

**Panel:** Reordering U.S.-Russia Relations

**Date/Time:** Wednesday, April 29, 2015 / 10:45-12:00

**Moderator:** Choi Kang, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

**Speakers:** Eom Gu ho, Hanyang University

Svitlana Kobzar, RAND Europe

Gilbert Rozman, The Asan Forum

Dmitry Suslov, National Research University-Higher School of Economics, Russia

Session 3, titled “Reordering US-Russia Relations” examined the root causes for conflict between the United States/European Union and Russia and whether Russia could still be a partner for peace. The moderator of the session, Dr. Choi Kang, Vice President for Research at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, began by asking the speakers the cause of confrontation between Western powers and Russia.

Dr. Svitlana Kobzar, research fellow at RAND Europe, started by providing a European perspective on this problem. She argued that the cause of conflict is not rooted in the role of the United States. Rather, Russia felt insecure because NATO had expanded without including Russia as part of the new order.

Dr. Dmitry Suslov, Deputy Director of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies at National Research University - Higher School of Economics at Russia, analyzed that cooling U.S.-Russia relations is due to the fact that there was no fundamental agreement on the modalities for managing world order after the Cold War. Both the United States and Russia have excluded any opportunity for reconciliation. As such, they perceive each other’s steps as a challenge to the current system.

Dr. Gilbert Rozman, editor-in-chief of the *Asan Forum*, stated that this crisis is not about Ukraine; it goes back to the 1990s when Russia chose to turn towards China, with whom it shares a legacy of communist national identity. In saying so, Dr. Rozman analyzes that this conflict is not based on national interests but more on identity, which is a big threat to western civilization.

Finally, Dr. Eom Gu Ho, a professor in the Graduate School of International Studies and Director of the Asia-Pacific Center at Hanyang University, argued that the United States does not have a good policy towards Russia and makes excuses for it by demonizing Putin, while Russia’s policy that it will not tolerate violations of its dominance in the former Soviet region

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has grown resolute. Moreover, he pointed out that common national interests are decreasing because of factors such as U.S. demand for Russian energy resource dwindling due to shale gas development.

On the implications for South Korea, Dr. Eom emphasized that, recently, Korea-Russia relations are aligning with U.S.-Russia relations. Therefore, any deterioration in U.S.-Russia relations may hinder Korea-Russia relations as well. In saying so, Dr. Eom expressed his doubts that U.S.-Russia conflict will make a breakthrough in a near future. He referred to Sino-Russian relations as a ‘convenient marriage’ that will deeply influence the Korean Peninsula. According to him, relationships with these countries are becoming more important to South Korea, considering Park Geun Hye administration’s Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative and the Eurasia Initiative as well as the Korean position towards the reunification.

During the question and answer session, questions on Russia’s turn to Asia and the possibility of Kim Jung-un’s visit to Moscow were made. On Russia’s turn to Asia, Dr. Suslov commented that the United States limiting Russia’s outreach towards Korea and other countries will only make China stronger. Dr. Rozman replied that the United States, who is hoping for constructive cooperation, should be encouraging Russia to get along with countries in the Asian region as long as it makes peaceful commitments.

Dr. Suslov acknowledges Russia’s pivot to Asia as its opportunity to take a positive role in the Asia-pacific. It would also provide the change to put more leverage against Pyongyang by allowing Russia to exert a positive influence on the North Korean nuclear issue. He noted that Russia does not have a policy to protect North Korea nor does it agree to a split in the trilateral alliances of Russia-China-North Korea and U.S.-Japan-South Korea.

Dr. Eom pointed out that if Russia is willing to be integrated into Asia, it should focus more on strengthening its economic foundation in Asia. In turn, he explained that the United States should not take such an endeavor by Russia as an anti-American maneuver, but rather as an enhancement of pragmatism that is in the interest of the United States. Given Kim’s visit to Moscow, U.S. support for this kind of pragmatic approach will also facilitate South Korea’s Eurasian and reunification policy.

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