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THE SETTLEMENT OF THE RUSSIAN-CHINESE BORDER DISPUTE

ABSTRACT

The establishment of the PRC opened the new chapter in the Sino-Soviet/Russian relations. For many years the existence of the problem of the common border was not openly expressed. In 1957 the first announcements about the territorial disputes between USSR and PRC were issued in China. And in 1960 Zhou Enlai stated that there were insignificant discrepancies in the Russian and Chinese maps, very easy to solve.

Over the next nearly 30 years the problem of determination of the border has become a victim of tense and hostile Soviet-Chinese relations and unproductive talks. Gorbachev's rise to power in the Kremlin enabled to negotiate a solution to the Soviet-Chinese border problem. And consequently to sign "The agreement on the eastern section of the Sino-Soviet state border" on May 16, 1991. The agreement on the western section of the border was signed on September 3, 1994. The demarcation of the western section of the border was finished by Joint Russian-Chinese Demarcation Commission on September 10, 1998.

After six years of negotiations on October 14, 2004 the Complementary Agreement on the Eastern Section of the China-Russia Boundary was signed in Beijing. On its basis the Russian side ceded the whole of Tarabarov island (ch. Yinlongdao), half of Bolshoy Ussuriyski (ch. Heixiazidao) and half of Bolshoy

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(ch. Abagaitu) island. Another halves of Bolshoy Ussuriyski and Bolshoy islands were kept by Russia. Both sides shared disputed territory almost equally. The ceremony of installation of the border landmarks between Russia and China on Bolshoy Ussuriyski island (on October 14, 2008) finished the long process of demarcation of the Russian-Chinese border.

Keywords: Russian-Chinese relations, Sino-Russian relations, Soviet-Chinese border, Russian-Chinese border, 1949–2008, demarcation, delimitation

The next day after the proclamation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949 the Soviet Union recognized the new communist government of China and established diplomatic relations with it, thereby breaking relations with the government of the Republic of China. In 1950, the whole area of Mainland China was controlled by the communist forces led by Mao Zedong.

Mao Zedong and other communist leaders, like Guomindang activists, strived for restoration of traditional Chinese supremacy in Asia and maintaining control over territories conquered by Manchu Qing Dynasty. None of them supported acknowledgement of Russian territorial gains of the former Qing Empire lands nor recognition the Russo-Chinese “unequal” treaties from 19. and 20. century as valid and binding.

Article 55 of the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (September 29, 1949) has obliged the Central People's Government of Chinese People's Republic to study treaties and agreements concluded by Guomindang with foreign governments in order to recognize, abrogate, revise or re-negotiate them (*The Common...*, 1949).

In the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance of February 14, 1950 both sides committed themselves to respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Kurdyukov, 1959, p. 219–220). The Joint Declaration of Governments of October 12, 1954, Declaration of Soviet Government of October 30, 1956, the Announcement of PRC Government of November 2, 1956 as well as joint Sino-Soviet Announcement of January 18, 1957 (Kurdyukov, 1959, p. 319, 321, 334) confirmed the mutual respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Except for the empty phrases about respect for the territorial integrity, both sides did not reveal the existence of differences in the perception of Sino-Soviet border because of political reasons. One should note, however, that from the very beginning of the existence of the People's Republic of China books, maps and atlases presented Chinese territory covering the some lands of its neighbors (disputed territories). Sometimes some parts of the state border were shown as "not determined". The maps of the lost territories were also published (see: Tzou, 1990; Kim, 1979).

The Sino-Soviet border dispute was a consequence of lack of delimitation and demarcation of boundary line on rivers (Amur, Ussuri) and some sections of lands. This situation was a result of rejection of *Thalweg rule* by the Soviets and Russians¹ (Russians often used the term "farwater")², as well as claiming numerous islands on the aforementioned rivers located close to the Chinese bank, and annexing small areas of Chinese territory in the times of Russian Empire as well as in 20. (the conflict of 1929) and 30. of 20 century (taken from Manzhuguo – Japanese puppet state created in northeastern China, called Manchuria in Russia and the West)³. As the result of these annexations, two border lines existed in the same time. The former, although not precise, was confirmed by mutual treaties and documents, while the latter – actual – was moved towards China and had no legal basis.

In the early 50. Soviet government asked by PRC submitted the set of maps indicating the border line and Chinese supposedly – as Moscow later claimed – "did not express any remarks about the course of the border line and this line was practically respected" (*Zayavlenye...*, 1969, p. 1).

