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The “Rise” of China in the Eyes of Russia: A Source of Threats or New Opportunities?

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At the moment, the center of global economic and political gravity is rapidly shifting to the Asia-Pacific Region. This region possesses vast financial, resource-related, industrial and human potential. As the center of global development rapidly shifts to the East, Russia regards the Asia-Pacific Region as the engine of the world economy, the key to which is a burgeoning China.

In contemporary international relations the fast-moving rise of the PRC has become a crucial issue that concerns both Western and Russian political leaders, scholars and common citizens. The true intentions of the Chinese leadership as it pursues its foreign policy course remain quite nebulous and ambiguous. In various spheres and at a various levels of Russian society there are quite a few discussions and disputes about what, in fact, lies behind the global phenomenon of the “rise” of China, what consequences it entails for Russia, and how Moscow should organize its relations with Beijing.

The Concept of China’s “Peaceful Rise”

In November 2003 at the plenary session of the Boao Forum for Asia Zheng Bijian, who in the 1990s occupied the posts of deputy head of the Department of Propaganda of the Communist Party of China’s Central Committee and permanent prorector of the Central Party School of the CPC, was the first to voice the idea of the “peaceful rise” of China.¹ Such a candid expression of the idea of China aspiring to “rise” attracted tremendous attention, mostly among foreign observers. The idea was considered to be sanctioned by the CPC of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and, accordingly, to reflect the official position of the Chinese leadership. Zheng Bijian went on to repeatedly express this idea in other speeches and publications. Since early 2003 the term “peaceful rise” has been actively used by leading figures of the Politburo of the PRC Communist Party, and in 2005 an article about it by Zheng Bijian was published in the American journal *Foreign Affairs*.²

At its core, the concept of “peaceful rise” generally came down to three basic propositions. First, China intends to pursue its own uniquely Chinese path of socialism and in

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¹ Zheng Bijian, *China’s Peaceful Rise: Speeches of Zheng Bijian 1997-2004* (Brookings institution, 2005), available at <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2005/6/16china/20050616bijianlunch.pdf>.

² Zheng Bijian, “China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ to Great-Power Status,” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2005), available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/61015/zheng-bijian/chinas-peaceful-rise-to-great-power-status>.

doing so actively participate in the process of economic globalization. Second, despite the PRC's desire and ambition to rely primarily on its own capacities, it also needs a peaceful world environment. And third, the "lifting up" of China will be exceptionally peaceful in nature, since Beijing firmly rejects the path of aggression and outward expansion. In a broader context this was something of an effort to adapt an obsolete image of China to new realities and to explain to the world that the steadily growing and obvious power of the PRC entails no threat for those around it.

China's actions on the world arena during the past decade have convincingly demonstrated that the last two generations of Chinese leaders have been consistently and actively realizing a course to ensure a new place for China in international relations. This allows it to play a key role in creating a new global security and cooperation architecture.

The Evolution of the PRC's Foreign Policy Objectives and Methods

Recent years have seen a gradual change among the Chinese political elite with respect to its strategic vision of the country's future. Geographic and ideologic priorities are changing and a new, more global strategy—and thus one that to a certain extent threatens the interests of many world powers—is taking shape.³ China continues to adhere to its three key interests: maintaining internal political stability; ensuring security, territorial integrity and national unity; and maintaining stable economic and social development. However, on the rebound of the recent financial and economic crisis China not only proved the viability and effectiveness of its economic model, but was able to emerge from the crisis with a clear advantage.

The PRC has become more active in putting forth its own criteria for responsible behavior that can be discerned in practically all areas of Chinese foreign policy – in economic interaction with the United States and the European Union; in exchange rates; in energized economic diplomacy, especially in the ASEAN area, the Asian-Pacific region and other regions of the world (Africa, Middle East, Latin America); and in an active energy-supply policy (the largest energy contract in history recently signed with Russia). Other areas include building its military, an ambitious space program, and the expansion of Chinese cultural and humanitarian presence in the world and in various territorial disputes around the perimeter of its territory.

The PRC's strategic thinking and its foreign policy priorities have undergone a number of changes that can be observed in various areas and quite naturally elicit some concern among world powers, including Russia.

First, the leaders of the PRC have begun to perceive the concept of security in a more comprehensive context.

³ Wang Jisi, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Great Power Finds Its Way," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2011), available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67470/wang-jisi/chinas-search-for-a-grand-strategy>.

Second, China has begun to demonstrate a greater interest in multilateral interaction to address some issues, thereby relegating its previous focus on bilateral cooperation to the back burner.

Third, the PRC is displaying a growing understanding of the need to transform China's economic development component.

Fourth, current changes also have to do with Chinese values. Realizing that China differs from many countries in terms of its political structure and ideology, the Chinese leadership nonetheless is expressing the readiness to spread its "soft power" by cooperating with other countries on the basis of common interests and values.

Fifth, China has begun to vigorously expand the geographical aspect of its presence in the world.

And finally, sixth, the PRC has boosted its militarization and begun to take a more aggressive position militarily.

For a more detailed and systematic analysis of assessments of the current transformation of the PRC's foreign policy available in Russia, one should look at discussions of this issue in three dimensions: political, academic and social.

The Russian Political Elite's View

The Kremlin's Position

During the past 15 years Russian foreign policy with respect to the PRC has undergone definite changes. Realizing the importance of changes underway in the Asia-Pacific Region, Russian leaders have begun to gradually "turn" toward the East and regard China as its close ally and main strategic partner in a wide range of global affairs. The Russian establishment has always demonstrated a certain unity of positions in the context of pursuing a foreign policy course in relation to China. Accordingly, the formation of Moscow's strategic vector toward Beijing during first and second decades of the 21st century can be easily traced based on public addresses and publications by the country's leaders.

By all indications, V. V. Putin, having only just started his first official presidential term in 2000, was clearly cognizant of the entire potential and necessity of developing relations with China.

In an opinion piece back in November 2000, V. Putin stated the Russian priorities and interests in the Asia-Pacific Region. At that time, according to him, Russia and China were confidently maintaining a "course toward building an equal and trusting partnership" that became "an important factor in maintaining global stability."⁴ These principles and a determination to develop a strategic partnership with China were also formalized in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation of 2000,⁵ and then confirmed in revised editions in 2008 and 2013.

⁴ Vladimir Putin, "Russia: New Eastern Perspectives," official site of the President of Russia, 9 November 2000, available at <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/21132> (in Russian).

⁵ *RF foreign policy concept 2000. Foreign policy and the security of contemporary Russia. 1991-2002*, Volume 4 (Moscow, 2002), 109-112.; *Russian Federation foreign policy concept* (15 July 2008), official website of the President of Russia, available at <http://kremlin.ru/acts/>

In 2001 the Russian-Chinese Friendship and Cooperation Treaty was signed,⁶ which contained a statement of the parties' commitment to "develop relations of equal and trusting partnership aimed at strategic cooperation in the 21st century." This wording first appeared back in April 1996 in the Russia-China Joint Declaration,⁷ signed during a visit to the PRC by Russian President B. Yeltsin. The Treaty's provisions were confirmed and developed in ensuing joint documents, including the Declarations on Foreign Policy Matters of 1 June 2005 and 23 May 2008.⁸ A document signed during the Sino-Russian summit in Beijing in March 2006 provided a more emphatic formula for Russia-China cooperation as a relationship of "mutual support and mutual preferential treatment." And it was stressed that the parties would pursue a stronger course "toward coordination and deepening of strategic cooperation in foreign policy matters with the objective of creating a propitious international environment."⁹

In one form or another, the phrase "strategic partnership" has in recent years been heard repeatedly at numerous meetings of the two countries' leaders. Although the meaning of the very concept of partnership is somewhat fuzzy, the idea (although never deciphered in detail from the beginning) has proven to be very productive. Time, common interests and challenges Russia and China have faced in recent years on the international scene have imbued it with specific content.

The year 2004 was declared the Year of Friendship between Russian and Chinese Youth. In 2005, a treaty to settle border disputes between the two countries was ratified. The year 2006 became the Year of Russia in China and 2007 the Year of China in Russia. Military anti-terror exercises of unprecedented scale in which Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries participated were held in 2005 and 2007 in China and Russia, respectively. 2009 was the Year of the Russian Language in China, and 2010 the Year of the Chinese Language in Russia. Also, 2009 saw the adoption of the Program of Coop-

785; *Russian Federation foreign policy concept* (12 February 2013), official website of the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F.

⁶ *Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China*, signed on 16 July 2001 in Moscow by President V.V. Putin of the Russian Federation and Premier Jiang Zemin of the People's Republic of China, available at <http://archive.kremlin.ru/events/articles/2001/07/142467/142465.shtml>.

⁷ "Joint Sino-Russian Declaration," signed in Beijing on 25 April 1996 by President B.N. Yeltsin of Russia and Chairman Jiang Zemin of the PRC, in *Collection of Sino-Russian treaties. 1949-1999* (Moscow, 1999), 333-337.

⁸ "Joint Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the international order of the XXI century," signed in Moscow on 1 July 2005 by President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation and Chairman Hu Jintao (sic) of the PRC, available at <http://archive.kremlin.ru/events/articles/2005/06/90767/153816.shtml>; "Joint Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on major international issues," 23 May 2008, available at http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/240.

⁹ "Joint Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China," signed by President Vladimir Putin and Chairman (sic) Hu Jintao of the PRC on 21 March 2006 in Beijing, quote from: *Problems of the Far East* 3 (2006), p. 8.

eration between the Far East and Eastern Siberia Districts of the Russian Federation and the Northeast region of the PRC through 2018. The year 2012 was the Year of Russian Tourism in China, and 2013 the Year of Chinese Tourism in Russia.

Since 2000, the heads of state of Russia and the PRC, as well as representatives of higher governmental structures, have held annual meetings. For example, one could calculate that from December 2002 through March 2012 the presidents of Russia and chairmen of the PRC held about 40 personal meetings (counting discussions on the sidelines of various forums) – an average of four meetings per year.¹⁰

Such intensified contacts and connections are fully consistent with the obvious and steady rapprochement between Russia and China in recent years, despite all the admonitions and talk of a potential “Chinese” threat for Russia. For example, in a 2008 interview with Chinese media¹¹ while he was still president, Dmitry Medvedev noted the dynamic and energetic development of the Chinese economy and stressed that Russia “is observing its development with great interest and enthusiasm.” Moreover, according to him, this phenomenon holds “a definite incentive” and “plus for development,” since it promotes the development of competitive production capacities and the creation of products of a higher technological quality and economic and technical standards” in the Russian economy itself. In his opinion, in the context of Russian and Chinese strategic cooperation the 21st century will be “a century of high-tech cooperation” (in space, in high tech and nanotechnologies, in shipbuilding, and in automobile manufacturing), which is greatly needed for the further growth of the two economies.

In September 2010, when he was the prime minister, Vladimir Putin denied the existence of a threat of that sort from the PRC and said he believed that “rumors that China’s million-strong army would one day occupy vast areas of our Far East are greatly exaggerated.”¹² In his opinion, “China is not a threat to Russia’s security” and does not possess “sufficient resources required to begin immigration to the Far East.” The president considers development of the Far East region and Eastern Siberia a priority, and he would like to expand cooperation with China even further.

¹⁰ S.V. Uyanaev, “RF and PRC cooperation on international issues: Content and accents of its ‘new phase,’” in *China in World and Regional Politics. History and the Modern Era*, Issue XVII: annual publication, editor-in-chief and compiler E.I. Safronova (Moscow: IDV Russian Academy of Sciences, 2012), p. 19, available at http://www.ifes-ras.ru/attaches/books__texts/kitmir3_08_2.pdf.

¹¹ Interview in Chinese mass media: Xinhua News Agency, People’s Daily newspaper and Central Television of China, 22 May 2008, official website of the President of Russia, available at <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/178>.

¹² “Putin denies the existence of a so-called ‘Chinese threat,’” *China News*, 7 September 2010, translated on the *inosmi.ru* portal (8 September 2010), available at <http://inosmi.ru/foreast/20100908/162769348.html>.

In October 2011 Vladimir Vladimirovich gave an interview to three Russian channels (“One,” “Russia,” “NTV”),¹³ where he also touched upon the issue of Russia-China relations. He stated that he did not see China as a source of a threat, but as a reliable strategic partner that is demonstrating the readiness and willingness to join with Russia in building “friendly, good-neighborly relations and seeking compromise on what would seem to be the most difficult issues.” Premier Putin went on to stress that in the “main struggle for world leadership” on a global scale Russia “does not intend to contest with China,” since it (China) has other competitors.

