

DOUGLAS E. SCHOEN AND MELIK KAYLAN

RETURN TO WINTER

RUSSIA, CHINA, AND THE NEW COLD WAR AGAINST AMERICA



THE UNITED STATES IS A NATION IN CRISIS.

WHILE WASHINGTON HAS BEEN RENDERED NEARLY IMPOTENT BY ONGOING PARTISAN WARFARE, WE FACE AN ARRAY OF NATIONAL-SECURITY THREATS THAT AMERICA SEEMS INCREASINGLY UNPREPARED, AND PERHAPS UNWILLING, TO HANDLE.

AMONG THESE, none is more formidable than the unprecedented partnership developing between Russia and China, two former foes drawn increasingly close together because of a confluence of geostrategic, political, and economic interests—all of which have a common theme of diminishing, subverting, or displacing American power.

While America's influence around the world recedes—in its military and diplomatic power, in its political leverage, in its economic might, and perhaps most dangerously, in the power and appeal of its ideas—Russia and China have seen their influence increase. From their support and interventions on behalf of rogue regimes like those in Iran, Syria, and North Korea to their aggressive use of cyber-warfare and

intelligence theft, Moscow and Beijing are playing the game for keeps. Meanwhile America, pledging to “leading from behind,” no longer does much leading at all.

In *Return to Winter*, Douglas E. Schoen and Melik Kaylan systematically chronicle the growing threat from the Russia-China alliance, and argue that only a rebirth of American leadership in the world can counter the corrosive impact of this antidemocratic alliance, which may soon threaten the peace and security of the world.

Return to Winter outlines how Russia and China are now operating against American and Western interests in nearly every conceivable area.

Russia working assiduously to build more nuclear facilities for Iran and ensuring Iran maintains “breakout potential” for a nuclear weapon—even as the West formalized its nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic.

Enabling the Syrian regime: making it possible for Assad to deploy chemical weapons against its own people, preventing U.S. interventions in Syria, forcing Obama to walk back his “red line,” and, finally, deploying Russian forces to protect the Assad regime.

Keeping the deranged North Korean regime afloat for years and enabling Pyongyang’s nuclear capabilities—which have grown to be far greater than previous American estimates.

Russia’s plans to destabilize and annex territories in Europe—from Eastern Ukraine to the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

China’s expansionism in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, where they are flouting international law and making claims that would put one of the world’s primary shipping lanes almost entirely under Chinese direction.

Establishing a “fifth theater” of Chinese and Russian state-owned firms and shell companies with headquarters around the world and in America’s backyard.

Waging an open cyber war against the West—including one of the largest breaches of federal-employee data in history, concerning at least 4 million current or former government workers.

Russia’s sale of potent S-300 missile-defense systems to Iran that would fortify Iran against retaliatory attacks if—or when—they break the nuclear agreement.

Beijing’s exponential increase military spending—particularly its naval forces—and aggressive upgrading its nuclear posture.

Russia’s 10-1 advantage over NATO countries in nonstrategic nukes.

That Russia even has a phrase, “fortochka Obama”—the “Obama window of opportunity”—for the sense that there will never be a better time to advance against America than right now.



TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW WITH DOUGLAS E. SCHOEN OR MELIK KAYLAN CONTACT:

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DOUGLAS E. SCHOEN AND MELIK KAYLAN

“[RETURN TO WINTER] PUTS ON THE TABLE WHAT MANY HAVE PREFERRED TO IGNORE OR WISH AWAY, NAMELY THAT OUR CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY IS CAUSING GRAVE AND SYSTEMIC HARM TO AMERICAN INTERESTS ALL AROUND THE WORLD.”

—JOHN BOLTON, FORMER UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS



DOUGLAS E. SCHOEN has been one of the most influential Democratic campaign consultants for more than 30 years. A founding partner and principal strategist for Penn, Schoen & Berland, he is widely recognized as one of the co-inventors of overnight polling. His political clients include former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Governor Evan Bayh of Indiana, and internationally, he has worked for the heads of states of over 15 countries. He is the author of many books, including *The End of Authority*, and is a regular contributor to the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and other newspapers and online publications as well as Fox News. He is based in New York City.

MELIK KAYLAN has written about international politics and culture for the *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, and *Forbes* for more than two decades. He has regularly reported from conflict zones throughout the world, from the North Korean border to the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the former Iron Curtain countries.



PRAISE FOR *RETURN TO WINTER*:

“[SCHOEN AND KAYLAN] NOTE THAT A NEW COLD WAR HAS ERUPTED, AND THAT WE ARE THE ONLY ONES NOT FIGHTING.”

—ANDERS ÅSLUND, PETERSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS
FORMER ECONOMIC ADVISER TO THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT

“A WAKE-UP CALL FOR THE RESURRECTION OF AMERICAN STRATEGIC, VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN THE FACE OF A GROWING GLOBAL CRISIS FOR LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC STATES.”

