

Promotion of Russian Language in China

As a Tool of Cultural Diplomacy of the Russian Federation

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Abstract—From Russia's perspectives, a stable Russian-Sino relationship is beneficial to both countries and remains one of its foreign policy priorities. The cultural and educational cooperation between Russia and China is one of the most important components of the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between the two countries. The article highlights the main directions of activity of Russia in the area of promotion of the Russian language in the context of the cultural diplomacy of the Russian Federation. In the authors' opinion it includes Russian language teaching in schools in China and, specifically, activity of the Russian Cultural Centre (RCC) in Beijing. The authors argue that the Fund "Russian World" also plays an active role in this process. The authors call upon Russia and China for much closer communication between the two countries in the area of Promotion of Russian Language in China as well.

Keywords—promotion of the Russian language; cultural diplomacy; Russia; China; Russian Cultural Centre; Fund "Russian World"; Russian-Sino educational and humanitarian cooperation

I. INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian relations between states are now an integral part of international relations. Alongside political, economic and military power, the influence of any state in the international arena depends on its cultural and spiritual potential. Having an effective policy, developing the economy, and enriching culture are proofs of that this logical chain can be seen in the growing attention given to the matters related to culture and humanitarian sphere as well as to the overall foreign cultural policy as stated within the Concepts of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation dated 2000 and 2008, and especially the Concept in effect now, which was approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in February 2013.

Culture has a special role within the foreign policy strategy of Russia. The position and authority of the Russian state in the world depend not only on its military and political might and economic resources, but also the cultural heritage of the peoples of Russia. While expressing the spiritual identity of the nation, Russian culture at the same

time reflects the universal values of the entire world community, being a part of the global cultural heritage of mankind. As such, a wealth of spiritual and cultural content accumulated throughout the centuries puts Russia in its unique place in the world cultural space. At the same time, peculiarities of the historical path of Russia have made its culture stand out for its openness for, and sensitivity to, the cultures of other countries and peoples.

Policy within the sphere of international cultural cooperation is an integral part of the policy of the Russian state in the international arena. Mutually-beneficial international, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation can make a significant contribution to help Russia achieve its fundamental objectives and increase the effectiveness of its foreign policy. The new challenges of the early 21st century, including large-scale tasks in the field of international relations. Such particular large-scale tasks are within the context of globalization, making cultural and humanitarian relations of Russia increasingly important.

The development of humanitarian cooperation with the People's Republic of China, one of Asia-Pacific Region political and economic leaders and consolidates its influence in the international arena, is an important part of the Sino-Russian comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation, influencing the formation of the international agenda.

II. THE ROLE OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

In its classical definition, cultural diplomacy is a special sphere of diplomatic activity, which uses culture as an object and means of achieving the fundamental objectives of state's foreign policy, creating country's favorable image, promotion of its culture and language of its peoples [2].

Alongside the term "cultural diplomacy", Russian studies often use the synonymous concept of "foreign cultural policy." The Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry in its policy document the "main directions of the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry in developing cultural relations with foreign states" gives the following definition of this concept: foreign cultural policy is a specific tool for achieving state's foreign

policy objectives through the development of international cultural cooperation [7]. The document also stresses that the interaction between diplomacy and culture has long historical traditions and serves the national interests of Russia.

Cultural diplomacy is capable of making a significant contribution to help Russia achieve its fundamental objectives and increase the effectiveness of its foreign policy. As one of the most flexible and therefore the most effective tools of the foreign policy, cultural relations are meant to promote favorable and objective image of Russia in the world [2]. In this context, culture, as a foreign policy tool should stimulate sympathy to the country, consolidate the positive image of the state abroad, promote long-term relations with other countries, civil society organizations and individuals, and work to improve interstate cooperation in other areas, including the economic sphere.

III. RUSSIA'S MAIN AREAS OF ACTIVITY TO PROMOTE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN CHINA

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation seeks to promote the courses to teach Russian to foreigners, thus disseminating the language as an integral part of world culture and a tool of international and interethnic communication.

