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Susanna Aghajanyan



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## Message from the Editor

With great pride, we present the third issue of the *Sinology Journal of the University of Würzburg*. This edition marks a special moment for me personally, as it is the last issue I publish as the chief editor.

Looking back to our very first issue, I remember how much hope and ambition we poured into creating a platform for student-led academic dialogue in Chinese Studies. Since then, the journal has grown into something truly meaningful—thanks to the dedication of our editorial team, the guidance of our professors, and the trust of our authors.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our current editorial team—York Frerks, Xu Jing, and Ariane Kolden—for their outstanding work on this issue. Their careful editing, critical insight, and collaborative spirit have made this publication what it is.

To all our contributors: thank you for your valuable research and for your confidence in our journal. Your work continues to shape the identity of our journal and quality of what we publish.

Although this is my final issue as the chief editor, I step away with full confidence that the journal will continue to thrive. I am sure the next generation of editors will take it even further, opening it up to more voices and perspectives from around the world.

Thank you all for being part of this journey. I'm proud of what we've built together—and excited to watch it grow.



## “The Role of Root Searching Journey Summer Camps for the Local Government and its Attendees”

NARGIZA TAISHYBAYEVA

Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg



**Abstract:** By analyzing the media on the summer camps in Qingtian County, I argue that although the summer camps for overseas Chinese youth are highly politicized, the camp plays different roles for the local government and its attendees. In Qingtian, the summer camps began as a social welfare project to meet the needs of abandoned children. They then evolved into typical summer camps that are affordable and include educational, recreational, and networking activities. The local government also sees patriotic education as a tool to foster loyalty for future talent returns and investments. Although the research is limited to the selected media articles, it can provide another dimension of understanding the nature of Summer Camps for overseas Chinese within the domestic context.

**Keywords:** Summer camps, Qingtian, Chinese youth, patriotism

## Introduction

The political significance of young overseas Chinese graduates has grown substantially, advancing China's global and local economy, as well as contributing to developments in science, technology, diplomacy, and soft power (Liu and Dongen 2016; Thunø 2024; Goodkind 2019; Schäfer 2022). Under Xi Jinping's presidency, China has strategically restructured its diaspora politics, expanded the support for institutions dedicated to maintaining connection with the diaspora, and enhanced its management approach across various levels of governance (Schäfer 2022). The educational policies for overseas Chinese (Qiaoxiang, 侨乡) emphasize attracting returnees through legal and financial incentives, fostering cultural identity, and integrating nation-state initiatives with market strategies. Notable efforts include the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) extensive outreach and training programs (Schäfer 2022:16), the "Discovery Trip to China for Outstanding Young Overseas Chinese" (Suzuki 2019), and the "Study Class for Overseas Chinese Leaders" to support the Belt and Road Initiative (Schäfer 2022:16; Yuan 2023 n.p.). These policies showcase China's educational approach to maintaining ties with its diaspora and communicating national interests.

Educational youth camps, museum presentations, and ceremonies are used to construct a sense of belonging among the diaspora abroad and encourage "root tourism" in their "hometown" (Thunø et al. 2024). The government-sponsored "root-searching camps" (xungenxialing, 寻根夏令) were designed to teach Mandarin language skills and foster cultural identities among diasporic youth (Suzuki 2019:92-93; Qu 2017:236). The initiative aligns with

China's political ideology, as evidenced by the CCP's incorporation of its agenda into educational curricula (Lindberg et al., 2023). Cultural preservation, stimulating diaspora tourism, and attracting overseas youth back are the main functions of the camps, which have been covered in Chinese media. This can, for instance, be seen in Qingtian, the hometown of many overseas Chinese who host summer camps that serve the political purposes mentioned above. Root tourism<sup>1</sup> plays a significant role in China's diaspora engagement strategies. It requires strong personal motivation and is supported by various activities within the OCAO framework. Tomczewska-Popowycz et al. (2014) propose understanding roots tourism as an umbrella for the broader categories of "roots" or "diaspora" tourism based on personal connection to ethnicity, ancestry, and individual experiences.

Additionally, the Chinese government introduces national and transnational layers of the root-tourism experience. Government-sponsored and oriented to the overseas Chinese, root tourism in China was described as "a form of tourism with geopolitical and economic sustainability dimensions" (Kwek et al. 2013:36-52). This evolving platform fosters interaction between local and global actors, facilitates negotiation and re-evaluation, leverages the memory of the past for present and future benefits, and strengthens relationships between the diaspora and the state. Encouraging sponsors and organizing visits to China for overseas Chinese are the main ways of locally implementing China's public diplomacy (Kwek et al. 2013:37; Xie 2011 n.p.). Although this research is limited to selected media articles, it can provide another dimension of understanding the nature of Summer Camps within the domestic context. The paper starts with an overview of the summer camp program and then focuses on the case study, unarchiving the role of initiative in social welfare for left-behind children of the Chinese diaspora. Lastly, it discusses the context and narratives of the program that are reflected in media articles and connects it with the domestic needs of local governments.

### **General Overview of Summer Camp for Overseas Chinese Youth**

The youth camps for overseas Chinese are strategically designed to create a positive visiting experience that can evoke emotional responses among participants. These initiatives aim to foster a sense of belonging and garner potential support for China's broader socio-political goals (Barabantseva 2010; Qu 2017:236). Initiated in the 1980s by Chinese Cultural

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<sup>1</sup> travelling to places of one's origin or those connected to one's family or ancestral history (Tomczewska-Popowycz and Taras 2022:245)

Centers, these camps provide overseas-born Chinese opportunities to explore their ancestral roots. The program typically includes briefings by local officials, ceremonial banquets, and visits to ancestral villages, deepening participants' cultural understanding and emotional connection to China (Louie 2004:12-13, 44, 55-59). Louie argues that the state's geopolitical ambitions regarding diaspora politics should be differentiated from the smaller, county-level grassroots politics. Local officials were more oriented toward domestic economic and political benefits, such as business investments and ideological support among the diaspora (Louie 2004). Parents viewed the camps as affordable holidays and opportunities for language learning and networking. Other empirical research shows that emotional attachment to China varies among participants and is influenced by self-identity, ethnicity, and exposure to modern or traditional cultural elements. Modern aspects of China, such as technology and architecture, positively impacted participants' views (Pedone 2014; Li et al. 2024). Scholars Lindberg and Edström have raised concerns regarding the political influence, specifically the non-democratic values to which the children may be exposed. However, there is a wide variety of activities for overseas Chinese youth that share similar goals, formats, and agendas. This includes workshops, summer camps, and root-seeking travel tours, all exhibiting similarities in their structural organization, yet they represent distinctly different types of root tourism. Currently, scholars Zheng, Haan, and Koops have categorized four forms of summer camp: regular camps (Chinese language and general culture), camps with a special subject, camps for children adopted by foreign families, and the Chinese culture circuit (Zheng et al. 2019:192). Due to differences in curriculum between summer camps hosted in universities, schools, or at the local enterprise, a narrower case study is the starting point for understanding the diverse experiences and objectives within the overseas Chinese Hometown.

### **Origin of Qingtian Summer Camp: Education for Left-Behind Children**

The first wave of labor migrants often leaves their children behind in China to minimize costs and maximize work opportunities. Many of these migrants, who are young and sometimes have children after migration, send their children back to China for care by grandparents while providing financial support through remittances. This arrangement reflects an inter-generational exchange of financial support for caregiving (Zheng et al. 2019:185). While recent trends show reunion among children with their parents (Masdeu 2019:4), transnational parenting continues to impact the mental health of left-behind children negatively (Zhao et al. 2016:1934-1936; Zheng et al. 2019:189; Xu 2021:83,90). Education programs for migrant descendants emerged

from the practice of overseas Chinese leaving their children with grandparents to maintain family ties and learn Mandarin. They would be immersed in a Chinese environment until reaching the age of ten, after which they would return to their parents. However, when residency and financial status are secured, in many cases, the families tend to be reunited (Masdeu 2019:4-5). Therefore, migrant language schools are gradually replacing and supplementing the need for a linguistic and cultural environment.

Officially, ‘left-behind children’(liushou haizi 留守儿童) refers to “rural hukou” (resident status) children or young people (under 16 years old) who have been left behind at home by either both parents or one parent who has migrated domestically. At the same time, the other one does not have guardianship capacity” (Council 2016 n.p.). With an increasing number of left-behind children, the state initiated and supported various programs to improve the situation nationwide (Guan and Deng 2019).

Chinese media have expanded the concept of "left-behind children" by introducing a new term to specifically categorize and emphasize the unique challenges faced by a distinct group — "overseas left-behind children" (yangliushouhai, 洋留守儿童 or huaqiao liushou ertong, 华侨留守儿童) (Zheng et al. 2019:185; PBS 2015 n.p.; Yang et al. 2014:6;). This term highlights the additional complexities and difficulties experienced by children whose parents work or live abroad, distinguishing them from the traditional left-behind children whose parents migrate domestically. Then, Chinese scholars adopted this approach and analyzed this group separately (Zhao al. 2017:1; Wang et al. 2022; Huang et al. 2022). Lamas-Abaira distinguishes between left-behind children, born in their homeland, and sent-back children, born in the host country but sent back to their parent’s homeland, as “satellite babies” (Lamas-Abaira 2023:). Concerns about these children’s well-being have largely focused on their education, especially in Chinese. Before, diaspora groups would self-organize Chinese language tutoring and schooling, but language (Masdeu 2019:4) learning for descendants of migrants abroad. Those classes gradually transitioned from community-based to the Beijing-led, institutionalized educational system (Benton and Gomez 2014:1467). Language proficiency has practical applications in the future; the advantage of bilingual identity is more relevant to the option of moving to China (Masdeu 2019:4-5). The youth camps could offer essential emotional and social support, helping to mitigate the sense of displacement and isolation often experienced by transnational left-behind children. The first goal of the Qingtian overseas camp was to improve the quality of life of “stay-at-home-children” and not help foreign-raised young Chinese to

evoke deeper identity-related connections. Qingtian started to host summer camps only in 2006, initially launched alongside other social welfare campaigns. This can be seen from an old article:

“How to let their children living abroad receive education in traditional Chinese culture, continue the spirit and moral qualities of the Chinese nation, and thus become a new generation with a good understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and multicultural compatibility.”

如何让生活在国外的子女接受中国传统文化的教育, 延续中华民族精神和品德, 从而成为中外文化兼通, 多元文化兼容的新生代?3 (Chinaqw 2008 n.p.)

The source interprets the experience of the children differently, emphasizing the Chinese spirit and moral values as major motives; migrants have been sending their children to their hometowns for traditional education. After an investigation in 2006 on left-behind children, the county administration took measures to improve the life quality of left-behind children. At that time, the Fangshan Xiang Centre School (Fangshanxiang zhongxin xuexiao, 方山乡中心学校), which served about 9000 left-behind children, 70% of whom were international students, became known as a “UNESCO school” (China news 2008 n.p.). Therefore, care for the left-behind is society’s duty, and its members under the institutional organization, volunteer initiatives, and education system have been tasked to assist with their basic needs but, more importantly, provide emotional and spiritual guidance. In 2007, under the local government initiative (movement) of “Thousand Surrogate Parents Pair with Left-behind Children”( qianming daili jiazhang jiedui liushou ertong, 千名代理家长结对留守儿童)4. It encapsulates communal unity values, in which the children without parents’ supervision are cared for and protected by society. Therefore, teachers and volunteers are given the task of being their “insiders” (知情人, zhiqingren) or close person; the tasks include communication and meeting in person (China News 2008 n.p.). The education department organized “Journey to the Root” summer camps to extend Chinese language education, combined with the following classes:

“Qingtian Overseas Chinese Migration History, Suffering Hardship History, Fighting History, Patriotic History, and Contribution History”



青田华侨的出国史、苦难史、奋斗史、爱国史、奉献史教育 (Ibid n.p.).

Initially, the curriculum was designed around the history of the region, crediting the contribution of development and patriotism of overseas migrants. Precisely, the curriculum highlighted the struggles and sacrifices of migrants, hard work, family separation, and loyalty, thus, in return, leading to prosperity and development. This narrative is observed in other media articles on romanticizing the overseas migrant heritage of Qingtian County (Taishybayeva 2024:9-13). The underlying message could possibly aim to comfort children facing loss and family separation due to migration by suggesting that migration contributed to the development and created conditions from which they could benefit. Like Mainland Chinese children of working migrants, the first attendees of the camp suffered from family separation. However, in general, Chinese news media's portrayal of left-behind children depicts them as both vulnerable, lacking family care and living in poor conditions, and deviant, getting involved in criminal and problematic behaviors (Huang and Zou 2023:1882). Despite being minors, the media largely attribute the LBC's problems to their families and personal characteristics, absence of parental care, and ineffective monitoring. Moreover, the media often simplistically suggest that LBC's parents should have overcome obstacles to providing adequate care, condemning them as irresponsible (Huang and Zou 2023:1890). The concern about the loss of cultural roots among the younger generation is a common feature in the media, and it has given rise to several initiatives designed to reconnect young Chinese descendants with their heritage. The story of summer camps in Qingtian is about the tragedy of separated families, the consequences of outward migration, and the challenges and solutions for the local economy and social welfare. In recent years, the summer camps have offered more diverse programs, and young adults are invited to receive patriotic education, learn about the regional heritage, and participate in and contribute to China's modernization.

### **Qingtian Summer Camp: Communication Mediator between Diaspora and the State**

The generational outflow of the working population has led to a significant imbalance in the labor force, putting the most vulnerable at risk. In response, the local government has launched the "return flow" project to attract young overseas Chinese to settle and start businesses in the region (Qingtian County People's Government 2022 n.p.). Nowadays, during the camp time, the Lishui-Qingtian-Wenzhou axis hosts a substantial number of children and young adults participating in these travel programs (Lamas-Abaira 2023:63). The camp provides a chance to cover expenses when traveling to China, as it is free of charge, covering

food, accommodation, travel, insurance, and other fees. For this reason, the opportunity is to attract more participants each year. The maximum number of places has increased by 50% from 2015, rising from 139 to 280 in 2023. Only students aged between 12 and 18 can apply; there is no priority for admission, and those interested should apply as soon as possible, as admission will stop once all places are taken. The applicants must have good health, strong motivation, and an interest in learning Chinese culture. The organizer is Zhejiang Overseas Chinese Federation (ZOCF), Lishui Overseas Chinese Federation (LOCF), Qingtian County Party Committee United Front Work Department (QCPCUFW), Qingtian Overseas Chinese Federation (QOCF), Qingtian Bowen Middle School (Qingtian Bowen zhongxue, 青田伯温中学) (Qingtian Overseas Chinese Federation, 12th Floor 2023 n.p; OCAO 2015 n.p.). An earlier article in China News connects The Root-seeking Tour” with the sustainable maintenance and use of resources (remittances and investment) together with other measures such as “Return of Overseas Chinese Essential Factor Project” (Huaqiao yaosu huiliu gongcheng, 华侨要素回流工程) to appeal for Overseas Chinese Youth and Talents. The “Journey to the Roots” camps and related programs have the objective of enhancing cultural identity and ensuring the sustainable development of diaspora resources through emotional and educational engagement.

“Qingtian also organized “Root-Seeking Journey” summer camps for overseas Chinese youth of Qingtian descent and carried out root-seeking projects for overseas Chinese, with the aim of strengthening the emotional connection and sense of identity of the new generation of overseas Chinese with their homeland, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of overseas Chinese resources.”

青田还组织了青田籍华裔青少年学生参加的“寻根之旅”夏令营活动和开展海外华裔“寻根之旅”等留根工程，以增强新一代华侨对故乡的感情和认同感，达到实现华侨资源可持续发展的目的 (China News 2005 n.p.).

