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Image of China in Russian Media in the Era of Xi Jinping

"Research on the Formation of International Influence of Contemporary Chinese Culture"

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Abstract

Nowadays China is the closest superpower to Russia and holds a high position in global politics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the relations between the two countries have been stable and quite positive. Based on the media of both countries there have not been noted any changes between the countries in the last years, moreover the alliance seems to be closer than before. The current general secretary of the Communist Party of People's Republic of China- Xi Jinping, also known as "core leader", is considered one of the most powerful leaders in the modern Chinese history. The main purpose of the research is to analyze the representation of China in Russia's online media in the recent 6 years after Xi ascended to the presidency in 2012.

Keywords: China; image of China; online media; Russia; Russian media; Xi Jinping.

1. Introduction

The People's Republic of China is one of the main countries to which the attention of Russian media is primarily drawn, but news information about the life of the PRC mostly prevails. Economic growth, political relations between the PRC and Russia are discussed not only in professional circles, but also by the public.

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The culture of China, the life of the people and much more fall into the sphere of discussion. It requires a thorough analysis of the media in order to establish their role in the formation of relations between the two countries. The purpose of this article is to reveal and study the image of modern China in the Russian online media. The new era of Xi Jinping came to China at the end of 2012 when Xi Jinping became the new senior leader of the country. After becoming the party chief, Xi announced "The Chinese Dream" which is a plan of "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". The Chinese dream consists of different aspects of China: economy, social life, governmental structure, ideology, culture, position in global politics etc. [1]. New China has undergone a full cultural modernization which includes both gains and losses. First is the progress of knowledge: Chinese science and technique have developed and raised the quality of national science. Secondly is the progress of the mind: new democracy, emancipation of the consciousness and the search of truth in facts, people are impressed from progressive thinking, scientific innovations, democracy, reforms and opening borders, freedom of speech and thought. In third place is the obvious progress in the system; the growing value of the science, gradual system of market economy, modern corporal system and modern science and technology, education, information, culture and means of communication. Forth, changes in the culture: development of simplified writing system, development of national and online literature, as well as cultural organizations and groups, changes in social culture (weddings, families, clothes, architecture, transport, etiquette, tourism and entertainment). In fifth place, cultural transformations: establishment and development of modern culture, science and scientific institutions, cultural professionalism and industrialization, television culture, internet culture, urban and ecological culture; "the Great Cultural Revolution" which has damaged the traditional culture; rational protection of cultural heritage and diversity [1,2].

2. Materials and Methods

For this research we used content analysis method to study. Content analysis is appropriate here since it is extensively used to examine media coverage, including the tone and the news frames used.

The relationship between Russia and China works on many levels and involves many aspects. Apart from governmental relations and diplomacy, we have the popular perceptions of each country in the eyes of the other. These perceptions can be analyzed by observing how China is portrayed to an average Russian. More than 76% of Russian population uses internet every day so the image that internet media gives to a certain topic (in this case certain country) has a deep effect on the interaction between the two countries.

On May 8, Chinese President Xi Jinping presented the Russian President Vladimir Putin with the Order of Friendship of the People's Republic of China, which served as a boost to the friendship between the two countries. The Russian president became the first foreign leader awarded this high Chinese state award. Earlier, no one was awarded this order.

"Handing this order to President Putin for the first time since the creation of the state awards system in China, President Putin as the leader of a great power with world influence is the founder of the current Chinese-Russian relations and always promotes their development at a high level," said Chairman Xi Jinping. Xi Jinping also stressed that Putin visited China the most among the world powers and he is the most familiar and respected in

China. "President Putin is the best and closest friend for me," he added.

The focus of this paper is to examine how China is portrayed in famous internet media as "Argumenty i fakti", "Lenta" which are considered trusted and credible source of information. Articles concerning China were also be found in oppositional portals such as "Meduza" (meduza.io), however the articles were more neutral compared to right-wing media and were mainly news. We examined how China is presented in these online newspapers in a five-year range from 2013 to 2018.

