RUSSIA AND CHINA

Brothers Again?

Elizabeth Wishnick

"Russia and China are brothers forever," or so proclaimed the 1950 ode to Sino-Soviet friendship. Although three decades of animosity cast doubt on that claim, by the mid-1990s the two countries had succeeded not only in repairing relations but also in developing a strategic partnership for the 21st century. The signing of the Sino-Russian Treaty on Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation on July 16, 2001, raises questions about the long-term significance of the partnership developing between Moscow and Beijing today.

The new Sino-Russian friendship treaty made headlines, but most Western observers have been indifferent to the emergence of the Sino-Russian partnership in the 1990s and have focused on its limitations.[1] While appreciating the international, military, economic, and political interests encouraging rapprochement, these analysts emphasized that in the short term there are many constraints to Sino-Russian strategic cooperation.[2]

Elizabeth Wishnick is Senior Research Analyst at the EastWest Institute in New York City. The views expressed are solely those of the author.

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1. Gilbert Rozman, "A New Sino-Russian-American Triangle?" *Orbis* 44:4 (Fall 2000), p. 542.

2. Sherman W. Garnett, *Limited Partnership: Russia-China Relations in a Changing Era*, Report of the Study Group on Russia-China Relations (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace [CEIP], 1998), p. 30; idem. "Limited Partnership," in *Rapprochement or Rivalry? Russia-China Relations in a Changing Era*, ed. Sherman W. Garnett (Washington, D.C.: CEIP, 2000), p. 30; Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Living with Russia," *National Interest* (Fall 2000), p. 10; Peggy Falkenheim Meyer, "Sino-Russian Relations under Putin" (paper presented at the International Council for Central and East European Studies VI World Congress, Tampere, Finland, July 29-August 3, 2000), pp. 1–2; and Jennifer Andersen, *The Limits of Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership*, Adelphi Paper no. 315 (London: Oxford University Press on behalf of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), pp. 10–12.

By the end of the decade, however, some commentators had noted that common opposition to American policies on national missile defense (NMD), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion, and intervention in the Kosovo conflict served to shore up Sino-Russian strategic coordination and military cooperation, despite the partnership's weakness in other areas.[3] Some argued that the strategic triangle, viewed as a Cold War relic for much of the 1990s, had regained its relevance as a framework for understanding Great Power relations in the 21st century.[4]

This article provides a balance sheet for the emerging Sino-Russian strategic partnership and examines its potential as an alliance.[5] It is argued that strategic and political concerns bring the two neighbors together, creating the foundations for an incipient alliance and fertile ground for new triangular maneuvering. Nevertheless, divergent interests over issues such as Asian security, missile defense, and economic and regional cooperation exert countervailing pressures and set limits to the partnership. Neither the forces bringing Russia and China together nor the pressures pulling them apart should be underestimated–the Sino-Russian partnership has real substance but also many underlying tensions. Domestic developments in China and Russia, and U.S. policy toward both countries, will be key in setting the parameters for Sino-Russian partnership in the years to come.

Impetus for Cooperation

In Moscow and Beijing alike there is widespread agreement that the developing Sino-Russian relationship reflects their shared interests on fundamental issues.[6] Once Moscow's most worrisome ideological opponent, China has become in the post-Cold War international order a valued strategic partner. President Vladimir Putin recently told the new Chinese Ambassador to Russia, Zhang Deguang, that Russian-Chinese cooperation had never been more

3. Paula J. Dobriansky, "Be Wary When the Bear Sides with a Dragon," *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 2000; and Evan A. Feigenbaum, "The United States Is Driving Russia and China Together Again," *International Herald Tribune*, December 28, 2000, p. 8. According to Feigenbaum, a recent poll by a Russian subsidiary of the Gallup organization found that more than half of Russian policy makers, business people, and journalists now consider China to be a more reliable partner than the U.S.

4. Li Jingjie, "Pillars of the Sino-Russian Partnership," *Orbis* 44:4 (Fall 2000), p. 532; and Michel Tatu, "The Washington-Moscow-Beijing Triangle," *International Affairs* (Moscow) 45:2 (1999), p. 64.

5. I discuss the evolution of the Sino-Russian partnership in detail in *Mending Fences: The Evolution of Moscow's China Policy from Brezhnev to Yeltsin* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), Part 3.

6. Interview with Aleksandr Konovalov, director, Institute of Strategic Studies (Moscow), on Russian Public Television, July 16, 2001, at <http://www.securities.com/>.

fruitful than in the current stage of relations.[7] Similarly, from Beijing's perspective, Sino-Russian relations have never been better than in the 1990s.[8] Despite early concerns about Russian political reforms, Chinese officials praise former President Boris Yeltsin for treating China as an equal–a sharp contrast from the 1950s, supposedly the heyday of Sino-Soviet friendship but in fact a time when Moscow viewed Beijing as a vassal in the communist movement.[9]

If the Sino-Russian strategic partnership of the 1990s is an equal one, this is because it is based on mutual support and common political concerns. Within a year of the formation of the new Russian state, the political center had shifted: disenchanted with Western assistance and exhortations, more and more prominent voices called for a foreign policy balanced between East and West. In particular, Yeltsin took steps to engage Russia's Asian neighbors. He used his summit with Chinese leaders in Beijing in December 1992 to develop a conception of a foreign policy "balanced between East and West."[10] Once the early hopes for a new type of Russian-American relationship had evolved into sober reflections on different interests, policymakers in Moscow began to look toward China as their preferred partner for the 21st century.

Strategic Agreement

During a series of summit meetings throughout the decade, Presidents Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin announced first their constructive partnership in 1994 and then their strategic partnership in 1996. Russian and Chinese leaders quickly found common cause in their opposition to what they perceived as U.S. domination of the evolving post-Cold War world order and embarked on a joint effort to shape a more inclusive multipolar international system.[11]

In the first half of the 1990s, Chinese leaders seized on a vision of a multipolar world order as a means of emerging from the diplomatic isolation resulting from the Tiananmen sanctions, the collapse of the communist movement, and the Clinton administration's initial tough talk on human

7. NAPSNet, August 28, 2001, at <http://www.nautilus.org>.

8. For example, see Song Yimin, "Sino-Russia, Russia-U.S., Sino-U.S. Relations, and Interaction among the Three," paper prepared for the International Research Exchange Board (IREX), Washington, D.C., February 1997, p. 14, republished in *Guoji wenti yanjiu* [Foreign affairs research], no. 3, 1997.

9. Author interviews with senior scholars and officials, Beijing, March and November 1999.

10. President Boris Yeltsin, press briefing, December 18, 1992, Moscow Television Network in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Report/Central Eurasia* (*DR/CE*), December 21, 1992, p. 4.

