

Russia's foreign policy enters new China-aligned phase

Description

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Moscow is redefining its relations with Germany, Europe and the wider world in sight of its alliance with Beijing

The following is the fourth installment of an extended report on one of the most important geopolitical developments of the 21st century: the increasingly comprehensive alliance between China and Russia and its implications for Eurasian and regional powers across the planet. To follow the series, [click here](#).

It comes as no surprise that the joint statement issued in Moscow on September 11 reserves its most powerful passage on the *raison d'être* of the Russian-Chinese alliance in the emerging international situation by recalling their historic struggle against Nazism and Japanese imperialism:

“The Soviet Union and China were hit the hardest by Nazism and militarism and bore the brunt of the burden of resisting the aggressors. At the price of enormous human losses, they stopped, routed and destroyed the occupiers, displaying unparalleled self-sacrifice and patriotism in this struggle.

“The new generations are deeply indebted to those who gave up their lives for the sake of freedom and independence, and the triumph of good, justice and humanity. Entering a new era, the current Russia-China relations of comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation have a powerful, positive feature of true comradeship developed on the battlefields of World War II.

“It is a sacred duty of all humanity to preserve the historical truth about that war. Russia and China will jointly counter all attempts to falsify history, glorify the Nazis, militarists and their accomplices, and tarnish the victors. Our countries will not allow anyone to revise the results of World War II.”

Indeed, the historical analogy carries profound echoes in the current situation in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. The German government is openly accusing the Russian state of poisoning opposition politician Alexei Navalny and is threatening Russia with sanctions.

Germany's language toward Russia has dramatically changed. It is no more restrained by any sense of guilt that the blood of 25 million Soviet citizens is on its hands. It is talking as if it is already planning the next military campaign against Moscow.

Above all, as happened once before in the 1930s, other Western powers, in their obsession with containing Russia and China, are not only turning a blind eye to the growing militarism in Germany and Japan but are surreptitiously encouraging it.

Russian diplomacy, which has a glorious tradition in modern history, does not make its moves accidentally or impulsively. The historical consciousness is intense. Memories from the past and the present lie deeply embedded, hopelessly entangled in the collective consciousness.

A little-noticed fact is that the Russian-Chinese statement of September 11 was released on the eve of the 30th anniversary of The Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany.

The so-called “2+4 Treaty,” signed in Moscow on September 12, 1990, between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic – with the erstwhile World War II allies the USSR, the US, Britain and France as co-signatories – formalized the unification of Germany, which had been a divided nation through the previous four and a half decades.

No doubt, the joint statement issued in Moscow on September 11 this year heralds a new phase in Russian foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, especially with regard to Russo-German relations and Russia’s relations with Europe and the world order in general.

The salience that draws attention here is that Moscow decided to embark on this new journey holding China’s hand. This is of great importance for European, Eurasian and international politics as a whole.

Two days after the joint statement was issued, on September 13, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appeared on the prestigious Moscow. Kremlin. Putin. program of the state-run Rossiya-1 TV channel, where he was asked about the specter of Western sanctions once again haunting Russia in the shadows of the “Navalny case” and Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project in particular, with Germany in a lead role.

Lavrov summed up Russia’s deep disenchantment with its European partners in the following words:

“In principle, the geopolitical response over these years consisted of recognizing that our Western partners were unreliable, including, unfortunately, members of the European Union. We had many far-reaching plans, and there are documents setting forth the path to developing relations with the EU in the energy sector and high technology, and stepping up economic cooperation in general.

“We share a single geopolitical space. Considering our shared geography, logistics, and infrastructure across the Eurasian continent, we benefit from a substantial comparative advantage.

“It would certainly be a grave mistake for us and the European Union, as well as other countries in this space, including the SCO, the EAEU, and ASEAN, which is also nearby, not to use our comparative geopolitical and geo-economic advantages in an increasingly competitive world. Unfortunately, the European Union sacrificed its geo-economic and strategic interests for the sake of its momentary desire to match the United States in what they refer to as ‘punishing Russia.’

“We [Russia] have grown used to this. We now understand that we need a safety net in all our future plans related to reviving the full partnership with the European Union. This means that we need to proceed in a way that if the EU sticks to its negative, destructive positions, we would not depend on its whims and could provide for our development on our own while working with those who are ready to cooperate with us in an equal and mutually respectful manner.”

The extent of the bitterness in the Russian mind at this point in time can be put in perspective only with

a recap of history devolving upon the unification of Germany in 1990, the hopes that the momentous event had raised in regard of Russo-German relations (which has a troubled history, to say the least) and what subsequently turned out during the three decades thereafter.

It is a complicated story of amnesia and plain political chicanery on the part of the West. With the benefit of the “declassified” archival materials that are available today – especially the indispensable diary of Soviet politician Anatoly Chernyaev, aide to Mikhail Gorbachev, relating to the year 1990 – it is possible to reconstruct Russia’s tortuous relations with the West in the post-Cold War era.

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