The major part of analytical articles was found in "Argumenty I fakty" (Russian: Аргументы и факты, commonly abbreviated "АиФ" and translated as *Arguments and Facts*). According to lenta.ru on 7 March 2014 the newspaper was bought by the Government of Moscow [3]. The newspaper published number of articles on China, particularly focusing on the economic, political and strategic aspects of the country. In his earlier interviews to "Argumenty I fakty" the leading researcher of the Institute of the Far East of the Russian Academy of Sciences Vasily Kashin, sees China as a reliable but at the same time tough partner. As Kashin stated in the same article the policy of priority development of relations with China did not begin in recent months or even several years ago. It has been carried out by Russia very consistently since 1992, and the first leader and very active supporter was the first president of Russia Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin. Since 1996, Russia and China have had relations of strategic partnership. Even then, the Russian leadership attached importance to relations with China, although the real trade turnover at that time was very low. The current president Vladimir Putin simply continued this line [4].

In another article from the series of lectures "Predictions about threats" [5], Vasily Kashin told AiF.ru about the prospects for the development of Russian-Chinese relations, describing China as Russia's largest neighbor and trading partner. According to the expert, the Chinese market has unlimited prospects for Russia from the point of view of natural gas and other types of raw materials, it is only necessary to build the infrastructure. Kashin mentions that China's needs for resources is so big that even Russia cannot cover it, but Russia reduces the dependence on imports of resources from the Middle East as well as on vulnerable sea highways.

Kashin mentions, while China avoids direct intervention in international politics, cooperation with Russia on international issues is of key importance. Here Kashin also talks about an issue bothering many Russians- the protection of the Far East and Siberia from China. Kashin describes the hypothetic military confrontation with China a complete nightmare for Russia, saying that in Soviet times Russia had a huge superiority in firepower, which nowadays does not exist anymore, whereas, China is stronger than ever . Therefore, it is obvious that Russia's foreign policy is aimed at preventing a conflict with China. "We are striving to become an important partner for China," said Kashin directly confirming that Russia has no other choice but be friends with China.

In another interview, Vasily Kashin analyses the reasons behind the changes in Chinese military and the upcoming plans of PRC [6,7]. In the article, Aleksandr Kolesnichenko states that Chinese media reports about the reduction of 200 thousand soldiers - about a quarter of the land forces of the armed forces, which, respectively, in number approached a million people. Previously, experts said that such a powerful army is needed, only if it is going with it to solve some problems in the north - in Russia. On the other hand, China

considers itself a naval power, potential conflict zones are in the Pacific Ocean: there is Taiwan; there is the South China Sea; Senkaku islands. Significant resources China now directs specifically to the development of the fleet. By the way, part of the cut ground forces will go to the strengthening of the marines, which was small, consisted of only three brigades. Now it will increase at once several times. As Kashin mentions in his interview to AIF, China creates a global armed forces that will be able to operate around the world - with a powerful military transport aircraft, with a powerful fleet: aircraft carriers, landing ships. In addition, the rapid development of strategic nuclear forces begins. That is, they create an army that will be able to compete, in terms of potential, and with the US armed forces. The first significant rearmament and reform results are expected in 2020, and further it is planned that by 2049 the Chinese army will raise level with the US armed forces. In his interview to the newspaper "Argumenti I fakti" Aleksei Maslov tells about his experience in Shaolin Wushu temple in China, and describes the country and its people [7]. As Aleksei states *"China almost does not allow researchers to go deep into itself and does not really want to be studied. China is still an absolutely closed country. And only wide tourism creates the illusion that everything in China can be easily discovered for you."*

Aleksei also analyzes China's relations with other nations constating that the Malays, Singaporeans, Koreans better understand the Chinese, as they have some similar traditions, or once were involved in the orbit of Chinese culture. In addition, the West is in many respects is the complete opposite; it is very different and difficult to agree with him. The worst attitude is towards the Japanese: the word "Japanese" in Chinese can sometimes sound almost as abusive, it is associated with many historical conflicts. Russia is the only country that is called "brother" (兄弟) in Chinese. Chinese look at Russia very kindly, but at the same time - as a younger and not very successful brother because China sees successes and failures of Russia. China believes that Russia sometimes does not understand the simplest things in organizing the economy.

