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## Chinese civilization: dynamics factors

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**Abstract:** The article, which is based on the analysis of modern Chinese and Western studies of the Chinese civilization, contains the author's conclusions regarding factors of dynamics of the Chinese civilization. Both Chinese and Western scholars draw our attention to the influence of Western civilization. The formation of the modern Chinese civilization is considered as a kind of synthesis of Chinese and Western ones, but with the dominance of cultural codes and archetypes of the Chinese civilization. Among the factors of dynamics, a special place is held by the studies relative to the role of natural and climatic conditions in the development of culture and models of relations between peoples. Among the stabilizing factors, a special emphasis is given to localities, civilizational centres that support and reproduce the traditional values of Chinese civilization.

**Keywords:** Chinese civilization, centres of civilization, local civilizations, dialogue of civilizations, conflict of civilizations.

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## Introduction

The relevance of the research of the Chinese civilization is rising alongside enforcing of the economic and political significance of China within the system of international relations. In 2009 a book by the British scholar and journalist Martin Jacques was released, which contains the arguments behind the position relative to the “flourishing of the celestial Empire” and the “end of the Western World” [Jacques 2009]. The research has aroused resonance and had the continuation. In one of his latest works “Civilizational state against the national state” Martin Jacques keeps on asserting, that the West adheres to a mistaken position, insisting on the fact that the world should be looked upon through the Western prism. In this prism no other tradition, history or culture can be compared with the Western one, it surpasses other cultures, and the significance of the others is diminished. European centrism (to be precise, western centrism) is an universal criterion of civilizations, but

it speaks not about our wisdom, but about our ignorance, it is not the expression of our cosmopolitanism, but our isolated and provincial nature. ...This kind of thinking

threatens to become the greatest obstacle, as we are entering the epoch, when Europe will gradually become marginalized, the United States will undergo the irreversible decline, the developing countries will become the basic actors, and China will replace the United States as a domineering power. In other words, those countries and cultures, at which we are looking from above, will more often become arbitrators of the future. [Jacques 2011].

The research made by Martin Jacques is popular enough in China. The studies caused an upsurge in the research of the Chinese civilization, and part of them became the subject of our analysis.

## Materials and methods

The methodological background for the research of the Chinese civilization in the Russian science has a great history and at the present time is represented by the academic Maysnikov V.S. scientific school. His collective works in seven volumes are well known, and these include the monographs "Qing Empire and the Russian state in the XVII century (1978), "A short review of the history of the People's Republic of China diplomacy" (1960-ies early 1980-ies)", (1988), "The agreed articles adopted: diplomatic history of the Russian-Chinese border. XVII-XX centuries" (1996), also articles published in two volumes edition "Quadrature of the Chinese circle" (2006). According to the viewpoint of the Maysnikov V.S. school, relations with the states of the Eastern Asia, in particular with China, are considered as a form of inter civilizational contact. As for Russia, China represents one of the largest from the neighboring Eastern European civilizations with the contact zones of inter civilizational communication. Nonetheless Russia and China have different views on political coordinates of the world, priorities of values relative to human rights, evaluation of tendencies and contradictions in the world community. At the same time the sizes of the two countries are such that the models of their development and external policy behavior influence the world historic process.

The historic basis for our analysis is composed by the most well known publications of the Chinese and Western authors, accessible for our studies. Their analysis, systematization, comparison, generalization allowed us to single out several groups of factors, influencing, according to experts, the development of the Chinese civilization. In this article we shall analyze the works, describing factors of the Chinese civilization dynamics.

## Results

### Development factors

Despite the widespread standpoint about the stability and invariability of the basics of the Chinese civilization, there are a number of research studies, showing what changes arose in China under the influence of external factors. The changes in the Chinese

civilization under the influence of globalization processes and penetration of the Western civilizational models became the subject of the research made by Guang Xia [Xia 2014]. It has been historically shaped in such a way that the Chinese civilization suffered considerable changes, especially after active China's ushering into the contemporary world as an active actor despite the exceptional historical lasting continuity. This made the contemporary China consciously or unconsciously abandon some aspects of their traditions and accept some basic components of the Western civilization. As a consequence at the present time we deal with the conversion of China into the modern nation, which began its transformation already in the course of the bourgeois revolution of Sun Yat-sen, and then as a result of the socialist revolution of Mao Zedong. Thus the modern Chinese civilization is the synthesis of the partially preserved Chinese traditions and global (basically Western) values.

According to Guang Xia, the Western dichotomy between traditions and modernity is not acceptable for the contemporary China. In many aspects from the ancient time China has been a modern state (according to Western assessments), as in the large measure a temporal state, meritocratic bureaucracy, highly self-governing civil society, a written language accessible for all, a system of stratification, based on the status achieved, united culture, open for multiculturalism, idea of equality in education and etc., lying at the basis of the formation of the Western modernity, have long existed in China. On the other hand, the Chinese society, pre-contemporary or contemporary, differs, among other things, in its Confucian values, in family morale in particular. In fact, even today, Confucian familism (in the forms of paternalism, nepotism, groupism, personalism, communalism, authoritarianism and etc.) has a decisive significance for the functioning of the system of power in China, market economy and everyday life. Consequently, depending on its civilization, China simultaneously resembles the West and does not resemble the West. Defining China as a civilizational state, defining the role of Chinese civilization, Guang Xia suggests that the Chinese civilization should be considered both in its continuity, and in disruptions in the Chinese history, as well in its similarity and differences from the Western analogue.

Thus, the Chinese scholars, in the similar way as their Western partners do, recognize the external influence of the Western values and make the conclusion about the contemporary Chinese civilization as about a symbiosis of Chinese traditions and the Western modernity. At the same time a number of scholars say about a kind of archetypes, cultural codes of the Chinese civilization, which do not yield to changes, lie at the foundation of civilizational identity and potentially conflictogenic in relation to other civilizations.

