

Reenergizing the Russia-ASEAN Relationship: The Eurasian Opportunity

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While Russia's policy in Southeast Asia (SEA) encounters serious deficiencies, in 2016, plans to raise the Russia-ASEAN relationship to the level of strategic partnership were announced at the top level. The puzzle is how cooperation between Russia and ASEAN in Eurasia can lay the foundation for their strategic partnership. The article gives insights into Russia's policy in SEA through the prism of ASEAN prospective plans, traces the increase in bilateral cooperation in Eurasia, and assesses the potential of the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU format and its implications for Russia's policy in SEA. The authors argue that the Russia-ASEAN strategic partnership will be premised upon their cooperation in Greater Eurasia, which will give a strong impetus to Russia's policy in SEA. The article identifies the reasons behind premising the planned Russia-ASEAN strategic partnership on Greater Eurasia's foundation, the obstacles the parties will have to overcome, and the impact of this cooperation upon Russia-ASEAN connectivity.

Key words: ASEAN, Eurasia, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Russia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

尽管俄罗斯在东南亚(SEA)的政策存在严重缺陷, 俄罗斯高层仍在2016年宣布将俄罗斯-东盟关系提升到战略伙伴关系水平。俄罗斯与东盟在欧亚大陆的合作如何为两国的战略伙伴关系奠定基础是个难题。本文从东盟未来规划的角度分析了俄罗斯针对东南亚实施的政策, 研究了欧亚大陆双边合作的增长, 并评估了东盟—上合—欧亚经济联盟合作模式的潜力以及其对俄罗斯东南亚政策的影响。笔者认为, 俄罗斯—东盟战略伙伴关系将以它们在大欧亚大陆的合作为前提, 这将有力地推动俄罗斯的东南亚政策。本文说明了在大欧亚大陆基础上建立俄罗斯-东盟战略伙伴关系计划的背后原因, 各方必须克服的障碍, 以及双边合作对俄罗斯—东盟互联互通的影响。

关键词: 东盟, 欧亚经济联盟, 欧亚, 俄罗斯, 上海合作组织

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Mientras que la política de Rusia en el sudeste asiático (SEA) encuentra serias deficiencias, en 2016 los planes para elevar la relación Rusia-ASEAN al nivel de asociación estratégica se anunciaron en el nivel superior. El enigma es cómo la cooperación entre Rusia y la ASEAN en Eurasia puede sentar las bases de su asociación estratégica. El artículo da una idea de la política de Rusia en la EAE a través del prisma de los planes prospectivos de la ASEAN, rastrea el aumento de la cooperación bilateral en Eurasia y evalúa el potencial del formato ASEAN-SCO-EAEU y sus implicaciones para la política de Rusia en la EAE. Los autores argumentan que la asociación estratégica Rusia-ASEAN se basará en su cooperación en la Gran Eurasia, lo que dará un fuerte impulso a la política de Rusia en la EAE. El artículo identifica las razones detrás de la premisa de la asociación estratégica planificada entre Rusia y la ASEAN sobre la base de la Gran Eurasia, los obstáculos que las partes deberán superar y el impacto de esta cooperación sobre la conectividad entre Rusia y la ASEAN.

Palabras clave: ASEAN, Unión Económica Euroasiática (EAEU), Eurasia, Rusia, Organización de Cooperación de Shanghai (SCO)

During Russia's difficult times in the 1990s, Lee Kuan Yew, one of the most prominent political figures in contemporary history as well as the figure behind many of ASEAN's success stories, mentioned that Russia's failure as a great nation was misleading (Yew, 2000). Among other interpretations, this signaled that Russia would not be dismissed from ASEAN's strategic calculations in the future.

As the current developments suggest, this future seems to have arrived. In the midst of the anti-Russian economic and propaganda war, the leaders of the states belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) not only came to Russia to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the ASEAN-Russia Full Dialogue Partnership, but more importantly agreed to raise the relations to the level of strategic partnership. At a minimum, this demonstrates that despite a lack of breakthroughs, ASEAN and Russia have similar visions of the present as well as the forthcoming international trends. At a maximum, coupled with other directions of Russia's and ASEAN's policies, this shows their preference for a multipolar world order as only that can give them the chances for an advantageous future.

Emerging from these developments are new and complex questions about the forthcoming evolution of the Russia-ASEAN relations and the substance of the planned strategic partnership. From the practical perspective, the move to a truly strategic partnership that lives up to its name implies expanding Russia-ASEAN relations far beyond their present scope as well as embracing cooperation in the geopolitical and geoeconomic areas of Greater Eurasia where the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) can play a pivotal role. To substantiate why this expansion will lay the foundation for the forthcoming Russia-ASEAN strategic partnership and, by implication, upgrade Russia's policy in Southeast Asia (SEA) is a timely and relevant exercise.

Starting from the identification of the main obstacles in the Russia-ASEAN relationship against the growing strategic congruence in their perceptions of international processes, this article reveals the reasons behind Russia's and

ASEAN's interest in developing cooperation in Eurasia. It then turns to discussing the format of ASEAN-SCO-EAEU, as agreed upon at the Russia-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in Sochi in May 2016, through the prism of the planned Russia-ASEAN strategic partnership in order to finally assess the prospects of the Russia-ASEAN cooperation in Eurasia for Russia's policy in SEA. The conclusion summarizes the foregoing analysis.

Deep-Rooted problems and emerging tasks

Since the establishment of the Russia-ASEAN Full Dialogue Partnership, critics have continuously charged that it is not living up to its true potential (Martynova, 2014; Rangsimaporn, 2009; Sumsy et al., 2012). As seen from the Russian perspective, a fundamental reason has been Russia's failure to coordinate its projects in SEA with ASEAN strategic planning. The latter concentrates mainly upon the narrative of connectivity by embracing three dimensions: physical connectivity, institutional connectivity, and people-to-people connectivity.

