

Russia's View on the International Security in Northeast Asia*

Dmitry Streltsov, Anna Kireeva, and Ilya Dyachkov**

MGIMO University, Moscow, Russia

The article focuses on Russia's approach to international security in Northeast Asia. It argues that Russia's unique position is that it is not a party of any major security-political conflict, takes a neutral position on territorial conflicts as best suiting its interests of promoting cooperation with all East Asian states and objects to the involvement of third parties. Russia is involved only in a dispute with Japan where it demonstrates a flexible position. As a comparatively weak regional player, Russia is interested in maintaining peace, stability and the status quo, in particular on the Korean Peninsula, and has no revisionist agenda in East Asia. Major elements of Russia's approach include creating an inclusive, open, transparent and equitable regional security architecture, support for polycentric regional order with Russia as one of the major centers of power, criticism of the U.S.-sponsored MBD as well as focus on a strategic partnership with China. Intensifying its Asian pivot, Moscow is increasingly concerned with the tensions on the Korean Peninsula where it promotes denuclearization, dialogue between the two Koreas, resumption of the Six-Party Talks and opposes to the dangerous actions of all parties. Russia and China advocate a "moratorium for a moratorium" proposal as the only way to mitigate tensions and create a common security mechanism.

Keywords: Russia, security, foreign policy, Northeast Asia, East Asia, territorial disputes, the Korean Peninsula.

Introduction

Amid the current transformation of the world order and security challenges in times of global turbulence, East Asia has shown little signs of stability. The rise of China inducing the greatest regional power shift in the post-bipolar world, American policy

* This article is prepared with the support of the Russian Foundation for the Humanities (RGNF). Grant project "The Transformation of International Relations in Northeast Asia and national interests of Russia" No. 16-03-00602.

** dmstrl@gmail.com; a.kireeva@my.mgimo.ru; dyachkov@naver.com

to sustain its preeminence in the region (Asian Pivot / rebalance to Asia), Trump's inconsistent protectionist moves amid his administration's attempts to conduct "business as usual", the rise and demise of the U.S.-led Transpacific Partnership, China's growing assertiveness and intensifying U.S.–China competition, China's ambitious project with its "Belt and Road" initiative, constantly aggravating crisis and instability on the Korean Peninsula in particular since 2016, strained Japan–South Korean and Japan–Chinese relations, escalating territorial disputes, re-emergence of the Taiwan issue after Tsai Ing-Wen's coming to power—and a number of other noteworthy events of the recent period are exacerbating the security dynamics in the region. Adding to its complexity is the growing interconnectedness with the Southeast Asian region and the South China Sea dispute, where a number of Northeast Asian states are directly or indirectly involved.

Against this background, Russia is striving to reestablish itself as an Asia–Pacific power to improve its standing in the region. Russia views East Asia as one of the most strategically important regions in the world, crucial to its foreign policy and economic development. Russia's Asian pivot is stimulated by its bid to strengthen its positions as a leading regional power in East Asia and to provide a stimulus for the economic development of Siberia and the Russian Far East (RFE). Russia's policy to diversify its ties with Asian states in politics, security, economics, energy, etc., was strengthened after the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 amidst the background of Russia's rift with the United States and Europe and the introduction of anti-Russian sanctions. The acceleration of Russia's Asian pivot after the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 is based on a broad consensus that it should be strengthened as a safeguard of Russia's development.¹

This paper focuses on Russia's approach to regional security in East Asia centering on Russia's position over major security issues. It argues that Russia, intensifying its Asian policy, is to a large degree concerned by the aggravating regional instability and security challenges. The article is structured into three parts. The first one is devoted to Russia's approach to regional security architecture and regional organizations, its position towards the U.S. alliances, ballistic missile defense, and strategic partnership with China. The second part analyzes Russia's view on territorial conflicts. The third part focuses on Russia's policy towards the Korean Peninsula as the major challenge to regional security issues directly affecting Russia's national security interests.

Russia's Position on Regional Security Architecture and Strategic Partnership with China

Russia's approach to regional security has been based on the rejection of bloc security and on the idea of "an inclusive, open, transparent and equitable collective security and cooperation architecture in Asia–Pacific."² Its diplomacy proceeds from the premise that the U.S. "hub-and-spokes" alliance system reminiscent of the Cold War at the present time does not ensure a sustainable economic and security environment in Asia. Although the U.S. military presence and the system of security treaties admittedly have played a stabilizing and balancing role in the past, Russian officials state that they are no longer

adequate for the regional dynamics and thus a new approach is required. Hence, a more balanced and inclusive system based on the principles of equality and “indivisible security” should be established which would guarantee non-alliance-based security for every state, so that the security of any country should not be strengthened at the expense of others. From Russia’s perspective, the new collective security and cooperation architecture in the Asia–Pacific should involve not only the United States and its allies: Japan and South Korea, but also other East Asian states: Russia, China and ASEAN members.³

The contours of this proposal became clear when, in 2010, during President Dmitry Medvedev’s visit to Beijing, Russia and China put forward an initiative on strengthening security and creating an open, transparent and equitable security and cooperation architecture in the Asia–Pacific. It was supposed to be based on the principles of international law, not adhering to military blocs and considering the interests of all states involved, without any cooperation aimed against third parties. The principles proclaimed under this initiative include respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, non-interference into domestic affairs, commitment to equitable and indivisible security, defensive military policy, no use or threat of use of military force, peaceful disputes resolution basing on diplomatic means and readiness to compromise, strengthening of combating non-traditional security threats, bilateral and multilateral military exchanges and exercises, etc.⁴

Russia’s initiative of an overarching security architecture presented at the East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2013 was the first articulated proposal of its kind at this forum. Although several countries such as China and Brunei supported it, the initiative took place against the backdrop of a relatively low-key Russian political representation in the EAS. The Russian President never attended the EAS, although this structure is deemed very important by ASEAN.⁵

However, Russia’s security architecture initiative, though supported by China, has been described as poorly fitting into the regional security environment with very vague, if any, practical implications. What it really proved is Russia’s desire to actively discuss security issues and improve its position as one of the regional stakeholders. While avoiding participation in territorial disputes or political and security clashes in the region, Moscow at the same time wishes to retain its role in settling major security issues and conflicts.⁶ Although the United States and its regional allies who rely upon security cooperation with Washington have shown no support for the initiative, it is evident that the task of building a collective security architecture may in the future prove to be very fruitful as a method for preventing military conflicts in East Asia. Discussing the issue at broad regional platforms such as the EAS and ASEAN Regional Forum could be the first step in this direction.⁷