The media states that overseas Chinese children, regardless of their origin, will accept China’s language (Mandarin), calligraphy, history, and other aspects of education. According to the narrative drawn from state-led media, it is important to provide cultural and linguistic education to overseas Chinese descendants to maintain ties and patriotic sentiments, emphasize the unity and connectivity between the state and the Chinese diaspora, and help them understand a new vision of China’s development (China news 2008 n.p.; China News 2023an.p.; China News 2023bn.p.; People’s Daily Overseas Edition 2023 n.p.). The media also highlighted

Qingtian's modernization as a rural-to-urban transformation, achieved via poverty elimination and rural revitalization policies. Modernization is narrated to provide career opportunities and revolutionary changes and one of the reasons for the youth to return "back" where they were supposed to belong. Vocational training includes linguistic, cultural, and "moral" education as the main course of study for students aged from 7 to 18. The same method of education was applied to older participants. The young people are supposed to be exposed to cultural values and, as a result, contribute to the community and the domestic economy Lishui City People Government 2023n.p.).

Table 1: Program and content of summer camps in Qingtian

Program	China's education	Roots searching journey	Cultivate roots, cast soul, and build dreams
Age	7–11	12–18	18–30
Activity	Handcraft	Cooking and eating	industrial and commercial bases
Location	Fangshan Town	Fangshan Town	Qingtian Douyin E-commerce Live Broadcast Base; Overseas Chinese Imported Commodity City; World Red Wine Center; "Western Food Master"; Global Talent Training Center.

(from People's Daily Overseas Edition 2023 n.p.)

The table above illustrates the structure of summer camp, showcasing the process of descendants gradually learning about local culture and discovering career possibilities. "The Cultivating Roots" program was presented to teach knowledge about the Chinese language, hometown traditions, and customs. China Overseas Web features that the students use "China's first county-level Chinese education textbooks "Hometown Qingtian" and "Let's Speak Qingtian Dialect Together" as study materials. The teacher commented that "students are

making efforts to introduce themselves in Chinese.” This commentary could show that young students raised abroad have low fluency in Mandarin; meanwhile, the programs for both children and teenagers are designed in simple form and have similarities to tourist programs for foreigners. Two articles from China News and a notice from the Lishui City Government describe the educational program content as having Chinese and Qingtianese language lessons and activities for children and youth to experience hometown culture, including traveling, cooking, and food testing. Young adults visited industrial, commerce, and other businesses to understand local characteristic industries and the development progress and tell the world about it (China News 2023a n.p.; People’s Daily Overseas Edition 2023 n.p.; Lishui City People Government 2023 n.p.). Qingtian Web shared a more detailed overview of Chinese language classes; the article was published with the title:

“I have a motherland; I have a mother tongue”—Chinese language class begins.”

“我有祖国、我有母语”—中文语言课堂上课啦”

Precisely, 167 students, ranging in age from 7 to 12 years old, attended classes on the Chinese language, Qingtian “Cultivate roots subjects,” and traditional stories of “Benevolence, Righteousness, Etiquette, Wisdom, and Trust” (ren yi li zhi xin, 仁义礼智信) (People’s Daily Overseas Edition 2023 n.p.). Experience-oriented activities include agricultural heritage lectures on rice-fish symbiosis and Qingtian fish lantern making, which further enhances awareness of their Hometown and the sense of identity and belonging. The self-identity and sense of belonging of the overseas Chinese diaspora form the core, supported by sentiments for their Hometown and awareness of Chinese cultural heritage, as well as loyalty to the state of the People’s Republic of China (Qingtian Web 2023 n.p.).

“Through these experiential courses, we hope children can deepen their understanding of Qingtian. In the future, when talking about Qingtian to others, (they) can confidently list the specialties of the Hometown and introduce the Qingtian’s scenery.”

通过这些体验课程，希望孩子们能加深对青田的认识。

将来对外讲起青田，能自信地列举家乡特产，介绍青田风物。

“Some younger students have limited Chinese proficiency and cannot understand the explanation about rice-fish symbiosis, but they are very interested in handicrafts.”

有小学员中文水平有限，听不懂有关稻鱼共生的讲解，但对手工非常感兴趣。

(class teacher).”

The young adults aged from 18 to 30 are invited to visit various urban areas and industrial bases, such as Qingtian Douyin E-commerce Live Broadcast Base, Overseas Chinese Imported Commodity City, World Red Wine Center, “Western Food Master,” Global Talent Training Center and other places. The article demonstrates commentary from the interview, which can be interpreted as an exemplary mindset of diasporic youth.

“I saw the development prospect of my Hometown and learned about the support of my Hometown to the new generation of overseas Chinese. I have learned about the development prospects of my Hometown and its support for the new generation of overseas Chinese. I hope to contribute to the development of my Hometown if I have the opportunity to do so in the future,” said Yuxi Zhou from Czechoslovakia.

我看到了家乡的发展前景，体会到了家乡对华侨华人新生代的支持。将来如有机会，

我也希望为家乡发展做出自己的贡献 (People’s Daily Overseas Edition 2023 n.p.).

“I grew up in my grandmother’s house when I was a child, and I still have some memories of my Hometown, and I do not feel strange. When I came back this time, I found that China’s mobile payment is so convenient, and I can pay by scanning with my mobile phone.”

我小时候在外婆家长大，对于家乡还留着一些记忆，没有感到陌生。这次回来，我发现中国的移动支付好方便用手机扫一下就能付钱 (China News 2023a n.p.).

The essence of talent return is more pronounced in the “Cultivate Roots, Cast Soul, and Build Dream” program. Ideally, motivated young adults who have developed strong patriotic sentiments and diasporic values are prepared to return and establish their lives in a modernized, urbanized, and economically developed environment in urban areas of rural China. The younger participants engage in cultural activities, while older participants visit industrial and



commercial bases, gaining insights into local industries and economic development. The program aims to nurture a potential talent pool of young adults who, through cultural immersion and education, develop a strong sense of identity and loyalty to their Hometown. Louie's objectives remain relevant today; within the context of the overseas Hometown, the long-term mission of these camps is to foster connections with the younger generation of the diaspora, potentially leading to business investments and reversing the brain drain that has affected the region (Louie 2004).

## Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that local governments, such as those in Qingtian County, adapt central policies to local conditions and ensure their implementation on the ground, involving cooperation with non-state actors, including schools, cultural organizations, and local communities. The summer camps for overseas Chinese youth initially aimed to improve social welfare and address the needs of left-behind children of international migrants. State-led media and official narrative stressing the necessity of providing cultural and linguistic education to overseas Chinese descendants. According to the sources, maintaining ties and patriotic sentiments is essential for the unity between the nation and the diaspora. Patriotic education for overseas Chinese youth is often framed within the context of cultivating patriotic sentiments for future donations, investments, and talent return (China News 2023a n.p.; China News 2023b n.p.; China News 2008 n.p.; Sichuan Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese 2019). The long-term mission of these camps is to educate a younger generation of overseas Chinese who are not only aware of their cultural heritage but also motivated to participate in and contribute to the socio-economic progress of their ancestral regions (Louie 2004). These summer camps serve as a mediating platform for communication between the state and the overseas diaspora, tailored to specific age groups and regional cultural affiliations. Rather than focusing solely on nationhood, local governments foster a sense of belonging, emphasizing place attachment and personal connection to the community when shaping diaspora education policies.

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## “The Six-Party Talks as the Turning Point for the PRC’s Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy”

MARTYNA SZOJA

Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg

**Abstract:** The People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to solidify its role on the world stage, and one of the most defining shifts in its foreign policy has been its approach to nuclear non-proliferation. The PRC transformed from a relatively isolated nuclear power to a mediator in multilateral negotiations. This paper examines this critical evolution, focusing on the Six-Party Talks as a landmark case study. These talks, aimed at denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, illustrate the PRC's evolving stance on global security and its growing commitment to international nuclear non-proliferation norms. The Six-Party Talks manifested the PRC's changing perception of its own role as a key player in the global arena. While much has been written about the PRC's expanding nuclear capabilities, fewer studies have analyzed its political shift toward supporting non-proliferation. This paper seeks to address this gap.

**Keywords:** PRC, North Korea, Six-Party Talks, nuclear weapons, nuclear non-proliferation, peacebuilding, denuclearization

## **Introduction**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is recognized as an official Nuclear Weapon State (NWS) and has a complex history of adapting to global nuclear non-proliferation norms. Over time, the PRC has played various roles, including that of a nuclear proliferator and both an active and passive participant in international norms, depending on the specific context and narrative. A pivotal moment in the PRC's engagement with global non-proliferation norms was the Six-Party Talks, which marked a significant milestone in the PRC's journey toward defining its identity in the field of disarmament.

This paper analyzes the evolution of the PRC's attitude toward nuclear non-proliferation policy. This paper argues that the Six-Party Talks were the key turning point in the PRC's shift toward active support for nuclear non-proliferation. To achieve this, the paper first examines the PRC's approach before the talks, which is characterized by proliferator behavior. It then explores the Six-Party Talks, providing an overview of the actions taken and the interests of the participating states. The PRC's perspective is analyzed by detailing Chinese engagement in the talks, including a chronological overview of its involvement. Finally, the legacy of the Six-Party Talks for the PRC's nuclear non-proliferation policy is discussed.

## **PRC's Approach Towards Non-Proliferation Before the Six-Party Talks**

The PRC joined the Nuclear Club on October 16th, 1964, when it declared the successful detonation of an atomic bomb (Chiu 1965: 96-107). Two years after that detonation, the PRC conducted its first hydrogen bomb experiment in 1966 at Lop Nur. Testing persisted until 1996, when the PRC endorsed, though did not formally ratify, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) (Hui Zhang 2024: n.p.).

Initially, the PRC resisted global non-proliferation norms and was widely viewed as a promoter of nuclear proliferation. The PRC supported nuclear development in socialist-aligned countries, viewing it as a strategic counterbalance to the US nuclear arsenal, which it saw as an “imperialist” threat. The PRC sought to advance its own nuclear capabilities, aiming to position itself as a leader within the Global South and strengthen its influence on the international stage (Young 1966: 141-156). It also manifests the role the PRC envisioned for itself, i.e., the role of the socialist power. In the 1980s, the first proliferation actions of the PRC were noticed. Examples include reportedly selling unsafeguarded nuclear reactors to Algeria, Pakistan, and Iran (Yuan 2000: n.p., Burr 2013; Chakma 2011: 44; Paul 2003: 24) and proliferating technology to e.g. Iran, Libya, North Korea, and Saudi Arabia (Stewart 2015: n.p.). It can be said that for the first three decades after its successful nuclear test, the PRC was widely viewed as a proliferator and the “rule shaker.”

Over the next three decades, however, this perception shifted considerably. The PRC has signed several key treaties and portrays itself as a committed supporter – rule-taker – of international atomic disarmament efforts and international organizations on peace, such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The PRC has increasingly positioned itself as a potential leader and “rule maker” in global non-proliferation. Key milestones in this transformation include its 1991 commitment to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the signing of the NPT in 1992, and its membership in the Zangger Committee in 1997. These actions reflect the PRC's shift toward a more active role in promoting nuclear non-proliferation.

To demonstrate its commitment to non-proliferation, the PRC also needed to take the initiative in this area. This opportunity arose in the early 2000s, marking a significant step that



underscored the PRC's progress in aligning with and supporting non-proliferation goals: the Six-Party Talks.

### **Key Aspects of the Six-Party Talks and the PRC's Role**

The Six-Party Talks took place from August 2003 till April 2009. They aimed to resolve the security concerns caused by the North Korean nuclear weapons program and its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Meetings gathered representatives from six countries: the PRC, Japan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia, and the United States. Six-Party Talks were divided into six rounds with additional phases and meetings.

#### *Overview of the Six-Party Talks*

The Six-Party Talks were not a stable linear process but rather negotiations with frequent interruptions and restarts due to a lack of mutual trust and credibility. The PRC hosted the talks in the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in western Beijing (Huan 2024: 81).

Talks started in late August 2003 and, through a series of first, not very effective rounds, reached a consensus in September 2005, named the September 2005 Joint Statement. North Korea agreed to give up its nuclear program, accepted IAEA safeguards, and promised to return to the NPT and nuclear non-proliferation regime (Bajoria/Xu 2013: n.p.). Wu Dawei – head of the PRC delegation and chairman of the talks, announced the adaptation of the Joint Statement. Wu added that the Six-Party Talks framework proved successful and realistic (MOFA PRC 2009: n.p.). In exchange, the DPRK received security guarantees, economic aid, and energy assistance.

Talks encountered a serious obstacle one month later, in November 2005, when the US accused the DPRK of money-laundry activities in Macau (Bajoria/Xu 2013: n.p.). Amid the ongoing deadlock, the DPRK conducted several missile and nuclear tests, including a nuclear test in October 2006. It directly violated the September 2005 Joint Statement and caused the UN sanctions. The PRC was informed about this test an hour before conducting it (Singh 1998: 41-52, Huan 2024: 178). Beijing urged North Korea to rejoin multilateral talks after the nuclear crisis. In February 2007, during the sixth round of talks, members agreed on a denuclearization plan. The DPRK was to freeze its nuclear program within 60 days in exchange for aid and

access to Banco Delta Asia funds. Later that year, North Korea began disabling its Yongbyon plant under US supervision. In June 2008, North Korea provided a detailed account of its nuclear programs to the PRC, which was leading the Denuclearization Working Group at that time (Nikitin/Dunham 2009: 16). Progress continued into mid-2008 as North Korea provided detailed disclosures of its program. The US eased sanctions and removed the DPRK from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list. However, Pyongyang did not agree to verification terms, and by late 2008, it restarted its program and expelled nuclear inspectors, deteriorating relations with the US (Bajoria/Xu 2013: n.p.).

The Six-Party Talks effectively ended on April 5th, 2009, when North Korea tested a satellite launch, leading to expanded UN sanctions. In response, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the Talks and renounced all previous agreements made during the negotiations on May 25th, 2009 (Liang 2023: n.p.). The talks have not been renewed since 2009.

### *Chinese Role and Interests*

The PRC applied a range of tactics to ensure the continuation and progress of the Six-Party Talks. These included coercive measures, leveraging networks, visiting the White House, and sending and applying expert knowledge to exert pressure on the DPRK and the United States (Huan 2024: 110-112). In the process of Six-Party Talks, the highest rank officials, including Presidents Jing Zemin (1993-2003) and Hu Jintao (2003-2013), were personally involved (Jin 2005: 26 in Chu/Lin 2008: 30). The Six-Party Talks grew to such importance that one of the PRC spokesperson said that denuclearization would not be possible in any other framework than the Six-Party Talks (Zhang/Han 2013: 199).

The main reasons for the PRC's commitment were geographical closeness and historical interests. The PRC was concerned about its security and stability. It feared that North Korea's regime collapse could lead to nuclear contamination and a refugee crisis, with thousands of North Koreans possibly fleeing into the PRC territory. Additionally, the PRC worried that North Korea's nuclear ambitions could lead other neighboring countries to build up their own nuclear weapons, threatening peace in Northeast Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific (Gong 2007: 12). Moreover, North Korea also acted as a "buffer zone" for the PRC against American forces in South Korea (Zhu 2016: 577 in: Huan 2024: 92). Additionally, the PRC saw benefits in guiding North Korea toward economic reforms similar to its own, as a stable, reforming North Korea

would better align with the PRC's regional and global goals (Acuto 2012: 12). In the 1970s, the PRC faced challenges similar to North Korea's in the 2000s and 2010s, including economic stagnation and international isolation. Since the PRC had successfully addressed these issues, it hoped to guide North Korea toward similar improvements and progress (Chu/Lin 2008: 35-36).

An important factor was the PRC's growing sense of responsibility for maintaining peace in Asia, as emphasized by President Hu Jintao (2003-2013). This new role was linked to the PRC's economic rise and broader ambitions (Chu/Lin 2008: 31). The PRC government set multiple goals for the Six-Party Talks, including achieving denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, establishing a security framework for Northeast Asia, maintaining positive relations among the involved states, demonstrating its soft power, and improving its international position (Zhang/Han 2013: 192).

Despite limited success in the first round in 2003, talks continued. From February to June 2004, the PRC's Ambassador Ning Fukui served as a special envoy between the US and North Korea, ensuring North Korea's participation in the next round. The PRC arranged private US-North Korea meetings at North Korea's request (Acuto 2012: 5).

