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**STAGES AND PROBLEMS OF RUSSIAN-CHINESE
INTERACTION**

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Abstract

This article is aimed at considering stages and problems of interaction of different types between residents of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation at different historic periods. The authors cover the following research questions: firstly, to provide the description of stages of Chinese-Russian interaction at different historic periods, secondly, to discover the traces of economic and political cooperation between 2 countries in culture and language, thirdly, to investigate modern perception of inter-regional interaction by Russians. Three major periods can be distinguished in the history of relations between China and Russia: the period of the relation formation between the Chinese and Russian empires, the period of Soviet-Chinese relations and the modern period that began after the collapse of the USSR. Each of these periods has its own specifics, while being the basis for expanding bilateral contacts in subsequent years. Clearly, since 17th c. those three periods have differently, but constantly contributed to the mutual perception of both. During this time, between Russia and China there were periods overshadowed by confrontation and even a complete break. At the turn of the 20th-21st centuries, the parties managed to bring the dialogue to a strategic partnership. Nevertheless, among the inhabitants and the elite of Russia, a negative attitude to the processes of bilateral cooperation is also noticeable.

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Keywords: Inter-regional cooperation, historic periods, interaction, intercultural communication



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1. Introduction

The problems of inter-regional cooperation tend to be quite often a subject of interdisciplinary analysis. In very general terms it can be explained by continuing conceptual debate on the correlation of the global and the regional in social processes and phenomena nowadays.

China and Russia are two parts of the world that share a number of points of convergence. As scientists underline, China is an old civilization with a rich and diverse cultural heritage which constitute a priceless contribution to humanity (Rwantabagu, 2020). Russia can enjoy the same.

In the framework of this article, it is proposed to consider the concept of inter-regional cooperation between people living in the south of the Russian Far East and people who live in the north-eastern provinces of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The choice of these territories is primarily determined by their border location. Over the course of 400 years of history, countries have accumulated rich experience in cooperation. During this time, between Russia and China there were periods overshadowed by confrontation and even a complete break. At the turn of the 20th-21st centuries, the parties managed to bring the dialogue to a new level.

2. Problem Statement

Scientists pay lots of attention to inter-regional cooperation (Pawera et al., 2020; Yuniarto, 2019). At present, inter-regional cooperation should be considered as a combination of local and global (Wang, 2019). We believe that at present there are no insurmountable contradictions between regional and global cooperation. Global cooperation does not lead to a loss of cultural cohesion in the region, it gives access to a cosmopolitan culture, which can provide the basis for a new development of local culture. 'Global is a concept built on the local, and the local is formulated in response to the global' (Wang, 2019, p. 3). However, the articulation of regional interaction can create tension between local communities and global integration. Such a dual positioning of inter-regional cooperation, which is a combination of local and global, is a key feature of the mentality of residents of the Far East region.

3. Research Questions

The article supposes to cover the following research questions: firstly, to provide the description of stages of Chinese-Russian interaction at different historic periods, secondly, to discover the traces of economic and political cooperation between 2 countries in culture and language, thirdly, to investigate modern perception of inter-regional interaction by Russians.

4. Purpose of the Study

This article is aimed at considering the concept of inter-regional cooperation between residents of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation at different historic periods.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study is determined by principles of historicism and objectivity. A set of traditional methods of historical research (problem-chronological, and comparative-historical) was applied in the work. The use of these methods allowed not only to study thoroughly political and socio-economic development of countries under discussion during the old and modern times, but also to determine the factors that had a positive and negative impact on strengthening the intercultural interaction of peoples. The authors also used such general scientific and linguistic research methods as hypothetical-deductive in the collection and generalization of empirical data; context analysis method for explaining explicit and implicit manifestations of interaction; method of etymological analysis.

6. Findings

Three major periods can be distinguished in the long process of relations between China and Russia: the period of the relation formation between the Chinese and Russian empires (17th - early 20th centuries), the period of Soviet-Chinese relations (20th century) and the contemporary period that started after the USSR collapse (late 20th to the present).

In the 17th - early 20th centuries, there was the formation of diplomatic, trade and economic relations between countries and the actual acquaintance of peoples with each other's culture. Ignorance of the features of etiquette, traditions and everyday life made it difficult to sign the Russian-Chinese agreements of the period in question. Geopolitical factors determined by the weakening of China in the 19th century should also be attributed to difficulties influenced by the expansionist policies of European states and Russia's attempts to resist the growing influence of European countries in the region. Despite the existing problems, trade relations developed between China and Russia. In the 18th century, the centre of foreign trade relations of Russia has moved from the city of Nerchinsk (the centre of bilateral trade in the 17th century) to the city of Kyakhta. By the middle of the 18th century, Kyakhta accounted for more than 60 % of the trade turnover with Pacific countries. Russia exported furs, cloth, iron products, and leather. Silk fabrics, tea, sugar, and tobacco came from China to Russia. The high level of interstate economic dialogue was also evidenced by the creation in 1895 of the Russian-Chinese Bank and the development of railway communication with China. The key internal routes of communication of the Far East at the end of the 19th -beginning of the 20th centuries were the Chinese East and Ussuri railways, as well as the waterways of the Amur River Basin.