In February 2012 Vladimir Putin published in “Moskovskiye Novosti” [Moscow News] a landmark election campaign article with the characteristic title “Russia and a Changing World,”¹⁴ in which he outlines his vision of contemporary international relations, Russia’s place in the world, and its foreign policy priorities. An entire section was devoted to enhancing the role of the Asia-Pacific Region in the world and to the process of the “rise” of China. Moreover, passages on Russia-Europe and Russia-U.S. relations followed only somewhat later. Calling China “a most important center of the global economy,” Putin also noted the “increase in cumulative might of the PRC, including the ability to project power in various countries.” In light of numerous discussions and issues in recent years in the Western and Russian academic communities surrounding the threats and challenges that the phenomenon of China’s “rise” poses for Russia and the world, Putin in his article asked an acute and burning question: how is Russia to “conduct itself in consideration of the dynamically strengthening Chinese factor?” He amplified his reply in the following three points.

First, in Vladimir Putin’s opinion, the “growth of the Chinese economy is by no means a threat, but a challenge that comes laden with tremendous potential for business cooperation, a chance to catch the “Chinese wind” in the “sail” of the Russian economy. Moreover, in this context it behooves Russia and China “to more actively build cooperative links by integrating technological and production capabilities of both countries,” and to engage Chinese potential for the development and economic rise of Siberia and the Far East.

Second, in Putin’s opinion, China’s behavior on the world stage does not evince any claims to dominance. China has indeed begun to pursue a more confident and active foreign policy. Russia welcomes this, because Beijing shares its vision of an “emerging world order based on equal rights.” Moreover, the two countries need to continue supporting one another on the world stage and should address many regional and international problems together by bringing to bear all possible bilateral and multilateral mechanisms (UN, BRICS countries, SCO, G-20, etc.).

And, third, a solid and legally executed mechanism of bilateral links has been built between Russia and China, and all major political issues, including the border issue,

¹³ Full text of Putin interview on Russian TV channels, *RIA Novosti*, 17 October 2011, available at <http://ria.ru/politics/20111017/462204254.html>.

¹⁴ Vladimir V. Putin, “Russia and a changing world,” *Moskovkiye novosti* (Moscow News), 27 February 2012, available at <http://www.mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>.

have been resolved. The leaders of the two countries have achieved “a historically high level of trust,” which enables them to “act in the spirit of real partnership, based on pragmatism and consideration of mutual interests.”

While presenting the positive aspects of Russia-China cooperation and the phenomenon of the China’s “rise” in detail, Putin did not fail to mention the problems that nonetheless exist between the two countries – incongruity of commercial interests in some third countries, an evolving commodity circulation structure, a low level of mutual investments, and the migration issue. However, even with the existence of certain thorny issues in bilateral cooperation, this model of Russia-China relations is quite promising. Vladimir Putin’s main underlying idea comes down to this: “Russia needs a prosperous and stable China, and China, in turn, needs a strong and successful Russia.”

In ensuing publications and interviews both in Russian and Chinese media Vladimir Putin frequently touched upon the nature and essence of Russia-China relations, emphasizing their depth, sustainability and intrinsically high degree of trust and robustness.¹⁵ Moreover, the president always brings up and analyzes such important aspects of bilateral cooperation as investment cooperation¹⁶ and high tech,¹⁷ military,¹⁸ energy¹⁹ and other areas of cooperation. In addition, in connection with recent events in Ukraine and Crimea becoming part of Russia it is especially worthwhile to note the unity of positions Moscow and Beijing demonstrated during the crisis. In that connection, speaking at the Kremlin in 2014 before deputies of the State Duma, members of the Council of the Federation, leaders of the regions of Russia and representatives of civil society, Vladimir Putin expressed appreciation specifically to the people and leaders of China for viewing the current situation “in all its historical and political fullness.”²⁰

Summing up the Russian establishment’s position on the phenomenon of China’s unrelenting “rise” and the question of cooperation with the Asian giant, it’s worthwhile remembering a comment by President Putin expressed during an interview with Russian

¹⁵ See, for example: Vladimir V. Putin, “Russia and China: New Horizons of Cooperation,” *People’s Daily*, 5 June 2012, published on the official website of the President of Russia, available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/15547> (in Russian).

¹⁶ See, for example: Vladimir Putin press conference, 20 December 2012, official website of the President of Russia, available at <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/17173> (in Russian); Interview on Russian and foreign mass media, 17 January 2014, available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/20080> (in Russian).

¹⁷ See, for example: Vladimir Putin press conference (19 December 2013), *official website of the President of Russia*; available at <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/19859>.

¹⁸ See, for example: “Direct line to Vladimir Putin,” 17 April 2014, official website of the President of Russia, available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/20796> (in Russian).

¹⁹ See, for example: “Meeting with directors of world information agencies,” 24 May 2014, official website of the President of Russia, available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/21090> (in Russian).

²⁰ Address by the President of the Russian Federation, 18 March 2014, official website of the President of Russia, available at <http://kremlin.ru/news/20603> (in Russian).

and foreign media in January 2014 just ahead of the Olympics in Sochi.²¹ The president noted the following: “When such a potentially powerful country as China begins to demonstrate rapid growth rates, it becomes a real competitor in world politics and in world markets,” which in his opinion leads to the triggering of mechanisms to deter that growth. Wishing to describe the Western attitude to the East and to China in particular, he quoted a well-known phrase by Napoleon: “China is sleeping, and may God grant that she continues to sleep.” However, China has wakened, and in this politician’s opinion the surest option for developing relations with such a large, potentially powerful and great country is “to seek joint interests, not deterrence.”

Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)

In contrast to the ruling party United Russia, whose members are the prevailing authorities and leading business figures of Russia, a different wing of the political sphere is represented by the Communist Party, whose position on the “rise” of China largely coincides with the official one.

It can be said that Russian communists are coming out even more strongly than other political forces in the country for deepening Russia’s and China’s bilateral relations and even cite the Asian neighbor’s path of development as an example for the current Russian authorities. For instance, in the opinion of G.A. Zyuganov, Chairman of the Central Committee of the CPRF and leader of the CPRF faction in the Russian State Duma, the main formula for China’s success is its successful adaptation of socialism with a Chinese accent to current realities. The key components to this success lie in the use of thousands of years of traditions of Confucianism; in the combination of state-owned assets at the command points of the economy and market mechanisms; in shrewd personnel policy and implementation of highly advanced technologies; and, most importantly, in a long-range approach to one’s own development. The Chinese leadership is also not forgetting to address a number of internal problems accompanying such rapid development of the country (the existence of poor and wealthy regions, stratification of the society, the inter-ethnic problem, the environment, lack of energy resources, the danger of increased corruption, etc.)²² In Zyuganov’s opinion, China has doggedly and consistently carried out reforms for 30 years, which ultimately has enabled it to achieve such fantastic results.

Touching directly upon China’s *economic development*, the communist party leader notes its precipitous nature and the effectiveness of its leaders’ economic course. Genady Zyuganov does not agree with Western analysts who predict an imminent decline in development and the collapse of the Chinese economy. In his view, the PRC authori-

²¹ Interview in Russian and foreign media, 17 January 2014, official website of the President of Russia, available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/20080> (in Russian).

²² V. Tetekin, “China is surging forward: G.A. Zyuganov on his trip to the PRC,” interview, *Sovyetskaya Rossiya* (Soviet Russia), 29 January 2008, available at <http://www.sovross.ru/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2439> (in Russian).

ties “are closely monitoring movement along a collectively chosen path,”²³ soberly assessing existing problems and skillfully addressing them. This also applies to the intensification of the explosive situation within China itself (the problem of Taiwan, Tibet, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and so forth) and beyond its borders (disputes in the South China Sea, etc.). The leadership of the PRC is demonstrating an understanding of these problems, is taking a number of “very energetic measures” to stabilize the situation and is pursuing a well-reasoned foreign policy in all areas. For example, in a meeting with correspondents from the Chinese edition of *The People’s Daily* and representatives of the Russian-Asian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Gennady Zyuganov described the successes of today’s China as follows: “The Heavenly Empire today is taking long strides and looking far ahead.”²⁴ The political leader often draws special attention to China’s experience in surmounting the financial and economic crisis of the late 2000’s. In his opinion, “China was the locomotive that pulled other countries out of a serious crisis”²⁵ and plays an “exceptionally positive role.” Moreover, he believes China is already a leading world power.²⁶

Analyzing the current state of *Russia-China relations*, Gennady Zyuganov notes the “atrocious” structure of trade between countries, the existence of a substantial deficit in favor of the PRC, and a number of other serious problems. In assessing the prospects for the development of bilateral relations between the two countries, the CPRF leader especially stresses the fact that Russia is a Eurasian country. Accordingly, it must look both to the West and to the East. However, in his opinion the current priority should be the East, since in the 21st century it is the Asia-Pacific Region where the most important events driving the future configuration of the entire global system will be occurring. He sees China as being the key to Asia. For that reason it’s necessary to learn not just to listen to, but to hear our Asian partners.

Speaking directly to the *lessons* Russia could theoretically learn from China’s current dynamic “ascendance,” the CPRF leader places special emphasis on the effectiveness of the present Chinese model: “a combination of fundamental principles of socialism, national particularities and foreign experience.”²⁷ In his opinion, the time has come for

²³ Quote from: “G.A. Zyuganov in ‘Pravda’: China is the key to a new civilization,” official website of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, 28 May 2008, available at <http://kprf.ru/international/79627.html> (in Russian).

²⁴ “G.A. Zyuganov: China is taking long strides and looking far ahead,” official website of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, 7 November 2012, available at <http://kprf.ru/international/112188.html> (in Russian).

²⁵ Quote from: “Chairman G.A. Zyuganov of the CPRF CC: “China is the locomotive that is pulling other countries out of the economic crisis,”” *People’s Daily Online*, 15 November 2012, available at <http://russian.people.com.cn/95197/8021339.html> (in Russian).

²⁶ “G.A. Zyuganov – Russia-24: The CPRF will insist on forming a government of national interests,” official website of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), 12 January 2014, available at <http://kprf.ru/party-live/cknews/127040.html> (in Russian).

²⁷ Quote from: “G.A. Zyuganov in ‘Pravda’: Reforms in China are working. In Russia they are only being talked about,” official website of the CPRF, 1 February 2008, available at <http://kprf.ru/international/54651.html> (in Russian).

Russia to learn from China, just as China once learned from the USSR. The Chinese “reformers’ success scheme” is highly effective and represents an amalgam of the ideas of socialism, the Chinese national character, Confucianism, a love of labor and learning, respect for authority and a focus on the latest technologies. If this outline for Chinese success were to be combined with experience gained during the Soviet era “the result would be a unique phenomenon on a global scale.”²⁸ In Gennady Zyuganov’s view, China does not intend to gain unilateral benefits in its relations with Russia and does not view Russia solely as a source of raw materials.

Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)

Another wing of the Russian political system is represented by the LDPR party, headed by one of the more influential, yet scandal-plagued Russian politician – V.V. Zhirinovsky. A positive assessment of China’s development and the prospects for Russia-China relations—although with some elements of alarmism—can be discerned in the rhetoric of this political alliance.

The party’s official foreign policy program²⁹ stresses that China today is a “new center of world production and a leader of the “resource billion” camp of countries and may become Russia’s strategic partner. At the same time it notes that China, being a nuclear power with a population of over one billion, “has the potential of being a hypothetical threat for Russia.” In this party leader’s opinion, military parity, given the numerical strength of the respective armed forces, is impossible for purely objective demographic reasons. In this connection, in order for it to provide for its own security, Russia will have to surpass its Asian neighbor in nuclear weapons and modern armaments. The party proposes to pursue toward China a so-called policy of “vigilant amicability,” the main postulates of which are: “to act openly, honestly and transparently; develop and strengthen economic ties; enter into sensible political and economic alliances;” and “not to forget to consolidate Russia’s positions in the entire Far East region.” In this context it is also suggested to concentrate on developing the Far East region, move to a policy of “forcing investments (where China would be compelled to build enterprises for advanced processing of Russian raw materials on Russian territory), and to update Russia’s defensive doctrine by identifying the “maximum scale of a hypothetical military threat” that China may create in the event of “unforeseen changes in its political course or the international power balance.” Moreover, it is suggested to formulate a “range of measures aimed at maintaining Russia-China power parity.”