Another key component of Russia’s approach is intertwined with its view of a polycentric regional order. As Russia still falls short of enjoying a full-fledged regional engagement in East Asian regional cooperation, it desires to diversify and strengthen its political and economic ties with East Asian states and consequently to improve its role as an independent pole in a multi–polar regional system. Russia’s improved position in

East Asia are also believed to reinforce its stance as a major global power, especially in the light of the rise of China and the U.S. “pivot to Asia.”⁸

The task of acquiring a status of a major independent pole in the polycentric regional order is inseparable from the need to foster the economic development of Siberia and the Far East to the level of Russia’s neighbors in Northeast Asia. It should be implemented in line with improving Russia’s poor involvement in intra-regional economic ties. The economic rise of Russia in Asia will help her to resist the undesirable perception that while Russia geographically belongs to East Asia, politically and economically she is an “external” player or an “absent power.” For Russia it would not be possible to compete with the United States or China without any formidable role in the regional production networks.⁹

However, Russia is not embedded in a complicated web of historical disputes, mutual claims, allegations and obligations and subsequently enjoys an advantageous position of a party not involved in any serious political–security conflict in the region. Russia’s military planning takes account of high-impact, low-probability threats surmising situations when Russia’s survival can be put at risk—namely, military conflicts with the United States and China. Notwithstanding the fact that Russia’s potential conflict with the United States is supposed to take place primarily in Europe with the Asia–Pacific being a secondary battlefield and China is not considered a threat under its present leadership, Moscow is modernizing its military potential in Siberia and the Far East as a precaution against these risks. With a direct attack against Russia being unlikely due to its nuclear potential, Russia’s military–political leadership regards the Asia–Pacific environment to be more favorable to its security than other regions like Europe or Central Asia. Military conflict on the Korean Peninsula presents the most critical threat for Russia in the region, as it may result in North Korean refugees’ flow into the Far East either across the shared border or by sea and the contamination of Russia’s territory in case WMD are employed.¹⁰ It should be noted that Russia has been a strong proponent of peace and stability in East Asia, as any conflict would undermine Russia’s rather weak positions in the regional power balance even more and make prospects of development of the Far East more uncertain. As Russia is interested in maintaining stability and conflicts prevention, it has no revisionist agenda in the region.

Russia took steps to secure its place in all relevant regional organizations in East Asia: apart from enjoying dialogue partnership with ASEAN since 2005 and supporting its centrality in the regional architecture, Russia has been a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum, APEC, Asia–Europe Meeting, East Asia Summit, ASEAN Defense Ministers’ and Dialogue Partners’ Meeting, Conference on Interaction and Confidence–Building Measures in Asia and takes part in the Shangri-La Dialogue. Russia’s involvement guarantees it a powerful say in all regional matters. Apart from the Russia–hosted APEC summit in Vladivostok in 2012, Russia’s engagement in regional cooperation is described as facing a number of limitations, which derive partly from its inconsistent actions in regional organizations and partly from the complex regional environment and competition in East Asia.¹¹

It should be highlighted that a major security concern for Moscow in Northeast

Asia is the issue of the U.S.–sponsored ballistic missile defense (BMD) system. Russia believes that it is built on a unilateral basis and that it undermines strategic stability and triggers an arms race in the region. It is suspected to have the potential of employment against Russian and Chinese strategic forces despite U.S. assertions that it is directed only against North Korea. Russian officials had already expressed their concern about the U.S. ballistic missile defense in Japan before, but this issue came to the fore after South Korea decided to deploy THAAD in June 2017 following DPRK nuclear tests and missile launches. Russia considers this deployment would only lead to further escalation of security tensions and lead to North Korea implementing new launches and conducting new tests. Yet, it should be noted that unlike China's case, THAAD deployment does not pose a direct threat to Russia's strategic nuclear potential. Russia's strategic nuclear forces are stationed out of range of THAAD and hardly rely on the intermediate–range ballistic missiles that it is supposed to intercept. However, Russia objects to the American missile defense systems approaching its border, this time in the East. On January 2017, Russia and China agreed to intensify cooperation and take joint measures against the U.S. THAAD deployment in order to reinforce their strategic interests and balance of power in the region.¹² By the same token, Russia regards Japan's decision to deploy Aegis Ashore as disproportionate to the real missile threats in the region and believes that its eventual incorporation into the Asian segment of U.S. global missile defence may further undermine strategic stability in the northern part of the Pacific.¹³

Russia's strategic partnership with China, which is the main axis of Russia's East Asian policy, has been strengthened amid the rift with the West and deteriorating Russia–U.S. relations. Russia's relations with China are not directed against third parties and are based on mutual support for a polycentric world order, opposition to unilateralism, respect for mutual sovereignty, and non-interference into domestic affairs. Despite the fact that the desired massive surge in Chinese investment never materialized, there has been substantial progress in the political and military development of bilateral relations. After the border issue was settled in 2004, the two countries have been conducting military exercises on land (since 2005) and in the sea (since 2012) along with ballistic missile defense exercises held for the first time in 2016, and for the second time in 2017. In 2015, new arms contracts were signed, with Russia agreeing to deliver 24 Sukhoi Su-35 super–maneuverable multirole fighters (4++ generation) and six battalions of S-400 Triumf air defense systems, the most advanced medium– and long–range anti-aircraft missile systems in service in Russia. However, Russian–Chinese relations remain mostly focused on political and security cooperation, at least in part *vis-à-vis* the West. With the Chinese elite holding a more restrained position, it is Russia that bears more economic, political and strategic expenses in this case.¹⁴

In regard to the Taiwanese issue it should be noted that Russia fully supports Chinese sovereignty and the official “one China policy.” Although it develops semi-official relations and working contacts with Taiwan through the Moscow–Taipei Coordination Commission on Economic and Cultural Cooperation (i.e. in economics), Russian–Taiwanese cooperation will make progress only on the condition that it is not met by serious objections from China.¹⁵

Russia and China share a common approach to many (albeit not all) regional security problems, first and foremost the Korean Peninsula. The two states hold regular discussions on international relations and the security architecture in the Asia–Pacific. In June 2016 Russia and China signed a joint statement on strengthening global strategic stability. It advances a new vision of strategic stability where all states should observe the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, should not use coercive measures in international relations other than the UN, and should discuss the nuclear issue comprehensively, taking into account conventional weapons and non-military aspects of security as well. In July 2017 during Xi Jinping’s visit to Moscow, Russia and China signed a joint declaration on strengthening comprehensive partnership and strategic interaction where they stated that Russia–China relations represent a model of harmonious coexistence and mutually beneficial partnership of two large states, which has surpassed simple bilateral interaction and has emerged as an important factor of international strategic balance, peace and security. Both countries pledged to strengthen international and regional cooperation and to promote the concept of common, complex, stable and indispensable security.¹⁶

