

ONE BELT - ONE ROAD” IN THE FRAMEWORK OF STRATEGIC COOPERATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA

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ABSTRACT: *The research subject is the analysis of international interaction between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China since the late 20th century to the present time within the upcoming new prospects of long-term cooperation. The author makes a brief review of the recent history of interrelations between the two countries and forecasts their development for the nearest future within the adopted joint program “One Belt and One Road”. This project is based on the “complementarity” principle, i.e. the unification of advantages of China and Russia thus forming modern largescale “development partnership”. This study is based on a set of scientific methods, including the historical, institutional, system and comparative methods of scientific analysis. The scientific novelty of the study consists in the fact that the political science problem under consideration reveals the new understanding of the vectors of development of relations of the two largest world powers. Particularly, the author considers the role of China in realization of the largest projects of the Eurasian Economic Union in the context of economic decline in Russia and other countries, close to Russia, caused by the Western sanctions. In the context of the possible narrowing of the EAEU’s potential, China’s project of “One Belt - One Road” can naturally compensate Russia’s demand for effective partnership. A special author’s contribution to the study of the topic is the conclusion that in the contemporary world, the alliance of Russia and China can define many vectors of development of world politics for the nearest decades.*

KEYWORDS: national sovereignty, national interests, strategic cooperation, strategic partnership, Eurasia, Russia, China, integration, complementarity

INTRODUCTION

The political understanding of Russian-Chinese relations at the present stage of development of world politics is becoming increasingly relevant and multi-vector. Russia and China, being great world powers, having much in common in their recent historical past, and being close neighbors, cannot but see each other as the most important strategic and geopolitical partners. In this regard, we will try to analyze Russian-Chinese relations in their dynamics, taking into account the realities of modern politics, and determine the general trends of this interaction, which is most important for the whole world politics.

Today's Russian-Chinese relations are a continuation of interstate contacts between China and the USSR of past decades. At the same time, at the turn of the XX – XXI centuries, significant changes took place in world politics, which could not but affect the relations between the two countries, however, the desire of both sides for close

strategic cooperation and partnership remains unchanged. Obviously, the strategic cooperation between China and Russia should be based on observing the strategic interests of both powers, which implies the need to take into consideration the characteristics and advantages of two countries. Thus, Russian territory is the largest in the world, and such a neighborhood means for China a direct interest in stability, integrity and ensuring the national sovereignty of a neighboring state.

Collapse of USSR and Formation the CIS

Recall that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia began to pursue a pro-Western "unilateral" foreign policy in exchange for Western loyalty, and the price of such "friendship" was too high - a huge country began to be divided into parts, a significant part of national wealth was plundered, and national interests were seriously suffered [1]. In this difficult situation, Russia in the mid-1990s took the natural historical path for it - the restoration of the former Soviet strategic space and the unification of the CIS countries in the economic, political, cultural and security fields on a new basis, which became an effective way to regain Russia's influence in this region and contributed to the promotion of the overall integration policy of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The CIS is now the fundamental basis for the transformation of geopolitical forces in the Russian foreign strategy [2].

The new stage of Russian – Chinese relations

In December 1992, China and Russia signed the Joint Statement, "Foundations of Mutual Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation" [3]. The both countries agreed to maintain a regular dialogue at all levels and through all channels, thus making it clear that high-level interaction, as well as coordination of personal contacts between the leaders of the two countries are of particular importance, which resulted in the creation of a hotline between China and Russia.

