

CHAPTER 11

‘THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND’: RUSSIA EMERGES AS A STRATEGIC PARTNER OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA



AP Photo/Greg Baker

A REAL ‘STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP’: Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and Chinese President Jiang Zemin toast each other in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People, July 18, 2000. Although the Clinton administration has long boasted of its “strategic partnership” with Russia, the Russian government unmistakably disavowed any such relationship in its authoritative *Foreign Policy Concept*, approved by President Putin in June 2000. The *Foreign Policy Concept* flatly states that “certain plans relating to establishing new, equitable, and mutually advantageous partnership relations of Russia with the rest of the world”—plans embodied in the 1993 version of the *Concept* approved as President Clinton was taking office—“have not been justified.” To challenge America’s dominance, Russia today cultivates its strategic partnership with the People’s Republic of China—a partnership explicitly targeting American policies and interests around the globe, and founded on increasing both the PRC’s and Russia’s military capabilities against the United States. This is in stark contrast to Russia’s explicitly seeking an alliance and missile defense cooperation with Washington in 1992.



American foreign policy in the 1990s pursued one foreign policy toward Russia and another toward China; neither has been considered in light of the other, and neither has proven successful. ...

Through most of the past seven years, the Clinton administration has seemed almost bent on creating an anti-American community of interest between Moscow and Beijing.

Charles Hill, *Blundering Toward a Second Cold War?*

Although the Clinton administration has long boasted of its “strategic partnership” with Russia, the Russian government unmistakably disavowed any such relationship in its authoritative *Foreign Policy Concept*, approved by President Putin in June 2000. The *Foreign Policy Concept* flatly states that “certain plans relating to establishing new, equitable, and mutually advantageous partnership relations of Russia with the rest of the world”—plans embodied in the 1993 version of the *Concept* approved as President Clinton was taking office—“have not been justified.”

Instead, the June 2000 *Concept* lists first among the threats to Russia “a growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States.” To challenge America’s dominance, Russia today cultivates its strategic partnership with the People’s Republic of China—a partnership explicitly targeting American policies and interests around the globe, and founded on increasing both the PRC’s and Russia’s military capabilities against the United States. This is in stark contrast to Russia’s explicitly seeking an alliance and missile defense cooperation with Washington in 1992.

Russia and the PRC have rapidly increased the level of their cooperation in opposing American plans for national and theater missile defense, NATO enlargement, U.S. security cooperation with Taiwan, and U.S. opposition to the North Korean missile program.

Even more troubling is the dramatically-increasing scale and sophistication of Russian arms and technology transfers to the PRC: *Sovremenny*-class destroyers equipped with Moskit surface-to-surface missiles, state-of-the-art weapons systems specifically designed to destroy U.S. aircraft carriers; ultra-quiet *Kilo*-class

diesel submarines; Su-30 long-range attack aircraft and MiG-31 long-range fighter-interceptors; AWACS radar systems; T-80U tanks; state-of-the-art Russian surface-to-air missiles; and rocket engines, as well as many other weapons systems and technologies. Negotiations are reportedly underway for still more sophisticated weapons systems and technology. There are also reports of far-reaching Russian military commitments to the PRC in the event of hostilities over Taiwan.

After over \$20 billion in U.S. assistance and eight years of mismanagement by the Clinton administration, the U.S.-Russian relationship is in tatters, characterized by deep and growing hostility and divergent perceptions of international realities and intentions. The Sino-Russian relationship, by contrast, has grown steadily stronger, and has steadily assumed a more overtly anti-American aspect.

Because of Russia’s current and future importance, the consequences of this failure are difficult to overstate. They almost certainly exceed the consequences of the American defeat in Vietnam, and the fall of the pro-American government in Iran. To find a foreign policy failure of comparable scope and significance, it would be necessary to imagine that after eight years of American effort and billions of dollars of Marshall Plan aid, public opinion in Western Europe had become solidly anti-American, and Western European governments were vigorously collaborating in a “strategic partnership” directed against the United States.

First Principles

Relations between Russia and the People’s Republic of China and the triangular relationship those countries share with the United States are a critical element in U.S.-Russia policy.



Consolidation of a monolithic Sino-Soviet alliance after Mao Zedong’s victory in 1949 was regarded in the United States as one of the gravest strategic reverses ever suffered by the United States, and was directly responsible for the Korean War. Dissolution of the Sino-Soviet alliance bought invaluable breathing room for freedom in Asia and Europe during the 1960s. Particularly after President Nixon’s opening to China in 1970, the United States made it a priority to prevent Sino-Soviet strategic collaboration against the West throughout the remainder of the Cold War. America’s success in the 1970s and 1980s in restoring a strategic equilibrium in Eurasia through such “triangular diplomacy” was an historic triumph for the United States.

In light of current Russian suspicions about American policy, it is crucial to specify that even at the height of the Cold War this policy was defensive in nature: neither the United States nor its allies desired to dominate Eurasia, either directly or by fostering hostility between the Soviet Union and the PRC on the principle of divide and conquer. Neither has America, then or now, maintained any territorial claims on Russia or China. Rather, long-standing U.S. policy has been designed to prevent any great power from dominating Eurasia, either alone or in combination. As former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has written:

Geopolitically, America is an island off the shores of the large landmass of Eurasia, whose resources and population far exceed those of the United States. The domination by a single power of either of Eurasia’s two principal spheres—Europe or Asia—remains a good definition of strategic danger for America, Cold War or no Cold War.¹

The consistency of this approach can be seen in American policy during the mid-20th century Chinese civil war, when the United States sought to avert the victory of Chinese Communists at that time closely allied with the Soviet Union; in American policy before and during the Second World War, when the United States fought to prevent Axis domination of Eurasia; and as far back as America’s Far Eastern policy at the close of the 19th century, when the United States sought to preserve Chinese territorial integrity and forestall the efforts of any of the great powers to dominate China either economically or politically.²

In the 21st century, in the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States continues to have a strong interest in cordial relations between Russia and China. War between those great powers would affect critical American allies throughout the Asia-Pacific region, tens of thousands of U.S. troops in the region, and global security and prosperity. Even continued military tension between them would divert the energies of both societies away from economic modernization, and would strengthen the most retrograde political forces in each country.³

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union fundamentally altered the dynamic of both NATO’s and China’s relations with Moscow, by ending the direct Soviet military threat to both. But it did not alter the critical imperative of preventing great power dominance over Eurasia, particularly if such dominance is exerted in the form of a strategic partnership directed against American interests.

In pursuing such a policy the United States enjoys several inherent advantages, including more extensive economic and cultural ties with Russia and China than either of those nations shares with the other. Moreover, although the United States projects its power in both the Pacific and Europe, it is not a territorial sovereign anywhere on the Eurasian landmass. America has thereby avoided territorial conflicts such as the centuries-old disputes between Moscow and Beijing that have frequently arisen along their 2,200-mile border.

