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Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

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THE U.S.—RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP

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Is There a Russia Card?

By Seth Cropsey

Vladimir Putin’s arrest of Alexei Navalny, the nationwide protests that followed, and the Solar Winds cyberattack demonstrate the rough veneer of U.S.–Russia relations that President Biden must now navigate. An Obama-era “reset” is out of the question.

Beneath this razor-edged surface are the long-term prospects for Russo–American cooperation as exemplified for instance by the Kremlin’s hybrid intervention in Belarus in the fall of 2020. But it is the statesman’s task to see beyond the immediate political crisis, cut through confusion and contradiction, and chart a wise course into the future. Every possibility must be reviewed. Even a partnership with an ethically repugnant geopolitical foe.

Ironically, the Belarus intervention reveals more clearly one of Putin’s core motivating factors. For all his pretensions of international strength and domestic unity—including the supermajority he commands in every presidential election—Putin still views a “color revolution” within Russia as a real possibility. Although the Kremlin gained control of Crimea, the Ukraine crisis generated significant political costs. Russia is now wholly responsible for a small enclave of Eastern Ukraine with no domestic economy. Its occupation of five percent of Ukrainian territory has earned it the Ukrainian population’s lasting enmity, both in the country’s west and its east. And while sanctions pressure has not destroyed the Russian economy, it has at least undermined it.

Belarus holds different risks than Ukraine. Unlike Yanukovich, Lukashenko is a staunch Putin ally. Belarus lacks the standard post-Soviet oligarchy that Europe can tempt with its promises of free movement, free trade, and access to top-quality higher educational institutions. Moreover, the Belarusian state security services are already integrated with Russia’s, making a hybrid intervention easier to execute. Indeed, if Putin wishes to annex Belarus—a remarkably aggressive move, even for the man who escalated in Ukraine in late 2014—he likely can.

Putin’s possible support for Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko is risky. The population will object, much as Ukraine’s did, and like that of any post-Soviet state would, to Moscow’s renewed colonial rule. But Belarus is isolated, an international outcast ruled by Europe’s only remaining despot. One suspects that Putin can break its will.

Putin’s strategy of progressive western expansion—being demonstrated now in his support for Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko—carries risks. Directly absorbing large populations now accustomed to independence will stress Russia’s security services. Propping up puppets will do the same, while amplifying already extant corruption concerns. And the harder Putin presses NATO and the EU, the greater the risk of severe backlash, which could make his feared Russian color revolution a reality.

Much is made of Russian historical memory when discussing its European policy. Europe, that is, a united Europe, is an incorrigible threat to Russian survival. Napoleon, Hitler, Charles XII before them—every major



Image credit: Poster Collection, US 3290, Hoover Institution Archives.

modern power that controls at least Eastern Europe views Russia as a target. But in each case, Russia survived, albeit severely bloodied.

The same cannot be said when Russia's enemies invade from the east. Indeed, of Russia's enemies, only the Mongols were able to invade and subjugate her entirely. In a five-year campaign, the Mongol Golden Horde swept across Russia, conquering or vassalizing all Russian political units, and killing seven percent of the population.

Similarly, just as Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States hold historical-emotional significance in Russia's national narrative, so do Central Asia's post-Soviet republics. Continuous wars of conquest defined Imperial Russia throughout the nineteenth century. Unwilling to challenge the European balance, it looked to the south and west to assert itself, progressively conquering, annexing, and vassalizing all territory up to Persia and Afghanistan.

Soviet rule was the natural extension of the prior century's colonization. Despite the Soviet Union's collapse, Russia retained clear influence in Central Asia throughout the 1990s, particularly through contacts with new national militaries, whose leadership and structure stemmed from their Soviet predecessors. Most significant, Russia provided security to the newly independent Tajik government, which lacked its own military under Soviet rule. These relationships continue today. Moscow maintains military bases throughout Central Asia and uses its political capital to secure access to the region's lucrative hydrocarbon reserves.

Considering Putin's deep-seated paranoia, it's reasonable that he believes the West seeks to overthrow him by engineering a color revolution. But that threat qualitatively differs from the threat China poses. Since NATO enlargement in the mid-2000s, practically every country in post-Soviet Europe has drifted from Russia's sphere of influence. By contrast, Russia retains its monopoly on Central Asian security, maintaining a strategic buffer between it and growing powers in Asia and the Near East.

Chinese economic ambitions may shift this balance. China has avoided exerting direct political or military influence in Central Asia. But its One Belt One Road initiative—a strategic overland pipeline providing critical insurance in any Sino–American war—will require gaining direct political control in the region, particularly considering the centralized nature of these post-Soviet states and their control over natural resource deposits that China needs. A major political crisis, in, say, Kazakhstan after Nursultan Nazarbayev leaves power could trigger more robust Chinese involvement.

Moreover, the global Salafi-Jihadi network will target China in retaliation for its genocide in East Turkestan. A post-COVID, isolated, and aggressive China will likely be tempted to use force against an expanding regional Islamist threat. Additionally, any economic or political leverage China can cultivate in the Near East, most importantly in Iran, could lead to a more robust physical presence outside of Asia. This, in turn, would require unobstructed communications and supply lines running through Central Asia, further infringing upon Russian interests.

If any one of these friction points sparks, a Sino–Russian break becomes possible. Nevertheless, Western statesmen must be exceedingly cautious. Russia has generally struggled to fight major Asian land wars since the beginning of the twentieth century, with the notable exceptions of the Battles of Khalkhin Gol and the Soviet invasion of Manchuria. This difficulty stems from Russian overextension. Any regime in the Kremlin must pick and choose where it commits forces, being unable to defend the entirety of Russian territory from all possible threats. History and political trends have dictated that Russia emphasizes Europe over Asia, a fact reflected in its current conventional force balance.

Still, the Kremlin has not left its Asian borders completely undefended. Russia has stationed a high proportion of nuclear-capable short-range cruise missiles in the Eastern Military District. In the event of a Chinese contingency, it is almost certain that Russia will “escalate-to-terminate,” employing nuclear weapons to signal Moscow's resolve to Beijing and even the distinctly unbalanced conventional odds.

It is possible that a longer-term European settlement would allow Russia to transfer conventional forces to Asia. But no American policy maker should expect such a settlement for at least three to five years, nor such a transition for the next decade. It is prudent for America's statesmen to court Russian assistance in the deepening confrontation with China. At minimum, it would free up NATO and American resources for a major Pacific and Near Eastern rebalance. At best, it would unite practically every major power against an increasingly dangerous China. But a partnership with Russia carries significant risks, especially if that partnership remains loose, informal, and poorly structured. A tacit Russian ally, for all its support, brings with it the dangers of escalation.



SETH CROPSEY is a senior fellow at Hudson Institute and director of Hudson's Center for American Seapower. He began his career in government at the Defense Department as assistant to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and subsequently served as deputy undersecretary of the navy where he was responsible for the navy's opposition to defense reorganization, development of the maritime strategy, and naval special operations. In the Bush administration, Cropsey served as acting assistant secretary of defense for special operations. Cropsey served as a naval officer from 1985 to 2004. His articles have been published in *Commentary*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The National Interest*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and other national journals.