That being said, such alarmist themes are virtually nonexistent in the public statements of the party leader himself and of his party cohorts. Most public statements note the fast moving and multidirectional “rise” of the PRC and the threat the Asian giant

²⁸ Quote from: “Interview with G.A. Zyuganov for the newspaper Pravda on his trip to China,” available at <http://kprf.ru/international/83089.html> (in Russian).

²⁹ “The Liberal Democratic Party Program (LDPR) Program: Foreign Policy,” official website of the LDPR, program as of 31 July 2014, available at http://ldpr.ru/party/Program_LDPR/Foreign_policy (in Russian).

poses for the US, being its “main enemy.”³⁰ In this context the party representatives often regard the phenomenon of China in the popular format of a strategic triangle, where Russia is afforded a place “between the hammer and the anvil.” Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s opinion is that Russia, as a historically Eurasian power, will always have to cooperate with both the West and the East. As one of the party’s deputies in the State Duma noted, “history itself is turning Russia to the East.”³¹ Meanwhile, the US is carefully observing how cooperation between Russia and China is being structured, hoping they will clash in the near future. In this situation China and Russia have a good chance of “breaking this deadly scenario,”³² for which purpose Russia-China cooperation must become as active as possible at the present stage.

On the whole, the LDPR is not inclined to view China as a direct threat to Russia and its interests. For this political wing the greatest concern in the context of the Chinese “rise” is most likely prompted by the aggravated migration problem³³ and the alarm it generates in Siberia and the Far East.³⁴

A Just Russia

This party’s position with respect to China and its bilateral relations with Russia is practically identical to that expressed by the country’s president and by representatives of other Russian political parties (primarily CPRF). Representatives of the A Just Russia party regularly meet with delegations from China and travel there to arrange inter-party and inter-parliamentary cooperation between the two countries.

All speeches by party members note the significance and depth of Russia-China cooperation, the similarity of their positions on key international issues, and the prospects for future development. For instance, one party representative believes Russia is historically a European-Asian country and is today “slowly but consistently” turning to the

³⁰ “Vladimir Zhirinovskiy on current events in Russia and the world, “Russia-24” Television channel, “Interview” program, 28 February 2011,” official website of the LDPR, 31 March 2011, available at http://ldpr.ru/leader/The_leader_in_media/Vladimir_Zhirinovskiy_about_current_events_in_Russia_and_the_world_channel_Russia24_program_interview_28_02_11 (in Russian).

³¹ Speech by M.V. Degtyarev at the plenary session on the situation in Ukraine, 20 May 2014, available at http://ldpr.ru/ldpr_talks/deputys_word/speech_at_the_plenary_session_of_20_may_2014_on_the_situation_in_ukraine (in Russian).

³² “Vladimir Zhirinovskiy: We need a Far East boom,” official website of the Russia-Asia Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, 21 February 2013, available at http://raspp.ru/novosti/eurasia-news/vladimir_zhirinovskij_nam_nuzhen_dalnevostochnyj_bum (in Russian).

³³ “Where is control over Chinese farms?,” official website of the LDPR, 6 June 2013, available at http://ldpr.ru/events/Where_control_over_Chinese_farms (in Russian).

³⁴ *23 steps to rebirth. LDPR proposals on Far East development* (Moscow: LDPR publication, 2014), p.16, official website of the LDPR, available at http://ldpr.ru/static/uploads/8abfd97d73_DV_2014_int.pdf (in Russian).

East.³⁵ Moreover, this party representative believes, “the Russia-China strategic partnership is one of the country’s foreign policy priorities” and Russia is ready to “continue efforts to deepen mutually advantageous cooperation in all areas.”³⁶

The need to intensify cooperation in the Far East in the area of investment and technology is especially emphasized. Also of note is the importance of the “Program of Cooperation between the Far East and Eastern Siberian Districts of the Russian Federation and the Northeast Region of the People’s Republic of China for 2009-2018,” which has been approved by both countries’ heads of state. However, the party also expresses some concern about the evolving situation in the Far East. For example, according to a party deputy in the State Duma, “those living in the Far East should not feel like members of Japanese colonies or Chinese provinces.”³⁷ In this connection a number of measures aimed at economically developing the Far East and improving the living conditions for Russian citizens there are proposed. In particular, detailed discussions are underway in the State Duma regarding measures to attract Russian citizens to work and live in the region.

Despite the situation in the Far East, the representatives of this party generally do not express particular concern about the growing might of China and do not regard it as a threat. In contrast to the previous party under discussion, alarmism is not a component of the party rhetoric of A Just Russia. Their accent is primarily on the bilateral nature of the two countries’ interaction and on their desire for mutually beneficial cooperation on a wide range of regional and international issues.

Civic Platform

In addition to the four main parties that play a key role in Russian politics, a new opposition party, “Civic Platform,” was founded not too long ago. During its thus far brief existence it has already attracted many followers to its ranks. There can be discerned in their foreign policy platform an appreciable degree of alarmism regarding the growing strength of China and its heightened activity in the areas bordering Russia. For example, the party’s founder and former leader Mikhail Prokhorov believes that the current global agenda is driven by competition between two poles (the United States with Latin American and China with the Asian countries) and that a third center of power is yet to be seen. The European Union, Russia or Japan, in his opinion, are unable on their own to rival any of these centers, and therefore it would seem desirable to create a third, alter-

³⁵ “Nikolai Levichev participates in “Security and Cooperation in the South China Sea” conference,” official website of *A Just Russia*, 18 October 2013, available at www.spravedlivo.ru/5_52085.html (in Russian).

³⁶ Quote from “Sergey Mironov: Russia-China partnership is a foreign policy priority for our country,” official website of *A Just Russia*, 19 October 2010, available at http://www.spravedlivo.ru/5_33830.html (in Russian).

³⁷ Quote from: “Will Zhirinovsky’s prescriptions help the Far East? – The opinions of parliamentarians,” *Novosti Federatsii* (Federation News) news agency, 8 November 2013, available at <http://regions.ru/news/2484938> (in Russian).

native pole (consisting of Russia, the EU and Japan) that would unify the Eurasian continent and world as a whole.³⁸

The first version of a draft Russian Foreign Policy Doctrine the party recently presented states that Japan should be Russia's strategic partner in Asia instead of China. In the party's view, "pandering to China changes the Far East and Eastern Siberia into an appendage of the Chinese economy."³⁹ For this reason Russia should "move away from its preferential orientation to China." In the party's view, the eastern vector of Russian policy today is exclusively aimed toward China, and therefore the need for diversification is crucial. The leitmotiv of this vector is a "path toward servility, vassalage, and dependence of the Russian Federation on the People's Republic of China," which harbors the risk of turning into a "colony of the Celestial Empire," and a "raw materials vassal of China."⁴⁰ The representatives of this party repeatedly raise the issue of possible Chinese expansion to the Far East and Siberia. To adequately counter "Chinese expansion" and "protect [Russia] from the creeping Chinese threat"⁴¹ Russia needs to urgently set to developing these regions by providing economic and financial support, creating jobs, developing programs to raise labor productivity in those jobs, and so forth. Thus, it is crucial for Russia today to enhance its ability to compete in the Asian region and in the world as a whole.

There are somewhat varying opinions in the Russian political community regarding the phenomenon of China's rise and the question of how Russia should structure its relations with its Asian neighbor.

In any case, all political groups note the real exacerbation of the situation in the Siberian and Far East Federal Districts associated with China's growing might and its increased level of activity in border territories and in the areas in question. The degree of alarmism expressed in statements on the matter and proposed solutions to the long-pending problem vary, but this issue has taken a prominent place in the Russian foreign policy agenda.

³⁸ See, for example: "Mikhail Prokhorov proposes creating a conglomerate of the RF, Europe and Japan," *Russkaya sluzhba novostey* (Russian News Service), 11 December 2013, available at <http://rusnovosti.ru/news/295357> (in Russian).

³⁹ "Civic Platform sees Russia as a center of power," *Kommersant*, 30 January 2014, available at <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2395655> (in Russian).

⁴⁰ Quote from: "Solomon Ginsburg: Fleeing Europe," official website of Civic Platform, 2 July 2014, available at <https://civilplatform.ru/2277> (in Russian).

⁴¹ Quote from "Mikhail Prokhorov: Stalin has 'arisen' and become a participant in today's political life," official website of *Civic Platform*, 20 July 2013, available at <https://civilplatform.ru/691> (in Russian).

The Russian Academic Community's View

A large part of Russia's academic community regards China as a global power and assesses it based on requirements applied to other countries at its level. The process of China awakening to its status as a world power has been long and difficult. The PRC's coming to this point has been a completely logical result of its steady development and its full-scale entry into world-wide links.

Nonetheless, an obvious duality and inconsistency can be discerned in Beijing's foreign policy course. On the one hand, China seeks to play an ever greater role in the world, and on the other it demonstrates a certain lack of resolve as it takes on international commitments commensurate to its growing strength. Thus, China today declares the need to act in accordance with the powers it possesses. Yet another contradiction can be observed in Beijing's statements that it does not seek to threaten the emerging world order, while at the same time proclaiming the intention to move the international order in a more equitable direction. Another contradiction is in the question of China's priority area of responsibility – does it perceive itself and is it positioning itself as a regional or global power? The answer varies depending on the situation. Overall, most experts believe, the PRC has completed its initial adaptation to its new status and will continue to move along the path of widening its sphere of interests and responsibility depending on a wide range of external—and mostly internal—factors.⁴²

Some specialists also propose certain parameters by which one may judge the potential of a given country to “secure” its status as a great power.⁴³ For example, by some definitions only the United States fully possesses all the parameters. China's data are quite inconsistent. For example, despite its fast-paced economic growth it has thus far been unable to solve the problems of literacy, poverty and lack of development in some territories, and its lagging behind the US and RF in nuclear capability. There is also the problem of providing for its energy needs and uncertainty in the choice of how and to what extent the country will participate in the process of running the world. Despite all this, China demonstrates complete independence in its foreign and domestic policy and firmly opposes any interference in its internal affairs or encroachment on its sovereignty. However, when it has to do with other countries, Beijing shows no such determination and clear policy in its actions.

On the whole, China has forged a reputation as a country where everything always works according to a plan worked out for many years into the future. Deng Xiaoping's behest to “keep a low profile” is no longer applicable; every action Beijing takes on the international scene is at the center of attention and comes under careful scrutiny, followed by either a correct or incorrect interpretation of its motives. One way or another, difficulties or successes in China's development will have enormous consequences for

⁴² For details see: V. Portyakov, *The establishment of China as a responsible global power* (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences Publishing House, 2013), p. 240.

⁴³ Tatyana Shakleina, “Great powers and regional sub-systems,” *Mezhdunarodniye procesy* (International Processes) 9:2(26) (May-August 2011), available at <http://www.intertrends.ru/twenty-sixth/004.htm> (in Russian).

the entire world. If the Chinese economy undergoes a decline, it will inevitably pull the entire world economy downward with it. If its dynamic rise continues, tensions will only increase, and Moscow will be faced with the need to take one side or another.⁴⁴

On the whole, proponents of the linear approach dominate among experts engaged in analyzing the prospects of China's development in the coming years. In their view, if China succeeds in resolving all its internal problems and disparities related to its rapid rise in recent years, its power will only grow and its influence spread even further in the future. However, there are other experts who believe that pro-democratic changes are inevitable in China and that they will be a catalyst for the breakup of the country into separate regions, which will inevitably entail a change in the configuration and balance of powers in the region itself and throughout the world.⁴⁵

The Chinese Threat

The topic of the so-called "Chinese threat" occupies a special place in discussions within the Russian academic community. An absolute majority of experts maintain a generally cautious and reserved position on this count. However, there are some representatives of the "alarmist" wing, who view the matter in dramatic terms. In this context, the Russian community of experts is often the scene of quite heated discussions between representatives of the various approaches to China.

In the most striking and extreme form of the alarmist approach, ideas are developed in numerous pessimistic and quite shrill publications and speeches by the director and the most active members of the *Institute for Political and Military Analysis* (IPMA), who regard China as a direct threat to Russia.⁴⁶ It has to do with an all-encompassing threat that includes not only demographic and migration factors (to which the more moderate alarmists limit themselves), but economic, military, energy-related, and many other aspects. For example, in the opinion of the organization's associates, "China is a

⁴⁴ Feodor Lukyanov, "The razor's edge," *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 14 November 2012, available at <http://www.rg.ru/2012/11/14/knr.html> (in Russian).

⁴⁵ Dmitriy Mosyakov, "A new China in the Asia Pacific Region," Russian Council on Foreign Affairs, 29 August 2012, available at http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=725#top (in Russian).