To these natural advantages must be added the extraordinarily favorable strategic environment in East Asia that the Clinton administration inherited in January 1993. There existed a genuine détente between Russia and the People’s Republic of China that plainly did not extend to military or strategic cooperation against the United States, or its friends and allies. The acute military tension between the Soviet Union and the PRC, which at its height had led to military clashes along the Ussuri River and the Xinjiang frontier in 1969, and large-scale Soviet military exercises along the PRC’s northern border during the 1979 conflict between China and Soviet client Vietnam, had ended. The new Russian Federation had largely removed the offensive military threat that the Soviet Union had posed to the PRC, and that had overshadowed the relationship since the Sino-Soviet split in 1960.⁴





The easing of military tensions between the two countries had begun even before Russia's independence. In 1987, Gorbachev announced a five-year phase-out of the Soviet military presence in Mongolia, which had long been regarded by the PRC government as acutely threatening. In April 1988, the Geneva Accords provided for withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan by 1989, relieving a source of anxiety beyond the PRC's northwestern border. In December 1988, Gorbachev announced at the U.N. a reduction in Soviet conventional forces of 500,000 troops, including 120,000 troops deployed against the PRC. Between 1989 and December 1992, eight rounds of force-reduction talks led to an agreement to reduce troops and offensive weaponry in a zone extending 60 miles on either side of the border.

Agreements in May 1991 and September 1994 delineated virtually the entire Sino-Russian border. A Joint Declaration signed during Yeltsin's December 1992 visit to Beijing, renouncing the use of force against each other, and forswearing any "military and political alliances directed against the other party, or ... detrimental to the state sovereignty and security interests of the other party,"⁵ formally normalized the cross-border relationship.

Russian arms sales to the PRC, which began with the June 1990 Moscow visit of Gen. Liu Huaqing, Vice Chairman of the PRC's Central Military Commission, were strictly limited by Russia's concerns over enhancing the PRC's military posture vis-à-vis Russia itself. In 1992, Russian arms sales contracts with the PRC were less than \$2 billion.⁶ Despite President Yeltsin's claim at the December 1992 Beijing summit that Russia would sell the PRC "the most sophisticated armaments and weapons,"⁷ Russian arms sales to the PRC during this period were subject to comparatively strict qualitative controls. The sales appear to have been predominantly motivated by economic rather than strategic considerations, and were part of a broader effort to transform the former Soviet Union's unprofitable, policy-based arms transfer program into a profitable, economically-motivated element of Russian trade.

By the end of this process, in December 1992, the triangular Washington-Beijing-Moscow relationship was as favorable to the United States, the West, and international peace and security as it ever has been.

Cordial, normalized relations between Moscow and Beijing had been established for the first time in three decades, but not at the expense of the United States or its allies and friends.

Indeed, Moscow clearly sought much closer military and political ties with the West than with the PRC, as outlined in Chapter 2.⁸ The PRC's support for the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev, contrasted with American opposition to the plotters, remained a vivid memory in Moscow for several years.

The Inverted Triangle: The Advent of Sino-Russian Cooperation Against the United States

By 1999, U.S. relations with both Moscow and Beijing had changed dramatically, reaching their lowest point in many years.⁹ In both capitals thousands of people took part in violent anti-American demonstrations in front of the respective U.S. Embassies—a poignant contrast with events a few years before, when thousands of Russians had paraded through Moscow with American flags, and tens of thousands of residents of Beijing had gathered in Tiananmen Square around the American-inspired statue of the Goddess of Democracy.

The contrast between the excitement and enthusiasm with which a joint session of Congress greeted President Yeltsin in June 17, 1992, and the indifference and hostility shown by the Duma toward President Clinton on June 5, 2000, is similarly dramatic. This was the scene in Washington on June 17, 1992:

Yeltsin's ringing denunciation of communism and call for U.S. assistance in rebuilding Russia's shattered economy drew one of the most enthusiastic responses ever seen in Congress for a foreign leader. Billed in advance as the political highlight of the first formal U.S.-Russian summit since the collapse of communism, the speech was interrupted by nine standing ovations and chants of "Boris, Boris" from the packed House chamber.¹⁰

Eight years later almost to the day, Clinton was in Moscow to address the Duma. He was received with a mixture of indifference, hostility, and contempt:



When Mr. Clinton addressed the Duma ... only about one-third of the legislators bothered to show up. The rest of the audience was composed of staffers and others dragooned into filling the seats.¹¹

Most of the applause for Clinton’s speech came from the large entourage of American officials who followed the president into the chamber, to the chagrin of the Russian audience. Both inside and outside the chamber, the president was jeered and insulted.¹²

A few weeks later, President Putin was warmly received in Beijing, reviewing goose-stepping soldiers of the People’s Liberation Army in the square where the Goddess of Democracy had once stood.

1993-95: From Sino-Russian Détente to ‘Partnership’

China is the most important state for us.

President Yeltsin, remarks at a foreign policy meeting in the Kremlin, June 1995¹³

Russia’s turn toward the PRC, like its growing hostility toward Washington, was rooted in the setbacks experienced by American-sponsored “reforms” and “reformers” during this period. The progressive discrediting of the Clinton administration economic policies invested the “Chinese model of development” and the PRC leadership with new prestige. As early as December 1992, Yeltsin himself had praised “the Chinese tactic of reform” during his visit to Beijing,¹⁴ and this sort of praise became steadily louder and more ubiquitous as Russia’s economic turmoil showed no sign of ending.

Just as Russian “westernizers” who favored domestic reform tended toward a relatively pro-Western foreign policy, so too the opponents of democracy and free enterprise at home tended to favor an orientation toward American rivals or enemies abroad. The most powerful of these by far was the Communist government in Beijing.¹⁵

Several witnesses who testified before the Advisory Group observed another factor that encouraged Moscow’s turn toward Beijing: the perception among the Russian elite that while the PRC had adopted a far more anti-American foreign policy than

Russia, it was benefiting from far greater trade and investment. This perception intensified after the Clinton administration’s well-publicized 1994 decision to reverse its earlier linkage of trade and human rights. Thereafter, many Russians believed, the Clinton administration directed more high-level attention to the PRC, accorded it priority over Russia in trade negotiations and admission to the World Trade Organization, and steadily increased the disparity in American economic ties.

