



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
CONGRESSIONAL PROGRAM

**U.S. POLICY TOWARD EURASIA
AND THE ROLE OF THE U.S. CONGRESS**

May 27 - June 2, 2019 | Prague, Czech Republic

U.S. POLICY TOWARD EURASIA AND THE ROLE OF THE U.S. CONGRESS

The Aspen Institute Congressional Program
May 27 – June 2, 2019
Prague, Czech Republic

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rapporteur's Summary <i>Matthew Rojansky</i>	3
U.S. Policy Toward Eurasia and the Role of the U.S. Congress <i>Thomas Graham</i>	17
Getting America Off the Backfoot in Eurasia <i>Evan A. Feigenbaum</i>	23
Does BRI Really Exist? <i>Robert Daly</i>	29
China's Rise as a Geo-Economic Influencer in Eurasia <i>Philippe Le Corre</i>	39
It's Time to Rethink Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy <i>Dimitri Trenin</i>	47
Is Russia a U.S. 'Adversary' or Just a 'Competitor'? Developing a Sustainable, Realistic U.S. Policy Towards Russia <i>Nikolas K. Gvosdev</i>	59
The Russia-China Partnership in Eurasia and the Trans-Atlantic Response <i>Stacy Closson</i>	65
China as a Copycat of the Practices of Russian Influence in Central and Eastern European Members of the EU and NATO <i>Ivana Karásková</i>	69
How America Invented Cyberwar <i>Emily Parker</i>	73
Conference Participants.....	77
Conference Agenda.....	79

RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY

Matthew Rojansky

Director, The Kennan Institute, The Wilson Center

Seventeen Members of Congress met in Prague, Czech Republic May 27—June 2, 2019 for briefings and discussions on U.S. interests, challenges and opportunities in Eurasia, a region encompassing much of the globe, most U.S. allies, as well as major adversaries. This meeting followed an Aspen-organized conference approximately one year ago that was focused principally on Russia in the European theater, as well as a meeting earlier this year on U.S. Policy toward China.

Prague was a fitting backdrop for these conversations in several key substantive respects. From its myth-shrouded founding over a millennium ago, Prague has been a city at the crossroads of European and Eurasian civilizations. Celtic, German, Roman, Austrian, Polish, Russian and other rulers have held sway, whether from the ancient and lovely Prague Castle on a hill overlooking the city (now the official residence of the Czech President) or from distant imperial capitals. The Czechs themselves have regained their lost independence twice in the past century—and they credit an American President, Woodrow Wilson, for the vision to support Czechoslovak statehood in the aftermath of the First World War.

In any given year, Prague itself attracts more tourists than it has permanent residents—they flock to see a city whose magnificent architecture has miraculously

survived wars and occupations, yet which has lost a great deal as well. Of some 150,000 Jews who were a central part of Czech life before World War II, only 5,000 remain today—the vast majority killed in the Nazi Holocaust, with many of the few survivors (including the family of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright) fleeing Soviet occupation afterward. Having survived and defeated two occupations in the past century, Czechs feel justifiably proud of their more recent achievements: NATO and European Union membership, impressive economic growth, and economic links with the wider world, including China.

The challenges faced in the Czech Republic today were likewise fitting reminders of the broader themes of this gathering. The current government, despite its avowed commitment to Western institutions, maintains warm and friendly ties with both Russia and China—these were very much in evidence from the billboards in the airport arrival hall to the droves of Russian and Chinese tourists in the city streets. Moreover, nearly three decades after winning their independence and splitting from Slovakia in the so-called “velvet divorce,” Czechs are still struggling with fundamental questions about national identity, democracy, and their future as a small country in an increasingly fractious and dangerous world. As a member of the Czech parliament told his U.S. colleagues,

Prague's European and Western choice has been made, but that means Czech voters have high expectations that their leaders cannot always match.

Eurasian Geopolitics and Great Power Dynamics: Why it Matters

The conversation began with important reminders about the truly global scope of Eurasia, which 19th Century British geographer Halford MacKinder called, "the World Island." It is a region with three continents, one third of the world's land mass, seventy percent of its population, sixty percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and eight of nine nuclear weapons states. Thus, the scholar concluded, control of Eurasia might well amount to power over the whole world, and this has given rise to a longstanding and bipartisan U.S. policy to prevent any hostile power or group of powers from occupying such a role.

Scholars also recalled that Eurasia has become considerably more interconnected in recent decades, and they urged members to think in terms of the region as a whole, rather than constituent sub-regions or nation-states. This stove-piping of regional expertise, policymaking and U.S. capabilities, one scholar lamented, has limited the effectiveness of U.S. diplomacy and defense strategy in Eurasia. For instance, Middle East issues, which fall under U.S. Central Command, cannot easily be separated from South Asian or Central Asian Issues, which sometimes fall under U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, or even under European Command if they involve Russia.

Despite clear trend lines toward economic integration in Eurasia, security concerns are forcing difficult and often fragmenting choices on the states in the region, including U.S. allies like Japan and South Korea. Scholars and members were

particularly focused on the related but distinct challenges posed by Russia and China, which some called "near peer" adversaries of the United States. One scholar characterized the two as major challenges but said they should not be lumped together, since China is a rising power focused on the future, and hoping to overtake the United States, while Russia is a declining power that seeks to bring the United States down to its level.

Scholars explained that despite some divergences, China and Russia could pursue a strategic alignment as long as both were committed to calm along their extended shared border in Central Asia, and both were more focused on projecting power and influence outward, principally in competition or confrontation with the United States. Although Russia did not necessarily offer a coherent or attractive future vision to its Eurasian neighbors, scholars explained, it had strong historical ties and political, military, economic and social leverage over many states in the region. China, while not yet seeking to project its full power in the direction of Russia and Central Asia, has begun to offer solutions to the region's geographic isolation from the high seas and the global economy by funding large-scale infrastructure construction.

Members wondered whether a Russia-China alignment of interests could last long, in particular whether it could outlast the regimes of Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, respectively. Scholars countered that waiting for authoritarian leaders to pass from the scene was not a basis for U.S. leadership in the region, and that such an approach would cede the initiative to Moscow and Beijing.

Members raised the question of whether the U.S. had the necessary

capacity not only to push back against Russia and China, but to understand and engage with the disparate small and large states of this enormous world region. Scholars confirmed that reductions in U.S. State Department staffing and assistance budgets had set U.S. foreign policy off balance, with the much better funded U.S. military too often in the lead. Scholars likewise recommended that Americans play to strengths like an attractive, innovative U.S. economy, robust alliances, and high standards for trade and investment. Some sought to identify opportunity amid adversity by focusing on what might be new, shared goals like adapting to climate change, diversifying energy sources, increasing opportunities for women, and combatting proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Others wondered whether U.S. sanctions, Foreign Corrupt Practices Act enforcement, and protection of intellectual property were actually effective tools in the current environment. Scholars explained that some U.S. regulations and punitive measures were seen as needlessly adding costs, disadvantaging U.S. firms, and ultimately eroding Americans' strong position in the global economy. They said that other countries only sometimes care about the moral or political basis for such measures—they more often look just at the bottom line. Scholars recommended a clearer, more targeted and more transactional approach to sanctions—not just punishing states such as Russia for bad acts, but setting forth step-by-step pathways for restoring normal economic ties. The alternative, they cautioned, was that Russia, China and others would construct their own global trading and investment system that could circumvent U.S. and European sanctions. To some

degree, scholars warned, this is already taking place.

Several members pointedly said that their constituents just didn't care about far off problems and abstract questions about "world order." Some resented extensive and costly U.S. international commitments at a time when the American middle class is suffering, while others saw China mostly as an opportunity, bringing investment and new jobs to U.S. communities. One member challenged the group to question the longstanding U.S. policy principle that bringing other nations into a world trading and investment system led by the United States would help spread democratic and free market values. Another member worried that since elections in the United States could flip policy priorities every two or four years, it would be difficult or impossible to compete with authoritarian governments that have the ability to plan and direct long term resources.

Yet scholars challenged members to offer a clear, American vision for the future, recalling the famous advice of 20th Century diplomat and historian George F. Kennan. In his 1947 "X" article, Kennan wrote that the United States would be challenged to, "create among the peoples of the world generally the impression of a country which knows what it wants, which is coping successfully with the problems of its internal life and with the responsibilities of a world power, and which has a spiritual vitality capable of holding its own among the major ideological currents of the time." Indeed, scholars and members agreed, that remains the challenge for Americans today.

China's Interests and Objectives

China presents both serious challenges and opportunities, one scholar explained. The U.S. discussion has relied

too much on “bogeyman terms” to describe Chinese state champions like Huawei, and Beijing’s vaunted Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). A more balanced framing of the issue would reveal that BRI is a jumble of disparate projects and trends, many of which preexisted and will surely outlast Xi Jinping. Besides lacking a specific strategy or action plan for BRI, China has triggered suspicion among many of its putative partners by demanding that those who accept Chinese investment also refrain from opposing or criticizing China on sensitive issues like human rights or the South China Sea. It is not only the United States that has concerns—many of China’s partners fear the long-term environmental impact and the human costs of its model of fast development.

Scholars explained that traditional U.S. allies in Europe increasingly view China as an economic powerhouse. Trade on a daily basis between the EU and China now exceeds \$1 billion, with \$20-40 billion per year in direct investment from China to the EU. Since China announced its Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, European states have begun to formally embrace and echo Beijing’s language about Eurasian integration, although most understand that they are primarily an endpoint in this trading scheme, as a consumer market for Chinese goods. Some European leaders, like the Czech Republic’s own President Milos Zeman, openly admire both Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin. Still, China lacks “soft power” in Europe thanks to its poor reputation on environmental issues and low pop culture penetration. Some European states have joined with the United States in calling China a systemic rival, and calling out its unfair trade practices, while creating new screening mechanisms for Chinese imports to the EU.

Scholars agreed that transatlantic dialogue on China was essential, but that Europe could not be put in a position of needing to choose in a zero-sum fashion between China and the United States. A joint U.S.-European approach was seen as the only way to limit Chinese-Russian partnership from eroding the West’s interests, and from running the table on important issues like trade and cyber security.

The discussion raised two fundamental questions that are now at stake in U.S.-China relations, but have far broader relevance to U.S. foreign and domestic policy. First, whether Americans can and should seek to do significant trade, which entails inevitable interdependency, with countries whose worldview and values we may reject or even consider to be threatening. Second, whether and how the United States can attract meaningful levels of investment in the modern globalized economy if it keeps closed off some of the most attractive and dynamic sectors of its economy considered “too sensitive” from a national security perspective—especially information technology, infrastructure and energy. The session also underscored the reality that policymaking can no longer be conveniently divided into foreign and domestic spheres—what happens in one has clear effects on the other.

Members wanted to know, on the one hand, how they could protect the U.S. economy from Chinese inroads, and, on the other, whether China’s promises to pursue more “clean, green and high quality investment” would translate to an embrace of U.S. standards. As one member pointed out, China’s ability to invest in regions and sectors of the U.S. that are hurting gives it access and appeal, it is hard to argue that this should be limited. Yet the long-term

trend is beginning to become clear, with risks that the U.S. will lose its domestic capabilities to manufacture key transportation and information technologies. Similarly, members worried that China's success was really just a "race to the bottom," but that for the U.S. government to step in and tell businesses how to be more competitive was also not productive.

Scholars pointed out that some protections could be effective, especially if thought of as "high fences around small yards," in a few key, narrowly defined areas of science and technology that may be so sensitive for U.S. national security that they should exclude foreign ownership and participation. A clear area of concern is production of rare earths, where members and scholars pointed out that China now controls global supply, and that even ore mined in the United States is exported to China for processing. But amid current tense trade negotiations with China, one member warned, "it will get worse than soybeans," and asked, "what cost are we willing to pay?" As China has come under greater U.S. pressure, a scholar explained, its government-controlled media has become more nationalistic, and extols the Chinese capacity to "eat bitterness"—apparently readying the Chinese people for a long term battle of wills with the United States.

Other members countered that the solution should be much simpler. It cannot be about restricting trade and adding more government regulation, but must rather be about Americans stepping up and more effectively competing with China on our own terms. Scholars echoed that a scolding tone toward China would do no good, and that not all battles can be won simultaneously—there are times to apply leverage, and other times to let China

pursue its path, especially when it is producing and selling products at a discount to their real values that essentially transfers Chinese wealth to the United States and the rest of the world.

Russia's Interests and Regional Influence

Russia may not be a power on the rise like China, but it is very much in transition. Increasingly, Moscow no longer sees itself as the easternmost outpost of Europe, or even as the center of the former Soviet space, but rather as "Northern Eurasia." This, scholars explained, is a much more inward-looking Russia, but one which is nonetheless one of greater Eurasia's three principle military powers.

Regarding the other two powers, Russia sees clear choices. Russia does not expect conflict with the United States to abate any time soon, as it considers the status of a world power equal to but independent from the United States as essential, and believes that Washington will never agree to that. While deterrence has thus far prevented the U.S.-Russian confrontation from escalating to direct, all-out military conflict, this is a real and ongoing risk factor for both sides, which both members and scholars described as a "nightmare scenario." The greatest danger now is around U.S. and Russian forces operating in close proximity in Syria, where as many as several hundred Russian mercenaries were killed by U.S. air strikes and artillery just last year, and where Russia has threatened retaliation for any future U.S. strikes on Russian bases or personnel.

When it comes to Russia and China, the guiding principle for both sides is "never against one another, but not necessarily together." Both Russia and China are

perfectly happy to see the other challenge the United States for leadership on regional or global issues, but neither seeks a full alliance against Washington. Nor will either necessarily support the other on its own challenges to the global rules—for example, Russia was silent when China deployed artificial islands in the South China Sea, and China in turn has not recognized Russian-backed separatist states in the South Caucasus or Eastern Europe, or Russia's annexation of Ukrainian Crimea. Being the weaker power by nearly every measure, Russia seeks to embed China in organizations where Russia's close relationships with other Eurasian states like India and Vietnam can play a balancing role. Thus, scholars explained, Russia will continue to engage actively with China but also with China's regional rivals.

Members and scholars exchanged views on Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, whom many thought simply could never be trusted after his aggressive actions against Russia's neighbors, interference in U.S. elections and information warfare, and his recent foray into Venezuela to back the discredited strongman Nicolas Maduro. Scholars explained that for Putin, Russia is already on a war footing. He views U.S. sanctions as an act of economic warfare, and sees U.S. interventions in the post-Soviet space, the Middle East and elsewhere over the past three decades as dangerous and destructive meddling, even as warning signs of a U.S. plot to topple his own regime in Russia. Opposing Washington globally is therefore a matter of self-preservation for Putin and his regime.

Nor does Putin see joining the West as a viable path forward. Scholars noted that the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, which cost Russia over \$50 billion and was meant to be a coming out party for a resurgent

Russia on the world stage, was nonetheless boycotted by most Western leaders. When Ukraine's kleptocratic government fell at nearly the same time, Putin viewed Russian military intervention and annexation of Crimea as a necessary and urgent defensive move against what he thought was the beginning of another U.S.-backed regime change operation.

However, as one scholar pointed out, Putin is in many respects less nationalistic than previous Russian and Soviet leaders. He does not seek to reintegrate most of the former Soviet republics into the Russian Federation, and the current Russian elite is far more preoccupied with making money than with ideology or national greatness. That is why so many top Russian officials and oligarchs siphon wealth out of the Russian economy only to buy real estate and move their families to Europe, the Middle East, and even the United States itself. U.S. sanctions that have tried to target these individuals have had some impact, scholars noted, however they warned that Russia will always seek to strike back asymmetrically, playing to its strengths and exploiting U.S. vulnerabilities.

Members were not given a hopeful outlook for a time after Putin or the Putin system. Not only is Putin himself relatively young and in good health, but he has brought plenty of younger people who share his worldview into the government, and almost any alternative system, whether on the left or the right, has been discredited by Russia's historical experience over the past hundred years. Thus, scholars concluded, the basic structure of today's Russia is likely to endure for some time.

Members nonetheless asked about areas for potential cooperation and dialogue with Russia. In Afghanistan, scholars

explained, U.S. and Russian interests are aligned, moving toward some involvement for the Taliban in a power-sharing agreement, provided they neither expand their territory nor provide a safe haven for extremists to export terror abroad. U.S. and Russian experts have already found common ground on a wide range of projects related to space, education, energy and even waste management. Russians are especially hungry for practical exchanges with Americans on the level of local governance and problem solving. More exchanges, from parliamentary dialogues to youth programs would be beneficial, scholars noted, because all these would help more people from both sides to understand the way the other side thinks, and to break down inaccurate stereotypes and false mythologies about the other.

While members reported that most Americans feel positively toward Russians, they deeply dislike and distrust the Russian regime. Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. election, its bad record on human rights, and its cheating on the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces agreement are all serious breaches that will take time to heal. Yet Russian culture enjoys fairly wide exposure in the United States—think of music, ballet, literature and even children's cartoons ("Masha and Bear" is a Youtube sensation) and fairy tales. Members and scholars agreed that while they did not expect Moscow to offer an apology for any of its past actions, if it at least drew the lesson that election interference and attacks on U.S. democracy had backfired, that might be the basis to start talking to one another more productively in the future.

U.S. Strategy, Allies and Resources

In considering the role of allies, partners and resources in formulating a U.S. strategy toward Eurasia, scholars cautioned

strongly against repeating 20th century thinking in a 21st century context. As compared with the U.S.-Soviet contest for regional and global influence in the Cold War, Russia and China have more limited aims, which are largely devoid of the kind of ideological overreach that doomed the Soviets. As a consequence, the relatively easy case for U.S.-led alliances and partnerships during the Cold War is much harder to make now, when even close allies do not necessarily see Russia or China as inimical adversaries.

Although Moscow and Beijing have many differences and real limitations on their joint approach to Eurasia, they stress common interests and this positions the China-Russia entente to outmaneuver and exceed United States influence among the states of greater Eurasia. Good examples of this phenomenon include Eurasian regional institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, where Russia and China have differing interests, but agree about posing a counterweight to the United States. Likewise, although Russia and China develop their conventional and cyber weapons technologies separately, they increasingly operate against common U.S. targets, and this may facilitate a gradual convergence of aims between the two. When the U.S. imposed sectoral sanctions on Russian energy companies in 2014, China shifted its gas import strategy from U.S.-sourced LNG to Russian pipelines. Russians have even begun talking in terms of a strategic alliance, and joint positions on foreign policy issues, such as a 2016 declaration supporting "territorial sovereignty and nonaggression." The June 2019 visit of Xi Jinping to Vladimir Putin's native St. Petersburg may also offer an object lesson for Americans who doubt the closeness of the two leaders.

As several members pointed out, Americans may not have a lot of choice about whether Russia and China cooperate with one another, and whether they have powerful instruments they can use to advance their interests—“carrots and sticks.” As long as direct military confrontation with either country is unthinkable, the United States will have to come up with better ways to compete, and cannot just stand over Eurasia wagging its finger about bad behavior. We are no longer “the biggest kid on the block,” as one member put it, and so we cannot pick fights with everyone at the same time and expect to win. Another member compared current ineffective U.S. leverage to the strong steps taken after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, including a ban on grain exports on which Moscow depended, and a U.S. boycott of the 1980 Olympics.

This, both members and scholars agreed, gives Americans all the more reason to think hard about strengthening our vital friendships in Eurasia. Together, the U.S. and its traditional European and Asian allies are far stronger than Russia and China. But, scholars and members cautioned, these relationships are drifting away from where they should be.

To turn that drift around, scholars suggested, Americans need to be crystal clear about our strengths and weaknesses and to be thoughtful about the language we use at home and abroad. Americans also need to clearly measure and honestly discuss the real costs of various policy options. Members and scholars shared the view that U.S. strengths include the capacity to innovate, and to offer attractive partnerships that respect the interests and the freedoms of other countries. However, some noted, Americans often have difficulty turning down requests for assistance, or

putting limits on commitments to close allies, let alone more distant partners. Among the latter, some states may be more willing to engage in showdowns with powerful rivals if they believe they will enjoy U.S. support, and this can become a slippery slope, leading to direct U.S. confrontation with Russia or China.

Scholars also cautioned that a hard-nosed assessment of the costs of U.S. partnerships and alliances was especially necessary, given that the United States could soon lose its ability to fund deficit spending by printing U.S. dollars, as the world gradually shifts away from the dollar as the dominant reserve currency. In this sense and others, there is a strong correlation between the strength of U.S. society, democracy and the economy at home and the ability of Washington to project power in Eurasia.

Members expressed divergent views on the current U.S. administration’s efforts to encourage NATO allies to meet their target of spending 2% of GDP on defense, however scholars recalled that this has been U.S. policy going back several administrations, and has long been a source of frustration for Democratic and Republican presidents.

When approaching allies, scholars suggested, Washington should seek to persuade rather than coerce, and may have to be ready to act unilaterally if it cannot secure support for policies that run counter to allies’ interests. In some cases, it may simply be impossible to persuade allies to join the United States in confrontation with Eurasian neighbors. For example, while India (a close partner, if not an ally) was prepared to support Washington on sanctioning Iran, once a major energy supplier, it could not be expected at the same time to join U.S. sanctions on Russia,

its main longstanding supplier of defense technology and hardware.

Similarly, although members worried about EU dependence on imports of Russian gas and criticized the North Stream II pipeline project now under construction between Russia and Germany, scholars reminded them that even during the Cold War, the U.S. and its closest European allies disagreed about Soviet gas imports. Europeans have long argued and many still believe that energy trade is a two-way street, and that Russia has strong incentives not to use gas as a political weapon.