Maslov compared two neighboring countries for several times every time focusing on positive aspects of the Chinese policy that Russia should learn. For example, talking about the survival after the "red terror" Maslov notes that in China, there was no destruction of social groups, as in Russia, so the traditional society survived. For China, the entire history of the country is positive. When they had to decide on the role of Mao Zedong, 80% of his actions were declared positive, only 20% - negative. During perestroika, which was under the slogans of Westernization, Russia tried to copy everything possible from the West: social institutions, the education system, technology, social relations, and cultural matrixes. In addition, in many respects the leaders did not really understand what exactly they copy. However, the Chinese restructuring was under the national slogans. No one there set out to recreate the Western way of life. On the contrary, everything was done for the revival of China.

To the question of the reporter how China managed to develop so quickly, Maslov explained that, it was programmed systematically, consistently and in several stages. First, in the eighties and nineties, the Chinese put forward their famous slogan "market in exchange for technology." They invited foreign companies, who immediately opened in China modern at the time of production. For these firms only two important conditions were set: to use Chinese labor and manufactured goods not to sell in China, but to export abroad, returning the currency to the country. As a result, the PRC received money and modern technology, trained engineers, workers and managers. At the same time, foreign investments were protected by the Chinese state.

After that, China began to create its own innovative productions. The country succeeded in this. In recent years, China, for example, has created its own operating system, to which all state computers have already been transferred. There are in China and their computers, created solely on the basis of its own element base, including supercomputers, its social networks and messengers, which are much more powerful and more convenient for Chinese than Facebook or Twitter. There is a production of machine tools, equipment, satellites and rockets, own automobile industry. As Maslov believes now China, unlike Russia, does not need to ban the importation of anything to support its producers. On the contrary, many foreign goods proved to be uncompetitive in comparison with Chinese ones.

According to Maslov China is not an enemy, it can be a reliable partner, if it is to conduct a dialogue with it correctly, but do not let it go deep into the country. China will always try to penetrate as deeply as possible into the foreign economy, politics or culture, thereby ensuring its sustainability.

To the question what can Russia learn from China Maslov answered- *“China can teach us, first, a very stable political culture: the country can have both ups and downs, but at the same time there is a constant dialogue between the ruler and the people. The Chinese state has always been a socially-oriented monarchy. Moreover, invariably the main task was real improvement of people's life, which is still going on, that is why the people as a whole trust the authorities. This is the guarantee of China's stability. The authorities really want people to live at least peacefully: they fight corruption in the higher echelons, raise pensions, and improve medical services. It always puts the interests of the state above the interests of individual financial groups. Secondly, China has never started external economic or political expansion, while within the country there was a complicated socio-economic situation. The principle is simple: first we become stronger inside, we put things in order, we use the western achievements for the development of the Chinese economy, and then, say, we return territories or conduct military operations. First - internal affairs and concern for the people. Thirdly, China never rolls down when discussing its past or present, or in painful reflection, or in a glow of enthusiasm and pathos. In Russia we have- either rapture or torment. We must learn to be calm and worthy of accepting ourselves.”*[7]

One of the recent articles of “AIF” refer to the economic success of China and the way the country achieved it. The head of the Oriental Studies faculty of the Higher School of Economics Professor Alexei Maslov tells about the approaches to the implementation of the reforms, which ensured steady development and economic growth [8].

In this interview, Maslov compares the Russian and Chinese Westernization once again criticizing Soviet economic model and praising the model of reforms in the PRC that was initially national and very pragmatic: they took everything Western, which is useful for the Chinese, preserving economic independence. China widely opened its market to foreigners, but did it very carefully, closing down entire industries for them. Maslov brings an example- it was forbidden to create foreign enterprises that produce traditional Chinese medicine or grow tea and rice. This was not only economic, but also symbolic. Starting reforms, the Chinese did not abandon their heritage, but strengthened it.

