

# The Image of China in The Cultural Society of Russia-As an Image of Victory Over Coronavirus

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## ABSTRACT

*This article touches such aspect as the formation of the image of China as an image of victory over the coronavirus in the cultural society of Russia. At the stage of intensive development of relations between two countries, this is a very relevant topic. Various scientific works very often touch upon the economic and foreign policy aspects of cooperation between the two countries, but very little information was voiced specifically about the impact of China's image during the pandemic on Russian society. The main method of research in this article is an approach to image generation, as a process in which the opinion of the Russian cultural society about China is being changed and corrected in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. The main goal of the research is to determine the significance of China in the public eye of Russian cultural society. Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that the influence of Chinese traditions and values on the residents of Russia will only increase, despite the pandemic.*

**Key words:** Image of China, Cultural society, Chinese culture, Coronavirus, Pandemic

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## INTRODUCTION

The image of a country is always formed through the state policy, economy, social sphere, culture, geography, and other factors. According to Sidorskaya, a selection of the most significant element for the image is situational and depends on both goals and objectives of the study and the target audience of this image. The level of China's economic development is one of the main resources for forming China's image. China ranks second in the world after the United States in the ranking of countries in terms of GDP (12237.7 billion dollars) and first in terms of GDP growth (6.6%). According to the surveys of Russian Fund "Public opinion" to the question "Which country is developing more successfully, Russia or China?" 68% of the respondents chose China, 18% are sure in the success of Russia and nearly as much, 16% of respondents found it difficult to answer. In the modern world, there is no stability in the economic development of any country, but even under such negative conditions, China remains a reliable economic partner of Russia. Currently, the possibility of implementing the concept of Greater Eurasian partnership based on the Eurasian economic Union and the Chinese initiative "one belt, one road" is being actively discussed. Not long ago, China was associated among Russians as a country that produces low-quality and cheap consumer goods, but with the growth of China's economic development, the attitude

towards Chinese goods is also changing. Chinese goods dominate in the world as high-quality and affordable to the population, that is good for the positive image of China.

It is quite effective to use it as a tool for creating a positive image of Chinese culture and the Chinese language. In 2003, the agreement under which the PRC and the Russian Federation committed themselves to develop interest in the language of the neighbouring country, was signed. The PRC understands the complexity of the Chinese language is one of the reasons for the formation of an incomplete image of the PRC, so it is doing its best to fill in this gap. Confucius Institutes and classes have become the most popular in Russia today. Confucius institutes hold various creative competitions, scientific conferences, sports events, organize creative meetings and educational trips to China. Image formation through Confucius Institutes is mainly aimed at young people, since their opinion about China will be extremely important in the next 10-15 years [Abramov, 2010]. The steadily growing interest in the Chinese language in Russian society is the evidence of the positive perception and appreciation of China, its culture and growing economic influence by Russians. The number of Chinese students has increased more than 10 times from 5 thousand in 1997 to 56 thousand in 2017.

China has recently become attractive to Russians not only in terms of increasing the popularity of the Chinese language, but also from a tourist point of view. About 30 million foreign tourists, according to some data, visited China in 2018: 4 million from South Korea, 2.5 million each from Russia, the United States, and Japan. According

to the analytical Agency Turstat, in 2017, 2 million 3 thousand Russian citizens went to China for tourist purposes (+20% compared to 2016), while in 2018-2 million 18 thousand. If in 2015, according to the POF, 47% of respondents answered positively to the question: "Have you ever read articles or books, watched films, programs dedicated to China, or not?", then in 2018- it was already 52%.

Another direction of creating a positive image of the country is China's policy in the media space. Since September 2015, several Russian-language network resources have been launched: the website of the Chinese State news Agency "Xinhua" in Russian language, an online version of the newspaper "People's Daily", a "Chinese Information Internet centre" web portal. Russian.CHINA.ORG.CN", Russian edition of the International radio of China (Russian. cri.cn), "China" magazine, and the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. In addition, the Russian-language channel "CCNV-Russian" operates. The communication strategy of the Chinese media is aimed at creating a strong and modern image of China in the eyes of Russia. The activities of Russian media on the territory of Russia, it is through them that Russian citizens receive information about China, based on which the image of the PRC is being built.