According to China's Ministry of Education, the specialty "Russian language and literature" is taught in 137 universities of the country (85 in 2007, 110 in 2011, 128 in 2012). They have opened 50 graduate programs and 13 doctoral programs. The total number of students of the Russian language is more than 20 thousand (12 thousand in 2009), most of which are bachelors. Undergraduates and graduate students are about 1,000 and 100 respectively. The faculty of the Russian language institutes and departments altogether counts some 2,000 people and leads in the number of doctoral degrees among teachers specializing in foreign languages.

According to the China Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature (KAPRYaL), Russian as a foreign language in China is taught in 414 universities located in 29 provinces, autonomous regions and direct-controlled municipalities. The studies involve 45 thousand people (35 thousand in 2011). However, the number is volatile because of extracurricular format of studies.

There has also been a gradual geographical expansion of where Russian language is being taught in high schools. The geographical expansions involving provinces Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Shandong, Sichuan, Anhui, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Hebei, Henan, Hunan, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Gansu, Hainan, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, direct-controlled municipalities of Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing, Hong Kong and Macau. Chinese universities have opened 98 joint programs with Russian universities for the preparation of subject matter specialists with the knowledge of Russian language..

In 2014, cooperation between Russian high schools and secondary schools in China intensified. The Ural Federal University (named after first Russian President: Boris

Yeltsin) signed an agreement on cooperation with five schools within the provinces of Hunan, Hubei, Shandong and Inner Mongolia. A similar agreement was concluded between the Moscow State Pedagogical University and the secondary school of the highest level in Henan Province. This area of cooperation can be seen as one of the most promising, since promoting the academic cooperation with the secondary schools can, on the one hand, contribute to the dissemination of the Russian language in schools and, on the other hand, ensure a sufficient level of the knowledge among prospective students from China planning to study in the Russian universities.

Penetration of the Russian language into secondary schools in China looks less optimistic. If at the end of the Year of Russian Language in China, the Ministry of Education of China reported 100 thousand Chinese students studying Russian language (around 80 thousand in 2007), then a few years that followed had changed the situation dramatically. While in May 2011, the official accounts showed about 70 thousand, the revised figures for 2012 school year beginning report 50 thousand children studying Russian.

The majority of schools teaching Russian language are located in the provinces of Heilongjiang (70), Shandong (40) and Jilin (5). The subject is also included in the secondary education curriculum in the provinces of Liaoning, Guizhou, Hunan, Anhui, Hebei, Sichuan, direct-controlled municipalities of Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing, as well as in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region [9].

Shrunkened by half, the number of Russianists among Chinese students raises certain concerns. The reasons can be found in the shortage of Russian language teachers and poorly qualified teaching staff, especially in rural schools. Penetration of the Russian language into the pre-university education also has direct constraints because, first, when entering high schools, one can face exam in Russian only in the north-eastern provinces of the country. Second, there have been canceled extra scores for the complexity, which were given before at passing exams in Russian language as a part of a unified exam in secondary schools of the highest level. There is also a gap between the Russian language teaching system in secondary schools and universities; the curriculum does not envisage the continuation of the language course after a student leaves secondary school and enters higher school.

As for the penetration of Russian-language publications, there is a number of information materials being issued in China. The agency "Xinhua", holding "Renmin Ribao", China Radio International (CRI) and the website of the State Council Information Office daily post online feed with the latest information in Russian. Since 1999, CRI broadcasts daily in Russian. Every month sees a new edition of "China" magazine in Russian, there are regular editions in Russian from "Kontimost", "Partners", Far Eastern Trade and Economic Bulletin "China: economy and cooperation" of Heilongjiang University. In 2009, China Central Television began broadcasting a 24/7 channel in Russian.

Among the new publications of 2014, which received most publicity in local academic circles, one must mention a teaching guide in Russian "Reading V. Putin to study the Russian language", a collection of speeches of the President of the Russian Federation compiled by the Publishing House for Studying and Teaching Foreign Languages at Beijing University of Foreign Languages. In addition, the China Radio International in cooperation with the Russian publishing house "Veche" issued the Encyclopedia of China in Russian. We also see the implementation of the program on translation and publishing of Russian and Chinese classical and modern literature, carried out together with the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation and the State General Administration for Affairs of Press, Print, Radio, Film and Television of China.

