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CHINA, RUSSIA

AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY GLOBAL GEOPOLITICS

PAUL J. BOLT & SHARYL N. CROSS

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Paul Bolt dedicates this book to Betty Jo and his children, especially Abby, whose enthusiasm for the book was inspirational

Sharyl Cross dedicates this book in memory of US Senate Majority Leader Joe T. Robinson and in honor of the legacy of the Robinson family of Lonoke Arkansas—to their dear son and nephew, her father, Jerry Cross—with gratitude for those sacred and enduring values that he carries on in all spheres—commitment, loyalty, integrity, faith, and love

Preface and Acknowledgments

China and Russia, as the world's two leading authoritarian nations, will undoubtedly be critical for managing the most pressing traditional and non-traditional security challenges facing humanity, and can be expected to exert significant influence in shaping the future development of the twenty-first century geopolitical security order. China and Russia challenge United States hegemony and the Western liberal order by seeking a multipolar global power configuration more suited to their interests. Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin enjoy a close association, and both are strong nationalistic leaders determined to command respect on the world stage. Russia still maintains nuclear parity with the United States, and China rivals the United States as the world's leading global economic power. China and Russia exercise considerable influence as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and share a coincidence of positions on several significant international issues in direct contradiction to the preferences and interests of Western democratic nations. Beijing and Moscow understand that the Sino-Russian partnership holds the potential to challenge the United States and its allies on global and regional issues. At the same time, both countries place high priority on relationships with Western democratic nations, but they insist that collaboration be based on "mutual respect" and "equality."

The motivation for undertaking this project on the Sino-Russian relationship comes from the fact that, first of all, we recognize the importance of these two major global powers, nations possessing rich historical and cultural traditions, for future peace and security in the twenty-first century international community. As American scholars, we believe that the US academic and policy communities have been so consumed over the past decade with issues in the Middle East and countering terrorism that we have neglected to devote sufficient attention to assessing the strategic significance, challenges, and opportunities presented by the evolving Sino-Russian relationship. We hope that this book, combining our respective expertise on China and Russia, fills a critical gap in the existing literature by offering a study that will hold significant relevance for both academics and policy practitioners interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the dynamic developments in the Sino-Russian strategic partnership.

This book provides a comprehensive analysis of the Chinese–Russian bilateral relationship, grounded in a historical perspective, and discusses the implications of the burgeoning “strategic partnership” between these two major powers for world order and global geopolitics. The study concentrates particular attention on evaluating the importance of Russia’s “pivot” toward China and Asia in response to the consequences of the crisis in Ukraine. The chapters compare the national worldviews, priorities, and strategic visions for the leaderships of both China and Russia, examining several aspects of the relationship in detail. The energy trade is the most important component of economic ties, although both sides desire to broaden trade and investments. In the military realm, Russia sells advanced arms to China, and the two countries engage in regular joint exercises. Diplomatically, these two Eurasian powers take similar approaches to conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, and also cooperate on non-traditional security issues, including preventing “colored revolutions”, cyber management, and terrorism.

The analysis suggests major themes regarding the evolving Sino–Russian relationship. Russia and China have common interests that cement their partnership, including security, protecting authoritarian institutions, and reshaping aspects of the global order. They are key players not only influencing regional issues, but also international norms and institutions. The comprehensive Sino–Russian partnership presents a potential counterbalance to the United States and democratic nations in shaping the contemporary and emerging geopolitical landscape. Nevertheless, the West is still an important partner for China and Russia and both countries seek better relations with the United States and its democratic allies, but on terms of equitable partnership. The Sino–Russian bilateral partnership has gained considerable momentum, particularly since 2014 as Moscow turned to Beijing in an attempt to offset tensions with the West in the aftermath of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine. However, the two countries still have some frictions in their relationship, and not all interests overlap. Therefore, China and Russia describe their relationship as a comprehensive “strategic partnership,” but they are not “allies.”

In terms of our approach, the book combines the expertise of one author concentrating research and teaching on China and Chinese foreign policy and the other specializing in Russian security and foreign policy. We would not have been able to offer the depth and scope of analysis provided in this book without the regional expertise that each co-author brought to the project. In addition, we placed the highest priority on actively engaging in discussions with our colleagues in China and Russia over the past several years to gain deeper understanding of their varying perspectives and priorities with respect to Chinese and Russian international behavior. We have made every effort to incorporate interviews and statements from discussions with leading experts

in China and Russia and to consult and document a wide range of original primary Chinese and Russian sources in developing our assessments and analysis presented in this book. This project reflects not only our daily immersion in the American and European international relations academic and defense communities, but also our efforts to maintain routine collaboration and engagement with our colleagues in both China and Russia, who possess substantial subject area expertise on politics and foreign policy and international security.