⁴⁶ See for example: A. Sharavin, "A third threat" (28 September 2001); "Who should Russia beware of: America or China?" (15 June 2002); "Russia-China: Laughter through tears?!" (13 April 2004); "Russia and China: The prospects of a military and political alliance against the United States" (8 September 2005); "Don't wait until potential threats become real" (5 February 2009); A. Khranchikhin, "Into the embrace of Chinese colonization" (19 April 2002); "Taiwan will be annexed to the PRC" (28 October 2004); "Chinese Invasion: Scenario 2015" (24 March 2005); "China as one of the powers-that-be" (14 December 2006); "China will reach to the Caspian" (9 April 2006); "China and Japan will unleash war for oil and gas" (18 April 2006); "Quiet expansion" (20 April 2006); "The Reds will strike from the rear" (26 April 2006); A. Tsyganok, "Military threats for Russia" (2 February 2005); all available at the site of Institute for Political and Military Analysis <http://www.ipma.ru> (in Russian).

threat to Russia by virtue of its very existence.”⁴⁷ China cannot resolve all the accumulated internal political problems and disparities using only its own internal resources and imports, and therefore is obliged to look outward (mostly to Russia and Central Asia). Thus, seizing Siberia and the Far East is not only a whim but a vital necessity, and therefore this radical wing of the Russian academic community regards the scenario of a Chinese invasion and war with Russia as completely realistic.

In the view of another expert, V. Kashin, an associate of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, Russia should not dismiss the possibility of the Chinese threat becoming real. In his article “The Sum of All Fears,”⁴⁸ the author stresses that the Chinese threat, with all its hypothetical nature, is one of the main factors driving Moscow’s foreign policy and force development. Moscow is taking a large number of precautions related to the thus far potential threat to the Russian Federation’s interests and territorial integrity. In particular, this expert believes, an analysis of the process of re-arming the Russian Federation’s military forces shows that the Eastern Military District is among the leaders in the acquisition of military equipment, the deployment of troops from the European part of Russia to the Far East is one possible scenario of large-scale Russian maneuvers, and Chinese investments in some significant sectors of the economy are being purposely limited by Moscow. Considering the tentative nature of the existing uncertainty regarding its powerful neighbor, V. Kashin believes Russia would do well to keep open its effective channels of communication and cooperation with the United States and America’s allies in the Asia-Pacific Region in order to activate them should the need arise.

Yet another important aspect of the “rise” of China is its military program, which arouses particular concern in many countries, including Russia. For example, experts say that under the cover of its modern air force China has deployed the most powerful group of ground forces in the world at a distance of several days forced march to the Russian border. Of course, given today’s political and economic realities it is difficult to imagine military aggression by China, although the possibility cannot be fully excluded either. Russia need not succumb to alarmism, but it cannot ignore obvious facts. For that reason it is important to remember that friendship between Russia and China should mean openness and candor, not hidden agendas. Accordingly, some believe that Russia’s Chinese colleagues should explain the presence of a powerful military group not far from the Russian border and remove it.⁴⁹ Furthermore, considering that China has moved from being a major importer of weapons to being an exporter, the Russian military in-

⁴⁷ Quote from: A. Khranchikhin, “Chinese Expansion: Russia will not even notice...,” *Institute for Political and Military Analysis*, 4 November 2004, available at <http://www.ipma.ru/publikazii/geopolitika/541.php> (in Russian).

⁴⁸ Vasilii B. Kashin, “The sum of all fears, Russia in global politics,” *Russia in Global Politics*, 1 May 2013, available at <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Summa-vsekh-strakhov-15961> (in Russian).

⁴⁹ See: Alexey G. Arbatov, “The Asia-Pacific Strategic Panorama is Rapidly Changing,” *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozrenie* (Independent Military Review), 21 February 2013, available at http://nvo.ng.ru/nvo/2014-02-21/1_asia.html (in Russian).

dustry finds itself in considerable distress. Thus Russia is not only losing a significant portion of the Chinese market but is finding a powerful competitor in its Asian neighbor, since the two countries operate in the same geographical and market segments. For this reason some experts anticipate that sooner or later a group of developing countries economically and politically oriented to the PRC will emerge, which will inevitably lead to a worsening situation for Russian arms suppliers, regardless of the quality and level of their products.⁵⁰

Moreover, in the opinion of many experts, in the years since the breakup of the USSR China has succeeded in turning the new Russia into its junior partner. Chinese leaders do not relate to their Russian counterparts as equals, as frequently noted by many Russian political scientists.⁵¹ They also believe Moscow's desire for rapprochement with Beijing will bring the former neither economic or political welfare, nor social progress. An economic orientation to China will be sure to guarantee Russia the status of a subordinate country.⁵²

In his analysis of the aforementioned numerous alarmist themes, Yu. Morozov, a senior researcher at the Center for Strategic Problems of Northeast Asia and the SCO of the *Far East Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, puts forth a number of facts and arguments that cast doubt on them.⁵³ Morozov believes that the problem of overpopulation in China, its deficit of natural resources, its focus on Central Asia, and the demographic pressure and migration problem in the Far East are exaggerated in alarmist publications of this sort. In his opinion, such inflation of the "Chinese threat" is capable of doing appreciable harm to bilateral Russia-China relations and to Russia in general. Such activities strengthen the positions of anti-Russian and anti-Chinese forces, promote an image of China as an enemy, and necessitate spending more energy and resources to dispel this mythical threat that is certainly taking root in the impressionable minds of citizens, especially those in the Far East. Still, he does not exclude the possi-

⁵⁰ For details see: M. Barabanov, V. Kashin, and K. Makienko, *The Defense Industry and Arms Trade of the PRC* (Moscow: Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, 2013), p. 272.

⁵¹ See for example: Vasilii Kolotilov, "'China does not consider Russia an equal.' Why the PRC will not become a military and political ally of Russia to counterbalance Europe and the United States," *Profile*, 20 May 2014, available at <http://www.profile.ru/rossiya/item/82161-kitaj-ne-schitaet-rossiyu-rovnej> and at www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document251565.phtml (in Russian).

⁵² See for example: Vladislav Inozemtsev, "Russia's Pacific Destiny, Russian Council on International Affairs" (Russian International Affairs Council, 4 November 2013), available at http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/index.php?id_4=2636#top (in Russian); or Ekaterina Kuznetsova and Vladislav Inozemtsev, "Russia's Pacific Destiny," *The American Interest*, 10 October 2013, available at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2013/10/10/russias-pacific-destiny> (in English).

⁵³ Yuriy Morozov, "What publication of myths about the Chinese threat will lead to," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 13:2 (2010): 118–129, available at http://www.ifes-ras.ru/attaches/books__texts/morozov_chinese_risk.pdf (in Russian) or at <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/k-chemu-mozhet-privesti-publikatsiya-mifov-o-kitayskoy-ugroze> (in Russian).

bility that a buildup of overall strength followed by an expansion of foreign policy interests will lead to a rise in the Beijing's great-power ambitions, which in turn may give rise to an increased threat to Russia's national security. In this expert's opinion, however, such a scenario is possible only in the distant future, and not at all in the near- or mid-term.⁵⁴

It is important to emphasize that the overwhelming majority of Russian experts hold an opinion opposite to that of the extreme alarmists. They focus on the need for further rapprochement and increased cooperation between Russia and China. One such expert is Y. Bazhanov, rector of the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy. He believes that China is primarily a partner for Russia, and not a threat at all. Bazhanov acknowledges the concern among part of the Russian population living near the Russian-Chinese border, but questions the reality of such a "Chinese threat."⁵⁵ Starting from Beijing's officially postulated statements about a multi-polar balance of power in international relations based on peaceful co-existence, Y. Bazhanov stresses China's desire to strengthen ties to Russia in various spheres and the countries' common approaches to addressing major international problems. In this expert's opinion, this speaks to its "serious interest in a long-term and close strategic partnership with Russia."⁵⁶ It is further noted that Beijing is formally declaring that it has no need for hegemony or expansion, either now or in the future. At the same time he acknowledges the fact that there is a wide range of negative factors that have a bearing on their bilateral relations. This has to do mostly with the sharp increase in the numbers of Chinese citizens living in the Far East, which naturally causes apprehension among the local population regarding "demographic expansion" by their Asian neighbor.

Other factors include cultural differences, disparate interpretations of the territorial issue, imperfections in economic cooperation, geopolitical rivalry, issues of the two countries' internal development, and so forth.⁵⁷ However, in Y. Bazhanov's opinion Russia need not unduly exaggerate the "Chinese threat," as this may cause irritation on China's part and only ruin bilateral relations. Instead, political leaders need to focus on close bilateral cooperation with an emphasis on the complementary nature of the two economies. Moreover, cooperation should be established with other countries as well (in particular with Korea, Japan, and countries of Southeast Asia) with the aim of developing the production capacity of Siberia and the Far East. This will make it possible in the future to increase the flow of Russian citizens into these regions, enhance the overall development of the territories, and so forth. That being said, Y. Bazhanov notes that while geopolitical engagement with China is necessary, cooperation with the United States and the West must not be abandoned either. Such a multi-vector and balanced policy by Moscow will help to prompt Washington and Brussels to affirm multi-polarity on the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Yevgeny Bazhanov and N. Bazhanova, *A Multipolar World* (Moscow: Vostok-Zapad, 2010): 304–311.

⁵⁶ Yevgeny Bazhanov, "China as a Partner, Not as a Threat," *The Moscow Times*, 25 March 2009, available at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/tmt/375651.html>.

⁵⁷ For details see: Bazhanov and Bazhanova, *A Multipolar World*, 288–298.

international scene, under which the world powers will cooperate—not compete—with one another.⁵⁸

In 2012 the Valdai International Discussion Club published an analytical report: “Toward the Great Ocean, or the New Globalization of Russia,” which spoke of the need for a clear-cut balance between eastern and western vectors of Russian foreign policy so that one could speak of the “country as a full-fledged modern global power.”⁵⁹ Considering the growing tension between the United States and China, Russia is being given a special place in the emerging power structures of the Asia-Pacific Region. For example, Russia is already playing the “role of the background factor” in the development of the strategic military situation in Asia as a whole and is providing a certain amount of strategic cover for the PRC’s economic leap forward. At the time, experts acknowledged the fact that Russia was not yet capable of playing the role of a heavy-weight balance between the United States (the West) and China, which does not promote stabilization of the situations in the sphere of regional security. Analysts believe that Russia has what it takes to become a full-fledged Euro-Atlantic and Pacific power, but to do so it must even the balance between the eastern and western foreign policy vectors, where the latter is still dominant. A major theme in the report is also the need to develop the Siberian and Far East Federal Districts together with China. Thus, Russia should not close itself off from China, but rather build cooperation with it. For that purpose it is important to determine the competitive advantages of the regions in question, to evaluate the real need of the Chinese market for goods and services from those regions, and to find points of complementarity in the Russian and Chinese markets.⁶⁰ It is important to note that in the experts’ opinion, these regions are becoming “not the rear area but the front – the front of development rather than confrontation.”⁶¹

In a similar report issued in 2014,⁶² analysts again emphasized the existing “demand” for Russia in Asia.⁶³ But they went further, touching upon the discussion of existing threats to Russia from China. For example, in their opinion there is no threat of military, political or demographic sinification of the eastern Russian regions in the short- or mid-term. Moreover, there is no current threat of an influx of Chinese migrants, since, in the analysts’ opinion, the Chinese themselves are uninterested in spending a lot of time in Russian territory. Added to that is the fact that the Central Asian labor force is many times greater than the Chinese labor force. The main problem with Chinese migration is

⁵⁸ For details see: Bazhanov and Bazhanova, *A Multipolar World*, 298-303.

⁵⁹ *Toward the Great Ocean, or the New Globalization of Russia, Analytical report* (Valdai Discussion Club, 5 July 2012), available at http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/Toward_great_ocean_rus.pdf (in Russian) and http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/Toward_great_ocean_eng.pdf (in English).

⁶⁰ For details see: *Toward the Great Ocean, or the New Globalization of Russia*, 39–51, 62–76.

⁶¹ Quote from *Toward the Great Ocean, or the New Globalization of Russia*, 31.

⁶² *Toward the Great Ocean – 2, or Russia’s Breakthrough to Asia*, Analytical report (Valdai Discussion Club, 27 February 2014), available at http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/Twd_Great_Ocean_2_Eng.pdf.

