

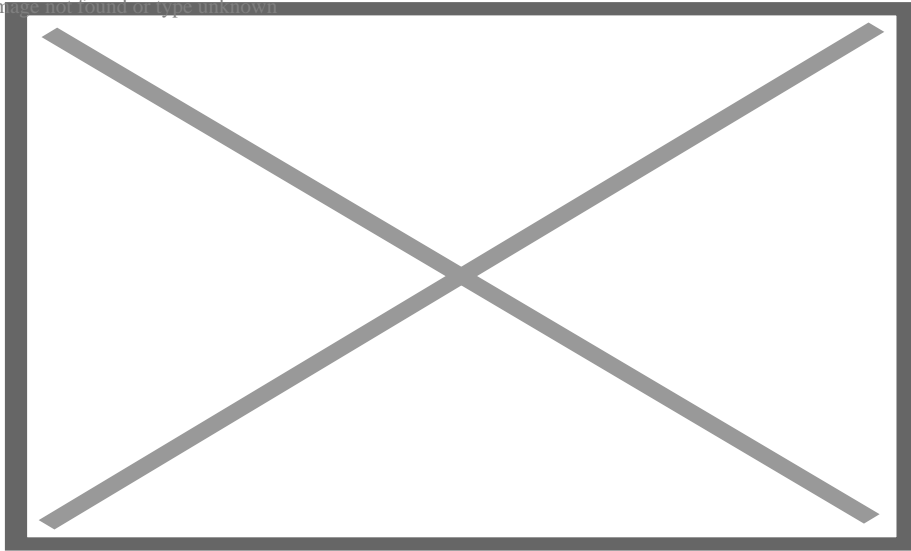
There Will Be No American-Russian Alliance Against China

Description

[Authored by James George Jatras via The Strategic Culture Foundation,](#)

Since 1991 and the formal end of the first Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the world has experienced an American “unipolar moment” as the bipartisan US policy establishment sought to consolidate and perpetuate its hegemonic control over the entire planet. Doomed to fail even before it received its fullest articulation in 1996 by [neoconservative ideologists](#) William Kristol and Robert Kagan (misleadingly billed as “[Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy](#)”), that misbegotten moment thankfully is coming to an end.

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The main question today is whether the grinding to a halt of a quest so foolish and destructive can peacefully devolve into a tripolar entente among the US, Russia, and China – or whether the entrenched Washington establishment will, Sampson-like, [crash everything down in a desperate but futile attempt](#) to hang on to its power and privileges. We appear to be approaching the cusp at which that question will be resolved one way or the other. What the Trump Administration does [next with respect to Iran](#) will be a key, perhaps decisive, indicator.

However, of late there has emerged an alternative concept that may be seen as a middle way between America’s stubbornly hanging onto our diminishing hegemony versus working out a new [Concert of Powers](#) with the two countries the Trump Administration has dubbed rivals in a new “[great power competition](#).” This concept suggests that the United States should play odd-man-out, teaming up with one of the other two powers against the third. Such a triangulation conceivably could perpetuate and enhance America’s global dominance (it is assumed the other nation would be the junior partner) while limiting the influence of the designated adversary.

Strangely, given the unhinged levels of Russia-hatred that define the American political class, no one seems to have proposed trying to flip Beijing away from its quasi-alliance with Moscow in a repeat of President Nixon’s “playing the China card” against the USSR in the early 1970s.

Rather, the hot talk is all the other way 'round, that the US should woo Russia as an ally against China. As presented by Harry J. Kazianis of the Center for the National Interest ([“The Coming American-Russian Alliance Against China”](#)):

‘[T]here is a very real possibility that Washington and Moscow will collude for a very big reason—and soon.

‘Both nations have a reason to fear a coming change in the international order that will impact them both. And as history shows us time and again, a rising power that seeks to overturn the international system can make the most dedicated enemies join forces—and fast.

‘I can only be talking about one thing: a growing and more powerful China. [...]

‘While it might not happen right away, and an armed clash over, say, Ukraine or Syria could delay or even destroy any chance of a geopolitical realignment, there is the very real possibility that the stars could align for Russia and America to take on China in the future. Stranger parings have occurred in the past. While we might rightly see Moscow [as a rogue nation](#) today, tomorrow it could be a partner in containing a common foe. History and circumstance still stand for no one.’