This book represents the culmination of collaborative research on the Sino-Russian relationship spanning the past decade. We initiated our work on the Chinese-Russian partnership in 2004 while serving together on the faculty of the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and have continued to collaborate in hosting professional gatherings with our Chinese and Russian colleagues on contemporary international security and foreign policy issues, traveling frequently to China and Russia to conduct research, lecture, and contribute to major conferences, and co-authoring publications from which this book is a product. Although they are not directly funding this book, we would like to acknowledge the importance of prior valuable support for our research on Chinese and Russian foreign policy and the Sino-Russian relationship provided by the US Air Force's Institute for National Security Studies, Minerva Research Initiative, Marshall Center Director's Sponsored Research Program, and Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The authors thank the Kozmetsky Center of St. Edward's University for funding research for this project in Russia during Fall 2015, and hosting a conference session led by the authors in February 2016 to bring together leading experts from both China and Russia to discuss the Sino-Russian relationship and implications for global politics and security. These sessions provided excellent opportunities for holding working meetings with colleagues from both nations to explore in depth the issues discussed in this book.

We would also like to acknowledge institutions in China and Taiwan and Russia for hosting and supporting conference gatherings and research visits over the past two decades that were important for this project work, including Fudan University, the School of International Studies at Peking University, National Chengchi University, Shanghai International Studies University, China Foreign Affairs University, China Institute of International Studies, Institute of Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (MGIMO), Moscow State University, Institute of USA and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg State University, School of International Relations, Institute of World Economy and International

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China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics will be of interest for academic experts on Chinese and Russian foreign and security policy, and for those involved in broader study of international relations, geopolitics, and security studies. The rich original primary source material contained in this book should be useful for research scholars, but we would like to emphasize that every effort was made to present the material throughout the chapters so as to be clear, straightforward, and easily accessible for the wider non-expert student and public audience. In our judgment, the stakes could not be greater for the United States and its allies in productively managing relationships with these two critical global powers, and we certainly hope that the research and analysis featured in the chapters will provide insight on foundations of the Sino–Russian evolving partnership that will serve as a valuable resource for the United States and international policy communities.

A project such as this requires contributions and support from numerous colleagues, friends, and our families. We would like to thank Alexei Voskresenski, Alexander Lukin, Artyom Lukin, Viktor Sumsy, Alexander Gabuev, Victor Kremenyuk, Tatyana Shakleina, Pavel Palazchenko, Mikhail Margelov, Raymond Truong, Scott Urbom, Wang Ning, Zhao Huasheng, Su Changhe, Jennifer Davis-Paguada, Nina Diaz, Cam Torrens, Gao Fei, Su Xiaohui, Wang Dong, Wu Hongwei, Arthur Ding, Shen Dingli, Wei Bai-Ku, Tsai Ming-Yen, Jim Smith, and Patrick Beshia for contributing to our understanding of Sino–Russian relations. Cheryl Kearney, Joe Foster, Teresa Daniels, Fran Pilch, Paul Carrese, Damon Coletta, David Sacko, John Riley, Christine Cross, Steve Balich, and Brenda Vallance provided encouragement throughout the project. We thank those who have discussed ideas with us at various stages of our work on Sino–Russian relations or who commented on the manuscript, including Ruth Melkonian-Hoover, Evan McKinney, Doyle Baker, Wang Wenfeng, Suisheng Zhao, Matt Rojansky, Igor Zevelev, John Reppert, Despina Afentouli, Greg Gleason, Deborah Palmieri, Elizabeth Prodromou, Craig Nation, Scott Roenicke,

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*Sharyl Cross, Austin and Paul Bolt,
Colorado Springs, 2016*

Disclaimer: The ideas expressed in this book are those of the authors, and are not a reflection of the views of the institutions where we are presently or have been employed or affiliated.

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List of Abbreviations

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APR	Asia-Pacific region
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASAT	Anti-satellite
ASCM	Anti-ship cruise missile
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BMD	Ballistic missile defense
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CAC	Cybersecurity Administration of China
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CICIR	China Institute of Contemporary International Relations
CIIS	China Institute of International Studies
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMC	Central Military Commission
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSAC	Cyber Security Association of China
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CT	Counterterrorism
CTC	Counter-Terrorism Committee
CTED	Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
CVE	Countering violent extremism
EAG	Eurasian group on combating money laundering and financing of terrorism
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ESPO	East Siberian–Pacific Ocean pipeline

List of Abbreviations

ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FSB	Federal Security Service
GLONASS	Global Navigation Satellite System
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICT	Information and communication technology
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
INEW	Integrated network electronic warfare
INF	Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces
IS	Islamic State
ISSG	International Syria Support Group
LNG	Liquid natural gas
MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NATCG	National Anti-Terrorism Coordination Group
NDB	New Development Bank
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NEA	National Energy Administration
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NOC	National oil company
NRC	NATO-Russia Council
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAP	People's Armed Police
PARNAS	People's Freedom Party
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
PYD	Democratic Union Party
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
RFE	Russian Far East
RMB	Renminbi

SAM	Surface-to-air missile
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SPR	Strategic petroleum reserve
SSF	Strategic Support Force
THAAD	Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense
TIP	Turkistan Islamic Party
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolutions
YPG	People's Protection Units

