

# Russia's breakthrough into the Asia-Pacific: China's role

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## Abstract

Russia's place in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) is undefined, hovering between Moscow's grandiose visions of its geopolitical role in balance of power strategies, and Russia's near invisibility in the region. Russia's integration into the Asia-Pacific has been dependent on China to give Russia a legitimate political and military presence in the region. Moscow blames mistakes it has made in Asia Pacific integration, 1992–2005, on this China dependence, and expects that post-2006 Russian integration will be different as Moscow diversifies its relations in the region, culminating in Russia hosting the APEC 2012 summit.

There is a human security deficit for the people of the Russian Far East, which Russians believe will be solved by better integration into the APR. This article examines Russian preparations to host APEC 2012, local-level Sino-Russian economic relations, and Russian ambivalence regarding dependence/interdependence with its Chinese neighbor.

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## 1 Introduction

As part of a resurgent Russian nation, Vladimir Putin, as President and then Prime Minister, has been planning for an expanded role for Russia in the Asia-Pacific since at least 2005 (Ito, 2006; Kimura, 2007; Rozman, 2008). These plans are barely noticed by the region because Russia's place in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) is still undefined, hovering between grandiose visions of its geopolitical role in balance of power strategies, and Russia's near invisibility in the region. For the most part, Russia has barely begun the process of socialization into the 'ASEAN Way' (ASEAN—Association of Southeast Asian Nations), which has become the norm of Asian multilateralism, including APEC, with a greater emphasis on human security issues rather than traditional national security concerns.<sup>1</sup>

This Russian invisibility has been the basis for Chinese claims since the 1990s that China is Russia's 'gateway to the Asia-Pacific', implying that Russia needed China to have a legitimate political and military presence in the Asia-Pacific. Moscow seeks to broaden its Asian relations beyond China, while simultaneously using the Sino-Russian strategic partnership in the region to better establish its presence.

The thesis of this article is that there is a human security deficit for the people of the Russian Far East (RFE), which Russians attribute to economic dependence on China, and which they believe will be solved by integration into the APR. Russian dependence on China is blamed for Russia's minimal integration into the Asia Pacific during 1992–2005, with the expectation that post-2006 Russian integration will be different, culminating in Russia hosting the APEC 2012 summit. At the same time, there is a Beijing-initiated strategy to economically integrate the RFE with the Chinese Northeast in a co-development strategy that would create a 'natural economic territory' (NET) in the Asia-Pacific. This article examines Russian preparations to host APEC 2012, local-level Sino-Russian economic relations, and Russian ambivalence regarding dependence/interdependence with its Chinese neighbor.

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1 The ASEAN Way is a code of conduct that includes seeking consensus, consultation, non-intervention, non-use of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, and abiding by the UN Charter. Human security was added after the 1997 East Asian financial crisis, promoted by ASEAN-affiliated Track II NGOs. The ASEAN Regional Forum is focused on non-traditional security issues.

## 2 Historical origins of dependence on China

Mikhail Gorbachev's 1986 speech in Vladivostok is considered to mark a turning point for the Soviet Union's relations with Asia. Many books were written on the implications of that speech for the Soviet Union as an Asia-Pacific power; yet, with the collapse of the USSR, the focus for the successor Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, was on a much more scaled-down strategy for Russia in the Asia-Pacific. Yeltsin signed an agreement in Beijing, December 1992, pledging Russian participation in the Beijing-initiated Tumen River Development Programme, which would have created a pathway to the Asia-Pacific economy for China's Northeast and greater economic integration between China's Heilongjiang Province and Russia's Primorski Krai (Primorye). Local Primorye opposition would undermine the Tumen project, although it continues to the present without realizing its full potential.

The larger Russian goal was membership in APEC, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the primary multilateral regime in the Asia-Pacific. In January 1994, Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev visited Beijing to request Chinese assistance in Russian political integration into the Asia-Pacific. This was followed in April 1994 by hearings in the Russian Federation Council and State Duma, where it was reiterated that China should play a major role in integrating Russia into the Asia-Pacific. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin led a parliamentary delegation to Beijing the following month, stressing the importance of Sino-Russian relations in the Asia-Pacific. Beijing waited until September 1994, during Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to Moscow, where he stated China supported Russia's active participation in Asia-Pacific security and economic cooperation and he agreed to Sino-Russian mutual assistance in Asia-Pacific integration. This would be formalized in a joint communiqué in June 1995, which promised Chinese support for Russian membership in APEC. The following month, Foreign Minister Kozyrev explained to a gathering of Russian diplomats posted in the APR the importance of China in Russia's application to APEC. He instructed these diplomats to cultivate relations in the APR that would further the RFE's security and economic reform (Christoffersen, 1996).

During the 1990s, Russian President Boris Yeltsin engaged in bargaining with Washington, Tokyo, and Beijing in a search for what Russia's position in the Asia-Pacific would be. Because Primorski Krai and the

city of Vladivostok are Russia's window on the Asia-Pacific, Yeltsin also bargained with Primorye regarding the degree of autonomy the province would have to engage in foreign economic activity. The Greater Vladivostok Project (*Bolshoi Vladivostok*) was Primorye's effort, with help from Japan, for greater autonomy from Moscow, developed as an alternative to the Tumen River Development Programme, supported by Russia and China (Christoffersen and Troyakova, 1993; Christoffersen, 1994/95; Wishnick, 2002). Putin and current Russian President Dmitry Medvedev continue to bargain with Beijing for a position in the Asia-Pacific and simultaneously bargain with Primorye on the nature of Russian integration into the region, i.e. the degree of Chinese-dependent integration into the Asia-Pacific.

During the 1990s, Beijing put much less significance on Sino-Russian relations in the Asia-Pacific because it was more focused on relations with the United States, Japan, South Korea, and the ASEAN. Developing relations with these countries would further integrate China into the APR, and increasingly expand China's role in regional organizations, to the extent that some scholars believe the East Asian order is returning to a Sino-centric order (Kang, 2007).

Russian dependence on China was explicit in an article by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who referred to Russia, China, and India as the 'three whales of the Asia-Pacific', a reference to Russian expectations that the three countries are able to form a cohesive Eurasian bloc within the Asia-Pacific (Lavrov, 2005). The only viable Eurasian bloc is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Central Asia. Sino-Russian intentions to link the SCO to APEC and ASEAN have a long lineage, discussed in November 2005 between Foreign Minister Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing.

