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Can Russia Ever Become an Asian Member State?: The Question of Dual National Identity Revisited✢

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|ABSTRACT|

This paper explores Russia's Asian national identity and the intersection between that identity and its foreign policy, particularly focusing on its limitations in East Asia. Rather than confining the analysis to post-Soviet debates, this study examines the enduring Asian dimension of Russia's national identity that has persisted over centuries. Despite efforts to engage the region, Russia remains a peripheral player in Asia, often excluded from key regional organizations and negotiations. In the long term, Russian policymakers acknowledge their country's relatively weak position in the region dominated by large, powerful nations with rapidly advancing economies and technology. In the eyes of many in Asia, Russia appears small and fragile by comparison. Nonetheless, the remarkable economic rise of East Asia has drawn Russia's attention, representing one of the most significant geopolitical developments of the twentieth century. This economic transformation is shifting the global balance of power between Asia and the West. Even amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, Russia's role in Asia continues to occupy a dual position: while its image has deteriorated further due to the invasion—seen by many in Asia as aggressive and imperialistic—Russia has also intensified outreach to Asian countries, including adversarial neighbors aligned with Western sanctions. Notably, its military alignment with North Korea indicates a search for emergency support, while Russia continues to send conciliatory signals to other Asian states to avoid further alienation. In this context, the longstanding debate on Russia's dual national identity—European and Asian—becomes especially relevant. This duality helps explain Russia's increasing pivot toward Asia following the collapse of its relations with Europe. Despite its damaged reputation, Russia continues to express its desire to be recognized as part of the Asian community. However, without significant efforts to reshape its image and policy approach, it will be difficult for Moscow to alter its current trajectory in the long run.

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Ⅰ. The Debate on Russian National Identity

The concept of national identity is a tricky subject to tackle. There are many different approaches one could adopt, both to define identities and to generalize about them. Furthermore, one could be addressing individual identities or collective identities, identities as solely a state of mind, or identities as informing behavior.[1] Whatever the definition we choose, we know that the collapse of the Soviet Union has resulted in a landscape in which many individual and collective identities are not only in transition, but also many of them are to be redefined. Diverse forces are competing to shape new identities and to capture the popular energies released by the embrace of new identities.[2]

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the literature of Russian national identity, many scholars have focused on identities after communism. This means that most studies tended to deal with the facet of the disorientation experienced by other broad groupings of people in the former Soviet territory. Post-Soviet scholarship on Russian national identity has primarily aimed at the following subjects: 1) Russians living in Russia who historically have never clearly distinguished the Russian state from the Russian empire and who must now do so in a most way;[3] 2) Russians living in the other newly dependent states who are unsure and frightened about their fate and that of their children,

1) For a complex interdisciplinary survey of the extensive literature on identities and identity formation, see Craig Calhoun, "Social Theory and the Politics of Identity," in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 9-36.

2) George W. Breslauer, "Identities in Transition: An Introduction," in Victoria E. Bonnell (ed.), *Identities in Transition: Eastern Europe and Russia after the Collapse of Communism* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), pp. 1-12.

3) Moreover, under Soviet rule, the official conflation of "Russian" and "Soviet" created, in Beissinger's term, see Mark Beissinger, "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1995), pp. 149-184.

who do not know whether to think of themselves as citizens of Russia or citizens of the state in which they live, as "Russian speakers" or as Russians by ethnicity; 3) Russians who have moved from Kazakhstan or the Baltic states back to Russia who have been socialized into a cultural frame that does not match the new, strongly contested political reality of Russia in 1996; and 4) peoples along the southern rim of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Yugoslavia, the Caucasus, Central Asia), where the tapestry of multi-ethnicity has created chaos.[4)]

Meanwhile, this paper will focus primarily on historical, cultural, and geopolitical aspects of the Russian national identity that lasted throughout the centuries, rather than post- Soviet debates. The great merit of geopolitical analysis, in my opinion, provides accounts for the physical, geopolitical, and demographic problems that face any regime —whether Tsarist or Marxist or reformist-Liberal or Putinism[5)]—that seeks to govern this vast land. Furthermore, as the British geographer Halford Mackinder suggested in 1904, the "great geopolitical limits of Russia's existence would always remain, despite social and political transformations."[6)] In this regard, we examine how the duality of Russian national identity generates Russia's limited performance in East Asia throughout the centuries. There is no denying that certain identities constrain the kinds of political parties that can emerge, the kinds of coalitions they can form, and the constituencies to which they can appeal.

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4) Breslauer (1996), p. 9.

5) Here in this paper, Putinism means the social, political, and economic system of Russia formed during the political leadership of Putin. The main characteristic of Putinism refers to the restoration of strong Russia.

6) Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (1904), pp. 421-444.

Ⅱ. Origin of Identity Crisis

1. Historical Determinants: Russia as a Geographically Dual Position

The drama of history is shaped by the natural setting, which cannot of itself determine but which facilitates certain lines of development and impedes others. Accordingly, the formation of national and group identities is closely linked to the notion of geography.[7] Territory itself becomes part of the national identity, with places and spaces taking on historical and, in many cases, mythical significance in the creation of the nation's historical narrative.[8]

People have often asked whether Russia belonged to the East or the West. Russia was seen as Asian in Europe and as European in Asia. It was an empire of the Oriental style mingling in and dependent upon the European world of nation-states, its political inferiors and cultural superiors. Because of its location, it had special needs, to rule the Asian style and to progress in technology, and to follow the Western style. The ability to do this made possible the building of the proud empire; also, stimulation and competition saved Russia from the depths of decadence that had overtaken isolated empires after two or three centuries of splendor.

It was obvious to Russians that if they could only thoroughly take over the ways of the West, the size of their realm would enable them to conquer the world. This made it possible that they could not come near doing, but they were able to build their greatness on a dual basis. "One leg is

7) Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, "Nation, State, and Identity at International Borders," in Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan (eds.), *In Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 145.

8) David Newman, "Boundaries, Borders, and Barriers," in Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan (eds.), *In Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 146.

Oriental-imperial-political; the other is Western-technological."[9] An imperial political structure made possible not only the governance of the huge empire but also the mobilization of its people and resources; on the other hand, the power-centered structure was always detrimental to trade, innovation, and industry, and it was necessary for Russia to take over and apply the achievements of a liberal, pluralistic civilization well enough to defend itself and overpower Asian people. The Russians could regard themselves as saviors of the world, bearers of the light, thanks to borrowed knowledge and imported machines.