11. "Rossiia-KNR, Visit B.N. Yeltsina v KNR" [Russia-PRC, B.N. Yeltsin's visit to the PRC] *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik* [Diplomatic herald], no. 5 (May 1996), p. 16.

rights issues.[12] For Chinese analysts, the Sino-Russian partnership, coming at a time of growing Russian disenchantment with Western assistance and Russia's rejection of the role of junior partner to the U.S., represented a counterweight to American influence and confirmation that a multipolar world was indeed taking shape.[13]

In January 1996, Evgenii Primakov replaced Andrei Kozyrev as Russia's foreign minister. Unlike Kozyrev, the architect of the pro-Western foreign policy of Yeltsin's first term, Primakov reinvigorated relations with Moscow's longtime friends, such as India and North Korea, and focused more attention on developing multilateral cooperation in the former Soviet republics. Abandoning Kozyrev's efforts to develop a new Asia-Pacific security community,[14] Primakov sought to raise Russia's profile in the region through partnerships with selected states, such as China and India, and even went so far as to advocate a tripartite alliance. The new foreign minister, like his Chinese counterparts, saw the international system shifting to a multipolar order, which would be conducive to inclusive dialogue and take Russian interests into account. His successor, Igor Ivanov, has continued this policy and highlighted the importance of achieving balance in Russia's policy toward Europe and Asia, which he views as the "natural symbiosis of Russia's traditional pro-European orientation and its eagerness to promote its interests in Asia."[15]

The dramatic progress in Sino-Russian political relations paralleled the development of NATO expansion and growing concern in some American policy circles about China's rising power. Just as Russian officials saw NATO expansion as a way of containing Russian power, so have Chinese officials viewed the U.S. role in the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, and the tough battle in the U.S. Congress over China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), as attempts to counter Beijing's growing clout. Russian and Chinese leaders have issued joint statements about U.S. military strikes against Iraq, the NATO intervention in the Kosovo crisis, and U.S. plans for theater missile defense (TMD) and NMD. Since the mid-1990s, China and Russia have joined together to oppose what they view as American interference in their

12. Gilbert Rozman, "China's Quest for Great Power Identity," *Orbis* 43:3 (Summer 1999), p. 390.

13. Zheng Yushuo, "Zhongguo lingdao ren waijiaozhengzhong de ZhongE zhanlue huoban guanxi" [Sino-Russian strategic partnership in the foreign policy of the Chinese leadership] *DongOu ZhongYa yanjiu* [Eastern European and Central Asian research], no. 6 (1998), pp. 60–63.

14. Gennady Chufrin, "Asia as a Factor in Russia's International Posture," in *Russia and Asia: The Emerging Security Agenda*, ed. Gennady Chufrin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 475–76.

15. Interview with Igor Ivanov, *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* [Independent newspaper], June 15, 2001, p. 6.

domestic affairs on human rights grounds. Chinese leaders supported Russia's effort to subdue Chechnya militarily, and Russia has firmly backed China's position on Taiwan.

Nevertheless, by the end of the decade, Chinese analysts acknowledged that there were formidable obstacles to the development of a multipolar world. In particular, the U.S. accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade brought home the difficulty of protecting Chinese sovereignty from American encroachment.[16] Moreover, Chinese officials and scholars see in American plans to develop TMD and NMD systems an outright attempt to contain China and prevent it from occupying its rightful place in the international system.[17] Thus, partnership with Russia has become all the more crucial for China's effort to prevent any major changes in the strategic security architecture, which would neutralize the Chinese strategic nuclear deterrent and impede its aim of recovering Taiwan. Today Russian and Chinese leaders also share similar domestic concerns–Russia's new president, Vladimir Putin, came to office determined to reassert the power of the Russian state and rein in his country's fractious regions, concerns that parallel Beijing's apprehensions about maintaining social stability and keeping China's peripheries firmly in the fold of the state.

The new Russian president's July 2000 visit to Beijing demonstrated that the Sino-Russian partnership would continue to be an important part of the geopolitical landscape in the 21st century. One of the key results of the summit was the signing of a joint declaration condemning the U.S. plan to create an NMD system, which the Russian and Chinese presidents argue would undermine their own security by enabling the U.S. to achieve unilateral military superiority.[18] In addition to restating their well-known positions on mutual respect for territorial integrity and opposition to separatist activities, Putin and Jiang also agreed to prepare a new friendship treaty, to continue to cooperate with their Central Asian neighbors, and to expand confidence-building measures in their border regions.[19]

However, in contrast to the Yeltsin leadership, Putin's government appears to view relations with China with far less idealism and is attempting to take a more hard-nosed approach to developing a truly equal partnership.[20] Although Putin had promised that China would be the first country he visited as

16. Sa Benwang, "The Impact of the Balkan War on the World Situation" (in Chinese), *Heping yu fazhan* [Peace and development], no. 3 (1999), pp. 62–63.

17. Author interviews with senior scholars and officials, Beijing, March 1999.

18. Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration, *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* [Russian newspaper], July 19, 2000, p. 7.

19. China-Russia Declaration, Xinhua, July 18, 2000.

20. The discussion of Putin's Asia policy is drawn from interviews with senior scholars and officials in Moscow, July 2000.

president, he actually went to Great Britain first. Putin has emphasized that Russia is a European country and even floated the idea of cooperating with Europe and the U.S. in the development of an anti-ballistic missile defense system. Such statements give some Chinese observers pause about the priority of the Sino-Russian partnership in the new Russian president's foreign policy.[21]

Indeed, there is a sense in Russian foreign policy circles that China has benefited more than Russia from the partnership as it had been elaborated in the 1990s. In coming years, one may expect to see Russian policymakers make more explicit efforts to link their country's interest in gaining lucrative Chinese contracts for aircraft and energy equipment to support for issues of greater concern to China, such as NMD, and perhaps even for sales of military equipment to China.[22]

The Putin government has tried to address some regional concerns in the Russian Far East about Chinese intentions there. The newly appointed presidential representative for the Russian Far East federal district, Konstantin Pulikovskii, accompanied the Russian president on his visit to Beijing. As soon as the summit meetings concluded, Pulikovskii was dispatched to Khabarovsk to reassure the regional administration that the two governments had agreed to maintain the status quo of three remaining disputed islands, including two in the Amur River, right across from the city, although in principle both the Russian and Chinese governments are committed to resolving their status.

In recent years, the Sino-Russian partnership has been most effective in the geopolitical sphere,[23] but Putin has stressed his intention to improve the economic side of the relationship. In an effort to find new prospects for regional cooperation, the Russian and Chinese governments have shifted their focus westward. Russia agreed to explore the possibility of participating in energy projects in China's western regions. The governors of Altaiiskii Krai and Chita Oblast,[24] more enthusiastic about economic cooperation with China than Russian's Far Eastern regions, accompanied Putin during his visit to

21. See, for example, an article by Pan Guang, director of the Shanghai Academy of Social Science's Institute of European and Asian Studies, "Sino-Russian Relations in Putin's Era" (in Chinese), *Ta kung pao* (Hong Kong), July 18, 2000, p. A2, in FBIS, *Daily Report/China (DR/C),* July 18, 2000, at <http://www.fedworld.gov/>.

22. Sergei Strokan and Andrei Ivanov, "Velikaia Kitaiskaia spina" [The great back of China] *Kommersant-Vlast'*, [Entrepreneur-power], July 10, 2001, pp. 28–30.

23. Interview with Evgenii Bazhanov, director of the Institute of Contemporary Problems, Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Strategicheskoe partnerstvo po siiuminutnym voprosam" [The strategic partnership and current issues], *Segodnia* [Today], July 18, 2000, p. 1.

24. The 89 territories comprising the Russian Federation are divided into four types of units: ethnically based republics and krais (territories), oblasts (regions), and okrugs (districts).

Beijing. Putin also adroitly neutralized the most outspoken critic of Russia's China policy: then-Primorskii Krai Governor Evgenii Nazdratenko was invited to the banquet in Beijing but not the working sessions.

In an effort to codify the Sino-Russian partnership for future generations, Russian and Chinese leaders signed the new Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation during Jiang Zemin's July 2001 visit to Moscow. After the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance expired in 1980, a time when conflict prevailed, China refused to renew it. Beginning in the 1970s, Soviet officials periodically proposed signing a new document that would outline the principles of bilateral relations, but the Chinese adamantly refused to do so, viewing the Soviet proposal as a way for Moscow to gloss over major problems in the relationship above all the border issue.[25] Nevertheless, at a July 2000 summit meeting, Jiang himself proposed signing a new treaty, a surprising move since Chinese officials had consistently opposed alliances of any kind. Indeed, China has no such friendship treaty with any other country.

