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## **RUSSIAN-CHINESE STRATEGIC COOPERATION : THE MIGRATION PROBLEM IN PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

During 1995-1998, Russian-Chinese relationship entered a new stage of the development. Moscow began to look at China in the light of Russian-American dispute on NATO enlargement eastward and signs of tension in Russia's relations with the West. More credence was added to ideas that China was a "more reliable" and "easy-to-talk" partner to Russia than the West. The conception of "strategic cooperation" with China - contrary, or in addition - to cooperation with the West, was included into Russian foreign-policy baggage. Nevertheless, in Russia, there is no single understanding of the content and goals of the Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation. While assessing the Russian approaches to China from military-political, military-economical and economical perspectives, the paper also looks into the role of the pressing issue of illegal Chinese migration into Russian territories. The paper makes a plea for inter-governmental co-operation on the question of migration.

**C**reation of long term relations between two big Asian and Global powers - Russia and China - demands open, frank and constructive approach to the all pending issues and problems of mutual concerns. Without such an approach, it seems difficult to solve the problems which impede now, and will impede in the future, bilateral relations. The approach may be considered crucial in establishing a Russian-Chinese cooperative security architecture.

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In the 1960s through the beginning of the 1980s, ideological and military-political confrontation dominated relations between Moscow and Beijing. After normalization of the Russian-Chinese relations at the end of the 1980s, problems of mutual concern seemed to have moved to lower stages of intergovernmental relations. Earlier, dispute over delimitation and demarcation of the Russian-Chinese borders turned into one of the most serious problems. In the 1990s, however, both sides succeeded in signing an important border agreement that meant that relations between Moscow and Beijing entered a new stage of constructive development. The normalization process led Yeltsin's authorities proclaim the idea of Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation in the coming century.

However, the process of normalization of Russian-Chinese relations has witnessed new problems in bilateral relationship. Among them, the migration problem has the potentials of turning into a serious one impeding bilateral cooperative relations in the coming decades. By way of examining Russo-Chinese strategic relations, this paper aims at analysing of the problem of Chinese illegal immigration to Russia in the light of Russian-Chinese long term relations.

#### **1. RUSSIA AND CHINA : DIVERGENT PERCEPTIONS OF STRATEGIC COOPERATION**

In April 1997, a Russian-Chinese political declaration highlighted "partnership directed at strategic cooperation in the XXI century" as a content of Russian-Chinese relations for the coming millennium. Such a formulation gave rise to a number of questions: What could it - the strategic cooperation - mean? How realistic is the "strategic cooperation" formula? Is it not better and pragmatic to substitute it with a more moderate one?

Answers to these questions do not look obvious. After formal normalization of Russian Chinese relations in 1989, a theory of strategic technological cooperation between Russia, China and South Korea came to surface. The theory was based upon the idea of combination of the relative advantage-factors of the three countries - Russian achievements in basic research, Chinese cheap and skilled work force, and South Korean capital and Research and Development (R & D) opportunities. The idea was used by Soviet policy-advisers to push the former Soviet leaders, preoccupied with searching for new diplomatic conceptions (*novoye myshlenye*), to speed up official recognition of Seoul.

It may be mentioned that the strategic technological cooperation concept had a very short history. After collapse of the USSR, Russian diplomacy paid more attention to its relationship with the Western countries, leaving aside cooperation with China. In 1993-1994, however, Russia corrected its approach to China. Moscow tried to demonstrate to the World that Russia is not only a "pro-Western country" but that it has national interests in the East, as well. China was named "a prospective partner" in the Asian Pacific region. Priority, in bilateral relations, was given to economic and military cooperation, and to the settlement of security problems in the area of common borders between China, Russia and the former Asian USSR republics. Russia re-examined the understanding of a Chinese geopolitical role in assuring Russia's security and development. A new perception of China as "a great prosperous neighbor" occurred in the minds of Russian policy-makers in place of an old approach of China as "a potential enemy".

In 1995-1998, Russian-Chinese relationship entered a new stage of the development. Moscow began to look at China in

the light of Russian-American dispute on NATO enlargement eastward and signs of tension in Russia's relations with the West. Ideas that China was a "more reliable" and "easy-to-talk" partner to Russia got more credence in Western perception. The conception of "strategic cooperation" with China - contrary, or in addition to cooperation with the West - was included into Russian foreign-policy baggage. Nevertheless, in Russia, there is no single understanding of the content and goals of the Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation. Three basic approaches to the issue could be identified: military-political, military-economical and economical ones.

Supporters of the military-political understanding of the strategic cooperation between Russia and China see bilateral alliance as the one directed against the growing role of the West in the World, and, in particular, against American "intentions" to dominate in the international affairs. There exist different variants of anti-Western concepts of the Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation.