Members and scholars agreed that any policy that appeared to “appease” China or Russia in hopes of encouraging better behavior would be counterproductive. Yet participants debated exactly where to draw the line between reasonable accommodation and unacceptable behavior. This can be especially problematic for poorer developing states, for example in the former Soviet region, which lack a strong national consensus in favor of Western political values, and whose leaders often pursue “multi-vector” approaches to extract maximum benefits from ties with each major Eurasian power. Some members argued for patience, suggesting that it is simply not possible to expect some countries in transition to make full and irreversible commitments, such as to NATO membership—when the process is rushed, they warned, conflict can result.

Some members raised the question of global challenges, in particular nuclear non-proliferation and climate change, which they suggested could be shared priorities for the United States, traditional U.S. allies, and even Russia and China. Given the mounting costs of climate-driven adaptation and disaster response, they asked, why

would any country want to waste its limited resources on a new arms race?

Ultimately, members agreed, allies and partners look most of all to the United States for leadership, and so it is preferable for Washington to have a clear strategy and speak with a united voice. Episodic responses to individual countries and issues would compound the problem of stove-piped resources already discussed. Scholars suggested creating a non-partisan commission to review U.S. policy and develop a long-term American strategy for Eurasia. Such a commission would not only underscore cross-cutting U.S. interests requiring a “whole of government” approach to advance, but would have a better opportunity of looking forward, and anticipating developments instead of playing catch up. A clear American vision, members agreed, would not only mobilize allies and partners, but would help them remind their constituents why the U.S. role in the world is important to Americans at home.

New Technologies and Evolving Threats: Cyber, Social, Media, and Information Operations

Scholars characterized the new and evolving threat landscape in Eurasia as one that lacks clear lines, whether between friend and foe, between offense and defense, or even between concrete action and mere acquiescence. By comparison, the existential threats of the Cold War were less complicated—Americans knew that if a major nuclear attack was launched, it had to have come from the Soviet Union, and vice versa. Today, warfare in the cyber and information spheres is highly decentralized, and often entirely invisible.

Under these circumstances, how can the United States protect itself? Although

deterrence against state attacks may still play an important role, it may be difficult to attribute any attack quickly enough to establish such deterrence, a problem that is compounded in an environment rife with disinformation. As one scholar reminded participants, the United States was first to “cross the Rubicon” of cyber warfare with the 2006 “stuxnet” attack on computer-controlled centrifuges in Iran’s nuclear facilities, which remained concealed for months before it was accidentally discovered, having spread to commercial computer systems. In this respect, Washington has also exploited deniability and the fog of cyber war.

Other nontraditional security challenges include the leveraging of economic, political and social influence to try to shift a country’s policy priorities, whether from above (political leaders) or below (society at large). This has been a particularly acute problem in Central Europe. The region’s economy is growing fast and it remains far more economically interdependent with, for example, Germany than with China (by a factor of more than 100 to 1). Yet Central Europe has recently begun to lean toward Beijing and even toward Moscow, despite its troubled history with Russia.

The reasons for this shift are complex, and the politics varies from country to country, scholars explained. In the Czech Republic, for example, President Milos Zeman views his Chinese and Russian counterparts as attractive models for strong leadership, a key to his popularity, especially among poorer rural voters. In Hungary, where Prime Minister Viktor Orban has turned away from pro-Western reform and toward authoritarian-leaning nationalism, Russia has influence through nuclear and oil and gas contracts while

China offers an economic lifeline not subject to Western political pressure. China has tended to engage with Central Europe primarily at the leadership level, whereas Russia has been more effective in reaching out to populations in the region directly through its broadcast and social media fronts. As time goes on, though, Moscow and Beijing are increasingly pursuing the same strategies, building on what gets results.

Members expressed concern about the vulnerability of U.S. companies and the economy as a whole to Russian, Chinese or other cyber attacks. They noted that most of their constituents had little idea what was going on, and how quickly the threats were growing. When queried about whether the same technology that created dangerous offensive cyber tools could offer defensive solutions, experts said that there would always be a pendulum of offense and defense, but that the range of potential impacts was now much broader than ever before, with particular vulnerability to critical infrastructure in the United States, because it is such a highly connected, information-intensive economy.

Scholars and members agreed that Russia had attempted to use cyber weapons to interfere in past U.S. elections, including 2016 and 2018, however scholars cautioned that there would almost never be a “smoking gun” pointing to state-directed attacks. Instead, they explained, disparate non-attributable attacks are on the rise, while potentially vulnerable voting infrastructure is spreading rapidly. Some members suggested the solution might be to go back to “paper and pencil” ballots or to disconnect critical electoral systems from the Internet altogether. Others noted that the worst forms of Russian interference had nothing to do with voting machines, but

with social media, where Americans' own deep partisan divisions and negative campaigning empowered fringe voices regardless of their origins.

Asked by members whether the nightmare of a full-scale cyber war could be averted by signing a cyber treaty with Russia, China and others, scholars suggested that would be difficult because of problems with attribution and because the U.S. has historically not wanted to accept constraints on its own offensive cyber weapons. Further complicating matters is that in the cyber sphere, unlike nuclear or even conventional weapons, it would be impossible to include all the potentially relevant actors in a binding agreement, because there are very low barriers to entry in cyber competition.

At the same time, one scholar cautioned, building up U.S. cyber defenses in the absence of any formal understanding with Russia and China might be counter-productive if it signals to these other powers that the United States seeks to be in a position where it can launch cyber attacks at will and remain protected from any retaliation. Fundamentally, a member responded, there just is not enough trust between major powers to avoid cyber competition and even conflict, so a more dangerous future in this area looks inevitable. Other members agreed with this assessment, and called for more work by Congress and the administration to improve U.S. cyber defenses and resiliency.

Policy Discussion

Members started from the premise that the discussions were far more productive and in-depth than their typical experience of committee hearings in Washington. A big part of that, some noted, was the friendly, frank and open

bipartisan atmosphere, a departure from Congress today, where leadership seems more focused on scoring points against the other side than getting things done together. As one member put it, "we have met the enemy, and he is us." Another pointed out, "if we can't settle the D-R split in Congress, how can we deal with China and Russia?"

One member recounted three basic rules for being effective in Congress. First, always be willing to compromise on policy, but never on principle. Second, find out what the other side most needs, and make sure they get it. Third—the Golden Rule—treat others the way you would want to be treated. If we follow these rules, the member said, we can probably get to agreement around 80 percent of the time. Another member decried the "tyranny of the urgent" on Capitol Hill, while another pointed out that the day-to-day business of legislation leaves no room for strategic thought.

Members were inspired by and frequently repeated the line from Kennan's 1947 "X" article that America needed to once again solve problems at home, lead with vision, and demonstrate "spiritual vitality" amid competing ideological currents. Some reported that they already saw opportunities going forward for bipartisan cooperation on cyber security, social media and election security, especially in the fast-closing window before the 2020 election. Others suggested that joint work would be possible on trade, recognizing the political sensitivities for each member, depending on his or her constituency, but also stressing the importance of U.S. trade ties for solidifying alliances, especially with NATO countries and close U.S. allies in East Asia.

Members were encouraged by bipartisan agreement on U.S. values in the world, and some suggested this as a way to counter disinformation—by increasing transparency and openness, not by limiting or restricting information flows, including the Internet. The more transparent Congress can make the financial and advertising side of politics, some said, the harder it will be for foreign interests to exploit our open society. This, they argued, was a better counterpoint to Russian and Chinese attempts to nationalize and control the Internet than for Americans to do the same. Other members suggested the need for broader civics education to help ensure that future generations of Americans would be sophisticated consumers of news and information, regardless of the source.

Members were also in broad agreement about the importance of U.S. allies, and of alliances built on shared values and shared contributions. While members also concurred that U.S. allies in Europe deserve respect, support and appreciation, there was disagreement on the right approach to achieving a more equitable sharing of the costs among them. One member pointed out that the U.S. has increased its defense spending during the Trump administration by as much as the entire German defense budget, and asked whether it really made sense for Americans to spend 4% of GDP principally to defend allies that don't invest at least the same amount.

In search of specific action items to strengthen the U.S. position in Eurasia, members turned to energy, and agreed that while low energy prices will reduce Russia's power and influence in the region, the U.S. is now also a price-sensitive energy producer and exporter. Thus, they conceded, energy really is a double-edged

sword. One member pointed out that competition is natural, and recalled the fears Americans felt about Japanese competition in the 1980s. Rather than becoming paranoid about Russian energy exports to Europe, the member argued, why not pursue an "all of the above" energy strategy at home in the United States, to maximize affordable energy production of all kinds?

Members also recognized the basic difficulty of persuading or coercing Russia or China to accept U.S. positions on issues that both we and they consider central to our national security. Some suggested that new and broader efforts are needed to bring cyber and information warfare under the umbrella of international law, along the lines of the Geneva and Hague conventions that restrict attacks on civilians, and forbid the use of certain inherently indiscriminate weapons like poison gas. Members were not persuaded that China would be ready to join in trilateral nuclear arms control with the United States and Russia, or that Russia and the United States could agree to extend the current New START agreement limiting deployed strategic nuclear weapons.

Members cautioned against always framing policy toward Eurasia as competition with Russia and China. They reminded their colleagues that cooperation will be necessary to confront some obvious common challenges like climate change, mass movement of people, radicalization, and others. They worried that information coming to Capitol Hill and the United States in general is so heavily filtered that Congress often has collective blind spots about the ways in which people around the world think about these problems.

Finally, while they conceded that the U.S. foreign policy process puts the White House in the driver's seat on many key

questions, members endorsed a consistently strong role for the legislative branch of government. Active oversight and involvement through hearings, deliberation and debate is essential. Members said they

would encourage the White House to fill many still vacant national security and foreign policy appointments, especially U.S. ambassadors around the world

U.S. POLICY TOWARD EURASIA AND THE ROLE OF THE U.S. CONGRESS

Thomas Graham

Managing Director, Kissinger Associates

Since the United States emerged as a great power at the end of the 19th century, a core strategic tenet has been to prevent an accumulation and concentration of power by a hostile state anywhere in the world that could pose a mortal threat. That danger has loomed largest in Europe and East Asia, the world's two most advanced industrial regions besides North America. The United States fought two world wars and prosecuted a cold war in the twentieth century to keep those regions free of domination by a hostile power. Similarly, since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States has sought to prevent the re-emergence of a threat of Soviet dimensions in the heart of Eurasia. That is why the United States has supported the independence and territorial integrity of the former Soviet states, or "geopolitical pluralism" in Eurasia, as Zbigniew Brzezinski once put it.

Today, the burgeoning Russo-Chinese partnership threatens to dominate both East Asia and the heart of Eurasia. Calm along their long common border allows China and Russia to concentrate greater resources in challenging the United States in East Asia and the Western Pacific, and in Europe and the Middle East, respectively. The partnership constrains

America's access to Central Asia, as it facilitates the advance of China's Belt and Road Initiative. It limits America's options in dealing with North Korea. Russian arms sales to China enhance the latter's military capabilities with advanced weapons systems it is not yet capable of producing on its own, such as the S-400 air defense system and the Sukhoi SU-35 fighter jet. Easier and more reliable access to Russia's abundant natural resources east of the Urals, especially crude oil, fuels China's robust economic growth. Beyond Eurasia, Russia and China increasingly coordinate their policies to thwart U.S. initiatives in international fora, most notably the UN Security Council, where each holds a veto. Together, they pose a mounting challenge to the U.S. global position.

In its most recent worldwide threat assessment, the U.S. intelligence community warns that "China and Russia are more aligned than at any point since the mid-1950s, and the relationship is likely to strengthen in the coming year as some of their interests and threat perceptions converge, particularly regarding perceived U.S. unilateralism and interventionism and Western promotion of democratic values and human rights." Their competition with the United States, it notes, "cuts across all

domains, involves a race for technological and military superiority, and is increasingly about values.”

Nevertheless, while the administration’s *National Security Strategy* identifies Russia and China as revisionist powers and strategic competitors, it makes little of the challenge posed by their ever closer alignment. Quite the contrary: its policies — especially the punitive sanctions and effort to isolate Russia diplomatically and its assertive trade policies toward China — have arguably reinforced that alignment. Meanwhile, Russian President Putin and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, extol relations that “have never been better.”

What explains Washington’s complacency? In part, it grows out of the prevailing assessment that Russia is a declining power and, as such, only a short-term nuisance to American interests. In part, it is a consequence of the dismissal of Russia as an Asian power. And, in part, it is a result of a misreading of current Russo-Chinese cooperation and an entrenched conviction that historical, psychological, political, and other points of friction preclude a sustainable, long-term, strategic alliance.

There is a kernel of truth in these views, but they overlook critical conditions that render Russo-Chinese alignment a growing challenge to the U.S. position on the Eurasian landmass. To start, Russia does indeed face long-term secular decline as a consequence of demographic deficiencies and lagging technological advance. Even official projections have the Russian economy growing at less than 2 percent a year out to 2030, a rate that lags projections for the United States, not to speak of China and India.

Nevertheless, the Kremlin retains a remarkable capacity to mobilize the country’s resources for its purposes, as the Russian state has throughout history; witness Russia’s impressive capabilities in cyberspace. The mobilization might come at the expense of the socio-economic welfare of the overall population, and that might engender discontent, but rarely does a leader emerge who can muster this discontent to mount a serious challenge to the regime. As a result, Russia has consistently punched far above its weight on the global stage — Russia’s current high-profile position in the Middle East is a case in point. There is little indication that this situation will change in the next decade, even in a post-Putin Russia.

Likewise, other than its vast territory, Russia is indeed a meager presence in East Asia. Its population east of Lake Baikal numbers slightly more than 7 million, whereas there are over 130 million Chinese just across the border in Northeast China, 70 million Koreans, and 120 million Japanese. Russia’s Far Eastern provinces account for a mere 1 percent of the gross regional product of Northeast Asia (including Northeast China, the two Koreas, and Japan as well). Despite Putin’s insistence that the development of the Russian Far East is a national priority, progress has been slow.

But the important consideration is not the size of Russia’s population or productive capacity; it’s the treasure of natural resources in Siberia and the Russian Far East that China can tap to fuel its robust economic growth and expansionist ambitions. Roughly three-quarters of its imports from Russia are natural resources, including crude oil, which alone accounts for over half. The share of natural resources will only grow when the energy of Siberia

gas pipeline into China comes on line later this year.

Finally, it is true that Russo-Chinese cooperation continues to fall short of the soaring rhetoric of Putin-Xi summits. Their bilateral trade may have risen sharply to \$108 billion in 2018 (from under \$65 billion in 2015), and China may now be Russia's largest trading partner. But Russia does not rank among China's top ten trading partners, and U.S. trade with China is nearly seven times larger. On foreign policy matters, China has been reluctant to support Russian adventures in Europe — it refused to follow Russia in recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Russia stripped away from Georgia in 2008, and it has not recognized Russia's incorporation of Crimea in 2014. The Russian and Chinese-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization¹ remains more a talking shop than a forum for concrete cooperation, in large part because Russia is focused on security arrangements in Central Asia while China is more interested in commercial penetration.

It is also true that there are serious obstacles to the formation of a Russo-Chinese strategic alliance, including historical antagonism lingering from Russia's exploitation of China in the 19th and 20th centuries, Russia's disinclination to play the junior partner over the long run, and Russians' anti-Chinese racial prejudices. Moreover, while both countries might chafe at perceived U.S. global domination and prefer a multipolar world, their views on the proper world order diverge significantly. Russia appears intent on overturning the current order and replacing it with a concert

of great powers based on spheres of influence; China, which has benefitted greatly from the rules-based current order, appears more inclined to reshape the balance in its favor. Finally, the United States is radically more important to Chinese economic and security interests than Russia is. Beijing is not about to sacrifice its complex and delicate relationship with the United States to defend Russia against U.S. reactions to what Beijing sees as ill-advised, overly aggressive Russian behavior (e.g., in Georgia or Ukraine).

Nevertheless, the United States should be concerned by the rapidity with which the two countries have been building their partnership since the eruption of the Ukraine crisis and the collapse of Russia's relations with the West and the damage their close alignment has done, and can continue to do, to U.S. interests in the short to medium term. Even if unsustainable in the long term, their partnership emboldens Russia to challenge U.S. interests globally, and it provides China with resources to mount a longer-term strategic challenge. It is already shifting the geopolitics of Eurasia to America's disadvantage, as China's power and ambitions grow, to the consternation of our allies and partners in the region, including India, Japan, and South Korea, all of which are seeking ways to constrain China.

U.S. Policy

In these circumstances, how should the United States pursue its interests? How does it address the challenge of Russo-Chinese strategic alignment?

¹ The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was formally established in 2003 to address regional security issues. The six original members are China and Russia, plus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. India and Pakistan joined in 2017.

To begin with, it makes little strategic sense to pursue policies that drive Russia and China closer together without due consideration to mitigating the downsides of their increased cooperation. The most graphic example is the U.S. effort to punish Russia with ever harsher sanctions and to isolate it diplomatically because of its “malign activities.” While having little noticeable impact on Russian conduct, this effort has not only driven Russia ever more tightly into China’s embrace but has also weakened it in ways that have enabled China to pay less for the benefits it receives from Russia.

This is not to argue that the United States does not need to resist Russian violations of international norms in Ukraine or its egregious interference in elections. It does mean that the United States should consider the China factor and seek to mitigate the risk of stimulating closer Russo-Chinese alignment. In the current circumstances, a more limited, better targeted set of sanctions, coupled with the renewal of more normal diplomatic relations and a concerted effort to overcome domestic political dysfunction and division, would prove more effective in resisting Russia without encouraging a further consolidation of Russo-Chinese ties. Indeed, by offering Russia the hope of finding a strategic counterbalance in the West, such an approach would likely attenuate Russia’s ties with China and enhance its bargaining position on both strategic and commercial matters.

Second, it pays to look at Russia in a global context, and not simply through the prism of Europe and the Middle East, as Washington tends to do (a tendency that is reinforced by the bureaucratic structure of the national security agencies, which places Russia and Europe in the same division).

Russia plays different roles from the standpoint of U.S. interests at opposite ends of the Eurasian landmass: In Europe, it is a challenger; in East Asia it could be a partner in forging a stable regional balance that favors U.S. interests. U.S. partners and allies in the Indo-Pacific region are already actively courting Russia as a partner in counterbalancing China. The United States should be engaging with them in maneuvering Russia into a position that advances U.S. interests. One practical way to do that would be to invigorate a set of triangular dialogues among experts and eventually among officials — U.S.-India-Russia, U.S.-Japan-Russia, U.S.-South Korea-Russia — to encourage favorable regional balances of power across Asia.

Finally, the United States needs to set an achievable goal. Contrary to some thinking in Washington, turning Russia and China against one another is an impossible task. Russia has no interest in a confrontational relationship with a dynamic neighbor, which would require it to devote immense resources to the defense of Siberia and the Russian Far East, as it was compelled to do during the second half of the Cold War. Similarly, friendly relations with Russia have eased China’s commercial penetration of regions all along Russia’s periphery, particularly in Central Asia, but also in Europe, amidst the growing U.S. resistance to the Belt and Road Initiative.

Nor should the U.S. goal be to contain China, another impossible task in the globalized economy that undergirds American prosperity. Rather, the U.S. should strive to bolster the bargaining position of all the countries along China’s periphery, including Russia, so that deals with China, in both the commercial and the security realm, are more balanced and less exposed to Chinese exploitation. In the end,

creating regional balances of power across the Eurasian landmass remains the most promising way of avoiding the domination

of its critical regions by hostile powers and advancing American interests, as it has been for the past 150 years.

GETTING AMERICA OFF THE BACKFOOT IN EURASIA

Evan A. Feigenbaum

Vice President for Studies,
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Eurasia is changing dramatically but the United States is losing the plot. This is happening in spite of the Bush Administration's efforts to promote regional connectivity between South and Central Asia, the Obama Administration's "pivot" or "rebalance" to Asia, and the Trump Administration's more assertive stance toward China in nearly every region of the world.

Washington is losing the plot because it has failed to adapt quickly or sufficiently to three important and accelerating trends. All three are closely connected to the rise of Chinese power. And all are altering the international order to which the United States has been accustomed.

A Tale of Two Asias ...

The first of these trends is the growing collision between economic integration and security fragmentation.

For much of the postwar period, Asia's dominant security and economic orders were tightly interconnected, with the United States acting as the principal provider of both security- and economic-related public goods. Put bluntly, this is no longer the case. "Security Asia" and

"Economic Asia" have taken on distinct dynamics: the former remains trans-Pacific, with the United States still at its center, but the latter is increasingly pan-Asian, more diverse, complex and multifaceted — and with China, even amid its economic slowdown, as a major driver of the action.

In "Security Asia," the United States remains an essential strategic balancer, vital to stability. Its alliances and forward-deployed military presence continue to provide comfort and security to nearly every country in Eurasia except China, Russia, and Iran.

By contrast, in "Economic Asia," the American role, while growing in absolute terms, is receding in relative terms as Asian economies increasingly act as a source of demand, products, capital and trade for one another. Indeed, as Asia becomes more integrated— including Central and South Asia where U.S. trade and investment have been less pronounced than in East Asia— economic interaction with the U.S. will comprise a diminishing share of nearly every major Asian economy's overall trade and investment.

Pan-Asian Regionalism ...

A second trend is the persistence and growth of pan-Asian ideas, pacts and institutions that do not include the United States. These ideas will persist, and some of them will cohere, regardless of American views and preferences.

In East Asia, these trends have deep roots. It is fashionable, for example, to ascribe efforts to build a pan-Asian economic and institutional architecture to rising Chinese assertiveness (or, more precisely, to Chinese ambition). But that is just one part of the story. In fact, contemporary Asian regionalism—the desire to forge at least some cohesion out of the region’s enormous diversity—has deep roots. It has found expression across Asia, in many countries, and over several decades.