The 20-year renewable treaty is interesting because it highlights both the areas of convergence in Russian and Chinese policies and the still unresolved issues in their relations.[26] Half of its articles restate the contents of previous joint declarations and indicate points of agreement. These articles reiterate oft-mentioned principles of cooperation, the parties' respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, and Russia's commitment to a one-China policy, although the latter is made much more explicit in the July 2001 agreement. The treaty also reaffirms pledges to expand ties in a variety of spheres, enhance military confidence-building, and hold regular high-level meetings.

Although Russian and Chinese leaders have insisted that the new treaty does not constitute an alliance, and it contains no mutual defense clause, two articles contain pledges typical of alliances.[27] Article 8 commits the parties to refrain from entering into agreements with third states that could harm the security, sovereignty, or territorial integrity of the partner. Article 9 obliges the signatories to contact each other immediately in case of a threat of aggression against the partner. Since Russian and Chinese leaders consult frequently on security matters, Article 9 simply formalizes standard practice.

25. Wishnick, *Mending Fences*, ch. 2.

26. The complete text, "Dogovor o dobrososedstve, druzhbe i sotrudnichestve mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Kitaiskoi Narodnoi Respubliki" [Agreement on good neighborliness, friendship, and cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China] was published by ITAR-TASS in *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* [Russian newspaper] on July 17, 2001. For an English-language version, see "Text of Sino-Russian Treaty," Xinhua, July 15, 2001.

27. Robert H. Donaldson, "The Arms Trade in Russian-Chinese Relations: How Firm a Foundation?" (paper presented to the International Studies Association convention, Hong Kong, July 2001), pp. 8–10.

From the outset, Moscow nonetheless made it clear that Article 8 would be interpreted loosely: the day after the signing, President Putin suggested that either NATO should disband or Russia should be invited to join it–a move China would undoubtedly view as harmful to its security.[28]

Several of the new articles, which have not appeared in previous declarations, indirectly call attention to underlying problems in the relationship and their potential consequences. Such problems include the growing imbalance in Russian and Chinese economic power, the distrust in the border regions stemming from territorial disputes and illegal immigration, and regional economic issues. Thus, despite the preamble's mention of the "historical tradition of good-neighborliness and friendship,"[29] the treaty obligates signatories to forswear economic and other forms of pressure (Article 2) and to facilitate "the strengthening of stability and the establishment of an atmosphere of mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation in the [border] regions" (Article 14). It notes an "absence of mutual territorial pretensions," committing the parties to maintain the status quo along the border until the islands dispute can be resolved (Article 5), and to cooperate in combating illegal immigration (Article 20).

The treaty also is intriguing for what it does not say. Nowhere does it mention cooperation in Northeast Asia, an area where Russian and Chinese interests diverge, as will be seen below. In a separate joint statement, Jiang and Putin said that they would participate in programs to safeguard regional stability and security, but they gave no specifics about key issues such as the future of the Korean Peninsula.[30] More striking, given the number of joint statements issued by China and Russia opposing missile defense, the treaty fails to mention this explicitly, although the presidents, in a separate statement, noted that the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty signed by Washington and Moscow is of critical importance. Article 12 of the friendship treaty obligates the signatories to "take joint efforts to maintain the global strategic balance and stability and to encourage strict adherence to the observance of basic agreements guaranteeing the maintenance of strategic stability." Asked about the omission of the ABM treaty from the new friendship accord, Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Losyukov said the document was designed to last 20 years and therefore did not include statements on specific issues,[31] a remark implying that he believed the ABM treaty might

28. Peter Baker, "Putin: NATO Should Disband or Allow Russia to Join," *Washington Post*, July 18, 2001.

29. On the myth of historical friendship between Russia and China, see S. C. M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1996), pp. 10–11.

30. Joint Statement of Chinese and Russian heads of state, Xinhua, July 16, 2001.

31. *RFE/RL* [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty] *Newsline*, July 17, 2001.

not last that long. The lack of reference to the ABM treaty thus gives Russia greater flexibility in future negotiations with the U.S., while appearing to agree with China on the issue in the short term.

Russia and China had different motives in signing the treaty. For Russian officials, the main goal was to gain China's formal agreement to abandon any territorial claims against Russia, a clause which Foreign Minister Ivanov stated was of enormous historical significance.[32] The Russian press has also noted the importance of China's commitment to combat illegal immigration.[33] However, some of the coverage was more skeptical about the treaty's benefits for Russian interests. Some commentators have said that without resolution of border issues, the 2001 treaty may well meet the same fate as the 1950 friendship agreement. They have emphasized that even if Beijing abides by the terms, Chinese economic expansion in the underpopulated Russian Far East could lead to de facto Chinese control over its former territories.[34] Other observers have argued that by pledging to consult with China and forswear agreements that would adversely affect Chinese interests, Russian officials were giving Beijing veto power over the development of Russia's relations with the West.[35]

Chinese statements on the new treaty have stressed the importance of ensuring a long-term legal basis for Sino-Russian friendship.[36] China's current dependence on Russian military technology (and potential reliance on Russian energy supplies) makes such a relationship essential.[37] Jiang Zemin, in his address at Moscow State University, hailed the new treaty as an example of strategic cooperation based on "non-alliance, non-confrontation, and not targeting any third country. . . ." According to Jiang, it was necessary to chart out a new form of cooperation, because the history of relations between Beijing and Moscow showed that both alliances and confrontations have been detrimental to the development of bilateral ties. Reiterating China's commitment to an independent foreign policy, the Chinese leader said that coopera-

32. Interview by Xinhua with Foreign Minister Ivanov, July 15, 2001, at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs home page at <http://www.mid.ru/>.

33. Vladimir Soskyrev, "China, Russia, Friends Forever," *Moscow News*, July 18, 2001.

34. Aleksandr Lomanov, "Twenty Years Later," *Vremia Novostei* [Time for news], July 16, 2001, p. 6.

35. Evgenii Volin, "Rossiia-Kitai/Ot braka po raschetu mogut byt' deti" [Russia-China: After marriage children may come], July 18, 2001, at <http://www.grani.ru/>.

36. *Renmin ribao* [People's daily] editorial, republished by Xinhua, July 26, 2001.

37. Even under the Su-27 co-production agreement, China requires Russian parts to manufacture the aircraft in Shenyang. All of the Su-27s and Su-30s also receive overhauls in Russia, after approximately 800 hours of flight time. John Pomfret, "China Signs $2 Billion Deal to Buy Russian Fighter Jets," *Washington Post*, July 20, 2001.

tion with Russia would further promote the development of global stability and multipolarity.[38]

Arms Sales

Russian arms sales to China have been expanding, some say beyond the control of the Russian Defense Ministry, as ailing defense industries seek sources of hard currency.[39] On the whole, except in the views of some critics on the fringes of the Russian political spectrum, better Russian-Chinese military relations are widely perceived as one of the main achievements of the commercial relationship. Cooperation has become wide-ranging, including intelligence-sharing, training, exchanges of high-level visits, and arms sales.

Today the pace and character of Russian arms sales to China are raising concerns in the West. Chinese military purchases increased steadily in the 1990s, and Beijing now is the biggest buyer of Russian weapons: by October 2000, China accounted for 49.9% of Russian arms sales, surpassing India. After 18 fighter aircraft (10 Su-30MKKs and 8 Su-27UBKs) and a second destroyer were delivered to China in December 2000, Beijing's share of Russian arms exports rose to more than 70%.[40] China buys a wide range of weapon systems from Russia, including attack aircraft, missile systems, destroyers, diesel submarines, and helicopters.

