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FAR EASTERN REGIONS OF RF
IN MODERN RUSSIAN-CHINESE COOPERATION

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Abstract. The article discusses the favorable prerequisites for the development of cross-border cooperation between Russia and China, the announced intentions of the parties and compares them with the concrete results of economic cooperation in the last decade. The analysis shows that in the second decade of the 21st century, trade and economic ties between the territories of the Far Eastern Federal District and China developed unevenly and by the end of the decade stagnated at the level of 2011–2013, and the share of this district in Russian–Chinese trade decreased from 14 to 9.5%. The Far Eastern Federal District has rich natural resources, intellectual, scientific, technical, and recreational potential, which, as the study of documents of the border territories of the PRC shows, is in a big demand in this country. However, favorable conditions for the development of cross-border relations and high expectations of both sides are not realized either on the Russian or Chinese parts of the borderland. Comprehension of these conditions and the past experience of Russian–Chinese relations leads the authors to the conclusion that the governments of both the Russian Federation and the PRC no longer declaratively, but on a scientific basis, approach the coordination of both plans and projects, and practical activities for the development of adjacent territories of the two states. They also recommend the Russian government to work out the strategy of cross-border cooperation with China.

Keywords: Russia, China, Far East, cross-border cooperation.

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ДАЛЬНЕВОСТОЧНЫЕ РАЙОНЫ РФ
В СОВРЕМЕННОМ РОССИЙСКО-КИТАЙСКОМ
ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИИ

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Аннотация. Для развития приграничного сотрудничества РФ и КНР существуют благоприятные предпосылки. Однако они не реализуются ни в российской, ни в китайской частях приграничья. Осмысление накопленного опыта развития российско-китайских отношений подводит к выводу о необ-

ходимости на научной основе подойти к вопросам координации планов, проектов и практической деятельности по развитию сопредельных территорий двух государств. России пора разработать стратегию приграничного взаимодействия с Китаем.

Ключевые слова: Россия, Китай, Дальний Восток, приграничное сотрудничество.

An analysis of the relationships between the eastern regions of Russia and China leads to contradictory conclusions. On the one hand, there is mutual interest in cooperation at both the interstate and regional levels, and there is a positive dynamic. On the other hand, there is low efficiency in utilizing the existing potential of the region to address national, regional, and global challenges that are relevant to both countries.

The Far Eastern Federal District (FEFD) accounts for 40.6% of Russia's territory, about 5–6% of its socio-economic potential, and a similar portion of its population. In 2021, it accounted for approximately 10% of Russian-Chinese trade and almost the same amount of Chinese direct investment (FDI) in Russia. This would be considered an impressive result if not for the 4,200 km border connecting the Far Eastern Federal District with China, its vast natural resources and spatial potential, which China is interested in utilizing, as well as the hopes of filling the sails of the Russian (including the Far Eastern) economy with the “Chinese wind” [1].

In modern conditions, the nature and role of the regional component in the Russian-Chinese

strategic partnership are of utmost importance. It is crucial to identify the stumbling blocks that hinder the economic logic and concepts of mutual complementarity.

DYNAMICS AND STRUCTURE OF RELATIONS

From 2001 to 2012, the volume of trade between the FEFD (within the borders of 2019) and China grew almost tenfold: from USD1.1 billion to USD10.1 billion. However, in the years 2013–2019, it sharply declined (Fig. 1). The region's contribution to the Russian-Chinese economic cooperation decreased from 13.8% in 2013 to 9.5% in 2019 [2].

Recent years have seen a new surge in trade. In 2021, the trade turnover between the FEFD and China increased by almost 30%, and in the first eight months of 2022, it increased by another 45.5% [source 2]. Importantly, in 2020–2021, this growth was driven by the increase in the FEFD's exports to China (up 51% in two years), but later there was a jump in China's exports. In 2022, Heilongjiang Province increased its trade with Russia