In the realm of physical connectivity, the Russia-ASEAN relations encounter numerous shortcomings. The key reason is the poor level of transport infrastructure in the Russian Far East and its insufficient integration into the logistics network of the Asia-Pacific region. The high costs of transport services in Russia, as compared to those in the Asia-Pacific countries, also matter. The Russian air transportation market is sensitive to increases in the cost of jet fuel, which increases expenditures on the aviation fleet and air cargo traffic maintenance. According to the Federal Agency for Air Transport, as of December 2017, the average price of jet fuel in Russia was \$826 per ton (Federal Agency for Air Transport, 2018), while in Asia and Oceania, it accounted for \$632 per ton (IATA, 2018). The low throughput capacity of the Russian ports and railways, mainly the Trans-Siberian Railway, as well as the absence of direct flights between large Russian (apart from Moscow) and SEA cities, adds to the Russia-ASEAN physical connectivity deficiencies.

Against this background, it is hardly surprising that the Russia-ASEAN total trade in goods accounted for just 16.7 billion dollars in 2017. This is dramatically lower than the corresponding exchanges between ASEAN and its other dialogue partners (see Table 1).

The institutional realm of connectivity is presented by the structures of the Russia-ASEAN Full Dialogue Partnership. The main platforms are the Russia-ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), the ASEAN-Russia Joint Cooperation Committee (ARJCC), the ASEAN-Russia Joint Planning and Management

Table 1. ASEAN Trade with Dialogue Partners, 2017, Billion Dollars

China	436.8
USA	233.1
Japan	217.9
South Korea	152.5
India	73.5
Russia	16.7

Source: ASEAN Statistics Web Portal (2018). Retrieved from <https://data.aseanstats.org/trade>.

Committee (ARJPMC), the ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership Financial Fund (ARDPFF), the ASEAN-Russia Business Council (ARBC), the ASEAN-Russia Working Group on Science and Technology (ARWGST), and the Post Ministerial Conferences (PMCs+1) (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016). This multidivisional organizational structure, however, does little to unlock the true potential of the Russia-ASEAN cooperation and allows it only to maintain contacts at the level of reasonable sufficiency.

There are several reasons why this relationship does not live up to its potential. State agencies do not always provide these institutional frameworks with the necessary support. The agendas of the ARJCC and ARJPMC extend beyond economic cooperation and overlap with the responsibility of the ASEAN-Russia Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG CTTC). Cumbersome bureaucratic procedures prolong both the selection and implementation of projects.

The people-to-people dimension of the Russia-ASEAN connectivity remains underdeveloped as well. In SEA, Russia has no ethnic diaspora involved in economic exchanges to an extent comparable to that of China and India. Labor migration between Russia and the ASEAN countries is largely absent. Russia lacks recognizable brands and goods of mass consumption in SEA markets, and the majority of the Russian small and medium-sized businesses do not see SEA as commercially promising. Personal connections between the management of the economic champions in Russia and SEA countries are virtually nonexistent. The academic and student exchange programs are still sporadic, although the ASEAN Center at MGIMO University deserves high appreciation for developing them to an ongoing and sustainable basis.

The key reasons behind the weak Russia-ASEAN connectivity can be summarized as follows. First, the USSR and the Russian Federation did not participate in the regional supply production chains or, to put it differently, in the process of East Asian regionalization. Second, Russia is almost completely ignorant about the possibilities of free trade agreements (FTAs) as a tool to promote its economic interests while the FTA between the EAEU and Vietnam remains just a trial exercise. Third, until recently, Russia has been far from attempting to integrate its business interactions with SEA states in a large-scale geopolitical project with ASEAN as its part, which would even partially resemble cooperation between the USSR and Vietnam during the Cold War.

Coupled with this poor economic performance are ASEAN's and Russia's differing strategic visions about each other. For ASEAN, Russia's pivot to the Asia-Pacific region signifies primarily Moscow's siding with Beijing, a point substantiated by Russia's solidarity with China's position on the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) decision on the South China Sea issue and the Russian-Chinese naval exercises in this maritime area in September 2016. Russia is not part of the RCEP, the main ASEAN-led mega-initiative of economic regionalism that, if implemented successfully, will lead to a qualitative increase of ASEAN's international status. Last but not least in significance, Russia is a marginal role-player in urgent need of influence on regional political-security issues, the key being the narrative about the Indo-Pacific region and the evolution of the Quadrilateral Defense Cooperation format. However, seen from the Russian angle, the direction of its ASEAN policy to a considerable extent remains a

function of its relationship with China whereas in its cooperation with ASEAN, the imbalance in favor of Vietnam is conspicuous.

By identifying these obstacles Russia-ASEAN cooperation, a stark reality should be accepted: the long-term and complex nature of the obstacles does not allow them to be overcome quickly. Strong infrastructure is formed over years, while establishing brands takes decades, and economically thriving and politically influential ethnic communities can require centuries. At the same time, Russia and ASEAN must develop a relationship within the limited time available. Resolving this task implies expanding it beyond its present scope.

Simultaneously, ASEAN and Russia must formulate responses to similar challenges generated from the fundamental trend: in its present form, globalization does not offer the world equitable and sustainable development. As the Russian expert Viktor Sumsy observed in the year of ASEAN's 15th anniversary, "The time has come for ASEAN and its members to face the moment of truth. ...It is the time to say goodbye to the illusions that the epoch when humankind faced the threat of major wars allegedly sank into oblivion with the end of the Soviet-American confrontation; and that the guarantee of everlasting peace is general economic interdependence that would be created through globalization and would make fighting wars detrimental to those who fight. It is the time when American-style globalization looks less and less like a process which it is possible and necessary to join with the maximum benefit to oneself" (Sumsy, 2017). The coming "globalization of mistrust" generates Russia's and ASEAN's parallel search for responses to the same predicaments.

