

AMURCON 2021  
AmurCon 2021: International Scientific Conference**THE IMAGE OF CHINA PRESENTED IN RUSSIAN HISTORY  
SCHOOLBOOKS**Evgenii G. Spiridonov (a)\*, Alexandra V. Spiridonova (b)  
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(b) Chita Pedagogical College, 51a, Krasnoy Zvezdi St., Chita, Russia, [spiridonova\\_a\\_v@mail.ru](mailto:spiridonova_a_v@mail.ru)**Abstract**

The article analyses appropriate Russian history schoolbooks used in Middle and High school with the methods of Discourse analysis and Corpus linguistics analysis to find out how China is being presented in Russian history schoolbooks and what image of China is being presented in Russian schoolbooks. The following methods include Corpus linguistics analysis, which also includes content analysis, to search the keywords associated with China and Discourse analysis based on Critical Discourse analysis and van Dijk's microdiscourse and macrodiscourse framework. The article states that school textbook discourse has a deep impact on audiences with an official image of absolute authority, hence, it is an important foundation for how people construct, perceive and interpret the world. Based on this, the article takes Russian history textbooks as a starting point, and specifically addresses the following issue: how is the image of China presented in Russian history schoolbooks? According to the analysis, we can see a positive image of China in Russian history textbooks, which manifests itself in the structure of the microdiscourse. However, if we look at the general picture of mentioning China in textbooks, we can notice that China is mentioned relatively little. We believe that this phenomenon is associated with the picture of the world that is formed in textbooks - it is rather Eurocentric.

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## 1. Introduction

The world today is facing major changes unseen in a whole century, and historical changes are also taking place in the international system and world structure. In the historical stream of a constantly changing international situation, building a community with a common future for humanity is an important step in the modern world. A community with a common future between Russia and China is an important part of building a community with a common future for humankind. Russia is China's largest neighbour, that's why the development of Russian-Chinese relations is an important part of development peace and prosperity in the whole Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, research on neighbouring countries has become popular in academic circles. Having that said, there's no doubt in the huge importance of studying modern China as much as Russia in the concept of regional studies, which can benefit not only both mentioned countries but also the whole world due to a better understanding of processes taking place in Russia and China. Both China and Russia are two large countries with a centuries-old history and culture, a huge market and a huge development potential. Not only that, faced with various dangers around the world, the governments of the two countries have expressed a desire to support each other and provide the necessary assistance. Thus, it is very important nowadays to study what processes are going on in both countries.

This article considers school textbooks as the result of a mutual compromise between political, economic, cultural activities. With the content and form presented in the textbooks, we can see how the real world, described in the textbook, works. Understanding the presentation of ideology in Russian textbooks will help us to understand how Russia sees China, specifically to the subject of this article. The huge impact of language analysis approach to political fields is presented by Hu and Hu (2021), who described political communication linguistics as not a simple superposition of the existing studies of politics, communication, and linguistics, but a new theoretical paradigm based on the redefinition of "politics", "communication" and "language".

According to Anderson (1991), the process of the "self-discovery" of a country is considered to be the process of building an "imaginary community" of people based on social facts (Goswami, 2020). As a tool for the transfer of national knowledge by the state's ideology, textbooks have become the most authoritative carrier of information in the process of self-knowledge of the "community of the imagination". Apple (2012) sees schooling as a form of social control. According to Apple (2012), though textbooks pretend to teach neutral, legitimate knowledge, they are often used as ideological tools to promote a certain belief system and legitimize an established political and social order. Through the content of the textbook and the listed structural system, we can see what kind of world official institutions are trying to describe and shape the impression of students. Research-based on Russian textbooks will contribute to a full understanding of Russia's "self-awareness" and will foster equal dialogue and people-to-people connections between different countries. Chinese linguists studied the connections of particular text's discourse and the image of a country, for example, Hu and Hu (2018) researched neologisms in Chinese languages connected to new social phenomena in China. Gan et al. (2019) analyzed the differences between English versions of Wikipedia on a description of Kunming "3.1" Event and London

“6.3” Event. Russian linguists also researched discourse impact on a country’s image (Grenaderova, 2019).

