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More than just a “Bridge”? Russia’s Asian Pivot through Vladivostok

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Research Abstract

Political and economic relations among Russia, China, and the wider Asia-Pacific region potentially will intensify, partly as an indirect result of targeted US and European geopolitical and economic initiatives that Moscow perceives as contrary to its interests. Moscow has consequently tried, albeit unevenly and haltingly, to pursue expansion of commercial exports to Pacific Asia while easing visa processing to attract investment, trade and tourism from Asian and Middle Eastern nations. Russia and China, in particular, will continue to pursue stronger neighborly relations and confidence building initiatives. Although Russia’s trade with Asia has hardly reached 1% of the region’s total and Asia’s economic promise remains largely just a “promise” to Pacific Russia’s residents, this research examines many of the lived experiences and realities on the Russian side of its “Asian bridge.”

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Research Goals



Since the founding of Vladivostok in 1860, the city and its extended region have uncertainly contended with a series of interrelated challenges that continue today to produce multiple and at times contesting perspectives on how Pacific Russia should be developed and for which purposes. As Russia's economic struggles continue, in large measure intensified by the West, the Russian Far East's diverse resources—which includes but extends beyond natural to incorporate human, transit, and trade—are potentially transforming Russia's asymmetrical relations to Asia. Aspirationally no longer merely a marketplace for Russian arms, hydrocarbons, and tourists, Asia's interest in Russia's Far East—hesitatingly—incorporates a range of commercial, security and financial speculations, multimodal logistical land and sea passage deliberations, nascent

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multinational "digital economy" spaces, and energy trade and distribution development.

Since President Putin declared in 2010 that Russia would “Turn to the East” and Russia hosted APEC in 2012 on Russky Island, a number of scholars have tried to assess the feasibility of an Asian pivot and have struggled to address a number of unresolved questions (Hill and Lo 2013; Huang and Korolev 2017; Karaganov and Makarov 2014; Korolev 2016; Lee and Lukin 2016; Lukin 2016; Makarov et al. 2014; Rozman 2014; Troyakova 2018). Should economic development rely on private enterprise or be driven by the state? Should special legal and regulatory regimes be established to attract international investment; can distinct policies be created to retain the region’s highly educated population while attracting new residents, and can such policies be effective; can private financiers be attracted to invest in the construction of massive infrastructure projects, or should the government invest public funds into such development? And finally, can the region become a cosmopolitan space, effectively serving as a gateway to economic and social integration with the wider Asia Pacific?

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Research Activities

Methodologically, this research was divided into two main tasks. First, a range of local stakeholders were identified. Stakeholders included individuals included those involved in shaping, responding to, or participating in Russia’s pivot, including representatives of governmental departments and related agencies, commentators within academia and members of the corporate sector, and on an ad hoc basis store owners, taxi drivers, university students and urban residents. Secondly, pertinent discursive materials and practices produced by these actors were registered, analyzed, and organized to reveal how Russia’s Asian pivot is locally being shaped, interpreted, and lived. These two tasks partially overlapped as participants suggested relevant data sources and, conversely, related data sources revealed key actors. Analysis of data from news articles, reports, memos, press releases, and interviews helped uncover the various actors’ positions in response to Moscow’s directed “Asian pivot” and whether—and how—Vladivostok was being shaped by Russia’s newest turn to the east.

On-site research activities began in late October and concluded at the end of January 2018. Fieldwork was conducted in Russia’s major far eastern port city, Vladivostok. A number of key stakeholders were identified prior to arrival through purposeful selection (Maxwell 2005), the informed knowledge of the researcher, and networking with in-country contacts. During in-country data collection the researcher encouraged contact persons to further identify relevant

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sources—this is often referred to as snowball sampling and respondent-driven sampling (see, for example, Griffith, Morris, and Thakar, 2016).

Data was collected from a broad cross section of individuals who are living, working, and visiting the region, and consequently are participating in and reacting to Russia’s eastern pivot. In addition to meeting with representatives of governmental organizations involved with foreign affairs and trade, representatives of semi-state organizations were also contacted. These included, for example, members of the Pacific Institute of Geography, the Asia-Pacific International Institutions and Multilateral Cooperation Studies Center, Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography, the School of Regional and International Studies, FEFU, and so forth. To examine the perspectives held by these diverse actors, we conducted open-ended but directed interviews and collected relevant statements, reports, and directives from published sources. Laws and precedent-setting judgments to which these actors referred were added to my database. Through this approach, we investigated the ways in which actors’ sociopolitical and economic “imaginaries” of the region (i.e., values, institutions, symbols, references to authority, etc.) intersect with, support, or diffuse Russia’s declared Asian pivot. In large measure our inquiry sought to understand how, and to what extent, actors within a single region share a similar discourse on the Asian pivot or whether discourses vary depending on stakeholder focus, e.g. research, business, government, etc.

