



Should America Reset Relations With Russia?

At the end of the day, alliances are marriages of convenience, and the true and overarching priority of the statesman is to his own people.

The United States currently finds itself in the middle of a war with the allied powers of Russia and China, which have other ancillary powers such as Iran on their side. While the war between the U.S. and the Russo-Sino alliance has not yet erupted into kinetic warfare — and there is no certainty it ever will — it is a war nonetheless per the principles of Chinese unrestricted warfare.

The question is whether the U.S. can long continue the fight against the two superpowers, whose joint world order is rapidly drawing in new partners on every continent. If this economic-military-diplomatic race keeps up, will America find itself falling to the same fate as the U.S.S.R. did upon trying to keep pace with the U.S. during the arms and space races? That is, will the competition provoke a collapse of the United States as we know it?

And is fighting Beijing and Moscow really worth taking that risk?

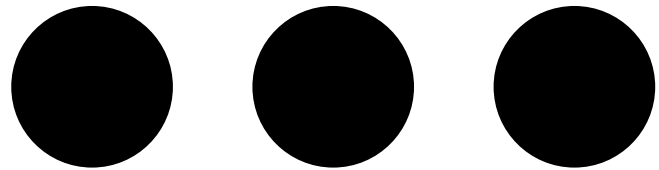
There is certainly a strong case for the U.S.-Chinese rivalry. Beijing has been waging unrestricted warfare on America for decades, infiltrating and corrupting its institutions, taking its industry, and weakening the country in a variety of ways.

The case for enmity between America and Russia, however, isn't as strong. Much of it is politically driven by leftists who wanted a good scapegoat for the rise of the "far Right" in the United States. Having Vladimir Putin as the great boogeyman allows Democrats to point and yell that Donald Trump and his supporters are agents of Moscow.

Moreover, Russia's attacks on the U.S. in the realms of diplomacy and economics have largely been reactionary, the result of trying to keep itself afloat in the face of sanctions from the Western powers.

In fact, the parallel world order that Russia is cultivating with China is, for Moscow, less a matter of ambition than one of self-preservation — Russia desperately needs an ecosystem it can reliably depend on that can't be pulled out from under it whenever the U.S. decides it wants to single out the "evil Russkis" for its current woes.

This has largely been the motivation for other countries to join with Russia and China. Many of these nations have grown tired of Washington's sanctions and other methods of control and punishment.



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America's penchant for slapping these punitive measures on anyone who rubs it the wrong way has made doing business on an international scale a headache for states that don't have the means to stand up to D.C. As a result, many of these countries are seeking the comfort of stability in the Russo-Sino world order.

In short, the rivalry with Russia is largely of America's own making. That's not to say the U.S. and Russia should be best friends; we should not fall into the fantasy of some who idealize Putin as the immaculate savior of mankind. But in politics, especially international politics, it's never about perfection or perfect ideological congruence anyway — believing that to be the case is nothing more than naivete, which has become far too widespread in this modern era.

Nations throughout history have always known that when it comes to alliances, what matters is making the connections that benefit one's own people. Who cares if our partner abroad is not a paragon of virtue? Let the foreign country deal with its own internal problems. We need to prioritize forging relationships that serve *our* interests.

This lesson is well illustrated by the complexities of Medieval and Renaissance Italian politics. At that time, Italy, divided into numerous city-states, served as a microcosm for the geopolitics of today.

Take Florence, for example. The city, which created a respectable territorial empire in Tuscany, for a notable period had a rivalry with Milan. The Medici family of Florence succeeded in turning Milan into an ally by supporting the coup of the mercenary General Francesco Sforzo, helping elevate him to Duke of Milan.

In the 15th century, the assassination of the Duke of Milan caused the King of Naples, Ferrante of Spain's Aragonese house, to fear that France would use the chaos as grounds to invade his kingdom to once again assert its claim to the Neapolitan throne (the French and Spanish went back and forth fighting over Naples).

Believing that in such a conflict Florence would side with the French (as they generally did in international conflicts), Ferrante and Pope Sixtus IV preemptively launched a war against Florence and Milan, and even unsuccessfully tried to assassinate Florence's ruler, Lorenzo de' Medici (though they did succeed in killing his younger brother).

The war put Florence on the ropes. To save his city, Lorenzo took the bold risk of personally traveling to Naples — placing himself in danger of being captured and executed there — and successfully working out an alliance with Ferrante.

This drove the pope mad with anger, but Rome was nevertheless unable to continue the conflict without the support of its chief ally. Lorenzo and the pontiff would eventually bury the hatchet when Florence contributed fifteen galleys to a coalition force to ward off an Ottoman incursion into the heart of Europe.

The lesson here is that it's acceptable for alliances to shift according to the needs of one's country. If the United States eases its tensions with Russia, then it can potentially leave China isolated. This is similar to the strategy the U.S. implemented against the Soviet Union, normalizing relations with Red China to break it away from the U.S.S.R.

Of course, there were issues with that strategy, and we are living with the consequences now. The difference is that we knew from the beginning that China, being communist, was ideologically antithetical to America; no such ideological enmity between the U.S. and Russia exists today. And the



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U.S. was irresponsible to let China gobble up America's manufacturing base — something Russia is not interested in doing.

There are many factors to consider and details to work out, but the inescapable conclusion is that, if the U.S. is to survive the ongoing conflict with China, it will have to rethink its alliances.



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