Playing the Russia card against China is even presented by former Indian diplomat [M. K. Bhadrakumar](#) as part of a long term strategy (“[Trump Has a Grand Strategy, He Wants to Do a ‘Reverse Nixon’ — Partner Russia for an Alliance vs China](#)”) foreseen by the architect of Nixon’s long-ago outreach to communist China, Henry Kissinger (who [reportedly is advising Trump to this end](#)):

‘As far back as 1972 in a discussion with Richard Nixon on his upcoming trip to China, signifying the historic opening to Beijing, Kissinger could visualize such a rebalancing becoming necessary in future. He expressed the view that compared with the Soviets (Russians), the Chinese were “just as dangerous. In fact, they’re more dangerous over a historical period.” Kissinger added, “in 20 years your (Nixon’s) successor, if he’s as wise as you, will wind up leaning towards the Russians against the Chinese.”

‘Kissinger argued that the United States, which sought to profit from the enmity between Moscow and Beijing in the Cold War era, would therefore need “to play this balance-of-power game totally unemotionally. Right now, we need the Chinese to correct the Russians and to discipline the Russians.” But in the future, it would be the other way around.’

The possibility that Trump or some people in his Administration may be seriously considering the idea can’t be dismissed. It should be noted that among the few sane voices about Russia in US public life, such as Fox News’ , it is axiomatic that [“China is the real threat, not Russia.”](#)

However, whether or not the US is open to teaming up with Russia against China doesn’t address the question of whether such a ploy would be objectively viable. There are three strong reasons to

suppose it wouldn't be:

US hostility toward Russia is unalterable for the foreseeable future. In a rational policymaking context, it should be obvious that there is no inherent reason for US-Russia animosity. The basic interests of the two states do not conflict and there is much, other than China, that should be a basis for cooperation, such as the common threat of Islamic terrorism (as opposed to the decades-long US penchant of employing jihadists against Russia and other countries, like Serbia, Libya, and Syria).

Unfortunately, [there is little rationality about Russia in Washington](#). Diehard, uncompromising detestation of Russia, which [decent people](#) are not suppose to see as anything but an enemy, is inseparable from the [transatlantic conspiracy to eject Trump from office](#). Indeed, Trump's pledge to improve relations with Moscow is [among the top reasons Trump is being targeted for removal](#).

Hostility to Russia (and to any Trumpian hopes of détente) unites virtually all the Democrats, almost all prominent Republicans, the entire legacy media (of course), almost every prestigious think tank, and seemingly every high-level official on Trump's own team. In the wake of his Helsinki summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Trump's innocuous skepticism on supposed election "meddling," the hysteria of this phalanx of hate has reached new heights of derangement. Senators promise a new "[sanctions bill from hell](#)" even as Trump insists existing sanctions are here to stay, presumably forever. The new Senate measure even includes a preposterous requirement that the Secretary of State "submit a [determination of whether the Russian Federation meets the criteria for designation as a state sponsor of terrorism](#)" – evidently ignoring the fact that for over seven years the US has armed and funded bona fide al-Qaeda-linked terrorists in Syria while Russia has been killing them.

Trump's [own top officials openly press him not only on bogus 2016 meddling but already accusing Moscow of interfering in advance in the 2018 Congressional vote with the intent, without any sense of irony, to "undermine our democracy."](#) Social media like Facebook are on a search-and-destroy mission against anything [even suspected of being "Russian-linked,"](#) whatever that means. A young Russian student advocating gun rights and networking in Washington is treated as a conflation of [Anna Chapman](#) and [Natasha Fatale](#) while being smeared and [slut-shamed across the major media](#)(and her [lawyer is threatened with a gag order](#)). [Stepped-up military aid is being provided to Kiev](#). The NATO Pac-Man is set to gobble up next (the Former Yugoslav Republic of) [Macedonia,](#) [while in the process alienating Russia from longtime Orthodox Christian friend Greece.](#)

No wonder Russian Foreign Minister [Sergey Lavrov can only look on with sardonic laughter](#).

In short, anything and everything Russian is toxic and becoming more so. Even if Trump really wanted to change this state of affairs – sure proof the evil Russians must "[have something on him,](#)" according to former CIA Director Leon Panetta – he couldn't do it. Not only his opposition but his own team will see to that. US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley says Russia "[is never going to be our friend](#)." The Russians have every reason to take her at her word.

This makes any notion of enlisting Russia as an ally against China impractical, to say the least. To even contemplate it the US would have to be able to extend some sort of olive branch to Russia, but that can't happen anytime soon, if ever. You can't build a partnership on the basis of unremitting antagonism.

Russia is once burned, twice shy. Even in the event, currently inconceivable, that the US did offer to bury the hatchet with Russia, the Russians would have to be fools to accept.

They are not fools.