To supplement this direct inquiry, we examined news archives to uncover how the pivot has been openly influenced and discussed through the media since APEC 2012. To assist with



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this task, graduate students from Russia, South Korea, Japan, China, the US, Mexico, and Germany were brought into the project. These graduate students reviewed materials from a range of Russian and international news outlets, including from China (www.nuxue.com, *Reference News*, the largest nationally circulated daily newspaper), Japan (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, www.yomiuri.co.jp, ranked first in daily circulation), South Korea (*Tistory*, www.tistory.com, one of South Korea's most popular news outlets), and the Russian Far East (www.PrimaMedia.ru, www.vladnews.ru, and www.newsyl.ru). These news outlets were identified based on circulation rates and informed knowledge of their capacity to influence key actors and reflect public opinion. Furthermore, these broad-based sites have accessible and searchable online archives. From these diverse data sources we identified important events and opinions that suggested specific, at times overlapping, and at other moments contradictory ways of conceptualizing Pacific Russia's efforts to economically integrate with Asia.

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Research Findings



Russia’s formal “Asian Pivot”—a policy emphasizing economic cooperation with its East Asian neighbors—received substantial international attention following the hosting of APEC 2012 on Vladivostok’s Russky Island (see photo, above, the site of APEC 2012 and currently the main campus of the Far Eastern Federal University). Moscow’s apparent pivot centers on Primorye, the northeastern periphery of the Eurasian continent, distant and removed from the political, economic and demographic hub of the nation. Vladivostok, the capital of Primorye, however, has had little reason “to pivot.” When viewed from the Sea of Japan, Vladivostok is “The *center* [italics added] of international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region” (Primorsky Krai Legislative Assembly 2008), a region poised to continue as a major driver of global growth.

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Indeed, sharing international borders with China, Japan and the Korean Peninsula, Primorye is geographically, geopolitically, and—at least aspirationally—economically “Asian.”

Yet because of its unique geographic position, Primorye’s history seems partially to constrain its present. From the end of the Civil War (1922) and the beginning of the Soviet period, then intensified during the Sino-Soviet split (1956–1966), Primorye was positioned by Moscow, located 6,440 km away, as its distant Asian military outpost. Primorye, further, for most of its cultural-political history was not actually a part of Russia; in fact, during the Chinese Empire’s Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Vladivostok was known as Yongmingcheng, and then during the Qing Dynasty (1644 to 1912), Vladivostok was known as Haishenwai, “Sea-Cucumber Embankment.” Vladivostok, together with the wider Primorye region, was only ceded to the Russian Empire in 1860. Then just a few decades later, during Russia’s Civil War, Allied forces—primarily consisting of Japanese, American, and British military personnel—occupied Vladivostok and beyond. Thus, the city’s negative multinational experiences, its consequent militarization, and enormous physical separation from European Russia have resulted in the region’s legacy of relative estrangement.

While some nostalgic strands may subtly be found in Northeast China for its lost “Pacific China” (based on author interviews in northeast China, August 2017) and territorial disagreements with Japan remain unresolved, the local Vladivostok population has no pretense toward separation nor seeks autonomous status *vis a vis* the Russian state. But with Vladivostok just 1,335 km from China’s capital and a 3,600 km border connecting the two countries, Tokyo

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about 1,060 km from Vladivostok, the Korean peninsula a relatively short ferry ride away, and with hundreds of foreign tourists arriving weekly on cruise ships during Vladivostok's pleasant summers, Moscow's pivot to Asia at a time when the west arguably has been "pivoting away" from Russia, appears quite rational.

BUILDING BRIDGES AND OPENING GATEWAYS

Russian industries' international competitiveness lies within the traditional spheres of oil and gas export, heavy machinery production, nuclear technology, and some areas of agricultural production. But the Russian economy must develop 21st century diversification in order to reach levels of international competitiveness necessary if extensive free trade opportunities are to make sense for the Russian economy. Concurrently, Moscow-based policymakers, focused on the more compelling geopolitical campaigns of building military connections with China and attracting large investments from Japan in exchange for possible territorial considerations, seem less attentive to the practical details needed to facilitate smaller and time-consuming Asian trade arrangements.

