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AmurCon 2021: International Scientific Conference**BORDER COOPERATION OF RUSSIA AND CHINA IN  
REPRESENTATION OF THE FAR-EASTERN YOUTH**Svetlana Khalikova (a)\*  
\*Corresponding author

(a) State and municipal administration and service law, Far-East Institute of Management – Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, 33 Muravieva-Amurskogo St., Khabarovsk, Russia, halikovas@yandex.ru

**Abstract**

Border regions have several features and affect the formation of life strategies of the population living in them. Border regions from the point of view of state development as a whole perform two main functions: barrier - protection of sovereignty and national security and contact - interaction with the neighbouring states. From these positions, an analysis was carried out. Young people have several concerns about China's threats, but most view the neighbouring country as a partner. The contact function was considered through the prism of models of sociocultural interaction: acculturation, cooperation, cognitive, educational, role training, consumer, migration. The author separated another model based on answers of respondents that are not provided in the framework of the above typology - getting medical and beauty services. Within each model, an analysis of youth participation, adoption or rejection of the corresponding behaviour model and the use of opportunities of the border areas was carried out. Undoubtedly, the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic affected cross-border cooperation. However, the development and introduction of digital innovations and the use of new interaction tools allow us to continue the active cross-border cooperation, despite the isolationist measures at both countries. The author concludes that cross-border cooperation is reflected in the perceptions of young people and is an integral element of their behaviour and consciousness.

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## 1. Introduction

The processes of globalization and regionalization taking place in the modern world have led to activation of the cross-border cooperation, which stimulates the comprehensive and sustainable development of the border subjects of the Russian Federation. Development of the border regions largely depends on the relations developing with the neighbouring state. The Russian-Chinese cooperation has a stable trend in different sectors and areas of development of the territories. Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences affect Russian-Chinese relations, being, on the one hand, a destabilizing factor, and on the other, contributing to the search for new forms and tools of interaction. So, for the first time in history, the volume of Russian-Chinese trade overcame the mark of \$100 billion in the first three quarters of 2021, which is 29.8% more compared to the same period in 2020 (Ob"em..., 2021). Over the past two to three years, a serious breakthrough has occurred in the online trading market, which made it possible to achieve such results. The introduction of digital innovations and the use of new interaction tools allow us to continue active cross-border cooperation, despite isolationist measures by both countries.

The Russian regions bordering China are mostly part of the Far Eastern Federal District. The Far East of Russia, representing the largest federal district, has specificity compared to the other regions due to both, natural-climatic, geographical, economic, political, and social characteristics. Belonging to the actively developing Asia-Pacific region determines the increased attention and priority of development of the Far East. The provisions of the National Program for the Socio-Economic Development of the Far East for the Period until 2024 and for the Future until 2035, adopted in 2020 (Natsional'naya programma..., 2020), confirm this fact.

However, the effectiveness of the taken measures largely depends on the possibilities for their implementation in the region. Negative trends in many indicators in the demographic, socio-economic and other spheres attract the attention of both the governing structures and the scientific community with the aim of scientific reflection and the search for productive solutions.

## 2. Problem Statement

The potential of the Far East is determined by its economic and geographical location near China's fast-growing market, as well as the natural resource reserves, availability of production capacities, and the key location in the natural transport corridor between Asia and Europe. The territories bordering China: the Primorsk territory, the Khabarovsk Territory, the Amur region, the Jewish autonomous region, the Trans-Baikal territory, the Chita region open up opportunities for international Russian-Chinese cooperation and accelerate the development of the territories of these regions. Border cooperation contributes to overcoming the periphery and outskirts of the border territories and provides opportunities to solve many geopolitical problems (Vendina, 2019) However, migration outflow of the population, with the already low population density, insufficient level of provision of transport and social infrastructure, the difficulty of attracting investments to the Far East, etc., hinder the development of territories (Ob utverzhdenii..., 2020). Competent and active use of the opportunities of cross-border cooperation will give an impetus to the sustainable development of the Russian regions and realize the goals set by the President of the Russian Federation.