Neither Russia nor ASEAN seems to know how to simultaneously maintain friendly relations with China and India as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) develops. In the future, the Russian-Chinese conjugation of the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) and the EAEU might very well lead to India's dissatisfaction. ASEAN anticipates negative repercussions due to the Sino-Indian disagreements over the BRI project in SEA (Jha, 2015; Mulay, 2017). How to offer both Asian giants a cooperative agenda is a task of uppermost significance for Russian and ASEAN top experts and policymakers, especially as there are no easy solutions in sight. The ongoing escalation of traditional and nontraditional security challenges generates concerns in Russia and ASEAN, which is reflected in joint documents such as the Sochi Declaration of the ASEAN-Russian Federation Commemorative Summit, Comprehensive Plan of Action to Promote Cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Russian Federation 2005–2015 and 2016–2020, and Statement of ASEAN and Russia Ministers of Foreign Affairs on the Joint Effort to Counter International Terrorism (ASEAN–Russia Summit, 2016b).

In the case of traditional security challenges, the tensions between Russia and the United States over combating international terrorism in the Middle East couples with NATO's expanded operational and combat training with a de facto anti-Russian component. The inroads the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS, forbidden in Russia) make in SEA coincide with the steady development of the North Korean nuclear and missile programs, which undermine ASEAN's plans to make SEA a nuclear weapons-free zone.

Russia and ASEAN search for an alternative to the Western-led global order. In particular, the Sochi Declaration of the ASEAN-Russian Commemorative

Summit implies that the parties reaffirm commitment to the principles and norms of international law enshrined in the UN Charter, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), including mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, noninterference in internal affairs, and the non-use of force or the threat to use force, as well as respect for ASEAN principles and norms including ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture, which are logically linked to the concept of the ASEAN Way (Sochi Declaration of the ASEAN–Russian Federation Commemorative Summit, 2016).

As Russia's contradictions with the "collective West" further evolve, Moscow seems to have abandoned its previous vision of the Euro-Atlantic spatial and spiritual periphery and now sees itself as a great northern Eurasian power (Diesen, 2017; Karaganov & Peskov, 2016; Lukin, 2016; Maçães, 2018). ASEAN, in turn, is growing disappointed in the European integration project, pointing out its irrelevance to SEA (Hoang, 2017).

Another important contextual factor currently influencing the Russian and ASEAN relationship is the forthcoming Fourth Industrial Revolution. Russia and ASEAN see no reason to integrate into the new phase of globalization from the perspective of subordinate actors that will obtain losses rather than benefits. Social unrest, political manipulations, mass unemployment, uncontrolled fake news, and cyber-attacks on financial institutions, as well as critical infrastructure issues generated by disruptive technologies are just a few points of their concern.

Finally, the American factor plays an important role. Donald Trump's rise to power has led to an intensification of the U.S.-China confrontation, both in the economic and military-political spheres. While the former is exemplified by the China-U.S. trade contradictions, the latter is confirmed by the promotion of the Indo-Pacific Region concept (IPR) with clear anti-Chinese connotations. Given the U.S. attempts to drag the ASEAN countries into containing China, coupled with the weakness of regional security institutions, the IPR concept can deepen the rift within ASEAN, undermining its fundamental principles such as non-alignment, balancing between the great powers, ASEAN's central role in the economic and security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region, and the rejection of the block status (Kausikan, 2018; Santikajaya, 2013). Of note is a lack of consensus within ASEAN over whether or not to join this initiative. While Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia support it (Chongkittavorn, 2018), Malaysia, Cambodia, and Laos are understandably apprehensive as they see it as capable of jeopardizing the potential benefits from cooperation with China (Kausikan, 2018). This deterioration of the regional milieu undermines ASEAN's capabilities to effectively coordinate multilateral negotiations on security issues and complicates its interaction with dialogue partners, including Russia.

With this in view, a critical factor in the Russia-ASEAN relationship is the need to create a completely new context for a relationship, one in which its present shortcomings will decrease in significance while Russia's and ASEAN's motivation to undertake coordinated actions will grow.

The Eurasian reset

The success behind the formation of this new context critically depends upon Russia's and ASEAN's ability to grasp the key trends shaping the current international politics. Among these trends, the most conspicuous is the emergence

of Greater Eurasia as a new center of geopolitical gravity. Despite its relative recency, a number of authors attempted to conceptualize the term “Greater Eurasia.” For example, Dmitry Yefremenko considers the Eurasian Partnership a “fundamental process of geopolitical and geo-economic changes in Eurasia and the adjacent regions of Africa,” highlighting the development of semi-peripheral and peripheral countries (Yefremenko, 2017).

One of the most prominent Russian international relations scholars, Sergey Karaganov, suggests viewing Greater Eurasia as a complex system with the following elements. First, it is a continental system of co-development, cooperation, and security from Jakarta to Lisbon premised on the existing mega-initiatives and institutions. Second, Greater Eurasia is not limited to the Russia-China relationship and gives credit to other non-Western centers of power—India, Iran, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and ASEAN. Third, Greater Eurasia is an open partnership, including for Europe. Fourth, Greater Eurasia is an independent growth area that rejects hegemony, military and political alliances, asymmetric dependence, sanctions, and any other form of economic and diplomatic coercion. Instead, respect for international law, the recognition of the leading role of the United Nations, political and cultural pluralism, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries are prioritized. Fifth, Greater Eurasia offers its participants the liberalization of economic cooperation, openness, and flexibility, as well as nonpoliticization of economic interactions (Karaganov et al., 2017).

