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**Sino–Russian Political Humanitarian Partnership and Cooperation:
Directions, Implementation, and Prospects**

Specialty 5.5.4 — International Relations, Global and Regional Studies

ABSTRACT

of the dissertation submitted for the degree of Candidate of Political Sciences

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Relevance of the Research Topic

Since the signing of the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China in 2001, China and Russia have entered a new stage of bilateral interaction that acquired the status of a strategic partnership. A high level of trust has been established between the two states at the governmental level, as reflected in the mechanisms of annual meetings of heads of state, regular meetings of prime ministers, and consultations of ministers of foreign affairs. Numerous bilateral agreements, joint statements, and other significant documents have been concluded.

The dynamics of Sino-Russian relations are manifested in the transition from the format of "friendly interaction" to "constructive partnership," and subsequently to a "comprehensive strategic partnership." A defining feature of the contemporary stage of these relations is the expansion of cooperation across multiple domains. Alongside traditionally significant economic and political ties, increasing attention is devoted to humanitarian cooperation.

In the contemporary era, China and Russia act as key actors in world politics, facing a complex set of multi-level external challenges. One of the most significant factors remains the intensifying geopolitical competition with the United States of America, the European Union, and other centers of power. At the same time, both states are involved in addressing issues of regional security and are confronted with risks affecting territorial integrity and state sovereignty.

The sanctions policy of the Western bloc exerts a substantial influence on the internal development of both Russia and China, constraining economic interaction and generating additional pressures on social spheres. Under these conditions, the development of flexible and adaptive foreign policy strategies aimed at protecting national interests becomes particularly important.

Against this background, humanitarian cooperation emerges as a major sphere of Sino-Russian interaction. In situations where military and economic cooperation are partially limited by external circumstances, humanitarian

cooperation retains considerable potential for maintaining political dialogue, strengthening mutual understanding, and reinforcing trust between the peoples of the two countries. Thus, humanitarian partnership becomes an integral component of the broader strategy of Sino–Russian relations under conditions of global transformation.

Humanitarian cooperation constitutes an essential component of the comprehensive partnership between China and Russia. The two states actively pursue cultural exchanges and cooperative initiatives that contribute to the expansion of social interaction and the strengthening of bilateral ties. During his visit to Moscow in March 2023, President of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping emphasized the significance of Sino–Russian relations, quoting the proverb “A great ship sails far” to illustrate the long-term prospects of bilateral interaction, including those within the humanitarian sphere.

The foreign policy strategy of the Russian Federation, as reflected in the Concept of the Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad (2022), assigns particular importance to international humanitarian cooperation on a fair and mutually beneficial basis, underscoring the significance of cooperation with China. Under contemporary international conditions, humanitarian cooperation increasingly functions as an instrument of soft power, contributing to the promotion of national interests and the development of bilateral relations.

All of the above determines the relevance of the present dissertation research for an adequate and realistic analysis and forecasting of Sino–Russian relations.

The humanitarian dimension acquires particular significance within the framework of soft power theory. Following Joseph Nye, culture, education, and language may be regarded as channels of long-term influence. However, unlike the Western interpretation of soft power, in Russia and China humanitarian cooperation functions not only as an instrument of attractiveness but also as an independent direction of foreign policy.

The relevance of humanitarian cooperation is also shaped by the challenges of globalization, including processes of cultural standardization that stimulate both Russia and China to preserve national values and develop alternative models of interaction.

The practical significance of humanitarian cooperation is reflected in the concrete results of bilateral initiatives and the activities of various institutions engaged in cooperation between Russia and China, demonstrating the strengthening of the social foundations of partnership and a high level of institutionalization.

At the same time, humanitarian cooperation is not devoid of challenges. Researchers identify differences in cultural traditions and educational systems, uneven regional development, limited integration with economic cooperation, and insufficient innovation. These factors constrain the scale and depth of cooperation and necessitate further scholarly analysis.

The relevance of the present study is therefore determined by the growing role of humanitarian cooperation in strengthening the Sino–Russian strategic partnership and by its importance as an instrument of public diplomacy and global governance. The conceptualization of humanitarian cooperation enables a deeper understanding of the dynamics of bilateral relations and contributes to the formulation of analytically grounded approaches to sustainable and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Object of the Research

Political humanitarian cooperation and partnership between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China under contemporary conditions.

Subject of the Research

The characteristics and prospects of the implementation of Sino–Russian political humanitarian partnership and cooperation.

Research Objective

To determine the state, challenges, and prospects of political humanitarian cooperation and partnership between Russia and China under contemporary conditions.