However, the focus on relations with China in its Asian policy poses a number of challenges for Russia. Moscow is facing the risks of an increasingly asymmetrical relationship, overdependence on China and becoming its junior partner, with its own position being undermined in the region. Given China’s growing might and assertiveness and its lack of willingness to coordinate actions in East Asia with other actors and tolerate other competitors in the region, Russia in the future may find itself in a position where it will have to accommodate China’s interests in a way that is contradictory to its own. For instance, Russia may be pushed to counterbalance the United States in East Asia, which thus far has been carefully avoided. It remains to be seen if Russia and China would be able to coordinate their policy within regional institutions in East Asia. Thus, one of the key targets for Russia’s Asian pivot is to take the right balance between relations with China, on the one hand, and other regional states on the other, with Japan, South Korea and ASEAN, also seen as extremely important partners in politics, economics and security.¹⁷

Russia’s View on Territorial Conflicts in East Asia

An important aspect of Russia’s approach to security in Northeast Asia is related to territorial and border conflicts. Most of these conflicts have deep historical roots and are linked to the historical legacy of the Cold War and even the earlier colonial period. They include disputes over the Southern Kuriles/Northern territories, the Senkaku Islands/Diaoyudao Islands, and the Islands of Dokdo/Takeshima. Since territorial conflicts in the South China Sea (Spratly Islands, Paracel islands etc.) are closely intertwined with the security situation in Northeast Asia, in this section we shall try to generalize Russia’s views and policies within the framework of the geographically broader notion of East Asia.

Russia's approach to the territorial conflicts in East Asia, highlighted from the point of its international political and economic interests, contains global, regional and economic dimensions. With regard to the global dimension, Russia remains one of the leading actors of world politics. Meanwhile, in the age of globalization, many territorial conflicts in East Asia have outgrown the regional level and become global problems affecting fundamental political, military and economic interests of all the leading world powers. In fact, the political situation around these conflicts becomes a manifestation of the global balance of power, or, in other words, these conflicts create dividing lines in the global geopolitical games. Russia's position as a global challenger to the hegemony of the United States and a confronter of the West is pivotal for understanding the logic of Russian diplomatic thinking, and the issue of territorial disputes is no exception. On the other side, the regional dimension is formed by Moscow's deep interest in sustaining friendly relations with all its main partners in Asia. Therefore, Russia is driven to take a balanced, ideology-free and pragmatic position on all international issues of the regional agenda, so as not to inflict damage to its own interests, especially in the economic sphere. The goal of Russia is to concentrate its diplomatic efforts on maintaining, at least at a minimum level, the fragile status quo in the region, and to find a delicate balance in relations with various regional actors.¹⁸

Territorial conflicts in East Asia involve controversies over island territories and maritime borders. At stake are the exclusive economic rights over vast sea areas in the East China and South China Seas which are rich in minerals and marine resources and are an integral part of major sea lanes. Meanwhile for Russia these sea areas are not so valuable from geo-economic and geo-strategic points compared to Japan, South Korea and China. Russia relies mainly on the use of the transit potential of its Eastern ports, which are largely focused on the Arctic sea route or on servicing the internal needs of China, rather than on the Southern route (i.e. through the Malacca Strait). Not coincidentally, Russia tried to actualize the transit potential of the Northern sea route when it hosted the Vladivostok APEC summit in 2012. Against this background, Russia is rather a bystander to territorial conflicts in East Asia and, in this sense, it enjoys a much greater freedom of maneuver in the rapidly changing regional environment, than in the case of the countries, for which territorial conflicts pose a direct threat of war. It should be noted, however, that economic, political and strategic interdependencies are compelling to all the disputing actors to adopt a relatively pacifist approach to maritime security.¹⁹

Simultaneously, the economic factor of the Russian approach to territorial conflicts is intertwined by the needs of the economic development of Siberia and the Far East. In the context of its development strategy, Russia is deeply interested in fair economic and political relations with all participant states of the economic integration frameworks in East Asia (i.e. practically all the countries in the region except the DPRK). Meanwhile, almost all of them, including China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and other states of Southeast Asia, are mutually involved in the territorial and border conflicts. Russia's active positioning in territorial disputes in favor of one of the parties would inevitably cause damage to its relations with the opposing party. Besides, Russia would lose face

in the eyes of other diplomatic partners, for whom Russia's biased position would testify her weakness and lack of independence. Moreover, Russia's participation in situational blocs and coalitions around territorial disputes is fraught with the risk of getting involved in an armed conflict. Thus, Russia cannot afford to "make friends" against anyone and takes the position of strict neutrality towards the territorial and border issues in which it is not directly involved.

With regard to territorial conflicts, Russia's position is based on the principles of respect for state sovereignty and national integrity of states, inviolability of borders, and the priority of international law. Boundary lines can change only as a result of international agreements concluded between the relevant parties. According to the head of the Russian delegation at the negotiations on the demarcation of the border with China Ambassador Genrich V. Kireev, border is a "bilateral body" and "shall be governed by the bilateral documents," while unilateral determination of a border would not lay a basis for the demarcation.²⁰

Moscow holds a negative attitude to the idea of internationalization of the disputes, i.e. their resolution through multilateral platforms with the participation of extra-regional actors, or by an international court if the trial takes place without the participation of any of the parties. In the Soviet period, Moscow was strongly opposed to Japan's attempts to discuss the problem of the South Kuril Islands at a meeting of the Group of Seven in Toronto in 1988. Moscow uses the same approach presently towards territorial conflicts in East Asia. For example, the Russian Ambassador to China, Sergey Razov said in a newspaper interview in February 2013 that "the introduction of bilateral territorial disputes to collective, international or regional grounds is not conducive to finding appropriate solutions. Issues of state sovereignty and territorial integrity are very sensitive for any country. Their actual settlement requires time, patience, and peace."²¹

The China-related component of Russia's position on territorial conflicts deserves special attention. Relations with China after the 2014 Ukrainian crisis acquired a special meaning for Russia as both countries reject American global hegemony and share views on multi-polarity as the new basis of world order. At the same time, the military and economic rise of China, accompanied by its increasing assertiveness over the issues of border disputes, creates additional difficulties for Russia in its diplomatic relations with East Asian partners, since it complicates the problem of finding the right balance in relations with China and its opponents.

The Chinese factor is inseparable from the issue of the Russo-Chinese border. To date the more than 4,300-kilometer border is demarcated, and practically all border disputes have been resolved. Russia believes that in the long-term span stability on the border with China is essential to its national security.