Japan, for instance, is a close U.S. ally, suspicious of the rise of Chinese power, and has a strong trans-Pacific identity. Still, Japan’s bureaucracy has incubated a variety of pan-Asian ideas, especially with respect to monetary integration. Before there was the Beijing-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, there was Japan’s proposal of an Asian Monetary Fund, which helped give rise to today’s Chiang Mai Initiative of bilateral currency swaps among Southeast and Northeast Asian countries.

In the 1990s, the U.S. could squash such incipient regionalism. But relative power balances have changed considerably since then. Worse, the U.S. withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has fueled perceptions across Asia of American protectionism. Viewed through this frame, Beijing’s proposal of the AIIB (and probably other ideas yet to come) cannot be so easily squashed since they lie squarely in a longer pan-Asian tradition.

American policymakers make much in speeches today about indebtedness to China and the potential for Beijing to exact a steep price in exchange for its loans. But the International Monetary Fund (IMF) itself was hardly popular in Asia not long ago. Many in the region, especially in Southeast Asia, reacted badly when Washington refused to bail out Thailand in 1997, just three years after bailing out Mexico. And for many Asians, the most enduring image of the crisis is a photograph of IMF managing director Michel Camdessus standing, arms crossed over a seated Indonesian president Suharto, his head bowed, as he was compelled to sign onto the IMF’s terms for financial support.

The biggest takeaway is that when Washington absents itself (or merely shows disinterest in the region’s concerns), Asians will grope for their own solutions.

This is precisely what happened with the TPP after American withdrawal. The U.S. frequently argues that Asia will pay a big price for failing to confront China. Actually, the U.S... stands to pay a far steeper price for creating, and then abetting, a vacuum. It is no surprise that the eleven remaining TPP parties completed the agreement without Washington: for all their tensions with one another, forging agreement on pan-Asian rules beats both “Chinese” rules and no rules.

And today, as Asia’s subregions become more integrated, we are likely to see more cross-fertilization between Russian-promoted institutions and pacts, Chinese-promoted institutions pacts, and cross-regional institutions and pacts that are expanding their memberships and elements of functional coordination.

For one, although the United States bulks large in the global economy, it is, in

relative terms, not so large as it was in 2008, and much less than in 1998. The 2008 financial crisis book-ended a tumultuous decade, arriving almost precisely 10 years after the Asian crisis and adding fuel to Asian debates about overreliance on Western economies by dampening growth in the region's traditional export markets. As Asia has emerged from the 2008 crisis, debates have intensified about the utility of an intra-regional hedge, or cushion, against continued or future volatility elsewhere.

But that is not all: Where G7 economies were once disproportionately the demand drivers for Asian exports, the other foot now wears the shoe in a growing number of sectors. Asian economies today are more than traders; they are builders, lenders, investors and, in some areas, a growth engine – for example as consumers of U.S. corn and soybeans (for their animal feed), pork (for their tables) and natural gas (for their power plants). Asia is, as well, a source of capital, not just a capital recipient.

Then there is simple geopolitics: Asia's emerging powers, including India and China, are less content to live in perpetuity with an architecture largely built by the West. This explains, at least in part, why India, despite its deep ambivalence and suspicion of Chinese power, has joined both the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS Bank as a founding member.

And then there is China, whose foreign and economic policies are converging in unprecedented ways. With foreign exchange reserves still larger than the nominal gross domestic products of India, South Korea and Thailand combined, the export of capital has become an extension of Chinese foreign policy. China is not alone: Japanese, Korean and other

Asian money is also looking for yield and for project finance opportunities across Asia.

"Historical Asia" Reborn ...

The third trend, and perhaps the most important, is the reconnection of disparate sub-regions of Eurasia into a more integrated strategic and economic space. Unless Washington adjusts to this more integrated Asia, and soon, the U.S. could find itself much less relevant in each of its constituent parts.

The "Asia" that will exist in 2035 is likely, in important strategic and economic aspects, to more closely resemble the historical norm that predated America's arrival, not the world to which Americans have grown accustomed since 1945.

Take China's Belt and Road. It is widely viewed as an attempt to foster dependence on China's economy across Eurasia, with potential strategic and even military effects. And there is something to that argument. Still, Beijing is succeeding, in part because it is borrowing and adapting ideas long advocated by others, including the United States.

Ironically, in the 2000s, the other foot wore the shoe. Instead of the U.S. condemning China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it was Beijing that bombastically condemned Washington as a "schemer." America's "crime"? Daring to envision a "Greater Central Asia" and making efforts to connect Asia's sub-regions through infrastructure, policy coordination, and project finance.

This context strikes me as very important. The regrowth of economic connections across Asia's disparate sub-regions is a function of the choices, actions and capabilities of many states, including Japan, South Korea, and India. It is not a Chinese invention, did not begin only in

2013, and did not spring from Chinese President Xi Jinping like Athena from the head of Zeus. Indeed, China was part of this connectivity effort even before it launched the BRI, breaking Russia's monopsony on Central Asian oil and gas with pipelines from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, an onshore production sharing agreement in Turkmenistan, and dozens of projects around the world.

Why do others' efforts matter? The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, for instance, have undertaken longstanding efforts on roads and power lines in Eurasia. The ADB's Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program (which happens to include China) has been promoting six connectivity corridors—"linking the Mediterranean and East Asia"—for two decades. And it is no coincidence that "linking the Mediterranean and East Asia" sounds much like Beijing's sloganeering on behalf of the BRI.

Here is another example from my own experience: The Bush Administration actually reorganized the State Department around a connectivity concept in 2005, when it moved the countries of Central Asia out of a westward-facing European bureau into an Asian-facing bureau that included India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. During those years, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her team developed a variety of U.S.-backed ideas for regional infrastructure integration, most of them premised on leveraging the strengths of the international financial institutions and the ongoing efforts of many partners.

This included Japan, whose role remains notable—it has been Tokyo, not Beijing, which is playing the dominant role in project finance in India, for example, including building the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the Delhi Metro and the

development of high-speed rail for Indian Railways.

Then there is the sheer "Asianization" of Central Asia, which owes as much to the retreat of Russian economic power and relative ebbing of Moscow's primacy as it does to the arrival of Chinese trade and capital.

In short, the "challenge of China's new activism"—Russia's is, in my view, more peripheral—is more complex than the BRI being some sort of binary counterpoint to the United States. Rather, we need to enlarge our framing of the strategic problem:

The United States risks being marginalized by an organic process through which numerous Eurasian states, including but not limited to China, are reintegrating East, Central, and South Asia through the direction of trade, capital flows, infrastructure, and new pan-Asian pacts and agreements. More often than not, this is happening without American involvement.

Gradually, but inexorably, the region is becoming more Asian than "Asia-Pacific," especially as Asian economies look to one another, not just the trans-Atlantic West, for new economic and financial arrangements; more continental than sub-continental, as East and South Asia become more closely intertwined; and, in its continental west, more Central Asian than Eurasian, as China develops its western regions and five former Soviet countries rediscover their Asian roots.

Insufficiently, in my view, the U.S. response to this has mostly been to complain about the Belt and Road. Even without the Belt and Road, the U.S. was already increasingly out of the picture.

And the Chinese-Russian entente—not an "alliance," but a working

partnership—complicates the picture for the United States even further.

Whining Isn't Competing ...

Washington can and must do better.

For one thing, American policymakers need greater discretion and better judgment about when and where to pick their fights. In the case of the AIIB, for example, the U.S. went to the mat, contesting a Chinese initiative in a functional area where existing structures were clearly insufficient and the U.S. itself offered no distinctive model. It turned China's proposal of a multilateral bank into a bilateral test of wills but without the leverage to stop Beijing from moving forward. Worse, Washington badly misread the sentiment of some of its allies.

Here are some final takeaways:

One, like Don Quixote tilting at windmills, it is futile for the United States to try to write China out of Asia's story. And this would be true of any China, not just Xi Jinping's assertive and nationalistic China.

One reason for this is cartographic: China borders every sub-region of Asia—Northeast, Southeast, Central, and South. The United States does not. Neither does any other big Asian player.

Another reason is financial: even if China cannot ultimately deploy the billions of state-backed project finance it has pledged to the Belt and Road, it can still drop plenty of meaningful money into countries all over Asia where the United States and its firms are largely invisible. To reject and battle against every instance of China's effort to foster connectivity, then, would require Washington to fight both geographic and economic gravity.

A more realistic way to counterbalance the spread of Chinese

power, especially in Asia, is to be more successful at bolstering America's own power, presence, initiative, role, relationships, and arsenal of military, economic, and technological tools. And it can best do this in concert with other partners who have stepped into the vacuum created by U.S. absence, disinterest, protectionism, and worse.

That is why the recent Trump Administration effort to coordinate infrastructure priorities among the U.S. and Japan and the U.S., Japan, and India is so welcome. So, too, is a development finance reform bill making its way through Capitol Hill, which aims to make it easier for U.S. firms to manage and mitigate risk in tough business environments.

To compete in geopolitics—as in sports, business, and life—one needs to actually compete. Washington has to outperform the Chinese competition, not just belittle and whine about it.

There is certainly a deep suspicion of Chinese intent across Asia today. But I have seen enough from every sub-region of Asia to know that the U.S. will not get far by telling third countries that they should forestall deepening their economic relationships with China. For nearly every country, and especially the smaller ones, that is an impractical choice, and therefore will be rejected.

And that is not all. Trashing China's initiatives while failing to counter and compete with them signals other capitals that their countries are of little interest to the United States on their own terms. Their takeaway will surely be that the United States pays attention to them only in the context of its strategic competition with China. That is a poor message indeed.

The recent U.S. approach, whether to BRI or to AIIB, risks inviting comparisons, both implicit and explicit, between what Washington is offering and what Beijing is offering. The U.S. is diplomatically challenged and commercially weak in around two-thirds of the Eurasian continental landmass—including many countries in Central Asia, South Asia, and mainland Southeast Asia. Sadly, then, the comparison will often benefit Beijing not Washington.

And in responding to BRI, at least, it is important when designing U.S. policies not to compare American apples to Chinese oranges, much less to Russian pears and Iranian peaches. America isn't China. For instance, it doesn't have state-backed firms that it can leverage through billions channeled through state-backed policy banks.

So Washington should be better leveraging its uniquely American strengths—technology, innovation ecosystems, STEM education, connections to the global capital markets, best in class services and other firms, and so on.

It will be harder to deploy that leverage in the context of messages that say "America First." American business remains crucial, especially in East Asia. U.S. companies have invested more than \$200 billion into the ten ASEAN countries of Southeast Asia alone. But what is at stake is not just business but rules, norms, standards, and strategic momentum.

Ultimately, at the political level, Washington spends far too much time playing defense against Beijing across Eurasia—and to a much lesser extent, against Moscow in Central Asia.

As Asia becomes more integrated, the U.S. will become progressively less relevant in many parts of the region—in Central Asia, in most of South Asia except India, and in mainland Southeast Asia, as noted above.

Within a generation, Americans could find their firms at a competitive disadvantage in a part of the world that will constitute as much as half of the global economy. Americans could become bystanders to the economic and strategic dynamics quickly reshaping this region.

The fact is, China is going to continue proposing greater Eurasian initiatives like the Belt and Road. So the U.S. needs to get off its back foot and onto the initiative.

The U.S. can work with China but that needs to happen in the broader context of strategy and policy in Asia. And this includes leveraging the many initiatives and partnerships from Japan to Singapore that also aim to promote economic expansion and connectivity—and thus, by extension, deal with Chinese and Russian power and the effects on U.S. interests of the Beijing-Moscow entente.

The key is to play to uniquely American strengths—but then multiply them by leveraging these non-American partners.

DOES BRI REALLY EXIST?

Robert Daly

Director, Kissinger Institute on China and the United States,
The Wilson Center

China's Belt and Road Initiative is as much smoke & mirrors as steel & concrete, but it drives discussion of Eurasian integration.

The Question

It is absurd to challenge the reality of what China calls the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping has pledged up to \$1 trillion in loans for BRI infrastructure projects in Eurasia and Africa. A project of such scope and ambition, which would cost four to eight trillion dollars if realized and which some seventy countries—including over half of the European Union—have “endorsed,” must be an established fact. Aren't frantic U.S. headlines and the energy which American leaders spend in attacking BRI proof of its existence?

The 21st century may indeed see the beneficial integration of Eurasia through infrastructure. Should a continental network of ports, airports, highways, and rail lines take shape, China will undoubtedly play a major role in financing and constructing a portion of it. China's infrastructure lending in the region is high; its trade with the EU and Africa is increasing; Chinese corporations, small businesses, and speculators are found throughout the region; and China is the leading trading

partner of most nations in Asia and has a growing presence in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Arctic, all of which Beijing now claims are within BRI's purview. These are real, important dynamics.

But all of them preceded the launch of BRI in 2013. Eurasian infrastructure integration is a complex, organic phenomenon that dates at least to the end of the Cold War. If BRI is shorthand for linked Eurasian infrastructure, it is not Xi's “idea” (although it is his acronym). China would be Eurasia's economic lodestone of even if Xi had never mentioned BRI and China's economic influence will expand even if he never mentions it again. The growth rates of China's trade with Europe and the rates of its lending and investment in Eurasia have not increased, moreover, since BRI was announced. China's actual BRI expenditures in the region have slowed since 2016. So what real difference does BRI make? Does it offer anything new beyond packaging and pageantry? Why use BRI rhetoric rather than plain language, like *China's overseas infrastructure lending*?

Suspicion of BRI hype is stoked by Beijing's refusal to provide any serious accounting of BRI projects and by the fact that, six years in, the would-be largest undertaking in human history has no blueprint, no plan. This deficit is glossed over by Beijing and usually ignored by foreign governments hungry for China's largesse, but it is the most dubious aspect of Xi's "vision." It doesn't take a civil engineer to understand that any genuine attempt to build an infrastructure network spanning three continents would require an international, multi-year, feasibility study and planning process comprising—to pick a few key factors—demographics, environmental impacts, financing, security, geography, legal integration, technological standards, and projections of future demands and industrial capacity. None of this work has been done. Nations which "endorse" the Belt and Road are not signing onto a master plan. Again, there is no plan; there is only the prospect of financing. Xi explains away this oversight by likening BRI to a Chinese landscape painting in which the artist lays down bold, un-representational strokes that form the backbone of the composition, then fills in details later, when he figures out what he wants. Xi says this with a welcoming smile, but his goal is to dazzle and silence foreign critics with Orientalist hooey. The artist in his analogy is like a surgeon who makes random incisions all over the patient's body and promises to provide a diagnosis and cure somewhere down the line, when the mood strikes.

How should American policymakers respond to the Belt and Road's ambition and ambiguity? A review of China's grand strategy and the BRI's brief history indicate that Washington has over-reacted to the initiative, but should take no comfort in BRI's many failings. BRI is incoherent, but it

has inspired global thinking on infrastructure investment and a growing list of American allies are choosing access to Chinese wealth over American warnings.

Rollout and Strategy

In 1904, Halford Mackinder said that whichever nation ruled the "World-Island" of Africa, Asia, and Europe would "command the world." He thought that future World-Island hegemony would emerge from Eastern Europe, but, in 2013, Xi Jinping declared that China would be the engine of Afro-Eurasian integration. Unveiling the scheme that would become BRI in Astana, Kazakhstan, Xi said that "more than 2,100 years ago (China's) imperial envoy Zhang Qian was sent to Central Asia twice to open the door to friendly contacts between China and Central Asian countries as well as the transcontinental Silk Road linking East and West." In October of 2013 he told the Indonesian parliament that "Southeast Asia has since ancient times been an important hub along the ancient Maritime Silk Road." The era of BRI diplomacy had begun.

Some Chinese analysts claim BRI was provoked by the Obama administration's Rebalance to Asia. They trace Xi's strategic thinking to a 2012 article by Peking University's Wang Jisi. Wang pointed out that, to the east, China's naval options and sea lines of communication were challenged by (1) *The Malacca Dilemma*: Japan, Taiwan, and the littoral states of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia form a geographic chain that makes it possible to bottle China up in the Western Pacific; and (2) the U.S. Pacific Command and America's Asian alliances. While the United States is an obstacle on China's maritime borders, Wang noted, it is not a factor when China looks west across Central Asia, to Europe. Through BRI's

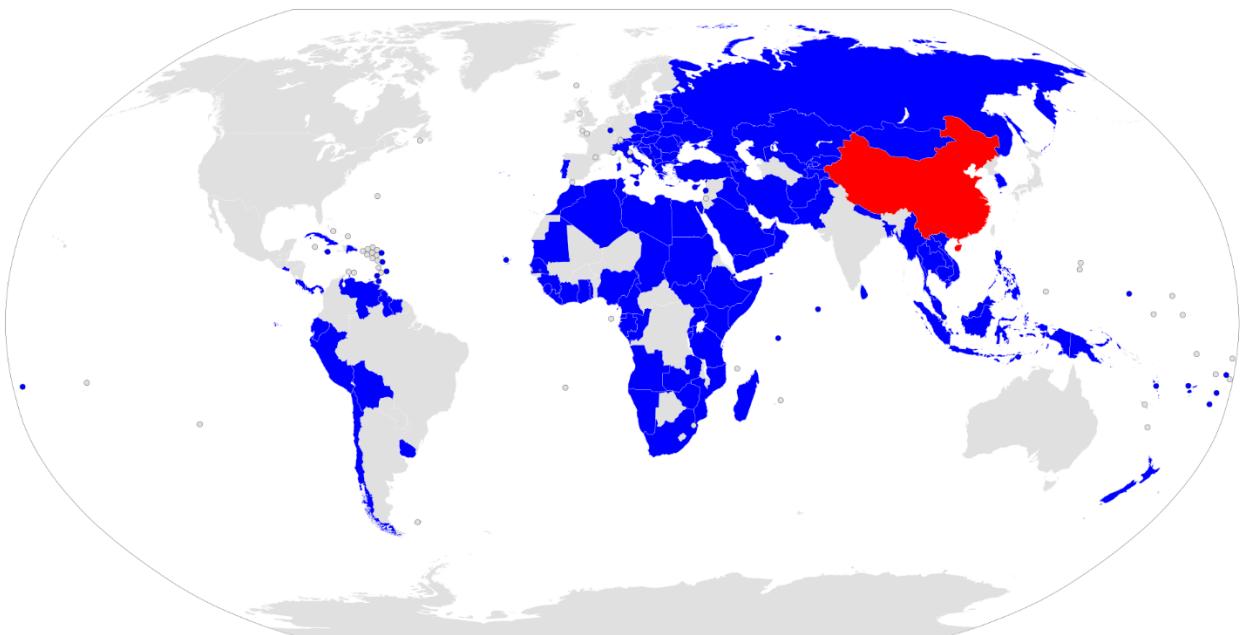
westward thrust, Xi hopes to employ China's foreign exchange reserves, the construction capacity of its State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), and the lending power of its state-run banks to break out of the Malacca Dilemma and build networks that guarantee China's supplies of energy, food, and natural resources. The "New Silk Roads" are also likely to increase regional dependence on, and political deference to, Beijing. China doesn't conceal the self-interest woven into BRI. As a *People's Daily* manifesto put it in 2018: "The world needs China ... That creates broad strategic room for our efforts to uphold peace and development *and gain an advantage*" (emphasis added).

In its broad outlines, BRI makes strategic sense for China. If it were pursued carefully—in collaboration with international experts and stakeholders and in accordance with global best practices—BRI could help China meet its goals while spurring continental development. But BRI as managed to date threatens to turn Eurasia in history's largest white elephant breeding

ground. Deep pockets and propaganda can't overcome the uneven development, political and cultural diversity, age-old hatreds, and daunting geography of the World Island. China has already written off bad loans in at least fifteen African and Pacific countries. If it doesn't change its lending practices, China may create one hundred Venezuelas along the Belt and Road.

What does this have to do with the historic Silk Road?

Almost nothing. Xi's claim that Zhang Qian "opened the transcontinental Silk Road" and that something called the "ancient Maritime Silk Road" ever existed is false. The term "Silk Road" was coined in 1877 by a German geographer to connote the historic *phenomenon* of Eurasian trade. It did not refer to a particular route because there wasn't any; trade occurred along myriad shifting paths that crisscrossed Eurasia. Some led to China, but pre-modern Eurasian trade was not Sino-centric, nor was it a gift from China to the rest of the world. Xi's mythologizing of the Silk



Countries which have endorsed the Belt and Road Initiative, from Wikipedia

Road, furthermore, elides the fact that soldiers traveled the same routes as salesmen. Zhang Qian's mission was not to establish a free trade regime — Eurasian commerce began millennia before he was born — but to convince nomads to ally with China in a war against Turkic tribes in what is now Xinjiang province and Central Asia.

Suspicious Minds

Because BRI is as vague as it is grandiose, and because China's foreign policy has been increasingly assertive under Xi Jinping, Chinese, American, and third-country observers have raised doubts about BRI's goals, methods, and feasibility since its inception. The major critiques are as follows:

Goals

Are there political conditions for BRI loans?

Nations that depend on China economically tend to support Chinese policy positions. Laos and Cambodia prevent ASEAN from expressing Southeast Asian concerns over China's militarization of artificial islands in the South China Sea. In April of 2019, Greece, which has endorsed BRI and whose port of Piraeus has flourished since China took over its management, criticized the European Commission's labelling of China as a "systemic rival." Turkey has not joined BRI, but when the Turkish Foreign Ministry called China's detention of Uighurs in Xinjiang a "great shame for humanity," China's Ambassador to Turkey made the link between China's lending and its political agenda clear, saying: "Criticizing your friend publicly everywhere is not a constructive approach. If you choose a non-constructive path, it will negatively affect mutual trust and understanding and will be reflected in commercial and economic relations."

