negotiations with China. Expert voices also bemoan the slow pace or altogether failure to realize promised Chinese investments in the Far East as an objective of the pivot to the East. Furthermore, skeptics emphasize that despite public lauding by Putin and Xi of Sino-Russian cooperation in foreign policy positions and institutions like the UN, some of the most important and controversial areas continue to be neglected, such as China's failure to recognize Russia's territorial claims in Crimea (p.13).

Kolosov and Zotova's (2021) analysis of China's construction in Russian official and elite discourse is a productive contribution to our collective understanding of the Sino-Russian partnership in the most recent decade of the 21st century. The disproportionately positive construction of China in official discourse and federally controlled mass media compared with the more nuanced and varied perspective of the 'elite' or 'expert' discourse emphasize the deliberate, even forced, top-down nature of Putin's pivot to China. Dissenting voices in the elite discourse evidence that the Sino-Russian relationship remains troubled by historical, cultural and political tensions beneath the surface of bold proclamations of friendship by Putin and Xi.

Overall, Kolosov and Zotova (2021) represents an important initial foray into interrogating the substance of Sino-Russian partnership through media and discourse analysis. Their research is also limited however, by its overwhelming focus on the behavior and discourse of elites regarding narratives of China and the pivot to the East. An analysis of regional Russian media that evaluates regional responses to the unanimously positive constructions Russian-Chinese relations espoused by Putin's government will contribute to a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the substance and durability of the Sino-Russian partnership.

Specifically, Kolosov and Zotova's findings regarding the official Russian discourse serve as a benchmark for future analyses of responses among regional media outlets to the predominantly positive constructions of China in official statements and press.

Kuteleva and Vasiliev (2021) investigate representations of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in several of Russia's most prominent newspapers in the context of the 2015 agreement between Putin and Xi to "link up" the BRI and EAEU. Using framing theory and a content analysis of 852 articles, the authors find that national newspaper coverage of the BRI is predominantly positive and supportive of the official narrative. Indeed, Kuteleva and Vasiliev conclude that national newspaper coverage of the BRI is reactive, primarily serving to regurgitate official statements rather than develop a separate or independent narrative based on analytical or investigative reporting (p.592).

Representations of the BRI initiative in Russian media have become increasingly important as a measure of success and progress in Sino-Russian relations due to the competing visions of the BRI and EAEU and Russian anxieties that China is usurping Russia's traditional sphere of influence, particularly in Central Asia. As a result, sentiments expressed in Russian media regarding the BRI are often reflective of sentiments towards China and Sino-Russian relations itself. Like Kolosov and Zotova (2021), Kuteleva and Vasiliev's (2021) analysis of the official and elite (national media) coverage of the BRI establishes a benchmark from which to evaluate constructions of the BRI, and other Chinese investments in regional media coverage. Given the prominence of China's role in providing financial impetus necessary for the development of Putin's energy projects in the RFE and Arctic, further investigation of regional

media portrayals of China in these areas is crucial to improving our understanding the substance of Sino-Russian relations beyond official or national-level narratives.

Chapter Three: Methods

3.1 Framing Theory

Using a framing theory and quantitative content analysis-based approach, this project manually coded a sample (n=194) of news articles obtained from three Russian regional media outlets (*Amurskaya Pravda*, *Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda*, *Yakutskoe Sakha*) that were used to identify key framing patterns in the regional media outlets' reporting of China during [include time frame]. Framing theory states that there are multiple ways to communicate a topic or issue which in turn affects how that topic or issue is perceived by others (Chong and Druckman 2007) while content analysis is the practical application of studying texts to identify specific frames (Şenocak 2017). The principles of framing theory have been frequently applied to investigations of news coverage in order to understand how media ecologies define, construct, or "frame" issues to their audiences (de Vreese 2005, p. 52). For example, Erdal Şenocak uses framing theory and content analysis to examine how nanotechnology is covered in Turkish media (2017), while Lams et. al (2022) explore the framing patterns of NATO in Russian and Chinese news media. Importantly, news framing differs from agenda setting, which refers to the frequency an issue or topic appears in the media, but does not address how that topic or issue is constructed (Borah 2011).

For the purposes of this study, I use the definition of a media frame, borrowed from Bennet (2002, cited in Di Gregorio et. al 2011) as "*a broad organizing theme for selecting, emphasizing, and linking the elements of a story.*" The project also borrows Di Gregorio et. al's (2011) practical definition of a news frame as "*a conceptual lens that brings certain aspects of reality into sharper focus (emphasizing a particular way to understand an issue) while relegating*

others to the background.” Applying this definition of news frames to this project’s analysis of regional Russian media framing of China, framing theory can provide important insights regarding what issues, topics and sentiments are most salient in Sino-Russian relations in the respective Russian regions.

Not all scholars agree on the precise definition and operationalization of media frames, and as a result framing theory has been applied in a multitude of different theoretical and empirical contributions (de Vreese 2005). Jörg Matthes and Matthias Kohring (2008) for example identify five methods of media framing in existing literature, including: a *hermeneutic approach* that is largely interpretive and unique to the investigator, a *linguistic approach* that seeks to identify and categorize specific patterns of speech or text, as well as a *manual holistic approach* whereby the author reads an initial series of articles, develops a set of frames and codebook based on this reading and then proceeds to conduct a quantitative content analysis of the media sample. Matthes and Kohring’s definition of *holistic approach* best represents the framing methods used in this study’s analyses of regional Russian media framing of China.

The inherent flexibility in applications of framing theory and definitions of media frames support scholars and policy analysts’ studies of unique or specific issues in otherwise diverse and irregular media ecologies. However, this flexibility is also the most common critique of media framing and content analyses, with many scholarly critics pointing to the subjectivity, difficulty in repeating or recreating studies, and a lack of transparency as the major detractors to framing theory-based approaches. Poignantly, Matthes and Kohring (2008) point out one of the biggest risks related to the *manual holistic approach*, the iterative process employed in this

study, is that without pre-determined frames based on existing literature the author runs the risk of “extracting researcher frames, not media frames.”

This study invariably runs the risk of meeting some of these limitations, particularly those related to subjectivity and extracting “researcher frames” rather than media “frames,” however, the proceeding sections of this chapter will demonstrate the author’s attempts to mitigate these risks in the methodology. To briefly summarize these mitigating actions here however, the project began with clearly defined research questions thus narrowing and specifying the type and scope of frames. Second, the project utilizes a mixed deductive and inductive based approach to identifying media frames, and relied on a pre-existing coding structure (Di Gregorio et. al. 2011) that was then adapted to the specific requirements of the investigation (regional Russian media framing of China).

When conducting quantitative content analysis coding of qualitative and otherwise subjective media frames, such as sentiment, strict guidelines for identifying positive, neutral and negative sentiment frames were pre-emptively established and employed. In order for a media frame to be coded with a positive, negative or neutral sentiment towards China, the article was required to demonstrate clearly opinionated language to affect a positive or negative portrayal of the China related frame, and neutral if both or neither were present. Examples regarding opinionated and neutral language and their corresponding *sentiment* coding can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sentiment Coding Examples

Sentiment	Example(s)	Context
<i>Positive</i>	<p>1) “Our Chinese counterparts created an excellent program...gave us the opportunity to communicate with interesting people of a great country (China).”</p> <p>2) “Historically, China has been a strategic partner for us in the development of export relations, we are pleased to cooperate with such a large company”</p>	<p>1) account of journalist during a recent state-organized tour of China. Published by VSP on July 4, 2017</p> <p>2) Comments from regional business leader in the coal industry. Published by Yakutskoe Sakha on 24 June, 2019</p>
<i>Negative</i>	<p>“when we (Russia) sell raw materials, China processes them, and then sells finished products to us, this is not good” (Press conference, 2013)</p>	<p>Government official discussing the failures of Sino-Russian efforts to attract investment and develop the Russian Far East. Published by Yakutskoe Sakha in January 2013</p>
<i>Neutral</i>	<p>“We (Russia) must clearly understand that with the development of the PRC, the gap between our countries is also widening... the trade imbalance with China is also growing” AND “But China is very important for our country” (China does not threaten, 2013)</p>	<p>Interview with an academic specializing in Chinese studies. The language extracted here represents a discussion of Sino-Russian relations in terms of China’s rapid economic growth in the 21st century. The first statement is indicative of negative sentiment, the latter of positive, thus the frame is coded as neutral. Published on April 26, 2013 by Amurskaya Pravda</p>

This approach mitigated opportunities for subjective interpretations of text that the author’s biases as a US citizen may have interpreted as negative or positive based on their individual understanding of the issue in the frame. Further explanations of the coding process and methodology are detailed in following section and precise coding guidelines can also be found in the codebook itself (Appendix A).

3.2 Regional Russian Media Ecology

Before moving onto a more detailed explanation of the methodology employed in this study, it is prudent to first offer an explanation and description of the regional Russian media outlets selected as subjects, how the sources were identified and the data collected, as well as

a brief overview of scholarly observations on the status and influence of regional Russian media ecologies. The three media outlets investigated in this study are:

1. Amurskaya Pravda (Амурская Правда): Located in Blagoveshchensk, along the Russian border with China and is self-described as the oldest publication in the Far East and the Amur region, the newspaper was founded in 1918. Amurskaya Pravda began publishing news online in 2004 and publishes new articles on a daily basis. According to the website, the online news site is visited by between 5 to 15 thousand people every day. The outlet was founded and is operated by the State Budget Institution of the Amur Region Agency for Mass Communications “Amurmedia.” Outlet is state-owned and operated.

2. Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda (Восточно-Сибирская Правда): A weekly news-journal, VSP reports on political, economic and social events in Irkutsk and the surrounding region. VSP has ranked as one of the most frequently read news publications in the region and has at least publicly demonstrated a commitment to freedom of speech, evidenced by an annual free speech contest that has been held in the past by the publication.

3. Yakutskoe-Sakha (Якутское-Саха): A daily news paper published in Yakutsk, in the Sakha Republic, a large administrative territory in the north east of Siberia, covering swathes of both the Russian Far East and the Arctic. The news outlet is owned by Sakhamedia, a state-run and founded media company that owns several newspapers covering political, economic and social issues in the Sakha Republic and in the capital Yakutsk. The self-reported number of views on Sakhamedia websites is 1,884,854 per month.

Each news publication represents a unique and important geographic location in the Sino-Russian relationship and where the local population has significantly more exposure and

interaction with the on-the-ground reality of Chinese investment and presence than populations in the European-metropolitan cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg. For example, the construction of the Power of Siberia Pipeline, a major keystone of the Sino-Russian partnership in the last decade, directly affects the populations, and readership of each of the three regional newspapers. Irkutsk is a major economic hub in Siberia, and is the capital of a republic in which the POSP passes through and regularly interacts with Chinese businesses and tourists, especially in the Lake Baikal region. Amur is a border-territory with China whose population has daily interactions with Chinese businesses, tourists and social activities. Yakutsk and the Sakha Republic is a major economic region in the Arctic as well as a prominent supplier of natural gas and oil, among other exports to China and other Asian countries. Selection of news outlets was also due to more pragmatic concerns such as accessibility and response rate to search terms. While these were not the primary selection factors, once regional preferences had been identified (news outlets in the Arctic, Siberia and the Far East) they nonetheless represented an important part of the selection process.

All articles were accessed through the Factiva database by using the following search parameters: the article must mention “China” (Китай) at least 3 times. Various issue-specific search terms were initially attempted, such as “China AND Arctic” or “China AND Pivot to the East,” but ultimately did not provide significant results. A broader search for “China” coincidentally facilitated a more holistic approach to investigating Russian regional media framing of China by capturing a range of frames covering the economy, politics, culture and science. Additionally, the threshold of at least 3 mentions of China in the article insured that the majority of articles contained a relevant framing of China. Articles that demonstrated a

passing mention to China and duplicates were subsequently discarded from the initial data sample. The final distribution of the units of analysis ($n=194$) is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Data Corpus Summary Over Time

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021/2	Sum
Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda	4	16	7	5	5	1	4	2	0	44
Yakutskoe Sakha	10	30	12	2	0	0	13	4	10	81
Amurskaya Pravda	13	7	15	15	2	9	6	0	2	69
										194

3.3 Quantitative Content Analysis and Inflection Points

Each article was coded manually according to several pre-determined frames (see Appendix A for full codebook). In order to establish how regional Russian media outlets were framing China for their respective readerships, and furthermore how, if at all, this framing differed from existing findings from studies of national-level rhetoric and framing of China, the following frames were quantitatively coded: *Level* (did the frame present the China-topic as a regional, national or international level issue?) *Billet* (what was China’s relevance to the frame?) *Sentiment* (was the framing of China positive, negative or neutral?), *Future Sentiment* (was the framing of China optimistic, skeptical or neutral regarding the future of Sino-Russian Relations?).