In July 2001, Russian and Chinese officials signed a major new $2 billion contract to supply China with additional Su-30MKK ground-attack aircraft, which will be produced in Komsomolsk-na-Amure in Khabarovsk Krai in the Russian Far East.[41] Following Putin's July 2000 visit, just days after Israel announced that Beijing would not be able to purchase AWACs, Russian officials finalized a deal to sell China six A-50E airborne warning and control systems.[42] Although Moscow has not been willing to sell Beijing its most current generation of weapons, some Chinese purchases have the potential to alter the Asian balance of power. For example, Sukhoi-27 aircraft were deployed during the 1995–96 Taiwan crisis and the Kilo-class destroyers

38. Xinhua, July 17, 2001.

39. Steven Blank, "Why Russian Policy Is Failing in Asia," *Journal of East Asian Affairs* 11:1 (Winter/Spring 1997), p. 285.

40. Konstantin Makienko, "Preliminary Estimates of Russian Performance in Military-Technical Cooperation with Foreign States in 2000" [in English], *Export Vooruzhenyi* [Arms exports], Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (Moscow), at <http://www.cast.ru>. As of October 2000, India accounted for 22% of Russian arms exports, although on December 28 Russia and India signed a contract worth approximately $3.5 billion for the licensed production of 140 Su-30MKKK aircraft.

41. AVN Military News Agency (Moscow), July 18, 2001.

42. Economist Intelligence Unit, "Russia Industry: Putin Peddles Arms Abroad," *Viewswire Eastern Europe*, at <http://www.securities.com>.

equipped with guided missiles that Beijing recently acquired could complicate Taiwan's naval defense.[43]

A Secure and Peaceful Border

Through their new partnership, Russian and Chinese leaders have ensured that their 2,600-mile border is no longer a tense militarized zone, as it was from the 1960s to the late 1980s. After squandering scarce funds on border defense and stunting the economic growth of their border regions, the two neighbors now are working to settle any outstanding issues, to deepen confidence-building measures, and to promote economic cooperation.

By 1997, Russia and China had succeeded in resolving most of their differences over the demarcation of their border. To be sure, the demarcation process has been the source of considerable controversy, aggravating tensions between Moscow and the Russian border regions. In 1995, Primorskii Krai Governor Evgenii Nazdratenko called for the repudiation of the 1991 Sino-Russian border demarcation treaty, rather than the return of certain territories to China. Although compromise ultimately was achieved, three border-river islands remain the subject of dispute, as mentioned above. Two islands, Tarabarov/Yinlong and Bolshoy Ussuriiskiy/Heixiazi, occupy a strategic location directly across from Khabarovsk. While the islands lie on the Chinese side, Khabarovsk Krai Governor Viktor Ishaev adamantly refuses to return them, for fear that his regional capital would become a vulnerable border outpost. Ishaev acknowledges the importance of cooperation with China in arms sales, forestry, labor exchanges, and international problems but insists that the two disputed islands are native Russian territory and he has no intention of returning them–to the contrary, his government has accelerated economic development efforts there.[44] Even Putin's representative to the Far East federal district, Konstantin Pulikovskii, has stated unequivocally that the two islands belong to Russia.[45]

Present-day border issues now involve many participants–Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, as well as the Russian border regions. Russia, China, and their three Central Asian neighbors are committed to greater transparency in border defense activities. In 1996, the five agreed to confidence-building measures requiring that each party inform the others about troop and weapons movements within 100 km of their common border. A year later they set numerical limits on the forces stationed in the border regions–130,400 Chinese troops and an equal number divided among Russia and the three Central Asian states. Summit meetings of the so-called Shang-

43. Pomfret, "China Signs $2 Billion Deal," p. A27.
44. ITAR-TASS, July 27, 2000.
45. RIA News Agency, July 22, 2000.

hai Five (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) have become a regular forum for discussion of confidence-building measures and regional economic cooperation.

During the June 2001 meeting, Uzbekistan became the sixth member of the group, now called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and Mongolia is interested in joining. Concerned by the destabilizing influence of the Taliban, refugee flows, drug trafficking, and militant Islamic movements in Central Asia, the member states have agreed to hold joint military exercises and signed a declaration on joint counter-terrorism, involving the establishment of a center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization also plans to promote economic cooperation, especially in the energy sector, to counterbalance growing U.S. investment in the region.[46]

Enduring Tensions and New Problems

It is one of the great ironies of history that just as Moscow was able to achieve a significant improvement in relations with China in the early 1990s, as demonstrated by their flourishing military cooperation, the issues in the relationship suddenly changed. From the beginning, the newly established Sino-Russian partnership had to address new challenges stemming from divergent paths to economic and political development, the growing influence of regions on foreign policy, the lagging bilateral economic relationship, legacies of mistrust, and changing domestic and international environments. All of these factors will shape the Sino-Russian relationship in years to come and introduce elements of uncertainty into the fledgling partnership. For it to be an enduring one, legacies of mistrust and divergent interests will need to be addressed. As the 21st century opens, unpredictable configurations of international factors and domestic conditions in both Russia and China will determine whether they truly will be "brothers forever" or wary neighbors.

Regional Relations

Regional leaders, along with policymakers in Moscow and Central Asia, have been reassessing their geopolitical positions and are less than sanguine about the current outlook. Previously, the leadership in Moscow focused on the ideological and military aspects of the balance of power with Beijing. Today, Russian leaders on all sides of the political spectrum are concerned, above all, with economic and demographic issues. The results of Russia's own reform efforts compare unfavorably with China's impressive economic growth, and some Russian observers have noted that Russian technology shipments in

46. Rachel Morajee, "Silk Road Oil Resources a Lucrative Draw for China, Russia," Agence France-Presse, June 17, 2001.

recent years have only served to contribute to Chinese economic strength.[47] Russian officials feel pressure from China in another area as well. Since the early 1990s, the population of the Russian Far East has been dwindling because of the high cost of living and the economic downturn in the region, while Chinese citizens have been migrating there, often illegally.[48] The influx of Chinese traders and workers has inflamed the already high social tensions in the region, causing what former Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev termed an "inescapable" problem for local inhabitants and authorities.[49] Today, fewer than seven and a half million people live in the Russian Far East, a vast territory two-thirds the size of the U.S., while more than 100 million people reside in the Chinese northeast.[50]

Russia's regional media, largely controlled by governors who see political capital in warning of China's "quiet expansion" in the Russian borderlands, have exacerbated concerns about Chinese illegal immigration to the Russian Far East. In 1993 and 1994, in particular, the peak period of Sino-Russian regional trade, the regional press decried the illegal presence of millions of Chinese migrants on Russian soil. According to the Institute for Economic Research in Khabarovsk, however, at that time a total of 50,000 to 80,000 Chinese worked in the Russian Far East, including contract workers, students, and business people. Now that rules for business travel and local oversight of foreign visitors have been strengthened, these numbers have been halved.[51] Chinese officials have denied the existence of a policy to retake lands lost to

47. On this point, see Sergei Rogov, "Analysis: The Results Are Pitiful, but There Is a Way Out: Three Years of Trial and Error in Russian Foreign Policy," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* [Independent newspaper], December 31, 1994, pp. 4–5; in FBIS, *DR/CE*, January 26, 1995, p. 10; and Aleksei Arbatov (director of the Geopolitical and Military Forecasting Center), "Rossiia: Natsional'naia bezopasnost' v 90e gody" [Russia: National security in the 1990s], *Mirovaia Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia* [International economy and international relations], no. 7 (1994), pp. 5–15. On China's rise and Russia's decline, see Sherman Garnett, "Russia's Illusory Ambitions," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1997), p. 69.