The perceived contrast between America’s aggressive economic engagement with the PRC and its virtual disengagement from Russia strengthened those in Russia—and in the PRC—who argued that a harder line against the United States in the foreign policy and security spheres does not hurt in the sphere of economics and trade, and possibly might help.¹⁶

Finally, the protracted failure of the Russian economy made foreign sales of weapons and military technology increasingly vital for a whole range of actors—from the Russian government as a whole, the armed forces, and the military-industrial complex down to individual ministries, industries, factories, military units, and research institutions, and even to individual bureaucrats, company officials, officers, soldiers, and scientists. The PRC—“one of the most solvent nations in the world,” as Yeltsin remarked at the December 1992 Sino-Russian summit in Beijing¹⁷—was a potential key customer for these highly motivated sellers.¹⁸

The change in tone of Sino-Russian relations was apparent even before the September 1994 Moscow summit between Yeltsin and Jiang.¹⁹ The Sino-Russian Joint Statement issued there described the relationship between Russia and the PRC as “a constructive partnership.” The same statement pledged opposition to “hegemony, power politics, and the establishment of antagonistic political, military, and economic blocs”—a thinly veiled reference to the United States that would become steadily more strident at each successive Sino-Russian meeting.

By the May 1995 summit meeting, President Jiang would announce that Russia and the PRC had “decided to establish and develop a constructive Sino-Russian partnership that would strategically gear us toward the next century.”²⁰ From then on, the formulation “strategic partnership” would be used to describe the relationship.





1996-98: Solidifying the Russian-PRC 'Strategic Partnership'

[T]he communique [issued by Yeltsin and Jiang in Shanghai in April 1996] represents nothing less than a declaration of independence by both Moscow and Beijing from the strategic triangle that had evolved in the two decades since Richard Nixon's opening to China. A basic premise of that triangle was that the United States place itself closer to both Beijing and Moscow than either was to the other, achieving a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis each. This new Shanghai communique symbolizes the demise of that process and a deliberate effort by both China and Russia to reduce America's options in Asia.

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger
May 14, 1996²¹

*There is no such pair
in the world.*

President Yeltsin, remarks on Sino-Russian relations at the April 1996 Beijing summit²²

The transition between a limited Sino-Russian détente and the new “strategic partnership” reached a critical juncture in 1996-98, when a number of factors emerged to crystallize a far-reaching change in Moscow’s relations with Beijing and Washington. Beijing viewed the replacement of Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev by the veteran Communist diplomat Yevgeny Primakov in 1996 as a repudiation of Russia’s heretofore “bankrupt pro-Western foreign policy.”²³

Chinese and Russian officials ostentatiously paraded the new understanding between Beijing and Moscow at their summit meetings during those years. At the September 1994 summit in Russia, Jiang Zemin had cautiously stated that “[n]either confrontation nor alliance corresponds to the fundamental interests of the two peoples.”²⁴ But by the April 1996 summit in Beijing, Russia and the PRC pledged “their resolve to develop a strategic

partnership of equality, mutual confidence and mutual coordination toward the 21st century.”²⁵

Ironically, the initiative for this characterization came not from the PRC, although the U.S. and the PRC had just endured the March 1996 military confrontation in the Taiwan Strait. Instead, it was the result of the personal initiative of the Clinton administration’s partner President Yeltsin—a striking example of the failure of the Clinton troika to capitalize on their personal relationships with the Yeltsin administration, especially given the strenuous efforts the Clinton administration was then making for his re-election.²⁶

At the April 1996 summit, Russia and the PRC also institutionalized semiannual summit meetings, created a new Moscow-Beijing hotline, and pledged to further develop both military exchanges and “cooperation on military technology.” While approvingly noting a supposed trend toward a “multipolar” world, the Joint Communique also acidly cited the continuation of “[h]egemonism, power politics, and repeated imposition of pressures on other countries,” as well as “new manifestations of bloc politics”²⁷—points repeated and embellished in subsequent Sino-Russian statements and documents.

In November 1996, Russian Foreign Minister Primakov stated unequivocally that “[t]he stronger China becomes, the more peace and stability in the region will benefit.”²⁸

Their Own Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission

During Premier Li Peng’s visit to Moscow from December 26-28, 1996, Russia and the PRC held the first meeting of their own version of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, complete with standing subcommittees devoted to transportation, energy, trade, and economic and scientific cooperation.²⁹ By elaborately duplicating the Gore-Chernomyrdin structure for its relationship with the PRC, the Russian government went out of its way to erase the notion that Washington was its preferred interlocutor. The inaugural meeting of the Commission committed both sides to a highly ambitious—and ultimately unrealistic—target of \$20 billion in trade by 2000.

An extremely public demonstration of the change in Sino-Russian relations played out over the winter of 1996-97. The Russian Defense Minister, Igor Rodionov,



who had included the PRC among potentially threatening countries during a military conference of the Commonwealth of Independent States on Christmas Day in 1996,³⁰ was rebuked publicly by both the Russian Foreign Ministry and President Yeltsin’s spokesman. In January 1997, Rodionov sent an official message to the Russian armed forces praising Sino-Russian relations, and disavowing his earlier statement.³¹

At the April 1997 Moscow summit, both presidents went to the unusual length of publishing a “Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Formation of a New International Order.” It reaffirmed that Russian-Chinese relations aimed at “strategic cooperation.”³² Although the references to the United States and NATO are characteristically opaque, the declaration is a concise brief against what Moscow and Beijing conceived of as American policy.

Such an explicit itemization of Russian criticisms of the United States should have been viewed as a striking development in a year when the “Dream Team” of westernizing reformers was in power in Moscow,³³ and just one month before Russia and NATO signed the “Founding Act” in Paris.³⁴ But neither the Clinton troika nor the administration as a whole seemed capable of adjusting their policies to fit the rapidly changing situation.

By the time Clinton met Yeltsin at the funereal September 1998 summit, immediately in the wake of Russia’s complete economic collapse, the would-be American “strategic partnership” with Moscow had become a hollowed-out shell. The thorough discrediting of the U.S.-inspired Russian economic “reforms” and the now-fundamental U.S.-Russian disagreements over virtually the entire spectrum of major foreign policy issues—Iraq, Iran, the Balkans, and NATO—had left the relationship in tatters. Though the summit documents and statements continued ritually to allude to a Russian-American “partnership,”³⁵ they were unable to paper over explicit disagreements on these topics.³⁶ The disagreements went unresolved, and had no analogues in the burgeoning Sino-Russian partnership.

1999-2000: ‘A New Stage of Development’ in the Strategic Partnership

Worse was to follow. As NATO military intervention in Kosovo in 1999 sparked a free-fall in U.S. rela-

tions with both Russia and the PRC, Russian and Chinese threats and denunciations of the United States that were unprecedented since the Cold War³⁷ were surpassed only by weapons transfers of extraordinary scope and sensitivity from Russia to the PRC.