The ethnic population of the Far East was dominated by the Russian population (about 68 %). Gradually, Chinese entrepreneurs were appearing in the Far East of Russia. One of the famous figures of that time was Khabarovsk merchant Tifontai (Ji Fengtai), a Chinese by birth, in 1893 accepted Russian citizenship and after 2 years became a merchant of the 1st guild. The activity of Tifontai was multifaceted: trade, construction of houses and factories. The intensification of trade and economic cooperation contributed to building trust between the peoples of northeast China and the south of the Russian Far East.

On the map of the Khabarovsk Territory, toponyms of Manchurian and Chinese origin are marked. These names were recorded by cartographers and travellers from the 15th century to the 20th century inclusive. Chinese geographical names appeared in the Russian Far East in the middle of the 19th century, after the arrival of the Chinese here. A small number of Chinese place names are recorded on the Amur,

namely on the left bank of the river. Basically, these toponyms designated small settlements, for example, Xu-san-in, Xu-lun-lu, Xu-la-sy. However, along the Ussuri River from Khabarovsk to its upper tributaries, you can find a much larger number of place names of Chinese origin. For example, some of them designate the tributaries of the Bikin and Iman rivers. Even more Chinese hydronyms are found at the confluence of the Daubikhe and Ulakhe rivers in the south and southeast (Soloviev, 1975). Most of them appeared in the XIX-XX centuries and have a pronounced nomenclature, descriptive character. Here are a few examples: Antunka is a mountain in the region named after Lazo of the Khabarovsk Territory. The name of Chinese origin, formed by components: an - a house, a hut; tun - a small village. Antun means a small village; Beitsukha is the right tributary of the Bikin River in the Bikinsky district of the Khabarovsk Territory. The name is Chinese, formed from Beizuhe - the Northern Mountain River (Soloviev, 1975).

Since the early 1920s a new period began in the development of international relations. A new state appeared on the political map of the world - Soviet Russia, and then the USSR. The foreign policy of the Soviet state was aimed at solving 2 problems: first, to support the national liberation movement in countries seeking independence, to spread communist ideas, and secondly, to pursue a policy of peaceful coexistence with countries with different political systems.

The Soviet government announced the cancellation of previously concluded unequal treaties with China. Soviet diplomats, guided by new principles of the state's foreign policy, at the request of Chinese leader Sun Yat-sen, Soviet military and political advisers were sent to South China. The countries have restored diplomatic relations. In 1924, an agreement was signed on general principles in solving various issues. In the Soviet Far East, decrees of Soviet power extended to the Chinese. So, by decision of the IV Khabarovsk Regional Congress of Soviets of the Far East (April 1918), Chinese peasants living in the region received land plots for free. This testified to the need to maintain communication between the Chinese and Soviet peoples, even in conditions of aggravation of interstate relations in the pre-war and wartime.

After World War II, the USSR made the main bet in the Far East on the People's Republic of China formed on October 1, 1949. Period 1949 - 1956 became the 'golden age' in Soviet-Chinese relations. The USSR recognised the PRC and established diplomatic relations with it on October 2, 1949. The Soviet government donated to China the Chinese Changchun Railway, the Soviet share in joint stock companies and all the property of the Dalniy port (Dalian), the Port Arthur (Lushun) military base, with all the infrastructure and weapons. As a result, China has established an industrial base in the Northeast. The Soviet state also provided the PRC with powerful military assistance in providing the PLA with technical equipment, training military personnel, and organizing a number of large military production facilities in China. The USSR provided the PRC with a preferential loan of \$ 300 million and assumed obligations for the construction of large industrial enterprises in the territory of the neighbouring country. By the mid-1950s economic cooperation between the USSR and China reached its highest point.

After the 20th Congress of the CPSU (1956), there existed a cooling in relations between the Soviet Union and the PRC, which subsequently led to a complete break in interstate relations. During the Soviet-Chinese confrontation of the 1960s - 1970s the border territories of China and the USSR developed in isolation from each other. The implementation of the Cultural Revolution policy in China led to the resettlement of the engineering elite friendly from the USSR from the northeast. In the minds of peoples,

an image of the enemy in relation to each other began to take shape. Since that time, the famous words from the Moscow-Beijing song “Russian with Chinese are brothers forever” have lost their meaning.