—ALLEN B. WEST, LIEUTENANT COLONEL, U.S. ARMY, RETIRED (1982–2004)
MEMBER OF 112TH U.S. CONGRESS (2011–2013)

PRAISE FOR *END OF AUTHORITY*

“[SCHOEN] SOUNDS THE ALARM ON THE RISING PUBLIC DISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT GLOBALLY, AND OFFERS HIS IDEAS FOR REBUILDING CONFIDENCE—NOT ONLY IN AMERICA, BUT AROUND THE WORLD.”

—WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON

PRAISE FOR *HOPELESSLY DIVIDED*

“SCHOEN OFFERS A REAL-WORLD ANALYSIS OF WHY THIS IS HAPPENING AND WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT. HOPELESSLY DIVIDED REVEALS JUST HOW DYSFUNCTIONAL WASHINGTON HAS BECOME.”

—MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG



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Q & A

IT IS HARD TO THINK OF A SINGLE SUCCESS OF OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY.

WHAT DOES RUSSIA'S INTERVENTION IN SYRIA PORTEND FOR THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE REGION?

Russia is now the pre-eminent power in the Middle East, and America has abandoned its traditional allies in pursuit of an ill-considered, strategically disastrous relationship with Iran. Russia has turned Assad's Syria into a client state, successfully seeded Iran's nuclear program, targeted American-backed militias, and is cutting deals with erstwhile American allies including Saudi Arabia and Egypt who are keenly aware of the declining regional influence of the United States.

RUSSIA AND CHINA HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL STAND IN THE WAY OF UN INVESTIGATIONS INTO IRAN'S RECENT TESTING OF A BALLISTIC MISSILE CAPABLE OF DELIVERING A NUCLEAR WEAPON. WHAT DOES THIS SUGGEST ABOUT RUSSIA AND CHINA'S VIEW OF THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL THAT THEY HELPED BROKER?

The greatest blunder of Obama's presidency may have been his mistaken belief that the Iranians, and their Russian and Chinese backers, were ever negotiating in good faith on the nuclear deal. It is now plain to everyone that the deal was a play for time so that Iran could reach breakout capacity, and Russian and Chinese obstructionism as well as ludicrous capitulations by Obama and John Kerry that allow

the Iranians to "self-inspect" certain sites, will ensure that Iran will absolutely be able to develop and deploy a nuclear weapon at any point in the near future. Further, Obama's willingness to be played for a fool by Iranian, Russian, and Chinese diplomats in order to score political points at home has confirmed the suspicions of our enemies that we have no long-term strategy and are unwilling to protect core American interests.

WHAT DANGER DOES CHINA'S TERRITORIAL CLAIMS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA POSE TO INTERNATIONAL TRADE—AND PEACE IN THE PACIFIC MORE BROADLY?

China's neighbors clearly understand the imminent economic and military threat that China poses: Japan is remilitarizing, South Korea is on high alert, and the Southeast Asian countries are pushing hard for the Trans-Pacific Partnership so that they have easier access to the American economy. The only player missing is the United States, which needs to step up and actively preserve peace in the Pacific.

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HAVE THE WEST'S SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA HURT ENOUGH TO CURB FURTHER AGGRESSION IN EUROPE?

Clearly not. Putin can wait out the sanctions, which must be approved by an EU consensus which is rapidly shattering. But he continues to occupy eastern Ukraine and wage war against the Ukrainian people through separatist proxies, while the West does nothing to arm the Ukrainian military so it can defend itself against Russian tanks and missiles.

"THE CYBER GAP TODAY IS AS DANGEROUS AS THE MISSILE GAP WAS DURING THE COLD WAR"

WHAT ARE PUTIN AND XI'S LONG-TERM GLOBAL AMBITIONS? HOW DO THEY FIT TOGETHER?

Simple: a total rollback of American influence around the world. Both China and Russia stand to benefit enormously if America abdicates global leadership and ceases to be willing or able to defend international norms. Unfortunately, that is precisely what is happening.

OBAMA VETOED THE 2016 DEFENSE SPENDING BILL. DESPITE THEIR INCREASED DEFENSE SPENDING, WE STILL SPEND SEVERAL TIMES MORE THAN RUSSIA AND CHINA ON DEFENSE. DO WE REALLY NEED TO SPEND MORE?

It's not just about more spending, it's about smarter spending that meets new and emerging national security threats. We've spent trillions learning how to fight enemies like the Taliban and al-Qaeda, but they don't show up to battle in Russian tanks or Chinese jets. We need to be ready for the next generation of Russian and Chinese military technology and capabilities, but experts are already warning that we

are falling behind. Our military leaders have warned that right now, the only way to defeat Russia would be to deploy the entire American military in Europe, something we just cannot do.

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HOW WILL HISTORY VIEW THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S LEGACY OF "LEAD FROM BEHIND" FOREIGN POLICY?

Globally disastrous.

A list of Obama's most catastrophic foreign policy failures makes this obvious: Russia has invaded Ukraine; Putin has resurrected the Russian imperial project; Syria has collapsed; Iraq has collapsed; Libya has collapsed; ISIS is reestablishing a caliphate; the Taliban is resurgent; Iran is dominating the Middle East and on track to get nuclear weapons; millions of refugees and migrants are fleeing the Middle East and North Africa; China is extending its borders; North Korea is more aggressive than ever; the EU is on the verge of collapse; the global economy remains dangerously fragile and volatile; American allies are turning away from us and preparing for the worst.