Next, issue specific frames in each article were quantitatively coded to capture the primary issue or topic in the China frame using a mixed deductive and inductive methodology. An initial set of issue frames organized into four ‘meta-topics’ (Economy, Politics, Culture,

Science/Technology) were developed based on an initial review of source material and key themes in existing scholarly literature on Sino-Russian relations, which was subsequently adjusted when new, prominent frames were discovered during coding process. The mixed methods approach helped in mitigating potential biases by beginning with an established set of frames based on established research while also facilitating flexibility in accounting for new and unanticipated frames discovered during data collection.

Since news articles often discuss or include a number of issues that can vary in terms of relevance to the primary frame, the coding methodology allowed for the inclusion of multiple issue-specific issues, but only those most important to the China-frame were included. Issue relevance to the frame was determined by a number of factors, including connection to the primary topic of the article, as indicated by the title, attention devoted to the issue and whether or not the issue was directly related to the news article's discussion framing of China. The issue-specific frames can provide important insights regarding what issues are most prevalent (frequent) in the Russian regional news' framing of China, as well as in what context these issues are presented to the public. Major domestic and international policy events were also coded, in addition to the names of the major actors and companies in each frame. Together, these variables are intended to provide a holistic as possible picture of Russian regional news' construction of China between 2013-2021.

Statistical analysis of the final data set was conducted using the software SPSS. In addition to baseline descriptive statistics, this analysis utilizes pre-determined inflection points (event or time of significant, dramatic change) in the Sino-Russian relationship to investigate possible transformations in framing of China and responsiveness to national, elite-level rhetoric

before and after major events. Inflection points were selected based on observations in existing scholarly and policy-expert literature.

3.4 Limitations

Due to time, scope, budgetary and other constraints the dataset and results are subject to several limitations that may influence this project's results. With only one researcher, the project was unable to verify coding-reliability through the most traditional means: intercoder reliability tests. In order to address potential researcher bias during the coding process, strict and rigorous coding guidelines were pre-established with the advice of supervising faculty. Principally, potentially tricky or subjective coding categories, such as sentiment (SENT) expressed towards China, China's billeting within the frame (BIL) and the level to which China is relevant in the frame (level) were accorded the strictest guidelines. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in order for sentiment to be coded as either positive or negative, the China frame in the news article must have contained expressly favorable or unfavorable opinionated language regarding China within the frame. While this approach worked towards ensuring positive and negative sentiment results were not inaccurately overpopulated, it may have inadvertently overpopulated the neutral results.

Chapter Four: Results/Findings

The findings of this research suggest that in the regional Russian news China is overwhelmingly framed in terms of the economy and how economic agreements like the POSP and various other Russian exports will potentially affect the regional and national economy. Sentiment expressed towards China is predominantly neutral, while sentiment expressed towards future Sino-Russian relations is more balanced between optimistic and neutral. A breakdown of the findings by news outlet reveals subtle, and in some cases notable discrepancies in the respective framing patterns of China. Briefly summarized; Amurskaya Pravda discusses China in a cultural context more frequently than the other outlets, Yakutskoe Sakha mostly discusses China in a national context, thus diverging from the primarily regional-level framing of the other two news outlets, and Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda is the only news outlet with more articles expressing negative sentiment of China than positive, though the prevailing sentiment is still neutral.

Overall, the study does not find that results from any one individual news outlet diverges from the others enough to influence the collective findings. On the other hand, examination of regional Russian news coverage using inflection point based analysis in some cases does reveal significant changes in framing patterns of China, suggesting a certain level of positive responsiveness to major developments in Sino-Russian relations. The rest of this chapter will include the following: 1) An overview of the general findings for key variables including a breakdown of findings by news outlet 2) Identification of major framing patterns and relationships between key variables 3) Inflection point based analysis evaluating patterns

and changes in regional Russian news coverage of China before and after major developments in Sino-Russian relations.

4.1 Overview of Findings: Issue Framing

One of the key objectives for this project is to investigate and ascertain what topics and issues are most prevalent in regional news framing of China. To this end, Tables (XX) and (XY) show the frequency of each meta-topic and issue-specific frame between January 2013 – January 2022. Issues relating to the Russian economy and Sino-Russian economic partnership constitute the majority of regional discussions of China (67.5%). Notably, political issue framing is relatively insignificant (11.9%) and is surpassed, albeit only slightly, by culture issue frames (18%). These findings represent a departure from existing studies and analyses of national and elite level Russian discourse on China (Kolosov and Zotova 2021) that found politics an important and preeminent topic in the elite-level construction of Sino-Russian relations.

The demonstrated preference for economic and cultural issues regarding China in regional news emphasizes the priorities and experiences of the regions in Sino-Russian relations, and how they differ from those in the more European, metropolitan Russian cities. Russians living in the Far East and Siberia, in cities like Irkutsk and Khabarovsk, experience far more daily interaction with their Chinese counterparts than those living in Moscow or St. Petersburg by virtue of their geographical proximity and subsequent opportunities for interaction (Lena Meetings, 2015). For many living in Primorsky Krai, the host region for Amurskaya Pravda, China is a more affordable vacation destination than other popular Russian or European vacation hotspots like Sochi, or Western Europe. There is also a significant Russian cultural connection to the city of Harbin, with a reasonably large Russian expat community

living there, and a host of various other interregional historical connections. Similarly, Chinese tourism is a valuable source of revenue for the economies of both the Amur region, and the Baikal region, near Irkutsk. Indeed, for Amurskaya Pravda, cultural issue-framing of China represents roughly 38% of their total news coverage ranking not far behind the economy (52.2%). On the other hand, cultural topics are much less prevalent in Yakutskoe-Sakha's framing of China (6.2%), where there is significantly less cultural interaction due to the absence of an established tourist industry, as well as their relative distance from the Chinese border compared to the other news outlets.

Economic preference in regional news framing of China is, as this project will continue to demonstrate in subsequent analysis, due to the priorities of the economically depressed regions in attracting investment, as well as how China is framed to the regions themselves by the federal government. As this project highlighted earlier in the introduction chapter, a major objective in Putin's pivot to the East strategy announced in 2013 was to capitalize on the supposedly long-dormant capital potential of resources in the Far East and Arctic. This fact highlights two key influences to regional news framing of China: the regions are woefully economically underdeveloped and have long required capital injections to social and economic infrastructure, and that the pivot eastwards, which as this project among numerous others have argued largely equates to a pivot towards China, is an economic solution to the regions' economic stagnation.

Indeed, regional news articles commonly featured statements from public national figures such as Putin or the Alexei Miller, the CEO of Gazprom, reiterating the promised economic stimulus to regions that would come from the POSP deal (Alexei Miller, 2014;

Gazprom, 2014). Subsequent analysis in this project will elaborate on these influences in Russian regional news framing of China; to include analysis and relationship testing of issue-specific framing, results breakdown by newspaper, and results from *level* framing, which coded in what context (regional, national or international) China was discussed.

Table 3: Summary Results for Meta-topics

Meta-topics					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Economy	131	67.5	67.5	67.5
	Politics	23	11.9	11.9	79.4
	Culture	35	18.0	18.0	97.4
	Science and Technology	5	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	194	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Summary Results for Issue Specific Frames

Issue Specific Frames Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Topics	POSP	50	12.3%	26.0%
	Oil/Gas	15	3.7%	7.8%
	Coal	12	2.9%	6.3%
	Hydroelectricity	12	2.9%	6.3%
	Price Disputes and Negotiations	31	7.6%	16.1%
	Infrastructure Projects and Investments	21	5.2%	10.9%
	Exports and Cooperation	87	21.4%	45.3%
	Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure	22	5.4%	11.5%
	Economic competition	17	4.2%	8.9%
	Logging	9	2.2%	4.7%
	Strategic Partnership	14	3.4%	7.3%

Regional Government Actors	15	3.7%	7.8%
International Politics	12	2.9%	6.3%
Sanctions	8	2.0%	4.2%
Tourism	16	3.9%	8.3%
Education	3	0.7%	1.6%
Cultural Exchange	24	5.9%	12.5%
Industrial Science and Tech Imports	2	0.5%	1.0%
New Tech	5	1.2%	2.6%
Environment	3	0.7%	1.6%
Pivot to Asia	6	1.5%	3.1%
Arctic Cooperation	2	0.5%	1.0%
POSP2	1	0.2%	0.5%
Political Competition	5	1.2%	2.6%
Business Opportunity in China	8	2.0%	4.2%
Fall of Ruble	7	1.7%	3.6%
Total	407	100.0%	212.0%
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.			

Results for issue-specific frames, shown in Table 3, provide a more nuanced picture of overall regional news framing of China by identifying recurring sub-topics/issues within the larger meta-topics. Regional Russian news outlets discuss China using a diverse array of issue-specific frames. The two most frequent frames, *economic cooperation and exports* (21.4% of cases), and *Power of Siberia Pipeline* (12.3% of cases), alongside others like *Oil and Gas*, *Logging* and *Hydroelectricity* point to the importance of China’s status as Russia’s largest trading partner as well as the Russian economy’s dependence on natural resources, both to sustain its economy and as a tool in building foreign partnerships. The prevalence of frames including discussions of *Price Disputes and Negotiations* (7.6%) and *Regional and Social Economic Infrastructure* (5.4%) further reinforce the significance of economic partnership in the regional news framing of

China. Notably lacking in general finding results from issue-specific frames are discussions of China in geopolitical or strategic contexts. Key issues and agreements that one might expect to find prominent in the regional news framing of China based on readings of global media or scholarly literature such as *Pivot to Asia*, *Strategic Partnership*, or *International Politics* are dramatically underrepresented.

Based on the collated findings from all three news outlets, this project finds that China is first and foremost framed as an economic partner to Russia and that economic relations are more relevant to regional conceptions of China than political or cultural ones. Furthermore, considering the comparatively high frequency of related economic issue-frames like *Price Disputes*, *Regional Social/Economic Infrastructure*, and *Infrastructure Investments*, regional media framing of China is most concerned with the effects of Sino-Russian relations on the regional and domestic economy.

Crosstabulation and Chi Squared of these variables and the most prominent economic issue-specific frames like *POSP* and *Economic Exports and Cooperation* corroborate the significance of regional economic effect in the news framing of China (for full results see Appendix B). Closer investigation of the relationship between the key issue specific economic frames identified here and ordinal variables, such as *sentiment*, *future sentiment* and *level* in this chapter will help provide more context regarding the salience of major framing topics to overall regional Russian attitudes towards China and Sino-Russian relations.

4.2 Overview of Findings: Sentiment Framing

General findings in the analysis of regional Russian media's framing of China suggest current and past sentiment is predominantly neutral (71.1%), whereas sentiment expressed

regarding the future is nearly equally optimistic (46.3%) and neutral (47.9%) (see Tables 5-6). Negative sentiment (8.2%) and expressions of skepticism regarding the future of China-frames (5.8%) though still present, do not suggest the subject news outlets have rejected Putin’s attempts to build closer and warmer relations with China. However, at the same time it is not evident that Putin’s pro-China narrative is whole heartedly accepted either. Sentiment (SENT) and future sentiment (FUT) in China frames were coded neutral if there was no opinion expressed OR if both positive and negative opinions were clearly expressed within the frame. The prevalence of neutral framing in both *sentiment* and *future sentiment* indicate a more balanced and nuanced interpretation of Russia’s position in the Sino-Russian relationship among the subject regional news outlets compared with the national-level narrative.

Table 5: Summary Results for Sentiment

Summary Results for <i>Sentiment</i>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive	40	20.6	20.6	20.6
	Negative	16	8.2	8.2	28.9
	Neutral	138	71.1	71.1	100.0
	Total	194	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Summary Results for *Future Sentiment*

Summary Results for <i>Future Sentiment</i>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Optimistic	56	28.9	46.3	46.3
	Skeptical	7	3.6	5.8	52.1
	Neutral	58	29.9	47.9	100.0
	Total	121	62.4	100.0	
Total		194	100.0		

A notable discrepancy between expressions of *sentiment* and *future sentiment* framing of China is the significant spike in the frequency, as a percentage of the total population, of frames expressing favorable opinions and optimism regarding the future of Sino-Russian relations. Whereas positive sentiment constituted roughly 21% of the total *Sentiment* variable, favorable opinions, or optimism of *Future Sentiment* represented about 46% of the total articles analyzed. These results indicate overall perceptions of Sino-Russian relations and China in the subject regional Russian news outlets are more balanced, but with a comparatively significant positive tilt reflected by the much higher frequency of positive *sentiment* framing than negative ones.

The reason for the discrepancy in *N* total sample between *Sentiment* and *Future Sentiment* is the latter was only coded when a China frame included a statement or opinion assessing the future of the framing-issue. When an assessment or statement about the future was not included in the frame, the variable was coded as N/A.