### 3. Research Questions

Cross-border cooperation is one of the early forms of interaction between the border regions. The border region is considered by the authors from different positions. On the one hand, this is a territory that regularly interacts with the border territories of neighbouring states at the level of economic, cultural, legal ties, on the principles of relative complementarity of potential and resources, respecting mutual interests (Bilchak, 2014). On the other hand, it is considered more widely and assumes the presence of only one sign - location along the border of another state (Dubrovina, 2018). Specific features of the border regions making the additional potential consist of the following factors: proximity to the state border; specific border infrastructure; Ability to utilize resources and capacities of the neighbouring country; possibility of developing different forms of international cooperation (Kuchinskaya, 2011).

Russian legislation interprets cross-border cooperation as a part of international relations of the Russian Federation, international and foreign economic relations of border subjects of the Russian Federation and the municipalities of border subjects of the Russian Federation with the subjects of cross-border cooperation of the neighbouring states (Ob osnovah prigranichnogo..., 2017).

In the European framework convention, cross-border cooperation refers to any concerted action aimed at strengthening and promoting good-neighbourly relations between the territorial communities or authorities under the jurisdiction of two or more contracting parties and the conclusion of any agreements and arrangements necessary to achieve these objectives (Evropejskaya..., 1980). Dubrovina (2018) determines the main goal of cross-border cooperation as the establishment of relations between the border territories and the search for joint solutions to similar problems.

Also, many authors determine the most important specific characteristic of border cooperation: geopolitical factor, which consists of the geographical position of the country, size of the territory, the population in the border regions (Vardomskiy, 2017).

The current system of cross-border cooperation includes a whole range of relations: economic and political cooperation, solving environmental problems, socio-cultural development (Yermakova & Nikulina, 2019), exchange of cultural values, tourism, joint research activities, etc.

Simonyan and Kochegarova (2014) distinguish three models of cross-border cooperation: traditional - the economic effect is associated with the expansion of the sales market for one side and cheaper goods and services for the other side; preferential - granting preferences to the border regions; institutional - development of the joint projects, programs, specially created organizations (Simonyan, 2019).

To ensure preservation of the borders of the state, as well as the establishment of constructive dialogue with the border territories, it is necessary to uniformly settle the border areas, the uniform socio-economic development (preventing the abandonment of border territories), formation of the ideological and moral, patriotic positions among the citizens, formation of decent and favourable living conditions for the local communities, preservation of the independence of domestic local communities from the socio-economic influence of the border states, high level of cultural development and education of the population of the border areas, allowing protect their cultural identity (Biyzhanova, 2014).

Achievement and implementation of these criteria are possible only with the integrated attention of the state and the local community aimed at preserving and developing the potential of the local population. In this vein, the young generation living in the border regions deserves special attention (Simonyan, 2018). Representing the labour, population, cultural potential of the territory, young people strive for its maximum possible implementation. Therefore, the creation of favourable and comfortable living conditions and self-development, including the development of social infrastructure, the level of economic development, the socio-cultural component, ensuring security, etc., will depend on creating the life strategies for youth, which will be associated either with the region of residence, or with the search for more promising territories from their point of view, and formation of sustainable migration mood (Khalikova, 2020).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the work is to analyse the ideas of youth about the cross-border cooperation between Russia and China from the point of view of further prospects for the development of the territories of the Far East using sociological research methods.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Analysis of ideas of the Far-Eastern youth about the cross-border cooperation between Russia and China was carried out based on sociological studies.

A sociological study conducted "The opinion of student youth about modern Russia, its place in changing world, its prospects for development, relations with the neighbouring countries" (2020) among the students of senior courses at the universities in Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Blagoveshchensk, the questionnaire survey method (using Google form) made it possible to obtain quantitative characteristics of the subject of study. Sampling type is a quota, according to three characteristics: territorial affiliation, training course, gender, n = 962. The confidence interval is 96%. Supervisor - Simonyan R. Kh., Doctor of Sociology, Head of the Institute of international studies, MGIMO MFA, field leader - S.S. Halikova, Candidate of Sociology, associate professor.