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1

Historical Foundations, Strategic Visions, and World Order

The year 2016 marked the twentieth anniversary of the strategic partnership between China and Russia, and the fifteenth anniversary of the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation. Over the past two decades, political relations between China and Russia have become increasingly dynamic and close, with common views on most major world issues, frequent summits, significant Russian arms sales to China, and joint military exercises. China's leader Xi Jinping made his first foreign visit to Moscow in 2013, and he and President Putin have established a close personal bond.¹ However, the events of 2014 catalyzed even deeper relations between these two Eurasian giants. Western attempts to influence the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine, the Russian annexation of Crimea and intervention in eastern Ukraine, followed by Western sanctions against Russia and the deployment of NATO military forces further east, broke what was left of the trust between Russia and the West. As a result, Russia pivoted more sharply to the east, and especially toward China. Although China did not endorse Russia's actions in Ukraine, it believed that Russia had been pushed into a corner as a result of Western instigation of the uprising that led to the ouster of the government in Kiev in 2014. At the same time, relations between the United States and China were deteriorating, due largely to intensified Chinese efforts to advance its maritime claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea at the expense of American allies, raising fears in the United States that China would interfere with freedom of navigation in vital sea lines of communication.

The closeness of Russia and China to each other and their distance from other Western powers was illustrated in 2015 by festivities in Moscow in May, and then in Beijing in September, celebrating the anniversary of the end of World War II. While Xi went to Moscow and Putin traveled to Beijing, President Obama and other Western leaders held commemorations elsewhere. Since the events of early 2014, China and Russia have signed new agreements on building gas pipelines (although the pipelines have not been built yet) and

increased their joint military exercises, with naval drills taking place in the South China Sea in 2016. The two partners have cooperated diplomatically on Syria, and Russia and China have worked together on non-traditional security issues such as cyberspace, terrorism, and preventing “colored revolutions”, unified by a shared vision that stable authoritarian government is legitimate. Since 2014, Russia and China have also intensified efforts to enhance economic cooperation, and have begun working on integrating China’s One Belt, One Road (OBOR) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). They characterize their relationship as a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination.

This is not to suggest that China and Russia have overcome all differences in their outlooks and policies. While China has asserted its maritime interests, it is relatively cautious in its foreign policy in order to preserve a stable environment for economic growth. Russia has been more willing to violate traditional rules, norms, and expectations and defy US preferences if it believes it is in its interests to do so. There are significant structural differences in the Russian and Chinese economies that impede closer bilateral economic cooperation, and these barriers will continue to present significant challenges even with strong political will to overcome them. China does not want to become overly entangled in Russia’s conflict in Ukraine, and Moscow strives to maintain good relations with Hanoi in spite of Vietnam’s dispute with China in the South China Sea.

Thus, China and Russia have a useful partnership with strong momentum that shapes international politics. China and Russia seek to alter aspects of the liberal world order which they had no hand in creating, although China in particular has benefited from this order. What remains an open question is how the power disparity between the two countries will play out over the coming years. China treats Russia with respect. Nevertheless, the fact remains that China is outpacing Russia in economic growth and military spending. Leading Russian experts on China, Alexander Gabuev and Alexei Voskresenski, note that Russians have recently suggested the reference to “elder sister” for Russia in the Sino–Russian relationship, or a woman of senior status, that more powerful China should respect or even protect.² While Russian elites are determined to establish Russia as an independent pillar in the world and insist that Russia will not serve as a junior partner to any country, the long-term power differential is a fact that Russia must deal with.

The academic and policy debates on Sino–Russian ties cover two major issues. The first is the question of how close and stable the relationship of these two countries really is. In other words, what is the best way to characterize this relationship? Answers in the literature have ranged from cynical cooperation on a limited range of issues to an alliance that threatens the West. The second (and related) debate is how the Sino–Russian relationship will shape the liberal international order. How do Beijing and Moscow view the current order, and

how might their partnership alter aspects of this order? Within these broader questions lie more specific issue areas where China and Russia both cooperate and compete. These include economic and energy ties, security and arms sales, regional conflicts, and approaches toward non-traditional security concerns.

In addressing these topics, this book has four major themes. First, Russia and China have common interests that cement their partnership. One such interest is maintenance of external and internal security. A secure joint border is vital for both states, as well as cooperation against terrorism and internal threats. While China and Russia have different forms of government, they share a goal of legitimizing and protecting authoritarian institutions. Moreover, both countries are strengthening state institutions at the expense of civil society and private business. An additional common interest is dissatisfaction with elements of the existing liberal world order. While the West holds rules for resolving disputes to be central to the order, China and Russia perceive injustices that are difficult to remedy under the existing rules.

A second theme is that Russia and China are key players in shaping the international order. Western triumphalism after the end of the Cold War is past, and Russia and China will be influential in all major world issues, affecting the balance of power, norms of both domestic and international conduct, and global institutions. Russia and China can be a counterbalance to the United States and the West, but the cooperation of these two giants will also be critical in successfully managing a host of transnational security challenges in the global environment.