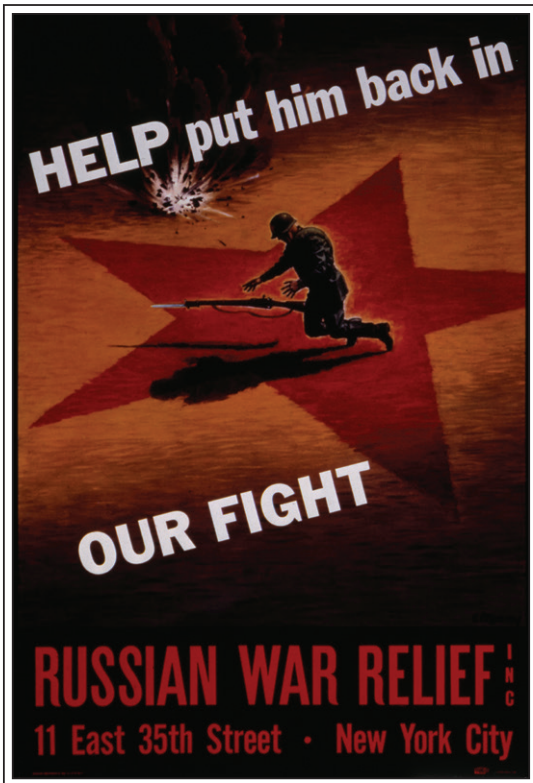


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Forget the Russia Card

By Josef Joffe

Why Putin Will Not Work for America as Ally against China

Like Beijing, Moscow Wants to Dethrone, Not Strengthen the United States

Theoretically, two superpowers—the United States and Russia—should go after China, a rising contender, to preserve the established hierarchy. But it won't happen. For an instructive historical lesson, go back to a comparable constellation when that master of manipulation, Henry Kissinger, failed to play China against the Soviet Union. The intent was to draw a much weaker and poorer China into the American orbit in order to pressure the Soviet Union, the world's no. 2.

In Kissinger's words: "We opened to China . . . to introduce an additional element of calculation for the Soviets."

Translated: The U.S. would bribe China so that it would weigh

in against Moscow and help the Nixon administration to arrange a graceful exit from Vietnam. Kissinger assumed that both "had the same objective."¹

They did not. China pocketed the gifts: the betrayal of Taiwan, a seat among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, and the opening of America's markets. And China never did do America's bidding. It did not position itself against the USSR, nor did it save the U.S. from humiliation in Vietnam. Today, Beijing is America's worst rival in the contest over global primacy, not to speak of its predatory trade policy.

Could a different line-up among the three work today? Could America and a diminished Russia coalesce against the Beijing Behemoth? Yes, if the sun were to rise in the west. There are three structural problems that defy Russo-American collaboration.

One, as no. 1, the U.S. is wedded to the existing order, the foundation of its primacy. Yet China and Russia are *revisionist* powers who both want a much larger slice of the global pie.

How then would a grasping Russia act as handmaiden of status-quo America? The problem is not bad blood, but Mr. Putin's ambition. One objective is to informally reconstitute the Soviet Empire by drawing former USSR republics as clients into an uncontested Russian sphere of influence. The second is to cast the shadow of Russian power over Moscow's former satrapies in Eastern Europe from the Baltics to Bulgaria. The third quest is to weaken the transatlantic bond between the U.S. and Europe. The fourth is to secure and expand Russia's sway over the Middle East and North Africa. Basically, the game is to dislodge the U.S. wherever opportunity beckons.

Given this set of interests, how would Washington recruit Moscow against Beijing? There is nothing, save recognizing Russian sway over the "Stan" countries, that the U.S. could offer to gain the Kremlin's good will. But if the U.S. were to yield on Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, it might just as well say good-bye to its global preeminence. There is no deal here because America cannot pay such a price.

Two, another reason why a U.S.–Russian partnership won’t materialize is structural as well. For Russia, the U.S. remains the foremost rival. So, it pleases Mr. Putin to play China against America. Nor is this a fanciful prospect. Moscow and Beijing have already fashioned an alliance of convenience. It is defined by routine, though often symbolic, military cooperation. Examples are joint exercises, joint air patrols over the Pacific, advanced Russian weapons sales, and the training of Chinese officers at Russian academies.²

Three, U.S.–Russian amity is limited because it makes much more sense for two revisionists to unite against the top dog than for Moscow to bandwagon with Washington. By analogy, recall the legendary American bank robber Willie Sutton. Why did he break into banks? He replied: “That’s where the money is.” The U.S. is the global bank, so to speak, with power and assets galore. To diminish and thus weaken no. 1 is a natural for nos. 2 and 3 who want more for themselves and less for the nation standing in their way. Rob and reap!

Finally, the nonstructural factor of ideology. China and Russia need not fear domestic interference from each other, as both share the same authoritarian faith. From each other, they won’t have to worry about the kind of condemnation that emanates from democracies like the United States and threatens their domestic supremacy. In that respect, Putin and Xi, despots both, are cousins-in-crime with a strong interest in maintaining ideological solidarity.

The upshot: The United States won’t be able to set Russia against China, nor the other way around, as Kissinger tried in the 1970s. So, America must harness strategic friends elsewhere in order to construct the double-containment of nos. 2 and 3. Candidates are Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, and lesser Asian powers like Vietnam (a former Chinese colony) or Taiwan (a designated victim of Chinese imperialism). At best, Washington can play Beijing and Moscow only at the margins—with an ad hoc deal here or there, but without any hope that such fleeting bargains will add up to a reliable relationship. Putin will not work for America, and neither will Xi.

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- 1 As quoted in Joseph Bosco, “Kissinger’s Historic China Policy,” *The Hill*, September 26, 2018, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/408507-kissingers-historic-china-policy-a-retrospective>.
 - 2 For the whole list, see Nurlan Aliyev, “Military Cooperation Between Russia and China: Alliance Without Agreement?” *International Centre for Defense and Security*, July 1, 2020, <https://icds.ee/en/military-cooperation-between-russia-and-china-the-military-alliance-without-an-agreement/>.



JOSEF JOFFE, distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, is co-editor of the German weekly *Die Zeit*. His areas of interest are U.S. foreign policy, international security policy, European-American relations, Europe and Germany, and the Middle East. A consulting professor of political science at Stanford, he is also a fellow at Stanford’s Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. He has taught at Harvard and SAIS (Johns Hopkins). A co-founder of *The American Interest*, his latest book is *The Myth of America’s Decline*. His essays and op-eds have appeared in all the major papers of the U.S. and Britain.



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Containing China

By Hy Rothstein

Deciding whether the path towards containing China is best served through improved relations with Russia correctly implies that the United States will ultimately need help to do so. The idea of aligning with any country for security is rooted in the principles of *realism* and *balance of power* designed to create a stabilizing equilibrium among great powers. While realism dictates that interests and power should govern both international affairs and U.S. foreign policy, it is difficult to imagine America's long-term interests ignoring ideals and values. Overlapping interests and underlapping values is a recipe for a dubious long-term strategic alliance. For example, President Nixon's opening of U.S. relations with China in 1971 to strengthen America's position against the Soviet Union was viewed as an act of brilliance based on *realism* and *balance-of-power* politics. While evidence suggests that this relationship was initiated by China, it benefitted China immensely and likely more than it did the United States. And Russia still remains a serious threat today.

