

# Why'd the CIA Chief Unexpectedly Tell the Truth About Russian-Chinese Ties?

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*William Burns' surprisingly accurate assessment of Russian-Chinese ties coincides with Secretary of State Antony Blinken's upcoming trip to Beijing, which is aimed at advancing the incipient Sino-American New Détente. The CIA chief is thus tempering expectations about how far their discussions over far-reaching mutual compromises will go so that nobody gets the false expectation that China will dump Russia as a quid pro quo for comparatively "normalizing" ties with the US.*

## An Unexpected Narrative Development

The US is simultaneously waging information warfare campaigns against Russia and China, including those which are aimed at manipulating perceptions about their partnership by falsely suggesting an impending split between them, which is why CIA Director William Burns' latest assessment was so surprising. Despite all the lies that he and his institution have pushed in the past, he deserves credit for finally setting the record straight about those two's relations.

## The Truth About Russian-Chinese Ties

According to [Reuters](#), he told the participants at a Georgetown University event on Thursday that "I think it's a mistake to underestimate the mutual commitment to that partnership, but it's not a friendship totally without limits." In a single sentence, he rubbished the false narrative about a supposedly impending Sino-Russian split as well as the equally false one claiming that those two have allegedly formed an "alliance" against the US-led West's [Golden Billion](#) in the [New Cold War](#).

Detailed insight into their relations can be obtained by reviewing the following seven analyses:

- 12 August: "[Speculation About Russia Becoming A Chinese Puppet Ignores India's Decisive Balancing Role](#)"

- 27 September: “[Are American Officials Right About China Tacitly Complying With Anti-Russian Sanctions?](#)”
- 1 October: “[The Ukrainian Conflict Might Have Already Derailed China’s Superpower Trajectory](#)”
- 2 January: “[Debunking The Latest Conspiracy Theory About Sino-Russo Infowar Cooperation](#)”
- 11 January: “[Exposing Western Media’s Narrative Agenda In Spinning The Sino-American New Détente](#)”
- 1 February: “[Korybko To C. Raja Mohan: There Is No Such Thing As A So-Called ‘Sino-Russian Alliance’](#)”
- 2 February: “[The Washington Post Has It All Wrong: China Doesn’t Want Anyone To Win In Ukraine](#)”

They’ll now be summarized for the convenience of those who don’t have the time to read them.

In brief, Russia and China closely cooperate on their shared goal of gradually reforming International Relations in order to end unipolarity, but there are limits to how far they’ll go. Beijing balked at supporting Moscow’s [special operation](#) since it fears Washington’s secondary sanctions, and it’s presently exploring the parameters of far-reaching mutual compromises with the US. Nevertheless, it’s unrealistic to predict an impending Sino-Russian split since their ties remain mutually beneficial.

## Assessing American Sincerity Towards The New Detente

Burns’ surprisingly accurate assessment of their ties coincides with Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s upcoming trip to Beijing, which is aimed at advancing the incipient New Détente. The CIA chief is thus tempering expectations about how far their discussions over far-reaching mutual compromises will go so that nobody gets the false expectation that China will dump Russia. What both parties really want is to explore whether it’s possible to comparatively “normalize” their bilateral relations for the time being.

## The Military-Strategic Imperatives For Temporarily “Normalizing” Chinese-American Relations

The immediate motivation in doing so is to preemptively avert a conventional conflict between them by miscalculation, which neither can afford to have happen. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) [published a study](#) last month of what it claimed were the most extensive war-game simulations ever conducted over a potential Taiwan Conflict, which concluded that this scenario would be mutually disadvantageous for the American and Chinese militaries.

Adding a sense of urgency to all of this, a memo from four-star Air Force General Mike Minihan [leaked](#) at the end of January where he warned his officers that they should be ready to fight a conventional war against China by 2025. The Pentagon [subsequently distanced itself](#) from his prediction, but the resultant impression was that at least one faction within the US’ permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies (“deep state”) is actively pining for war with China, which raises serious concerns.

That scandal broke out around the same time that the influential RAND Corporation

[published a study](#) advising against an indefinite perpetuation of [NATO's proxy war on Russia through Ukraine](#) on the partial basis that this scenario would degrade the US' military-strategic capabilities against China. These three events over the past month confirm that threat perceptions of China are once again on the minds of American decisionmakers after they've spent the last year obsessing over Russia.

## The US' Strategic Recalibration In The New Cold War

Coupled with the ongoing discussions over a New Détente, the CIA chief's surprisingly accurate assessment of Russian-Chinese relations, and Blinken's upcoming trip to Beijing, it's possible to intuit the ways in which the US is recalibrating its strategic calculations in the New Cold War. The first observation is that the US is beginning to realize that the Ukrainian Conflict is sapping its military capabilities that could otherwise have been invested in more effectively "containing" China.

The [New York Times](#) reported in late November that the US' military-industrial complex can't indefinitely sustain the pace, scale, and scope of armed assistance to Kiev. This was seconded last month by [Naval Secretary Carlos Del Toro](#), who said that his country might soon have to choose whether to meet its minimum national security needs or Ukraine's. The emerging dilemma is that the US must either find a "save-facing" retreat from that proxy war or further delay its "Pivot to Asia" against China.

