Particularities of Relationship Between Russia and Asean

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Abstract: The article is devoted to analysis of relationship between Russia and ASEAN countries from late 90s to present time. The efficiency of cooperation between the parties in the sphere of policy, security, economy and socio-cultural relationship is assessed. The author emphasizes that during 2 last decades its components become undeveloped and this prevents from transition to comprehensive and dialogue partnership of the parties.

Key words: Dialogue partnership, Post-ministry conferences, Summits, Regional forum of ASEAN (ARF), EAS (East-Asian Summit), ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting)

INTRODUCTION

The destiny of Russia is not detachable from Asia and our country considers itself an active participator of integration processes. Russia can not isolate itself from such processes - because it will be impossible to create favourable conditions for economic development of the country, first of all, regions of Siberia and Far East. Solution of this task can be done only through combination of courageous measures in the sphere of social and migration policy in the East of the country with complex and active external political and external economic activity in Asia [1]. ASEAN is one of the most important and perspective directions of external policy of the Russian Federation as successor of the USSR.

Main Part: ASEAN, having recognized the Russian Federation as legal successor of the USSR which developed only bilateral relationship with ASEAN countries in circumstances of cold war, is going to establish dialogue partnership with Russia.

In 1994 the Russian Federation became a member of regional forum of ASEAN (ARF) on security issues. Ministers of foreign affairs from 18 states participated in its work. Forum participators have claimed that "movement to security in Asian-Pacific Region (APR), let alone establishing of this security, is not possible without Russia".

After E. Primakov substituted A. Kozyrev in the position of Ministry of foreign affairs in autumn of 1995, the relationship with ASEAN changed cardinally. In 1996 during his visit to Jakarta Russia obtained status of full-capacity partner in dialogue with ASEAN and could participate side by side with other leading states of Asia and Pacific region (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the USA, Korean Republic, Japan, India, China) and EU in annual “post-ministry” measures taken after the meeting of ASEAN Foreign Affairs ministers.

In the same time turn to the East in late 90s was more like geo-political game not provided by resources - it means that it was not supported in that time by the level of our economy. Russia and ASEAN countries were still not-essential partners in regard to each other.

During the reign of President V. Putin strengthening of relations with ASEAN countries has become one of external priorities of Russia. In November of 2004 the Minister of foreign affairs Sergei Lavrov signed the act about accession of the Russian Federation to Friendship and Cooperation Treaty in South-East Asia, which opened the road to the first summit Russia-ASEAN.
In December 12-13, 2005 in Kuala-Lumpur (Malaysia) the first Russia-ASEAN meeting on the highest level took place after which the Russian Federation had become a full-capacity partner of the Dialogue Association and in the format of summit. The president of the Russian Federation V. Putin and the heads of South-East Asia (SEA) had adopted Joint declaration about developed and full-dimensional partnership for 2005-2015 [3]. But neither Russia, nor USA (they had not joined the Friendship and cooperation Treaty of ASEAN of 1976) participated in EAS where 10 ASEAN countries side by side with China, Japan, South Korea took part. But V. Putin was visited the Summit and had a speech.

Conditions for partnership in EAS include: status of full-capacity partner; accession to the Treaty of 1976; developed relationship with the Association. Russia corresponded to only first 2 but had not reached the level of developed relations in the sphere of economic cooperation, which was pointed out by the general secretary of the Association, Ong Keng Yong [4]. Finally Russia remained in the position of a step-daughter at the ball of Europe-Asia integration [5]. Russian experts made conclusion that one of the key tasks of the Russian Federation is to raise economic cooperation with ASEAN in order to correspond to already achieved level of political dialogue [6].

The summit adopted resolution to organize such meetings regularly in 2-3 years. Orientating itself to this resolution Russia activated bilateral contacts on the highest level with Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore. Moscow made attempts to renew contacts with Myanmar and Brunei.