On October 3rd, 2006, North Korea announced plans for nuclear tests, conducting one on October 9th. The UN Security Council responded with Resolution 1718, condemning the test and imposing sanctions. (Acuto 2012: 7). However, initially, the PRC opposed UN sanctions, with Wang Guangya – PRC representative to the UN 2003-2008 – threatening a veto and Premier Wen Jiabao expressing concerns about unintended consequences of deteriorating situation instead of improving (Swaine 2009: 4, 17). Eventually, it was the first time the PRC supported sanctions against the DPRK, and it marked the beginning of China rebuilding its strategy towards the DPRK. After these nuclear tests, the PRC was evidently dissatisfied with North Korean behavior and answered with strong statements condemning the DPRK tests, even naming the DPRK 悍然 *hanran* (flagrantly) and used by the PRC when describing rivals or enemies (Kahn 2006: 11, in: Huan 2024: 178). It could be, therefore, said that the PRC prioritized its new role as a global power over the role of a socialist ally of North Korea.

In 2007-2008, the PRC kept diplomatic talks with North Korea active, pressuring Pyongyang through energy controls and negotiations. In February 2007, North Korea agreed to

shut down its Yongbyon nuclear facilities under IAEA supervision in exchange for fuel. However, delays and missed deadlines strained relations, and North Korea later threatened to restart its nuclear program. By the end of 2008, facing a humanitarian crisis, North Korea's dependence on aid from the PRC, South Korea, and the US linked its stability closely to foreign support (Acuto 2012: 7-10).

When the Six-Party Talks ended in December 2008, Beijing and Seoul attempted to restore the format but unsuccessfully (Lee 2024: 86). The PRC tried to restart them with a three-step plan: first, bilateral discussions between the DPRK and the US, then a meeting of key nations, and finally, full negotiations. However, the US, Japan, and South Korea reacted skeptically and began exploring alternatives to the Six-Party Talks (Zhang/Han 2013: 193).

### **Meaning of the Six-Party Talks for the PRC Policy**

From the beginning, the PRC government found the Six-Party Talks of huge importance. For the first time, the PRC was the host and mediator of the international multilateral discussion. Never in history was the PRC so fully involved in the situation of another country. Until joining APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) in 1991, the PRC was not involved in multilateral cooperation – excluding being in the Soviet Bloc – and was not eager to join talks about security due to the lack of such experience. The first multilateral security cooperation for the PRC was the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994, followed by SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) in 1996 (Chu/Lin 2008: 38-39).

The PRC's leading role in the Six-Party Talks marked a critical turning point in its foreign policy, as they became a “major issue in Chinese foreign policy” (Chu/Lin 2008: 30). The PRC was responsible for all arrangements and formulas and acted as the host-mediator. This initiative underscored the PRC's shift toward positioning itself as a mediator on the global stage. Previously, the PRC had primarily embraced the role of a socialist power, often challenging established norms and then relatively passive followers. However, the Six-Party Talks provided a critical opportunity for the PRC to transition into the role of a responsible global power that adheres to international rules and aligns itself with the broader international order.

To achieve its goal of becoming a global power, the PRC needed to develop experience in diplomatic processes. The Six-Party Talks provided such a possibility. The PRC's delegates, accustomed to rhetoric designed for domestic audiences, had to adapt and gain expertise in the international diplomacy communication styles. They employed a strategically ambiguous approach, which proved effective during the talks (Zhang/Han, 2013: 192-193).

The Six-Party Talks were crucial for the PRC's nuclear non-proliferation strategy and its narration of the PRC's role in the global community. Negotiations significantly boosted its standing on the international stage as a responsible actor capable of leading multilateral negotiations – a responsible global power. The PRC aligned more closely with global non-proliferation norms by hosting the Talks, using this platform to reinforce its image as a responsible nuclear player. The PRC's foreign policy showed its ability to put its goals into practice, often using shuttle diplomacy, moving between parties to negotiate, and preferring cooperative, multilateral solutions instead of acting alone. The Six-Party Talks and the PRC's growing diplomatic role in Asia and globally highlight this active and practical approach.

The PRC recognized that joining multilateral efforts allows it to expand its influence in global affairs without raising concerns. Rather than the contrary, it often receives praise, as seen during the Six-Party Talks. Understanding that acting alone may lead to resistance, the PRC has started to view multilateralism as a way to play a positive role in Asia and beyond (Chu/Lin 2008: 38-40; Gong 2008: 15-18, Huan 2024: 84). The role of the PRC was perceived as crucial, as noted “without China, the Six-Party Talks would never be possible” (Gong 2008: 14). Especially for the DPRK, presence of the PRC was instrumental, as it was the only country its representatives could have trust in (Huan 2024: 94).

Nowadays, the Six-Party Talks are frequently cited by PRC politicians and officials as a significant achievement in the PRC's diplomatic history. They often express pride in the PRC's fundamental role, portraying it as a prime example of constructive diplomacy and successful multilateral engagement. Official platforms, such as the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) website, feature updated content like “The Six-Party Talks on the North Korean Nuclear Issue Held in Beijing” (朝鲜半岛核问题六方会谈), emphasizing the positive influence of the PRC's involvement and the international recognition it garnered. This narrative reinforces the PRC's self-image as a responsible global power and an effective mediator in complex international negotiations.

Beijing made significant pushes to revitalize the Six-Party Talks in 2013, 2015, and 2021 and organized commemoration celebrations of the Six-Party Talks (Bajoria/Xu 2013: n.p., US Department of State 2016a: n.p., US Department of State 2017: n.p., MOFA PRC 2023: n.p.). The PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi delivered a speech titled “Revisiting the Spirit of the September 19 Joint Statement and Safeguarding Peace and Stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia,” – calling for reaffirming ideas and principles of the Joint Statement and the Six-Party Talks (PRC MOFA 2015: n.p.).

In light of ongoing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the PRC frequently advocates resuming the Six-Party Talks. As the PRC statements emphasize, the principles developed during the Six-Party Talks, such as the balanced and synchronized resolution of all parties' concerns, continue to be relevant and influential in guiding current diplomatic efforts (MOFA PRC 2023: n.p.).

Through the Six-Party Talks, the PRC has positioned itself as an active mediator and a source of solutions. This represents an evolution from its earlier, more reserved role during the initial negotiations. It also indicates that the PRC has chosen a specific role in international relations – the role of responsible global power. In April 2021, the PRC proposed a “three-step” approach: initiating direct contact between North Korea and the United States, holding preparatory meetings, and ultimately resuming the formal Six-Party Talks. Furthermore, the PRC has suggested convening emergency consultations among the heads of the Six-Party Talks to address urgent issues (MOFA PRC 2023: n.p.).

The PRC consistently supports nuclear non-proliferation. In November 2024, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution to do a nuclear weapons war effects study. Interestingly, only the PRC voted in favor of the NWS when France, the UK, and Russia were against it, and the US abstained (ICAN 2024). The PRC gave a strong signal that it noticed the importance of such studies and potentially saw the risk of nuclear war. Supporting such studies could be part of the PRC's diplomatic approach to position itself as a responsible nuclear power concerned with global stability. It may also be a strategic stance, highlighting a contrast to the US approach, which appears less transparent by abstaining.

## Conclusions

The Six-Party Talks represent a transformative chapter in the People's Republic of China's engagement with nuclear non-proliferation norms, illustrating a transformative shift in its role within the international system. Situated approximately midway through its 60 years as a nuclear-capable state, the Six-Party Talks highlighted the PRC's progression from a reluctant participant to an active leader in multilateral diplomacy. This evolution underscores the applicability of National Role Theory as the PRC transitioned from a "rule taker" to a "rule maker," aspiring to influence and shape the international non-proliferation framework.

The Six-Party Talks not only provided a platform for the PRC to showcase its diplomatic capabilities but also reinforced its position as a responsible global power committed to stabilizing the Korean Peninsula. Although the talks eventually collapsed, their impact remains significant in the PRC's foreign policy. They highlight the PRC's ability to mediate complex international issues and reflect its broader goals in the global order. The PRC's leadership in these negotiations helped change how its strategic intentions are seen, showing its efforts to balance regional security needs with a commitment to global non-proliferation.

Furthermore, the Six-Party Talks framework remains a significant model for multilateral diplomacy, offering insights into the management of regional security crises. As contemporary tensions on the Korean Peninsula persist, the principles and cooperative mechanisms developed during these talks continue to be invoked. PRC's involvement in the talks has thus provided it with a strategic advantage, demonstrating its readiness to assume leadership in addressing global challenges.

Ultimately, the Six-Party Talks signify more than just a milestone in the PRC's nuclear policy. They reflect the broader way of its integration into the international system and its ongoing pursuit of a global identity. By aligning its national interests with international norms, the PRC has underscored the enduring relevance of multilateralism in promoting peace and stability. This legacy positions the Six-Party Talks as a foundational case study in understanding the PRC's evolving role in the global order and its potential as a future leader in international security governance.



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## “Post-Honeymoon Tensions: A Chinese Performing Arts Troupe’s tour of the United States and the Fragility of Sino- American Rapprochement in 1975,,

LEONARDA R. PFAUS

London School of Economics and Political Science

*\*This essay is based on the authors’ Master thesis.*



**Abstract:** In March 1975, a seemingly innocent visit of a Chinese Performing Arts Troupe to the United States turned into a diplomatic scandal over a song calling to “liberate Taiwan.” By analyzing the ultimately canceled tour, this essay reveals the increasingly visible fragility in Sino-American rapprochement, stemming from ideological differences with regard to the future of Taiwan, as well as in domestic political pressures in both the United States and the People’s Republic of China. Nevertheless, as the cancellation of this tour had no significant impact on Sino-American rapprochement, this essay also reveals the powerful dynamic towards normalization that progressed despite numerous reversals.

**Keywords:** Rapprochement, Cultural Diplomacy, Performing Arts Troupe, Kissinger, Taiwan

## Introduction

On 26 March 1975, the U.S. government ordered the cancellation of a long-planned tour of a Chinese Performing Arts Troupe (PAT) through five cities of the United States. The reason for the cancellation of another event in U.S.-China exchange diplomacy was one phrase of a song, quietly inserted into the roster in a last-minute program change: “We are determined to liberate Taiwan.”<sup>1</sup> By analyzing the tour cancellation, this essay investigates the reasons behind the fragile nature of Sino-American relations after a promising start with Chairman Mao’s and President Richard Nixon’s momentous handshake in February 1972. The transformation of a seemingly innocent cultural event into a diplomatic scandal in spring 1975 reveals how Sino-American rapprochement was increasingly strained by ideological differences with regards to the future of Taiwan, as well as by domestic political pressures in both the United States and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Nevertheless, as the cancellation of the PAT tour had no significant impact on Sino-American rapprochement, this essay also reveals the powerful dynamic towards normalization that progressed despite numerous reversals.

With the publication of “Improbable Diplomats,” Pete Millwood fills a major gap in the historiography on Sino-American exchange diplomacy by showing the “direct and interactive connection between high-level and exchange diplomacy,” highlighting the various Chinese and American stakeholders’ roles in rapprochement.<sup>2</sup> With regards to the cancelled PAT tour,

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<sup>1</sup> Supplementary List, Folder 380, Box 39, RG4 NCUSCR.

<sup>2</sup> Millwood, *Diplomats*, p.25. For other works on exchange diplomacy, see: Bess Xintong Liu, “The Timpani Beats Just Hit on My Heart!” Music, Memory, and Diplomacy in the Philadelphia Orchestra’s 1973 China Tour’,

Millwood echoes Nancy Bernkopf-Tucker who blames Kissinger for failing to grasp the Chinese's serious stance on Taiwan, virtually provoking the PRC's strong message.<sup>3</sup> While the topic of this paper sheds light on the second disruption in U.S.-China exchange diplomacy, Shing-Kwang Chan's 2024 article explores the first attempt by the PRC to convey a political position through cultural diplomacy: in late 1974, Beijing attempted to exclude selected international journalists from China's first archaeological exhibition in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> The third disruption – a canceled visit of American mayors to the PRC in September 1975 – still awaits an in-depth analysis.

This research draws upon largely unexamined documents in the archive of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations (NCUSCR), held in the Rockefeller Archive Center in New York City, and on a special volume on the United States' China policy between 1973 and 1976, published as part of the Department of States' *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series. Additionally, cables and memoranda of conversations between Kissinger and his staff in March 1975 provide insight into the U.S. administration's decision-making that led to the PAT tour cancellation.

## Historical Context

Since the PRC's was founded in 1949, and especially after American soldiers faced the People's Liberation Army in the Korean War, and Beijing developed political, economic and military ties to Moscow, the U.S. regarded the PRC as a principal enemy, second only to the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Washington developed strategic ties with the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, established by Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek. A Mutual Defense Treaty, signed in 1954, sealed Washington's commitment to the island's defense in case of an armed attack – aimed to deter the PRC.<sup>6</sup> Yet, PRC officials insisted that the future of Taiwan

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*Twentieth-Century Music*, 18:3 (2021), pp.395-418; Tracy Ying Zhang, 'Bending the body for China: The Uses of Acrobatics in Sino-US Diplomacy during the Cold War', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 22:2 (2016), pp.123-146; Jeffrey Crean, 'A New Sphere of Influence: Table Tennis Diplomacy and the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations', *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 28 (2021), pp.109-132.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Bernkopf-Tucker, *Strait Talk. United States – Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge (Mass) London, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Shing-Kwan Chan, 'Relics and rapprochement: The intricacies of cultural diplomacy in China's first archaeological exhibition in the U.S. during the Cold War era', *Museum History Journal*, 17:1 (2024), pp.76-94.

<sup>5</sup> Harding, *Relationship*, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of China. 02.12.1954. Via: [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/chin001.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/chin001.asp), last access 22.08.2024.

was an affair internal to the Chinese and resented American military presence on the island – turning Taiwan into a perennial point of contention.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Sino-Soviet alliance soon unraveled, and Beijing's apprehension over Moscow's heightened power grew.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the Cultural Revolution, launched in 1966, severely disrupted internal Chinese politics, science and culture, and led to an unprecedented international isolation of the PRC.<sup>9</sup> By 1969, Mao acknowledged the PRC's vulnerable situation, and showed a readiness to engage with the U.S. – ultimately demonstrated in the Chinese table tennis players' sending a political message through their exchanges with American players in 1971.<sup>10</sup> This catalyst for Sino-American rapprochement led to President Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué.<sup>11</sup> Besides giving exchange diplomacy a prominent role in the growing Sino-American relations, both parties used the Communiqué to lay out their positions regarding Taiwan. Beijing reiterated that Taiwan was a province of China, that "the liberation of Taiwan is China's internal affair", and demanded the withdrawal of U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. acceded to the latter, but used ambiguous language with regards to Taiwan: it did not *accept*, but simply *acknowledge* the PRC's claim that Taiwan was a part of China.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Washington called for a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question – a commitment that Beijing purposefully avoided.<sup>14</sup>

### **Evolution of a Divergence**

By the mid-1970s, diverging views over Taiwan's role in normalization and the goal of rapprochement became apparent. To Henry Kissinger, National Security Advisor to Nixon, building Sino-American relations was attractive for two reasons: Beijing could help Washington settle the Vietnam War, and it could work as a strategic leverage against the Soviet Union,

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<sup>7</sup> Harding, *Relationship*, p.13.

<sup>8</sup> Crean, 'Diplomacy', p.122.

<sup>9</sup> Zhang Ru, 'The Chinese Experience. Sino-American Arts Exchange 1972 – 1986', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 31 (1991), p.70.

<sup>10</sup> Crean, 'Diplomacy', p.120.

<sup>11</sup> Shanghai Communiqué.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Foot, 'Normalization', p.100.

