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# THE EVOLUTION AND PROSPECTS OF THE RUSSIAN STRATEGY IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION \*

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**Abstract.** *The understanding of Russia to develop the eastern area and to carry out Asia-Pacific cooperation has changed distinctly after the Ukrainian crisis. It no longer looks at the Asian-Pacific region from the previous perspective of the East and West balanced development and the Eurasian balanced diplomacy, whereas it regards cooperation with the Asia-Pacific countries as an important support for itself to get rid of the economic crisis and diplomatic isolation, and realize modernization, and as a battleground to pursue the great national aspirations. Arms sales and energy are two important levers for Russia's involvement in the Asian-Pacific region. Actively deepening the relations with China is a key element of Russia's Asia-Pacific strategy. However, Russia's "Turn to the East" is not only for China. Cooperation and balance are two means for Russia to construct the Asia-Pacific diplomatic diversity. It is a controversial issue whether Russia's foreign strategy, "Turn to the East", is a passive act or an active behavior. In fact, Russia's "integration" with Asian-Pacific area faces many problems and challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Asia-Pacific regional strategy; Ukrainian crisis; Turn to the East; balanced diplomacy*

# ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РОССИЙСКОЙ СТРАТЕГИИ В АЗИАТСКО-ТИХООКЕАНСКОМ РЕГИОНЕ

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**Аннотация.** *После «украинского кризиса» для России стало очень важным развитие восточного региона и расширение Азиатско-Тихоокеанского сотрудничества. Россия теперь рассматривает сотрудничество со странами АТР как важную поддержку в борьбе с экономическим кризисом и дипломатической изоляцией, необходимую для осуществления модернизации и достижения национальных интересов. Продажа оружия и энергии – два важных рычага сотрудничества России с АТР. Активная интенсификация отношений с Китаем является ключевым элементом стратегии России в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе, однако российский «Поворот на Восток» – не только для Китая. Сотрудничество и сбалансированность – это два способа для России построить дипломатические отношения в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе, но интеграция России в АТР сталкивается со многими проблемами и испытаниями.*

**Ключевые слова:** *стратегия Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона; кризис Украины; поворот на Восток; баланс дипломатии*

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The re-rise of Russia and the outcome of modernization development strategy greatly depend on the development of the eastern region. And the revitalization of this area and participation in the process of Asia-Pacific integration are two indivisible tasks for Russia.

Some Chinese scholars regard the 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok as a new sign of Russia's "Turn to the East" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century [1 p. 23], but Russian scholars advance this time to 2009. The GDP growth rate of Russia declined 8.9%, affected by the global financial crisis between 2008 and 2009, while East Asian countries, especially China, remained to be the engines of global growth during this period (Chinese GDP increased 9.4%). Then many Russian enterprises were forced to turn to Asia for seeking new sources of funding. In a sense, Russia's "Turn to the East" is only one of the long-term strategies before the Ukraine crisis. No matter the level of attention to Asia-Pacific countries, or from the resource investment, Russia has not fundamentally changed its nature of "orientated in Europe".

The Ukrainian crisis erupted in November 2013 was the most serious conflict between Russia and the West after the Cold War. This crisis has profoundly changed the international political environment and the relations among major powers. The prospect of establishing common political, security and economic spaces between Russia and the West basically disappeared [2, p. 9]. In the new version of the "Russian National Security Strategy" signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2015 and the new version of "The Russian Federation's Foreign Policy Concept" approved on November 30<sup>th</sup> 2016, the weight of the Asian-Pacific region in Russia's national security strategy and diplomatic direction has greatly increased, compared with the past, and involving into the process of economic integration in the Asian-Pacific region actively has become the main goal of Russia's Asia-Pacific strategy. The advent of Russia's "Greater Eurasian Partnership" in June 2016 announced the complete failure of the "Greater Europe" vision which pursued many years.

## **1. AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVATION FOR RUSSIA'S STRATEGY IN ASIA-PACIFIC REGION ADJUSTMENT**

Russia's relations with the United States and Europe have rocketed bottom because of the Ukraine crisis and they conducted a series of rounds of

bouts (diplomatic notes, war on words, property freeze, sanctions and anti-sanctions, freezing of relations in some areas but maintaining relations in other equally important areas at the same time) similar to the "mixed Cold War" From the inspections and speeches of Russian leaders like Putin on the eastern region, it can be seen that Russia's understanding of exploring the east and developing Asia-Pacific cooperation has changed significantly. Russia no longer looks at the Asian-Pacific region from the previous perspective of the East and West balanced development and the Eurasian balanced diplomacy, whereas it regards cooperation with the Asia-Pacific countries as an important support for itself to realize modernization [1, p. 27], in order to make up political and economic losses caused by the tension with America and Europe.