## **2. Problem Statement**

In this article, Russian history schoolbooks are used as a starting point for studying the cognitive framework presented in textbooks from the side of describing China. Studying the peculiarities of Russian textbooks has to describe the problems of Russian history textbooks and school history textbooks in the old days. Donskoy (1992) remarked: “The specificity of the study time at school leaves a certain imprint on the content and style of the methodological system” (p. 254). The influence of time and historical age on school textbooks is undeniable, and it manifests itself in various forms. This is the direct influence of national politics on the content of history education.

## **3. Research Questions**

The article takes Russian history textbooks as a starting point, and specifically addresses the following issue: how is the image of China presented in Russian history schoolbooks?

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

As a kind of “hegemonic narrative”, school textbook discourse has a deep impact on audiences with an official image of absolute authority, hence, it is an important foundation for how people construct, perceive and interpret the world. Research-based on Russian textbooks is a prerequisite for achieving equal dialogue and interpersonal ties between China and Russia. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Russian education system has undergone major changes, the result of which was the decision to abolish the unified school textbook system (Zajda, 2017). For each subject, a system for publishing multiple versions of textbooks for each level of education has emerged. The de-monopoly of the educational book publishing market has led to the emergence of many publishing houses specializing in education. The Russian state controls the quality of textbooks. Based on professional knowledge, textbooks are given a “recommended” or “approved” seal. Only in this case, the textbook can be used in schools or higher education institutions. Textbooks with prescribed signs constitute the federal list that is updated every year. Until recently, the evaluation of textbooks was carried out by the Federal Expert Committee, and now this function has been partially transferred to the Russian Academy of Sciences. The State Education Policy Department is also involved in the quality control of textbooks.

“Federal textbook list” is a list approved by the state government. The list of federal school textbooks includes textbooks recommended for teaching. According to this list, regional authorities have the right to fill the school library's resources at the cost of the national budget. At the end of 2018, the Russian Minister of Education Olga Vasilyeva approved a new list of textbooks in which the title was reduced from 1370 to 863. The new list includes publications that have received additional professional training. As a result, the “Enlightenment” publishing house became the leader in submitting titles in the federal textbook list, with a total of 573 titles. This article is focused on researching modern Russian history schoolbooks, published by “Ventana-Graf” publishing house, which are included in the Federal

textbook list of the 2021 year and provided by “LECTA” software. These textbooks include two subjects: Russian history and Common history (which describes the history of the world).

The list of analyzed school textbooks:

- “Russian history”, grade 6,7,8 Vovina V. G., Baranov P. A., etc., Ventana-Graf, 2019;
- “Russian history”, grade 10, Part One, Part Two, Izmozik V. S., Zhuravleva O. N., Rudnik S. N., Ventana-Graf, 2019;
- “Global history. Medieval history”, grade 6, Iskrovskaya L. V., Fedorov S. E., Zemlyanitsin V. A., Ventana-Graf, 2020;
- “Global history. Modern history”, grade 7, 8, 9, Noskov V. V., Andreevskaya T. P., Ventana-Graf, 2020.
- “Global history. New history”, grade10, Heifetz V. L., Fedorov O. D., etc., Ventana-Graf, 2019.

## 5. Research Methods

The core theory for this study is based on discourse analysis, which is multimodal and can be used for a huge number of different texts, such as news (Wang et al., 2021), schoolbooks etc. The relationship between discourse, power and ideology has always been the focus of critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis regards discourse as a kind of social practice, and its purpose is to reveal the ideology and power relations behind language use through detailed language analysis and to study the relationship between discourse and social and cultural development in different fields.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) appeared in the 1980s as an approach toward the amalgamation of language studies and social theory. Fairclough perceived the social interactivity between language and social cognition in the process of producing and interpreting texts as forms of social practice conditioned by linguistic and non-linguistic (cultural, economic, political and affective etc.) elements (Naimah, 2021). The three-dimensional analysis framework proposed by Fairclough is a theoretical paradigm of critical discourse analysis. He regards discourse as a mode of behaviour, divided into three dimensions: text, discursive practice and social practice. Based on the three-dimensional model, Fairclough proposed three steps of discourse analysis: describe (analyse the formal and structural characteristics of the text), interpret (analyze the relationship between the text and the practice process of discourse and explain (analyze the relationship between the discourse practice process and its social context) (Lanchukorn & Pattamawan, 2017). Critical discourse analysis aims to examine the relationship between discourse and ideology and power, from the perspective of language to study social issues such as race, gender, and discrimination, and to reveal the social meaning expressed by language through the analysis of language structure.