At the end of NATO negotiations with Milosevic—though not before—Russia cooperated to some extent with NATO.³⁸ Nonetheless, neither Yeltsin nor Russia’s foreign and defense policy makers were prepared to forget Kosovo. Instead, they appear to have concluded that Russia could more safely and appropriately respond half a world away, by strengthening the security relationship with Beijing. The PRC government, outraged by NATO’s accidental bombing of Beijing’s Embassy in Belgrade, was also thoroughly willing to deepen the “strategic partnership.”

During a lengthy visit to Russia in June 1999, General Zhang Wannian, Deputy Chairman of the PRC’s Central Military Commission, spoke by telephone with the ailing President Yeltsin and met in Moscow with Prime Minister Stepashin, Defense Minister Sergeyev, and then-FSB head and Security Council Secretary Vladimir Putin. Stepashin told Zhang that his father had been a Soviet military adviser in the PRC: “My father served with the navy and helped build China’s armed forces. Now, meeting you, I feel I am continuing my father’s cause.” Putin told Zhang, “Highest-level ties are developing very fruitfully. . . . Russia’s and China’s interests in the present international circumstances largely coincide.”³⁹

Gen. Zhang was given unprecedented access to Russian military facilities. He visited air force and air defense command posts, a Strategic Rocket Forces installation near Novosibirsk, the Pacific Fleet’s commanders at Vladivostok, and the commanders of the Far Eastern Military District at Khabarovsk. A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman told the press that during Gen. Zhang’s visit to Novosibirsk, he was shown a Topol SS-25 intercontinental ballistic missile and given an explanation of its potential for overcoming the defenses of a “potential foe.”⁴⁰

At Vladivostok, Gen. Zhang told the press that Russo-Chinese “military-technical cooperation has the best prospects” among Sino-Russian initiatives. The upcoming summit in the fall, he said, would probably further strengthen such bilateral relations.⁴¹

Gen. Zhang’s prediction was amply justified. The





PRC-Russia summit in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek in August 1999, which also included the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, was a debacle for United States relations with both the PRC and Russia. Going far beyond earlier formulations, Yeltsin bluntly told the press, "I am in fighting form, ready for battle, especially with Westerners. . . . The current summit is taking place in conditions of an aggravated international situation. Some nations are trying to build a world that would be convenient only for them, ignoring that the world is multi-polar."⁴²

Yeltsin and Russia were once again more assertive in denouncing American policy than the PRC itself—a further striking example of the failure of the Clinton administration's reliance on a personal relationship with Yeltsin.⁴³

At the same time, the Sino-Russian commission for economic cooperation, headed by Deputy Premier Ilya Klebanov, the point-man for Russia's military-industrial complex, was proving itself considerably more potent than the Gore-Stepashin Commission. It was busy preparing a cornucopia of Russian weapons sales for the planned Russian visit to Beijing to meet with Zhu Rongji, Li Peng, and Zhang Wannian.

The Russian delegation included Alexei Ogaryev, head of the Rosvooruzhenie arms-export monopoly, and Yuri Koptev, the head of the Russian Space Agency. President Jiang, newly returned from the Bishkek summit, met the delegation on the final day of their visit. According to Deputy Premier Klebanov, the Russian delegation brought "several new, very serious suggestions, including on military and technological cooperation . . . Russia and China are strategic partners."⁴⁴

Col. Gen. Leonid Ivashov, the head of the Defense Ministry's International Cooperation Department and an outspoken critic of Washington and NATO, promised the press that "[m]ilitary cooperation between our two countries will considerably expand in all aspects soon."⁴⁵

Ivashov was as good as his word. Press accounts reported that Presidents Yeltsin and Jiang had already agreed on a \$1 billion purchase of at least two *Akula*-class nuclear-powered attack submarines at the Bishkek Summit.⁴⁶ In Beijing, a \$2 billion contract to purchase Su-30MKK long-range fighters was announced.⁴⁷ At the last Yeltsin-Jiang summit in Beijing in December 1999, the two presidents repeat-

ed a litany of anti-American charges, and hailed the "coordination" of their foreign policies in opposition to the American government.⁴⁸ By the end of 1999, CIA Director Tenet was reportedly ordering a "crash effort" to assess Sino-Russian ties.⁴⁹

These developments continued in 2000 under the incoming Putin administration. The large Russian delegation to the July 2000 Beijing summit was a who's who of the Russian military-industrial complex. It included Defense Minister Sergeyev; Foreign Minister Ivanov; Rosvooruzhenie chief Ogaryev; Atomic Energy Minister Yevgeny Adamov; and Deputy Premier Klebanov, the government lead for arms sales. The collective presence of such powerful figures was eloquent testimony to the pervasive military orientation of the Sino-Russian partnership.⁵⁰

The "Beijing Declaration by the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation" issued at that summit is uncompromising in tone:

China and Russia support in the international arena forces of peace, stability, development, and cooperation, defy hegemonism, power politics and group politics, and oppose attempts to amend the basic principles of international law, to threaten others by force or to interfere in other countries' internal affairs. . . .

The further and comprehensive development of economic, trade, scientific and technological, and military-related technological cooperation between China and Russia is vital for the expansion of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership of cooperation based on equality and trust.⁵¹

The July 2000 Sino-Russian summit in Beijing represented, in the words of President Jiang, "a new stage of development" in the strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing.⁵² It marked the evolution of the Russian-PRC relationship into an explicitly anti-American political and military compact. The summit dispelled rumors that Russia was planning to curtail military technology transfers to the PRC,⁵³ just as it went far toward allaying Beijing's uncertainty over the Russian proposal for cooperation with NATO on theater missile defense research and deployment by making clear that the proposal was not intended to protect either the United States or Northeast Asia. And the



AP Photo/Sergei Karpukhin, POOL



THE TIES THAT BIND: President Putin, right, introduced President Jiang, center, to Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev during a welcoming ceremony in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, July 18, 2000. The two leaders discussed increasing military cooperation and their mutual opposition to U.S. proposals for an anti-missile defense.

summit made explicit that the core of the Russo-Chinese strategic partnership was now opposition to American interests around the world.

