6 The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: The End of Rivalry?

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The relationship between these two vast empires astride the Eurasian heartland has been a political roller coaster. The premodern relationship was for the most part distant but increasingly predatory. This was seemingly overcome in the first half of the twentieth century by the Soviet adoption of a revolutionary, national liberationist foreign policy, only to lapse once again into fierce ideological and limited physical violence during the second half of the century. The relationship currently finds itself in full flower of postrevolutionary, postideological cooperation. Yet despite the current elaborately institutionalized diplomacy of "constructive and strategic partnership," the historical default relationship between these two vast empires is one of suspicion and intermittent strife, relieved by only two relatively brief periods of cooperation: the 1950s and post-1989. Yet the overwhelming emphasis in the analytical literature has been on the disputatiously "hot" phases, leaving us very little factual basis for understanding the nature and dynamics of the peaceable continental *cohabitation* that has now resumed.

The aim of this chapter, in accord with the theoretical framework set forth in the introduction and pursued throughout the volume, is a relatively systematic analysis of this relationship in the context of a "two-level game" framework. The two games are, of course, domestic politics on one level and the international power constellation on the other. Chronologically, after briefly reviewing the acrimonious historical background of the relationship, we focus on the two periods of relatively harmonious cooperation (1949–59

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and 1990–2000), concluding with a review of the postmillennial period. In each case we ask: What were the domestic and international events that precipitated and then maintained this particular dynamic? What changes then brought it to an end? What are the most serious threats to the current "partnership," and what are likely to be the political-economic consequences if efforts at cooperation ultimately lapse—as they so often have in the past?

The Historical Legacy

Until the rise of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, the Chinese empire was largely oblivious of the still less developed Slavic principalities only recently brought to a semblance of unity under Kievan Rus' (ca. 880–1250). In 1223–40, Batu Khan, grandson of Genghis (Temuchin) and leader of the Golden Horde assigned to the northern realms, invaded the Russian principalities, sacking and burning Moscow, Kiev, and twelve other cities, sparing only Smolensk and Novgorod once they agreed to pay tribute. The Golden Horde subsequently built a capital, Sarai, on the lower Volga, where they continued to collect taxes and otherwise exercise dominion for nearly three centuries, far outlasting the reign of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China. The impact of what became known as the "Tatar/Mongol yoke" has been mythologized as one of barbaric suffering, the source of Oriental despotism (as practiced by Ivan the Terrible), the death penalty, long-term imprisonment and torture, even Russia's failure to become involved in the European Renaissance, Reformation, and subsequent Industrial Revolution.[1] However retrospectively distasteful, there was considerable fraternization between occupier and occupied, as indicated by the fact that some 15 percent of the families of the Boyars, or Russian nobility (for example, Boris Godunov), claim Mongol ancestry. Yet the overall impact of the experience was to foster a Russian national identity as tenaciously (if borderline) Europeans, perpetually threatened on the eastern frontiers by Oriental "barbarism" (as Doestoevskii put it, "In Europe we are too Asiatic, whereas in Asia we are too European")—a self-image ironically mirror-imaging the Chinese perception of their northern neighbors as menacing barbarians (against whom the Great Wall was erected). Russia, though its imperial thrust was largely to the east and the south, remained culturally oriented westward; China's self-image was, by contrast, that of a self-sufficient "central kingdom," exacting tribute from abroad with no perceived need for international peer groups.

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Russia's modernization experience was signaled in a sense by overcoming the Mongol-Tatar occupation. After pushing back the Teutonic Knights and the Swedes, the initial Russian direction of imperial expansion was to the east, sweeping aside the last remnants of Mongol rule in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in a drive to the Siberian Pacific even before turning south. Initial contacts with the Qing were deferential, but at the first signs of Chinese weakness the Russians seized their chances. In 1854–59, while China was engulfed by the Taiping Rebellion (1851–64), General N. N. Murawjew and twenty thousand troops occupied the delta and north shore of the Amur/Heilong R. and the maritime provinces without firing a shot. During the second Opium War, Russian forces made further inroads. These gains were consolidated in the treaties of Kuldja (1851), Aigun (1858), and Tarbagatai (1864); though later denounced for being "unequal," they awarded Russia a vast swath of some 665,000 square miles of land in the region of the Amur and Ussuri rivers in northern Manchuria to the Pacific Ocean. During the Yakub Beg Rebellion in Xinjiang, Russian troops occupied part of the Yili region, formalized in the Treaty of Livadia (later modified in China's favor in the Treaty of St. Petersburg). In 1898 Russia relegated Lu-shun (Port Arthur) and Dalian to treaty port status and demanded a leasehold on the Liaodong peninsula to construct a port there. Russian claims on Manchuria and Liaodog, however, fell athwart those of Japan, precipitating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5). Count Witte's skillful negotiations at Portsmouth, however, forestalled punitive sanctions, and Moscow took advantage of the 1911 Xinhai revolution to establish a protectorate over Outer Mongolia.

The Bolshevik Revolution was intended to signal a no less revolutionary transformation of relations with China, as the new Soviet regime renounced its share of the Boxer reparations as well as many other imperial privileges in the seemingly magnanimous but ultimately equivocal Karakhan Declaration (1919) and established diplomatic relations with the short-lived Peking Republic (1924).[2] Playing all its options in a still ambiguous situation, Moscow also helped to organize and advise the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, while assisting in the reorganization of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT), along Leninist lines two years later.[3] Even after the bloody 1927 split and ensuing civil war between KMT and CCP, Moscow divided its commitments, advocating a second united front, signing a nonaggression pact in 1937 as well as a "treaty of friendship and alliance" with the Nanking regime in 1945 (in which Moscow, promising not to support the CCP, introduced

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stipulations for Mongolian "independence").[4] At the same time Comintern advisors continued to support the beleaguered CCP. While it is true that Comintern advice during the late 1920s and early 1930s contributed to the near annihilation of the CCP by the KMT and that Mao's subsequent adoption of guerrilla warfare waged by peasant armies proved far more successful than the prior Comintern policy of urban insurrections, the adoption of "united front" tactics at Moscow's insistence in 1936 may have rescued the embattled CCP at a crucial juncture (true, the Japanese invasion also provided a timely diversion). In any case, the CCP made better use of its opportunities during the Sino-Japanese war than the nationalists and reemerged to defeat republican armies (with timely Soviet help, especially in Manchuria) and march into Beijing in October 1949, driving remnant KMT forces into exile in Taiwan. Victory was promptly followed by negotiating a thirty–year "treaty of friendship, alliance and mutual assistance" with Moscow in 1950, superseding the August 1945 treaty with Nanking (and relinquishing many of the concessions Moscow had gained from the KMT). But although this alliance would endure formally until abrogated by the Chinese side upon its expiration in 1980, it became a hollow shell after scarcely a decade, giving way to bitter reciprocal polemics culminating in border violence before finally being laid to rest in exhaustive "normalization" negotiations in the course of the 1980s. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union into fifteen different independent republics in 1991 (to the CCP's consternation), the two have managed to maintain conciliatory momentum, negotiating and demarcating a border agreement, opening demilitarized borders to growing commerce, all sealed by a "comprehensive strategic partnership" in the late 1990s and a twenty–year friendship treaty (but not an alliance, both sides insist) in 2001.