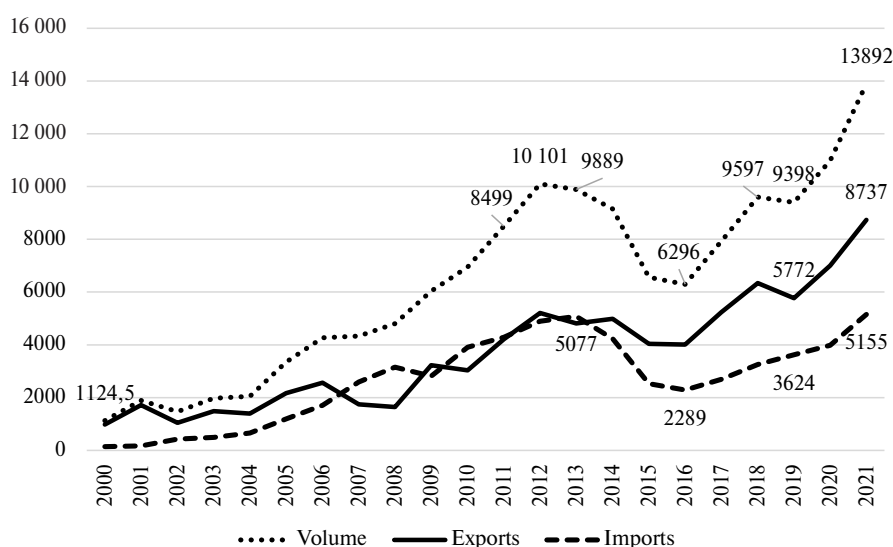


Fig. 1. The FEFD trade with China (within the current borders of the FEFD), 2000–2021, USD million

Compiled according to [source 1].

by 41.3%, and its exports by 61.7% [source 3]. Trade between Inner Mongolia and Russia increased by 13.1% [source 4]. Trade in Jilin Province in the first 11 months of 2022 increased by 74% [source 5]. Customs authorities in the Chinese border provinces recorded double or even triple-digit growth in Chinese exports: Hunchun – up 69.2%, Manzhouli – up 89.9%, Suifenhe – up 96.6%, and Heihe – up 189.1% [source 6].

Seventy percent of the trade turnover between the FEFD and China is accounted for by four regions: the Primorye and Trans-Baikal Territories, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and the Sakhalin Region. The Primorye Territory serves as a hub for Pacific Russia, through which Chinese goods mainly arrive (in 2018–2019, it accounted for 68–70% of all FEFD imports from China, and in 2021, it was 79%). The Sakhalin Region, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and the Trans-Baikal Territory contributed 57% of the FEFD’s exports to China in 2021.

Trade between the FEFD’s regions and China over the last decade has been marked by instability (Fig. 2). Positive dynamics were inherent only in the Trans-Baikal Territory and Jewish Autonomous Region, which consistently increased exports to China. In 2021, the volume of trade between the Khabarovsk Territory and Amur Region with China was at the 2011 level, while the Primorye Territory did not reach its peak levels of 2013.

More than 80% of the value of Far Eastern exports is consistently attributed to three items: mineral resources, fish and seafood, and timber. The growth in Far Eastern exports was mainly driven by an increase in the value of oil exports and partially fish and seafood. Meanwhile, more than half of the FEFD’s imports from China (53.5% in 2021) consist of engineering products: machinery, equipment, and vehicles (Table 1). Accordingly, the 15-fold increase in Chinese exports to the FEFD was driven by high-tech products, while the Far East consumes the same amount of food and light industry goods from China today as they did 15 years ago.

From 2014 to early 2022, accumulated direct investments from China (including Hong Kong) in the FEFD increased from USD247 million to USD991 million. The growth rate of Chinese investments in the bordering Russian territories was higher than in Russia as a whole, so the FEFD’s share in the total volume of Chinese FDI in Russia increased from 9.6% to 17.1%. Yet, in the overall volume of FDI in the FEFD, Chinese investments still accounted for less than 1%. Moreover, 59% of Chinese investments (USD585 million) are concentrated in the Trans-Baikal Territory. Another USD280 million (28%) was invested in the Amur Region, while all other territories accounted for only USD126 million [source 7].