Primorye, however, has experience with creating such agreements, having concluded 17 between 1991 and 2017. The majority of these agreements are with Japan, South Korea, and China. The first agreement was signed in 1991 with the Tottori and Shimane prefectures of Japan, when the region was still officially the "Primorsky Krai of the USSR." Primorye has entered into other region-to-region treaties, for example with the Central Aimak (i.e. *province*) of



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Mongolia and the Khan Hoa province of Vietnam. At the national level, Primorye's regional government and the central government of the Belarus Republic concluded an agreement in 1998. Beyond building bilateral connections, Primorye is a member of a number of regional networks, such as the Association of Regional Administrations of the Countries of Northeast Asia, the Russia-China Coordination Council on Regional and Cross-Border Cooperation, and the Commission on Economic Cooperation between the Far Eastern Regions of Russia and Hokkaido Prefecture of Japan.

Clearly, Primorye not only possesses the legal power to enter into international agreements, but for three decades has been exercising this privilege.

The record of establishing representative subnational offices in Northeast Asia has been, so far, less remarkable. Primorye's regional administration announced in 2012 its plan to open a foreign office in China, in Heilongjiang's provincial capital, Harbin. While this regional initiative remains unfulfilled, at the federal level there have been recent indications that the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation anticipates opening its own representative office in Harbin. Operating out of the governor's office, the Primorye Investment Agency has candidly discussed its hopes to open a representative office in Seoul, South Korea. This initiative, however, seems to have ended without publicity prior to its realization.

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The Primorye Investment Agency promotes on its website that the

"Primorsky Territory is considered to be Russia's gateway to the Asia-Pacific region. Primorye offers new opportunities for investors and partners from Russia and abroad" (<https://pkia.ru/?lang=en-US>)

Asia Pacific trade facilitation through Russia's "gateway" consists of a measured set of agreements, one region, one country at a time. But before a clearer "Asian" agenda can take shape, Russia's Far East will need to diversify from an economy largely based on raw materials export. One way to create sustainable growth is to strengthen the competitive power of its domestic human and economic forces and to create "real infrastructure."

GATEWAY

In 1860, Vladivostok was founded as Russia's window to Asia. By the Russian Revolution, the Trans-Siberian Railway—the 9,289-kilometer link between Moscow to Vladivostok and, via connecting branch lines Moscow to Mongolia, China and North Korea—was the most remarkable achievement of a period during which the Russian rail network grew from 1,000 miles in 1860 to 45,000 miles by 1917.

One Revolution, a Civil War, and Soviet rule and collapse later, and again Vladivostok is being positioned by Moscow as its "Asian bridge." In preparation for Vladivostok's hosting of the 21-nation Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Meeting, in September 2012 on Russky Island, construction was completed of the 3,100-meter Russky Island bridge linking the

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island to the Muravyov-Amursky Peninsula section of the city and, five kilometers to the north, the second span linking Vladivostok's Churkin District with the city's historic center via the 1388-meter-long Golden Horn Bay Bridge.

In keeping with the Trans-Siberian Railway, both bridges are almost entirely the products of Russian design and construction. While originally open to international bidding, bidding interest in the over \$6 billion construction project soon faded due to Russia's stipulation that project completion was required within a three-year window. The bridges were, however, completed, on time and with only the consultation of a French engineering firm, entirely by Russian contractors and with Russian labor.

The bridges, according to a local official, "...show that Vladivostok and the Russian Far East is open for business....These bridges signal to the world we're getting connected." Russia's hope to fulfill the APEC 2012 theme of "Integrate to Grow, Innovate to Prosper" rests primarily with Vladivostok, alternately Russia's maritime "center" (Primorsky Krai Legislative Assembly 2008), its "bridge" (The Economist 2012; Fortescue 2016; Higgins 2017), and "gateway" (Rozman 2008; Lukin and Zakharova 2018) to the Korean peninsula, Japan, and coastal China. While bridges connect different sides, they can only do so providing the distances—which in Pacific Russia are not only physical—can be spanned.

The 2012 APEC Leaders' Summit, hosted on Russky Island and reached by the two Russian-built bridges, was intended to be a symbolic inauguration of Russia's new "Pivot to

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Asia.” This current turn continues Vladivostok’s 150-year position as Russia’s pivot on which to realize hopes and expectations for the Russian Far East’s integration with Northeast Asia. The physical and metaphorical terms interchangeably used to refer to Vladivostok’s Asian-pacific location—namely “Bridge,” “Gateway,” “Pivot” and “Center”—all refer with different shades of meaning to, for example, *connection*, *entry*, and *central point*. What position Vladivostok can fulfill *vis a vis* Russia and Asia’s evolving relations remains uncertain. When constructing bridges, there is obviously more than one side. And when discussing Russia’s Far East—still partially in Europe and partially in Asia—there are multiple sides.