⁶³ For details see: *Toward the Great Ocean – 2, or Russia’s Breakthrough to Asia*, 16–36.

not migration as such, but rather the corrupted system of how labor is brought in, which is ultimately manifested in the appearance of a considerable illegal sector. Also very curious is the analysts' opinion that Russia is of interest to the United States only in the context of China's "rise": on one hand Russia figures as a possible ally and partner in the fight against the common challenge of China's rise, and on the other hand Russia is regarded as a factor in China's substantial increase in strength, which makes it a threat for the United States. America looks at the strengthening of China's economic positions in eastern Russia in the same terms. As in the preceding report, analysts paid most attention to the issue of the development of a wide region of Siberia and the Far East, which is supposed to become the "Russian window to Asia." That window is supposed to become a "key implement for Russia's turn to the East," and a stronger Russian economic presence in the Asia Pacific region may lead to political consolidation in the long term.⁶⁴

M. Titarenko, director of the Far East Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, believes that the "threat"—if it even exists—originates not from China, but from the European part of Russia, which does not properly support its Siberian and Far East regions. In his opinion, the problem of demographic expansion by China may arise in the foreseeable future only if central authority weakens and there is a potential threat of disintegration of the country. On the topic of Chinese migration, this expert emphasizes that it is unavoidable in any case and at present it would seem impossible to eliminate the demographic imbalance with China. Russia may make prudent use of external immigration to address the problem of a labor shortage in the region and at the same time begin to more actively stimulate an influx of Russian citizens to these territories. In doing so the existing problem and "threat" can be eliminated and prevented by tying Chinese immigration to the overall strategy for the region's social and economic development and Russia-China relations in general.⁶⁵ In M. Titarenko's opinion this is how those who wish ill to Russia-China cooperation are spreading myths about the "Chinese threat" and Beijing's "demographic expansion."⁶⁶

There is another threat related to the hypothetical triumph of the nationalistic approach in the upper echelons of power in China. This type of threat has been discussed in recent years against the background of increasing numbers of publications of an extreme nationalistic bent in Chinese society. In this case, as some experts believe, Russia may encounter a huge "accelerator state" that wants to actively contend for world dominance in order to "to save the world a la China," seize world resources to prevent their honest distribution among other states, and "restore historic justice" and so forth.⁶⁷ In this scenario, Russia would have to reexamine its entire system of bilateral relations with

⁶⁴ Ibid., 37–70.

⁶⁵ For details see: M.L. Titarenko, *Geopolitical Significance of the Far East. Russia, China and Other Countries of Asia* (Moscow: Landmarks of historical thought, 2008): 199–207, available at http://www.ifes-ras.ru/attaches/books__texts/Titarenko_Dalnii_Vostok.pdf.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 140–141.

⁶⁷ See: Alexandr Lukin, "The "Chinese dream" and the future of Russia," *Russia in global politics*, 19 June 2010, available at <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Kitaiskaya-mechta-i-budushee-Rossii-14857> (in Russian).

Beijing and the basis of its foreign policy in general. However, at the present moment such a scenario seems purely hypothetical.

Does a “Chinese threat” really exist? It would seem that for the most part this phenomenon is farfetched and many of its components sometimes are not real. However, at the level of Russian mass consciousness notions about such a threat remain quite persistent. The fact is China itself is interested in integrating itself into the world economy and the international system as a whole, so Beijing is making a number of efforts to level out all existing misgivings about it. Russian leaders need an extremely positive program of actions toward its eastern neighbor that contains options and proposal for joint development in order to “catch the Chinese wind.” As some experts note, passivity and a melancholic depiction of threats emanating from China and related to its growing overall strength may lead to a future where “Beijing will indeed be setting the agenda in the Asian part of Russia.”⁶⁸ It is in this scenario that economic and political threats may materialize for Moscow. For the time being Russia should heed the Chinese foreign policy model and develop close relations with other players in the region (Japan, South Korea, the ASEAN countries) and in the world (USA, EU, India) in order to maintain and preserve balance. Internal problems related to Chinese immigration and the demographic explosion should not be forgotten either; numerous measures should continue to be implemented to address them.⁶⁹

The China–Russia–USA Strategic Triangle

The question of these three powers interacting within a strategic triangle is of special interest to Russia’s academic community. In general, there are three groups of researchers in the academic community with differing assessments of Russia’s place in such a triangle. The first group believes that Russia should deepen its cooperation with China, considering all the positive factors of bilateral cooperation. The second group insists on strengthening relations with the United States and western countries. And, finally, a third group believes it is necessary for Russia to develop cooperation both with western countries and with China.

Some experts point out unsuccessful past efforts by countries to build a “two against one” triangle. In this connection, neither a Russian-American alliance against the PRC nor a Russian-Chinese alliance against the US can be contemplated. For this reason he believes that even in the long term, all three of the aforementioned points of the triangle will be “three isolated centers of power.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Quote from Fedor Lukyanov, “A dangerous wind in the sails,” *Moscow News*, 27 March 2012, available at <http://www.mn.ru/oped/20120327/314277549.html> (in Russian).

⁶⁹ For details see A. Druzyaka, “Chinese migration in Russia’s Far East,” in *China today: Social and economic development, national policy, ethno-psychology* (Moscow: KRASAND, 2011): 107–138.

⁷⁰ Yevgeny Bazhanov, “Tangled Triangle of Russia, China and the U.S.,” *The Moscow Times*, 22 July 2010, available at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/tmt/410827.html>.

A similar opinion is held by V. Mikheyev, under whose direction a report analyzing trilateral relations with the Asia-Pacific Region was prepared in 2009.⁷¹ The authors concluded that any bilateral relationship within such a triangle is independent and does not require a third participant. In their view, it is very important not to use a third party to bring pressure to bear against another member of the triangle.

Another point of view may be presented by those experts in favor of Moscow is flexibly balancing between West and East, with a slight gravitation toward the former. Although Moscow and Beijing share identical views of the contemporary system of international relations and a dislike of the American wish to remake the world in its own way, there is a flip side to their dislike of Washington's foreign policy. Russia and China clearly signify their refusal to tag along with American policy as "junior partners." Nonetheless they are not creating a full alliance for openly standing up to the United States, but are limiting themselves to building something of a counterweight to Washington, so as not to encounter harsh reprisals. In this regard, Russia is playing the lead public role to resist America policy that both countries find unacceptable, while the PRC remains in the shadows building independent, more even and pragmatic cooperation with the United States. Thus, the experts believe that Beijing is even interested in maintaining the antagonisms between Moscow and Washington, because it fears confronting the United States openly, as this may result in China becoming isolated. For these reasons, Russia should try to find its ways between the "Chinese model" of cooperation with the United States and a fate as its "junior partner."⁷²

Another proponent of this position is Eduard Lozansky, who in one of his publications⁷³ makes a case for the need to build even relationships with both points of the triangle. Maintaining stable links with one side will enable Russia to balance the influence of the third side. Within this framework the future of strategic interaction between Beijing and Moscow will inevitably depend on how relations in the entire China–Russia–USA triangle pan out.

Yet another expert, P. Salin,⁷⁴ speaks of Russia's three possible strategies and prospects. He asserts that Russia is faced with a choice that will in the future determine the logic of its foreign policy behavior. In the first instance, Russia has an opportunity to create a new center of gravity in the Asia-Pacific Region; in the second, it may enter the orbit of interests of either the United States or China; and finally in the third, Russia may use the so-called "pendulum tactic" or "multi-vector policy." The *first scenario* seems

⁷¹ V.B. Amirov and V.V. Miheev, eds., *The Russia–China–USA triangle in the Asia Pacific Region: Factors of uncertainty* (Moscow: IMEMO, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2009): 114, available at <http://www.imemo.ru/files/File/ru/publ/2009/09038.pdf> (in Russian).

⁷² Igor Zevelev and Michail Troitsky, "Russia and China in the mirror of U.S. policy," *Russia in global politics*, 27 October 2010, available at http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_9650 (in Russian).

⁷³ E. Lozansky, *Russia between America and China* (Moscow: International relations, 2007), 288.

⁷⁴ Pavel Salin, "Three paths for Russia in Asia," *Russia in global politics*, 28 October 2012, available at <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Tri-puti-Rossii-v-Azii-15732> (in Russian).

least likely, since Russia is not comparable to China, India or even Indonesia in terms of economic power. Moreover, making this scenario a reality would also require military might to provide for the security of allies, but Russia has a very small presence in the Asia-Pacific Region. Nonetheless, this expert posits that Russia has a chance to remain an independent center of power in the “soft underbelly” of China in Central Asia, control over which will allow Moscow to exert influence on the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific Region overall. However, here Russia encounters the activities of the PRC itself, which is increasingly making its influence felt in a region that is of great importance to it (mostly due to energy resources) and in doing so is causing Moscow’s position to erode. The *second scenario* is that Russia will simply act by inertia, which involves moving from economic to political dependency. In Salin’s view, Beijing is lobbying for just this scenario, since it stands to gain from Russian inertness, and this will allow China to implement its “new Silk Road” project (a Eurasian transcontinental bridge), where Russia would be the main transit country and China the moderator and engine of the whole project. And, finally, the third scenario calls for using the “pendulum” or “seesaw” tactic. In this case, it is assumed that Russia will show Beijing that it has an alternative in Washington and will show Washington that it has an alternative in Beijing. However, this tactic of running from one center to another does not serve Russia’s interests either. The author believes that the paradox in the situation is that Moscow’s strategic goals coincide partly with China’s and partly with those of the United States. For that reason, none of the aforementioned strategies are acceptable for Russia; she needs to act in an ad hoc manner in the Asia-Pacific Region and position herself as a neutral force, which in an environment of growing confrontation could materialize into real economic and geopolitical gains.

It is quite noteworthy that such a position on the need to conduct a multi-vector policy was widely discussed during the First Asia-Pacific Forum, held in late 2011 by the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) and the Russian Research Center of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization (RRC APEC). The summary report notes that Russia’s interests are not amenable to being fully harmonized with either Chinese or American interests. For that reason Moscow needs to leave itself the discretion and space to maneuver, try to distance itself from outside political actors and if necessary agree to the role of moderator. The report’s authors call this approach a “flexible maneuvering position,” that makes it possible to avoid creating a conclusive alliance with China or the United States, and to become a factor in the drawing together of those countries that do not wish to become hostage to Chinese-American confrontation. The experts believe it is this policy by Moscow, aimed at maintaining balance in the region and not allowing polarization of forces, that may become a key pillar of Russian policy in the Asia-Pacific region.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ *Russia’s Interests in the Asia-Pacific Region: Security and Development. Results of the First Asia-Pacific Forum* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Prospekt,” 2012), p.33, available at http://russiacouncil.ru/common/upload/RIAC_ATR.pdf (in Russian).

This mirrors the thinking of D. Trenin, director of the Moscow Carnegie Center.⁷⁶ In his view, Russian political elites perceive China as a new world power and a pole of the global system, without which it is impossible to address global challenges. As a center of influence and gravity, China distorts the economic and geopolitical space around Russia. For this reason Russia must focus on developing its eastern regions and integrating them more fully with the European part of the country. In this expert's opinion, the Russian leadership is aware that even a peaceful rise of a country of such size as China is fraught with numerous problems and challenges on a regional and global scale.

For Moscow, ensuring peace and good neighborliness with China is a priority task of bilateral relations. For Beijing, neighborly relations with Moscow are also extremely important, as they allow China not to worry about a threat from the north and to focus on addressing internal problems, while putting off an active foreign policy to a later time. Moreover, Moscow's refraining from rapprochement with Washington allows Beijing to keep Russia in the status of a reliable rear guard, thanks to which it need not fear strategic encirclement by the United States. There are many in China who regard the United States as a threat and call for rapprochement with Moscow. This attitude is widespread mostly in military circles and the north eastern regions of the PRC on the Russian border.

Despite China's desire that its dynamic rise not irritate or provoke Russia, Russia is concerned about the growth of Chinese might. Parallel to joint Russian-Chinese exercises it is beefing up its own group of forces that is subordinate to the "East" strategic command. That being said, a buildup of military and naval rivalry between Beijing and Moscow plays into Moscow's hand, as it weakens the chances for collusion between China and the United States and allows Russia greater discretion to maneuver to find balance between two powerful poles. In Trenin's opinion, Russian policy makers lack a clear-cut strategy toward both Beijing and Washington. Some among the ruling elite are not against turning America-China confrontation to their advantage, while others see Beijing as being more of a long-term serious threat for Russia than the United States is. In the context of the latter position, America is a potential ally for Russia in the event China suddenly acts against Russia. But the greatest worries for Russia are caused by the possibility of collusion between Washington and Beijing to the detriment of Moscow. This is why Moscow has always been suspicious of the idea of a G-2. However, in the author's view, Moscow should be more alarmed by a standoff between China and the United States, since in this case Moscow would face a very difficult choice between two more potent centers of power.