Discourse analyses referred to as social studies has become very popular due to their ability to detect the influence of a particular text on people (e.g., narratives of journalism (Molek-Kozakowska, 2018)). Van Dijk developed discourse analysis as a sub-discipline of applied linguistics and as a method of linguistic research, which has the characteristics of crossing various disciplines and takes social reality as the research orientation and is committed to exploring the social structure and society behind the discourse facts. According to Van Dijk's (1980) description of discourse, discourse can be divided into

macrostructure and microstructure. The macrostructure is a general description of the main content of the discourse, which is established by the recipient in the process of understanding. Macrostructure is a series of macro propositions, that is, discourse propositions formed according to certain rules. The microstructure of discourse is to divide discourse into the smallest components that are meaningful to the level of discourse (Van Dijk, 1980).

According to the theory listed above, adding the mentioned concepts of Political textbooks studies (M. W. Apple, B. Anderson), this article uses methods divided into two categories: methods of critical discourse analysis and Corpus linguistics methods. Critical discourse analysis includes content analysis that is aimed to count all the topic-related nouns in the textbook. Then, the paragraphs related to the nouns are analysed according to van Dijk’s macrostructure model (in common – how often is this topic mentioned in the book) and microstructure model (what exactly the textbook “says” about the topic). In this field, the Corpus linguistics methods are perfect to see the structure of the text (Sánchez Ramos, 2020). The software provided by Corpus linguists (in the case of this article – Lancsbox and MyStem) can efficiently analyse the number of particular words and get the whole context of their usage (Zaini et al., 2021).

With help of Lancsbox software, we examined the number of “China” and “Chinese” words mentioned in Russian history schoolbooks. Then we examined the related words with the following results (see Table 1):

**Table 1.** The number of “China”, “Chinese” related words in history schoolbooks

<b>“China” co-occurring high-frequency terms</b>		<b>“Chinese” co-occurring high-frequency terms</b>	
country	66	country	54
war	57	army	37
Japan	46	years	37
Russia	41	power	36
Soviet Union	39	trade	34
year	37	attitude	30
army	37	border	28
power	36	Soviet	27
trade	34	government	24
dynasty	31	population	23
empire	31	emperor	21
relations	30	territory	20
border	28	Russia	19
time	28	influence	19
United States	28	society	15
Soviet	27	culture	8
North Korea	25	language	5
regime	23		
treaty	23		
East	21		
Life	20		
Impact	19		
Asia	18		
World	18		
End	17		
India	16		
Leadership	15		
Foreigners	14		

Conditions	12
Building	11
Confucianism	10
Status	10
Confrontation	7

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## 6. Findings

Nouns are the first category of co-occurring words. High-frequency nouns reflect the object of the text, that is, people, things or events. Since the content of history textbooks is related to the particularity of history and international relations, we will analyse it in terms of three categories: military, politics, and culture.

### 6.1. Military category

From the co-occurrence words in textbooks, it can be seen that the frequency of Chinese-related words is at most the words belonging to military discourse. Relevant Chinese military discourse appeared in foreign history textbooks of:

Grade 6:

“The Emperor of the Song Dynasty was forced to wage an uninterrupted struggle with external enemies. In 1351, China broke out an uprising against Mongolian rule. In 1368, the rebels occupied Beijing. China regained its independence”.