Breaking *sentiment* and *future sentiment* frames down by news outlet yields similar framing patterns to the one found in the general data pool, with a few exceptions. Each of the three news outlets averaged roughly 70% neutral for *sentiment* framing, confirming that neutrality in sentiment framing holds across all three case subjects (See appendix T). Yakutskoe Sakha, whose territory covers a large swathe of North Eastern Siberia and the Arctic, reported more positive *sentiment* frames than the other two, with 27.2% coded as positive, and only 2.5% negative. 17.4% of Amurskaya Pravda's sentiment framing was positive and 8.7% negative. Findings from Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda (VSP) are unique in comparison with the other two subject news outlets in that despite holding to the predominantly neutral framing of

sentiment towards China, VSP framed China negatively (18.2%) than positively (13.6%). This represents the only case in either sentiment variable (present or future) where China is framed more frequently negatively.

The results for *future sentiment* by outlet are more nuanced, but still demonstrate across all three cases a higher percentage of optimism regarding future Sino-Russian relations than positive sentiment based on a current or past perspective of China. Yakutskoe Sakha demonstrates the most optimistic framing of future sentiment towards China at 57.4%, and reported zero skeptical frames. 32.5% of Amurskaya Prava's future sentiment frames were optimistic, and only 2.8% skeptical. Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda's framing of future sentiment towards China evidences the largest discrepancy between future and current/past sentiment with 44.4% of its *future sentiment* frames coded as optimistic, 37% neutral and 18.5% skeptical.

Each news outlet evidences similar sentiment framing patterns of China; current/past sentiment is overwhelmingly neutral while expressions of future sentiment are more equally optimistic and neutral, with optimistic framing overtaking neutral in two out of three (Yakutskoe Sakha and VSP). Crosstabulation analysis and a Chi Squared Test ($p = <.001$) of *sentiment* (SENT) and *future sentiment* (FUT) reveal a strong association between the variables (see Table 7). Neutral *sentiment* and optimistic *future* sentiment appear together within the same frame in approximately 20% of cases when future sentiment is expressed and is only just behind cases where both variables reflect positive/optimistic sentiment. The discrepancy suggests a more hesitant or cautious perspective of China, likely rooted in the complicated and sometimes hostile history of Sino-Russian relations, but also a strong sense of optimism that whatever has traditionally led Russians in the regions to question relations with China can be

overcome. Alternatively, or perhaps in concert with the above explanation, the comparatively high optimism is indicative of the economically stagnant regions' eagerness to attract Chinese investors and rebuild their economies.

Table 7: *Sentiment and Future Sentiment Crosstabulation*

		<i>Future Sentiment</i>			Total
		Optimistic	Skeptical	Neutral	
<i>Sentiment</i>	Positive	28	0	2	30
	Negative	2	3	3	8
	Neutral	26	4	53	83
Total		56	7	58	121

These big-picture findings indicate that while sentiment framing of China based on past/current events is neutral, and therefore divergent from the optimism in the official rhetoric, future sentiment framing is significantly more optimistic. Further analysis of these variables using inflection points to assess their relationship to time and major events, in addition to their relationships with other variables follows later in this chapter.

4.3 Overview of Findings: Level and Billet Framing

China is most frequently framed in the context of regional issues or in a region-specific context: 51% (See table 9). This is particularly interesting as it suggests that regional news outlets, even state-controlled ones like the subjects of this study, are not simply regurgitating the national rhetoric but are indeed developing and evaluating their own interpretation of the Sino-Russian relationship based on their respective unique experiences with China. National-level framing (36.6%) is second in terms of frequency with international-level framing making up only 12.4% of the data population. The findings of *Level* framing suggest regional Russian

media are preeminently concerned China-related issues that most directly affect the regions themselves on a more local or national level.

The relative insignificance of international-level framing is particularly interesting, and even surprising given the attention and focus attributed to the Sino-Russian partnership in a geo-political context by Western-media and scholars. A Chi Squared Test of variables *Sentiment* and *level* ($p=.326$) indicate a significant association between how and on what level China is framed and the sentiment expressed towards China. Considering the emphasis of regional Russian media on regional and domestic framing, this could have important implications in assessing the future of Sino-Russian relations. Specifically, regional sentiment towards China may be dependent more on the success of regional and domestic cooperative ventures, as opposed to Sino-Russian cooperation in international politics.

Table 8: Summary Results for *Billet*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	51	26.3	26.3	26.3
	Medium	132	68.0	68.0	94.3
	High	11	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	194	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: Summary Results for *Level*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Regional	99	51.0	51.0	51.0
	National	71	36.6	36.6	87.6
	International	24	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	194	100.0	100.0	

Furthermore, China is most frequently billeted in regional Russian news frames at what this project coded as a 'medium' billet, meaning that China most often shares the primary focus of the frame with one other actor, or is the secondary focus within the context of the primary issue. To add clarity, an example of a 'medium' billet could involve a discussion of the POSP, where construction of the pipeline is the main issue, but partnership with China (selling the gas, negotiating price etc.) is still equally or near equally relevant to the primary issue. The intended objective in coding for China's billeting within the news frame was to evaluate whether or not a relationship existed between expressions of sentiment and billet. More specifically, this project was interested to investigate, for example, whether positive or negative sentiment was more often expressed if China was the main topic ('High' Billet), shared the focus of the frame ('Medium') or was of low relevance to the frame ('Low'). Crosstabulation analysis for the variables *sentiment* (SENT) and *Billet* (BIL) however did not yield significant results, indicating that China's relevance to the topic did not affect the corresponding sentiment.

4.4 Inflection Points

Inflection point analysis involves identifying significant moments or events that the researcher assumes will have a significant effect on the data, and then dividing and analyzing the data before and after the event. As discussed earlier in the methods section, the assumptions driving the selection of inflection points for this project are derived from observations in existing literature and the researcher's own understanding of initial data results. Each inflection point analyzed below includes a summary of the event and a justification for why the moment should have a noticeable effect on regional news framing of China. An inflection point is considered significant if the results proceeding the event evidence some

combination of the following: 1) A spike in frequency of articles discussing China (increase in n), 2) there is a demonstrable relationship between the nature of the event and subsequent transformations in regional news framing of China. For example, if, following signing of the Power of Siberia Pipeline, there is a spike in frequency of articles related to China, there should also be a corresponding increase in *POSP* issue-specific frames corroborating the increase in reporting is somehow related to the inflection point.

Before introducing the selected inflection point moments included in this study, it is perhaps useful to first introduce a brief summary of the data corpus from which the chosen inflection points were chosen. Events that were potentially considered as inflection points included the signing of major bilateral economic or political agreements, as well as official meetings between the respective heads of state, Putin and Xi Jinping. Using search functions on the official President of Russia website, a list of all official trips and many agreements within the time scope of this project was compiled and each event was evaluated for its possible effect on framing of China and relevance to the research objectives.

A first glance at the compiled inflection point data, that is, the number of official meetings and bilateral agreements since 2013, demonstrate a sharp increase in Sino-Russian cooperation efforts during 2014 and in the years after. In the ten years before 2014, Putin visited China a total of only four times. Between 2014 and February 2022 however, Putin visited China at least ten times, while Xi traveled to Russia on an additional six occasions. Information for Chinese leader visits to Russia before 2014 could not be ascertained. These figures suggest that the events of May 2014, most notably the signing of the *POSP* against the backdrop of increasing Russian isolation from the West due to the annexation of Crimea, were an important

catalyst in driving Sino-Russian cooperative efforts. It must be noted however, that these inflection points represent important developments in efforts to strengthen Sino-Russian cooperation at the level of the national government, or the ‘elite’ level. The following inflection point analysis of regional Russian news framing of China is intended to provide insight on how these ‘top-down’ cooperative efforts were interpreted at a regional level. The inflection points selected in this project are outlined in table 10 below.

Table 10: Inflection Point Analysis Summary

Inflection Point:	Description of Event:	Date Parameters Used:	Inflection Point Significant?:
May 2014	Signing of the Power of Siberia Pipeline deal; Putin visited Beijing to finalize terms of the deal	(1/12/2014 – 1/5/2014) AND (1/5/2014 – 1/11/2014)	Yes
May 2015	Putin and Xi meet in Moscow and announce intention to integrate the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)	(1/12/2014 – 1/5/2015) AND (1/5/2015 – 1/12/2015)	No
June 2016	Putin visits China, signs a number of bilateral agreements and celebrates the 15 year anniversary of the ‘Treaty of Good Neighborliness’	(1/12/2015 – 1/6/2016) AND (1/6/2015 – 1/12/2016)	No
April 2019	Putin working trip to China and 2 nd annual BRI forum for international cooperation	(1/10/2018 – 1/4/2019) AND (1/4/2019 – 1/10/2019)	No

Inflection Point 1: May 2014

The signing of the POSP gas deal in May 2014 between Putin and Xi, valued at over \$400 billion USD over a period of 30 years is without doubt Putin’s most successful bilateral economic cooperative achievement with China since the announcement to pivot Russia eastwards in 2013. As this project noted earlier, the POSP itself was often framed by the federal government as a key economic stimulant to regional economies. Additionally, each of the

regions represented by the news outlets from this study are in some way involved in the construction or implementation of the POSP. That is, natural gas for the POSP is either drawn from or passes through the Yakutsk, Amur and Irkutsk oblasts. As such, this project expected to find that the May, 2014 POSP deal had a significant effect on regional news framing of China, namely that frequency of China-focused articles would increase, and that regional news would largely echo the positive rhetoric emanating from Putin's federal government.

The findings from this project's investigation of regional Russian news' framing of China evidence the POSP's significance to Russian perceptions of China is particularly salient at the regional level. Investigation of regional Russian news before and after the announcement suggest that the signing of the POSP had a significant impact on how China was framed and that the variables experiencing the most notable transformations before and after the signing of the POSP deal are sentiment (current and future), issue specific frames, and level.

Analysis of results for *sentiment* framing before and after May 2014 demonstrate a significant shift in instances of opinionated language expressed regarding China. Prior to the inflection point, positive news framing of China made up only about 7% of the total, while negative framing represented over a quarter at nearly 27%. After May 2014 however, the ratio inverted, with nearly a quarter (23.7%) expressing a positive opinion of China and negative frames were reduced to only 2.6%. Overall, regional news sentiment towards China remained predominantly neutral before and after the signing of the POSP deal, despite national-level Russian government efforts to frame it as a boon to regional economies. Further analysis of changes to other variables such as *future sentiment*, *level* as well as transformations in issue-

specific framing offer explicators for the contrast between regional news' neutral sentiment, and the federal government's positive framing of China.

Table 11: May 2014 Inflection Point Key Variable Results

Variable	Before May 2014	Post May 2014
Total (N)	15	38
Sentiment	Positive (6.7) Negative (26.7) Neutral (66.7)	Positive (23.7) Negative (2.6) Neutral (73.7)
Future Sentiment	Optimistic (30.0) Skeptical (30.0) Neutral (40.0)	Optimistic (68.0) Neutral (32.0)
Level	Regional (73.3) National (13.3) International (13.3)	Regional (28.9) National (63.2) International (7.9)
Billet	Low (33.3) Medium (66.7)	Low (23.7) Medium (76.3)

Results represent valid percentages of findings

Table 12: May 2014 Inflection Point Issue-Specific Frame Summary Results

Variable (Issue-Specific Frame)	1/11/2013 – 1/5/2014	1/5/2014 – 1/11/2014
Power of Siberia Pipeline	9.1	22.6
Exports and Economic Cooperation	12.1	18.3
Price Disputes and Negotiations	12.1	14.0
Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure	9.1	7.5
Sanctions	3.0	3.2
International Politics	6.1	1.1
Pivot to Asia	N/A	2.2
Infrastructure Projects and Investments	6.1	4.3

Results represent valid percentages of findings

Future sentiment, or perspectives regarding the future of Sino-Russian relations was the variable seemingly most impacted by the announcement of the POSP deal by far, which transformed from predominantly neutral to optimistic. Reporting featuring favorable opinions of the future of China spiked significantly after May 2014, rising to 68% of cases from 30% beforehand, while articles coded as neutral fell to 36.4% from 52.2% and skeptical opinions vanished altogether. Thus, although regional news opinions of China based on a past or current understand were mostly neutral, the signing of the POSP in May 2014 preceded a significant shift in optimism regarding the future of Sino-Russian relations. Regional news overall sentiment towards China after May 2014 is best characterized as hesitant or neutral, but hopeful for the future.