In his book, *The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New World Order*, Portuguese political scientist Bruno Mações makes an analytical attempt at insight into the civilizational, social, political, and economic characteristics of Europe and Asia. His main argument is that Europe and Asia form a unified political space, which make up the Eurasian supercontinent. In his view, the distinction between Europe and Asia is premised solely on the fact that for centuries Europe has been modern, while Asia has remained traditional. According to Mações, the major factors behind the formation of the integrated Eurasian space are the rise of new great powers and the increase in their aggregate capabilities, as exemplified by the cases of China, Russia, India, Japan, as well as the strengthening of “the arc of instability threatening both Russia and Europe,” which stretches from Afghanistan to North Africa. Accordingly, the rise of traditional and non-traditional security threats across Europe and Asia heightens the necessity to create a consolidated Eurasian security architecture to replace the failed concept of Greater Europe (Mações, 2018).

Glenn Diesen is on the same page with Bruno Mações while analyzing the prerequisites for Greater Eurasia (Diesen, 2017). From his perspective, the creation of a new geo-economic space is conditioned by Russia’s attempt to remove itself from the periphery of Europe and Asia, which gains significance as the crisis with the West evolves and the necessity to introduce a new development model in Russia increases (Diesen, 2017). Beyond that, Diesen argues that the promotion of Greater Eurasia by means of the Russia-China rapprochement is accompanied by Moscow’s rejection of the Greater Europe concept, which prioritized the common approach toward security threats. In this light, according to the expert, Moscow’s Greater Eurasia project is designed as a bargaining chip in

Russia's dialogue with the West while simultaneously enhancing its economic, political, and military ties with the East.

Alexei Voskressenski, Ekaterina Koldunova, and Anna Kireeva assume that Greater Eurasia, or the Greater Eurasian Partnership, is a search for the implementation of transregional projects, which would reduce the risk of political and economic gaps similar to those between Russia and Europe. From this perspective, the main problem in the formation of a consolidated Eurasian space lies in the existence of several multidirectional transregional initiatives that are markedly different from both the classical integration model based on the EU experience and the "new regionalism" with its focus on non-state actors and transnational processes that go beyond the control of the state (Voskressenski, Koldunova, & Kireeva, 2017).

The beginning of the Ukraine crisis marked the failure of Russia's plans to reintegrate the post-Soviet space. It was described as a dismissal of "Small Eurasia," the term introduced by the MGIMO University professor T. Shakleina. In her vision, Small Eurasia is a new subsystem of international relations which unites the so-called "transit post-Soviet states located between the core-country—Russia—and other powerful actors" (Shakleina, 2013, p. XX). Simultaneously, for Russia, the need to respond to China's One Belt, One Road project (OBOR; now BRI since May 2017) grew in significance. But perhaps most importantly, the crisis in Russia's relations with the "collective West" coupled with the modest results of Russia's "pivot to the East" made Moscow reassess the foundations of its foreign policy.

In response, Russia intensified the development of the EAEU as its own integration project and strengthened its external ties. As mentioned earlier, in 2015, the Russian-Chinese agreement to conjugate the EAEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) was concluded, and the FTA between the EAEU and Vietnam was signed. In 2016, at the Russia-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in Sochi, the promotion of the format ASEAN-SCO-EAEU is considered by many officials of the ASEAN member states a great opportunity to enhance the bilateral ties between Russia and the Association (Koldunova & Rangsimapon, 2016; Sochi Declaration, 2016; Viet Nam News, 2016).

Finally, a trade and economic cooperation agreement between the EAEU and China was concluded in 2017. Such steps portray a gradual shift from the original "pivot to the East" policy toward the formation of the Greater Eurasian Partnership. Russia's focus on developing the Eurasian project is premised upon several sound reasons. Facing political and economic pressure, Moscow strives to elaborate on a "Code of Conduct" in Greater Eurasia that prioritizes co-development and prohibits hegemony, regime change, and other forms of economic and diplomatic war as foreign policy tools. The modernization of Siberia and the Far East, as a key task for the entirety of the 21st century, requires more external resources, even more so since the interim results of the "pivot to the East" have been modest thus far. Most importantly, Russia as an influential global actor needs its own integration project with a distinct global dimension.

Considering the further development of the BRI as inevitable, Russia wants to avoid a scenario under which Chinese economic possibilities will translate into political and military predominance (Gabuev, 2015). This can be done by the multilevel and multidimensional balancing of China by Eurasian actors.

Finally, Russia realizes that to diversify and deepen relations with its neighbors in the post-Soviet space is its major priority and a precondition for successful economic development. While the West refuses to accept it, such sentiments do not exist in Asia. Added to this positive emotional atmosphere, the rapid economic development of Asian powerhouse economies, including the ASEAN member states, makes cooperation with them even more attractive.

Seen from the ASEAN angle, the reasons behind the expansion of cooperation on Eurasia are also clear. The implementation of ASEAN's prospective plans related to the establishment of the ASEAN Community 2025 and the Master-Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 will not succeed without large-scale investment in transnational infrastructure. The single market and single production base in SEA and their integration in the global value chains presuppose the reduction of the currently existing mismatch between the levels of infrastructure development in the ASEAN states. This requires huge financial allocations that the association does not possess. According to Asia Development Bank (ADB) estimates, the ASEAN expenditures on infrastructure for 2010–2020 account for 1.09 trillion dollars while the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund established in 2011 can provide just 300 million dollars a year (Asia Development Bank, 2016). In these complicated circumstances, the association has no option other than to integrate its policy with the strategies of its extraregional partners. Among them are China's BRI, Japan's Partnership for Quality Infrastructure Investment for Asia's Future, and India's programs to improve connectivity with ASEAN within the framework of Modi's Act East Policy. All these states aim to integrate SEA in a wider web of their interactions in Eurasia. Consequently, ASEAN support of the Eurasian narrative is becoming a critical factor for attracting investments from these countries to SEA.