Will Beijing use BRI to extend its technology, cyber censorship, and surveillance regimes?

BRI seeks to build a *digital silk road* across Eurasia and to harmonize standards that increase commerce. A Sino-centric Eurasian digital network, in which Chinese firms like Huawei and ZTE have major stakes, will make it easier for China to collect the World Island's data. As China builds out its techno-surveillance state and social credit system, and as its capacity to censor the Internet expands, concern is growing that China will leverage its economic influence and technological dominance to extend these domestic practices.

Is BRI a stealth means of attaining overseas assets?

The U.S. characterizes BRI as "debt trap diplomacy." The accusation is that China knowingly makes unrepayable loans to poor, corrupt nations and then seizes assets when debtors default. Something like this occurred when China built and later took over the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota, although there is no evidence that China planned to seize the port from the outset. BRI does make large loans on secret terms to poorly-governed countries with bad credit, but an April 2019 study by America's Rhodium Group found that, to date, Hambantota is the only case of its kind. China usually deals with bad loans by writing them off or renegotiating them on terms more beneficial to borrowers.

Will BRI be used to project Chinese power?

Armies travel by rail as readily as exports and aircraft carriers can use the same ports as container ships. China's Maritime Silk Road, which is purportedly about commerce, maps closely onto the

ports the Chinese navy needs for a push into the Indian Ocean.

Does BRI aim at establishing China's currency as an international reserve currency rivalling the dollar?

That was the claim made to the author in a private meeting in Washington in 2017 by economists from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Is the goal of BRI to create a revisionist, Sino-centric system that legitimizes CCP practices?

Within China, BRI is overseen by the Communist Party's Leading Group for Advancing the Development of One Belt, One Road. The CCP has set up courts in Shenzhen, Xi'an, and Beijing to adjudicate BRI disputes. Xi Jinping has enshrined BRI in the nation's constitution and has so expanded its scope that it has become a shorthand for China's foreign policy. BRI is now inseparable from Xi's other pet phrases: *The China Dream*, *The Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation*, *the Party Leads Everything*, *the Community of Common Destiny*. It has also become part of Xi's personality cult; at a Beijing conference in 2017, a Chinese foreign policy analyst claimed that Xi's BRI vision "could not only guide the peaceful development of the human race, but will benefit non-human animal species and plants as well."

Is BRI an indirect subsidy to Chinese SOEs?

Beijing cushioned the domestic impact of the 2008 financial crisis through a massive state-financed infrastructure expansion program. But China is now built out, as evidenced by the ghost cities scattered across the country and vacant redevelopment projects like the Binhai New Area in Tianjin. China now needs overseas markets for the SOEs and the labor force that grew explosively during the years of

stimulus. The solution is to make BRI loans to Eurasian neighbors and require them to use the borrowed funds to hire Chinese construction companies through closed tenders.

Methods

Opacity: Most BRI Memorandums Of Understanding and contracts are not made public and there is evidence that some deals entail onerous costs and repayment terms and require that projects be planned and built by Chinese companies. The Chinese-funded railway link between Budapest and Belgrade, for example, awarded most of its contracts to Chinese corporations through a closed bidding process that violated EU rules on open tenders.

Corruption:

Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives have all accused China of bribing their national leaders to win their approval of unaffordable BRI loans. These charges were brought after elections removed the allegedly corrupt incumbents, underscoring the threat that normal, democratic political volatility can pose to BRI projects. As Adrien Zenz, of the European School of Culture and Theology in Korntal, Germany, put it: "Beijing has traditionally influenced politically and economically weaker nations by inducing ruling elites to trade selfish short-term gains for their nations' long term interests."

Energy and the environment

Many BRI projects are fueled by coal-fired power plants. A Duke University study found that nearly 70% of the energy for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects comes from coal. China has built 14 coal-powered BRI projects in Indonesia alone. A 2019 study by the U.S. Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis

found that China funds more than ¼ of all coal-fired power plants under development outside of China, many of them under the BRI umbrella.

Feasibility

Land versus sea

Trains are faster than container ships. It takes 45 days to ship goods by sea from Chongqing to Duisburg, but only 13 days by rail. But shipping is much cheaper and transportation experts doubt that Eurasian rail networks will ever be able to compete with ocean transport on cost. Most BRI rail routes receive Chinese government subsidies of \$3,500 to \$4,000 per trip for a 20-foot container to create the illusion of economic efficiency.

BRI investment is slowing

The American Enterprise Institute's China Global Investment Tracker (CGIT) estimates that China's BRI investments in the first half of 2018 dropped 15 % from the same period in the previous year and that, based on the number of transactions and total committed capital 2018 would look a lot like 2015.

BRI's capacity is out of synch with its ambitions

According to CGIT, BRI lending will not hit its promised level of \$1 trillion until well into the 2020s. The Asian Development Bank, meanwhile, estimates that the "gap" in needed Asian infrastructure spending is \$800 billion annually and that the Asian portion of BRI alone requires \$8 trillion in investment between 2010 and 2020. If these estimates are even roughly accurate, it is clear that China's lending capacity, welcome as it often is, does not make China the World Island's infrastructure savior. The most that can be safely said is that China significantly increases the funds available

for infrastructure development in the region.

China's economy is cooling down

China's Gross Domestic Product growth is gradually slowing, due partly to government policy—Beijing wants, slower, more sustainable, high quality growth—and partly to factors the government can't control. Chinese critics of BRI have always asked whether it made sense for the country to invest so much in overseas development when dire poverty and economic disparity remain pressing problems within China. Future popular support for BRI within China cannot be guaranteed.

Blowback

BRI's international reception, which was mixed from the outset, grew steadily worse after then-U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson labelled China a "predatory lender" in October 2017. As noted, Hambantota became the poster child for this claim, even though its experience was not representative. The United States, Canada, and Mexico have been resistant to BRI's charms since 2013, as have India, Japan, and, until Italy signed an MOU with China in April 2019, the G7 nations. More worrisome for China than the grumbling of known competitors has been rumblings of discontent, the cancelled projects, and the requests for renegotiation from within the BRI fold. Malaysia, Myanmar, the Maldives, Kenya, and even Russia, Kazakhstan, and Eastern European nations have expressed doubts publicly or privately. The record to date suggests that BRI nations judge Beijing's intentions not by its lofty rhetoric, but in light of their own experience, interests, and vulnerabilities. They are enticed by China's deep pockets, but

unconvinced of its good will and fearful of its broad influence.

Developed nations are beginning to respond to BRI with more than name-calling. In July 2018, the U.S., Japan, and Australia announced a partnership to invest in infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific, where all three are long-established traders and investors. The EU unveiled similar plans a few months later. In October, 2018, Congress passed the *Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act (BUILD)* to “facilitate the participation of private sector capital and skills in the economic development of countries with low- or lower-middle-income economies.” BUILD created the International Development Finance Corporation and authorized it to allocate up to \$60 billion to make loans or loan guarantees and acquire equity or financial interests in development projects as a minority investor. By providing technical assistance, insurance, and reinsurance to private sector and sovereign entities, BUILD hopes to facilitate “sustainable, broad-based economic growth, poverty reduction, and development”... “achieve clearly defined economic and social development outcomes”... build “public accountability and transparency,” and follow “high standards of transparency and environmental and social safeguards.” In other words, BUILD challenges developing nations to weigh the *quality* of western lending against the much greater *quantity* and ready availability of Chinese funds. Its principles vs. resources.

BRI 2.0

These critiques, and the challenge from other lenders, made an impression in Beijing. Because BRI is Xi’s signature foreign policy project, and because Xi uses foreign “endorsements” to signal China’s strength and global benevolence to the

Chinese people, a reconsideration of BRI’s goals, methods, and messaging had become essential by the end of 2018. Chinese analysts had begun to ask why BRI wasn’t more like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a development bank founded by China which had rapidly won over foreign skeptics with its transparency, cooperative spirit, and expert governance. BRI, in contrast, seemed rushed, undefined, and ill-disciplined, even to Chinese economists. It was telling, therefore, that China signaled its receptivity to criticism by dispatching the esteemed President of the AIIB, Jin Liqun, to give an interview to the *Financial Times* in early 2019. Jin said, “Chinese leaders definitely have picked up the message. You cannot go on and on putting money in, without taking a review of what’s going on, to rebalance” ... “China is fully aware of debt sustainability in spite of the critical comments by some people.”

It was widely assumed that the promised “rebalance” would be unveiled when Xi Jinping hosted his second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing from April 25 to 27, 2019. Five thousand international delegates and thirty-seven heads of state, including leaders from Italy, Switzerland, and Portugal would attend. A large foreign press corps and global Chief Executive Officers were also on hand to learn about Belt and Road 2.0.

The forum was a bit of a bust. No new lending targets were announced, although Beijing said it signed new deals worth \$64 billion over the course of the week. Delegates said the event was too tightly choreographed, yet poorly planned. Journalists were corralled, with little notice, to an out-of-town press conference at which Xi Jinping took no questions. In his speeches, Xi was low-key. He stressed that

BRI would henceforth only support “high quality” projects that were “clean,” meaning zero-tolerance for corruption, and “green,” or environmentally responsible. Other than the usual blandishments about the virtues of development, cooperation, and win-win projects, that was it. There was no BRI 2.0—just a promise to do things better. Structurally, the BRI “rebalance” echoes Xi’s Anti-Corruption Campaign, which promises to weed out all the bad guys and govern well, but which never seriously asks how the absolutely essential Communist Party allowed corruption to become an existential threat in the first place.

China’s Dilemma

It is likely that Xi was silent because BRI, now six years old, faces a developmental dilemma of China’s own making. The problem was hinted at in Jin Liqun’s *Financial Times* interview, in which he said that AIIB planned to lend only \$4 billion in 2019 due to a “dearth of investable projects” that “meet the bank’s criteria for fiscal, social, and environmental sustainability.”

That is a stunning admission. AIIB is far more cautious and professional than BRI, but as Exhibit A in China’s bid for global governance, AIIB is no less ambitious. Yet even Jin Liqun and his colleagues can identify only \$4 billion in bankable projects in Asia in 2019. How likely is it, then, that the \$64 billion in new lending that Beijing committed to during the BRI Forum will go to projects that are truly high quality, clean, and green?

China’s BRI lending cannot possibly meet global standards *and* be the vehicle for creating a Sino-centric Eurasian order. It cannot be both responsible and glorious. The contradiction seems insoluble. Lending for glory breeds suspicion and blowback,

while lending responsibly makes China just another medium scale creditor with no great political, technological, or normative influence. No wonder Xi had so little to say in April.

America’s Irrelevance?

And yet, for all of its shortcomings, enthusiasm for BRI is growing, even in Western Europe and Latin America. Many BRI partnerships and projects are proposed not by China, but by under-developed nations that have much to gain and nowhere else to turn. It is too soon to draw conclusions about the quality of most BRI-invested projects or to know whether all of this infrastructure will someday form a transcontinental network. The rough success of BRI, on average and over the course of several decades, cannot be ruled out. Regardless of the scope or nature of China’s role, the integration of the World Island through infrastructure could be one of the greatest boons to humankind in this century. And where would that leave the United States?

Policy Recommendations

American should not aim at undermining BRI. Instead, the United States should use the Chinese and worldwide desire for high-quality Chinese investments, together with an enhanced American development program, to shape China’s evolution as a constructive provider of global public goods. Through diplomacy, the strengthening of alliances, and its own lending, the U.S. might flip the script: rather than being the means by which China builds dependency and deference in Eurasia, BRI could become the medium through which China incorporates global norms. Despite the legitimate concerns about the program detailed in this essay, BRI could prove to be more about the integration of China than

the Sinification of Eurasia. Even partial success would validate this strategy.

The United States should:

- Tone down rhetoric that demonizes BRI. It is unconvincing to much of the world and, because it draws attention to America's declining foreign aid, it makes America look whiney and weak.
- Avoid using China's propagandistic descriptions of BRI. China is not recreating the Silk Road and it doesn't have a plan for the integration of Eurasia. American policymakers can bend the conversation by referring to "What China calls its Belt and Road Initiative," or, simply say, "China's foreign infrastructure lending."
- Show the world how it's done by investing in a modern American infrastructure system that incorporates emerging technologies and benefits all socioeconomic classes in the cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Pay for it. Do it soon.
- Join the Trans Pacific Partnership to improve the standards of trade and demonstrate America's economic commitment to the Indo-Pacific.
- Enhance funding for the BUILD Act and other development vehicles.
- Prioritize competition with China by strengthening America's Eurasian and African partnerships.
- Encourage Eurasian and African nations to launch a serious planning process for World Island integration. China should have a major role in the process, but should not lead it.
- Do not ask other nations to pick sides between the U.S. and China, but cast a harsh spotlight on illiberal and ineffective Chinese practices whenever they emerge.
- Encourage Eurasian and African nations to uphold their own laws and best practices when working with China. No quarter need be given to "the Chinese Way," if it conflicts with local ways, outside of China's borders,
- Encourage qualified American and third country companies to bid on high quality infrastructure projects in Eurasia and Africa, even if they are financed by China.

CHINA'S RISE AS A GEO-ECONOMIC INFLUENCER IN EURASIA

Philippe Le Corre

Senior Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School and Nonresident Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Introduction

Over the past decade, China has become central to the world economy. Building on its economic successes, it is increasingly becoming central in world politics. China is now more ambitious, aiming to establish itself as a regional as well as a global power. In his report to the Chinese Communist Party's 19th Congress in October 2017, President Xi Jinping stated that, by 2050, China will have "become a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence". Despite a growing internal debate in China about the country's international positioning in the context of a confrontational tone with the United States, Xi believes he has the power to realize these ambitions. In 2018, he chaired an important foreign policy meeting in Beijing, which reaffirmed the notions of "foreign policy with Chinese characteristics" of "diplomacy of socialism with Chinese characteristics", and redefined the concept of a "global community of common destiny".

China's rise has been driven by economic development, starting with the launch almost exactly forty years ago of Deng Xiaoping's "open-door policy", which made China the economic powerhouse we

know now, not just domestically, but in most parts of the world.

On the world stage, China has become a strong player in institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank. It has developed strong bilateral relations with most countries around the world, with the exception of a handful of nations still recognizing Taiwan diplomatically. Around the world, Chinese diplomats have been incredibly active, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs receiving a 15 percent budget increase in 2018, to help project Chinese diplomacy and soft power throughout the world. In the six years of President Xi's rule, the MFA budget has doubled to Rmb60bn (\$9.5bn).

While it has created quasi-institutional initiatives (such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; BRICS Bank; and Silk Road Fund), China is willing to use the existing international order to continue to take a bigger role on the multilateral stage.

China stepped up its overseas presence a decade ago by increasing its outbound investment. One of its key-policies is to increase its footprint in developed economies, where it can acquire technologies, brands and management

skills, as well as access to major markets such as the Eurozone.

According to the China global investment tracker established by the American Enterprise Institute, since 2005, the total stock of overseas Chinese investments is approaching \$1.8 trillion worldwide. China's overseas investment spree has reached numerous developing economies where Beijing has been looking for natural resources but is now expanding its business activities locally by building public buildings, railways, roads, energy projects and other infrastructures. From Africa to Latin America, it is hard not to notice China's massive presence. For the past six years, many of these projects have been encompassed within a major China-led undertaking called the Belt and Road Initiative, launched by Xi Jinping himself in 2013 and initially aimed at building or rebuilding infrastructures across the Eurasian continent.

The plan highlights that the scope of the initiative will extend well beyond infrastructure construction. For example, it includes efforts to promote greater financial integration and use of the Chinese currency (the yuan, or RMB) by foreign countries, create an "Information Silk Road" linking regional information and communications technology networks, and lower barriers to cross-border trade and investment in the region, among other initiatives. With the broader BRI definition brought forward in 2017, some analysts have described China's ambition as "higher, more aggressive and opportunistic due to the relative decline" of American power. Although only officially supported by just one of the leading G7 world economies (Italy, since March 2019), the BRI is gaining visibility, and often strong support from local authorities. Beijing is

aiming at creating a new, massive economic platform.

The BRI is also there to demonstrate China's will to "help others" by building infrastructures and to relaunch the world economy through its own initiatives. Some experts have noted that China's foreign aid is conditional and helps to rally diplomatic support and provide political benefits to Beijing as well as some of the local elites in recipient countries. As China entered an important phase of its political development after the 19th Party Congress, heading to the party's 100th anniversary (2021) and the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, it is worth pointing out that the country's economic rise is already challenging traditional geopolitics, despite a "clear divergence of views about how threatening this might be to traditional U.S. dominance and agenda setting". In April 2019, Beijing hosted its second BRI Forum in the presence of leaders from all continents, among them many European leaders mostly from the Eastern and Southern parts of Europe.

An exporter of influence

In many parts of the world, China's presence is taking place through economic channels but Beijing has, in addition, become an exporter of political influence. Through some of its most vocal representatives, it is increasingly presenting itself as an alternative to the Western democratic model, leading numerous Western analysts to call China a "revisionist" power. Perhaps "disruptive" might be a better way to qualify it as China's strategy "is actually one of portfolio diversification, not the replacement of institutions and system" according to my Carnegie Endowment colleague Evan Feigenbaum. Still, Beijing's narrative has had an impact

on a number of governments around the world – a majority of them classified as “illiberal”: (Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Turkey, Pakistan, the Philippines, for example. What is newer and perhaps unprecedented is China’s growing influence in European countries such as Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Cyprus and Greece, to name just a few. Cases of Chinese political interference in Australia and New Zealand have been reported during the year 2017, and speak for themselves: from donations to Australia’s largest political party during elections to the use of local Chinese communities in order to push certain agendas, increased ties between China-backed cultural/media activities and local political groups have been covered in various articles. In Europe, reports have been more subdued and somewhat less substantiated, although it is hard to deny the reality of Chinese lobbying and search for influence, notably in Brussels at the heart of European Union institutions.

For the past two years, the subject of China’s geo-economic assertiveness has attracted a lot of attention within policy and scholarly communities. For example, there is a growing discussion in Europe about China’s interest in sectors such as energy, transport, port and airport facilities, and especially information and digital technology, which would lead to a stronger influence within European societies. In Central Asia, Chinese aid and presence are not often viewed positively in the local discourse, with concerns including governance, the environment, labor issues, corruption and mass migration from China. In practical terms, local governments play a key role in influencing the public’s perception of China, but in the end old clichés often die hard.

As China’s inroads into Europe are increasing, it is worth addressing the question of China’s growing geo-economic influence, and perceptions of its influence in European countries, especially in Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Malta), but also in Eastern and Central Europe where China has been gathering countries in a format called “16+1”. Since April 2019, it has been rebranded “17+1” with Greece as an additional member. Other members include 11 members of the European Union (Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the three Baltic states, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Greece); and 5 non-EU members (Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro). It is worth adding that a large part of the Chinese investment has been targeting the Balkan countries which do not need to follow EU regulations. They remain relatively isolated due to the 1990s Balkans war. They are close to the EU, but not members yet, making it easier for Chinese businesses to operate.

Some key questions include the following: Does China’s economic weight, whether in trade or investment, lead to some political impact on receiving countries? Is China’s governance model translating into major changes in foreign societies? Do local political elites care about pleasing or offending China? Does Beijing’s political weight affect some countries’ foreign policy decisions?

Some of these countries started being Chinese strongholds in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, others are part of the Chinese “plan”, whether it is the BRI or an overall growing presence on the European continent to counter-balance the complexities of the U.S.-China relationship. China has already succeeded in creating a narrative: In Prague or in Athens, political

elites and media talk about China in a way that never happened in the past twenty years. As part of these new links, local business communities engage with Chinese companies. Journalists travel to China, mostly on paid journeys. Citizens take Mandarin-language courses at schools and universities, Confucius institutes or cultural centers; sometimes, political parties are encouraged to conduct dialogues with units of the Chinese state or the Chinese Communist party, not to omit the many organizations that are asked, by the regime, to engage with foreigners. It goes from the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries to the Association of Chinese Journalists, branches of the All-China Women's Federation, business associations, state media such as the People's Daily or CCTV, think-tanks such as the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences, research centers, universities, sport federations, museums and so on. In most cases, we have noticed an increased activity over recent years.

Besides the economy (in many Eastern European countries, figures demonstrate a clear rise), there is a growing Chinese presence in the form of "soft power" and sometimes of political influence ("sharp power"). The number of presidential and ministerial visits, for instance, is a good case in point. Although relations between China and each country differ greatly based on historical bilateral relations, data collected through this research, including interviews with local actors and analysts has led us to list them as "new friends" of China. In most cases, there are also evidences that their foreign policy decisions have been influenced by a rising Chinese economic presence which has led governments to align with Beijing on issues ranging from human rights to the South China sea.

Unlike Russia, which has notoriously been interfering in the democratic systems of several countries (United States, Germany), China's influence is more opaque and discreet. Still, lobbying may be an English-American word, but the Chinese have certainly made it theirs. Like many other powers, China is now using new ways to push its agenda: not just in the economy, but also through the media, culture, think-tanks, academia, sport and even the local Chinese communities and Chinese students through Scholar and Student Associations. Many of these entities are placed under organizations such as the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference or the International Liaison department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which are instrumental in the propagation of the regime's messaging.

The Czech Republic: China's Friend or China's Foe?