Meanwhile, the reunification of Russia with the Crimea in 2014 brought new connotations to this issue. It gave rise to discussions of whether state boundaries are a "sacred cow" and whether they may be changed, for example, as a result of the nations' use of their right to self-determination. If there are precedents for such changes in Europe (even in the constitutional case of nationwide referendum), can they take place in the East? If they can, a rising China may be tempted to return to the question of the

“historical injustice” committed in the “semi-colonial past” when it was in a much weaker position. In this sense, Russia would not like the Pandora box to be opened and the border issue to be put again on the negotiating table with China. This fear serves as an additional factor of anti-revisionism and conservatism of Moscow on the issue of state borders in East Asia, additionally fueling Russia’s self-reserved approach to territorial spats in the region.

In this context, Russia’s position towards the Sino–Japanese conflict on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is especially noteworthy. What matters for Russia is the involvement of two nuclear powers—China (directly) and the United States, which are tied to Japan by the Security Treaty and bear the obligation to protect it in the case of an armed attack on the territories under Japanese administrative control (article 5 of the Treaty). Given that the conflict is fraught with escalation into the global nuclear war, Russia as a nuclear power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council will in no case be able to stay aside. In addition, the growth of military tensions in the East China Sea, the emergence of risks of unprovoked and uncontrolled escalation of the conflict pose a great danger for the nearby Far Eastern borders of Russia. The approach of Moscow to this conflict is characterized by the principles of strict neutrality and the necessity to settle it by the conflicting parties themselves.

In June 2016, Russian and Chinese warships in the course of joint exercises were spotted near the Senkaku (Diaoyu) islands. Some observers in Japan assessed this fact as a sign of Russia’s solidarity with China and a signal to Japan. The Japanese newspaper *Sankei*, remarking that Russian ships appeared almost simultaneously with the Chinese vessel, insisted that the incident took place against the backdrop of Moscow’s apparent desire to show a willingness for anti-Japanese cooperation with China and to raise the stakes in its negotiations with Japan on the “Northern territories” issue.²²

However, in reality, Russian warships had passed near the Senkaku Islands earlier and it had not violated any international law. This incident attracted attention in the context of Japan’s oversensitivity to Russia’s strategic cooperation with China, when all information of such cooperation is viewed as a testimony of an “anti-Japanese conspiracy.” For example, the joint statement of President Medvedev and Chinese President Hu Jintao on the 65th anniversary of the end of the World War II affirmed that the two nations were “in a position very close to each other” over the outcome of World War II and according to the *Yomiuri* newspaper, “hinted at possible solidarity in their territorial claims against Japan.”²³

It should also be noted that on the issues of the territorial sovereignty of the Crimea and of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, China does not support Russia officially, adhering to the principle of diplomatic neutrality. Both countries, therefore, do not bear any moral obligations to each other and all their international actions are driven by their own national interests.

As far as the disputes in the South China Sea are concerned, Russia also adheres to the standards of neutrality and elimination of the third parties from direct involvement. At a briefing on June 10, 2016 the official representative of the MFA of Russia Maria Zakharova stated that “Russia is not a party to territorial disputes in the South China

Sea and will not be involved in them. Fundamentally, we are not taking sides. We firmly believe that the involvement of any third parties to these disputes will only inflame tensions in the region.”²⁴ As was repeatedly stated by Russian officials, including foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Russia strongly supports efforts to develop the code of conduct in the South China Sea.²⁵

The neutrality of the Russian position is sometimes scrutinized with doubt by some Western, especially the Japanese, media. In September 2016, Russia held sea joint naval exercises with China in the South China Sea called “Sea interaction–2016.” On the Russian side, they were attended by anti-submarine warfare destroyers Admiral Tributs, Admiral Vinogradov, which not only conducted fire and rescue maneuvers, but also practiced capturing an island. Since the exercises were conducted for first time in the South China Sea and the timing coincided with the increased naval activity of China in the sub-region, some observers interpreted these drills as demonstration of Russia’s solidarity with China on the territorial issues.²⁶ The scenario of the exercise was viewed as the development of joint military action against the U.S. Navy which actively opposes Chinese military activity in the region.²⁷

Another example of Russian diplomatic behavior seen by the West as “biased” and “pro-Chinese” is the reaction of the President of Russia Vladimir Putin to the decision of the Hague Tribunal in July 2016 on the lawsuit of the Philippines against China, stating that China is not entitled to claim a 200-mile exclusive economic zone around the Spratly Islands. During the meeting with the Chairman of the PRC Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Hangzhou, the Russian President said that “we do not interfere and we believe that any intervention of a non-regional power goes only to the detriment of settling these issues. The intervention of third-party non-regional powers, in my opinion, is harmful and counterproductive.”²⁸ It should be noted that the logic of Russia’s position is that arbitration should be initiated by the disputing parties, while the arbitration court should hear the arguments and positions of all the disputing parties. Because arbitration was not sought by China, its decisions are not considered fair. This statement reveals Russia’s negative attitude to the practice of resolving territorial disputes in the international court, although such practice has proved its fruitfulness in other disputes.

Russia also has to take into account the fact that many countries in Southeast Asia, anxious with the assertive policies of China, rely on multilateral political and judicial mechanisms involving the participation of third countries, particularly the United States. Some of these countries are important to Russian economic and political interests, such as Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. Russia cannot completely ignore their position, because many of Russia’s economic cooperation projects in the region are held in the disputed waters.

The most vivid example is Vietnam. Russian Rosneft and Gazprom take part in developing Vietnam’s offshore fields in the South China Sea. Besides, Vietnam has been actively purchasing Russian military equipment, including six *Varshavyanka*-class conventional fast attack submarines as a part of its counter-intervention strategy.²⁹ In April 2012, Gazprom and the Vietnamese company Petrovietnam signed an agreement

to develop two gas fields on the continental shelf near the Spratly archipelago. China in response filed a protest, saying that the agreement covers the waters of the South China which are included in the Chinese zone of exclusive economic interests.³⁰

This brings a certain element of ambiguity to the Russian approach to the problems of the South China Sea. However, from the point of view of China, Vietnam's cooperation with Russia in the South China Sea has no political motive and is not directed against Chinese interests, and therefore represents a "lesser evil" compared to the Vietnamese–American cooperation in the military sphere. In China, there is a widespread view that Russia develops ties with Vietnam not to counterbalance China, but to strengthen its influence in Asia.