ASEAN's motivation to cooperate in Eurasia is reinforced by the expansion of ISIS activity in SEA. As demonstrated by the acts of terrorism committed from 2014 to 2017, after losing their positions in the Middle East, the ISIS militants are infiltrating other regions. SEA, with its large Muslim population, indigenous terrorist organizations, and deep-rooted ethno-religious rivalries, attracts the close attention of ISIS. Along with the number of citizens of ASEAN countries who have joined the ISIS, of note is the number of people who demonstrate solidarity with this group. In Indonesia alone, more than three thousand citizens support ISIS through social networks (Bordachev et al., 2017). Specifically, a number of radical Islamist groups—Jemaah Islamiyah, Ansar al-Khilafah, Mujahideen Indonesia Timor, and others—pose a threat to the domestic stability of ASEAN countries, especially of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2017, South and Southeast Asia account for one-third of all terrorist attacks in the world. Two SEA countries—the Philippines (12) and Thailand (16)—are among the 20 states of the world with the highest impact of terrorist activity. Since 2002, the greatest increase in terrorist activity has been observed in the Philippines, Thailand, and Myanmar. At the end of 2016, these three countries accounted for 94% of all terrorist attacks in the Asia-Pacific region, as compared to 55% in 2002 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2017). The most horrific incident was the Marawi Siege, a five-month armed conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and pro-ISIS militants, namely, the Maute and Abu Sayyaf Salafi jihadist groups, which claimed

the lives of more than 200 Philippine citizens (Fonbuena, 2018). Under these circumstances, ASEAN understands that ISIS should be combated primarily in the Middle East rather than in SEA.

Possibly most importantly, Greater Eurasia as a global center of gravity can give ASEAN what it needs the most—to enter the multipolar world simultaneously escaping the “unipolar revenge” at the ongoing stage of transition toward multipolarity in global politics. From this perspective, the relationship with Russia that strives to perform the same tasks in the Greater Eurasia context strengthens its relevance to the association.

In the ASEAN expert community, the Eurasian narrative is receiving an increasing amount of attention. ASEAN experts link the upgrade of ASEAN institutions and the modification of the ASEAN Way to the forthcoming cooperation in Eurasia (Kausikan, 2016). Reflecting the future course of the ASEAN relationship with China and the United States, ASEAN experts predict a decrease of U.S. attention to SEA under the Trump administration while simultaneously raising doubts about China’s readiness to take ASEAN interests into consideration while implementing the BRI (Emmerson, 2017). China’s reaction to the PCA decision evidenced its selective approach to international law while dealing with emerging disputes. Under these circumstances, ASEAN experts suggest creating reliable safety mechanisms to, on the one hand, capitalize upon China’s BRI while also intensifying cooperation with other strong Eurasian actors, primarily with Japan and India, to balance Beijing’s growing influence (Hong, 2015; Singh, 2017; Chongkittavorn, 2017; Cook, Suryadinata, Izzuddin, & Hiep, 2017; Kausikan, 2018). Besides, some scholars from ASEAN member-states highlight the necessity to not only participate in the BRI, but to also integrate it into ASEAN strategic planning to enhance regional connectivity (Jetin, 2017; Kapahi, 2017; Pitakdumrongkit, 2018).

In parallel with Russia’s and ASEAN’s bid for cooperation in Greater Eurasia, international trends advance rather than undermine the advent of this scenario. The crisis of the global regulatory institutions is accompanied by the establishment of non-Western mechanisms of financial and economic governance, complementing the already existing institutions. They include the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Silk Road Fund (SRF), the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), and the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB). The shift from the paradigm of “Asia for the world” to “Asia for Asia” in terms of the Asian consumption of produced goods, services, and technologies due to rising regional incomes further intensifies this trend. As a consequence of the BRI, the likely Sino-centric security system will be premised upon the perception of common security, adding another impetus for the establishment of Greater Eurasia.

The format of ASEAN-SCO-EAEU and its implications

Given the rise of Greater Eurasia in the priorities of both Russia and ASEAN, the question about the most resourceful institutional framework for Russia and ASEAN to engage with one another in multilateral cooperation becomes pertinent. A penetrating and cutting-edge foresight supports the format of ASEAN-SCO-EAEU, which was agreed upon during the Commemorative Russia-ASEAN

Summit in Sochi in May 2016 (ASEAN–Russia Summit, 2016a; Sochi Declaration, 2016).

For the first time, this initiative was mentioned in Putin’s Annual Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly in December 2015. Speaking there, the Russian President mentioned strengthening links between the EAEU, the SCO, and ASEAN (President of Russia, 2015). By then, the foundations for this proposal had already been laid. Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic joined the EAEU, China and Russia agreed on the conjugation of the EAEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the EAEU and Vietnam signed an FTA. In 2015, the decision to admit India and Pakistan into the SCO was made, which signified that four ASEAN dialogue partners—Russia, China, India, and Pakistan—are the SCO members. Significantly, in 2017, there was also an intensification of contacts between ASEAN and the SCO, when the SCO Secretary General attended the East Asia Summit (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 2017). All the factors mentioned suggest that the format of ASEAN-SCO-EAEU was not an inconsiderate or groundless proposal.

From the association’s perspective, the format of ASEAN-SCO-EAEU offers it generous advantages. Given that ASEAN is older than the SCO and the EAEU, the association, with its experience in coordinating negotiations between many participants on a neutral and inclusive basis and the existing web of dialogue venues, may well be delegated the status of the “driving force” of the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU. Under these circumstances, the ASEAN-led multilateral dialogue platforms, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting Plus Eight (ADMM+8), and the East Asia Summit (EAS), integrated into the framework of ASEAN–SCO–EAEU, dramatically increase in importance.

The practicability, as well as the likelihood, of this integration rests on several fundamental reasons. Seen from the ASEAN angle, this matches well with its priorities to raise its global status. The demand for the establishment of the pan-Eurasian security system has been articulated (Karaganov, 2018; President of Russia, 2018), and ASEAN can use it to its greatest advantage. Simultaneously, this step will strengthen ASEAN’s positions as the coordinator of the already operating multilateral dialogue negotiations in the Asia-Pacific region. But possibly most importantly, the rise of terrorism in SEA provides the impetus for ASEAN to address its roots, which are far from their geographical domain.

