Russia and the Asia–Pacific Region: Mosaic of Integration

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Summary

In this paper we examine the moves on integration which Russia is undertaking in the Asia–Pacific region, while implementing the program of an eastward shift announced by Russia's leaders. In order to solve this issue effectively, choosing the most rational format for the mutual cooperation of the countries in this region has intrinsic significance. Both the existing structure of APEC and the new integration megaprojects of the US-led "Trans-Pacific Partnership" which is taking shape and the "Silk Road Economic Belt" announced by China do not completely conform to Russian respect regarding leadership. As an alternative proposal toward these integrated entities, in June 2016 President Vladimir Putin announced the beginning of work relating to the new Great Eurasian Partnership (GEP) as one conceptual project. All the member states other than Russia of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) will be able to participate in the GEP in the integration model the president mentioned. Other than that, "Great Eurasia" is being opened to Europe also. This paper points out that the possibility of realizing such projects in the current environment is connected to China's position to a fair degree. China may adopt a concept to link up its own integration projects with those of Russia, may adopt a neutral stance, or may find a structure opposed to its own "Silk Road Economic Belt" in the Russian project. It is indicated that amongst these the first scenario has the highest possibility of realization, and reciprocal items will be found through the mutual adjustment of projects.

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