¹ According to this principle of international law, on navigable river border runs along the line of the deepest channel or current (Talweg) and on non navigable river along the middle of the river (median) (Mojsiewicz, 1998, p. 79).

² Farwater = a sea lane with sufficient depth for safe navigation.

³ At a press conference in 1996 Deputy Director of the Federal Border Service Lieutenant-General Alexandr L. Manilov admitted that when Japan occupied Manchuria in the mid-30., Soviet Union unilaterally took control over virtually all the islands on the Amur and Ussuri River. The boundaries were also shifted in many places of the land border (*Efforts...*, 1996, April 1).

In 1954, during Khrushchev's visit to Beijing Mao was unsuccessfully trying to talk to him about the independence of Mongolia, although PRC acknowledged its independence. Three years later, in 1957, Zhou Enlai made an attempt to discuss the territorial questions, but was not given any "satisfactory answer" (Chang, 1982, p. 108–109; Ginsburgs, Pinkele, 1978, p. 6–7, 9). In 1957 according to the Russian side the first announcements about the territorial disputes between USSR and PRC were issued in China⁴ (Borisow, Kołoskow, 1979, p. 292; see also Ginsburgs, Pinkele, 1978, p. 24 and note 53 on p. 33–34).

On April 28, 1960 Zhou Enlai during a press conference in Kathmandu answering a question if there exist any section of not delimited border line between USSR and PRC, replied that there are insignificant discrepancies in the maps, easy to solve peacefully (*Zayavlenye...*, 1969, p. 1; Ginsburgs, Pinkele, 1978, p. 12). Zhou publically pointed out the existence of the sections of border, which course was discrepant on Soviet and Chinese maps respectively.

On August 22 and September 21 1960 Chinese proposed negotiations to settle the border dispute in a complex way (*Oświadczenie rządu...*, p. 726; Ginsburgs, Pinkele, 1978, p. 12). On December 12, 1962 in a speech to the Supreme Soviet Khrushchev, irritated by the Chinese criticism (in connection with the installation and withdrawal of the nuclear missiles from Cuba), accused the Chinese, that they on the one hand instigate the war with imperialism and colonialism, while on the other, agree on the colonial status of Macao and Hong Kong (*Zasedanya...*, 1963, p. 492–493). The Soviet leader contrasted Chinese dogmatism and Soviet pragmatism. Commenting the armed conflict between China and India, he supported the peaceful settlement of border disputes (*Zasedanya...*, 1963, p. 504).

The Chinese replied with the editorial in "Renmin Ribao" (March 8, 1963), which was dedicated to 9 unequal treaties including 4 concluded by Imperial Russia (Treaties of Aigun, Tientsin (Tianjin), Peking (Beijing), and Treaty of Ili or Treaty of Saint Petersburg) and, according to Chinese

⁴ This statement was published in the "right-wing speeches of the bourgeois elements that have made the fight against the Communist Party". Soviet authors drew attention to the fact that the CCP authorities "fending off attacks of the rightists did not responded to these territorial claims put forward against the USSR".

side, were contradictory to the Karakhan's declaration. A rhetorical question was asked, whether Moscow really wants to deal with this problem and come to an agreement concerning the unequal treaties (Ginsburgs, Pinkle, 1978, p. 44–45; Chang, 1982, p. 110), having in mind the aforementioned Sino-Russian treaties delimiting the boundary line between the both states. Thus PRC questioned the legitimacy of the grounds, on which Russia gained control over territories that earlier belonged to China. The Article 55 of Common Program was invoked (however not *expressis verbis*), according to which the Chinese government will examine the treaties concluded by "previous Chinese governments" with foreign states. The words "concluded by Guomindang" were changed into "concluded by previous Chinese governments".

On May 17, 1963, the Soviet government (according to its announcement from 1969) „has proposed PRC government bilateral consultations” to reduce tensions on the border (*Zayavlenye...*, 1969, p. 1). The Chinese side also arrogated the initiative to itself – on August 23, 1963 it presented “a six-point proposal about maintaining the border status quo and avoiding conflicts” (*Oświadczenie rządu...*, p. 726) (including maintaining status quo, not crossing the main channel of navigable rivers by patrols, and decision to resolve the status of disputed territories by future negotiations on the state level). The Chinese proposal was tantamount to withdrawal of Soviets from many river islands.