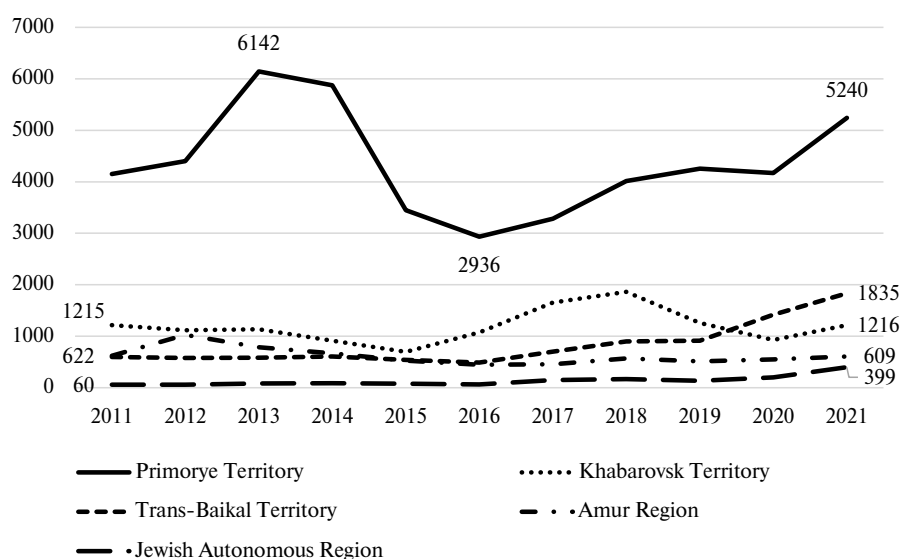


Fig. 2. Trade of border territories of Russia with China, 2011–2021, USD million
Compiled according to: [source 1].

Table 1. The exports and imports of the FEFD from China

Commodity group	2005		2021		
	USD million	%	USD million	%	Growth since 2005 (times)
FEFD exports					
Oil and poi products	916.1	45	3993.3	45.7	4.4
Fish and seafood	112.2	5.5	964.2	11.0	8.6
Timber	528.5	25.9	794.4	9.1	1.5
Other	480.2	23.6	2985.1	34.2	6.2
Total	2037	100	8737	100	4.3
FEFD imports					
FMCG	544.5	45.8	386.9	7.5	-1.4
Food	208.0	17.5	300.3	5.8	1.4
Machinery, equipment, vehicles	178.3	15	2756.3	53.5	15.5
Metals and metal products	96.3	8.1	336.4	6.5	3.5
Other	161.7	13.6	1375.1	26.7	8.5
Total	1188.8	100	5155	100	4.3

Compiled according to: [source 1].

Thus, all the achievements in economic relations between the FEFD and China over the past two decades come down to an increase in oil exports, imports of engineering products, and very limited growth in Chinese investment. The results achieved clearly do not correspond to the existing potential and interests of both parties.

The existence of serious grounds for long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation between the FEFD and China is recorded in Russian (the National Program for the Socio-Economic Development of the Far East for the Period until 2024 and for the Future until 2035, Reports by the Corporation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic on investment cooperation), Chinese (Plans for socio-economic development until 2025, Annual Government Reports), and bilateral (the Program for the Development of Russian-Chinese Cooperation in Trade, Economic and Investment Spheres in the Far East for 2018–2024, Protocols of Meetings of the Intergovernmental Russian-Chinese Commission on Investment Cooperation) documents. Here, the authors will outline the general approaches of the parties and specific points of cooperation.

GENERAL APPROACHES

The interests of Russia's border territories are largely determined by their dependence on economic ties with China and the degree of involve-

ment of the local population in these ties. The greatest dependence on China is inherent in the Jewish Autonomous Region (China's share in its foreign economic relations amounted to 98.3% in 2021) and Trans-Baikal Territory (87.8%). Less dependence is found in the Amur Region (52.6%), Primorye Territory (48.3%), Republic of Buryatia (42.5%), and Khabarovsk Territory (33%) [source 1]. The authorities in these territories constantly demonstrate interest and readiness to expand relations with China¹.

Public sentiment in these regions is quite contradictory, although on the whole, tend to favor China. Sociological surveys indicate that a significant proportion of residents are in favor of the primary development of relations with China. However, there are many who fear the growing Chinese presence and oppose attracting investments from China (for more details, see [3]).