Russia’s traditional aspiration was to be recognized as a major European power, a region with which it had developed cultural, political, and economic contacts. Asia, on the other hand, it considered its backyard, a continent of open territories and less powerful governments. This Orientalist conception has existed for more than a century, since the Far East was Russia’s last frontier against more foreign spaces. This frontier, from Empire through Union, was Russia’s bulwark against enemies, both real and imagined, and even since the 1991 opening of Vladivostok this perception has not fully dispersed. Today, while the Primorye Investment Agency promotes this part of Russia as its “gateway to the Asia-Pacific region,” given the region’s history, it is also critical to recognize the protective functions that gateways serve.

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Soviet Union's hammer and sickle in the foreground, with the Primorsky Krai Administration building in the background

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BRIDGE

Vladivostok's bridges are material symbols of Moscow's plans to develop Russia's Far East, its entrepôt to the broader Asia-Pacific. This highlights the position and significance that can be ascribed to "bridges." The metaphor of "bridging" has many constructive connotations. People often view bridges as the only way to reach a destination, overcome obstacles, create links and reach a better place. Bridges also represent transitions and thus can be more than a transit way joining one place to another but can also be works of political and economic imagining about an expanding landscape, once the bridge is completed. In October 2017 the Bank of Russia introduced two new banknotes, giving everyone wallet-sized, tangible symbols of Russia's expanding Asian vistas. The new 2000 rouble bills display the recently built Vostochny Spaceport, located in the Far East's Amur region, and the bridge to Russky Island. Banknotes with Far Eastern modernist images are tradable symbols of Russia's economic aspirations for its "pivot to Asia." According to Vladimir Putin,

...in the 21st century, the vector of Russia's development will be the development of the East. Siberia and the Far East represent our enormous potential. And now we must realize our potential. We have the opportunity to assume a worthy place in the Asia-Pacific region, the most dynamic region in the world. (Putin, 2012)

Printing new Far Eastern-themed roubles clearly indicating a value of "2000" is straightforward. Ascribing a position from Moscow that the Russian Far East's geographical

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proximity establishes Russia's own "worthy place" in the Asian Pacific Region's remarkable development may *seem* straightforward. Russia's eastern pivot reflects domestic needs and regional changes. It denotes an approach that emphasizes its Pacific profile as well as alignment with China in regional bilateral and multilateral structures (Dave 2016). Russia's renewed interest in its traditional Pacific periphery reflects its evolving perception of Asia, represented most visibly by China's economic strength and complementary evolving geopolitical outreach, coupled with Moscow's distancing from the west. With the Asia-Pacific "the most dynamic region in the world," Russia's "bridge building" intentions toward the east are pragmatic, albeit still largely unrealized.

Moscow has been rebuilding its Far Eastern infrastructure, most notably along its Pacific coast, in hopes of attracting Asian investment in mineral resource extraction, infrastructure development, forestry, agricultural production, water supply enhancement and energy production. Some observers contend that these forms of extensive development consign Pacific Russia to the role of a resource colony serving the needs of European Russia and forming an Asian periphery for its Asian investors. Now, as during the Soviet Union, the Russian Far East's economy is largely dependent on the extraction of its diverse natural resources. Referring to it as a resource periphery of the Soviet Union is not inappropriate (Troyakova 2007), as it contributed 16.4 percent to the country's total extraction industry (Goskomstat RSFSR 1991). As a supplier of minimally processed natural resources, Pacific Russia's position in global trade remains on the margin of Asian industrialism and innovation. Pacific Russia's contemporary dependence on

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natural resources is a consequence of historical processes and the uncertainties of geography, technology, and the institutions that shape and constrain its economy.

In the Far East—as in other resource-dependent regions—the oligopolistic character of resource extractive enterprises necessary for the large capital investments create “financial and production ‘rigidities’” (Barnes, 1996, p. 222). As the Russian Far East copes with current rounds of change, uncertainty, and opportunity, it remains burdened by the accumulated layers of previous as well as current extractive development and the path dependence this produces. Current and anticipated resource development projects require access to requisite levels of financing and clearer (i.e. more transparent) administrative procedures. The region’s resource production “path” becomes increasingly embedded as industrial capital consolidates its control over raw resource supplies and necessary elements of the related service and supply chains, while alternative local and regional employment options narrow.