As with the deterioration in U.S.-Russian relations, the strengthening of the Sino-Russian relationship from 1993 to the present is clearly traceable in the Russian and PRC foreign policy and security doctrines. The January 1993 *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* discussion of Asia began with the United States:

For Russia, the time has become objectively ripe for close cooperation with the United States in the Asia-Pacific region, with whom we are today brought together by adherence to singular democratic values and an unconditional interest in stability in the region. It would be expedient for us to share responsibility with the United States for the provision of security in the Asia-Pacific region, to

become strategic partners here. For these purposes, we should reorient our military potential in the direction of ensuring regional stability and creating reliable guarantees of common security together with the United States.⁵⁴

The immediately following section on the PRC, by contrast, posited much more distant relations:

A realistic transformation of the nature of relations with China must consider the differences in ideology and the socio-political systems of the two countries, and must also proceed from the principle of no alternative for Russia other than good neighborly intensive and substantial relations with it. In the past, confrontation with the PRC cost the U.S.S.R. (as well as China) much too dearly, and was one of the main reasons for our alienation from the region.⁵⁵

Notably, the 1993 *Concept* stated that “[i]n spheres of military-technical cooperation, we should measure our commercial interests against the task of maintaining stability in the region and *not permitting the re-creation of a situation from the cold war times, when the United States armed Taiwan, while we armed Communist China.*”⁵⁶

By contrast, the revised *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* issued in June 2000 states that:

The concurrence of the fundamental approaches of Russia and the PRC to the key issues of world politics is one of the basic mainstays of regional and global stability. Russia seeks to develop mutually advantageous cooperation with China in all areas. The main task is, as before, bringing the scale of economic interaction in conformity with the level of political relations.⁵⁷

Russian foreign and security policy doctrine is now virtually coextensive with that of the People's Republic of China. The PRC's July 1998 *White Paper on China's National Defense* stated that

hegemonism and power politics [Moscow's and Beijing's code words for U.S. policy] remain the main source of threats to world peace and stability; Cold War mentality and its influence still have a certain currency, and the enlargement of military blocs and the



strengthening of military alliances have added factors of instability to international security; some countries, by relying on their military advantages, pose military threats to other countries, even resorting to armed intervention.⁵⁸

As in the Russian documents, the immediacy and malevolence of the American threat is even more dramatically portrayed by the PRC in 2000. The PRC Foreign Ministry's formal presentations depict a much more threatening international environment, animated by the United States. "China's View on the Development of Multi-polarity" bemoans that while the international situation on the whole has become more relaxed since the end of the Cold War, nonetheless

over a period of time, world forces have become increasingly out of balance, hegemonism and power politics have further developed, and regional crises have occurred frequently. This shows that the move toward multi-polarization of the world is a tortuous and long process. At present, by virtue of its economic, technological, and military advantages, an individual country is pursuing a new "gunboat policy" in contravention of the United Nations Charter.⁵⁹

Thus, the practice and doctrine of both PRC and Russian foreign and security policy are increasingly converging. Whereas Russia accorded a privileged position to the United States in 1992, it has now reversed field. From practical and doctrinal equidistance by the mid-1990s (symbolized by the creation of a mirror-image Sino-Russian joint commission to counterbalance the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission), Russian practice and theory by 2000 unquestionably had established a privileged relationship with the PRC, and had adopted the PRC's view of the United States as a threat.⁶⁰

As disturbing as these developments are for U.S. national interests and security, there have been persistent reports of much more far-reaching covert cooperation and agreements between the PRC and Russia. According to the *Washington Post* in February 2000, "Western experts and Asian diplomats say that over the last year, and especially since the Kosovo war last spring, Moscow's security ties have surpassed the sim-

ple cash-for-weapons transactions that characterized the relationship for years and are evolving into something more complex and potentially far-reaching."⁶¹

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on July 19, 2000, Prof. Stephen Blank of the U.S. Army War College surveyed reports beginning in 1995 and extending through 2000 of explicit Russian solicitations of a formal military-political alliance with the PRC, together with more recent reports that the PRC is warming to such proposals. According to Prof. Blank,

on July 12, 2000 at least two Chinese language sources, one from New York, reporting from Taipei, and another from Hong Kong, as well as the *Singapore Straits Times*, stated that President [Putin] told President Jiang Zemin at the July 5 Dushanbe Summit of the Shanghai Five ... that in the event of a war with Taiwan, should the U.S. Seventh Fleet sail to Taiwan's rescue, he had ordered Russia's Pacific Fleet ... to block our forces from getting to Taiwan.⁶²

Prof. Blank further noted there was substantial additional evidence that conflicts with such reports.⁶³ He summarized that:

while it would be rash to conclude that an alliance in the classical sense is on until we have further confirmation, these reports should ring alarm bells in the White House, intelligence community, and the Pentagon.⁶⁴

Today, Russia and the PRC coordinate their policies across the spectrum of sensitive foreign policy and security issues. Both vehemently oppose U.S. national and theater missile defense programs, and U.S. efforts to amend the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Both oppose NATO expansion, despite the evident lack of a PRC national-security interest in Central Europe. Both bitterly denounce the sanctions and U.S. use of force against Iraq. Both oppose NATO policy in Kosovo. Both reject any outside scrutiny of their human rights abuses in Chechnya, Xinjiang, and Tibet. Moscow supports Beijing's position on Taiwan, and Beijing supports Russia's war in Chechnya.

After eight years of Clinton policies designed to woo both Moscow and Beijing, the United States is the odd man out.



Arms Sales: The ‘Glue’ of the Sino-Russian Partnership

From its inception, the new Sino-Russian partnership has been built on Russian transfers of arms and military technology to the PRC—transfers seen by Russia as serving both economic and political goals.⁶⁵ Steady increases in the size and quality of these transfers have accompanied and enabled each improvement in the “strategic partnership”:

In 1991-96 Russia sold China an estimated \$1 billion a year worth of weapons and related technologies. That figure doubled to \$2 billion a year by 1997. ... In 1999 the two governments doubled that military assistance package for a second time. Thus there is now a five-year program through 2004 of \$20 billion worth of such transfers. ...

Every year 8-12 military delegations of various services will conduct mutual visits to the other country to promote bilateral military ties. Every year 1,200-2,000 Chinese military students will study in Russian military academies. Both governments’ armed forces will conduct joint exercises at an appropriate time. ...

A mechanism for the exchange of military intelligence will be established and there will be a mechanism for cooperation in the manufacture of naval, air, and air defense weapons. And given the scope of other exchanges in technology and know-how it would seem that still more cooperation is in the offing.⁶⁶

Sales of increasingly advanced armaments remain, as one senior People’s Liberation Army official at the PRC’s Moscow Embassy recently stated, “the glue” binding bilateral Sino-Russian relations.⁶⁷ The sharp increase in the quantity of Russian weapons and technology transfers has accompanied a progressive easing of qualitative restrictions on Russian exports to the PRC of weapons that most threaten the United States.

Military Aircraft

In 1992 Russia began delivering Su-27 air superiority fighters to the PRC. By 1994 it reportedly agreed to sell the PRC the Su-30MKK long-range attack variant of the Su-27, capable of carrying twice as much armament. The Su-30MKK is capable of carrying the most advanced Russian short- and medium-range air-

to-air missiles. It has also been reported that the PRC will be acquiring the newly-developed Su-32 tactical bomber once it is made available for export in 2002.⁶⁸

By Yeltsin’s April 1996 Beijing summit, Russia and the PRC had reached a licensing agreement for PRC production of the Su-27.⁶⁹ Such licensing agreements transfer far more technological capability than off-the-shelf weapons sales.