The representativeness data was ensured by: calculating the proportion of respondents by sex, age (from 18 years and older), territorial affiliation (student youth living in the territories of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation bordering China: the Primorsk territory, the Khabarovsk Territory, the Amur region). The survey results were processed using the SPSS software. Using the qualitative sociological methods (conducting focus groups) made it possible to deepen and expand information obtained through a questionnaire survey and obtain more detailed information on the question of interest to the researcher. As a part of the study, 9 focus groups were conducted with young people living in the border regions: the Primorsk territory, the Khabarovsk Territory, the Amur Region. The choice of these subjects of the Russian Federation for the study was due to the degree of proximity of the border, presence of the largest length of bordering territory and the largest number of students living on their territory. Focus groups were held in June 2021 in three age groups: 18-23, 24-29, 30-35 years in each of the aforementioned constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The questions were formulated based

on the most common models of socio-cultural interaction. These models are typologies in the work of Simonyan and Kochegarova (2014): acculturation, cooperation, cognitive, educational, role training, consumer, migration. The results of the study are presented in a generalized form using citations from the focus group participants or in the form of assertion obtained by classifying the identical responses. Each focus group consisted of eight participants. The method of conducting focus groups met all the requirements.

## 6. Findings

The border regions from the point of view of state development as a whole perform two main functions: barrier - protection of sovereignty and national security (ensuring security) and contact - interaction with neighbouring states (including the socio-cultural interaction). Living in border regions forms the consciousness, behaviours and life strategies, including the presence factor of the border. (Simonyan & Sluckin, 2020) Most young people surveyed believe that the role of border regions is increasing (45.3%), another 9.4% believe that the development of relations and interactions of states is becoming dangerous for the regions bordering them.

Considering relations through the prospect of further development of countries, the strengthening of China poses a danger to Russia, according to 37.3% of respondents, almost a third found it difficult to answer (27.4%), 35.3% of respondents see no danger in this. At the same time, among the bordering states throughout the country, the Far-Eastern youth are more afraid of neighbours from the European Union (32.6), the CIS countries are the safest, they cause only 9.4% of respondents, China causes concerns by 19.3% of youth, another 38.7% found it difficult to answer this question.

Interaction of the border territories of different states implies the interest and to some extent dependence on each other. More than a third of respondents believe that Russia needs China more (34.4%) than China in Russia (16.1%), but another third of respondents note the mutual interest of the two countries equally (35.8%), 13.7% found it difficult to answer this question.

A necessary condition for comfortable living in the territory is the ability to satisfy their needs. Of the three possible answers, the least created conditions in our region are to meet material needs, as 66.1% of young people consider, another 22.1% - to meet the needs for self-realization, 11.8% - to need security. Meeting the security needs of the border area plays an important role and is an integral part of public policy. However, the lack of conditions for the realization of material needs leads to the search for opportunities to meet them outside the region and even the State. Most of the young people surveyed are ready to go to work abroad with opportunities (77.9%), only 9.9% do not agree to leave their country for the sake of work.

We will analyze the attitude of young people living in the border regions in different areas of socio-cultural interaction. The acculturation model is voluntary, conscious, active absorption by the individual of a new culture. It is expressed in the acquisition of new personal contacts, connections, immersion in a new cultural environment. In general, young people believe that Chinese cultural and social values are significantly different from the Russian ones. Differences are due to adherence to the other religions, and, above all, Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, etc. However, in the border regions of the

Far East among the foreign languages studied by the local population, Chinese is in second place after English (Ieroglif., 2019), significantly ahead of the number of people studying Japanese or Korean.

Young people connect the need for learning Chinese with further employment opportunities: "I will be more competitive in employment," "now specialists with knowledge of Chinese are in great demand," "after receiving a diploma I plan to go to China for employment." Also, Chinese is interesting for education "I want to enter the Chinese magistracy," "I will try to enter Moscow and Beijing, it all depends on opportunities (whether it will be possible to go abroad)." Knowledge of the language allows you to establish relations with Chinese students who study at the universities (FEFU, PSU, etc.)

