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Sino-Russian Cooperation in the Framework of the Project One Belt and One Road

Orazalina Korlan Burkitbayevna¹, Asset Darimbek²

¹ School of Political Sciences and Public Administration, Shandong University, Jinan, China

² International Relations Expert, who holds a Master' degree from Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract

At present, the Sino-Russian relations are the best in the history of relations between the two countries, the interaction of these two countries in the international arena is one of the most important factors for ensuring stability in international affairs. Entering the Twenty-first century, despite the fact that the international situation is still difficult and the situation in the regions, as before unstable, the Sino-Russian relations continue to move forward, reaching a higher level. Russia, as China's largest neighbor and partner in comprehensive strategic cooperation, is an active supporter and an important participant in the construction of the "One Belt and One Road," as well as a key partner in cooperation. Currently, the trend of the positive development of Sino-Russian relations continues, but despite the most positive development of political and economic relations, both sides are in no hurry to raise them to the rank of allies.

Keywords: Sino-Russian relations, "One Belt, One Road" Initiative, Cooperation, Strategic Partnership, Alliance

1. INTRODUCTION

The World is currently experiencing a serious and deep changes, there is a profound impact of the international crisis, the global economy is recovering at a slow pace, the development is diversifying seriously governed by international investment patterns of trade and multilateral rules for trade and investment, hegemony and the policy forces continue to threaten humanity, to every state is facing serious problems of development. In such a situation, the country, relying on its own capabilities, will not be able to achieve prosperity, only through the integration of countries can contribute to the joint development and solution of human problems. The creation of a "One Belt, One Road" is a Chinese initiative and a Chinese version of the development of the world, which will be put forward to solve the world problems of mankind.

The initiative "One Belt and One Road" is the union of two projects "economic belt of the Silk Road" and "Maritime Silk Road of the XXI century", which borrows the history of the ancient Silk Road (abbreviated as "One Belt — One Road", Belt and Road or One Belt, One Road) the Idea of the formation of the "economic belt of the Silk Road" was put forward by Chinese President XI Jinping and was first heard during his speech in

Astana during his state visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013. The overall strategic goal is the stable development of the economy, prosperity, and power of states. The Chinese leader stressed the need to "comprehensively strengthen practical cooperation" and convert the advantages of political dialogue, geographical proximity, and economic complementarity into the advantages of cooperation, sustainable growth, the creation of common interests on the basis of mutual benefit and common gain."

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SINO-RUSSIAN COOPERATION IS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES.

As China's largest neighbouring country and an indispensable link in the process of promoting the Belt and Road Initiative, Russia responded to the initiative and expressed its intention to take an active part in its implementation. China and Russia have an ancient history of communication, according to historical records, in the middle of the XVII century, China and Russia have already established diplomatic relations, for more than three centuries, the relationship between China and Russia were stable.

Sino-Russian relations are an old topic, but talk about them is often new. In history, the conflicts between China and Russia have been numerous; especially the borders of the conflict have always been the main state problem. For a long time, the two countries were in hostile relations, which was not in favour of economic development, trade, culture, etc. of the two countries. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was the first socialist state in the world to announce the establishment of new diplomatic relations with China. At the same time, China was in the period of socialist revolution, advanced Chinese intellectuals did not find the right revolutionary way, and the October Socialist Revolution just gave a good experience. The USSR strongly supported China, which not only provided material assistance to China but also helped China to pass to independence and liberation (赵文文, 2015). The peoples of the two countries have established friendly contacts. The popularization of studying the Russian language became widespread in China, which contributed to the strengthening of friendly relations among Nations close in spirit. These are important historical lessons for China and Russia: friendly relations contribute to the development of the two countries, hostile ones undermine the forces of Nations.

Today, on the basis of friendly relations, stable Sino-Russian relations have become a classic example of interstate relations of a new type of modern era, as well as a stimulant of stability in the region and in the world. Sino-Russian relations are an important component of the modern system of international relations. The entire course of political processes, at least within Eurasia, will largely depend on how relations between China and Russia develop.