48. The population outflow from the Russian Far East was particularly large from 1991 to 1996, when the region lost 7% of its population (559,000 people). Southern territories did not experience the same degree of out-migration; during the same period, Primorskii Krai lost 1.5% of its population and Khabarovsk Krai lost 3%. See Galina Vitkovskaya, Zhanna Zayonchkovskaya, and Kathleen Newland, "Chinese Migration into Russia," in Garnett, ed., *Rapprochement or Rivalry?,* p. 351.

49. Vladimir Abrimov, "The Foreign Ministry Hopes That the CIS Will Greet the New Year without Bloodshed: Russia's Diplomats Are Reluctant to Step on the Same Rake," *Segodnia* [Today], December 16, 1994, p. 3, in FBIS, *DR/CE*, January 12, 1995, p. 6.

50. The three provinces constituting China's northeast (*dongbei*)–Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning–have a relatively low population density for China, but Russia's entire population is less than 150 million.

51. More stringent rules for contract workers also have led to a steady decline in their numbers. In Primorskii Krai, for example, the number of Chinese contract workers declined from 8,349 in 1995 to 5,185 in 1999. Primorskii Krai Committee of State Statistics, *Statiticheskii*

Russia during the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) through the encouragement of economic migration, as alleged by some in the Russian Far East and in Moscow.[52] China, too, has been concerned by criminal activity caused by Russian traders and implemented a well-publicized campaign against illegal border crossings.

Russia is not alone in facing problems with increasingly independent-minded regional leaders. In China, development has not proceeded evenly and has led to vast inequality in wealth between the coastal and interior provinces. Although by comparison with Russia, China's economic progress seems staggering, fundamental problems remain that have broader implications for China's neighbors. Flagging state industries in northeast China have exacerbated unemployment problems and led economic migrants to try their hand at shuttle trade in the Russian Far East. Efforts by the Chinese border regions to redress these disparities through an enthusiastic commitment to border trade with Russia have at times led to an unintended consequence: a rapid expansion of trade without the necessary infrastructure to regulate it. In the first half of the 1990s, many small and inexperienced firms from northeast China rushed to take advantage of new opportunities in cross-border trade with the Russian Far East. Their Russian counterparts soon complained of shoddy goods and unscrupulous trading practices. By 1996, Beijing had called Heilongjiang officials to task for their inadequate administration of regional trade with Russia, which had resulted in new irritants in Sino-Russian relations.[53] Investigations were undertaken and more stringent regulations imposed.[54] Since then, Chinese officials in Beijing and the Chinese northeast have been encouraging larger firms to enter Russian markets and trying to meet Russian demand for higher-quality products.

Regional issues figure high on the list of problems in Sino-Russian relations, largely due to Russia's changed geopolitical position. While in the Cold War era Sino-Soviet tensions were viewed globally (i.e., in terms of their impact on the U.S.-Soviet relationship), problems today in Russian-Chinese relations are felt most acutely in the Russian Far East. Russian regional leaders in particular look more critically at problems in bilateral relations with China because of the economic and demographic imbalance between the Russian and Chinese border regions.

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ezhegodnik v 1998 [1998 statistical yearbook] (Vladivostok, 1999), and *Primorskii Krai v 1999 godu* [Primorskii Krai in 1999] (Vladivostok, 2000).

52. Author interviews with senior scholars and officials in Harbin, July-August 1996; and in Beijing, June and August 1996, and November 1999.

53. Interviews with senior scholars and officials in Beijing and Harbin, June-August 1996.

54. I discuss this in detail in "Chinese Perspectives on Cross-Border Relations," in Garnett, ed., *Rapprochement or Rivalry?*, pp. 244–48.

Lagging Bilateral Economic Cooperation

Despite the problems in regulating regional economic cooperation, border trade has spurred the improvement in the overall trade balance, especially in the period from 1991 to 1993. Still, progress in Sino-Russian political relations far exceeds the results achieved in bilateral economic cooperation. The pledge by former president Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin to reach $20 billion in two-way trade by 2000 proved impossible to fulfill because of constant changes in trade rules, a lack of infrastructure, and rapidly evolving markets. Nevertheless, in 2000, Sino-Russian bilateral trade reached $8 billion, its highest volume since 1993, and figures for the first six months of 2001 show a 40% increase over the previous year. Arms sales have expanded consistently but not without controversy, because of Russian complaints about early agreements that allowed China to barter allegedly poor quality consumer goods for weapons.[55]

Indeed, the strategic partnership with Russia appears to have had little impact on Chinese economic decisions. Much to Moscow's consternation, Russia's bid to provide turbines for the Three Gorges Dam was rejected as uncompetitive, and, thus far China has opted to purchase Boeing and Airbus passenger aircraft over Tupolevs. Russian officials were dismayed at these setbacks, which some saw as incommensurate with the political aspects of Sino-Russian partnership,[56] and have redoubled their efforts to convince the Chinese to purchase Tupolev passenger planes. During Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's September 2001 visit, a compromise was reached–China agreed to purchase five Tupolev-204 cargo planes, with an option to buy additional cargo or passenger aircraft.[57]

China also faces stiff challenges in expanding its presence in the Russian market. In an effort to boost the prestige of Chinese products among Russian consumers, China is seeking to open a trade center in Moscow, which would showcase high-quality exports. Two new Chinese department stores opened in Moscow in fall 1999, although swanky new retail outlets may do little to change the minds of increasingly brand-conscious Russian consumers. Even in the Russian Far East, Chinese consumer goods remain a tough sell and face stiff competition from South Korean, Japanese, and U.S. products. For example, in 1999 and 2000, Japan was the largest source of imports for Khabarovsk Krai, and South Korea was number one for Primorskii Krai.[58]

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55. *Jamestown Monitor*, February 8, 1996.

56. Author interviews with senior scholars and officials, Moscow and Beijing, March-April 1999.

57. Lyubo Pronina, "China Plane Puts Wind in Sirocco's Sails," *Moscow Times*, September 11, 2001, at <http://www.securities.org>.

58. *BISNIS*, Russian Far East, U.S. Department of Commerce, at <http://www.bisnis.doc.gov>. The United States was the leading source of imports to Primorskii Krai prior to the Au-

Despite Russia's unsuccessful bid to provide turbines for the Three Gorges project, energy cooperation in East Siberia and the Russian Far East may be one area where substantial bilateral, and even multilateral, cooperation (including Japan and South Korea) may be achieved. China already receives oil from Sakhalin and has expressed interest in purchasing gas from other Sakhalin projects. During the July 2001 summit, Russia and China reached an agreement paving the way for a feasibility study for a $1.7 billion pipeline running from Angarsk in eastern Siberia to Daqing in northeastern China. The 1,500-mile pipeline could be built as early as 2005 and begin shipping 147 million barrels annually to China.[59] The Russian gas giant Gazprom is one of the contenders for a project to build a 2,480-mile pipeline connecting gas fields in the Xinjiang region in western China to Shanghai on the east coast.