According to the Russian Consulate General in Shenyang, one of China's leading regions in terms of Russian language studies, cooperation in the humanitarian sphere was based on the Action Plan signed in December 2012 for the development of Russian-Chinese cooperation in the humanitarian sphere [8]. The plan implementation in Northeast China could be seen as overall satisfactory. In education, we find to be important: an agreement on educational cooperation between the agencies responsible for education of Northeast China. On one hand there is the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia is on the other hand, as well as memorandums on friendship and cooperation signed by the ministries of education of the Khabarovsk Territory and the Amur Region with Heilongjiang. Worthy of being particularly mentioned is one of the most significant international projects in Dalian, which is jointly supervised by the Consulate General and Rossotrudnichestvo (Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation) - "Culture without Borders", timed to the celebration of Victory Day [1].

IV. ROLE OF THE RUSSIAN CULTURAL CENTRE IN BEIJING AND FUND "RUSSIAN WORLD"

According to the "Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the mutual establishment of cultural centers" of 13 October 2009, September 27, 2010 witnessed the opening of the Russian Cultural Centre (RCC) in Beijing [3]. Shortly before the opening of the Russian Cultural Centre, it was visited by the President of Russia, D.A. Medvedev, as a part of his official visit to China.

Russian Cultural Centre activities are supported by the Federal Agency for Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation. RCC is the first institution of the humanitarian format opened on the territory of the People's Republic of China by the Russian Federation Government [9].

The center works toward raising Chinese public awareness of Russia's achievements in various fields, its spiritual heritage, rich scientific and cultural potential. It promotes the expansion of bilateral cultural, educational, scientific, technical and business connections, supporting the Russian language.

The Russian Cultural Centre actively cooperates with governmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and universities, artistic and youth organizations of Russia and China. The center also maintains partnerships with leading Chinese and Russian media. The center organizes a variety of interesting and diverse activities that promote mutual understanding and strengthen the friendship between the peoples of Russia and China. Among the events there are the performances of famous Russian and Chinese ensembles and artists; presentations of scientific, technical, economic and investment potential of different regions of Russia, numerous forums, round tables, lectures, seminars, youth meetings of the two countries, art and photo exhibitions, film shows, concerts of classical and modern Russian music, plays, literary and poetry readings. Russian Cultural Centre hosts a variety of creative clubs and art studios. Much public attention in Beijing was attracted to choirs working in Russian Cultural Centre - Russian Choir "Katyusha" and Chinese chorus "Show Dee Show" [9].

One of the focal areas for Russian Cultural Centre is to promote and support the studies of the Russian language in China. Russian Cultural Centre cooperates with centers of the Russian language, the China Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature (KAPRYaL), Russianists and Russian Language Departments of Chinese universities [6]. The center hosts the Russian language courses led by experienced teachers from Russia.

Currently, the Russian Cultural Centre is the place of permanent presence of information and a media center that combines the resources of traditional libraries and various advanced multimedia capabilities, and the electronic branch of Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library (containing a large number of high-resolution scans of archival documents and old books including those related to the Russian-Chinese relations). Also to be found here is the information-educational center "The Russian Museum: Virtual Branch", which comprises a huge number of different materials, representing the Russian art, the collection and the buildings of the Russian Museum: there are art albums, multimedia software on CD and DVD, as well as documentaries and programs [8]. With the support of its Chinese partners, Russian Cultural Centre arranges events in other Chinese cities as well.

As for the Fund "Russian World", it is a Russian organization engaged in the popularization of the Russian language and culture, as well as the support for programs to study Russian language in different countries. The fund was established pursuant to Decree of the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin of June 21, 2007 [5]. Russian centers on the basis of the Foundation have been established in Chinese cities such as Beijing, Macau, Xi'an, Changchun, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. By providing access for foreign citizens to libraries of Russian literature, the monuments of Russian art and Russian language, the centers are agents of the Russian culture and contemporary Russian life. The purpose of the Foundation is to promote the Russian language, which is both a national treasure of Russia and an important element of Russian and world culture, and support

programs to study Russian language in the Russian Federation and abroad.

Popularization of the Russian language in China is what other cultural organizations are actively engaged in - Chinese Pushkin Society, Association for the Study of Russian and Soviet Literature, and Russian Language Centers opened in Beijing and other major cities in China.