<sup>14</sup> Shanghai Communiqué.

drawing Moscow to the negotiation table on détente with the U.S.<sup>15</sup> In doing so, Washington could achieve good relations with both the PRC and the Soviet Union while further alienating one from the other.<sup>16</sup> For Beijing, on the other hand, while undoubtedly appreciating the “strategic marriage of convenience” with the U.S. for the sake of deterring the Soviet Union, these advantages never surpassed the risk to regime stability posed by endangering Beijing’s claim to Taiwan.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Beijing made three demands with regards to Taiwan: the U.S. should fully break diplomatic relations with the ROC, abrogate its 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty, and withdraw all its troops from the island.<sup>18</sup> Encouraged by Nixon’s and Kissinger’s secret concessions that went beyond the Shanghai Communiqué, Beijing perceived Washington’s promises regarding Taiwan as serious concessions intended to be promptly implemented – while to Washington, they were simply signs of overall commitment to normalization. This misunderstanding was further fueled during Kissinger’s visits to Beijing in February and November 1973, where Kissinger promised that within the first two years of Nixon’s second presidency the U.S. would withdraw its remaining forces from Taiwan. Crucially, he also pitched the idea of U.S. normalizing ties with the PRC under the “Japanese Formula” – meaning that only unofficial ties with the ROC would be maintained.<sup>19</sup> While Kissinger expected Beijing to concede to U.S. demands and “not press the Taiwan issue to the point of force,” the PRC leadership believed it simply had to wait before demanding further U.S. concessions on Taiwan.<sup>20</sup>

## Domestic Turmoil

The chief debilitating factor for the U.S. government’s room for maneuver in foreign policy was the Watergate Scandal, which considerably took momentum out of American foreign policy.<sup>21</sup> After Nixon stepped down in August 1974, his successor Gerald Ford was left with little room for political maneuvering: he had to balance his policies with the anti-Communist and pro-ROC forces within the Republican party.<sup>22</sup> By 1974, pro-ROC positions were not held

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<sup>15</sup> Brandon Willadsen: ‘From China Lobby Activists to Blue Team Neoconservatives: The Evolution of the GOP’s views on Taiwan since 1949’, *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 31 (2024), p.168.

<sup>16</sup> Harding, *Relationship*, p.36.

<sup>17</sup> Bernkopf-Tucker, *Talk*, p.72.

<sup>18</sup> Harding, *Relationship*, p.51.

<sup>19</sup> MemCon, 16.02.1973, 2:15-6:00 pm, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Vol. XVIII (hereafter: FRUS), Document 9.

<sup>20</sup> Kissinger, *Renewal*, p.898. Bernkopf-Tucker, *Talk*, p.43.

<sup>21</sup> Lord, *Oral History*, p.545.

<sup>22</sup> Bernkopf-Tucker, *Talk*, p.72.

out of genuine support for Taipei – rather, Ford’s opponents stood up for Taiwan because they “hated détente, detested Kissinger, and found China policy a ready target.”<sup>23</sup> Additionally, as Ford was aiming to secure his nomination for the Republican presidential candidate, his competitor Ronald Reagan used Ford’s alleged negligence on Taiwan to challenge the incumbent.<sup>24</sup> The fear that Beijing would conquer Taiwan after U.S. withdrawal became an even more powerful allegation as the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975 dramatically showed the consequences of the U.S. retreat from South Vietnam. Therefore, maintaining a good relationship with Taiwan was as much about deterring domestic political opponents as it was about safeguarding Washington’s international reputation as a leader that honors its commitments.<sup>25</sup> This explains the inability of the State Department to make any public concessions on Taiwan and why ultimately, the Performing Arts Troupe tour was cancelled.

Meanwhile, Beijing increasingly demonstrated a willingness to allow tensions with the U.S. to escalate. A CIA paper, given to Kissinger on 26 October 1975, situates the main cause for Chinese officials’ increasingly frank stance towards Washington in Mao’s personal disappointment with the slowing “pace of U.S. moves in respect of Taiwan.”<sup>26</sup> Consequently, during Kissinger’s conversations with deputy premier Deng Xiaoping in November 1974, the latter pointed out that there was “a lot of talk that our relations have chilled,” acknowledging the reason for these rumors: the appointing of the experienced Ambassador Leonard Unger to Taipei and the increased number of ROC consulates in the U.S.<sup>27</sup> The apparent revival of U.S.-Taiwan relations had added to Beijing’s insecurity about Washington’s motives. After Kissinger told Deng that the U.S. intended to solve the problem of Taiwan’s diplomatic status by maintaining a liaison office in Taipei and an embassy in Beijing – hence moving on from the Japanese Formula – Deng categorically replied that Kissinger’s considerations were still “a variation of one China and one Taiwan” and hence impossible to agree to.<sup>28</sup> Deng repeated Mao’s phrase that the PRC could wait one hundred years for unification with Taiwan, but that nevertheless, the United States would need to adhere to the Shanghai Communiqué, which, to

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.75.

<sup>24</sup> Harding, *Relations*, p.52.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> CIA, 26.10.1974, FRUS, Document 89.

<sup>27</sup> MemCon: 26.11.1974, 10:20-11:00am, FRUS, Document 92.

<sup>28</sup> MemCon: 26.11.1974, 3:45-5:00pm, FRUS, Document 94.

Deng, clearly precluded any variations of a “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan” solution.<sup>29</sup>

Additionally, the so-called Gang of Four, headed by Mao’s wife Jiang Qing, was another cause for the uncompromising stance that Chinese policymakers held in negotiations. Advocating for a renewed shift towards the left, the Gang of Four opposed Zhou’s effort to rehabilitate those purged during the Cultural Revolution and opposed his rather pragmatic foreign politics, also represented by Deng Xiaoping.<sup>30</sup> In this context, every aspect of the Sino-American relationship had become a subject of controversy, and Chinese policymakers were pressured to tread a hard line in negotiations with the Americans. As the Gang of Four gained more power and Jiang dominated culture politics, it becomes clear that this group was instrumental in the contentions triggered during cultural exchanges, with the Performing Arts Tour cancellation in March 1975 being a prime example.<sup>31</sup>

### **Anatomy of a cancellation**

The initial proposition for a new event of cultural diplomacy was made in summer 1974 by Hsieh Ch’i-mei, Counsellor of the PRC Liaison Office in Washington, to Murray Zinoman, member of staff at the State Department.<sup>32</sup> Eventually, it was agreed that the NCUSCR would be the appropriate host organization for the tour of the PAT. Founded by a group of prominent East Asia scholars in 1966, the NCUSCR aimed to carve out a space for nonpartisan public discussion and education on the PRC and U.S.-China politics.<sup>33</sup> With the beginning of rapprochement in 1972, it took up a crucial role in facilitating numerous events of cultural diplomacy, starting with the visit of the Chinese table tennis players to the United States in April 1972.<sup>34</sup> Building on this expertise, by January 1975, the NCUSCR had finalized the programme and tour itinerary, and eventually sold 20.000 tickets for what it advertised as a “highly colorful

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Harding, *Relationship*, p.50.

<sup>31</sup> Berris: ‘Exchanges’, p.84.

<sup>32</sup> Memorandum, 23.07.1974, Folder 380, Box 39, RG4 NCUSCR.

<sup>33</sup> Jan Carol Berris, ‘The Evolution of Sino-American Exchanges: A View from the National Committee’, in Joyce K. Kallgren, Denis Fred Simon, eds., *Educational Exchanges. Essays on the Sino-American Experience* (Berkeley, 1987), p.81.

<sup>34</sup> Warren I. Cohen, ‘While China Faced East. Chinese-American Cultural Relations, 1949-71’, in Joyce K. Kallgren, Denis Fred Simon, eds., *Educational Exchanges. Essays on the Sino-American Experience* (Berkeley, 1987), p.54.

evening of music and dance” as part of the “people-to-people exchanges” with the PRC.<sup>35</sup> Besides the artists, the delegation included interpreters, security personnel as well as PRC Liaison Office (PRCLO) and NCUSCR staff, and counted around 110 people.<sup>36</sup> Sixteen performances were scheduled between April 3<sup>rd</sup> and April 26<sup>th</sup>, going from Los Angeles to St Paul-Minneapolis, Chicago, and New York with the final four performances to be held in the prestigious Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

However, when Jan Berris and Arthur Rosen from the NCUSCR met with Hsieh at the PRCLO on Saturday, 8 March 1975, it became clear that this tour would not go as planned. Berris recounts how, in a suspiciously casual way, Hsieh handed her a new program and a supplementary list with English translations of the songs and additional information about composers, insisting that the supplementary list was printed in full in the programs.<sup>37</sup> Arguably on purpose, Hsieh failed to mention the tacit incorporation of a new song titled “People of Taiwan, Our Own Brothers” (台湾同胞—我的骨肉兄弟), whose lyrics were summarized in the program sheet as follows:

“People of Taiwan, our own brothers, day and night you are in our hearts.

We are determined to liberate Taiwan and let the light of the sun shine on the island.”<sup>38</sup>

Realizing the sensitivity of the issue, the NCUSCR contacted the State Department for advice.<sup>39</sup> Because Kissinger was traveling in the Middle East, it was Philip Habib, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, who, from 13 March 1975 onwards, chaired meetings between the State Department and the PRCLO, aiming to find a solution. However, after Habib made a conciliatory gesture by asking for a modification of the critical line instead of insisting on removing the entire song, Han Su, Deputy Chief of the PRCLO, accused the Americans of deliberately escalating talks “to the point of no return”, knowing that to the Chinese, “the Taiwan question is a matter of principle, and we never yield to foreign

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<sup>35</sup> Invitation, 06.03.1975, Folder 380, Box 39, RG4 NCUSCR.

<sup>36</sup> Millwood, *Improbable Diplomats*, p.215.

<sup>37</sup> Letter to Eckstein, 11.03.1975, Folder 385, Box 39, RG4 NCUSCR.

<sup>38</sup> Supplementary List, Folder 380, Box 39, RG4 NCUSCR.

<sup>39</sup> Chronology, 23.05.1975, Folder 385, Box 39, RG4 NCUSCR



pressure on matters of principle.”<sup>40</sup> Hsieh similarly argued that since Taiwan was an integral part of China, the song only expressed the Chinese’s true feelings in the matter, and that this point of view was in the spirit of the Shanghai Communiqué – implying that the United States therefore had no grounds to object to the song.<sup>41</sup> Habib, in turn, expressed his regret at the Chinese’s uncompromising stance, and reiterated that for the American side, the inclusion of the song would neither be in Washington’s nor in Beijing’s interest.<sup>42</sup> He further emphasized that the U.S. position does not reflect any change in their adherence to spirit or word of the Shanghai Communiqué, and emphasized a generally benevolent stance towards the PRC, hoping that “this regrettable episode” would not affect other aspects of their relation.<sup>43</sup> Habib’s position, therefore, reflects the dilemma of American foreign policy under Ford: a willingness to achieve normalization with the PRC that, because of fragile domestic politics, could not be publicly pursued, especially not at the expense of Taiwan. The Chinese officials, on the other hand, were pressured by radically leftist forces in Beijing to firmly defend PRC claims over Taiwan and aimed to transmit Mao’s dismay with the state of normalization negotiations.

Since no compromise was reached, the last deadline – 12 noon, March 26<sup>th</sup> – passed and the PAT’s tour was postponed indefinitely. Despite the fact that neither government drew extensive attention to the cancellation, trying to limit the political damage, the PAT tour cancellation was one cobblestone on the sloping road that Sino-American relations had turned into by 1975. During his visit to the PRC in October 1975, Kissinger failed to prepare a draft communiqué in advance of Ford’s visit because of an exceptionally hostile atmosphere in negotiations with Mao, where Mao accused the U.S. of standing on China’s shoulders to reach détente with the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, as Ford visited Beijing in December 1975, the president faced hardened Chinese fronts and could himself not propose any meaningful concessions on Taiwan. Ultimately, Sino-American relations only moved on from their entrenchment in 1977, when the Gang of Four in China was purged, and Deng Xiaoping was secured as the PRC’s new leader.

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<sup>40</sup> MemCon, 23.03.1975, Box 5, Folder “China, unnumbered items – (10), 3/13/75 - 3/27/75”, Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, via: [https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/sites/default/files/pdf\\_documents/library/document/0332/4527383.pdf](https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/sites/default/files/pdf_documents/library/document/0332/4527383.pdf), last access 30.08.2024 (hereafter: KSWWOF-GRFPL).

<sup>41</sup> Rosen, 12.03.1975, Folder 385, Box 39, RG4 NCUSCR.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> MemCon, 23.03.1975, KSWWOF-GRFPL.

<sup>44</sup> Millwood, *Diplomats*, p.247.

On the U.S. side, it took the newly elected Jimmy Carter to shift his focus from Moscow to Beijing to finally realize normalization in late 1978.<sup>45</sup>

To conclude, the cancellation of the PAT tour has proven the relevance of cultural diplomacy in Sino-American rapprochement as an indicator for tensions in a partnership that was “intense and important but also unofficial and incomplete.”<sup>46</sup> As normalization negotiations had stalled over divergent views and misconceptions about the role of the ROC in Sino-American normalization, and government-to-government exchanges reflected the domestic political turmoil in both countries, the Chinese government turned an event of cultural diplomacy into a stage for political maneuvering. The PRC evidently had a holistic understanding of Sino-American diplomatic relations that included cultural diplomacy, and hence used the PAT tour to communicate their discontent with Washington’s position on Taiwan. American policymakers, however, had no relevant political leverage to counter this attack, and hence resorted to cancel the tour. A central responsibility bore Henry Kissinger, whose vision of the Chinese standpoint was clouded by his understanding of Sino-American rapprochement as a purely strategic endeavor during the Cold War, where Taiwan was of minor importance – consequently, he never grasped the importance of Taiwan to his Chinese interlocutors.<sup>47</sup> The canceled PAT tour proves how the dichotomy between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ diplomacy obscures the working mechanisms of Sino-American relations. Paying attention to changes in cultural, trade, sports and high-level relations between Washington and Beijing therefore is instrumental in understanding the overall health of this consequential relationship.

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<sup>45</sup> Foot, ‘Normalization’, p.98.

<sup>46</sup> Millwood, *Diplomats*, p.312.

<sup>47</sup> Bernkopf-Tucker, *Talk*, p.42.

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## “China’s Foreign Strategy Toward Armenia: Armenia’s Role in the Belt and Road Initiative”

Mane Vardanyan

Nanjing University

**Abstract:** This paper analyzes Armenia's role within China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's application of soft power strategies toward Armenia. As an important node in the South Caucasus region, Armenia has actively responded to the BRI, engaging in multi-level cooperation with China in infrastructure construction, trade and investment, finance, security, education and cultural exchange, and healthcare. This cooperation has allowed Armenia to promote economic diversification and enhance its international status. Still, it also faces challenges such as economic dependence on Russia and limited foreign exchange reserves. Through the BRI, cooperation between China and Armenia not only boosts economic growth for both countries but also strengthens China's strategic influence in the South Caucasus region. This paper aims to analyze the current state of cooperation, the challenges it faces, and China's strategic needs regarding Armenia.

**Keywords:** China, Armenia, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

## Introduction

China's national strategic goal is to achieve the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" (中华民族伟大复兴) by 2049<sup>1</sup>. This strategy seeks modernization in the political, social, and military realms, aiming to expand China's national power, improve governance, and adjust the international order to support China's governance model and national interests<sup>2</sup>. In line with this goal, China utilizes the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to advance its national rejuvenation. BRI aims to promote China's development by expanding global transportation and trade connections and deepening economic integration with neighboring and other countries. According to the 2024 government work reports from various provinces and cities across the country<sup>3</sup>, over the past decade, the BRI has made remarkable progress through nationwide efforts (Zhang, "聚焦‘一带一路’地方两会绘出‘大格局’"):

<sup>1</sup> The Center for Strategic Translation, "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation," accessed 2022, <https://www.strategictranslation.org/glossary/great-rejuvenation-of-the-chinese-nation>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023 Annual Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2023), accessed October 19, 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>

<sup>3</sup> Shouying Zhang, "聚焦‘一带一路’地方两会绘出‘大格局’ [Focusing on the 'Belt and Road' and Local Two Sessions to Paint a 'Grand Layout']", last modified January 29, 2024, <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/0ERL2819.html>

- From January to November 2023, China's total imports and exports with BRI partner countries amounted to 17.65 trillion yuan, non-financial direct investment reached 201.1 billion yuan, and the revenue from contracted projects was 784.8 billion yuan.
- The China-Europe freight trains completed 16,145 trips in the first 11 months of 2023, transporting 1.749 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), representing year-on-year increases of 7% and 19%, respectively.
- The Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway, after two months of operation, transported over 1 million passengers.
- Major projects such as the Father of the Nation Tunnel in Bangladesh and the Lekki Deep Sea Port in Nigeria were completed and implemented.