Regional Asia-Pacific organizations had not given much attention to the SCO, but in 2005 ASEAN signed a memorandum of understanding between the ASEAN Secretariat and the SCO Secretariat, which established official relations. Lavrov also acknowledged the importance of Asian multilateral organizations as the 'vector' of Russia's integration into the Asia-Pacific, but the concept of a Eurasian bloc is at the core of his analysis.

There is a large gap between Moscow's expectations for Russia's role in the APR and how the region perceives Russia, revealed at the East Asia Summit (EAS), December 2005. Vladimir Putin had hoped for

Russian membership in the regional regime but was given only observer status in the EAS. Russia needed membership in the EAS to broaden the Russian presence in the region away from dependence on China. Alexander Lukin has critiqued the ASEAN view that Russia does not belong in the region, and that Russia has an insufficient economic role in the region to justify membership in EAS. Moscow has continued to express interest in membership but ASEAN passivity and skepticism on the issue leave the question of Russian membership in the EAS in limbo. Lukin suggested a balance of power strategy of aligning Russia with ASEAN to balance China, demonstrating the continued importance of geopolitical strategies in Russian thinking which had not yet absorbed the logic of cooperative security within Asian multilateralism (Lukin, 2009).

An Indonesian foreign ministry analyst claimed that Russia would only matter to the Asia-Pacific if Russian foreign policy priorities were to change. Currently, Moscow places the Asia-Pacific in fifth place after the CIS, the European Union, NATO, and North America. Although the analyst expected Russia to use its energy exports to re-engage the Asia-Pacific, he warned the region on overdependence on Russia given the way in which Moscow had combined military coercion and blackmail with oil and gas business in Europe and Central Asia (Pramono, 2009). The Indonesian analyst acknowledged that Russia hosting APEC 2012 might mark a turning point for Russia's full engagement with the Asia-Pacific.

At the time of the Russian bid for EAS membership, Moscow analysts claimed that Russia had accumulated the necessary prerequisites for a 'breakthrough into the APR'. Debating the impact of China's rapid economic rise on Russia, especially on the RFE, they recognized that the region was threatened, not because of an expansionist plan in Beijing, but rather because of the RFE's economic integration with China while the RFE was underdeveloped and economically weak (Bordachev, 2006).

These analysts attributed increasing dependence on China to the numerous mistakes Moscow had made in APR integration during 1992–2005 and claimed that post-2006 Russian APR integration would be different because Moscow had learned from those mistakes (Simonia, 2006). By mistakes, they meant Moscow's inability to resolve outstanding issues in Russian–Japanese relations, especially the Northern Territories issue, which hindered increasing Japanese investment and trade in

the RFE. This hampered Russian efforts to have a more diverse, less China-dependent relationship with the Asia-Pacific. US and Japanese official circumscription and benign neglect of Russia's role in the region encouraged further Russian dependence on China, although some American analysts have suggested integrating Russia further into Asian multilateral regimes to strengthen its regional role independent of Beijing (Weitz, 2003). Putin explicitly hoped that APEC 2012 would lead to greater economic integration with Japan.

Additional Russian mistakes included a poor investment climate, corruption, bureaucratic ineptitude, and rampant lawlessness in the RFE, which discouraged both Russian and foreign investors.

In August 2006, RFE governors met with Putin's representative, Kamil Iskhaqov, to lobby the center for greater resources for the RFE's social and economic development and to reverse the decline in industrial production. Originally, when Russia joined APEC in 1997, it was for the purpose of RFE development, putting emphasis on APEC's EcoTech agenda, economic and technical development. Since that time, according to Russian analysts, both Moscow and the RFE have been in a learning process, reorganizing themselves and preparing for eventual effective participation in APEC (Shkuropat, 1999). Vladivostok analyst Tamara Troyakova has pointed out that China was too much of an economic rival to assist in RFE integration into the Asia-Pacific and has stressed the difficulties in supporting Dongbei–RFE economic integration because it would also entail cultural and territorial assimilation (Troyakova, 2007b).

Zhang Yunling reflected a Chinese expectation that APEC could solve Sino-Russian integration problems when he argued that economic interdependence with neighboring countries (Russia) and the 'China Threat Theory' were incompatible and could be solved within a regional multilateral regime that could manage economic integration and co-development (Zhang, 2007). Chinese have continued to believe that 'mutual participation in each other's economies' would make Dongbei–RFE a single economic space and would contribute to Dongbei's industrial revitalization. They reasoned that because China was Russia's most important partner in the Asia-Pacific, and Russia had a weak economic position in the Asia-Pacific, the RFE would likely remain an exporter of raw materials rather than machinery and had no other choice but to cooperate with China. They believed that it was the China Threat Theory in the RFE that irrationally blocked its realization (Xu, 2005).

### 3 Definitions of human security

There are many definitions of 'human security' which are useful, and the concept remains highly debated, but for the purposes of this article, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), APEC, Chinese, and Russian perspectives on human security are used. UNDP, in its 1994 Human Development Report, had introduced the concept of human security. At its most basic level, human security seeks to ensure individual security rather than regime security or state security. It is concerned with socio-economic threats to human development, including energy, food, health, and environmental security. UNDP interprets this on an individual country basis in the Human Development Reports it publishes for countries.

UNDP's 1998 *Human Development Report* for Russia had emphasized regional inequalities and poverty in the RFE as a threat to human security. The 2006–07 UNDP Human Development Report on Russia (UNDP, 2007), *Russia's Regions: Goals, Challenges, and Achievements*, identified the RFE as the poorest region in the country with the greatest risk to human security. Poverty and threats to human security in the RFE have contributed to the continuous population decline since 1991. Because of the Russian emphasis on traditional security, it was not until 2006 that Russian President Vladimir Putin brought attention to the socio-economic and political security of the people of the RFE, their human security, and defined it as an issue of national security requiring a policy response by Moscow.