Some experts give special emphasis to the fact that within the Russia-USA-China strategic triangle, Russia must be able to resist the temptation to play the Chinese card

⁷⁶ See for example Dmitriy Trenin, *True Friends? How Russia and China Perceive One Another* (Moscow: Center for European Reforms, Moscow Carnegie Center, 2012), p. 74, available at http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CER_TreninRuss_web.pdf (in Russian).

against the American, and the American against the Chinese.⁷⁷ There are no grounds to regard the United States and China as overly dangerous competitors, just as one cannot groundlessly claim irreconcilability of interests within the triangle, despite the existence of certain elements of rivalry. In this context there are interesting prospects for turning bilateral relations along both lines into a dialogue, a desirable yet difficult-to-achieve model.

In the opinion of yet another political scientist and chairman of the presidium of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy, F. Lukyanov, the status of junior partner in balancing between Washington and Beijing brings not only potential preferential advantages but also serious risks.⁷⁸ If it finds itself in the position of junior partner, but still with the option of free choice, Moscow may derive numerous benefits, but this may require executing a very careful policy. This expert believes that Moscow's position today lies in being an opponent to Washington and drawing in China, but without putting forth any systemic alternative whatever to the emerging world order. Being dependent on China, it would be very problematic for Russia to even out the balance by moving closer to the United States, for two reasons: due to the absence of a requisite level of trust between Moscow and Washington, and due to the excessively strong interconnection between the United States and China. Thus, it is for this very reason that the most reasonable option for Moscow is to distance itself from both participants in a potential showdown. Furthermore, as a "new Asia" takes shape it is urgently important for Russia to rely on a diversified system of relations in the Asia Pacific region and not to equate links to Asia with links to China.⁷⁹ This will only narrow Russia's space to maneuver and will create the threat of asymmetric dependence.⁸⁰

As a result of recent events in Ukraine and Crimea becoming part of Russia, many experts have begun talking of a "divorce" between Russia and the West and an acceleration of the process of Russia turning to the East. It's a correct but somewhat belated decision. The main stage of international relations has for all practical purposes shifted to Asia, which has its own definite "rules of the game" and in which Russia is not the strongest player. As F. Lukyanov notes, China views its place in the world system and analyzes the capabilities of its partners through the PRC–USA–Russia triangle. The importance of each point of the triangle depends on its relations with the other two points. If one of the points loses its connection or wrecks its relations with one of the two other points, it immediately becomes weaker and more subject to the influence of the third

⁷⁷ Vladimir Baranovsky, "Trialogue in the Asia-Pacific Region," *Russian Council on Foreign Affairs*, 17 December 2012, available at http://russiancouncil.ru/blogs/riacmembers/?id_4=264 (in Russian).

⁷⁸ Fedor Lukyanov, "How Russia Can Profit from Confrontation between the US and China," *Forbes*, 19 February 2013, available at <http://www.forbes.ru/mneniya-column/mir/234451-kak-rossii-zarabotat-na-protivostoyanii-ssha-i-kitaya> (in Russian).

⁷⁹ Fedor Lukyanov, "We and the New Asia," *Kommersant Ogonyok*, 11 November 2013, available at <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2335761> (in Russian).

⁸⁰ Fedor Lukyanov, "Maneuvering is the most valuable thing," *Rossiskaya gazeta*, 26 September 2012, available at <http://www.rg.ru/2012/09/26/manevr.html> (in Russian).

corner. In this regard, Russia greatly needs to retain the United States as a “way of maintaining equilibrium” with China and “heightening its interest.”⁸¹ In the current political environment Beijing would not want Moscow to suffer defeat, but the prospect of a fight between Moscow and Washington is also not in the PRC’s interests. China is expecting the present conflict to accelerate Russia’s turn to the East and it is ready to adjust its strategy in order to firmly bind together the two countries. In this case, however, Moscow is faced with the need to urgently seek a counterbalance to growing Chinese influence so as not to fall into a dependence on China even more serious than on the United States and Europe.⁸²

Some specialists are expressing yet another viewpoint, according to which the West’s current squeezing out of Russia from its traditional spheres of influence, paralleled by deterrence of Russia and China, will inevitably push Moscow and Beijing toward one another. In a new environment, it is possible and desirable not just to intensify Russia-China cooperation, but even move it to a new qualitative level of a military and political union. This would make it possible to strengthen both countries’ positions on the world arena and to finally dispense with the last remnants of mutual distrust that are hampering the emergence of bilateral relations to a new and higher quality level.⁸³

Indeed, the old adage “every cloud has a silver lining” is quite apropos in this case. However, in turning to the East and coming closer to China Russia must make a maximum effort to maintain its autonomy. For that purpose it must act in three main directions.⁸⁴ First, an all-encompassing Asian strategy must be developed and implemented that would include internal (raising up the Far East) and external aspects (positioning itself in the Asia-Pacific region). Second, Russia’s ties to other important state players in the Asian Pacific arena (Japan, South Korea, India, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia and others) must be expanded and diversified. And third, an effort should be made to act as an architect of a new “other” globalization, at least at the level of slogans. This could partially balance out Russia’s economic disparity with China, which still lacks extensive experience as a leader in the sense of independently putting forth ideas of a global nature. Thus, this international situation is opening a new phase in bilateral Russia-China relations and the Asia-Pacific system in general.

⁸¹ Fedor Lukyanov, “Why do we need America?” *Rossiskaya gazeta*, 26 March 2014, available at <http://www.rg.ru/2014/03/26/lukjanov.html> (in Russian).

⁸² Fedor Lukyanov, “The Chinese would not want Russia to suffer defeat,” *Kommersant-FM*, 24 March 2014, available at <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2436857> (in Russian).

⁸³ Yuriy Tavrovsky, “Moscow – Beijing: A new strategic axis?,” *Zavtra*, 6 March 2014, available at <http://www.zavtra.ru/content/view/moskva-pekin-novaya-strategicheskaya-os/> and at <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/global-processes/MoskvaPekin--novaya-strategicheskaya-os-16458>.

⁸⁴ Fedor Lukyanov, “A Logical Partnership,” *Rossiskaya gazeta*, 21 May 2014, available at <http://www.rg.ru/2014/05/21/lookianov.html> (in Russian).

The Russian Public's View

The image of any state greatly influences its place and role on the international scene and the perception of a country by the masses beyond its borders directly lays the foundation for building its relationship with the international community. For this reason, when analyzing how a given state relates to its partner it is vitally important to examine the state of its public opinion. Analyzing the dynamic of how attitudes change in one's own society allows leaders to evaluate their foreign policy course with respect to another state.

Over the past decade and a half Russian and foreign organizations have conducted a large number of polls of Russian public opinion connected in one way or another to the subject of China. The results of this research make it possible to track the transformation of the Russian public's attitudes toward China and its "peaceful rise" program.

According to data from a recent poll by the Pew Research Center (see Figure 1), the percentage of Russians demonstrating a generally favorable *attitude toward China* significantly exceeds those expressing a negative attitude. And the results have remained at about the same level for more than 10 years.

In a 2007 poll an absolute majority of Russians (62 %) expressed the opinion that the *Chinese economy* would outstrip the U.S. economy in the future. But 20 % of respondents believed that the U.S. economy would always be stronger than the Chinese.⁸⁵ In

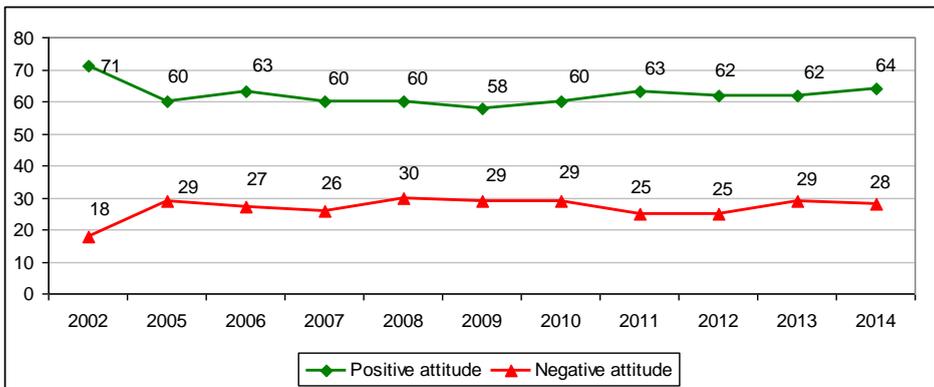


Figure 1: Changes in Attitude toward China by Members of the Russian Public (2002-2014): Generally Favorable and Unfavorable Responses.

Source: Pew Research Center, "Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America's Image," July 2014, p. 63, available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2014/07/2014-07-14-Balance-of-Power.pdf>.

⁸⁵ "World Publics Think China Will Catch Up With the US – and That's Okay" (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 25 May 2007), available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/may07/CCGA+_RiseChina_article.pdf.

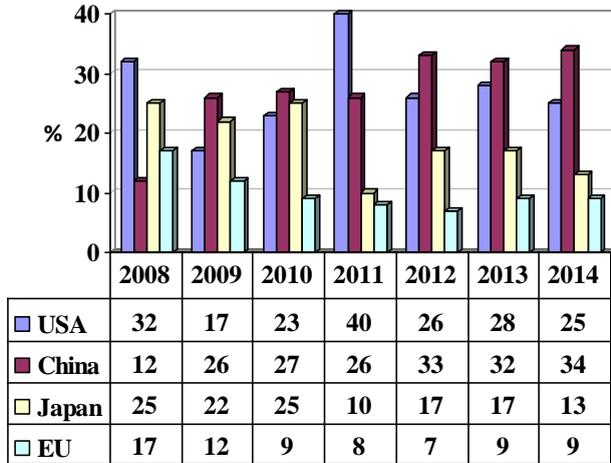


Figure 2: World Economic Leaders (USA, China, Japan, EU): Opinion of Members of the Russian Public (2008-2014).

Source: Pew Research Center, July 2014, “Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America’s Image,” p. 69, available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2014/07/2014-07-14-Balance-of-Power.pdf>.

their current assessments of the present state of the world economy Russians posit that China has already passed up the United States and is the *leading economic power*, holding that position for some years (see Figure 2). Furthermore, in the context of bilateral Russia-China relations, the *growth of the Chinese economy* should be regarded in a positive, rather than negative, light (see Figure 3).

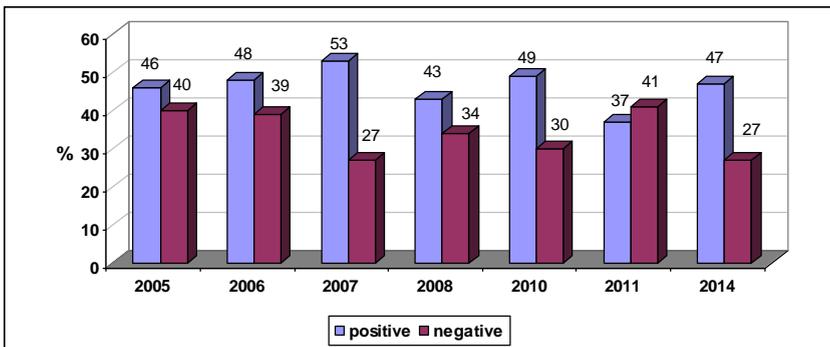


Figure 3: Consequences of Chinese Economic Leadership for Russia: Opinion of Russian Public (2005-2014).

Source: Pew Research Center, *Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America’s Image* (July 2014), p.82, available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2014/07/2014-07-14-Balance-of-Power.pdf>.