Therefore, the question is: Who should the United States align with to contain Chinese ambitions? Answering this question requires an assessment of our primary enemies, our friends, and of ourselves.

China and Russia

China aims to replace the United States as a global hegemon, economically, militarily, and ideologically, and is on its way to doing so. Its strategy uses multiple instruments of statecraft to imperceptibly peel away America's allies from peripheral areas of interest. The result is a gradual shift in the balance of power against the United States. So far, the competition has not involved the use of force. China's economic miracle, made possible by Nixon's 1971 outreach, changed China from being economically inconsequential into the region's biggest economy and major economic partner. And China's economic reach extends to Europe and the Americas, creating an ominous supply chain.

Very deliberately, China's influence in regional politics grew in turn. For many years, China did its best to avoid challenging the United States while simultaneously modernizing its army and navy, turning its military into a world-class fighting force. Lastly, the conventional wisdom of political elites envisioned that opening China would have a profound impact on human rights and political liberty that would improve the prospects for democracy. It is now clear that China will not conform to global norms. Beijing has succeeded in neutralizing regional actors through economic ties and when necessary, coercion. And China's modern military now deters the U.S. and limits its options to compel change, even in the event of a move on Taiwan.

Russia is weaker than it was during the Cold War and is much feebler than China. But Putin has played his weak hand well. Enabled by Western apathy and preoccupation elsewhere, Russia has violated the sovereignty of neighbors, violated arms control treaties and international law, and undermined the integrity of elections in the United States and Europe. Putin has generally delivered on his goals of reestablishing order inside Russia after years of chaos and decline, and of restoring "greatness" on the international stage. Since assuming the presidency in 2000, Putin's methods for reestablishing order made it clear that a Soviet KGB

officer was in charge. Restoring greatness required reasserting Russian hegemony in its “near-abroad” and rebuilding its military.

The extent of Russia’s investments in irregular warfare and cyber capabilities became evident after the 2014 seizure of Crimea. Russia had regained global influence. Western governments, preoccupied with terrorism and believing that giving Russia a seat at the global decision-making table would facilitate Russia becoming a responsible stakeholder in international affairs, overlooked Putin’s jailing and killing of rivals, closing opposition newspapers and television stations, and reviving a single-party system of governance. However, Russia lacks the capability to dictate the terms of global economic and military affairs. Their strategy seems to recognize this. Accordingly, they have exploited ongoing tensions dividing Europe from the United States, undermined democratic processes on both sides of the Atlantic, and created maneuver-space to operate militarily below the threshold that would generate a serious NATO response. Putin has advanced Russian security objectives while successfully paralyzing NATO.

Our Friends

It is easy to conclude that in today’s fractured world, former relationships among like-minded states offer little hope for the future. After all, the U.S. and its allies could not unite as the chaos of the coronavirus pandemic engulfed the world. Plus, the orthodoxy that liberal values would lead to a stable international order failed to fully emerge. But even with their shortcomings, giving up on liberal ideas and institutions for mutual gain would result in a world that is less friendly towards Western values and more dangerous. Therefore, liberal democracies are natural allies because of their shared values and interests, and because open societies are more vulnerable to transnational threats, especially when operating alone. The economic and social wreckage brought about by the pandemic, decades of war, and refugee flows will further the breakdown of global order and divide natural allies unless something is done. More importantly, division facilitates the agenda of the illiberal China–Russia nexus.

Ourselves

Global chaos is mirrored, perhaps even generated, by U.S. domestic turmoil. Today, Americans no longer share a common national narrative. In other words, there is no consensus among Americans about what the United States stands for. Grand strategy must rest on a shared worldview among like-minded states, but being a member of such a coalition is impossible with a fractured national narrative. Racial tension and perceived inequality coupled with vitriolic partisan discourse diminish the United States, internally and on the global stage. The United States is no longer a “melting pot.” The shared common identity derived from the principles in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights has been replaced by concepts of multiculturalism and diversity. These concepts were intended to bring Americans together but, instead, they have been divisive. Greater diversity highlights what people do not have in common. Promoting diversity and multiculturalism over the common good dissolves the unity and cohesiveness of a nation. To be sure, the case for diversity and multiculturalism is strong but its place must be subordinate to a set of values that bring Americans together. Americans need to get their own house in order.

The Path towards Containing China

This essay began with the following question: Who should the United States align with to contain Chinese ambitions? China is the most serious threat to U.S. security. But the trajectory of Russian actions must also be contained and possibly rolled back. Efforts to leverage Russia may only reposition the threat. Nixon’s 1971 outreach to China to contain Russia seems to have done that. Furthermore, China and Russia have values and interests that are contradictory to those of the U.S. To illustrate, over the last decade, China and Russia have almost always voted the same way in the UN General Assembly. By contrast, the U.S. and China agree about twenty percent of the time.

Therefore, the United States must work with its natural allies to develop ways to contain both enemies simultaneously. This natural coalition must first acknowledge that past efforts to encourage China and Russia to

be responsible stakeholders in the international order were a gamble that failed. Second, the alliances that brought security and prosperity to the West are in disarray. Third, tolerating Chinese and Russian expansion in exchange for peace and harmony is a fool's errand. And fourth, China and Russia have legitimate security interests that must be considered.

Any strategy to check the Chinese and Russian threats will require, in President Roosevelt's words, "the great arsenal of democracy." Liberal democracies need to remind themselves of their common interests and values, and partnerships are more important than ever. Reviving the organizations that protected the West for more than half a century, and perhaps restructuring them to better address today's threats are key to safeguard free societies. Reinvigorating the liberal order is not an idealistic attempt to spread democracy nor an appeal for globalism. It is a necessary, pragmatic cooperative solution to contain and manage the complex economic, military, and ideological threats generated by China and Russia.

The tenets of this collective strategy should deny China and Russia their immediate objectives, impose significant costs for bad behavior, and reduce their power and influence. This does not necessarily imply that relations are a zero-sum game. Cooperation and even accommodation are possible where interests converge, but tough Western policies should not change before China and Russia change behavior.

There is risk associated with turning up the heat. However, overstating the risk is not wise. Both China and Russia have mounting liabilities that threaten their internal security. They govern in fear of their own people. Governments that rely on coercing their citizens and censoring information are vulnerable to penetration and outside subversion. A united West bound by liberal democratic ideals represents an existential threat that will result in China and Russia shifting more resources to internal security, thereby reducing their abilities to expand regionally. Plus, the economy of China depends on access to Western markets to fuel its aggressive foreign policy. A liberal coalition willing to cut trade with China would be a crippling blow. Forcing China to pay a heavy price for their predatory behavior is the best way to generate change. The real risk is not engaging in the peripheral areas because we fear that doing so will trigger a general war.