The issue of human security is not new to APEC, which has included a statement on 'enhancing human security' in every *APEC Leaders' Meeting Declaration* since 2003. APEC definitions of human security are focused on transnational threats that are beyond national capacities to manage: terrorism, WMD and pandemics such as SARS, energy and food security, regional emergency preparedness, and disaster response. APEC's underlying assumption is that human security is promoted through reducing border barriers to trade and increasing economic interdependence. The *APEC Fact Sheet on Human Security* emphasizes the economic dimensions of human security and advocates member countries promote a coordinated and integrated response to threats to security. This coordinated response helps to create international public goods from which all member countries would benefit.

An APEC Human Security Seminar, organized by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2005, claimed there was a clear distinction

between the UN concept and the APEC concept of human security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2005). The APEC concept supports activities that complement the economic agenda of APEC and supports APEC's goals and vision, including building human capacity. Compared with UNDP, APEC's concept is more business-oriented and concerned with countering threats to economic and trade liberalization in the region's globalizing economy.

The issue of human security, or human development, for the individuals who reside in the RFE, is an issue of seeking security in one's daily life. The United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index for Primorski Krai (0.736) and Khabarovsk Krai (0.749) is lower than that for Moscow (0.873) and lower than that for the country as a whole (0.781).<sup>2</sup> Human development in Russia reflects large regional inequalities requiring specific socio-economic policies for each region. The RFE has been treated by Moscow, in the past, as a raw materials periphery that has left 30% of the population below the poverty level. A Vladivostok economist argues that a deficit in human security is the source of threat perceptions in the RFE, which center on a mix of internal and external threats – a declining socioeconomic situation, negative demographic trend, and a fear of being excluded from East Asia's economic integration process (Sevast'ianov, 2005, p. 22).

Since the early 1990s, the human security of people in the RFE was viewed by both the region and Moscow as threatened by Chinese migration. Elizabeth Wishnick called this a 'human security dilemma' arguing that Chinese traders from China's Northeast (Dongbei), with inadequate human security in their home provinces, seek remedy across the border in Russia's Primorye, but this in turn threatens the security of RFE residents (Wishnick, 2005). This 'human security dilemma', dealt with at a broader perspective, suggested achieving greater mutual security through collaborative measures.

A Chinese history of the RFE found lawlessness in the region to be the primary factor threatening people's security, leading to a precipitous population decline in the RFE, which was at crisis levels. The study covers the history of what it calls 'Russian Chinese' [俄罗斯华人], which includes a diverse group of Chinese citizens [中国公民], overseas

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2 The HDI is a comparative measure used by the UN to assess well-being. It includes life expectancy, GDP per capita, and literacy rate.

Chinese [华侨], as well as descendants of the Han people [汉族人] who it claimed resided in that region prior to the Russian arrival (Cheng, 2007). Rather than finding Chinese migration to be a threat, the author felt that the Russian Chinese residing there had made numerous contributions to the economic development of the RFE, and thus to overall human security.

Russian concepts of security have, in the past, focused on traditional security concerns – the state defending the nation against external threats and protecting its boundaries from outside intruders. This state-centric security has been especially true in the RFE, where border guards, a division of the KGB (the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti*, now called *Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*, FSB), zealously guard Russian borders, creating a frontier consciousness among Russians residing in the RFE (Stephan, 1998). In contrast, human security promoted by regional organizations entails an acceptance of the processes of globalization. The initial Russian interest in APEC was narrowly focused on economic development of the RFE and has only slowly absorbed the logic of globalization.

In December 2006, Russian President Putin, at a meeting of the Russian Security Council, declared the state of affairs in the RFE to be a national security threat that required a strong planning response, a comprehensive strategic plan. Some Vladivostok analysts at that time suggested what was really needed, instead of another state plan, was the rule of law, an open economy and society, and better coordination between Moscow and the Maritime Krai (Troyakova, 2007a).

When Putin announced the 'Federal Program on Economic and Social Development of the Far East and Zabaikal to 2013', adopted August 2007, it was linked to a new strategy for Russia in the APR and a new immigration policy. The RFE would be modernized for the 2012 APEC meeting that Russia was hosting with Vladivostok the anchor project for the entire region. Each krai and city was asked to prepare a development plan. This was the third development program for the RFE and Zabaikal. The first development program in 1996 had assumed 60 Japan–Russia projects that were not realized because of insufficient financial and institutional support from Moscow. In 2002, the second development program modified the 1996 plan, scaling down funding requirements but implementation mechanisms remained nonfunctional.

From 1992 to the present, the RFE lost 1.7 million people who migrated out in search of a better life, reducing the population to

6.8 million. According to Victor Ishaev, the presidential plenipotentiary envoy in the Far Eastern Federal District of Russia and Governor of Khabarovsk Krai, under this third federal program, the economic development model will focus on strengthening human capital, developing infrastructure, and diversifying away from raw material exports (Ishaev, 2009). The program will attempt to keep the population in the RFE from declining further by increasing their human security, i.e. improving the standard of living, increasing salaries, creating jobs by increasing the processing of raw materials, and reducing the amount of raw materials exported to China.

There seems to be a consensus among Russian analysts that Russia's greatest security issue is a lack of a functional model for East Siberian and RFE regional development. Without such a model, the RFE would be at risk of becoming a 'raw material appendage' for Chinese industrialization. In addition, Russia needed an energy strategy, an immigration policy, a technology innovation strategy, a security doctrine for Northeast Asia, and a China policy that would not make Russia dependent (Trenin, 2006). All of these policies had both domestic and foreign aspects; as stated by President Putin, Russia's comprehensive grand strategy for a role in the Asia-Pacific would need this RFE development plan (Putin, 2006).

However, the Russian consensus fragments on the issue of China's role in Russian human security and globalization. Moscow analysts, B. Kuzyk and M. Titarenko, in *China–Russia 2050: Strategy of Co-development*, offered the thesis that threats to human security on both sides of the border have their origins in globalization and regionalization and the solution is co-development of the RFE and Chinese Northeast (Kuzyk and Titarenko, 2006). In addition, what was needed was a Sino-Russian cross-civilizational dialog that improved mutual perceptions. This was translated into Chinese and published in Beijing (库济克, 季塔连科 2007). Moscow is more inclined to embrace Sino-Russian border interdependence, accepting the Chinese view that it is a pre-condition for a stronger Sino-Russian strategic partnership.