The consultations concerning the regulation of border problem started in February 1964 in Beijing (the chairman of the Soviet delegation was Soviet vice-minister of foreign affairs P.I. Zyrianov, the chairman of the Chinese delegation was vice-minister of foreign affairs Zen Yunchuan (*Zayavlenye...*, 1969, p. 1)⁵ and lasted until August of that year.

In the beginning both sides of consultations exchanged maps. After comparing them, 20 discrepant sections were found. A project of agreement about the eastern section of border was made, excluding Bolshoy (Bolshoi) Ussuriysky and Tarabarov Islands on Amur by Khabarovsk that

⁵ Talks began on February 25, 1964, and were discontinued on August 22, with the intention of resuming them in Moscow on October 15, 1964. But the further talks took place only a few years later (Borisow, Kołoskow, 1979, p. 328).

both sides could not reach an agreement about. The Soviet leadership did not agree, however, to initial the document without determining the status of both disputed islands (Kireev⁶, 1999, p. 42). During the consultations Chinese rejected the border line which was drawn on the map attached to the Beijing Treaty (because of the 1:1000000 scale and the fact that the border line was drawn with a thick pencil; because of that some sections of border led along Chinese bank of Ussuri river, which was tantamount to Russian control over most of the islands) and presented their own map of the border line in a bigger scale, consistently accepting Thalweg rule of the international law, according to which the boundary line on a river always runs along the main current of this river (Chang, 1982, p. 117).

On July 10, 1964 during a conversation with a delegation of Japanese Socialist Party in Beijing, Mao made the border conflict public. He blamed USSR of putting Mongolia under the Soviet domination under the guise of giving it independence and accused Russia of seizing enormous Chinese territories lying to the East of Baikal Lake. Mao said then: "About one hundred years ago, the territory lying to the East of Baikal Lake became Russian and since then Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Kamchatka and other territories are Soviet. We still have not made an account for it" (*Beseda...*, 1964, September 2, p. 3; Chang, 1982, p. 108–109)⁷. The editorial in "Pravda" (September 2, 1964) accused China of expansionism and rejected Chinese claims relying on the fact that the Amur basin was inhabited by non-Chinese tribes. Moreover, it stated that Mongolia is an independent state and all the issues concerning it should be dealt with its authorities (Chang, 1982, p. 112–113). Khrushchev's harsh and awkward statements about Chinese borders (including Xinjiang) were badly received in Beijing. However, the Soviet leader was soon removed from the post and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev (October 14, 1964), which lead to further deterioration of mutual relations.

During the Beijing consultations the agreement was not reached, but both sides decided to return to negotiations in Moscow on October 15,

⁶ Author – Genrich Kireev was the chairman of the Russian delegation in the Joint Russian-Chinese demarcation commission.

⁷ This was a reprint of the article (with some shortcuts) from the Japanese magazine "Sekai Siuho" of August 11, 1964.

1964 (which did not happen). Soviet propaganda was later trying to tortuously motivate the fail of Beijing consultations: “the Soviet side presented propositions, acceptance of which would enable delimitation of Sino-Soviet border in a shortest time possible, based on mutual agreement and in a precise way (...) the Chinese side was not interested in achieving the agreement. PRC delegation was trying to cast doubt on historically shaped border based on international agreements. The Chinese side perceived the sense of the consultation in artificial creation of the territorial problem, which could complicate relations between our nations and states for years” (*Zayavlenye...*, 1969, p. 1).

The growing contradictions between USSR and PRC, including not regulating the problem of border, resulted in escalation of resentment and hostility between Moscow and Beijing (rejection of invitation to 23. Congress of Communist Party of Soviet Union by Communist Party of China was symptomatic here). The border incidents abounded – in March 1969 they led to armed struggle on Ussuri River, on an island called Zhenbao by Chinese and Damansky by Russians, which became the climax of hostile and tense relations between both states. It became the reason of the controversy, because Chinese, who acknowledged Thalweg rule, have seen it as a part of its territory (the main channel has flown to the East of the island).