In 1999, the Russian firm Yukos shipped 1.5 million tons of oil by rail to China and plans to sell up to 10 million tons by 2005. To facilitate shipping the increased volume, Russia and China are discussing the construction of a pipeline from Yukos's oil fields in Tomsk in eastern Siberia to China, although the two sides have not resolved differences over pricing.[60] In the Republic of Sakha in the Russian Far East, however, China emerged as Yukos's competitor and won the tender to develop the Talanskii fields, which are believed to contain 124 million tons of oil and 47 billion cubic meters of gas.[61]

Currently the Chinese are participating in a feasibility study for the development of the Kovykta gas fields near Irkutsk, but they disagree with the Russians over the route of the proposed pipeline. The Russian side has proposed construction from Irkutsk via Mongolia to Beijing, the shortest route from eastern Siberia to China. The Chinese, however, want the pipeline to go directly from Russia to its northeast, to Daqing in Heilongjiang Province and thence to Dalian in Liaoning Province.[62] Apart from Sino-Russian differences, the Asian financial crisis has made it more difficult to proceed with energy cooperation because of the depressed demand for energy in Asia. The crisis also has made Asian states more reluctant to commit investment funds

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gust 1998 financial crisis and has yet to recover its share of the region's market for consumer goods.

59. John Lams, "China, Russia Plan Oil Pipeline," *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 2001.

60. *Vedomosti* [Gazette], October 31, 2000.

61. *Kommersant Daily* [Entrepreneur], July 21, 2001.

62. Igor' Sergeev, "Sammit reshit sud'bu `neftianogo mosta'" [Summit to Resolve Fate of Energy Bridge], *Ekspert*, no. 27, July 17, 2000, p. 10. To avoid conflicts over pricing, Gazprom was made the operator for the project. Previously, Russian gas companies negotiated separately with the Chinese, and the contract price varied significantly. ITAR-TASS, July 18, 2001.

to costly new energy projects. As a result, there has been much more discussion, than concrete progress, about Sino-Russian energy cooperation.

Legacies of Mistrust

When Mikhail Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping agreed at their May 1989 summit meeting to "close the past and open the future," the two leaders opted to put aside old disagreements in order to focus on facilitating the development of a constructive bilateral relationship. As the Sino-Russian partnership flourished in the 1990s, Russian and Chinese officials came to view the period of confrontation in Sino-Soviet relations as an aberration from the traditional friendship between the two neighbors.[63]

Nevertheless, despite a concerted effort by Russian and Chinese leaders to emphasize the positive and develop a strategic partnership, sweeping aside more than a century of border disputes, the more recent history of tensions in communist party relations served only to reinforce underlying suspicions. This was clear even as Deng made his historic pronouncement in 1989. While he suggested letting bygones be bygones, in his next breath the Chinese leader noted that it would be impossible to avoid all discussion of the unequal treaties imposed by the Tsarist regime and post-1917 Soviet encroachments.[64] Similarly, Russian opposition to the Sino-Russian border demarcation process and fears in the Russian border regions regarding the possibility of an uncontrollable influx of Chinese settlers are in part a reflection of Moscow's inadequate regional strategy,[65] but they also stem from the unwillingness of political leaders in the two countries to confront the legacy of centuries of tension.

Although most Russian officials and scholars agree that a stable and peaceful relationship with China is important, there is a spectrum of views in Moscow on the desirability of strategic partnership.[66] Relations with China have

63. Igor Rogachev, "Russia-China: The Principles and Parameters of Partnership," *Far Eastern Affairs* 26:2 (1997); Li Fenglin, "The Historic Choice of the Peoples of Our Two Countries," in ibid., p. 36. Rogachev was the Russian ambassador to the PRC and Li was the Chinese ambassador to Russia.

64. Vilia Gel'bras, "Kitaiskii Vopros Rossii" [Russia's China question], manuscript, Department of Economics, Moscow State University, 1999, p. 6.

65. Aleksandr Lukin makes this point in "Rossiia-Kitai: druz'ia ili soperniki?" [Russia-China: Friends or rivals], *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* [Independent newspaper], August 3, 2001.

66. Several scholars examine the differences of views in Moscow over Russia's China policy. For example, Aleksandr Lukin, "Russia's Image of China and Russian-Chinese Relations," *East Asia: An International Quarterly* (Spring 1999), pp. 1–16; Aleksei Voskressenski, "Russia's Evolving Grand Strategy toward China," in Garnett, *Rapprochement or Rivalry*; and Wishnick, *Mending Fences*, ch. 9.

long been a contentious issue in Moscow.[67] What is interesting about the current configuration of opinion is that some of the staunchest supporters of Sino-Russian partnership, many affiliated with the Russian Communist Party (KPRF), were among the fiercest critics of Maoist hegemony in the 1970s. Oleg Rakhmanin, a key player from the 1960s to the early 1980s in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Central Committee's strategy of containing China, recently published a book in which he argues that Russian and Chinese leaders today have a unique chance to create a firm basis for cooperation, because this is the last generation of Chinese leaders to have studied and worked in the Soviet Union in the 1950s.[68]

Though in the 1980s, Russian reformers pressed for normalization of relations, many contemporary democrats have criticized China's human rights record, urging closer ties with the West and emphasizing the potential danger of selling weapons to Beijing.[69] On the other side of the political spectrum, extreme nationalists such as Russian Liberal Democratic leader Vladimir Zhirinovskii dispute the value of friendship treaties in general and view confrontation as the norm in international relations. Interviewed on Russian television about the Sino-Russian treaty, Zhirinovskii dismissed its long-term potential: "We have signed hundreds and thousands of them. Sign one today, and tomorrow you can tear it apart and throw it in a bin."[70] Nevertheless, there is considerable consensus at the center of the political spectrum as to both geopolitical imperatives drawing Moscow and Beijing closer together and their need to maintain good relations with the West.[71]

Officially published Chinese materials are relentlessly upbeat about the Sino-Russian partnership, yet interviews with officials in Beijing and in the Chinese northeast reveal considerable frustration with economic relations, especially on the regional level, and with Russian allegations of official Chinese government support for illegal migration of Chinese citizens to the Russian Far East. While the desirability of partnership is never questioned openly, the overall weakness of Sino-Russian economic relations, and the difficulties in regional relations, fueled a debate in Chinese policy circles

67. Gilbert Rozman first chronicled these differences in "Moscow's China Policy in the Post-Mao Era: The Response to a Changing China," *China Quarterly*, no. 83, (June 1983), pp. 215–41.

68. Oleg Rakhmanin, *K istorii otnoshenii RSFSR, SSSR, RF s Kitaem, 1917–1997* [The history of China's relations with the RSFSR (Russian Socialist Federation of Socialist Republics), the USSR, and the Russian Federation] (Moscow: Institut Dal'nego Vostoka, 1999), p. 217.

69. See, for example, Aleksei Bogaturov's discussion of China as a potential threat in *Sovremennye teorii stabil'nosti i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia Rossii v Vostochnoi Azii v 1970–90e gg* [Contemporary theories of stability and Russia's international relations with Northeast Asia, 1970–90s] (Moscow: Moskovskii obshchestvennii nauchnyi fond, 1996), pp. 196–201.

70. BBC Worldwide Monitoring, July 16, 2001, at <http://www.securities.com>.

71. See, for example, Bazhanov, "Strategicheskoe partnerstvo," p. 4.

about the long-term prospects of the partnership.[72] Some see economic relations as fundamental and stress the potential for instability when political and economic ties develop at an uneven pace. Others argue that political and economic relations are separate. Even if economic relations grow more slowly than political ties, the strategic partnership has its own rationale and will not be affected adversely. Many Chinese analysts generally attribute the weakness of economic relations to instability in the Russian economy and argue that improvement in such ties will have to wait for the overall amelioration of Russian economic conditions.[73]

Divergent Strategic Concerns

Despite the efforts by Russian and Chinese leaders to move forward with a strategic partnership for the 21st century, their strategic interests continue to diverge on certain key issues, especially conflict resolution on the Korean Peninsula, missile defense, and to a lesser extent, Japan's role in Asia and relations with Central Asia. Although Yeltsin sought to downplay these differences, Putin has been attempting to use them in a new form of triangular diplomacy in an effort to boost Russia's profile, especially vis-à-vis the U.S.