In 2018, the Public Opinion Foundation conducted a full-scale study of the attitude of Russians towards China, this study allows us to see the dynamics of the attitude of Russians towards China over the past five years, from 2014 to 2018. The number of Russians who are familiar with Chinese culture well or at least at an initial level is not that much. Only 52% of respondents have read articles, books or watched films about China, 57% are sure that Russian and Chinese cultures are very different, Russians are more interested in European culture than Chinese culture (35% vs. 12%, respectively), and 68% of those who took part in the survey have never communicated with Chinese people in their lives.

China is a major trading partner of Russia and a buyer of Russian industrial products, including military equipment and technologies. Currently the beginning of economic relations between the two countries is being laid for the next century, on the strength of which the future of Russian Chinese cooperation as a whole will largely depend. It is expected to further develop cooperation in the field of science and technology soon, during which the Chinese side will improve the quality of its products and increase the volume of exports of Chinese products to Russia. China is also trying to attract the results of Russia's research activities and acquire Russian innovative technologies. Thus, we can say that the positive image of China directly depends on the economic development of the PRC.

In recent years, many events have been held aimed at creating a positive image of China in Russia. Many bilateral events were planned for 2020. But the beginning of 2020 was overshadowed by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. China was the first to take on the wave of the

pandemic, thus becoming a protective shield for the whole world. Chinese President Xi Jinping convened a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee six times, personally led the process of taking measures to respond to the pandemic. The entire Chinese people rallied together to fight the pandemic. In less than seven days, Chinese scientists isolated a strain of the virus and produced reagents to detect the coronavirus. China built two specialized hospitals with 2,500 beds in less than 15 days, once again demonstrating how quickly Chinese people can solve the most acute problems and deal with it with responsibility.

### Measures to prevent the spread of the virus

China's measures to prevent the spread of the virus inside and outside the country are fully recognized by the international community. WHO noted that "China has taken effective measures to protect public health to counter the pandemic, thereby giving the world valuable time to implement anti-pandemic measures?"

China has vast experience in dealing with all kinds of pandemics. First, in the mobilization of society, economy, and science to fight pandemics. When a hospital was built in Wuhan in February within a week-that was the application of such experience in practice.

China always invested huge amounts of money in innovations, including medical ones. After all, the fight against viruses is not only a vaccine, but also the development and production of virus tests. And the most important thing is forecasting, formulating simulation models of the pandemic. On February 21, Chinese Ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui said: "Over the next month, we will prevail against the virus." Indeed, by the end of March, the epidemic had begun to decline. The Ambassador, as well as the entire Chinese government, relied on specific mathematical models in this matter.

In January and February, when the virus seemed to be spreading out of control, the social situation threatened to explode. It was then when the people and government in China united and acted together. People saw that officials (doctors, military personnel, engineers) promised - and stood by their promises, called specific deadlines (for building a hospital or reducing the epidemic) - and the deadlines were met. All this instilled in people the belief that strict measures of the state are important and should be followed. The state, in turn, provided social support to medical workers.

One of the most effective ways to deal with the pandemic has become a mobile application called "Health Code". Every Chinese had to install it. The program shows the status of a person: green-everything is fine; yellow- you need to be careful; red-you need to be quarantined. The status is calculated based on a person's medical data collected by the government: for example, when entering a store, the temperature must be measured, and this parameter is immediately entering into the system. Since a smartphone tracks the location, it means that if a person is in the "red status" and if he/she leaves a

quarantined apartment, a fine will follow. Through the "Health Code", verified official news about the coronavirus and the current quarantine situation in the city comes to the smartphone. And the authorities can understand where and how many people are in a threatening situation. If the "green" becomes a lot-the quarantine in this area can be relaxed.

