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#### **CHAPTER 4.**

#### **RUSSIA AND JAPAN: PROMOTING COOPERATION AND SECURITY IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

Russia and Japan are important players in the Asia-Pacific region. They share many common interests and responsibilities to promote greater security and prosperity. Moscow and Tokyo have recognized the centrality of the Asia-Pacific region to their own economic wellbeing and stability. Both countries are becoming more active in regional affairs. Both countries prioritize nuclear non-proliferation and engagement in multilateral forums. Both seek to encourage peaceful resolution of disputes among regional states.

In recent years, the relative importance of the Asia-Pacific has dramatically increased in Russian foreign policy. Within its 'turn to the East' Russia has prioritized relations with key regional players, including Japan. Russia and Japan are now cooperating in such areas as economy, energy, and maritime safety. But much more can be done

to promote understanding and friendship between the two neighbors.

The crisis in Russia's relations with the West that began in 2014 has put pressure on Russia-Japan relations as Tokyo remains an ally of the United States and a member of the G7; plus Japan has imposed sanctions on Russia. But the crisis in Europe has not undermined the importance of bilateral relations for both Russia and Japan. Despite existing differences, Japanese and Russian leaders have taken steps to prevent the relationship from deteriorating, including those over territories and maritime jurisdiction.

Cooperation in the following areas will contribute to stability and prosperity of the Asia Pacific region and are worthy of further consideration.

### **Regional security architecture**

In recent decades, there have been drastic changes in the strategic environment of the Asia-Pacific region and sources of instability continue to exist. Paucity of mechanisms for ensuring security in the region is a matter of concern. Currently, the US bilateral alliance system, which was a stabilizing and balancing factor in the Asia-Pacific region in the past, is the only such mechanism. However, Russia's diplomatic and political approaches to Asia-Pacific regional security architecture are based on the premise that the prevailing US alliance system does not fit the contemporary economic and security environment. Fundamental changes in the region require a new approach. Russia calls for a more balanced and inclusive system based on the principles of equality and 'indivisible security', the precept that one country cannot increase its own security at the expense of another country's security.

Because of differences in approaches to regional security architecture, it could be helpful if Russia and Japan continue to hold regular high-level bilateral consultations on regional security issues. Specifically, such dialogue

should focus on areas in which both sides share common purposes, such as nuclear non-proliferation and freedom of navigation.

Russia and Japan can strengthen cooperation on nuclear non-proliferation both on policy level, such as a coordinated approach toward North Korea, and on the operational level, such as export controls. Russia and Japan can cooperate on practical measures to enhance the capacity and legal framework of developing countries to prevent them from becoming conduits for illicit trade related to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In this connection, it is important to strictly implement all UN resolutions adopted to comply with the regime of nuclear non-proliferation.

Russia and Japan could also develop a Russia–‘US–Japan alliance’ dialogue along the lines of the Russia–NATO Council. Such a platform could be used to create confidence and security-building agreements, including transparency measures regarding military doctrines and regional deployments, as well as develop cooperation to address emerging threats and security challenges.

It is essential to strengthen efforts to enhance confidence and promote cooperation through multilateral frameworks. Regional mechanisms and institutions, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit, APEC and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting–Plus, represent important dialogue platforms to address new security threats including terrorism, piracy, drug smuggling, etc. Promoting cooperation, exchange of information and confidence building through these frameworks are conducive to regional stability by preventing misunderstanding and reducing mistrust as well as expanding areas of common interest.

### **China’s rise**

The rise of China is the most significant development in the Asia-Pacific strategic environment and poses

most opportunities and challenges. China's increased military capability and assertive behavior can have serious repercussions in view of increasing tensions over maritime disputes in the region.

Tokyo and Moscow differ in their approaches to China's rise. Japan-China relations are a mix of cooperation and competition. Japan has been willing to confront China openly about disagreements and disputes on territorial, security and political issues. Moscow has purposefully minimized areas of disagreement in its relationship with Beijing and not allowed its partners' disputes with China to affect its ties with Beijing.

According to the prevailing view in Russia, China's assertive behavior is an objective reflection of its growing strength and an expression of its dissatisfaction with the status quo regarding China's current role in the region. Therefore, it is in the interest of all regional powers to develop a security architecture that includes China. Russia has its own concerns about China and therefore supports the inclusion of China in a new architecture on an equal basis with others.