Nevertheless, the two bases of Russian greatness were and are profoundly contradictory. The anomalous and uncertain role they imply has caused the Russians endless political and psychological difficulty. It has resulted in a deep ambivalence, or series of ambivalences or dualities, that writers have noted in various terms: the Asiatic substance and the European veneer; the mystical and the rational; the state and the people; the "black" masses and the modernized elite; the submissiveness of the people and their individualism or rebelliousness.[10] Russian foreign policy, political institutions, and culture have likewise been permeated with this duality, the basic uncertainty whether Russia should be considered an indefinite empire with a special destiny or a state among states, following in the stream of Western civilization. Russian duality is also clearly reflected in the organizational structures of the Russian Foreign Ministry and academic institutes. Consider, for example, the distinction between the 'occidental' and 'oriental' departments of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations or the Institute of 'oriental languages in which Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, along with Chinese and Japanese, are taught.'[11]

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9) Wesson, Robert G, *The Russian Dilemma* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974), p. 39.
10) Ibid., p. 40.
11) Seth Singleton, "Russia and Asia: The Emergence of 'Normal Relations'?" in Roger E. Kanet

The geopolitical basis of Russian history is, however, more subtle and complex than the obvious facts that Russia has an Eurasian heritage and that the lack of clear-cut or defensible boundaries was a major factor in the formation of the vast Russian empire. Russia grew up in the transition zone between Europe and Asia. Occupation of this zone meant that an indefinite space for expansion was opened to the Russians, although they did not cease to be Europeans on the edge of progressive European civilization.

By continual expansion, Russia became a political entity fundamentally different from the nation-states of Western Europe, and much of Russian politics becomes more comprehensible by comparison with such empires as the Roman or Chinese.[12] Yet, unlike most traditional universal empires, Russia has had powerful and progressive independent states as neighbors and has been partly shaped by intercourse with them. In other words, Russian politics has been and remains burdened by the overwhelming task of managing large numbers of alien peoples within its imperial body and at the same time competing and getting along with the Western state system. In this regard, the interplay of opposites, the peculiarities of the Russian career, political and psychological, and the profound ambivalences often noted by historians become more understandable.[13] Russia has been a mixture of East and West not merely in the trite sense suggested by its linking Eurasia but in the sense of mixing "Eurasian" empire with "Western" state, with all the consequent strains and ambiguities.[14]

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and Alexander V. Kozhemiakin (eds.), *The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 102.

12) The paradigm of the universal (continental) empire was much used by Arnold Toynbee in his *Study of History*; political aspects are developed by Robert G. Wesson, *The Imperial Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

13) Wesson (1967), pp. 3-29.

14) Ibid.

Russia occupies the heartland of Eurasia. As George Vernadsky pointed out, Russia has been placed by nature between East and West, constantly subject to pressure from both sides and itself capable of exerting pressure in either direction or both. The long and bloody Russian historical experience in Asia has left a deep imprint on Russian national psychology.

2. On the Asian Side

Geography has exerted a pervasive influence on Russian and Soviet perceptions of Asia. Russia and Asia are not contiguous, as the term *Sino-Russian frontier* implies, but overlap spatially and ethnically. Three quarters of Russia lies in Asia. One-third of Asia lies within Russia. Asia's spatial interpenetration with Russia is symbolized by the vast Eurasian plain, which stretches from the Urals to Mongolia. In the absence of major barriers, waves of migrations have moved across the plain for centuries, displacing or absorbing earlier inhabitants. The Russians are but the most recent wave. Awareness of the plain's historic permeability and ethnic evanescence leaves many Russians with a half-formed sense of territorial insecurity that manifests itself not only in the predilection for strong central authority but in what amounts to a national fixation on frontier defense.[15]

History has also left a deep imprint upon Russian views of Asia, particularly selected historical episodes that the regime uses to mobilize and channel public consciousness. Images of the Mongol conquest are triggered by shrewdly worded propaganda about the territorial appetites of "Great Han chauvinism.[16]" Japanese claims in the Kurile

15) Books and articles about frontier defense form a minor literary genre whose current state was manifested at a 1978 conference on Literature, Art, and the Defense of Sacred Boundaries of the Motherland.

Islands are portrayed as following a tradition of predatory designs on the Russian Far East from the Siberian Intervention (1918-22) to the miniwars around the Manchurian perimeter in 1937-39. Ominous motives are ascribed to nineteenth-century American commercial interests in the Amur region, to American involvement in the Siberian Intervention, and to Washington's wartime plans to occupy the Kurile Islands. Ubiquitously present in school curricula, books, and museums, these tinted images of the past pervade the Russian environment and shape the collective historical consciousness.

The cumulative weight of geography and history manifests itself both implicitly and explicitly in Russia's articulations about Asia. There is an acute sense of geopolitical vulnerability. For example, it is common to hear the opinion voiced that the Soviet Union had to cope with NATO in the west, China in the south, Japan in the east, and American strategic forces all around. Furthermore, there is immense concern about the tenuous logistical position of the Russian Far East, connected to European Russia only by the Trans Siberian Railroad, air, and circuitous sea routes via the Indian and Artic oceans. On the other hand, the specific gravity of Asia has become more important for Russia in terms of economics, geography, security, and so on. In particular, with the Baltic States and Ukraine becoming independent, Russia's only remaining maritime links with the outside world are through the major port facilities in Nakhodka, Vostochnyy and Vladivostok.[17)]

16) Han chauvinism is an ideology that speaks out for the ethnic Han Chinese people and its uniqueness throughout human history.

17) Suck-ho Lee, "Korea and Russian Security Cooperation," in Il Yung Chung (ed.), *Korea and Russia: Toward the 21st Century* (Seoul: The Sejong Institute, 1992), p. 249.