Beijing has also reportedly ordered Tu-22M Backfire bombers⁷⁰—long-range supersonic strategic bombers capable of performing precision anti-ship missions, as well as conventional and nuclear strikes. The Backfire’s potential use as an intercontinental bomber made it the subject of rancorous arms-control negotiations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Its capabilities against U.S. carrier battle groups would arguably be of still greater interest to the PRC.⁷¹

The PRC is also reportedly negotiating to acquire Su-37 long-range attack aircraft—arguably the world’s most capable jet fighter.⁷²

In 1997 the PRC acquired the license to produce MiG-31 long-range fighter-interceptors—the most capable Russian interceptor, and the first with an effective look down-shoot down capability.⁷³

The PRC is seeking to acquire an AWACS radar system from Russia in the wake of Israel’s withdrawal from a planned sale. It has already acquired Ilyushin Il-76 transport aircraft suitable for carrying the AWACS system.⁷⁴

In late 1997, the Russian firm Phazotron contracted to provide the PRC with improved Zhuk radars for the PRC’s new F-8II fighter, and for the Chengdu J-10 fighter.⁷⁵

Warships

During then-Premier Li Peng’s December 1996 visit to Moscow, the PLA Navy ordered two *Sovremenny*-class destroyers equipped with Moskit (“Mosquito”) SS-N-22 surface-to-surface missiles. These are weapons specifically designed to destroy U.S. aircraft carriers and their AEGIS escort vessels. The sale represented “the first export of several state-of-the-art Russian weapons systems, including not only the ship but also the supersonic Moskit anti-ship missile ... new electronic warfare systems and other naval technology.”⁷⁶ According to *Jane’s Intelligence Review*:





DESIGNED TO DESTROY U.S. CARRIERS: During then-Premier Li Peng's December 1996 visit to Moscow, the PRC Navy ordered two *Sovremenny*-class destroyers equipped with Moskit ("Mosquito") SS-N-22 surface-to-surface missiles—weapons specifically designed to destroy U.S. aircraft carriers and their AEGIS escort vessels.

The *Sovremennys* will also provide the [PLA Navy] with its first viable medium range air-defense system in the form of the Mach 3 SA-N-7, which has a 25 km range. The new warships also have a strong anti-submarine armament, including a bow-mounted sonar, torpedo tubes, rocket launchers and a Russian Ka-28 'Helix' helicopter.⁷⁷

The PRC's purchase of this anti-U.S. carrier weapons system followed U.S. deployment of two aircraft carrier task forces to the Taiwan Strait during the missile firings that Beijing ordered during Taiwan's 1996 presidential elections. The first of the Russian-built destroyers, the *Hangzhou*, arrived in the PRC in February 2000; the second is expected to arrive in November 2000.⁷⁸

In March 2000, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov announced that "China is interested in buying not two but a larger number of Russian destroyers equipped with Moskit missiles."⁷⁹ The acquisition of these vessels and their missile systems provides a "vital upgrade" to the PLA Navy in its continuing effort to erode the U.S. Navy's ability to assist Taiwan:

This class of destroyer is equipped with modern, well-proven Russian weapons and sensors and has been successful in Russian service. ... The new missiles pose a potential threat both to Taiwan's recently modernized navy and to any U.S. carrier battle groups that may be deployed to the Taiwan Straits. ... The addition of the *Sovremenny* destroyers to the Chinese order of battle should substantially reduce the nation's susceptibility to such defense diplomacy. ... The *Sovremenny*

destroyers represent a quantum leap in [PLA Navy] capabilities. ...⁸⁰

In a July 2000 hearing on the PRC's military capabilities, the House Armed Services Committee was informed that "American military sources have stated that the Moskit is possibly the most lethal anti-ship weapon in the world, and that the U.S. Navy has nothing that can stop it."⁸¹

Submarines

Russia has sold the PLA Navy four *Kilo*-class submarines, with deliveries beginning in early 1995. The Director of Naval Intelligence testified in April 1999: "The last two diesel submarines ordered from Russia were upgraded variants of the *Kilo* design. This variant is one of the quietest diesel submarines in the world and was previously only seen in service with the Russian Navy."⁸² The PRC reportedly intends to obtain licensing rights for construction of *Kilo*-class submarines, as well.⁸³

The Defense Department's *Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China for 2000* notes that this acquisition "reportedly has provided the [PLA Navy] with access to technology in quieting and sonar development, as well as weapons systems." The *Annual Report* further notes that the PRC's most advanced indigenously-built diesel attack submarine, the *SONG*, reportedly incorporates technologies acquired from both Russia and Western countries, and that "Beijing's next-generation nuclear submarine programs are expected to reflect a significant amount of Russian influence."⁸⁴

Russia reportedly is also prepared to sell the PRC a conventionally-armed version of its *Shkval-E* weapon, designed to protect Russian ballistic missile submarines.⁸⁵



Armor

Russia approved the sale of 50 T-72 main battle tanks to the PRC’s People’s Liberation Army in 1992. By 1995 it had agreed to upgrade the PLA to T-80U tanks, and by 1999 Russia was discussing the sale of T-90C tanks.⁸⁶

Beyond-Visual-Range Air-to-Air Missiles

It has been reported that in the near future the PRC will begin receiving shipments of the Vympel R-77 medium-range air-to-air missile, dubbed the “AMRAAMSKI” because of its similarity in capabilities to the American AIM-120 AMRAAM. The R-77’s estimated range of approximately 55 miles makes it a fully functional beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile. This missile is useful in attacking existing U.S. fighters such as the F-16 and F-15, and will challenge the superiority of even newer U.S. aircraft such as the F-22 and F/A-18E/F. According to one analyst, the result of the PLA’s acquisition of Vympel R-77 missiles is that “[t]he Chinese air force will pose a greater threat to Taiwan after its acquisition of one of the best [air-to-air-missiles] in the world.”⁸⁷

Surface-to-Air Missiles

According to the Defense Department’s *Annual Report* for 2000, in recent years the PRC has embarked on an aggressive program to procure state-of-the-art Russian surface-to-air missile systems and related technologies. To date, limited numbers of Russia’s SA-10b, the SA-10c, and SA-15 SAMs have been sold to the PRC.⁸⁸

Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles

Either or both of the PRC’s two new land-mobile ICBMs, the DF-31 and DF-41, “may be armed with multiple independently targetable warheads (MIRVs) based on technology provided by Russia and illicitly acquired from the United States.”⁸⁹ In 1995 the Russian Ministry of Defense violated the Missile Technology Control Regime by selling upper-stage rocket engines to the PRC.⁹⁰ It has been reported that in 1995, Russia was preparing to sell heavy SS-18 “Satan” ICBMs to the PRC.⁹¹

Russia and the PRC are reportedly close to agreement on joint use of Russia’s GLONASS satellite-based global positioning system. This would aid the PRC military in targeting its rockets and air-to-air missiles.⁹²



FROM RUSSIA TO THE PRC: Russia’s 50-ton T-90 Main Battle Tank is the most advanced armor unit deployed by the Russian Army. Russia approved sales of 50 T-72 Main Battle Tanks to the PRC’s People’s Liberation Army in 1992, in 1995 it approved orders for T-80U tanks, and by 1999 Russia was discussing selling T-90C tanks to the PRC.