Indeed, it is hard to think of a single success of Obama's foreign policy.

WHAT CAN THE NEXT AMERICAN PRESIDENT DO TO TURN THE TIDE AGAINST THE RUSSIA-CHINA ALLIANCE?

A good first step is to acknowledge that it exists. Russia and China are open about their alliance and their intentions to create a "multi-polar world" by rolling back American power, but our leaders insist on treating them as good-faith actors who can be reasoned and negotiated with. This is delusional and suicidal. Our next president must address the threat head-on, and make the case for urgent action and a robust response to Congress and the American people. But Putin and Xi will not be sitting on their hands between now and 2017, and our next president will likely face an even graver, more difficult set of challenges to overcome.

"CHINA AND RUSSIA STAND TO BENEFIT ENORMOUSLY IF AMERICA ABDICATES GLOBAL LEADERSHIP"

AN EXCERPT FROM

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“THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD FEEL THEY CAN ACT AS IF THE UNITED STATES DOESN’T EXIST.”

IN APRIL 2015, the Obama administration announced a preliminary agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran to limit Iran’s nuclear program, allowing Iran to keep its nuclear facilities open under strict limits. But those limits would be in place for only the first decade of the accord, and even under these, the only assurance that the Americans could provide was that Tehran could not “race for a nuclear weapon in less than a year.” In short, the agreement all but guaranteed that Iran would soon have a nuclear capability. The agreement was reached through the administration’s willful disregard of stubborn facts about the Tehran regime’s behavior and intentions.

Nuclear experts warn that the deal will be impossible to verify, given Iran’s history of non-compliance with similar agreements.¹ Ray Takeyh, an Iran expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, notes that Iran will enjoy “a sizeable enrichment capacity and none of its facilities will be shuttered as was once contemplated.” And Takeyh points out that the 10-year “sunset clause”

is the real key to understanding the agreement. After ten years, he says, “all essential restriction on Iran’s enrichment infrastructure” will expire, thereby allowing Iran to develop highly advanced nuclear capabilities.² “What is often missed,” he says, “is that Iran’s ingenious strategy is to advance its program incrementally and not provocatively.”

“IN SHORT, THE AGREEMENT ALL BUT GUARANTEED THAT IRAN WOULD SOON HAVE A NUCLEAR CAPABILITY.”

Skeptics of the deal could hardly be encouraged by the increase in provocative behavior from Iran since the deal was announced. In April, Iranian Revolutionary Guard ships fired warning shots and then intercepted and seized a Marshall Islands vessel in the Persian Gulf, only days after Iranian patrol ships surrounded an American vessel.³ The United States directed a

destroyer toward the area, along with patrol aircraft.⁴ And the Obama administration's reassurances to Israel about its continued security were belied when Ayatollah Khamenei, discussing the Iran deal shortly after its completion during a speech in Tehran, warned that "Israel [...] will not see the end of these 25 years."⁵

Iran's aggression in the Gulf mirrors that of China's activities in the South China Sea. In fact, China has enabled much of Iran's naval activities, in addition to providing other military assistance: "Over the years, China has supplied Iran with anti-ship cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, combat aircraft, fast attack patrol vessels, and technology to produce ballistic missiles and chemical weapons," writes Tzvi Kahn, a Senior Policy Analyst for the Foreign Policy Initiative. Iran's naval commander visited China to discuss broader military cooperation shortly before the incidents in the Gulf.⁷

Preparing for both Iranian and Chinese naval threats is straining the U.S. Navy's current force structure.⁸

**"IRAN'S AGGRESSION IN THE GULF
MIRRORS THAT OF CHINA'S ACTIVITIES
IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA."**

At the same time, Russia, long a partner of Tehran's, has just announced the sale of an \$800 million, S-300 missile-defense system to Iran. Coming just as Iran began formalizing the nuclear deal with the United States, the missile-defense sale is illustrative. It suggests that Iran is emboldened by the arrangements it has made with Washington, while also preparing itself, defensively, for any consequences of breaching the

agreement—especially since the Americans insist that the "military option" remains "on the table" should Iran violate the terms. Putin just made it easier for Iran to do so.

"That deal represents a lot of money to Russia and a system Iran wants," said Russian expert Tom Nichols, a professor at the Naval War College. "From their perspective, why bother waiting? What price would be paid if they do it? This is what happens when other countries in the world feel they can act as if the United States doesn't exist." The missile-defense deal, he continued, was "yet another moment where Russia and Iran underscore the reality that they can do whatever they like, unconstrained by a disengaged United States."⁹

The S-300 sale reflects a deepening alliance between Moscow and Tehran that has developed over certain shared goals, all of which revolve, in some form or another, around checking American influence in the Middle East and around the world. Thus, Moscow has worked assiduously to help Tehran get closer to where it can reach its "breakout" nuclear capacity—after which point, a whole new reality will take shape. That explains why Tehran has dragged out the talks so long; time is its ally, and the Russians are helping them build more nuclear facilities.

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