#### 4 Center–local differences over Asia-Pacific integration

There are several development models for the RFE that have been tried since the nineteenth century, most of which depended on economic relations with China and reliance on Chinese migrant labor. According

to Pavel Minakir, the Deputy Director of the Economic Research Institute in Khabarovsk, the preferred scenario for RFE development and integration into the APR, from the local RFE viewpoint, would utilize state resources without dependence on China. Minakir was less supportive of an alternative Moscow strategy of integrating the RFE into the APR through cooperation with China including heavy use of Chinese migrant labor, creating a single economic space between the RFE and China's Northeast (Troekurova, 2005).

Moscow analysts are more concerned with geopolitical relations in the Asia-Pacific. In March 2006, Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy held a conference on 'The Future of Asia and the Policy of Russia' during which analysts differed over the benefits of integration with Asia. Some analysts were concerned that Russia's European orientation might be undermined, leading the country away from modernization, if Russia further integrated with Asia. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov countered that Russia could and should join the Asian integration process only with the concurrent development of the RFE. He further argued that while continuing economic ties with immediate neighbors (China), Russia should participate in a wider Asia-Pacific integration process (Lavrov, 2006).

Analysts in Moscow claimed that the 'China factor' was primary in motivating Russian-renewed interest in East Asia and in formulating a Russian Grand Strategy for linking domestic development with East Asia. They debated whether the main threat from China and East Asia was a demographic or economic invasion in the RFE, or if, in fact, the real threat would be Russian exclusion from Asian regional integration. It was argued that unless Russia became an active participant in East Asia, it risked exclusion from the United States–China–Japan tripartite formation that they assumed would govern the region (Mikheyev, 2007).

At the local grass-roots level, Chinese perceive a growing web of complex interdependence between Heilongjiang and Primorski Krai that they hope will evolve into a 'single economic space' spanning China's Northeast (Dongbei) and Russia's Far East. Previous work that the author has done focused on Heilongjiang's efforts to create a single economic space, a NET, between Heilongjiang and the RFE (Christoffersen, 2002). This NET would give Heilongjiang access to Asia-Pacific markets that are now closed off to it. Yet, questions have persisted on whether a Sino-Russian NET could be successfully nested within the larger Asia-Pacific.

China–RFE economic integration is not balanced. According to Table 1, RFE exports to China in 1996 were almost four times the value of imports from China. By 2007, RFE exports to China were only 78% of imports to China. In 1996, imports from China constituted only 11% of total imports, but grew to 33% of total imports by 2007.

More importantly, it was the structure of this Sino-Russian trade that was leading to dependency because of an increase in exports of Russian raw materials to China, a decline in Chinese imports of Russian manufactured goods, a relatively low level of mutual investment, and minimal joint ventures.

The asymmetric trade relationship, the decrease in Chinese imports of Russian machinery and electronics while increasing raw materials imports to support Chinese industrialization, remained a source of tension. Hu Jintao acknowledged the problem of the trade imbalance during his visit to Moscow to open the ‘Year of China in Russia’. The Russian Federal Customs Service had published statistics in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* just before Hu’s arrival, claiming that in 2006, Russian exports to China fell 10.5%, while imports increased 58.4%.

Another source of tension is the lawlessness that pervades Sino-Russian economic interactions. RFE Customs reported detaining 361,000 units of counterfeit goods during 2006, primarily from China, a substantial increase from the 175,000 units in 2005. A local Primorski Krai politician, Victor Gorchakov, estimated that in 2006 there were 15,000 legal foreign workers in Primorye, of which 6,000 were Chinese, 3,000 North Korean, 1,500–2,000 Vietnamese, and 2,000–3,000 from the CIS countries. He was referring to contract labor. The much larger numbers of Chinese traders in the local markets and the number of Chinese who had overstayed their visas were not known.

## 5 The second coming of ‘Bolshoi Vladivostok’

Vladivostok’s political and economic leaders have always imagined the city would be a vibrant part of the ‘Pacific Century’, while economic interdependence with the neighboring Heilongjiang Province was never a wished-for outcome locally.

In 2006, Primorye Governor Sergey Darkin had a new plan for a ‘Greater Vladivostok’ [*Bolshoi Vladivostok*] integrating Vladivostok with the towns of Artyom and Ussurisk, and Nadezhdinsky and Khasansky

**Table 1** RFE Trade with China 1996–2007, (\$ million)

	1996	1998	2000	2001	2003	2005	2006	2007
Total Exports	3,572.0	2,989.0	3,788.4	5,842.1	4,122.1	6,581.6	9,065.8	13,533.4
Exports to China	744.2	876.7	978.1	1,696.8	1,517.2	2,162.9	2,573.1	1,981.1
Total Imports	1,865.0	1,767.0	934.2	1,216.8	1,764.5	5,813.0	6,983.3	7,747.6
Imports from China	217.2	172.2	141.1	173.4	487.6	1,187.4	1,701.8	2,540.8
Total trade	5,437.0	4,756.0	4,722.6	7,058.9	5,886.6	12,394.6	16,049.1	21,281.0

Source: *ERINA Databooks Russia*, [http://www.erina.or.jp/en/Asia/bes/xls/ErinaDatabookRussia\\_E.xls](http://www.erina.or.jp/en/Asia/bes/xls/ErinaDatabookRussia_E.xls).

counties, into a metropolitan area that covered southern Primorye. *Bolshoi Vladivostok* was linked to hosting the 2012 APEC meeting. Vladivostok newspapers claimed that Darkin presented his plan to Putin during the Hanoi APEC meeting, November 2006, with the idea that Vladivostok could host the 2012 APEC meeting. Vladivostok opened hearings on the city development general plan in February 2007. Meetings were held in all the districts to give citizens an opportunity to voice feedback. By March 2008, the Vladivostok public had approved the city general plan which would develop infrastructure, create an export-oriented industrial zone, and prepare Vladivostok to host APEC 2012.

In keeping with Moscow's new strategy for the Asia-Pacific, Putin announced in January 2007 that the central government pledged to spend \$4 billion on the RFE social and economic development program. Of that amount, \$1 billion would be allocated to Vladivostok for building a resort on Russky Island to host the APEC 2012 summit. Putin established a state commission on the socioeconomic development of Russia's Far East to oversee the disbursement of funds.