The first variant sees it as an alternative to NATO enlargement eastward. The arguments of the supporters of this concept are as follows. The West "betrayed" Russia - it had promised to Moscow on the eve of "Yeltsin's August revolution" not to enlarge NATO and to make Germany "neutral"; but, in practice, the West did not fulfill its commitment. NATO enlargement, besides a moral aspect, creates new military threats to Russia and builds up "sanitary corridors" in Europe. This leads to isolation of Russia from European integration, to the detriment of Russian national interests. In response, Russia has nothing to do but to find an "adequate answer" to "non-friendly" Western steps. Strategic cooperation with China could be a proper respond because:

- China has strong, long-term political antagonism with the West, and, particularly, with the USA - on human rights and minorities' issues, on continuing struggle for political hegemony in Asia, on trade disputes, on the Taiwan problem, etc. Russia can play on these contradictions supporting China against the West, or just convincingly hinting at such a support.
- China itself is not interested in NATO enlargement eastward, closer to the China's border, and can share Russia's concerns on the issue.
- Military-political cooperation with China, on the anti-NATO basis, can help Russia to slowdown the NATO enlargement and "to win a time" to solve domestic problems and to become stronger.

The second variant sees the Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation in the light of Moscow's ideas about "multi-polar World". Moscow officials use to express strong objections to American claim to be "the only political pole" in the world, and are ready to identify China as an ally in opposing American "hegemony". Moscow's position is that there should be many "poles" of international affairs: the USA, Western Europe, Russia, China, India, Japan. Moscow makes a stake on that China could "like" the idea about multi-polar world. A very naive concept, expressed recently and unexpectedly by Russian Prime Minister Primakov, that Russia in cooperation with China and India could make up an anti-Western pole, can be added to this scenario.

The third variant considers Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation as one directed at leading a struggle of the poor "World's South" against rich "North". The logic of this variant looks rather orthodox:

- after the collapse of the USSR, Moscow lost its position as a World anti-imperialist leader,
- China, alone, cannot play this role,
- Russia's economic crisis makes Russian national interests more close to the South's economic interests rather than to the North's ones,
- so, Russia has to share with China leadership of the "anti-imperialism" struggle of the "Third World".

Followers of the military-economic understanding of Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation consider the alliance as a response to the growing domination of the USA on the international weaponry markets. They hope to increase Russian military export to China and so to become the main military-technological partner to China in long-run. The arguments of those who prefer to see Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation as an economic alliance are as follows:

- Russia and China, during the old socialist past, when two countries were political allies (in the 1950s), succeeded in promoting economic integration in heavy industry and energy fields. Russia helped China to build-up modern, by the standards of those years, plants, factories and electric power stations. Up-dating and restoration of those old enterprises could be one of the goals of long-term cooperation between China and Russia in the XXI century,
- Russia could meet Chinese needs in relatively developed technology that Russia still is able to offer to the market,
- cooperation in exploring Russian and Chinese gas, oil and hydro-energy resources, as well as cooperation in development of trans-Eurasian transportation system could have gotten a strategic character.

Besides these three basic approaches, a few other approaches to strategic cooperation between Russia and China can be marked out. One of them sees Russian-Chinese bilateral relations in a historic perspective, and considers them as one aimed at canceling civilizational differences between Russian, (Slavic-European) and Oriental cultures. Another concept perceives Russian-Chinese "strategic cooperation" as development of "normal, non-conflict" relations between two countries.

Some Russian China-specialists present a "narrow" understanding of the strategic cooperation, meaning that it just provides for security regime in the Russian-Chinese border area and helps to develop economic relations on the principles of mutual benefits.

There are also scholars and politicians who still consider China as a "strategic enemy" to Russia. They accuse Russia for "unacceptable" territorial concessions to China, point at the fact that China has not withdrawn, in reality, its territorial claims to Russian Far East, and conceive over-populated China as a real geo-political threat to Russian security in the East Asian region.

In correspondence with different approaches to the Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation, there exist different assessments of the meaning of the April 1998 Russian-Chinese declaration. Some China-analysts and politicians consider it as an attempt at consolidation of already established relationship of strategic cooperation. Others point out that strategic cooperation is an aim that can be achieved only in case of hard and common work of Russia and China on gradual up-grading of their relations. Opponents to the idea suppose that the April declaration is a useless, maximum

- demagogic - "sheet of paper", because it is absolutely unrealistic, and it is not necessary for Russia to achieve strategic targets proclaimed in the declaration.

So, the conclusions from the analysis of Russian approaches to the perspective of Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation are: (i) first, Russia does not have a single, legally approved understanding of content and stages of the strategic cooperation with China; (ii) second, majority of Russian China-specialists and politicians see the bilateral strategic cooperation as a long-future-stage of the development of Russian-Chinese relationship; (iii) third, there exist aggressive opponents to the idea who are ready to use pending issues in bilateral relations not to let them develop.

Chinese approach to Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation seems to have much more reservations than the Russian one. It was Chinese side that insisted on the formula: "development of the relations directed at strategic cooperation in the XXI century" in the Moscow April-declaration. While the Russian side proposed a less uncertain formulation, viz. "development of strategic-cooperation relationship in the XXI century", finally, Russia had to approve the Chinese, less concrete, variant.