Subsequent crosstabulation analysis and Chi Squared tests for *sentiment* and *future sentiment* with *POSP* reveal a significant association between each respective variable pairs, the results for which can be found below in Tables 13 and 14. Related Chi Squared tests results for *POSP* and *Sentiment* ($p=.419$) and *POSP* and *future sentiment* ($p=.411$) further suggest a strong association between *sentiment* and *future sentiment* and regional news framing of the Power of Siberia Pipeline. Seemingly, the signing of the POSP is associated with the subsequent spike in optimism and increase in positive sentiment generally towards China.

Table 13: *Sentiment* and *POSP* Crosstabulation

		POSP		Total
		0	1	
<i>Sentiment</i>	Positive	3	6	9
	Negative	1	0	1
	Neutral	13	15	28
Total		17	21	38

Dichotomy Group Tabulated at Value 1

Table 14: Future Sentiment and POSP Crosstabulation

		POSP		Total
		0	1	
Future Sentiment	Optimistic	7	10	17
	Neutral	5	3	8
Total		12	13	25

Dichotomy Group Tabulated at Value 1

Analysis of other prevalent issue-specific frames in regional news coverage of China during the period after May 2014 also help contextualize and explain the mostly neutral sentiment. After *POSP* and *Exports and Economic Cooperation*, the next most prolific issue-specific frame in regional news is *Price Disputes and Negotiation*. Crosstabulation analysis and Chi Squared testing indicates a strong association between *Price Disputes* and *POSP and Exports and Economic Cooperation*, indicating a persistent hesitancy or skepticism at the purported benefits to Russia and the regions from the Sino-Russian gas deal. Speculation surrounding the price gas sold to China is common, specifically that Russian isolation from the West and economic desperation forced Putin to agree to a deal on unfavorable terms. For example, during an interview published in *Amurskaya Pravda* with Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller, while extolling the benefits of the POSP deal to the Amur region Miller is grilled on the price China pays, referencing rumors that China got the better end of the deal. Miller responds only by stating that the reporter has no way of knowing the price, and that it is a trade secret he will not share (Moskalyuk, 2014).

Importantly, even in the face of a public, nationally recognized figure close to the Kremlin like the CEO of Gazprom who is attempting to convince the regions of the POSP deals

benefits, regional perspectives evidence a skepticism. Fears over Chinese price-gouging are likely also rooted in longer-held regional Russian fears from the early 2000s surrounding the rise of China and the inversion in balance of power discussed in the introduction chapters.

In addition to shifts in overall sentiment expressed towards China regarding the POSP and other economic cooperation prospects, level framing also experienced a notable transformation after May 2014. Discussions of China in a national context rose from 13% of cases to 63% overtaking discussions in regional contexts which fell to 29%, reversing the relationship present before the inflection point. As results from the general findings section indicated, regional Russian news were more likely to express negative sentiment towards China in regional contexts, offering an additional and potentially important explicator for the rise in positive and optimistic sentiment found after May 2014. Specifically, that a temporary shift towards discussing China in a national context due the POSP deal drew attention away from regional issues that they might otherwise frame negatively. Reasons regional Russian news framing of China may be more favorable in a national context are because the regions themselves are more removed from the immediate effects of the frame, compared regional-level framing when the effects of the Sino-Russian relationship are more immediate and closer to home.

Additionally, international level framing of China is insignificant before and after the May 2014 inflection point, indicating a persistent preference to discuss the facts and consequences of Sino-Russian relations on a national or regional level. Interestingly, despite international level framing not representing significant factor in primary framing of China, international policy moments discussed within regional or national level frames reveal how

international events still influence how China is construed closer to home. Discussions of Ukraine related sanctions spiked after May 2014 (n=7), along with, unsurprisingly, mentions of bilateral agreements (n=14). Domestic policy event mentions were mostly related to announcements of energy deals or policies, as well as national government or corporate actors advocating for a policy, like Putin or Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller. Instances of regional government or corporate actors advocating for a policy were low (n=6). The domestic policy event findings after May 2014 in particular support findings from other variables that the POSP influenced regional news framing to shift to a more national-level framing of China.

In summary, this project's analysis of Russian news coverage of China before and after May 2014 suggests that the announcement of the POSP had a significant effect on how China was framed. News coverage post-2014 featured a notable increase in frequency of positive framing of China and a steep drop off in negative framing. Furthermore, signing of the POSP deal, and perhaps the efforts of national-level actors like Putin and Alexei Miller to frame the deal positively to the regions effected a notable transformation in optimism regarding China and Sino-Russian relations. The cumulative effect is a regional news sentiment that remains cautious and skeptical based on contemporary experiences and fears, but nonetheless optimistic that the situation can be improved through economic cooperative ventures like the POSP and export economies.

Inflection Point 2

The next major milestone in Sino-Russian relations after the May 2014 signing of the Power of Siberia Pipeline occurred nearly a year later with a joint announcement from Xi and Putin that Russia and China would work to integrate their respective economic initiatives; the

Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The announcement occurred during a trip by Xi to Russia and caused a stir among analysts and scholars as the move appeared to resolve, at least superficially, an area of competition many considered as a major potential point of contention in Sino-Russian relations. Integration of the BRI and EAEU would have serious implications for the Russian regions addressed in this study.

As this project has already discussed in earlier sections, regions in the Russian Far East and Siberia have long sought to attract much needed economic stimulus, from domestic and foreign investors, to support and fund major resource projects that will in turn replenish depleted regional government budgets. Successful integration of the BRI and EAEU would, theoretically, encourage Chinese investments in Siberia and the Arctic and also help to offset economic hardships effected by Western-sanctions. Furthermore, the BRI-EAEU integration announcement sparked intense discussion in national news coverage of Sino-Russian relations (Kuteleva and Vasiliev 2021). Based on these assumptions and review of observations in existing literature, this project expected the BRI-EAEU integration announcement to represent a significant inflection point in regional Russian news coverage and framing of China.

A total of 36 articles meeting the search criteria were published by the three subject news outlets during the time parameters for the May 2015 inflection point ($n=36$). Key findings for this inflection point are outlined in Table 15 and Table 16 below:

Table 15: May 2015 Inflection Point Key Variable Summary Results

Variable	11/1/2014 – 1/5/2015	1/5/2015 – 1/11/2015
Total Articles Published (N)	n=14	n=22
Sentiment	Positive (7.1) Neutral (92.9)	Positive (13.6) Negative (4.5) Neutral (81.8)
Future Sentiment	Optimistic (50.0) Neutral (50.0)	Optimistic (47.4) Skeptical (10.5) Neutral (42.1)
Level	Regional (57.1) National (35.7) International (7.1)	Regional (18.2) National (50.0) International (31.8)

Results represent valid percentages of findings

Table 16: May 2015 Inflection Point Issue-Specific Frame Summary Results

Variable (Issue-Specific Frame)	11/1/2014 – 1/5/2015	1/5/2015 – 1/11/2015
Power of Siberia Pipeline	13.3	11.1
Exports and Economic Cooperation	30.0	20.0
Price Disputes and Negotiations	13.3	6.7
Business Opportunities in China	13.3	N/A
Strategic Partnership	N/A	8.9
International Politics	3.3	4.4
Pivot to Asia	N/A	6.7
Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure	N/A	6.7
Infrastructure Projects and Investments	3.3	6.7

Results represent valid percentages of findings

Initial findings suggest the May 2015 inflection point may have had an effect on regional Russian news coverage and framing of China, albeit not as significant as the May 2014 POSP inflection point. Notable changes include: a slight uptick in news articles meeting this project’s search criteria (must mention ‘China’ at least 3 times), a slight increase in positive framing of

China (*sentiment*), a similarly slight decrease in optimistic framing of the future of Sino-Russian relations (*future sentiment*), and a stark increase in frequency of discussing China in a national or international context, accompanied by a drop in regional framing (*level*).

Table 16 displays the most frequently mentioned issue-specific frames, with the exception of *international politics*, which is included for its relevance to the inflection point. The issue-specific frames add useful context to observations gleaned from the other variables and assist in evaluating explanations for changes therein. A full list of issue-specific findings for this inflection point can be found in Appendix D.

Findings suggest issue-specific framing diversified significantly post May 2015, as opposed to the May 2014 inflection point which saw a majority of coverage coalesce around a few specific issues. *Economic Cooperation and Exports* remained the most frequent issue-specific frame in coverage of China, highlighting the continued salience of economic partnership in regional perspectives of Sino-Russian relations. *POSP* also continued to represent one of the most frequent issue-specific frames after May 2015, but experienced a slight decline from the period before the BRI-EAEU integration announcement. Notable new appearances post-May 2015 include *Pivot to Asia* (6.7%), *Strategic Partnership* (8.9%) and *Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure* (6.7%).

Notably absent from issue-specific framing of China during this period are discussions of the Belt and Road Initiative (often referred to in Russian media as ‘New Silk Road’) or the Eurasian Economic Union, which were accounted for in the codebook but surprisingly do not appear in the news coverage as issue-frames during this time period. Although direct mentions of the BRI or EAEU are not present in the regional media’s framing of China after the May 2015

inflection point, increases in frequency of other related frames like *Pivot to Asia*, *Strategic Partnership*, which refers to discussions of the label commonly used by government officials to describe the status of Sino-Russian relations, and *Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure* indicate that the regional news outlets may be responding to the BRI-EAEU integration announcement without referencing the specific terms. This is further supported by significant increases in national and international level framing after the May 2015 announcement, which aligns with the inherent objectives in integrating the BRI and EAEU.

However, due to the diversity in issue-frames found in the 6 months after May 2015, it is difficult to articulate legitimate connections between the inflection point, subsequent change in level framing, and a particular issue or topic responsible for that shift. Other factors that could have influenced the increase in national and international level framing include two other highly publicized meetings between Putin and Xi which took place in the overlapping time period post-May 2015. In July 2015, Putin and Xi met in Russia again for a BRICS summit, and again in early September when Putin visited China to celebrate the 70th anniversary of China's victory over Japan shortly after the conclusion of the second World War. Absent more definitive evidence, this project cannot conclude the EAEU-BRI integration announcement in May 2015 was a significant inflection point in regional Russian news' coverage and framing of China.

Inflection Point 3:

The next inflection point in this analysis of Russian regional news coverage of China is a June 2016 meeting in China of Presidents Xi and Putin that concluded with a number of new bilateral agreements primarily focused on cooperation in global politics and strengthening economic cooperation. The meeting also celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Treaty of Good

Neighborliness and Friendship, a 2001 agreement meant to resolve tensions from the Sino-Russian border war of 1969 and promote cross-regional and geopolitical cooperation (PA-X, 2017). The meeting is particularly notable for a comment made by President Xi during the press conference in which he publicly called on both Russian and Chinese media to take an active role in establishing a favorable public opinion of Sino-Russian relations (Xi, 2016). Although none of the agreements carried major implications for the relevant regions in this study specifically, the meeting represents an important milestone in Sino-Russian relations that could have a significant effect on how China is framed by Russian media, including regional news outlets.

A total of 22 articles ($n = 22$) meeting the project’s search criteria were published in the six months before and after the inflection point. The relevant findings are listed below in Tables 17 and 18.

Table 17: June 2016 Inflection Point Key Variable Summary Results

Variable	1/12/2015 – 1/6/2016	1/6/2016 – 1/12/2016
Total Articles Published (N)	n=10	n=12
Sentiment	Positive (20.0) Neutral (80.0)	Positive (8.3) Negative (16.7) Neutral (75.0)
Future Sentiment	Optimistic (33.3) Neutral (66.7)	Optimistic (25.0) Skeptical (8.3) Neutral (41.7)
Level	Regional (70.0) National (30.0)	Regional (58.3) National (25.0) International (16.7)
Billet	Low (40.0) Medium (60.0)	Low (25.0) Medium (58.3) High (16.7)

Results represent valid percentages of findings

Table 18: June 2016 Inflection Point Issue-Specific Frame Summary Results

Variable (Issue-Specific Frame)	11/1/2014 – 1/5/2015	1/5/2015 – 1/11/2015
Power of Siberia Pipeline	4.3	3.7
Exports and Economic Cooperation	30.4	18.5
Price Disputes and Negotiations	4.3	3.7
Tourism	8.7	3.7
Cultural Exchange	8.7	18.5
Fall of the Ruble	13.0	3.7
Economic Competition	4.3	11.1
Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure	4.3	N/A
Regional Government Actors	4.3	18.5

Results represent valid percentages of findings

The June 2016 inflection point did not cause a significant shift in regional Russian news framing of China. Frequency in news articles meeting the search criteria stayed largely the same while both *sentiment* and *future sentiment* remained predominantly neutral. Interestingly, after a spike in national and international level framing of China observed in the analysis of the May 2015 inflection point, *level* framing in both the pre and post June 2016 periods is predominantly regional. Also of interest, reporting of the POSP as an issue-frame declined significantly since the May 2014 and 2015 inflection points. *Economic cooperation and exports* also declined in significance as an issue-specific frame after June 2016, while discussions of cultural similarities or differences and the responsibility and actions of regional governments increased.