Ⅲ. Russian Foreign Policy and the Identity Debates

The debates on Russian foreign policy and, more generally, on the Russian self-image itself have always been about Russia's place in relation to the West. The question is again, is Russia Europe, or not? If it is not Europe, is it Asia or some alternative of its own distinct itself? This debate goes to the heart of the Russian character and it emerges at times of crisis or transition: during the time of Ivan IV and the Time of Troubles, the reign of Peter I, the late nineteenth century, and the present. Historical debate on Russia's relationship to Asia was carried on with great intensity by Russian intellectuals themselves, from Dostoevsky onward, but the best-known critique in the West was that by one of the founding fathers of the subject of "geopolitics," Sir Halford Mackinder. In 1881, Dostoevsky noted that,

> "What for? What future? What is the need for the future seizure of Asia? What's our business there? This is necessary because Russia is not only in Europe, but also in Asia; because the Russian is not only a European, but also Asians. Not only that: in our coming destiny, perhaps it is precisely Asia that represents our main way out…"
>
> "In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, whereas to Asia we shall go as masters. In Europe we were Asiatics, whereas in Asia we, too, are Europeans. Our civilizing mission in Asia will bribe our spirit and drive us thither. It is only necessary that the movement should start. Build two railroads: begin with the one to Siberia, and then to Central Asia, and at once you will see the consequences."[18)]

18) From Dostoevsky's article, "Goek-Tepe. Chto takoe Aziya dlya nas?," written in the aftermath of General Shkobelev's massacre of the Turkmens in 1881. See Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (St. Petersburg: Nabu Press, 1986), pp. 513-523, and *The Diary of a Writer*, translated and annotated by Boris Brasol (New York: Charles Scribner, 1949), pp. 1043-1052.

Yet, it is also important to keep in mind that for Dostoevsky, Asia was exemplified by Muslim Central Asia rather than by Buddhist Asia, because he regarded the Christian struggle against Islam and the opposition to the British world hegemony as Russia's legitimate aspirations. However, an extremist branch of frustrated Slavophiles appeared on the scene during the 1880s and turned their attention more exclusively to East Asia. Called the *Vostochniki* ("Easterners"), they preached that Russia's holy mission could no longer be accompanied in the regions of the traditional Pan-Slavist ideology, that is, in predominantly the Balkans and Eastern Europe, but rather in the opposite direction, in faraway Inner and East Asia.[19]

Meanwhile, in focusing attention on the development of a Russian-dominated "Heartland" in Eurasia, and in turn on the implications of that development for the other Great Powers (especially the maritime powers), Mackinder emphasized Russia's extraordinary position as both a European and an Asian, indeed, a Pacific Ocean country. Before Mackinder, Ratzel had already developed his concept of space as the basis of state power, and he designated North America and Russian Asia as the two major "powerhouses" of the future. But it was Mackinder who succeeded in marrying space and strategic location with the current dichotomy between land and sea power in an attractive and simple map.[20] Yet, Mackinder himself, when he first formulated his seminal thesis on the importance of Russia's Eurasian Heartland in 1904, remained completely ignored in Russia for many years. First, Russians did not need to be enlightened about their own Empire by some Western mentors, certainly not by Anglo-Saxons whom they suspected of evil schemes at a time of acute Anglo-Russian rivalry. They had their own fertile minds.

19) Milian Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?: Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 49.

20) Patrick O' Sullivan, *Geopolitics* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), p. 26.

At first sight, that double position appears as a massive advantage to Russia, the beneficial legacy of centuries of landward expansion from its original Muscovite core. But it is also a massive problem. Milan Hauner introduced an insurmountable ambivalence into Russian policy making —as one can observe at the present time in Gorbachev's efforts to claim that Russia is an integral part of a "common European home," while announcing in his Vladivostok speech in 1986 that it is a full member of the booming "Pacific rim."[21] The term Eurasia is, of course, a testimony to that ambivalence.

Ⅳ. Russia and Asia

1. Russian Perceptions of Asia and Its People

Due to the unique impact of history and geography, which combined the European and Asian portions of the Russian Empire, the Russians have long claimed a close and intimate relationship with Asia and its people. It is also important to note that Russians do understand Asia and its inhabitants better than do any other European people. According to Hauner, the basis of this strange claim is a combination of "collective suffering" and "territorial aggrandizement."[22] In other words, it was the special sacrifice of the Russian people that saved Europe from the Asiatic

21) "The East, especially Asia and the Pacific region, is now the place where civilization is stepping up its pace. Our economy in its development is moving to Siberia and to the Far East… The Soviet Union is an Asian, as well as European country, and it wants to see that the huge Asia-Pacific region, the area where world politics will most likely focus next century, has everything it needs to improve the situation in it, and that due account is taken of the interests of all states and of a balance between them. We are against this region being somebody's domain." See Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 180.

22) Hauner (1992), p. 21.

invaders; and their capacity to endure the Mongol occupation, which Nicholas Riasanovsky calls "the most traumatic historical experience of the Russian people,"[23] entitled the Russian people and government to special considerations for territorial expansion on the grounds of security.

Perhaps, not the least important element in Russian foreign policy in Asia is the Russian perception of Asia and Asians. Moreover, to understand the duality of Russian national identity, it is also necessary to examine Soviet and Russian perceptions of East Asia and its people, and to analyze how these concepts have evolved. Russian perceptions of this region and its people have evolved according to Russian or Soviet national interests at each stage throughout history. The Russian experience in Asia during the past several hundred years has been one of almost permanent war, invasion, or conquest. Soviet leaders' approaches to Northeast Asia prior to Gorbachev were colonial and imperialistic and intimately connected with security concerns. However, the economic significance of Siberian and Russian Far Eastern development, and the prosperity of Northeast Asian states have altered previous perceptions of this region.

In 1881, Dostoevsky noted that "to us Asia is like the then undiscovered America. With our aspiration for Asia, our spirit and the forces will be regenerated." In contrast to Europe, he went on in a prophetic mood, "Asia is our future outlet, our riches are there, there is our ocean, when in Europe, because of the overcrowded condition alone, inevitable and humiliating communism is established, communism which Europe herself will loathe."[24] Despite the fact that the Russians, among all

23) Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "Asia through Russian Eyes," in Wayne S. Vucinich (ed.), *Russia and Asia* (Stanford: Hoover, 1972), p. 5., see also George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia* (New Haven: Yale, 1953).

24) Dostoevsky (1986), pp. 513-523.

Europeans, had developed the most intimate relationship with the Asian world because of their history and geographical location, this knowledge was somehow lost in the European context. Moreover, the significance of Northeast Asia and its people was relatively minimal, compared with that of Central Asia, because it was located too far from Moscow.