This basic difference between Russian and Chinese approaches to the bilateral strategic cooperation relationship proves that China remains more cautious in regard to how it sees security, political and economic relations with Russia in the next century. Beijing keeps reservations about who will be its "more close" or "less close" friend in the future. Beijing neither wants to make its Western friends "too nervous" about "too close" China's relations with Moscow. Conducting its policy towards Russia (including the problem of strategic cooperation concept), China proceeds from the following:



- First, "strategic-cooperation relationship" with Moscow is just a possible aim, not a Chinese obligation, for the next century - it may or may not be reached. The result depends upon what and when China will consider as suiting its national interests;
- Second, China understands strategic cooperation with any country, as relationship aimed at reaching Chinese strategic goals - (a) creation of proper international environment for "four modernizations", including economic and military reforms; (b) defending national sovereignty, including a problem of the unification with Taiwan; and (c) turning China into a World Super Power; and
- Third, normal good neighborhood-relations with Russia provide for relaxation of tension on the Chinese Northern borders, and, thereby, contribute to reaching the first Chinese strategic goal - continuation of "four modernizations" policy. From this stand point, China can consider good-neighborhood relationship with Russia as one that meets Chinese strategic need in international political stability. Had Russia a strong economy and additional financial resources, it could become China's strategic partner in fulfilling economic and military tasks of the "four modernizations".

China does not consider Russia as a military threat to its sovereignty or as an economic or political threat to Chinese "four modernizations". However, China neither considers Russia as a country that can defend China in case of a hypothetical aggression from the West, nor hopes for Russia's assistance in solving the Taiwan problem. Chinese Russia-watchers define Russian policy towards the West as "contradictory" and "non-reliable", in regard to repelling

external aggression. They suppose that Russia is not consistent enough in its objections to NATO enlargement and growing American hegemony in international affairs. So, in reaching the second Chinese strategic goal - defending national sovereignty - Russia's long-term role seems rather "modest".

With regard to the third Chinese strategic goal - turning China into a Super Power - Russia may be perceived more as a competitor, that has not got rid of its own ambitious plans to play one of the leading roles in international affairs, than a China's strategic ally.

Besides, China strictly draws limits of strategic military political cooperation with Russia. Beijing's firm position is that such kind of cooperation should not be directed against third countries. China is not going to play "on the Russian side" in Russia's struggle against NATO enlargement eastward. China, on the other hand, tries not to lose a chance to play a "Russia card" against the West if it is necessary. The issue of cancelling restrictions on the weaponry exports to China or smoothing pressure upon China in human-rights issues are cases in point.

In Chinese estimation, neither relations with China for Moscow, nor relations with Russia for Beijing, play a leading role in the foreign policy of both countries. Russia assigns China a "reserve political role", i.e., a "China card", which may be used by Moscow when relations between Russia and the West are deteriorating. Similarly, China keeps Russia "in reserve" that can be used to press the USA when China and America fail to find solutions for their economic and political dispute issues.

In general, China's approach to strategic cooperation with Russia is more cautious and more pragmatic than the Russian one. China sees long-term goals in cooperation with Russia in maintaining friendly neighborhood relations, in using all that Russia can offer in economic, technological and military fields, and in being careful not to let Russia play the "China card" against the West.

Of course, Chinese perception of strategic cooperation has some historical elements. Contrary to Russia, China did not have big experience of development of strategic-cooperation relationship in its history. Russia experienced military strategic cooperation with France and England (against Germany) in the World War I, as well as similar relationship with the USA and England (again against Germany) in the World War II. During the "Cold War", Russia developed strategic military-political and economic cooperation relationship with the Warsaw Pact and COMICON countries.

Secondly, China traditionally perceives cooperation with non-hostile nations in the light of sovereign-vassal relationship. The Russian-Chinese agreement on Friendship and Mutual Assistance of 1950, (in principle, it was an agreement of strategic and security cooperation) was perceived by China as an agreement between a sovereign-Russia and a vassal-China. It was not difficult for China to cancel the agreement when China decided to play an independent leading role in the former socialist World in the 1960s. China's security treaty with North Korea had an opposite content: China was a sovereign, while North Korea was considered as a vassal.

The methodological difficulty to find a single understanding of what Russia and China mean by "strategic cooperation" imposes strong concerns about the reality of

Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation itself. It is not easy to estimate Russian and Chinese potential for mutual strategic cooperation when we do not know particularly what the sides mean by strategic cooperation: sovereign-vassal relationship, or COMICON-type relationship, or military mutual assistance, or something else.

## **2. TOWARDS A SHARED PERCEPTION OF STRATEGIC COOPERATION**

To continue our analysis, we would like to propose the following definition of the strategic cooperation. Strategic cooperation between countries is (a) preferable and long-term cooperation, (b) aimed at reaching both countries' strategic goals of defending national security and (c) providing for economic and social development. Therefor, the main prerequisites for strategic cooperation between two (or more) countries are:

- existence of common, global or regional, threat to national security of the countries;
- existence of similar goals of economic development;
- existence of military, economic and intellectual potential for development of relations of strategic cooperation.

In what follows, the above prerequisites of Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation are critically examined.

*Common threat* : Hypothetically, military threat to such big powers as China and Russia may come only from the USA. However, after the end of the Cold War, both countries, Russia and the USA, do not consider each other as political and ideological enemies. The NATO strikes against Yugoslavia, though deteriorated Russia-West relations, did not change this fundamental approach. The USA needs democratic Russia

with market economy, and Russia needs American assistance in promoting Russian reforms. Similar approaches exist in China-American relations: the USA does not consider China as a source of direct military threat to America, China needs American investments and American market to continue Chinese reforms.