### **1.1. The Asian-Pacific region is an important region for Russia to get rid of political isolation and safeguard national security**

Since implemented "Return to Asia" strategy in 2010, the United States has deepened its military cooperation with Japan, Korea, and other traditional allies in order to plunder its strategic leadership in the Asian-Pacific region and contain Russia and China from the east. In the new version of the "Russian Federation National Security Strategy" approved on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2015, Russia believes that "NATO's eastward expansion and the military deployment around Russia threaten its security, including deploying anti-missile systems, global strike systems, as well as sophisticated and space weapons in Europe, Asia Pacific, and the Middle East". Russia's judgments on the world situation and the international configuration, and its recognition of major security threats reflect Russia's relatively pessimistic attitudes toward the current status and development tendency of the international configuration.

An important change from the 2013 version to the new security strategy is implementing diplomatic strategy shift, based on the deterioration of Russia's relations with the United States and other western countries, as well as the de facto difficulty to repair in a short period. China, India and the Asian-Pacific region have been prioritized in Russian foreign strategies and activities. Russia regards the comprehensive strategic partnership with China as a key factor to maintain global and regional stability and attaches importance

to its special strategic partnership with India at the same time. This idea is also reflected in the “Russian Federal Foreign Policy Proposal” adopted on November 30<sup>th</sup> 2016: “Consolidating Russia’s position in the Asian-Pacific region and actively developing relations with Asia-Pacific countries are important orientations for Russia’s diplomacy” ([http://www.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/news//asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE\\_02Bw/content/id/2542248](http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news//asset_publisher/cKNonkJE_02Bw/content/id/2542248)).

### **1.2. Speeding up integration into the Asia-Pacific economy is in line with the long-term interests of Russia and the world trend**

The Asian-Pacific area is the region with the fastest economic growth in the world. The reality that the global economic center shifted eastward in recent years, has determined that the Russian national development must take the needs of the Asian-Pacific region into consideration. Better access to this market is what Russia always focuses on.

Russia’s existence in Asia has a long history. The so-called “Turn to the East” is just an image. It does not mean Russia discovering Asia or first appearing in Asia. Its basic meaning should be strengthening by its developing eastward. And its purpose is to increase the importance of Asia, rather reduce Europe’s position [2, p. 5]. In recent years, Putin has repeatedly mentioned that the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the SCO and ASEAN should strengthen cooperation, and stressed that “Russia’s adherence to a positive east-oriented policy is by no means a transient consideration, nor because of the sour of relations with the United States and the European Union, but out of long-term national interests and the world trend” (<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53379>).

### **1.3. Strengthening cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries can help Russia get out of the economic crisis dilemma**

The Russian economy fell once again into a crisis between 2014 and 2015, and it was the fourth crisis since the market-oriented economic transition started in 1992. In 2015, the GDP growth rate dropped 3.7% year-on-year, the inflation rose to 12.9%, the real disposable income growth rate of residents witnessed a negative inflection point and the trade volume dropped drastically, etc. [3, p. 129–132].

The impacts of the economic sanctions by the West on Russian economy are both direct and indirect, and could be roughly summed up in four aspects: Firstly, due to the financial restrictions imposed on Russia by the West, Russia’s funding constraints and financing costs increase, which in turn has a devastating effect on the investment and production of Russian enterprises. Secondly, as the West adopted technical and equipment embargoes, investment restrictions, and cancellation or reduction of cooperation projects, the quantity and quality of production in the Russian enterprise’s slowdown and the medium and long-term investment lag behind, especially the negative impact of technical restrictions on labor productivity. Thirdly, the Western embargo and the Russian anti-embargo exert an overall disruptive influence on all spheres of economy, such as production, consumption and financial stability. Last but not least, against the backdrop of the vicious political relations between Russia and the West, Western economic sanctions and Russian anti-sanctions have increased the uncertainty of the Russian economy and policies. This uncertainty affects the economy by curbing two channels, consumption and investment [3, p. 132].