Central Asia. China and Russia share an interest in maintaining stability in Central Asia, but they remain competitors in energy development and transportation projects in the region. Central Asian leaders are keenly aware that their countries are caught between two great powers jockeying for influence and have sought to diversify their partners through economic cooperation with the Middle East and Turkey, as well as their security relations via NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

Even as Russia and China have begun institutionalizing their cooperation in Central Asia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, some Russian observers have questioned Chinese intentions. A leading Moscow news magazine has suggested that while Russia hopes to use the new grouping to work with China to combat Islamic fundamentalism and contain Western influence, China aims also to push Russia out of Central Asia.[74] After years of Beijing's treading carefully there to avoid the appearance of competing with Russia, a combination of concerns about social unrest in Xinjiang and waning energy supplies has prompted China to play a more prominent role in the area that Moscow has been accustomed to view as its sphere of influence. How

72. See the discussion in Xue Jundu and Lu Nanquan, eds., *ZhongE jingmao guanxi* [China-Russia Economic and Trade Relations] (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1999).

73. Author interviews with senior officials and scholars in Beijing, Harbin, and Changchun, November 1999.

74. Sergei Strokan', "Shankhaiskaia gramota" [Shanghai charter], *Kommersant Vlast'* [Entrepreneur-power], June 26, 2001.

Russia and China manage their interests in Central Asia will reflect their more fundamental readjustment to the shifting balance of power between them. As Dmitri Trenin of the Moscow Carnegie Center noted, "Russia still has a big-brother mentality, but in reality it's now the junior partner."[75]

Japan. China has become the centerpiece of Russia's Asia policy in part because of the impasse in Russian-Japanese relations over territorial issues. Even after former Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro outlined a new "Eurasian policy" separating economic and political issues in Russian-Japanese relations, Japanese concerns about the high level of economic and political risk to investors have limited economic cooperation with Russia. Nevertheless, Japan supported Russia's participation in the G-7 and its entry into the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), which China was reluctant to do on its own.

For China, the revision of the U.S.-Japan security guidelines heightened apprehension that Japanese-American cooperation was evolving on an anti-Chinese basis, especially concerning Taiwan.[76] Although discussion of a Japanese-American TMD system arose after North Korea launched a Taepodong-I missile over Japan on August 31, 1998, Chinese officials dismissed this rationale and claimed that such a system could be directed against China, especially if Beijing used force in the Taiwan Strait.[77]

Despite its support for Beijing's position on Taiwan and opposition to missile defense in general, initially Russia took a surprisingly sanguine approach to the revised U.S.-Japan alliance guidelines. Then-Defense Minister Igor Rodionov went so far as to welcome them as a positive development for Asia.[78] Today, more liberal voices in Russia's foreign policy establishment are emphasizing the importance of Japan as a counterbalance to China's growing regional clout. They argue that the gradual improvement in Japanese-Russian relations since the late 1990s can be attributed to Tokyo's concerns about China's role in the region.[79]

Korea. In their summit meetings, Russian and Chinese leaders have declared that they hold "similar" views of Asian security issues, but official joint declarations have yet to mention the Korean Peninsula explicitly as an area inviting Sino-Russian cooperation. The absence of this important Northeast Asian security issue from their joint agenda reveals certain fundamental

75. Cited in Andrew Higgins and Charles Hutzler, "China Pursues a Great Game of Its Own," *Wall Street Journal*, June 14, 2001.

76. Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, "Chinese Apprehensions about Revitalization of the U.S.-Japan Alliance," *Asian Survey* 37:4 (April 1997), pp. 287–88.

77. Author interviews with senior scholars and officials, Beijing, March 1999.

78. *RFE/RL Newsline*, no. 33, part 1, May 19, 1997.

79. Author interviews with senior scholars and officials, Moscow, July 2000.

differences in security, political, economic, and regional interests, which set limits to the scope of the Sino-Russian partnership.[80] Despite their interest in playing a more prominent role in resolving Korean security problems, Russian policymakers have continually found themselves outmaneuvered by the Chinese,[81] who have succeeded in achieving what Russia sought, i.e., to develop a thriving economic relationship with Seoul, while maintaining a solid relationship with Pyongyang.

Russian observers note that China did little to promote Russia's inclusion in international negotiations on Korean issues or to protest its exclusion from four-party talks (involving China, the U.S., and North and South Korea).[82] Instead Putin has resorted to high-profile bilateral diplomacy to assert Russia's importance for conflict resolution on the Korean Peninsula.

In many respects, Russia and China have competing interests on the Korean Peninsula. Each of the two aspires to shape developments in a direction favorable to its individual interests, but Russian and Chinese interests are far from identical on Korean issues despite their broader strategic agreement. Russian analysts have been quick to point out that only Russia is an unequivocal supporter of unification, because the status quo gives a rising China more freedom of maneuver in the region than would a strong and unified Korea, especially one friendly to the U.S.[83] China has been more insistent on the need for a withdrawal of U.S. troops; one reason for increased security dialogue between Beijing and Seoul has been to give Chinese officials a forum to express their concerns about U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula.[84]

Missile defense. Beijing has consistently opposed theater and national defense systems, although Chinese officials note that they are particularly concerned by the American plan to deploy a TMD system in East Asia, which could include Taiwan.[85] Despite frequent joint statements with China in support of the ABM Treaty, the Putin administration's position has been more equivocal. The new Russian president has sought to obviate the need for

80. Vladimir Li, "Koreiskii poluostrov v mirovoi politike vtoroi poloviny XX veka" [The Korean Peninsula in the world politics of the second half of the 20th century], in *Rossiia i Koreia v geopolitike evraziiskogo Vostoka* [Russia and Korea in the Geopolitics of the Eurasian East] (Moscow: Nauchnaia kniga, 2000), p. 281.

81. Leszek Buszynski, "Russia and Northeast Asia: Aspirations and Reality," *Pacific Review* 13:3 (2000), p. 411.

82. Li, "Koreiskii poluostrov," p. 280.

83. Vadim Tkachenko, "Russian-Korean Cooperation to Maintain the Peace on the Korean Peninsula," *Far Eastern Affairs,* no. 3 (1999), p. 45.

84. John B. Kotch, "Korea's Multinational Diplomacy and U.S.-Korea Relations: The Challenge of Change in the 21st Century," *Journal of East Asian Affairs* 14:1 (Spring-Summer 2000), p. 149.

85. He Chong, "China Reiterates Its Opposition to the United States' NMD Plan," Zhongguo tongxun she (Hong Kong), May 18, 2001, in FBIS, *DR/C*, May 18, 2001.

missile defense by using diplomacy to reduce key threats, such as North Korea's missile program. Russian officials emphasize the importance of the ABM Treaty, which they would prefer to amend rather than abandon. They assert that if, despite all these efforts, the U.S. still goes ahead and deploys NMD, then Russia would counter it, for example, by developing MIRVed missiles. Yet, Putin also has given American officials reason to believe that it might be possible to reach a compromise on a limited NMD deployment.[86] Bush administration officials, for their part, have made it clear that the U.S. is prepared to abandon the ABM treaty and move forward with national missile defense, preferably with Russian acquiescence to some sort of a new framework, although American NMD efforts are unlikely to be abandoned if a modus vivendi is not reached with Russia. On July 22, 2001, within days of the signing of the Sino-Russian friendship treaty, Bush and Putin agreed to hold talks linking discussion of missile defense and arms reduction issues. Although Bush administration officials were quick to assert that a compromise had been reached, Putin called Jiang on July 26 to confirm that Russia's position on the ABM treaty had not changed.[87]

Russian-American differences over NMD have not been fully resolved, but their dialogue on the issue has driven a wedge between Russia and China, prompting China to soften its earlier unequivocal opposition to any form of missile defense and to seek further talks with the U.S. on the issue. Chinese officials also have had to rationalize their strategic partner's behavior. A Xinhua report explained, for example, that Putin was willing to discuss the terms of NMD deployments because "Russia clearly understands that it is difficult to stop the USA from deploying NMD."[88]

A New Triangular Diplomacy?