The latter argument is substantiated by the interest of ASEAN top-level militaries displayed at V Moscow conference on international security, which was organized by the Russian Ministry of Defense in April 2016 and focused upon fighting international terrorism, to joining efforts in combating ISIS (Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, 2016). This is hardly surprising because the combination of technological capabilities, political will, and strategic foresight demonstrated during the Russian operation in Syria is the only successful anti-terrorist operation along with the escalation of international terrorism all over the world, including SEA, as demonstrated by the Marawi incident.

The aftereffects of the incident itself upon relations between Russia and the Philippines follow the logic of the pan-Eurasian security system. The interest displayed by the President of the Philippines R. Duterte during his visit to Moscow in May 2017 and the beginning of the Marawi siege were hardly a mere coincidence. The contract on defense and technical cooperation signed between Russia

and the Philippines during the fourth session of the ADMM+8 was followed by the handover of Russian military equipment, particularly suitable for anti-terrorist operations, to the Philippines (Romero & Laude, 2017). The shared interest in combating international terrorism with the focus upon ISIS was reiterated at subsequent meetings between the Russian and the Philippine top foreign policy and military officials (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2018b; Laude, 2018).

For the association's partners in the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU, to delegate it this status is even more advantageous as many considerations matter. From the reputational perspective, ASEAN is an authoritative international actor with a glorious history and bright success stories. ASEAN can be regarded as an acceptable figure by all the participants of the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU. From the practical viewpoint, in the Asia-Pacific region as the testing ground, these institutions have demonstrated "the limit of the possible" in making the Asia-Pacific security challenges manageable. The "functional cooperation," such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, search and rescue operations, illegal migration, and environmental degradation, should be prioritized, while raising sovereignty issues, even with the best intentions, is not advisable. The coordination between these dialogue platforms, although not absolutely ideal, has been in place for many years. The experience of ARF, ADMM+8, and EAS can be highly useful, if not indispensable, for the establishment of a continental pan-Eurasian system of security and cooperation.

This system should embrace the countries of Northeast Asia that are absent in ASEAN, SCO, and the EAEU. This is especially relevant in regard to North Korea. As part of the perspective Eurasian security system, ARF remains the only channel of communication with the DPRK. Given that this system should be inclusive, ASEAN-led multilateral venues can provide diversified channels of communication with nonparticipants, including the United States.

In Russia's expert community, the idea to invite the European Union (EU) to join the Greater Eurasia project has been put forward (Bordachev, 2017; Karaganov & Peskov, 2016). It was reiterated at the top political level (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2018a). As long as the connections between the EAEU and the EU remain underdeveloped, the ASEAN Regional Forum, in which the EU has participated since 1994 (coupled with the ASEAN-EU partnership established in 1977), can provide an institutional linkage between ASEAN-SCO-EAEU and the EU.

Burdened with numerous internal tasks regarding its expansion, the SCO will be unable to perform the function of acting as the driving force of security cooperation in Eurasia. The EAEU is an economic format, and its members tend to rely upon the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to tackle security challenges. As a result, ASEAN-led multilateral venues will logically become the institutional hub for the forthcoming Eurasian system of cooperation on security issues.

ASEAN's history has amply demonstrated that to be a success, the association needs a super task as the key motivating and consolidating factor. Developing a transcontinental security system will give the association a new mission and, by implication, increase its internal coherence.

For Russia, the likely benefits from the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU are also significant. Russian companies will find it easier to develop the markets of ASEAN countries if they are integrated with those of the EAEU states where Russia's economic presence is already strong enough. Although relations with China will likely occupy the central place in Russian policy in Eurasia, Russia should diversify its directions, including by developing relations with ASEAN. Another motivating factor is that the experience obtained by ASEAN-led platforms in combating international terrorism can be used in Russia's vicinity.

Among the constraints the new format will have to remove, the most serious is institutions. The connecting links among ASEAN, SCO, and EAEU are virtually nonexistent. While Russia sees the EAEU as its key prospective integration project while considering the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) as the central agent for economic integration in Greater Eurasia, at present, the EAEU is largely left out of multilateral economic cooperation with other Eurasian dialogue platforms. The EAEU is still in the "catch-up" stage of identifying the possibilities for establishing FTAs and other economic agreements. Beyond that, in spite of the considerable third-party interest in concluding FTAs with the Union (as of July 2018, there were about 40 applications) and the ongoing negotiations, the EAEU still lacks a clear strategy for developing cooperation with external partners (Karaganov et al., 2017). Due to its relative youth, the EAEU has so far been more focused on its internal integration, developing "in depth" rather than "in breadth."

From the strategic perspective, the task of fostering institutional links between the EAEU and its partners in the Greater Eurasia project will be a matter of growing significance. Urgent steps include the establishment of a dialogue partnership between the EAEU and ASEAN by emulating the dialogue between ASEAN and the EU (in parallel with the further development of the Russia-ASEAN Full Dialogue Partnership) and the conjunction between the EAEU and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The conjunction of these initiatives should be aimed at creating formats for long-term cooperation to coordinate the rules of trade and investment activities in the institutional and normative spaces of the EAEU and the RCEP. This is aimed at reducing the institutional barriers for unlocking the EAEU transport-logistic potential to form a production linkage between the RCEP and EU countries, as well as to make these external conditions for exporting the EAEU norm and practice.

The foundation for this cooperation can be premised upon the accumulated political and economic RCEP potential. In parallel, the necessary step is to engage ASEAN in this format, including on the expert level.