At that time, the most important task between the countries was to solve the problem of ensuring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of both powers as soon as possible, and on September 3, 1994, China and Russia officially signed the "Joint Russian-Chinese Declaration" [4]. This Declaration stated that the People's Republic of China supports the measures and actions taken by the Russian Federation to protect its national integrity, and considers that the problem of Chechnya is an internal affair of Russia. In turn, the Russian Federation confirmed the fact that the Government of the People's Republic of China is the only legitimate government representing all of China; and Taiwan is an inseparable part of China. As a result, Russia established official relations with Taiwan and recognized Tibet as part of China. In addition, both sides intended to take effective measures to further expand and develop bilateral trade and economic cooperation through the use of the unique advantages of their geographical regions and the principle of economic complementarity of the two countries. In April 1997, China and Russia signed the "Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Formation of a New World Order" [5], thereby outlining strategic partnership and prospects for cooperation between the two countries in the 21st century, which fully meets the fundamental interests of the people of two countries and promotes peace and security in Asia Pacific region and around the world.

In the following years, a number of important interstate documents were developed and signed, which determined the development directions of bilateral relations for decades:

Table 1. Treaties and documents were signed between Russia and China 1999 – 2012.

Year	Agreements
In 1999	"Agreement on the eastern and western border lines between the countries," which completely resolved the border dispute between the two countries.
In 2001	Russian-Chinese agreement on good neighborliness, friendship and cooperation was concluded, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established, which was of great importance for the further development of bilateral relations.
In 2005	Agreement on the settlement of disputed border issues between the two countries was ratified, as a result China received a number of disputed territories with a total area of 337 square kilometers. Then, joint military exercises were held for the first time, and at the SCO summit, a declaration was adopted calling on the United States to determine the timing of the withdrawal of US military bases from the former Soviet republics in Central Asia
In 2006	the Year of Russia in China was declared.
In 2007	the Year of China in Russia was declared
In 2007	Shanghai Cooperation Organization anti-terrorism exercises were held
In 2009	Program of cooperation between the regions of the Far East and Eastern Siberia of the Russian Federation and the North-East of the PRC was developed with an implementation period of up to 2018.
In 2009	In 2009, the year of the Russian language in China was announced.
In 2012	the Year of Russian tourism in China. (According to Russian statistics, the number of Chinese tourists who visited Russia in 2012 increased by 47% compared to the previous year.)

In March 2012, when Putin was re-elected as president of the Russian Federation, President Hu Jintao reaffirmed that China is ready to cooperate with Russia in order to promote comprehensive strategic partnership and cooperation at a new level.

“One Belt and One Road” initiative

A new period of interaction between Russia and China began during the development of the program "One Belt and One Road". This major initiative was launched by China in October 2013. The program “One Belt and One Road” [6] covers almost all countries of the Eurasian continent, and Russia, as part of Eurasia, is the most closely connected with China country in the world. Both China and Russia are consistent adherents of integration on the Eurasian continent, striving for the full maintenance of peace, stability and economic development of Eurasia. It is obvious that this project is another opportunity to fully ensure a high level of Chinese-Russian strategic cooperation – within the framework of the "common way" program, relations between China and Russia will receive a new impetus for further multilateral development. This large-scale program includes such areas of cooperation as Eurasian geopolitics, economy, security and other key aspects of international cooperation.

On May 20, 2014, President Vladimir Putin paid an official visit to the People's Republic of China and signed the "Joint statement of the Russian Federation and the people's Republic of China on a new stage of comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation" [7], which has raised relations between the two countries to a new height.

Russian’s turn to the East

Russia after the beginning of the conflict with Ukraine and imposition of Western sanctions against Russia lost its usual status in the Western world, its membership in the G-8 was suspended, respectively, Russia's influence in the Europe decreased. In this situation, it is China that is actively supporting Russia, which is also important because Asian countries led by China are becoming increasingly influential actors in world politics, the economy and the overall security system. The circumstances have necessitated Russia's adjustment of its West-oriented foreign strategy, and this fully corresponds to the current trends of balanced development of the East and the West. Asian countries, China and Russia today purposefully expand and deepen areas of cooperation, striving to constantly bring their national interests closer and to find the foundations for strategic cooperation.