A third theme is that the West is still an important partner for China and Russia in the economic and political realms. Russia and China are not directly opposing the West as in the Cold War, and desire a cooperative relationship with the West, but one in which the West makes greater accommodation of their interests.

The final theme is that Russia and China are partners but not allies. While the pace of cooperation between the two states is quickening, there are limits to the amount of support each will give the other, as well as elements of distrust that, although perhaps not often publicly discussed, are rooted in history and the fear of ongoing changes in relative power.

World Order

Since the end of the Cold War and the unexpected collapse of the bipolar world order, scholars and policymakers have attempted to understand the contours of an emerging order. As early as 1989, Francis Fukuyama, an American political scientist now at Stanford University, predicted the end of history, a world where liberal democracy reigned supreme without serious ideological

challengers. In 1991, US President George H. W. Bush proclaimed a “new world order where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind: peace and security, freedom and the rule of law.” However, Fukuyama’s onetime mentor Samuel Huntington foresaw a very different structure, a clash of civilizations where frequent wars would be fought along civilizational fault lines.³ By the mid-1990s, many observers noted a unipolar world structure dominated by the United States, although debate revolved around how long unipolarity would last.⁴ For instance, French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine described the United States as a “hyperpower,” meaning “a country that is dominant or predominant in all categories,” and thus a state whose unilateral tendencies, in his view, needed to be balanced.⁵

This matters because major powers seek to advance their view of world order. Henry Kissinger states that the American view of order sees democratic principles as universal, necessary to legitimize governments. Seeing itself as unique and having a mission, the American view is rooted in Wilsonianism. Kissinger claims, “Whenever America has been tested by crisis or conflict . . . it has returned in one way or another to Woodrow Wilson’s vision of a world order that secures peace through democracy, open diplomacy, and the cultivation of shared rules and standards.” Unfortunately, according to Kissinger, this Wilsonian impulse takes neither history nor geopolitics into account.⁶ Liberal Wilsonian values continue to affect the American worldview. As described by the *2015 National Security Strategy*, the American vision consists of “a rules-based international order that works best through empowered citizens, responsible states, and effective regional and international organizations.”⁷ It self-consciously strives to promote American values abroad, defining democracy, human rights, and the equality of minority groups around the world as fundamental American interests.⁸ While critics point to numerous instances of the US applying rules to others but not itself, the Wilsonian principles themselves are not universally accepted.

Today the unipolar moment has passed: US failures in Iraq and Afghanistan; Russian activism in Ukraine, Syria, and elsewhere; the emergence of the BRICS (a grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa); the power of terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda, ISIS, and their affiliates; and significant weaknesses in Western financial structures illustrated by the 2008 financial crisis, continuing instability in the Eurozone, and Brexit have all posed challenges to the liberal world order.⁹ Kissinger states: “Our age is insistently, at times almost desperately, in pursuit of a concept of world order,” noting that order consists of both legitimacy, or rules that are widely considered just, and power relationships between states.¹⁰ He makes it clear that, regrettably, nuclear proliferation, cyber technology, and the pressures brought on political leaders by digital media make the framing of a global order more difficult.

Views of world order are inevitably tied to one's theoretical perspective. Realists see order as the prevailing power distribution among states. Because the world is anarchic, "order" always has a conflictual element. Liberals emphasize the importance of international institutions in shaping world order. They also focus on the domestic characteristics of states, particularly the extent to which states embrace values such as democracy and human rights. Constructivists note that conceptions of order evolve in line with state identities, conceptions of interest, and norms. The English School views international order as "a pattern or arrangement that sustains the primary goals of a society of states. It must involve limits on behaviour, the management of conflict, and the accommodation of change without undermining the common goals and values of society."¹¹

States too have differing views of world order. China and Russia have demonstrated dissatisfaction with elements of the current liberal order. Both countries publicly call for a multipolar world where the interests of all major powers are taken into account. As early as 1997, the two sides submitted a document to the United Nations entitled a "Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order."¹² Both countries insist that major international issues be worked out in the United Nations Security Council, where they have a veto. Russia and China advocate for stronger state sovereignty, where human rights are not issues of international concern. Russia and China both reject the notion that democracy is necessary for government legitimacy. Russia insists on a sphere of influence in the former Soviet states, while China wants the United States to stop intervening in its maritime territorial disputes.