By March 2007, allocations had changed. The central government planned to allocate 35 billion rubles (\$1.34 billion) to the RFE, of which 15 billion (\$573 million) was for Vladivostok alone. Infrastructure for the APEC summit in 2012 included building two new bridges – 30 billion rubles (\$1.15 billion), improving the road networks – 20 billion rubles (\$764 million), modernizing the port of Vladivostok – 12 billion rubles (\$458 million), and upgrading the airport – about 10 billion rubles (\$382 million). Decommissioning military facilities on Russky Island would take 4 billion rubles (\$153 million) (Blagov, 2007). Later expectations would shift toward foreign business investment in infrastructure.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade, German Gref, visited Vladivostok to review its plan and its preparations for APEC 2012, a meeting that would help realize Putin's plan to make Russia a more active power in the APR. The Ministry promised that Vladivostok would finally get permission to create a special economic zone using the facilities created for APEC 2012. Vladivostok was initially promised an SEZ in the early 1990s but it was never implemented.

The First Pacific Economic Congress, which met in Vladivostok July 2007, was meant to attract foreign business investment for the Development Plan and APEC 2012 infrastructure. Gazprom presented

on Russian potential oil and gas exports to the APR. Primorye Governor Darkin signed a Primorye–Heilongjiang cooperation agreement with Heilongjiang's Governor. The Second Pacific Economic Congress, held in July 2008 with the motto 'Russia and APR countries – from collaboration to integration', continued the effort to attract FDI for the APEC infrastructure projects. The Third Pacific Economic Congress met in July 2009.

The three Pacific Economic Congresses have created a certain globalization euphoria and expectation that everything that was wrong with Vladivostok and the RFE in the past would be transformed by hosting APEC 2012. Governor Darkin published a book, *Pacific Russia*, discussing his strategies for integration with Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific (Darkin, 2007). The Congresses became dress rehearsals for the APEC meeting, attracting businesspeople from Asian countries, Australia, and the United States. The RFE's oil and gas potential and The Greater Vladivostok project are presented at each Congress. The Strategy of Social-Economic Development of Primorye to 2025, a more long-term and broader strategy contracted out by the federal government, was presented at the Second Pacific Economic Congress and was passed by the Primorye legislative Assembly in October 2008.

Simply hosting an APEC meeting would not transform Russia's relationship with the Asia-Pacific. At the First Pacific Economic Congress, the Executive Director of APEC reminded Russian hosts that Russia would benefit from APEC only if it implemented best-practice policies advocated by APEC in corporate and public sector governance, investment climate, legal infrastructure, and other reforms that would make the Russian economy competitive in the region (Heseltine, 2007). At the Second Congress, the Executive Director of APEC also stressed structural reforms as a prerequisite, predicting that if Russian government and society could meet those challenges, APEC 2012 would transform the RFE's relations with the Asia-Pacific (Capunay, 2008).

The 2009 Executive Director of APEC claimed that Russia was overly reliant on its traditional trade partners in Europe and overly reliant on raw materials export. APEC would help diversify trade partners, providing access to a wider range of markets. He recommended increasing trade with China as well as other APEC economies. APEC's ECOTECH agenda was especially beneficial to help Russia build capacity. He noted that Russia–Japan bilateral trade had increased 39% at the end of 2008

due to Japanese participation in APEC 2012-related infrastructure projects (Tay, 2009). Moscow has also invited Chinese and South Korean companies to bid on APEC projects.

Part of the revitalization of Primorye included a new immigration policy of repatriating ethnic Russians from the former Soviet Union republics, especially from Central Asia. The Primorye government was determined to repopulate the RFE with ethnic Russians to prevent a vacuum that would draw Chinese into it. In 2007, the Krai planned to resettle 300 migrants with family members, about 1,000 people. The actual number would be far less.

The increasing xenophobia in Russia, the movement of 'Russia for Russians', and the number of attacks on foreigners are primarily directed at immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Ethnic hatred toward the Chinese has been caught up in this larger phenomenon. In opinion surveys done over the last few years, the percentage of Russians supporting limitations on immigration has increased. Many wanted the Chinese banned from doing business in Russia (Gudkov, 2006). Greater economic integration was impeded by tense Sino-Russian society-to-society relations.

## 6 Chinese views of Primorye

Russia's perceived dependence on China as a gateway to the Asia-Pacific, in the minds of Chinese analysts, serves to mitigate a re-emergent Russia as a threat to China once again. These analysts have been wary, since the 1990s, of Russian ambitions to reconstitute itself as a major power in East Asia (Xue, 1995).

The ongoing problems on the Sino-Russian border were one factor that encouraged the creation of a five-year project, 2002–07, the Northeast Project [东北边疆历史与现状系列研究工程, shortened to 东北工程, *dongbei gongcheng*] by the Center for Chinese Borderland History and Geography [中国社会科学院中国边疆史地研究中心], under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The Northeast Project is generally associated with the China–South Korean dispute over the origins of Gaogouli/Koguryo, an ancient kingdom that both countries claim.

However, the Northeast Project was also created to study the international relations of China's northeast borderlands during the economic reforms and to examine the Chinese northeast (Dongbei) as an

increasingly important strategic area. According to the head of its leading group, Wang Luolin (王洛林), a vice president of CASS, the project was a defensive response to local Russian scholars and officials in the RFE who promoted the 'China Threat Theory' and distorted Sino-Russian history, negatively impacting the Chinese northeastern borderlands development (Wang, 2003). During the duration of the project, Wang co-authored a book titled *Strategy and Policy of Economic Regeneration in Northeast China*, published in 2005.

The Northeast Project was a Beijing project rather than a local Heilongjiang project, meant to strengthen patriotism and nationalism. The project was eventually challenged by international scholars and reputable Chinese historians, but references to it still exist in the blogosphere and, at one time, on video footage from Youtube.com. The Northeast Project was said to have finished in 2007, although it is still found on the Center for Chinese Borderland History and Geography's website.