Cooperation direction is expressed in the mutually beneficial cooperation: development of joint business, research projects, sports events. The most promising young people are considering the possibility of starting an entrepreneurial business in China given the presence of significant state support that they can receive in China, as well as the development of joint business projects under favourable conditions. "Today, a novice entrepreneur in China can get almost free credit for his business," "very good support for young entrepreneurs in China, in our country, it is much more difficult," "just now I am looking for opportunities to enter the Chinese market, there are no special prospects in the region" - such answers were received with focus groups among the young people under 35 years old. Also in this age group, interest was shown about the research activities, through participation in the conferences, symposia, and joint scientific works. Among the student youth (aged 18-23), the interest is manifested in participating in joint leisure, cultural and sports events (festivals, tournaments, competitions, etc.), but it was noted that activity has decreased significantly since 2020 due to the introduction of several restrictive measures related to the pandemic.

The next model is cognitive, which is realized in the process of knowing a different culture. Tourism is a common form of cognitive interaction. Of course, at present, the number of tourists travelling to China has decreased several times due to the border closures, but now we can talk about overcoming the lowest mark of this indicator under the pandemic conditions. Of interest to the Russian tourists are both the nearby Chinese territories (weekend tour, shopping, holding holidays, visiting the baths, etc.) and more distant ones. Which are associated with visiting cultural centres and the capital of China, as well as recreation near the sea.

Of course, at present, the number of tourists travelling to the Fourth direction is educational, which is implemented through the student exchange and desire of young people to get higher education in China. Currently, education is an important area of cross-border cooperation. Russian students can receive education both free of charge and on paid terms (Morozova & Dondokov, 2020). This makes it possible to gain a profession and master Chinese at a high level. The interest in studying in China is associated with the possibility of further employment and residence in its territory. Most young people would be willing to take advantage of the opportunity to receive education abroad (76.9%) and only 9.9% of young people do not attract such opportunity.

The next direction is role training, which is implemented through exciting leisure, extreme and reflection of this on the social networks through the expression of their impressions. Among young people, the most interesting are the rafts on rivers by kayaking, saps, climbing into the mountains of China, as well as the sea adventures.

The consumer model is more common than the previous one and was reflected in 84% of respondents' answers. Many noted that they made shopping tours for almost every season "went to buy winter clothes," "previously they bought shoes only there and at a price much cheaper than ours," "they bought a lot for the house after repairs there," "all the furniture was brought from China," etc.

And the seventh model, according to the typology of Simonyan and Kochegarova (2014), migration (Maksimova et al., 2019). The migration mood of young people confirms their readiness to move to another country. It would be sure that 68.5% of the survey participants took this opportunity, another 18.3% did not decide and could not answer this question unequivocally, 13.2% answered that this did not attract them. Understanding that China is a country with other values, religions, mentality and life structure is not an obstacle to moving to a permanent residence (Khalikova, 2020).

Analysis of the study results allowed the author to highlight another model of interaction related to obtaining medical and beauty services. Respondents noted the lower cost of procedures with the higher quality and service levels in a neighbouring country. The focus groups received the following answers: "visited China to treat teeth," "traditional Chinese treatments are very effective and natural," "before the pandemic once a year sent parents to improve their health," "they say plastic surgery is very well developed there," "flew to perform different procedures," etc.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, cross-border cooperation is reflected in the perceptions of young people as an integral element of their behaviour and consciousness. The frontier factor undoubtedly affects the choice of life paths and strategies of behaviour in the short and long term. The main prospects for inter-country cooperation are outlined in the Concept of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Russian Federation (Konceptiya..., 2020), which are aimed at the further development of Russia and China. For the younger generation, the neighbouring state is of interest in many areas included in the Concept - it is trade, entrepreneurship, research, employment, migration strategies, etc. Further study of the potential of cross-border cooperation will allow more effective development of the territory of the Far East and implementation of the national priorities and goals outlined by the President of the Russian Federation.

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