As a result, plans for developing relations with China are broad but not specific enough. In the Program for the Socio-Economic Development of the Far East for the period until 2024, China is presented as nothing more than a participant in abstract cross-border programs and projects

¹ As an example, one can cite the speeches of the governors of these territories at a meeting of the Intergovernmental Russian-Chinese Commission on Cooperation and Development of the Far East and the Baikal Region of the Russian Federation and the North-East of the People's Republic of China [source 2].

and as a supplier of cargo for the Trans-Siberian Railway and the sea ports of the Primorye Territory [source 8]. The transport strategy of the Russian Federation, despite anticipating a significant increase in trade with China and Chinese transit, does not envisage the modernization or reconstruction of local ports [source 9].

In the strategies of the FEFD territories bordering China in the years 2016–2018, China is represented in two ways. On the one hand, they see opportunities for economic development, while on the other hand, they fear becoming resource appendages to their growing neighbor, increasing dependence on Chinese capital, and increasing Chinese migration [2, pp. 431-432]. These circumstances hinder rapprochement with their neighbor.

The Chinese party approaches the task of involving Russian potential in the development of its own border territories with more detail. In terms of a number of political (absence of territorial contradictions, largely identical approaches to issues of the world order and global politics) and economic (the FEFD share is 0.2–0.3% of the value of China's exports and imports, the region accounts for 0.03% of the total volume of China's FDI) reasons, Beijing does not consider the region of Pacific Russia as a priority in its strategic plans. However, cooperation with it is considered important for border areas. The task of expanding cooperation with the FEFD is assigned to the provinces of Heilongjiang and Jilin bordering Russia, as well as the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia (ARIM), and primarily to cities and counties that have railway, road, and river border crossings with Russia (Suifenhe and Heihe in Heilongjiang, Hunchun in Jilin, and Manzhouli in Inner Mongolia). All of the regions establish relationships with neighboring Russian territories depending on the economic significance of existing connections and assessments of potential opportunities for their own development.

History, modern practice, and medium-term plans for the socio-economic development of territories until 2035 show that Heilongjiang is the most interested of all regions of China in developing relations with Russia [source 10]. This is the only province that creates programs for the development of economic relations with the Russian Federation (the first was adopted in 2005, amended in 2009), supporting them with particular plans in

the field of energy, manufacturing of export products, and scientific and engineering cooperation. Russia's share in Heilongjiang's foreign economic relations is traditionally high (63.3% in 2020 and 70% in 2022). Russian tourism was essential for its development in the pre-Covid period (48% of all foreign tourists in 2019).

In the socio-economic development program of Heilongjiang for the 14th Five-Year Plan, a special chapter is dedicated to the implementation of the policy of openness and the construction of the "Belt and Road", where the development of cooperation with Russia is designated as an obvious priority [source 10]. Among the main tasks of the province for the next decade are the formation of a new model of external openness with an emphasis on Russia and Northeast Asia, turning it into the vanguard of Chinese-Russian trade and economic cooperation, a key industrial base and a scientific platform for engineering and innovative cooperation with Russia. The leadership of Heilongjiang intends to strengthen the strategic linkage with the Russian Far East, consolidate and expand investment cooperation with Russia in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, increase exports of machinery and equipment, everyday consumer goods, increase the import of bulk cargo, and improve the system servicing multimodal shipping, to speed up the construction of the gas pipeline between China and Russia [source 11].

The government of Heihe city continues to place the development of economic relations with Russia at the center of its policy [sources 12; 13]. After the commissioning of the road bridge across the Amur, the city authorities significantly expanded their tasks. They intend to make Heihe a strategic center of Chinese-Russian cross-border cooperation, serving the entire country, the largest, most promising and environmentally friendly city on the Russian-Chinese border, and a model city for Chinese-Russian friendship. An important goal is to build a unique Chinese-Russian cross-border metropolis through deep industrial connectivity and close integration of the development of Heihe and Blagoveshchensk cities, and to create an integrated international transport and logistics system on the border.

The authorities of Suifenhe city intend to make their county an important gateway for the Chinese-Russian strategic partnership, openness, and

cooperation in Northeast Asia, an innovative and experimental platform for close trade and economic cooperation between China and Russia [source 14]. The five-year development plans for Suifenhe and Heihe outline a whole range of measures to develop cooperation with Russia in the economic and social spheres, including funding levels and specific projects.