The Russian Federation actively participated in the work of Regional Forum of ASEAN. Apart from some western countries which accused the Forum in disability to solve key issues Russia considers it at present moment an optimal platform for dialogue between 27 states and associations, it respects the role of the Association and its core, ASEAN principles of consensus. The Russian Federation greeted the announcement of Vision of ARF for the period to 2020.

Russia which signed Joint Declaration in 2004 with ASEAN about partnership in the struggle against world terrorism is specially respected by ASEAN countries [7]. Russia announced its intention to make the struggle against terrorism within framework of ARF more systematic. In 2008 Working group Russia-ASEAN was formed and in May of 2009 they approved working plan on resistance to terrorism and transnational criminality.

Share of the Russian Federation in products turnover of ASEAN countries was growing rapidly in volume until the global crisis of 2008 and was 10 billion dollars. In the same time Russia was aiming to reach technological level of ASEAN countries production, their programs of industrial development. The authors believe that perspective cooperation with the members of the Association in the sphere of energy production could be fulfilled in the same way as at the object of Russian-Vietnamese cooperation - joint oil-producing enterprise VietSovPetro - key extractor of oil in Vietnam. Thanks to the efforts of Russian and local oilers Vietnam entered the top-4 of oil producing countries in South-East Asia and got billions of dollars from this joint enterprise into budget. Cooperation in oil sphere is developing with Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand.

Experts emphasize fuel and energy complex including atomic energy branch, bio-technologies, telecommunications and new materials, space machinery as the most perspective. In the end of 2006 Russian booster rocket launched Malaysian satellite MEACAT-3 to the orbit. In October of 2007 Malaysian cosmonaut for the first time in history flew to ISS on Russian spacecraft, Indonesian satellite of communication Garuda was launched to the orbit by Russian rocket.

Many members of the Association act as key partners of Russia in the sphere of military defense export. Indonesia in 2007 got state credit for 1 billion dollars for 15 years for purchasing of Russian weapons. President of Indonesia was happy to emphasize that his country got opportunity to modernize its military forces. Vietnam entered the top-5 of leading Asian countries by the volume of military trade turnover with Russia. All this enables Russia to strengthen its positions in military sphere in SEA.

High quality of Russian education in many spheres, especially in fundamental sciences, enables to cooperate with foreign countries. At present time in Russian institutes students from all countries of ASEAN study except for Brunei. Most crowded groups are from Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar. Pacific scientific-educational center which was built in Vladivostok in the framework of preparation for the summit of ATES in 2012 will definitely give an urge to further expansion of Russian scientific and educational services.

Experience of SEA countries which are attractive world tourist centers can be useful for the Russian Federation. Tourism to a great extent is a catalyst of development of a number of branches of industry and agriculture, service industry.
Side by side with traditional tourist centers of SEA, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia visited by Russian people there are other new centers of tourism. The popularity of Vietnam greatly increased for the last years [8]. Mutual tourism has big perspectives, however the Russian Federation must take measures to provide security and services which would increase attractiveness of our market of tourist and education.

Russia and ASEAN have rather big base for cooperation but both parties lack recognition of its counterpart as perspective partner. One of the problems is gap in information support.

After the 1st Summit scientific relations started to develop more intensely, exchange of students became more frequent, relations between twin cities, the work of Russian culture houses became more active in SEA countries and in friendship societies. Study of languages of SEA countries in universities of Volga region, Siberia and Far East was a big step in needed direction.

Tin January, 2009 the President of Russia, D. Medvedev assigned A. Ivanov, an ambassador in Indonesia, constant and authorized representative of the Russian Federation in ASEAN as it was stipulated by the Charter of the organization approved in the end of 2008. General Secretary Pitsuvan pointed out that assignment of constant authorized representative of the Russian Federation became very important milestone in development of relationship between Russia and ASEAN which in its turn is ready to increase the cooperation.

A. Ivanov in his counter speech emphasized particular importance of Financial fund for dialogue partnership. In 2007 and 2008 Russia contributed 500 million dollars, in 2009 - 750 million to this Fund.