In the future, it is worthwhile to think about the expansion of the EAEU-RCEP format by creating the so-called "Far Eastern Partnership." In its key parameters, it should resemble the "Eastern Partnership" promoted by the EU, but without a harsh political component, rather being primarily focused upon the development of economic, scientific, educational, and sociocultural ties.

In parallel, it is of top importance to develop a comprehensive cooperation between the EAEU and ASEAN (apart from the conjunction between the EAEU and RCEP). At a minimum, in the dialogue partnership format, at the level of regular meetings of the EAEU trade ministers, EEC ministers, and ASEAN member states, expert groups must elaborate on an interaction strategy between

the two integration formats. In order to strengthen the political level of cooperation, the idea to establish the EAEU-ASEAN format with meetings at least every 2 years deserves to be developed. At the same time, the EAEU-ASEAN track does not mean abandoning the mechanisms of the ASEAN-Russia Full Dialogue Partnership. Within the two formats, a division of competences must be established.

In the practical realm, the ASEAN-EAEU format will facilitate the establishment of an FTA, which is why Russian companies will enter SEA markets. ASEAN readiness to establish an FTA with Russia makes this scenario quite realistic (Cahiles-Magkilat, 2017; Russia Briefing, 2017; Tsvetov, 2018). As stated above, the EAEU already has a similar agreement with Vietnam (concluded in 2015 and entered into force in 2016). The EAEU-Vietnam FTA is by far the only institutionalized element of the Russia-ASEAN economic cooperation in Greater Eurasia. Seen from the Russian perspective, the advancing of trade and economic ties with Vietnam also has political significance. The level of Vietnam-Russia relations is far ahead of other countries in SEA. Strong historical ties facilitate cooperation in strategic sectors—primarily, energy and arms transfers. As the Russian expert A. Tsvetov observes, this allows Russia to position the FTA as a special gesture toward Vietnam, while at the same time using Hanoi's willingness to conclude FTAs as an additional counterargument against the Western narrative of Russia's isolation (Tsvetov, 2017).

At present, similar negotiations are being held between the EAEU and Singapore. According to Russia's top officials, the agreement can be concluded in 2018, which is symbolic as this year marks the 50th anniversary of Singapore-Russia diplomatic relations and Singapore's chairing ASEAN (Russia-Singapore Business Council, 2018). The FTA with Singapore will be pivotal in the rapprochement between the EAEU with ASEAN, as it will show the ability of the EEC negotiating team to work not only with politically close Vietnam. Given the influence of Singapore in ASEAN, the Russian side expects to improve the perception of the Union in ASEAN as well as the entire Eurasian initiative (Tsvetov, 2017). Finally, Indonesia and Cambodia also expressed their readiness to conclude a preferential agreement on trade and economic cooperation with the EAEU. Specifically, in 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded between the EAEU and Cambodia, and a working group was established to study the aftereffects of the agreement (EEC, 2017).

Nevertheless, the intra-ASEAN differences on the reasonability of the FTA regime with the EAEU are also in place. What is more, even the positions of the ASEAN states that are already discussing or preparing to negotiate this issue with the EEC markedly differ. This is conditioned by the following reasons. As compared with FTAs with other ASEAN partners, for the association, the expected commercial benefits from the agreement with Russia and the EAEU are insignificant. ASEAN is busy harmonizing its FTAs with the six largest economies of the region (China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, and New Zealand) into a single framework of the RCEP, which is much more economically promising (International Centre for Trade & Sustainable Development, 2018).

Despite the EAEU's efforts to achieve international legitimization, ASEAN countries still do not perceive it as a self-sufficient actor, especially because

Russia is the major “promoter” of the FTA within the EAEU. At the same time, for Russia itself, the benefits of the EAEU-ASEAN FTA are not yet obvious: the trade volume with SEA countries is small while the competitiveness of many Russian goods remains rather weak.

On the whole, the key lacuna in the enhancement of economic ties is the EAEU’s and Russia’s lack of a clear trade strategy for SEA. The contemporary approach to FTAs requires a nuanced understanding of their substantial and institutional specificity. As things are, the trade policy is not an instrument for protecting the domestic market and not even just a means of liberalizing trade. In the present circumstances, foreign trade agreements signify positions of countries and intergovernmental platforms in the world economic and political arena. The EAEU member states, including Russia, will be able to successfully defend their positions in negotiations with larger partners only if they fully utilize their capabilities at the national and the EAEU levels.

Although the common trade policy may give the EAEU member states valuable feedback, this policy must go further than just trade exchanges and include mutual investment, sanitary regulations, technological cooperation similar to ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) which rests on agreements on trade in goods, trade in services, and investment (ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreements, 2018).

As a first step, it is worth considering the possibility of establishing a permanent intergovernmental body for coordinating the interaction between the EEC and ASEAN member states on issues related to foreign trade negotiations. The focus on the export priorities of each country, possible investment projects, and the expert evaluation of the readiness of a particular partner to cooperate is relevant.

From the political and security perspectives, an intensified dialogue between SCO and ASEAN-led platforms corresponds with the interests of both parties. This is mainly because the dialogue allows intensifying the cooperation between their anti-terrorist agencies, including in the form of joint exercises and information exchanges.

Finally, it is worth coordinating both the JWG CTTC and the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure with an emphasis on fighting terrorism and extremism.

Summing up the factors discussed above, in spite of the existing difficulties, it is the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU that will lay down the foundation for the Russia-ASEAN strategic partnership. In translating this vision into reality, the Russia-Vietnam comprehensive strategic partnership, whose Eurasian dimension is evident, can be the starting point. Vietnam is the first ASEAN country that concluded an FTA with the EAEU. Vietnam expresses interest in developing the resources in the Arctic in cooperation with Russia. In the anticipation of the BRI, Vietnam wants to create reliable safety mechanisms against uncertainties by deepening and diversifying cooperation with great powers. This is all the more timely because the BRI can be used by China for security purposes, including in the digital sphere (Basu Das, 2017), and convincingly explains the reasons behind the SRV’s interest in training Vietnamese specialists in cyber-security in Russia.

