

## **International workshop “Navigating Sino-Russian relations in the 2010s: role claims and mutual expectations”**

University of Duisburg-Essen, March 29–30, 2021

### **Report by Elizaveta Priupolina**

The international workshop “Navigating Sino-Russian relations in the 2010s: role claims and mutual expectations” took place at the University of Duisburg-Essen as an online meeting on March 29th – March 30th, 2021. The workshop was organised within the framework of the DFG project 238920157 “Rollenwandel und Rollenkontestationsprozesse in der VR China: Globalisierung ‘chinesischer’ Ordnungskonzeptionen?”. The organisers, Prof. Dr. Nele Noesselt and Dr. Elizaveta Priupolina, University of Duisburg-Essen, sought to initiate the discussion of Sino-Russian relations from the perspective of National Role Theory and welcomed a group of Russian and Chinese scholars focusing on the analysis of Sino-Russian contemporary relations to present their research providing an outlook on mutual perceptions, expectations, and role claims articulated by Russia and China vis-à-vis each other. The workshop consisted of four panels covering a wide range of issues at the global and bilateral level.

The first panel discussed China’s and Russia’s mutual perceptions and expectations regarding the great/major power role. Prof. Dr. Artyom Lukin (Far Eastern Federal University, FEFU) presented his analysis of the alignment dynamics between Russia and China. Based on the analysis of the relations in the field of geo-economic and military connections and strategic interaction in East Asia, he characterised the current state of the Sino-Russian relationship as a quasi-alliance, or entente, and outlined a range of scenarios for the future. Prof. Dr. Liu Jun (East China Normal University, ECNU) reflected on the role of history and the approaches to the contemporary construction of the new type of major power relations between Russia and China. Prof. Dr. Zhang Xin (ECNU) talked about the evolution of mutual perceptions and role expectations between Russia and China in the changing US-Russia-China triangle since the early 2000s.

The second panel centred on mutual perceptions and expectations in Sino-Russian relations in the context of Central Asian politics. Prof. Dr. Andrei Ostrovskii (Institute of Far Eastern Studies, IFES) discussed the problems and prospects of Sino-Russian economic relations regarding the promotion of China’s BRI. Dr. Elena Bazhenova (IFES) reflected on the problems and prospects of the conjunction of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and China’s BRI, which is an essential element of contemporary Sino-Russian relations. Prof. Dr. Yang Cheng (Shanghai International Studies University, SISU) took a broader perspective focusing on constructing the new continentalism in the context of coordination among such formats as EU, EEU, and BRI.

Opening the second day of the workshop, the third panel shifted the focus to the hurdles and challenges facing Sino–Russian relations. Prof. Dr. Leonid Kozlov (FEFU) provided an overview of the domestic origins of Russian foreign policy and their impact on the bilateral relations between Russia and China. Dr. Elena Feditchkina Tracy (University of Illinois) challenged the existing literature on energy relations between Russia and China by arguing that Russian and Chinese approaches to energy policy are likely to diverge in the future.

The final panel discussed how the agents employ visual politics to construct role/status claims and articulate expectations. Dr. Anna Kuteleva (Higher School of Economics, HSE) presented her research on China’s experiments with new media and new identity representations, highlighting the way how videos on China’s BRI posted on social media platforms provide new tools for China to (re)imagine itself and narrate China’s relations with the world to the international audience. Dr. Elizaveta Priupolina reflected how Sino–Russian relations are narrated in the CCTV documentary “Major Country Diplomacy” (Daguo Waijiao) and how the identified narratives correspond to the narratives developed by Russian mainstream media.

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