One of Central Europe's fiercely independent nations-post 1989, the Czech Republic, had been known as a staunch advocate of human rights. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and democratization across the region, the election as the nation's first president in 1992 of writer and former dissident Václav Havel led Prague to become the center of human rights and democracy activism in Central Europe. "We were considered a model of the Velvet revolution, especially on human rights. At the same time, we had communist ministers in our government" recalls former Havel adviser Petr Kolar. Liu Xiaobo, the imprisoned Nobel peace prize winner who died in 2014 was inspired to write his Charter 08 declaration based on the Czech dissidents' Charter 77.

As Beijing wearily watched developments in Eastern Europe in 1989, Czech relations with China became cool and

distant. Every year, the highly popular Havel hosted fellow Nobel Prize winners including the Dalai Lama and former leaders of the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democracy movement in Beijing.

Despite having formal diplomatic relations with Beijing, Havel even hosted Taiwan Premier Lien Chan in 1995, leading relations with the PRC to an all-time low. Such an invitation would be considered unacceptable by China today. Prague even supported Taiwan's re-entry in the United Nations, before committing, under Beijing's pressure, to the "one China policy" in 1996.

Havel's successor Václav Klaus attempted to improve relations, and travelled to Beijing in 2009. But it was current president Miloš Zeman who orchestrated a complete 360° change. He met President Xi Jinping in Beijing in 2014, then was the only western leader to attend Beijing's military parade in September 2015. Zeman's entourage also started engaging with Chinese potential investors, especially a man called Ye Jianming, chairman of China Energy Company Limited (CEFC Energy), who claimed strong connections with China's top leadership. The driving forces for the CEFC connection have been former Defense Minister Jaroslav Tvrdík, former Foreign Minister Jan Kohout and former Prime Minister Petr Nečas, all members of the Social Democratic Party. In 2016, a carefully staged state visit by Xi Jinping took place in Prague, giving China a unique platform in a country not considered an ally. Martin Hala, a China-hand commentator noted that the visit was "full of symbolism, much of it unintended. A quarter of a century after 1989, Prague citizens were treated to a spectacle eerily reminiscent of the old, communist-era staged events. The organizers made sure that potential trouble-makers were kept

safely out of sight". "It became outright grotesque when much of central Prague was cordoned off in what amounted to the largest scale police operation since 1989.

On Chinese Central Television (CCTV), Zeman declared that the Czech Republic had had poor relations with China due to the "submissive attitude of previous governments towards the U.S. and the EU". In 2016, as CEFC rose to world prominence when it was revealed it purchased a \$9.1 billion stake in the Russian state-controlled oil giant Rosneft, Ye Jianming was made an honorary economic adviser to the President, a rare honor for a foreigner.

While it has the word "Energy" as part of its name, CEFC was mainly a financial company, which has been at the core of many Czech business projects. This included a 15 percent ownership of J&T Financial Group; a 49.9 stake in the Czech Republic's private airline Travel Service; Czech brewery group Lobkowicz; the Prague soccer club Slavia Praha; the national airline; as well as real estate in central Prague such as the Florentinum office building. But no significant investments in energy have taken place.

In March 2018, according to media reports, Ye was arrested in China, "raising eyebrows in Prague". Martin Hala, who has been tracking Sino-Czech relations over the past several years, noted that two envoys of the Czech president (Vratislav Mynar and Martin Nejdely), were then told in Beijing that "CEFC would effectively be taken over by the Chinese state, together with its Czech acquisitions". A Chinese State-owned company, CITIC has technically taken over CEF Europe, the Czech-based unit of CEFC, but much uncertainty remains. As mentioned by another commentator, it is not just investment that is at stake: it is also the credibility of the President's office.



Figure 1: Czech Republic Imports from China was U.S.\$20.47 Billion during 2017, according to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade.

Zeman has made significant ideological concessions to Beijing after cozying up to CEFC, raising questions of heavy-handed Chinese political influence in the central European country”.

Despite the President’s strong will, leading to the country’s foreign policy shifts, Chinese investments in the Czech Republic remain minimal. From almost nil, bilateral trade has been increasing: In 2016, Czech exports to China climbed to \$1,921 billion (1.19 percent of total Czech exports) but Chinese exports to the Czech Republic amounted to \$17,770 billion (12.66 percent of total Czech imports), underlining a massive deficit between the two nations. Tourism from China has been increasing, with three direct flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu - and a fourth one, Kunming, is being finalized. The Czech agency for investment promotion, Czech Invest, estimates in 2017 that China had become one of the top five foreign investors in the Czech Republic, but few actual projects have been executed. Actual data and figures remain sparse. On the Czech side, the PPF group, led by Petr Kellner,

received a nationwide Chinese license in 2014 to operate its Home Credit services in China. According to a recent report, Kellner had received lobbying help from CEFC associate Jaroslav Tvrdík.

These awkward developments, especially with regard to President Miloš Zeman and his entourage, have prompted a debate about “the wisdom of tying the country’s future to mysterious Chinese entities and to the Communist regime in Beijing” according to Hala who argues that CEFC’s main investments in the Czech Republic “weren’t economic, they were about buying up the loyalty of Czech officials”.

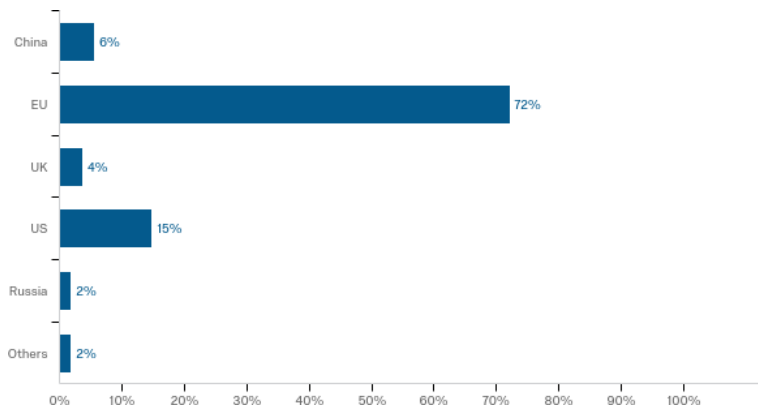


Figure 2: Czech Republic Survey. When it comes to foreign direct Investments, who would you like them to come from? (author’s survey, 2018)

Regional context

It is hard to separate the Czech case from the regional context. Since 2010, Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries –all former members of the Socialist Bloc- have become important to the Chinese strategy. Enter the already mentioned 16+1 format (now 17+1 with Greece’s recent arrival).

Almost all countries of the region are part of this group, set up by China to

increase relations with former members of the Soviet Bloc.

Having become full members of the European Union since 2004, many of these countries have felt chastised by the EU and Germany during and after the 2008 euro-debt crisis. Several governments, including those of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic have also been unhappy with the ways the EU handled the 2016 Syrian refugee crisis; above all, they needed cash which led a number of local politicians to welcome and encourage Chinese investments in infrastructures. Although the EU has for the past fifteen years pumped large amounts of money into the region, it come with "strings attached" (ie with strict competition rules and transparency requirements) in the form of grants. Chinese loans tend to be more difficult to track down, therefore favored by less principled businessmen and politicians.

What is China aiming at with CEE? Increased influence and presence, leverage on European institutions for those member-states and potential impact on the EU for aspiring members in the Balkans. It may also be testing its own political model of state capitalism in Eastern European relatively adolescent institutions. By and large, it is looking at building a coalition of country friends on the world stage, of which CEE is a key-part. Unlike in Central Asia and the Caucasus, it is unlikely that Russia will interfere in China's plans in Eastern Europe. What matters here is China's "symbolic power": "China creates the list of the CEE countries that comprise the region, exercising the power to arbitrarily consecrate boundaries of the CEE region as comprised by the countries only China considers part of the region. Moreover, inside the 16 + 1, the CEE representatives know very little about countries other than

their own or their close neighbors; in fact, the ones who possess a holistic knowledge of all of them are the Chinese representatives".

During the latest 16+1 summit in April 2019 in Croatia, Premier Li Keqiang promised to buy "more products from Eastern and Central Europe" but some dismissed this as "dèjà vu". Chinese imports are less than 10% of Chinese exports from and to the region – and there has been no sign of significant improvement.

Chinese Soft Power and Influence in Czech Republic

President Miloš Zeman who is also considered pro-Russia and has opened the door to Chinese investors, was re-elected as Czech president for a second term, albeit with only a slight margin. The Czech President has limited powers but he benefited from a long and convenient status quo situation in Parliament.

Thanks to a favorable environment under Zeman's presidency, China (through CEFC) has increased its presence. The President's office and several ministries have been supplied—for free—with tablets and smart phones by the Chinese telecommunication company Huawei, without much of a public debate ever taking place. The Czech-China Chamber of Commerce, for example, is chaired by CEFC's Jaroslav Tvrdík, a former minister. Several think-tanks have hosted Belt and Road-related conferences, including a newly-formed "Sino-Czech Center for Cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative" which held its first forum in 2017. Numerous politicians and journalists have had paid trips to China. But the economic impact of Zeman's policy orientations have so far failed to materialize. In fact, many of the CEFC investments never took place. It

certainly gave a bad name to Chinese investors, and state-owned CITIC (which have taken over most of CEFC assets) is now struggling to get back to a normal state of affairs.

There is hope that Prague is getting back to be a center of democratic thinking. Previously part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, then of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic is surrounded by bigger European democracies such as Germany and Poland, but remains a proudly independent member of the European Union. Unlike Hungary, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Czech elites have been mainly pro-Western. In power since July 2018, the government of prime minister Andrej Babiš has been more cautious vis-a-vis China. For example, he announced Prague would be preventing Huawei from building the Czech Republic's 5G network. It came as a surprise to Beijing, but the Chinese leadership should have remembered that Prague is the city of democratic hero writer-turned president Václav Havel that, thirty years ago, took a prominent role in the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.

IT'S TIME TO RETHINK RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY

Dimitri Trenin

Director, Carnegie Moscow Center

A broad public discussion on Moscow's foreign policy goals and objectives is long overdue. International issues are affecting the interests of Russian society as a whole more and more, making it necessary for private citizens to take a greater interest in their country's conduct abroad, especially in the single continental space that is Greater Eurasia.

It has been just over five years since the Ukraine crisis began, drastically reorienting Russia's foreign policy and destroying the two main pillars of Russia's post-Soviet course in just a few months:¹ Moscow's integration into Western

structures on terms acceptable to Russia (plan A)² and the reintegration of the post-Soviet space with an eye to creating a Russian-led power bloc (plan B).³ Soon thereafter, the hope of forming a close alliance with China (plan C) faded, too.⁴

¹ The Ukraine crisis worked as a catalyst, rather than the cause, of these changes. Russia's relations with the West had been progressively strained since 2011; attempts at deep politico-economic and military integration with the former Soviet republics had been receiving a pushback, not least from Ukraine itself, well before 2014. In both cases, integration failed due to the rejection by Russia of U.S. leadership over it, and the rejection by the ex-republics of Russia's would-be dominance.

² Iterations of plan A included Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's 1989 vision of a "common European home"; then Russian president Boris Yeltsin's proposals in the 1990s for a comprehensive partnership with the United States and European countries; President Vladimir Putin's 2001 speech on Russia's "European choice" and subsequent talk as prime minister of "Greater Europe," a space of economic cooperation from Lisbon to Vladivostok; and then president Dmitry Medvedev's 2010 proposals for a Euro-Atlantic security space and a common Russia-NATO missile defense system. In practical terms, Russia joined the Council of Europe in 1996; concluded partnership agreements with the EU in 1997 and NATO in 1997 and 2002; and became a member of the Group of 8, or G8, in 1998.

³ Putin has made serious attempts to reintegrate the post-Soviet space. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (1999) and the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus (2009) were established for this purpose, with the latter institution eventually transformed into the Eurasian Economic Union (2015). A manifesto on Eurasian integration was unveiled in a 2012 *Izvestiya* article by Putin: Vladimir Putin, "Rossiya sosredotachivayetsya—vzovy, na kotorye my dolzhny otvetit" [Russia focuses: Challenges that we must respond to], *Izvestiya*, January 16, 2012, <https://iz.ru/news/511884>.

⁴ See the following remark by a famous Chinese political scientist, Yan Xuetong, to a *Kommersant* journalist: "I do not understand why Russia does not insist on forming an alliance with China." Quoted in Mikhail Korostikov, "Ne ponimayu, pochemu Rossiya ne nastavayet na formirovaniy alyansa s Kitayem"

Today, Russia's relations with the West are characterized by alienation and confrontation. Post-Soviet states regard Russia as at worst a hostile power and at best a pragmatic partner, accepting at most elements of integration. Relations with China, for their part, are increasingly close, mostly to Beijing's benefit.⁵

All of this has forced Russia to pivot—not to the East, but to itself. Such a step is entirely logical. Post-Soviet developments have made clear that Russia will not accept U.S. global leadership, a stance that necessarily closes the door to its integration into Western-led structures. It has also become clear that the United States does not intend to tolerate an independent Russian foreign policy, while the EU does not intend to tolerate Russia's domestic political order. This has not only put the issue of Russia's integration into the expanded West to rest but also created conditions for the return of great-power rivalry and a clash of values.

The first quarter-century after the Soviet collapse saw the former Soviet republics pass through the first stage of building new independent states. The Ukrainian revolution of 2013–2014 resulted from the desire of the Ukrainian elite, supported by the West, to finally break the ties binding Kiev to Moscow. Moscow's forceful response to events in Ukraine, in turn, forced its two closest partners, Belarus and Kazakhstan, to accelerate their movement away from Russia and head

down a path already taken by the rest of the former Soviet states.

Russia has thus lost strategic partners in not only the West but also its own neighborhood. Geopolitically, it is isolated yet free. Modern Russia has many weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The Russian economy is trailing behind a dozen others. Russia's scientific and technical capabilities, once among the world's most powerful, lag far behind those of current leaders in scientific and technical innovation. Yet Russia remains able to think and act globally. If Russia's internal contradictions are resolved in a constructive way—and this is a big if, given the scale and complexity of the tasks ahead—the country can still play an important and positive role in the world in the late twenty-first century.

The geopolitical goals Russia has set for itself explain its current predicament. The foreign policy of post-Soviet Russia has long been characterized by a mismatch of means and ends. As a result, Moscow has in practice found itself constantly reacting to the actions of opponents and focusing on tactical moves. This approach has enabled some victories, but it is also a major cause of the present crisis in relations between Russia and both the West and other post-Soviet states in general and the geopolitical catastrophe of 2014 in particular. Russia's leaders—its future ones, if not its current ones—will have to reevaluate its geopolitical situation and take inventory of Moscow's foreign policy goals and the strategies by which it will achieve them.

[“I do not understand why Russia does not insist on forming an alliance with China”], *Kommersant*, March 17, 2017, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3243633>.

⁵ China, whose economic, financial, and technological power are much superior to Russia's, has managed, since 2014, to gain access to Russia's energy resources and more sophisticated military technology. Given the U.S.-led sanctions against Russia, it is also poised to exercise more influence on Russia's financial system and its choice of technological platforms.

Russia's leadership is often blamed for the country's lack of a coherent foreign policy strategy. That is not entirely fair. Reestablishing Russia as a great power, of course, is a major strategic goal, which has just been achieved. Other stated objectives, such as creating a full-fledged Eurasian Union or, just before it, working with the EU to build a Greater Europe, are unrealistic and exceed Russia's capabilities. With international issues affecting the interests of Russian society as a whole more and more, it is time for a broad public discussion about what Russia's main foreign policy goals and objectives should be and how they should be implemented, a national conversation the present article seeks to jump-start.⁶

Countries, unlike people, do not migrate. But they can change their borders and foreign policy orientation. Politically, today's Russia belongs to neither Europe nor Asia. The former borderlands of the Soviet Union and, before it, the Russian Empire have gained independence and statehood; today, they vary in terms of friendliness toward Russia. Russia does not belong to any regional political and economic communities and lacks the capacity to build its own bloc. It does not belong to any geopolitical or ideological "family" and, on a political map of the world, it stands apart. The "Russian world," much spoken of at the time of the Ukraine crisis, is essentially a cultural, linguistic, and partly religious phenomenon, not a geographical entity. This is the core of Russia's soft power, but thinking of it in hard-power terms only destroys it.

It would be a mistake to consider this a temporary situation and expect an eventual return to pre-crisis conditions and, with it, reconciliation with the West and/or the successful reintegration of the post-Soviet space. Take U.S.–Russia relations, which have since 2014 deteriorated to the point of active confrontation. There is no reason to believe that this will change with the election of a new U.S. president in 2020 (or 2024) or even regime change in Russia. The question is one of principle: either Moscow admits defeat and agrees to resume playing by the rules set by the United States, or Washington recognizes Moscow's right to promote and protect its interests in the world, however the Kremlin defines them. A compromise is theoretically possible, but one thing is clear: there will be no return to the 1990s or early 2010s in U.S.–Russia relations.

Likewise, there will be no return to "business as usual" with Europe, whose relations with Russia began to deteriorate years before the Ukraine crisis as a result of seemingly incompatible values. Today, Russia mistakenly dismisses European countries as little more than U.S. satellite states and as such considers problems in EU–Russia relations merely an outgrowth of Russia's troubled relations with the United States. Its attempts to build a "Greater Europe" from Lisbon to Vladivostok on the basis of common interests have failed, while Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's concept of a "common European home," introduced in a speech before the Council of Europe in 1989, has long since lost all relevance.⁷

⁶ See the following Levada Center findings for evidence to this effect: Levada Center, "Rossiya-Zapad" [Russia–the West], May 14, 2018, <https://www.levada.ru/2018/05/14/rossiya-zapad-2/>.

⁷ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, "Putin: Plädoyer für Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft," [Putin: Plea for Economic Community], November 25, 2010, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/putin-plaedoyer-fuer-wirtschaftsgemeinschaft-von-lissabon-bis-wladiwostok-1.1027908>.

Indeed, the divide between Russia and Europe is deeper than you think. For three centuries, beginning with the rule of Peter the Great, Europe played the role of Russia's mentor, model, and sole source of modernization. But by the beginning of the twenty-first century, there had emerged new sources of investment and technology, including Asia, while Europe's social model increasingly highlighted not only the continent's achievements but also its problems. Russia grew tired of European mentorship, and political cooperation with the EU lost its value in light of the bloc's inability to act as an independent strategic player on the world stage.

At the same time, a process of disintegration—of not only the empire but also the historical core of the Russian state—has become irreversible. Ukraine's break with Russia in political, economic, cultural, and even spiritual terms precludes any possibility of their integration.⁸ Under different circumstances and at a different pace, Belarus is moving in the same direction, a post-Soviet republic that is slowly transforming into a full-fledged East European state. The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), for all of its usefulness, has not become the center of power in Eurasia that Moscow had hoped would emerge.⁹ It is an interest-based association with limited goals and limited capabilities to pursue them. It appears that the "Little Eurasia" of the Russian Empire—and later the USSR—has been lost to history.

Russia stands alone, but it is not an island. The country's former borderlands

have established their independence, but they have remained neighbors of the former metropolitan power. The Russian Federation is located in Northern Eurasia, a single continent extending from Portugal to Chukotka. The Ural Mountains have never posed an insurmountable physical barrier for Russians, and China's political and geoeconomic advance westward via the One Belt, One Road project since 2013 has broken down any remaining walls between Asia and Europe. Eurasia has long been understood by historians to comprise those territories that belonged first to the Mongol and then to the Russian empires and, finally, to the Soviet Union. Now, thanks to the development of economic and cultural ties, as well as modern communications, a single continental space is being formed within its natural limits. This space, which serves as Russia's geopolitical neighborhood, can be dubbed *Greater Eurasia*.

To be sure, the main routes linking the East and West of this vast continent have historically run south of Russia. Still, Russia is not on its periphery. Geopolitically, it neighbors numerous countries, from EU member states in the west to China and Japan in the east and Turkey and Iran in the south. For a country that touches three oceans and borders Norway and North Korea alike, such a high degree of physical contact with the outside world opens up exceptional opportunities, even if Russia is neither the center of Greater Eurasia nor a "bridge" between civilizations.

⁸ A landmark event in this respect was the founding of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in December 2018 and the granting of autocephaly by a tomos (decree) the following month.

⁹ Vladimir Putin, "Novyi integratsionnyi proekt dlya Evrazii—budushcheye, kotoroye rozhdayetsya segodnya" [New integration project for Eurasia—the future that is born today], *Izvestiya*, October 3, 2011, <https://iz.ru/news/502761>.

Although it has distanced itself politically from modern Europe, Russia should not turn away from it or from the global West as a whole; it should not seek to become Asian or try to form an anti-American alliance with China. Far from Scythians or Asians, Russians have their own face; far from the “West of the East” or the “East of the West,” Russia stands apart. It is absolutely contrary to Russia’s interests for Moscow to retreat into itself and embark on a quest for autarky—the path of the USSR, but from a worse starting point.

Even after its messy divorce from Russia, Ukraine remains an important neighbor with which Russia will have to rebuild its relations, one way or another. Moreover, Moscow must take into account the mistakes it made in navigating Russo-Ukrainian relations in its relations with Minsk, whose break with its eastern neighbor does not necessarily have to result in a hostile relationship. Foregoing abrupt pivots, Moscow should stabilize the country’s foreign policy by striking a balance between East and West on the one hand and the developed North and the developing South on the other. In the future, Russian strategists will need a 360-degree vision consistent with Russia’s new place in the world.

Russia’s society and its political elite have traditionally perceived their country to be a great power, an assumption that must be reconsidered—not in the sense of dropping the notion altogether, but in terms of what it has come to mean today. First, Russia is no longer the country it used to be in terms of both its size and its capabilities. Second, it cannot be forgotten that in terms of population and gross domestic product, Russia ranks ninth and thirteenth in the world, according to the World Bank. Third, Russia is no longer the role model in

international affairs it once was, with its “sphere of influence” now limited to the de facto states of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, the Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics, and, with caveats, Transnistria. Fourth, tellingly, none of Russia’s EEU partners or Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) allies officially recognize Moscow’s claim to Crimea, and, in the UN, Russian initiatives enjoy less support than *anti-*Russian measures. Finally, Russian culture and language have ceased to be the soft-power assets they were in the Soviet era.