Research Tasks

To achieve this objective, the following tasks are addressed:

- to examine the theoretical concepts of political humanitarian cooperation and partnership between Russia and China, including their evolution and current state;
- to analyze the historical formation of the political model of strategic partnership as a necessary condition for the development of humanitarian cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China;
- to consider public diplomacy as a key instrument of political interaction between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China;
- to characterize the principal directions and results of political humanitarian cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China;
- to investigate the process of institutionalization of political humanitarian cooperation and partnership between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China;
- to assess the prospects for the further development of political humanitarian cooperation and partnership between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China and to formulate proposals for the advancement of humanitarian cooperation between the two states.

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis is that political humanitarian cooperation between Russia and China constitutes a form of the realization of the “soft power” of both states, oriented toward the achievement of public diplomacy objectives. In other words, humanitarian interaction is regarded as an instrument of foreign

policy influence that facilitates the advancement of political interests through cultural, educational, and informational channels.

Scientific Novelty of the Research

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the comprehensive political science analysis of the state and prospects of humanitarian interaction between Russia and China.

1. On the basis of theoretical analysis, a definition of political humanitarian cooperation and partnership between Russia and China is formulated. Differences in terminology (“人道” and “人文”) are identified, which makes it possible to consider humanitarian policy as an instrument for the achievement of foreign policy objectives. A distinction is drawn between political humanitarian cooperation (a set of specific projects) and political humanitarian partnership (institutionalized and strategic interaction).

2. Within the framework of the study of the humanitarian dimension of the strategic partnership between Russia and China, an original authorial periodization of the development of humanitarian interaction is proposed. This periodization reflects the transition from historical preconditions (prior to 2000) to the stage of institutionalized partnership beginning in 2001. The periodization is constructed on the basis of a set of criteria, including changes in the contractual and legal status of relations, the level of institutionalization of humanitarian cooperation mechanisms, and the dynamics of key programs and exchanges. On this basis, a strategic model of cooperation is presented, in which the humanitarian sphere is regarded as an integral component of political partnership and as a mechanism for its sustainable reproduction under contemporary conditions.

3. A model of the interrelationship between public diplomacy, soft power, and humanitarian cooperation is substantiated. Using the example of Sino-Russian relations, it is demonstrated that public diplomacy functions as an instrument of influence on foreign audiences and contributes to the realization of foreign policy objectives. The combination of public diplomacy and soft power

ensures effective cultural and political interaction. The model emphasizes that humanitarian cooperation plays a significant role not only in the cultural sphere but also in the advancement of the strategic interests of the two states.

4. The principal directions of humanitarian cooperation between Russia and China are systematized on the basis of an authorial classification and unified criteria for the selection and grouping of projects. This made it possible to conduct a comparative periodic and quantitative analysis of cooperation dynamics across the following stages: prior to 2000, 2000–2003, 2003–2017, and from 2017 onward. The dynamics were assessed in terms of the number and scale of initiatives, the regularity of programs, the sustainability of existing mechanisms, and shifts in thematic priorities. It is shown that cooperation maintains its intensity and adapts to external constraints, including the pandemic, sanctions restrictions, and geopolitical challenges. This adaptation is reflected in changing formats and institutional support, as documented in official sources. It is established that humanitarian projects perform not only cultural and educational but also foreign policy functions, acting as resources of soft power and public diplomacy and reinforcing the institutional foundations of strategic partnership.

5. It is determined that state institutions establish long-term frameworks and institutional mechanisms, while non-governmental organizations, associations, universities, and local actors perform functions related to mobilization, project implementation, and the formation of public perception. As the number of agreements, long-term programs, and regular events increases, interaction between state and non-state actors becomes progressively consolidated in institutional form. The analysis of bilateral bodies and international platforms demonstrates how institutionalization enhances the sustainability of cooperation and expands its political and strategic influence.

6. Prospects for the further development of Sino–Russian political cooperation are presented, including the balance between official and public initiatives, the strategic planning of projects, the involvement of regional and

municipal actors, the expansion of exchange areas, and the strengthening of the soft power potential of both states. It is emphasized that the development of cooperation is associated not only with the quantitative growth of projects but also with the increasing role of institutionalized and strategic forms of partnership in the realization of national interests. The assessment of future prospects confirms the analytical validity of the proposed conceptual distinctions and their significance for the study of foreign policy strategies.