Real changes in Chinese and Soviet relations occurred after the death of Mao Zedong. By 1982, the volumes of Soviet-Chinese border trade had increased, and the economic and cultural interaction of citizens of China and the Soviet Union had resumed. In the 1980s - early 1990s trade centres appeared on the Soviet-Chinese border, they were the cities of Manzhouli, Hunchun, Heihe, Suifenhe, and Ussuriysk.

A catalyst for the normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations by the end of the 1980s. was initiated by the leader of the People's Republic of China Deng Xiaoping "The Policy of Reforms and Openness." The USSR and the PRC were united by the initiation of democratic transformations and market reforms. After a visit to China by a Soviet delegation headed by M.S. Gorbachev (May 1989), the parties determined the principles of bilateral cooperation for the near future. The basis of bilateral relations was a mutual desire to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries. During this period, interethnic dialogue began to be restored in the Soviet-Chinese border area. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 slowed down the implementation of the outlined plans to expand trade, economic and socio-cultural interaction. We cannot ignore the fact that the PRC was the first in the international arena to recognize Russia as the successor to the USSR and to establish equal relations with the Russian Federation. By 1994, Russian-Chinese relations began to be characterized by stability, and the decisions made were of a long-term nature. Jiang Zemin, the PRC leader, described the relationship between Russia and China as a "constructive partnership."

By the beginning of the 21st century, trade and economic cooperation between countries has developed both at the state level and at the regional level. The Chinese side assigned a special place in the development of this direction to the north-eastern provinces, and the Russian side - to the subjects of the south of the Far East and the Trans-Baikal Territory. An additional impetus was given to cross-border trade, its volume amounted to almost a quarter of the total volume of trade between Russia and China. Along with solving economic problems, the leaders of both countries tried in this way to solve the issue of preserving the population in the border areas. Considering this direction as promising, the State Council of the PRC adopted several significant documents that allowed China to formulate the rules and conditions for border trade with Russia in the cities of Manzhouli, Hunchun, Heihe and Suifenhe. The Russian side did not pay close attention to resolving this issue in the 1990s. This caused misunderstanding both on the part of the PRC and on the part of the Russian Far East. Already at that time, in the Far East of Russia, one could hear accusations against the residents of the PRC for plundering Russian territories (Petrunina et al., 2019).

Thus, at the end of the 20th century restoration and strengthening of dialogue between peoples in the border areas created the conditions for the restoration of friendly relations between China and Russia at the interstate level and the transition to the level of strategic partnership. Of utmost importance for the long-term relations between China and Russia was the final settlement of border issues, which ended by 2004.

Nowadays, territories of the Russian Far East are engaged in the fostering of international relations in the socio-political, economic and humanitarian spheres with foreign partners, including China. Prospects for expanding these relations are defined in the 'Programme for the development of Russian-Chinese cooperation in trade, economic and investment spheres in the Russian Far East until 2025'. A significant vector of activity in the Khabarovsk Territory is the strengthening of relations with China. Such a policy is

of interest to both parties and occupies one of the key places in the foreign policy strategies of both countries.

Over the past decades, China has been steadily increasing its economic potential, therefore, the leadership of the Russian Far East seeks to propose conditions for cooperation with Chinese partners that would strengthen interaction and provide favourable conditions for attracting Chinese investors to the economy of the Far East. Maintaining a high intensity of bilateral relations with the PRC is largely facilitated by the annual Plan of Events between the Khabarovsk Territory (part of the Russian Far East) and Heilongjiang Province, which includes the development of cross-border road transport, participation in exhibitions and fairs, cooperation in the field of sports, ecology, culture and tourism, archival and library business. Over the past decade, Chinese investors have been actively involved in the development of territories of advanced social and economic development in the Russian Far East. An additional impetus was developed in the region of the woodworking industry. In Amursk, where the pulp and paper mill began operating in 1967, it is planned to intensify the work of the large timber processing 'Far East Center for Deep Processing of Wood' with the involvement of Chinese investors from the Jiamusi Pulp and Paper Mill (Heilongjiang Province, China). This project was developed by Dallesprom OJSC and the Russian-Chinese Investment Fund, which represents the RFP-group timber industry holding back in 2002 (Petrunina, 2016). In the field of woodworking, cooperation between the Khabarovsk Territory and the Chinese province of Jilin is being strengthened. Along with traditional investment projects in the mining industry and agriculture of the Khabarovsk Territory, Chinese business is involved in the construction and modernization of transport infrastructure (the Vostochny Bypass highway of Khabarovsk highway, the construction of an airport, and the modernization of the port on the Amur River where river-sea vessels can enter) and others). On the one hand, the close attention of Chinese business to these projects is caused by the desire to intensify cross-border trade and economic ties, and on the other, to accelerate the export to China of products grown or manufactured in the Khabarovsk Territory by Chinese workers. To get acquainted with the traditions and lifestyle of Russians and Chinese, the parties conduct various events. In 2016, the 'Russian-Chinese Friendship Festival' was held for the first time in Khabarovsk, which attracted about 400 participants. In March 2019, the traditional annual International Festival 'New Names of the Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region – 2019' took place, where contests for the youth of the 2 countries were supposed. In July 2019, athletes of the 2 countries from the border areas met in the framework of the Russian-Chinese festival 'Path of Friendship'.

