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Russia and ASEAN in Eurasia: Value-Added for Russia-ROK Cooperation

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I. Introduction

Since the establishment of the ASEAN-Russia full dialogue partnership in 1996, its most conspicuous feature has been lack of ability to fulfill its true

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potential.¹⁾ This assessment is not ungrounded. Economic cooperation between Russia and the ten ASEAN states pales in comparison with corresponding figures related to trade, investment and technological exchanges ASEAN enjoys with its other dialogue partners. Projects with Russia's participation, for instance, its contribution to the railway construction in Indonesia or the nuclear power plant Ninh Thuan 1 in Vietnam, are noticeably stagnating. Contacts between business communities increase before a landmark political event only to decrease again. A classical vicious circle.

“If a problem cannot be solved, enlarge it.” This famous quote by Dwight D. Eisenhower can be useful for properly re-assessing the relationship between Russia and ASEAN. If the parties truly wish to foster mutual cooperation, as they probably do, the context of their relationship should be enlarged. The more so since ASEAN and Russia are ready for their relationship to respond to the alarmingly weak foundations of the global order.

Capturing the essence of this context, its substantial and institutional pillars should be elaborated on. As for the former, the Eurasian area broadens possibilities for Russia-ASEAN cooperation, while the nascent format of the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU would be an example of the latter. Although outlined only recently, this format took on immense significance during the preparations for the Russia-ASEAN Commemorative Summit and became the focal point in

1) The ASEAN Secretariat (2000), “ASEAN and Russia: The Potential for Business,” (April 13), Available at <http://asean.org/> (accessed: October 19, 2016); ASEAN-Russia Summit (2016), “Press Conference after the Russia-ASEAN Summit (in Russian),” (May 20), Available at <http://russia-asean20.ru/> (accessed: October 19, 2016).

its key documents. To trace this emerging trend in Russia-ASEAN relations in an anticipatory ahead-of-time way, and make a forward-looking assessment of its repercussions for cooperation between Russia and ASEAN, as well as for the Republic of Korea as an influential Asia-Pacific actor, is a timely exercise.

Presenting the specificity of the contemporary global milieu as a factor shaping Russia-ASEAN relations, the analysis proceeds to the current ASEAN prospective plans and obstacles to their realization. Then it gives insights into the places Russia and ASEAN occupy in each other's priorities to offer assessments of the upcoming format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU as the new focal direction in Russia-ASEAN cooperation. Repercussions for the relationship between Russia and the Republic of Korea are assessed in the ahead-of-time format to arrive at the main conclusions.

II . Entropy in Global Affairs and Eurasian Response

The present world order is in a state of flux. The global politics appears to have entered a new – revolutionary – phase whose essence at its very dawn was shrewdly described by Randall L. Schweller, professor of the political science at the Ohio State University: an age of entropy. “International politics is transforming from a system anchored in predictable, and relatively constant, principles to a system that is, if not inherently unknowable, far more erratic, unsettled, and devoid of behavioral regularities. In terms of geopolitics, we

have moved from an age of order to an age of entropy.”²⁾

Evidence for this state of entropy is numerous. Around the world, the dissatisfaction with the outcomes of globalization is rising. As Jeffrey Sachs put it, “... The current version, once called the Washington Consensus, has delivered economic growth but at enormous cost: rising inequalities of income, massive environmental destruction and growing lawlessness.”³⁾ These factors alone undermine the foundations for sustainable global economic development for many years ahead. The problem is further exacerbated by lack of resources to keep it on track. Previous growth factors based on information and energy sectors are depleted while new ones, mainly bio-engineering and “clever” informational networks, are just emerging. In these circumstances, global actors, be they states or trans-national business, come into an increasing conflict over sources of growth and income.

Traditional global regulatory mechanisms have turned out to be unable to effectively respond to the present realities. The WTO is a key example. Encountering the slowdown of the global economic growth rates and rising protectionism in the priorities of many global actors, the WTO approach based upon consensus decision-making has not been revised. The WTO links with the private sector, banks and sector-specific regulators are largely absent. The

2) Schweller R. (2014), “The Age of Entropy. Why the New World Order Won’t Be Orderly,” *Foreign Affairs*. (June 16), Available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/> (accessed: October 8, 2016).

3) Sachs J. (2016), “Sustainable Development: a New Kind of Globalization,” *The Boston Globe*, (July 19), Available at <https://www.bostonglobe.com/> (accessed: October 8, 2016).

practice of a single package or “one-size-fits-all,” especially concerning the treatment of emerging and developing economies, continues to hamper the efficiency of the WTO negotiating process. The WTO, as exemplified by the outcomes of its Ministerial Meeting in Nairobi, is unable to respond to the interests of many of its participants in linking their priorities in global trade agenda with the participation in regional and macro-regional trade initiatives.⁴⁾

As a response, new global formats of economic cooperation are being developed. The decision of BRICS countries to initiate stabilizing financial mechanisms exemplifies their decision to lessen dependence upon the traditional global financial institutions. The key role in this process might be delegated to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) tasked to finance large-scale infrastructure facilities in Asia and facilitate the implementation of China’s strategy “One Belt, One Road.” Therefore, a large geo-economic area with China as its core, aimed to promote China’s technologically-advanced production, services, know-how and personnel, internationalize renminbi and create a China-friendly zone of standards and conformances stretching all over Eurasia, will probably appear.

The political dimension of the AIIB also matters. Recycling Asian savings within Asia and financing infrastructure at a lower cost will allow Asian countries to become largely independent from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank. Through the AIIB, China,

4) The World Trade Organization (2015), *Nairobi Ministerial Declaration*, (December 19), Available at <https://www.wto.org/> (accessed: October 16, 2016).

frustrated with the slow progress in reforms of global governance instruments, offers the world its own version of globalization – the project One Belt, One Road (OBOR) which has no time and space limits, links security and development and is underpinned by the idea of shared prosperity and the community of common destiny.⁵⁾

A roll-back of the “Washington Consensus” version of globalization is also portrayed by the shift of global trade and investment regulation to the regional and macro-regional level. The Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership are cases in point. The crux of the problem lies not only with the slow progress at the WTO; strategic considerations matter no less. As demonstrated by the TPP, its super-task was more than clearly explained by the US President B. Obama: “We can’t let countries like China write the rules of the global economy.”⁶⁾ If this is not an attempt to divert the processes of Asia-Pacific economic regionalism from China to the US, separate China from Asia and therefore undermine the very foundations for the “Asian century,” then what is?

In sum, the global economy is encountering an imbalance between increasing interdependence and its lessening manageability. Global regulatory institutions

5) See, for instance: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (2015), *China’s Role in the Global and Regional Order: Participant, Facilitator and Contributor. Speech at the luncheon of the Fourth World Peace Forum by H.E. Foreign Minister Wang Yi*. (June 27), Available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/> (accessed: October 9, 2016).

6) Obama B. (2015), “Statement on the Trans-Pacific Partnership,” *The White House*, (October 5), Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/> (accessed: October 18, 2016).

fail to provide participants with conditions for sustainable economic growth and development. New economic formats and initiatives are just appearing, but their potential and institutional capacities remain uncertain.

The rise of turbulence in global politics adds to the overall complexity. Apart from the confrontational trends in relations between Russia and the US, the simultaneous escalation of traditional and non-traditional security challenges further diminishes prospects for a stable and secured world. Among the former, the North Korean nuclear issue presenting a blatant challenge to the global nuclear non-proliferation regime is especially noteworthy. Practice has demonstrated that the North Korean nuclear problem long ago outgrew its sub-regional and regional dimensions, and its global component is rising commensurably with Pyongyang's increasing nuclear capabilities. Among the latter, the policy of the Islamic State of the Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) questions the efficiency of global security institutions. International efforts to combat the ISIS threat have not been successful so far.