In April 1969 (from 1 to 24), 9. National Congress of Communist Party Of China took place. During this event, a claim for the disputed territories recognized by Congress as Chinese and seized by the Soviet Union was upheld, while in a paper issued by the Central Committee the desire of the Chinese government to resolve the territorial questions by negotiations, and to keep the status quo and avoid conflicts before the resolution of dispute was expressed (Borisow, Kołoskow, 1979, p. 479). On April 11, 1969 Russians invited Chinese delegation to Moscow for consultations considering the boundary line, proposing its start within the 4 days (April 15) or another time convenient for the Chinese side (*Nota...*, 1969, April 12, p. 1). The Chinese government replied that it is going to examine the propositions and answer them (April 14) (Chang, 1982, p. 123).

The most significant attempt to overcome the deadlock caused by the border clashes were four hours lasting talks on the Beijing airport

between USSR Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin and Chairman of PRC State Council Zhou Enlai (September 11, 1969). The talks were initiated by Moscow. Kosygin proposed an immediate start of negotiations concerning controversial border issues on the level of vice ministers of foreign affairs and, taking into account Chinese anxieties over a possible Soviet attack, concluding a separate document – non-aggression treaty, but Chinese wanted it to be a temporary document concerning maintaining the status quo on the border in the frame of the border agreement (*Soviet Report...*, 1969, p. 1–4; *Letter...*, 1969, p. 1–3).

On October 7, the Chinese government issued a special statement informing about its will to start the negotiations concerning the border disputes, in the same time stating that it never demanded the return of territories claimed by Imperial Russia by unequal treaties and has always supported the resolution of existing disputes by negotiations (Clubb, 1971, p. 506; Chang, 1982 p. 133). It was also reported that Zhou proposed Kosygin a preliminary agreement concerning “temporary measures” to keep status quo on the borders and to avoid military clashes understood by him as withdrawal or not entering the disputed territories along the borders by troops of both sides. The announcement made by Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that if any of the sides takes control over territory of another side, thus violating the unequal treaties, it has to return them unconditionally, which does not exclude later necessary corrections of boundary line on this territories (Chang, 1982, p. 133–134).

Thereby Chinese resigned from the allegations that Russians illegally occupy 1.5 million km² of Chinese territory. While abandoning their previous claims, they argued that Russians in many sections violated the borders set by the unequal treaties and those violations caused the emergence of territorial dispute. Russians rejected those allegations and claimed that they have legal basis for their control over all of the territories.

The negotiations about the boundary lines started in Beijing on October 20, 1969 and lasted until 1978. They failed to yield any practical results. The situation became even more complicated because of Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, as well as number of Soviet troops on Chinese border and in Mongolia and Soviet support for Vietnam. In the end of 70. and 80. unofficial contacts

were maintained and political consultations on vice-ministers took place. During the latter the opinions about the normalization of international relations were exchanged and “a number of international problems was discussed”.

The Gorbachev’s rise to power brought a radical shift. The new Soviet leader pronounced his milestone speech in Vladivostok (July 1986), in which he agreed on delimitation of boundary line according to the rule of the main channel of the river (“farwater”) (Gorbachov, 1987, p. 27). The change of Moscow’s stance on Kampuchea, Mongolia and Afganistan, as well as the reduction of armed forces on the Sino-Soviet border resulted in a decision made during a ninth session of Beijing talks (in October 1986) about the resumption of talks concerning the boundary line on the level of vice-ministers of foreign affairs (Slavinsky, 1988, p. 253).

The talks concerning the boundary line were resumed on February 9, 1987 in Moscow. Both sides decided to review the whole boundary line between both states starting from the eastern section (4300 km) (Dmochowski, 2009, p. 474–477; Kireev, 2006, p. 215–216; Jing-dong Yuan, 1998, p. 4).

The agreement of the Soviet side to accept the rule of course of boundary line through the main channel of the river and admitting to the violation of mutual treaties during the annexation of parts of Chinese territories in 20. and 30. of 20. century. The preliminary works on the preparation of the agreement concerning the eastern section of the border was finished until the end of April, 1991.

On May 16, 1991 the ministers of foreign affairs of Soviet Union (Alexandr Bessmertnykh) and China (Qian Qichen) signed in Moscow “The agreement on the eastern section of the Sino-Soviet state border”. USSR President Gorbachev and Chinese President Jiang Zemin were present during the ceremony of signing the document.

The agreement was called “a great event”. Both sides expressed readiness to continue the talks concerning the disputed questions in order to solve them as quickly as possible (see: Dmochowski, 2010, p. 66–71).