The point is that despite the currently cordial "constructive and strategic partnership," the historical default relationship between these two vast empires is one of suspicion and intermittent mutual predation, relieved by only two relatively brief periods of cooperation between Russians and Chinese: the 1950s and post-1989. Yet the overwhelming emphasis in the analytical literature is just the reverse, focusing on the Sino-Soviet dispute and leaving us very little factual basis for understanding the nature and dynamics of viable cooperation. Thus our focus here will be on these two periods of cooperation. What factors explain the top-down de-escalation of tensions, and are they the same or similar? What role have domestic factors played in these phases? Are these mere "axes of convenience" due primarily to the need to

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refurbish domestic resource bases and/or to confront the United States, or is the Sino-Russian "partnership" as it exists today more deeply rooted? Finally, what are the most serious threats to the relationship, and what are likely to be the political-economic consequences if they escalate or ultimately prevail? This chapter consists of two parts, the first focused on the initial Sino-Soviet Alliance period, and the second on the post-1989 partnership.

The Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1950–1980

In his first departure from native soil, Mao spent two months in Moscow in January-February 1950, just two months after final victory in the civil war, to negotiate the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, which comprised a US$300 million low-interest loan and a thirty–year military alliance. Although the alliance fell into desuetude after scarcely a decade in terms of either bilateral assistance or international strategic coordination, it continued to inhibit any opening to the West for another ten years. In retrospect, for Mao to have so closely aligned his country's foreign policy with that of its northern neighbor was to prove strategically unwise and regrettable.

Why did he do so? What complex of domestic and international power-political factors drove this decision? In terms of the correlation of international force, it is important to remember that he was not constrained to do so in the way the Eastern European satellite republics (East Germany, Poland, et al.) were by the presence of Soviet troops on their soil, who had liberated them from the Nazi occupation only to impose socialist regimes friendly to the USSR. The Chinese revolution, though certainly conducted with Soviet advice and material support, had an autochthonous leadership, was based on domestic political interests and innovative war strategies, and finally succeeded despite its departure from the Soviet revolutionary "model" in significant respects (for example, the elevation of the "rural proletariat" or peasantry to a major role, the manipulation of anti-Japanese nationalism in "white" areas, the reliance on guerrilla warfare). And China did have viable alternatives in the international arena. True, the United States had, despite disagreements, supported the CCP's domestic opponents in the civil war to the bitter end. But before the invasion of South Korea, Washington was prepared to write off residual KMT forces in Taiwan and accept CCP victory in the civil war. There were other indications of U.S. interest in cultivating a relationship with the victorious CCP forces (such as Ambassador Leighton Stewart's attempts

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at conciliation through Huang Hua), in hopes of turning the PRC against the USSR and splitting the bloc. To which there were seemingly favorable CCP responses, particularly in late 1948. Though these may have been sincere, they were no doubt premised on the assumption that there was no necessary contradiction between maintaining a strong Sino-Soviet relationship and reconciliation with Washington (after all, the United States and USSR has been anti-Axis allies only three years ago). But as the Soviet-American relationship cooled after 1947 as a result of rigged elections in Poland, the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the Berlin blockade, and the countervailing organization of the Marshall Plan and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the PRC was forced to choose between "two camps" (as Zhdanov put it). In the context of international polarization, although Stalin did not force him to choose, Mao boldly declared in June 1949 that China would "lean to one side." To both Moscow and Washington, the Chinese decision to intervene in the Korean War after McArthur's Inchon landing threatened to unify the Korean peninsula under American auspices confirmed this choice in blood.

In terms of the international power calculus, China's choice was thus to balance rather than to bandwagon, a functional option in terms of balance of power theory in the sense of restoring equilibrium to the international system. Yet as a revolutionary power China had little interest in preserving an international equilibrium. In terms of China's national interest this choice was ill advised. Participation in the Korean War protected its northeastern flank, where the Japanese invasion had begun, but China lost at least half a million men in the conflict (including Mao's oldest son), thereby also sacrificing its chance to take Taiwan. The American 7th Fleet quickly imposed a blockade that would inhibit China's economic development for the next three decades and force its dependency on the Soviet bloc. In terms of balance of power theory it is often considered strategically preferable to align with a geopolitically distant power against a proximate one.

In terms of domestic politics, too, the alliance was also of dubious value. The alliance was clearly elite-driven, and more specifically the decision was one in which Mao and Stalin personally had ultimate discretion. But although both systems were Leninist and highly monocratic, judging from their sole face-to-face meeting in the winter of 1949–50 in Moscow, neither Stalin nor Mao seemed to have much personal affinity for the other (though Stalin did do Mao a personal favor by revealing to him at this meeting that Gao Gang, party chief of the Northeast Bureau in Manchuria and a member of the

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Politburo, was communicating private information about CCP politics to the CPSU leadership, preparing the way for his future purge).[5] China had been devastated by the anti-Japanese and revolutionary civil wars, with conservative estimates of ten million military and civilian war deaths, but according to best estimates the Soviet Union had suffered still higher casualties from the Nazi invasion (following Stalin's Great Terror).[6] The United States, alone among the great powers, emerged from the war relatively unscathed and in an internationally unprecedented position of political and economic dominance. Whereas the Soviet aid package that accompanied the thirty–year security alliance was very generous in view of the ruinous postwar condition of the Soviet economy, it was dwarfed by postwar American aid to, say, Greece, Germany, or South Korea, no doubt contributing to later CCP criticisms of the niggardly terms of the alliance. From a developmental perspective the Chinese leadership would no doubt have been better advised to flout the Soviet embrace and "completely Westernize" (*quanpan xifanghua*, as Chen Duxiu, the CCP's founding leader, had once advocated).

If neither international nor domestic factors can account for the alliance, what can? The most recent and authoritative research on the origins of the alliance agrees in attributing the decision to a profoundly skewed ideological perspective.[7] Was ideology an "international" or a "domestic" factor? In this case Marxist-Leninist ideology was a partial international factor, limited in effect to those countries (the "communist bloc") that had embraced it. To both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, it was an essential part of their categorical identity. At this time both identified themselves as "communist" party-states who shared the vision of world revolution and political economic salvation through a transformative reorganization of the human condition, and this shared vision gave both far more optimistic expectations of future developmental prospects than would prove to be realistic. Facing an overwhelming national reconstruction imperative with scarce resources, both Communist Party leaderships were united in their approaches to domestic nation-building and modernization as well as their aspirations to spread Marxist-Leninist salvation to the rest of the world (especially the decolonizing "new nations" in Africa and Asia). To China, the alliance meant not only aid and cooperation but also a comprehensive blueprint to reorganize the Chinese nation-state; to the Soviet Union it contributed to the biggest expansion of communist influence in the history of that doctrine, consolidating its geopolitical hold on the Eurasian "world-island" and making world

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revolutionary prospects more feasible than ever before. Pyongyang's initiation of the Korean War in June 1950, and the subsequent U.S. invocation of sanctions and blockade of the PRC strengthened the alliance by raising the profile of the common threat and for the time being foreclosing the possibility of a triangular alternative.