The military force quickly returns in the global politics. As D. Suslov, a Russian foreign policy expert, argues: "... military force is necessary not only to protect from terrorist threats and regional instability. It comes back as a factor of great power rivalry and distribution of forces — even despite the low probability of "hot war" between them because of nuclear weapons. This is a natural reaction to the revival of great power rivalry as such. The latter is unthinkable without arms race."⁷⁾ Assuming that this line of argument is correct, as it seems, a rising militarization of international relations is in the offing.

Finally, the emancipation of regional actors, which challenge the grandees on issues secondary to their priorities, is conspicuous. The example of Turkey shooting down the Russian military aircraft in Syria in order to provide NATO with an excuse to consolidate its members on the anti-Russian basis is a case in point. As seen by the Russian expert community, “...this step means open violation by Turkey of unwritten yet important rules of the game regulating relations between countries. Not being in a state of war and not having territorial and other vital conflicts the regional power threw down a direct and arrogant challenge to the global player — the second nuclear superpower and a permanent member of the UN Security Council — doing it in a cowardly manner, sheltering itself behind its NATO membership.”⁸⁾ If this trend continues, the global concert of big powers will remain just wishful thinking.

As a response to these developments, the reset of the global system is taking place. The new bipolar world order – with the first global center concentrating around the US and its allies, while the second focuses upon the Eurasian area – is emerging. Arguably, this is a welcoming development as the bipolar system is more stable and secure than the unipolar world. As S. Karaganov, a prominent Russian scholar, argues, the establishment of Greater Eurasia can contribute to

7) Suslov D. (2016), “Regionalisation and Chaos in Interdependent World. Global Context by the Beginning of 2016,” *Global Affairs*, (January 29), Available at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/> (accessed: October 1, 2016).

8) Suslov D. (2016), “Regionalisation and Chaos in Interdependent World. Global Context by the Beginning of 2016,” *Global Affairs*, (January 29), Available at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/> (accessed: October 1, 2016).

the return of the cooperative paradigm in global affairs.⁹⁾ This is substantiated by the rise of the Eurasian dimension in the priorities of many international actors. China's project One Belt, One Road, Russia's Eurasian Economic Union, Korea's Eurasian Initiative, India's Connect Central Asia Policy and Japan's Dialogue with Central Asian States are the most noteworthy examples. ASEM's focus upon connectivity between Europe and Asia adds to the nascent bid for Greater Eurasia.

Although the EU's intentions to become involved in Eurasian cooperation remains not well-articulated, objective factors account for the likely rise of Europe's interest. To rejuvenate its stagnating economy, the EU needs new markets. Also, it is interested in participating in the establishment of the pan-continental security system stretching from Lisbon to Singapore in which its present security problems will be placed in a context conducive to cooperation rather than confrontation.

Arguing that time will play for the Greater Eurasia scenario, it should be kept in mind that its realization to a considerable extent will be performed by two Eurasian actors – Russia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). While Russia has traditionally seen itself as an established Eurasian actor, the Association started to identify its interests with Eurasia only recently. A timely exercise will be to trace the main reasons behind this emerging trend.

9) Karaganov S. (2016), "From East to West, or Greater Eurasia," *Global Affairs*, (October, 25), Available at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/> (accessed: October 25, 2016).

III. ASEAN in the New World

The bid for Eurasia in ASEAN priorities is predetermined by the challenges ASEAN has to deal with at the present stage of its evolution. As things currently are, the association has to adapt to the new – revolutionary – paradigm of global development. In the previous – evolutionary – system, ASEAN was able to shape the international milieu in Southeast Asia in a way capable to satisfy the priorities of its external partners. The only ASEAN expectation from these partners was to give it the *carte blanche* to act as a collective entity. This strategy worked well during the Cold War era, when ASEAN's key diplomatic success, the resolution of the Cambodian issue being the key, stemmed from the association's ability to offer the US and China diplomatic and political options which satisfied them both. It also turned out effective after the Cold War, when Asia-Pacific actors delegated ASEAN the initiative to establish pan-regional multilateral dialogue formats on economic and security issues.

The present – revolutionary – phase of world politics, based upon “the game without rules” is not what ASEAN has been preparing itself for. The challenges which the association is currently encountering are numerous.

The afore-discussed shift of global regulatory mechanisms to the regional level is making ASEAN adapt its policy to the TPP project. After the TPP becomes operational, ASEAN will find it difficult to maintain intra-ASEAN unity on issues related to economic cooperation. Only four of ten ASEAN countries – Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam – are TPP members.

A new reality for ASEAN is the price and investment uncertainty within the global energy market. The period of 2014-2015 witnessed a decrease in investment and a new wave of M&As in the oil sector. If this trend continues, the repercussions for ASEAN relations with its dialogue partners will be significant. On the one hand, in relations with China, somewhat decreased tensions over the South China Sea issue, which to a large extent are based upon energy resources, are likely. On the other hand, the whole course of ASEAN dialogue with its external partners on energy issues will have to be modified, adding uncertainty in the realization of the trans-ASEAN energy infrastructure projects.

Another challenge for the association is the simultaneous escalation of traditional and non-traditional security threats. ASEAN cannot but think that the Western policy of regime change in Russia, if successful, will create a zone of instability to the north of China, which will logically shift Beijing's attention from economic to security priorities. In line with the domino effect, this will influence relations between China and Southeast Asia in the frameworks of CAFTA (China-ASEAN Free Trade Area) and the upcoming 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The escalation of the North Korean nuclear and missile issue in 2015-2016 once again tasks ASEAN to revise the readiness of the nuclear states to accede to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty.

The policies of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham destabilizes the Muslim countries of Southeast Asia. In the view of Southeast Asian militants,

ISIS has become a de-facto existing state which should be visited to gain “combat experience.” Another aspect of the problem is that Southeast Asian radicals, seeking approval from the ISIS leaders, commit acts of terrorism in their countries. As a result, a new advent of terrorism in Southeast Asia may become the “new normal.”

But the key challenge for ASEAN is the crisis of the Euro-Atlantic model of globalization. Along with the reputational damage caused by the global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009, the US and global regulatory institutions did not offer the world, including Southeast Asia, a new model of economic growth. Coupled with the failure of immigration policy and practice of multiculturalism in the EU, desperately low rates of Europe’s economic growth, this did not pass by unnoticed in Southeast Asia. As a result, ASEAN leaders point to the inapplicability of many components of the European experience to Southeast Asian realities.¹⁰⁾

In the afore-discussed circumstances, the present international realities might have been the worst for the association since its inception. The more so as they coincided with the final stage of ASEAN’s key prospective project – the establishment of an ASEAN Community.

The ASEAN Community came into existence on 31 December 2015.¹¹⁾ It

10) The Malay Mail Online (2015), *Malaysia: ASEAN Will Have a Unified Market, but Rejects Eurozone Model*, (January 24), Available at <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/> (accessed: June 5, 2016).

11) The ASEAN Secretariat (2015), *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Community*, (December 31), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 11, 2016).

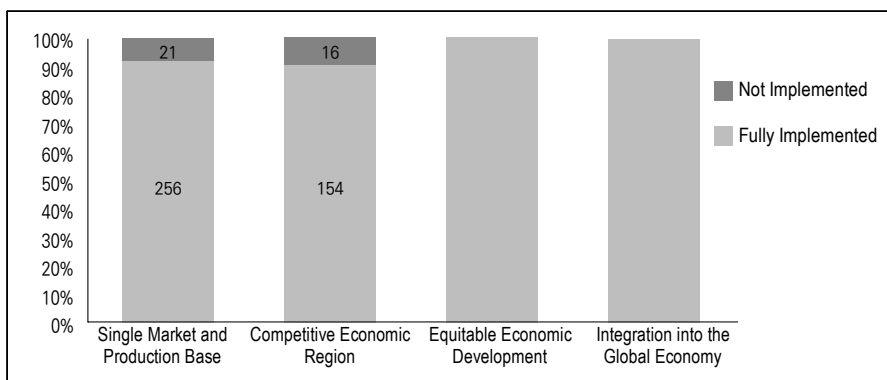
consists of three interrelated components – the ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Political-Security Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The project presupposes the simultaneous development of three interrelated directions – deepening intra-ASEAN integration, strengthening ASEAN positions in multilateral dialogue platforms and initiatives, and developing relations with external partners according to ASEAN priorities.¹²⁾

The presumable aim of these three directions is to increase the competitiveness of ASEAN as a unified geo-political and geo-economic entity given that the ideal – in ASEAN understanding – world order will be established without its contribution. ASEAN sees its task in creating a mini-projection of the ideal global order in Southeast Asia by intertwining the potential of the three pillars of its Community. The ASEAN Economic Community aims to elevate the investment attractiveness of Southeast Asia by stimulating big companies to invest in the trans-ASEAN infrastructure projects. The super-task of the ASEAN Political-Security Community is to create a peaceful and stable regional milieu conducive to economic development. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community is responsible for forging a common identity between Southeast Asian countries at the elite and the grassroots level.