The way that China and Russia will shape the world order, and the influence each will have, is still unfolding. China has greater resources than Russia, although Moscow is more inclined to boldly challenge the status quo. This book will explore Sino-Russian ties, with an emphasis on how this relationship will affect the features and rules of world order in terms of both power distribution and what constitutes legitimate rules, norms, or expectations of behavior. The current chapter will look at the legacy of the history of Chinese-Russian relations, noting major historical events and their effect on world order, as well as providing an overview of how China and Russia view the international rules of the game.¹³

The Legacy of History in Chinese-Russian Relations

Russia's first experience with an Asian empire was invasion from Genghis Khan's grandson Batu Khan and his general Subutai from 1223–40. The Mongol forces crushed Russian military opposition and burned fourteen

cities, including Moscow and Kiev. As a result, Russia lay under Mongol subjugation for more than two hundred years. (The Mongols also ruled China under the Yuan Dynasty.) Mongol rule left a legacy of both despotism and positive administrative reforms.¹⁴ It also contributed to an abiding Russian sense of insecurity and fear of invasion.

Russian dealings with the Qing Dynasty began in the seventeenth century. The Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689 established a border between Russia and the Qing that recognized the Amur basin and the current Russian maritime province as Chinese territory. It also established licensed border trade between the two empires. However, even more significantly from a world order perspective, the Treaty of Nerchinsk was China's first treaty with a European state. The agreement resembled treaties between Western states, and the two sides negotiated as sovereign equals. Thus, in this pact the Qing and its powerful emperor Kangxi recognized the czar as a sovereign outside the traditional Chinese tribute system. Harvard historian Odd Arne Westad notes, "Of all the European states, China's first regular foreign relations were with Russia. Indeed, it can be argued that China's first foreign relations—in anything approaching the Western sense—with any country were with that other expanding empire moving into East Asia from the north."¹⁵ In 1715, the Qing permitted a Russian Orthodox mission in Beijing to serve the spiritual needs of Russians. This mission essentially served as an embassy, the only one in Beijing for more than one hundred years.¹⁶ The Kiakhta Treaty of 1727 enabled two hundred Russian merchants to go to Beijing every third year, in addition to permitting border trade. By the end of the 1700s, 10 percent of Russia's trade was conducted with China. As Westad argues, "While the Qing, at home, tried to pass its relations with the Russians off as tribute, it was clearly very different from the exchanges China had with any other country."¹⁷

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Russia was becoming a threat to China. Russia continued to expand eastward along the Amur, and Russian officials had territorial designs on China. While the Qing Empire fought for survival during the Taiping Rebellion and was concurrently engaged in the Second Opium War against the French and British, Russia made territorial demands. The Treaty of Aigun (1858) gave Russia 185,000 square miles of territory along the northern bank of the Amur. In return, Russia promised to mediate the Second Opium War, a promise it did not keep. In the Treaty of Peking (1860), Russia gained an additional 130,000 square miles from China along the coastline. These treaties were achieved in part through Russian local officials exceeding their instructions, although Moscow was also attempting to make up for losses in Crimea.¹⁸

Russia further sought territory along the western border. The Treaty of Tarbagatai in 1864 gave Russia 350,000 square miles from Xinjiang, and

during the 1860s Russia encouraged Muslim separatists in Xinjiang in order to enhance its influence there. Russian troops occupied the Ili Valley in 1871, but the Qing regained control of Xinjiang by 1878 and thwarted further Russian efforts to acquire territory there. The empire made Xinjiang a province and tried to better incorporate it into the rest of China. In all this the Qing came to see Russia as more dangerous than other European states due to its efforts to permanently take Chinese territory.¹⁹ Later on, Mao would demand that Russia return to China the territories gained through the “unequal treaties” of the nineteenth century.²⁰

In the late nineteenth century, the Qing began allowing Han Chinese to settle in Manchuria, the traditional Manchu homeland, in order to solidify Qing control over the region. Some of the new settlers moved to the north side of the Amur River, causing fear in Russia that it would lose control of this territory. As a result, Russians began expelling Chinese from the north bank in 1886. Moreover, Japan had designs on the area as well. Alarmed over Siberian security and possessing expansionist ambitions of its own, Russia began building the Trans-Siberian Railroad in 1891, with plans to traverse Manchuria. The Qing gave Russia a concession for the Manchurian section of the railroad as part of a secret Russian–Chinese alliance against Japan in 1896. Russia again intervened in Manchuria in 1898 by leasing the Liaodong Peninsula, including Lüshun and Dalian. This provided Russia with warm-water harbor facilities to defend its railroad.²¹

Russia further threatened Manchuria during the Boxer Rebellion when it occupied the three northeastern provinces with approximately 100,000 troops. Moscow resisted withdrawing its forces after the uprising ended, leading to a strong reaction from China, Japan, and the other foreign powers involved in China. Russia hoped to make Manchuria its exclusive sphere of influence. However, Moscow’s dreams were shattered by the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–5. Russia’s defeat forced it to recognize a Japanese sphere of influence in Korea and turn over Lüshun, Dalian, and the Southern Manchurian Railroad to Japan, as well as the southern half of Sakhalin Island.²²