Objectively, the Ukraine crisis aggravated Russia’s urgency to develop new economic and political space to the east. If only depends on one source and market in terms of economy, investment, and energy, Russia’s economic lifeline would be vulnerable in the face of Western sanctions. This situation will prompt Russia to accelerate its turn to the East and seek cooperation with Asian countries in order to enhance its international status and offset losses caused by Western sanctions [2, p. 9]. The rapid progress of cooperation between Russia and the Asia-Pacific countries is embodied by the fields of military industry, energy, anti-terrorism and so on.

## **2. POLICY TREND OF RUSSIA’S ASIA-PACIFIC STRATEGY**

Cooperation with neighboring countries in Asia is both a major way to attract investment and a major solution to the economic development and social problems in Siberia and the Far East. Therefore, accelerating the development of Siberia and the Far East in eastern Russia is of great significance to Russia in reversing the economic

downturn, realizing economic modernization, developing the innovative economy, integrating into the Asia-Pacific economic space, and consolidating its position in the world economy. In the context of economic globalization and the increasing ascension of the Asian-Pacific region, the success of developing the eastern part depends to a large extent on the progress of Russia's regional economic cooperation and accession to integrate into Asia [1, p. 25].

### **2.1. Actively participate in related mechanisms and strive to join the process of regional economic integration**

Russia joined the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation as a sovereign state in 1998. The Eurasian Economic Union led by Russia signed a free trade agreement with Vietnam on May 29<sup>th</sup> 2015. This is not only the first free trade agreement of the EEU but also the first one signed by Russia and APEC memberships since Russia's participation, which marks the trend that Russia and the Asian-Pacific regions will further deepen economic integration and they are expected to start the integration process mainly aimed at establishing FTA [4].

Under the framework of APEC, Russia regards ASEAN as the fulcrum of its Eurasian geopolitical strategy. The need of Russia's desire to reshape the new pattern of the Asia-Pacific political and economic structure and to boost the Russian Far East economy has accelerated its cooperation process with ASEAN countries. From May 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the third Russia-ASEAN summit was held in Sochi, after which both sides issued the "Sochi Declaration-the Road to Mutually Beneficial Strategic Partnership" and the "Comprehensive Action Plan of Development and Cooperation between Russia and ASEAN from 2016 to 2020". ASEAN is not only an important export market of energy and military products to Russia, but also an important partner in anti-terrorism, anti-piracy and fighting organized transnational crimes, etc. With the further deepening of the relations between Russia and ASEAN, the bilateral military security cooperation will enter a new phase.

### **2.2. Establish an "advanced socio-economic development zone" to achieve a combination of development and opening up in the Far East**

Building an advanced development zone is another major investment project in the Far East following

related projects of the 2012 APEC summit in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It could be gotten firstly in Putin's State of the Union addressed on December, 12<sup>th</sup> 2013. The Russian government has successively selected 14 advanced development zones in the Far East and provided best terms of tax breaks, land, and infrastructure construction, etc.[5] Encouraged by the policies, a number of large projects have landed in the Far East, including the Amur gas processing plant, which is the largest one in Russia. It is reported that the Russian government also plans to extend tax concessions and insurance concessions for the enterprises meeting related conditions and to promote the construction of related projects.

In order to expand the opening up of the Far East and attract foreign capital inflows, Russian President Putin approved the "Eastern Economic Forum" held annually from 2015 in Vladivostok, the Far East capital. The first forum was attended by over 2000 participants from 25 participating countries, including Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and India. Its main content is to introduce the new economic policies of Russia's the Far East and to discuss the possibility of investment and the specific projects to be implemented in this natural resource-rich area. Over 80 agreements and memoranda were signed during the Forum. Compared with the previous session, the number of participants in the second forum in 2016 increased by more than 1,500 participants from 56 countries and signed 216 investment agreements totaling more than 180 billion rubles. Additionally, at the 3rd Eastern Economic Forum held from September 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, leaders of many countries like the ROK, Japan and Mongolia gathered, and DPRK Foreign Minister Kim Young-cai also led the delegation. The Russian leader and relevant countries conducted bilateral meetings on issues concerning the economy and the peninsula situation, and Russia's regional influence was greatly demonstrated.

Yury Trutnev, former Russian Deputy Prime Minister and President's Plenipotentiary at the Far Eastern Federal District, said at the 2017 forum that since the implementation of new economic development policy in the Russian Far East almost the three years, there are 51 new businesses have been put into operation and 837 investment projects have been or is being implemented, with a total investment of 3.2 trillion rubles (about 55.6 billion US dollars).

