

US-Russia-China Relations

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Introduction: Relations between the US, Russia, and China have been persistently tumultuous, waxing and waning keeping each in an ongoing stalemate of sorts. Each of these countries are one of the five permanent seats in the United Nations, yet they each have continued to press their own agendas that sometimes conflict with one another. The relations between these States has commonly been referred to as “The Triangle,” often accompanied with other adjectives such as “Broken,” “Unbalanced,” “Turbulent,” “Unpredictable,” etc. Although the wording is blatantly pessimistic, it is not clear if the interrelations between these governments is bitter, sweet, or in fact bittersweet. Not only have each of these States worked together and continue in some forms of trade, but they have also held proxy wars against one another and continue to do so on a global scale. What can be clearly stated, are the facts of each of these countries and their trade relations between them, as well as each of their exponential militarization in pursuit of becoming or maintaining local and global hegemony.

US-Russia Relations: Russian President Putin and US President Trump both have a popular voice among those in their countries. This can have potential harm when both leaders are more focused on their own countries rather than relations between one another. On one hand, Putin is attempting to make Russia a world leading power, while on the other hand Trump is doing the same. However, Trump as currently representing the US has far more influence globally than Russia or Putin. Trump’s influence on NATO and the UN has pushed concern that the US is far more financially invested in these

institutions compared to others in the world. In turn, if others begin spending more on military in their countries as a means to enrich their armed forces, this could lead to an arms race (Carnegie Tsinghua).

Unfortunately for US-Russian relations, on July 13th, 2018, twelve Russians were indicted for interfering with the 2016 US elections by hacking into the Democratic National Committee's (DNC) servers and emails, among other allegations against them. Those that were indicted were primarily agents of the Russian military intelligence agency, formerly known as the G.R.U., or the Main Directorate. This may have helped Trump to win the election unfairly and would be a sincere threat to federal elections in the future unless something is done to protect the system (NY Times). Many in Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, spoke out against Trump meeting with Putin in the coming days. They have concern that if Trump were to meet with Putin and discuss US-Russian relations and not condemn the interference with US democratic procedures, it would be too close to treason and a sign that Trump was actually working directly with the Russian government to establish his position as US President.

On July 16th, 2018, that meeting between Trump and Putin occurred regardless of those in Congress and their growing concerns. In this meeting, the two leaders spoke of trade relations among other issues regarding the two countries' unstable relationship. Putin apparently denied any allegations that Russia was involved in meddling with the 2016 US elections, and Trump openly accepted this statement. Trump went on to blame the US for the problems between the US and Russia, and in turn began pointing to the DNC and Hillary Clinton's missing servers and emails in which Trump believes proves

that both the DNC and Ms. Clinton are guilty, not he. Nevertheless, both Trump and Putin seemed to leave the meeting with optimism that bettering US and Russian relations is possible and practical, as it would benefit both.

Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Paul Ryan, responding to the meeting between the two Presidents saying, “There is no question that Russia interfered in our election and continues attempts to undermine democracy here and around the world. That is not just the finding of the American intelligence community but also the House Committee on Intelligence. The president must appreciate that Russia is not our ally. There is no moral equivalence between the United States and Russia, which remains hostile to our most basic values and ideals. The United States must be focused on holding Russia accountable and putting an end to its vile attacks on democracy,” (Guardian).

According to research data at MIT, in 2016, Russia exported around \$12.3B worth of products to the US, and imported around \$6.83B from the US. “In 2016 Russia exported \$269B, making it the 16th largest exporter in the world. During the last five years the exports of Russia have decreased at an annualized rate of -11.2%, from \$506B in 2011 to \$269B in 2016. The most recent exports are led by Crude Petroleum which represent 28.1% of the total exports of Russia, followed by Refined Petroleum, which account for 16%.” While the US, in 2016, “exported \$1.32T, making it the 2nd largest exporter in the world. During the last five years the exports of the United States have decreased at an annualized rate of -0.8%, from \$1.34T in 2011 to \$1.32T in 2016,” (MIT). However, the US, since former US President Obama, have maintained economic sanctions on Russia and Russian companies, preventing as much trade as possible. After

the talks between Trump and Putin, a market may open between the two countries allowing more travel and exchange of goods and services. In the meantime, it is unclear as to the future between these States (Bloomberg).

Sino-Soviet Split: The Sino-Soviet Split is what prompted the modern triangular relations between China, the US, and Russia, as a conflict over international relations. Initially it was a series of discussions between US Presidents Eisenhower, Nixon and his associates, Chinese Communists Leaders Peng Zhen and Mao Zedong, and USSR's Leader Khrushchev among others. In 1962, the split between China and the Soviets began when Mao spoke out against Khrushchev for backing down in the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Khrushchev openly held that Mao's policies could potentially lead to an all-out nuclear war. In 1965, Mao severed all relations between China and the USSR, and attempted total isolation for China's entirety. By 1970, Mao was left with a decision to attempt easing tensions growing between China and Russia, as well as internal issues of conflict in China. So, Mao decided to reach out to the US in order to mediate relations between China and the USSR. Finally, in 1971, Nixon's security adviser, Henry Kissinger, held a secret meeting with the Chinese government in Beijing. After catching wind of the meeting, the Soviets also held a meeting, but with Nixon himself. This series of events and meetings established the eschewed and tattered Triangle between the US, China, and Russia (National).