Less than five years later, however, Russia made gains in Mongolia. In 1911, when the Qing was falling to Republican forces, Mongolian separatist leaders declared independence from China. Russian support for Mongolia led to political leverage and commercial privileges there. The 1915 Tripartite Treaty between the Republic of China, Russia, and Mongolia affirmed the new status quo. While legally China maintained suzerainty over Mongolia, it was forced to grant the Mongolians autonomy, a major diplomatic victory for Russia. After the Bolsheviks moved into Mongolia in 1921, Mongolia again declared independence with the clear understanding that this was to be guarded by the Soviet Union. Thus, in important ways Soviet policy was consistent with czarist policy.²³

The period from 1937–45 was especially complex, with constantly shifting ties between the Republic of China, the Soviet Union, Japan, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). At stake were world order-altering questions of who would rule China and maintain dominant influence in Asia. China and the Soviet Union agreed to the Sino-Soviet Nonaggression Treaty in August 1937, creating an alliance against Japan. This pact was abrogated when the Soviet Union aligned with Germany in 1939, leading to an improvement in ties between Moscow and Tokyo. In 1941, while China was fighting for its life, Japan and the Soviet Union signed a neutrality agreement, a major setback for then head of state Chiang Kai-shek. Both sides adhered to neutrality almost until the end of the war. However, after tortuous negotiations over Xinjiang, Manchuria, and the CCP, the Soviet Union and Republic of China signed a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance on August 14, 1945. At the same time, the Moscow-directed Comintern worked to control the CCP and manipulate the conflict between the CCP and Kuomintang (KMT) to foster Soviet interests.

During this period, Moscow's goals included using China to enhance Soviet security vis-à-vis Japan, Germany, and the West; controlling Xinjiang, Mongolia, and Manchuria; and managing the CCP. Chiang Kai-shek sought to defeat Japan, maintain Chinese territorial integrity in light of Soviet designs, demonstrate his nationalist credentials to his own population, defeat the CCP, and use the Soviets to strengthen his government. Mao similarly strove to demonstrate CCP nationalism, use the Soviets to strengthen the CCP while simultaneously ridding the party of Soviet influence through various internal struggles, and drive the KMT out of power.²⁴ While in theory ideology created a bond between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the CCP, in practice the three-way struggle was based largely on realist considerations of power and interest.

After the victory of the CCP in the Chinese revolution, China was eager to learn from the Soviet Union. In 1949, Mao said that the Soviet Communist Party "is our best teacher and we must learn from it." Mao announced that China would "lean to one side," and on February 14, 1950, after hard bargaining, Mao and Stalin signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance and Mutual Assistance. Subsequently, the Soviets sent 10,000 advisors to China. However, before too long the relationship began to sour. By 1956, Mao, referring to the Soviets and Eastern Europeans, said, "We mustn't copy everything indiscriminately and transplant mechanically. Naturally, we mustn't pick up their shortcomings and weak points... Some of our people were not clear about this and even picked up their weaknesses."²⁵ Subsequently, the relationship deteriorated further, to the point that war seemed likely by 1969.

Early after the CCP victory, China attempted to adapt major elements of the Soviet economic model, believing it was suitable for China. Soviet experts

taught Chinese cadres how to produce five-year economic plans, and China's first plan relied heavily on Soviet loans and other assistance. In May 1953, the two countries signed the Agreement on Assistance by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Allied Governments to the Central Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) for the Purpose of Developing China's National Economy, which provided assistance for 141 major projects. But by 1953 the Soviet Union, which was at a different stage of economic development from China, began adjusting its own economic model. This was seen as revisionist in Beijing, and was one factor leading to later clashes between China and the Soviet Union.²⁶

China also learned from the Soviet military in ways that still resonate today. University of Macau political scientist You Ji notes that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) made huge advances within five years of its victory in 1949 as it acquired Soviet weaponry, including 800,000 guns, 11,000 artillery pieces, and 5,000 aircraft. The PLA also learned from the Soviets how to transform a guerrilla army into a conventional force by studying centralized regulations, rank structure, training regimens, and command arrangements. In addition, the Soviets helped China develop its defense industries. Nevertheless, PLA and Soviet ways often clashed. The Soviet military was a conventional force that had helped defeat Adolf Hitler. The PLA was primarily a guerrilla force with very different traditions and viewpoints on how to fight. In particular, PLA political commissars disliked the Soviet model because it emphasized professionalism over ideology. PLA officers had major internal debates on whether they had gone too far in adopting the Soviet model, and careers were ended for those on the losing side.²⁷ These arguments, of course, reflected broader debates in Chinese politics on red versus expert and self-reliance versus integration.

By the late 1950s, less than ten years after the victory of Mao's CCP, the Sino-Soviet relationship was in trouble. The seeds of dissension had been sown early. During the CCP's wars against the KMT and Japan, Stalin and Mao often had conflicting viewpoints and Mao regularly ignored Stalin's instructions.²⁸ When Mao was in Moscow to negotiate the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance and Mutual Assistance from December 1949 to February 1950, Stalin treated him poorly. Stalin was suspicious of Mao, and left Mao sitting in a dacha for weeks with nothing to do in order to humiliate him. While the treaty they eventually negotiated provided economic benefits for China, secret protocols gave the Soviet Union special rights in Xinjiang and Northeast China that were a reminder of China's past unequal treaties.²⁹ Moreover, the Korean War deepened mutual suspicion between China and the Soviet Union as each country tried to manipulate the other and China paid a high price in lives and treasure defending North Korea.