Lastly, George Kennan warned in 1946 that in dealing with Moscow, "much depends on the health and vigor of our own society." Restoring the unity and confidence in the alliances that define the liberal democratic order must be the first order of business. Democracies must show that they have something positive to offer to attract countries and populations on the fence. This is the best way to prevent developing countries from being susceptible to Chinese and Russian advances. Unless the United States and like-minded allies reassert their commitment to shared ideals, articulate those principles, and forcefully act on them, democracies will continue to drift apart. Drifting apart is what Beijing and Moscow hope for.



HY ROTHSTEIN recently retired from the faculty at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA. His teaching career coupled with his military career as a special forces officer culminated fifty years of service to the Defense Department. Hy has spent considerable time in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines observing the conduct of those wars.

Dr. Rothstein has written and edited books about Afghanistan, Iraq, the similarities between insurgency and gang violence, military deception, and the challenges of measuring success and failure during war. Dr. Rothstein taught courses on the strategic utility of special operations, military deception, and psychological and political warfare. He is currently working on an updated assessment of civil-military relations.

U.S.—Russia Enmity Defies Reason

By Angelo M. Codevilla

To impeach the notion that governments act rationally to maximize their own advantages, one need only look at the U.S. and Russian governments' reluctance to act concurrently, if not jointly, to contain the biggest geopolitical threat to both: China. By 2020 the relationship between the U.S. and Russia had so deteriorated that it was no longer possible for either rationally to consider what good it could do for itself, if so doing would also benefit the other. So much for "rational actor" theories of international relations. Nevertheless, the common ground on which both could stand to advance their own interest vis-à-vis China remains broad and solid, beckoning both sides to prioritize those interests.

Believing that governments act in their country's international interest requires overlooking that governments consist of people who usually sacrifice long-range international interests to their own pressing political exigencies as they struggle day to day against one another. Officials may also use what they say or do with regard to a foreign country as a means of managing their own political identity, and as a weapon in partisan struggles. To some extent, all are also captives of habit.

Cold calculations concerning China cannot but chill Russian hearts. China's GDP of circa \$15 trillion is ten times Russia's. Its 1.4 billion people live next door. Unlike the Russians, they have no issues with alcoholism or with social dissolution. Though the Chinese are racially repulsive to most Russians, such is Russian society's state that Russian women are taking Chinese husbands. How Russia may contain the ever-strengthening Chinese, or simply get along with them, is by no means clear.

Yet Russian officials grew up disdainful of China and measuring their country's status against the United States. The strategic forces that still give Russia some claim to world power are designed to fight America. So is Russia's first-class navy. Russia's newly professional army, nuclear weapons and all, is stationed in the West and designed against eventual aggression from that quarter. Putin finds it inexpensive and politically enhancing publicly to disparage Americans who, during his time in office, have proved to be pathetic foils. Precisely for that reason, Putin—ever the cold calculator—is unlikely to fear America.

Nevertheless, Putin helps to strengthen China and partners with it against America. Surely, one reason is that U.S. officials have so shaped the relationship as to make any other course unreasonable in the short run.

From the Soviet Union's founding in 1917 until 2016, America's body politic was divided on dealing with "the Russians" along unchanging lines. *Grosso modo*, the establishment—Democrats, the professoriate, the sophisticated, etc.—were first "soft on communism" and then indulgent toward a renascent Russia. They wanted treaties and essentially a kind of global co-dominium with it. America's conservative side damned communism, forcibly resisted it, and remained skeptical of Russia. The farther Left the official, the more pro-Russian he was likely to be.

That ceased when, in the course of the 2016 campaign, Donald Trump made improving relations with Russia so as to counter China a part of his proposals for reshaping U.S. foreign policy. In July 2016, WikiLeaks' release of emails from the Democratic National Committee's server so deeply embarrassed the Democratic presidential candidate that the DNC sought to deflect attention from intra party strife by claiming that the emails had been stolen by "the Russians." The DNC gave no evidence and denied the FBI investigative access. Why would "the Russians" have done it? Political logic dictated a series of answers. The Russians did it to help Trump because Trump is its agent.

For four years, the U.S. establishment's energy and the U.S. government's investigative resources went into spreading this "narrative." Zero evidence surfaced.

But, in this century, China has substantially undone the position in the Western Pacific that the United States secured in WWII and defended thereafter. China took control of the supply chains for many of America's manufactured goods, and secured for itself political support within America's own corporate structure and society. Whereas the United States has no outstanding geopolitical issues vis-à-vis Russia, China openly bids to counter U.S. influence everywhere—above all amongst ourselves.

Nevertheless, anyone in America who advocates common ground with Russia against China might as well spit against gale force winds.

The common international ground exists, and waits only those willing to step out of their domestic not-so-comfortable zones.



ANGELO M. CODEVILLA is a professor emeritus of international relations at Boston University. He was a U.S. naval officer and Foreign Service officer and served on the Senate Intelligence Committee as well as on presidential transition teams. For a decade he was a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is the author of thirteen books, including *War: Ends and Means*, *The Character of Nations*, *Advice to War Presidents*, and, most recently, *To Make and Keep Peace*. His *America First: John Quincy Adams's Teachings for Our Time* will be published in February. He is a student of the classics as well as of European literature; he is also a commercial grape grower.

Working with Russia: An Important Component to Checking a Rising China

By Chris Gibson

With the rise of China and the civilizational challenge it presents for the rest of the world, we will soon see more of what realist theorists and historians describe as “balancing” actions by the international community to contain this potential existential threat. As part of that phenomenon, I expect U.S.–Russian relations to improve as these two countries increasingly work together to check a rising China.

Given the long record of antagonism between our two nations since the Cold War, which briefly abated after the fall of the Berlin Wall only to worsen again with the ascent of Russian autocrat Vladimir Putin, some may doubt this possibility. However, at moments like these it's instructive to look at history and remember that the U.S. found a way to work closely with the notorious butcher Soviet premier Joseph Stalin in order to defeat an even greater threat, German führer Adolf Hitler and the Axis powers. History has shown us

that existential threats such as these have a tendency to sublimate the differences between even antithetical ideologies, and when everything is on the line, cause an arguably otherwise idealistic America to look the other way when it comes to corrupt and abusive dictators. In pivotal moments like these, it all comes down to power as it always does, and humans will do what it takes to survive. In the coming years as China's power grows and her outsized and dangerous ambitions become clearer, nations will lean in and do what is required to balance and check that threat.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has made his ambitions patently clear to both the people of China and the world. Xi, who ascended to general secretary of the Communist Party in 2012 and president of China in 2013, is now leader for life (China abolished term limits in 2018, effectively making Xi's power akin to Chinese emperors of old). Xi has abandoned former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's strategy of "hiding your strength and biding your time" to overtly pursuing global power with his "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI).

The connection between these international trade and development activities, with the corresponding projection of military power is readily apparent in the way Xi has quickly translated late loan repayments for Chinese financed and built roads, ports, and bridges in places like Sri Lanka, Djibouti, and Pakistan into formidable geo-political influence, and in some cases, even overt military presence. All of these moves are made easier because of the economic vehicles China uses to implement BRI: state-owned enterprises like COSCO Shipping Ports and China Merchants Port Holdings doing the bidding of the Chinese government. All of these BRI activities are coming with stepped-up confrontational actions (both political and military) by China in the South China Sea.