The relationship was described as one between "big elder brother" and "little brother," between "father" and "son," between "lips and teeth." As Mao put it on one occasion, "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union . . . is the most advanced, the most experienced, and the most theoretically cultivated party in the world. This Party has been our model in the past, is our model at present, and will be our model in the future." He acknowledged as late as 1962 that the Chinese simply did not know how to build socialism on their own. From 1950 through 1966 the Soviets helped the Chinese to construct a total of 256 industrial projects (by Chinese count), two-thirds of the 320 "complete sets of industrial plant and equipment" that China purchased from the bloc during this period. These projects, described in China's first Five-Year Plan as "the core of our industrial construction plans," included the largest iron and steel complex in China, the largest ball-bearing plant (Luoyang, Henan), one of the largest coal mines, the largest linen mill (Harbin Flax, Helongjiang), the largest paper mill, and so on.[8] These projects included aid in all phases of the construction process. In all, Soviet aid projects plus those directly supporting them absorbed more than half of all construction investment in the First Five-Year Plan, and a high proportion of Chinese heavy industrial production for the next two decades came from these plants. China acquired whole branches of industry that never existed there before: aviation, automobile and tractor manufacture, radio, and many branches of chemical production. Indeed, some 70 percent of the industrial machinery operating in Chinese factories as late as the early 1980s was still of Soviet or East European provenance. Among these was China's first atomic reactor and cyclotron (completed April 1957), which would form the basis for all subsequent Chinese research in nuclear physics. The Soviet contribution to Chinese industrialization was not gratis, as Khrushchev himself conceded; it was based on mutual benefit: nearly all of the industrial plant and equipment was purchased based on low-interest loans, and the sales were beneficial to Soviet industry as well.[9]

Even more significant than Soviet material assistance is what has been called "the most comprehensive technology transfer in modern history." It was also more generous, based on grants rather than loans. The Soviets sent

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about ten thousand experts of various types to China to advise in socialist reconstruction. They also sent thousands of books, blueprints, and technical documents and hosted Chinese students and scholars at Soviet educational institutions and industrial enterprises. Not only the basic party-state structure but also the entire Chinese educational and research institutional framework were patterned after the Soviet model, and they have retained this basic structure to the present, notwithstanding the post-1978 reforms. Young communist cadres also studied in the Soviet Union, later rising to elite positions, from Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De in the first generation of leadership to Yang Shangkun and Ye Jianying in the second and Jiang Zemin and Li Peng in the third. Russian became the most popular foreign language taught in the schools. Thus the impact of this experience on Chinese economic construction, particular heavy industrialization, was deep and lasting. Whereas previous Chinese industry was located mostly along the eastern seaboard, during the period of cooperation this shifted to northern and central locations, based on a logic of being close to natural resources and distant from sources of threat (then conceived to stem from U.S. air and naval power in the Pacific). This shift in locational preference was to continue in the 1960s under the "Third Front" strategy and (despite the return in the reform period to east coast industrialization with the "opening to the outside world") even revived in 1999 in the form of the attempt to "develop the west" [*xibu da kaifa*].

This period of cooperation and unity however culminated in growing interpartisan disagreements by the end of the first decade and in an open, sporadically violent schism by the end of the second. Why did the relationship, apparently so solid, disintegrate? Relevant new archival materials are still emerging, but tentative retrospective findings concur on the following points. First, the dispute was not mainly based on marginal frictional factors such as the imbalance of trade, the arrogance of visiting Soviet experts, or other aspects of bilateral cooperation in the relationship, but on the very pivotal issues of the future direction of socialist development for both countries. The shared categorical identity that brought them together meant that since both are committed to socialism both should take the same future developmental path: if the USSR turned left, then China must also turn left, and vice versa). This issue also complicated the question of the "correct" strategy to lead the international communist movement, for this was not only a diplomatic but also a world revolutionary developmental issue and hence an ideological one. This accounts for the irony that sharing the same belief system both facili-

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tated and then greatly complicated bilateral cooperation. A second paradox is that the chief grievant in the split was also its principal beneficiary: China. It turned out to be easier to give than to receive. Third, within the CCP leadership Mao was personally the main driving force, not only in so decisively siding with the Soviet Union at the outset but in the subsequent critique of the Soviet "road." In both cases he used ideology to rationalize his decision (in the latter case after having adapted Marxism-Leninism to Chinese national conditions. Framing the dispute in this increasingly personalized ideological framework (viz., "Mao Zedong Thought"), he then used it to articulate and give broader international significance to intramural disputes with many of his own colleagues during China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution—indeed, the same epithets to first appear in the Sino-Soviet polemics of the early 1960s ('capitalist-roaders," etc.) were to be recycled against Mao's domestic rivals during the Cultural Revolution. And the identification of Mao's factional opponents with Soviet sponsorship in turn further exacerbated the domestic cleavage.

Sino-Russian Partnership, 1989–2000

After nearly three decades of ideological polemics, arms race, diplomatic encirclement and counterencirclement maneuvers, border incidents and other manifestations of an enmity that Mao predicted would last "one hundred years," the post-Mao leadership began a cautious climb down. They found the Soviet leadership, from the outset somewhat perplexed by the schism, to be cautiously receptive.[10] After Mao's death in August 1976 the ideological polemic against "social revisionism" gradually disappeared, though fear of the "polar bear" still provided the cement for Sino-American diplomatic normalization in 1971–79, facilitating collaboration against perceived Soviet-inspired initiatives in Afghanistan and Cambodia.[11] In 1981 China formally declined Moscow's offer to renew the expiring Sino-Soviet alliance but suggested "normalization" talks (formal diplomatic ties had never broken, but socialist nations have a three-tiered relation, and party-to-party ties had been suspended during the Cultural Revolution), and Moscow accepted. Beginning in 1982, after concluding the third Sino-American communiqué to resolve outstanding issues regarding Taiwan, the PRC and the USSR convoked a series of talks, alternating semiannually between the two capitals in the spring and fall of each year, involving approximately the same team of officials on either side. Progress was initially glacial due to Soviet intransigence over the "three fundamental obstacles" that Beijing stipulated as a precondition for improved

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relations: heavy fortification of the Sino-Soviet border and Outer Mongolia, Soviet troops in Afghanistan, and support of the Vietnamese threat to China's southeastern flank. Talks nevertheless continued on schedule, betokening a high degree of stubborn patience on each side, helping to contain the dispute during the series of post-Brezhnev and the post-Mao succession crises.

