



U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

## **Hearing on “An Emerging China-Russia Axis? Implications for the United States in an Era of Strategic Competition”**

**Opening Statement of Chairman Carolyn Bartholomew  
March 21, 2019  
Washington, DC**

Thank you, Commissioner Kamphausen, and good morning, everyone.  
Thank you, particularly, to our witnesses for the time and effort they have  
put into their excellent testimonies.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of China-Russia  
diplomatic relations. Today, the leaders of both countries describe the  
relationship as the best it has ever been. China and Russia are both named in  
the 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy as “strategic competitors.” Their  
growing alignment is a concerning development with significant  
implications for the United States and our allies and partners.

We hope to learn from today's hearing why China and Russia are deepening their relationship, where they are collaborating and where they have differences, and what their relationship means for the United States.

The first panel discusses key areas of cooperation between Beijing and Moscow, focusing on strategic, defense, economic, and energy cooperation. China and Russia's growing strategic alignment is driven by a mutual understanding that their respective national interests are better served by closer cooperation. Both countries share similar anti-Western views and revisionist desires to create a new world order where they hold greater influence and status. Beijing and Moscow have prioritized defense ties through bolstering high-level contacts, defense industrial cooperation, and military exercises. Bilateral energy relations have also deepened; Russia has increased its oil and natural gas exports to China, while permitting Chinese investment in Russia's upstream energy markets.

In the second panel of today's hearing, we will examine the potential limits and barriers to cooperation between China and Russia, including ideological differences, limits to defense ties, and differing views on arms control.

Longstanding frictions in the relationship and emerging areas of disagreement, driven by Beijing's growing global ambitions, have the potential to limit cooperation. These include differing visions of the international system and increasingly asymmetrical economic ties. Questions remain about the extent of strategic trust between both militaries and many analysts view the defense relationship as unlikely to become a full-fledged alliance. On arms control, Beijing and Moscow's sharp divergence over the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty is representative of their larger differences on global arms control regimes.

Finally, the third panel examines current and future China-Russia interaction in Central Asia and Afghanistan, the Middle East and the Arctic. Beijing's inroads in Central Asia and the Arctic are eroding Russia's traditional dominance in these regions. Thus far, China and Russia have been careful to avoid encroaching on the other side's interests.

In Central Asia, the key regional dynamic is the decline of Russia's relative influence and China's emergence as the most influential country in the region. In the Arctic, Moscow relies on Beijing to help finance regional energy development, but Russia remains wary of China's long-term regional ambitions. In the Middle East, China and Russia have shared interests in supporting the Syrian and Iranian regimes, containing Islamist extremism, and reducing U.S. influence. The two countries have had limited coordination in the region to date, but this dynamic may change in the future.

Today's testimonies and transcript will be posted on our website, [www.uscc.gov](http://www.uscc.gov). Our next hearing, on U.S.- China Strategic Competition in Space, will be on April 25th.

Thank you, again, for joining us today. With that, we will proceed with our first panel.