Also, in qualitative terms, Russia’s twenty-first century role in international affairs is a shadow of its twentieth- or even nineteenth-century self. Russians will have to proceed from this reality, not fond memories of the past. Great-power status is less the whim of Russian rulers and more a necessity for a traditionally lonely country and a critical condition for its survival. Today, Russia can still claim the status of a great power, but in a different sense than before, with Russia no longer a hegemon or a world leader. Nevertheless, Russia is one of the few countries in the world that instinctively refuses to submit to others’ hegemony, dominance, or leadership. Both Russian political elites and Russian society as a whole value Russia’s sovereignty above the benefits, economic and otherwise, of ceding sovereignty and are able to defend Russia’s sovereignty by political and military means—a rare thing in international affairs. Indeed, few other states are prepared to stake out such a position to preserve their freedom of action.

However, autonomy in international affairs and the moral authority that comes with it are insufficient for Russia. It is obvious that Russia will succeed in winning respect around the world only if it is able to fully realize its human potential in all areas:

economy, science, and technology, and the social and cultural spheres. It is equally important to adhere to proclaimed values, especially legal ones, both at home and on the world stage. In the meantime, the domestic basis of Russian foreign policy must be substantially updated and bolstered.

Great-power status, more than just an end in itself, is inextricable from the role that one seeks to play on the world stage and the ambitions of a country's leadership. The principal foreign policy objective of any respectable government is to ensure one's security and create an external environment conducive to economic growth at home. But that is not enough. A great power must have some kind of mission. Russia's mission could be to maintain the world's geopolitical balance and strengthen security in various parts of Greater Eurasia and the continent as a whole in a way that is consistent with international law and involves the combination of skillful diplomacy and the proportionate use of military force.

The overarching goal of Moscow's foreign policy for the foreseeable future should be turning Russia into a modern, developed country while avoiding excessive dependence on leading players in Greater Eurasia, such as China, the EU, and the United States. At the same time, it should strive to slowly but steadily normalize its economic and other ties to the West and actively pursue cooperation with Asian and Middle Eastern nations.

Russia's leadership has significant, though not unlimited, resources at its disposal in making foreign policy. These include Russia's permanent seats on the UN Security Council and other international organizations; a strategic nuclear deterrent and modernized conventional armed forces; energy and other natural resources;

transportation infrastructure; scientific, technological, and intellectual capital; an extensive and experienced diplomatic and intelligence apparatus; and some capacity to project soft power.

None of this matters, however, if Russia's economic and political system does not fundamentally change in such a way that man-made obstacles to economic and technological development are removed. Today, Russia's political elite almost exclusively serves the narrow interests of the administrative and moneyed elite, hindering the emergence of a functioning state that is observant of legal and ethical norms. In such conditions, Russia will continue to grow and develop more slowly than its immediate neighbors in Greater Eurasia, making the road ahead harder—and longer. If and when Russia's internal situation changes, the Russian people must be prepared to seize the opportunity. Yet Russians should not wait to begin discussing the principles on which their country's foreign policy should be based.

I propose the following such principles. Russia must act abroad pragmatically, primarily to promote or protect its interests; it should not attempt to impose a given political system or international order on other countries or regions of the world. It should have no permanent allies or enemies, save (in the latter sense) extremist and terrorist groups. It should maintain working relations with all major players, whatever their ideology or political system and however mixed their history of relations with Russia.

It should not impose its values on others or engage in nation-building abroad, and it must respect others' established values and customs and tolerate all religions. It should respect the legitimate security interests of others and be prepared

to take them into account. Finally, it should renounce any claim—which is at the same time a burden—to domination, be it of individual states or regions or of the world as a whole. These principles should underlie Russia’s future conduct in Greater Eurasia; what Moscow’s strategy could (and should) look like in relation to Greater Eurasia’s individual states and regions is explored below.

For Russia, the most important country in Greater Eurasia is **China**. Considering the circumstances—confrontation with the United States and alienation from Europe—it is critical for Russia to avoid becoming China’s sidekick. It would be a bitter irony if, having rejected the role of a junior partner to the United States, Russia accepted the role of a Chinese tributary state. With this goal in mind, Moscow’s strategic tack with respect to Beijing could be the facilitation of further Chinese involvement in multilateral institutions.

In the political sphere, one such institution is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It is in Russia’s interest to turn the SCO into the world’s primary deliberative body on security issues in continental Asia. Russia, which boasts more military, diplomatic, and intelligence expertise than any other SCO member state, can play a key role in this process. In the economic sphere, a permanent forum for EEU-China dialogue could be created to link the One Belt, One Road project to Russia’s Eurasian integration efforts. Meanwhile, security issues and economic cooperation can be discussed, and action taken, within the framework of the Russia-India-China (RIC) group, which brings together three leading continental powers.

In its bilateral relations with China, Russia should continue to adhere to the

following formula: Russia and China must never act *against* each other, but they do not necessarily always have to act as one, thereby guaranteeing that neither power will stab the other in the back while refraining from imposing constraints on how the two states interact with the rest of the world. Russia and China are both major powers, even if their economic, political, and military resources and advantages differ. They must maintain a certain distance from each other; otherwise, friction becomes inevitable. Moscow and Beijing have many reasons to enhance their collaboration in numerous fields, even if it is premature to talk of forming a military alliance. Such an alliance, even if its formation were possible, would not be in the interest of either country. Neither power would feel stronger; instead, both would resent being constrained and clash over questions of leadership.

Although Russia will continue to cede ground to China economically, it is still possible for Moscow to maintain and even expand its advantages and in doing so make the Sino-Russian relationship more balanced. This applies to not only energy and other natural resources but also agriculture and, at least for the time being, certain technologies, civilian and military alike. Russia also has the potential to develop transport infrastructure linking China and East Asia to Europe by air, land, and sea, that is, the Northern Sea Route.

Moscow, and its relations with Beijing, can only benefit from Russia’s development of business ties to other leading countries, such as Japan and South Korea in East Asia; India and the ASEAN countries in South and Southeast Asia; Germany and the EU as a whole; and, of course, the United States. In the escalating rivalry between the United States and

China, Russia should pursue its own interests instead of becoming a pawn in China's game. Indeed, such is the approach taken by Beijing, whose appetite for risk dwindles whenever it is thrust into Moscow's confrontation with Washington.¹⁰

Relations with **Europe** must be reimagined. Russia will no longer attempt to embrace, let alone emulate, its neighbors to the west. For their part, some EU member states will oppose the achievement of good-neighborly relations with Russia, being historically hostile to Moscow and of the view that it is a permanent threat to their independence. Absent changes in this respect, Russia and Europe will remain economic and technological, but not political, partners. In the future, Russia should focus its diplomatic efforts on those European states it has alienated over the years, an endeavor presupposing, among other things, mutual recognition of differences, mutual pledges not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, and mutual respect.

Such goals cannot be achieved without at best the resolution and at worst the de-escalation of the war in eastern Ukraine. There is no change in leadership in Kiev favorable to Russia, "grand bargain" with Washington, or political settlement on the basis of the Minsk agreements coming. Instead, Moscow must accept that Donetsk and Luhansk belong to Ukraine and will inevitably be reintegrated into that country. Those in eastern Ukraine who have a special bond with Russia or fear persecution by the Ukrainian authorities should be given the opportunity—and materially supported

in their efforts—to move to Russia and obtain Russian citizenship, an arrangement that is preferable to Russia's covert support for quasi-state entities like Donetsk, Luhansk, and Transnistria; beneficial to Russia demographically; and conducive to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the creation of an atmosphere favorable to the improvement of relations with Europe.

As for Ukraine itself, Moscow should dial down its domestic propaganda, abandon the mistaken notion that Russia and Ukraine are fraternal nations, and treat Ukraine as just another neighboring state. The stabilization of relations with Ukraine should be made a long-term strategic goal of Russian foreign policy, one that can be achieved by letting Donbas return to Kiev's control and, following negotiations, securing Ukrainian recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea, at which point Russia's European borders will once again be fully recognized by the whole of the international community.

At the same time, Russia should not go out of its way to erode the EU's (and NATO's) anti-Russian consensus by appealing to individual member states or their leaders. Such efforts have backfired spectacularly, and Russia should refrain from interfering in Europe's internal affairs, even if the United States does not do the same. Indeed, it is of fundamental importance that Moscow avoid shooting itself in the foot by fueling European fears of Russia. Moscow's vehement opposition to NATO expansion has damaged Russia's national interests no less than NATO

¹⁰ For example, Russian companies are denied loans if there is a risk that Chinese commercial interests in the United States may be damaged as a result. See Mikhail Korostikov, Anatoly Dzhumailo, Ksenia Demytyeva, Oleg Trutnev, and Anatoly Kostyrev, "Novoye kitayskoye predubezhdenie" [New Chinese prejudice], *Kommersant*, October 24, 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3779051>.

expansion itself, while its practice of threatening those European countries that host U.S. troops and military assets has led Europeans to seek U.S. security guarantees rather than break with the United States. EU enlargement, for its part, poses a challenge to but does not threaten Russia.

Japan, a U.S. ally, is more autonomous in international affairs than Europe. As such, it has joined the West in imposing sanctions on Russia since 2014 yet has continued to push for the resolution of the Kuril Islands dispute and sought to prevent a Sino-Russian axis. Although Moscow does not need Tokyo to serve as a counterweight to Beijing, the development of Russia in general and its Far East in particular would benefit from improved relations with Japan thanks to the island nation's scientific and technological prowess and, of course, Japanese investment in Russia.

That said, the signing of a peace treaty between Russia and Japan and the resolution of the Kuril Islands dispute is a precondition for the enhancement of Russo-Japanese cooperation and the transformation of Russo-Japanese relations from those between "distant neighbors" to those between good ones.¹¹ Such a solution, if and when it is reached through diplomacy, will have to be "ratified" by the Russian and Japanese publics.¹²

Russia and **India** have had a nearly trouble-free partnership for seventy years. Today, India is rapidly increasing its economic weight, building up its military strength, and becoming more active in international affairs. Along with China and

Europe, it is becoming one of Greater Eurasia's principal centers of power. Russia should strive to deepen its already privileged relationship with India in every way possible and pursue cooperation in cutting-edge fields, where India has made great progress.

Russia's practical goal should be to transform the RIC group, which remains a purely ceremonial body, into a permanent policy coordination mechanism on key issues of security, stability, and development in continental Asia. A functioning RIC would give Russia the opportunity to soften the rivalry between its two most important Asian partners and strengthen its own position as an experienced (and benevolent) mediator. The RIC, having become the core of the SCO, can act as a leader in stabilizing the region and preventing and resolving its armed conflicts, such as the war in Afghanistan.

Moscow, however, must accept India's pursuit of a multi-vector foreign policy that is not centered on Russia. For economic and geopolitical reasons, New Delhi will continue to deepen relations with Washington—ties that are no cause for panic in Moscow, which should focus on developing its own foreign relationships, not undermining those of the United States.

The countries of **Northeast and Southeast Asia**, especially the highly developed South Korea, interest Russia primarily as economic partners. On the Korean Peninsula, Russia seeks increased contacts and especially economic cooperation between Seoul and Pyongyang,

¹¹ Hiroshi Kimura, *Rossiia i Yaponiya: dalekiye sosedi* [Russia and Japan: Distant Neighbors] (2002).

¹² Dmitri Trenin, "Kurilskii obshchestvennyi dogovor" [The Kuril social contract], *Vedomosti*, January 22, 2019, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2019/01/22/792039-dogovor>.

anticipating that a thaw will create economic opportunities for Russia. It accepts North Korea's nuclear arsenal as a reality and understands it as serving the purpose of deterring the United States.

When it comes to the denuclearization of North Korea, it makes sense for Russia to continue to let the United States, North Korea, China, and South Korea lead the way. This, of course, does not preclude Russia from interacting and cooperating with all relevant parties, including Japan, as it should do, with an eye to preventing war from breaking out in the immediate vicinity of the Russian Far East.

Moscow has always recognized Taiwan as part of China and favored China's gradual and voluntary unification along the lines of the handover of Hong Kong while considering the matter an internal Chinese one. An armed conflict between Beijing and Taipei, especially one in which the United States is militarily involved, is clearly not in Russia's interest, but Moscow would have no reason to, and should not, intervene should one break out. Indeed, its main goal should be to avoid being drawn into such a war and remain unbiased whatever the issue of contention in East or Southeast Asia.

The countries of **Central Asia**, including Mongolia, and the **South Caucasus** are direct or close neighbors of Russia. Some are EEU and CSTO member states. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan cooperate with Russia in countering terrorism and extremism through the CSTO, whereas Uzbekistan works with Russia in these areas bilaterally. Russia has a vital interest in the stability of the countries of Central Asia—especially Kazakhstan, which, thanks to its location, size, and EEU and CSTO membership, deserves to be treated by Moscow as its

main regional partner in these organizations.

The South Caucasus, like Central Asia, interests Russia primarily from the point of view of security. Moscow's security interests, however, have changed considerably over time: nowadays, Russia is preoccupied with terrorism and extremism, not international rivalry, be it with major regional powers, such as Iran and Turkey, or with the United States. Still, Russia cannot leave unresolved the protracted armed conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia and Abkhazia, and Georgia and South Ossetia.

In the first case, Russia has long managed to maintain relations with both belligerents; with the help of other world powers, it has prevented the fighting from resuming and escalating. In the case of Georgia, with which Russia went to war in 2008, Moscow has openly sided with the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, Moscow cannot neglect its relations with Tbilisi, and it should take steps to improve them, such as by offering visa liberalization (or, even better, visa-free travel); jointly ensuring stability on the border; and promoting dialogue between Georgians, Abkhazians, and Ossetians. Stable relations between the three belligerents would open the door to a joint search for a mutually acceptable solution on territorial and border disagreements.

Iran and Turkey are among the **Middle East's** main players. It makes sense for Russia to maintain close working relations and, in some areas, enter into partnerships with them. However, since their strategic interests differ dramatically, Russia should expect nothing more than situational alliances with Tehran and Ankara, even as it does its best to keep them at peace with one another. For its

part, Israel—a technologically advanced country in which a significant segment of the population has Russian roots—has legitimate security interests to which Russia is sympathetic and interests that overlap with Russia's.

Russia would gain from Iran's accession to the SCO, whose status as continental Asia's leading security organization would be reinforced as a result. Turkey, an SCO observer state as well as a U.S. ally and a NATO member state, should be included in SCO efforts as much as possible. More generally, the maintenance of a friendly relationship with Turkey will continue to be of strategic importance to Russia given Ankara's role in the Caucasus and its control of the Black Sea straits.

Russia is right to consider Iran a major Middle Eastern power and a potentially important economic partner. To be sure, Iran's geopolitical ambitions in the region divide it from Russia, but Moscow's commitment to preserving the Iran nuclear deal is a matter of principle, as it opposes nuclear proliferation, especially in the Middle East. Russia should do what it can to bring about the normalization of relations between Iran and its Gulf Arab neighbors and the formation of a security system in the Gulf region. In the event of military conflict between Iran and its foes—chief among them the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia—Russia should remain neutral and seek a quick end to the war.

As the heart of the Muslim world—a community to which Russia's millions of Muslims belong—the **Arab states** have an interest in the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims, especially Orthodox Christians, in Russia. However, it must be kept in mind that the Arab world has in recent years been the source of

instability and terrorist and extremist threats, the kind against which Russia has acted by militarily intervening in Syria.

Russia's strategic objectives with respect to the Arab states should include joint efforts to ensure Russia's security, assisting the strengthening of regional security by acting as both mediator and defense partner, coordinating steps in energy policy with major oil and gas exporters, and attracting Arab investment in the Russian economy. Egypt and Saudi Arabia will remain Russia's principal geopolitical and geoeconomic partners, respectively, in the Arab world, while Syria will remain its main military outpost in the region.

The **Arctic**, in the context of global warming, is for the first time becoming another geopolitical facade for Russia. The Northern Sea Route linking Asia and Europe is becoming more and more active and, in the Arctic, Russia directly interacts with other littoral states: the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Iceland. Despite the fact that most of them are NATO member states, Russia must minimize its militarization of the Arctic and leverage regional cooperation as a platform for improving its broader relations with said countries.

Asian countries—China, Japan, South Korea, and even India—are also increasingly interested in the Arctic, a development serving Russia's interests. After all, Moscow's strategic goal should be to turn the Northern Sea Route into one of the world's most important trade routes and use this waterway for the development of Russia's northern regions and the Far East insofar as its security and sovereignty are not jeopardized. In the Arctic, as in the Far East and Siberia, the more international partners Russia attracts, the better

positioned it will be—in this case, on its northern and eastern flanks.

These rather general observations do not detail a full-fledged alternative to Moscow's current foreign policy. The contours outlined above are geographically confined to the perimeter of the Eurasian macro-continent. They almost entirely leave out the Americas, as well as Africa and Oceania. The main purpose of the present paper has been to emphasize the need for a broad strategic design in Russian foreign policy making, which in practice often resembles a decidedly tactical and operational art.

Russia's geopolitical situation has changed fundamentally in recent years,

necessitating serious reflection and a broad public discussion. The ensuing debate should reexamine Russia's role in the world, its relations with global and regional players as well as its nearest neighbors, what exactly Russia's main foreign policy goals and objectives should be, and, finally, Russia's global prospects in the twenty-first century.

Today, foreign policy—not just in Russia but throughout the world—is designed by narrow circles of decisionmakers. Ultimately, the choices they make affect everyone, which is reason enough for private citizens to take a greater interest in their country's conduct abroad.

IS RUSSIA A U.S. 'ADVERSARY' OR JUST A 'COMPETITOR'?

DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE, REALISTIC U.S. POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA

*Nikolas K. Gvosdev**

Jerome E. Levy Chair of Economic Geography and National Security
U.S. Naval War College

When one examines post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, and particularly during Putin's tenure as prime minister and president, a number of objectives become apparent. First and foremost, Putin believes that the general settlement that emerged at the end of the Cold War was predicated on Russian weakness, and so a key policy objective has been to renegotiate, if possible, and revise, by force if necessary, some of its provisions. Russia has consistently sought to maintain its position as one of the agenda-setting countries of the world; to secure Russia's freedom of action not only on the global stage but also in terms of its domestic governance; and, as much as possible, to recreate a "zone of privileged interests" across the Eurasian/post-Soviet space. Russia seeks to

do so cooperatively wherever possible, but by use of both conventional and nonconventional force whenever necessary. Thus, Moscow has been prepared to engage both in conciliatory and hostile behavior with Western countries, sometimes even simultaneously, in pursuing its objectives.

Russia has economic weaknesses and a brittle political system, but U.S. policy must be predicated on the assessment that, despite these problems, the Kremlin has sufficient resources and capabilities at its disposal to remain an active player in global affairs for the foreseeable future. Moreover, the objectives summarized above reflect a consensus view of the Russian elite, so that even Putin's departure from office whether by choice, by mortal causes or by an

* Nikolas K. Gvosdev is the Captain Jerome E. Levy chair of economic geography and national security at the U.S. Naval War College, and holds non-residential fellowships at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. The views expressed in the paper are personal opinions only and do not reflect any official position of the U.S. Navy.

internal political upheaval, will not change this trajectory. Indeed, Russia is already undergoing a generational transition in its political elite and its military leadership. Retirement of Russian “boomers” and their replacement by the Russian equivalents of “Generation X” and “first-wave” Millennials are bringing new faces into the Russian establishment. Yet this post-Soviet generation shows little interest in returning to the 1990s paradigm: of a Russia seeking inclusion in the Western world under the conditions set by the Euro-Atlantic world for admittance.

While Russia’s outlook looks more problematic after 2030—and a black swan event¹ could collapse the sources of the Kremlin’s power even before that point—it is neither prudent nor strategic to base U.S. policy on the hope that negative trends might force Russia to change its course or to be more amenable to end domestic and foreign policy actions which draw U.S. ire. As a result, Russia, in its current position, has the ability to reject U.S. preferences, to accept U.S. punishment within acceptable losses, as well as to raise costs for the United States in other areas. It is certainly a competitor—and U.S. policymakers must also decide whether or not Russia is an adversary, and, if so, the level of threat it poses to U.S. interests. As Dimitri Trenin of the Carnegie Moscow Center notes: “The question is one of principle: either Moscow admits defeat and agrees to resume playing by the rules set by the United States, or Washington recognizes Moscow’s right to promote and protect its interests in the world, however the Kremlin defines them.”

In theory, U.S. policy vis-à-vis Russia should be grounded in the twin requirements of deterring and/or reversing Russian actions which we object to or which threaten our interests (or those of our allies) while simultaneously engaging to find areas of mutual concern where a cooperative approach produces positive outcomes for both parties. We identify Russia as a “near-peer competitor” based particularly on the reality that Russia is one of the few countries which can credibly project power beyond its immediate border, especially military power. Russia’s near-peer status is based on its population, military-industrial complex and resource endowments, which guarantee that even if Russia faces long-term problems, it will remain a major international actor for the next several U.S. presidential administrations. In dealing with near-peer competitors, there are two strategic choices.