The problem of territorial disputes is also acute in Russian–Japanese relations. The two countries are on the opposite sides on the issue of border demarcation. A peace treaty has not been signed yet and ongoing negotiations for two and a half decades have not succeeded in any palpable result. Both in Tokyo and in Moscow, there is an understanding that this question is extremely difficult to solve because of a fundamental gap in the positions of the parties which is almost impossible to fill.

The main obstacle lies in the radically different assessment of the outcome of WWII. Russia considers that the Southern Kuriles are part of its territory as a result of the postwar settlement between the victorious states. In the dispute with Japan, Russia takes an existential approach based on its identity as the successor state of the Soviet Union, which gained its status of superpower in the war victory. In this sense, for Russia the "antirevisionist" attitude to the problem of the South Kuril Islands is not just a negotiating position, but a manifestation of Russian statehood.

On its side, Japan insists that now it is due time to repair the historical injustice committed against Japan, which suffered from the "Soviet aggression" and from the behind-the-scenes deal struck behind her back by the allied powers. For Japan, the solution to the border problem with Russia has become a part of the general course of "summing up" the results of the Second World War and of its attainment of a new status as a "normal country."

For both countries, the border issue has become a matter of national pride, national prestige and honor, whilst any concessions in the dispute by their own governments are interpreted in the public opinion of both countries as betrayal of the fathers' memory.

However, towards Japan, Russia demonstrates the greatest degree of flexibility compared to any party in other cases of territorial disputes in East Asia. First, Russia believes that the absence of a peace treaty with Japan is abnormal. Moscow recognizes the unsettledness of the border problem with Japan (naming it the problem of border delimitation) and agrees to conduct negotiations on this issue. This moment comprises a fundamental difference with the situation around Senkaku and Dokdo, where the party exercising administrative control over a disputed territory does not recognize the existence of a territorial problem and refuses to hold any dialogue with the opposing side.

With the painful border problem in the passive of bilateral relations with Japan, Russia is trying to avoid steps that would worsen them to a greater extent—for example,

by an open manifestation of her solidarity with China and South Korea in their territorial disputes with Japan. Russia, moreover, has put forward the idea of creating a special economic zone on the disputed islands. It should be noted that attempts to organize joint economic activity as a method of soothing contradictions had been practiced in other conflicts (one may recall the bilateral Japanese–Chinese agreement of 2008 on the shelf in East China Sea). However, no positive results have been achieved, and the Russo–Japanese experience, if it proves successful, could be applied to other dispute cases.

Russia and Korea: Security Concerns and Solutions

The Korean Peninsula provides ample food for thought and, unfortunately, numerous causes for concern. For decades since the late 1940s, two very different political systems have been clashing in this uniform ethno–cultural space, and their conflict internationalized from the very beginning. Combined with Korea’s central location within the already competitive region of Northeast Asia, this made the Peninsula the focal point of the regional security system in the Cold War era. Arguably, it retains this status today. The nuclear and missile problem, the future of unification, political and economic transformations in the North and the South are key issues on the regional agenda, with serious potential repercussions in terms of security. To make matters worse, most players perceive the Korean dilemma as a zero-sum game, a conflict of principal, non-forfeitable interests the parties believe to be irreconcilable. Moreover, all Korean issues are interconnected and intertwined into a tight and very complex knot. Consequently, analysis of Russia’s security policy in Korea would inevitably revolve around these vast topics.

Recently Russia has been following Asian affairs with increasing interest. This “pivot to the East” cannot be explained only by soured relations with the West. Northeast Asia is a key region both economically and politically, and Moscow simply acknowledges this fact. Each new edition of the Russian foreign policy doctrine devotes more attention to Korea-related topics. The current Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation reads that Moscow strives to “maintain friendly relations” with both Korean states and promotes political dialogue between them to reduce tensions. The document reiterates that Russia supports the Peninsula’s denuclearization “believing that this objective can be attained through the Six–Party Talks.” Notably, it is the Korean chapter of the paper that presents Moscow’s longstanding idea of building “a mechanism for maintaining peace and security in Northeast Asia.”³¹

Aside from the intrinsic value of proactive foreign policy, dealing with Korean issues has important additional benefits. First and foremost, Moscow needs to secure a stable regional environment to carry on with its highly-prioritized plan to develop the Russian Far East. Russia shares a border with the Korean Peninsula, and this simple fact makes following the situation there vitally important for the country: Russia is not only a player here, but also a stakeholder.

Besides, working on Korea-related matters is important not only *per se*, but also

as a means of engaging with China and the United States. For instance, in July 2017 the Russian and Chinese foreign ministries issued a joint statement on the Korean Peninsula's problems,³² which marks the first time Moscow and Beijing formally adopted a common policy on an international issue. Korea was also an important topic at the meeting between Presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump at the G20 Summit in July 2017. The Peninsula is where Moscow's and Washington's interests are compatible to a considerable degree, making possible cooperation in the hopes of its positive effect spilling over to other areas of Russo–American interaction. To this end, Russia continues consultations with the United States on the Korean issue.³³ The recent shift in threat perception in the United States, with previously ignored North Korea coming to the fore, looks entirely politically motivated and deeply concerns Russia. This change has already led to strange and careless actions, such as the show of U.S. military force in April 2017, or the initiative to police Russian and other countries' ports to enforce sanctions against Pyongyang. The idea of adding new sanctions against Russia and North Korea (along with Iran) with a single legislative act³⁴ is not only symbolically unfriendly, but also hints at the possibility of linking the two issues in the future.

Despite remarkably unanimous North Korean and American claims that Pyongyang has combat-ready nuclear munitions and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs),³⁵ most Russian experts are skeptical about actual progress in this area. For example, the Russian Defense Ministry, basing its analysis on the data collected from early warning radars, considers the Hwasong-14, launched on July 4, 2017, to have been an intermediate-range missile rather than an ICBM.³⁶ Moscow officially presented this assessment to the UN Security Council, and this is also the viewpoint the Russian Foreign Ministry proceeds from.³⁷ Notably, South Korean experts are also careful in their judgment, saying that North Korean ballistic technology requires some extra years of work and testing to reach true ICBM level.³⁸

Domestic and foreign policy considerations are probably the reason why the United States periodically returns to the topic of the North Korean threat. The pattern is irregular: unlike Hwasong-14, the Hwasong-12 launch of May 14 with remarkably similar parameters, distance and same lofted trajectory garnered little attention from American politicians and the press. Perhaps, initially unconvincing “marketing” is to blame: in May, North Korea dubbed the tested unit merely as a “new nuclear-capable land-to-land strategic intermediate-to-long-range rocket.”³⁹ It would not be until July that Pyongyang would come up with the ICBM moniker.