The authorities of the Mudanjiang district, which oversees the border counties of Dongning and Suifenhe, are committed to a comprehensive and full opening up to the outside world with an emphasis on cooperation with Russia [source 15], and the leadership of Heilongjiang generally intends to make Mudanjiang a model city for cooperation with Russia nationwide [source 16]. Another important center of Russian-Chinese interaction, Manzhouli, is aimed at continuously deepening pragmatic cooperation with neighboring regions of Russia and Mongolia [source 17].

The plans of Jilin and ARIM in relation to Russia are less developed and detailed. For ARIM, Russia is the second most important economic partner after Mongolia, but is gradually losing its position. If in 2021 Russia's share amounted to 24% of its foreign trade turnover, then in 2022 it was only 12.8% (Mongolia accounts for 30%) [source 4]. Nevertheless, ARIM continues to build external relations through the prism of the accelerated construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor, a springboard for opening the north, and creating a pilot zone for China-Mongolia-Russia cooperation [4, p. 9; source 18], counting on expanding the import of minerals and grain and the export of machinery, equipment, and textile products [source 19].

Jilin Province, which has a relatively short border with Russia (233 kilometers), accounts for just over 4% of its external trade. Its interests are mainly related to providing access to sea transport arteries through the ports of the Primorye Territory. Jilin is developing the border region of Changjitu (in the Changchun-Jilin-Tumenjiang triangle) and the Hunchun maritime economic development zone as a platform for strengthening interaction with Northeast Asia and Russia [4, p. 9; source 20]. It is precisely these intentions that are reflected in the plans of the Yanbian-Korean Autonomous Region

[source 21] and the city of Hunchun [source 22] bordering Russia.

Thus, the territories of China that are adjacent to Russia not only have clearly formulated their interests in relation to Russia but they are acting within the framework of a general strategic line to use Russia's economic potential for the needs of North-Eastern China. The main interests are focused on expanding the import of Russian energy resources and minerals, creating a network of processing plants on the Chinese territory, increasing the export of industrial and agricultural products and services to Russia, and making cross-border transport corridors more efficient. The tasks of creating Chinese-Russian production chains in such areas as woodworking, petrochemicals, grain and soybean processing, pharmaceuticals, etc., training highly qualified personnel with knowledge of the Russian language, Russian business and social practices are being cautiously considered.

AREAS OF CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS

1. The large volumes and diversity of the natural resources sector in the FEFD, on the one hand, and China's need for the resources of this sector, on the other, are the basis for the economic complementarity of the Far Eastern macroregion and the border regions of China. Accordingly, the socio-economic development programs of the FEFD and its territories seek the active development of these resources, and the Chinese border territories are making plans to receive these resources.

A number of the largest deposits of solid minerals in the Asia-Pacific region are located in the FEFD². The largest gas and petrochemical cluster in the Russian Federation and one of the largest in the Asia-Pacific is being formed here, with an expected volume of investment from Russian companies of more than USD35 billion. Its main competitive advantages are the largest oil and gas reserves in the Asia-Pa-

² Ore gold – more than 630 tons; silver – more than 6,000 tons; copper – about 337,000 tons; tin – 1.1 million tons; brown coal – 14.2 billion tons; hard coal – 7.9 billion tons; iron ore – 1.2 billion tons and over 50 kinds of other minerals.

cific³, as well as the existing transportation infrastructure⁴.

The Chinese party is committed to using these resources. Inner Mongolia is counting on receiving Russian gas through a branch of the “Power of Siberia” gas pipeline to the city of Hulunbuir [source 23]. The Heihe authorities are making plans to create cross-border industrial parks for deep processing of mineral products, rich and green energy resources from Russia [source 13]. The Suifenhe authorities also intend to encourage enterprises to process and use Russian energy and mineral wealth [source 14].

The second most important natural resource of Pacific Russia is timber. The permissible volume of timber harvesting in the FEFD is 93.8 million m³ annually, but only 16.4 million m³ (17.4%) is actually harvested. At the same time, the Asia-Pacific countries annually import timber products worth more than USD20 billion. The Russian Government has approved a new customs and tariff policy regarding the export of Far Eastern roundwood, stimulating timber processing on the Russian territory. In addition, the harvesting and deep processing of low-grade wood, which the authorities of Suifenhe, Heihe, and Qiqihar, for their part, are targeting, have great prospects.