Given the emphasis on Sino-Russian cooperation in global politics of the June 2016 inflection point contrasted with persistent observed regional-level framing of China, this project concludes the 2016 Xi-Putin meeting in China did not have a significant effect on how China was framed in regional Russian news. Despite an uptick in mentions of international policy events, the framing of China in regional Russian news does not appear to prioritize coverage of Sino-Russian partnership in a global political context, despite their government leaders public advocacy to do so. If, as many contributing scholars to framing theory suggest, frequency of news frames indicates interest then the results demonstrate a trending overall decline in interest of China by the June 2016 inflection point, compared with the surge of interest witnessed after the May 2014 signing of the POSP.

There are several possible explanations for the observed indifference to the outcomes of Putin and Xi's June 2016 meeting in regional Russian news coverage of China. The first explanation is that the bilateral agreements, which mostly focused on political cooperation, did not carry any immediate economic implications for the regions themselves. Since the signing of the POSP deal in 2014, no economic project or stimulus of comparable significance had been signed by the end of 2016. Furthermore, the initial excitement and interest in Sino-Russian relations witnessed between 2013-2014 spurred Russia's sudden isolation from the West and Putin's accelerated pivot to China likely cooled.

By 2016 major economic agreements like the POSP or EAEU-BRI integration were either under construction or simply rhetoric causing regional Russian news to shift focus elsewhere, either within the Sino-Russian partnership or outside of it to other topics and countries altogether. This explanation suggests an underlying preference of regional economic effect in

regional Russian news framing of China, implying coverage frequency and perhaps also coverage type are heavily influenced by an event's likelihood of affecting the region economically. In this respect, regional Russian news may still respond to official rhetoric regarding Sino-Russian relations, but are more likely to cover the event if it will have some type of economic effect on the region. This would also help explain responsiveness to the 2014 and 2015 inflection points which were both framed in elite-level discourse as having direct economic implications for the regions.

Inflection Point 4

The final inflection point is the 2nd annual Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation for which Putin traveled to Beijing and held a press conference with Xi Jinping. The objective in selecting this event as an inflection point was to investigate a sudden surge in press coverage of China by regional Russian news in 2019. Specifically, articles meeting this project's search criteria rose from n=10 in 2018 to n=23 in 2019 (see Table 1 in methodology chapter for response figures over time). The relatively high response rate for 2019 represents an outlier in regional Russian news coverage of China in the years after 2016, which generally witnessed a declining frequency in references or interest in reporting on China after the initial spike following May 2014, and the signing of the POSP. Analysis of regional news framing patterns regarding China in April 2019 is also important in understanding how the regions continued to perceive Sino-Russian relations several years after the landmark 2014 POSP deal and the accelerated pivot to the East.

This project identified several possible inflection points which occurred in 2019 that could have influenced regional Russian framing of China. In December, 2019 Xi and Putin commemorated the official launch of the POSP during a virtual ceremony. Considering the significant changes to framing patterns of China this project identified during the 1st inflection point analysis related to the May 2014 signing of the deal, December 2019 was initially considered a potential catalyst for the reporting surge that year. However, a preliminary inflection point analysis revealed that most articles in 2019 were published prior to December, while only four articles were published in the six months after, concluding that the event was not a catalyst for 2019's outlier results. The comparative indifference among regional Russian news outlets to the 2019 launch of the POSP is nonetheless an important and revealing finding that is discussed later in the Implications chapter.

Other potential catalyst events for explaining the December 2019 outlier were a visit to Russia by Xi Jinping in June 2019 for the St. Petersburg economic forum, and a law ratifying integrating Russian and Chinese global navigation systems. Ultimately, this project determined the events of April 2019 as the most likely to have caused a spike in regional news coverage of China. The publicity associated with Putin's trips to China, the significance of BRI-EAEU integration to Sino-Russian partnership contributed to the determination.

Putin's visit to China in April 2019 was marked by a joint press-conference with Xi Jinping and various plenary forums where Putin referred to Xi and reiterated Russia's willingness to integrate the EAEU with China's BRI, while also highlighted Sino-Russian economic ties as well as Sino-Russian political alignment on a global scale (Putin, 2019). Findings for the April 2019 inflection point analysis are reflected in Table 19 and 20 below.

Table 19: April 2019 Inflection Point Key Variable Summary Results

Variable	1/10/2018 – 1/4/2019	1/4/2019 – 1/10/2019
Total Articles Published (N)	n=5	n=7
Sentiment	Negative (20.0) Neutral (80.0)	Positive (42.9) Negative (14.3) Neutral (42.9)
Future Sentiment	Neutral (100.0)	Optimistic (50.0) Neutral (50.0)
Level	Regional (80.0) National (20.0)	Regional (85.7) National (14.3)
Billet	Low (20.0) Medium (80.0)	Low (15.8) Medium (73.7) High (10.5)

Results represent valid percentages of findings

Table 20: April 2019 Issue-Specific Frame Summary Results

Variable (Issue-Specific Frame)	1/10/2018 – 1/4/2019	1/4/2019 – 1/11/2019
Power of Siberia Pipeline	22.2	N/A
Exports and Economic Cooperation	11.1	17.6
Cultural Exchange	N/A	11.8
Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure	11.1	11.8
International Politics	11.1	5.9
Tourism	N/A	11.8
Regional Government Actors	11.1	11.8
Logging	N/A	11.8

Results represent valid percentages of findings

As the findings illustrate, Putin’s April 2019 trip to China and announcements regarding BRI-EAEU integration were not followed by a surge in regional news coverage of China and did not influence framing patterns. Overall articles increased by only two (n=7) in the six months after April 2019. There were no mentions of the Belt and Road Initiative or the Eurasian

Economic Union, and *international politics* frames decreased in frequency after April 2019. Also conspicuously absent considering the nature of the April 2019 event are *Strategic Partnership* issue-specific frames. The most notable shifts in regional news framing of China after April 2019 occurred in the *sentiment* and *future sentiment* variables. Specifically, framing of China became more positive and optimistic during the six months after April 2019.

Overall, there is not sufficient evidence to suggest the April 2019 inflection point had a significant effect on regional news framing of China. Furthermore, the inflection point analysis does not provide an explanation for the general increase in reporting during 2019. Indeed, regional Russian news outlets' seeming indifference to Putin and Xi's cooperative rhetoric regarding the BRI-EAEU integration, strategic partnership and expressions of friendship follow patterns found in the previous inflection point analyses of this study.

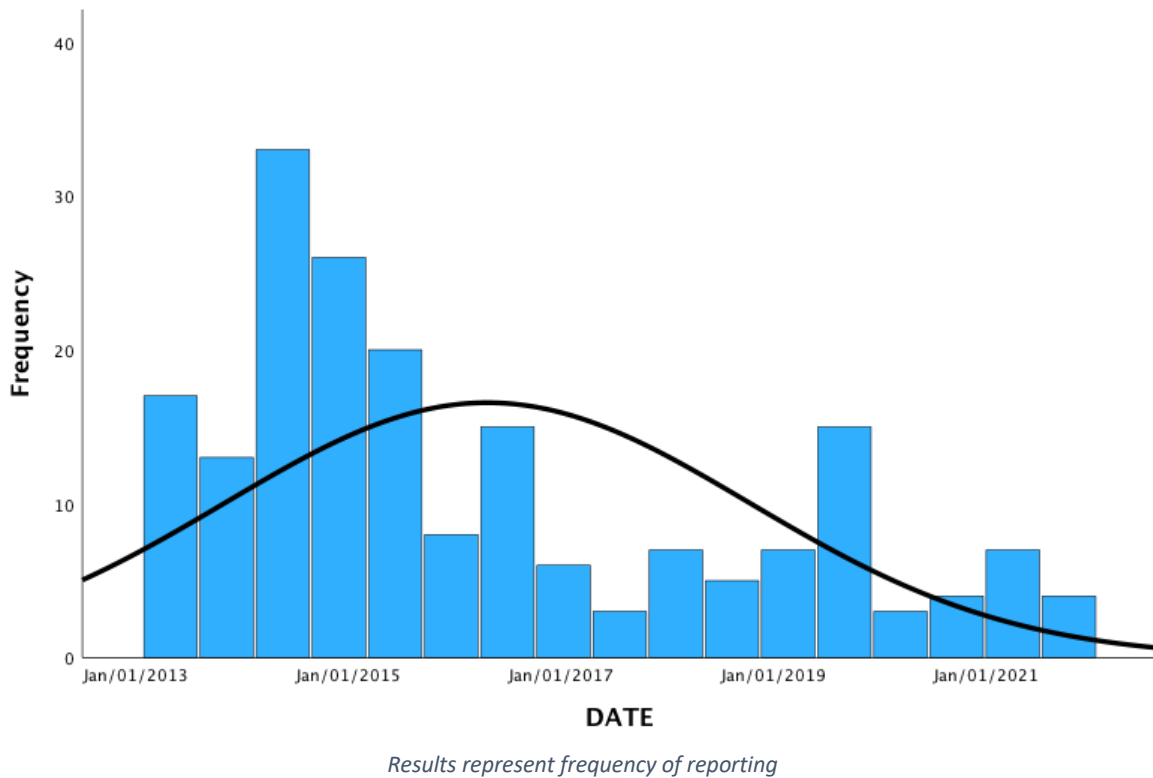
In seeking to better explain the 2019 outlier results, a breakdown of the findings by regional news outlet offers more detailed context and explanation. Yakutskoe-Sakha is responsible for the majority of reporting during this period (n=13), over half of which is directly related to the impending launch of the POSP in December. Notably, much of Yakutskoe-Sakha's reporting on the POSP begins in October, outside of the time frame for the inflection point analysis and thus explaining the POSP's absence in the issue-framing results. The other news outlets did not draw much attention to the POSP in 2019, but still reported on a wide variety of economic and cultural issues relevant to the region.

Findings for *sentiment* and *future sentiment* by individual outlet also shed more light on the increase in positive and optimistic framing of China after April 2019. Yakutskoe-Sakha, the most prolific reporter on China during this period, reported most positively about China (38%

positive, 62% neutral). Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda framed China most negatively (50% negative, 50% neutral), and Amurskaya Pravda was relatively balanced (17% positive, 83% neutral).

The 2019 surge in reporting is therefore best characterized by a late spike in reporting from Yakutskoe-Sakha on the launch of the POSP, in addition a seemingly unrelated slight increase in reporting by all news outlets on regional economic and cultural issues. Moreover, 2019 is further marked as an outlier in an otherwise trending decline of interest in China among regional Russian news outlets. Figure 1 below reflects general frequency trends over time.

Figure 1: Summary of Reporting Frequency Over Time



As the results in Figure 1 indicate, the 2019 reporting period was followed by a steep decline in reporting on China, a pattern that continued uninterrupted through to February

2022, the eve of Putin and Xi's declaration of "limitless friendship" and the tragic full-scale invasion of Ukraine. While the Implications chapter will delve further into what this reporting pattern might mean regarding Sino-Russian relations today and going forward more broadly, it seems clear that the apparent escalation in Sino-Russian friendship in February 2022 was not preceded by a surge in interest from the regional level.

Inflection Point Findings Summary and Analysis

The May 2014 signing of the Power of Siberia Pipeline is the most important event in regional Russian news framing of China and also marked the peak of interest of Sino-Russian relations. Subsequent major developments in Sino-Russian relations evidence an overall declining trend in significance of to regional Russian media. Highly publicized demonstrations of friendship and gestures of political goodwill from national leaders like the integration of the EAEU and BRI in May 2015, and even a nationally launched initiative to increase inter-regional cooperation had little impact on news portrayals of China. Inflection points are generally followed by a spike in optimism regarding the future of Sino-Russian relations, and specifically how economic relations with China will affect the regional or national economy. Seemingly important developments in Sino-Russian cooperation in global politics do not influence regional perceptions of China.

The following Figures (2, 3, 4) demonstrate the summary findings for variables *Sentiment*, *Future Sentiment* and *Level* in the inflection point analysis.