When Gorbachev decided to cut Soviet foreign policy losses in the late 1980s, he also decided, while terminating high-risk ventures in the Third World, to try to revive the Sino-Soviet friendship, thereby alleviating a very expensive defense burden and opening the way to greater involvement in the economically dynamic Pacific Rim. In speeches at Vladivostok (July 1986) and Krasnoyarsk (September 1988), he proposed a freeze on deployment of nuclear weapons in the Asia-Pacific region, conditional Soviet withdrawal from the Cam Ranh Bay naval facility in Vietnam, and unilateral reduction of the Soviet military by five hundred thousand troops within two years, nearly half (two hundred thousand) of which would come from the region east of the Urals. This Soviet "new thinking" [*novo myshlenie*], according to which Brezhnev's vaunted strategic parity with the United States had achieved few substantial gains at immense cost, eventually satisfied all three Chinese "obstacles." The international constellation was favorable in that the Reagan administration at once made clear in its Star Wars initiative its ability to outspend the Soviet Union, it simultaneously launched Strategic Arms Reduction Talks offering a way out of the arms race, leading eventually to simultaneous détente between Washington and both communist giants—generating a less-threatening climate also conducive to détente between them. Domestically, inasmuch as both countries' economies were running aground on the limits of "extensive development" under command planning—the Soviet Union after years of stagnation under Brezhnev, and China after radical Maoism had reached its dead end in the Cultural Revolution—fresh leadership teams in both capitols turned to "socialist reform," an attempt at revitalization referred to respectively as *perestroika*/glasnost and *gaige kaifang*. There was again a sense among policy intellectuals that both countries, with symmetrically structured and ideologically oriented economies, could learn from one another. While during the Maoist period Soviet criticism of China was taken up by Soviet liberals as an Aesopian way of criticizing analogous tendencies in the Soviet Union, now it was the liberals who rallied to China's support. Because China had been first in the bloc to experiment with reform, most of the initial learning was on the Soviet side—but China also paid close attention

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to Soviet experiments, and in fact the liberalization that led to the 1986 protest movement (and to the demotion of Hu Yaobang) was inspired not only by Deng Xiaoping's Delphic encouragement but by Gorbachev's earlier call for Soviet political reform. Whereas such "learning" was, to be sure, selective and would eventually lead in divergent directions, the fact that both countries were engaged in analogous socioeconomic experiments and interested in each other's experience helped to revitalize ideology as a common language facilitating their détente. Based then on both international and domestic policy convergence, it had become possible by the end of the 1980s, after seven years of negotiations, to hold a summit to seal the "normalization" of party-to-party relations.

This summit, held in early May 1989 amid student demonstrations at Tiananmen Square that necessitated moving all ceremonies indoors, quite unexpectedly marked both climax and terminus to this process of reconvergence around a socialist reform agenda. The visiting Soviet delegation was more sympathetic to the Chinese demonstrators than their hosts but understood the CCP leadership's embarrassment and diplomatically avoided taking sides publicly. The sanguinary Chinese solution to spontaneous student protests, implemented within a fortnight of Gorbachev's departure, led to international sanctions and to a quiet Soviet resolve to avoid any analogous "solution," whether domestically or among Warsaw Pact Organization signatories.[12] But without resort to outside force, the European socialist regimes (which were unsympathetic both to the demonstrators and to the conciliatory concessions Gorbachev recommended) could not stand, and by the end of 1991 all but China, North Korea, Laos, Vietnam, and Cuba had succumbed to a wave of anticommunist protest movements. Throughout 1989–91 the Chinese leadership, still defending both Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and the crackdown, deplored this as "peaceful evolution," an insidious capitalist conspiracy to undermine socialism with "sugar-coated bullets," but more immediately blamed on Gorbachev's passive leadership, "deviating from the path of socialism." The Propaganda Department compiled seven hundred thousand characters of "black" materials, and Deng Liqun submitted a six hundred thousand–character draft resolution to the Politburo before the 6th Plenum in early March 1990 (which had been personally reviewed by Wang Zhen), proposing a systematic public demolition of Soviet revisionism. But Deng Xiaoping held the line at "internal" criticism: "First of all we should mobilize the entire Party to do our own work well," he said. "I do not favor

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issuing documents like the 'first to ninth commentaries on the CPSU'" (published in the early 1960s). He also advised Jiang Zemin against trying to play a major role in the remnant international communist movement. Three factors conceivably influenced his decision. First, the Soviets dispatched several emissaries to Beijing asking them to avoid polemics, which would hurt bilateral relations. In late December, Gorbachev sent his envoy, Valentin Falin, with a personal missive from Gorbachev to Jiang Zemin, but this fence-mending visit apparently came to naught (Jiang Zemin indefinitely postponed his reciprocal visit to Moscow), so Vice Foreign Minister Igor Rogachev was dispatched to Beijing (January 9–11, 1990), and he succeeded in fixing a date for a visit by Li Peng in April 1990. Second, Gorbachev himself made two statements during the February 1990 CPSU CC Plenum that had a redeeming impact: he reaffirmed his commitment to socialism; moreover, despite having approved legislation renouncing the party's "leading role," he declined calls by the reformists to resign as CPSU general secretary. Third, Taiwan was at this time energetically pursuing "pragmatic" (aka dollar) diplomacy in pursuit of diplomatic recognition, establishing relations with eight small developing countries in 1989–91, and as the former satellites lost no time recognizing South Korea upon their self-emancipation it was clear that they might also recognize Taiwan itself unless the PRC quickly buried the ideological hatchet. Upon the December 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union into fifteen republics, twelve of which promptly agreed to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), China promptly recognized all of them (now diplomatically addressed as "Messrs.," rather than "comrades"). Part of the reason for the PRC's quick adaptation was that otherwise, many alternatives seemed open to the new democratic Russian Federation: it then seemed feasible to resolve the old Russo-Japanese territorial dispute (involving three small islands and a tiny archipelago north of Hokkaido) and sign a peace treaty with Japan, which had considerable trade complementarity with the Russian Far East; South Korea had just granted Moscow a US$3 billion concessionary loan (in gratitude for recognition), and Taiwan briefly established consular relations with Latvia and very nearly exchanged ambassadors with the Ukraine and Outer Mongolia before being deterred by PRC diplomats. The new line in the Kremlin under Yeltsin and Kozyrev was anticommunist and pro-Western. To Chinese Kremlinologists these were traitors to socialism, while for their part the latter suspected the CCP of supporting the August 1991 coup conspirators and lost no time in signing a partnership agreement with Bill Clinton. Bei-

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jing also voiced concern lest successful reform in the new Russia lure Western FDI away from China and thereby undermine performance-based CCP legitimacy.

Yet Moscow's new international prospects under bourgeois democracy proved greatly exaggerated. The decisive domestic factor was that the Russian "double bang" of marketization and privatization failed miserably to revive the economy, which went into free fall for the next decade: real GDP declined 13 percent in 1991; 19 percent in 1992; 12 percent in 1993; and 15 percent in 1994, culminating in the collapse of the ruble in 1998. The health system and transportation system collapsed, even the birth rate shrank. Under the circumstances the leading Western industrial powers, still overburdened with debt in the wake of the Star Wars arms race and worldwide recession following the second oil price hike, were far less munificent with financial support than had been expected. Only Germany, now reunified thanks to Gorbachev's refusal to invoke the Brezhnev Doctrine to defend the Berlin Wall, made substantial subventions to Russian economic readjustment (more than US$20 billion in 1993 alone), cultivating a relationship that has made Germany Russia's top trade partner ever since. In the West, after Russian arms were discredited in the Gulf War (in which Moscow played no diplomatic role), Russia was demoted from bipolar nemesis to diplomatic nonentity, excluded from any role in resolving the imbroglio surrounding the ethnic disintegration of Yugoslavia, and finally invited to the "Group of Seven" but initially only as observer. The expansion of NATO to include former Russian satellites in Eastern Europe and even former Russian republics in 2004 infuriated the Russians, who were firmly convinced the West had promised no post-cold war expansion beyond Germany. Yeltsin's emergent political rivals, both on the left (Zyuganov and the revived Communist Party, the CPRF) and the right (for example, Lebed) challenged his nationalist bona fides and urged a shift from West to East, arguing on geostrategic grounds in favor of a more "balanced" international posture between East and West.