Grade 7:

“The Japanese commander Hideyoshi Toyotomi took advantage of the decline of the Ming Dynasty and decided to conquer China and sent envoys to Goryeo to organize a joint campaign against China”.

“At the beginning of this century, the Manchus established their state in the Songhua River basin, and then they seized southern Manchuria to the coast of the Yellow Sea, placing southern Mongolia and North Korea under their rule. In April 1644, they occupied Beijing and overthrew it... The battle failed, and the Manchus entered Beijing on June 6, 1644. A new era began in Chinese history...The struggle with the Manchus led to the rise of Chinese philosophy, politics, and historical thinking”.

Grade 8:

“After the capture of Beijing, it took the Manchus nearly 40 years to capture the rest of China with the help of Chinese officials and military leaders. It was not until 1681 that the Manchus suppressed the last hotbed of resistance in mainland China for two years. Later, with the help of the Dutch, they occupied Taiwan and completed the conquest of the entire country. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Chinese made two more attempts to rebuild their nation-state in Taiwan”.

Grade 9:

“In 1897, when international competition in the Far East was intensifying, the Kaiser dispatched a fleet... to provoke other powers to seize Chinese naval bases. Germany’s sudden appearance in the Far East’s political arena accelerated China’s division of spheres of influence, leading to a Chinese uprising against all foreigners. It was suppressed by the Eight-Power Allied Forces under the command of a German general. William II warned his army: «Don't have mercy, don't take prisoners!”.

“The main target of British trade is opium produced in Indian poppy plantations. Narcotic opium has long been used in religious ceremonies in China, but since the beginning of smuggling in the United Kingdom, it has been widely used. The spread of opium has become a national issue. The Chinese complained that opium “consumed our wealth and increased the power of the barbarians”. In the capital, additional agreements were signed to further expand the rights of foreigners in China. In the course of these events, Russian diplomacy made China recognize the borders along the Amur River and divide Primorsky Territory into it through the port of Vladivostok. The disintegration of traditional Chinese society and the threat of national-territorial division gave birth to a reform and revival movement in China, which first appeared after the defeat of the war with France. The reformers demanded, “change the existing order and take root in the hearts of the people”. The reform movement after the Anti-Japanese War was particularly fierce, but the reform of “removing the old and expanding the new” started in 1898 was immediately suppressed by Cixi and was supported by Army Commander Yuan Shikai’.

Grade 10:

“...Chiang Kai-shek signed an anti-Japanese agreement with the Chinese Communists. The Soviet Union secretly sent military advisers, pilots and military equipment to China”.

‘In the summer of 1937, the Japanese Kwantung Army invaded China. The outbreak of hostilities meant that the Japanese economy turned to the basis of war, militarism rose sharply, and the government’s authoritarianism increased. In the 1920s, China’s most important task was still unified and free from imperialism, solving the problem of China's land-lost peasants, and modernizing the industrial base. Anti-imperialist demonstrations have taken place all over China”.

Based on the discourse analysis of the above text, it can be noted that the rhetorical techniques used in these passages indicate that the Chinese phenomenon is not a phenomenon of an aggressor country, but a country that defends against foreign attacks. At the same time, Russia's role in participating in the Opium War is not hidden, but it emphasizes the assistance of the Soviet Union in China's anti-Japanese struggle (in the “anti-fascist” discourse).

However, in describing the conflict between the Soviet Union and China, the discourse has changed:

“In Asia, the differences with China have deepened. During China's “Cultural Revolution”, China's provocations on the Soviet border became more and more common. In 1969, two areas of the Soviet-Chinese border were armed conflicts: in Uzbekistan. Damansky Island and Kazakhstan region on the Suri River. Soviet leaders worried about the threat of a large-scale war with China. The Soviet Union spent a lot of money on strengthening its borders. The restoration of relations with China only occurred in the 1980s”.

Regarding the armed conflict between Russia and China, it must be mentioned that the description is short-lived. These events have no distinctive ideological colour but are presented as historical facts. For example, only the upper paragraph in the textbook is about the Damanskiy Island incident, although it contains the words “provocation from China”, but in the context of the entire textbook, little attention is paid to this conflict.