Asian people, often, in an ambivalent Russian term, meant the almost unlimited capacity among Russians to identify themselves with Asia while showing their contempt for the Asian peoples and civilizations as utterly barbaric.[25] Consequently, the inhabitants of Asia came to be seen as inefficient and backward people. Until 1917 Asia to Russians represented variously a source of terror, an exotic subject of romantic speculations, and an object of imperialist idealism.[26]

Following the October Revolution, Russian self-images concerning Asia underwent a significant change. Lenin set about linking the Bolshevik revolutionary mission with anti-imperialist struggles in Asia and wooing Asian nationalities within the fledgling Soviet state. Russians were subsumed with Slavic and non-Slavic minorities into the "Soviet people," who were supposed to possess special qualifications for assisting in the liberation of all Asians.

Moscow has tried in various ways to capitalize on the USSR's self-image as an "Eurasian state."[27] Judicious use has been made of Soviet Asians in dealing with Asian countries.[28] Toasting a visiting Japanese foreign minister in 1941, Stalin proclaimed: "You are an Asiatic, so am I." At international conferences throughout Asia, Soviet

25) Hauner (1992), p. 14.

26) John Stephan, "Asia in the Soviet Conception," in Donald S. Zagoria (ed.), *Soviet Policy in East Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 35.

27) Mikhail S. Kapitsa, "Bor'ba SSSR za mir i sotrudnichestvo v Azii," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, No. 1 (1979), p. 31.

28) Geoffrey Jukes, *The Soviet Union in Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 64.

delegates of unmistakably Russian ethnicity have been overhead stressing that the USSR is an Asian country. Such expressions of solidarity notwithstanding, it is doubtful that the Russian people as a whole (particularly those subject to the current pull of Russian nationalism) feel ethnically or ideologically close to Asia.

Considerable commentary exists about Russian "gut" feelings toward Asians in general and toward the Chinese in particular. This commentary should be treated with caution, based as it is upon limited and not always reliable evidence. Even knowledgeable observers have fallen into the habit of overgeneralizing, asserting variously that Russian racial feeling against Asians is "strong and widespread"[29] or that Russians are virtually immune to racial prejudice.[30]

Moreover, the bizarre and ambivalent "Yellow Russia" movement (*Zhelto-Rossiya*), the most peculiar and extreme variant of the *Vostochniki*, was best illustrated in the writings and entrepreneurial activities of Prince Esper Ukhtomsky (1861-1921). As the owner of several newspapers, he was a close collaborator of Russia's leading statesman, Sergei Yu. Witte, in the Trans-Siberian Railway subject. He was also a tutor to the future emperor, Crown Prince Nicholas. Ukhtomsky developed a megalomaniacal vision based on a questionable theory about the alleged organic affinity of Russia with China, and even with India.[31] He was able to sing the praises of Chinese civilization, but his underlying leitmotiv assumed unmistakably the "Yellow Peril" threat

29) Sidney Monas, "Amalrik's Vision of the End," in Andrei Amalrik (ed.), *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 84.

30) George Vernadsky, "The Expansion of Russia," *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sceinces*, Vol. 31 (1933), p. 396; Klaus Mehnert, *Soviet Man and His World* (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 282-283.

31) Emanuel Sarkisyanz, *Russland und der Messianismus des Orients* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1955), pp. 154-167.

tone silently in the background. What the historian Andrew Malozemoff called the ideological essence of the *Vostochniki* is demonstrated in Ukhtomsky's statement.

> "Asia—we have always belonged to it. We have lived its life and felt its interests. Through us the Orient has gradually arrived at consciousness of itself, at a superior life…. We have nothing to conquer. All these people of various races felt themselves drawn to us, by blood, by tradition, and by ideas. We simply approach them more intimately. This great and mysterious Orient is ready to become ours."[32]

Thus, on the surface, one could say that the optimistic version of Russia's *Mission Civilisatrice* toward the East, one based on racial and cultural assimilation, or at least cooperation and tolerance, and which Venyukov heralded in the 1870s concerning Central Asia, was to be applied to East Asia. Witte, himself, was a proponent of the view that the Russian Empire, set between Europe and the Buddhist, Indian, and Islamic worlds, was a world to itself. In his 1893 memorandum to the Tsar, Witte contended that what made Russia different from the West was her unique national spirit. This spirit, apart from other elements providing her with the necessary cohesion (for example, geographical position, Orthodox Christianity, and autocracy), created "a strong kernel, closely united yet free from nationalistic exclusiveness, possessed of a vast capacity for friendly companionship and cooperation with most diverse races and people."[33]

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32) Andrew Malosemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy 1881-1904* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), pp. 43-44.

33) Benedict H. Sumner, "Russia and Europe," in Sergey Knonvalov (ed.), *Oxford Slavonic Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1951), pp. 1-16.

Perhaps the "Yellow Peril" debate was one of the most important factors in explaining the Russian perception of Northeast Asian people in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Russians feared the "Yellow Peril" threat. Russians were afraid of the overpopulation of Asian people in the Russian Far East because the thin Russian settlements in that region could not survive.[34] The Russian ambivalent attitudes towards Koreans in the Russian Far East clearly illustrate Russian fear of the "Yellow Peril." Russians initially welcomed the economic migrants who helped populate Russia's newly acquired eastern territories in the mid-19th century, and then feared that the thousands of Koreans who resided in these regions by the end of the century were creating a threat to Russians.[35] Stalin's deportation of 180,000 Koreans from the Russian Far East to Central Asia in the 1930s is somehow related to Russian fear of the "Yellow Peril" too. The fear of the "Yellow Peril" was the conspicuous manifestation of Russian racial imperialism, stating that inferior races were condemned either to submission by superior ones or to disappearance.[36]

The fear of the "Yellow Peril" still survives these days. For example, inspired by the four special economic zones established by China in the early 1980s, Moscow wanted to create similar free economic trade zones in the Far East, dubbed "Far Eastern Singapore," to attract foreign capital. The average Russian was hostile to the idea of letting in Asiatic guest-workers and entrepreneurs. "We would rather let the land go to waste than allow foreigners in," was the leitmotif of the vast majority of TV viewers who sent letters to a recent panel discussion entitled "The Asian-Pacific Region: Problems and Prospects for Development."[37]

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34) Ibid., pp. 49-63.

35) Vladimir Li, *Rossiia I Koreia v Geopolitike Evrazeiskogo Vostoka* (Moscow: Nauchnaia Kniga, 2000).

36) Malosemoff (1958), p. 43.

37) Milan Hauner, "Does the Soviet Far East Have a Future?" *RL/ Report on the USSR* (1989).