China and Russia are friendly neighbours, reliable friends, and important partners. The friendship between the peoples of the two countries has a long history. Russia is a world power, stretching across continent Eurasia, the largest neighbouring state of China. As the largest neighbour, Russia supports the One Belt, One Road project and is actively involved in its implementation together with Chinese partners. After the signing of the agreement between Chinese President XI Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin on cooperation in the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union, the countries managed to achieve new results in all areas of cooperation: energy, trade, investment, high technology, finance, infrastructure construction and agriculture, as a result of which the levels of modernization and technical initiative are continuously increasing. As a result, the basis of strategic trust between China and Russia is becoming stronger. The "One Belt, One Road" initiative contributed to the development of strategic cooperation between China and Russia in the following areas:

First, the "One Belt, One Road" initiative has directed the relations between China and Russia to a new height. From cooperation and partnership to constructive partnership, and then from strategic interaction and partnership to comprehensive strategic interaction and partnership. Sino-Russian relations, having passed through various stages of development, gradually moved towards maturity and stability, becoming a classic example of relations between countries. The "One Belt, One Road" initiative was put forward in the process of continuous in-depth

development of relations between China and Russia, improved the existing structure of these relations, led them to the fact that at the same time, taking into account all areas of development, they focused on political contacts, infrastructure connectivity, free trade, financial integration and relations between peoples. This has greatly enriched the content of bilateral relations and expanded opportunities for cooperation.

Secondly, the "One Belt, One Road" initiative has provided new opportunities for the development of relations between China and Russia. In May 2015, the heads of state of China and the Russia signed a joint statement on cooperation to link the construction of "One Belt, One Road" and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), from a strategic height and in the long term presented new plans for bilateral practical cooperation between China and Russia within the "One Belt, One Road". In May 2017, during his visit to China, Russian President Vladimir Putin took part in a high — level forum on international cooperation within the framework of "One Belt, One Road." Following the continuous deepening of cooperation on the interface, the high level of development of relations of comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership between China and Russia gradually acquired a new look. The fact that Sino-Russian relations are going through the best period in history has already become apparent to the international community.

Third, the Belt and Road initiative has helped to improve the quality and practical cooperation between China and Russia. More than three years have passed since the signing of the joint statement on cooperation on the conjugation of the construction of "One Belt, One Road" with the EAEU. The parties have achieved positive results in cooperation in such areas as economy, trade, energy, infrastructure, finance, aviation, space and humanitarian spheres, laid a solid foundation for deepening bilateral practical cooperation, promoting healthy and stable development of relations between the two countries (General Directorate of Customs of China, 2018).

2.1. Economic Sphere

Economic relations are on the rise, currently, the latest results of the Sino-Russian trade and economic cooperation are mainly manifested in the following three areas.

First, trade volumes are increasing, the structure is improving, and actively developing cross-border e-Commerce is becoming an important form of trade. China – Russia bilateral trade is growing rapidly. According to the data published by the General Customs Administration of China, in 2017, the bilateral trade turnover reached 84.07 billion dollars, which is 20.8% more than in 2016. China for the eighth consecutive year retains the status of Russia's largest trading partner. In the five months of 2018, bilateral trade amounted to \$ 40.67 billion – 26.9% more than in the same period last year. In terms of growth rates, this figure is the highest among other major partners of China.

The structure of China – Russia bilateral trade is constantly improving. In addition to stable trade in hydrocarbons, trade in Electromechanical and high-tech goods is supported by rapid double-digit growth. At the same time, trade in agricultural products is constantly increasing, and in particular, food products have become a new point of growth in the Sino-Russian bilateral trade. For the entire 2017 year, the volume of Chinese imports of Russian food products has already exceeded 3 billion dollars, which amounted to 11% of the total exports of Russian food products. China has become the largest importer of this type of Russian goods.

Cross-border e-Commerce is developing, which is becoming a new driver of rapid growth in China – Russia bilateral trade. In 2016, the volume of e-Commerce between China and Russia amounted to 2.3 billion dollars – 54% of the total volume of cross-border online trade in Russia. At the same time, the number of orders for Chinese goods by Russian Internet users has increased by 5 times. From 2013 to 2016, the share of Russians' purchases in Chinese online stores increased from 60 to more than 90% of the total volume of parcels imported to Russia. According to Yandex, in 2016 the number of goods ordered in China by Russian Internet users increased by 78% compared to 2015, the volume of consumption increased by 1.8 times. In addition, the number of Russian visitors to Chinese online stores increased by 38% (Li Hui, 2017).