## **6.2. Political category**

In the political category, the discourse on Sino-Russian relations in textbooks has a positive attitude. At the same time, the influence of Japan and the United States on China has been described in a negative way, e.g.:

“President Bush publicly abandoned the idea of a “superpower” and called for a return to solve the problem through multilateral efforts. However, the Americans are “firmly trapped” in Afghanistan and Iraq and continue to conflict with China on economic issues”.

“In 2005, Japan-China relations deteriorated sharply. This was because Tokyo supported the United States on the Taiwan issue, and China continued to treat Taiwan as its territory. The new Japanese history textbook defended the imperial aggression on the eve and during the World War and was regarded as to insult China and North Korea. Thousands of anti-Japanese demonstrations in China destroyed the offices of several Japanese companies and diplomatic missions. The Chinese authorities do not bear any responsibility for this. Prime Minister Koizumi had to give others for his country again apologize for the “suffering” caused by the nation”.

“China occupies a solid position in the world economy (the second-largest economy in the world) and international politics. The Chinese authorities, which still do not recognize Taiwan, no longer insist on using military means to resolve the issue of secession. In 1997, the Chinese successfully regained Hong Kong, which was previously ruled by the British. In 1999, the Chinese flag flew over Macau, which was once a Portuguese colony. The border disputes with Russia and India were resolved. In 2005, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) and successfully hosted the 29th Summer Olympics in the summer of 2008, in which Chinese athletes won first place (October 2017). Since March 2013, he has also served as the Chairman of China. Xi Jinping has established himself as a tough fighter against corruption. The Constitution of the Communist Party of China embodies the “One Belt, One Road” initiative-the establishment of three economic corridors, linking China with Europe, Central Asia, Russia, and the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf countries”.

“At the beginning of the 21st century, China-Russia relations have made significant progress. In 2001, the two sides signed an agreement on good-neighbourly friendship and cooperation. Moscow and Beijing have a common view on combating religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism. China supports Action taken by the Russian government in Chechnya. In 2005, 2007 and 2014, Moscow and Beijing conducted joint military anti-terrorism exercises. On May 21, 2014, Russian President Putin and President Xi Jinping signed a landmark contract for the supply of natural gas to China in Shanghai between Natural Gas Industry Corporation and China National Petroleum Corporation. The total price of the 30-year contract is 400 billion U.S. dollars. To fulfil the contract, the “Siberian Power” natural gas pipeline with a length of 4,800 kilometres will be built. The cooperation between the two countries has entered a new stage”.

The above example is a comprehensive description of modern Sino-Russian relations and the modern international situation of the world. How are the earlier related Chinese historical events described?

“Another important diplomatic event during the reign of Princess Sofia was the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk with China in 1689. The Amur region agreed to establish a border along the Argon River and the Stanovoi Mountains (at the same time, the eastern section of the border did not clear



geographical indications). Therefore, Russia and China have established a peaceful relationship for a long time, and the gradual expansion of trade has promoted the maintenance of this relationship”.

“A special relationship has formed between China and Russia. The interests of the two countries were as early as the 17th century. They collided in the Amur River Basin. After completing the conquest of China, Kangxi fought several battles against Russian settlements. Under the threat of force, he forced the Moscow Embassy to sign the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, according to which the Russians ceded the land they developed in the Amur Valley. However, the same Kangxi allowed the establishment of a Russian mission in Beijing in 1715. The Orthodox Mission has played a special role in the development of Russia-China relations. When no foreign powers had the right to station diplomatic representatives in the Chinese capital, the two countries maintained informal contacts through it. The agreements signed in 1727 and 1728 confirmed that in addition to the border between Russia and Mongolia occupied by the Manchus, the Russian-Chinese trade terms through the border town of Kyakhta were also determined, which will continue after the Europeans “closed” to China”.