Even in the East, hopes of new breakthroughs were quickly dispelled: negotiations with Japan premised on a territorial compromise implementing Khrushchev's (never implemented) 1958 agreement (splitting the four: giving up two now, with the other two to be negotiated later) aroused unexpectedly firm military and local opposition, coming as it did after the Union had already imploded, leading Yeltsin to postpone his visit twice and not even to moot a proposal when he finally arrived in Tokyo in October 1993.

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With regard to Korea, Russia's role as the first socialist patron to abandon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea embittered Pyongyang even more than Beijing's subsequent shift in the same direction, precluding Russian involvement in the four-power talks, and South Korean businessmen saw little intrinsic value (and considerable risk) in Siberian infrastructure investments after the disintegration of the USSR. Thus the 1994 proposal to enlarge NATO to include three former satellites in Eastern Europe, implemented in 1997 in apparent appreciation of American election-year constituency concerns (as earlier with Cuba) rather than any realistically perceived security threat, was merely a continuation of this adverse current. The West was ignoring Russia and sanctioning China (for Tiananmen), so the two turned to each other. The semiannual bilateral talks were resumed, this time including the newly independent Central Asian states bordering China in a tandem diplomatic delegation called the "Shanghai 5" (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan). After several years' negotiations, this team agreed with Beijing in August 1986 to a set of confidence-building measures on their shared borders, including the regular exchange of information on military exercises and limits on the size of such exercises to no more than forty thousand troops. At a second joint summit the following year (April 1997), Russia and the Shanghai 5 agreed to reduce the size of its forces on the one hundred–meter border zone by 15 percent and place limits on a wide range of ground, air defense, and aviation equipment and personnel.

Ironically, two nations that had never been able to agree on the same ideology now found it possible to cooperate smoothly without one. One reason for this is that the ideological accord having irrevocably broken down, cooperation was now premised on more modest premises, making it more feasible to achieve: what was ideologically "right" for one side did not necessarily have to be right for the other. Thus they established a "constructive partnership" in September 1994, then a "strategic cooperative partnership" in April 1996 (a month after China's confrontation with the United States over Taiwan and immediately following Clinton's confirmation of a beefed-up Japanese-American Security Alliance), finally formalizing the relationship in a "Treaty of Good Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation" in July 2001 (reportedly at Beijing's initiative).[13] A "partnership" [*huoban guanxi*], has become a very informal, nonexclusive expression of mutual commitment in the diplomatic vocabulary of both powers, as China formed partnerships with Pakistan, France, Germany, the European Union, Japan, Korea and the United States,

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while Russia claimed partnerships with the United States, Japan, Iran, and India. Yet, for both, the Sino-Russian partnership has remained pivotal, an entry ticket back to what Jiang Zemin called "great power strategy" [*da guo zhanlue*]. Though third parties are never mentioned, the strategic utility of the partnership is implicitly tied to its greater geopolitical leverage vis-à-vis the American superpower, which had emerged from the cold war with more international power than either country deemed safe. Both sides stress that neither the partnership nor the 2001 Friendship Treaty is an "alliance," with an agreement only to consult but no obligation to military engagement in case of a threat to either side, and both disavow any security implications for a third party (that is, the United States), from whom both stand to gain more in economic terms than from their relationship with each other. Without alliance commitments, without mutually agreed strategic goals or opponents, just how meaningful is this "partnership"?

Sino-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century

While both sides would no doubt agree that the cross-border peace that has been sustained since 1970 is preferable to the alternative, and that the border settlement and confidence-building measures have put peace on a firmer footing than ever before, the partnership has also fallen somewhat short of expectations—particularly in the first decade of the new century, as some of its presumed support bases seem to have eroded substantially. But it is a very mixed picture: one might perhaps say the relationship has simply "normalized." For a more systematic assessment, let us sequentially examine the partnership's three most central pillars: territorial, domestic, and international.

From a formal legal perspective, the territorial issue has been resolved completely. The border delimitation and demarcation processes proceeded once the basic principles were agreed through the 1990s, and by the beginning of the next century the western boundary had been agreed and confirmed in three treaties, while the entirety of the Sino-Russian boundaries was also covered by treaty, setting aside a few disputed areas: Bear [*Heixia*] Island near Khabarovsk, and another island on the Argun River. Then in 2004 the two sides suddenly announced that continued negotiations had produced solutions to these last two "set aside" problems as well. The comprehensive agreement was formalized in a new treaty in Vladivostok in 2005; though details have not been made public because they involve sensitive (Russian) concessions, Bear Island was in effect split, and a small upstream channel of the Amur became Chinese. Mutual gradual border demilitarization to the mini-

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mal number of troops required for peaceful border patrolling (now numbering some two hundred thousand) has permitted both sides to shift strategic priorities, as China transfers forces to Taiwan and the South China Sea and Russia addresses the security threat created by the expansion of NATO in the West. But as Bobo Lo puts it, the paradox here is that while the territorial issue is now formally resolved, it has not relieved Russian anxieties—the Russians continue to fear mass Chinese immigration, Chinese exploitation of natural resources, a Chinese takeover of retail trade, and so forth—paranoid fears, but not entirely without foundation.[14]

On the positive side, the partnership has certainly been sedulously cultivated at the elite level. Since 1992 there have been dozens of high-level diplomatic exchanges and summit meetings (for example, eight presidential summits during Yeltsin's tenure) have been held on an annual basis; these have resulted in hundreds of agreements, among the most important of which were the 1991 agreement to delimit the eastern borders along the thalweg and initiate border demarcation (completed in 1997), the 1992 summit agreement gradually to demilitarize the border, the September 1994 agreement to detarget strategic weapons, mutual nonaggression and non-first-use of nuclear force; and the 1997 agreements on trade, oil and gas development and cultural cooperation. The year 2006 was declared the Year of Russia in China, and the following year the Russians declared the Year of China in Russia, prompting a series of exhibitions and friendship rituals. Yet it remains a top-down relationship that has never caught fire at the mass level: for example, according to public opinion surveys conducted in 2005 only 8 percent of Russians now view China as a friend, while 45 percent deemed it an adversary (though 47 percent also considered China a model for economic success).[15] Suspicion has been particularly rife in the Russian Far East, a vast resource-rich region with a shrinking population of now less than 7 million that has inveighed against Russian territorial concessions in the border settlement and fears Chinese demographic inundation. Even among elites there is suspicion of China's rise on the Russian side and cynicism about Russia's decline on the Chinese side: Chinese complain of the Russian refusal to sell their latest weaponry or their oil companies or to build promised pipelines; the Russians complain of Chinese intellectual property rights piracy (not to mention weapons smuggling), shoddy exports, uncontrolled emigration, or pushing Russia into the role of "resource appendage" by importing only raw materials. In one of history's great rank reversals, the "big brother" and former superpower has fallen far

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behind China economically (in aggregate but not per capita terms), despite Russia's economic recovery (thanks to a worldwide energy shortage and price spiral) since the turn of the millennium. While this has roused Russian anxieties, it also inspires admiration—not for "socialism with Chinese characteristics" but for the China model of successful adoption of capitalist economy in an authoritarian political context.