If we rely on this data provided by the Chinese government, we can conclude that these achievements demonstrate the significant progress made by the BRI in promoting economic integration between China and other countries and its crucial role in supporting China's national rejuvenation strategy.

In this context, it is necessary to understand Armenia's role in the BRI and China's strategic needs regarding Armenia. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the current state of cooperation between China and Armenia, the challenges they face, and the potential benefits for both sides, thereby deepening the understanding of their bilateral relationship within the framework of the BRI.

### **China-Armenia Cooperation under the BRI**

Once an important node on the Silk Road, Armenia now plays an indispensable role in the BRI. In the South Caucasus region, Armenia lies at the crossroads of several geopolitical plates on the Eurasian continent, serving as a key channel for exchanging international capital, information, goods, and people. Armenia's vibrant cultural diversity and spirit of inclusivity form a humanistic base that supports its significant role in international affairs.

China was one of the first countries to recognize Armenia's independence and establish diplomatic relations with it (April 6, 1992)<sup>4</sup>. Armenia has consistently regarded its relationship with China as a "priority in its diplomatic development."<sup>5</sup> To date, the two countries have

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<sup>4</sup> "Bilateral Relations," last modified August 26, 2024, <https://www.mfa.am/en/bilateral-relations/cn>

<sup>5</sup> Jin Yang, "亚美尼亚政治危机探析——兼论中国与亚美尼亚 '一带一路' 合作" [An Analysis of Armenia's Political Crisis: With a Discussion on China-Armenia 'Belt and Road' Cooperation], *Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian Studies* 5 (2019): 151, CNKI:SUN .0.2019-05-009.

signed dozens of cooperation agreements covering various fields of bilateral relations, including the Joint Communiqué between the Two Governments, the Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Tax Evasion, the Civil Aviation Transport Agreement, the Central Bank Cooperation Agreement, and the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement<sup>6</sup>.

Since China's leadership proposed the BRI in 2013, the Armenian government has supported this initiative. In 2015, during his official visit to China, Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan met with Chinese President Xi Jinping. President Sargsyan reaffirmed Armenia's support for China's Belt and Road Initiative, expressing confidence in Armenia's potential contribution to this ambitious project<sup>7</sup>. The two countries signed a Joint Declaration on Further Development and Deepening of Friendly Cooperation Relations. The declaration emphasized: The initiative to jointly build the Silk Road Economic Belt provides new historical opportunities for comprehensive cooperation between the two countries. Both sides will actively implement the relevant agreements already signed and jointly promote the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt<sup>8</sup>.

This statement highlights the mutual commitment of both nations to advancing the BRI. By framing the initiative as a 'new historical opportunity,' the declaration underscores its transformative potential for bilateral relations. It reflects Armenia's strategic interest in leveraging the BRI for economic and infrastructural development while aligning with China's objective of deepening its regional influence.

The cooperation between China and Armenia under the BRI spans several sectors:

### ***1. Infrastructure Development***

**Transportation:** With China's support, Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, has upgraded its public transportation system by introducing around 250 new buses and providing the necessary

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<sup>6</sup> Yang, "亚美尼亚政治危机探析", 151.

<sup>7</sup> State Visit of President Serzh Sargsyan to China," last modified March 25, 2015, <https://www.president.am/hy/foreign-visits/item/2015/03/25/State-visit-of-President-Serzh-Sargsyan-to-China/>.

<sup>8</sup> "中华人民共和国和亚美尼亚共和国关于进一步发展和深化友好合作关系的联合声明（全文）" [Joint Statement Between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Armenia on Further Developing and Deepening Friendly Cooperation (Full Text)], *Central Government Portal*, accessed March 25, 2015, [https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-03/25/content\\_2838414.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-03/25/content_2838414.htm).

spare parts for future maintenance<sup>9</sup>. In addition, China's involvement goes beyond urban transport, extending to the construction of Armenia's North-South Highway<sup>10</sup>. This strategic corridor connects Northern Europe, Russia, and the Middle East to South Asia, significantly shortening transportation times and offering an efficient land transport alternative to maritime routes, greatly improving trade flow. The corridor not only accelerates the circulation of goods but also acts as a catalyst for regional economic integration, deepening China's economic ties with Armenia and neighboring countries. Additionally, as a stable energy transportation route, it enhances the security of energy supplies, playing a key role in strengthening the energy security framework for the entire region.

*Energy Infrastructure:* Chinese enterprises have played a significant role in developing Armenia's energy infrastructure, including upgrading power facilities and developing renewable energy projects, particularly in the solar and wind energy sectors.

First, Chinese companies have actively participated in modernizing Armenia's power infrastructure. On July 1, 2016, China XD Group and the Armenian National High-Voltage Electric Grid Company signed the EPC project for the "Armenia Power Supply Reliability Grid Upgrade" in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia<sup>11</sup>.

Secondly, as one of the countries along the BRI, Armenia has made remarkable progress in the renewable energy sector in recent years, particularly in developing solar energy projects. Chinese enterprises have provided technical support for several solar power projects in Armenia. For example, the Armenia 3.75 MW ground-mounted and rooftop photovoltaic power station project, supported by Guorui Energy's photovoltaic brackets, successfully connected to the grid<sup>12</sup>.

Additionally, nuclear power plays an important role in Armenia's electricity supply. The Armenian Ministry of Energy has maintained close ties with the China National Nuclear Corporation, with both sides signing several cooperation agreements. On August 15, 2017, the

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<sup>9</sup> "New Yerevan Buses Mostly Unused", Azatutyun, last modified June 25, 2012 <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/24625774.html>

<sup>10</sup> "China participates in Armenia's North-South Highway project," CGTN, last modified September 11, 2022, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2022-09-11/China-participates-in-Armenia-s-North-South-Highway-project-1dfmpV4Cnmw/index.html>.

<sup>11</sup> "中国西电成功签约亚美尼亚电站改造 EPC 项目" [China XD Group Successfully Signed Armenia Power Plant Renovation EPC Project], *China Electricity Council*, accessed July 5, 2016, <https://www.cgcpa.org.cn/bhyw/hydt/2016-07-05/5968.html>.

<sup>12</sup> "Solar First Group Helps Global Green Development with Successful Grid Connection of Solar-5 Government PV Project in Armenia," Solar First, accessed October 17, 2022, <https://www.esolarfirst.com/news/solar-first-group-helps-global-green-development-with-successful-grid-connection-of-solar-5-government-pv-project-in-armenia/>



governments of China and Armenia signed an agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, paving the way for bilateral cooperation in the nuclear energy sector<sup>13</sup>.

On June 2, 2023, the government of Armenia and the government of China reached an important agreement to implement the construction of Armenian Public Television's eighth studio pavilion. This new pavilion will be the first new production facility for Armenian Public Television since its independence and will include a modern studio covering 1,000 square meters<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. Trade and Investment

In recent years, bilateral trade relations between China and Armenia have shown a clear upward trend. According to data from the National Statistical Committee of Armenia, bilateral trade between China and Armenia reached \$2.127 billion in 2023, representing a year-on-year increase of 21.3% and accounting for 10.3% of Armenia's total foreign trade<sup>15</sup>. This indicates that China is playing an increasingly important role in Armenia's foreign trade sector.

In terms of exports, Armenia mainly exports minerals and agricultural products to China. In 2023, Armenia's exports to China amounted to \$425 million, a year-on-year increase of 15.1%, making China Armenia's third-largest export destination, behind only Russia and the UAE. Regarding imports, Armenia imported \$1.702 billion worth of goods from China, a year-on-year increase of 23%. The main products China exports to Armenia include electronic products and machinery, making China Armenia's second-largest source of imports<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Qingtian Zheng, “亚铺路核能合作 可再生能源投资潜力大” [Armenia Paving the Way for Nuclear Energy Cooperation: Significant Investment Potential in Renewable Energy], *21st Century Business Herald*, last modified August 19, 2017, <https://m.21jingji.com/article/20170819/9bd657fabcd671e229d9c9131e31e080.html>

<sup>14</sup> “Armenia and China signed an agreement on the construction of a new TV studio of the Public TV Company of Armenia,” High-Tech Ministry of Armenia, accessed June 2, 2023, <https://hightech.gov.am/en/tegekatvakan-kentron/ayl/norutyunner/hayastan-ev-cinastan-paymanagir-en-storagrel-hanrayin-herusta-nkerutyany-nor-herustastudiayi-karucman-veraberyal>

<sup>15</sup> Foreign Trade of the Republic of Armenia in 2023,” ArmStatBank [https://statbank.armstat.am/pxweb/hy/ArmStatBank/ArmStatBank\\_5%20Foreign%20trade/FT-5-2023.px/table/tableViewLayout2?rxid=a442d0d9-55e7-405b-8e2a-3bb7c304f81d](https://statbank.armstat.am/pxweb/hy/ArmStatBank/ArmStatBank_5%20Foreign%20trade/FT-5-2023.px/table/tableViewLayout2?rxid=a442d0d9-55e7-405b-8e2a-3bb7c304f81d)

<sup>16</sup> “Foreign Trade of the Republic of Armenia in 2023.”



However, China and Armenia have a trade deficit of \$1.277 billion, accounting for 60% of the bilateral trade volume. This means that Armenia's imports from China far exceed its exports to China. Overall, China is Armenia's third-largest trading partner after Russia and the UAE<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, the economic cooperation between China and Armenia extends beyond the trade sector, encompassing strategic investments in various industries. Chinese companies have increasingly engaged in Armenia's energy, infrastructure, and mining sectors, with projects focusing on renewable energy, transportation networks, and resource development<sup>18</sup>. Meanwhile, Chinese telecommunications companies like Huawei have also gained a strong foothold in the Armenian market, particularly in cooperation related to developing 5G networks<sup>19</sup>.

### **3. Financial Cooperation**

Financial cooperation between China and Armenia has shown positive progress in several areas, most notably the signing of a bilateral currency swap agreement. On March 25, 2015, with approval from China's State Council, the People's Bank of China and the Central Bank of Armenia signed a bilateral currency swap agreement valued at 1 billion Chinese Yuan (RMB) / 77 billion Armenian Dram (AMD)<sup>20</sup>.

### **4. Security Cooperation**

In recent years, security cooperation between Armenia and China has continuously strengthened. This cooperation includes military and defense collaboration, such as joint exercises and military education.

In 2017, during a three-day visit to Yerevan by Chinese Rear Admiral Guan Youfei, the two sides reached agreements to expand military cooperation and carry out mutually beneficial projects. This included a joint activity plan between the Armenian and Chinese armed forces and ongoing military personnel training<sup>21</sup>. In 2022, Armenian Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan received the Chinese Ambassador to Armenia, Fan Yong, and the new military

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<sup>17</sup> “2023 年中国—亚美尼亚双边贸易额同比增长 21.3%” [China-Armenia Bilateral Trade in 2023 Increased by 21.3% Year-on-Year]. Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. Accessed January 6, 2024, <http://am.mofcom.gov.cn/article/jmxw/202402/20240203471927.shtml>.

<sup>18</sup> “US Should Keep an Eye on Rising Chinese Investment in the South Caucasus,” Russia Matters, last modified October 1, 2020 <https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/us-should-keep-eye-rising-chinese-investment-south-caucasus>

<sup>19</sup> Emil Avdaliani, “The US, China, and the Race for 5G in the South Caucasus,” China Observers, last modified May 11, 2021 <https://chinaobservers.eu/the-us-china-and-the-race-for-5g-in-the-south-caucasus/>

<sup>20</sup> “中国央行与亚美尼亚央行签署双边本币互换协议” [The Central Banks of China and Armenia Sign Bilateral Local Currency Swap Agreement], *Yicai Global*, last modified March 25, 2015, <https://www.yicai.com/news/4590438.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Emil Danielyan, “Armenia To Deepen Military Ties With China”, Azatutyun, last modified April 14, 2017 <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/28430829.html>

attaché of the Chinese Embassy. During the discussions, Suren Papikyan and Fan Yong As emphasized the importance of bilateral relations and explored opportunities for further development and expansion of defense cooperation<sup>22</sup>.

### 5. Educational and Cultural Exchange

*Educational Cooperation:* China and Armenia's cooperation in education is growing stronger. Scholarships and exchange programs have facilitated significant interactions between students and scholars from both countries. Several universities in Armenia have established mechanisms for mutual student exchanges with higher education institutions in China. For example, the student exchange agreement between Yerevan State University and Tianjin Normal University is a concrete manifestation of this cooperation<sup>23</sup>.

Since 2009, Bryusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences in Armenia has engaged in deep collaboration with Dalian University, primarily relying on the platform of the Confucius Institute. This collaboration marked the official beginning of education, culture, and scientific research cooperation. Notably, Shanxi University of China and Yerevan Bryusov State University of Languages jointly established the Armenian Confucius Institute in February of the same year. In addition to the institutes, Confucius Classrooms are also being established<sup>24</sup>. As of 2025, the institute has two Confucius Classrooms<sup>2526</sup>.

In addition, the Chinese language is gradually occupying an important position in Armenia's education system, with many schools and universities incorporating it into their curricula as a first or second foreign language<sup>27</sup>.

In September 2018, Yerevan hosted the grand opening ceremony for the China-Armenia Friendship School, the only Chinese school in the Caucasus region. The school enrolls students from grades 5 to 12. In its inaugural year, the school had 408 students, and by 2025, the number

<sup>22</sup> “Armenia, China discuss perspectives of expanding defense cooperation.” Armenpress. Last modified November 11, 2022. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1097037>

<sup>23</sup> Lilit Muradyan, “Համագործակցության հուշագիր՝ ԵՊՀ-ի և Թյանցինի Նորմալ համալսարանի միջև” [Memorandum of Cooperation between Yerevan State University and Tianjin Normal University], *Public Radio of Armenia*, last modified January 7, 2022, <https://hy.armradio.am/archives/386904>.

<sup>24</sup> “Կոնֆուցիուսի ինստիտուտ” [Confucius Institute], Brusov State University, accessed October 14, 2024, [https://brusov.am/hy/page\\_list/konfuciusi\\_institut#sthash.GxXrEdbl.i8NsJVAh.dpbs](https://brusov.am/hy/page_list/konfuciusi_institut#sthash.GxXrEdbl.i8NsJVAh.dpbs).

<sup>25</sup> “Երևանի Չեխովի անվան դպրոցում բացվել է Կոնֆուցիուսի դասարան” [A Confucius Classroom has been opened at the Chekhov School in Yerevan], Armenpress. Last modified February 26, 2016 <https://armenpress.am/hy/article/837536>

<sup>26</sup> “Confucius Class Opening at RAU.” Russian-Armenian University. Last modified October 28, 2021. <https://rau.am/en/news/klass-konfucia-rau#>

<sup>27</sup> Armen Vardanyan, “Հայաստանի 6 դպրոցներում չինարեն են ուսուցանում, դրանց կավելանա եւս մեկը” [Chinese is taught in six schools in Armenia, and another one will be added to them], *Public Radio of Armenia*, last modified November 7, 2016 <https://hy.armradio.am/archives/148967>

had steadily grown to 700<sup>28</sup>. Notably, the school's popularity is increasing year by year. In the enrollment season of September 2023, 191 students competed for 54 spots in three classes, highlighting its significant position<sup>29</sup>.

*Cultural Exchange:* Cultural exchange between China and Armenia is a rich and multifaceted field, covering areas such as education, art, and literature. The Confucius Institute plays a significant role in China-Armenia cultural exchange, as it teaches the Chinese language and organizes cultural and academic events. For example, the Confucius Institute at Yerevan Bryusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences in Armenia organized an international forum on "The Silk Road of the 21st Century: Prospects and Cooperation"<sup>30</sup> and an event presenting Chinese culture and civilization at the community hall<sup>31</sup>.

The two countries frequently send artistic groups to participate in each other's cultural festivals and celebrations. Foreexample, Chinese opera and traditional music performances are very popular in Armenia. In 2019, a Chinese opera group performed at the Yerevan Opera House as part of Chinese Culture Day, receiving a warm reception<sup>32</sup>. Similarly, an Armenian orchestra toured China from December 28, 2024, to January 2, 2025<sup>33</sup>.