## 7 Year of Russia in China

The problem of tense Sino-Russian societal relations at the border level was addressed by Premier Wen Jiabao in November 2005 at the 10th Prime Ministerial Meeting with Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov. Wen had issued a seven-point list for improving Sino-Russian relations in areas that were weak: the trade structure, lack of agreement on the oil pipeline, need for an agreement on investment protection, need for greater cooperation in the neighboring regions (Heilongjiang and Primorski Krai), and a need for better societal relations, which could be achieved through exchanges in education, sports, science, and cultural events. Wen suggested celebrating the Year of China in Russia and the Year of Russia in China. Subsequently, the Sino-Russian 2006 mutual New Year's greetings announced the Year of Russia in China during 2006 and the Year of China in Russia in 2007.

The Year of Russia in China (March 21–November 9, 2006) was meant to build grassroots constituencies in China for Sino-Russian relations. The Chinese Ambassador, Liu Guchang, in Moscow called for Sino-Russian relations being built on a 'new mentality'. At the end of 2006, there was special stress placed on strengthening local and non-governmental relations between the two countries.

Russian President Putin's official visit to Beijing, March 21–22, 2006, was to open the Year of Russia in China and discuss energy cooperation and military ties. The visit was meant to demonstrate the strength of the Sino-Russian partnership, but it revealed Russia's unease with increasing dependence on China, and the partners' diverging concepts of security.

Just before the visit, a Chinese domestic debate over energy strategy erupted once again between the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). NDRC Vice Chairman Zhang Guobao had announced that China was not satisfied with the level of Sino-Russian energy cooperation, especially on pipeline negotiations. According to Zhang, there had been many promises but no real progress. He claimed that Chinese do not know who can make the decisions when one Russian official states that a decision has been made, while another official claims that it has not (Interfax, 2006a). One day before the visit, CNPC's general director, Chen Geng, expressed optimism that he would sign with Transneft for a feasibility study under an official agreement to build an oil pipeline (Interfax, 2006b). During Putin's visit, 22 cooperation agreements were signed, but there was no agreement on an oil pipeline.

Gazprom and CNPC signed a memorandum of understanding to build two gas pipelines from Western and Eastern Siberia to China with a total capacity of 30–40 billion cubic meters per year. CNPC signed an agreement with Rosneft to create two joint ventures: an upstream JV for oil exploration in Russia, and a downstream JV for constructing a petroleum refinery and a network of filling stations in China.

Beijing only signed a protocol with Transneft regarding the principles of financing an oil pipeline to China, which it called a 'summary of negotiations', but it would require another feasibility study. Since there have been many feasibility studies and many ambiguous agreements in the past without concrete results, skeptics questioned the protocol. Chinese had hoped for a concrete agreement.

Putin suggested Sino-Russian bilateral trade widen beyond Russian raw material exports since overdependence on products such as oil could trigger instabilities in bilateral economic relations as raw materials' prices fluctuate. The postponement of a concrete oil agreement is a sign of Russian avoidance of being locked into the Chinese oil market.

Russia was at that time increasingly dependent on arms sales to China to sustain its military–industrial complex, causing the internal balance

between the two countries within the partnership to shift toward China. To counter this trend, Russia maintained ambiguity regarding the direction of oil pipelines which threatened Chinese energy security. If Moscow had simply agreed to a pipeline to Daqing, Russian dependence on the China oil market would have increased. By leaving open the possibility of a second-phase pipeline to Nakhodka with shipments to Japan and the Asia-Pacific market, Moscow retained the upper hand in the bilateral oil partnership.

During Putin's visit, the recurring Chinese theme that China was Russia's gateway to the Asia-Pacific emerged in an article in *People's Daily*, which claimed Beijing would 'support Russia to establish connections with East Asian regional integration network' (Xing, 2006).

During December 2006, at the end of the Year of Russia in China, *People's Daily* had put Evgeniy Nazdratenko, a former governor of Primorye, on the 'global people list of foreigners who hate China', accusing him of promoting the 'yellow-peril theory', inciting fears of Chinese expansion plans into the RFE, instituting discriminatory policies toward Chinese people, and giving orders to expel 'tens of thousands' of Chinese from Primorye (Guo, 2006). This inclusion of Primorye's former governor, five years after he had left office, struck a discordant note in the overall congratulatory atmosphere of concluding the Year of Russia in China.

## 8 Primorye's contributions to the Year of China in Russia

The overall purpose of the Year of China in Russia was to institutionalize Sino-Russian relations beyond the state-to-state level and to deepen relations beyond the personalized political elite level. The goal was to create networks of bilateral ties at all levels of state and society. There were numerous concrete objectives of the 'Year' programs: coordinate local development strategies of Heilongjiang and Primorye, expand mutual investment, set up cultural centers on both sides of the border, cooperate on energy and environmental issues, expedite customs clearances and issuances of visas.

To celebrate the Year of China in Russia, beginning in January 2007, Primorye planned 45 events: trade fairs in Heilongjiang and Jilin, visits by delegations from these neighboring provinces, creative arts groups,

cultural, educational and sports exchanges, upgrading bilateral tourism and industrial cooperation. Primorye's celebrations were not really different from what the Krai would normally do on an annual basis since every year is the Year of China in Primorski Krai.

However, on January 15, 2007, right at the beginning of the Year program, new regulations banning foreign traders were implemented, impacting Chinese traders most severely. These new regulations came at an awkward time. One Moscow TV program, privately owned Ren TV, quipped that the RFE was celebrating 'the Year of China without Chinese', referring to the new regulations banning foreigners from working in Russian markets.

The regulations, implemented in stages, banned foreigners working in markets outside of established shops. On January 15, the law required 40% fewer foreign traders in the markets. Chinese began leaving immediately. By April 1, 2007, foreign traders were completely banned. Before the April deadline, Chinese traders had already sold all their goods, emptied out the markets, and returned to China. Newspaper accounts of what was left of the markets reveal disarray and disruption in peoples' lives (Vlasenko, 2007). The Primorye government held the first meeting of the commission for organizing the work of the markets and inspected 128 markets in the krai. The Federal Migration Service sent police teams to enforce the new regulations. Chinese were banned from trading but could still be janitors or porters.