The partnership's greatest value is bilateral, turning what is still the world's longest land border from a military landmine and budgetary black hole into a thriving economic thoroughfare.[16] After all, the two are geographically condemned to be neighbors, and it makes more sense pragmatically to be good neighbors than bad. Yet even bilaterally there are persisting difficulties.

Bilateral trade has long been problematic—if politics is the locomotive of the relationship, economics has been the caboose. After a virtual freeze during the thirty–year dispute there was an initial upsurge in the early 1990s, to fill the vacuum left by the Tiananmen sanctions (the value of all Western investment in China dropped 22 percent during the first half of 1990) and the collapse of the centralized Russian distribution system and disappearance of subsidies; while total Soviet foreign trade dropped 6.4 percent for 1990, Sino-Soviet trade volume increased to US$5.3 billion, a quarter of which was border trade. Several Special Economic Regions were established in emulation of China's thriving Special Economic Zones in the southeast, more than two hundred cooperative projects were initialed between localities of the two countries, and China dispatched some fifteen thousand citizens to the Soviet Far East for temporary labor service. But these steep early rates of commercial growth could not be sustained, despite Yeltsin's announced goal of raising it to US$20 billion by the millennium; the 1991–92 economic crisis in the Russian Far East left Russians unable to repay Chinese exporters, and the Russians complained of shabby product quality and disruption of their retail networks. Visa-regime negotiation in 1993 (designed to control shuttle trade, a source of underground migration) and Moscow's subsequent imposition of border duties, cuts on transport subsidies, and restrictions on organizations entitled to engage in foreign trade caused trade to plunge by nearly 40 percent in the first half of 1994. In 1995 it began to recover, reaching US$5.1 billion that year and US$6.85 billion in 1996, but in 1997 it sank to US$6.12 billion, and dropped further in 1998, particularly after the November devaluation of the ruble. Trade began to grow more vigorously after 2000, as the Russian economy recovered as an energy exporter: though it failed to reach the goal

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of US$20 billion announced at the 1996 summit, by 2000 it was up to nearly US$8 billion, $10.7 billion in 2001, US$12 billion in 2002, US$15.8 billion in 2003, reaching US$29 billion by 2005 (the Russian figure was US$20 billion, apparently due to Russia's refusal to count shuttle trade, which it prohibits). China by 2006 was Russia's fourth biggest trade partner while Russia was China's eighth biggest. Trade fell sharply in 2007, due in part to a weapons buying strike by Beijing as a way of pressing Russia to sell more advanced weaponry,[17] but it rebounded smartly in 2008, increasing by 38.6 percent over the previous year to reach US$55.9 billion (with realistic hopes of reaching US$60 billion by 2010). Meanwhile the balance of trade has shifted from Russia to China: Russia now has a deficit of US$13.6 billion, its biggest trade deficit. Given the heavy state role in the economy and mercantilist tendencies on both sides, this is a sensitive issue. In terms of trade composition, Russian complaints about being derogated to the position of raw material supplier seem statistically justified: the proportion of raw materials has risen from 10 percent of Russian exports to 20 percent in 2003, to 30 percent in 2004, and seems likely to increase further, thanks to timely recent Chinese "loans" to hard-pressed Russian energy suppliers (and to the decline in Chinese weapons purchases).[18]

The most immediate beneficiary of expanded trade is ironically the region that has complained most vociferously about the relationship, the Russian Far East (RFE). This resource-rich but climatically forbidding region boasts only about 4.9 percent (6.5–7 million) of the Federation's approximately 148 million population, most of whom live along a narrow beltway just north of the border—facing some 120 million Chinese on the southern side of the Heilongjiang/Amur. The RFE grew in the late nineteenth century when it was on the frontier, and subsequently thrived as the ward of the state, with prison camps and defense installations, but has languished since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The region experienced its first population contraction of 250,000 in 1992 and has continued to shrink through out-migration in the context of reduced central subsidies, massive unemployment in the military-industrial sector in the wake of Russia's peace dividend, and the collapse of the Soviet infrastructure network. Against this background, the influx of Chinese workers or traders (allegedly including large numbers of criminals, prostitutes, and other riff-raff) was functionally useful but incited populist alarm. According to Chinese statistics, border crossings amounted to 1.38 million in 1992 and 1.76 million at their peak in 1993—but for the Russians, the central issue was not how many were crossing but how many stayed: unofficial Rus-

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sian estimates of Chinese illegal residents run as high as one million in the Far East and six million nationally, versus Chinese official estimates of approximately 250,000. In light of these trends, the future seems apt to feature a dialectic between a growing Russian need for supplemental labor to realize the economic potential of the Far East in the wake of continuing population decline and Russian fears of a Chinese demographic threat. For the present, the latter seems to have priority: in 2008 Russia passed laws barring non-Russians from making cash transactions in Russian markets and Beijing cooperated by enforcing tough visa requirements on Chinese shuttle traders, resulting in a sharp decline in Chinese traders (but also reported shortages in Russian markets).

One facet of the economic exchange that had battened on the post-Tiananmen sanctions was that of military technology and equipment. Deprived of American and European arms since the post-Tiananmen sanctions, the Chinese returned to Russian arms merchants, from whom much of their original hardware came and which hence offered advantages in terms of compatibility of parts. Soviet global arms sales had dropped "catastrophically" in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, when the Soviet war equipment used by the Iraqis was seen to be so completely eclipsed by high-tech American weaponry. Inasmuch as military equipment was the second largest item in the Soviet export repertory (after petroleum products), continued Chinese interest was particularly welcome at this point, and Russian strategic monitoring of arms exports relaxed accordingly.[19] Negotiations for the purchase of Sukhoi SU-27 fighters, under way since early 1990, culminated in the purchase of twenty-six at a "friendship" price of more than US$1 billion (about 35 percent of which China could pay in hard currency, the rest in bartered goods), with an option to buy an additional forty-eight. In March 1992 China also took delivery of the highly sophisticated S-300 antiaircraft missile system and SA-10 antitactical ballistic missile missiles. The first contingent of Chinese pilots was sent to Moscow in June 1992 to undergo a one-and-one-half-year training course, and by 1993 more than one thousand Russian experts were based in China by "private" contractual arrangement, helping to modernize Chinese nuclear and missile capabilities.[20] The 1995–96 confrontation over the Taiwan Strait whetted Chinese appetites for further acquisitions, and in November 1996 the two sides signed a bilateral defense cooperation pact, resulting in China's purchase of thirty to fifty SU-30 multipurpose fighters, four diesel-powered (Kilo-class) submarines, and two Sovremenniy-class destroyers with accom-

