Jeju Peace Institute 제주평화연구원

JPI PeaceNet

New Approaches Toward Regional Security: A Prerepuisite for Asian Future Global Leadership

Sergei SEVASTIANOV

Far Eastern Federal University

저자 Sergei Sevastianov is currently a Professor, International Relations Chair, and Director, Asia Pacific International Institutions & Multilateral Cooperation Studies Center, at School of Regional and International Studies, Far Eastern Federal University. Prior to joining FEFU in 2012, he had been an Associate Professor and Professor of International Relations at Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service. He is an expert in Asia Pacific international relations, and he actively participates in research projects studying multilateral cooperation models in security and economics.

* 이 글에 포함된 의견은 저자 개인의 견해로 제주평화연구원의 공식입장과는 무관합니다.

1. Russian views and approaches to Asia and the Asia-Pacific

Recently, especially after the world economic crisis started in 2008, the Asia-Pacific is steadily assuming a role of a global development leader, especially in economics. The Asia-Pacific is one of the Russia's foreign policy priorities. For Moscow, its main strategic task in Asia is to use regional economic integration to boost socioeconomic development of its vast and under-populated Far East territories. At the same time, Moscow is very keen and interested to promote initiatives to shape new security architecture in Asia.

Considering theoretical approaches, Eurasian concept is reviving in Russia. According to it, the Asia-Pacific represents the eastern edge of Eurasia, where China and USA are preeminent competitive powers, while in the continental Eurasia the main growing tension is between the US-led West and Russia over the control of Eastern Europe and Caucasus. This clarifies that the US, despite the relative decline, is still very much the pivotal power, being a major force both in the continental and maritime theaters of Eurasia. According to one FEFU scholar, the US pursues the strategy of dual containment vis-a-vis Russia and China, trying to counteract Russia in Eastern Europe, while confronting China in East Asia. Such a policy may lead to real (not only perceived) bipolarity in the entire Eurasia, with the Sino-Russian bloc standing against the US and its allies.[1)]

1) A. Lukin The Asia-Pacific's Emerging Geopolitical Order and the U.S.-China-Russia Triangle. Paper presented at the workshop "Great Powers and Geopolitics", Jerusalem, 26-27 Nov. 2013.

Such a scenario if realized would not correspond well with an idea of Asia becoming a future global leader in international affairs.

2. Latest changes in the international system, and possible ways to form a comprehensive security system in Asia

Recent events in Syria, Ukraine, South China Sea, etc. clarified several things:

- Some international laws contradict each other while their principles could be considered in different ways (Kosovo VS. Crimea, etc.)

- In the 21st century, great powers are still willing to take calculated risks and ready to undertake bold actions when their interests are not taken into account by other powerful states

- The modern world is not fully unipolar anymore, but becoming more polycentric, while China and Russia would not allow any other power to dominate in vast parts of Eurasia that they are consider areas of their vital interests.

To avoid new confrontational bipolarity, Washington, Moscow and Beijing must try to achieve some version of multipolarity / policentricity and later build a more comprehensive multilateral architecture in Eurasia, in which not only Moscow, Washington and Beijing but all the Asian stakeholders can be engaged.

A future system of genuine and equal security in Asia and the Pacific should be based on a balance of bilateral mechanisms and multilateral diplomacy that excludes any closed or restricted systems and blocs. For a variety of reasons, Russia' s policy in Asia gives clear priority to partnership with China. The recent crisis in Ukraine has worsened Russia' s relations with Western states and thus elevated the priority of Russian-Chinese ties for Moscow even higher. Vladimir Putin demonstrated it very clearly during his visit to China last week when a huge gas deal had been arranged after more than 10 years of difficult negotiations. But, to avoid political and economic over-reliance on China, Moscow would continue developing dynamic bilateral ties with other regional partners in East Asia such as Japan, ROK and ASEAN countries.

Traditionally, Russian scholars have considered Japan to be Russia' s second best regional partner (after China), but movement in this direction so far has been blocked by unresolved territorial disputes, while the Japanese economy has been stagnating for years. At the same time, Russian Korean ties are not hindered by unresolved political, historic or other issues, and taking into account recent positive trends in Russia ROK political, economic and humanitarian relationships, in the future, Moscow may rely more on Seoul in East Asian regional politics.

According to President Putin[2], as far as multilateral security system, Russia is consistent in supporting the creation in Asia of a new security architecture that guarantees equal interaction and a genuine balance of power and harmony of interests, effectively address today's security challenges, prevent the emergence of new threats, and serve the goal of building an integrated economic and political space, and this can only be based on the concept of indivisible security. A future system of genuine and equal security in Asia should be based on a balance of bilateral mechanisms and multilateral diplomacy that excludes any closed or restricted systems and blocs. Only by taking this approach can we avoid the emergence of new political and ideological dividing lines in the region.

To go in this direction, Moscow is ready to cooperate with Asian states in such important multilateral institutions as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asian Summit, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. We are sure that only if Asian states achieve real progress in forming a new more comprehensive and effective security system, sometime in future Asia may play a role of a global world leader.

August 29, 2014

저작권자 © 제주평화연구원, 무단 전재 및 재배포 금지

2) V. Putin, Speech at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia summit, Shanghai, May 21, 2014