Moreover, in ten years, China will have between 240 and 260 million unemployed, mostly young and illiterate peasants, who may become restless. Chinese authorities recently admitted that they had been unsuccessful in implementing rigorous birth control measures. China's labor force is growing by an estimated 10 million a year, surpassing the country's capacity to create new jobs. And it is obvious where they would go if the Russian Far East is declared off-limits for Asians.

However, Russian perceptions of Northeast Asia changed significantly under Gorbachev. In his memorable Vladivostok speech of July 1986, Gorbachev stated that the East, specifically Asia and the Pacific region, is now the place where civilization is stepping up its pace, and the Soviet economy in its development is moving to Siberia and to the Far East. He added that the Soviet Union is an Asian, as well as European country, and it wants to see that the huge Asia-Pacific region, the area on which world politics will most likely focus in the next century, has everything it needs to improve its situation.[38] Gorbachev's speech clearly suggests that for the first time in Soviet history, the Soviet Union perceived Northeast Asia as a future economic and potential political partner.

Yeltsin's perception of Northeast Asia, in my opinion, does not depart from Gorbachev's. It is interesting, however, to note that, unlike in the Gorbachev period, the relationship between Northeast Asia and Russia under Yeltsin has been promoted when directed against the West. The deterioration of the relationship with the West was accompanied by a growing influence of *Evraziistvo* (Eurasianism). As many of its adherents saw it, the West's refusal to embrace Russia as an integral part of its civilization and organization left Moscow no choice but to turn away from Europe and the Atlantic and to search for its destiny in the friendlier confines of Asia. Close ties with China in the last few years vividly indicate

38) Gorbachev (1987), p. 180.

that Russia at least seems to seek a certain type of ally in response to Western NATO expansion and United States hegemony in international affairs. When Yeltsin visited Seoul in November 1992, Yeltsin delivered an important address to the Republic of Korea's National Assembly in which he stressed that Russian foreign policy is "turning from looking toward the West, Europe and the United States, to the Asia-Pacific region" and that South Korea is one of Russia's leading partners in the region.[39] However, Yeltsin still struggles with Japan over the issue of the Kuriles. On April 21, 1998, Moscow and Tokyo clashed anew over the territorial issue, even only a day after the amicable close of an informal summit meeting between Yeltsin and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto.

2. East Asia and Russian Identity Revisited?

Once again, just as Russian leaders looked to Europe as a role model for reforming their country throughout the centuries, the emergence of East Asia in the second half of the twentieth century prompted the Russian people to rethink their identity: Should they adopt the Western way or the Eastern way? Traditional early approaches considered the problem of Russian cultural and national duality within the framework of a superior European culture and a barbarian Oriental one. Such approaches are no longer relevant, considering today's achievements of East Asia. In the Asia-Pacific region, states that cannot keep pace with their economic-political transformation are highly likely to be excluded from their communities or to become the object of their hostile policies. Failure to keep up jeopardizes a major disaster for Russia.

The economic development of East Asia has been one of the significant

39) Peggy F. Meyer, "Russia's Post-Cold War Security Policy in Northeast Asia," *Pacific Affairs,* Vol. 67, No. 4 (1994), p. 506.

developments in the world in the twentieth century. East Asian economic development is altering the balance of power between Asia and the West. Successful economic development generates self-confidence and assertiveness on the part of those who produce it and benefit from it. As Samuel Huntington notes, wealth, like power, is assumed to be proof of virtue, a demonstration of moral and cultural superiority.

In this regard, the current challenge of the East toward the West in many ways resembles Putin's current advocacy of restoring the Russian people's self-respect and enhancing national pride after the collapse of the Soviet Union, or the continued the continued deep-rooted historical antagonisms toward the West throughout the centuries. Russia would not allow the West to reduce it into a secondary player in the international arena, nor to deprive it of an independent voice in world affairs.

Accordingly, to become a major regional economic power, Russia must first develop a coherent state and policy process, establishing a legitimate, law-abiding, and most of all, stable state with relatively predictable policies.[40] Otherwise, Russia's relative economic backwardness and fading military power will decline further, making Russia an unattractive partner for Asian states. The case of Chechnya and the military's general condition show what awaits a military establishment that loses its economic-political foundations.

Perhaps, at present, Atlanticism and Eurasianism represent two different trends in today's Russian foreign policy. These two terms appeared soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union and addressed the questions of Russia's national interests and the orientation of its foreign

40) Shalendra D. Sharma, "Neo-Classical Political Economy and the Lessons from East Asia," *International Studies Notes of the International Studies Association,* Vol. 20, No. 2 (1995), pp. 22-27 demonstrates that effective state is a *sine qua non* of development in Asia and probably for states like Russia as well.

policy. Eurasianists rejected what they described as uncritical acceptance of Western political and economic ideals. As Margot Light noted, this does not mean that they are the same as the extreme Eurasian views of the nineteenth century, since Russia had already been irretrievably Europeanized.[41] Today's Eurasianism is more of a modified Eurasianism, entailing a balance of Western and Eastern orientations.[42] It was neither anti-democratic nor really anti-Western. They simply argued for a more rational analysis of Russia's national interests and for a balanced policy. As far as domestic developments were concerned, they were firmly democratic, and they supported the construction of a market economy.[43] Eurasianists argued that Russia's geographic position— spanning vast territories across both Europe and Asia —left Moscow no choice but to develop extensive participation in the affairs of both continents. In fact, some Eurasianists suggested that Russia assume the role of a bridge connecting Europe and Asia, and many insisted that the Kremlin concentrate its attention on the East, not the West. Not surprisingly, many adherents of this school of thought were connected with the old Soviet institutes and think tanks devoted to the study of Asian affairs.[44]

Among the initial indications of the existence of Eurasianist thinking was an article written by Sergei Goncharov, head of the Sino-Soviet section at the Institute of the Far East of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). In it, Goncharov objected to Moscow's preoccupation with the West "as a development model and a business partner" and warned the

41) Margot Light, "Foreign Policy Thinking: National Identity and the Culture of Debate," in Neil Malcom and Alex Pravda (eds.), *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 47.

42) Ibid.

43) Ibid., p. 48.

44) Oles M. Smolansky, "Russia and the Asia-Pacific Region: Policies and Polemics," in Stephan J. Blank and Alvin Z. Rubinstein (eds.), *Imperial Decline: Russia's Changing Role in Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 7-8.

