

# A comparative study of China and Russia cultural influence on their foreign policy & diplomacy—From the Perspective of the Function of Culture

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## ABSTRACT

How does a country think of the outside world, what kind of foreign policy will a country adopt, is related to the country's economic, political, military and other core national interests directly. However, if we investigate its deep root causes, we will find that the country's long-accumulated and structured conceptual structure which is closely related to the country or national culture plays a significant role. This is especially true for countries who are older. China and Russian are two major countries in the current international landscape which both conduct profound impact on international politics and will continue to play more significant role in the future international relations. This article provides an initial step toward an explanatory analysis and comparison of the role that culture plays in foreign policies and diplomacy. Finally this article is going to discuss the different functions that culture has in foreign policy and diplomacy.

**Keywords:** *China, Russia, Foreign Policy, Cultural Influences*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After the end of the cold war, the relationship between China and Russia has made great progress. In a short period of five years, the relationship between China and Russia has developed from "mutual regard as friendly countries" to "strategic cooperative partnership". With the passage of time, the content and scope of bilateral strategic cooperation have been constantly enriched and expanded, forming a unique and beautiful landscape in the complicated relations between big countries. Nevertheless, there are some complex problems in Sino Russian relations that are hard to avoid. The development of Sino Russian relations not only depends on the agreement of national interests of both sides and the influence of the third party factors after the cold war, but also is deeply influenced by the culture of the two countries. In the long run, a country's culture plays a decisive role in the choice of its foreign strategic direction and the screening of its foreign policy. Through the analysis and comparison of Chinese and Russian cultures, we can have a deeper understanding of the nature, characteristics, dynamics and variables of Sino Russian relations, which is helpful to predict the future of bilateral relations from a longer-term perspective.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between China and Russia is influenced by many factors, among which cultural factors play a unique role from a deep level. There are similarities and

differences between Chinese and Russian cultures. Both emphasize collectivity and despise individual, emphasize centralization or totalitarianism and ignore democracy. However, compared with Russian culture, Chinese culture is more secular, so it is more rational and peaceful; it is more stable and cautious to change, and is more cautious in the process of reform; it is more disciplined than competitive; it is more introverted but not outspoken, and has more trust and goodwill to external things. These cultural factors have a significant impact on the formulation of foreign policies and the development of foreign relations between the two countries. Affected by it, although the current momentum of Sino Russian relations is good, there is great uncertainty and unpredictability in its long-term development.

There is a longstanding interest among the cultural influences in Chinese and Russian foreign policies and diplomacy. Previous studies have examined that there are at least three aspects in the cultural affection which are judge, governance and the reconciliation of the conflict. (Qin Yaqing, 2011; Li Xin, 2016; Zhang Qingmin, 2018; Zhang Hong & Liu Huibao, 2011; Eduard Solov'ev, 2006; Maurice Williams, 2003; etc.)

Some studies start from the fact that China's diplomacy has demonstrated more Chinese cultural elements since the end of the Cold War indicates the awakening of national consciousness as China becomes integrated into the international system. This cultural feature will become more salient as China becomes further internationalized. (Zhang Qingmin, 2018.) Also, Zhang and Liu (2011) acknowledge that a country's cognition, emotions and evaluations of its own country, its own nation and the

world should be the origins to explore its foreign policies, and these factors are bound to have significant impacts on its foreign policies as well. Besides, To understand and master a country's diplomatic culture is of great significance to interpret its foreign policy and grasp its diplomatic trend.(Wang Ying, 2006.)

Wang Xin said that Russia pays more attention to independent power diplomacy with the core of safeguarding the interests of nation-states.(2006.) and Xu Jiuxian argued that the moral system of pre-qin Confucianism is of great significance for the study of moral and ethical issues in contemporary Chinese diplomacy.(2011.)

### 3. DISCUSS

#### 3.1. China

The constructivism emphasis on the influence of culture and concepts. In the 1980s, the process of the end of the cold war accelerated, and the strong momentum of the conflict between neorealism and neoliberalism gradually weakened, which made people reflect on the interpretation and prediction ability of these two theories. With the introduction of the sociology of international politics and the philosophy of language, constructivism comes into being. Culture is an important part of the idea, even the master of realism in international relations theory, Hans J. Morgenthau, has made a very clear expression of the significance of conceptual factors in national decision-making. He called these factors "national character and national morale", noting that "not only are they particularly difficult to make rational predictions, but they have a lasting and often decisive influence on the weight of a nation in the balance of international politics."[1]

China has a long history and rich cultural traditions. Under its influence, China's foreign policy and foreign behavior have distinctive characteristics different from other countries. Influenced by the status of China's foreign relations and China's domestic political environment, the influence of Chinese culture on China's foreign policy varies in different periods, and the cultural characteristics of Chinese diplomacy are not exactly the same in the implementation of foreign policy. However, The trend since the reform and opening up is that cultural factors have more and more significant influence on the formulation and implementation of China's foreign policy. Since the 18th national congress of the communist party of China, Chinese culture has been established as one of the guiding thoughts of China's diplomacy and an important ideological source of China's foreign policy.