Secondly, the volume of Chinese investments in Russia is increasing, and financial cooperation is constantly deepening. China's investment in Russia is growing significantly. Last year, Chinese direct investment in Russia reached 2.2 billion dollars, which is 72% more than in 2016. The amount of new construction contracts signed in Russia increased by 191.4%. Russia occupies a leading place in this indicator among the countries along the "One Belt and One Road." According to research, in 2017, foreign investors invested in 238 projects in Russia. The number of projects in which the Chinese invest is growing rapidly: from nine in 2016 to 32 in 2017, China for the first time was in the lead in the number of direct investment projects. In particular, there is a large number of Chinese investment enterprises in the Far East of Russia, only in Primorsky Krai, there are more than 600 companies with Chinese capital. China has already become the first source of investment for the Russian Far East.

At the same time, the Sino-Russian cooperation in financing, insurance, securities, payment, and banking cards is being promoted. Banking cooperation is strengthening. To date, six Chinese banks — Industrial and Commercial Bank (ICBC), Agricultural Bank of China, Bank of China, China Construction Bank, China Development Bank, The Export-Import Bank of China — have established their branches in Russia. The five largest state-owned banks of China together with Russian banks established correspondent relations. Enhanced cooperation in the financial sector has effectively stimulated bilateral trade and investment.

Third, strategic projects are steadily moving forward, and the level of cooperation in the trade and economic sphere is constantly increasing. Major strategic projects are constantly deepening the level of cooperation between China and Russia in various spheres of trade and economy. In July 2017, the heads of the two countries reached important agreements to accelerate cooperation on major strategic projects in energy, nuclear energy, high-speed railways, aviation and space, infrastructure, and outlined the directions for the development of bilateral practical cooperation. The Sino-Russian wide-body long-haul aircraft has already officially received the certificate and the name CR929, the development of the project entered the practical stage. According to the plan, the construction of a railway bridge between the Chinese city of Tongjiang in Heilongjiang province and the Russian Khabarovsk, as well as a road bridge between the cities of Heihe and Blagoveshchensk, is being promoted. International transport corridors of the Russian Federation are being built, in which China is involved: Primorye-1 and Primorye-2. Cooperation within the framework of the Sino-Russian "Ice Silk Road" on the basis of the "Northern Fairway" is developing; the trade route passing in the basin of the Arctic ocean is gradually being built (The office of the Adviser On Trade and Economic Issues of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Russian Federation, 2017).

2.2. Energy Sphere

The main Chinese — Russian cooperation in the framework of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative is cooperation in the energy sector, which is an absolute condition to allow China and other countries along the "One Belt, One Road" to keep pace with domestic energy demand. As everyone knows, the market is a powerful engine of cooperation between the countries. Along the "One Belt, One Road" there are such countries-producers of energy resources as Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, etc., and countries-consumers of energy resources, including China and India. Therefore, the production and export of energy resources for energy-producing countries, as well as the production and import of energy resources for energy-consuming countries are vital aspects of the national economy and the basis for economic development. With the changing global energy structure, East Asian areas are becoming the center of world energy consumption, so East Asian countries would like to take advantage of energy resources, and China would like to strengthen energy cooperation with continental peripheral countries to improve energy security and stimulate the development of all participating countries. West Asian countries, North American countries, and East Asian countries want to promote economic development through energy production and exports. Countries in West Asia, North Africa, and East Africa also need to promote economic development through the production and export of energy resources. There is a strong economic complementarity between the East Asian countries, which shows that the market is the main force for the implementation of cooperation in the field of energy resources of the countries. The construction of "One Belt, One Road" is of particular importance for China's