Both countries regularly hold art exhibitions in each other's countries, displaying their artistic works. These art exhibitions typically include Armenian traditional art, contemporary works, and collaborative pieces, helping to foster cultural understanding and appreciation between the two nations<sup>34</sup>. Meanwhile, Chinese cultural festivals in Armenia feature Chinese art, music,

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<sup>28</sup> "Մեր մասին" [About Us], Հայ-չինական բարեկամության դպրոց հիմնադրամ (Hay-Chinese Friendship School Foundation), <https://chin.schoolsite.am/>

<sup>29</sup> Asryan, Gayane. "Soft power: China's spheres of influence in Armenia. Analysis and human stories." JAMnews. Last modified February 25, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Confucius Institute "孔子学院助推“一带一路”" [Confucius Institutes promote the Belt and Road Initiative], *Confucius Institute Edition*, March 2017: 12 ISSN:1674-9731 CN11-5960/ C Issue No. 41

<sup>31</sup> "Զինաստանի մշակույթն ու քաղաքակրթությունը ներկայացնող միջոցառում համայնքապետարանում" [An event presenting Chinese culture and civilization at the community hall], Ejmiatsin, accessed April 12, 2023 <https://ejmiatsin.am/news/448/>

<sup>32</sup> "中国文化日隆重举行 京剧艺术首次走进亚美尼亚" [Chinese Culture Day Grandly Celebrated: Peking Opera Art Enters Armenia for the First Time], *Qianlong Culture*, last modified September 11, 2019, <https://culture.qianlong.com/2019/0911/3401629.shtml>

<sup>33</sup> "Հայաստանի պետական սիմֆոնիկ նվագախումբը հյուրախաղերով հանդես կգա Չինաստանում" [An Armenian Orchestra Tours China], Armpress, last modified December 26, 2024 <https://armenpress.am/hy/article/1208402>

<sup>34</sup> Chinarmart. "Exhibition Review: Armenian Garments and Decorative Art Objects Displayed in China for the First Time." Last modified August 3, 2023. <https://chinarmart.com/2023/08/03/exhibition-review-armenian-garments-and-decorative-art-objects-displayed-in-china-for-the-first-time/>

and dance, deepening Armenians' understanding of Chinese culture<sup>35</sup>. These events often include art exhibitions displaying Chinese calligraphy, painting, and folk art<sup>36</sup>.

On April 7, 2017, to mark the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations, Yerevan hosted an exhibition of Armenian Chinese partnership photos, further strengthening the cultural ties between the two nations<sup>37</sup>.

## 6. Medical Cooperation

In 2018, China donated 200 ambulances to Armenia's healthcare system<sup>38</sup>. As we entered 2020, in the face of the severe challenges posed by the pandemic, the Chinese government and enterprises donated a large amount of epidemic prevention supplies to Armenia, including masks, ventilators, and other necessary protective equipment<sup>39</sup>. These measures provided important support for Armenia's effective response to the pandemic. In May 2021, China provided 100,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, sufficient for 50,000 people, to Armenia<sup>40</sup>.

## China and Armenia Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges under the BRI

First, Armenia can obtain preferential loans and investments from China by participating in the BRI. This helps diversify its economic structure and injects new vitality into Armenia's long-term economic growth. Leveraging Chinese-led financial mechanisms like the Silk Road Fund

<sup>35</sup> News.am. "Armenia to host Chinese Culture Days" Last modified September 5, 2019.

<https://news.am/eng/news/531925.html>

<sup>36</sup> Elmira Mirabyan, "Չինական մշակույթի օրեր Հայաստանում" [Chinese Culture Days in Armenia]. Cultural.am. Accessed February 19, 2016 <https://www.cultural.am/hy/norutyunner/lurer/2968-chinakan-mshakuyti-orer-hayastanum>

<sup>37</sup> "25 տարվա ամուր բարեկամություն. Երևանում բացվեց հայ-չինական հարաբերություններին նվիրված լուսանկարչական ցուցահանդես" [25 Years of Strong Friendship: A Photography Exhibition Dedicated to Armenian-Chinese Relations Opens in Yerevan], Armenpress, last modified April 7, 2017, <https://armenpress.am/hy/article/886017>.

<sup>38</sup> "China Donates More Ambulances to Armenia," Azatutyun, last modified October 17, 2018, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29549062.html>.

<sup>39</sup> "中国援助亚美尼亚抗疫物资运抵埃里温" [China's Anti-Epidemic Aid to Armenia Arrives in Yerevan], Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, accessed April 10, 2020, [https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-04/10/content\\_5500783.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-04/10/content_5500783.htm).

<sup>40</sup> Siranush Ghazanchyan, "100,000 doses of Chinese Corona Vac vaccine delivered to Armenia." Public Radio of Armenia. Last modified May 2, 2021. <https://en.armradio.am/2021/05/02/100000-doses-of-chinese-coronavac-vaccine-delivered-to-armenia/>

and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)<sup>41</sup>, the two countries can engage in extensive cooperation in the international transfer of advantageous industries, utilizing China's capital, technology, and market resources to promote in-depth collaboration in capacity.

Second, the BRI cooperation platform provides Armenia with opportunities to strengthen international transportation, energy, and agriculture cooperation. Particularly in infrastructure construction, this is crucial for Armenia, which has been under long-term blockades from Azerbaijan and Turkey, significantly enhancing its international connectivity and optimizing the international investment environment<sup>42</sup>.

Third, by deepening its economic and trade relations with China, the BRI can help Armenia improve its position in the international division of labor and enhance economic independence. Armenia's economy currently heavily relies on Russia, with severe industrial hollowing-out<sup>43</sup>. Through cooperation with China, Armenia can reposition itself on a broader international stage, achieving industrial restructuring and implementing an import substitution strategy.

Fourth, as the BRI deeply aligns with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), Armenia can leverage this opportunity to enhance its status among the EEU and other countries along the BRI. Armenia can potentially become a key node in multiple international cooperation mechanisms<sup>44</sup>.

Fifth, for China, collaborating with a smaller economy like Armenia under the BRI primarily aims to utilize Armenia's geographical advantage as one of the important countries along the route. By forming a demonstration effect with smaller investments, it can effectively promote the in-depth development of the BRI and implement China's new diplomatic concepts.

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<sup>41</sup> Norton Rose Fulbright, A global infrastructure resource 2016, Nexus 2016 , P. 11-12  
<https://www.nortonrosefulbright.com/-/media/files/nrf/nrfweb/imported/nexus-2016-pdf.pdf?revision=&revision=4611686018427387904>.

<sup>42</sup> World Bank. *South Caucasus and Central Asia: The Belt and Road Initiative—Armenia Country Case Study*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020 .P.6-8  
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/413701593499050132/pdf/South-Caucasus-and-Central-Asia-The-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-Armenia-Country-Case-Study.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Arshaluis Mgdesyan "Russia's Powerful Economic Levers over Armenia." ,Eurasianet. Last modified November 1, 2023 <https://eurasianet.org/russias-powerful-economic-levers-over-armenia>

<sup>44</sup> Khachikyan, Sos; Hongzhen, Jiang (2022) : "Spatial administration and legal aspects of the Belt and Road Initiative: Innovative solutions for Armenia", Ordnungspolitische Diskurse, No. 2022-7, Ordnungspolitisches Portal (OPO), Erfurt P.3

Although the bilateral and multilateral cooperation between China and Armenia within the BRI framework can bring the aforementioned benefits and serve as the driving force for both countries' active participation in BRI, it must also be noted that the cooperation faces a series of new challenges.

First, as a formal member of the EEU, Armenia is economically integrated with Russia, presenting technical obstacles and market barriers to cooperation with China. The most evident issue is Armenia's obligation to align its trade policies with EEU rules, limiting its flexibility in negotiating trade agreements with non-EEU countries<sup>45</sup>. Sorting out these complex relationships is essential, yet it increases the difficulty and complexity of cooperation.

Second, the international economic situation significantly influences Armenia's economy, particularly because it links with Russia's economy. For example, economic sanctions on Russia following its actions in Ukraine have led to currency depreciation and reduced trade activities in Russia, which in turn affect Armenia. The decline in the Russian ruble has reduced remittances sent to Armenia by its sizable diaspora in Russia, impacting household incomes and foreign exchange inflows<sup>46</sup>. Additionally, Armenia's small amount of foreign exchange reserves<sup>47</sup> and unstable exchange rates<sup>48</sup> exacerbate these issues, creating short-term challenges that affect Chinese enterprises' investment returns and efficiency.

Third, Armenia's complex relationships with neighboring Turkey and Azerbaijan, both of which have imposed a long-term economic blockade on the country<sup>49</sup>, create significant challenges. This not only compresses the surrounding market for Chinese enterprises but also increases transportation costs for these companies.

## China's Multidimensional Interests and Strategic Needs in Armenia

<sup>45</sup> Asian Development Bank, "*Tariff Changes in Armenia and Their Impact on Foreign Trade*" (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2021), P.7 <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/715141/tariff-changes-armenia-foreign-trade.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Seda Hergnyan, "Remittances to Armenia: Ruble Tumbles, Dollar Rises" Hetq.am Last modified March 5, 2022 <https://hetq.am/en/article/141800>

<sup>47</sup> CEIC. "Armenia Foreign Exchange Reserves." <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/armenia/foreign-exchange-reserves>

<sup>48</sup> International Monetary Fund. Middle East and Central Asia Dept. "Republic of Armenia: Third Review under the Stand-by Arrangement and Request for Modifications of Performance Criterion and Monetary Policy Consultation Clause-Press Release; Staff Report", Published 17 Jun 2024 <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2024/165/article-A001-en.xml>

<sup>49</sup> USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Science "Focus on Karabakh: An Overview of the Turkish-Azerbaijani Economic Cooperation" <https://dornsife.usc.edu/armenian/initiatives/resources-on-karabakh/focus-on-karabakh-an-overview-of-the-turkish-azerbaijani-economic-cooperation/>



China's strategic needs concerning Armenia may arise from the following considerations:

- **Geostrategic Position:** Armenia occupies a strategic location in the South Caucasus region, situated at the intersection of multiple geopolitical blocks on the Eurasian continent, making it a key passage connecting Europe and Asia. Through cooperation with Armenia, China can enhance its strategic influence in the region and further expand the geographical scope of the BRI. Additionally, this cooperation can elevate China's diplomatic status in the South Caucasus, helping it gain an advantage in geopolitical competition with other major powers.
- **Energy Corridor:** The South Caucasus region is rich in oil and natural gas resources. Although Armenia is not a major energy producer, its geographic location makes it a crucial transit route for energy transportation<sup>50</sup><sup>51</sup>. By collaborating with Armenia, China can ensure control and security over energy transport routes in the region.
- **Multilateral Diplomacy and International Support:** Cooperation between China and Armenia helps China gain greater support in international affairs. As Armenia is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)<sup>52</sup>, strengthening relations with it allows China to expand its influence within the CIS framework and secure Armenia's backing in international organizations and multilateral forums.

In conclusion, while Armenia may not have the same level of resources or direct geopolitical leverage as its neighboring countries, its strategic location offers substantial advantages for China. Armenia's position as a key transit route in the South Caucasus not only enhances China's influence in the region but also strengthens its access to Iran, which plays a crucial role in BRI. Iran's geographical location is vital for the BRI's success<sup>53</sup>, as it connects Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, forming an important node in China's Eurasian trade corridor. By strengthening ties with Armenia, China can solidify its strategic foothold in the South Caucasus, facilitate energy transit, and enhance its broader geopolitical objectives in competition with other major powers.

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<sup>50</sup> Vladimir Socor, "IRAN-ARMENIA GAS PIPELINE: FAR MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE", Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 4 Issue: 56, March 21, 2007

<sup>51</sup> Interfax, "Armenia wants to use newly built transit power lines to become regional energy hub", Interfax, last modified 9 Jun 2023 <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/91351/>

<sup>52</sup> World Population Review, "CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Countries 2024" <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/cis-countries>

<sup>53</sup> Alex Vatanka, "Making sense of the Iran-China strategic agreement" Middle East Institute, published March 26, 2021 <https://www.mei.edu/publications/making-sense-iran-china-strategic-agreement>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has analyzed Armenia's evolving role within the BRI, focusing on the current state of cooperation, the challenges faced, and China's strategic interests. This bilateral relationship serves both nations' economic and geopolitical priorities. For instance, China's assistance in the construction of the North-South Highway has significantly improved Armenia's transportation infrastructure. This strategic corridor connects Northern Europe, Russia, the Middle East, and South Asia, enhancing Armenia's trade and transport hub position. Moreover, cooperation between Armenia and China continues to deepen in various sectors, including energy, trade, finance, and culture, fostering economic growth and highlighting the strong partnership between the two countries.

However, this cooperation is not without challenges. As a formal member of the EEU, Armenia's economic integration with Russia imposes technical and policy constraints, limiting its flexibility in trade negotiations with non-EEU countries. Armenia's economy is also heavily influenced by Russia's economic conditions, including currency depreciation and reduced remittances due to international sanctions on Russia. Additionally, limited foreign exchange reserves and unstable exchange rates exacerbate these difficulties. Further complicating the relationship are Armenia's strained ties with Turkey and Azerbaijan, which result in long-term economic blockades, restricting regional market access and increasing transportation costs.

Despite these obstacles, China remains highly interested in cooperation with Armenia for several strategic reasons. Armenia's geostrategic location in the South Caucasus positions it as a vital link between Europe and Asia, thereby expanding the geographical reach of the BRI. This cooperation strengthens China's diplomatic influence in the region, allowing it to compete more effectively globally. Furthermore, Armenia's potential as a transit route for energy resources offers opportunities to secure critical energy transport corridors. Finally, deepening ties with Armenia enables China to expand its influence within the CIS and gain support in international organizations and multilateral forums.

By addressing these challenges and aligning with China's strategic objectives, both countries can foster smarter and more mutually beneficial cooperation in the future. Their long-standing

history of friendly relations, dating back to the ancient Silk Road, provides a strong foundation for further collaboration<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> “President Armen Sarkissian of Armenia Meets with Wang Yi” , last modified May 26, 2019 [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg\\_663340/dozys\\_664276/xwlb\\_664278/202406/t20240606\\_11396756.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg_663340/dozys_664276/xwlb_664278/202406/t20240606_11396756.html)

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## “A Comparative Analysis of Primary School Language Curricula in Russia and China”

EMMA ARABAJYAN

荣维东 中国 Rong Weidong

Southwest University

**Abstract.** Language education serves as a vital bridge between cultural heritage and contemporary learning, reflecting a nation's sociopolitical and educational priorities. This article delves into the primary language curricula of Russia and China, two countries with rich linguistic traditions and unique pedagogical philosophies. Examining the historical evolution and underlying principles of their language education frameworks unpacks how these systems nurture linguistic proficiency, cultural pride, and moral values in young learners. Comparative analysis highlights key similarities, such as the emphasis on national identity. It contrasts instructional strategies, including Russia's focus on classical literature and foundational skills and China's integration of critical thinking and multimodal learning. The findings underscore the potential for mutual enrichment, suggesting how each system might adapt innovative elements from the other to enhance educational outcomes. This exploration offers valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to refine language instruction and promote meaningful cross-cultural exchange.

**Key Words:** Language Curricula, Education, Russia, China

**Introduction:** Understanding the foundations of language education in Russia and China provides valuable insights into each nation's educational system's broader cultural, historical, and ideological underpinnings. As influential players on the global stage, both countries prioritize language education as a key component of early education, aiming to instill linguistic proficiency and a strong sense of cultural identity. This study offers a comparative analysis of primary language curriculum standards in Russia and China, focusing on their educational philosophies, structural frameworks, and teaching methods. It aims to uncover and compare the core objectives and methods within each system and their implications for students, educators, and society.

Influenced by the Soviet legacy, Russia's language education system maintains a strong focus on linguistic structure, critical thinking, and appreciation of national literature. This historical context is explored by authors Lisovskaya & Karpov, Vasilyeva, Uskova, Kosheleva, Lin Jang. The authors emphasize bilingual and culturally grounded education as essential for fostering Russian identity, drawing on historical bilingual models and adapting them to suit contemporary multicultural contexts.