During the negotiations from 1987–1991 two sections of boundary line with three islands were not discussed. The first of them was 30 kilometer long and 350 km² large Amur section in the proximity of islands

Bolshoy Ussuriyski and Tarabarov (close by Khabarovsk). The second was 28 kilometer long and 58 km² large Argun river section in the proximity of Bolshoy island. The aforementioned fact did not prevent both sides, however, from delimitation of the course of boundary line apart from two sections. It was decided to maintain status quo: to keep islands under Russian jurisdiction and not discuss demarcation of the border (Kireev, 1999, p. 48)⁸.

In the case of the islands near Khabarovsk the cause of the difference between both sides was the fact that Russians claimed that Ussuri and Amur are divided by Amur Channel (prong of the Amur river, which flows to the south of the island), while Chinese claimed that Ussuri flows directly into Amur (wider, northern prong and not the southern was perceived as the proper Amur) and thus the islands belong to them. What is more, the residents of Khabarovsk had their dachas and garden allotments there and some state farms were running (*Kireev on Russia...*, 1993, April 7).

The non-delimited sections were mentioned in the article 3 of the agreement, in which both sides decided to continue talks “in order to solve the question of the course of the state border between USSR and PRC in its eastern section from the seventh to the eighth boundary point [Bolshoy island on Argun] and from the tenth to eleventh border point [Tarabarov and Bolshoy Ussuriyski islands]”. Until reaching the agreement concerning them, they would have stayed under Russian jurisdiction. The agreement have found a special commission – its main task was to determine the precise course of the main channel, middle of the river or its main prong (*rukav*) and determine the status of islands on the rivers, placing boundary markers, preparing the projects of documents concerning the demarcation of the boundary line and detailed demarcation maps. The 5. article stated

⁸ Bolshoy (Bolshoi) Ussuriyski Island (ch. Heixiazi Dao, rus. остров Большой Уссурийский), Tarabarov Island (ch. Yinlong Dao, rus. остров Тарабаров) and over 90 little islands (chinese name Heixiazi means either the one larger island or the whole group of these islands together), lie at the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri rivers near Khabarovsk and have major strategic importance. In 1929 Soviet Union annexed Heixiazi and Yinlong Islands that was never accepted by China. Similarly in 1929 Soviet Union annexed Bolshoy Island (ch. Abagaitu, rus. Большой остров) on Argun river. According to other sources, the islands territory was approx. 375 km².

that during the demarcation the precise position of the main current is to be determined – it is equivalent to the middle of the main current, the middle of the river or its main prong and the watershed line on the sections where the boundary line runs along the watershed. The agreement did not concern any talks concerning the boundary line or its correction/revision. According to the article 7, the natural changes on the rivers do not result in change of boundary line, if both sides do not decide otherwise (*Sbornik...*, 1999, p. 117–125)⁹.

The result of the dissolution of USSR was emergence of four new states on Chinese border – Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that inherited border problems from the Soviet Union.

In December 1991 in Moscow bilateral political consultations took place in Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was agreed then that Russia, as USSR successor would continue its relations with China and act in accordance with the rules of joint announcements of 1989 and 1991. The Chinese government acknowledged Russian right to replace USSR in Security Council of United Nations. Both sides decided to continue their talks concerning the border and ratification of the agreement of 1991 (Dmochowski, 2012, p. 16–18). While Russian Federation acquired the rights and obligations resulting from the previous international agreements, according to the article 109 of the Constitution of Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic of 1978 the agreement should have been ratified by the Supreme Council.

On February 13, 1992 the agreement was ratified by the Supreme Council of Russian Federation (170 delegates “for”, 6 “abstained”, nobody – “against”), On February, 25 the Standing Committee of All-Chinese Congress of People’s Representatives. It came into life as „Treaty of State Border between Russia, the Legal Successor of USSR, and PRC” (Larin, 2005, p. 172. See also: Kireev, 1999, p. 43).

⁹ Prime ministers Viktor Chernomyrdin and Li Peng on May 27, 1994 signed inter-governmental agreement on the management of common borders (*Sbornik...*, 1999, p. 215–225). The agreement provided for joint border check once every 10 years or in any other agreed period to examine the changes that have occurred as a result of natural forces (eg. the creation of new islands), which would allow bringing of any adjustments in the course of the boundary line.