12) The ASEAN Secretariat (2008), *ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint*, (January), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 7, 2016); The ASEAN Secretariat (2009), *ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint*, (June), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 7, 2016); The ASEAN Secretariat (2009), *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint*, (June), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 7, 2016).

The extent to which ASEAN has succeeded in implementing this task has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The ASEAN Economic Community exemplifies the first. As outlined in the four pillars of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2015 – the establishment of a single market and single production base in Southeast Asia, making Southeast Asia a highly competitive economic region, a region of equitable economic development and a region fully integrated into the global economy¹³⁾ – the association considers that it has completely implemented the two latest directions. The first two ones have been realized up to 92.4% and 90.5%, respectively.¹⁴⁾

Figure 1. AEC Scorecard Measures, Fully Implemented ASEAN-wide and high-priority measures, by AEC Pillar, 2008–2015 Number of Measures (as at 31 October 2015)



Source: The ASEAN Secretariat (2015).¹⁵⁾

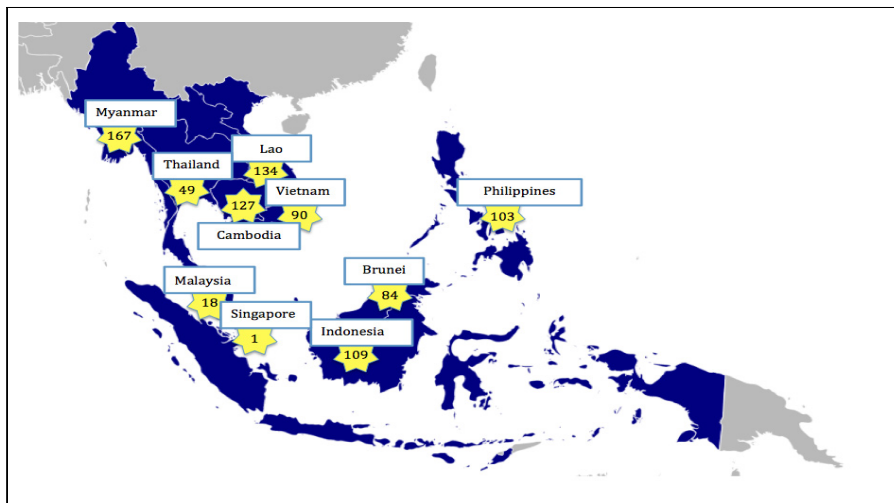
13) The ASEAN Secretariat (2008), *ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint*, (January), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 7, 2016).

14) The ASEAN Secretariat (2015), *A Blueprint for Growth ASEAN Economic Community 2015: Progress and Key Achievements*, (November), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 12, 2016).

Numerous multilateral initiatives under the ASEAN auspices were launched and gained momentum. Among them, the key initiatives are the ASEAN Free Trade Area, ASEAN Investment Area, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, and ASEAN Surveillance Process. Large-scale infrastructure focusing upon land, maritime and air connectivity in Southeast Asia, exemplified by the ASEAN Power Grid, Trans-ASEAN Gas Pipeline, the ASEAN Highway Network, the railway Kunming-Singapore, are being implemented.

Nevertheless, the success of the intra-ASEAN cooperation is hampered by the lack of uniformity in doing business.

Figure 2. ASEAN Countries in Ease of Doing Business List (2015, out of 189 economies)



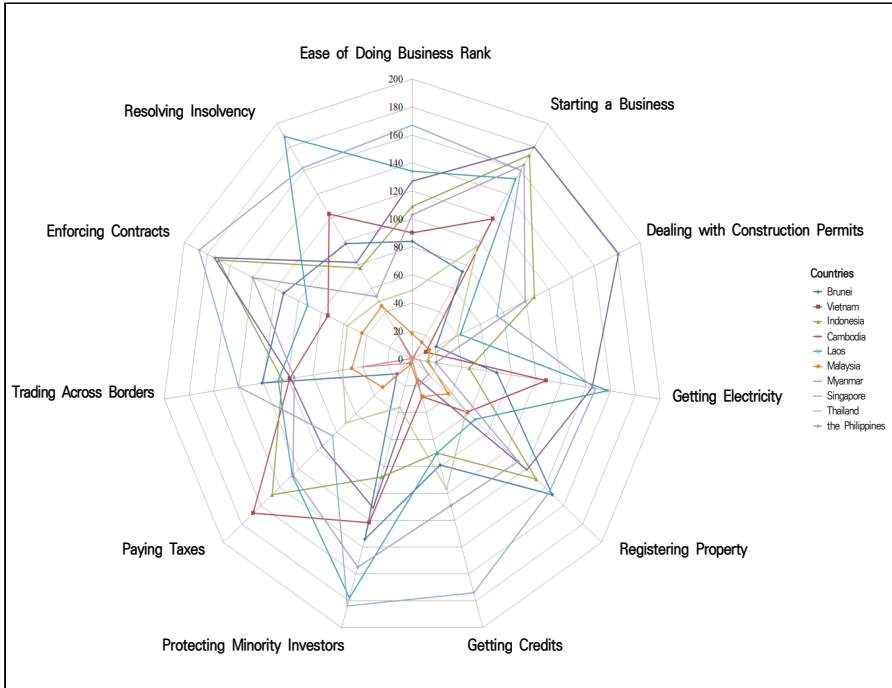
Source: World Bank (2016).¹⁶⁾

15) *Ibid.*

16) World Bank (2016), *Doing Business 2016: Measuring Regulatory Quality and Efficiency*,

In specific terms, the imbalances are presented in the picture below.¹⁷⁾

Figure 3. ASEAN Countries in Ease of Doing Business List (2015, Specific Positions)



Source: World Bank (2016).¹⁸⁾

Although in economic terms this picture is likely to remain largely unchanged,

Available at <http://www.doingbusiness.org/> (accessed: October 7, 2016).

17) The ASEAN Secretariat (2015), *A Blueprint for Growth ASEAN Economic Community 2015: Progress and Key Achievements*, (November), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 12, 2016).

18) World Bank (2016), *Doing Business 2016: Measuring Regulatory Quality and Efficiency*, Available at <http://www.doingbusiness.org/> (accessed: October 7, 2016).

the strategic significance of ASEAN Community is obvious. The positioning of Southeast Asia as an area interconnected in infrastructural and institutional respects raises the interest of multinationals to invest there. ASEAN drives the establishment of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, whose participants exert considerable influence upon the global development. Even the formal establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community is an important precondition for the RCEP's success. The cumulative effect of these factors suggests that the interim results of ASEAN Economic Community are generally positive for ASEAN.

A balanced assessment of interim results of ASEAN Political-Security Community, on the contrary, gives reasons for skepticism.

The ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2015 envisaged three directions: a rules-based Community of shared values and norms, a cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security, and a dynamic and outward-looking region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world.¹⁹⁾ In practical terms, this meant fostering “good governance” based upon law and order in Southeast Asian states, upgrading ASEAN's leading role in regional multilateral dialogue platforms and improving relations between ASEAN and its dialogue partners. At all these directions, the obtained results are hardly encouraging.