Since these events, each of the countries has perpetually sought their best interests, fought as friend and foe, while simultaneously maintained relative peace given the series of situations they have each been part of.

US-China Relations: China has many trading partners, the US is the largest. As of recently, Trump has proposed possible tariffs to be added to imports from China into the US, which could hurt relations between the two. However, China does hold a significant amount of US Treasury debt, in fact they hold the most for outside of the US countries (CNN). This is to say that each of these countries has a significant financial incentive to maintain good relations, yet according to the Cato Institute, there is no formal Fair Trade Agreement between the two. A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is necessary between US and China in order to better relations and trades. This comprehensive set of rules will give confidence to business, especially in areas of intellectual property and technology transfer. China is notorious for not keeping strong regulations on Chinese companies infringing on copyrights and IP. The same FTA could be a good step forward with Russia as well, but many in the US are in fear of Russia becoming more powerful if that were to happen. Nevertheless, contrary to what some believe, free trade benefits the citizenry more than it would the governments' political elite (Cato).

MIT stated, "In 2016 China exported \$2.27T, making it the largest exporter in the world. During the last five years the exports of China have increased at an annualized rate of 1.7%, from \$2.04T in 2011 to \$2.27T in 2016." Whereas, "In 2016 China imported \$1.23T, making it the 2nd largest importer in the world. During the last five years the imports of China have decreased at an annualized rate of -2.8%, from \$1.39T in 2011 to \$1.23T in 2016. The most recent imports are led by Crude Petroleum which represent 8.25% of the total imports of China." In 2016, the US imported from China around \$436B in goods and exported around \$122B in goods to China (MIT).

The Chinese have ramped up their militarization and continue to press forward into the South China Sea, against the wishes of the UN, the US, and other Western countries. Along with this growth of regional military presence, the US is equally showing a presence in the Sea as a means to attempt to thwart further possible aggression by the Chinese (Voa). So, economically, China and the US are tied together in a seemingly eternal marriage of trade, but when it comes to regional hegemony the two clash when it comes to determining who has legitimate authority and power. This rising tension further perpetuates the idea that a FTA may help ease the stress between the two. Yet, China's Communist President Xi Jinping, has also pushed his Asian continental series of high speed railways in what he has called "The One Belt, One Road, Initiative." According to a report at Axios, this is still a part of the Chinese Navy's military budget and growth, estimated anywhere between \$4T and \$8T, likened to a modern Silk Road (Axios).

Chinese-Russian Relations: China is Russia's biggest source of import and export. As of 2016, Russia imported around \$35.5B from China and exported nearly \$30.3B to China. The two, although share a border, have not had a longstanding good relationship, but since the US has increased the US military presence in the Asian Pacific and along the waters of China and Russia, China and Russia have increased cooperation in military drills as a means to show comradery against the US hegemony (Newsweek).

Not only has US military presence irked Russia and China alike, but the US' threats of tariffs on Chinese goods without a FTA could potentially lead to worsening relations between the US and China while strengthening those between China and Russia.

Equally, the economic sanctions on Russia by the US, are probably inadvertently assisting the relations between China and Russia since China is now Russia's biggest importer and exporter. If, indeed, it is verified on all levels that Russia mingled in the 2016 US Presidential elections, that could ensure severed ties between the US and Russia, providing more reason for Russia to join forces with China. Both China and Russia have worked together in the past, not only are they regionally close, but politically they are far more similar than the US is with either one of them. The Soviets joined China to fight against the Americans in both the Vietnam and Korean wars. The Chinese also joined the Americans to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan, showing the complexity of their relations (Iakal).

Concluding Statements: The timidly fluid relations among the US, China, and Russia, has been economically lucrative while concurrently the escalating militarization of each of these States has brought the world to attention over the fear of a potential World War far more catastrophic than any in the past. While China is gaining economically, some of their exploitations of trade tariffs and their expansion of military may become their Achilles heel. As for Russia, sanctions against them only helps benefit the elite, while hurting the country overall. The best bet to ensure bettered relations between the US and Russia is by setting up a secure FTA. An FTA should also be established with China in order to maintain good economic and political relations between the US and China. It would then behoove Russia and China to follow suit. The ongoing lingering force of the US military around the world will surely be one of the US' downfalls, as it blatantly instigates and infuriates countries all over, but it absolutely frustrates both Russia and

China especially within their own regions. The sure way to peace is the age old tale of continuing in free trade, having Justice systems that provide equality under the law, and cease the prowess of global military might or dominance. Countries that normalize positive trade relations between one another will find that the economic incentive is far more valuable than the harms caused by going to war with one another. Likened to a parable, wars between butchers and candlestick makers leaves the town with tarnished knives and a lack of light; but if the butcher and candlestick maker agree to trade instead of fight, their steel is strengthened and their lights shine brightest.

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