

Russia Bans Most Chinese from Entry: ‘Pure Racism’ or ‘Preventive Reaction’?

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Russia unexpectedly banned all Chinese except those with diplomatic, business, humanitarian, and transit visas from entering the country, but this unprecedented move was made as a preventive reaction against the spread of the coronavirus and not for racist purposes, though it's understandable that China might be alarmed by Moscow's decision since it could lead to other countries following suit for nefarious reasons related to their desire to wage psychological warfare on the Chinese people.

Russia's Unprecedented Reaction

Russia took the unprecedented step of banning all Chinese except those with diplomatic, business, humanitarian, and transit visas from entering the country as a preventive reaction against the spread of the coronavirus. [RT](#) reported this breaking news late Tuesday night, quoting the decree issued by new Prime Minister Mishustin which read that

“From 00:00 local time on February 20, 2020, the passage of citizens of the People's Republic of China across the state border of the Russian Federation entering the territory of the Russian Federation for labor purposes, for private, educational and tourist purposes, is temporarily suspended.”

Such a move wasn't made lightly considering Russia's strategic partnership with China and the increasing convergence of their economies following President Putin's [proposal](#) last year to pair the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with Beijing's [Belt & Road Initiative](#) (BRI), which makes it all the more unexpected and raises some serious questions.

Perfectly Legal...

The Russian government didn't elaborate on the reasons behind its decision, but it can be credibly assumed that this drastic course of action was undertaken because of Moscow's unstated belief that the coronavirus epidemic isn't going to abate anytime soon. Sharing such a large border with the People's Republic and recently becoming one of its people's prime tourist destinations after [several million](#) of them visited the country last year, Russia could potentially be at risk of a serious coronavirus outbreak if it doesn't take proper precautions. Infected individuals can [reportedly spread](#) the coronavirus even [without showing symptoms](#) of the illness, so it makes sense that Russia would prefer to be “safe than sorry” by prohibiting the entry of all Chinese citizens except those with diplomatic, business, humanitarian, and transit visas. All countries, after all, have the right to ensure the security of their people from any type of threat however they see fit, so there's nothing legally wrong with the measures that Moscow has decided to implement in response to this

growing health emergency.

...But Still Controversial

That said, Chinese officials have previously criticized the US for [causing panic and spreading fear](#) because of its own preventive reaction to the coronavirus, though America's response to this epidemic is comparatively milder than the much more drastic decision that Russia just made. It would therefore follow that China's criticisms against the US would be just as — if not more — applicable against Russia as they are against America, though Beijing might refrain from directly criticizing Moscow due to the spirit of friendship that unites these strategic partners. China understands that the Russian state harbors no racist attitudes towards the Chinese people but is just being extremely (if not “overly”) cautious, unlike some Western countries which have exploited this situation for self-interested political purposes intended to portray the Chinese people in a very negative way that disturbingly borders on — and sometimes outright embodies — racist stereotypes.

Copycats

Nevertheless, it's completely understandable if China feels alarmed by Russia's move, though not necessarily because of the reason behind why it was made but due to how this decision might be abused by those same Western actors that Beijing had earlier accused of taking advantage of the coronavirus outbreak for advancing their own hostile interests against the People's Republic. Those same countries might feel emboldened by Russia's decision and thus follow suit with copycat measures even if they don't stand as much of a risk from the epidemic as neighboring Russia does, arguing that it isn't “racist” to do so if even China's own strategic partner is taking such steps without being criticized by Beijing in the same way. It's therefore important that Russian media responsibly articulates the reasons behind their country's decision and how their specific situation differs from others', emphasizing facts and figures in order to make their case and rebuff any accusations of racism.

“Hoping” For “Hong Kong 2.0”?

Even so, that might not stop other governments from doing the same thing for the same publicly proclaimed reasons, though their intentions might be more nefarious since they could be doing so in order to send a subtle message of hostility against the Chinese people. The psychological warfare motivation behind their moves would be to make the country's citizens feel “isolated” from the rest of the world, which stands in strong contrast to their hitherto presumption that they were rapidly becoming the center of it as a result of China's global expansion of economic influence through BRI. Upon imposing their copycat entry restrictions on all Chinese without diplomatic, business, humanitarian, and transit visas, those countries might then prioritize shifting their supply chains outside of China on the basis of long-term “health-economic-strategic security” planning, kicking the country while it's down in order to exacerbate its domestic challenges so as to “hopefully” incite Hong Kong-like anti-government chaos all across the mainland in the coming future.

Concluding Thoughts

Russia's decision to ban the entry of all Chinese without diplomatic, business, humanitarian, and transit visas — including those that live outside of China and haven't been there for over the past three months since before the coronavirus outbreak even began — is certainly

controversial and will undoubtedly cause many strong reactions on all sides, but the state's intentions are not to cause panic and spread fear even if its actions inadvertently result in this outcome. Nor, for that matter, does the Russian government harbor any racist attitudes towards the Chinese people, unlike some of its Western counterparts who have gleefully exploited this epidemic for psychological warfare purposes and are likely to take advantage of Moscow's move in order to intensify their campaign of pressure against the People's Republic. On a closing note, the author is personally concerned about the situation and hopes that these temporary restrictions don't harm the hard-earned friendship between the Russian and Chinese people.

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