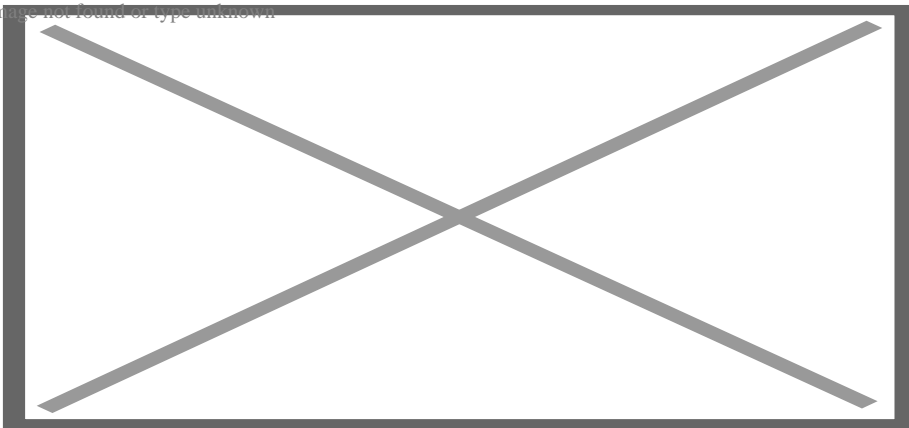
Apart from the most minimal, easily verified circumstances, why would anyone in Moscow believe any assurance from anyone in Washington? Did the US honor our commitment to Boris Yeltsin not to move NATO “one inch” further east following Germany reunification? Did the US respect the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and UN Security Council Resolution 1244 during the Bill Clinton Administration’s 1999 military aggression against Serbia over Kosovo or the George W. Bush Administration’s spearheading of Kosovo’s purported secession in 2008? Does the US show good faith in baseless accusations of Russian guilt in false flag chemical attacks in Syria and the United Kingdom?

While Russian officials by nature remain open to “businesslike” and professional discussion with those they still insist on referring to as “partners,” they also know blind ideological and zoological hatred when they see it.

Even if tomorrow the US would offer the Russians the sun, the moon, and the stars in exchange for cooperation against China, they wouldn’t bite. Nor should they.

Russia has more objective incentives to get along with China than with the US. The main thing Russia needs from the US is basically – well, nothing. That is to say, there is very little of a practical, especially economic, nature Russia needs in a positive sense from the US, and vice versa. What Russia mainly wants from the US is negative: to stop regarding Russia as an enemy and get out of Moscow’s face in regions vitally important to Russia but of little or no value to the US.

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Without taking the analogy to George Orwell's 1984 too far (with [America as the primary component of Oceania, Russia of Eurasia, and China of Eastasia](#)), geographically America and Russia not only have no reason for conflict, they have little natural need for interdependence. Russia is the closest approximation of the "[Heartland](#)" of Halford Mackinder's "[World Island](#)". The United States is the principal in Mackinder's "Outlying Islands" (Western Hemisphere and Australia) and "Offshore Islands" (British Isles and the Pacific "[First Island Chain](#)"). But, contra the fantasies of some half-baked graduates of an elementary geopolitical "Mackindergarten," this configuration need not give rise to a predetermined and inevitable conflict but points as easily to the self-sufficiency of each dominant power within its own exclusive sphere.

With a common boarder of over 2,500 miles, Russia and China are locked into a relationship by the simple fact of geography in a way neither is with the United States, which inherently is in the most secure position of the three. The Russo-Chinese relationship can be hostile (as it notably was in the late 1960s, when the two then-communist giants fought a short border war that threatened to escalate into a nuclear conflict and set the stage for Nixon's China initiative) or it can be cooperative. Fueled in part by an entrenched American animus against Russia and a growing one towards China, Moscow and Beijing have chosen full-spectrum partnership via the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Eurasia Economic Union (EAEU), the New (formerly BRICS) Development Bank (NDB), and other initiatives. Finally, Russia and China are working in concert to de-dollarize their financial systems in favor of local currency and of gold, which both countries have been buying in massive amounts.

Such ties between Russia and China are as natural, complimentary, and obvious as are America's with Canada and Mexico. It's hard to picture Moscow (or Beijing) abandoning them because someone in Washington flashes a come-hither look.

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If Trump [survives the efforts to remove him](#) (either [politically or physically](#)) – a tall order, given the forces arrayed against him – and doesn't plunge the US and the Middle East into an Iran misadventure that [would destroy his presidency](#), it is still an open question whether he can deliver [on an America First policy](#). Along with getting control of our borders and restoring America's industrial base eroded by bad trade policies, that must mean [completing his demolition of the failed neoliberal order of which the US has been the guarantor and enforcer](#).

In its place the only stable and mutually advantageous arrangement for America is a [Big Three accord with both Russia and China](#). The notion of turning one against the other should be dismissed as the distraction it is.