So, Russia and China are unlikely to find a single global threat to their security. The problem is that the USA, being, in principle, interested in spreading market relations and democratic procedures to Russian and Chinese territories, not necessarily would like to see too rapid economic growth of Russia and China. Prosperous Russia and China can easily turn into strong economic competitors to the USA in the World markets. However, economic competition with the USA is not enough a reason for perception, by Russia and China, of the USA as a common threat today.

On the other hand, there exist common regional threats to Russian and Chinese security. They are: situation on the Korean Peninsula, conflicts in Middle Asia, and separatist movements in China and Russia. However, China is ready to cooperate with Russia in repelling common regional threats only on a case-by-case basis, only where and if it meets Chinese interests, and only if Russian interests coincide with the Chinese ones. Thus, no common global threat - no strategic cooperation: that could be a conclusion from the just mentioned arguments.

*Single economic goals* : Both Russia and China want to achieve high and stable rates of economic growth, turn themselves into economic Super-Powers, and for this they urgently need foreign capital. However, the similar nature of the goals would sooner make Russia and China economic competitors than allies. Besides, there exist principal difference

in internal development of Russia and China. China maintains a high growth rate; they practice free market relations but under strict state control. The Communist Party provides for political stability and unity of the country, though restricts democratic development. Russia, on the other hand, is still suffering from economic stagnation; the State still does not know to what extent it can interfere into the market to run the economy efficiently. The political situation is uncertain; the ruling regime is suffering from corruption and growing unpopularity, liberals are in minority, and the communists and nationalists do not have enough people's support to take power.

Facing such differences, it is not easy to see how Russia and China can understand and support each other, and can cooperate and coordinate their domestic policies in the long run. What both Russia and China are interested in is perhaps preservation of good-neighborhood relationship between two countries. From this standpoint, the content of the Russian-Chinese "strategic cooperation" could be the prevention of a situation when internal political differences and competition on international financial markets could spoil good-neighborhood relations between the two countries.

*Economic potential* : A number of features characterize economic and military potentials of Russia and China as far as their "strategic cooperation" is concerned. First, on the macroeconomic level, Russian and Chinese economies are not complementary. Both countries have natural resources and do not have capital and updated technology.

Secondly, Russia and China have commodities and services for mutual exchanges. China needs Russian gas, Russian railroads (as an access to European markets), non-expensive, though not-up-dated, machinery, equipment for

atomic and hydro-power stations, and achievements of Russian basic research. Russia, on the other hand, needs Chinese consumer goods and foodstuff, gas pipe-line through Chinese territory - as an access to Asian Pacific gas-consumers, Chinese manpower that could be used on construction works in the Russian Far Eastern sparsely populated area. However, exchange of these goods and services is conducted on the market principles: Russian businessmen will not buy Chinese products if they find products from elsewhere that are better or cheaper.

Thirdly, at micro-economic level, perspectives of integration processes between Russian and Chinese enterprises are rather uncertain. Vigor of integration aspirations of Chinese modern enterprises is directed to the Western and Asian Pacific countries. Old enterprises, built up in the 1950s and 1960s, theoretically, could become integration partners to their Russian counterparts. However, possibilities of such kind of integration become the smaller, the deeper becomes crisis in Russian heavy industries.

Fourthly, Russia and China potentially are huge markets for consumer goods and services. However, demand for Russian commodities in China, as well as for Chinese commodities in Russia, is very limited. Chinese share in Russian imports is around 4%, Russian share in Chinese imports, less than 1%.

So, there exist objective prerequisites for development of Russian-Chinese cooperation, in particular, strategic branches of the economy, such as construction of gas pipe-line through Chinese territory to Asian markets, modernization of Russian railroads that could connect China with Europe, building up atomic and hydro-power stations in China with Russia's assistance (though Russia has to compete with Western

companies for the Chinese contracts). But potentials for micro-economic integration at enterprise levels that is a basis for two countries' economic co-development, i.e., for "strategic cooperation", are very small and reducing.

Besides, according to Chinese understanding of national economic security, too much dependence upon one country in finance, technology, industrial or other sectors is less preferable to "balanced dependence" upon a few countries. From this standpoint, China can reserve, for Russia, a role of a "balance" in Chinese long-term economic integration with the West, so not to let dependence upon Western countries become too deep and, so, too dangerous for Chinese national economic security.

*Military potential of strategic cooperation* : Political aspects of the problem are tied with Russian and Chinese understanding of single threats to national security of the countries. As it has been mentioned above, there does not exist any threat to Russia's and China's security that could demand joint use of the armed forces of both nations.

Military-technical aspects are connected with export of Russian weaponry to China. China, buying around one third of Russian arms export, is one of the leading importers of Russian weaponry. Russian-Chinese military-technical cooperation have a long-term character and could, in principle, turn into a "strategic cooperation" in arms-production field. However, this sphere of bilateral relations has a number of serious limitations:

- limited hard currency resources that China can afford to spend for purchasing Russian arms,
- China's reluctance to develop jointly military technology in the long-run,



- China's wish to reduce its dependence upon the work of Russian military-industrial complex - stagnating together with stagnation of all Russian economy.
- continuing degradation of Russian basic and defense research that was and should be the routes for development of Russian defense industry.