The Russian foreign minister Andrey Kozyrev emphasized that the agreement does not include any modifications of the land sections of boundary line and is based on the international law rule of the course of the boundary line on navigable rivers in the middle of the main navigable channel or the middle of the river on non-navigable rivers (*Russia ratifies...*, 1992, February 13).

While signing the protocol on exchange of the ratification notes of the treaty of the March 16, 1992 (during Kozyrev's visit to Beijing) it was emphasized that Russia took the rights and obligations resulting from the agreement (Kireev, 1999, p. 43).

In 1992 the Joint Russian-Chinese Demarcation Committee was created (composed of two delegations – Russian and Chinese). Later the committee was given also the task to determine the western section of the boundary line. Among the members of Russian delegation were members of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Federal Border Service, Navy General Staff, deputies of chiefs of border subjects of Russian Federation (Primorskiy Krai, Khabarovski Krai, Chita District, Amur District, Jewish Autonomous District; in the demarcation of western section participated members of Altai Republic). Genrikh Kireev became a chairman of Russian delegation.

Since treaties and general norms of international law were the basis of the regulation of the border dispute (as the preambles highlighted), both sides had to determine and specify the course of the boundary line. The exact location of the main current and its middle was determined by the hydrographic research. The main current was determined in the deepest and the widest prong.

In the most disputed sections, 3 of 8 islands in Jewish Autonomous Area were granted to Russia (Sazaniy, Sukhoy, Na Stvorakh) and 5 (Popov, Savelev, Evrasikha, Lugovskoy, Nizhnepetrovski) were granted to China. Russia kept a group of islands in Sungari estuary (in Jewish Autonomous Area) and Poludenny island (in Amur Area) (Kireev, 1999, p. 47).

In Primorskiy Krai three sections were to be determined: in Khakaysk Area, Ussuriysk Area and Khasan Area. In Khasansk Area the treaty border was re-established (from 1860–1886) along the watershed. Thus Russia gained 0.9 km² of Chinese territory and China gained 2.6 km² of Rus-

sian territory. In the Ussuriysk Area the border was determined according to documents of 1860–1861 along the Granitnaya (Hubtu) River. In the Khasan Region a border in accordance with the treaties of 1860–1861 and 1886 were re-established and the left bank of Tumannaya River was incorporated by China. In Khasan Area the section of border was re-established according to the documents of 1860–1861 and 1886. It meant that the whole left bank of Tumannaya (Tumangan) River as far as to the Russo-Korean Border belongs to China (Kireev, 1999, p. 48–49). Generally, in Primorski Krai Russians ceded to China the area of 15 km² (in three areas mentioned above) including Damanski island well-known because of the conflict of 1969. In the result of the demarcation, the boundary line was moved 5 to 350 meters into the territory previously recognized by Russians as Russian (*Chronology...*, 1996, April 24).

On the eastern section of the border 1183 landmarks were installed on land and rivers, 24 buoy on Khanka lake and two pairs of signs on Russian and Chinese shore of the lake (Kireev, 1999, p. 50).

The last buoy was installed on November 6, 1997 which finished the process of demarcation of the eastern section of the boundary line. On November 10, 1997 President Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin signed the joint statement, where they proclaimed that for the first time in history Sino-Russian border became clearly demarcated on the ground. Yeltsin called it a “truly historic event”. Despite these declarations, the issue of 3 disputed islands considered by Russia as “strategically important territories” remained unresolved. In this case, the inter-governmental “Agreement on the guidelines of the common economic use of separate islands and water areas adjacent to them on the border rivers” was accepted. It concerned a common economic use, which was seen as a temporary measure, the conditions of which were to be agreed upon by both sides (*Chinese-Russian Joint...*, 1997, November 11; *Soglasheniye...*, 2003, p. 13–15).

The agreement on the western section of the border was signed on September 3, 1994 by the Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen (*Soglasheniye...*, 2002, p. 38–40) during a visit to Moscow, President Jiang Zemin PRC (2–6 September 1994). In a joint statement the presidents of Russia and China opted for a “strategic and sustainable partnership” between the two countries.

On June 23, 1995 State Duma (Russia's lower house of parliament) and on July 5, 1995 the Federation Council (Russia's upper house of parliament) ratified the agreement on the western section of border, which was tantamount to finalization of legal delimitation of the whole Sino-Russian border. The Chinese National People's Congress Standing Committee ratified the agreement on December 29, 1994 (Yang Cheng, 2013, July 1–2)¹⁰.