Natural resource development in Russia’s Far East and export through the Free Port of Vladivostok—alternatively promoted as Russia’s “bridge,” “gateway,” and “pivot” to the broader Asia-Pacific, has left a legacy of both positive and negative economic, social and environmental impacts from the local household to the larger region (Tasch and Auton 2008). A key question is whether Russia’s Asian neighbors care as much about Russia as it does about them.

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“FOREIGN VOICES, LOCAL UNDERSTANDINGS”

Since annexing Crimea and its consequent and increasingly strained relations with the West, Russia has sought to diversify its foreign policy by pivoting to the east. The goal of the pivot has been to broaden the base of its Asian engagement. Many residents of Vladivostok, from immigrant taxi drivers and local business owners, to scholars and foreign government representatives, anticipated that stronger relations would encourage especially greater Chinese investment. The result, optimistically, would be to boost the region’s economy and more broadly to provide an alternative to the West’s truncated economic involvement in Russia.

The Chinese investment boom, which many in Primorye had hoped for, has so far not materialized. Russia seems to recognize that it may have more success if it can further diversify its relations with other Asian powers, particularly with Japan and South Korea. The Northeast and South Asian countries are, in fact, emerging as sources of foreign direct investment, FDI, to Pacific Russia, led in order by China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and India. The bulk of Asian investments, however, remains intra-regional within the Asian nations themselves. Attracting FDI as an engine of growth is a tenet of neoclassical economic theory, global trade governance organizations, and the Russian government. Russia’s policy emphasis, then, is on creating an enabling environment to attract more FDI through a *de jure* strengthening of legal, regulatory,

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and political institutions to improve property protection and financial stability. FDI in Russia has indeed increased by 7.3 billion USD in the third quarter of 2017. A combination of multiple special economic zones and localized tax-breaks, electronic visa processing for citizens of 18 countries and streamlined customs processes, and more than 30 recent laws and 150 legislative acts directed to invite foreign investors have helped attract 64.8 billion USD in FDI to the Russian Far East across 1,200 projects during the last four and a half years (*Asian Times* 2018). Increasing demand for commodities, and large-scale construction and infrastructure projects have clearly encouraged FDI to the Russian Far East.

Economic integration of Pacific Russia with the wider Asia-Pacific, however, and in a manner whereby local residents experience tangible benefit, is more than the application of neoclassical economic development models (Barnes & Gertler, 1999; Peet, 2007). Notwithstanding a small anti-Putin street protest in January 2018 (see photo, below), residents of Russia's "Bridge to Asia" largely appear to accept a political situation in which they are divested of regional self-administration, revenues derived from local resource are controlled by Moscow, and Putin appoints its regional executive. In the words of a local business owner, an importer of Asian manufactured office furniture: "The words sound good and we welcome them, but you were asking whether we've experienced benefits or positive changes from the turn to Asia.

