

China's Global Political Shift

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I have been to China over the years more than a dozen times. I have spoken with people at all levels of policy-making, and one thing I have come to realize is that when Beijing makes a major policy change, they make it carefully and with great deliberation. And when they arrive at a new consensus, they execute it with remarkable effect on all levels. That is the secret to their thirty-year economic miracle. Now China's top leadership has made such a policy decision. It will transform our world over the next decade.

On November 29, 2014, a little-noted but highly significant meeting took place in Beijing as Washington was absorbed with its various attempts to cripple and ultimately destabilize Putin's Russia. They held what was termed The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs. Xi Jinping, Chinese President and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, delivered what was called "An Important Address" [there](#).

Careful reading of the official Foreign Ministry statement on the meeting confirms it was indeed "important." The central leadership of China has now made official a strategic global shift in geopolitical priorities in Chinese foreign policy.

No longer does China regard its relationship with the United States or even the EU as of highest priority. Rather they have defined a new grouping of priority countries in their carefully-deliberated geopolitical map. It includes Russia, as well as the entire BRICS rapidly-developing economies; it includes China's Asian neighbors as well as Africa and other developing [countries](#).

To give a perspective, as recently as 2012 China's foreign priorities in the world, including China); Multilateral Organizations (UN, APEC, ASEAN, IMF, World Bank etc.), and public diplomacy which determines which situations to become engaged in around the [world](#). Clearly China has decided those priorities no longer work to her advantage. Her priorities were described in a general framework: Great Powers (principally the USA, EU, Japan, and Russia); Periphery (all countries bordering China); Developing Countries (all lower income coun.

In his address to the meeting, President Xi highlighted a sub-category of developing countries: "Major Developing Powers (kuoda fazhanzhong de guojia). China will "expand cooperation and closely integrate our country's development" with the designated Major Developing Powers, Xi declared. According to Chinese intellectuals, these are countries now deemed especially important partners "to support reform of the international order." It includes Russia, Brazil, South Africa, India, Indonesia, and Mexico, that is, China's BRICS partners, as well as Indonesia and Mexico. China has also ceased calling itself a "developing country," indicating the changed [self-image](#).

Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin indicated one significant aspect of the new policy when at the conference in Beijing he declared that the “imbalance between Asia’s political security and economic development has become an increasingly prominent issue.” China’s proposal to create an Asian “community of shared destiny” aims to resolve this imbalance. That implies closer economic and diplomatic ties with South Korea, Japan, India, Indonesia, even Vietnam and the Philippines.

In other words, although the relationship with the United States will remain highest priority because of America’s military and financial power, we can expect an increasingly outspoken China against what it sees as American interference. This was seen clearly in October when the official China Daily wrote an OpEd during Hong Kong’s “Umbrella Revolution” asking, “Why does Washington Make Color Revolutions?” The article named the Vice President of the US Government-financed regime-change NGO, National Endowment for Democracy as involved. Such directness would have been unthinkable just six years ago when Washington tried to embarrass Beijing by stirring up violent protests by the Dalai Lama Movement in Tibet just before the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

China is openly rejecting the usual Western criticism on human rights and recently declared a freeze in China-UK diplomatic relations following a meeting by the Cameron government with the Dalai Lama and to Norway over its recognition of dissident Liu Xiaobo. Over the past year, step-by-step Beijing has dismissed Washington’s criticism of its reclamation of its historical claims in the South China Sea.

But perhaps most significant, in recent months, China has boldly moved an agenda to build alternative institutions to the US-controlled IMF and World Bank, a potentially devastating blow to US economic power if it succeeds. To counter the US attempt to economically isolate China in Asia through creation of a US Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Beijing has announced its own Chinese vision of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), an “all inclusive, all-win” trade deal that really promotes Asia-Pacific [cooperation](#).

Elevating Russian Relations

At present, what clearly emerges is China’s decision to make its relation with Putin’s Russia central to this new priority strategy. Despite decades of mistrust following the 1960 Sino-Soviet split, the two countries have begun a depth of cooperation unprecedented. The two great land powers of Eurasia are welding economic bonds that create the only potential “challenger” to future American global supremacy, as US foreign policy strategist, Zbigniew Brzezinski described it in his *The Grand Chessboard* in 1997.

At a time when Putin was engaged in a full-scale NATO economic sanctions war aimed at toppling his regime, China signed not one, but several gigantic energy deals with Russian state companies Gazprom and Rosneft, allowing Russia to offset the growing threat to her west European energy exports, a life-and-death issue for the Russian economy.

During the November APEC meeting in Beijing, where Obama was given an unmistakable Chinese diplomatic downgrade for the official photo by being told to stand next to the wife of one of the Asian presidents while Putin stood beside Xi. In politics symbols, especially in China carry great import as an essential part of communication. During the same occasion, Xi and Putin agreed

To build a West Route Gas Pipeline from Siberia to China, as an addition to the historic East

Route Pipeline agreed with Russia in May. When both are completed, Russia will deliver 40% of China's natural gas. At the same occasion in Beijing the Chief of the Russian General Staff announced significant new areas of cooperation between Russian Armed Forces and the Chinese [PLA](#).

Now, in the midst of Washington's full-scale currency war against the Russian ruble, China has announced its readiness, if asked, to help its Russian partner. On December 20 amid a record fall in the Ruble to the dollar, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China will provide help if needed and is confident Russia can overcome its economic difficulties. At the same time Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng said expanding a currency swap between the two nations and making increased use of yuan for bilateral trade would have the greatest impact in aiding Russia.

There are other synergies between Russia and China where both coordinate more closely, including Putin's decision to meet in Spring with the North Korean President, as well as with India, a long-time Russian ally with whom China has had fragile relations since the 1950's. As well Russia has a strong position with Vietnam going back to the Cold War and development by Russian oil companies of Vietnam's offshore oil discoveries. In short, for both, once in a harmonized geopolitical strategy, Brzezinski's worst geopolitical nightmare is taking on a life of its own, thanks, largely, to the very stupid policies of Washington's neo-conservative warhawks, President Obama, and the very rich, loveless families who pay their bills.

All of these moves, while fraught with danger, signal that China has deeply understood the Washington geopolitical game and the strategies of the neo-conservative US warhawks and, like Putin's Russia, have little intention of bending their knee to what they see as a Washington global tyranny. The year 2015 shapes to be one of the most decisive and interesting in modern history.

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