### 2.3. Propose the concept of “Greater Eurasian Partnership” and actively respond to the real challenges

Compared with the five editions of the Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy Proposal respectively in 1993, 2000, 2008, 2013 and 2016, Russia has always regarded itself as an important power that cannot be ignored in contemporary international relations. 46% of Russians think, after the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, the world should more perfectly respect Russia’s great-power status. The use of the phrase “Russia-Great Power” has risen sharply among all federally-administered television, radio, magazines, and newspapers in Russia [6].

The Greater Eurasian Partnership (<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52178>) is a new method against the deteriorating relationships between Russia and the West. It not only takes short-term consideration of the pressure from the West but also takes strategic consideration of building a new international and regional order based on this platform. The setback of Russia’s “Greater Europe” conception and the establishment of Eurasianism are indeed the ideological foundation, while the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union is its material foundation [7].

Greater Eurasian Partnership has the characteristics of “double-track diplomacy”. The historical context from “Greater Europe” to “Greater Eurasia” shows that “the Greater Eurasian Partnership” actually reflects the changes of Russia’s strategic positioning in the international configuration. It essentially is a continuation and the embodiment of Russia’s Eurasian strategic concept and it is not only the latest interpretation of Russia’s international positioning and identity, but also a positive response to the current situation and challenges which Russia faces. Besides, it aims at economic development, national security, diplomatic breakthroughs and getting out of the crisis [8, p. 5].

### 2.4. Adopt two measures, “cooperation” and “balance”, to realize diplomatic diversification in Russia-Eurasian region

The new version of the “Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy Conception” views China as Russia’s most important partner in Asian-Pacific area even in the world. The official Chinese and Russian judgments on their relations also tend to be consistent and it means “At present, the Sino-

Russian comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation is the highest point in the history of their relations. As long as the United States keeps its policy of containing China and Russia, the development of Sino-Russian relations will be stable and credible.”

China is Russia’s partner and bridge to the Asian-Pacific region. Through its strategic cooperation with China, Russia can play its due role relatively smoothly in the Asian-Pacific region and realize its own national interests. Actively enhancing relations with China is an important part of Russia’s Asia-Pacific strategy. Russia hopes to work closely with China not only to develop the eastern area but also to build a framework for security and cooperation in the Asian-Pacific region [9]. On June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016, China and Russia issued the Joint Statement: “Establish a Eurasian comprehensive partnership based on openness, transparency, and consideration of each other’s interests, including possible absorption of the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and member countries of ASEAN” ([http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/oz\\_678770/1206\\_679110/1207\\_679122/t1375315.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679110/1207_679122/t1375315.shtml)). The combination of OBOD and EEU is undoubtedly the new achievement of their relationship development and the crystallization of stabilizing the common prosperities. This indicates that there would be a new development vision for the process of economic integration in the Eurasian region, and it also serves as an opportunity for China and Russia to realize economic interactions and mutual-beneficial cooperation in the Eurasian area [1, p. 29].

In this context, Russia eased the restrictions on arms export to China. The two sides reached an agreement, and China will become the first foreign buyer of Russia’s most advanced S-400 air-defense missile system and Su-35 fighters. In bilateral trade and economic cooperation, the Sino-Russian trade volume and the cooperation scope have both increased and expanded significantly. In 2014, Gazprom and CNPC signed a \$ 400 billion natural gas contract. China has become the largest export market for Russia’s food.

It is noteworthy that Russia’s diplomatic policy towards China has two implications (cooperation and balance). The development of Russia’s relations with other Asian powers can strike a balance with China and diversify Russia’s foreign relations in Asia, so that bring its own political and

economic benefits to the greatest extent. So it is a rational policy option for a country [2, p. 15–16].