The exclusion of foreigners from Russia's retail markets, reportedly expelling 1 million traders, 90% of whom were Chinese nationals, stunned the Chinese government as it prepared for the Year of China in Russia, and it was considered by Chinese a modern day 'exclusion act', a practice of the nineteenth century resurrected in the twenty-first century (Yu, 2007). Chinese felt it would not improve relations at the societal level or build constituencies in either country. *China Daily*, *People's Daily*, and *Beijing Review* all voiced concern over Chinese victims of Russian rules, reporting that Chinese embassies sought contact with Russian officials to work out alternatives.

Only Russians can now sell in these markets. Reportedly in the country's 5,200 markets, only 68% of the market stalls were occupied, resulting in shortages of fruits and vegetables, and price increases throughout Russia.

Banishment of Chinese traders from the RFE changed the original understandings of the single economic space of Dongbei–RFE.

Economic cooperation in the future would have to depend more on the trade zones and industrial parks rather than the shuttle traders. Trade zones give Primorye some control over Chinese migration by confining Chinese traders to the zones, while the zones give Heilongjiang access to Russian markets.

## 9 Impact of the global economic crisis

The Russian National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation (RNCPEC) 2007 work report, without mentioning the roundup of Chinese traders, reported on the eighth and ninth meetings of Russian–Chinese Coordination Council on Interregional and Cross-border Trade and Economic Cooperation, which discussed cross-border trade between the Chinese Northeast and RFE. These meetings include a diverse number of participants including representatives from border provinces, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Regional Development of Russia, Chinese consular officials from Moscow and Vladivostok, Chinese Ministry of Commerce, Interregional Association ‘Siberian Accord’, and the Interregional Association ‘Far East and Zabaikalie’. The RNCPEC remained optimistic on cooperation, including among its work program for 2008 a project on ‘Russian Far East: “The Second Industrialization” and Northeast China: resources and infrastructure provision, mutual benefits, and contradictions’.

The RNCPEC is attempting to widen the areas involved in regional cooperation beyond the RFE to include more Siberian regions, helping them find partnerships in Asia-Pacific countries. For example, Siberian companies and government representatives participate in the annual Harbin International Fair for Trade and Economic Cooperation.

By 2008, the discourse on relaxing the border was the object of conferences with an emphasis on the processes of globalization. In November 2008, a teleconference among Chinese and Russian scholars called on both governments to loosen immigration and trade policies along the border to stimulate economic growth, especially in the RFE, where localities were hit hard by the global recession. The conference claimed that, in the past, the Chinese side had been the more active promoter of border trade but now Russians had begun to realize that the real problem was Moscow’s neglect of the RFE. Conference participants agreed that the Russian central government ought to be providing better development

policies in the RFE rather than allowing local Russian fear of China to block greater joint economic development (*China Daily*, 2008).

Local discussion of interregional cooperation had adopted some of the language of Moscow analysts, referring to a 'new ethno-cultural milieu' along the Sino-Russian border, where 'inter-civilizational rather than intergovernmental' relations evolve between millions of people and reflect complex regional interactions. At the same time, all the problems of globalization and transnational movement of illegal drugs, illegal migrants, smuggled goods, and environmental pollution move across the border (Larin, 2008, pp. 5–6). The local Russian complaint was that Moscow does not understand, or it does not want to understand, regional needs to solve cross-border problems. The 25 border crossings on the Russian side lack infrastructure and personnel, while the Chinese side is fully modernized. This was a local Russian complaint 17 years ago, which continues to the present. During the 1990s, the Russian mafia privatized the control of some of the border ports.

The Pogranichny–Suifenhe Trade and Industrial Complex, opened in August 2006, had been important as a symbol of local Chinese–Russian economic integration but had not been built as planned. Each side brought different expectations and different resources to the complex. The Chinese had expected the trade and industrial complex would be the kernel of an expanding NET, while the Russians saw the complex as a way to contain Chinese shuttle trade and prevent Chinese markets from expanding in RFE cities.

By 2008, the Chinese side of the trade zone had a luxury hotel, the Shimao Holiday Inn, and a large shopping mall, while the Russian side had only a hostel and church. The Shimao group had invested 1 billion RMB in the Chinese side. However, there continued to be little interest shown by Moscow or Beijing major corporations in investing locally despite promises made at the Sino–Russian Trade Forum in 2004, which local Russians still remembered four years later.

Due to the global financial crisis, it was reported in January 2009 that Russian imports from China dropped 51% over the previous year and exports dropped 27%, the first time in a decade that trade had declined. The Pogranichny-Suifenhe trade complex was empty.

Local Russians worried that the RFE development plan that Putin had first mentioned in December 2006 would be discarded, although funds were invested in Vladivostok in preparation for APEC 2012, and

the Far Eastern development commission met in February 2009, discussing cooperation with China in the RFE's plan. The Russian president's plenipotentiary in the Far Eastern Federal District, Oleg Safonov, claimed that Russian government plans were building relations between the RFE and Chinese Northeast, planning on joint ventures, agricultural cooperation, timber processing, and tourism, although he complained that 'Chinese investors account for only 0.5 percent (21.7 million dollars) of all foreign investments', and of that, 30% went to Primorye and 21% to the Amur Region (*Vladivostok Times*, 2009).

In 2008, Chinese anxieties about the substance of the strategic partnership led to President Hu Jintao presenting a four-point proposal for better relations to President Medvedev during his May 2008 visit to Beijing. Hu's proposals stressed institutionalizing (制度化) Sino-Russian interactions at all levels, including economic development between China's Dongbei and the RFE. Hu also suggested institutionalizing what had been initiated by the Year of Russia and the Year of China programs. Hu hoped to stabilize Sino-Russian energy relations by the creation of a bilateral Sino-Russian energy negotiating mechanism, an effort to institutionalize an energy dialogue.

Russia seemed to respond in July 2008, when Russia's New Foreign Policy Concept was approved by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. He claimed that Moscow was eager to boost ties with the APR, with special emphasis on China. These ties included large-scale economic cooperation between Russia's Far East and China's Northeast.

Beijing, frustrated over years of negotiating oil prices, and contending with unpredictable Russian energy policymaking and abrupt maneuvers by Transneft, Gazprom, and Rosneft, indicated that it wanted a more active Russian government role in oil negotiations. CNPC on September 9, 2008, proposed speeding up the natural gas commercial talks and signing an intergovernmental agreement on the East Siberian-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline. At the government level of negotiations, Beijing could make progress in energy cooperation, a necessary condition for progress in the strategic partnership, and could leverage access to China's domestic market for discounted oil and gas prices from Moscow.