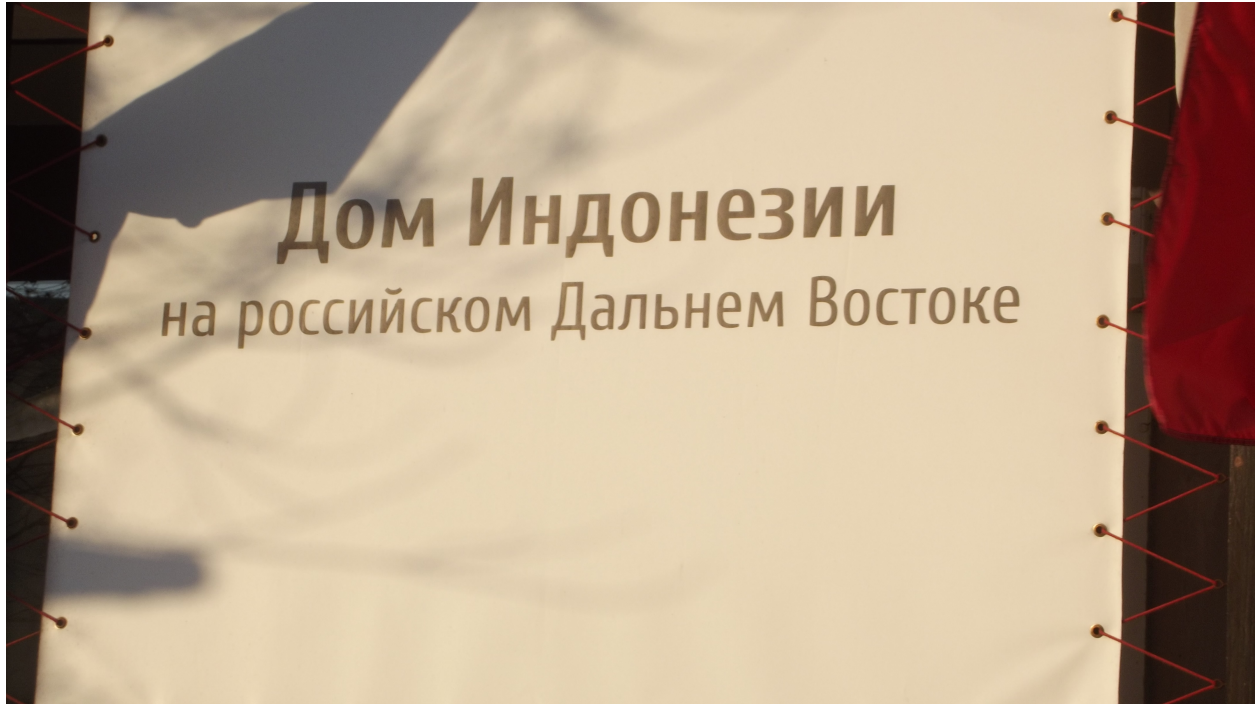
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Directly? Well, no, not yet.” A graduate student preparing to receive a degree from the Far Eastern Federal University expressed a starker position on the Asian pivot: “A lot of friends and people my age leave for Moscow. When I finish my master’s degree I’ll leave too. There’s not enough jobs to keep us here.”

Given Russia’s current political and economic inertia, and notwithstanding Vladivostok’s strategic Pacific position and its new infrastructure, a “Bridge to Asia” remains more metaphorical than material.

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“House of Indonesia in the Russian Far East”

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Russia is not a democracy, nor is it democratizing. But Moscow cannot simply be diplomatically isolated nor coerced to acquiesce to United States and Western Europe’s geopolitical expectations. Resulting reciprocal sanctions and contending narratives combine to block even basic US diplomatic engagement. Indeed, representatives of the US Consulate, Vladivostok, are prevented from simply visiting public schools and universities, and continually search for creative ways merely to share information about American culture.

Political and economic interests among Russia, China, and the wider Asia-Pacific region continues to intensify, apparently as a result of targeted US and European geopolitical initiatives

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that Moscow—and residents in Vladivostok—perceive as contrary to national interests. Consequently, through the streamlining of visa arrangements with 18 countries, the creation of the Free Port of Vladivostok, and the formation of Territories of Priority Development across Russia's Far East (RFE), Russia is attempting to expand commercial exports to Pacific Asia. But it has been discussions regarding large-scale infrastructure development projects and transport connections through Pacific Russia to the Northern Sea Route, the potential unification of Russian, Japanese, South Korean, and Chinese energy systems, and the nascent creation of a common "digital economy" space in the Asia Pacific region that offers prospective for long-term expansion and intensification of economic and political relations among Russia, China, and the wider Asia Pacific.

With limited access to Western capital and expertise, the RFE potentially faces long-term dependency on China. China's policies toward Russia—and Eurasia more generally—are expressive of a broader program to promote a multipolar international order while finding outlets for its own excess industrial capacity. Both nations in principle oppose the regional, and global, ascendancy of a single power; each is uncomfortable with a stronger US presence in South Korea and the Korean Peninsula more broadly; and each is dissatisfied with U.S. displays of naval power in areas adjacent to the South China and East China Seas and border areas with India. A strong Chinese presence in a region as strategically dynamic as the RFE could alter the balance of economic and political power in Pacific Asia to China's advantage—a circumstance largely unacknowledged in Western policy circles (see also Lee and Lukin 2016). Russia's "Turn

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Toward Asia” and China’s strategic partnership with Russia are not only important because of their potential implications for U.S. interests but as indicators of Russia and China’s aspirations in the 21st century. In short, deteriorating relations with the West combined with concomitant economic sanctions have made Russia’s “Pivot Toward Asia” a necessity.

As perceived by a number of local commentators and residents, it is the United States that aspires to coerce the international order—and Russia in particular— toward its particular dominant sphere of influence. While political views among interview respondents toward the United States and Europe appear largely to align, what types of changes can be made to better develop Russia’s Far East, promote equitable relations with Asia and attract more targeted Chinese investment, and how to facilitate a more acceptable distribution of economic and political power is contested and uncertain.