The competitive advantage of the Russian Far East is the presence of more than 150,000 hectares of marine waters off the coast of the Sea of Japan and the south of the Sea of Okhotsk. There are excellent natural and ecological conditions for growing the most valuable and in-demand aquaculture products in the Asia-Pacific markets: sea cucumber, scallop, etc. The Mudanjiang district, the cities of Suifenhe and Hunchun intend to establish processing of the Russian seafood.

³ As of 2016, proven reserves of oil amount to 1.1 billion tons, gas – 5 trillion m³, and gas condensate – 268 million tons. Export supplies of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the Russian Far East account for about 5% of the global LNG market volume.

⁴ This infrastructure includes: main pipelines – the existing oil pipeline “Eastern Siberia – Pacific Ocean”, which is in the process of expanding its throughput capacity to 80 million tons per year in the section from Taishet to Skovorodino and up to 50 million tons per year in the section from Skovorodino to the port of Kozmino; the gas pipeline “Power of Siberia” with a throughput capacity of up to 38 billion m³ per year; the main pipeline “Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok” with a design capacity of 28.04 billion m³ per year.

In the Far East, a land bank has been developed, including more than 2.5 million hectares of cropland and 4 million hectares of pastures and hayfields, making it possible to develop poultry farming, dairy and beef cattle breeding, to grow soybeans, corn, wheat, rice, barley, and rape. The growing season in the southern regions of the FEFD ranges from 130 to 200 days. Agricultural products grown in the Far East are largely environmentally friendly: the scale of use of chemical and mineral fertilizers here is lower than in the Asia-Pacific countries, which import food more than USD280 billion worth per year. Meanwhile, the level of self-sufficiency in the Far East for vegetables is 58%, grains, 79%, meat, 25%, and milk, 44%, which creates additional opportunities for Chinese investors. Taking into account global climate change, up to 5 million hectares of land may be involved in agricultural turnover in the FEFD.

In addressing issues of ensuring food security in the northeast of China, Manzhouli is building a Russian-Chinese storage and distribution facility for agricultural products [source 17]. Fuyuan County, which borders the Khabarovsk Territory, considers the neighboring region’s advantages, first of all, green ecology and opportunities for agriculture [source 24]. Suifenhe aimed, on the one hand, at expanding the processing of Russian grain, and on the other, at “using Russian soil to solve the important problem of food shortages in the country” [source 14].

2. Existing transport infrastructure. The Far East is a connecting link between China and the western part of Russia, as well as the countries of Western Europe. The world’s largest railways, the Trans-Siberian and the Baikal-Amur, begin on its territory, and the total capacity of exceeds 150 million tons. There are 29 seaports on the coast of the FEFD, including large ones like Vladivostok, Nakhodka, Vostochny, Vanino, and Sovetskaya Gavan. They account for a quarter of the cargo turnover by the Russian ports. Joint implementation of projects for the development of international transport corridors, including “Primorye-1” (Harbin-Suifenhe-Vladivostok-Nakhodka) and “Primorye-2” (Jilin-Slavyanka-Zarubino-Posyet)⁵, will allow for efficient transit cargo from the

⁵ The Concept for the Development of International Transport Corridors “Primorye-1” and “Primorye-2” was approved in December 2016 by the Russian Government. A memorandum on the joint development of these transport corridors was signed

northeastern provinces of China through the ports of the Primorye Territory.

The shortest sea route from Asia to Europe through the seas of the Arctic Ocean runs through the north of the Far East. Global climate change can make this route competitive and will reduce transportation time from China to Europe, as well as release the load on the Suez Canal, through which China now ships goods to Europe.

The authorities of the Chinese border territories are also committed to using this transport infrastructure. Inner Mongolia is actively developing the China-Europe transport corridor [source 19]. Heilongjiang is creating an international commodity and logistics cluster aimed at Russia, Western Europe, and North America [source 16]. Suifenhe is focused on connecting with the Primorye-1 transport corridor and increasing the capacity of cross-border points between China and Russia [source 14]. The authorities of Mudanjiang intend to develop railway communications with the ports of the Primorye Territory [source 15], and Tongjiang county, bordering the Jewish Autonomous Region, intends to “achieve new breakthroughs in cooperation with Russia” through the use of the Nizhneleninskoye-Tongjiang railway bridge, the opening of railway checkpoints, and the creation of a pilot zone of cross-border economic cooperation [source 26].