Russia and the PRC are also exploring the possibility of cooperating on a ballistic missile defense—an ironic form of collaboration, given the two nations’ outspoken opposition to U.S. missile defense efforts.⁹³

Military Technology

In addition to arms transfers and licensing agreements, Russia has transferred significant defense technology and know-how to the PRC:

Perhaps more serious than Russia’s sale of military hardware to China is the transfer of production technologies. China and Russia signed a memorandum on defense technology cooperation in 1996 in which Russia agreed to assist China’s development of new weapons systems. . . .

China has also attracted a significant number . . . of Russian scientists to work in China’s defense industry. These elements of China’s military relationship have long-term implications for China’s overall military modernization program in that they may facilitate a comprehensive upgrading of Chinese defense research, development, and production capabilities.⁹⁴

The PRC’s arms acquisitions from Russia have multiple rationales:



First, they are endeavoring to fill pressing near-term military needs. Second, and perhaps more importantly, however, they are attempting to acquire advanced military and military-related know-how. The foreign purchases also represent hedges against the failure of indigenous development programs.⁹⁵

The Clinton Administration 'Welcomes' Russian-PRC Military Cooperation

Necessarily attempting to put the best face on the unraveling of its Russia policy, the Clinton administration has affected to be unconcerned by the Sino-Russian strategic partnership, or the arms sales that have undergirded it. Indeed, in May 1998, Walter B. Slocombe, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, went so far as to say that, "far from seeing a threat to U.S. interests ... we welcome it, as a step toward Russia being a constructive partner in the region."⁹⁶

In July 1998, Ambassador Stephen Sestanovich stated that "[t]o date, Russian arms sales to China have not significantly improved China's military capabilities." Notwithstanding the PRC's well-known hard currency reserves, Sestanovich further opined that "is far from clear that China will be willing or able to pay for significant quantities of additional weaponry."⁹⁷

When asked if the Clinton administration shared our East Asian allies' concern that the PRC-Russian strategic partnership was a threat to peace and stability, he replied:

[N]o, we do not share that assessment, but agree that we must remain watchful. Both Russia and China have explicitly declared that their improved relationship is not directed against the U.S. The U.S. supports the warming in relations between Beijing and Moscow.⁹⁸

Likewise, when asked In February 2000 about the implications for U.S. security of Russian arms sales to the PRC, and whether the U.S. has yet expressed any opposition to them to Moscow, Secretary of State Albright evaded both inquiries in her reply for the record:

While China's purchase of two guided missile destroyers will clearly improve its naval capa-

bilities, the Department of Defense has indicated that it does not pose a significant military threat to the U.S. military posture in Asia and that it will not fundamentally alter the regional balance of power. The United States maintains an active dialogue with Russia on the issue of arms sales, reflecting our concern about proliferation and regional security.⁹⁹

The Clinton administration's seeming nonchalance belies a far more serious set of concerns beneath the surface. In their totality, Russian sales of arms and technology to the PRC now account for more than 90% of the PRC's military imports.¹⁰⁰ As House Armed Services Committee Chairman Floyd Spence recently reported, "[w]eapons purchases from Russia have given China, for the first time, power projection capabilities that can be expected to pose new challenges to U.S. forces operating in the China Seas."¹⁰¹ Sherman Garnett, former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia, testified in March 1999:

China's military modernization requires substantial improvements in its air force, command, control and communications, naval power projection, and space technology. Russia has accommodated or appears willing to accommodate China in all these areas. ... These sales—and the broader defense and technology cooperation that are linked to them—could over time help to alter regional military balances in areas of vital U.S. interest in East and Southeast Asia or the Taiwan Strait.¹⁰²

The sale of increasingly sophisticated Russian weaponry and technology to the PRC, and the establishment of close security cooperation between Beijing and Moscow, calls into question the fundamental prediction undergirding much Clinton administration security planning: that the United States will face no peer competitor in the military field during the next two decades.¹⁰³ Any truly thoroughgoing combination of Russian and PRC technology and resources would surely produce a peer competitor for the United States more quickly than is otherwise commonly supposed.

Nor are the national security consequences to the United States limited to the military posture of the PRC or Russia. Because of the PRC's track record as



a significant weapons proliferator, these Russian exports can be expected to have a cascading effect in other regions of vital importance to the United States:

China is not simply an importer of arms, it is a major exporter of arms and missile technology. . . . China is a particularly important supplier to Iran and has been a major supplier to Iraq in the past. Any Russian transfers of advanced military technology are likely to eventually pass on to potentially hostile states once China absorbs them and begins to produce similar equipment or weapons.¹⁰⁴

An Unnatural Alliance

It is a striking indictment of the Clinton administration’s policies that the Sino-Russian strategic partnership could have taken such deep root during the last eight years despite the latent contradictions inherent in it. Both Beijing and Moscow have each had to pay a significant price for their strategic partnership, which remains narrowly based on weapons transfers and self-defeating antagonism towards the United States.

Russia and the PRC have both been disappointed in their expectations for a broadly-based economic relationship. Although in 1996 both nations set a goal of \$20 billion in bilateral trade by 2000, trade levels have stagnated at around \$6 billion annually.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, they remain overwhelmingly focused on PRC purchases of weapons and nuclear power technology. Sino-Russian trade overall fell in 1997 and 1998, and has yet to reach its exceptionally modest level of 1993.¹⁰⁶

Initial Russian hopes that flourishing transborder trade with the PRC would assuage the economic crisis in the Russian Far East—arguably deeper even than the other depressed areas within Russia—were dashed by a host of factors, including the inherent limitations of barter trade, high customs duties, corruption, burdensome regulation on both sides of the border, and Russian complaints about the quality of Chinese exports.¹⁰⁷ Beijing and Moscow have already de-emphasized transborder trade and looked instead to improved political relations between the two national governments to expand the economic basis for the emerging partnership.