On January 1, 2015, a number of post-Soviet countries led by Russia announced the creation of the “Eurasian Economic Union” [8]. The main territory of the "Eurasian economic zone", as expected, will be located in the zone of influence of China and Russia. Experts agree that the key factor for the ongoing development of this project is the balance of influential forces in the region and the degree to which their interests coincide. In this sense, Russia is vital for China with its ambitious plans for the construction of the "Silk Road economic zone", especially its main part. The fact that China and Russia are the only permanent members of the United Nations among the developing countries of the Eurasian continent, only emphasizes the need for a “single belt” directly related to the future.

From Unipolar to Multipolar world

In May 2015, the Chinese and Russian heads of state signed the “Joint statement on deepening their strategic cooperation in the framework of the construction of this “road”, the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on cooperation in

conjunction with the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt” [9]. It says that China and Russia are non-Western powers committed to the diversity of world civilizations, they are based on the priority of their national values and socio-political systems and other issues related to the interests of China and Russia, and are ready to act as a United front in order to curb the dominance of the United States, which clearly seeks to divide States, discredit them and thus create a number of international problems. The document emphasized the need for mutual support in response to the actions of the United States, Japan and NATO and the strengthening of the newly created alliance, as well as close cooperation between China and Russia with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in conditions of unipolarity and hegemony of one state with all the rhetoric of “quasi-multipolar era”. Both sides declared a joint solution to global issues of world development, building common capacities, promoting global "multilateral co-management" and resolving other issues related to common historical responsibility. Putin noted that the current military and political forces of the Russian Federation are not enough to effectively confront modern challenges and threats, and that in the context of the growing interdependence of all countries and peoples, no state is able to ensure security and stability separately. In this regard, it is particularly important to adhere to the universal principles of equality and sovereignty in relations with the European Atlantic, Eurasia and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region [10].

Strengthening cooperation between two countries

In 2016, President V. V. Putin and Chinese President XI Jinping signed the "Joint statement of the Russian Federation and the people's Republic of China" [11], in which both countries committed themselves to support the development of dialogue and strategic trust at a high level and to create a new joint government and legislative bodies in accordance with the needs of the two peoples, to ensure the stability of trade relations, gradually optimizing the branched structure of trade and creating all the necessary conditions for achieving bilateral trade volume of about 200 billion USD. Reference was also made to the intention to jointly use outer space for peaceful purposes and to fully strive for the implementation of the plan for the development of aerospace cooperation between China and Russia 2016 -2021, thereby contributing to the further integration and complementarity of the socio-economic systems of China and Russia. China and Russia are unanimous in the fact that the world is changing rapidly today and the previously existing model of world politics has been greatly transformed. The reasons for this transformation are uneven country development, widening of the gap between the levels of national welfare, competition for resources, trade markets, etc. In addition, the level of security and stability on a global scale has significantly decreased, there are still many conflicts in different parts of the world, which are often resolved through force, and the threat of terrorism remains extremely high. The current situation on the world stage requires China and Russia to develop close military, political and economic cooperation, strengthening the traditional friendship between the two armies, and this is an important component of the Chinese-Russian multilateral strategic partnership.

If we analyze the current situation of Russia in the socio-political and economic spheres, we can state that Western sanctions have led to its economic downturn, respectively, in

the economy of other members of the Eurasian economic Union there is also a proportional decline in growth, resulting in the dependence of the CIS countries on Russia began to decrease. It can be assumed that over time, the potential of the Eurasian economic Union within the Commonwealth of post-Soviet States will narrow. In this regard, Russia will be forced to independently implement the planned major projects of the Eurasian economic Union, and it is the Chinese project of the "One Belt and One Road" that can naturally compensate for this demand. China has the potential to ensure full-scale cooperation in the fields of electronics, aerospace, mechanical engineering, agriculture, bioengineering, information and communication, medicine and other areas that will be focused on the Eurasian economic Union. It is also impossible not to mention the prospects associated with the Russian Far East and the formation of the "Russian economic corridor", which will allow the implementation of multi-vector Russian-Chinese joint projects.