So, Russian-Chinese cooperation in defense industry, hypothetically, can be one of a long-term character, but it is very unlikely to become the core of the Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation, at least, without radical changes in Russian economy and science development. Hypothetically, one could mention the following scenarios of Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation:

*Military-political scenario* : Russia and China make up a military and/or political alliance aimed at repelling, preventing or deterring threats from the USA, Japan and other Western countries. This scenario proceeds from the assumption that both countries, Russia and China, are interested in opposing growing American influence in global security, political, economic and financial affairs. Growing American control over World information and telecommunication systems is considered as a strategic threat to Russian and Chinese interests, according to this scenario. Russia and China could lead anti-American movement in the developing countries and help transition economies to develop without getting into dependence upon American, and other Western capitals.

This scenario, theoretically, has its logic. However, practically it does not take into account the reality that both Russia and China give absolute priority to restructuring and development of their economies on a market basis; and nowadays, it is impossible to develop economy on a market

basis in isolation from the World markets, from finance systems and economies of most prosperous countries. This would sooner make the USA and other Western countries "strategic economic partners" to Russia and China, rather than stimulate Russian-Chinese cooperation on anti-Western basis.

*Military-technical scenario* : Under this scenario, Russia and China cooperate in joint development of defense technology and basic research. At the first stage of the implementation of this scenario, Russia sells weaponry and defense technology to China. In the next stage, China joins fulfillment of defense programs in Russia. Finally, Russia and China create a new military-technical World centre, that can successfully compete with the USA, limiting the US monopoly in working out modern defense systems.

The weak points of this scenario are: (a) continuing degradation of Russian science, including basic and defense research, and deep crisis of Russian economy and (b) Chinese military doctrine based on self-reliance concepts. In future, if Russia can overcome its domestic difficulties and restore scientific potential and China can get rid of traditional views on defense-technology development, this scenario has theoretical chances for practical realization.

*Economic scenario* : The economic scenario proceeds from coincidence of strategic priorities to economic tasks in the strategy of the development of Russia and China. Russia and China maintain strategic economic cooperation on macro- and micro-economic levels aiming at creation of a new economic block, similar to EC, NAFTA or ASEAN. Russian-Chinese economic community gradually turns into a leading economic integrity that has a production and market potential bigger than a potential of already existing World economic

unions. Deep economic integration creates, in the future, material basis for cultural and social co-development of Russian and Chinese societies, that could be an example of co-prosperity of European and oriental civilizations.

Russian economic uncertainty, and orientation of Chinese industrial modernization on western capital, high-tech and markets, are the main weak points of this scenario. Another counter-argument to this scenario is that historic perspectives do not grow automatically from economic relations. There is also the threat that basic civilizational antagonism will impede Russian-Chinese co-development.

Nevertheless, there could be, as well, a counter-argument to the counter-argument: Russia and China first have to try to develop economic integration and then they can see what cultural-civilization consequences it will have.

*Ecological scenario* : Russia and China both understand growing threat from deteriorating environment and try to solve problems of ecological security together. China and Russia give full priority to industrial development and economic recovery that basically demands radical violence on the nature and leaves "for the future" tasks of providing for a co-evolution between a man and nature. Neither China, nor Russia are ready, at the moment, technologically, financially, politically for "ecological strategic cooperation". In fact, ecological security problems are not among main strategic goals of Moscow and Beijing yet.

*Scenario of a "restricted" strategic cooperation* : One may visualize a scenario of limited strategic cooperation where they try to forge good neighbourly relations and one does not impede the growth and development of the other. Thereby, both countries, directly or indirectly, can help each other to reach strategic goals of economic development and national

security; though they don't present to each other "strategic privileges".

This scenario seems to be more realistic. However, the scenario is unable to upgrade Russian-Chinese relations to higher level of strategic cooperation in a short-run. And it is not quite clear what results can be achieved in a long-run. Objective needs of Chinese and Russian economy in creating a "common market", in a long-term perspective, will compete with other objective economic needs - in integration of Russia and China into European, North American and Asian Pacific economies. Nevertheless, a variant of "restricted" strategic cooperation will be a realistic background against which Russia and China will develop bilateral cooperation-partnership.

So, what we are suggesting is basically less ambitious, pragmatic and incremental approach to improvement of bilateral relations. Such an approach to cooperation is all the more needed because of an outstanding problem of cross-border population movement, which, if looked from traditional security prism will be self-defeating.

### **3. THE VEXED MIGRATION PROBLEM**

Cross-border movement, particularly, migration, can exert different kinds of influence - positive or negative - upon bilateral relations between any two countries, including the relationship between Russia and China. At one end, migration of labor force helps the country which receives immigrants from the other country to solve problems of inadequate labor force or need for development of virgin regions, or to meet a demand on unskilled workers. It helps the country of immigrants' origin to solve unemployment problems. On the other hand, immigration, especially uncontrolled and

unlimited immigration, creates tension in the labour market in the country which receives immigrants, risks deterioration of law and order situation, and the risk of an adverse turn in the demographic balance of local population.