3. Tourism. The total tourist flow to the Russian Far East in 2017 exceeded 6 million people, including 867,000 foreign tourists. In 2018–2019, the region was visited annually by approximately 1 million Chinese tourists (calculated according to [source 27]).

What attracts the Chinese and residents of other East Asian countries? The Russian Far East is an outpost of European culture in Asia and is located within a two-hour flight from many regions of China, Japan, and South Korea. From these countries, about 170 million citizens annu-

in July 2017 during a meeting with Presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. The document also provides for the involvement of enterprises and financial institutions of both countries in the implementation of infrastructure projects within the framework of the development of these corridors, as well as mutual simplification of procedures, reduction of costs and time for customs clearance of transit cargo, expansion of the range of exported/imported goods. However, the signing of an intergovernmental agreement has not yet taken place, as the Governor of the Primorye Territory Oleg Kozhemyako noted, “due to the large volume of approvals and the coronavirus pandemic” [source 25].

ally travel abroad for tourism purposes, spending more than USD250 billion. In the Russian Far East, there are many unique natural, cultural, and historical sites that have the potential to attract tourists. For example, the volcanoes and geysers of Kamchatka, the ski slopes of Sakhalin, the mountain taiga slopes of Sikhote-Alin, the islands and ice-free sea bays of the Primorye Territory, the Lena Pillars natural park in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the unique national parks “Land of the Leopard” and “Bikin” in the Primorye Territory, and Lake Baikal in the Republic of Buryatia. The free port of Vladivostok has a simplified visa entry (8-day electronic visa) for the arrival of citizens from 18 foreign countries.

The Chinese authorities and businesses, for their part, are counting on Russian tourists, as well as the development of domestic tourism in the northeast of the country, which, in addition to the region’s natural beauty, offers a “Russian zest”. The Master Plan for the Development of Tourism of Heilongjiang (2020–2030) provides for a number of measures to develop the border tourism area, in particular the creation of a Chinese-Russian national park, the transformation of Heixiazhi (Great Ussuri) Island, Suifenhe, and Dongning to the “gateway of international autotourism”, etc. [source 28]. The plans of Fuyuan County are connected with the development of the Chinese part of Heixiazhi Island [source 24]. Its authorities have planned to create a tourist center on the island with the highest attractiveness rating (5A) by 2025. Suifenhe and Heihe are creating “Russian-Chinese villages” designed to attract both Chinese and Russian tourists.

4. Scientific and technical sphere. In the context of the unprecedented Western sanctions against Russia and China in the scientific and technological sphere, cooperation has become especially relevant. The FEFD has significant scientific and technological potential: more than three dozen scientific institutions of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, a number of scientific institutes of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (located in Yakutia and Buryatia), one and a half dozen large universities and other scientific centers.

The Chinese party is very active in establishing contacts, as evidenced by both reports from scientific institutions of the Russian Academy of

Sciences and plans for border areas. In particular, Heilongjiang intends to deepen international scientific and technological cooperation with an emphasis on Russia, “to conduct joint research on key issues” [source 16] and turn the city of Harbin into “a national center of scientific, technical, and innovative cooperation with Russia” [source 10]. Suifenhe’s plans include the creation of a “Chinese-Russian technology exchange platform” and “industrialization of promising Russian innovative technologies” [source 14]. Inner Mongolia aims to develop academic and educational exchanges with Russia [source 23].

5. Similarity of geopolitical conditions. Russia and China, through their eastern regions, reach the largest center of power – the United States, the strategic axis of the United States-Japan-Korea, the emerging military-political bloc AUKUS (Australia-UK-USA), and other zones of geopolitical tension: the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Taiwan, and a number of islands in the East China and South China Seas. All this can help strengthen the long-term strategic partnership between Russia and China in these regions.