Figure 2

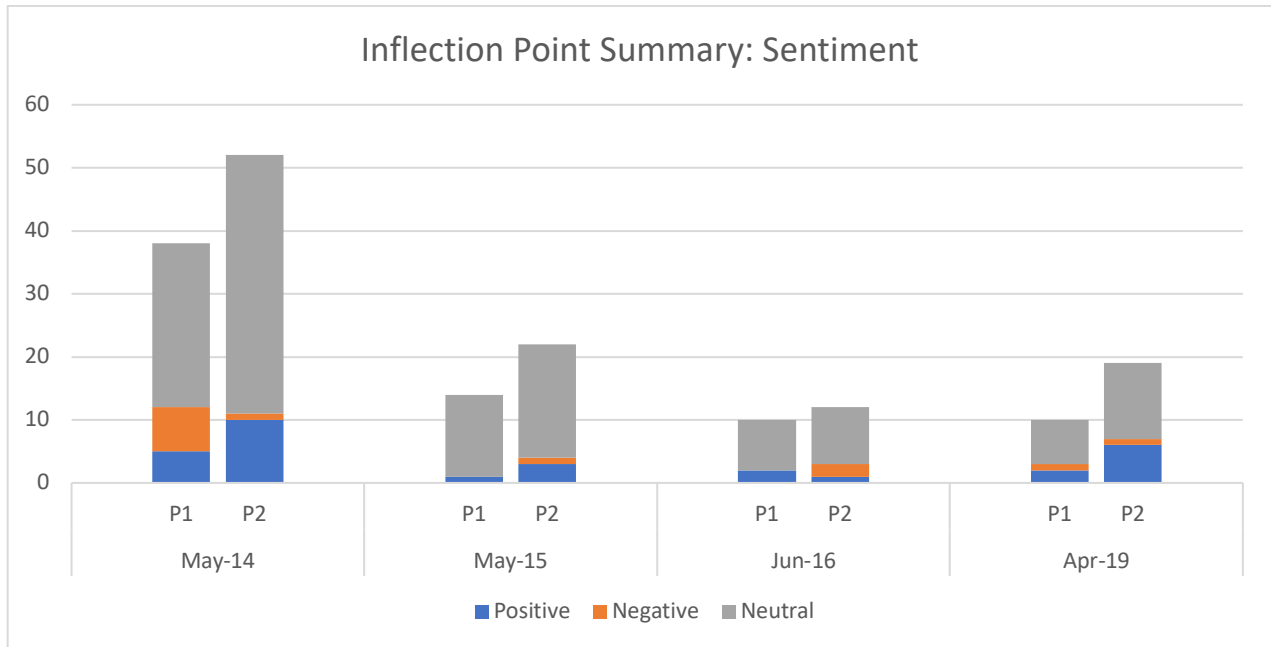


Figure 3

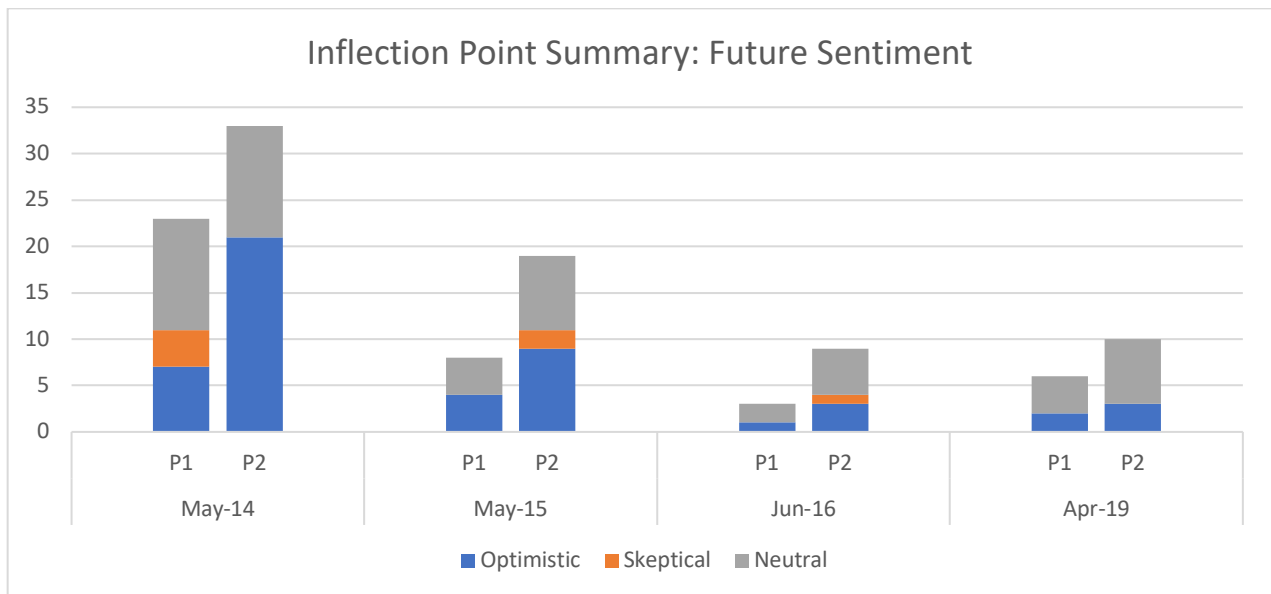
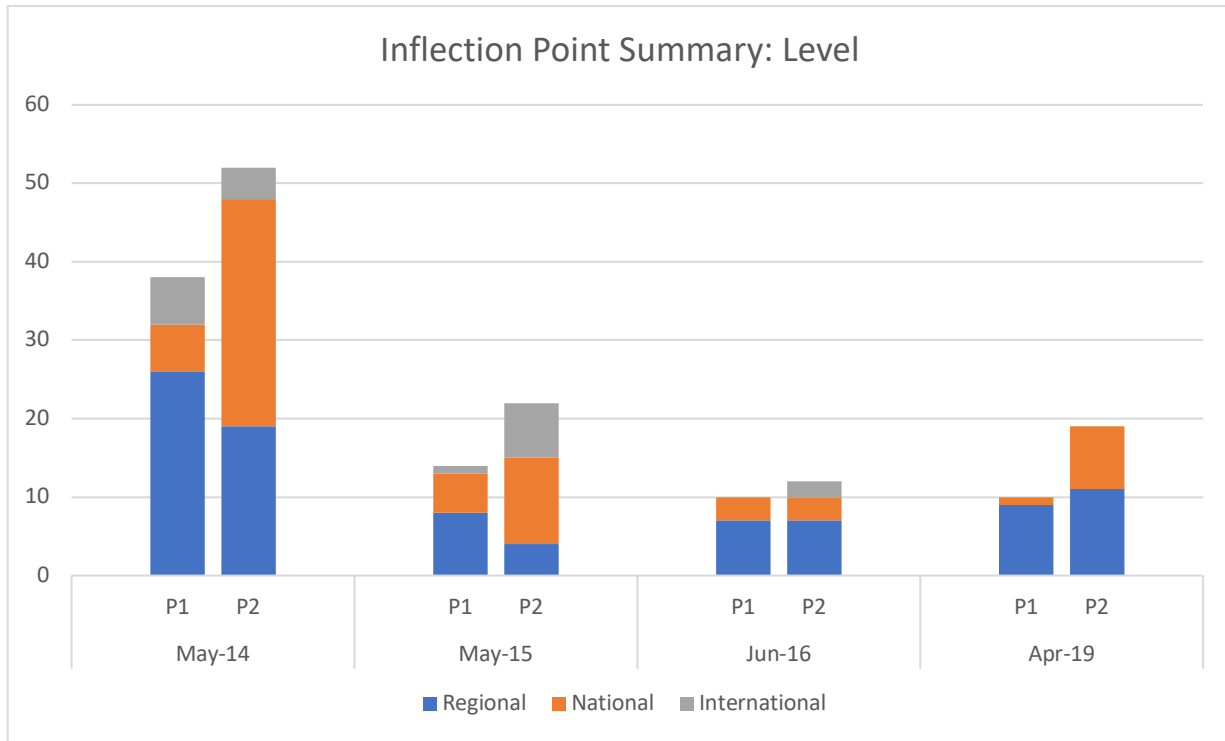


Figure 4



Analysis of issue-specific framing in regional Russian news coverage of China between January 2013 and January 2022 suggests that Sino-Russian relations are anchored by the POSP deal and regional export economies. Furthermore, overall sentiment is overwhelmingly neutral and characterized by frequent debates over the pros and cons of increasing economic reliance on China. Key detractor issues in these debates include speculation whether the price of gas in the POSP deal is favorable for Russia, the effects of illicit resource export economies, particularly in Irkutsk and Khabarovsk, historically rooted fears and insecurity regarding China's lopsided economic influence and expansionist ambitions in the Far East and perceived unfair Chinese business practices, especially in tourism and agriculture. Importantly, critical views of Sino-Russian economic cooperation are rarely overtly hostile or directed towards China or

Chinese citizens themselves. Rather, critiques of Sino-Russian economic relations are characterized by a prevailing focus on the potential detriments to local and national economies. The following chapter will discuss the implications of the findings and analysis presented here as well as offer a brief conclusion.

Chapter Five: Implications

Studies of regional Russian perceptions and interpretations of Sino-Russian relations between 2013-2022 are critical to building a holistic understanding of one of the most important geopolitical partnerships in the 21st century. As this study has stated, one of the key objectives in analyzing regional Russian news framing of China was to investigate the effects of Putin's top-down imperative to pivot Russia eastwards at a grassroots level. Of particular interest to this project were potential divergences from findings of studies of national-level constructions of China, and further, in what context these divergences occurred.

Indeed, the study found several divergences from national rhetoric and existing studies of national-level constructions of China. Briefly summarized these key findings are: 1) regional Russian news demonstrates a persistent preference for regional and national economic effect in their framing of China, 2) Interest in China and Sino-Russia relations, evidenced by frequency of published articles meeting search criteria, peaked in 2014/2015 and then experienced a gradual decline through January 2022, 3) sentiment expressed in regional news towards China is predominantly neutral, but is also frequently optimistic about the future potential of the partnership, and 4) regional news evidences a persistent apathy regarding Sino-Russian geopolitical cooperation and also towards the glossy declarations of friendship between the respective leaders Putin and Xi Jinping.

The rest of this chapter will discuss the implications of these key findings in various contexts, beginning with how they contribute to our understanding of current Sino-Russian relations as a whole. This will be followed by a discussion of region-specific implications for the Russian Arctic and Far East respectively. The chapter will conclude by discussing the

implications for future Sino-Russian relations in the context of the ongoing Ukraine conflict, as well as potential policy recommendations.

5.1 Implications for Russia's Pivot to the East

Regional news' demonstrated preference for regional and national economic effect informs new methods regarding how interested observers should approach evaluating the success of Putin's pivot to the East and attempts to strengthen bilateral ties with China. First and foremost among these, is an investigation of how, and to what extent new Sino-Russian agreements affect the regional and national economies. As both the general *sentiment* and inflection point analysis findings suggest, regional perceptions of China prioritize the likely impact of new developments on the regional economy, even over seemingly important political milestones in Sino-Russian geopolitical cooperation. Moreover, regional interpretations of Sino-Russian agreements are likely to diverge from their national-level origins based on the economic priorities of the region.

Russian regional perceptions of China, unlike their counterparts in Moscow or St. Petersburg, are informed by unique economic, geographical and social circumstances. Specifically, each of the regions represented in this study suffer from economic stagnation and a dearth of government or corporate investment in physical and social infrastructure since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a result, comparatively neutral sentiment expressed towards China rooted in their complicated history is combined with a persistent sense of optimism that Chinese partnership and investment can finally provide much needed economic stimulus to the regions. Summarily, Russian regions are simply hoping to attract investment to alleviate severe economic depreciation, regardless if the investment is from a Chinese actor, or a Western one.

Any analysis of regional Russian sentiment towards China should emphasize the perceived localized economic impact of Sino-Russian relations there.

Perplexingly, regional optimism for future relations with China seem unaffected by the fact that Sino-Russian economic cooperation has yet to materialize much of the promised benefits to the region. Since the peak in Sino-Russian cooperation after the POSP deal in 2014, Chinese investment in Russia's real sector (section of economy producing tangible goods and services) fell by 250 percent (Balzer, 2020). A Russian financial website published an article in April 2021 bemoaning the fact that seven years of attempting to attract Chinese investment to modernize infrastructure and participate in join-projects has achieved nothing (Finanz, 2021). The failure of Sino-Russian relations to advance meaningful economic cooperation after 2014 is reflected in the declining interest in regional Russian news by 2022. Despite these negative trends however, regional optimism persists as evidenced by the April 2019 inflection point analysis where *future sentiment* was still fifty percent optimistic (See Table 17). Based on these observations, interested observers should not assume that failure to achieve meaningful economic cooperation precludes Russian regions' willingness to accept or work with Chinese foreign investment in the future.

Regional preoccupation with the economic consequences of Sino-Russian relations are further reflected in a consistent apathy towards Putin and Xi's performative demonstrations of bilateral friendship and 'strategic partnership.' Inflection point analysis of several seemingly important moments in Sino-Russian geopolitical cooperation, such as the BRI-EAEU integration announcement in May 2015 (Inflection Point #2), did not produce a significant transformation in regional new framing of China.