The transformation of Russian education after the collapse of the Soviet Union serves as a case study of how radical shifts in governance can disrupt and reshape educational systems. (Lisovskaya & Karpov 2020: 5)

Today, Russia's primary language curriculum remains grounded in the foundational elements of grammar, morphology, and literary study. As established by the Ministry of Education, the curriculum

focuses on rigorous language structure, mastery of linguistic forms, and comprehension of Russian literature's cultural significance. (ISEDRAE Moscow, 2022: 3)

The primary school language teaching curriculum standard of Mainland China reflects a comprehensive and modernized framework for language education. It emphasizes the integration of linguistic competency, cultural heritage, and moral education. Published by the Ministry of Education, the document underlines the significance of language as a foundational tool for communication, thought, and cultural transmission. The curriculum also aims to cultivate national pride and a sense of cultural belonging by incorporating elements of traditional, revolutionary, and socialist advanced cultures. (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022: 1)

By investigating these aspects, this comparative analysis provides a comprehensive view of the educational objectives and strategies in both Russia and China. In addition, it highlights potential areas for educational reform and cross-cultural exchange.

### **Curriculum Standard of Russian Federation: Background, historical development, and current state**

Russia's primary language teaching curriculum has evolved from a rich tapestry of historical, ideological, and cultural factors that have shaped its approach to language education. The curriculum is a cornerstone of Russian primary education, aiming to instill a deep appreciation for Russian linguistic and literary traditions and formal language proficiency. (ISEDRAE, Moscow, 2022: 3)

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the curriculum's background and historical development, highlighting key influences and tracing the progression from its Soviet foundations to the present day.

The roots of Russia's current primary language curriculum are deeply intertwined with the Soviet Union's education system, which prioritized uniformity, ideological alignment, and national identity. Under the Soviet regime, education was highly centralized, with a strict curriculum that emphasized Russian language proficiency as a unifying force across the diverse republics of the USSR. The curriculum was structured to promote ideological values, with a strong emphasis on Soviet literature, socialist ideals, and state-controlled narratives. (Lisovskaya & Karpov 2020: 7) This approach to education, as detailed by Lisovskaya and Karpov, reinforced a model where language was both a tool of communication and a means of instilling ideological conformity. Lisovskaya and Karpov describe this cyclical model as the "revolutionary cycle" of Russian education, where periods of liberal



reform are eventually followed by conservative reactions. Their findings underscore the importance of flexible curricula that address varying levels of Russian language exposure, which plays a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity in multilingual environments. (Lisovskaya & Karpov 2020: 7)

During the Soviet era, the Russian language served as a means of both social and cultural integration, seeking to create a "Soviet identity" across the republics. Language education was not just a subject but a strategic component of nation-building, with textbooks and curricula meticulously curated by the state to uphold communist values. This legacy of state control, ideological uniformity, and centralization has continued influencing Russian language education. However, modern iterations reflect a nuanced balance between preserving traditional approaches and incorporating more contemporary educational practices. (Lisovskaya & Karpov 2020: 7)

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian education entered a period of liberalization marked by significant reform and decentralization. The transformation of Russian education after the collapse of the Soviet Union serves as a case study of how radical shifts in governance can disrupt and reshape educational systems. During the radical stage, reforms liberated schools from centralized ideological control, but financial instability led to the spontaneous emergence of a dual-school system. This unintended consequence illustrates the difficulty of achieving equity during times of systemic upheaval.

By the conservative stage, the state sought to restore order through centralized policies like the Unified State Exam and national standards, exemplifying a partial return to pre-reform structures with a modernized veneer. This evolution underscores the tension between innovation and tradition in post-authoritarian educational reforms. (Lisovskaya & Karpov 2020: 5)

However, as Lisovskaya and Karpov argue in *Russian Education Thirty Years Later*, these liberal reforms were not sustained indefinitely. By the early 2000s, under President Putin's administration, Russia's education system began reverting to a more centralized, state-controlled model reflective of the traditional Soviet approach. This shift toward conservatism marked a return to emphasizing Russian national identity and traditional values and a greater focus on Russian literature, history, and linguistic precision. In this context, the primary language curriculum was re-calibrated to align with the government's vision of a cohesive national identity and to counterbalance Western influences that had proliferated during the 1990s. (Lisovskaya & Karpov 2020: 8)

Today, Russia's primary language curriculum remains grounded in the foundational elements of grammar, morphology, and literary study. The curriculum, as established by the Ministry of Education,

focuses on rigorous language structure, mastery of linguistic forms, and comprehension of Russian literature's cultural significance. Rooted in educational philosophies that value systematic, formal instruction, the curriculum deeply emphasizes the "mechanics" of language—grammar rules, syntax, and morphology. The goal is to ensure that students attain proficiency in the standard Russian language, equipping them with the tools to communicate effectively and appreciate the language's historical and cultural dimensions. The Federal Curriculum for the subject "Russian Language" in the Primary Education Framework 3 outlines comprehensive guidelines for teaching the Russian language in grades one through four. As part of the "Russian Language and Literary Reading" domain, the program is central to developing functional literacy and linguistic competence among young learners. This article explores the structure, objectives, and key features of Russian language education in primary schools, emphasizing its role in cognitive, communicative, and cultural development. (ISEDRAE Moscow, 2022: 4)

*The curriculum comprises the following components:*

- **Explanatory Note:** Articulates the overarching goals, educational tasks, and psychological premises for teaching the Russian language. It emphasizes the subject's role in the educational plan and provides a rationale for content selection, learning outcomes, and thematic planning.

**Content of Learning:** Specifies mandatory content lines for each grade, encompassing phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. The curriculum also identifies universal learning actions (универсальные учебные действия) such as cognitive, communicative, and regulatory skills tailored to students' developmental stages.

**Planned Learning Outcomes:** Divided into personal, meta-subject, and subject-specific outcomes, these highlight achievements expected by the end of each academic year and the entire primary education phase.

**Thematic Planning:** A detailed breakdown of topics and activities ensures logical progression and alignment with developmental psychology.

*The curriculum is designed to fulfill several primary objectives:*

- **Linguistic Mastery:** Introduce students to the phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and lexical aspects of the Russian language.



Functional Literacy: Foster skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing while adhering to the norms of modern Russian literary language.

Cultural Awareness: Promote understanding of Russian as a national language, a means of intercultural communication, and a cultural and historical heritage repository.

Communication Proficiency: Equip students with the ability to use language effectively in diverse social and academic contexts.

Development of Thinking and Self-Expression: Cultivate logical thinking, creativity, and the ability to express thoughts, emotions, and viewpoints coherently.

*The curriculum emphasizes a balanced approach to:*

Language System Study: Systematically explores linguistic rules and structures, including phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary.

Speech Development: Practical application of language norms in oral and written communication. Collaboration with the "Literary Reading" subject enhances these skills.

Integrated Learning Outcomes: Aligning personal, meta-subject, and subject-specific achievements to ensure student academic progress continuity. (ISEDRAE Moscow, 2022: 5).

The distinctive features of primary education in the Russian language are provided in Table 1.

Table 2, based on Russia's curriculum standard for grades one to four, provides a structured and comprehensive approach to language instruction. It emphasizes foundational skills in literacy and linguistic awareness. The program integrates instruction in reading, writing, phonetics, syntax, and speech development, ensuring a balanced progression through the early stages of language acquisition.

*The curriculum standard from grades one to four emphasizes:*

*Integrated Skills Development:* Across grades, the curriculum fosters the interconnected growth of linguistic, communicative, and cultural competencies.

Gradual Complexity: Starting with basic phonetic awareness in Grade 1, students advance to

understanding sentence structures, text analysis, and creative writing by Grade 4.

Cultural Literacy: Incorporation of Russian literature, poetry, and oral traditions helps students connect language learning with national heritage.

Balanced Assessment: Regular formative and summative assessments ensure a comprehensive evaluation of student progress.

By the end of Grade 4, students are expected to possess a strong foundation in Russian language skills, preparing them for more advanced studies in middle school. (ISEDRAE Moscow, 2022: 5)

As discussed by authors T. Vasilyeva, O. Usakova, and E. Kosheleva, the curriculum standard in the education of the Russian language emphasizes cultural preservation. The curriculum is rich in literary heritage and features classic works of famous Russian authors like Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Chekhov. It not only enhances linguistic skills but also cultural and moral values. (Preserving Russian Cultural Identity of Learners in a Multicultural Learning Environment, 2015: 214)

### **Current Curriculum Standard in the Primary Schools in People's Republic of China: Background and Historical Development**

The Curriculum standard for language education in China<sup>4</sup> reflects a comprehensive and modernized framework for language education. It emphasizes the integration of linguistic competency, cultural heritage, and moral education. Published by the Ministry of Education, the document underlines the significance of language as a foundational tool for communication, thought, and cultural transmission. Below, the key aspects of the curriculum standard are analyzed. (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022: 1)

The curriculum identifies language as a critical medium for human interaction, information exchange, and cultural preservation. It characterizes the Chinese language curriculum as both practical and integrative, emphasizing the dual focus on 工具性 (practicality) and 人文性 (humanistic values). Through active participation in real-world language practice, students are guided to accumulate linguistic experience, understand language rules, and develop a deep appreciation for the aesthetic and functional properties of the Chinese language. The curriculum also aims to cultivate national pride and a sense of cultural belonging by incorporating elements of traditional, revolutionary, and socialist advanced cultures.

The curriculum is founded on the principles of fostering 核心素养 (core competencies), which include cultural confidence, linguistic application, critical thinking, and aesthetic creativity. These competencies enhance students' cognitive abilities, moral values, and emotional intelligence. By integrating moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, the curriculum aspires to provide a holistic developmental foundation for students, enabling them to succeed academically and socially. (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022: 4)

The curriculum outlines key goals, such as fostering patriotism, promoting cultural literacy, and encouraging lifelong learning habits.

Specific objectives include:

- Proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking Mandarin.
- Engagement with classical and modern literary works to appreciate their intellectual and artistic value.
- Development of independent critical thinking and the ability to articulate ideas effectively.
- Strengthening national identity and cultural self-confidence.

It also strongly emphasizes integrating language education with other disciplines, thereby broadening students' intellectual horizons and practical skills.

The curriculum is divided into three stages, reflecting the 六三学制 (6-3 schooling system), with specific learning outcomes for each stage. It introduces thematic and task-based learning, which connects classroom activities to real-world contexts. This structure ensures continuity across grade levels while addressing the developmental needs of students at each stage. ( CEL PRC Beijing, 2022: 16)

A unique feature is the 语文学习任务群 (Chinese Learning Task Groups), which organize content by themes and tasks, integrating resources, methods, and contexts to create a cohesive learning experience. The framework emphasizes the importance of literacy in the digital age, encouraging the use of multimodal resources<sup>5</sup> to enhance comprehension and engagement.

The standard advocates for a process-oriented and holistic approach to evaluation, integrating formative and summative assessments. It encourages modern technology to diversify assessment

methods and better capture students' progress in linguistic and cultural competencies. Key areas of assessment include linguistic accuracy, critical thinking, aesthetic appreciation, and moral values. (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022: 37)

A notable emphasis of the 2022 curriculum is on cultural preservation and moral education. Students are exposed to classical works, such as 唐诗 (Tang poetry) and 宋词 (Song lyrics), to instill cultural pride and a deeper understanding of Chinese traditions. (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022: 38)

Moreover, the curriculum integrates revolutionary and contemporary cultural values, aligning language education with the national goals of fostering patriotism, social responsibility, and collective identity.

The curriculum reflects China's response to modern educational challenges, particularly the integration of technology and global perspectives. By promoting digital literacy, students are equipped to engage with multimodal texts and navigate the complexities of the digital age, ensuring the curriculum's relevance in a rapidly changing global landscape.

The section "Alignment with Student Development" in the curriculum emphasizes tailoring teaching methods to students' age and cognitive abilities. It advocates for real-life connections, immersive learning environments, and culturally enriching content to foster enthusiasm for literacy, writing, and language accumulation. The integration of 社会主义先进文化 *Socialist Advanced Culture*, 革命文化 *Revolutionary Culture*, and 中华优秀传统文化 *Outstanding Traditional Chinese Culture* into language teaching promotes cultural pride and identity. (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022: 44)

The curriculum includes various methods for character recognition, practical language use in real-life contexts, evaluation strategies, and guidelines for digital tools to support literacy. This can be seen in Table 3, provided in the attachments.

China's primary school education system is meticulously designed to build a strong foundation in language skills and literacy, preparing students for higher levels of learning. Spanning Grades 1 to 6, it emphasizes progressive skill development in character recognition, writing, reading comprehension, and critical thinking. Each grade focuses on specific milestones, ensuring a gradual and structured learning journey. Grade 1 introduces essential character recognition, phonetic decoding, and sentence formation, where students learn 1,600 characters and write 800. This foundation is enhanced in Grade 2, emphasizing writing skills, structured sentences, and comprehension through engaging activities like phonetic games and short text readings. Grades 3 and 4 advance to more complex skills, including

context-based language use, error correction, and text interpretation.

By Grade 4, students begin exploring grammar, vocabulary expansion, and longer text comprehension, laying the groundwork for analytical thinking. Grades 5 and 6 focus on independent literacy and creativity. Students recognize up to 3,000 characters, engage in research projects, and develop critical thinking and creative expression through narrative writing and debates. Assessments across all grades emphasize skill mastery and practical application, incorporating oral presentations, creative assignments, and collaborative tasks to nurture well-rounded linguistic and cognitive abilities. (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022: 52)

The 义务教育语文课程标准（2022 年版）Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (2022 edition) represents a strategic balance between tradition and modernity, focusing on linguistic competency, cultural heritage, and digital literacy. Its thematic organization, emphasis on cultural and moral education, and integration of interdisciplinary and technological elements position it as a comprehensive framework for contemporary Chinese language education. By aligning with national priorities and addressing global challenges, this curriculum standard sets a benchmark for fostering holistic development in Chinese students.

### **Comparative Analysis of Primary Language Education Curriculum Standards in Russia and China**

Both Russia and China, as socialist and post-socialist nations, emphasize moral education and cultural preservation through their primary language curricula. This common focus is intertwined with the historical and ideological influences that have shaped the educational systems of these two countries. In both cases, national identity and cultural values are integral to language education. Russian primary language education reflects a deep engagement with Russian literary traditions, emphasizing the works of classical authors such as Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Chekhov. At the same time, China's curriculum integrates classical texts like Tang poetry and Song lyrics to instill cultural pride and foster a deeper understanding of Chinese traditions. (ISEDRAE, Moscow, 2022) Regarding linguistic instruction, one of the primary distinctions between the two countries lies in the structure and focus of their language education. The Russian curriculum, particularly for the first four grades of primary school, is centered on phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, with a clear focus on functional literacy. The emphasis is placed on fostering the basic skills necessary for communication and comprehension while promoting moral values through exposure to the works of Russia's literary giants (ISEDRAE, Moscow, 2022). The curriculum's goals include ensuring linguistic mastery, fostering communication proficiency, and cultivating cultural awareness with a strong alignment with Russian national identity. This is evident in

the central role Russian literature plays in the curriculum, which not only enhances linguistic skills but also integrates moral and cultural education (ISEDRAE, Moscow, 2022). On the other hand, the Chinese primary language curriculum, guided by the Ministry of Education's 2022 guidelines (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022), adopts a broader scope that integrates linguistic proficiency with moral, cultural, and intellectual development. Unlike Russia's relatively narrow focus on grammatical and phonetic components, China's curriculum places equal importance on developing core competencies such as cultural confidence, critical thinking, and aesthetic creativity. The Chinese curriculum is structured around three stages, with specific learning outcomes that progressively build from one grade to the next (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022). This curriculum not only seeks to improve reading, writing, and speaking proficiency in Mandarin but also emphasizes the cultivation of moral values, patriotism, and social responsibility. The integration of both classical and modern literary works ensures that students engage with the intellectual and artistic heritage of the country while simultaneously fostering a connection to contemporary cultural and revolutionary values (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022).