6. Similarities in the economic and geographical position of the FEFD, the Northern and North-Eastern China. The marginal position of the regions in their countries, remote from the central and western regions, which are most developed in Russia, and from the central, eastern, and south-eastern regions most developed in China; proximity and wide access to the sea coast; great differentiation and diversity of natural and climatic conditions in the North-South direction.

MUTUAL INTERESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Thus, there are somewhat objective prerequisites for mutually linking the interests of the Russian and Chinese parts of the border regions, identifying and implementing priority areas in which it is quite possible to intensify mutually beneficial relations (Tables 2, 3).

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, one can highlight the directions along which, as the authors see it, cooperation will develop in the future.

Table 2. Long-term interests of North-Eastern China in the southern regions of the FEFD

Kind of interest	Rationale
1. Natural resources of the FEFD (including a combination of land and sea resources within the 200-mile maritime exclusive zone of the Russian Federation)	Large reserves and diversity of natural resources on land and offshore. High complementarity of the natural resource potential of North-Eastern China and the FEFD. Opportunities for joint development of the Arctic and coastal marine zones
2. In the FEFD: – markets for Chinese goods, including food, consumer goods, machinery, agricultural, construction and transport equipment, etc.; – labor force, including builders, agricultural workers; – investments in infrastructure and natural resource extraction	Growth of Chinese trade, imports, and the number of Chinese tourists. Correlation of conditional cross-border market zones with significant Russian segments. Possible growth of developed agricultural lands, including northern regions, in the context of global climate change
3. Development of communication transport connections in the FEFD	Using the transit potential of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Baikal-Amur Railway, the Northern Sea Route, pipelines, transport corridors, including “Primorye-1” and “Primorye-2”, bridge crossings (Blagoveshchensk-Heihe, Nizhneleninskoe-Tongjiang), energy bridges, etc.
4. Using the scientific and educational potential of the FEFD	35 research institutes of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and large universities. Opportunities for training students from China and conducting joint scientific research, including technologies for deep processing of land and sea resources, and obtaining new medicinal substances
5. Tourist potential of the FEFD	The perception of this part of Russia as a territory of the European culture. Interest in unique wildlife areas and marine waters, extreme tourism in the Arctic

Compiled by the authors.

Table 3. Long-term interests of Russia and the FEFD in China and North-Eastern China

Kind of interest	Rationale
1. Deep integrated processing of natural resources	Use of Chinese and joint technologies, specialists, and investments
2. Chinese markets for the sale of FEFD products and imports from China	Narrow intraregional markets, large capacity of Chinese ones. Variety of Chinese goods
3. Chinese areas and objects of tourism, recreation, treatment	A large number and variety of tourism objects in China, a specific cultural and historical sphere. Chinese traditional medicine. Tourism “from winter to summer”

Compiled by the authors.

1. Sharing of unique assets: the Vostochny cosmodrome, the border rivers Amur, Ussuri, Tumannaya, Lake Khanka, the Northern Sea Route, and the New Silk Road.

2. Development and implementation of interstate programs for the green development of trans-border regions and territories (basins of the Amur, Ussuri, Razdolnaya, and Tumannaya rivers, Lake Khanka, etc.). In the new geopolitical conditions, it seems important to develop joint projects for the formation of international trans-border territories of a new type based on general strategic planning and infrastructure development – on Bolshoy Ussuriysky Island and in the estuary of the Tumannaya River basin (together with the DPRK). Sustainable development of trans-border regions is possible only on the basis of joint international monitoring, forecasts, and programs.

3. Adaptation to new conditions of economic development, taking into account the sanctions against the Russian Federation. The departure of

many Western companies creates favorable pre-conditions for the replacement of some of them by Chinese ones.

4. Improving the institutional foundations of Russian-Chinese cooperation, primarily at the level of strategic planning. It is possible to create a joint Russian-Chinese body for strategic planning of cooperation in the region, and a joint information and analytical center.

Awareness of overlapping interests does not guarantee their actual alignment. It requires not only political will from both sides but also a foundation in fundamental science. There is a pressing need for the development of a scientifically grounded strategy for Russia’s border interaction with China. Moreover, its core principles should be formulated at the level of the Russian Far Eastern regions, which are most interested in relations with Chinese partners and will implement them in practice.

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