By feeding into the anti-Pyongyang discourse, exaggerating North Korea's military might, Washington creates a situation where it is almost obliged to strike down the “deadly” and “irrational” foe. This is very dangerous by itself and also unnerves both opponents and allies of the United States, exponentially increasing the risk of devastating conflict. Observers can only hope that Washington merely emulates Pyongyang's usual tactic, leaving a gap between belligerent rhetoric and real policy-making.

The policies of the new South Korean administration are another unknown parameter. President Moon Jae-in, who came to power in 2017, is expected to improve relations with the North, however it is yet unclear whether he will succeed. Indeed, South Korea

may turn into a locomotive of dialogue rather than a spoiler as it was until recently, but faced with political opposition domestically, pressure from the United States, and the need to react to Pyongyang's actions, the new president may not be able to mend inter-Korean relations as soon as some observers expect.

Worsened inter-Korean relations are a major negative factor for regional security. During the past decade, vocalized threats, shows of force and even limited military clashes have been a disturbingly common feature of Korean affairs. Aside from the evident danger of escalation, the ongoing confrontation makes the elites feel increasingly threatened and thus prompts them to make new military moves perceived to enhance security. The lapse in inter-Korean dialogue robs both parties of the means to control their relations and resolve risky situations.

The high cost both Koreas would pay for a full-scale war creates a quasi-stable security environment. Paradoxically, limited escalation is seen as tolerable since the North and the South deem all-out conflict unacceptable for themselves and the counterpart. Needless to say, this “careful recklessness,” combined with considerable military capability and touchy nature of the divisive issues creates a consistently dangerous situation. First, the risk of a false alarm triggering real conflict increases considerably. Second, the current state of affairs lulls the parties into a false sense of security and disables dialogue without prior confrontation.

The Korean crises taught us one thing: no matter how bad things may seem, they can still get worse. The situation is extremely dangerous as is, yet the concerned parties seem ready to exacerbate it further with shows of force, like missile launches on the one hand and large-scale military exercises on the other. The negative effect of missile and nuclear tests on regional security is evident. Joint U.S.–South Korean exercises happen in direct proximity to North Korea, and their tasks (such as seizing Pyongyang) are rather concerning for the country. One can expect their leadership to consider this factor in military planning and thus rationalize acquiring a nuclear and missile arsenal. Most recently, this stance on the joint exercises was reiterated by Russian deputy foreign minister Gennady Gatilov at a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting in April 2017.⁴⁰

In this light, the Russo–Chinese “moratorium for moratorium” proposal⁴¹ for the parties to refrain from mutually concerning actions is sensible and presents a good starting point for further talks. Although earlier North Korea came forward with a similar initiative, now Pyongyang says it cannot refrain from tests since it has already made much progress and cannot stop midway. However, this is almost definitely a bargaining point rather than firm conviction.

Russia firmly believes that even nuclear and missile experiments must not stop engagement attempts, dialogue and equal-level contacts with Pyongyang. Isolation only reinforces factors that push North Korea towards nuclear technology: siege mentality, lack of response options when faced with challenges, economic and energy problems, etc.

This is the political motivation behind the Khasan–Rajin project, and Moscow hopes other actors will adopt this approach as well. The railroad link between Russian Khasan

and North Korean Rajin was completed in 2013. The modernized port was to channel Russian coal exports to South Korea and beyond. Russia invested 10.6 billion rubles (about \$189 million) in the endeavor.⁴² This could become the first step towards linking the Trans-Siberian and Trans-Korean railroads.⁴³ When the UNSC resolutions 2270 and 2321 tightened economic and financial sanctions against North Korea,⁴⁴ Moscow managed to keep the restrictions off the project, but Seoul later unilaterally closed ports to ships that visited North Korea during the previous 180 days, thus putting a stop to it. According to the Russian ambassador to Pyongyang, Alexander Matsegora, Russia hopes to carry on with China as the buyer to make the project interesting for other parties, be it Japan or South Korea.⁴⁵

As a permanent member of the UNSC, Russia not only supports, but also co-sponsors the international sanctions against North Korea. However, Moscow sees that sanctions are inefficient both technologically and politically, whereas engagement and cooperation will provide its participants with leverage in North Korea. Currently no country, not even China, has enough clout with Pyongyang to change its course. The apparent growth of the North Korean economy in recent years (in spite of sanctions) and overall decades-long isolation suggest that Pyongyang would be interested in opening up as well. Engagement would not only let the international community shape North Korea's choices, but also diminish the worth and necessity of its military projects.

Russia firmly supports the idea of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁶ Pyongyang's actions clearly endanger the non-proliferation regime and present a considerable security challenge for the region. While denouncing Pyongyang's actions, Moscow also sees the factors that influence such decisions (development of military capability in South Korea, U.S.–South Korean military exercises, etc.) and acknowledges that the problem is multi-faceted and cannot be explained away with North Korean "unpredictability" and "war-mongering."

From Russia's viewpoint, it is deplorable that North Korea, despite all calls and restrictions, pursues its nuclear and missile programs. However, Moscow believes it does not pose an immediate direct threat. The much more concerning aspect for Russia today is the reaction of North Korea's opponents and the risk of triggering a regional arms race, possibly with nuclear weapons. Frequent shows of American military might, THAAD deployment, certain South Korean politicians' calls to advance its own military nuclear research,⁴⁷ Japan's active remilitarization remind us that the danger of nuclear proliferation and armed conflict is real in Northeast Asia.

Only dialogue can prevent this grim outcome, and there is no need to invent a new platform given that the Six-Party Talks exist. It may be difficult to tackle the nuclear issue head-on, however, the format may be modified and its scope widened. Besides, it would be impossible to solve the nuclear issue separately from the other problems of regional security. Pyongyang may be reluctant to discuss its nuclear program, since it understands quite well that the end goal will be denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. At the same time, a wider security-oriented approach may alleviate North Korea's and other actors' concerns.

That is why the Russo–Chinese joint statement sets a goal to create "on the peninsula

and in Northeast Asia... a peace and security mechanism and consequently normalize relations between the countries in question.”⁴⁸ Although the document avoids direct mentions of the Six-Party Talks (probably due to their undeserved image as a “failed” structure), this passage is, in fact, a reference to the Six-Party process. Within its framework, as far back as 2007, Russia pushed to establish a working group on a Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism.⁴⁹ Moscow coordinated its work, and the objective was to transform the talks into a permanent institute executing a broadened mandate.⁵⁰ While the project failed to get traction, reviving it now would be a step in the right direction, since the need for such a structure is evident.