Talking about the ruling class Maslov still has only positive things to say. As the constates the ruling class in

China has always been socially oriented. The main theme of Chinese treatises of antiquity - as an official should serve the people. Chinese leaders have always distinguished and distinguished by a high responsibility. Therefore, at a turning point, the leadership of the Communist Party subordinated its interests to the interests of national development and adapted to the new situation.

Further, Maslov explains the model that China took in order to achieve economic growth. As he explains gradual steps were implied to in several stages. Special economic zones, which became a symbol of foreign investment, were first created in several coastal areas. After all the risks were controlled they were extended to the whole country.

Unlike Russia, China has done at least four different things. First, it did not sell state enterprises, but encouraged private business to create new ones. The state retained in its hands the basic sectors of the economy - metallurgy, energy, oil, and mining. Secondly, foreign investors were invited to the country on harsh conditions. China offered them their huge consumer market in exchange for technology. In FEZ it was impossible to register a foreign wholesale company selling clothes. But there were wide benefits to those who built factories, where such clothes were produced. Thirdly, China has done everything to preserve the public's confidence in its financial system. The country did not experiment with the exchange of RMB for a predatory rate. Fourthly, until the end of the 1990s from China without special permission it was impossible to export the earned foreign currency - neither cash nor non-cash. As a result, the country accumulated its foreign exchange reserves.

Maslov also explains the business ethics in China which are considerably different from the ones in Russia. The Chinese do not consider people from private business as crooks. But at the same time, since ancient times, it has been decided to clearly distinguish the interests of commerce, society and the state. Even in the era of Tang and Song, social groups were singled out, representatives of whom were forbidden to take on civil service. Among them are merchants. It was believed that for the government of their psychology is not suitable. Today, China still does not give the reins of the economy to the private sector. Therefore that cannot work: today you are the owner of the corporation - and tomorrow the vice-premier. And vice versa: a member of the CPC Central Committee became the owner of a large enterprise. As Maslov mentions that according to Chinese Russian government lacks intelligent planning and clear guidance.

Maslov breaks a popular foreign myth Labor in China is no longer as cheap as it seems. As the professor says, *“If you count in dollars, then from 2008 to 2017, salaries grew 2.5 times. And the population of 1.4 billion people is in fact a minus, which the Chinese managed to turn into a plus. How to feed and dress so many people? A huge problem! And China said: it's not just the population, it is the buyers. China solved the problem by offering the world's largest consumer market to foreign investors.”*[8]

Maslov praises the stable growth of average salary income saying that any person - whether it be a worker, a businessman or a doctor – has had prosperity growth each year. Social benefits were provided when the opportunity appeared. The Chinese authorities set realistic goals. Nobody promised to change our life in 500 days, as Russian leaders have. Deng Xiaoping announced that it would take a hundred years to build a prosperous country. The whole nation waited patiently.

The second online-newspaper used for the analysis is Lenta.ru (Russian: Лента.Ру). Lenta.ru is a Moscow-based online newspaper in Russian language owned by Rambler Media Group. Lenta.ru is one of the most popular Russian language online resources with over 600 thousand visitors daily. This source is allegedly known to be as government-supported. The ex-workers of the newspaper explained their leave by orders from Kremlin and limitations on free speech [9].

The first article is about the Russian-Chinese talks which were held in the Kremlin on July 4, 2017 [10]. As the article states this was the 23rd meeting of the leaders of the two countries. Five years ago, the new Chairman of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, made his first international visit to Russia. "With you, I maintain the closest contacts and contacts," he said to the Russian president. Vladimir Putin in a reciprocal compliment stressed that the great merit in good relations belongs personally to Xi Jinping. Recognition of his personal contribution to strengthening friendship between the peoples of Russia and China Xi Jinping was awarded the Order of St. Andrey Pervozvanniy. The Russian president estimated the arrival of the Chinese leader as the main event of the year in the relations between the two countries.

