



Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics

Bobo Lo

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Few relationships have been as misunderstood as the "strategic partnership" between Russia and China. Official rhetoric portrays it as the very model of international cooperation: Moscow and Beijing claim that ties are closer and warmer than at any time in history. In reality, however, the picture is highly ambiguous. While both sides are committed to multifaceted engagement, cooperation is complicated by historical suspicions, cultural prejudices, geopolitical rivalries, and competing priorities. For Russia, China is at once the focus of a genuine convergence of interests and the greatest long-term threat to its national security. For China, Russia is a key supplier of energy and weapons, but is frequently dismissed as a self-important power whose rhetoric far outstrips its real influence. *Axis of Convenience* cuts through the mythmaking and examines the Sino-Russian partnership on its own merits. It steers between the overblown interpretation of an anti-Western (particularly, anti-American) alliance and the complacent assumption that past animosities and competing agendas must always divide the two nations. Their relationship reflects a new geopolitics, one that eschews formal alliances in favor of more flexible and opportunistic arrangements. Ultimately, it is an axis of convenience driven by cold-eyed perceptions of the national interest. In evaluating the current state and future prospects of the relationship, Bobo Lo assesses its impact on the evolving strategic environments in Central and East Asia. He also analyzes the global implications of rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing, focusing in particular on the geopolitics of energy and Russia-China-U.S. triangularism.

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