While there is no question that China is creating some international "antibodies" with these heavy-handed moves (not to mention some domestic discontent with these misplaced priorities), they are not without champions. After all, Chinese investments in the Greek port of Piraeus have made that entity highly successful and profitable for all stakeholders. Even Israel is getting in on the action with China now building new ports in Haifa and Ashdod.

Although I disagree with some scholars who claim we are likely, if not destined, to go to war with China, I have long believed that we must confront and check Chinese aggression and insist on fair, transparent, and enforceable comprehensive agreements between our nations. Given the sheer size and scale of the Chinese threat, it's not likely we will achieve that without working together with Russia.

While today Russia continues to cause major problems for the United States (including waging cyberattacks against us, meddling in our elections, putting bounties on U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan, and poisoning its own domestic political opponents, just to name a few), given the geo-political need to check China, we should immediately take a series of steps to get the U.S.–Russian relationship back on track.

First, we must strengthen deterrence and send a clear message to Putin we will not tolerate his cyberattacks, meddling in our internal politics; nor will we accept his involvement in killing our soldiers. Putin respects power and will respond to our strength. Second, we must strengthen collective defense and enhance NATO unity. We are making progress on that, and recent steps to reinforce the Baltics with Allied ground troops and to provide arms to non-NATO Ukraine are also movement in the right direction and we should not reverse them. These actions go beyond shoring up capability; they also display determined *will*, essential to credible deterrence. Third, we must take steps to strengthen our economy, unify our country, and stabilize our debt crisis. History is littered with great powers who crumbled under the weight of massive debt. We are not immune from such fate. Our energy revolution provides enormous opportunity here. We are in a strong position to export natural gas and oil to help Europe get off its dependency of Russian energy. This will strengthen our economy and help fill the treasury coffers with needed revenues to help us to get back to a balanced budget.

Taking these actions will ensure we approach Russia from a position of strength and convince Russian leadership (now and after Putin) to work with us on a number of strategic priorities including defeating Islamic extremism, stabilizing the Middle East, and yes, balancing a rising China.

By working together to achieve these priorities, we will build the trust necessary for arguably our boldest initiative—bringing Russia into friendship with the West, and possibly new legal arrangements—commercial, diplomatic, and security agreements. By following this broad outline and insisting on verifiable actions, Russia will see the wisdom in changing course and working with the U.S. to achieve our mutual interests.



CHRIS GIBSON is the twelfth president of Siena College, where he also serves as professor of leadership. Previously Chris served for three years as the Stanley Kaplan Distinguished Visiting Professor of American Foreign Policy at Williams College, a member of Congress from New York for six years, and as a soldier in the U.S. Army for twenty-nine years, including four combat tours in Iraq. Chris holds a PhD in government from Cornell University and is the author of *Rally Point: Five Tasks to Unite the Country and Revitalize the American Dream*, a book published by Twelve in October 2017.

Russia Will Not Be Our Friend against China

By Jakub Grygiel

Russia wants to contain China on her Asian border but not on the Pacific Ocean. In fact, it is in Russia's interest to encourage a Chinese expansion in the Pacific as well as farther out, from Europe and the Middle East to Latin America. An oceangoing China with global ambitions, from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, is for Russia a safer China. A China with limited, regional aspirations would, on the other hand, focus mostly on its immediate neighborhood and its lengthy land frontier with Russia.

As a result, American and Russian interests are diametrically opposed: the U.S. wants a China that is preoccupied with its continental borders and does not devote resources and attention to the Pacific Ocean, while Russia seeks exactly the opposite. There is therefore no reason to expect common ground between the U.S. and Russia in containing Chinese expansion.

The difference between Russian and U.S. objectives toward China is rooted in large measure in geography. Russia shares a long land border with China and has no desire to create tensions with China on her eastern flank. Russian reluctance to engage in competition with China is strengthened by a realization that China is growing and the economic and military disparity between Beijing and Moscow is only getting larger. Why should Russia risk engaging in a rivalry in which she is at a clear disadvantage and with a power that is so close to her? Russia has no great aspirations on her eastern flank other than the preservation of the existing status quo: a relatively stable border with China, with Chinese economic penetration in Central Asia (and Siberia) but military overwatch by Russia.

Russia wants minimal tensions with China also because her great geopolitical goal lies in the West: Russia wants to be in Europe, albeit not of it. Moscow's actions of the last few decades have been characterized by this remarkable simplicity of concept and continuity of action: westward expansion through a variety of means with the goal of imperial reconstruction and of being the decisive power in Europe's balance of power.

There is a link then between Russia's eastern and western frontiers: Russia needs to have stability on one (in Asia) in order to expand in the other (in Europe). Throughout her history, Russia's ability to turn westward was derivative of her success in stabilizing the other frontiers (the southern and eastern ones). Putin has mostly succeeded in stabilizing the southern frontier in the Caucasus and has achieved a *modus vivendi* on the eastern one with China. And this is why for the past two decades he could, and continues to be able to, pursue a very aggressive westward strategy of expansion.

Russia's interest in keeping a peaceful and stable relationship with China is therefore independent of the tenor of U.S.–Russian relations: good relations (the definition of which is, in any case, murky) will not turn Russia into an opponent of Chinese global ambitions, and bad relations with Washington will not make Moscow into a long-term partner of Beijing. Russia, that is, has interests of her own, and is not merely an empty vessel whose goals and motivations are only a reaction to what the West or the United States do.

In fact, the best way to prevent a Russian insouciance or even friendliness to China is to close for Moscow the possibility of a westward expansion. Russia will not stabilize her European frontier until she is met with a clear opposition and counterbalancing from European states (American presence on Europe's eastern flank is vital but insufficient to stop Russian moves, which are across the spectrum of state tools). The goal of deterring Russia is not merely to prevent further destabilizing actions on the part of Moscow, but also to redirect Russian attention to its other borders. A strong and clear Western deterrent on Russia's European flank will not make Russia into a Western friend, but it will also remove Moscow's priority of being accommodating to China.

In brief, Russia has no interest in joining the United States in opposing China. And there are no incentives (e.g., "good relations," accommodating Russian ambitions in Ukraine or in Central Europe, withdrawing tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, or repositioning the few U.S. troops farther from Russia) that the U.S. can provide to make Russia more amenable to a counterbalancing posture against China.



JAKUB GRYGIEL is a professor of politics at the Catholic University of America (Washington, DC) and a senior adviser at The Marathon Initiative. In 2017–2018 he was a senior adviser in the Office of Policy Planning at the Department of State. Previously, he was a senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis and on the faculty of SAIS-Johns Hopkins University in Washington, DC. He is the author of *Return of the Barbarians* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), and co-author with Wess Mitchell of *The Unquiet Frontier* (Princeton University Press, 2016). His writings have appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, *The American Interest*, *Security Studies*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *The National Interest*, *Claremont Review of Books*, *Orbis*, *Commentary*, *Parameters*, and several U.S. and foreign newspapers. He earned a PhD, MA, and an MPA from Princeton University, and a BSFS summa cum laude from Georgetown University.