With respect to “good governance,” the root cause lies in the problems

19) The ASEAN Secretariat (2009), *ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint*, (June), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 7, 2016).

which Southeast Asian countries have to tackle at the present stage of their modernization. In many Southeast Asian states, political reforms coincided with the upsurge of nationalism, including on ethnic issues. At the grassroots level, the prevailing sentiments are that “good governance,” i.e. combating corruption and human rights protection, remain too far from practical realities to be taken seriously. In the government circles, due to the worldwide regime change in practices Southeast Asian elites discuss the expediency to strengthen components of constructive authoritarianism in internal politics as one of the prerequisites for raising economic competitiveness and improving state manageability.

Summing up the key problems that ASEAN as the “driving force” of Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue platforms faced in the “evolutionary” phase of international relations, the following are noteworthy. Regional dialogue platforms turned out not to be ready to deal with rapidly globalizing Asia-Pacific issues. The rise in number of these dialogue formats did not entail their qualitative and conceptual upgrade. Attempts to resolve regional security challenges suffered severe setbacks. The association failed to offer its extra-regional partners a consolidating agenda of cooperation to establish the cooperative security system. This generated criticism of these formats and ASEAN as their “driving force” (Kanaev 2007, pp. 86-100).

The criticism was all the more substantiated since ASEAN contribution in joint initiatives with Northeast Asian countries was apparently modest. ASEAN’s share in the Chiang Mai Multilateral Initiative and the East Asia Emergency Rice Reserve accounted for 20% and less than 15% respectively.

In 2014-2016, new problems arose. The simultaneous increase of attention to Asia-Pacific in the priorities of the US, China, Russia and India places a too heavy burden on ASEAN in terms of harmonizing their interests in multilateral cooperation along with rising interdependence of regional economy, politics and security. The problem is exacerbated by the absence of Russia and the US among the parties negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). These factors combined demonstrate that even at the regional level ASEAN is unable to integrate in the ideal – in its understanding – model of multipolarity.

In relations between ASEAN and its dialogue partners, the “three-tier” model of cooperation has ended in failure. Previously, the highest tier was occupied by the US. With all reservations, ASEAN saw Washington as the regional and global security guarantor, given that the stable international milieu is the key precondition for economic development of Southeast Asian states. The middle tier was occupied by China. In dialogue with Beijing, the association was seeking an optimum balance between economic cooperation and concessions on security issues, primarily relating to the South China Sea. The lowest level was given to ASEAN relations with Japan, India, Australia, South Korea, EU and Russia. Until recently, the association regarded these relations through the prism of balancing China’s and the US’ policies in Southeast Asia and preparing the project RCEP.

In the post-evolutionary era of global politics, ASEAN has to amend this model in the “big rush regime” in order to adjust it to its globalizing interests.

Developing dialogue with the US, ASEAN understands that Washington has no strong reasons to support the globalization of its policy simply because the ASEAN bid for multipolarity does not correspond to American interests. In Asia-Pacific, Washington has rocketed the South China Sea issue and develops the project Trans-Pacific Partnership with the afore-mentioned anti-Chinese component. This both questions the realization of the “Asian century” and undermines ASEAN prospective plans. ASEAN’s response came in the form of the Joint Statement of the US-ASEAN Strategic Partnership, the main idea of which is reaffirming the US’ positions as the regional security guarantor.²⁰⁾ But an imbalance between these expectations and the practice of American policy is evident.

In relations with China, the globalizing ASEAN prioritizes the project “One Belt, One Road” and expects an inflow of Chinese investment for infrastructure projects in Southeast Asia. This would be ideal for ASEAN if China did not offer it to develop relations on the principle of reciprocity. In practical terms, this means that the association might be deprived of a possibility to appeal to the assistance from its external partners in resolving the South China Sea issue. Beijing insists on a bilateral approach to the problem and prefers not to raise it at the Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue platforms on security issues. China’s adherence to the principle of reciprocity (“We provide you with an opportunity to achieve economic prosperity but instead demand you to respect our position

20) White House (2015), *Joint Statement on the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership*, (November 21), Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/> (accessed: October 11, 2016).

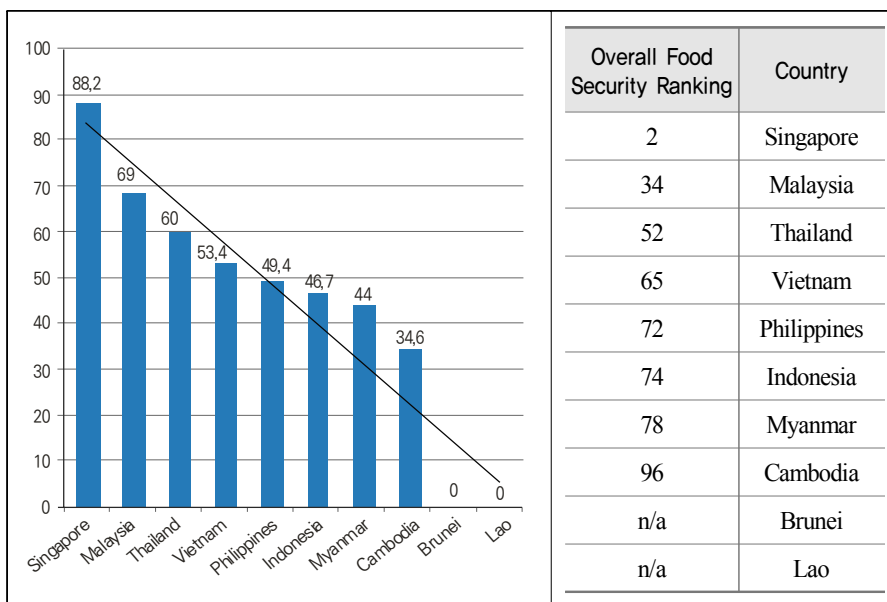
on our national core issues”) can make ASEAN resolve the South China Sea contradictions vis-à-vis China. As a result, the Code on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, when adopted, will have little substantial difference from the Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea signed by China and ASEAN in 2002, which outlines pro-Chinese terms of conflict resolution.

Through the prism of ASEAN globalizing priorities, its relations with the “third-tier” actors are shaped by the development of trans-Eurasian cooperation projects. Among them, the Indo-Pacific region and the Eurasian Initiative are particularly noteworthy. The former, being developed by the United States, might well place ASEAN at the epicenter of a new China-US confrontation on maritime security issues. The latter, which is driven by the Republic of Korea and presupposes strengthening Eurasian connectivity, coincides well with ASEAN international priorities. The Russian vector of current ASEAN policy will be discussed separately.

In establishing the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, the association did not encounter new problems in 2014-2015. But not because of their successful resolution in the preventive way: the existing challenges fully captured ASEAN attention. New escalations of conflicts between the donor and the recipient countries of migrant workers have taken place. Calls for strengthening a common identity among Southeast Asian nations have not been successful so far: the grassroots people identify themselves with their countries of residence rather than with ASEAN as a whole. The feeling of a pan-ASEAN identity exists, at best, at the elite level. While positioning Southeast Asia as a “mini-projection”

of the contemporary world in which social, economic and “perceptual” gaps between countries are minimized, the Association cannot but realize that this is just wishful thinking rather than the existing reality. This is well exemplified by the resources possessed by different ASEAN countries to tackle the food insecurity issue. Although the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2015 identified measures to strengthen food security and safety,²¹⁾ the Southeast Asian countries differ substantially in readiness to perform this task.

Figure 4. ASEAN members by the Global Food Security Score 2015



Source: The ASEAN Focus (2016).²²⁾

21) The ASEAN Secretariat (2009), *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint*, (June), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 7, 2016).

As seen from this evidence, the Association itself satisfies only partially its ideal standards of the global order. In the future, the problem may be further aggravated as a result of the imbalance between the goal of the ASEAN Community Blueprint 2025 to broaden ASEAN participation in shaping the global agenda²³⁾ and the real possibilities the Association possesses.