Modern international concepts of migration point out that the immigrants, in terms of work conditions or protection by law, should have the same rights as residents, i.e., local workers. Linking the migration problem with the problem of growing World interdependence and globalization, international scholars, despite differences in their ideas, all affirm two central conclusions:

- First, the state will continue to dominate political action in regard to the migration issue, though perhaps in modes and forms that move away from politics as usual;
- Secondly, state sovereignty is in the process of significant transformation at least among the states that wish to reap the benefits the global marketplace can provide (meaning first of all the European Union and NAFTA).

Western scholars insist that unilateral domestic control over immigrations is one of the cornerstones of traditional notions of sovereignty. If a consensus continues to build that openness holds the key to world prosperity and cooperation, not only must policy-makers frame political questions inclusive of an international perspective, but must look forward with an internationally oriented mental frame to these challenges.

The starting attempts of world leaders to move to the single world marketplace – not only in terms of investments, goods and services, but in terms of workforce as well – make up new challenges to the Russian-Chinese relations in the migration sphere. Both countries need to strengthen their practical

cooperation and mutual theoretical research in the field not only to contribute to development of restricted strategic cooperation partnership in the coming century, but also to respond to challenges of globalization and to contribute to the world efforts to create a single world market, including single world labor market.

Both, Russia and China are interested in that the rules on which the single world labor-market will operate, take into consideration Russian and Chinese traditions and interests and include only such rules and regulations that corresponded these interests and traditions. From these strategic and theoretical standpoints let us try to look at what is going on in Chinese migration to Russia.

#### **4. RUSSIAN REGIONAL AUTHORITIES' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS CHINESE IMMIGRATION TO RUSSIA**

While Moscow authorities pay most attention to migrants from the former Soviet republics, especially from Asian and Caucasus republics, and Vietnam, federal and local authorities in Russian regions, in particular, Primorsky and Khabarovsk krajs, Amurskaya and Chitinskaya oblasts, are facing serious problems dealing with Chinese immigrants, particularly with illegal immigration.

Primorsky krai: In 1998, 320 thousand foreigners passed through 8 immigration check-points in Primorsky krai, that is 45% more than in 1997. About 45% of them passed through Grodekovo railroad station, 18% – through Poltavka car-post, 8.5% – through Sosnovaya Pad car-post, 8% – via Nakhodka sea port, 7% – via Vladivostok airport, 5% – via Vladivostok sea port. More than 80% of the foreigners were Chinese, around 3-4% came from each of North Korea, South Korea, Japan and the Philippines. About half of the foreigners were

tourists, 15% – businessmen, 12% – holders of Service passports.

Regional authorities are concerned with the fact that a growing number of Chinese visitors are conducting illegal activities in Primorsky krai. In 1998, Primorsky Duma (regional parliament) received a big number of letters from Russian citizens pointing at that Chinese illegal workers push Russians out from trade and service business. Illegal Chinese workers, who do not pay taxes, are getting privileges before their Russian competitors and easily, but unfairly, win the competition, there by pushing Russians to violate the law as well.

Local immigration authorities suppose that growing illegal activity of the Chinese in Primorsky krai is due to the following factors :

- high level of unemployment in the Chinese regions neighboring Russia,
- existence of too many check-points on the Russian-Chinese border so that it is difficult to man them properly and the Chinese easily enter Russia,
- loopholes in the Russian Legal system and its implementation that let foreigners legally enter Russia but then travel around Russia and do any kind of business they want to do without any control,
- visa-free tourism regime in relations with China.

To improve the situation, Primorsky krai migration authorities in 1998 strengthened immigration control on the Russian border and improved investigation of illegal activity of foreigners in the krai. As a result of toughening of the immigration-control measures, in 1998, the immigration

authorities did not allow to enter Russia to 426 people from China and 57 - from North Korea (1.5 times more than in 1997). Besides, 291 Chinese were not allowed to enter Russia by Russian border guards, and 53 Chinese violated the border regime and were caught by Russian border guards (in 1997 - 98).

During investigation of illegal activity of foreign tourists, Primorsky krai police found out that 1016 tourists from China were illegally engaged in business in the krai. The krai demanded their expulsion from Russia. Visa-free tourist-regime for Chinese visitors has become the main channel of infiltration of Chinese illegal immigrants into Russian far East.

Increasing number of illegal foreign workers are accompanied by decrease in a number of workers who are officially allowed to work in Russia. The quota for the latter is 15 thousand persons a year, while in 1998 there were only 10 thousand thousand officially registered workers while the figure was 13.5 thousand workers in 1996.

Struggling against illegal immigration, the administration of Primorsky krai is not against visa-free tourism or against using Chinese workers in the krai's economy working on a legal basis. To strengthen control over the migration situation, local authorities made the following steps:

- governor of the krai established a special coordination Council on migration policy,
- a draft law about regulation of immigrants' behavior in Primorsky krai has been prepared,
- a special plan of coordination between regional police and migration authorities is approved, and
- the number of immigration officers is planned to be increased.



Other steps are also planned to be implemented. The Administration of Primorsky krai demands to change Federal legislation so as to separate Russian-speaking immigrants from the former Soviet Republics from other immigrants. Another step is to prepare simple procedures for the Russian-speaking immigrants in applying for a refugee-status. Another idea is to toughen the Federal legislation so as to increase obligations of the immigrants who intend to arbitrarily change their status in Russia. The Administration also plans to strengthen a role of Immigration service in the power structure in the Russian Far East.