Provisions of the Dissertation Submitted for Defense

1. In theoretical terms, the study differentiates between the concepts of humanitarian cooperation and humanitarian partnership. The former represents concrete and fragmented exchange projects with an emphasis on outcomes, whereas the latter constitutes a systemic and institutionalized form of interaction aimed at the formation of political trust between states and employed as an instrument of foreign policy for the protection of national interests. Both forms of activity are directly related to the political sphere, contribute to the strengthening of soft power, and facilitate the advancement of national interests. This conceptual distinction supplements existing theoretical approaches and provides a framework for analyzing the role of humanitarian cooperation in bilateral relations.

2. The development of humanitarian interaction between Russia and China within the logic of strategic partnership is characterized by a multi-stage nature and may be described through the author's original periodization model. This model reflects the transition from historical preconditions and pre-institutional forms of contact to the stage of institutionalized partnership beginning in 2001. The identification of stages is based on changes in the contractual and legal status of relations, the degree of formalization and sustainability of bilateral mechanisms, as well as the dynamics of key humanitarian projects. The empirical analysis of humanitarian cooperation as an institutionalized sphere is conducted primarily for the period following 2001, when a systemic infrastructure of interaction was formed. On the basis of official documents and

the identified dynamics, a strategic model of cooperation is substantiated, according to which the humanitarian sphere functions as an integral component of political partnership and as an instrument for its maintenance, ensured by stable institutional mechanisms.

3. Within the comprehensive model of the interrelationship between public diplomacy, soft power, and humanitarian cooperation, public diplomacy and soft power are interpreted as mechanisms for the realization of the humanitarian dimension of foreign policy. Their interaction is regarded as a key factor enabling effective cultural and political exchange between Russia and China.

4. A unified classification of cooperation directions and standardized criteria for project assessment enable a comparative analysis of the dynamics of humanitarian cooperation between Russia and China across the following stages: prior to 2000, 2000–2003, 2003–2017, and from 2017 onward. The dynamics are evaluated in terms of the number and scale of initiatives, the regularity of programs, the sustainability of mechanisms, and shifts in thematic priorities. Quantitative findings and the analysis of official documents demonstrate that cooperation maintains its intensity and adapts to external constraints, including the pandemic, sanctions restrictions, and geopolitical challenges. Humanitarian cooperation thereby performs a dual function — cultural-educational and foreign policy — acting as a resource of soft power and public diplomacy, while reinforcing mutual understanding and the institutional foundations of strategic partnership.

5. A detailed analysis of the institutionalized network of state and non-state actors within the framework of cooperation demonstrates that such a network ensures not only the sustainability of interaction but also its substantive political functions. Domestically, it operates as an instrument for the realization of state strategies, while internationally it functions as a consolidated platform for the articulation of shared narratives.

6. The prospects for enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of Sino–Russian political humanitarian cooperation primarily depend on strategic

interaction at the levels of central and regional governance. Such interaction contributes to the formation of favorable conditions for the development of exchanges across cultural, scientific, educational, environmental, sports, and other domains under conditions of a complex and unstable international environment, thereby constituting an important foundation for contemporary models of international relations.

The theoretical and methodological framework of the research. From the perspective of the theoretical substantiation of the study of the challenges and prospects of humanitarian cooperation, the author of the dissertation relies on cooperation theory, which interprets cooperation as a process of joint activity and interaction between individuals or organizations aimed at the achievement of common goals and the resolution of shared tasks. An important characteristic of cooperation is reciprocity, which is expressed through the coordinated actions of the participating parties directed toward the attainment of these goals. In addition, cooperation presupposes reliance on mutual trust, communication, and the alignment of efforts. As emphasized in a number of contemporary studies, cooperation may be regarded as a mechanism for the formation of stable international relations, particularly within the humanitarian sphere. Cooperation contributes to the consolidation of efforts required for addressing complex challenges, which makes it an important instrument within political and humanitarian processes.

Within the context of the present research, cooperation theory is employed not only as a general theoretical foundation but also as an analytical instrument that enables the explanation of the mechanisms of sustainability and reproducibility of Russian–Chinese humanitarian interaction. This approach makes it possible to interpret humanitarian initiatives not as a collection of isolated projects but as a systemic process supported by institutional, normative, and communicative mechanisms. The application of cooperation theory provides the basis for identifying factors contributing to the stabilization of bilateral

relations, as well as for explaining how bilateral mechanisms, programs, and exchanges are transformed into a sustainable practice of strategic partnership.