These findings represent a contrast to observations in other studies of elite-level Russian discourse as well as many analyses that surmise the state of Sino-Russian relations based on the actions of high level officials. While any analysis of bilateral relations would be unwise to ignore the behavior of two autocratic leaders like Putin and Xi, any effort to obtain a complete understanding of Sino-Russian relations must necessarily also consider perceptions of China at the regional level. Furthermore, the unique regional approach to evaluating Sino-Russian relations emphasize how Putin and Xi's top-down efforts to portray their bilateral partnership are not always mirrored at a local level. Rather, Putin and Xi's public displays of friendship better resemble shallow efforts at geo-political posturing, with both leaders seemingly content to emphasize their mutual geopolitical interests while forgoing more complicated efforts towards substantial cooperation in the regions.

5.2 Implications for the Russian Arctic

Putin has repeatedly stated the Arctic is key to Russia's geopolitical and economic future due to the regions rich natural gas deposits and the potential for the Northern Sea Route to become a major global shipping lane. Yakutskoe-Sakha, whose region in part represented the Arctic in this study, consistently framed China more positively and with greater optimism than news outlets from other regions in Siberia and the Far East. Yakutskoe-Sakha was also the only news outlet to more frequently frame China in a national-context than a regional one. Importantly however, Arctic-specific frames like the Yamal LNG plant and the Northern Sea Route were notably few and far between in even Yakutskoe-Sakha's news coverage of China, suggesting that these may not be as salient at a regional level.

Looking towards the future, there is little evidence of regional mobilization or even awareness for several of Putin's key Arctic ambitions, indicating that plans to transform the Arctic with Chinese investment as Putin envisions remain speculative at a federal government level. However, should such investment somehow materialize through a new development in Sino-Russian partnership, Arctic regions are likely to welcome increased Chinese influence if it is perceived as economically beneficial to the region.

5.3 Implications for Siberia and the Far East

Similar to the Arctic, regions in Siberia and the Far East occupy important positions in Putin's plans for Russia, particularly in the context of Russia's pivot to the East. Mostly neutral sentiment expressed towards China by news outlets in these regions through January 2022 reflect historical tensions earned by living in closer proximity to China than Russian from other parts of the country. Growing asymmetry in the Sino-Russian partnership, with Putin occupying an increasingly junior role, is likely to exacerbate tensions especially if Chinese actors opt to take advantage of their leverage to place unfavorable conditions on their Russian counterparts. However, amidst growing isolation from the West regions in Siberia and the Far East are faced with few alternatives to Chinese partners as they seek to improve their economic circumstances. The relatively consistent optimistic *future sentiment* findings for these regions (Amurskaya Pravda and Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda) suggest perhaps at least a tentative willingness to overlook tensions and insecurities in exchange for much needed economic stimulus and relief.

5.4 Implications in the Context of the War in Ukraine

Much remains uncertain regarding the outcome of the current escalation of the war in Ukraine including how long the fighting will continue and what a cessation of hostilities might look like. Although the timeframe for this study does not include the tragic events in Ukraine, begun in February 2022, findings from this study can add context and help infer implications for regional perceptions and relations with China since the beginning of the conflict.

The last major escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, the Russian annexation of Crimea, concluded with the signing of the POSP deal in May 2014, when a politically and economically isolated Putin regime sought and found reprieve in closer partnership with China. Unprecedented sanctions imposed by NATO and NATO-aligned countries since February, 2022 have only solidified Russia's economic dependency on China and dashed any potential hopes for a return of Western investment in the near future to Russian regions. Meanwhile, on the eve of Russia's invasion, Putin and Xi made their declaration of limitless friendship, signaling a strengthening of Sino-Russian partnership.

Given regional news' demonstrated preferences for localized economic effect, combined with increased certainty that China is the only viable partner left, and the ready endorsement of the national government, one might reasonably expect to see greater Chinese investment in Russian regions, accompanied by a positive or optimistic portrayal of the events in regional news. This is also a likely conclusion for observers who assume, based on the events in the aftermath of the Crimean annexation discussed above, that isolating Russia inevitably pushes the country closer towards China.

Indeed, some reports indicate that trade growth in certain sectors with China has aided the Russian economy in avoiding total collapse while Putin and his government pursue their invasion of Ukraine (Talley and Debarros, 2023). Russia is also increasingly conducting trade using the yuan, hoping to further distance itself from sanctions-related economic fallout (Putin, 2023). Xi Jinping notably visited Moscow as recently as March 2023, marking his first international trip since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, adding to speculations about deepening Sino-Russian relations.

However closer analysis of these developments reveals important distinctions between Sino-Russian relations in the context of the current Ukraine conflict and the events that preceded the annexation of Crimea. No new joint economic venture of comparable size to the 2014 POSP deal has been signed, despite persistent efforts from Putin to finalize the Power of Siberia Pipeline 2.0, which would export gas directly from the Arctic to China through Mongolia. The most recent meeting between Xi and Putin in March, 2023 produced only marginal adjustments or reaffirmations of existing economic agreements, while Xi's language describing China's relationship with Russia was notably more muted, and even refrained from calling Putin a friend as he has frequently done in the past (Putin, 2023). Most relevant to the topic of this study, since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine Sino-Russian relations have not produced any new concrete agreement that could be perceived as likely beneficial to regional economies. As a result, regional Russian attitudes towards China are likely unchanged as a result of the current escalation of the Ukrainian conflict, remaining neutral but optimistic that one day Chinese investment will materialize.

Looking toward the future, prospects for regional Russian economies in the context of the war in Ukraine are bleak and risk further exacerbating tensions with China. Investigations of Putin's "mobilization" efforts reveal that ethnic minorities and men from poorer regions like Yakutia (home of Yakutskoe-Sakha news outlet) were disproportionately affected and dying at higher rates on the frontlines (Mackinnon, 2023). While this development is tragic for its own reasons, it is also draining already depleted workforces, causing possibly irreparable harm to fragile economies. Furthermore, presumably vast sums of federal funds are being spent on munitions, supplies and manpower to sustain the conflict instead of being directed to re-build social and economic infrastructure in regions that Putin himself has repeatedly stated are essential to Russia's economic and political future.

Barring a dramatic reversal in trends of Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI), Russian regional economies in the Arctic and the Far East will almost certainly be worse off when the war concludes. National and regional Russian actors will have significantly less leverage when negotiating with China, likely exacerbating pre-existing concerns about Chinese price-gouging and insecurities related to the power imbalance. Much will depend on the decisions of Chinese corporate officials and to what degree they seek to assert their newfound leverage to the detriment of Russia and in particular the regional economies. Putin and Xi will likely gloss over any inconvenient realities incurred by the regions in order to preserve the image of geopolitically unified Sino-Russian partnership. Unfortunately, based on the trends for *sentiment* and *future sentiment* in this study, Russian regions are also likely to continue to view Sino-Russian economic cooperation with tragic optimism, irrespective of the reality around them.

5.5 Implications for US Policy

This project's analysis of regional Russian news framing of China highlights the top-down nature of current Sino-Russian relations, specifically, that the glossy image conveyed by leaders Xi and Putin is not necessarily mirrored at a regional level. Putin and Xi seem content to prioritize maintaining a unified geopolitical image at the expense of ignoring pressing economic concerns of Russian regions. Meanwhile, Russian regions are indifferent to the geopolitical posturing of their autocratic leader and instead appear focused on attracting much needed financial investment.

It is in the strategic interest of the US to drive a wedge between China and Russia and encourage dissension within the partnership wherever possible. The Sino-Russian relationship is a union of autocracies that poses a significant threat to democratic and liberal values around the world. Sino-Russian partnership also present a demonstrated and undeniable threat to global and regional stability, evidenced by Russian aggression in Ukraine, China's continued economic support of Russia helping to fund its war effort, as well as China's increasingly aggressive rhetoric targeting Taiwan.

Continued strengthening of regional Russian economic dependency on China is disadvantageous to the US. As the results from this study demonstrate, US officials cannot rely on regional anti-Chinese sentiment to encourage dissension in inter-regional cooperation. For one, the Sino-Russian cooperation is a top down imperative, and there is little evidence to suggest regional preferences influence Putin's decision making. Furthermore, regional priorities are primarily focused on improving their economic circumstances, rather than growing power imbalances in the relationship with China. As a result, it is unlikely that interregional

cooperation, or lack thereof, will adversely affect Sino-Russian geopolitical cooperation in the near future.

However, continued regional dependency on Chinese economic partnership poses potential future risks to US interests in regions like the Arctic. Although significant Sino-Russian Arctic cooperation has so far remained limited to Chinese investments in the Yamal LNG plant, Chinese interest and influence in the region may increase as sea-ice continues to melt and Putin's key ambitions, the Northern Sea Route and exploiting gas deposits, become more viable. Finland's recent accession to NATO membership has added a new Arctic border to the US' most important security alliance, increasing the Arctic region's strategic importance and also the risk of an Arctic conflict.

To mitigate the risks of an armed conflict and facilitate unified efforts to tackle universal dangers posed by climate change, the US and fellow NATO Arctic countries should actively seek to restore scientific, cultural and political cooperation among all Arctic countries, including Russia. The US should simultaneously pursue agreements for the demilitarization of the Arctic region. Prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and even by some estimates afterwards, the Arctic was largely considered a unique cooperative zone, where interregional cooperation among Arctic states was immune to geopolitical turmoil elsewhere in the world, in many ways resembling international cooperation in space (Byers, 2017). Since Putin's invasion of Russia in February 2022, Arctic cooperation's geopolitical immunity has been crushed, with the region now poised to become a major area of contention. Efforts towards de-escalation in the Arctic will disincentivize Sino-Russian cooperation in the region, since Russia will not feel pressured to accept Chinese help in order to meet perceived threats from NATO.

Re-establishing cooperation in the Arctic with Russia is an ideal solution to limiting Chinese influence in the region, but is becoming increasingly unfeasible due to worsening US-Russian relations over the conflict in Ukraine. An alternative, more aggressive approach to driving a wedge between China and Russia could be to sanction Chinese companies that export products created with raw materials produced in Russian regions. This approach could encourage China to choose between maintaining stable economic ties with the US, their most important trading partner, or preserving a comparatively shallow relationship with Putin's Russia.

Ultimately, the results from this research project corroborate existing analyses that tangible, realized economic cooperation between China and Russia is extremely limited and that Russian actors below a national-level are more reserved about strengthening ties with their southern neighbor. Both China and Russia are currently experiencing economic difficulties, and there is little evidence to suggest bilateral interregional economic partnership will reverse this trend in the near future. Russian economic dependency on China does not represent an additional immediate threat to US economic interests or hegemony, outside of normal global economic trends.

On the other hand, Sino-Russian economic partnership does represent a more pressing military threat to US interests and global stability. This is evidenced by continued bilateral trade growth after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, indirectly supporting Russia's financing of the war. Moreover, continued Russian economic dependency on China provides assurances to President Xi that, should China attack Taiwan, China will have a reliable source of natural resources in spite of the inevitable imposition of US-led sanctions. As such, the US should seek to mitigate

the potential emergence of new areas of conflict like the Arctic, as well as use its significant remaining economic leverage with China to deprive both Russia of a critical war-time income, and a potential war-time resource base if China invades Taiwan.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Thesis Codebook

Descriptive Variables:

0.1 Article_ID (year, month day) ex: 19960113

0.2 Newspaper Abbreviation (ex: VSP for *Vostochnaya Sibirskaya Prvada*)

0.3 Date article published

0.4 Type: Choose a code for type of article being analyzed:

1. News (General)
2. Opinion
3. Interview
4. News summary

0.5 Author Add the name of author (if available)

0.6 Passing Does the article make only a passing reference to China? If so no further coding is required

NEXT SECTION

A media frame is “a broad organizing theme for selecting, emphasizing and linking the elements of a story such as the scenes, the characters, their actions, and supporting documentation” (Bennet, 2002:42 cited in Boykoff 2008)

Variables prefixed with F1 refer to analysis of the primary frame and variables prefixed with F2 refer to analysis of the secondary frame

When there is no secondary frame identified in an article the rest of the variables in this section are coded as ‘Not applicable’

1.1 FRAMING: F1/F2level

How does the author/article frame the scale of the issue or effect related to China?

1. Regional

Article references effect of China-topic on local or regional community/economy/society
(*examples – local tax revenues, social infrastructure, employment opportunities*)

2. National

Article references effect or significance of China-topic on national interests, such as Russian economy, Russian identity, Russian relationship with China (bilateral agreements etc.)
(*examples – developing Russian-Chinese strategic partnership, energy exports to China have increased*)

3. Global

Article references effect of China-topic in terms of events or context outside of Russian bilateral relations with China, or Russia, China and a third country

(examples - Chinese officials denounce American boycott of Olympic Games, China is not a threat to global US hegemony)

1.2 BILLET: F1/F2BIL

In what context is China billeted within the frame? The idea here is to capture salience of the China-topic to the frame. These will be coded as: Low, Medium or High.