In sum, the main ASEAN deficiency is that the strategy, which the Association previously considered uncontested – to please all of its partners and simultaneously realize its own benefit – has suffered a systemic failure. Now the Association understands only the general direction of efforts that need to be taken – to strengthen the global dimension of its policy and integrate into the multi-polar world. This world should be created by other international actors that will support ASEAN in the implementation of its global plans. From this perspective, for the Association, relations with Russia loom all the larger.

IV. Russia and ASEAN: Distant Partners That Are Getting Closer

Summing up the results of the two decades of relations between ASEAN and

22) The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (2016), *The ASEAN Focus 2016*, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/> (accessed: October 1, 2016).

23) The ASEAN Secretariat (2015), *ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together*, (November), Available at <http://www.asean.org/> (accessed: October 2, 2016).

Russia since the establishment of the Full-Dialogue Partnership in 1996, the imbalance between politics and economy is evident. On the one hand, the parties continually stress similarities in their approaches to global and regional issues and the shared preference for the primacy of international law and polycentrism in global affairs. On the other hand, economic exchanges have been and remain very insignificant. This is exemplified primarily by Russia-ASEAN trade that is negligible when compared with corresponding figures between ASEAN and its main economic partners.

Figure 5. ASEAN Trade with Its Key Extra-Regional Partners
(2015, Percentage and Volumes In billion US Dollars)

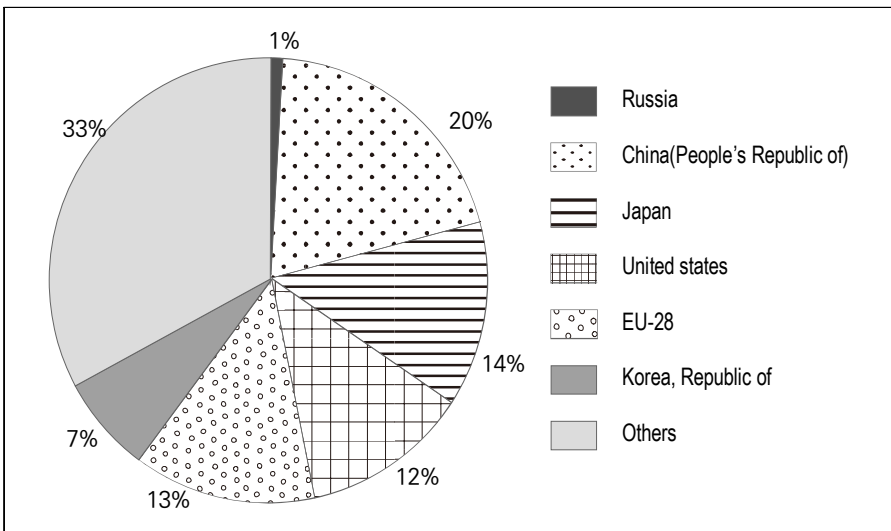
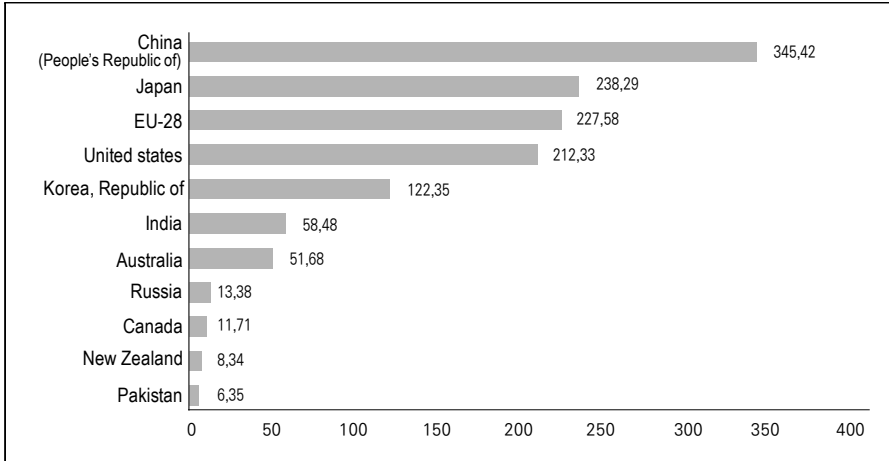


Figure 5. Continued



Source: The ASEAN Secretariat (2016).²⁴⁾

As a result, the main problem in the ASEAN-Russia relationship is the abysmal lack of self-reproducing ties. The root cause lies in numerous systemic weaknesses.

Russia does not have ethnic diasporas in Southeast Asia. As China's experience demonstrates, diasporas, especially involved in retail, banking and administrative decision-making, play a pivotal role in fostering economic exchanges. In ASEAN-Russia relations, this strategically important resource is missing and unlikely to appear.

Russia has no recognizable brands in Southeast Asian countries. Russia's TNCs, except for several operating in the energy sector, are not present in

24) The ASEAN Secretariat (2016), *ASEAN Trade by Partner Countries/Regions in 2015*, Available at <http://asean.org/> (accessed: October 17, 2016).

Southeast Asia's markets. Russia is not involved in supply-production chains of technologically-advanced and mass consumption goods, which is in contrast to China, Japan, Korea or the European Union.

ASEAN-Russia trade exchanges are hampered by underdeveloped transport and logistics infrastructure in the Russian Far East. Limited capabilities of Far Eastern ports and the Trans-Siberian railway, the underdevelopment of the “dry ports” and the cargo monitoring system, lack of direct flights between Russian cities, mainly located in Siberia and the Far East, and Southeast Asian capitals are typical constraints.

The top management of Russian big companies remains largely uninformed of the business legislation in Southeast Asian countries and, more broadly, the business milieu within the framework of the ASEAN Economic Community. Russian businessmen are not aware of either the priorities of individual ASEAN countries or how the mechanisms of ASEAN integration can be used for entering the Southeast Asian market. The underdevelopment of the banking support for implementing economic projects further aggravates the problem.

The mechanisms of the Russia-ASEAN dialogue partnership – the ASEAN-Russia Joint Cooperation Committee, ASEAN-Russia Joint Planning and Management Committee, ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership Financial Fund – are not always efficient in implementing the agreed projects owing, primarily, to the financial constraints.

Participating in ASEAN-centric multilateral dialogue platforms – the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus Eight and East Asia

Summit – Russia strives to develop permanent channels of communication with its Asia-Pacific partners, obtain reputational bonuses and strengthen its global positions. However, few practical results have been achieved so far. The primary reason stems from negligent volumes of economic exchanges as the ASEAN vision of security has a clear economic dimension. From this perspective, ASEAN does not regard Russia as an actor that can make a really substantial contribution to strengthening Asia-Pacific security. The problem is exacerbated by the absence of Russia’s top leaders at the three sessions of the East Asia Summit after Russia became its member.

If each of these factors undermines cooperation between ASEAN and Russia, what to say about their cumulative effect? Nevertheless, since early 2014, mutual interest between ASEAN and Russia has been growing.

Seen from the ASEAN perspective, this is predetermined by the globalization of ASEAN priorities and its rising interest to increase its influence upon the global development. Southeast Asia is a locus of economic activity in the Asia-Pacific region, whose influence on the global economy and security is increasing. Leading global multinationals consider Southeast Asia as an obligatory direction of their Asia-Pacific strategy.²⁵⁾ The project Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which includes the largest Asian economies – China and India – has good chances to rejuvenate the global economy by overcoming its capacity constraints.

25) Baker & McKenzie (2014), “Re-Drawing the ASEAN Map. How Companies Are Crafting New Strategies in Southeast Asia,” *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, (November), Available at <http://www.bakermckenzie.com/> (accessed: October 8, 2016).

Most importantly, ASEAN realizes that to motivate its extra-regional partners to invest in Southeast Asia will be easier if it is part of a wider geo-economic area interconnected in infrastructural, institutional and people-to-people respects. Owing to geographical reasons, for the Association the Eurasian continent matters the most.