It must be recognized that policies to contain China are inappropriate and counterproductive and that efforts should be made to strengthen comprehensive cooperation with China so that it will play a constructive role in the region. Efforts should be made to involve China in bilateral and multilateral consultations that would prevent uncontrolled military buildups and unintended escalation of tension. Greater transparency and confidence-building measures are key to achievement of this goal. In this context, bilateral defense hotlines, bilateral strategic and defense dialogues and exercises between Russia and Japan would be worth further consideration.

### **North Korean issue**

Political and military developments in North Korea are some of the most urgent challenges to the security of

the Asia-Pacific region. It is necessary to continue to urge North Korea to refrain from further provocative actions and to take steps toward denuclearization.

Russia, as a responsible nuclear power and permanent member of the UN Security Council, supports strengthening the regime of nuclear non-proliferation and is ready for dialogue on this issue. Russia opposes any actions that could undermine strategic stability in the region.

Russia regards the Six-Party Talks on denuclearization of North Korea as a significant instrument to pursue this goal. However, stalled negotiations do nothing to resolve North Korean nuclear and missile development and improve political and security situations in the region. Moreover, negative trends are gaining momentum as Pyongyang continues to defy UN Security Council resolutions. Mistrust remains among the other regional powers concerning the intentions of the negotiating parties. Amid increasing US-Russia tensions and mounting differences in approaches toward regional security between the United States and China as well as Japan and China, there is a strong risk that North Korea may once again become a 'buffer' state between Russia and China on the one hand, and the United States and its allies on the other. Such a development would be disastrous from every point of view: for the inter-Korean dialogue and prospects for the Korean reunification, for regional security and economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region, and for national development projects, including the modernization of the Russian Far East. This development would result in reviving the Cold War atmosphere in the region, with the North Korean regime being the sole beneficiary.

Therefore, it is necessary to look at different ways to resume multilateral dialogue on the North Korean issue. For example, Russia and Japan could engage in five-party consultations with the United States, the Republic of Korea and China. Close cooperation between these five parties is needed to solve the outstanding issues and achieve

peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. Their dialogue should address all possible challenges, such as nuclear weapon and missile tests, and consult in advance about coordinated responses.

### **Economic cooperation**

Significant economic engagement is a necessary condition for establishing balanced security structures in the Asia-Pacific region. Economic development in the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia is crucial for Russia's growing integration into the Asia-Pacific region, and it has been identified as a high priority by the Russian government. Moscow seeks to attract foreign investments to the region in order to develop local economies. Sakhalin-1 and Sakhalin-2 oil and gas development projects, which began in the mid-1990s, are examples of successful cooperation with international partners, including Japanese corporations. Currently, Russia intends to diversify exports to include more value-added sectors such as manufacturing and services. The Russian government also seeks to invite Asian, and most of all Japanese, automakers, agricultural producers and service industries to establish joint enterprises in the Russian Far East.

Preparations for the 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok led to a review of Russia's current posture and long-term strategy in the Asia-Pacific region; it also forced the government to pay more attention to the economic needs of the Russian Far East. With large-scale public investment in infrastructure development in Vladivostok for the summit itself, Moscow intends to make the city and nearby areas more attractive to potential Asian investors.

Today, the Russian Far East plays two roles in Russian engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. Firstly, Russia intends to leverage Asian economic demands for oil and gas into development of East Siberian and Far Eastern hydrocarbons which require significant investment and special technology to bring them to the market. Sec-

only, Russia aspires to have the Far East serve as a transit corridor across the Eurasian landmass, bridging Asia and Europe.

Potential gas reserves in Eastern Siberia and the Far East will allow Russia to develop new centers of gas production to meet domestic demand as well as to increase exports. Moreover, the demand for gas in the Asia-Pacific region and the favorable geographic location of Russian gas resources create ideal conditions for Russian natural gas deliveries to the Asia-Pacific region.

Japan and Russia can work together with other international partners to promote a more open and attractive business environment in the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia for both Russian and foreign investors.

## **Conclusion**

Russia and Japan are major countries in the Asia-Pacific region with both the will and capacity to contribute to regional security and stability, and they share wide-ranging interests and areas of cooperation. Further development of relations between Russia and Japan could help achieve greater strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific region that is consistent with both countries' objectives.