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panying Sunburn antiship missiles designed to counter U.S. Aegis-equipped ships. By early 1997 China was the leading purchaser of Russian arms, machinery, and equipment, rivaled only by India, purchasing nearly 70 percent of its arms imports there (totaling US$3.3 billion from 1994–99). Yet a crisis of confidence has since 2005 stalled this relationship. Upset by the private corporate agreement to license Chinese production of SU-27s, the Russian Foreign Ministry reportedly blocked sales of Tu-22 Backfire long-range bombers and Su-35 fighters, though the Chinese have been able to purchase Russian refueling technology to give Chinese bombers a range of more than one thousand miles. Russian technical assistance also contributed significantly to China's program to launch satellites and manned space flight. But questions began to be raised (by Westerners but also by their own strategists) of the wisdom of rearming a once and possibly future security risk, the Russians have been trying to shift Chinese interest to the purchase of nonlethal technology; thus some 25 percent of the Chinese commercial aircraft pool is now Russian.[21] But in the past few years there has been a sharp decline in arms sales: in 2005 the Chinese obtained a fifteen–year licensing agreement contract to produce two hundred Russian SU-27SK fighters as J-11As, but the Russians subsequently discovered that Chinese had illegally copied the design to produce the aircraft indigenously as the J11B, and so they canceled the deal; for their part, the Chinese complain that the Russians do not sell them the latest weaponry that they sell to India. The Russian counterargument is that the Indians agree to buy weapons off the shelf without trying to appropriate the technology, and moreover the Indians have persuaded them if they sell to China it will soon fall into Pakistani hands.

How firm is the political base of the relationship? Still not strong enough to drive it, it would appear. Domestic constituencies have shifted over time, from the committed socialist reformers of the 1980s to a "red-brown" coalition of communists and nationalists in the aftermath of Tiananmen to Putin's power pragmatists of the 2000s. The collapse of the communist bloc threw both opponents and proponents of the relationship into temporary disarray—whereas before that time, the relationship had been endorsed by reformers on both sides of the Ussuri and opposed by the old guard, since then there was an ironic reversal of roles: China's reform bloc became more wary of the partnership because, by raising the old specter of Sino-Soviet alliance within a "strategic triangle," it threatened to alienate China from the West, it's largest market and source of technology transfer. Meanwhile in Russia, the fact that

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the CCP was able to crush liberal opposition and prevail while communism was self-destructing elsewhere inspired the forces of orthodoxy that had once been among China's most vociferous critics.[22] The pro-China stance of the CPRF, since the 1995 elections the most powerful party in the Duma, reflects this group's ideological assumptions. At the same time the former pro-China liberals, including scholars such as Lev Delyusin and former diplomats such as Yevgeniy Bazhanov, though on guard against any blind nostalgia for fraternal solidarity, remain basically sympathetic to the PRC. The now marginalized anti-China bloc consists of two quite disparate currents: the radical pro-Western bloc, intellectually led by the Moscow Institute of Foreign Relations (affiliated to the Russian Foreign Ministry) and linked politically to such figures as Yegor Gaydar and the Yabloko movement; and radical nationalists such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky (whose Liberal Democratic Party had an unexpected electoral success in 1993), who regard China as an alien security threat. The local political leaders of contiguous regions of the Russian Far East, particularly Primorskiy and Khabarovskiy krays, share some of this rabid nationalism in their obsession with the border threat and inflated estimates of the problems of smuggling and illegal migration, but Putin brought them to heel by making their positions appointive rather than elective and transferring the most vocal rabble-rousers out. At the same time, the economic prosperity of their domains has become so closely linked to that of the PRC that there is an objective need for good economic relations (though economics and politics are not necessarily correlated). At the top, a pragmatic majority under Putin and Medvedev has since the mid-1990s favored a "balanced" or Eurasian, pro-China tilt.

The partnership has much more limited international leverage than during the heyday of the Sino-Soviet alliance in the 1950s. The endorsement of multipolarity and antihegemonism in the partnership documents clearly hints at a shared intention to counterbalance U.S. interests in the region, as evinced by apparently coordinated verbal support of Yugoslavia during the 1999 U.S. bombing campaign and opposition to the Iraqi invasion in 2003; as the Chinese joined the Russians in opposition to NATO expansion, the Russians joined the Chinese in opposition to American plans to install Theater Missile Defense (TMD) systems in Japan and Taiwan. But whether two against one suffices to override an American-led coalition depends on the circumstances. On the one hand, joint Russian-Chinese opposition (that is, implicit veto threat on the Security Council) to UN intervention in Kosovo in 1999 at

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least obliged the United States to resort to an alternative IGO vehicle, NATO. And joint Russian-Chinese opposition to escalating pressure on North Korea in 1993 or on Burma after the arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi seems to have thwarted any notion of invoking UN sanctions. Yet quite often, Sino-Russian collaboration has been insufficient: joint opposition to American missile defense failed, as Bush withdrew from the ABM treaty anyhow and in the Far East, the Japanese have made substantial contributions to an effective TMD despite Chinese objections. Joint opposition to the American invasion of Iraq (indeed, including Western European opposition) proved equally unavailing. The partnership has provided certain payoffs to each partner. It implicitly enhances China's position vis-à-vis India and Vietnam by reducing the probability that Moscow will support them in any confrontation with the PRC. To Moscow, perennially unsuccessful in resolving its border dispute with Japan, Beijing remains the key to entrée to the dynamic Pacific Rim. The partnership has already provided access to Hong Kong (where Russia now has a consulate) and to membership in ASEAN's Regional Forum, to APEC in 1998, and to Russia's prospective entry to the WTO. Russia has played the same role for Beijing with regard to the three Central Asian republics bordering Xinjiang, all of whom remain CIS members well integrated into the Russian security apparatus. In a team-negotiating format arranged by Moscow, China reached border agreements (and the initiation of border demarcation) with all of the bordering Central Asian republics. China has become Kazakhstan's largest trade partner and in 1997 agreed to invest US$9.7 billion there (China's largest FDI project, the equivalent of half of Kazakhstan's GNP) to build oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian oilfields to the Xinjiang region.[23] The Central Asians have in turn promised to control Uighur acolytes of an independent "Eastern Turkestan" (viz., Xinjiang) on their territory. The Chinese, who unlike the Americans have recognized Russia's leading role in the CIS, have limited their interest to trade (particularly energy), which they have continued to pursue in pipeline deals with Kazakhstan and more recently with Iran. This has resulted in a certain tension over the future role of the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO). Russia thinks the organization should focus on fighting (Islamist) terrorism, while China's aspiration has been to extend it to the field of economic cooperation, particularly energy extraction. In the wake of the worldwide 2008–2010 financial crisis, China's offers to invest its enormous cache of foreign exchange in tied loans and joint ventures are likely to be welcomed in Central Asia, further escalating Russian anxieties.