Convincing reasons question the utility of the US-ASEAN Connect Initiative launched at the ASEAN-US Summit in February 2016. The initiative has four directions – Business Connect, Energy Connect, Innovation Connect and Policy Connect.²⁶⁾ Ostensibly, this is aimed at strengthening US-ASEAN economic relations by compensating the missing points in the US-ASEAN Expanded Economic Engagement Initiative and enticing those Southeast Asian countries which are not TPP members to join it. The overall cumulative effect of this initiative might be moderately positive but hardly long-lasting owing to several factors.

In theory, the US-ASEAN Connect Initiative aims to facilitate the business milieu for American companies operating all over the ASEAN geo-economic area, but in practice, American business largely focuses upon Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. To invest in the less developed ASEAN countries hardly corresponds to their long-term planning, owing to under-developed investment regulations. For these countries, to quickly undertake necessary reforms is too

26) For details, see: United States Agency for International Development (2016), *U.S.-ASEAN Connect. Strategic Partners for Sustainable and Innovative Economic Growth*, (September 8), Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/> (accessed: October 13, 2016).

politically burdensome and financially costly. The US lacks institutional resources to finance the trans-ASEAN infrastructure projects like China and Japan possess, as exemplified by the AIIB and ADB. But most importantly, the US concentrates upon selective sectors like energy or ICT while ASEAN partners from Eurasia focus upon a broad strategy with the emphasis upon upgraded transport links. Coupled with the afore-mentioned geography factor, this makes ASEAN more receptive to the trans-Eurasian rather than the trans-Pacific vector of cooperation.

Beyond economic motives, geopolitical considerations are no less important. In the ASEAN perspective, Eurasia may become part of the multiplex world which includes states, multilateral dialogue formats, FTAs, loci of industrial and technological cooperation. Taken together, these centers may create the global system of security, cooperation and co-development. In this world order, ASEAN will be able to successfully continue its policy of balancing big actors, appealing to one of them if problems with another arise, and create an international milieu conducive to the successful political, economic and social development of its members.

For this scenario to materialize, ASEAN needs an established global partner whose priorities correspond to those of ASEAN. Russia amply fulfills these expectations.

For Russia, relations with ASEAN are also growing in significance. Russia has to diversify its Asia-Pacific policy, not allowing its “pivot to Asia” to de-facto become its pivot to China. The more so since mechanisms for integrating

the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union are still not clearly specified. More than that, for Russia many of ASEAN states can serve as an example to follow in upgrading Territories of Advanced Development in the Far East. The Singaporean and Malaysian experiences of increasing investment attractiveness and establishing technological and industrial clusters of value-added production should be adapted to the Far Eastern development. For Russia, ASEAN is one of the anchors of international stability as ASEAN principles with their emphasis on non-interference and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity are consonant with international law. Lastly but importantly, upgraded ties with ASEAN allow Russia to forge an institutional link between the Asia-Pacific and the Eurasian direction of its foreign policy.

A confluence of these factors suggests that the ASEAN-Russia relationship has outgrown its “one-by-one” dimension. As things currently are, their priorities embrace a broad geopolitical and geo-economic spectrum. If so, ASEAN-Russia cooperation can achieve a breakthrough if developed at a geographical domain wider than Russia and Southeast Asia. The integrated Eurasia discussed above seems to fit these shared perceptions.

V. ASEAN–SCO–EAEU: Emerging Framework for Russia–ASEAN Cooperation

Defining the key long-term task in ASEAN-Russia relationship, a logical

step is to outline the instruments to best approach it. In the institutional realm, the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU seems to be the most appropriate.

This idea was first mentioned by the President of Russia in December 2015.²⁷⁾ During the preparation for the ASEAN-Russia Commemorative Summit held in Sochi in May 2016, it was further developed by the ASEAN-Russia Eminent Persons Group, and became one of the key issues during the summit. The main results of the Sochi meeting strongly suggest that this format of cooperation has high chances to grow in prominence.

As exemplified by the results of the Sochi summit, at Russia's and ASEAN's highest political level there is a clear understanding that a "reset" of the relationship is impossible without going beyond the present Russian-ASEAN framework.²⁸⁾ Russian and ASEAN business communities share this perception.²⁹⁾ As seen from the key documents of the Sochi summit, the ASEAN-Russia strategic partnership will be increasingly premised upon the cooperation in the format of ASEAN-SCO-EAEU embracing not only economic issues, but also security, educational, academic and cultural exchanges.³⁰⁾

27) Official Internet Resource of the President of Russia (2015), *The President's Message to the Federal Assembly*, (December 3), Available at <http://kremlin.ru/> (accessed: October 15, 2016).

28) ASEAN - Russia Summit (2016), *Press conference on the results of the Russia - ASEAN Summit*, (May 20), Available at <http://russia-asean20.ru/> (accessed: October 15, 2016).

29) ASEAN - Russia Summit (2016), *Russia-ASEAN Business Forum members' consultation meeting*, (May 20), Available at <http://russia-asean20.ru/> (accessed: October 15, 2016).

30) ASEAN - Russia Summit (2016), *The Sochi Declaration of the ASEAN - Russia Commemorative Summit "Towards a mutually beneficial strategic partnership,"* (May 20), Available at <http://russia-asean20.ru/> (accessed: October 19, 2016); ASEAN - Russia Summit (2016), *The ASEAN-Russia Eminent Persons Group Report "Russia-ASEAN: a multi-faceted strategic partnership*

The ASEAN-SCO-EAEU format opens up new opportunities for Russia and ASEAN. From the ASEAN perspective, ASEAN-SCO-EAEU might make it possible for the Association to increasingly integrate in probable cooperation in strengthening pan-Eurasian connectivity. This involves the implementation of trans-continental infrastructure projects including ASEAN, China and Russia. Together with the central pillar (the EAEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt), the southern (the ASEAN Port Network and China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road) and the northern (the Northern Sea Route) areas can be simultaneously developed. This will result in the creation of the pan-Eurasian connectivity arc with Southeast Asia as its part.

By means of the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU format, the task to keep Southeast Asian security challenges manageable may be facilitated. Arguably, the development of transport corridors through Eurasia will shift the centre of economic activity from Asia-Pacific to Eurasia, which would make contradictions over the South China Sea, largely focusing upon differences between China and the US over the freedom of navigation issue, somewhat less intensive than they currently are. The development of energy infrastructure and logistics chains between producers and consumers of agricultural goods will strengthen energy and food security in Southeast Asia. The experience of the ASEAN, the SCO and the EAEU in combating international terrorism will be effectively used to face the ISIS threat (as experience demonstrates, at the global level the

facing the future," (May 20), Available at <http://russia-asean20.ru/> (accessed: October 19, 2016).

anti-ISIS cooperation leaves much to be desired).

The interconnected Eurasian area will logically lead to the establishment of a new – continental – security system with the EU as its part. This will place the current European problems in a markedly different international context making them somewhat less serious. As predicted by Russia’s leading foreign policy analysts, the rejuvenation of economic cooperation between the EU and Russia can be expected.³¹⁾ By its very nature, the cumulative economic effect will be positive for many international actors including ASEAN.

What is absolutely essential for the Association, in the format of ASEAN-SCO-EAEU, is that it be delegated the status of its driving force. The reasons for this are convincing as in the Asia-Pacific region ASEAN has been performing this function for more than two decades. By means of this, the Association will strengthen its global positions and at the same time receive a new super task with a strong intra-ASEAN consolidating effect.

The aggregate effect of the cooperation in the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU format will result in integrating the Russian Far East and the logistically linked Siberia in the Asia-Pacific economic exchanges including in the Southeast Asian supply-production networks.