Relations between Moscow and Beijing deteriorated further after Stalin died in 1953 and Khrushchev became the Soviet leader. From an ideological

perspective, Mao believed that Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign, which began in 1956, was an assault on him. Further, Mao thought that he should now become the leader of the world revolutionary movement rather than Khrushchev, a position completely unacceptable to the Soviets. Moreover, Mao and Khrushchev personally clashed, and strategic differences between Moscow and Beijing were very real. In 1957, when the Soviet Union advocated peaceful coexistence with the West, Mao called for a struggle against imperialism and asserted that the "east wind" was now prevailing over the "west wind." In the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958, Mao challenged the Soviet Union and dragged it reluctantly into a confrontation it had sought to avoid, further alienating Moscow.³⁰ This was exemplified by the Soviet withdrawal of aid to help China develop a nuclear weapon. The downward spiral in relations continued when China launched the Great Leap Forward in 1958. Despite the recommendations of Soviet experts, the CCP undertook mass collectivization and industrialization through means that Moscow considered absurd. As a result, in 1960 the Soviet Union withdrew its specialists and their blueprints from China, embittering the Chinese for years to come. The Soviet declaration of neutrality in the Sino-Indian War of 1962, and subsequent economic and military aid to India, revealed the depths of the split.

In 1963, China demanded that the Soviets recognize the nineteenth-century border treaties as unjust, and throughout the 1960s both sides built up military forces along their common border. Mao proclaimed in 1964 that a counterrevolution had occurred in the Soviet Union and capitalism had been restored there, a damning ideological claim. In international relations, the two states continued to compete for leadership of the third world and the communist movement. Support for Vietnam, in particular, caused tension. Circumstances deteriorated with the onset of the Cultural Revolution when in 1967 Red Guards besieged the Soviet embassy in Beijing. By 1969, there were armed clashes along the border and the two sides were preparing for war.³¹

Although war fears later eased, the relationship between China and the Soviet Union remained tense in the 1970s. The Chinese invasion of Vietnam in 1979 was a direct challenge to Vietnam's Soviet patron, but Moscow did not respond by supporting Vietnam in any meaningful way. China believed that Vietnam sought hegemony in Southeast Asia and was unwilling to see this realized. Ties slowly improved in the 1980s, especially as both states moved away from strict ideological positions. Relations were finally normalized with Mikhail Gorbachev's trip to Beijing in 1989 after enough progress had been made on the three issues that were particularly important to China: the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, Soviet forces along the Chinese border, and the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea.³²

Ironically, as China sought to learn from the Soviet Union in the 1950s, it also later sought to assess lessons from the Gorbachev era. Before the collapse

of the Soviet Union, Chinese scholars looked at Soviet reforms to determine how these policies might be applicable to China.³³ More important, however, were the debates that occurred within the CCP after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Chinese leaders were shocked by this event. They desperately wanted to know the primary factors that led to the collapse, and how to avoid such a disaster in China. David Shambaugh, a leading scholar of Chinese politics at George Washington University, notes that thirteen years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Decision of the CCP Central Committee on Enhancing the Party's Ruling Capacity was adopted at the Fourth Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Congress of the CCP, summarizing lessons from the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. An eight-volume DVD set entitled "Consider Danger in Times of Peace: Historical Lessons from the Fall of the CPSU" was made in 2006, and all party organs were required to view it. In general, Chinese analysts saw systematic problems in the CPSU in four categories: economic, political and coercive, social and cultural, and international.³⁴ A. Greer Meisels of the Wilson Center identifies three dominant schools of thought in China regarding lessons from the collapse of the Soviet Union: Some conservatives and leftists hold Gorbachev responsible; liberals and reformers point to the system for an incorrect execution of the socialist model; while other conservatives and leftists blame the West, the source of bourgeois liberalization and peaceful evolution.³⁵ Xi Jinping has argued that the CPSU collapsed because "nobody was man enough to stand up and resist" the attacks against it, and as a result he has led China in a much more centralized and ideological direction.³⁶

Boris Yeltsin visited China shortly after becoming the Russian president in 1992, and the leadership of Russia and China classified their relationship as a "strategic partnership" in 1996 after progress on demarcating the border. However, early in the Yeltsin period, the leadership of the Russian Federation looked primarily to the United States and Europe, and Russia's first foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, spoke of developing a "strategic partnership and alliance based on common values" with the United States.³⁷ Russia's first *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, issued in 1993, referred to Western countries as the "dynamic factor in the progress of world civilization in the foreseeable future."³⁸ However, the expectations of the early 1990s were not met, due in part to NATO expansion and the NATO air war over Kosovo, resulting in a more sobering assessment of Russia's relationship with the West. Already by 1994, Boris Yeltsin warned of a "Cold Peace" falling over Europe, asserting that "plans for expanding NATO" would "create new divisions" and "sow seeds of distrust."³⁹