energy strategy. According to statistics from the Ministry of Commerce of China, in 2016 China imported 52.48 million tons of oil from Russia compared to the same period last year and increased by 23.7%. Russia has become the largest oil supplier to China (Timofeyev O. A., 2014). This testifies to the broad prospects of cooperation between China and Russia in the energy sector. At the same time, the two leaders attach great importance to the construction of the Eastern route of the Sino-Russian gas pipeline from Russia to China along the Eastern route, which began in June 2015. The route consists of the Northern segment (Heihe – Changlin), the Middle segment (Changlin – Yunqing Prov. Hebei) and the Southern segment (Yongqing – Shanghai). In particular, the Northern segment is expected to be put into operation in October 2019, and the entire line will be laid before the end of 2020. In addition, China and Russia have another common project in the field of energy for the production of liquefied natural gas "Yamal LNG," which has been successfully put into operation; on the agenda put forward the question of the construction of power units No. 7 and 8 of the Taiwan NPP. Then, it should be noted the gradual implementation of such major projects in the field of transport infrastructure as cross-border railway and road bridges between China and Russia, international transport corridors "Primorye-1" and "Primorye-2", the economic corridor China – Mongolia – Russia and the railway routes "China – Europe" (Newspaper "Trud", 2018). In addition, direct flights were opened between many cities of China and Russia, which greatly simplified the opportunities for maintaining friendly contacts between the peoples of the countries and effectively stimulated Sino-Russian cooperation in the field of tourism. Three major Chinese Telecom Operators – China Telecom, China Unicom and China Mobile – have entered the Russian market and are constantly expanding their operations in Russia. Of course, the partnership between China and Russia in the energy sector is the result of mutually beneficial cooperation, which gives a strong impetus to the further strategic development of the two countries. First of all, it concerns energy.

2.3. Humanitarian Sphere

China and Russia are improving day by day the mechanisms of exchanges and cooperation in the humanitarian sphere. The Sino-Russian cultural forum, which is held jointly by the ministries of culture of China and Russia, as well as the large-scale Sino-Russian fair of culture and art, has become an important channel for deepening the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, comprehensive relations of strategic partnership and cooperation between China and Russia. The joint film festival and the project of bilateral translation and publication of classical and contemporary works of China and Russia strengthen the understanding and interest of the population of China and Russia to the culture of each side. The Chinese Cultural Center in Moscow and the Russian Cultural Center in Beijing have become important bridges of cultural exchanges between China and Russia and platforms for promoting the culture of countries. Specialized associations, museums, theatres and creative circles of China and Russia are constantly interacting. This has greatly enriched the forms and content of bilateral cultural exchanges. In recent years, humanitarian exchanges between China and Russia have been developing rapidly. The parties successfully held Sino-Russian National years, years of languages, years of tourism and years of youth exchanges, which greatly strengthened mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of the two countries, as well as increased the degree of mutual interest of both sides. In the sphere of scientific, educational and cultural exchanges, not only the level of economic development but also the socio-political level of the people of the two countries is increasing. As relations between the two great countries develop more closely, humanitarian exchange and the people-to-people relationship between the two countries flourish.

In addition, the popularization of the Russian language in China is becoming more and more popular, so that the number of students of the Russian language is increasing every year. According to the statistics of 2017 in China, the number of universities that have opened a specialty of Russian language, under the bachelor's program amounted to 153, under the master's program — 81, under the doctoral program — 17. At the same time, the interest of Russians in the study of Chinese language and culture is growing. Currently, there are 123 primary schools and about 200 universities in Russia, where the Chinese language is taught, the number of students has reached 40 thousand people (Newspaper "Trud," 2018). For example, at Kazan Federal University, which is one of the oldest universities in Russia, more than a thousand students study Chinese. Confucius Institute at the University serves as a bridge for cooperation and expansion of contacts, which contributes to the exchange of knowledge and experience between countries. The number of people traveling abroad for a short or

long period of study was more than 70 thousand. Both countries set themselves the task of increasing the volume of bilateral exchanges to 100 thousand people. Education is an important stimulus for the progress and development of the country, as well as a link between the peoples of the two countries. To facilitate the exchange and joint development of education between the two countries, China and Russia jointly opened the University of Moscow State University – FDI in Shenzhen — a joint decision reached by the leaders of the two countries. This university is also a good example of the development of humanitarian cooperation between the two countries. The active development of mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Russia has spread to all spheres. The strengthening of Sino-Russian cooperation in the humanitarian sphere contributes to the deepening of mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of the two countries, contributes to the continuous development of the strategic partnership, as well as the development of trade and economic relations. The existing proximity between the peoples of China and Russia in various spheres is the basis for strengthening relations between the countries.