As the first American scholar hosted by the Far Eastern Federal University since at least 2016, and among the few “local” Americans regularly invited to give lectures, attend discussions, and to meet with students, what is abundantly clear is that it is possible to engage through balanced cooperation, which may be promoted through academic exchanges and scholarly collaborations.

American public resources are no longer available on a large scale to Russia, and Russia is no longer receptive to direct US government programs and outreach. The challenge, then, for current and future American assistance is to focus reduced governmental resources, emphasize areas where there are meaningful transnational opportunities, and try to leverage private efforts

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to re-build citizen to citizen connections — which would appear most readily possible through the state of Alaska, as indeed was taking place through the 1990s and early 2000s.

Among all forms of bilateral assistance, educational exchanges and scholarly collaboration appear to pay the highest long-term dividends. Noting my own university, Towson University, a member of the University System of Maryland, US universities are in need of proficiency in Russian affairs. Russia's renewed authoritarian turn makes this necessity especially critical.

U.S. policy initiatives should concede that tensions with Russia do not neatly track along lines of geography nor according to discrete issues. Thus, policy goals should include constructing webs of interactions, cooperative and collaborative, which particularly through academic partnerships and citizen-to-citizen connections will more delicately yield benefits for US national interests. For at least as long as Putin remains in power, Russia will neither be transformed nor overwhelmed: US policies will better succeed by dealing with Russia as it is.

Russia—at least along its Far Eastern periphery—could be open to targeted cooperation and consequently to positive American inspiration. Russian educators and scholars across a wide spectrum of specialties acknowledge that professional development, career growth, and academic innovation are more readily achievable through youth, cultural, educational, legislative, and scientific exchanges with American partners.



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Co-Curricular Activity

Selected Briefs

"Geopolitics in Eurasia and Russian-Japanese Relations: A View to the Middle East and North-East Asia." Given by Yamauchi Masayuki, honorary professor, University of Tokyo, professor, Meiji University's Strategic Research and Intellectual Property Research Institute, Advisor to the Mitsubishi Corporation, and Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Exchanges in Asia.

“Threats to Russia's national security in the Arctic in the context of expanding NATO's military presence.” Given by Anton A. Kravchu, expert of the Scientific Laboratory of International Institutes and Multilateral Cooperation, Eastern Institute - School of Regional and International Studies, FEFU.

“Approaches of international institutions to the problems of security and development of the Arctic region.” Given by Sergei V. Sevastyanov, Head, Scientific Laboratory of International Institutes and Multilateral Cooperation, Eastern Institute - School of Regional and International Studies, FEFU.

“Prospects and problems of Russia's cooperation with the leading countries of the Northeast Asia.” Given by Tamara Troyakova, Head, Department of International Relations, FEFU.



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Conference

“Ethnocultural diversity and Ethnopolitics in the Russian Far East and the Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region,” organized by the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography; and the Department of Internal Policy, Primorsky Krai Assembly of Peoples of Primorsky Krai, Krai Administration. This conference presented a forum to share current research on minority peoples relations not only within Primorye, but the Pacific Asian nations. Consequently, researchers from multiple institutes, universities, and governmental departments, not only from Primorye but as far away as St. Petersburg presented work that analyzed state, non-state, current and historical relations with and among the ethnic minorities living and working in the Russian Far East.

Selected List of Meetings

Mr. Kawabe Ryou, Director, Mitsubishi Corporation in Vladivostok

Mr. E.V. Zhestkov, Deputy Director, Mitsubishi Corporation in Vladivostok

Mr. Kensuke Nagata, General Manager, Marubeni Corporation, Vladivostok Liaison Office

Dr. Peiqing Guo, Director, School of Law and Political Science, Ocean University of China

Dr. Guigang Xue, Executive Director, Shanghai University Think Tank Research and KoGuan Law School, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Mr. Kasai Kadzuhiko, Consul General, Consulate General of Japan in Vladivostok

Mr. Mukai Kazuyoshi, Director, Japan Center, Vladivostok

Ms. O.E. Sumarokova, Deputy Director, Japan Center, Vladivostok.