The overall strategy of China in the total isolation of the infected areas was correct. It was this strategy that helped China to cope with the epidemic in the shortest possible time.

Today, China is open for cooperation in the fight against the virus together with the whole world, including the World Health Organization and other international and national structures. Today in Beijing, a truly titanic effort is being made to prove that China and its development is an image of victory over the pandemic. China won precious time for the rest of the world by taking unprecedented measures to deal with the pandemic. Amid reports that by mid-March, the number of cases outside China exceeded the number of cases inside PRC for the first time, Chinese government has expressed its determination to increase the openness of the national market to foreign investors. Moreover, Beijing suggested to stimulate the economic development of the Asia-Pacific region. Despite the collapse of the oil market around the world and gloomy forecasts about the global crisis.

The coronavirus pandemic and the impending economic crisis will undoubtedly have an impact on relations between Russia and China. They will not have a completely new reality, but existing trends will accelerate dramatically. Russia will need to recover from the crisis quickly, given the internal political changes launched at the beginning of the year and the promises made to society. In this situation, the country's economy and technological development will increasingly depend on China, which will also affect other areas of cooperation and maintain a positive image of China.

Over the past few years, the Russian economy's dependence on the Chinese economy has grown steadily. During the six years of the "turn to the East", China's share in Russia's trade turnover increased from 10.5% (\$88.8 billion) in 2013 to 16.6% (\$110.9 billion) in 2019. The Russian Central Bank increased the share of the Chinese yuan in gold and foreign exchange reserves from 1% to 14.2%, which is about 10 times higher than the average for Central banks in the world. The example of the Central Bank is followed by the Ministry of Finance of Russia, which plans to invest funds of the national welfare Fund in the yuan.

The Russian Chinese rapprochement is based not on crises, but on objective reasons: the structures of the economy complement each other, political regimes are close and therefore face similar problems, and a huge common border requires security guarantees. After the pandemic, trade in nominal volumes will only grow. China's share in Russia's reduced trade turnover will undoubtedly exceed the current 16.6% – in the first two

months of 2020, it has already reached 18.7%. Overall, in the first quarter, imports to China decreased by 1% compared to the same period last year, while shipments from Russia increased by 20%.

Sanctions of the USA and European countries showed how much Russia depended on imports of Western technology. In 2013, machinery and equipment accounted for almost 60% (\$ 24 billion) of all imports from Germany. The West was replaced by China. In 2019, almost a third (\$28 billion) of all imported equipment in Russia was made in China. Another item of Russian import from China is know-how. In 2019, a delegation from Moscow government visited several Chinese cities to study their experience in video surveillance and facial recognition. The total self-isolation introduced during the epidemic and the introduction of a facial recognition system have shown their effectiveness. Moscow was the first of the Russian regions to launch a digital pass system to combat the spread of coronavirus.

The pandemic and the economic difficulties that follow it will only bring Russia and China closer together, both countries will be able to strengthen sanitary and epidemiological cooperation within the framework of the "Years of Sino-Russian Scientific, Technical and Innovative Cooperation" to achieve mutual benefits in the field of drug production, research and development of vaccines, as well as a combination of methods of Chinese traditional and European medicine. PRC has sent the most competent medical experts and anti-epidemic drugs to Russia. China is also actively helping Russia to eliminate a critical shortage of medical supplies. To date, China has delivered to Russia more than 158 million medical masks, more than 1.9 million protective suits and more than 1.6 million respirators, and a third of the daily protective masks used in Russia today are from China.

China will continue to exchange extensive anti-epidemic experience and information with Russia and conduct an open and honest economic dialogue. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that the influence of Chinese traditions and values on the inhabitants of Russia will only increase over time and will be entirely aimed at the implementation of global development, peace, and security [1-11].

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