The Wedge in U.S.–Russia Relations Never Went Away

By Walter Russell Mead

Each U.S. presidential administration of the twenty-first century has attempted some version of a “Russian reset.” George W. Bush looked into Vladimir Putin’s eyes, Obama’s secretary of state Hillary Clinton delivered Sergei Lavrov a physical “reset button,” and Donald Trump sought to form a congenial personal relationship with Putin throughout his presidency. Despite allegations of collusion, former president Trump was no more successful than his predecessors at stabilizing the relationship. For the third time in the twenty-first century an attempt to reset U.S.–Russian relations failed to overcome barriers that divide the two states. And for the first time in decades, the new presidential administration has made no allusions to a warming of relations or a reset of any kind.

However, the problem is not a “deterioration of relations.” It is a difference of interests. Putin’s Russia considers American power a much more urgent and critical threat to the security of the Russian government than anything China is currently doing. Only a change in the balance of fear in Moscow could lead to the opportunity of a real reset in its relationship with Washington, and any such change appears to be some distance off.

It is not hard to understand why so many American presidents have wanted to change the nature of the U.S.–Russia relationship. Peeling Russia off from China would change the Asian balance of power in ways that significantly benefit American interests and security. Cooperation with Moscow on issues like North Korea would simplify some of the toughest problems American policy makers face, while drawing Moscow closely and openly into the growing partnerships with India and Japan that the United States hopes will create a stable alliance system in Asia would be of immense benefit.

Beyond that, a real reset in the U.S.–Russia relationship would allow Americans to rethink their commitments in Europe, making it that much easier for the American military to address the large challenges of the Indo-Pacific theater.

However, Russia simply does not trust the United States—and with good reason. The government of the United States, as well as public opinion and its army of well-funded and globally active NGOs remain committed to the spread of democracy and will continue to support democratic groups within Russia’s borders or within the borders of Russia’s undemocratic allies. Friends of the current Russian system cannot help but see American power as a danger to the security of their state, whatever a given president may say.

Since the time of Catherine the Great, if not that of Peter, Russia has seen the extension of its influence in Europe as a vital national interest and a measure of its power and success. NATO is a military alliance that aims to keep Russia out of the principal issues in European security. The European Union is adamantly opposed to any revival of Russian political influence west of Minsk and Kiev. To the realists in the Kremlin,

POLL: Why are Russian–American relations currently at a historical low?

- Vladimir Putin became increasingly dictatorial at home and abroad.
- The Obama-era naive reset eroded U.S. deterrence and emboldened Putin to be more aggressive.
- In the post–Cold War period, NATO unwisely and provocatively expanded to Russia’s borders.
- The “Russian collusion hoax” created hysteria in the U.S. and distrust in Moscow.
- Relations are neither good nor bad, but what one would expect between a republic and a dictatorship.

which is to say to the large majority of those who work there, the two organizations look like a concerted western effort to keep Russian influence in its neighborhood permanently constrained in ways that no Russian government can voluntarily accept.

For a U.S.–Russian anti-China entente to develop, the danger from China would have to become so acute that Russia’s problems with the United States appeared trivial by comparison. That day is unlikely to arrive anytime soon.



WALTER RUSSELL MEAD is the Ravenel B. Curry III Distinguished Fellow in Strategy and Statesmanship at Hudson Institute, the Global View columnist at the *Wall Street Journal* and the James Clarke Chace Professor of Foreign Affairs and Humanities at Bard College in New York. He is also a member of Aspen Institute Italy and board member of *Aspenia*. Before joining Hudson, Mead was a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations as the Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy. He has authored numerous books, including the widely-recognized *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2004). Mead’s next book is entitled *The Arc of A Covenant: The United States, Israel, and the Fate of the Jewish People*.

Triangulating Russia

By Mark Moyar

Russian–American relations are as poor today as at any time since the fall of the Soviet Union. Mired in prolonged conflicts over Ukraine, Syria, Venezuela, election interference, and energy, among other issues, Russia and the United States clash in their interests and their worldviews. Mutual distrust is intense, much more intense than one might infer from the occasional statements of former president Donald Trump and Russian president Vladimir Putin.

An improvement in relations seems highly unlikely so long as Putin remains in power. Putin has shown, under successive American administrations, that disrupting the international order and diminishing the influence of the United States rank higher on his priority list than the health of Russian–American relations. Convinced that Russia is morally superior to a decadent West, he aspires to restore Russia to its rightful place of influence in Europe. There is little to suggest that Putin’s outlook will change, or that he will depart from the scene.

The United States and Russia can and do cooperate when their interests overlap, such as in counterterrorism and counterproliferation. Cooperation in these areas, however, generally causes little harm to China. In areas of greater salience to American competition with China, Russia and China often have more in common with one another than either has with the United States. Areas of common Sino–Russian interests include the support of authoritarian governments, the development of technologies that are competitive with those of the United States, the reduction of American influence, and the subversion of international organizations.

Opportunities to exploit conflicts between China and Russia are further limited by the low priority of East Asia in Putin's thinking. Putin has generally been content to circumscribe Russian activities in the Far East in ways that minimize conflict with China. A few significant points of friction persist, such as Russia's sale of arms to India and the migration of ethnic Chinese into Russia. The concern aroused in China by Russian collaboration with India is one area where the United States, by virtue of its good relationship with India, may be able to stoke Sino-Russian tensions.

Sowing division between China and Russia appears to be the best available means of using the Russian-American relationship against China. American diplomatic flirtations with Russia can foster distrust with China, and vice versa. Richard Nixon made excellent use of this approach in the late 1960s and early 1970s as he played China and the Soviet Union off against one another. Other possible avenues for creating discord include public diplomacy and messaging that highlight points of friction between the two, such as Chinese theft of Russian intellectual property or Russian arms sales to China's adversaries.

Another, more positive option for the United States to use Russian-American relations against China would be the development of religious and cultural ties between the United States and Russia, which would highlight commonalities that set the two countries apart from China. The revival of Christianity in Russia has opened many doors for exchanges and conferences between the Russian Orthodox Church and American religious groups. Such "people-to-people" diplomacy could also feed Chinese distrust of the Russian Orthodox Church, which is closely tied to the Russian state.



MARK MOYAR has worked for twenty years in and out of government on national security affairs, international development, foreign aid, and capacity building. From 2018 to 2019, he served as the director of the Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation at USAID, and previously served as the director of the Project on Military and Diplomatic History at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. He is author of six books, of which the most recent book is *Oppose Any Foe: The Rise of America's Special Operations Forces* (Basic Books, 2017), the first comprehensive history of U.S. special operations forces. He is currently writing the sequel to his book *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965*. He holds a BA summa cum laude from Harvard and a PhD from Cambridge.

A Critical Moment in U.S.–Russian Relations

By Williamson Murray

At present it is extraordinarily difficult to see how any American government—beyond former president Donald J. Trump—would be willing to trust the Russians to the degree necessary to cooperate effectively against the Chinese, at least for the short term. The Russian hacking in American elections is only the most obvious example of the extraordinary actions taken by the Russians against the United States. But the

Russians have not just focused their bad behavior against the United States. The attacks on Russian émigrés by radioactive poison and nerve agents on British soil represent irresponsible and hostile actions against the West in general.