“In the Far East, the task of Russian diplomats is to establish borders and trade relations with other countries. The result of their activities is the treaty delineating the border between Russia and China in the Far East. According to the treaty signed with China in 1858-1860, a border was established along the Amur River, and the Ussuri Territory, located between the Ussuri River and the Sea of Japan, on the right tributary of the Amur River, leads to Russia. In 1860, Vladivostok was established - Russia's outpost in the Far East”.

“By the beginning of the 19th century, China was still a country isolated from the outside world, and its power belonged to the Qing Dynasty. All contact with foreigners was limited to strictly controlled trade through the port of Guangzhou and the city of Kyakhta on the Russian border”.

In this short article, it is worth pointing out the description of Russia’s behaviour: The first thing is to put forward the things done by other countries, emphasizing the destructiveness and harm of these things, but Russia’s role is only limited to “making diplomacy”. The characteristic of these examples is that discourses related to Russia remain neutral, but discourses related to other countries are composed of phrases such as “influence” and “pressure”. This context has a derogatory influence and regards the mentioned countries as an aggressor. However, there is an exception to this description: “Russia took advantage of China's weakness, imposed an alliance agreement on it, and obtained concessions to build a Middle East railway through Manchuria”.

At the same time, a neutral discourse appeared: “Russians living in Siberia gradually developed trade relations with China. Chinese came to Tobolsk to participate in fairs, trading silk, gems, porcelain, coloured pottery, tea and other commodities. At the same time, in China in the early 17th century the Manchu emperor in power watched dissatisfiedly as the power of the Russian tsar first spread throughout Siberia and then began to establish his own country. In the Transbaikalian and Amur regions”.

But there are relatively few such facts mentioned in textbooks.

### **6.3. Cultural category**

Nouns such as “culture”, “life”, “Confucianism”, “society”, and “language” describe the cultural aspects mentioned. Compared with other categories, they appear less, but in foreign history textbooks, they concentrate on specific short essays describing China.

“During the Song Dynasty, China invented gunpowder and compasses, and developed printing (through stereotype printing), which all illustrate the development of social education in China”.

“Confucianism has dominated the spiritual life of China since ancient times”.

“China, which has a thousand-year civilization, has become the cradle of Far Eastern culture. This is a China-centered special world that has been isolated from other centres of civilization for a long time”.

“Japan owes it to the cultural influence that penetrated Japan from China and South Korea, mainly Confucianism and Buddhism”.

“The religious meaning of Zen that also comes from China is especially popular in Japan”.

“The Ming Dynasty was the heyday of the production of porcelain art products. The manufacture of porcelain became an exclusive affair of the country and was carried out under strict government control. Another characteristic of the Ming Dynasty is the prosperity of Chinese architecture and related crafts. New cities were built, countless palaces, temples, bridges, canals, fortifications. Under the rule of the Ming emperor, China completed the Great Wall on the northern border and rebuilt the Grand Canal connecting China’s largest river, the Yellow River and the Yangtze River”.

“Kangxi personally formulated the code of conduct for his subjects; he imitated Chinese literary classics and wrote poems. His famous sayings were dotted on the walls of urban buildings and were recited by schools. New palaces were built in the Forbidden City in Beijing and the Mausoleum of Bogdi Khan in Mukden, the capital of Manzhouli. The city walls were restored and rebuilt, and the walls were decorated with monumental gates. The architecture of the Qing Dynasty generally followed the old style. The pattern is different from the grand scale and gorgeous decoration. The construction of etiquette promoted the development of applied art. During that period, the art of stone carving reached the highest perfection”.

## **7. Conclusion**

According to the above analysis, we can see a positive image of China in Russian history textbooks, which manifests itself in the structure of the microdiscourse. However, this study does not include a full-scale analysis of history textbooks. If we look at the general picture of mentioning China in textbooks, we can notice that China is mentioned relatively little. We believe that this phenomenon is associated with the picture of the world that is formed in textbooks - it is more Eurocentric. At the same time, a positive image of China is being formed based on the current political agenda. Putting together these two theses, we can highlight the problem of the lack of full-scale information about China in general and about the Asian region in particular in Russian history textbooks. The small number of references to China weakly correlates with the political agenda of cooperating with China, which is being created in Russia.

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