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Panel: On North Korea (RR)

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Russia and North Korea

Russia’s Foreign Policy

1. The pragmatic foreign policy course under the leadership of Vladimir Putin is free of ideology, both communism and early Yeltsin Westernism, and is directed at forming around Russia an independent center of power.
2. This policy foresees the establishment of normal partnership relations with all countries, above all Russia’s neighbors. This is necessary both for the development of economic relations, which are directed at strengthening the economic power of Russia and at world recognition of Moscow as an important foreign policy player.
3. Asian neighbors are doubly important, since they make possible the diversification of Russian foreign policy activity, which previously had given too much weight to the West. Moreover, in the East its political and economic model meets with much more understanding than in the West.

Russia and the Korea Peninsular

For very pragmatic reasons, Russia is interested in peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, through cooperation with both Korean governments.

- Russia is interested in the security of its borders, consequently in the political stability of both Korean states.
- Any war or loss of control in developments on the peninsula, in consideration of the

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presence in North Korea of nuclear weapons, could easily directly affect the adjoining Russian territory, capable of causing casualties, an ecological catastrophe, a flood of refugees, and other dangerous consequences.

- Both Koreas are economic partners of Russia, with South Korea Russia’s third trading partner in Asia after China and Japan and an important investor in the Russian economy.
- Such cooperation plays an especially big role for the Russian Far East, the development of which is an important strategic issue for Moscow. It is significant too that ties with it serve as a useful balance for what many consider to be one-sided dependency on China.
- Trade with the DPRK is not large, but, after all, it is a neighboring country. Besides, realization of a whole range of large-scale trans-Korean projects are tied to its participation or, at least, consent.
- Russia is interested in a quick resolution of the nuclear problem of the DPRK. For this, it actively cooperates with all of the partners in the Six-Party Talks.

Russia and North Korea

- Over the past ten years the two sides have signed more than 40 inter-governmental and inter-agency agreements.
- The 2000 treaty replaced that of 1961, removing the mutual defense requirement, formally ending the alliance and the role of a shared ideology in favor of the principles of international law.
- Trade is at an insignificant \$100-150 million per year, reflecting North Korea’s difficulty in supplying traditional exports and delays in payment or absence of any payment for goods received.
- These factors make it impossible to realize much-advertised triangular projects with South Korea—a gas pipeline, a railroad corridor, and electric transmission lines--, agreement to which was reached in Kim Jong-il’s August 2011 visit to Russia.

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- Two projects recently have been realized: the September 2003 construction of a 54 km. railway segment connecting the ice-free Korean port of Rajin with the Russian border city of Khasan at a cost of 5.5 billion rubles; and modernization of the Rajin terminal at a cost of 3.5 billion rubles.
 - A big step forward was the September 2012 signing of an agreement on North Korea’s \$11 billion debt.

Russia and DPRK Nuclear Issue

- The DPRK’s missile and nuclear actions have had a negative influence on bilateral relations.
- Moscow has continuously stood for a non-nuclear Korean peninsula, does not accept the DPRK’s nuclear status, and participates in international sanctions that were imposed by the Security Council.
- Russia directly participated in preparing Security Council (rocket and nuclear) resolutions 1695 and 1718.
- On December 2, 2013 a presidential order was signed on fulfilling Security Council resolution 2094, providing the legal basis for implementation of this response to the February 2013 nuclear test in violation of Security Council resolutions.
- Russia remains convinced that a resolution of the North Korean nuclear program must be found strictly through political-diplomatic means, through restoration of the Six-Party Talks.

Russia and South Korea

- Political and economic relations between Moscow and Seoul are developing today stably. This is facilitated by mutual economic interests: South Korea’s in resources, and Russia’s in investment.
- Geopolitical situation: complicated relations between Seoul and Tokyo and the

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strengthening of China.

- After Park Geun-hye took office, there have been two summits, one in the context of the G-20 in St. Petersburg in September and the other in Korea in November.
- The eight signed documents in November included: removing visa requirements; establishing cultural centers, forming an investment platform, cooperating in the establishment in Russia of a center for shipbuilding, and cooperating in the area of transportation.
- Trade has reached about \$25 billion, cumulative investment in the Russian economy has hit \$2.5 billion.
- On January 1 an agreement on visa-free entry for a period of up to sixty days went into effect.

Prospects

- The general state of international relations, especially the rise in tension in Europe, contributes to Moscow and Beijing drawing closer and their joint inclination to contain attempts at world domination by the United States and the West.
- The tendency may increase in Russia to counteract the attempts by the United States and its allies to liquidate or weaken the North Korean regime
- More intensive support for the DPRK is possible in case of further worsening of Moscow’s relations with the US and Europe.

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