Real dialogue will grant new political leverage to all parties and give them new instruments to control the situation. Currently no country has any actual means to influence North Korea’s actions; even China, on which Pyongyang depends economically, or Russia, its long-standing partner. Threats or sanctions on Washington, Seoul or Tokyo’s part are unlikely to produce an effect aside from a negative one. Re-establishing and broadening the Six-Party process would allow all member countries to influence their own and common future, the partners’ actions and regional security.

Conclusion

The current state of affairs in Northeast Asia should be viewed as one of unstable equilibrium. There are several high intensity points in the sub-region, including the aggravation of tension on the Korean peninsula, territorial disputes, and growing arms race overshadowed by the confrontational U.S. and Chinese stances on the security architecture in Asia. Each of these flashpoints has huge destructive potential and requires a great deal of care and scrutiny.

This study has shown that Russia, aiming to strengthen its position as one of the major powers of East Asia in order to develop its Far East relations and help create a polycentric regional order, prefers to stand away from regional security conflicts. While Russia secured its place in all regional organizations to make sure it could have a say in regional matters, it takes a neutral position in territorial disputes and objects to the interference of third parties. That stance enables Russia to retain a freedom of maneuver and to develop balanced relations with all regional partners in Asia. Its strategic partnership with China is based on an evolving security cooperation as well as on preserving a substantial commonality in the approach to security challenges. Similar to China, Russia views the U.S. BMD system and THAAD deployment with serious concern, as an action undermining strategic stability in East Asia. Russia’s focus on China, however, contains the risk of an increasingly asymmetrical relationship that prompts Russia to diversify its regional ties. Russia is increasingly concerned with the tensions on the Korean Peninsula, which are considered the most dangerous threat to Russia in East Asia. It advocates for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, peaceful conflict resolution, resumption of the Six-Party process and—together with China—a “moratorium for a moratorium” proposal to ease the current confrontation.

The last few years Russia made an intensive shift towards Northeast Asia, given the regional environment and the multidirectional character of the existing threats. In addressing the international security problems of the sub-region Russia endeavors to establish an inclusive, open, transparent and equitable collective security and cooperation architecture in the Asia–Pacific. Russia needs strong partners to achieve this aim.

Notes

1. Alexander Lukin, *Pivot to Asia. Russia's Foreign Policy Enters the 21st Century* (New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt Ltd., 2017), 1–9.
2. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016). *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248 (accessed August 20, 2017).
3. Samuel Charap et al., “The U.S. and Russia in the Asia–Pacific,” *The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations*, 2016, 8, <https://www.iiss.org/en/events/events/archive/2016-a3c2/march-1194/the-us-and-russia-in-the-asia-pacific-39ff> (accessed August 20, 2017).
4. Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China on Strengthening Russia–China Partnership and Strategic Interaction, [in Russian] *The President of the Russian Federation*. September 27, 2010, <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/719> (accessed August 20, 2017).
5. Ekaterina Koldunova, “Russia's Involvement in Regional Cooperation in East Asia. Opportunities and Limitations of Constructive Engagement,” *Asian Survey* 56, no. 3 (2016): 554–52.
6. Vasily Kashin, “Russia's Approach to Regional Security in Asia–Pacific and Prospects for Cooperation with Japan, [in Russian] *Carnegie Moscow Center*, June 2016, 13–14.
7. Samuel Charap et al., “The U.S. and Russia in the Asia–Pacific,” 16.
8. Paradorng Rangsimaporn, *Russia as an Aspiring Great Power in East Asia: Perceptions and Policies from Yeltsin to Putin* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 156; and Margarete Klein, “Russia: A Euro–Pacific Power? Goals, Strategies and Perspectives of Moscow's East Asia Policy,” SWP Research Paper, September 2014, 5–10.
9. Koldunova, “Russia's Involvement in Regional Cooperation in East Asia,” 552–54.
10. Kashin, “Russia's Approach to Regional Security in Asia–Pacific,” 3–9.
11. Koldunova, “Russia's Involvement in Regional Cooperation in East Asia,” 554.
12. Vasily Kashin, Russia and China Respond to THAAD, *Russian International Affairs Council*, January 17, 2017, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=8579 (accessed August 20, 2017).
13. Russia Foreign Ministry Spokesperson M. Zakharova regarding Japan Defence Ministry plans to deploy Aegis Ashore systems in the country, The Embassy of the Russian Federation to Japan, August 24, 2017, https://tokyo.mid.ru/en_GB/web/tokyo-en/events-meetings-statements (accessed February 22, 2018).
14. Alexei Voskressenski, “Relations between Russia and China as Part of the Asian Vector of Russian Diplomacy (1990–2015),” [in Russian] *Comparative Politics* 18, no. 1 (2015): 32–53.
15. Kashin, “Russia's Approach to Regional Security in Asia–Pacific,” 13.
16. Joint Declaration between the Russian Federation and the PRC on the Further Strengthening of Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Interaction, [in Russian] *The President of the Russian Federation*. July 4, 2017, <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/5218> (accessed August 20, 2017).
17. Alexei Voskressenski, “Relations between Russia and China as Part of the Asian Vector of Russian Diplomacy (1990–2015),” 52; Rensselaer Lee and Artyom Lukin, *Russia's Far East: New Dynamics in Asia Pacific and Beyond* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015), 3–4, 212–15; Samuel Charap et al., “The U.S. and Russia in the Asia–Pacific,” 8–11; and