Also very telling is the fact that during the recent world financial and economic crisis a relative majority of Russians polled (39 %) believed that the “Chinese way” and the model of moving from a planned to a market economy is more successful than the Russian model.⁸⁶

In terms of the *military rise of the PRC*, the opposite situation is seen. In contrast to the positive assessment of the consequences of an increase in China’s economic might, the overwhelming majority of Russians expressed an exceptionally high degree of concern about the dynamic growth of Chinese military capability. For instance, in 2005 an absolute majority of Russians polled said that the strengthening of Chinese military power should be regarded more negatively (59 %) than positively (19 %). But 9 % believed that everything depends on circumstances, and 3 % said this issue cannot be perceived in a positive or negative light.⁸⁷ Some time later, in 2011, members of the Russian public again expressed their opinion on this question and the results showed that the overall picture was virtually unchanged: an absolute majority—74 %—indicated negative consequences of growing military capacity of the PRC and only 12 % positive.⁸⁸ When asked the same question in another poll, 69 % of the respondents spoke negatively and 10 % positively.⁸⁹ So, for completely understandable reasons having to do with issues of national security, the strengthening of the PRC’s military and political power causes much greater concern than the process of China becoming the largest economic power. Nonetheless, Russians are inclined to approve of joint Russian and Chinese military exercises to a greater degree (52 % “for” and 17 % “against”) than exercises between Russia and NATO (38 % “for” and 20 % “against”).⁹⁰

In the context of China’s dynamic multi-vector development and growing military, political and economic power, polls constantly raise the question of the *status of leading superpower* in the world, with the United States and China being the contenders. As for polls in recent years, the Russian public in the main believes that China has already supplanted or will soon supplant the United States as the leading “superpower” (see Figure 4).

⁸⁶ Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) Press release No. 1326 of 30 September 2009, available at <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=12509> (in Russian).

⁸⁷ 22 Nation Poll Shows China Viewed Positively by Most Countries, 5 March 2005, p. 2, available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/mar05/China_Mar05_quaire.pdf.

⁸⁸ Pew Research Center, “23-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey, U.S. Favorability Ratings Remain Positive, China Seen Overtaking U.S. as Global Superpower,” 13 July 2011, p. 39, available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Balance-of-Power-U.S.-Image-Report-FINAL-July-13-2011.pdf>.

⁸⁹ BBC World Service Poll: “Rising Concern about China’s Increasing Power: Global Poll,” 27 March 2011, p. 12, available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/mar11/BBC_China_Mar11_rpt.pdf.

⁹⁰ Dmitriy V. Kuznetsov, *China in the Mirror of Public Opinion* (Blagoveshchensk: Izdatel’stvo Barnaul State Pedagogical University Press, 2013), p. 255.

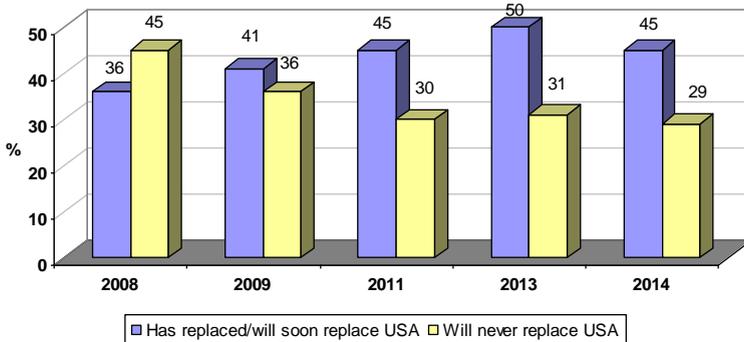


Figure 4: Prospects for Development of China (in the Status of Leading “Superpower”): Opinion of Russian Public (2008-2014).

Source: Pew Research Center, July 2014, “Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America’s Image,” p. 72, available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2014/07/2014-07-14-Balance-of-Power.pdf>.

However, as late as 2007 Russians were expressing an equal level of distrust toward China and the United States in terms of their *responsible behavior in the world*. For example, with respect to China, 14 % of Russian respondents absolutely did not trust China, 42 % did not have much trust, 31 % had a little trust, 4 % trusted China very much, and 10 % had no opinion. For the United States the results were: 31 %, 42 %, 17%, 3 % and 7 %, respectively.⁹¹ That said, the Russian public has rated China’s influence in the world fairly positively for a long time; however, the overall dynamic still seems somewhat unstable (see Figure 5). Since 2005 one sees certain “undulating” patterns of increase and decline of both negative (fluctuating from 3 % to 13 %) and positive indicators (fluctuating from 1 % to 14 %).

Russians also feel that China is displaying a *willingness to cooperate* with other countries on the world scene. In a 2009 poll, for instance, 73 % of Russian participants found that China is ready for cooperation (against 47 % in the U.S.) and 10 % thought the Asian giant was not ready for cooperation (against 27 % in the U.S.).⁹² It is entirely possible that the poll respondents were taking into account the efforts being made at the time by U.S. and Chinese leaders aimed at settling a number of problems and issues on a bilateral level. At the same time, residents of Russia believe that both China and the United States *use the threat of military force* to gain some sort of advantage for themselves – 33 % in China versus 78 % in the United States, while 39 % of Russian respondents stated that China certainly does not use military force for its own mercenary purposes (against 7 % in the United States).

⁹¹ “World Publics Think China Will Catch Up With the US – and That’s Okay.”

⁹² “As Hu Jin Tao, Obama Prepare to Meet, World Public Gives China, US Low Marks on Climate Change,” 11 November 2009, p. 7, available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/nov09/WPO_China_Nov09_quaire.pdf.

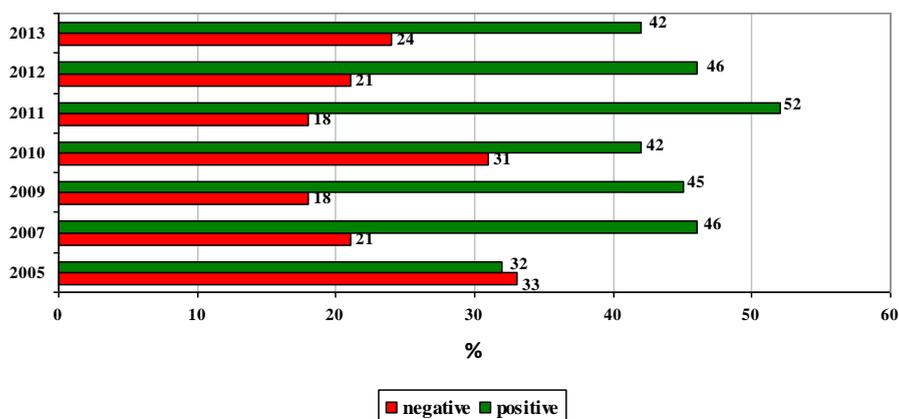


Figure 5: China's Influence in the World: Russian Public Opinion (2005-2013).

Sources: BBC World Service Poll, "Views of China and India Slide While UK's Ratings Climb," May 2013, p. 7, available at <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/2013%20Country%20Rating%20Poll.pdf>; "Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve," May 2012, p. 9, available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/may12/BBCEvals_May12_rpt.pdf; "Views of US Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll," March 2011, p. 9, available at www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/mar11/BBCEvalsUS_Mar11_rpt.pdf; "Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline," April 2010, p. 7, available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pipa/pdf/apr10/BBCViews_Apr10_rpt.pdf; "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll," February 2009, p. 7, available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/feb09/BBCEvals_Feb09_rpt.pdf; "Global Views of USA Improve," April 2008, p. 14, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/02_04_08_globalview.pdf; "Global Poll Finds Iran Viewed Negatively," February 2006, available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/168.php.

According to a recent poll conducted by the Russian "Public Opinion" Foundation, bilateral *relations* between Russia and China are presently taking shape quite well for the most part (see Table 1).

Table 1

Question: In your opinion, what kind of relations are presently taking shape between Russia and China: good or poor?

	<i>September 2010</i>	<i>April 2014</i>	<i>June 2014</i>
<i>Good</i>	50 %	72 %	76 %
<i>Poor</i>	6 %	3 %	3 %

Source: "Relations with China and the Gas Contract," *Public Opinion Foundation*, 17 June 2014, available at <http://fom.ru/Mir/11555> (in Russian).

Furthermore, the results of public opinion polls over the past decade and a half clearly demonstrate a considerable *improvement in Russia-China relations* in the eyes of the Russian public (see Table 2).

Table 2

Question: In your opinion, over the past year have relations between Russia and China improved, worsened, or remained unchanged?

	<i>September 1999</i>	<i>September 2010</i>	<i>April 2014</i>	<i>June 2014</i>
<i>Improved</i>	34 %	28 %	37 %	59 %
<i>Worsened</i>	5 %	2 %	2 %	1 %
<i>Remain unchanged</i>	29 %	37 %	40 %	23 %

Source: “Relations with China and the Gas Contract,” *Public Opinion Foundation*, 17 June 2014, available at <http://fom.ru/Mir/11555> (in Russian).

Moreover, a majority of Russian poll respondents believe that at the present time China is a state that is *friendly* to Russia, and this conviction is growing stronger from year to year (see Figure 6). At the same time the attitude that China is an unfriendly country is gradually losing ground.

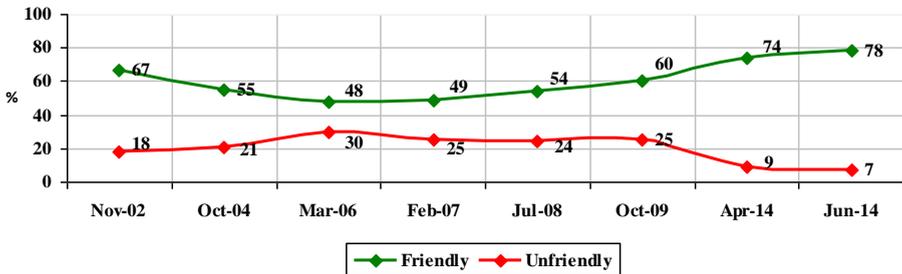


Figure 6: *Question* – In your opinion, is China a country that is friendly or unfriendly with respect to Russia?

Source: “Relations with China and the Gas Contract,” *Public Opinion Foundation*, 17 June 2014, available at <http://fom.ru/Mir/11555> (in Russian).

As for analyzing Russians’ *personal attitude toward the Chinese people*, a marked predominance of positive attitudes over negative can be observed. For example, among the more positive national traits of the Chinese people (38 %), Russians cite industriousness, intellectual excellence, mental alertness, perseverance, a sense of purpose, practicality, and so forth. Among negative traits (8 %) of the Chinese people, Russians most often name cunning, duplicity, insolence, obtrusiveness, overconfidence and so forth.⁹³ Identical results were obtained when residents of Russian regions bordering the PRC

⁹³ For details see Kuznetsov, *China in the Mirror of Public Opinion*, 209-212.

were queried.⁹⁴ However, here it must be taken into account that many notions about China, Chinese culture and the Chinese themselves arise from everyday life and do not always correspond to reality.⁹⁵ Still, it is worthy of note that the Russian and Chinese people express the willingness and desire to learn the best traits of the national character from one another.⁹⁶ Common Russians and regional experts share the opinion that mutual understanding between the two peoples should be developed and nurtured so that the concept of “good neighbor” can take firm root in the mass consciousness and become an important characteristic of both countries.⁹⁷

If we turn to a more detailed and explicit analysis of how Russian public opinion toward China is configured, we can see that it has a number of characteristics and particular features that reflect the specificity of Russians’ attitudes to the nearest Asian partner. For example, in a poll taken in 2001, the first associations Russians had with the word “China” were: “large population,” “Chinese goods,” “a large country,” “a wealthy, happy, developed country” and so forth. Russians expressed similar associations in 2007 and 2009, but in the past few years the PRC has begun to be associated more frequently in the minds of the Russian public with “rapid development of the country and economic advances” and “threat for Russia (seizures of territory, expansion, rivalry).”⁹⁸ It is important to note that those who considered China a threat to Russian interests based their response on such negative aspects of bilateral relations as the danger of territorial expansion and an increased flow of illegal immigrants (22 %), as well as the probability of a military threat (3 %).⁹⁹

But in response to the question of whether the growth of China represents a *threat for the interests of Russia*, most Russians polled believe that their Asian neighbor poses no threat. Although in 2006-2009 the number of those who did regard China as a threat and those who did not was approximately identical (see Figure 7). However, in recent years Russians’ positive attitudes toward China have trended upward.

⁹⁴ For details see T. Alagueva, K. Vasileva, and A. Ostrovksy, “How Chinese and Russians in Contiguous Territories See One Another,” *Problems of the Far East* 4 (2007): 126–134, available at <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2008/0347/analit01.php> (in Russian).

⁹⁵ See Dmitriy V. Buyarov, “China in the Perspective of Public Opinion,” *Historical, philosophical, political and judicial sciences, cultural studies, and art criticism. Questions of theory and practice* 3 (2009): 47–49, available at <http://www.gramota.net/materials/3/2009/3/10.html> (in Russian).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ See for example E.N. Danilova, *et al.*, *Russians and Chinese in an Era of Change: A Comparative Study in St. Petersburg and Shanghai at the Beginning of the XXI Century* (Moscow: Logos, 2012), p.452, available at http://www.ino-center.ru/doc/chin_and_rus.pdf (in Russian).

