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Russia-China Alliance Isn't as Unbreakable as We Might Think

The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

This bit of wisdom is at the heart of most international relationships. Throughout history, nations have tended to work together, not due to ideology or over philosophical considerations, but out of a sense of intertwined interests.

In debates of contemporary foreign policy, it can be easy to forget that this principle still very much applies to the growing number of states that are joining the Russo-Sino alliance and collectively challenging U.S. hegemony.



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While it is easy to want to lump these regimes together into a “legion of evil,” doing so reduces complex reality to an oversimplified concept. Moreover, the simplified, caricatured route blinds policymakers to real solutions to our current dilemmas.

This is because such a view ignores the fact that the ties between these various regimes is, in many cases, circumstantial, shallow, and self-interested. Again, this has always been the way in politics — in government, as in business, one cannot allow feelings of friendship or altruism to interfere with one’s bottom line.

In this case, the common denominator binding these various states together is that they all have a bone to pick with the United States. These regimes have either experienced the negative effect of getting on America’s wrong side or fear it happening to them and want to hedge themselves against any potential punitive measures by Washington.

Daniel W. Drezner, a professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, makes this argument in a recent piece for [Politico](#).

In his article, Drezner contends that the partnership between Russia, China, and their growing list of allies isn’t as firm as we might be led to believe.

“Moscow has directed a lot of vitriol toward the West over the past year,” Drezner writes. “The volume of that rhetoric sometimes drowns out an awkward fact about Moscow’s foreign policy reorientation away from the West and toward allies like China and Iran: Russian elites are not exactly thrilled with their new partners.”

He continues by explaining that not only are Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran not necessarily “thrilled” to be working together; they actually have some disdain for each other:

In my conversations with Russian academics, there has been plenty of grumbling about the meager quality of Chinese support, for example. This reflects a longstanding Russian hubris toward its eastern neighbor dating back to the days of Stalin and Mao. The Russian disdain



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directed toward Iran is even greater.

These feelings are mutual. In my conversations with Chinese diplomats, they express considerable exasperation with Russia's actions in Ukraine. For them, the invasion upset a strategic situation that they believed was favorable to China. Ordinary Chinese people still harbor resentments toward Russia; I have heard Chinese students vent in great detail about territorial land grabs by 19th century tsars that have yet to be reversed. Similarly, my Russian colleagues have complained that their bilateral relations with Iran have been stymied by Tehran's historical grievances.

But these deep and historic resentments notwithstanding, Drezner explains that they will continue working together so long as they feel that Washington poses an even greater problem for them. "Despite these lingering resentments, however, the past year has taught all of these countries an important lesson: as much as they might have issues with each other, they have much bigger issues with the United States," he wrote.

What does all this mean for U.S. policymakers?

It means Americans must make some tough decisions about what their priorities really are. First, the United States must make a full commitment to abandoning the neocon empire-building and foreign interventionism that for so long has characterized the administrations of both of America's major political parties.

Interventionism persists under both Democrats and Republicans not because such policies are good for American citizens. On the contrary, this type of foreign policy places onerous financial debts on our children, results in mass loss of life among our military service members, distracts from real national-security concerns such as the border, and only serves to create more enemies abroad — ultimately making us less safe.

The only reason this status quo continues is because it is beneficial to the Deep State and the military-industrial complex, which often, sadly, wield far more influence among elected officials than voters do.

Assuming that Congress and the executive branch are willing to turn away from these power brokers and actually make Americans' well-being the true priority of our foreign policy, they must then decide which partnerships, alliances, and rivalries on the global stage further our national security and which are only pursued at present to satisfy the childish whims of chicken hawks in the Pentagon.

By that metric, there is great cause to remain skeptical of China, which is successfully conducting a campaign of unrestricted warfare against the United States — one encompassing surveillance, media influence, bribery of elected officials, control of Americans firms, purchasing American land, and more.

On the other hand, while Russia's Vladimir Putin is no paragon of virtue, and his style of subtle authoritarianism is not something we would want to emulate here, he is also no more autocratic than regimes we gladly partner with, such as Saudi Arabia.

Should the United States consider, if not becoming allies proper with Moscow, at least ceasing to antagonize it — a move which thus far has only had the effect of bringing together Asia's two greatest powers by landmass (Russia and China) into one united front against America?



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