Knowledge of each other's cultural traditions could help strengthen the interethnic dialogue between the Russians and the Chinese living in the border areas. A large contribution to solving this issue is given to literature and poetry, where one can find evidence of peaceful coexistence of peoples, even, for example, in the difficult years of Soviet-Chinese relations. In the 1990s, Chinese scientist and translator Li Yanlin began to write poetry in Russian and became a member of the Amur Writing Organization and the Union of Russian Writers. At that time, an almost century-old tradition of using special imagery in Amur poetry related to the motive of friendship between the 2 countries was drawn up. Many of Li Yanling's works are looking for an answer to the question, which contributes to the maintenance of friendly relations between the two peoples living for centuries on adjacent territories (Kireeva, 2014). Indeed, despite the possible ideological or political contradictions between states, the Russians and the Chinese manage to build

"bridges of friendship", overcoming misunderstandings and disagreements. One of the most recurring images in the works of regional poets is the image of the border river Amur (the Chinese call the river the Heilongjiang River), which unites peoples and contributes to the achievement of harmony in relations between Russians and Chinese.

The visible positive results of the economic and sociocultural interaction between the Russian Far East and the constituent entities of the PRC in the views of the Far East are levelled by not unfounded fears about a possible loss of control over Russian territories. Even the expansion of intercultural contacts between countries causes an ambiguous attitude among the population of the Russian Far East.

In the Russian liberal-minded environment of politicians and economists, there is a negative attitude towards China. Representatives of this stratum of society believe that only the Russian people have the right to be engaged in the development of the Russian Far East, the inhabitants of the PRC cannot invest resources in the development of the Far Eastern territories. The main reasoning behind this attitude towards the PRC is the idea that the appearance of Chinese in the Russian Far East will significantly affect the demographic balance in favour of China, which will contribute to the strengthening of China's territorial and political claims towards Russia. In Russian media resources (especially the blogosphere), the Chinese are labelled as strangers on Russian territory. An analysis of empirical data showed that the main means of negative positioning of the Chinese presence in the Russian Far East are negatively connotated lexical units, linguistic means with hyperbolic semantics, lexemes with the semantics of a "possible" bleak future, a detailed description of the actions of the PRC representatives in a negative context.

Nevertheless, we can admit a friendly attitude towards the Chinese on media resources. Observing the intensive economic development of a neighbouring country, many visitors to Russian networks highly appreciate the successes that the Chinese have achieved and express their positive attitude towards China, calling the Chinese very positive and successful people (Huiqin, 2014). 62 % people of Russia consider China as a friendly state for the Russian Federation. The poll by the Russian Public Opinion Foundation also said that 55 per cent of Russian respondents believe that China's strengthening does not threaten Russia's interests (Habarovskij kraj narastit tovarooborot s Kitaem, 2018).

The interest of Russians in intercultural communication is manifested in a growing desire to study the Chinese language and ancient Chinese philosophy, addiction to Chinese food, in the form of marriages between representatives of both countries, etc.

7. Conclusion

The inter-state relationship and regional cross-border contacts between Russia and China have been developing for centuries and have become more intensive for some last decades. Since 17th c. three periods have differently, but constantly contributed to the mutual perception of both nations. During the centuries, between Russia and China there were periods overshadowed by confrontation and even a complete break. At the turn of the 20th-21st centuries, the parties managed to bring the dialogue to a new level. China and Russia have moved to a strategic partnership, and among the public of the 2 countries, interest in each other is constantly growing, trade and economic cooperation is developing, contacts in the field of science and culture are expanding. Nevertheless, among the inhabitants and the elite of Russia, a negative attitude to

the processes of bilateral cooperation is also noticeable. Some representatives of Russian society see the growth of intercultural contacts as even a threat to the Far Eastern regional identity.

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