In October 2008, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, at the Third High-Level China–Russia Economic Forum, offered several proposals including intensifying long-term strategic cooperation in energy and resources, and developing policy and planning coordination in the

rejuvenation of the old industrial bases in China's Northeast and the RFE (Wen, 2008).

On October 27, 2008, during the 12th meeting of the Sino-Russian Prime Ministers, which coincided with a bilateral energy negotiators meeting, it was decided to create a Sino-Russian Energy Negotiation Mechanism at the Vice Premier level. The October negotiations failed to agree on state guarantees and interest rates. Russians wanted a fixed interest rate of 7%, while Chinese wanted a floating interest rate based on the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR). Zhang Guobao, head of China's State Energy Bureau, reiterated what he had said two years before, that Sino-Russian energy cooperation needed real results in pipelines, nuclear, downstream and upstream, after so many years of negotiations. A Russian analyst close to Rosneft reportedly said that although there was no final agreement, the negotiators still had the whole night ahead to find an agreement.

Wen Jiabao claimed that the two sides had made a breakthrough in energy relations. In the same interview, Wen made it clear that streamlining trade rules between the RFE and Chinese Northeast and interregional cooperation on coordinated development of the RFE and Dongbei were also necessary components of the overall relationship, needing to improve if the strategic partnership was to progress (*Interfax*, 2008).

In November 2008, during a meeting between Alex Safonov, the Russian president's representative in the Far East, and Chinese vice premier Li Keqiang, both sides called for even greater Chinese Northeast and RFE integration, promoting the idea of cross-border infrastructure construction of roads, bridges, and ports.

The October 2008 decision was only the first of several rounds of oil negotiations within the energy negotiation mechanism that culminated in February 2009 in a \$25 billion loan for oil intergovernmental agreement. China Development Bank would loan Rosneft \$15 billion and Transneft \$10 billion at a fixed rate of 6%/year in exchange for 15 MMT/year of crude oil exported to China from 2011 to 2030, to pay back the loan. The price of the oil would be determined by the floating market price of oil in Primorye at the terminus of the ESPO. The agreement also included the pipeline from Skovorodino to the city of Mohe on the Chinese border (70 km), which Transneft would build. China would build the Chinese segment from Mohe, on the Sino-Russian border, to

Daqing (960 km), which Chinese claim will be completed by October 2010.

The Russian government only approved the oil pipeline agreement on April 13, 2009. On April 22, at the fourth meeting of the energy negotiation mechanism, China and Russia signed an intergovernmental agreement which finally agreed on the terms of the \$25 billion loan. Transneft would begin constructing the 67-km Skovorodino–Mohe pipeline as soon as it received the Chinese loan in April 2009. This pipeline, with a 15 MMT/year capacity and passing under the Amur River (Heilongjiang), must be completed by the end of 2010, according to the agreement.

Although the global economic crisis hurt Russian export revenues, requiring a 15% reduction in federal financing, Governor Darkin extracted promises from Putin that financing would not be completely cut for the Greater Vladivostok project, the development of the Far East/Zabaikal program, and APEC 2012. The *Vladivostok Times* chronicled the 2008 month-by-month progress of various construction projects and APEC 2012 meetings to reassure readers that the city was preparing. The paper also periodically published reassurances by Putin, during his visits to assess the city's progress, that Vladivostok would host APEC 2012.

## Conclusion

Russia is preparing to have a larger presence in the Asia-Pacific, partially facilitated by its strategic partnership with China, and partially because of its need to expand beyond that partnership. For Moscow analysts, Russian integration into the Asia-Pacific and formation of a NET through Dongbei–RFE integration are abstract concepts discussed in political circles. For local Russians in Primorski Krai, there is a more concrete reality entailing xenophobic fears of Chinese migration and economic dependence on China.

At the same time, there is a globalization euphoria about finally entering the 'Pacific Century' decades after it was first proposed, culminating in Vladivostok hosting APEC 2012. Preparations for the APEC meeting have motivated Moscow to provide much needed investment in infrastructure. The transformation of local Russian consciousness, learning the 'ASEAN Way', will take much longer and may begin only after the APEC 2012 meeting.

Beijing has made progress in the Sino-Russian strategic partnership contingent on Moscow guaranteeing better Dongbei–RFE economic and social relations, and greater economic integration leading to a NET. Progress in the partnership was also contingent on finalizing the ESPO oil pipeline deal. Domestically, Moscow faced local demands from the RFE: without significant development assistance and economic reform in the RFE that would promote the human security of RFE residents, there could be no societal support at the local level for the Sino-Russian strategic partnership. These conditions placed on Moscow by Beijing and by the RFE constrained Moscow’s strategies for integration into the Asia-Pacific.

To gain RFE compliance to the Sino-Russian strategic partnership, Moscow provided several incentives to the region:

- the new economic and social development plan for the RFE, a plan that would provide sufficient investment from the center;
- a wholesale cleanup of corrupt local Russian officials;
- banishment of thousands of Chinese traders in the markets;
- incentives that encouraged ethnic Russian migration into Primorye;
- Economic cooperation that would depend more on the trade zones and industrial parks rather than Chinese shuttle traders.

All of these incentives were meant to increase the human security of Russians living in the RFE. For Putin, this was a strategic issue rather than a humanitarian issue, a preparation for expanding Russia’s presence in the Asia-Pacific. Nevertheless, Putin’s program follows closely some of the recommendations for increasing human security in the RFE made by the 2006–07 UNDP report on Russia.

Additional prerequisites for Russia’s expanding role in the Asia-Pacific, not yet attained, include: a better understanding of Asian multilateral regimes and integration processes, exchanging geopolitical balance of power strategies for learning the ASEAN Way, relinquishing the notion of being a ‘whale’ in the Asia-Pacific or of forming a Eurasian bloc there, greater acceptance of the implications of economic globalization, improved relations with Japan, ASEAN nations, and other Asia-Pacific countries, and developing a more realistic concept of Russia’s position in the Asia-Pacific.

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