Another significant difference between the two educational systems is the duration and scope of primary education. In Russia, the primary education phase lasts from grades 1 to 4, while in China, it spans grades 1 to 6. This difference in the duration of primary education leads to varying expectations regarding student outcomes. The Russian curriculum is designed to ensure that by the end of grade 4, students have mastered the foundational elements of the Russian language, preparing them for further education. In contrast, China's primary school curriculum has broader expectations due to its extended duration, allowing for a more comprehensive development of students' linguistic, intellectual, and moral faculties (ISEDRAE, Moscow, 2022).

The structural approach to language instruction also diverges between the two countries. In Russia, the curriculum emphasizes the systematic study of the language's phonetics, grammar, and syntax with the goal of fostering functional literacy. By grade 4, students are expected to have a solid grasp of sentence structures, vocabulary, and basic writing skills (ISEDRAE, Moscow, 2022). In comparison, the Chinese curriculum includes thematic and task-based learning, which connects classroom activities to real-world contexts. This approach encourages students to use language not only as a tool for communication but also as a means for engaging with the world around them. The Chinese curriculum also places significant emphasis on multimodal learning, using modern technology to enhance students' understanding and engagement with texts (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022). Despite these differences, both countries share a commitment to promoting national identity and cultural pride through language education. Russia's curriculum draws heavily on its literary heritage, reflecting a deep connection to the works of its classical authors (ISEDRAE, Moscow, 2022). China's curriculum, while also incorporating traditional literature, takes a broader approach, emphasizing the development of

moral values and national pride alongside linguistic competence. Both curricula acknowledge the importance of language as a vehicle for cultural transmission and moral education, underscoring the role of language in shaping both individual identity and national consciousness (CEL PRC Beijing, 2022).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while both Russia and China emphasize the role of language education in cultural preservation and moral development, their curricular approaches differ significantly in terms of structure, content, and scope. Russia's primary language curriculum is focused on linguistic mastery and cultural preservation through classical literature, while China's curriculum adopts a more integrated approach that combines linguistic development with moral education and the cultivation of national identity. These differences are shaped by the respective educational histories, cultural values, and national priorities of the two countries, reflecting the ways in which education systems evolve in response to political, ideological, and cultural contexts. Both systems have valuable strengths and potential for growth through cross-cultural exchange and selective integration of each other's methods. Primary language education systems in both countries offer valuable approaches that can be mutually enriching. Russia may benefit from integrating more innovative teaching methods and multimodal strategies seen in China, such as thematic and task-based learning, which connect language skills to real-world contexts. Similarly, China could consider incorporating Russia's emphasis on deep literary engagement and classical authors into its curriculum.

Furthermore, Russia might find value in adopting China's use of modern technology and multimodal resources to enhance student engagement and create more dynamic learning environments. Such cross-cultural exchanges could lead to a more integrated, contemporary, and practical approach to primary language education, nurturing students who are not only linguistically proficient but also critical, creative thinkers with a strong sense of cultural and moral identity.

In summary, fostering international collaboration and embracing each other's teaching methods can enrich language education in Russia and China. By blending Russia's focus on linguistic structure with China's adaptability and autonomy, educators can help students develop as proficient, culturally aware global citizens.



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Attachments

Table 1: Distinctive Features of Primary Education in Russian Language

Feature	Description
Comprehensive Literacy Development	Integrates linguistic, communicative, reading, cultural, and social literacy for a holistic experience.
Age-Appropriate Content	Tailors' material and activities to the cognitive and emotional needs of young learners.
Emphasis on Sociocultural Values	Incorporates traditional Russian values, etiquette, and norms to foster moral and cultural consciousness.
Flexibility for Educators	Encourages diverse pedagogical approaches while adhering to mandatory content requirements.
Extensive Teaching Hours	Allocates 675 hours over four years, with 5 hours weekly, ensuring ample time for mastery and reinforcement.

Table 2: Combined Key Information Table for Grades 1–4

Grade	Focus Areas	Skills Developed	Key Activities	Assessment Methods
1	Introduction to letters, sounds, and basic word formation.	Phonetic awareness, basic reading and writing, oral language skills.	Alphabet games, basic sentence creation, oral recitation, reading short texts.	Oral responses, phonetic tests, reading fluency.
2	Building vocabulary, sentence structure, and understanding	Sentence formation, reading comprehension, basic	Short story reading, sentence restructuring, basic	Written tasks, dictations, reading comprehension

	punctuation.	narrative writing, proper punctuation usage.	creative writing tasks.	quizzes.
3	Expanding reading comprehension, grammar application, and text analysis.	Advanced grammar, structured text writing, analytical skills in reading, and expressive language use.	Group discussions, text interpretation, grammar exercises, and longer narrative writing tasks.	Written exams, grammar tests, essay grading.
4	Mastery of complex texts, creative writing, and cultural appreciation through literature.	Critical thinking in text analysis, creative expression, and oral presentation.	Reading classic Russian literature, thematic essays, oral presentations, and peer discussions.	Summative assessments, project-based evaluations, oral exams.

Table 3: Combined Key Information Table for China Curriculum Standard

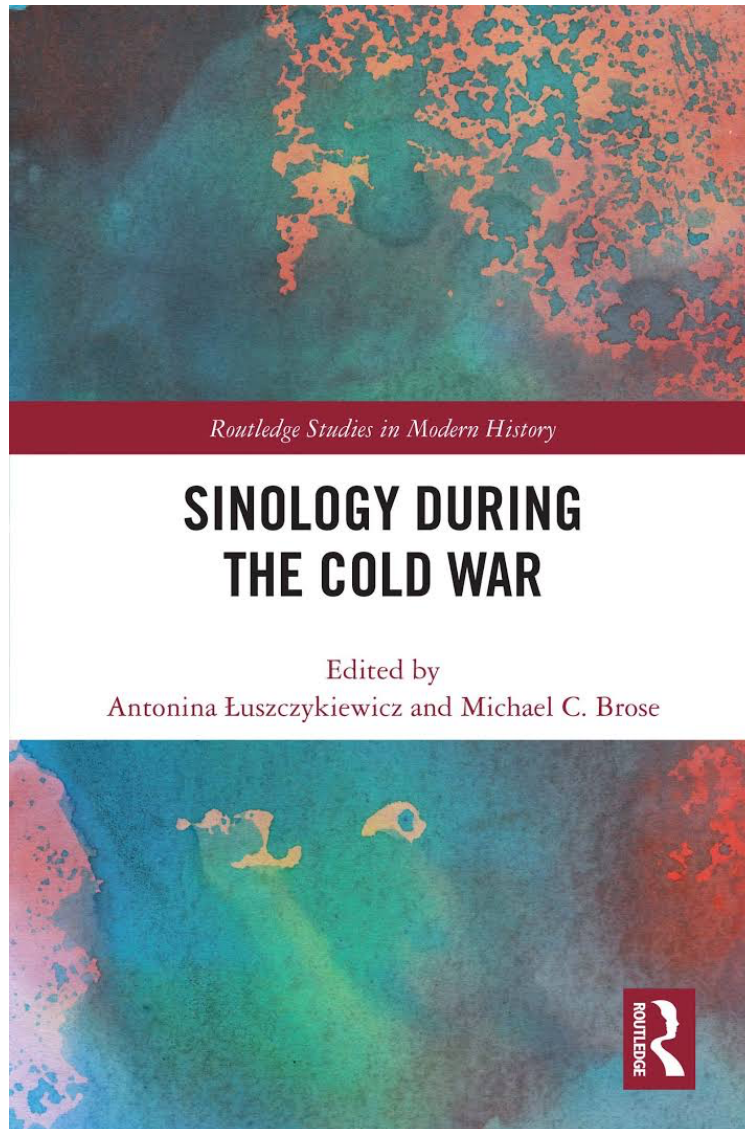
Section	Key Emphasis	Specific Strategies/Activities	Expected Outcomes
1. Alignment with Student Development	Tailoring teaching to age and cognitive abilities, fostering cultural pride.	Real-life connections, immersive learning, culturally rich content; integration of 社 会主义先进文化, 革命文化, 中华优秀传统文化.	Enthusiasm for literacy, stronger cultural identity, and engagement with language learning.
2. Diverse Teaching Strategies	Combining methods for literacy and writing; encouraging language accumulation and recitation.	- Literacy: 随文识字, 注音识 字, 字理识字 methods; focus on high-frequency and simple characters at early stages - Language: Reading culturally rich texts, memorizing concise classical works,	Gradual mastery of character recognition habitual language accumulation, and improved creative

		digital tools for accumulation.	application.
3. Practical Language Use	Focusing on real-life applications of language in various contexts.	Story reading on Chinese culture, drafting notes and letters, exploring achievements in revolutionary and scientific contexts.	Improved practical articulation, meaningful engagement with language, and broader cultural awareness.
4. Emphasis on Evaluation	Gradual and stage-appropriate assessment strategies for literacy and writing.	<div>- Early stages: Focus on character recognition, pronunciation, and cultural appreciation.</div> <div>- Later stages: Independence in literacy and fluent writing.</div>	Tailored learning progress monitoring, independence in language use, and effective contextual application.
5. Integration with Technology	Using digital tools for literacy, organization, and creativity; adapting to modern communication platforms.	Cross-media reading and analysis, digital archives for literacy tasks, and creative writing tools.	Digital literacy skills, enhanced creativity, and readiness for modern communication platforms.

Table 4: Combined Key Information Table for Grades 1–6 (Primary School)

Grade	Focus Areas	Skills Developed	Key Activities	Assessment Methods
1	Basic character recognition and phonetic decoding.	Recognizing 1,600 characters, writing 800, and forming basic sentences.	Character tracing, phonetic exercises, simple sentence formation.	Oral tests, recognition exercises, sentence writing tasks.

2	Enhancing phonetic skills and basic writing.	Strengthening writing skills, sentence structuring, and comprehension.	Phonetic games, short text reading, and structured sentence exercises.	Written dictations, sentence formation quizzes, oral responses.
3	Context-based language use and error correction.	Expanding recognition to 2,500 characters, writing 1,600, and comprehension of multi-meaning characters.	Story reading, context-based vocabulary exercises, and error corrections.	Written tasks, context-based reading tests, vocabulary assessments.
4	Developing advanced comprehension and application.	Strengthening grammar, expanding vocabulary, and interpreting longer texts.	Text analysis, collaborative discussions, and narrative writing tasks.	Grammar tests, essay evaluations, group presentations.
5	Independent literacy and critical thinking.	Recognizing 3,000 characters, creative expression, and synthesizing information.	Research projects, structured writing tasks, and creative storytelling.	Research reports, creative writing assignments, peer evaluations.
6	Creativity in expression and analytical thinking.	Advanced textual analysis, creativity in writing, and oral presentations.	Reading comprehension of complex texts, group debates, and creative essays.	Critical essays, oral presentations, thematic quizzes.



Book Review

## Sinology During the Cold War

GEVORG GRIGORYAN  
KRISTINE HARUTYUNYAN

Jiangxi Tellhow Animation Vocational College

The rapid growth of the Chinese economy worldwide has attracted the interest of many researchers in different fields. In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of research conducted on Chinese language and culture, with Sinologism (hànxuézhǔyì 汉学主义) emerging as a cultural theory that emphasizes the study of Sinology, China-West relations, and the production of cross-cultural knowledge (Gu and Zhou, 2018).

Through their work, the authors meticulously present the key challenges that sinology researchers faced during the Cold War era, predominantly in the fields of language acquisition, culture, philosophy, and cinematography. The manuscript offers a well-structured and insightful analysis of the topic.

“Sinology During the Cold War” supplements previous works that promulgated Western study on China's history, culture, and politics, such as “The Chinese World Order” (1963) and “China: A New History” (1999) by John K. Fairbank.

Structure-wise, the book is divided into three parts. Each part of the book contains articles written by authors with diverse geographic maps.

The book is initiated with a framework composed by the book's editors. In their framework, editors M. Brose and A. Luszczkevicz attempt to define the term sinology and underscore the unique value of sinology to readers with different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Furthermore, editors attach high importance to presenting the evolution of sinology during the Cold War between Soviet-bloc countries (China and the Soviet Union) and anti-Soviet countries.

The first part starts with a personal account by J. Bayer. The author thoroughly describes the political obstacles and setbacks between Poland and China during the Cold War period. Limitations of authority powers, lack of financial resources, and the political layout of Polish-Chinese diplomatic relationships were the key reasons. However, after 1990, the relationships between the two countries changed significantly, which promoted sinological research between China and Poland. Polish researchers were mainly interested in Chinese Daoism, Confucianism, and literature translation.



The main focus of the second article, "The Development of Sinology in East and West Germany during the Cold War Era," is the relationship between China and Germany before and after joining the UN as a permanent member, as well as the shift of Germany's geopolitical position to China after the death of Mao Zedong.

In his "Coordinated Research on Modern China in the Soviet Bloc-a Hungarian Perspective," author P. Vemos briefly introduces the anti-socialism ideology of Hungarian authorities. Despite the unfavorable geopolitical ideology and lack of financial resources, Eotvos Lorand University in Hungary has begun to carry out some classic Sinology research based on philology. However, the two nations' relationship began to stabilize in the 1980s after M. Gorbachev came to power, and more funding became available for Sinology research.

In the next article, the author, M. Lubina, attempts to thoroughly describe the Cold War interaction between China and Poland. The connection between Poland and China was far better than that of other nations. Some political groups expressed skepticism about the Soviet Union and a desire to maintain positive relationships with China. However, the Soviet Union suppressed all types of movements. In contrast to other Soviet nations, Moscow only permitted Poland to enjoy a cordial relationship with China after Stalin's death.

N. Atlantsegtseg, in his "Chinese Studies in Mongolia During the Double Cold War" tackles issues concerning Mongolia-USSR-PRC policy. The relationship between China and Mongolia under Soviet surveillance is the main topic of the following article. Mongolia is distinct from China in contrast to other European and Soviet nations. Because it shares a border with China, the two countries have a tight relationship. However, Moscow also opposed Mongolia's membership in the USSR. The relationship between China and Mongolia went through three stages: the first was by 1960, the second was from 1960 to 1980, and the third was following the fall of the Soviet Union.

A. Brinza discusses the rise of sinology studies in Romania during the Cold War. In contrast to other European nations, Romanian sinology studies began in the 1950s with a notable focus on Chinese literature and language. One of the first nations to recognize the PRC was Romania. The cordial diplomatic ties between China and Romania have long encouraged Romanian academics to become increasingly interested in learning and translating Chinese.

The autobiography of Barna Talas is presented in the article "Mapping the Interplay between the Individual and the Structure." The article discusses Talas's early years before and after Soviet rule, his doctoral studies at Tsinghua University, and how these experiences helped him become a well-known diplomat.

Chinese literature and philosophical ideas that conflict with Soviet doctrine in Czechoslovakia were mostly portrayed in Prusek's work (Communism, Modernization, and Chinese Literary Studies during the Cold War). After starting a school in Prague, the author began translating Chinese works, which quickly gained popularity among readers in the West. The study of Maoism in Poland is the focus of the following paper. Poland and China have a very excellent connection. Poland was among the first nations to recognize China as a nation, it should be noted. The study of Maoism was more realistic because it was opposed to the USSR. In actuality, there is a dispute around the figure of Maoism in Polish researchers' studies. While some study publications are full of criticism, others primarily portray it in a good light.

The final article focuses on the analysis of Chinese cinematography in Poland. According to the report, Chinese films were prohibited and subjected to severe censorship. Only after 1980, under the direction of a university scholar, did Chinese films begin to be depicted in Poland.

Overall, this book deserves praise in several ways. First and foremost, the book's writing style and language are its strongest points, as they enable readers to easily understand how sinology evolved during the Cold War. Another helpful feature of the book is that every chapter concludes with a conclusion, which is especially important for longer chapters. The sources list also aids readers in determining which topics merit more research.

The book has certain flaws as well. More precisely, the universality of sinology research during the Cold War Era receives less emphasis. The fifteen nations that made up the USSR had divisive views on sinology research. The author needs to have European and Soviet nations: Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Ukraine, Spain, France, the UK, etc.

Furthermore, the book's analysis of the PRC's and educational institutions' perspectives throughout the Cold War falls short. The articles primarily outline one nation's policy. Instead of being multilateral, the research is one lateral.

Despite these shortcomings, this enlightening book deserves attention and appreciation for providing new and comprehensive insights into Sinology research.

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### **Reference**

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