These hopes also remain unfulfilled. In 1997, Sino-Russian trade represented only 2% of the PRC’s

total trade. In that year, Russia ranked just eighth among the PRC’s trading partners. Russia’s total trade with the PRC was barely a tenth of Japan’s, and less than a sixth of that with Hong Kong and the United States.¹⁰⁸

Even in the Russian Far East, the PRC has failed to become a predominant factor in Russian commerce. The United States remains the largest investor in the Russian Far East—a far larger investor than the PRC, whose own vast appetite for capital limits drastically its capacity for foreign investment. South Korea, not the PRC, is the leading exporter to the Maritime Province; Japan, not the PRC, is the leading importer of Maritime Province products.¹⁰⁹

Russia’s June 28, 2000, *Foreign Policy Concept* states that “[t]he main task [in Russian relations with the PRC] is, as before, bringing the scale of economic interaction in conformity with the level of political relations.” There is little reason to think that either party will accomplish this “main task”:

China wants airplanes from Boeing or Airbus, not Tupolev; it has sought joint ventures with Audi and General Motors, not Lada. . . . The hoped-for benefits to Russian industry from [economic ties with the PRC] have not materialized. . . .

Corruption and rent-seeking have made many rich but seldom have made the enterprises or their workers better off. Although widespread benefits are usually touted when deals are signed—proceeds from Russian-Chinese arms sales in late summer 1997 were designated to pay the salary arrears of Russian officers—little seems to trickle down beyond the senior enterprise and government officials who are the prime beneficiaries of such deals.¹¹⁰

Despite much talk of the “complementarity” of the two economies, “Russia cannot provide China with what it needs for the modernization of its economy. It cannot provide large scale investment, because such investment is desperately needed inside Russia itself. . . . China, which has had a great influx of foreign investment, is itself reluctant to invest in Russia. . . . Financially, economically, and technologically, both countries still depend more on the West than on each other.”¹¹¹





The key element in Russia's economic relations with the PRC—its weapons sales, licensing agreements, and technology transfers—are ultimately self-defeating not only on commercial but also strategic terms. Not only are Russia's weapons transfers to the PRC significantly improving the military capabilities of an unpredictable neighboring power, but over time Russia's technology transfers will erode both the PRC and the international market for further arms sales, as the PRC strengthens its domestic military-technological capabilities, reduces its dependence on Russian imports, and itself becomes a competitor of Russia's in the international arms trade.

Despite the muting of official Russian concern over its potential military, economic, and political rivalry with the PRC, Russian foreign and defense policy planners foresee not only growing PRC interest in the energy resources of the former Soviet republics of Central Asia¹¹²—which Russia regards as a vital sphere of influence—but also the potential for PRC intervention in that region, should declining Russian power or destabilization of the current secular regimes cause this region to become a source of support for ethnic or Islamist separatists in Xinjiang.¹¹³ Moreover, the PRC policy of expanding economic links with Central Asia “is effectively undermining Russia's influence there. The reality of the Chinese economic boom and the Russian economic bust is causing a shift in the economic orientation of sections of the Central Asian region from the north to the east.”¹¹⁴

The imbalance of power between the PRC and Russia in the Russian Far East, a region comprising over one-third of the Russian Federation's territory but containing only 5.1% of its population, will eventually require Russia to seek better ties with not only the United States but Japan, South Korea, and other East Asian states. As one observer has written,

Russia is an Asian power geographically, militarily, and politically—but not demographically or economically. ... Siberia and the Russian Far East produce more than 90% of the country's oil and gas, all the diamonds, and a great share of other important natural

resources ... [yet only] 7.5 million of the nearly 150 million Russian citizens live in the Russian Far East. ... In 1990-92, for perhaps the first time since Russia annexed the region in the nineteenth century, there was a net out-migration of more than 225,000. Moreover, the rate of out-migration was increasing.¹¹⁵

And although Beijing has, at least temporarily, put on ice its far-reaching potential claims to vast tracts of the Russian Far East wrested from Qing China during the past 250 years by “unequal treaties,” this vast expanse could theoretically be claimed by the PRC to be as much an irredenta as the island of Taiwan.

While the emerging causes of friction between Russia and the PRC are based on long-standing differences, the causes of the current friction between Russia and the United States are not. A U.S. national missile defense does not begin to threaten Russia's deterrent forces. Kosovo and Bosnia are, in fact, tangential to both Russian and American strategic and economic interests. NATO enlargement does not threaten Russia and is not designed to exclude it from Europe. Nor does the United States seek to exclude Russia economically, politically, or militarily from Central Asia or the Caucasus.

The United States has a profound national security interest in Russia's becoming economically strong, free, and democratic. If Russia were to succeed in moving decisively from its Communist past to a free enterprise system, its future relationship with the United States could well mirror that of Japan, Germany, France, or England.

But Russia's current flirtation with the PRC's heavily statist economy, to the exclusion of opportunities with the United States, is destined to delay indefinitely its progress toward that goal. The current “strategic partnership” with the PRC, designed for joint confrontation and competition with the United States, is indeed an unnatural alliance that will only further delay Russia's economic transformation and further test the patience of the long-suffering Russian people.

Nearly a decade after the end of the Soviet Union, the task ahead for Russia remains the same. But her estrangement from the American model of freedom has taken Russia on a destructive detour of unknown duration and uncertain destination.



The Future: ‘A Strategic Partnership for the Twenty-First Century’?

[T]his [Sino-Russian] relationship has reached a mature stage of strategic military-political coordination, if not alliance, mainly directed against U.S. policies and interests.

Professor Stephen J. Blank
U.S. Army War College¹¹⁶

The coin of “strategic partnership” has been badly debased in recent years. During the same period in which Russia and the PRC were flaunting their “strategic partnership,” President Clinton and Vice President Gore were using the same term to describe U.S. relations with both of those countries.¹¹⁷ As Peter Rodman has testified: “The Clinton Administration still speaks glowingly of its ‘strategic partnership’ with a democratic Russia. Yet, for Russia, ‘strategic partnership’ is the phrase used for its ties with Iran and China—which happen to be America’s most serious strategic problems.”¹¹⁸

The Clinton administration’s mismanagement of U.S. relations with Russia has led to a growing military and political relationship between Russia and the PRC that is meant to seriously challenge the United States, our allies, and existing security arrangements in the Pacific. Two significant factors, moreover, are currently strengthening the “partnership.” Russia’s continued economic disarray and the financial crisis in the Russian military-industrial complex remain powerful motives for arms sales and proliferation activities. Second, largely for this reason, the “Moscow Consensus” on foreign policy appears to be firmly in place, with the result that the Russian domestic political premium on demonstrating distance from Washington is even greater now than in the past.

It is not only deeply ironic but tragic that this state of affairs follows \$112.2 billion in Western assistance to Russia. After eight years of a Clinton administration policy that has yet to place highest priority on the basic steps needed to create a free enterprise economy in Russia, the U.S.-Russia relationship is in ruins, characterized by deep and growing hostility and divergent perceptions of international realities and intentions.