For a brief moment at least, until the U.S. and China fully repair their relations in the aftermath of the summer 2001 spy plane incident, Russia is enjoying its privileged position in a newly reinvigorated triangle. Chinese officials asked a Russian air transport company to provide the AN-124 transport aircraft to ship the dismantled U.S. spy plane out of Hainan Island in July 2001, ending the episode but in effect confirming that Moscow now has better relations with Washington than does Beijing.[89] Unlike the triangular

86. See, for example, "Press Conference by President Bush and President Putin, Genoa, Italy, July 22, 2001," cited in "Start, NMD, and the ABM Treaty," at <http://www.acronym.org.uk/start/genoa.htm/>

87. Xinhua, July 26, 2001.

88. Ibid., June 17, 2001.

89. Although Chinese authorities were grateful for Russia's assistance, they reportedly demanded documents from the Russian carriers stating that the paint covering the aircraft contained no toxic substances and was not contaminated with termites. Concerned about the short runway,

maneuvering of the 1970s that involved balancing against security threats, Russia and China have been united by their shared desire to prevent the U.S. from becoming the world's arbiter and gendarme.[90]

While Russia and China share many strategic concerns, Russian officials continue to measure Moscow's clout in comparison to that of the U.S. Interviewed about Russia's current international status, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov replied that "[t]he Ljubljana summit [with George W. Bush] has provided further proof of the real role of our country in the world."[91] Moreover, Putin denies that Russia needs China's assistance to stand up for its interests when they conflict with those of the U.S. He rejected the likelihood of a joint Russian-Chinese response on NMD, stating that "Russia is strong enough to respond on its own to any changes in the sphere of strategic stability."[92]

Russian and Chinese officials deny that they are seeking a rapprochement on an anti-American basis–or a formal political-military alliance. When economic matters are at stake, the truth to this claim is abundantly clear. In spring 1999, for example, when NATO intervened in Kosovo, an action opposed by both Russia and China, Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji went ahead with a planned trip to Washington, although then Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov canceled his visit. Zhu, who was in the midst of crucial negotiations about China's entry into the WTO, was unwilling to sacrifice this important economic goal for strategic agreement with Moscow.

Chinese analysts of the triangle note that the current geometry is more complex than was the case in the 1970s and 1980s.[93] Despite the agreement between Russia and China on general strategic issues, for China, and to a lesser extent for Russia, cooperation with the U.S. far outpaces Sino-Russian efforts in a number of areas, especially in trade, investment, and educational exchanges. Sino-American trade was more than 10 times the volume of

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Chinese experts checked it for damage after the Russian aircraft took off. Dmitry Safonov, "A Chinese Document," *Izvestia*, July 11, 2001, cited in NAPSnet, July 11, 2001, at <http://www.nautilus.org>

90. Michel Tatu, "The Washington-Moscow-Beijing Triangle," *International Affairs* (Moscow) 45:2 (1999), p. 65. For a summary of the permutations in the strategic triangle from the 1950s to the 1990s, see Lowell Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications 1945–1990*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), part 3.

91. Interview with Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in *Argumenty i Fakty* [Arguments and facts], June 27, 2001, p. 3.

92. Agence France-Presse, July 18, 2001.

93. Guo Shuyang and Niu Jusheng, "70 niandai Sulian he 90 niandai Eluosi guoji zhanlue huanjing yu duiHua waijiao bijiao" [A Comparison of the International Strategic Environment and China Policy of the Soviet Union in the 1970s and Russia in the 1990s], *Eluosi Yanjiu* [Russian research] no. 2 (1997), p. 18; Li, "Pillars of the Sino-Russian Partnership," p. 538; Song, "Sino-Russia," p. 19.

Sino-Russian trade–$116 billion in 2000 compared to $8 billion in Sino-Russian trade. Although U.S.-Russia trade has yet to fully recover from the 1998 financial crisis, Russian-American trade ($10 billion) also surpasses the Sino-Russian volume. More than 50,000 Chinese students currently study in the U.S., while Sino-Russian exchanges have none of the same vitality.

Figures like these lead most American officials to downplay the significance of the new Sino-Russian friendship treaty. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher has noted that it is important for the U.S. to have good relations with both Russia and China and for them to have good relations with each other, given their long border.[94] White House press secretary Ari Fleischer has emphasized that a zero-sum world no longer exists. In his view, efforts by Russia and China to make the world a more stable place are in America's interest.[95]

Nevertheless, in a departure from his predecessor's effort to attain balanced relations with both the U.S. and China, Putin has seized on recent Sino-American tensions, especially on the U.S. interest in achieving Russia's acquiescence to NMD, to play the role of balancer between them. Although Beijing's efforts to downplay recent difficulties in Sino-American relations attest to the truth of the new triangular logic, some Russian observers accuse the Putin administration of hubris, given China's obvious self-sufficiency. At best, these analysts argue, the new friendship treaty might prevent Russia from becoming China's "younger brother."[96]

Conclusions

After signing a new friendship treaty in July 2001, Chinese and Russian officials have laid the groundwork for an incipient alliance, but one with notable weaknesses. Although their strategic partnership draws its strength from a shared interest in countering American unilateralism in international relations, differences of views on Asian security and missile defense, as well as obstacles to economic and regional cooperation, create significant fault lines. The future evolution of the Sino-Russian relationship will depend on the direction of domestic change in both countries, especially on the international environment they face.

The current Sino-Russian partnership is limited by the desire of both governments to simultaneously develop relations with the West. Indeed, both need the U.S. more than they need each other, especially for economic cooperation and educational exchanges. Yet, anti-Western nationalistic currents

94. Nicholas Kralev, "Russia, China Ink Friendship Pact," *Washington Times*, July 17, 2001.

95. John Daniszewski, "China, Russia Pledge Friendship," *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 2001.

96. Sergei Strokan and Andrei Ivanov, "The Great Back of China" (in Russian), *Kommersant-Vlast* [Entrepreneur-power], no. 27 (July 2001), pp. 28–30.

are present in both countries–should they gather momentum in one or both, the rationale for partnership would be strengthened. At the same time, strains in the relationship might be accentuated: a more nationalistic China could revisit taboos about territorial issues and a more xenophobic Russia could be even more suspicious about Chinese migration to the Russian Far East. On the other hand, a China more integrated in the global economy and in multilateral regimes and an economically stable and democratic Russia are likely to seek to maintain solid bilateral relations with each other as well as with a wide range of partners, including the U.S.

American policies toward both China and Russia will play a key role in setting the limits to Sino-Russian strategic cooperation. Should the U.S. press forward with national and theater missile defense in disregard of the security concerns of affected states, and focus on the competitive aspects of relations with China, American security is unlikely to improve. To the contrary, by pursuing such policies, Washington only promotes a Sino-Russian partnership explicitly directed against American interests and risks losing an opportunity to make a creative contribution to the emerging configuration of regional security and economic arrangements in Northeast Asia, made possible by the new climate of relations on the Korean Peninsula.