- Koldunova, "Russia's Involvement in Regional Cooperation in East Asia," 553.
18. Paradorn Rangsimaporn, "Russian Perceptions and Policies in a Multipolar East Asia under Yeltsin and Putin," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 9 (2009): 235.
 19. Michael I. Magcamit and Alexander C. Tan, "East and South China Seas Maritime Dispute Resolution and Escalation: Two Sides of the Same Coin?" *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2016): 114.
 20. Yuri Savenko, "Conversation with Genrikh Kireevym who Devoted Thirty and Three Years to Borderland," [in Russian] http://portalus.ru/modules/sensation/rus_readme.php?subaction=showfull&id=1336573714&archive=&start_from=&ucat=& (accessed August 20, 2017).
 21. An interview with S. Razov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia to China, published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, February 1, 2013, [in Russian] http://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/124698 (accessed August 20, 2017).
 22. "The Hurdle of Talks with Russia on North Territories Issue Grows," [in Japanese] *Sankei*, June 9, 2016, <http://www.sankei.com/world/news/160609/wor1606090038-n1.html> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 23. K. D. Kapur, "Russia–Japan Relations: Politico–Strategic Importance of the Disputed Southern Kurile Islands/Northern Territories," *India Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2012): 394.
 24. "The Immutability of Russia's Position on the Territorial Dispute in the South China Sea," [in Russian] Briefing of Official Representative of MFA of Russia M. V. Zakharova, Moscow, June 10, 2016, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2313531#16 (accessed August 20, 2017).
 25. Sergey Lavrov's Address to Mongolian MFA, Ulan-Bator, April 14, 2016, [In Russian] http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2233937 (accessed August 20, 2017).
 26. Yu Koizumi, "Why Has Joint Russo–Chinese Exercises been Held in the South China Sea?" [in Japanese] *Wedge Infinity*, September 27, 2016, <http://wedge.ismedia.jp/articles/-/7837> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 27. Aleksandr Khrolenko, "What is Interesting in Russian–Chinese Maneuvers in the South China Sea," [in Russian] *RIA Novosti Press Agency*, September 12, 2016, <https://ria.ru/analytics/20160912/1476705773.html> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 28. "Russia Supports China's Stance on South China Sea," *Sputnik International*, September 5, 2016, <https://sputniknews.com/world/201609051044988523-russia-china-putin/> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 29. Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnam's Strategy of 'Cooperating and Struggling' with China over Maritime Disputes in the South China Sea," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2016): 213.
 30. N. V. Fyodorov, "The Conflict in the South China Sea and the Russian–Vietnamese Relations," *Managerial Counseling*, [in Russian] no. 11 (2016), 35.
 31. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.
 32. "Joint Statement by the Russian and Chinese Foreign Ministries on the Korean Peninsula's Problems," July 4, 2017, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2807662?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw&_101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw_languageId=en_GB (accessed August 20, 2017).
 33. "Press Release on Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov's Consultations in Washington," July 8, 2017. http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kp/-/asset_publisher/VJy7Ig5QaAII/content/id/2809586?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_VJy7Ig5QaAII&_101_INSTANCE_VJy7Ig5QaAII_languageId=en_GB (accessed August 20, 2017).
 34. *Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act*, HR 3364 (July 24, 2017), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3364/text> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 35. "Statement by the Foreign Minister of the DPRK," [in Korean] July 8, 2017, http://rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2017-07-08-0018 (accessed August 20, 2017); and "Statement by Secretary Tillerson," July 4, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/>

- remarks/2017/07/272340.htm (accessed August 20, 2017).
36. "Russia Provided the UN with Data on DPRK's Missile Test," [in Russian] TASS, July 9, 2017, <http://tass.ru/politika/4399599> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 37. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Remarks and Answers to Media Questions at a Joint News Conference Following the Meeting with Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Moscow, July 5, 2017, http://www.mid.ru/vizity-ministra/-/asset_publisher/ICoYBGcCUgTR/content/id/2808200?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_ICoYBGcCUgTR&_101_INSTANCE_ICoYBGcCUgTR_languageId=en_GB (accessed August 20, 2017).
 38. "Experts: "North Korea's 'Hwasong-14' Lacks Reentry Technology," [in Korean] *Voice of America*, July 8, 2017, <https://www.voakorea.com/a/3940905.html> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 39. "A Momentous Occasion to Mark the History of Building a Strong Juche Nuclear Power. Successful Launch of Land-to-Land Strategic Intermediate-to-Long-Range Rocket Hwasong-12. Respected and Beloved Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un Gave Field Guidance for the Rocket Launch," [in Korean] *Rodong Shinmun*, May 14, 2017, http://rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2017-05-15-0001 (accessed August 20, 2017).
 40. "Statement by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov at an Open Meeting of the UN Security Council on the Situation on the Korean Peninsula," [in Russian] April 28, 2017, http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/kp/-/asset_publisher/VJy71g5QaAII/content/id/2740121 (accessed August 20, 2017).
 41. "Joint Statement by the Russian and Chinese Foreign Ministries on the Korean Peninsula's Problems."
 42. Oleg Kiryanov, "Current Situation in the Rason FEZ and Its Prospects," in *Korean Peninsula in the Era of Change* (Moskva: IDV RAN, 2016), 254. [in Russian]
 43. Anatoly Torkunov, "Political Will Can Forge Russo-Korean Projects," *Global Times*, November 5, 2013, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/822727.shtml> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 44. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2270, S/RES/2270, May 2, 2016, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2270 (accessed August 20, 2017); and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2321, S/RES/2321, November 30, 2016, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2321%20 (accessed August 20, 2017).
 45. Interview with Alexander Matsegora, *RIA Novosti*, April 14, 2017, <https://ria.ru/interview/20170414/1492248517.html> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 46. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.
 47. "Ruling Party Lawmaker Advocates S. Korea's Nuke Armament," *Yonhap News*, July 25, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/news/2016/07/25/0200000000AEN20160725002500315.html> (accessed August 20, 2017).
 48. "Joint Statement by the Russian and Chinese Foreign Ministries on the Korean Peninsula's Problems."
 49. "Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement," February 13, 2007, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/6party/action0702.html (accessed August 20, 2017).
 50. A. Vorontsov and P. Agaltsov, "Is It Possible to Build Multilateral Security Structure in Northeast Asia," *Problems of the Far East* 4, (2010): 14. [in Russian]

Notes on Contributors

Dmitry Streltsov is a Professor (history), Moscow State Institute of International Relations, MGIMO University (since 2008); leading researcher, Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (since 1989); President of Russian Association of Japanologists (since 2008). Main publications: *Foreign Policy Priorities of Japan in the Asia Pacific* [in Russian] (Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura, 2015); "Russian views of Japanese history," *The ASAN Forum* (July–August 2016).

Anna Kireeva (Ph.D., MGIMO University) is an Associate Professor and Research Fellow at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, MGIMO University, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Her research areas include international relations, security, balance of power and regional order in East Asia. She focuses on the foreign policy strategies and policies of great powers in East Asia: the U.S, China, Japan and Russia as well as India as an emerging major power. Her publications include numerous book chapters and scholarly articles including “Russia’s East Asia Policy: New Opportunities and Challenges,” (2012), “Regional Strategies and Military Buildup in East Asia and Indo-Pacific: A Russian perspective,” (2014).

Ilya Dyachkov (Ph.D., History) is an Associate Professor and ASEAN Centre Senior Expert at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, MGIMO University. His research focuses on security in Northeast Asia, the Korean Peninsula nuclear problem, inter-Korean cooperation, Russo-Korean ties and relations between Russia and the ASEAN. He authored some three dozen works on Korea-related topics including articles in scholarly journals, book chapters and books, such as “*Non-Peaceful Atom*” in *North East Asia: the Korean Knot* (2016).