For the Russian Federation, the Eurasian dimension of the comprehensive strategic partnership with Vietnam stems from the increased importance of the

maritime component in Greater Eurasia, which allows it to avoid an excessive reliance upon China. Resulting from this scenario, the cumulative effect of the Russia-ASEAN cooperation in Greater Eurasia by means of Russia's policy in SEA can be really significant as it allows for the elimination of the shortcomings of the Russia-ASEAN connectivity in its physical, institutional, and people-to-people dimensions.

The repercussions for “physical connectivity” imply the advancement of infrastructure cooperation involving ASEAN, China, Russia, and the Central Asian states along the BRI transport corridors. Specifically, the central direction (the EAEU and the SREB), the southern (the port infrastructure development of the SEA countries and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road), and the northern (the Northern Sea Route) can be distinguished. This will shape the trans-Eurasian connectivity arc in which Russia and SEA will play important roles.

The enhancement of physical connectivity will have noticeable aftereffects for the Russia-ASEAN trade and economic cooperation. At present, the Russian export to ASEAN is at a low level—just \$7.5 billion by the end of 2017, most of which (54%) accounts for mineral fuels, mineral oils, and products of their distillation (Trade Map, 2018). Of note is the inadequate use of the potential of the Russian Far East. According to the Federal Customs Service of Russia, Far Eastern Federal District exports to ASEAN in 2017 amounted to only \$473 million, which is only 2% of the total exports of the Far East to foreign countries (Federal Agency for Air Transport, n.d.). However, in the long-term perspective, the development of infrastructure in the Russian Far East, in particular the increase in the capacity of Russian ports, can boost Russian exports to SEA countries, especially the export of agricultural products. Russia can produce bioethanol on its territory, as the necessary ingredients—sugar beets, potatoes, corn, and barley—are traditional Russian agricultural outputs. The Far Eastern Federal District is already the leading producer of soybeans in Russia. The cultivation of rice in Primorsky Krai, Amur, and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast can be among the steps welcomed by the ASEAN states as they import quite a large number of products in this sector (collectively, they account for more than \$100 billion per year). In the future, Russia's export of food and biofuels has a good chance to increase, which will result in the gradual formation of agricultural supply production chains.

The institutional connections are also expected to increase. More intensive contacts between Russia and ASEAN starting, for example, from combating international terrorism but then moving beyond that initiative will naturally stimulate cooperation in other areas, as well as its subsequent institutionalization. Simultaneously, the present institutions in the Russia-ASEAN Full Dialogue Partnership will be upgraded.

Finally, with respect to the people-to-people dimension of the Russia-ASEAN connectivity, of particular importance will be the expansion of personal contacts at different levels. Of prominence are informal connections and the personification of making business decisions in business practices with participation of ASEAN member states. To do this, it is advisable to continue the ongoing practice of meetings between the representatives of the business communities of Russia and ASEAN countries. They can be integrated either into the format of existing platforms, where a joint discussion of the Russia-ASEAN partnership

already takes place—the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF), the Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum (KEF), or new platforms where representatives from ASEAN member states are not involved, such as the Far Eastern Investment Congress in Vladivostok, the International Investment Forum in Sochi, and the Gaidar Forum in Moscow. Along with the specialized agencies, efforts to find potential investors and prepare the necessary materials should come from the Russia-ASEAN Dialogue Partnership mechanisms, in particular, the ASEAN-Russia Business Council, the ASEAN-Russia Joint Cooperation Committee, and the ASEAN-Russia Joint Planning and Management Committee.

In sum, Eurasian cooperation opens up new opportunities for strengthening the Russia-ASEAN relationship as well as has a strong stimulating effect upon Russia's projects in SEA and the development of the Russian Far East. In the security realm, while Russia's key comparative advantage is the supply of security to its neighboring territories (Karaganov & Peskov, 2016), ASEAN has a ready security infrastructure hub that can be extended from the Asia-Pacific region to Greater Eurasia as well as adapted to combat trans-Eurasian security challenges. This congruence of possibilities makes Russia and ASEAN valuable partners for one another. Therefore, Greater Eurasia will form the foundation for the Russia-ASEAN Strategic Partnership to live up to its name and mission.

Conclusion

Overcoming the existing deficiencies in the Russia-ASEAN relationship requires following a well-known quotation of Dwight Eisenhower: "If the problem cannot be solved, enlarge it." Russia's current policy in SEA appears to have exhausted its resources as it is unable to effectively respond to ASEAN fundamental priorities.

The simultaneous increase of the Eurasian component in Russia's and ASEAN's strategic vision coupled with the obvious advantages that the parties can obtain by developing the ASEAN-SCO-EAEU suggests that the forthcoming Russia-ASEAN strategic partnership will be a function of cooperation in Greater Eurasia. Starting from cooperation in the security sphere, it will be gradually embraced in other directions. One of the positive side effects will be the promotion of the Russia-ASEAN connectivity in SEA.

In Greater Eurasia, ASEAN and Russia are neither partners of consequence nor "disposable friends" as the Russia-ASEAN cooperation will be premised upon their strategic comparability. While Russia's history demonstrates its ability to "move beyond the red lines" when its interests are threatened, ASEAN's history serves as evidence of its search for an optimal balance between the interests of all negotiating parties. Apart from eliminating elements of competitiveness, this factor increases the strategic congruence and the complementarity of Russia's and ASEAN's interests and possibilities.

In sum, cooperation in Greater Eurasia offers Russia and ASEAN exactly what they have lacked so far—the possibility to establish self-maintaining and self-reproducing ties with positive repercussions for Russia's policy in SEA. This provides Russia and ASEAN with a sound motivation to develop the relationship, possibly for the first time in their history.

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