A number of scholars consider that a man's reaction to external challenges, to be precise, natural cataclysms, determined the civilizational trajectory, social evolution of civilizational hearths [Liu, Chen, Lee 2019]. Cataclysms and their consequences provoked not only changes in culture (for example, the country's economy) but conflicts and contradictions between peoples. That is why our suggestion is to draw the attention at the present time to the role of ecological factor in ensuring the social consent and stability of civilizations. Yanxin Liu and Xiaodong Yan believe that under the Xian Dynasty draught was an important factor of social instability in China. And the contemporary China is to study

in detail the man-earth ancient system. [Liu Yan 2020]. By using the example of Shanxi region, Jinchang Li, Liuyan Han, Yanfang Zhao revealed the link of climate with the degree of conflict occurrence in societies: “changes in places of settlements were caused basically by differences in climate sensitivity depending on latitude and altitude and differences in frequency of human conflicts, caused by sharp changes in climate in the regions with a different settlement density”. [Li, Han, Zhao 2017]. In a number of research studies historical conflicts between nomads and arable farmers are explained by the influence of economic conditions [Pei, Lee, Fei 2018]. In their research of the role of ancient cities in civilization development, Xiaolin Ren, Duowen Mo, Tristram R. Kidder note, that the “ expansion of cities in combination with dry climate and development of agriculture changed sharply the landscape of China of the bronze century” [Ren, Mo, Kidder 2019].

Let us emphasize that the role of water in the development of civilizations is distinguished not only by Chinese scholars. For example, when studying water influence on civilization growth, on culture, beliefs in human societies, Seyedeh Habibbeh, Hosseinya Omid note:

Ancient civilizations, such as Egyptians, Romans, Venetian Empire and Umayyad Dynasty based their policy on stable water resources, which helped them to survive and flourish. Stability and development of human societies of the past and of the present were stipulated by the achievements of science on water and their accomplishments in engineering and technologies. [Habibbeh, Omid 2021].

By drawing historical parallels, scholars make a conclusion about the significance of rethinking of conflicts in the long national scale within the paradigm of ecological humanitarian sciences.

## **Stabilization factors**

Speaking about factors of dynamics, we cannot but note stabilization factors. A number of scholars consider that the basis for a contemporary Chinese civilization is formed by localities, some civilizational centers, located on the territory of China. The subject matter of local civilizations is vividly expressed in the Chinese science. For, example, under research is the civilizational basis of the Yanzhao region [Lijing Mingtao 2009], having both Chinese, and specific, original features, determining the place of the region in the development of the Chinese civilization. Another example is the studies made in Iluo in the middle part of the river Hwang, which is taken for an analysis of the first dynasty states in China [Liu, Chen, Lee 2019]. Civilizational seats retain codes and patterns of the Chinese civilization, that is why the correct socialization of the present day generations, the study on their part of the history of the Chinese civilization and their centers with its multi thousands years of history is viewed as a required condition for transfer of cultural codes, civilizational identity.

Another stabilizing factor are the principles of the Chinese civilization. Chinese scholars especially emphasize the strive for harmony among these principles. They make an accent on

the peace-loving nature of Chinese civilization, targeted towards concord and peace. [Xingpei 2010]. The idea of “tranquility” or “harmony” arose at the time of Chinese classics as summing up the existing interactions of everything in the world. Underlining the significance of the harmony, it was noted that noble people may enjoy harmonic diversity, and at the same time ignoble people may lose themselves in differences. Harmony is not only the philosophy of life, but political doctrine and cultural aesthetics of China. According to Yuan Xingpei, the war destroyed the Chinese civilization, caused a breach in society in Northern China, existing for many years. During Sun Dynasty, for example, China was the leader in science and technology, but it fell under the attack of discords and wars. In this connection the concept of harmony is persistently underlined both scholars and politicians of the modern China and is considered as a way of achieving the flourishing of the Chinese civilization.

At the same time among the Western scholars a suggestion is being outspoken about a possible clash of the US and Chinese civilizations. In particular, Marcus T. Anthony adheres to this position; he studies the in-depth physiological mechanisms of civilizational clashes. Among Russian scholars there are also representatives justifying incompatibility of a number of cultural paradigms. Making a research in relations of the Imperial China and the Vatican, Kruglova M.S. speaks about incompatibility of some cultural paradigms, proper both to the Chinese civilization and Western Christianity, which became the reason behind a continued diplomatic, theological and doctrinal conflict between the Imperial China and the Vatican [Kruglova 2018]. The archetypes of the Chinese civilization are studied in the Centre of Complex Chinese Research and regional projects at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO)<sup>1</sup>.

## Conclusions

Generalization of the research results shows the presence of external and domestic factors, influencing the development of the Chinese civilization. In the external factors group a special emphasis is to be made on the influence of Western values and their synthesis with the traditions of the Chinese civilization. What it really means is factors, setting the space for development dynamics. Among domestic factors a special place is taken by the research of the role of local civilizations, which fulfill the conservative role and allow to reproduce traditional values. The domestic factors include the transfer of the basic principle of the Chinese civilization – harmony and concord. And, finally, one more domestic factor, related to the changes of climatic conditions. The research in the history of natural cataclysms (for example draught), problems of settlement (for example, the emergence of cities and urbanization) show, which role they played in social and cultural life, how cataclysms became the reasons behind conflicts, changes in culture. Mindful of the above they suggest that the contemporary Chinese civilization should be studied from the ecological point of view.

<sup>1</sup> Center for Complex China studies and regional projects. URL: <https://mgimo.ru/about/structure/ucheb-nauch/chinaregion/>

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