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Dr. T.D. Khusiyatov TD, Leading Researcher, Center for the Study of Russian-Japanese Relations

Dr. I.Yu. Naumova, Department of Japanese Studies, Far Eastern Federal University

Dr. E. V. Pustovoit, Head of Department, Institute of Oriental Studies, Department of Japanese Studies, Far Eastern Federal University

Dr. A. Lukin, Deputy Director of Research, School of Regional and International Studies, Far Eastern Federal University

Mr. V. Yu. Konovalov, Head, Representative Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia in Vladivostok;

Mr. Michael Keays, U.S. Consul General, United States Consulate General

Mr. Darren Thies, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Consulate General

Ms. M. Mushkina, Public Affairs Representative, Consulate General of India

Dr. V. L. Larin VL, Director Emeritus, Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography

Dr. B. Afonin, Senior Researcher, Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography

Dr. VV Kozhevnikov VV, leading Research Associate, Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography

Dr. V. Panova, Vice-Rector, International Relations, Far Eastern Federal University

Dr. VI Kurilov, Director of the Law School, Far Eastern Federal University

Dr. A. Khamatova, Acting Director of the Eastern Institute - School of Regional and International studies, Far Eastern Federal University

Dr. A.V. Gubin AV, Department of International Relations, Far Eastern Federal University

Dr. S.Sevastyanov, Department of International Relations, Far Eastern Federal University

Dr. T. Troyakova, Head, Department of International Relations, Far Eastern Federal University

Dr. Aleksandr Bekker, Director, School of Engineering, Far Eastern Federal University



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Dr. E.A. Kolegova, Institute of Atomic Energy, Russian Academy of Sciences

Dr. A. Kravchuk, International Institutes and Multilateral Cooperation in the Russian Far East

Dr. Benjamin Beuerle, Fellow, Scientific Coordinator for Russia's North Pacific Research Program, German Historical Institute of Moscow

Dr. Bhavna Dave, Senior Lecturer, Politics and International Studies, Chair, Centre of Contemporary Central Asia and the Caucasus, SOAS, University of London

Ms. G. M. Zhenevskaya, Director, International Information and Analysis Center

Dr. Alexander Babanin, Department of Infrastructure Engineering, University of Melbourne

Dr. Sergei K. Pestov, Head of Department, International Relations and Regional Security, Center for Asia-Pacific Research

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Conclusions

Observing from Vladivostok, it is clear that Russia is not particularly inclined to integrate with the West and that it is prepared to resist the United States geopolitically, while concurrently charting new directions economically. With Putin's 2018 re-election, among the most significant elements in United States-Russian relations will likely be Russia's narrowing authoritarian political system. As complex as official cooperation already is, this trend will likely make finding common ground between the two sides increasingly complex and more difficult to cooperate even when they do.

Russia's economic revival—as hydrocarbon revenues will certainly begin to increase, political stability—despite sporadic and closely monitored political protests, and international self-confidence could have allowed expanded cooperation in multiple ways. Common interests that could offer cooperation, such as energy development, counterterrorism, and Pacific trade are subordinated to concerns over political power, Russian-Chinese relations and development of Russia's Pacific periphery, and geopolitical anxieties. Encouraging Russia to enter the Western political mainstream, however, should remain a critical interest of US foreign policy.

Russia's governance is increasingly authoritarian, and even in Vladivostok, a city well-known for its political as well as physical distance from Moscow, residents seem resigned to the administrative status quo. There is very little, unfortunately, that US policymakers can do to influence Russia's domestic situation. Making geopolitical change a central issue in U.S. relations toward Russia is unlikely to be effective; indeed, it may be counterproductive. President

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Putin, despite informal dissatisfaction expressed locally in Vladivostok, is largely seen as effective in rebuilding Russia's international prestige.

Despite official attempts to pivot to Asia, Russia concurrently remains anxious about Beijing's growing strength along its borders. Concurrently, Russia's hope to penetrate the Chinese market has yet to produce results as Moscow had hoped, while trade and investment remain uncertain and inconsistent. In Pacific Asia, Russia has hoped to diversify its commercial relations with South Korea and Japan as a counterweight to the risks that continued reliance on natural resource development in the Russian Far East could consign the region to a resource colonial relationship for China's booming markets. Consequently, Moscow is welcoming the emergence of other regional players, such as India and Singapore, to further counterbalance China. South Korea and Japan, hesitatingly and somewhat suspiciously, also perceive Russia as a potential partner to leverage their concerns about China's growing economic and geopolitical power. As the United States re-considers its role on the Korean Peninsula and enters renewed dialogue regarding its position in the Pacific, it could find its interests aligning with Russia by building a coalition that offers each nation more clout in relations with China. Recognizing that China's expansion into the region potentially poses a long-term challenge to American interests, US policymakers should continue to seek opportunities to promote joint US-Russian initiatives in the region.

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