*Khabarovskiy krai* : The krai authorities in Khabarovskiy express deep concern about mass immigration of Chinese. They consider it as "a quiet expansion" that, in perspective, can lead to "weakening and loss of the Russian state power" in the region, and demand toughening of the Federal policy against illegal immigrants.

The krai immigration authorities identify four channels of the illegal immigration in the region: (1) tourism, (2) using of foreign workforce in Russia, (3) student exchanges, and (4) illegal border-crossing.

The regional Administration supposes that the visa-free regime for Chinese tourists, in practice, led to worsening of criminal situation in the krai. In 1996, 250 Chinese, who had come as tourists, turned into de-facto illegal immigrants, the figures for 1997 being 125 and 1998, 100. A decline of a number of illegal Chinese immigrants, passing through this channel, is explained by toughening of the control by Khabarovsk immigration authorities.

On the other hand, foreign workers, who legally work in Khabarovsk krai, contribute to the regional economy. During

1995-1998, 3-3.5 thousand foreign workers were officially allowed to work in the krai economy. The most part of them were Chinese and North Koreans. However, beginning from 1996, there appeared signals that some of these workers illegally stay in Russia after their tenure is expired. In 1996, the number of such workers was 40, in 1997, it was 50, and in 1998, around 50. About 25% of Chinese companies, registered in the krai, appeared to be fictitious. The total number of Chinese and North Koreans living in Khabarovsk krai is around 4.5 thousand. In 1997, they illegally bought 20 private houses and flats in Khabarovsk (60% of the buyers were Chinese, 40%, North Koreans). The Administration does not have resources to organize total control of all international workers visiting the krai but plans to strengthen control on a selective basis.

Another problem is that students' exchanges, started in 1993, deteriorate the situation: 20-25% of Chinese students turn into illegal immigrants.

Illegal border-crossing is used by the Chinese not only with the purpose to infiltrate into Russia but also to use Russia as a transit corridor to the third countries. While 65% of illegal immigrants, using this channel of infiltration, want to stay in Russia, 20% would like to go to South Korea, 10%, to Italy, others to other European countries. This kind of illegal immigration is conducted in Moscow by Beijing and Harbin criminal groups, in Leningrad oblast by a Shanghai group. Khabarovsk Administration supposes that Chinese authorities in the regions neighboring with Russia are reluctant to struggle against illegal border crossing and to cooperate with Russia in this sphere.

The Khabarovsk Administration, while analyzing the situation with Chinese immigrants, keep in perspective the of

history deep concern, i.e., high rapid expansion of Chinese at the beginning of this century when a number of Chinese living in the Russian Far East increased from 40 thousand in 1897 to 150 thousand in 1910. The Administration agrees that Chinese workforce is very useful in economic development of the krai but supposes that Russia needs a well coordinated Federal migration policy aimed at restriction of Chinese illegal immigration. The core of this program should become regional laws which do not allow foreigners:

- to live in the areas close to the Russian-Chinese frontier,
- to buy krai lands in private property, and
- to have cash less than a particular, established by the local authorities, level.

The Administration also plans to issue special immigration cards (something like a passport for foreigners) to control the illegal immigration.

*Chitinskaya oblast* : Chinese account up to 94% of immigrants from non-former Soviet Republics to Chitinskaya oblast. 98% of them are men. The main channel of illegal immigration from China is a non-return to the homeland of Chinese, who had legally entered Russia. In 1997-1998, a number of Chinese which did not leave the oblast in time was around 10 thousand people.

The regional authorities suppose that the main factor which leads to increase of illegal immigrants from China - along with high level of unemployment in China and poor Russian immigration legislation - is China's interest in strengthening its control over Baikal area by stimulating growth of Diaspora of Chinese immigrants in the region. The main channels of infiltration - together with already mentioned tourism, legal use of foreign workforce - are visa-

free entrance of so-called private-traders, scientific and cultural exchanges, and fictitious marriages to Russian citizens. The total number of Chinese violators of visa-regime in the oblast in 1997-1998 was around 8 thousand. In 1997, the tenure of stay of 2.1 thousand of Chinese in the oblast was shortened as punishment for violation of Russian immigration rules. 161 Chinese were expelled.

On the other hand, the oblast Administration is very interested in continuing cooperation with China in the field of using Chinese workforce in the regional economy. The oblasts approved a quota for foreign workers which can be officially used in the regional economy on the level of 4 thousand a year.

*Amurskaya oblast* : Authorities of the Amurskaya oblast estimate that 90-95% of all the foreigners visiting the oblast a year are Chinese (around 50 thousand people). One thousand of them have Service passports. In 1998, around 5 thousand foreign workers (3 thousand of them are North Koreans, the majority of the rest being Chinese) legally worked in the regional economy.

The main problem for the regional Administration is that Chinese, visiting the region, do not have official permission to work. The average number of such kind of workers discovered by the migration service is around 1 thousand.

The regional Administration, together with Administration of other regions neighboring China, demands toughening of the Federal immigration control and giving to regional authorities more power to stop illegal immigration - including creation on the Federal and regional levels of the Immigration Police.