The article also mentions that Xi Jinping is the third leader of a foreign country to be awarded this order (almost 20 years ago this award was presented to the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, 14 years ago - to the President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev).

Overall, the article states the details of the meeting, the political and economic relations between the countries, as well as mutual efforts on solving the problems on the Korean Peninsula. The newspaper gives a detailed description of the business traits between the two countries, big growth of tourism.

The media of Russia and China can together withstand fake news, editor-in-chief RT Margarita Simonyan said. Speaking at a meeting between Putin and Xi Jinping with representatives of the business community and the media community, Simonyan called fake news traps, which includes millions of people accustomed to trusting large media names. "Frank lies, which used to be the lot of tabloids, are now being replicated by respected media and are being transferred from their pages to the mouths of freshly baked world leaders. It is convenient for everyone: both to the press that does this, and to the leaders," she noted, and called on the journalists of the two countries to unite to fight lies.

The second article found on lenta.ru thoroughly analyses the XIX Congress of the Communist Party of China (CCP), China's current position in world and what influence the country has. The name of article talks for itself "The era of Xi Jinping" with a headline saying, "*China decided to become powerful superpower and teach the world to live in a new way*" [11].

Here Alexander Lomanov, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and Chief Researcher of the Institute for Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences described the progress of Chinese political and economic system as well as predicts the possible developments.

As Lomanov states, "Xi Jinping's ideas of a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics," is the plans of the current secretary-general, enshrined in the party's charter that should become the guiding line for China in

the future.

The official canonization of the Secretary General's intentions has become an unprecedented thing. In just five years in office, Xi put forward his own "guiding ideas" and achieved what they are called with his name. In addition to Xi's ideas, the Communist Party's theoretical arsenal includes Marxism-Leninism, the ideas of Mao Zedong, the founder of the modern Chinese state, and the theory of Deng Xiaoping that modernized the country. The article also explains that the main feature of "Xi Jinping's ideas" is not that they received the name of the party leader, who is now inscribed in the charter after Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. The ideas of the current secretary general correspond to them in scale and breadth, which distinguishes them from Jiang Zemin's narrower and more private "ideas of tripartite representation" and Hu Jintao's "scientific view of development." "Ideas Xi" absorbed many political concepts and slogans put forward by the Chinese leader over the past five years, which will determine the fate of the country in the future.

Lomanov also sees another visible evidence of the personal power of Xi. According to informal rules, the Chinese leadership changes every ten years. Moreover, five years before the change of power, the successors of the top leaders - the general secretary and the prime minister - are being appointed to the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee. This time nothing was like this: there is not a single person in the Standing Committee whose age would allow him to claim the role of Xi Jinping's successor. Many experts believe that the current secretary-general, thanks to the unprecedented strengthening of his own power, can go on violating informal rules and, contrary to custom, stay for a third term - until 2027. Even if this does not happen and within the next five years, the current leader will have a recognized successor, Xi's informal influence on Chinese politics in the 2020s will remain very large.

Lomanov also speaks about China's role on international stage. As he mentions, today, the Chinese leadership understands that the country has become strong both in economic (China's success in this area supports the development of the world economy as a whole), and military spheres. Beijing actively promotes its own model of international relations based on equality, rejection of ideological and geopolitical confrontation, recognition of the community of interests.

For decades, China has actively studied and adopted the achievements of other countries. In the early twentieth century, the Chinese intellectuals worshiped Western science and democracy, and in the second half, Chinese communists copied the Soviet model, and then successfully changed its shortcomings, turning in the years of reforms to the development of a market economy and globalization. Western experts were confident that the market and prosperity would inevitably lead China to abandon the one-party system and move to the Western model, but this did not happen.

The prophecies of the rapid collapse of China due to the rejection of economic freedoms and the return to Leninism as a rigid form of political control have not come true. The strengthening of the political vertical did not damage the market freedoms appreciated by the Chinese, on the contrary, these freedoms are steadily expanding and getting legal registration.