⁹⁸ For details see Kuznetsov, *China in the Mirror of Public Opinion*, 195–198.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 222–223.

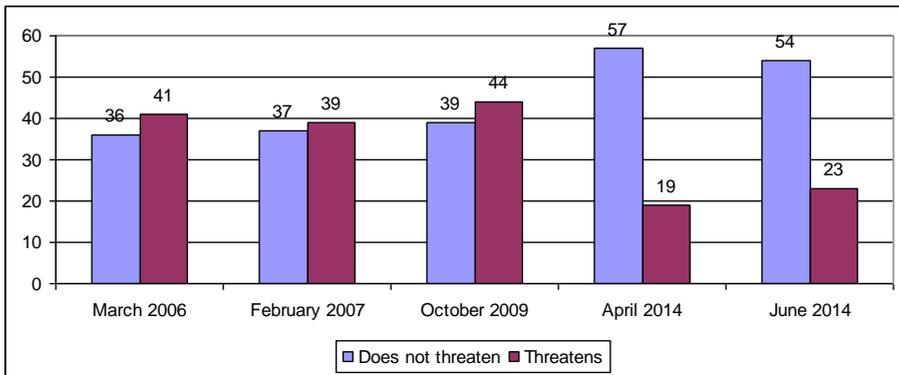


Figure 7: *Question* – In your opinion, does the growing strength of China threaten Russia or not?

Source: “Relations with China and the Gas Contract,” *Public Opinion Foundation*, 17 June 2014, available at <http://fom.ru/Mir/11555> (in Russian).

Regarding numerous polls of world public opinion taken in recent years, many experts believe that the negative component of the overall image of China arose as a result of the prevalence of ideas about a so-called “*Chinese threat*,” which is taken to mean “the aggregate of negative consequences for various countries of the world to which the dynamic development of the PRC in the late 20th and early 21st century may or may not lead.”¹⁰⁰ In this regard, the authors identify factors that contribute to the natural spreading and reinforcing of these notions at the level of public consciousness. For instance, these factors include the economic development of China, unprecedented in its scale; its burgeoning military might; the fact of human rights violations; the environmental threat; and the stepping up of its space program.¹⁰¹

It is curious that in the context of Russian public opinion the term referring to the “Chinese threat” and “yellow danger” is used directly as a description of the potential threat of Chinese expansion into the Russian regions of Siberia and the Far East. The existence of a common border of several thousand kilometers, a weak economic growth dynamic, a poor demographic situation, and other factors make this vast Russian region a center of gravity for numerous Chinese migrants. Accordingly, Russian public opinion polling organizations focus on just this serious question, and the subject of their research often becomes the inhabitants of the region who are located in direct proximity to the Russian-Chinese border.

However, it must be emphasized that a definite contradiction can be discerned in Russians’ attitude toward China: while not regarding China as an enemy but as a friend to Russia, a fairly large percentage of the Russian public nonetheless believes that a

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 129–131.

threat does arise from their Chinese neighbor. It is also important to note that concerns about competition and a multidimensional general threat from the PRC are expressed most often by residents of the Siberian and Far East Federal Districts of Russia, which are situated closest to Chinese territory.¹⁰² At the same time, however, it is they who hold that cooperation with China is “most important” for Russia (35 % in the Far East against 20 % in Moscow, with 27% overall in Russia¹⁰³) and that it would be useful for Russia to use the Chinese experience in rapid and successful development (28 % in the Far East against 10 % in Moscow, with 19 % for all of Russia¹⁰⁴).

Polls often raise the topic of the *strengthening of China* and pose the question of what consequences (positive and negative) this phenomenon holds in store for Russia. An absolute majority of Russian respondents (57 %) believe that the strengthening of the PRC is not a threat. However, there are those (19 %) who hold the opposite opinion. And those 19 % who see China as a *threat for Russia* put forth the following arguments to back up their position: 7 % refer to the possibility of the seizure of Russian territory, 4 % have concerns about Chinese populating Russian territories, 2 % see China as a military threat, and 1 % see it as a potential political leader in the world.¹⁰⁵

Migrational and demographic threats from China seem to be the most serious and real for Russians. Rank and file citizens as well as regional experts are concerned about the prospect of Chinese living in the Far East and dismemberment of Far Eastern territories. Some experts believe that mass fears regarding “Chinese expansion” are completely real, but often grow due to a dearth of objective information and a certain measure of xenophobia among the population.¹⁰⁶ Despite the shortage of labor resources in Siberia and the Far East, Russians consider the participation of Chinese companies and workers in the life of this region to be more dangerous than useful.¹⁰⁷ According to Russian public opinion polls, the use of Chinese hired labor is leading to an increase in unemployment and an exacerbation of the criminal situation in the region, not to a rise in labor productivity in Russian businesses.¹⁰⁸ In this connection, a recently conducted poll that

¹⁰² For details see A.G. Larin, *Chinese Migrants in Russia. History and the Present Day* (Moscow: Vostochnaya kniga, 2009), 298–301, available at http://www.ifes-ras.ru/attaches/books_texts/larin_chinese_migrants_in_russia.pdf (in Russian).

¹⁰³ See Larin, *Chinese Migrants in Russia*, 293.

¹⁰⁴ See Larin, *Chinese Migrants in Russia*, 296.

¹⁰⁵ “Relations with China and the Gas Contract,” *Public Opinion Foundation*, 15 April 2014, available at <http://fom.ru/Mir/11460> (in Russian).

¹⁰⁶ See Kuznetsov, *China in the Mirror of Public Opinion*, 224.

¹⁰⁷ VTsIOM press release of 30 July 2001, available at <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=346> (in Russian); VTsIOM press release No. 268 of 15 August 2005, available at <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=1607> (in Russian); VTsIOM press release No. 674 of 16 April 2007, available at <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=4397> (in Russian); VTsIOM press release No. 1326 of 30 September 2009, available at <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=12509> (in Russian).

¹⁰⁸ VTsIOM, “Opinion monitoring: July–September 2007,” p. 83, available at http://wciom.ru/fileadmin/Monitoring/83/s47-84_Journal_Monitoring83.pdf (in Russian).

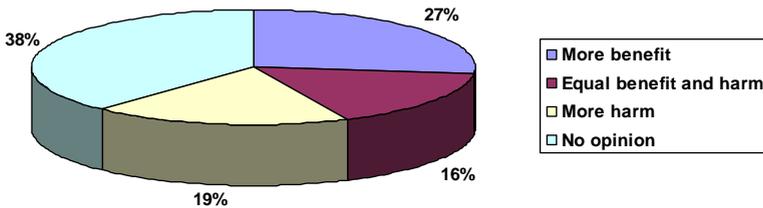


Figure 8: *Question* – The issue of expanded participation of Chinese businesses in the development of the Far East is currently under discussion. Do you think this will bring to the Far East more benefit, more harm, or equal benefit and harm?

Source: “Relations with China and the Gas Contract,” *Public Opinion Foundation*, 17 June 2014, available at <http://fom.ru/Mir/11555> (in Russian).

touched upon the topic of expanded participation by Chinese business in development of the Far East is very revealing (see Figure 8).

The 43 % of the respondents who believe that wider presence of Chinese business in the Far East will bring benefit cited the following potential benefits: development of the Far East, increased investment in the region and the overall economic growth of the territory (16 %); more jobs (5 %); development of industry and agriculture (3 %); development of trade relations (3 %); mutually advantageous cooperation and establishment of friendly relations (3 %); development of the region’s infrastructure (2 %); benefit to Russia (2 %); development of business (1 %) and so forth.¹⁰⁹

The 35 % of the respondents who believe that wider presence of Chinese business in the Far East poses a threat noted the following potential consequences: excessive numbers of Chinese in the Far East (10 %); seizure of Russian territories (7 %); environmental degradation (2 %); excessive competition in business and a weakening of the Russian economy (2 %); plunder of Russian natural resources (2 %); fewer jobs for the local population (2 %); Russia should develop independently (1 %) and so forth.¹¹⁰

So, in the first decade of the 21st century residents of Russia had a negative perception of the expansion of Chinese labor and business into Russia, stressing the potential negative social, economic, demographic and territorial consequences. In their opinion, therein lies the main threat for Russia from China. Undoubtedly, this is largely connected to the complex perception throughout the world of the rapid economic and military rise of China, with its immense population, vigorous expansion of its goods and

¹⁰⁹ “Relations with China and the Gas Contract.”

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

capital into world markets, and accumulated internal disparities and territorial disputes with its Asian neighbors. Against this background the Far East continues to “drop out” of the Russian space, and a decline in production and continuing depopulation are seen. Superimposed on all this is the so-called “demographic pressure” a densely populated China exerts on the sparsely populated Russian Far East, a substantially greater interest by the PRC in opening up and utilizing the raw material wealth of Siberia,¹¹¹ and exacerbation of the migration situation in the regions in question.¹¹² Despite all these factors, however, Russians (including the inhabitants of the Far East and Siberia themselves) are as before inclined to regard China in a mostly positive light.

It is important to understand that the existence in the public consciousness of two views of the phenomenon of the “rise” of the PRC and the future of Russia-China relations—expectations that they will intensify and deepen mixed with unequivocal alarmism—are completely natural and realistic, even though they may seem at first glance to be mutually exclusive. After all, burgeoning bilateral interaction not only does not hinder increased dependence of Russian Siberia and the Far East on China but even creates the premises for it. The reality today is such that the rebirth and rise of the Russian Far East is impossible without cooperation with China, which in turn has an interest in implementing various forms of investment and trade cooperation for purposes of its own development. And judging from a multitude of public opinion polls, Russian citizens understand this.

So despite all the concerns, public opinion polls demonstrate that a positive attitude toward China continues to dominate in Russian society. For most Russians, China today is a friendly country and one of its most important partners in the world arena. Russians have a positive view of the rise in Chinese influence in the world and the growth of Russia-China cooperation on various points of the global agenda. It is also important to note that the overall position in Russian public opinion that emerged during the first decade of the 21st century is generally in line with the official policy toward Beijing the Kremlin has pursued in the past and continues to pursue in the present.

Conclusion

There are varying assessments in Russian society regarding the phenomenon of China’s “rise” and its implications for Russia. All three layers of Russian society—politicians, scientists and common citizens—can be divided into three basic groups that rather accurately reflect the most vigorous discussions.

The first group is comprised of the pro-China portion of the society that regards the Asian neighbor as a vitally important strategic ally on the global scene. Along with this, the economic rise of China is also viewed positively. The economic model serves as an example for Russian authorities, and very positive scenarios for China’s further development are being put forth.

¹¹¹ For details see Larin, *Chinese Migrants in Russia*, 312–315.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 318–340.

The second group is comprised of people who look at the phenomenon in the framework of a strategic triangle and who advocate moderate cooperation with China while continuing to interact with Western countries, including the United States. Two subgroups can be discerned in this group—supporters of a *multi-polar approach* and supporters of a *flexible balance* between the West, as represented by the United States and Europe, and the East, as represented by China and other Asian countries. *The first case* anticipates interaction with China on a strategic level and China's involvement in international affairs with a greater share of responsibility. So this implies movement toward a final formulation of multi-polarity, which for the time being exists only in draft form. It is further assumed that it is China that will be the main counterbalance to the United States in the international arena, and Russia will endeavor to maintain neutrality and distance itself as much as possible from the growing confrontation between the two powers. In this regard it is entirely possible that a new, third center of power will be established – headed by Russia and comprised of all countries that do not wish to be drawn into the Sino-American rivalry. In the second instance it is assumed that Russia will balance between the points of the triangle, while retaining its discretion and the possibility of selective cooperation with and support of either of the other centers of power. It is thus anticipated that Russia will play either the American or Chinese card, depending on the situation.

The third group consists primarily of alarmists who regard China as a multidimensional potential threat that may in very short order become real. In this context, all aspects of the rise of China bring with them a number of problems and challenges, with which Russia is already dealing. Russia's prospects in this regard remain quite pessimistic; in the best case scenario a role has been prepared for Russia as the PRC's eternal junior partner that will be even more distant from the West than China itself.

In any case, all three groups are united by trepidation at the migration and demographic situation in the Far East and Siberia. Representatives of all three groups speak with a greater or lesser degree of alarmism about the need to focus on this problem in the regions in order to prevent the situation from worsening. A number of proposals and ideas are being put forth that could change the existing situation for the better; these involve doing everything possible to lift up the Siberian and Far East Federal Districts and to continue to integrate them into the common Asia-Pacific space that will be the main international political stage in the 21st century.

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