Nevertheless, a reconciliation between the Americans and the Russians is not impossible to imagine. In the long term, it is well to remember only fifty years ago the United States found itself engaged in a ferocious struggle against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, now an important ally in our attempt to hold the Chinese back from Southeast Asia and its mineral-rich waters. And what is crucial to remember is the fact that the international scene is more uncertain and ambiguous than any time since the early 1930s. Thus, sudden movements in the relationships among the great powers are much more likely. For example, the Entente Cordiale (1904) between Britain and France occurred a mere six years after the Fashoda Incident had threatened to plunge the two nations into war.

The problem, of course, lies in the fact that the great, uninhabited, mineral-rich lands of Siberia beckon to a China that is short of many of the natural resources on which a modern economy thrives. Moreover, the Chinese have not been overly subtle about their ancient claims, not only about the seas lying to their south-east, but to the lands to their north. In fact, if one takes ancient Chinese claims seriously, which apparently they do, they have a better claim to the latter than to the former. Perhaps, one of the most astonishing aspects of Russian strategy over the past decade has been Putin's dogged pursuit of Chinese friendship, including the sale of modern Russian weaponry, a considerable help in Xi's effort to overtake American military superiority.

Given the fact that it is inevitable that sometime in the future China will cast its gaze more covetously to the north, the question then becomes: Will the Putin regime have done so much damage to Russian–American relations that U.S. policy makers find it impossible to deal with the Russians until too late? The “too late” issue may revolve around another imponderable, namely the extent of the damage that Putin has and will have done to the Russian state. When he disappears into the trash bin of history, he will leave behind in Russia no certain successor. In the ensuing political crisis, the United States will have to tread carefully, because Putin has created a deep sense of suspicion of America among the Russian leadership. There will certainly be considerable problems among the states in the Caucasus.

The timing of an American–Russian rapprochement would be crucial to be effective. Too late, and we will be picking up the wreckage left by Chinese military and political moves. Done at the right time, an American move to bolster the Russians could deter the Chinese from taking risks that would result in nuclear war.



WILLIAMSON MURRAY is presently the Marshall Professor at Marine Corps University in Quantico. He graduated from Yale University in 1963 with honors in history. He then served five years as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, including a tour in Southeast Asia with the 314th Tactical Airlift Wing (C-130s). He returned to Yale in spring 1969, where he received his PhD in military-diplomatic history under advisers Hans Gatzke and Donald Kagan. He taught two years in the Yale history department before moving on to Ohio State University in fall 1977 as a military and diplomatic historian; in 1987 he received the Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award. He retired from Ohio State in 1995 as a professor emeritus of history. His books include *A Savage War: A Military History of the Civil War* (Princeton University Press, 2016) and *America and the Future of War: The Past as Prologue* (Hoover Institution Press, 2017). His most recent books are *The Culture of Military Organizations* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), edited with Peter Mansoor, and *Gods of War* (Bantam, 2020), co-authored with Jim Lacey.

Can the United States and Russia Unite against China? Naw . . .

By Ralph Peters

Under present and probable future conditions, Russia will not ally with the United States against China on any substantial issue in any sphere. The wording of that sentence is carefully chosen, since the U.S.A., under any president, would be glad to have Russia's support in the great competition of the mid-twenty-first century. But we are living through a period confounding to Marxist and bulk-data historians alike—an irrefutable return to the great-man interpretation of history, in which the individual titan leads (or misleads) the masses. In our time, the “greatest” of contemporary strongmen and aspiring dictators is Vladimir Putin, a man who has played an inherently weak hand with forceful, if flawed, brilliance.

And Putin hates the United States so viscerally that he is willing to harm his own country to punish America.

Schooled in an irrational commitment to rational analysis, Western observers and commentators have cut themselves off from a fundamental grasp of the circumstances confronting them globally, be it Putin's ethno-mythic emotional drivers or the religious passions fueling Islamist fundamentalism. Add in the fact that one individual can manifest both madness and genius that inspire vision and self-destructiveness (the latter pairing the bane of the last century), and those sages who would apply stern logic to human affairs fall short in all great crises.

Logically, Putin would recognize that China is, by far, the greatest threat to Russia, demographically, economically, militarily, and territorially. But Putin's vision for the future is nostalgic, the longing for a return to Russian greatness in Soviet guise, to the shabby-but-reassuring Eden of his youth. It was the United States that, in Putin's view, ravaged paradise and humiliated its most-devout inhabitants.

Each year, China grows stronger, Russia weaker, and Putin more obsessed with doing all possible harm to the United States. Given former U.S. president Donald Trump, who, to whatever end, declined ever to criticize Putin or counter his most-insidious initiatives, the situation has been all to Russian advantage, facilitating a domestic and international rampage. No Chinese action short of a large-scale invasion of Russian territory could move Putin toward a serious accommodation with the United States. Putin certainly recognizes that China may do great harm to Russia, but the United States already has done existential evil (in Putin's cosmology), and for Putin's psychology past sins are tangible and eternal, while future threats are abstract.

In an all-too-real sense, we are dealing not with a clash of civilizations between Washington and Moscow but with a collision between historical epochs: Our strategic cosmos is one of post-Enlightenment astronomy, while Putin's is of high-medieval astrology. And don't count on the scientific method to come through for us: We have entered an unstable new era of virulent superstition, a fraught time when signs and portents wallop the hell out of cold statistics: Increasingly, twenty-first-century man wants witches to burn, not learned explanations. Putin is, profoundly, a man of our times.

In the absence of strong, enduring and like-minded alliances united in the defense of our threatened strategic and national values, we will remain prey to Putin and to others.

Terrorists would like to kill us all in a blink; Putin would prefer our drawn-out suicide. To call him a sadist would be unfair to de Sade, who recognized the existence of morality even as he rejected it.

So . . . there will be no anti-Chinese pact until it is too late for Russia. Do not seek reason in the land of the czars.



RALPH PETERS is the author of thirty-four books, including works on strategy and security affairs, as well as best-selling, prize-winning novels. He has published more than a thousand columns, articles, and essays here and abroad. As a U.S. Army enlisted man and career officer, he served in infantry and military intelligence units before becoming a foreign area officer for the dying Soviet Union and the new Russia. As a soldier, journalist, and researcher, he has experience in more than seventy countries, covering various wars and trouble spots. His historical fiction won the American Library Association's Boyd Award for Literary Excellence an unprecedented four times and also received the Herodotus Award and the Hammett Prize. Additionally, he was the 2015 recipient of the Goodpaster Award, presented each year to a distinguished American soldier-scholar. In 2017, he was selected for the U.S. Army's Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame.

Balancing Interests and Fears

By Andrew Roberts

"We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies."

—Lord Palmerston (March 1, 1848)

History suggests that no two nations' relations ever deteriorate so much that it becomes impossible to find common ground if both perceive that a third nation's ambitions threatens them more. Examples abound, but the classic is Britain's instant alliance with the USSR the moment that Adolf Hitler invaded Russia in June 1941. Winston Churchill had been denouncing Soviet Communism for almost a quarter of a century, but as he told his private secretary after hearing of Operation Barbarossa, "If Hitler invaded Hell, I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons."