For example, China implements a national defense policy that is defensive in nature, which can date back to the peace-loving Chinese historical and cultural traditions.

When dealing with diplomatic relations between countries in an anarchic international community, China's diplomatic behavior tends to emphasize feelings rather than interests, emphasize principles of morality, respect for reciprocity, and pay attention to distinguishing between enemies and friends. The Chinese ancient thinkers have put forward the thought of "benevolence and good-neighbourliness", reflected that since ancient times the Chinese people hope to live in harmony with other countries people. [2]

The One Belt One Road Initiative in the 21st century is also originated from Chinese traditional culture. The 5,000-year-old Chinese culture is characterized by openness and inclusiveness. The reflection in the China's foreign policy is that China opposes any cultural conflicts and cultural hegemony in the international arena and advocates cultural diversity.

Since the 18th CPC national congress, China has more strategic space and conditions to reflect its own cultural traditions. At the same time, China is also faced with the task of constructing and improving the diplomatic discourse system. In the process of China's rise, people often use western theories to interpret many of China's diplomatic strategies and foreign policies, resulting in many misunderstandings and misinterpretations. And from the traditional culture of China, on China's road view, national outlook, order, exchanges and values systematically comb, interprets the inevitable connection between them and China's diplomatic practice and logic relation, is an important path to improve China's diplomatic discourse system. It is also the inevitable choice to expand Chinese knowledge into world knowledge.

#### 3.2. Russia

In the long history, Russia, as a nation state, its geographical environment, political changes and social civilization are unique. Therefore, the exploration of Russian diplomacy is supposed to start with its unique ideology, culture and conceptual basis. Because of its special location across the two continents of Europe and Asia, Russia's geopolitical culture is different from that of any people in history. Its philosophy, culture and religion are all influenced by the interaction between eastern and western civilizations. Russian famous thinker Никола́й Алекса́ндрович Бердя́ев once said: East and west, these two strands of the world flow collision in Russia, Russia in the interaction of the two, Russian is not a pure European nations, nor a pure Asian nation, is an integrated part of the world. In the Russian spirit, east and west are at each other's throats.[3]

The civilized character of Russia's junction has led to a variety of ideological differences and disputes about the direction of diplomatic strategy in Russian history. Generally speaking, there are three kinds of strategies: Slavism, Atlanticism and Eurasianism.

Slavism means that Russia adheres to the special cultural

form the Orthodox church and believes that it should follow the development path with Russian characteristics instead of the west.[4] In Russian culture creed, the concept of state is very strong, so no matter from Peter I or to after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's rulers all regard to establish a military power across Eurasia as their unremitting faith and the pursuit of goals. This cultural creed is also in Russia's diplomatic principles, and form a kind of measure of diplomatic behavior. Russia's diplomatic strategy focuses on safeguarding national interests and its federal government realized that based on the ideological foe relationship is not solid, foreign policy decisions should be made based on national interests, security situation and geopolitical situation. As a result, Russia's diplomatic decision-making mechanism reflects the sustainability, and economic interests as its foreign relations.

Atlanticism advocates western civilization and values, emphasizes the European nature of Russia, and reckons that there is no essential difference between Russian history and European history, so Russia should fully integrate into the west. Eurasianism holds that Russia is a unique Eurasian ethnic group, different from Western Europe and Asia, neither belonging to the west nor the east.[5] The Russians live and breed in the Eurasian continent, which is neither Europe nor Asia. It criticizes the decadent, declining and destructive European culture, and also opposes the view that the Russians are of pure Slavic origin, emphasizing that the Russian national tradition contains the heritage of "Genghis Khan".

Religious also occupies an important status in the Russian culture. Russia was baptized in the Byzantine church, which is different from the Western Europe of the Catholic church. Under the background of the Byzantium's decline, Byzantine "Christian world" still obsessed with the worship of the "empire". The idea of "imperial worship" was used for later Russia's rulers, and refracted to the "Imperial Diplomacy". The teachings of the Eastern Orthodox church call for patience, asceticism, fortitude and humiliation in the face of adversity, in the hope of light, and in the hope of a strong and resurgent "Empire." [6] Russia's special Orthodox faith has become the deep spiritual foundation of its great power strategy, and plays the role of road map for its choice of national road, guiding Russia's diplomatic practice.

For example, on the issue of Kosovo's independence, Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered opposition in various occasions, made adjustments in the energy cooperation to strengthen the strategic position of Serbia. Even threatened in Abkhazia and South Ossetia problem. But in terms of the transformation of Russia and Mr Putin, who is trying to revive Russia as a great power, the current great power conflict is not in line with Russia's national strategy and national interests. This modest response and flexibility in Russia's diplomacy naturally has an orthodox ideological basis. Everything that was Russian to them was sacred and wonderful; They wanted to find the source of philosophy and art, and the future of Russia, in the pure and simple Russian spirit.

