

Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats

Hearing on “China’s Rapid Political and Economic Advances in Central Asia and Russia”

Rep. William R. Keating- Opening Statement

- Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding today’s timely hearing.
- I would like to note that our hearts and prayers are with the Boston Marathon victims and families today.
- For this reason, I will need to depart the hearing upon delivering my remarks.
- Both China and Russia have a long history within Central Asia. This history can both be viewed through at times, an adversarial lens and more recently, through the framework of an opportune partnership.
- In fact, the seeming success of the recent China-Russia Summit highlights the dynamic nature of the modern Sino-Russian relationship, which has both domestic and international implications for both countries.
- On the international stage, Beijing and Moscow have been actively leveraging their partnership to expand their influence over global affairs, particularly on the United Nations Security Council, where both Nations vetoed resolutions condemning the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria.
- Further, the two countries have been working to coordinate their efforts on the establishment of a new international lending institution to serve as an alternative to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

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- At home, the Chinese benefit from the domestic perception that they are recognized and respected by a major player like Russia while also expanding their outside energy sources.
- In turn, the Chinese selected Russia for Xi Jinping’s first visit abroad to grant credibility to an increasingly belligerent Russian leadership whose relationship with the West has deteriorated since the re-election of President Putin.
- At its foundation, energy and security agreements have drawn these two regional powers into what seems to be a relatively positive working relationship.
- In this way, their role in Central Asia is not only based on proximity, but on a natural need to ensure the stability of their neighborhood, given that the Central Asian States only established their sovereignty after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.
- For this reason, despite differences between Russia, China and the United States, it is in the best interest of all three countries to work together.
- Although both the Chinese and Russians have strong historical, security and trade links to Central Asia, the United States can also provide a stabilizing influence through increased trade and democracy-building initiatives to ensure the durability of future investments.
- Kicking out foreign NGOs that work on rule of law and democratization has been an unfortunate trend in the region and does not necessarily bode well for US business interests.

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- Without the basic foundations of government being taught and exercised, the region will be prone to greater instability and chaos.
- This being said, Russia and China must display their own willingness to provide more freedoms, services and information to their people.
- Finally, this subcommittee has been examining the potential for and uncertainty surrounding the rise of extremism in Central Asia following the drawdown of troops in Afghanistan. The US, China and Russia have been working together on security matters since 9/11, and I believe that this cooperation should be maintained in a manner that is consistent with our own values in the US. This includes cooperation on other transnational challenges such as narcotics, HIV prevention, and trafficking in persons.
- In conclusion, there is no doubt that this is a dynamic region that holds great potential, but this potential can only be harnessed through a willingness to work with the United States and moreover, the West.
- I look forward to circling back with you, Mr. Chairman on this subject and in the meantime, will turn to Congressman Lowenthal who has graciously agreed to act as the Ranking Member for the remainder of the hearing.
- Thank you, Mr. Lowenthal and thank you, Mr. Chairman.