The author brings up the example of Wang Huning. Until the mid-1990s, he was an influential political scientist, engaged in international affairs at Fudan University in Shanghai. In 1995, he headed the cabinet study of politics under the CCP Central Committee, and then turned into a mysterious non-public figure of the shadow political adviser. Wang was engaged in the theory of "new authoritarianism" and defended the need to strengthen political power for the successful implementation of economic reforms. According to Lomanov this ideology strongly impresses Xi Jinping.

It is obvious that the centralization of party power and active ideological work will no longer conceal the fact that China's development path does not lead to a Western model and "universal values." Moreover, Xi Jinping, to the irritation of foreign observers, openly declared: China is ready to share its "wisdom" and "development plans" with other countries.

Lomanov repeats Xi Jinping's words announced during the speech at the last XVIII congress "A new era is approaching, when China is approaching the center of the world scene every day, it is continuously making an ever greater contribution to the affairs of mankind." The goal was as follows: it is necessary to build "a strong, rich, democratic civilized, harmonious, modernized socialist state."

Lomanov mentions that the key is in the details of the wording, for example during the speech the word "country" was replaced with the word "powerful nation" or "powerful country" (强国). With the multiple use of the word "power" China wants to highlight its role in world politics.

Mao Zedong helped the country stand on its own and achieve independence. Deng Xiaoping and his successors made China rich. Now it is Xi Jinping's turn: he is destined to make China a powerful global player, in no way inferior to other leading countries. He understands that China cannot achieve this by copying Western models. China presents to the world the thesis about "creating a community of the destiny of mankind" which is connected with the slogan of the "Chinese dream", which Xi Jinping proclaimed immediately after coming to power in 2012.

The official interpretation presented at the congress states that the dream of the Chinese people is closely connected with the dreams of the peoples of all countries, and the implementation of the "Chinese dream" is possible only in a peaceful environment on the planet and with the stability of the world order.

Lomanov explains that China promises to continue moving along the path of peace and development, openly rely on the principle of profit, reject ideological strife, and practice the right view of profit and justice. In Beijing, they want to promote cooperation of civilizations, take care of the environment, build peace in the whole world and preserve the existing international order.

In addition to foreign policy influence, an important role is assigned to the well-being of ordinary Chinese people. At the congress, it was confirmed that by 2020, a "small prosperity society" will be built in the country, and there will be no poor people living in China living on less than \$ 1.17 a day.

From 2020 to 2035 is supposed to "implement a basic socialist modernization." From 2035 to the middle of the

century, to the centennial anniversary of the founding of the PRC, it was promised to build "a powerful modernized state".

Lomanov highlights that "Xi's ideas" in domestic policy call for the development of mechanisms for democracy and rule the country based on law, strengthen the system of socialist values and inherit the Chinese cultural tradition, develop social security, and solve environmental problems. They demand adherence to the "comprehensive view of the security of the state", to uphold the principle of absolute party leadership in the army, to seek reunification of the homeland and to oppose any activity aimed at splitting the state. "Xi's ideas" also point to the need for strict management of the party, the fight against corruption and decay.

Ahead of Xi Jinping's five-year major celebrations: in 2018, China will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the reform and opening-up policy that Deng Xiaoping proclaimed. For the current leader, this is a good opportunity to declare himself as a continuer of the "architect of reform".

In 2018, it will be time to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. The round anniversary of the republic is notable for the fact that a military parade is held in Beijing on this occasion and foreign guests are invited. This is another good reason for increasing the influence of the country and its leader.

Xi Jinping will have a reasonable opportunity to declare in 2020 that the success of "small prosperity society" was made under his leadership - in the period after 2012."

In 2021, Xi Jinping will lead the celebration of the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. This anniversary will be politically rich and brightly colored ideologically, because the party will be able to tell the country and the world about the unprecedented successes achieved under its leadership over a long period, beginning from the revolutionary struggle and victory in the civil war against the Guomintang.