Russia has moved from a 1990s position of seeking inclusion with the West into a position of a competitor, so this dilemma will not be solved by expecting Russia to resume the position it took during the Yeltsin administration. The question now is whether the competition for geopolitical influence and geo-economic advantage that defines the Putin approach and is likely to be carried on by his successors is manageable within an overall cooperative framework. If it is not, there are implications for U.S. policy—which would require the United States to decide how much of its time, resources and attention should be spent on meeting a Russia challenge (and what other

¹ A “black swan” event, based on the definition provided by Nassim Nicholas Taleb, is an event which comes as a surprise but also has a major, disruptive effect in the world. Taleb has argued that trying to predict and prepare for black swan events is a risky strategy, and that it is best to develop robust, resilient capabilities that can meet a variety of possible negative scenarios.

challenges can be spared U.S. attention). It also returns us to the question of whether the primary driver of U.S. strategy in Eurasia for decades—to prevent a rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing that incentivizes Russia and China to cooperate more with each other against the United States—should remain operative. Finally, the U.S. political establishment must tackle whether the goal is to try and deter (or compel) Russia to change course, or to push for the removal of Russia as a major power by moving beyond deterrence and “compellence”² to provoke or accelerate factors that would lead to a decline in Russian power. Put broadly, the two directions for U.S. policy towards Russia is to turn a near-peer competitor into a near-peer partner; the other is to turn a near-peer competitor viewed in adversarial terms into a non-peer competitor.

In formulating a U.S. strategy, matters are complicated because America’s major international partners do not share a common strategic assessment of Russia. Russia matters differently to the U.S. than it does to Germany, France, Italy, Israel, India, Korea or Japan. U.S.-Russia relations can be characterized by a narrow but strong focus on a few key strategic issues of global importance. Unlike most key U.S. allies, the U.S. is capable of strategic autarchy, is energy independent, and is far less economically connected with Russia. U.S. partners in Europe, the Middle East and Asia have more in-depth economic relationships with Russia, depend on Russia for energy, or see Russia as an important player in regional affairs who cannot simply be sanctioned or ignored. There are limits in

terms of how far Berlin, Paris, Rome, Jerusalem, New Delhi, Seoul or Tokyo will go in terms of punishing or isolating Russia. Most U.S. partners have a simultaneous policy of trying to sanction Russian misdeeds while attempting to incentivize future cooperation. What has been clear, however, is that our key partners have made it clear they are reluctant to continue to take any steps that might collapse the Russian economy altogether. Thus, the United States must weigh the costs of applying stronger third-country sanctions on partners whose companies and banks continue to do business with Russia.

The Mayflower Group, a bipartisan group of experts, former officials and business figures, has, for the last two years, been grappling with this very dilemma. On the one hand, Russia’s size, geopolitical position and military capabilities mean that the United States does not have the luxury of selective engagement and punishment, enacting penalties against Moscow that carry no costs or risks for the United States. At the same time, the need to sustain strategic stability in the relationship with another major nuclear power does not mean that the United States must meekly submit to all of Russia’s demands.

The Mayflower Group proposed reorienting U.S. policy towards Russia along a 3-C paradigm: cooperate, compete and confront. In other words, the United States—and by extension the West—must be able to shift along the 3-C scale, safeguarding cooperation, for instance, in those areas that are vital to both countries (e.g. nuclear non-proliferation) while

² “Compellence” is a term invented by Thomas Schelling in 1966 to move beyond the concept of deterrence (preventing someone from doing something that you object to you by threatening punishment) to encompass using pressure to get another actor to do something the other side would rather not do.

creating ground rules for areas where the two countries will compete (for instance, in energy sales around the world). Most importantly, the United States must be prepared to confront Russia—but to do so with a clear understanding of the costs and consequences.

For instance, Russia has a strategy for creating a new normal in the Eurasian space, particularly in the Black Sea basin. The United States needs to decide how much of a threat Moscow's revision is to U.S. interests (such as whether a settlement in Ukraine which creates a more decentralized country threatens U.S. equities). It must weigh the means and ways it wishes to employ to deter the Kremlin, raise costs for Russia, or incentivize a change in course.

At the same time, we must keep lines of communication open. Current laws and regulations that limit the opportunities for contact with the next generations of Russian leadership, as well as a sentiment that engaging in meetings and dialogue is somehow conveying a sign of endorsement or seal of approval on the part of U.S. officers and officials to Russian behavior and policy, put the U.S. at a disadvantage. In order to be able to understand where possibilities for cooperation might exist, but also to better assess how U.S. deterrent and compellent efforts are faring, more contact, not less, is needed.

Moreover, in formulating Russia policy, it is important to consider implications for foreign and domestic policies that might otherwise seem unrelated to Russia. For instance, diminishing Russia's clout in international energy markets requires a more comprehensive approach to U.S. energy production that runs up against both Republican and Democratic objections—

including more U.S. government support for research and development of hydrocarbon substitutes as well as continuing to develop non-traditional sources of hydrocarbons and the infrastructure necessary for transporting them to overseas customers. To be successful, such a strategy would require environmental and regulatory tradeoffs as well as a retreat from free-market orthodoxy to allow for greater U.S. government subsidization of projects and prices.

Another key example is that partners around the world can only sustain so many sanctions regimes. India, for instance, is attempting to comply with U.S. sanctions on Iran by reducing its oil purchases, and also does not wish to fall afoul of U.S. restrictions applied to Venezuela. This, however, requires India to maintain its energy relationship with Russia. Similarly, Japan, wanting to ensure that Russia does not fall completely into the Chinese orbit in East Asia, has limits as to how far it will cut Russia off from investment, particularly in the Russian Far East. The U.S. also needs to weigh how much it is willing to do to get partners to accept its preferred course of action vis-à-vis Russia.

One step moving forward would be to create a new bipartisan commission on U.S. national interests and Russia, which would present a comprehensive analysis of options for Russia policy. One of the concerns of the Mayflower Group has been the reactive, episodic nature of U.S. policy to Russia, usually in response to specific events (election interference in 2016, deployment of forces in Syria, etc.) with measures adopted without reference to an overall strategic framework both towards Russia and towards U.S. foreign policy as a whole.

When policy is developed in an episodic factor, it does enough to irritate the Russians (and sometimes our allies) but measures taken in isolation weaken the deterrent impact and has contributed to a feeling in the Kremlin that penalties imposed by the United States, while annoying, are survivable. As a result, the Putin team takes America's protests less seriously than it should—and assumes that continuation of hostile action (such as hacking or poisonings) can continue with manageable consequences. In turn, Russia's behavior inflames American politicians who

begin to contemplate much more stringent penalties or are prepared to sacrifice even areas of beneficial cooperation in order to punish the Kremlin. This begins to move us into lose-lose territory.

Having a commission allows for a 3-C approach, guided by a sober assessment of costs and consequences, to break this dysfunctional cycle. It provides a way to take advantage of openings to improve the relationship but to stand firm against Russian challenges to U.S. interests and values.

THE RUSSIA-CHINA PARTNERSHIP IN EURASIA AND THE TRANS-ATLANTIC RESPONSE

Stacy Closson

Adjunct Professional Lecturer, School of International Service,
American University

Introduction

When we consider Eurasia, we must realize the potential challenges and opportunities from a growing Russia-China partnership. Russia is a threat to norms of democracy and capitalism. China is a growing source of economic development for Europe and Eurasia, albeit not always a lawful or transparent one. Together, Russia and China are working together to divide and conquer, to multiply their force, and to re-order international relations. To address this, the trans-Atlantic alliance must be at the center of our broader Eurasian regional policy. Europe's Southeast is geographically a continuum of Eurasia for western produced hydrocarbons. NATO ensures regional security. The trans-Atlantic partnership must manage the roles of Russia and China in the broader Eurasian landscape and ensure our mutual interests are secured.

Russia-China in Three Frameworks

We can think about the Russia-China partnership in three frameworks: divide and conquer, force multiplier, and a re-order of international relations.

While there is Russia-China strategic convergence on the role of Eurasia as a

bridge between them, they are at odds as to what ends this bridge serves. This presents a situation in which they divide up the responsibilities to conquer their individual ends.

They have different ideas about Eurasian regional institutions. While the Russians want the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt to unite, China conducts policy via bilateral agreements with Central Asian states instead. This has a lot to do with the fact that they have different ideas about globalization of trade. Russia wants to remake existing blocs as part of a new globalized architecture. For example, Russia has pushed the expansion of the China-Russia created Shanghai Cooperation Organization to include India and Pakistan, as well as reaching into Southeast Asia. China, on the other hand, wants a new form of globalization—connecting trade blocs that already exist without geographical boundaries—and picking up smaller states that do not wish to belong to blocs. Finally, they have different ideas who dominates in what areas. Russia has insisted on retaining the military and political spheres in Eurasia. However, as China's trade, finance, and investments double that of Russia's in

Central Asia, this has eroded Russia's control, including China's securitizing the Tajik-Afghan border.

Another example of the divide and conquer partnership is in Russia's Arctic Region. Indeed, China is not a titular state of the Arctic, and Russia prefers that the decision making body be the Arctic Five (Canada, Denmark-Greenland, Norway, Russia, and the United States). Russia opened up investments in its Arctic minerals and hydrocarbons to China and has supported exporting them East through the Russian controlled Northern Sea Route. But, there seems to be a limit to their cooperation as further Chinese investments in an Arghangelsk port and a railway are on hold.

The second framework to understand how Russia and China work together, by design or default, is as a force multiplier. In the security sphere, Russia and China are both developing weapons of cyber, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), space and counter space, disruptive technologies, information control, and transnational organized crime. Russia and China are sharing information on cyber and counterintelligence in the West. And, they have increased their joint military exercises and steamed together in the Baltic Sea. They also multiply their efforts to counter western-norms. This dynamic is most apparent in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, where long-standing Russian efforts to discredit democracy and the European Union exist in tandem with major infrastructure investments from China. Finally, China and Russia are capitalizing on the rising tide of nationalism and discourse about sovereignty to portray Western support for democratic institutions as foreign influence that must be resisted. In the case of Venezuela, they are jointly

engaged in direct actions to prop up a friendly regime.

The third framework to understand the Russia-China partnership is their coordinated effort to re-order international relations, starting with the United Nations. This is not new; in 1997 they presented a 'Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New World Order' to the United Nations General Assembly. Russia tows the broader agenda of limiting the role of the Security Council in protecting individual rights, particularly in crimes against humanity, the "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine, and invoking Chapter VII of the Charter to intervene on behalf of persecuted citizens. For the better part of two decades, their statements accompanying vetoes or abstentions have contained the same pro-sovereignty anti-intervention discourse. Meanwhile, China is working to lead in south-south development. China has become the second-largest contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping budget and the third largest contributor to the regular budget. China is successfully lobbying for its nationals to obtain senior posts in the United Nations Secretariat and associated organizations with the goal of blocking criticism of its own system but also to erode norms, such as the notion that the international community has a legitimate role in scrutinizing other countries' behavior on human rights and to advance a narrow definition of human rights based on economic standards. Both China and Russia have lobbied to cut funding for human rights monitors and to kill a senior post dedicated to human rights work.

The Director of National Intelligence's World Threat Assessment in January 2019 had a section on a combined Russia and China threat. It read: "Russia

and China are likely to intensify efforts to build influence in Europe at the expense of U.S. interests, benefiting from the economic fragility of some countries, transatlantic disagreements, and a probable strong showing by anti-establishment parties.” This appears to be an assessment that Russia and China will act as a force multiplier. However, during the Director’s testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, he said that they pose different threats: China is trying to outmatch capabilities and Russia is trying to confuse and obfuscate. This appears to be an assessment that they will divide and conquer.

Policy Implications

There are very practical drivers in Russia-China’s partnership. They both need Europe to succeed economically. Three out of the four major Chinese Silk Roads go through Eurasia to Europe. Russia remains dependent on the European market to sell hydrocarbons to sustain its GDP, and Chinese investments in hydrocarbon production since the 2014 Western sanctions.

At the same time, China is not interested in allowing Russia to drag it into political quarrels with the West. This includes not violating Western sanctions on Russia in banking and investing. China is the European Union’s second-largest trading partner after the United States, and the European Union is China’s top trading partner.

The United States and Europe share an interest in seeking greater Chinese participation as a constructive international player, contributing more readily and capably to the alleviation of global challenges. This could allow for a more

practical trans-Atlantic policy in several areas.

The first area is economic policy. China’s economy is multiple times that of Russia’s and is growing. China may provide leverage to European states, through investments, trade, and opportunities to balance or counter Russia. The United States could support some Chinese investment in Europe, while assisting European institutions in ensuring business interests and legal frameworks are enhanced. A dialogue among American and European experts could establish boundaries for the Belt and Road Initiative projects through a more official framework than has occurred to date.

The second area is security policy. Chinese engagement in Europe and Eurasia could make Russia more hesitant to take military action, as it did in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. If China had bigger financial interests in states such as Kazakhstan or the Balkans, maybe Russia would be less willing to harm Chinese interests. Chinese leaders have never openly endorsed Russia’s takeover of Crimea and eastern Ukraine. Likewise, the next time there is a crisis in Central Asia, China could step up and support an international peacekeeping operation, where Russia remains reluctant to operationalize the Collective Security Treaty Organization, despite requests.

The third area is energy security. China has a history of picking up projects and making a success of them where Russia has failed. Whether Kazakh oil or Turkmen gas, Chinese interests were able to take stagnant projects and turn them around, building new pipelines into its territory. China could gain a greater percentage of interest in Central Asian energy resources and consider it profitable enough to send

them West to Europe through the southern corridor, lessening Europe's dependence on Russia. Or, China could invest in Iranian gas development and build pipelines to Europe. If China is supplied from Russia and its High North with the resources it needs, this could alleviate China's insecurity over southern maritime transit routes.

The fourth area is regional security. Broadening regional security contacts through dialogue might be a good first step. Russia is uneasy about China militarily in ways China does not worry about Russia. The United States could initiate a dialogue among Russians, Europeans, and Americans on activity in the High North. In Eurasia, the European Union could engage in talks with the Eurasian Economic Union. Another is for the European Union and the United States to engage in a dialogue with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or the

BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to serve as an observer or to send a representative.

Conclusion

An effective policy presumes a healthy and united trans-Atlantic alliance. However this has been damaged by a series of policy turns by the United States. These include the U.S. Administration's choice to engage in trade wars with the European Union, withdrawal from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces agreement with little European consultation, consistent public chastising of European states on defense spending, unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear agreement with Iran and subsequent withdrawal of Iranian energy export waivers raising oil prices, and the announcement to leave the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

CHINA AS A COPYCAT OF THE PRACTICES OF RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN MEMBERS OF THE EU AND NATO

Ivana Karásková

China Research Fellow at the Association for International Affairs;
founder and coordinator of ChinfluenCE¹ and CHOICE² projects

China has made visible inroads into the region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) over the past several years, based on both bilateral arrangements and multilateral frameworks (e.g. 16+1)¹. It is a newcomer to the region, which is already occupied by a dense network of institutional frameworks. For Beijing, the region is attractive due to its strategic position close to major Western European markets and a relatively high-skilled yet reasonably priced labor force. At the same time, CEE countries

offer multilateral working capabilities with open trade mechanisms and established logistics platforms. From CEE countries' perspective, China is regarded as a source of alternative investment that can help diversify their economic and trade policies. The 'China card' can also be perceived as a potential 'bargaining chip' within the European Union (as is the case shown in Hungary, led by Viktor Orbán) or a valuable counterweight to Russian influence (as argued in Poland).

¹ ChinfluenCE is an international project mapping China's influence in Central Europe (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia) through media content analyses and complex analyses of key agenda setters, revealing e.g. links between Czech political and economic elites and pro-China lobby. ChinfluenCE research results were presented at the European Parliament, mentioned at U.S. Congress, in US-China Economic and Security Review Commission's 2018 Annual Report, Reporters without Border's report and widely quoted by European, Australian and American press. For more information see www.chinfluence.eu

² China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE) platform aims to form a consortium for monitoring and evaluating the rising influence of the People's Republic of China in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The goal of CHOICE is to critically assess and analytically dissect 16+1, Belt and Road and other China-led initiatives and by drafting a joint strategy which could be used by 16 CEE countries it strives to offset the asymmetry in their relations with China. For more information see www.chinaobservers.eu

¹ The 16+1 format is an initiative led by the People's Republic of China aimed at intensifying and expanding cooperation with 11 EU Member States and 5 Balkan countries in the fields of investments, transport, finance, science, education, and culture. The format is often criticized as serving China's interests and dividing the EU.

China's activities in the region of Central and Eastern Europe combine economic investment with increased diplomatic activity and media presence. As the case of the Czech Republic demonstrates, China's influence so far has been limited, and traditional media (print, TV, and radio) have proved surprisingly resilient against efforts at introducing openly pro-China policies, especially if this entailed compromising of liberal democratic values. Since China started as a complete newcomer to the region, the limited success of its strategy is understandable. However, Beijing increasingly utilizes the Russian long-term experience and established links to the groups of sympathizers in the region, which represent a much more effective toolbox of influencing tactics. If China learns not just from its own mistakes but borrows heavily from Russia's 'handbook', the risk of its rising influence in (not only) Central and Eastern Europe significantly increases.

China has already been able to establish tight ties to politicians in the region, including presidents (Miloš Zeman of the Czech Republic took a Chinese national as his personal advisor on China affairs and defended Huawei on a number of instances, downplaying the warnings of the Czech National Authority on Cyber and Information Security); Prime Ministers (Viktor Orbán of Hungary promoted Huawei and together with Greece watered EU joint position criticizing China's human rights abuses); and former politicians (such as ex-Ministers of Defense or Foreign Affairs, the former EU commissioner, etc.). These political elites are either both pro-China and pro-Russia oriented (Zeman, Orbán), or directly on a payroll (the case of above mentioned former politicians who have been working for the Chinese CEFC/CITIC companies).

China has also attempted to shape the coverage of itself through direct purchases of media companies, such as Empresa Media, who owns a TV station and a number of weeklies in the Czech Republic. The latter trend has proved worrying, as ChinfluenCE research clearly shows that even a co-ownership of a media outlet by a Chinese company effectively eliminates all negative coverage of the country. Not only the tone of the reporting shifted towards being exclusively positive on China, also the topics, which the media with Chinese (co)owners have pushed for (e.g. Belt and Road initiative promotion), differed significantly from what other both private and public Czech media reported on.

Based on the Russian model, China could go much further in cultivating contacts to favorable politicians of all ideological stripes. While eccentrics like the Czech Republic's president Zeman have done its interests more harm than good, carefully selected political figures could influence the situation much more effectively from behind the scenes. Last but not least, China has so far lagged behind Russia in effective use of social media and dedicated 'alternative news' (i.e. disinformation) servers, but Russian experience obviously shows a way ahead. Hence, the focus should be on political and economic elites of Central and Eastern European countries as well as traditional and 'alternative' media in the region. On the Chinese side, primary point of interest would be its diplomatic missions in the respective countries, companies with clear links to Chinese state (especially its intelligence services) as well as instruments of inter-party dialogue with counterparts from the region.

It has been a long believed 'common knowledge' that the Russian and Chinese

influences operate differently. While the Russian approach has predominantly focused on influencing the narratives and policies from bottom to top, influencing the public first and then waiting for politicians to pick up the issue to appease the electorate, the Chinese approach originally worked from top to bottom, focusing on political and economic elites who would then 'take care' of the population. But given the Chinese interest in Russia's influencing 'handbook', operation of the same anti-West groups of elites and its growing interest in direct purchases of media, China in fact may be seen as moving towards adopting both approaches. If China learns how to effectively use both, it will significantly increase its capabilities to influence different forms of decision making at the local (regional), state, or institutional level to favor and/or gain China's strategic goals while undermining the target—EU and NATO member state(s). The Czech Republic, where both Russian and Chinese influence coexist and have been growing, represents a litmus test for the Central and Eastern European countries' abilities to detect and counter the threat.

The question of course arises of how much Russia is aware of the growing Chinese influence in Central and Eastern European countries. On one hand, the goals of the Russian Federation (to push countries out of the EU and NATO formats) are different than the goals of the People's Republic of China (to ensure the countries stay within the formats which will enable China to influence the organizations from inside). On the other hand, the ultimate Russian goal is to create chaos and China's involvement contributes to achieving this goal. Moreover, in the Czech Republic no significant clash of interests between Russia and China has been so far detected, leading to a hypothesis that the late coming

Chinese influence has been if not welcome by Russia then at least tacitly tolerated.

If successful, China could effectively 'buy out' significant portions of economic and political elites in the region and purge the media coverage of itself of any critical views. Such a result would undermine the countries' commitment to liberal democratic values, could change their economic and political orientation, and simultaneously make them more vulnerable to manipulation by other hostile powers, such as Russia. The rising influence of China in Central and Eastern Europe due to the cultivation of friendly elites, suppression of critical voices in traditional media and spread of disinformation through 'alternative' news servers threatens to undermine the strategic unity of the European Union and NATO. The EU is arguably more important in this regard at the moment, due to its collective economic clout and positions concerning specific issues such as the arms embargo, South China Sea dispute or the status of Taiwan. However, NATO would be affected as well: With a host of pro-Chinese members or, worse, a consolidated bloc of such like-minded states, it would cease to function as a strategic forum for seeking consensus on key security challenges, to which China as a rising power with global ambitions belongs.

Counter reaction of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, EU and NATO should aim at supporting the resilience against pro-China assertiveness advocated by various political and economic elites with ties to the Chinese state entities. More effort should be directed towards uncovering and publicizing the mechanisms used by China in influencing the local public and politicians and towards experience sharing between those who study Chinese and Russian influence. Both EU and NATO

should be alerted at the growing threats posed by foreign actors to the member states. While Russia has been prioritized by NATO for some time now, China and its activities have not received a significant attention by the member states. Given the

global ambitions of China and the increasing capacities and capabilities of the would-be hegemon, Trans-Atlantic information sharing and counter-measures coordination seem crucial.