Kremlin not to neglect other region, such as "China and the Islamic world," that were of great importance to Russia.

Another early exponent of Eurasianist thinking was a well-known politician, State Counselor Sergei Stankevich. Writing in March 1992, he outlined Atlanticism as a foreign policy line that favored Russia's rapid integration with Europe and the general world economy. More specifically, its adherents wanted Russia to join the Group of Seven (G-7), an organization of the most developed industrial nations, and to establish particularly close ties with the United States and Germany—the "dominant members of the Atlantic alliance." It is important to note that Stankevich and other Eurasianists did not reject Atlanticism out of hand; after all, it was the industrially advanced nations that could deliver what Russia needed most: credits, economic assistance, and advanced technology. What Stankevich and others objected to was the Kremlin's tilt toward the West at the expense of other parts of the world, most notably Asia. They maintained that the dissolution of the Soviet Union confronted Moscow with a new geopolitical reality—Russia was "separated from Europe by a whole chain of independent states." This, in Stankevich's account, required a redistribution of "our resources, our possibilities, our ties and our interest in favor of Asia." In addition to geopolitics, Russia's economic weakness made competition with the West impossible, leaving Moscow no choice but to look for trade opportunities elsewhere. In this regard, too, Asia merited the Kremlin's attention. In short, Stankevich believed that Eurasianism was bound to emerge as a legitimate and important factor in the foreign policy decision-making process because Moscow will have to look for a new balance of Western and Eastern orientations that is distinctive to today's Russia.

3. Russia's Limitations in Asia

In Asia, Russia still remains a second-class citizen across much of the region, excluded from many regional organizations and negotiations. In the longer run, Russians recognize that their position in the region is weak. Asia is a region of large and powerful countries, marked by rapidly growing wealth and technological advancement. In Asia, Russia is a rather small and fragile country. Even a prosperous and technologically advanced Russia would still remain a relatively small player in Asia—and at present, it is neither. The South Koreans, not to mention the Japanese, are far ahead of Russia in both respects. So is southern coastal China. To make a different comparison, today the city of Shanghai has a larger economic product, a greater population, and possibly a higher standard of living than all of Russia from Lake Baikal to the Arctic and the Pacific. Moreover, many of its East Asian neighbors, for example, seem reluctant to accept Russia unconditionally, still fearing its military heritage and its frequent tendency to behave in unpredictable ways. Throughout a thousand years of vicissitudinous relations, there ran a sense of apartness from Asia, notwithstanding the geographic "Asianness" of much of Russia's territory after 1600.[45] Yet if Russians did not identify themselves with Asians, they did not fully assimilate European culture either. The result was an uneasy suspension between East and West.

Someone might argue that Russia is not unique in having a double position; the United States, being both an Atlantic and a Pacific power, is another good example. Why should it be such a problem for Russia?

First, the physical difficulties still have placed severe limitations on the amount of communications between Russia and Siberia, or Russian

45) Stephan (1982), p. 35.

Far East; in so many ways, they are separated countries, whereas a vast network of air, rail, and road links binds each side of the United States into a geographical integrity that is now so obvious as to be taken for granted. Indeed, the Russian geographical situation is vulnerable, particularly considering the inadequate, exposed lines of transportation and communications linking the areas to the power center. By extension, the precarious connections between Russia and the Far East virtually compel Soviet military planners to assume that, in the event of war, they must fight virtually separate campaigns.

The major obstacles are the Russian climate and the enormous distances separating the Far East from the centers of industrial production in the western regions of Russia. For example, Russia's traditional industrial centers of manufacturing also comprise the bulk of its European population in the cis-Ural regions (between 70 to 75 percent in both cases); on the other hand, nearly 90 percent of its energy and mineral resources are found in the trans-Ural territories. But the wasteful expansion of the extractive industries east of the Urals is only one factor characterizing the steady eastward shift of the Empire's center of gravity.[46] In the eastern part of the country, 60 to 80 percent of the mineral resources have not yet been exploited.[47] These obstacles can be partly overcome through the economic development of Asian Russia, the improvement of the east-west transportation network, the expansion of ocean shipping, and the prepositioning of military and other needed supplies. However, such measures require substantial time as well as economic and human resources, thus competing with other demands on the far-from-affluent Russian economy.

The demographic and social forces of Asian nations, those living

46) Hauner (1992), p. 8.

47) Lee (1992), p. 249.

within or outside the contemporary boundaries of the Soviet Eurasian Empire, constitute another powerful factor complicating Russia's age-long eastern drive toward integration and assimilation with Asian territories, which today comprise three-quarters of the Empire. Although the climatic and physical obstacles of Siberia, as well as the great distances between the European metropolis and the far-flung Pacific region, can be conquered to a considerable degree by technology, capital, and forced labor, the ethnic, cultural, and racial diversities require much more subtle human efforts.[48)]

Today's Russia has experienced a critical structural transformation at this moment, resulting from the socioeconomic and ethno-cultural tensions between the center and the periphery and along the west-east and north-east axes of its spatial polarization. Whereas the Americans have been more successful under much more advantageous geographic, climatic, and most of all, political conditions during the last 100 years in integrating their empire from shore to shore and avoiding the dichotomy between the center and periphery, the Russians achieved their aim almost exclusively by military means. According to Hauner, their Eurasian empire of today is a living anachronism of a bygone imperial mission and of an outlived autarkic concept of economic and social organization.[49)] Even inside the Empire, louder voices are asking how a third-rate economic power could afford a superpower military machine.

Second, most of all, Russia's weak position is closely related to the 'hostility' between Russia and East Asian nations, which originated from

48) Leslie Dienes, "Central Asia and the Soviet 'Midland': Regional Position and Economic Integration," in Milan Hauner and Robert Canfield (eds.), *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union: Collision and Transformation* (Boulder: Westview, 1989), pp. 61-100 and Leslie Dienes's excellent monograph, *Soviet Asia: Economic Development and National Policy Choices* (Boulder: Westview, 1987). See also Hauner (1992), p. 8.

49) Hauner (1992), p. 253.

mutual distrust. For example, a deep-seated hostility and sense of resentment in Russian attitudes toward Japan, along with a mixture of racism about Asians and insecurity about themselves, dates back to the struggle for dominance in Northeast Asia, which Russia lost in the 1904-5 war. Nicholas II himself called the Japanese "little yellow monkeys." Furthermore, Russians remember the Japanese siding with the White armies during the Civil War and invading Vladivostok, where they defeated the Red Army. The aggressive Japanese empire of the 1930s moved into Manchuria and North China, testing the Soviet position in Outer Mongolia. Moreover, Japanese cooperation with fascist Germany and Italy raised the specter of a simultaneous attack on Soviet territory from Europe and East Asia.