After Ukrainian crisis, Russia authorized India to manufacture advanced equipment such as Su-30MKI fighters and T-90 main battle tanks, and jointly developed “BrahMos” supersonic cruise missiles and fifth-generation fighters with India. In recent years, Russia and Vietnam have signed military technology cooperation agreements almost every visit. 97.6% armaments in Vietnam are imported from Russia between 2012 and 2015. Russia has provided or will soon provide Vietnam with advanced equipment, like six Kilo-class submarines, six Cheetah-class frigates, six Poison Spider-class missile boats, six Firefly-class fast patrol boats, 32 Su-30 fighters and “edge fort” missile system, which are almost a complete set of air and sea armed system [10]. Russia is the largest arms supplier to Indonesia, and one-third of the military equipment in Indonesia is provided by Russia. Russia and the DPRK have been actively interacting with each other. With the increasing contacts, North Korea is one of the 12 countries that recognize Russia’s reunion with of Crimea and call Russia a partner of strategic interests. Galushka, the Ministry of Russian Far East Development Department, announced in April 2015, that Russian-North Korean trade volume would increase from 100 million dollars in 2013 to one billion dollars in 2020. In May 2015, Russia decided to provide North Korea with concessional grain loans and promised to supply 50,000 tons of wheat to North Korea each year in the next three years. North Korea only needs to pay off its loans before 2032 [11].

### **3. THE PROSPECTS OF RUSSIA’S ASIA-PACIFIC STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

Putin, who is committed to economic development and political stability, speeds up the layout in the Asian-Pacific region, because of diplomatic isolation and multiple rounds of sanctions implemented by America and other western countries. The Asian-Pacific region for Russia is not only a place to realize diplomatic breakthroughs but also to obtain investment and get rid of the crisis. It is a controversial issue that whether the Russian foreign strategy, “Turn to the East”, is a passive act or an active behavior. In reality, Russia integrating into Asian-Pacific area faces many problems and tests.

#### **3.1. The “Other” identity in Asia-Pacific Space hinders Russia’s internalization of Asian identity**

From the identity point of view, although Russian participates in Asian affairs, it has not tried to acknowledge its identity. In Russian intellectual history, whether political elites or intellectuals, learning from Europe and solving its own problems have become the deep-rooted ideology of Russia. All popular social thoughts in Russian society, whether “Slavicism” or “Eurasianism”, stem from European civilizations. The difference between them is only the acceptance of European experience and the different degree of preservation of Russian traditional culture [12].

From the perspective of the adjustment laws of Russian foreign policy after the Cold War, Russia uses the Eastern diplomacy to balance the Western diplomacy, always concentrating on the Occident, and there have never been any signs of using the Western diplomacy to balance the Eastern diplomacy. Obviously, whether choosing the Occident or the Orient in the foreign strategy, Russia has not changed its original sense of self-identification. The aim of Russia to propose “Greater Eurasian Relationship” at the point of serious vicious relations with the West is solving problems with western countries, rather turning to the east fundamentally.

From an economic point of view, Russia has never been the dominant force in economic activities in the Asian-Pacific region for more than 100 years. In 2014, the EU and the Asia Pacific region accounted separately for 48.1% and 26.9% of the Russian total foreign trade. China accounted for 11.3% of Russian foreign trade, China, Japan and South Korea together made up 18.7%, ASEAN countries accounted for about 3%, and India’s proportion is 1.2% (<http://www.customs.ru>). In 2015, even if the trade between Russia and the EU decreased nearly 40%, severely affected by the sanctions and the drop in international energy prices, the trade value still reached 235.7 billion U.S. dollars, accounting for 44.8% of the Russian total foreign trade, which is nearly 4 times the size of Sino-Russian trade in the same period. It can be seen that there is a great gap between Asia and Europe, and it is extremely difficult to catch up, let alone surpass Europe. Even though Sino-Russian oil and gas pipelines have been fully connected to reach annual throughput of 68 billion cubic meters, still fails to equal to 146.6 billion

cubic meters to Europe in 2014. It is not enough for China to replace Europe's important position in Russia's energy market [2, p. 12].

### **3.2. The current economic situation of Russia and the poor investment climate in the Far East affect the implementation of its Asia-Pacific strategy**

The realization of any grand design requires the supporting economic strength. An official report released by the Russian Ministry of Finance shows that Russia needs four years to survive the economic recession. GDP declined by 0.8% in 2016 and Russia's economy would not be restored to the level of 2014 until 2020 (<http://www.oilru.com/news/512874>).

The role of boosting investment in boosting economic growth has reached a consensus in Russia and has become the long-term goal of economic policy. "The current investment should become the engine of economic growth, which is more important than consumption and exports. If we want to realize steady growth, we need to substantially increase the proportion of investment in GDP, at least from the current 20% to 24%" — said D. Medvedev [3, p. 144].