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From the Russian strategic perspective, Asia has gained importance since the cold war, following secession of the protective glacis of Eastern European satellites, the Baltic states, Ukraine and Belorussia: though the populace still prefers to identify itself as "Western," the Russian Federation now defines itself geopolitically as a land bridge between Europe and Asia. Like many other countries, Russia has inaugurated informal trade relations with Taiwan (Taiwan opened its trade office in Moscow in 1994, and Moscow opened its office in Taipei in 1996) while formally recognizing the PRC, and trade relations with Taiwan have expanded: by 1997, Taiwan had become Russia's fourth-largest trading partner in Asia. Within Asia, given the intractability of the territorial issue with Japan, India and China are Russia's twin pillars—one in the south, the other in the east. Russia expressed interest in consolidating this strategic triangle, but the weak link has been the Sino-Indian relationship, which has remained far weaker than the Indo-Russian link. On the one hand, bilateral trade has been increasing; on the other it is imbalanced, and the two are competing in third-party markets and in contracting commodity import arrangements. While they work together to block global emission-control initiatives inimical to their interests as developing economies and for a restructuring of the postcrisis world financial structure, China quietly seeks to block India's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, an Asian Developmental Bank loan, or India's inclusion (with U.S. support) in Nuclear Suppliers Group commerce—and border talks have stalled. Finally, both compete on the market for Russian weapons they may conceivably use against each other (though in each case the primary threat is anticipated from elsewhere). Yet in negotiations over global financial reform and the increasingly important "global warming" discussions, the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China) caucuses have been able to coalesce in pursuit of their shared interests.

Conclusions

The Sino-Russian relationship has by all accounts been a complicated one, fostering historically justified mutual suspicions. Yet as we have emphasized here, there have also been periods of cooperation and relative amity. During the long period of revolutionary civil war from 1927–49 the Soviet Union was a staunch supporter of the embattled CCP, contributing to its ultimate resurrection and improbable victory. True, much Soviet advice failed to take Chi-

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nese interests and circumstances into account and was hence ill-conceived, sometimes disastrously so, but after all, they continued to support their Chinese comrades when no one else would. And in the full flush of revolutionary victory these two Communist Party-states formed a comprehensive alliance designed to facilitate China's rapid economic modernization and together conceive a strategy aiming for world revolution. And they in fact contributed considerably to the accomplishment of the first goal though not much to the second. Even after both revolutions had exhausted themselves in the late twentieth century they were able once again to overcome their suspicions and cooperate in reorienting their respective political economies.

So what are we to make finally of the current period of wary cooperation—is this simply a temporary respite in an historical cycle of conflict and relaxation, a convenient recess between rounds? Or is there something more to it than that? There are both similarities and differences among the two periods of cooperation closely considered here. (The period of cooperation between the USSR and the CCP in the prerevolutionary period does not really count, as this consisted of state sponsorship of a clandestine foreign insurgency [against a government with which Moscow maintained amicable ties] rather than a relationship between two sovereign states.) One similarity is that in both cases the two have values in common and foes they wish to defend against—a shared adversary—though the specifics are different in the two periods. In the first period what the two held in common were Marxist-Leninist revolutionary values, and the opposition both perceived to this was the bourgeois reactionary "camp," led by the United States. In the latter case what they have in common is more vaguely defined—a common authoritarian heritage and enduring quasi-socialist political culture, the opposition to which is not international capitalism, of which both now partake, but meddlesome human rights liberalism. A second shared factor in both periods is the longest land border in the world—albeit considerably shorter in the second period since the independence of the three Central Asian border-states. Though there are Uighur peoples in China, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, in neither case do they have sufficient purchase on their governments to lay claim to co-ethnics on the Chinese side of the border, but the imperial experience has created grievances and territorial irredenta, particularly on the Chinese side. In both periods the border has been a significant issue, one that though now formally resolved still contains the potential for friction. Third, in both periods the relationship has been an asymmetrical one. In the first period, the Soviet Union was technologically

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superior to China, and both the Russians and the Chinese perceived the relationship in these terms. In the more recent period the relationship has been somewhat more symmetrical: although China had a larger absolute GDP as soon as the USSR disintegrated into fifteen independent states and has been increasing its lead since, the Russian Federation retains a higher per capita GDP and remains militarily and technologically ahead of the PRC. Fourth, both periods of cooperation have been plagued by serious problems with the relationship. There are deep historical roots to this sense of primeval dread that have not entirely been outgrown. In the first case the major differences were conceived in terms of ideological worldviews, which did not permit any deviance given the narrow conception of scientific "correctness" and the conviction that history moves in the same developmental direction for all. In the second case this zero-sum mentality has been alleviated by the Russian rejection and the more pragmatic Chinese interpretation of Marxism-Leninism, but there are still legitimate grievances on both sides, now more specifically and empirically defined.

There are also significant differences between the two periods of friendly cooperation. First, the second period, though still very central in the foreign policy horizons of both countries, is more modestly conceived, with significantly lowered, "live and let live" expectations on both sides. Nowhere is this demonstrated more clearly than in the low-key reaction to the deterioration of some of the pillars of the relationship since 2005. Despite the apparent halt of Russian weapons sales, disagreements about the construction of oil pipelines, Russian displeasure over China's economic surge into Central Asia, the imposition of strict visa requirements on Chinese shuttle traders, and an apparent Chinese disagreement with Russia's crackdown on Georgia, there have been no polemical recriminations or public protests; in fact, neither side has made much of any of this. Second, the border issue has been far more completely and satisfactorily resolved in the latter case. Although anxieties persist, particularly on the Russian side, there is no visible prospect of a return to border fortifications and bilateral arms race. Over time, both sides seem to have become cognizant of the considerable fiscal advantage of adjusting cross-border relations smoothly enough to be able to avoid fortifying the border at great, avoidable cost. Third, although the relationship is now more symmetrical than during the alliance period, Chinese economic progress has been so vigorous as to turn the economic tables with astonishing swiftness. While Russia retains its lead in per capita incomes and levels of scientific and

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military technology development, it may be only a matter of time before this too is lost. Hitherto the Chinese have handled this power transition with diplomacy and even deference, but as the Chinese grow richer and more confident this could spark hurt feelings and eventually even lead to a revived sense of "China threat." Finally, the common values the partnership is meant to protect are far more vaguely defined in the second period, as is the common enemy against which it is to be mobilized. The term "strategic partnership" may be an overstatement in view of the apparent lack of any concerted international strategy (indeed, both deny any shared strategy or common foe). The original Sino-Soviet alliance was certainly conceived in terms of such a joint strategy, although there was increasing disagreement about what it should be, but since the cold war, though Moscow has been inclined to brandish the threat of a triangular veto of U.S. unilateralism, there have been few issue areas in which such concertment has succeeded. China's concern with NATO expansion is largely rhetorical, as is Moscow's concern about the recovery of Taiwan—what resources would either be willing to bring to bear on behalf of the other's achievement of such cherished national goals? In sum, while both clearly value their more amicable relations, "good neighbors" would perhaps be a more apt description than "strategic partners."

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