Russian-Japanese relations were shaped by a general cultural disaffection, although the negative feelings were even stronger on the Japanese side. Opinion surveys found that only 17.6 percent of Japanese considered their attitude toward the Soviet Union and its people as "sympathetic," while 47.4 percent described their attitude as "antipathetic." Soviet respondents, by comparison, were much more favorably inclined toward Japan and its people— 88 percent were "sympathetic", and only 2.4 percent "antipathetic."[50] To the Japanese, Russia has been a country that is fairly untrustworthy and incapable of cooperating throughout the century. Even before the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, Yukichi Fukuzawa, a Japanese diplomat, who visited Russia a few years after the first Russo-Japanese treaty of 1855, stated that Russia was a country in which Japan could not safely unburden its minds.[51]

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50) These opinion surveys were conducted by the Soviet Academy of Sciences Institute of Sociological Studies and the Japanese newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun.* Quoted from International Affairs, "USSR-Japan: Headed for a New Beginning," *International Affairs*, No. 3 (1989), pp. 154-155.

51) Eiichi Kiyooka, *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1960), p. 137.

Japan continued to perceive the Soviets as aggressors. They claim that the Soviet Union entered the war in the Pacific in its final days, in violation of the non-aggression pact, and proceeded to realize its irredentist goals in the Far East.[52)]

Mutual distrust is still prevalent even between the two current nations. Russians typically argue that Japan was responsible for the poor state of relations between the two, while criticizing Japan's political dogmatism. They condemn Japan's stubborn insistence on unresolved territorial issues and unwillingness to conclude a treaty on good-neighborliness and cooperation. Yeltsin rejected Japan's humanitarian aid to Sakhalin earthquake victims because he suspected that Tokyo might take advantage of the situation to press harder for the return of the Kurile Islands.

On the other hand, the Japanese criticized Russian policy as being arbitrary, untrustworthy, unpredictable, and imperialistic. In response to Yeltsin's abrupt cancellation of his trip to Japan in 1992, the Japanese criticized Russians harshly, claiming that "They are liars through and through. They have not changed. That is the old Russian way— dirty." The title, "That is Why Russians Can't Be Trusted" was on the cover of a popular magazine during that period.[53)] Besides, the Japanese suspected Russia of attempting to isolate Japan when Yeltsin visited three major Asian nations in the month after the failed Tokyo summit. Moreover, the Russian navy's dumping of radioactive nuclear waste into the Sea of Japan just days after Yeltsin promised to stop this practice, and Russian coast guard attacks on Japanese fishermen elevated Japanese hostility toward Russia even further. When asked if Japan and

52) Charles E. Ziegler, *Foreign policy and East Asia: Learning and Adaptation in the Gorbachev Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 27-29.

53) William F. Nimmo, *Japan and Russia: A Reevaluation in the Post-Soviet Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 1.

Russia ought to make their relationship even closer, only 28 percent of Japanese answered affirmatively. Russians, when asked what they thought of the Japanese people, indicated a "feeling of friendship to some extent." Japanese, on the other hand, indicated that they "do not have a feeling of friendship very greatly."

Moreover, it is even more intriguing to observe that the mutual distrust between the two countries has developed in quite superstitious ways. In the unique Asian and Russian culture, the fate of Russian leaders who visited Japan became an interesting subject while explaining the chronically hostile relations between the two countries. Gorbachev was not only kidnapped within four months of his return from Tokyo and removed from office within eight months of his Japan visit, but also forced to preside over the demise of the Soviet Union. The other Russian leader visited Japan exactly 100 years earlier. His name was Nicholas, and he made the trip in 1891 while still the crown prince. When Nicolas visited Otsu (near Kyoto), a Japanese policeman, reacting to rumors of a Russian invasion of Japan, stabbed the crown prince with a saber. He was not so seriously wounded and returned to Russia. Three years later, he became Tsar Nicholas II. In 1917, the fate of his family and that of Tsarist Russia is well known. Any Russian leaders would be well-advised to consider the fate of the two previous leaders who visited Japan. Perhaps, at least in Asian or Russian culture, the fate of the two countries is doomed to be incompatible.

From the Korean perspective, Russia remains a country that cannot be trusted. As in the case of the relationship between Japan and Korea, Russia and Korea could be labeled as "neighboring but distant countries. There is no doubt that the Soviet Union played a crucial role in dividing Korea. North Koreans could not even trust the Russians at the helm of the Soviet Union to do what was best for Korea. When the Korean War flared up, South Korea learned that it could rely on Americans, whereas

North Koreans realized that China could be counted on for armed assistance more than the Soviet Union. Even though South Korea's enmity was largely channeled toward their North Korean rivals, South Koreans felt strong hostility toward Russians due to anti-communist Cold War rhetoric. Animosity increased even further due to the Soviet shoot-down of Korean Air Lines (KAL) Flight 007 over Sakhalin Island in 1983. Although South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan had earlier that year declared his "northern policy," which is a continuation of his predecessor, Park Chung Hee's attempts to achieve an accommodation with the communist world, the KAL incident brought this policy quickly to a halt.[54] The following famous Korean rhyme from the late 19th century clearly suggests that anti-Russian feelings were rooted among Koreans even before the Cold War began.

> Don't be cheated by Russians,
> Don't rely on Americans,
> The Japanese are rising again,
> So, Koreans, be careful.

In the early 20th century, the Bolshevik ideology came to shape anew the thoughts of a whole generation of youth living in Korea. Young Koreans began to see an alternative to domination. They interpreted the Japanese yoke as being a consequence of Japanese imperialism and concluded that there could be no peace or independence under the style of capitalism imposed by Japan. It appeared to them that socialism could bring peace and national independence to Korea. They sought a means for liberation that took exception to the nationalists, who believed national unity to be a basic priority in the struggle against Japan.[55]

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54) Natalia Bazhanova, "North Korea and Seoul-Moscow Relations," in Il Yung Chung (ed.), *Korea and Russia: Toward the 21st Century* (Seoul: The Sejong Institute, 1992), p. 342.