At present, the Far East makes up a relatively low proportion of the foreign investment in Russia and the proportion of direct investment is lower. The Russian Far East attracts only 2.5% of the total foreign investment in Russia and 10% of the total investment in this region. The foreign trade cooperation between the Far East and the Asia-Pacific countries has not yet been transformed into investment cooperation [13]. The harsh natural environment, high-security risks, the unsound management system, inefficiency of the bureaucracy, lack of labor resources and outdated infrastructures in the Far East are the direct barriers for the entry of foreign capital.

### **3.3. Complicated interests in the Asian-Pacific region and great-power games increase the complexity of Russia's integration into Asian-Pacific space**

Russia's "Turn to the East" will not be able to avoid the controversy among Asian-Pacific countries and the original big-power games in this region. First of all, the Japanese-Russian bilateral relationship is not effective because of their territorial disputes. And Russia's relations with ASEAN countries are constrained by the South China Sea

issue and the relations between region's states and the United States. Compared with investments from Korea, Taiwan, Chinese Mainland and America, Russia's investment in Vietnam is not satisfactory. In addition, with the U.S. intervening in the South China Sea issue in recent years, Russia continuously strengthen its relations with Vietnam, and their trade and military cooperation tend to be complicated because of China's sensitivity to this issue. Furthermore, Russia also needs to consider that Vietnam attaches equal importance to maintaining close relations with the United States. Therefore, Russia has tried to use its relations with South China Sea countries like Vietnam to break its own international disadvantages and the result is bound to be affected by all the above factors.

Russian academia has shown a cautious attitude towards the prospect of "Turn to the East" strategy. Andrey Vinogradov, director of the Political Research and Prediction Center at the Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, believes that the complete Russian "Turn to the East" strategy has not yet been formed at present. In particular, the development problems of the Far East and the national security policy have not yet been perfected. Gennady Fulin, the deputy director of World Economy and International Relations Institute at the Academy of Sciences, said that Russia just has positive relations with eastern neighbors, rather fully implementing "Turn to the East" (<http://www.mk.ru/politics/2016/12/01/razvorot-rossii-na-vostok-ekspert-y-prokommentirovali-poslanie-putina.html>).

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Russia has never been a country isolated from the world. In the modern world system, however, Russia has always been struggling between center and periphery and choosing between openness and isolation. He tries to enter the center from the periphery but often returns [14]. Both the concept of Russian "Greater Eurasian partnership" and the active expansion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Asian-Pacific countries reflect the concern of the Russian government and intellectual elites about their current edge position in the Asian-Pacific region. In recent years, the Russian government shows positive attitudes, different from the past, towards the Asian-Pacific region, indicating its urgency to include and participate in the process of Asia-

Pacific political and economic integration and avoid being marginalized.

Putin, as usual, harshly criticized the occidental policies during the fourteenth “Valdai” International Discussion Club annual meeting from October 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>. In the foreseeable future, the United States will still not view Russia as an equal partner, but a heterogeneous country. According to the American logic, it can only be contained and squeezed if it does not accept the “transformation” of the West. In the context of the unalleviated Russian-Western relationship, “Turn to the East” is the most realistic means for Russia to get out of the current crisis.

It is worth noting that Russia’s “Turn to the East” is a shift in diplomacy and economy, not a civilization shift. The goal of this policy is not to leave Europe, but to improve Asia’s position while continuing to develop its relations with Europe. Turning to the east is a domestic need for economic development of Russia, reflecting the urgency and necessity of expanding economic cooperation with Asian countries and developing Siberia and the Far East. “Turn to the East”,

propelled by the Ukrainian crisis, provides more possibilities and impetus for the Sino-Russian cooperation, but it is not completely turning to China [8, p. 16].

To a certain extent, Russia’s “Greater Eurasian Partnership” strikes China’s idea of dominating Eurasia. It wants to incorporate China into the co-governable regional framework and to combine various Eurasian integration mechanisms together [7, p. 83].

Although Russia has become more active in the Asian-Pacific region, Russian diplomacy still emphasizes on solving the Ukraine crisis and handling the relations with western countries. Russia’s proximity to Asian-Pacific countries stems from the goal of creating a balanced diplomatic pluralism and the oath that Russia would get more additional values from the strategy shifting eastward. Nevertheless, the military cooperation between Russia and the countries which have territorial disputes with China and the economic cooperation in disputed areas would naturally have a negative impact on Sino-Russian relations [2, p. 15–16].

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