For the characterization of the theoretical approaches of states to humanitarian cooperation, the author refers to liberal theory, within which moral and social responsibility is regarded as a principal internal factor of cooperation and as an instrument of international stability. Constructivist theory makes it possible to consider humanitarian cooperation through the prism of transformations of identity and interests among actors of international relations. According to this theoretical perspective, the behavior and objectives of states are shaped by norms, culture, traditions, and processes of learning. In contrast to rationalist approaches, which regard anarchy as an inevitable consequence of self-help, constructivism interprets anarchy as a social construct subject to transformation through political and social processes. From the constructivist standpoint, humanitarian cooperation contributes to the formation of collective identities and reinforces interdependence among nations. The incorporation of different theoretical approaches enables the author to conceptualize humanitarian cooperation as a form of the realization of soft power and foreign policy objectives, while also interpreting it as a mechanism of mutual development within the sociocultural space of the partner state.

The theory of international regimes provides a theoretical framework for conceptualizing and resolving a central contradiction. On the one hand, the development of such cooperation presupposes openness and international exchange, including intercultural dialogue and civilizational communication. On the other hand, contemporary global dynamics reveal tendencies toward the restriction of access to technologies and scientific achievements for the purpose of securing competitive advantages, as well as toward the promotion of national cultural values. An international regime is understood as a set of principles, norms, rules, and procedures established by actors of international relations for the regulation of interaction within a specific domain. The function of international regimes lies not solely in ensuring compliance but also in creating

a predictable environment that enables states to pursue their interests without undermining the stability of the international system.

The methodology of periodic and quantitative analysis. Alongside theoretical analysis, the study applies periodic and quantitative approaches to the examination of the dynamics of humanitarian cooperation between Russia and China on the basis of official documents and open sources. To ensure comparability, unified criteria for the registration of initiatives are employed: programs, projects, events, and formally documented initiatives characterized by defined objectives, actors, and formats of implementation are taken into account. The dynamics are assessed in terms of the number and scale of initiatives, the regularity of programs, the sustainability of existing mechanisms, and shifts in thematic priorities. The identification of stages prior to 2000, 2000–2003, 2003–2017, and from 2017 onward is correlated with transformations of the contractual and legal framework and institutional forms of interaction, which enables the interpretation of quantitative shifts in connection with political and organizational conditions. The year 2001 is regarded as a pivotal moment of the institutionalization of strategic partnership; within the proposed periodization of humanitarian cooperation, it is incorporated into the second stage (2000–2003) as a phase of institutional consolidation.

In the dissertation, various scientific approaches are employed. Within the framework of the institutional approach, the functioning of cultural diplomacy institutions in the spheres of educational and cultural policy of Russia and China is examined. Particular attention is devoted to state institutions, public organizations, professional associations, information agencies, and non-profit structures that play a significant role in the implementation of humanitarian policy.

In the course of the research, general scientific methods are applied, including generalization, analysis, analogy, synthesis, logical reasoning, and comparison, as well as methods directly related to the specific nature of the subject under investigation. The structural-functional method is utilized for the

examination of the objectives and resources of Russian–Chinese relations and for the identification of humanitarian cooperation as a direction of foreign policy. The comparative method enables the assessment of cooperation mechanisms within the humanitarian dimension of foreign policy. In analyzing humanitarian cooperation between Russia and China, attention is paid to both general characteristics and country-specific features. Modeling techniques are employed for the evaluation of future prospects of humanitarian cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China.

The scope of the dissertation research. The content of the dissertation corresponds to the directions of scientific inquiry specified in clauses 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 19 of the passport of specialty 5.5.4 — International Relations, Global and Regional Studies.

The theoretical significance of the research lies in the fact that the results obtained contribute to the theoretical understanding of humanitarian cooperation from the perspective of its political functions. Furthermore, the conclusions drawn from the study promote a broader interpretation of the contemporary state of humanitarian partnership between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon integrating diverse spheres of interaction, including education, exchanges of academic, research, and teaching personnel, sports, environmental cooperation, culture, the arts, tourism, media, and public health. The theoretical propositions developed in the dissertation may also serve as a foundation for future research addressing the role of humanitarian cooperation as an instrument of foreign policy.

The principal **practical significance** of the research lies in the fact that the key political aspects of humanitarian cooperation conceptualized in the present study may be applied in the development of strategic plans for the advancement of humanitarian partnership at both the level of central governments and the level of regional and local authorities, thereby providing a scientific foundation for the planning of interaction between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation across various humanitarian domains. The results of the

research may also be utilized in academic courses and lecture programs on world politics, regional studies, and Sino–Russian bilateral relations.

Approbation of the research provisions.

The principal provisions and conclusions of the dissertation research have been presented by the author in ten publications, including five peer-reviewed academic articles published in journals included in the official list of the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation (VAK) and in the list of publications of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, as well as five articles published in other academic outlets.

The structure of the dissertation comprises an introduction, two chapters consisting of six sections, a conclusion, and a list of references and sources.