HOW AMERICA INVENTED CYBERWAR¹

Emily Parker

Future Tense Fellow, New America Foundation

According to the Mueller Report, “The Internet Research Agency (IRA) carried out the earliest Russian interference operations identified by the investigation — a social media campaign designed to provoke and amplify political and social discord in the United States.”

The Mueller Report and the dramatic headlines surrounding Russia’s interference in the U.S. election may reinforce the perception that America is primarily a victim of cyberintrusions. But it’s not.

In fact, the U.S. government has been an aggressor for over a quarter century. In his book, “Dark Territory,” Fred Kaplan describes “counter command-control warfare”—attempts to disrupt an enemy’s ability to control its forces—that goes back to the Gulf War in 1990–91. At a time when U.S. President George H. W. Bush had never used a computer, the National Security Agency (NSA) was employing a secret satellite to monitor the conversations of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his generals, which sometimes revealed the positions of Iraqi soldiers.

The United States’ most ambitious cyberattack began in 2006, when it teamed up with Israel to sabotage the Iranian

nuclear program. The collaboration, dubbed Operation Olympic Games, targeted Iran’s Natanz reactor, which relied on remote computer controls. Malware designed by American programmers took over the reactor’s valve pumps, allowing NSA operatives to remotely increase the flow of uranium gas into the centrifuges, which eventually burst. By early 2010, the operation had destroyed almost a quarter of Iran’s 8,700 centrifuges.

For years, the Iranians failed to detect the intrusion and must have wondered if the malfunctions were their own fault. The Iranians and the wider public might never have learned about the virus, now widely known as Stuxnet, if it had not accidentally spread from the computers in Natanz to machines in other parts of the world, where private sector security researchers ultimately discovered it.

With Olympic Games, the United States “crossed the Rubicon,” in the words of the former CIA director Michael Hayden. Stuxnet was the first major piece of malware to do more than harm other computers and actually cause physical destruction. The irony was rich, as Kaplan notes: “For more than a decade, dozens of panels and commissions had warned that

¹ This essay is an updated and modified excerpt from “Hack Job,” a 2017 article that ran in Foreign Affairs. Link: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2017-04-17/hack-job>

America's critical infrastructure was vulnerable to a cyber attack—and now America was launching the first cyber attack on another nation's critical infrastructure."

Of course, cyberattackers have often targeted the United States. In 2014 alone, Kaplan reports, the country suffered more than 80,000 cybersecurity breaches, more than 2,000 of which led to data losses. He also points out that until recently, U.S. policymakers worried less about Russia than China, which was "engaging not just in espionage and battlefield preparation, but also in the theft of trade secrets, intellectual property, and cash."

China and Russia are not the only players. Iran and North Korea have also attacked the United States. In 2014, the businessman Sheldon Adelson criticized Iran, which responded by hacking into the servers of Adelson's Las Vegas Sands Corporation, doing \$40 million worth of damage. That same year, hackers calling themselves the Guardians of Peace broke into Sony's network. They destroyed thousands of computers and hundreds of servers, exposed tens of thousands of Social Security numbers, and released embarrassing personal e-mails pilfered from the accounts of Sony executives.

U.S. government officials blamed the North Korean government for the attack. Sony Pictures was about to release "The Interview," a silly comedy about a plot to assassinate the North Korean ruler Kim Jong Un. As opening day neared, the hackers threatened theaters with retaliation if they screened the movie. When Sony canceled the release, the threats stopped.

The United States and other countries use social media for political ends. Russia, as we know, tries to shape online discourse by spreading false news and

deploying trolls to post offensive or distracting comments. Chinese Internet commenters also try to muddy the waters of online discussion. In his book, "The Hacked World Order," Adam Segal claims that the Chinese government pays an estimated 250,000–300,000 people to support the official Communist Party agenda online.

Segal suggests that the United States will likely not win social media wars against countries such as China or Russia. U.S. State Department officials identify themselves on Facebook and Twitter, react slowly to news, and offer factual, rule-based commentary. Unfortunately, as Segal notes, "content that is shocking, conspiratorial, or false often crowds out the reasonable, rational, and measured."

Social media battles also play out in the Middle East. In 2012, the Israel Defense Forces and Hamas fought a war for public opinion using Facebook, Twitter, Google, Pinterest, and Tumblr at the same time as the two were exchanging physical fire. The Islamic State (also known as ISIS) has launched digital campaigns that incorporate, in Segal's words, "brutality and barbarism, packaged with sophisticated production techniques."

The United States has tried to fight back by sharing negative stories about ISIS and, in 2014, even created a video, using footage released by the group, that featured severed heads and crucifixions. The video went viral, but analysts inside and outside the U.S. government criticized it for embracing extremist tactics similar to ISIS' own. Moreover, as Segal notes, it seems to have failed to deter ISIS' supporters.

Part of what makes the cyber era so challenging for governments is that conflict

isn't limited to states. Many actors, including individuals and small groups, can carry out attacks. In 2011, for example, the hacker collective Anonymous took down Sony's PlayStation Network, costing the company \$171 million in repairs. Individuals can also disrupt traditional diplomacy, as when WikiLeaks released thousands of State Department cables in 2010, revealing U.S. diplomats' candid and sometimes embarrassing assessments of their foreign counterparts.

Americans tend to see themselves as a target of Chinese hackers—and indeed they are. The problem is that China also sees itself as a victim and the United States as hypocritical. In June 2013, U.S. President Barack Obama warned Chinese President Xi Jinping that Chinese hacking could damage the U.S.-Chinese relationship. Later that month, journalists published documents provided by Edward Snowden, an NSA contractor, showing that the NSA had hacked Chinese universities and telecommunications companies. It didn't take long for Chinese state media to brand the United States as "the real hacking empire."

The U.S.-Chinese relationship also suffers from a more fundamental disagreement. U.S. policymakers seem to believe that it's acceptable to spy for political and military purposes but that China's theft of intellectual property crosses a line. The United States might spy on companies and trade negotiators all over the world, but it does so to protect its national interests, not to benefit specific U.S. companies. The Chinese don't see this distinction. As Segal explains:

"Many states, especially those like China that have developed a form of state capitalism at home, do not see a difference between public and private actors. Chinese

firms are part of an effort to modernize the country and build comprehensive power, no matter whether they are private or state owned. Stealing for their benefit is for the benefit of the nation."

The intense secrecy surrounding cyberwarfare makes deciding what kinds of hacking are acceptable and what behavior crosses the line even harder. The Snowden revelations may have alerted Americans to the extent of U.S. government surveillance, but the public still remains largely in the dark about digital conflict. Yet Americans have a lot at stake. The United States may be the world's strongest cyberpower, but it is also the most vulnerable. Segal writes:

"The United States is . . . more exposed than any other country. Smart cities, the Internet of Things, and self-driving cars may open up vast new economic opportunities as well as new targets for destructive attacks. Cyberattacks could disrupt and degrade the American way of war, heavily dependent as it is on sensors, computers, command and control, and information dominance."

There are no easy solutions to these challenges. The cyber era is much murkier than the era of the Cold War. Officials find it difficult to trace attackers quickly and reliably, increasing the chances that the targeted country will make an error. The U.S. government and U.S. firms face cyberattacks every day, and there is no clear line between those that are merely a nuisance and those that pose a serious threat. In his book "The Perfect Weapon," David Sanger notes, "After a decade of hearings in Congress, there is still little agreement on whether and when cyberstrikes constitute an act of war, an act

of terrorism, mere espionage, or cyber-enabled vandalism.”

The public also understands cyberthreats far less well than it does the threat of nuclear weapons. Much of the information is classified, inhibiting public discussion.

Segal recommends that the United States replace its federal research plan with a public-private partnership to bring in academic and commercial expertise. Government and private companies need to share more information, and companies need to talk more openly with one another about digital threats.

The United States should also “develop a code of conduct that draws a clear line between its friends and allies and its potential adversaries.” This would include limiting cyberattacks to military actions and narrowly targeted covert operations, following international law, rarely spying on friends, and working to strengthen international norms against economic espionage. If the United States is attacked, it should not necessarily launch a counterattack, Segal argues; rather, it should explore using sanctions or other tools. This was apparently the path that Obama took after the attack on the Democratic National Committee (DNC), when the United States punished Moscow by imposing fresh sanctions and expelling 35 suspected Russian spies.

It’s likely only a matter of time before the Trump administration faces a major cyberattack. When that happens, the government will need to react calmly, without jumping to conclusions. Failure to do so could have dire consequences.

Some experts have argued that Obama’s response to the Russian

cyberattacks in 2016 did not do enough to deter future attackers. But if Obama underreacted, the United States may now face the opposite problem. Trump has proved willing to make bold, sometimes unsubstantiated accusations. This behavior is dangerous in any conflict, but in the fog of cyberwar, it could spell catastrophe.

Is there anything the American public can do to prevent this? Policy about cyberspace generally doesn’t draw the same level of public engagement, in part due to a lack of knowledge. Cyberbattles can seem confusing, technical, and shrouded in secrecy, perhaps better left to the experts. But cybersecurity is everyone’s problem now. The American public should inform itself, and these two books are a good place to start. If Washington inadvertently led the United States into a major cyberwar, Americans would have the most to lose.

U.S. POLICY TOWARD EURASIA AND THE ROLE OF THE U.S. CONGRESS

The Aspen Institute Congressional Program
May 27 – June 2, 2019
Prague, Czech Republic

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Rep. Jim Banks
and Amanda Banks

Rep. Don Beyer
and Megan Beyer

Senator Tom Carper
and Martha Carper

Rep. Diana DeGette
and Francesca Lipinsky DeGette

Rep. Ted Deutch
and Jill Deutch

Rep. Jeff Fortenberry
and Celeste Fortenberry

Rep. John Garamendi
and Patti Garamendi

Rep. Andy Harris
and Daniel Harris

Rep. Vicky Hartzler
and Lowell Hartzler

Rep. Doug Lamborn
and Jeanie Lamborn

Rep. Billy Long

Rep. David McKinley
and Mary McKinley

Rep. Mark Meadows
and Debbie Meadows

Rep. David Price
and Lisa Price

Rep. Tom Rice
and Wrenzie Rice

Rep. John Sarbanes
and Dina Sarbanes

Rep. Scott Tipton
and Jean Tipton

SCHOLARS

Stacy Closson Adjunct Professional Lecturer, School of International Service,
American University

Robert Daly Director, The Kissinger Institute, The Wilson Center

Evan Feigenbaum	Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia
Thomas Graham	Managing Director, Kissinger Associates
Nikolas Gvosdev	Professor of National Security Affairs, U.S. Naval War College, Newport
Ivan Hodáč	President and Founder, Aspen Institute Central Europe
Ivana Karásková	PhD candidate, Charles University, founder, Chinfluence, Prague
Philippe Le Corre	Senior Fellow, Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business & Government, Harvard Kennedy School
Emily Parker	Future Tense Fellow, New America Foundation
Matt Rojansky	Director, The Kennan Institute, The Wilson Center
Jiří Schneider	Executive Director, Aspen Institute Central Europe
Dmitri Trenin	Director, Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow
Igor Zevelev	Professor, George Marshall Center, Garmisch, Germany

EVENING SPEAKER

Jan Hamáček	Deputy Prime Minister, Former Speaker, Chamber of Deputies, The Czech Parliament, Prague
-------------	--

FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVES

Deana Arsenian	Carnegie Corporation of New York
Sean Raymond	The Democracy Fund

ASPEN INSTITUTE CONGRESSIONAL PROGRAM

Dan Glickman and Rhoda Glickman	Executive Director
Lauren Kennedy	Manager of Congressional Engagement
Bill Nell	Deputy Director
Carrie Rowell	Conference Director

U.S. POLICY TOWARD EURASIA AND THE ROLE OF THE U.S. CONGRESS

The Aspen Institute Congressional Program
May 27 – June 2, 2019
Prague, Czech Republic

CONFERENCE AGENDA

MONDAY, MAY 27

American participants depart the U.S.

TUESDAY, MAY 28

All participants arrive in Prague

Working Dinner

U.S. POLICY TOWARD EURASIA: A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Eastern Europe is the focal point on the dividing line between Eurasia and the western alliance. The former Speaker of the Czech Parliament will provide his perspective of the policy issues between the U.S. and Eurasia. Discussion will focus on the opportunities, challenges and potential solutions regarding U.S. relations with Eurasia. Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily.

*Jan Hamáček, Deputy Prime Minister, Former Speaker,
Chamber of Deputies, The Czech Parliament, Prague*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29

INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK OF THE CONFERENCE

*Dan Glickman, Executive Director,
Aspen Institute Congressional Program*

Roundtable Discussion

EURASIAN GEOPOLITICS AND GREAT POWER DYNAMICS: WHY IT MATTERS

Eurasia covers one third of the Earth's surface and is home to over five billion people—it is what British geographer Halford Mackinder once called "the world island." The bulk of this landmass is controlled by China and Russia, with whom the U.S. has been in competition and confrontation across different arenas and at different scales over the past decade. The two are both major powers and near peer competitors to the United States, and are increasingly aligned in their foreign, security and even development policies and programs, potentially to the detriment of key U.S. interests. The annual threat assessment by the U.S. intelligence

communities warns that China and Russia are more aligned now since the mid-1950s and that they are devoting resources into a “race for technological and military superiority.”

- How significant and how durable is this alignment?
- Has Washington paid it adequate attention? What U.S. interests are at stake in the region?
- What is the state of the U.S.-led international order with respect to Eurasia?
- Do Moscow and Beijing evince a genuinely shared vision, or is their alignment principally about countering U.S. influence?
- How have U.S. allies and partners across Eurasia responded?
- What have been the key pillars of U.S. strategy toward the region over the recent past?

Thomas Graham, *Managing Director, Kissinger Associates*
Evan Feigenbaum, *Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia*
Matthew Rojansky, *Director, The Kennan Institute, The Wilson Center*

Working Lunch

Discussion continues between members of Congress and scholars on the challenges for U.S. policy regarding Eurasia.

Individual Discussions

Members of Congress and scholars meet individually to discuss U.S. foreign policy. Scholars available to meet individually with members of Congress for in-depth discussion of ideas raised in the morning and luncheon sessions include Thomas Graham, Evan Feigenbaum, and Matthew Rojansky.

Working Dinner

Scholars and members of Congress will explore topics covered in the conference. Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Discussion will focus on the key policy issues at stake in U.S.-relations with Eurasia and their importance.

THURSDAY, MAY 30

Roundtable Discussion

CHINA’S INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES OF ITS BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

The U.S. administration has accused China of expanding its economy, global political influence and military power at the expense of the U.S. and its allies. Under the mantle of its ambitious "Belt and Road Initiative," China has spent massively on building long-distance railway networks, communications, and energy infrastructure links connecting it to Eurasia, some of which have potential military applications. Freight rail service between China’s east coast and European markets can now compete with shipping through the Straits of Malacca and the Suez Canal, while the opening of a Northern Sea route via the melting waterways of the Arctic ocean puts Russia-China maritime cooperation in the spotlight. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited many European capitals this Spring and secured a BRI agreement with Italy.

- How does Beijing see its position within Eurasia?

- Does Beijing harbor territorial ambitions, especially in Central Asia or Russia's Far East, parts of which were controlled by China in the past?
- Do China's internal challenges with its restive Muslim populations limit its ability to project power and influence into Central and South Asia or the greater Middle East?
- How does China use the newly established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to advance its influence with developing countries in the Eurasian region?

Philippe Le Corre, *Senior Fellow, Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business & Government, Harvard Kennedy School*

Robert Daly, *Director, The Kissinger Institute, The Wilson Center*

Roundtable Discussion

RUSSIA'S INTERESTS AND INFLUENCE IN THE REGION

The freezing out of Russia from Western-led global markets and diplomatic formats following its invasion of Ukraine has pushed Moscow to regard China more as a potential partner in its efforts not only to defend against U.S. pressure, but to develop its own economy and ensure domestic political stability and security. Russia remains the dominant security actor in Eurasia, supplying its former Soviet clients, China and other regional states with advanced military hardware, and leading major military exercises in all domains, recently with Chinese participation. Meanwhile cleavages within and between Europe and the United States have tested the traditional bonds of transatlantic solidarity.

- What does Moscow's assertion of its own "pivot to Asia" and a distinctive "Eurasian identity" actually mean?
- Do Russians think of Eurasia as something foreign, a "near abroad," or a "sphere of privileged influence?"
- How will the Kremlin respond to continuing political, economic and demographic change along its borders, especially in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, a region bordering Russia, China and Afghanistan?
- What is the significance of Russian-led international groups like the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?
- How does U.S. policy regarding China take into account China's growing interests in Eurasia?

Dmitri Trenin, *Director, Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow*

Working Lunch

Discussion continues between members of Congress and scholars on the challenges for U.S. policy regarding Eurasia.

Individual Discussions

Members of Congress and scholars meet individually to discuss U.S. foreign policy. Scholars available to meet individually with members of Congress for in-depth discussion of ideas raised in the morning and luncheon sessions include Philippe Le Corre, Robert Daly, and Dmitri Trenin.

Working Dinner

Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Scholars will discuss with members of Congress their perspective on China's and Russia's interests in the context of U.S. relations with Eurasia.

FRIDAY, MAY 31

Roundtable Discussion

U.S. STRATEGY, ALLIES, AND RESOURCES IN EURASIA

The Administration and Congress have responded to Russia's regional and global challenges with strong sanctions, expulsions of Russian diplomats, a bulked-up NATO forward presence and military assistance to Ukraine. Despite ostensibly positive personal relations between Presidents Trump and Xi, the U.S. has also taken on China with renewed vigor, imposing tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese imports and threatening further retaliatory action for Chinese pressure on U.S. companies, theft of intellectual property, or aggression in the South China Sea. The U.S. has increased military spending, jettisoned the Iran nuclear deal and the Intermediate Nuclear Forces agreement, and also launched ambitious denuclearization negotiations with North Korea. Eurasia is also a focal point of competition between China and the U.S. over which Superpower will be the dominant supplier of the new 5G digital technology, which presents a new realm of high-tech security concerns.

- To what degree has the U.S. actually "pivoted" toward Asia in the past decade?
- What have been and what should be Washington's principal policy goals toward the region as a whole?
- How should the U.S. balance its broader regional goals with its interests regarding individual regional states?
- What instruments have proven most effective in advancing U.S. interests, and how available are they today?
- How has U.S. policy been understood by allies and partners in the region?
- Are Beijing or Moscow effectively able to drive wedges between the U.S. and its regional allies?

Stacy Closson, *Adjunct Professional Lecturer,*
School of International Service, American University
Nikolas Gvosdev, *Professor of National Security Affairs,*
U.S. Naval War College

Working Lunch

Discussion continues between members of Congress and scholars on the challenges for U.S. policy regarding Eurasia.

Individual Discussions

Members of Congress and scholars meet individually to discuss U.S. foreign policy. Scholars available to meet individually with members of Congress for in-depth discussion of ideas raised in the morning and luncheon sessions include Stacy Closson and Nikolas Gvosdev.

Working Dinner

Scholars and members of Congress will explore topics covered in the conference. Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Scholars will discuss with members of Congress their perspective on the evolving threats from new technologies such as cyber, social media and information operations and their policy implications.

Saturday, June 1

Roundtable Discussion

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND EVOLVING THREATS: CYBER, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND INFORMATION OPERATIONS

The potential alignment between Chinese and Russian interests has security as well as economic implications for the U.S. beyond Eurasia, including the security of U.S. interests in cyberspace, domestic political processes, and the U.S. homeland itself. U.S. officials have confirmed that Russia and China are both major sponsors of cyber attacks, internet-based influence and radicalization campaigns, including election meddling, and the increasing use of artificial intelligence as a military tool against U.S. targets. As the Director of National Intelligence has said, "the warning lights are blinking red" about what is coming next--more interference, attacks, and near miss incidents, any of which could lead to dramatic escalation.

- How does each of the major Eurasian powers consider information and technology tools as part of its national security strategy?
- What lessons from addressing past threats and challenges can apply to these new threat vectors?
- How does the rapid improvement of artificial intelligence capabilities affect these challenges?
- How do difficulties with attribution affect the availability of deterrence as a response to Russian or Chinese cyber and information threats?
- Is there a risk of escalation from cyber to conventional or even nuclear conflict?
- Do the U.S. and its near peer rivals have common interests, for example, in countering online radicalization?
- Are common approaches feasible, such as a convention on limiting the means or methods of cyber conflict?

Ivana Karásková, *Research Fellow, Association for International Affairs; Founder, Chinfluence, Prague*

Emily Parker, *Future Tense Fellow, New America Foundation*

Policy Reflections **(MEMBERS ONLY)**

Members of Congress will reflect on the previous discussions and offer their ideas for policy implications.

Working Lunch

Discussion continues between members of Congress and scholars on the challenges for U.S. policy regarding Eurasia.

Individual Discussions

Members of Congress and scholars meet individually to discuss U.S. foreign policy. Scholars available to meet individually with members of Congress for in-depth discussion of ideas raised in the morning and luncheon sessions include Ivana Karásková and Emily Parker.

Working Dinner

Scholars and members of Congress will explore topics covered in the conference. Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Scholars and members of Congress will reflect on the discussions and analysis of the past four days to reach conclusions for the most appropriate policies for U.S. relations with Eurasia.

SUNDAY, JUNE 2

Participants depart Prague; arrive in the USA

Resource Scholars:

Jiří Schneider, Executive Director,
Aspen Institute Central Europe, Prague
Igor Zevelev, Professor of National Security Studies,
George Marshall Center, Garmisch