3. OUTSIDE OF A PROJECT: THE OTHER SIDE

The two countries have already felt the enormous benefits of building "One Belt, One Road." Russian society is increasingly positive about the "One Belt and One Road" initiative and believes that cooperation on pairing is bound to become a mutually beneficial way for the Sino-Russian partnership. However, both sides, despite the most positive development of political and economic relations, are in no hurry to raise them to the rank of allies. Russia does not want to burden itself with allied obligations, because it has its own strong political reasons:

To this day, China continues its "specific" relations with its neighbours: India, Vietnam, and Indonesia, with which Russia maintains close economic and political ties.

China, in turn, does not intend to revise economic and political relations with countries with which Russia has significant contradictions. China is developing intensive contacts with the United Kingdom, despite the very complex British – Russian relations.

China's interest in the Arctic region. In January 2018, a document, the so-called White Paper "China's Arctic Policy," was published in China. In it, China makes a claim that the problems of the Arctic go beyond the region and the interests of exclusively Arctic countries and is vital for the entire international community and that the freedom of navigation on the North Sea Region (NSR) should be ensured for all countries. This contradicts the position of Russia and other countries whose territories are washed by the Arctic Ocean. It is known that the most irreconcilable position on the NSR is taken by the United States, which does not recognize the priority rights of Russia and Canada to regulate navigation in their Arctic waters. And here it is obvious that there is a certain convergence of positions of the US and China regarding the NSR (Kuznecov S., 2018).

It is difficult for Russia and China to count on truly allied relations, as both countries face not only political and economic problems but also cultural and cognitive barriers caused by national differences. Russian and Chinese cultures differ significantly. This is the point of view of the Chinese side. According to it, they are distinguished by ways of cultural thinking, principles of behaviour and peculiarities of national characters. Different moral values: Russians strive for spirituality, and the Chinese are practical and focus on life itself.

Despite all this, in the current geopolitical realities, both China and Russia are very interested in the development of political and even greater economic relations. The economic and political war waged by the United States against China and Russia was a powerful stimulus for the development of bilateral relations between the two countries. Sooner or later, the US confrontation with China was to begin, as the world began a serious redistribution of spheres of influence caused by a significant weakening of the United States position in the economy, political sphere and in the military field.

Whatever it was, but it is the US pushing for an unprecedented rapprochement in all areas of Russia and China. Today, the nature of relations between the two countries is defined as "partnership," "strategic partnership," but

not "allied." The two states are developing independently, having their own political and economic priorities, which do not always coincide, but due to objective reasons and external hostile influence from Western countries, strategic cooperation between China and Russia becomes vital for the successful development of these countries.

At present, Russian – Chinese relations are at the best stage in its history. In the first half of this year, China and Russia successfully implemented important provisions of the domestic policy agenda. The two countries have reached a new historical starting point within the framework of comprehensive relations of strategic cooperation and partnership. China and Russia should continue to adhere to the concept of friendship and the spirit of strategic cooperation that has been passed down from generation to generation, expand and deepen cooperation in all areas, and achieve even greater development of Sino-Russian relations in the new era.

4. CONCLUSION

At present, the strategic partnership between China and Russia is a major achievement and the basis for economic growth. Based on mutual trust, China and Russia are gradually achieving concrete results in the development of a market-oriented economy. Having a positive experience of cooperation, states should continue to promote cooperation at the enterprise level for the common mutual benefit and the benefit of other countries in the Euro-Asian region. As a result of the joint efforts of the governments of China and Russia, Sino-Russian relations will successfully develop, thereby contributing to the development of the Eurasian region. And of course, joining efforts in the framework of "One Belt, One Road" contributes to the establishment of a new type of global partnership characterized by mutual benefit and common benefit, equality and balance. The spirit of "One Belt, One Road" is peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, learning from experience, mutual benefit and common gain. This spirit is being recognized by an increasing number of states.

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