From Russia’s perspective, likely benefits from the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU format appear no less significant. Russian companies will find it easier to gain a foothold in the Southeast Asian markets if they are integrated with those that

31) Karaganov S. (2015), “Eurasian Way Out of the European Crisis,” *Global Affairs*, (June 8), Available at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru> (accessed: October 7, 2016).

are closer and already developed (e.g., the members of the EAEU). The ASEAN-SCO-EAEU format has high chances to facilitate the establishment of an FTA between the EAEU and ASEAN, which has become a major priority in the Russia-ASEAN relationship.³²⁾ ASEAN efforts to develop the Global Movement of Moderates meet Russia's determination to combat international terrorism and for sure will be developed in the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU agenda. As long as the anti-Russian ideological campaign in Western mass-media continues, Moscow will only welcome cooperation based upon the ASEAN approach.

The idea of Eurasian cooperation has a practical and intellectual background. Possibilities to intensify dialogue between ASEAN and the SCO have been discussed since 2005. In May 2015, a Free Trade Agreement between the EAEU and Vietnam was signed. Now an FTA between ASEAN and EAEU is being prepared. The decision to synchronize the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union made by China and Russia can be extended to the cooperation between the EAEU and the SCO after which institutional links with ASEAN can be forged. The latter seems perfectly logical since the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road will run through Southeast Asia.

At the expert level, possibilities to foster the Eurasian cooperation have already been explored. During the First and the Second Asia-Pacific Forums

32) ASEAN - Russia Summit (2016), *Sochi Declaration of the ASEAN-Russian Federation Commemorative Summit to Mark the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN-Russian Federation Dialogue Partnership "Moving Towards a Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit,"* (May 20), Available at <http://en.russia-asean20.ru/> (accessed: October 8, 2016).

held in Moscow in 2011 and 2012 respectively, Russian experts endorsed and substantiated the Eurasian-Pacific Connectivity Initiative.³³⁾ Its core idea is to integrate Russia into the Asia-Pacific economic cooperation by means of developing a mega-project which, on the one hand, would stimulate economic dynamism in the Asia-Pacific region and, by instigation, in Russia as its part, and on the other, incorporate this cooperation into the pan-Eurasian cooperation. Global, continental and the “Russian” components of Eurasia’s development have been in the spotlight of experts of the “Valdai” International Discussion Club, a dialogue venue linking international intellectual elites, for many years.³⁴⁾

Assessing the presumable effect of the American factor upon the launch and the further development of the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU, the following points are worthy of note. Ample evidence suggests that Washington, although not favouring this process, will have to grin and bear it.

Starting to implement the New Silk Road project primarily tasked to counter-balance Chinese and Russian influence in Central Eurasia, the US realized that it lacks necessary resources, finances being the key, to keep the

33) Sumsky V., E. Kanaev, E. Koldunova (2012), “Russia’s Interests in the Context of Asia-Pacific Region Security and Development,” *Russian International Affairs Council*, Available at <http://russiancouncil.ru/> (accessed: October 14, 2016); Sumsky V., E. Kanaev, E. Koldunova, M. Zavadsky, E. Zinovyeva, V. Iontsev, A. Kireeva, V. Likhachev, S. Lukonin, G. Menzhulin, A. Novikov, Y. Prokhorova, S. Sevastyanov, and N. Stapan (2013), “Russia’s Guiding Landmarks in the Asia-Pacific after the APEC Summit in Vladivostok,” *Russian International Affairs Council*, Available at <http://russiancouncil.ru/> (accessed: October 14, 2016).

34) Karaganov S. (2015), “Toward the Great Ocean – 3. The Silk Road Economic Belt and the priorities of the Eurasian States joint development,” *Valdai International Discussion Club*. (June), Available at <http://ru.valdaiclub.com/> (accessed: October 11, 2016).

project on track. As things are, American business is not eager to invest money in infrastructure projects with unclear state support and commercial feedback. In these circumstances, as Jeffrey Mankoff ironically pointed out, “As Washington’s own Eurasian ambitions contracted in line with the planned drawdown of US forces from Afghanistan, the United States began … seeking to leverage Beijing’s deep pockets to build major new infrastructure projects that the United States itself could not afford.”³⁵⁾ Mainly for this reason, the US attitude to the projects SREB and EAEU has changed from very critical to generally conciliatory.

More importantly, Washington may want it or not, but the Eurasian integration is a natural and objective process. At the institutional level, the United States has no mechanisms to influence it, while in the substantial realm, American possibilities to offer the Eurasian states an attractive alternative are quite faint. The Eurasian integration has no hegemony while in the US-led projects, the TPP and the TTIP being the most representative examples, the situation is strikingly different. The “Washington consensus” prioritizing democracy within states succumbs in attractiveness to the upcoming “Eurasian consensus” advocating democracy between states (emphasis added in both cases – E.K.). The US policy of double standards towards Syria and ISIS, with repercussions stretching from Western Europe to Southeast Asia, further solidifies

35) Mankoff J. (2016), “How Washington Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Eurasian Integration,” *PONARS Eurasia*, (April 20), Available at <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/> (accessed: October 3, 2016).

the intention of Eurasian states to be masters of their own destiny.

Based upon all the factors combined, the interim assessment of the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU format suggests that it has generally good prospects. Stating that in this format Russia and ASEAN can broaden and diversify possibilities to cooperate, it seems reasonable to expect the self-reproduction of Russia-ASEAN ties with a positive multiplier effect upon other Eurasian actors.

VI. Implications for Russia-ROK Relations

The repercussions stemming from the afore-analyzed scenario for relations between Russia and the Republic of Korea are likely to be overly positive. Cooperation between ASEAN and Russia, within the format of integrated Eurasia institutionalized by ASEAN-SCO-EEU, fits well to the Korean key prospective project – the Eurasian Initiative. Although at the present stage all assessments cannot but be preliminary, this congruence is seen along the three dimensions outlined in the Eurasian Initiative.³⁶⁾

Starting with *connectivity*, the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU format can facilitate cooperation between Russia and ROK in developing the Arctic.

The reasons behind ROK interest in the Arctic are numerous. According to Korean experts, the Northern Sea Route can shorten the distance from Korean

36) South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013), *EurAsia Initiative*, Available at <http://www.mofa.go.kr/> (accessed: October 12, 2016).

to European ports by 40%, while fuel expenses might be reduced by 25%.³⁷⁾ Korea's geographical proximity to China, Japan and Russia makes it a natural hub for the Arctic oil transportation. By using the NSR, Korea can diversify its energy import basket as the Arctic oil substitutes up to 10 percent of the overall oil volume imported by the ROK from the Middle East, which will generate transportation savings accounting for 1 billion dollars.³⁸⁾ Increase in the cargo turnover via NSR might well stimulate the development of Korean ports. The Republic of Korea expects new orders for its shipbuilding companies as the Arctic navigation requires many types of vessels produced in ROK: icebreakers, container ships with icebreaking capability, icebreaking tankers etc.

The confluence of these factors generate the convergence of interests in Northern Sea Route in Korean government and business community. This is exemplified by, for instance, the statement made by Yun Byung-se, ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs in July 2015: "It is my dream to see the day when East Asia and Europe are connected both through the trans-continental railways and the Arctic waterways."³⁹⁾ Or the presentation made by President Park Geun-hye at the Eastern Economic Forum in September 2016: "... the Northern

37) Young Kil Park (2013), "Arctic Prospects and Challenges from a Korean Perspective. East Asia - Arctic Relations: Boundary, Security and International Politics," *Centre for International Governance Innovation*, Available at <https://www.cigionline.org/> (accessed: October 19, 2016).

38) Young Kil Park (2013), "Arctic Prospects and Challenges from a Korean Perspective. East Asia - Arctic Relations: Boundary, Security and International Politics," *Centre for International Governance Innovation*. Available at <https://www.cigionline.org/> (accessed: October 19, 2016).

39) Yun Byung-se H.E. (2015), "Dinner Remarks at the Commemorative Event to Mark 2nd Anniversary of ROK's Accession to Arctic Council," *South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, (July 7), Available at <http://www.mofa.go.kr/> (accessed October 21, 2016).