Speaking about the long-term cooperation between China and Russia, it should be emphasized that two countries have additional priorities in the geopolitical field, since Russia is partially located on the European continent, which has its advantages, and China's zone of influence includes the entire Asian region, while these territories are surrounded on both sides by Western countries – the United States and other Western powers, which dictates the need for close strategic cooperation between the two countries.

Win – win collaboration

Russian-Chinese cooperation can be built on the principle of complementarity. For example, China is not only the second largest economy in the world, it is also important to note that its political influence and military power are constantly increasing. In turn, Russia in the recent past was a superpower with huge opportunities and great power on the world stage, and so far its international influence is great. The complementarity of China and Russia can be expressed in combining the advantages of the two countries: for example, Russia has more developed military, aerospace, aviation, materials technology, China – light industry, electronics, communication technology, and on this basis can form a modern large-scale "development partnership".

In addition, China has the world's largest foreign exchange reserves, its enterprises are actively entering foreign markets, and Russia can contribute to this through "reindustrialization" for the rapid growth of urgent foreign investment in cooperation with Western countries and the prevention of financial difficulties when investing in the Chinese economy. Russia is rich in natural resources, especially oil and gas and land, as well as large reserves of freshwater, China is a "strategic buyer" of various resources and is able to become a guarantor of Russia's economic security.

Finally, the mechanism of strategic cooperation between China and Russia, in fact, is ideal. The leaders of China and Russia have a particularly trusting relationship, and Moscow and Beijing have become the two heads of state's main platforms for high-level talks and frequent visits to a friendly state. Ambassador of the Russian Federation to China A. I. Denisov noted: "Relations between Russia and China have developed to an unprecedented height, very close contacts are maintained at the highest level,

meetings of heads of state are held 5-6 times a year" [12]. Thus, Russian-Chinese cultural exchange continues to develop in accordance with the 2001 Treaty "on good neighborliness, friendship and cooperation", signed by the two countries and updated every five years, which adjusts the development of bilateral relations in accordance with current situation. Recent examples include a meeting in Moscow of Russian-Chinese leaders on the eve of the German G-20 summit in Hamburg in July 2017, when the Chinese leader demonstrated with this landmark visit the political priorities of his country in a favor of Russia despite of the sanctions imposed against it and the future prospects for the development of world political processes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin highly appreciates the partnership with China, in particular, at the silk road Economic belt forum in May 2017, which brought together representatives of 29 countries, he noted that the historical experience of cooperation between our countries has been known since the ancient silk road, which passed through Asia, Europe and Africa, and at the same time it is extremely relevant in the 21st century. Vladimir Putin called for greater cohesion in the face of global challenges – the uneven development of the modern world, poverty and regional conflicts [13].

CONCLUSION

As it seems today, joint Sino-Russian efforts to curb new interventionism should be directed primarily against external actors seeking to provoke "color revolutions" and around the world practicing various forms of encroachment on sovereign state power – that is, to fight the "third force". To this end, it is necessary to develop a strategy to ensure the Eurasian and then global system of security and stability, along with the universal principles of security cooperation between China, Russia and other countries. Respect for the national sovereignty of each country and the leading role of the United Nations should be at the forefront.

In today's world, Russia and China play the role of key actors in the international arena, and their Alliance can determine many vectors of development of world politics in the coming decades. In recent years, Chinese-Russian relations have progressed significantly from "good-neighborly relations" to "constructive partnership", "strategic partnership and cooperation" and "comprehensive strategic partnership and cooperation". The connotation of the term "strategic cooperation" is that "in accordance with the objectives, direction, time, place of coordinated action" it implies a deep and comprehensive rapprochement of entire peoples, and it is possible to predict with high probability the further sustainable and purposeful development of strategic partnership and cooperation in all spheres. Such a complex interaction between the two world powers, who have chosen a "common way" to build their future, will greatly enhance the potential of both the individual country and the Sino-Russian Commonwealth as a whole. In this sense, the initiative "One Belt and One Road" accurately reflects the essence and direction of the strategic partnership between China and Russia at the present stage.

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