The demarcation of the Western section did not cause any difficulties. There was no discrepancies in the statements of both sides and the clear watershed in South Altay Mountains facilitated demarcation – only two border signs were installed in two mountain passes (Kireev, 1999, p. 50). The demarcation of this section was finished by Joint Russian-Chinese Demarcation Commission on September 10, 1998 (*China-Russia...*, 1998, September 10)¹¹.

With the demarcation the exact length of the eastern section (419.22 kilometers, of which 578.18 were on land, on rivers 3547.01, and 70.03 on the lake Khanka) and Western (54.57 km) were established. In the area in which the cartography work was carried out (2–3 kilometers on either side of the border line), 1163 the island was granted to Russia and 1281 to China (excluding the islands lying by the Russian or Chinese coast, outside the area and the three disputed islands) (Kireev, 1999, p. 50).

During a meeting in Moscow on November 23, 1998 the President of Russia Boris Yeltsin and President of China Jiang Zemin issued a joint statement on border issue expressing satisfaction with the completion of demarcation work on the western section of the border. The statement noted that “it is the first time in the history of bilateral relations that their border line in the eastern and the western parts has been accurately indicated in the field, and the two sides will complete all the demarcation work within the agreed time”. The Parties also “agreed to hold more talks

¹⁰ The agreement came into force on October 17, 1995 when Zhang Deguang, Chinese vice-foreign minister, and Igor Rogachev, former ambassador of Russia to China, exchanged the ratification in Beijing.

¹¹ The Commission carried out topographical works, it marked the places where to put the boundary markers and then drew the boundary line on the map. Its last meeting was to take place in Urumchi (between 18 and 25 September). Following this meeting, the protocols were sent to both the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

on those not-solved-yet border issues of a few stretches on the basis of the agreements they signed and international laws“ (*China, Russia...*, 1998, November 23).

The problem of border on the intersection of Amur and Ussuri was so serious, that its settlement lasted until 2004. On October 14, 2004 Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Li Zhaoxing and Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov signed in Beijing the Complementary Agreement on the Eastern Section of the China-Russia Boundary. On its basis the Russian side ceded the whole of Tarabarov island (the Chinese side called it Yinlongdao – Silver Dragon Island), half of Bolshoy Ussuriyski (ch. Heixiazidao, Black Bear Island) and half of Bolshoy (ch. Abagaitu) island. Another halves of Bolshoy Ussuriyski and Bolshoy islands were kept by Russia. Both sides shared 375 km² of disputed territory almost equally (*Dopolnitelnoye...*, 2004, October 14; Shkel, 2005, May 21)¹².

In a joint declaration of presidents Vladimir Putin and Hu Jintao from October 14, 2004 the agreement about the delimitation of two sections of border which were disputed until then was described as “balanced and optimal solution, which became a political victory for both sides” (*Sovmestnaya...*, 2004, November).

The Standing Committee of the Chinese National People’s Congress ratified the agreement on April 27, 2005, while Russian State Duma did it on May 20, 2005 (Federation Council five days later)¹³. The cessation of islands was finalized on June 2, 2005 in Vladivostok by signing the agreement and exchange of ratification documents by Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Li Zhaoxing and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

On October 14, 2008 a ceremony of installation of the border landmarks between Russia and China on Bolshoy Ussuriyski island has finished the process of cessation of Tarabarov island and half of Bolshoy Ussuriyski island (*Ostrov...*, 2008, October 14). For the first time in the history of

¹² Kireev gives different figures: 350 and 58 km², that is total 408 km² (Kireev, 1999, p. 48).

¹³ State Duma adopted a law on the ratification with 307 votes in favour, 80 against and 2 abstentions (Shkel, 2005, May 21). Adopted by the State Duma on May 20, 2005, approved by the Federation Council May 25, 2005. President Putin signed it on May 31, 2005.

relations between both nations, the Sino-Russian border became undisputedly and correctly delimited and demarcated on its whole length, thus removing the cause of many years of conflicts and lack of understanding, having its sources in military supremacy and inequalities of treaties, including those concerning the border.

It finished the long-lasting process of negotiating and delimitation of Russo-Chinese state border, accepted and recognized by both sides. Delimitation of two last not confirmed sections of common border removed one of the most serious problems in Sino-Soviet/Russian relations of the last 40 years. The delimitation of border became an important input into securing the stability in Asia-Pacific Region and another impulse for the development of relations between border region.

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