## 5. THE RUSSIAN FEDERAL CONCERNS

The Russian Federal Center considers the migration problem as one of the most tense problems in bilateral relations that warrant radical moves by the Russian State. As a positive decision, a visa-regime was introduced beginning from 1994 that helped to reduce a number of illegal immigrants from China. Nevertheless, an intergovernmental agreement about visa-free tourist visits, signed on December, 18, 1992, remains as an open window for illegal immigration. Only 20% of Chinese de-jure visiting Russia as tourists are tourists de-facto. Half of the so-called tourists use their trips to Russia with commercial purposes for illegal purposes. About one-third of the tourists, in reality, are Chinese businessmen working at Chinese companies registered in Russia. To save money, they are using a tourist channel for their visits to Russia.

Every year 35-40% of Chinese tourists do not return from Russia to China. One of the tricks used by Chinese tourists to stay in Russia is to lose their documents. The Chinese side refuses to let Chinese in without documents. Consequently, they turn into well-known to Chinese illegal immigrants.

The total number of Chinese workers, engaged basically in construction and agriculture in Russia, is around 25-30 thousand people. However, after the term of their official work in Russia is expired, they try to stay in Russia illegally, trading in consumer goods in Russian markets.

One of the most concerns of Russian Federal authorities is the wide-spread practice of naturalization of Chinese in Russia by the means of fictitious marriages.

The Russian Federal Center is sure that the China Federal and local authorities are not only not active enough to cooperate with Russia to restrict illegal immigration, but they also conscientiously promote policy of increasing illegal immigration to Russia. The aim of this policy, in Russian perception, is to support a slow human expansion of Chinese to the Russian Far East with a strategic goal to seizure this territory in the future and to add it to China.

The Federal authorities in Russia point out the fact that China impose tough control with regard to Chinese emigration to Japan, so as not to spoil relations with one of the main Chinese economic partners. They follow the same policy with regard to South East Asia, so as not to accelerate growth of anti-Chinese feelings which may affect ethnic Chinese investment in those countries. Having a limited number of migration officers, China will also remain reluctant to oppose to illegal emigration northwards to Russia.

Another reason which makes Russia concerned is the question of China's economic development, of privatization and bankruptcy policies. A number of Russian China-specialists predict that current economic tendencies in China, namely, deflation, decline of export, a huge amount of bad debts and a big number of insolvent banks and companies, will lead to decline of China's GDP growth rate to 2-4% in 1998-2000 and to increase of unemployment. To solve unemployment problems China, not being able to promote emigration to the USA, Japan, South East Asia, is likely to support non-officially illegal emigration to Russia. Or, at least, will not promote a tough policy to stop the illegal emigration to Russia.

In response, Russia is planning to introduce the following measures aimed at struggle against illegal immigration from China:

- to establish legal quota of the Chinese who are allowed to visit Russia and quota on their moving around Russia and quota on where, in Russia, and how many Chinese can stay and live;
- to toughen administrative regime and punishment for Chinese (and other foreigners) who violate Russian migration rules;
- to create, on the basis of the Federal Migration Service, the Federal Migration Police which will have authority and power for deportation from Russia illegal immigrants;
- to introduce tough economic and administrative sanctions against those Russian companies, cooperating with Chinese partners, that help Chinese to violate Russian migration rules;
- to toughen control over exports from Russia to China of valuable raw materials and military technology; and
- to cancel a right, the local authorities have today, to issue documents to Chinese who apply for a permission for permanent residence in Russia.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As there is a very limited space within which Russia and China may undertake strategic cooperation, the vexed problem of migration comes to the fore in bilateral relations. Two alternatives are available to the two neighbours to deal with

the migration problem. The first one is : China de-facto supports illegal emigration to Russia aiming at solving its unemployment problem in a short-run and seizing Russian Far East (or increasing China's influence in this region) in a long-run. While Russia makes one-sided measures to stop the illegal immigration from China. This scenario creates a basis for growth of tension in Russian-Chinese relations - be it relations of strategic cooperation or of restricted strategic cooperation, or just good-neighborhood relations - that is against both Russian and Chinese long-term interests. The second scenario presupposes intergovernmental cooperation between Russia and China on the migration issue. That looks much better for the future of our bilateral relations because it :

- First, helps to solve a sincere problem and to avoid deterioration of Russian-Chinese relations .
- Second, turns the migration problem from the one that separates Russia and China into the one that helps two countries, working together on a particular issue, to become closer to each other strategically;
- Third, demonstrates to international community that Russia and China can jointly contribute to the international practice and experience of solving migration problems and that Russia and China can be active players in working-out and conducting the World Single migration policy in the future.

Russia expects from China that China will clearly and surely prove that it has no intentions to infiltrate into Russian Far East or to seize this region, in one or another form, in the future, and has no plans of a "quiet human



expansion northwards". Russia also expects that China will practically, on an everyday basis, cooperate with Russia in struggle against illegal immigration - that could help Russia avoid to implement one-sided tough measure against Chinese immigrants, accidentally touching honest Chinese visitors.

Otherwise, political radicals in Russia can add China's "human expansion northwards" to NATO's military expansion eastwards, Muslim extremists' expansion southwards and Japan's economic expansion westwards - can do it to try to correct in a wrong way Russian foreign policy as a whole and to make doubtful the future and the perspectives of Russian-Chinese relations in particular.