Sea Route would provide opportunities for new cooperative activities for the sustainable development of resources in the Arctic.”⁴⁰⁾ This demonstrates the sustainable demand for using the potential of the NSR at the ROK top political level.

In the Korean business community, this interest is no less intense. In October 2013, Korea used NSR for the first time: the ship belonging to the company Hyundai Glovis Co. arrived from the Baltic port Ust-Luga to Korean port Gwangyang. In July 2016, ROK used NSR for the first time to transport high-tech equipment – the reactors produced by Hyundai Heavy Industries for the Pavlodar Oil Chemistry Refinery were delivered from the Korean port Ulsan to Pavlodar in Kazakhstan.⁴¹⁾ At present, in business planning of Korean major industrial giants, among which there are Samsung Heavy Industries and Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering, the Arctic direction is gaining in prominence.⁴²⁾

At the same time, Korean business lacks confidence in the commercial feedback from NSR. As a result, cooperation between the Republic of Korea

40) Park Geun-hye (2016), “Keynote Address by President of the Republic of Korea at the Eastern Economic Forum in Russia,” *The Foreign Affairs*, (September 25), Available at <http://foreignaffairs.co.nz/> (accessed: October 21, 2016).

41) The Arctic (2016), *South Korea will use the Northern Sea Route for the first time to deliver chemical reactors to Kazakhstan*, (July 18), Available at <http://arctic.ru/> (accessed: October 22, 2016).

42) Tanker Shipping and Trade (2015), *Charter Rates for Shuttle Tankers Are Holding Up*, (December 11), Available at <http://www.tankershipping.com/> (accessed: October 22, 2016); LNG World Shipping (2016), *Daewoo Readies Prototype Yamal Icebreaking LNGC for Action*, (June 20), Available at <http://www.lngworldshipping.com/> (accessed: October 22, 2016).

and Russia remains at its initial stage.

Stimulating the trans-Eurasian connectivity, the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU might give a fresh impetus to this cooperation. China, Singapore and India, observers in the Arctic Council, will support it with Singapore acting as a bridge between the Arctic Council and ASEAN. At the present stage, it seems hardly possible and necessary to reflect upon concrete policy steps. What is really important is the political will shared by ROK and the members of the upcoming format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU to foster this cooperation and institutional mechanisms to translate it into reality.

In the *creativity* realm, the ICT dimension of the Eurasian Initiative seen through the prism of Russia-ASEAN cooperation and the presumable format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU is worthy of note.

At the conceptual level, Russia and ASEAN consider cooperation in technologically advanced sectors as their top priority. In the main documents produced by the Sochi summit, exchanges in innovative and technologically advanced production gained profound significance.⁴³⁾ This is not a diplomatic “slogan of the day” aimed at pleasing the partner as Russian ICT companies are active in Southeast Asia. Among them, the flagman is Kaspersky Lab. The

43) ASEAN-Russia Summit (2016), *Sochi Declaration of the ASEAN-Russian Federation Commemorative Summit to Mark the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN-Russian Federation Dialogue Partnership “Moving Towards a Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit”*; *Comprehensive Plan of Action to Promote Cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Russian Federation (2016-2020)*, (May 20), Available at <http://en.russia-asean20.ru/> (accessed: October 23, 2016).

company specializes in computer security software and has headquarters in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Among its clients, there are government agencies, including Malaysian Ministry of Education and Ministry of Defense, and large corporations. A high rank the company occupies in the priorities of its partners is reflected in its participation in International Multilateral Partnership against Cyber Threats under the auspices of Malaysia's government. In Singapore, Kaspersky Lab cooperates with INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in identifying and preventing cyber threats, and Singapore Economic Development Board.

Other Russian IT companies operating in Southeast Asia are Infowatch, SPB TV, CDN Video, Parallels, GS Group and Ruvento. Their activity focuses upon the mobile TV and video broadcasting, virtual applications and automated hosting services, manufacturing digital television equipment as well as upon cyber-security issues.⁴⁴⁾

Given that the ICT component in cooperation between Russia and ASEAN tends to gain further prominence, its incorporation in the transport projects in the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU seems perfectly logical. Seen through the Arctic dimension, this cooperation might entail the digitalization of the NSR contributing to Korean plans to develop the Arctic and to the overall Russian-Korean cooperation.

44) Kanaev, E., A. Pyatachkova, A. Korolev, A. Averina, R. Fainschmidt, E. Prokopchuk, A. Matveeva, and M. Rodoskaya (2016), "Russia and ASEAN. Key Cooperation Projects," *Russian International Affairs Council*, (May 18), Available at <http://russiancouncil.ru/> (accessed: October 23, 2016).

An assessment of the stimuli for the *trust-building* generated by the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU is also positive. The globalization of ASEAN interests makes the association focus upon global issues, among which North Korean nuclear problem looms all the larger. The establishment of Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone is hampered by constant escalations of North Korean nuclear issue. Assuming that any progress on keeping it manageable, however small it may be, should initially be welcomed, the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU can, although modestly, contribute to engaging Pyongyang in dialogue. The North Korean nuclear issue will be placed in a radically different international context as compared to the present. If the association is delegated the status of the “driving force” of the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU dialogue, this will make the international milieu around North Korea more conducive to cooperation and co-development rather than to confrontation and hostility.

Lastly but importantly, the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU has high chances to eliminate the present lack of congruence in terms of coordinating Russia’s pivot to Asia and ROK Eurasian Initiative. Actually, Russia and Korea differ in what Eurasia stands for. As Duckoon Chang, professor of Kookmin University, observes, “today Russians mostly identify the geographical scope of Eurasia with Russia and other former Soviet Republics – for the most part, the target area of the Eurasian Union, Caucasus, and Central Asia. In contrast, for Seoul the geographical scope of Eurasia mostly coincided with Eurasian landmass... for Koreans literally the European continent combined with the Asian continent on the whole – from the coast of the Atlantic to the coast of

the Pacific – is the target of “the Eurasia Initiative” (Duckjoon 2015, pp. 1-17). Arguably, if Eurasian cooperation is institutionalized by the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU, Russia and Korea will come to the common vision of the geographical and – more importantly – conceptual dimensions of Eurasia.

While many problems in Russia-ROK relations remain in place, and the prospects for cooperation might be unclear owing to both international factors and depleted endogenous potential, new resources to foster dialogue are a sheer necessity. The format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU, which is congruent with the ROK Eurasian Initiative in the key practical directions and the conceptual respect, has good changes to give a second wind to Russia-ROK cooperation broadening and diversifying its spheres.

VII. Conclusion

The intention shared by ASEAN and Russia to expand their cooperation into the Eurasian area and institutionalize it by the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU clearly reflects three interrelated macro-tendencies in current international relations. With the alarmingly weak foundation of the present global order, prospects for “a war of all against all” and “the global economy of mistrust” to last for years (if not decades), the world clearly needs a cooperative developmental paradigm. This is coupled with the rise of non-West and the growing demand for democracy not within, but between states resulting in fracturing the global order.

As a response to this strategic unease, the re-shuffling on the geopolitical deck of cards is on the way. A new kind of bipolarity is taking shape with Eurasia emerging as second global center. In this process, cooperation between Russia and ASEAN is predestined to play one of the pivotal roles.

In this emerging paradigm, ASEAN and Russia are not just partners of consequence. They enjoy a high level of strategic compatibility. The whole history of Russia is “looking beyond the limits” in crises. The whole history of ASEAN is an example of how to bring the interests of all its partners to the common denominator. This confluence of Russia’s and ASEAN experience and possibilities is the basic premise of the likely upward trends in their future relationship giving it the scale, depth and quality it has lacked so far. In the pan-Eurasian area, the scope for common vision and actions in Russia-ASEAN relationship will be further broadening.

As a much more important outcome of this cooperation in Eurasia, the advent of a new global order premised upon enhanced security, win-win cooperation and genuinely democratic relations between states will be gradually steering its path through the present state of international entropy. Our friends, among which the Republic of Korea holds a superior rank, will welcome this.

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