These tensions with the West led Russia to look increasingly to the East in order to create a more balanced foreign policy. Yevgeny Primakov, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs (1996–8) and Prime Minister (1998–9), advocated

shifting foreign policy to prioritize Russia's interests in Asia and the Middle East. In doing so he argued for the formation of a Russia–India–China strategic bloc as a counterweight to the United States. Alexander Yakovlev, senior research scholar at the Institute of the Far East in the Russian Academy of Sciences, wrote in 1997 that Russia, China, and perhaps India “can act as inspirers and organizers of a new anti-hegemonic, anti-Western international front.”⁴⁰ In 2002, the Russian, Indian, and Chinese prime ministers met informally in New York, and since 2007 have met at least annually, releasing a joint communiqué in a sign of “RIC” cooperation. However, differing national priorities and the Sino–Indian border dispute have prevented further institutionalization of this trilateral relationship.⁴¹

Since Vladimir Putin's first election as president in 2000, there have been tensions and geostrategic conflicts in Russia's relationship with the West. A high point was achieved after unexpectedly strong Russian support for the US-led War on Terror after the attacks of September 11. Low points include the US invasion of Iraq, colored revolutions in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Russia's war with Georgia. The Russian annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine in 2014, followed by Western sanctions, pushed Russia further toward China, although the Russian “pivot” to the East had preceded the deterioration of Russia's relationship with the West in 2014.

China, Russia, and the Liberal International World Order

China struggled to adapt to the Westphalian world order in the nineteenth century as the Qing Empire declined. Beginning with the First Opium War (1839–42), the major world powers forced China to adjust to the rules of international (Western) diplomacy in which all states were theoretically equal, diplomats resided in foreign capitals, and imperialism was a mark of great powers. Thus, the Qing not only grappled with states that wanted territorial concessions in China, but also with the necessity to reconceptualize a hierarchical worldview that pictured China as culturally and politically superior to other civilizations.

After the CCP victory in 1949, Mao strived to fundamentally change the domestic and world order. Inspired by an ideology that predicted a proletarian revolution would sweep aside existing political and economic structures around the globe, China saw itself as a champion of the Third World. While Chinese foreign policy under Mao could be pragmatic, it was also sometimes ideologically driven, particularly during the Cultural Revolution when Red Guards tried to take over the Foreign Ministry. After Mao died and China began its reform period in the late 1970s, China achieved rapid economic growth, along with commensurate political influence. Never had so many

people experienced such rapid change over so short a time. This growth was enabled by the contemporary international order, an order in which China had little to no say in creating. How much does China now want to change the existing order?⁴²

One area of debate is how to define China's traditional view of world order, and what perceptions of the traditional order mean for China's preferences today. The "Chinese World Order" is a phrase first used by John King Fairbank, the renowned Harvard historian.⁴³ More recently, writers have referred to the Chinese system as *tianxia*, meaning "all under heaven." The traditional Chinese world order refers to a hierarchical Asian system with the Chinese emperor at the pinnacle due to China's cultural superiority. Other states paid tribute to China in recognition of their subservience, and in return were given valuable gifts by the emperor. Enthusiasts of the Chinese world order claim that it was benevolent and a better model than the Westphalian system, with all states benefiting. For example, David Kang of the University of Southern California states "East Asian regional relations have historically been hierarchic, more peaceful, and more stable than those in the West."⁴⁴ Others disagree, noting that there was frequent warfare in imperial China, the empire was maintained by force, or the tributary system did not define all of China's foreign relations. For example, Georgia Tech professor Fei-Ling Wang argues that there was a great deal of diversity in world order across the different Chinese dynasties, and Chinese today debate their preferred world order. June Teufel Dreyer of the University of Miami claims, "Supporters of the revival of *tianxia* as a model for today's world are essentially misrepresenting the past to talk about the present, distorting it in order to advance an equally distorted political agenda."⁴⁵

One supporter of using *tianxia* as a framework in the contemporary order is Zhao Tingyang of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Zhao argues that we live in a global society that requires global governance, not just nation-state governance. *Tianxia* is a world theory that entails a benevolent empire ruling the globe. While *tianxia* is a Chinese concept of order, Zhao holds that any nation could rule under this model.⁴⁶ Although Chinese leaders have not embraced *tianxia* publicly because its hierarchical nature would suggest that China is striving to replace the United States as the world's leading power, they have emphasized Confucian themes such as harmony while striving not to appear to abandon Marxism in the process.

While imperial China defined the Asian order and Mao publicly advocated a radical transformation of the world order, Deng Xiaoping adopted a more modest position. Deng's primary goal was to build China's economy while maintaining the power of the CCP. Such a strategy required a peaceful international environment and a concentration of China's resources on economic development. As a result, Deng laid down the principle of "hide your strength,