In the middle of 2009 there was a meeting of renewed Russian national Committee of APSC where prominent Russian politologists and East studies scientists took part. The Chairman of the Committee was the Head of the fund Unity for sake of Russia, PhD V. Nikonov. In 2010 the Russian Federation Embassy was opened in sultanate Brunei and now the Russian Federation has diplomatic offices in all ASEAN countries. In summer of the same year they agreed to hold one more summit in 2010.

Several months ago in Moscow the ASEAN center was opened in MSIIR. The task of the center is to facilitate information support of the dialogue.

In parallel we managed to solve issue of Russia’s accession to Asia-Europe Forum. The Russian Federation which has got principal support of the Association has become ASEM in 2010 and this allowed Russia to realize its natural advantage of Eurasian state - to act like a bridge between the West and the East [9].

If the issue about summits Russia-ASEAN and participation of Russia in ASEM can be regarded in bilateral format, the participation of Russia in EAS has definitely revealed “American footstep”. It is not surprising that before the summit it was decided that the Russian Federation will be a member of EAS practically together with the USA in 2011. Accession of Russia to EAS is a geo-politic step rather then our own success because our economic component is still low and can not be compared with other leading partners in ASEAN and their contributions into Fund of dialogue partnership. Key factor here is large-scale return of the USA to Asia as counter-measure against China which greatly increased its influence on SEA [10].

So, ASEAN leaders one more time demonstrated their traditional position - keeping of balance between players beyond the region.

In his speech on second summit of Russia-ASEAN in the beginning of October 2010 the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev declared that Russia considers the relationship with ASEAN as important sphere of its external policy in this part of the world. Russia is interested in the use of ASEAN modernization potential for development of the economy of Siberia and Far East.

In joint statement both parties emphasized that they moved to practical realization of joint projects and set the task to elevate the relations onto higher level.

Russia promised to make contributions into the fund of dialogue partnership since 2011 and pays 1,5 million dollars annually. The Parties signed agreements in the areas of inter-state partnership, trade and economic partnership, cultural, humanitarian and cooperation and education.

Summarizing the results of the summit S. Lavrov pointed out that Russia and ASEAN have approached the level of mature and advanced partnership. Permanent representative of Russia in ASEAN A.Ivanov declared that Moscow decided to activate contacts with the Association and the next summit can be held not in 5 years but a bit earlier. With this purpose at the meeting of the ministers foreign affairs on Bali island dedicated to 15th anniversary of Russia-ASEAN dialogue partnership the participants initiated road map project of Russia-ASEAN trade-economic and investment partnership intended to eliminate obstacles in the sphere of mutual trade and investments, inclusion of our country, especially of Far East and Siberia regions into integration processes in APR.
The issue of free trade zone between the participators in Customs union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan) and Vietnam is being considered. Multilateral relations with SRV in the framework of strategic partnership establish solid platform for more active participation of the Russian Federation in economic and political processes in SEA.

As soon as he was officially appointed his position V. Putin signed the Decree about measures on realization of external political course of Federation and ordered MFA of Russia to develop Russia-ASEAN dialogue partnership. However 3 years have passed since the end of second summit. Finishing of next 5-year cycle between meetings on highest level is oncoming. Will the next summit take place sooner?

CONCLUSION

Since 1996 when Russia became of full-scale partner in dialogue with ASEAN our cooperation undergone significant changes. It was gradual, not very quick movement to each other.

Both Moscow and ASEAN countries agree that current level of trade-economic, scientific technical and humanitarian cooperation does not correspond to dynamics of political relationship. Such situation does not correspond neither to the interests of Russia, nor ASEAN countries’ intentions.

At last Russia is full-scale participator of all integration structures, the core of which is ASEAN. Today it is more important then ever to make cooperation with the Association a prioritized activity not in words, as it happens every time on the threshold of oncoming summit, but in reality. The beginning of XXI century was marked by steady turn of Russian external policy in the direction of Asia which must bring to Russia real Eurasian status.

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