1. Low.

China-topic is presented or discussed in the frame only as a 3rd party and only in the context of a separate and primary topic. China-topic is relevant to the frame but less so than other actors or issues.

Examples: Article discussing exports and the future of regional economy, but makes repeated references to the negative or positive implications of exporting so many resources to China

2. Medium.

China-topic shares the primary focus of the frame with one other actor, or is the secondary focus within the context of the main issue.

Examples: Putin discusses the importance of Russian and Chinese energy cooperation to complete the Power of Siberia Pipeline.

3. High.

China-topic is the primary or only focus of the frame, other actors or issues are discussed in the context of China

Examples: An article titled "China is not a threat" that discusses the reasons why China is not a threat to Russia or to the geopolitical world order.

1.3 SENTIMENT: F1/F2SENT

How is the sentiment expressed in the frame towards China or the China-topic, **based on a present or historical understanding of the issue**, best characterized?

1. Positive

Article offers or presents a mostly favorable opinion of the effect of China-topic as it pertains to Russia or others. Article must contain opinionated language.

(examples - Increased electricity exports to China decrease the price of local electricity, construction/completion of gas pipeline to China will revitalize local infrastructure and economy)

2. Negative

Article offers or presents a critical opinion on effect of China-topic as it pertains to Russia or others

(examples – Chinese monopoly in Siberian timber industry has no benefit to local residents, China only wants to enrich itself, Russia too dependent on Chinese for Gas exports)

3. Neutral

If both a positive and a negative example or opinion is offered
OR if there is no opinion and just an objective reporting of events, facts or developments

Examples – signing of Power of Siberia Pipeline was acceptable, Chinese are not easy to work with BUT trade opportunities would be beneficial to the Irkutsk region

1.4 SENTIMENT (FUTURE) F1/F2FUT

Is there an opinion or assessment on the future of China-Russian relations or the China related topic?

If no then write 'Not Applicable'

If yes, then continue

What assessment of the future does the source offer in relation to the China topic as it relates to Russia?

1. Optimistic

Article expresses or presents a mainly favorable opinion of China-topic in the future as it relates to Russia, the region or the world

Examples – settling agreements in Yuan will strengthen it as a regional reserve currency, Russia and China discussed possibility of increased cooperation building underground gas storage facilities

2. Negative/Skeptical

Article expresses or presents an unfavorable or skeptical opinion of China-topic in the future

Examples – cooperative partnership must be fixed to be mutually beneficial, Beijing can now impose very unfavorable conditions

3. Neutral

Article expresses an opinion that is not outwardly optimistic or skeptical, that includes reasons to be optimistic and skeptical

Examples – China understands Russia's position in Ukraine...but is concerned about the safety (stability) of its financial injections, Chinese investment in hydropower could be good or bad because the Chinese are difficult negotiators

1.5 F1/F2metatopic

This section will code and classify each article by the primary and secondary topics (frames) that it addresses

1. Economics and Trade

The frame refers mostly to economic issues between Russia and China such as industry, commerce including oil and gas, electricity, trade relations, trade deals, gasification, Power of Siberia pipeline, BRI or EAEU initiatives. This includes the economic impacts on society.

2. **Politics and Policy**

The frame refers mostly to domestic (national and/or regional) or international politics and policy, claims of government or government actors, bilateral or multilateral relations. This includes policy design and implementation.

3. **Culture**

The frame refers mostly to cultural issues or exchanges, lifestyles, travel, tourism, arts, sports or descriptions of routine daily activities

4. **Science and Technology**

The frame refers mostly to discoveries, research and development and scientific contributions. This includes topics of scientific or technology cooperation in the Arctic or Russian Far East.

1.6 F1/F2topic

The topics fall under 4 broad meta-topics categories which are indicated with letters below. The numbers represent the possible coding options of the single topics which should be entered in the database. You may select more than one if necessary, but try to be as concise as possible to capture the primary issues of the frame. (*Note that certain meta-topics may overlap, such as the Power of Siberia pipeline being discussed in the context of strengthening Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation*).

A. **Economics and Trade**

1. **Power of Siberia Pipeline.** Related to the construction, progress, completion or future of the Power of Siberia Pipeline (POSP) 1 or 2.
2. **Oil/Gas and Energy Sector Speculation.** Related to the production, trade or price of oil and gas exploration in Russia. Includes speculation and debate about future energy consumption of oil and gas in China
3. **Coal.** Related to the past, present or future state of Russian coal exports, production and trade with China
4. **Hydropower and Electricity.** Related to the production, trade, export or price of hydropower and electricity to China in the past, present or future.
5. **Price Disputes and Negotiation.** Related mainly to discussion of details, negotiation and dispute of price and cost of goods exported or imported with China. Includes discussion of negotiation and deals between major companies like Gazprom and CNPC
6. **Infrastructure Projects or Investment.** Refers to investment or construction of major infrastructure projects such as infrastructure along the Northern Sea Route, bridges to ferry goods to and from China, mines, railroads, pipelines and the project's significance to Russia (includes Belt and Road Initiative).
7. **Exports and Cooperation.** Related to national or regional economic partnership, integration or cooperation
8. **Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure.** Refers to effects of Chinese economic influence on regional economy, creating jobs, stimulating economy, increasing regional tax revenue and budget to invest in social infrastructure, includes "gasification"

- 9. **Competition.** Refers to China or Chinese enterprises as competitors to Russia and Russian commercial activities or refers to asymmetrical nature of the relationship
- 10. **Logging.** Related to logging or timber industry including exports to China or discussion of logging practices in context of Chinese investment

B. Politics and Policy

- 11. **Strategic Partnership.** Related mostly to the processes and development of Sino-Russian strategic partnership policy implementation, cooperation and outcomes
- 12. **Regional Government Actors.** Related to the policy decisions, accreditation and accountability of regional governments or regional political individuals.
- 13. **International Politics.** Related to politics or policy on an international scale, involving another country or international organization.
- 14. **Sanctions.** Related to international sanctions against Russia due to the conflict in Ukraine

C. Culture

- 15. **Tourism.**
- 16. **Education.**
- 17. **Cultural Exchange or Integration.** Related to discussions of similarities or differences between Russian and Chinese culture, cultural exchange programs, discussions of shared history and shared cultural attributes.

D. Science and Technology

- 18. **Industrial Science and Technology Imports.** Related to the use and implementation of Chinese research and development, science or technology to advance industrial projects in the Russian Arctic or Far East
- 19. **New Technologies.** Related to reports or use of new Chinese technologies
- 20. **Environment.** Related to environmental protection, global warming, cooperation on environmental issues, data and information sharing on issues related to the environment.
- 21. **Military.** Related to Chinese military technology, innovations, announcements or cooperation (including sales of military technology).

E. Added Variables. *(these variables have been added retroactively after initial coding was conducted and determination made of new variables that should be introduced to the coding scheme. They are added here for pragmatic reasons, specifically so as not to disrupt the nominal value of the variables already coded).*

- 22. **Pivot to Asia (Politics and Economics).** Related to discussion or assessment of Putin/Russia's pivot to Asia or China in a political or economic context.
- 23. **Arctic Cooperation (Politics).** Related to Russian cooperation with China in the Arctic, China's status on the Arctic Council or China's right to participate in Arctic affairs.

- 24. Power of Siberia Pipeline 2.0 (Economics).** Related to the Power of Siberia Pipeline 2, the Russia-Mongolia-China economic corridor
- 25. Competition (Politics).** Related to discussion of Russian-Chinese political competition, especially abroad and for spheres of influence.
- 26. Migration (Politics).** Related to issues of Chinese or Russian migrant workers living and working abroad.
- 27. Business Opportunities in China (Economics).** Related to discussion of business opportunities for Russian citizens in China, China as a potential market or migrating to China in search of work.
- 28. Fall of Ruble (Economics/Politics).** Related to discussion of the fall of the value of the Ruble, especially after 2015. This is often used in the context of sanctions to describe adverse consequences of the Crimean annexation without directly referencing the conflict in Ukraine.

1.7 Policy event analysis

A policy event represents an important milestone in the making of a domestic, regional or bilateral policy between China and a Russian government or corporate actor. Examples include signing of the POSP1 deal, talks or agreements to invest in local infrastructure, new energy corridors etc.

POL_MOMENT

Does the article mention a domestic policy event?

1. Yes
2. No

POL_MOMENT_TYPE

What is the nature of the domestic or bilateral (Sino-Russian) policy event?

1. Announcement of energy deal or policy
2. National Government actor advocating for a specific policy proposal/option
3. President (Putin) speech or announcement
4. Regional government actor, or corporation advocating for a specific economic policy, proposal
5. Falling price of Ruble

POL_MOMENT_DETAILS

This is a string variable. Using only a few words give some contextual information to define the policy decision or options that are discussed. Present it as a stance which an audience can agree

or disagree with. (Example: Putin succeeds completing POSP deal or Yakutsk Gov attracts Chinese investment)

INTPOL_MOMENT

Does the article mention an international policy event?

1. Yes
2. No

INTPOL_MOMENT_TYPE

What is the nature of the international policy event mentioned?

1. Discussion of Ukraine conflict related sanctions
2. Russia-Sino partnership and/or cooperation in global context
3. A Belt and Road Initiative project
4. A Eurasian Economic Union project
5. Chinese government or corporation actor advocating or announcing a policy
6. Chinese-Russian economic or political competition
7. Bilateral agreement, cooperation or announcement

INTPOL_MOMENT_DETAILS

This is a string variable. Using only a few words give some contextual information to define the policy decision or options that are discussed. Present it as a stance which an audience can agree or disagree with. (Example: China rejects US request to join Russian sanctions)

1.8 Policy or Commercial Actor List

Identify any other corporate or political actor that is relevant to the China-topic. For each actor enter the following variables as applicable. Leave fields blank for which the information in the article is not provided.

ORGNAME (ie. Gazprom, China National Petroleum Corporation, Yakutsk Regional Government)

ACRONYM (ie. CNPC)

PERSON (ie. Alexei Miller)

POSITION (i.e. CEO of Gazprom)

Appendix B:

POSP * Price Disputes and Negotiations Crosstabulation				
Count				
		Price Disputes and Negotiations		Total
		0	1	
POSP	0	129	15	144
	1	34	16	50
Total		163	31	194

POSP * Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure Crosstabulation				
Count				
		Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure		Total
		0	1	
POSP	0	132	12	144
	1	40	10	50
Total		172	22	194

Exports and Cooperation * Price Disputes and Negotiations Crosstabulation				
Count				
		Price Disputes and Negotiations		Total
		0	1	
Exports and Cooperation	0	89	18	107
	1	74	13	87
Total		163	31	194

Exports and Cooperation * Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure Crosstabulation				
Count				
		Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure		Total
		0	1	
Exports and Cooperation	0	96	11	107
	1	76	11	87
Total		172	22	194

Appendix C: *Sentiment* findings breakdown by individual outlet

Sentiment Summary: Amurskaya Pravda					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive	12	17.4	17.4	17.4
	Negative	6	8.7	8.7	26.1
	Neutral	51	73.9	73.9	100.0
	Total	69	100.0	100.0	
a. NEWS_ABRV = AP					

Sentiment Summary: Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive	6	13.6	13.6	13.6
	Negative	8	18.2	18.2	31.8
	Neutral	30	68.2	68.2	100.0
	Total	44	100.0	100.0	
a. NEWS_ABRV = VSP					

Sentiment Summary: Yakutskoe-Sakha					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	Positive	22	27.2	27.2	27.2
	Negative	2	2.5	2.5	29.6
	Neutral	57	70.4	70.4	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	
a. NEWS_ABRV = YS					

Appendix D: Summary findings for issue-specific frames (Inflection Point 2)

Issue-Specific Frames 1/5/2015 – 1/11/2015 (All Outlets)				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Primary Frame Topics ^a	POSP	5	11.1%	22.7%
	Oil/Gas	5	11.1%	22.7%
	HydroElectricity	1	2.2%	4.5%
	Price Disputes and Negotiations	3	6.7%	13.6%
	Infrastructure Projects and Investments	3	6.7%	13.6%
	Exports and Cooperation	9	20.0%	40.9%
	Regional Economic and Social Infrastructure	3	6.7%	13.6%
	Strategic Partnership	4	8.9%	18.2%
	International Politics	2	4.4%	9.1%
	Sanctions	2	4.4%	9.1%
	Tourism	1	2.2%	4.5%
	Education	1	2.2%	4.5%
	Pivot to Asia	3	6.7%	13.6%
	Arctic Cooperation	1	2.2%	4.5%
	Pcompetition	1	2.2%	4.5%
Fall of Ruble	1	2.2%	4.5%	
Total		45	100.0%	204.5%
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.				