#### **4. Conclusion**

To sum up the cultural influence on their foreign policy and diplomacy in China and Russia, firstly, the positioning function of culture provides a perspective from which countries can observe the world and itself to determine its foreign policy. What the differences that cultural world views and values reflect in foreign policies are that, culture provides a perceptual and cognitive perspective for people to observe and understand the world and their own position and role in the world. As an American scholar put it, "the views of the American Secretary of State on the world would be different in nature from the views of the Shah of Iran on the world." The difference would be "partly due to their different personal preferences and ideologies, and partly due to their respective roots in different civilizations for thousands of years."

Secondly, culture determines the value orientation of foreign policy. The national interest, no matter what type or level of national interest, as the basis and goal of a country's foreign policy, not only contains the pursuit of physical and material interests, but also contains the country's recognition of the world and certain value pursuit, that is, the country's world outlook and values. In *The Erosion of American National Interests*, Samuel P. Huntington argued that the national interest encompasses both security and material concerns as well as ethics and moral concerns.[7]

Thirdly, the common authoritarian cultural characteristics have profoundly influenced the development mode and speed of Sino Russian relations. There is a remarkable feature of Sino Russian relations, that is, the agreements and cooperation between the leaders of the two countries (especially the top leaders) have played a decisive role in promoting the development of the relations between the two countries. As long as the leaders reach an agreement, the relations between the two countries will be promoted rapidly. Since the end of the cold war, every big step in the development of Sino Russian relations depends on the direct promotion of the leaders of the two countries. On the contrary, the communication and cooperation between the people and the middle level are relatively lagging behind and have limited influence. Even the non-governmental exchanges are mostly carried out with the promotion and participation of the government. On the whole, the non-governmental exchanges between China and Russia are the most backward among the existing major power relations in both breadth and depth. This is the so-called "hot up and cold down" situation. The advantage of this model is that it is conducive to promoting and consolidating mutual understanding and trust between the leaders of the two countries, and is not easy to be affected by various negative factors of the people, and is conducive to grasping and planning the development of bilateral relations from a strategic perspective; its defects are that it is not conducive to the formation and expansion of the social foundation of friendly relations between the two countries, and is not conducive to eliminating mutual suspicion and distrust among the people, and to the public in the government This is especially true when the control

and influence of the mass media are severely limited, and state relations are easily affected by personal factors of the top leaders, which may lead to instability of relations.

Fourthly, Russia's deep-rooted big country complex has affected its strategic orientation and policy orientation towards China. The relationship between China and Russia after the cold war is a long-term backward relationship between a big country that has just begun to rise in recent decades, and a big power that has just declined and is recovering its strength recently. The mentality of the two countries and their understanding of each other are different. Since modern times, China has always been in the position of being invaded, threatened, bullied or protected and suppressed in front of Russia. China has never doubted Russia's great power status. Even under the circumstances of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the sharp decline of Russian power, Chinese still believe that Russia is a great power with world influence. This judgment is one of the basic starting points for China to develop relations with Russia. For the sake of its own interests and the influence of thousands of years of traditional culture, China's desire and efforts to develop friendly relations with Russia are sincere and dedicated. Therefore, China would rather sacrifice some local interests and bear huge economic losses. Russia has been used to being treated as a world power for hundreds of years. It is used to dominating others. Even after experiencing the disaster of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia still tries to gain the position of dominating the world together with the United States. This deep-rooted complex of great powers is unlikely to disappear soon, and with the strong rise of Russian power in recent years, it is becoming more and more intense. Some even predict that with the recovery of Russia's national strength, its great power doctrine will revive. As for China, although it sees and recognizes the rapid rise of China, it does not think that China has the equal qualification with it. It only regards China as a sub heavyweight country with huge strategic needs and available resources, and still tries to put China into its own strategic track in international affairs. Quite a number of senior Russian officials and scholars believe that the most important driving force for China's development of friendly relations with Russia is the United States and Japan. Russia can use this to draw China into the camp against the United States and the west, and even advocate that China's military modernization and energy demand will continue to be supported. This will undoubtedly affect Russia's strategic orientation and policy orientation towards China, and will certainly affect the future development of Sino Russian relations.

Furthermore, the normative function of culture limits the scope of a country's foreign policy options. Cultural values provide a value criterion for foreign policy. Only those foreign policies that are consistent with or at least not inconsistent with national values can be accepted by the general public. Foreign policy makers are inevitably influenced by their own country or national culture, and their foreign policies to some extent reflect the profound influence of their culture.

According to aforementioned argument, the various

functions of culture play an important role in the formulation and implementation of foreign policies. But the function of culture and foreign policy cannot be directly equated. Foreign policy is the result of the interaction between culture and many other factors. The function of culture is to explain, but not to predict, a country's foreign policy.

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