The second observation is that the seemingly inevitable transition from prioritizing Russia's "containment" to China's will take some time to achieve since the US cannot refocus the bulk of its military efforts from Europe to the Asia-Pacific right away. This process has already started as evidenced by [NATO's de facto expansion](#) to that part of the hemisphere via AUKUS+, which refers to this US-centric network's informal inclusion of [Japan](#), the [Philippines](#), and [likely also the Republic of Korea](#).

Building upon this, the third observation is that the US' interests are best served by achieving the comparative "normalization" of ties with China during his interim period instead of risking a conventional conflict by miscalculation before its aforementioned military posturing is complete. Even though the preceding worst-case scenario would be mutually disadvantageous like the CSIS predicted, China might still feel compelled to initiate it as a last-resort out of desperation to safeguard its interests.

With this in mind, the fourth observation is that the US must manage China's threat perceptions of it during this sensitive military-strategic transition in order to prevent that from happening, ergo why it's reciprocating President Xi Jinping's interest in a New Détente that he initiated last November. His calculations are also to buy time for his country too, albeit in the hopes that China's military capabilities will make such a "great leap forward" in the next few years that they'll successfully deter the US.

And finally, regardless of whatever series of mutual compromises that China and the US might agree to in pursuit of this mutually beneficial end of comparatively "normalizing" their ties for the time being, both acknowledge that it's unrealistic to expect it to include the scenario of China dumping Russia. This last observation about the US' recalibrated grand strategic calculations in the New Cold War places Burns' surprisingly accurate assessment of Russian-Chinese relations in their proper context.

## Strategic Dynamics Of The Seemingly Intractable Sino-American Security Dilemma

The CIA chief doesn't want anyone on his side to get false expectations about the outcome of the ongoing discussions over a Sino-American New Détente lest some "deep state" factions seek to sabotage this process out of spite that it doesn't include an anti-Russian dimension. This doesn't mean that he'll succeed, but just that he's doing his utmost to clarify the limits to the far-reaching mutual compromises that they might agree to so as to buy time for their military posturing against one another.

Basically, the US is finally realizing that it failed to "contain" Russia and is thus depleting valuable military resources by indefinitely perpetuating this unsuccessful campaign that could otherwise be more effectively invested in attempting to "contain" China, which is America's only systemic rival. The real battle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century isn't going to be between the US and Russia over Ukraine, but between the US and China over which of those two will become the predominant power in the [emerging world order](#).

Even so, neither of them wants a conventional conflict to break out since it would be mutually disadvantageous, hence why they'd rather militarily posture against one another in the hopes of gaining an edge vis-à-vis their rival and thus deterring them from initiating that worst-case scenario. Therein lies the crux of their security dilemma though since each might still in theory feel compelled to proactively avert the other's selfsame posturing that they consider to be an unacceptable threat to their interests.

To explain, China might initiate regional military hostilities in the near future out of fear that the window of opportunity for preventing its comprehensive "containment" by the US via AUKUS+ is rapidly closing. Similarly, the US might initiate the same - whether indirectly by ordering Taiwan to cross Beijing's red lines via a "declaration of independence" or even directly through a "first strike" - out of fear that failing to do so sometime soon would lead to China making strong enough military strides that fully deter it.

In other words, the Sino-American security dilemma is defined by both fearing that the other's evolving military postures in the Asia-Pacific will give them an edge that could then be leveraged to blackmail their rival into some sort of unacceptable strategic concessions. What's so dangerous about these dynamics is at that both the lead-up to that scenario as well as this scenario itself are fraught with tremendous risk that one or the other will proactively initiate military hostilities to avert that outcome.

This insight shows how unprecedentedly high the global strategic stakes are when it comes to their ongoing discussions over a New Détente. China and the US each want to at least temporarily delay the seemingly inevitable exacerbation of their military rivalry, yet they're also unsure whether doing so will truly give them an edge over the other or if it'll inadvertently compel their counterpart to proactively initiate hostilities out of perceived desperation if they think the window of opportunity is closing.

As it presently stands, however, there seems to be a shaky consensus between them that it's better to go forward with temporarily delaying everything than risk their tensions quickly spiraling out of control if they refuse to do so. This observation is evidenced by the progress that's been achieved thus far as proven by Blinken's upcoming trip to Beijing aimed at taking their talks even further, as well as the CIA chief's timely clarification that the US

shouldn't expect China to dump Russia as an implied quid pro quo.

## Concluding Thoughts

If the US wasn't serious about temporarily putting off the seemingly inevitable exacerbation of military tensions with China, then Burns wouldn't have unexpectedly told the truth about Russian-Chinese ties at this particular point in time in order to temper expectations about the New Détente. From this, it can be concluded that the US is seriously considering a "face-saving" exit strategy from the Ukrainian Conflict later this year in order to gradually refocus on prioritizing China's "containment" over Russia's.

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