The immediate presence of the Soviet Union near the northern frontier of the Korean peninsula strengthened the belief among many Korean leftists that the Soviet Union would provide material aid and moral assistance to the Korean national liberation movement. From the Korean communists' perspective, the Soviet Union was even considered to be the mother country of the world proletariat and thus of the Korean proletariat too. Despite the aspirations of these Korean radicals, however, the Soviet Union made no significant contributions to Korea's drive for independence. Contrary to their messianic propaganda, the Soviet Union's real concern was rather narrow and limited to its national interest rather than with people who were suffering under Japanese rule.[56]

Third, the shift in Russian foreign policy from initial, nearly exclusive preoccupation with the Western "third circle" to the countries bordering the CIS is somewhat unclear when it comes to the Far East. In the nineteenth century, Russia's policy toward its Eastern neighbors tended to be marked by increased activism whenever its fortunes in the West declined. Thus, for example, Russia's failure to gain control of the Black Sea straits following the Russo-Turkish War (1878) reoriented Russian attention to Central Asia and the Far East.[57] This pattern of reorientation toward the East was repeated in the late 1980s, when the crumbling and ultimate collapse of Soviet holdings in Eastern Europe and the USSR itself resulted in ever-growing Russian activism in the East.[58]

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55) Hee Young Kwon, "The Soviet Union and Divided Korea," in Il Yung Chung (ed.), *Korea and Russia: Toward the 21st Century* (Seoul: The Sejong Institute, 1992), pp. 31-32.

56) Ibid.

57) See Aleksei V. Ignat'ev, "The Foreign Policy of Russia in the Far East in the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Hugh Ragsdale (ed.), *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

58) Hung P. Nguyen, "Russia and China: The Genesis of Eastern Rapallo," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1993).

V. Conclusion

This paper examined Russia's relationship with Asia through the lens of its distinctive national identity—an area that has received limited attention from Western scholars. This study analyzed the importance of the origin of Russia's continued identity crisis, as well as its impact on Russian foreign policy. The uniqueness of this study primarily stems from a great departure from the previous Western-led studies of Russia's national identity, of being a predominantly European in approach to perceiving Asia as a backward authoritarian regime. The main focus of this paper is the nexus between Russia's Asiatic characteristics and the economically advanced East Asia. Historically, Russia's image and presence in Asia have been shaped by perceptions of ignorance, weakness, fear, military defeat, and the lasting trauma of the Mongol invasion.

Since Vladimir Putin's rise to power, Russia has made a deliberate strategic pivot toward East Asia, gradually distancing itself from Europe. This shift is largely driven by East Asia's growing importance in economic security. Since the early 2000s, Putin has emphasized the need to balance Russia's energy exports between Asia and Europe. Until recently, Russia maintained relatively stable and non-provocative relations with Asian countries.

The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, however, dramatically altered Russia's global relationships, including those in Asia. Notably, North Korea has emerged as Russia's only firm ally, providing substantial military support, including weapons and personnel. Nevertheless, Russia continues to pursue positive ties with other Asian nations amid the ongoing conflict. In particular, Russia has extended conciliatory gestures toward South Korea, expressing interest in restoring diplomatic relations. Russian officials have voiced hope that South

Korea might become the first among currently "unfriendly" nations to re-engage diplomatically with Moscow.

Putin's eastward turn has gained substantial momentum over the past two decades. Yet, in keeping with Russia's dual identity, its approach to Asia remains twofold. Economically, Russia and its Asian partners share mutual interests, particularly in energy and consumer goods trade. Whether Russia can maintain goodwill in Asia while exerting pressure on Europe remains an open question.

Geopolitically, Putin's deepening alignment with Kim Jong Un poses a significant regional security challenge. If Putin were to draw inspiration from Peter the Great and consider relocating the capital, the prospect of Vladivostok gaining new prominence would align with both Russia's dual identity and the shifting global order.

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[국문초록]

러시아는 아시아 멤버 국가가 될 수 있는가?: 러시아의 이중 국가 정체성에 대한 재검토

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러시아는 역사적으로 혹은 운명적으로 러시아의 상징, 문장이 보여주듯이 두 마리의 독수리가 서로 다른 대륙을 쳐다보고 있다. 이 모습에서 볼 수 있듯이, 러시아는 유럽과 아시아로부터 침략을 번복하면서 양 대륙으로부터 큰 영향을 받아왔다. 따라서 이미 학계에서도 많이 제기되었지만, 러시아는 매우 독특한 국가정체성을 보유하고 있으며, 때로는 이 정체성 이슈가 외교정책에 독특한 방식으로 상당부분 투영이 되어왔다. 제정 러시아 시절부터 자주 등장했던 유라시아 학파와 서구학파와의 대립 또한 구소련, 현재 러시아 연방 시절을 거치면서 그때 그때 다른 형태로 진화하거나 변화되어왔다. 특히 서구학자 중심의 러시아 학계가 그동안 많이 등한시 해왔던 러시아와 아시아 간의 관계와 아시아의 영향력 이슈는 아시아 지역에서조차 많이 연구되지 않는 것이 사실이다. 본 연구는 그런 의미에서 러시아와 아시아 간의 교류와 러시아 외교에 미친 아시아의 영향력과 러시아가 아시아를 바라보는 인식을 다시 집중 탐구한다. 또한 본 연구는 이러한 러시아의 본격적인 아시아로의 회귀 정책이 푸틴에 의해 본격적으로 구체화되고 있으며, 급기야 우크라이나와의 전쟁을 통해서 더욱더 확고하게 추진된다고 주장한다. 여기서 더 나아가서 본 전쟁기간 중 급기야 북한이라는 유일한 아시아 군사동맹국의 막대한 지원을 받으면서, 러시아의 친 아시아 정책은 러시아의 잠재되어왔던 아시아적인 국가정체성을 한층 더 부각시킬 것이다. 또한 흥미로운 점은 전통적으로 동아시아 지역에서, 러시아의 이미지 자체가 그리 탄탄하지 않거나 다소 문제국으로 각인이 되면서 그동안 러시아의 한계점을 보여주었지만, 현재 러시아와 유럽의 보이거나 보이지 않는 전쟁으로 인하여, 향후 푸틴의 아시아 피벗 전략은 분명 이전과는 다르게 진행될 것으로 보인다.

주제어: 러시아, 아시아, 한국, 러시아 외교, 국가정체성

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