Other examples of the way that the fourth-century BC Sanskrit adage “The enemy of my enemy is my friend” has worked in international relations include the Second United Front between the Chinese Communists and Chinese Nationalists against the Japanese before the Second World War, and the truce between the British and the Malayan Communist Party during it. Further back, there was no love lost between Britain and France in the early eighteenth century, but they allied against the feared hegemony of Spain between 1718 and 1720, and the same American colonists who had fought the French throughout the Seven Years War then made an alliance with them against Britain in 1778.

All that would be necessary for a profound realignment in Russo–American relations would be a recognition on the part of Vladimir Putin that China’s ultimate ambitions pose much more of a long-term threat to Russian interests and security than does American capitalism. It ought to have started to dawn on him already. Russia has a long history of dealing with America, but the new China will cause acute discomfort when it starts to treat its neighbor to the north in the same aggressive manner that it currently projects towards Taiwan, South Korea, and Australia, let alone its Uighur, Hong Kong, and Tibetan subjects.

The Sino–Russian border covers 2,615 miles, the sixth-longest in the world. Long the cause of border disputes—which very nearly ended in a full-scale war in March 1969, which the Chinese state media says was caused by Russian aggression—its final demarcation was only settled in July 2008, with rank Russian appeasement over various disputed islands that must still rankle in the Kremlin. The strategically important Bolshoy Ussuriysky Island, known to the Chinese as Heixiazi, is shared roughly 50/50, for example, and could be a flash point.

With China’s massive population and its growing needs on its side of the frontier, and Siberia being underpopulated but rich in minerals, oil, gas, and water, Beijing might once again cast covetous eyes northwards in its ravenous global quest for resources.

If it were ever to dawn on Vladimir Putin that Russia would be much worse off in a world in which a contiguous neighbor like China was hegemonic, rather than the transoceanic United States—or having no hegemon at all—then it would not be impossible to find common ground. Putin has shown that he is entirely driven by Realpolitik, as his reasonably good early relations with the George W. Bush and Trump administrations suggest. He would not be held back by ideology in ditching his currently good relations with China the moment that it suited him.



ANDREW ROBERTS read Modern History at Caius College, Cambridge, from where he is a PhD. He has written *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (which won the Wolfson Prize), *Masters and Commanders* (International Churchill Society Book Award), *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War* (British Army Military Book of the Year Award), *Napoleon the Great* (Grand Prix of the Fondation Napoléon and the *Los Angeles Times* Biography Prize), *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* (Council on Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Prize), and *Leadership in War: Essential Lessons from Those Who Made History*. He is the Roger & Martha Mertz Visiting Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, the Lehrman Institute Distinguished Lecturer at the New York Historical Society, a visiting professor at the Department of War Studies at King’s College London, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the Royal Historical Society. He lives in London.

Chinese and Russian Information Warfare in the Age of COVID-19

By Zafiris Rossidi

The COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled a new form of rivalry among countries that some have compared to that of the Cold War. The similarities are undeniable. However, there is a striking difference: in the time of the coronavirus, international rivalry has become a daily matter.

The first attempt at “weaponizing” information came from the Chinese as early as the first days of the appearance of the virus in the United States. Chinese sources claimed that the American government had deployed military forces in many cities to ensure the lockdown. Then, Chinese officials, through their personal accounts, criticized the U.S., claiming that it had introduced the coronavirus to China, using it as a bioweapon. This was reminiscent of the Cold War, as the mere mention of biological warfare, even though an old disinformation tactic, remains an effective one.

Until recently, the West regarded the network of the Confucius Institutes and Public Diplomacy as primary sources of China’s influence in the international arena. Since 2018 however, China has constructed an immense digital infrastructure using new, improved methods that do not simply manipulate the recipient’s emotions but also disorganize both smaller and larger social groups, using psychological modeling.

Russia, also, presents an interesting case. Russian services have vast experience and tradition, in disseminating disinformation and in hybrid operations. Russia is one of those countries that use the manipulation of information as a prime “weapon” to gain a larger share of power. Russia aggressively employs this form of asymmetric warfare, fully aware that today, it is social networking and not the mainstream media that exclusively provides information to citizens.

A successful campaign of disinformation must not originate from a single source. This is precisely the tactic of “chaotic order” that both China and Russia have adopted in the case of COVID-19. The use of many sources makes it difficult to trace the actual origin, confuses the target, prevents the recipient from analyzing and evaluating the message, and facilitates the dissemination of “noise” between the transmitter and receiver, making the real target of the message impossible to be identified, thus leading the recipient to a number of interpretations. These are, by definition, the characteristics of successful propaganda. During the pandemic, it became quite obvious that China and Russia have learned from one another. Russia has profited from China in the area of artificial intelligence, big data, and gaming, while China has gained technical knowledge from Russia in social networking.

It has also become apparent that a vast part of the two countries’ methods of influence has been transferred from the World Wide Web to the Deep Web. The source of the propaganda has become practically impossible to identify and dealt with because it mimics the mainstream media and is presented as a means of activism, etc. In this “grey game,” these two countries have joined forces with Iran and Turkey, in accordance with their geopolitical ambitions.

By comparing the objectives and methods of China and Russia and their disinformation campaigns during the pandemic, we can conclude the following: China’s intentions were to emerge as a world leader and as the savior of mankind from the health risks of COVID-19, as well as being the nation that had triumphed over the crisis. Its method was the manipulation of the mass media. Russia’s intention on the other hand

was to spread division in the United States and the EU by aggravating tensions and instigating a sense of panic due to the coronavirus. This was achieved by disseminating fake news and messages designed to provoke alarm.

The assessments and opinions expressed in this article are strictly those of the author himself and in no case of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



ZAFIRIS ROSSIDIS is the former head of the Public Diplomacy Directorate at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has worked for the Greek government as a press attache in Albania, Israel, Finland, Croatia, and Denmark. He holds university degrees in physics and in history, an MA in modern European history from the University of Athens, and a postgraduate degree in public diplomacy from the National School of Public Administration of Greece, and is a PhD candidate in the Department of Economics, University of Thessaly. His doctoral dissertation is titled: “Public Diplomacy as a Promoter of Economic Diplomacy: The Cases of USIA, China and Israel.” Rossidis graduated from the Hellenic National Defense College and also from the Joint School of Information Warfare of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff, where he is now an instructor. He served as an NCO in the Hellenic Navy Special Forces.

Discussion Questions

1. Where can the United States and Russia work together on shared challenges?
2. Can Russia prove useful in deterring China?
3. Is there realistic hope for a constitutional republic in the post-Putin era?
4. Should the United States enter into new strategic arms agreements with Russia?

Suggestions for Further Reading

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Domestic Dissent and U.S. Foreign Relations



Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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Hoover Institution, Stanford University
434 Galvez Mall
Stanford, CA 94305-6003
650-723-1754

Hoover Institution in Washington
The Johnson Center
1399 New York Avenue NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
202-760-3200