A significant event in the development of cultural ties between Moscow and Beijing was the visit of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill to major Chinese cities - Beijing, Shanghai and Harbin in May 2013. During his visit, the Patriarch met with the Orthodox population of China, as well as with the country's leaders. It was the first visit of Russia's Orthodox leader to China, the country of more than three centuries history of the Orthodox Church. This visit is seen as an event of historic proportions, having consolidated the friendship of the Chinese and Russian peoples [10].

V. CONCLUSION

Recent years call for the formulation of new theoretical and practical approaches to analyze the interaction between Russia and China, the countries that have pronounced cultural and historical features. As such, we urgently need to find the most optimal model for Russian-Chinese interaction and collaboration. Russian-Chinese cultural, educational and humanitarian ties grow increasingly strong year-by-year. The two countries have entered a new stage in their humanitarian cooperation by conducting the Year of Russian Language in China (2009) and the Year of Chinese Language in Russia (2010), which years have seen great many activities in the field of culture and education - competitions, festivals, seminars, exhibitions, Weeks of music, culture, and etc. The Years of Russian and Chinese Languages had led to the opening of 5 Confucius Institutes in Russia and 5 centers of the Russian language in China [11]. Success of such projects has made them the basis for further development of bilateral relations. In doing so, the governments of China and Russia decided to move beyond what they had achieved, they have launched a series of other long-term projects.

At the same time, we must realize that work to promote the Russian language in China needs to intensify to further strengthen Russian-Chinese cultural and educational ties. Obviously, linguistic propaganda and promotion of Russian educational products in China should start from schools, including secondary schools, opened at Chinese universities that have signed agreements on cooperation with Russian universities. It seems expedient to expand cooperation between the libraries of universities and schools, which would partly compensate for the lack of literature and form one of the lines of bilateral cooperation in the field of education. Among other things, the introduction of modern teaching aids to the educational process to increase the number of students of Russian language outside schools and universities, which currently remains rather small.

An important role in the promotion of the Russian language is assigned to outreach campaigns. Currently, a certain information vacuum is seen in China with respect to

those programs, training courses, and new developments in the field of teaching Russian as a foreign language, which are available in Russia. In part, this gap is being bridged by the catalogue of Russian universities annually issued by the Embassy in Chinese language [4]. In this regard, much help can come from a Russian educational and informational bulletin in Chinese and be periodically published and distributed to Chinese universities and schools. These bulletins could cover events, achievements and developments in the field of bilateral academic cooperation. Preparation of such bulletin could be done by attracting local relevant agencies and media, as well as recruiting companies involved in sending Chinese students to study in Russia.

It is also quite possible to step up efforts to communicate with local potential applicants and their parents within media space. As before, there is little official comments seen coming from Russian specialists, university rectors and teachers from Russian relevant agencies presented on the pages of local publications. In our opinion, there is a need for closer cooperation with the Chinese media, including those accredited in Russia.

Very helpful in ensuring large informational coverage of China's population could be periodic publication. For example, on the basis of RCC, provide information on Russian Cultural Centre activities and Russian Language Centers, Russian educational institutions and their training programs, summer language courses, international children's summer camps, competitions, children's and youth sporting events, interesting facts about modern Russia, its history and culture, published in the Russian and Chinese languages. The bulletin could become another effective media channel for the expansion of Russian educational space in China.

It is also important to pay attention to the issue of employment of Chinese specialists with the knowledge of the Russian language, as successful employment often determines the choice of a foreign language to study for Chinese students. For graduates with the knowledge of the Russian language to better understand their career prospects, we should study the possibility of creating a single electronic database of experts with the knowledge of Chinese and Russian languages. This can be done within the Russian-Chinese Subcommission on Education.

Overall, we can predict a positive progressive advancement in terms of the dissemination of Russian language in China. However, the long term success of the process relies heavily on the active governmental support for the popularization in China of Russian education, culture, tourism resources, and so on. We also need to develop a unified program, involving educational institutions of the two countries as well as supranational organizations, such as SCO University; to use the mechanisms of regional cooperation, including the participation of Russian universities in the provincial educational exhibitions. It will apply a new format of cooperation, such as Years of Youth Exchanges in 2014 - 2015, as well as other mechanisms of bilateral cooperation.

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