After this unbroken chain of holidays that will contribute to strengthening the power of Xi, the time for the 20th congress of the CCP in autumn 2022 will imperceptibly come. In accordance with the old tradition, Xi will need to resign by age.

However, his authority and influence will reach such heights at the time that one can expect a departure from tradition, either by extending his powers for a third term, or, more likely, dividing power posts and powers between Xi and the successor for a transitional period.

Xi Jinping's efforts to realize the "Chinese dream" and the transformation of China into the most influential power of the modern world set the vector of Chinese politics for several decades ahead. Lomanov summarized the article saying that the order without ideological and geopolitical confrontation, proposed to the world by Beijing, has a chance to find a large number of supporters and eventually become universally recognized.

Our next target is Meduza.io which is Riga-based online newspaper and news aggregator in Russian language, headed by Galina Timchenko, the former editor in-chief of Lenta.ru. According to Freeman Spogli International Institute Meduza.io is the world's number one independent source for professional reporting on Russia. The site

also operates an ambitious translation project, making its content available to the global community at Meduza.io/en. Meduza launched in October 2014 and by August 2017 the monthly readership of Meduza exceeded 7.5 million unique visitors, with more than 700,000 app downloads and more than 2,000,000 followers on social media [12].

Compared to Aif.ru, Meduza does not have high number of content related to China; moreover the existing articles are majorly related to news and curious reports. One of the most recent articles is related to the platform launched in China to suppress rumors in internet [13]. The article mentions that the platform will have web page, mobile app, as well as pages in Wechat and Weibo. The article stresses that the censorship is very strong in China and even spreading rumors can get people into jail. Beijing thus intensifies efforts to control the Internet, especially social networks, where users are discussing politics and other pressing issues, Meduza notes. Meduza has some other recent articles related to censorship and internet security in China as well as how China “teaches” Russia to control news and internet. For example, another recent article concerning China relates to Google. As Meduza states about a thousand Google employees signed an open letter to the company's management after it became known about Google's plans to launch a censorship search engine in China [14].

Another recent article found in Meduza [15] relates to historical and cultural treasures of China which nowadays due to historical circumstances are in foreign museums. According to the Chinese government, since 1840 more than 10 million pieces of art and antiques have been removed from the country; most of them were abducted during the so-called "century of humiliation" - the period from 1840 to 1949, when foreign troops invaded China on several occasions. As Meduza notes in recent years there has been a series of thefts from European museums where thieves take away only objects of Chinese art. The later fate of robbed objects is not known to anyone. Article also mentions that among Chinese businessmen, it has become fashionable to return art objects stolen by Europeans. They are ready to buy them for millions of dollars and many Chinese billionaires invest in purchasing ancient art objects for Chinese museums.

Meduza also informs about the annual All-Chinese of people's representatives which cancelled the two-term limit for presidency which means that Xi Jinping will be able to remain in power as much as he wishes. This decision caused considerable public criticism and dissemination of open letters with signatures of representatives of liberal views. Some compared the change as a return to the imperial regime [16].

3. Conclusion

The three papers surveyed for this research were chosen as a representative sample of Russian daily news. The study is not a fully comprehensive analysis but an approximate account of how China is presented in popular news sources of Russia. In quantitative terms, the majority of articles portray a positive image of China and the average reader will imagine China as a powerful country, world leader who underwent economic miracle and is a role model for other countries. The government of China under Xi Jinping is constantly described as powerful, influential and superior.

It is important to mention that in political sense China is stated as a “friend” who Russia should learn from and

catch up with. Perceiving country as one's friend will affect government's behavior accordingly. Unlike Western media, Russian sources do not have any resentment over China's international or internal affairs, political repression and geopolitical danger.

On the whole, from the point of view of current Russian perceptions, Russia for the nearest future can only be expected to develop closer ties with China, trying to become its closest political partner. Taking into consideration Russia's present economic difficulties and isolation from Western world, China is the best country to be friends with.

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