Landmarks of the “Asian Course” USA and Russia

Not so long, U.S. President Barack Obama made a decision to “return to Asia”. The essence of this political program is the cobbling together of a military and political bloc consisting of the United States, Japan, Australia (in addition to other countries able to pull in such dubious enterprises) against China. Washington declared universal cause for action for similar events and were made in order to “address the challenges and threats”.

It should be recognized that although Russia has no need to return to Asia (she has always been there), but as it turns out, Russia has its own “Asian Deal” and it is being actively discussed in the Asian as well as in the Chinese media. It differs greatly from a pronounced military-strategic “course” of Washington.

China Daily claims that the agreement between the Russian Federation and China for the supply of natural gas is a peaceful, creative direction of Russia's cooperation with countries in Asia and will have significant long-term consequences for the entire Asia-Pacific region. Meanwhile, the current agreement covers only until the eastern branch of the main gas pipeline with a design capacity of 38 billion cubic meters of gas. Under the terms of this project, a pipeline will be constructed “Strength of Siberia” based on the resources of Chayandinskoye and Kovykta fields (total reserves 2.7 trillion cubic meters). In the region of Blagoveshchensk and Dalnerechensk the plans include making allocations for China and the pipeline ending near Vladivostok. Here Gazprom and a consortium of Japanese companies plan on constructing a large LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) factory. The end market would be countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, the project will not depend solely on Chinese conjuncture. The commissioning of the first stage of the pipeline is planned for late 2017.

It is also expected that the pipeline gas (via the western route) to China will be delivered through the pipeline “Altai” from the compressor station “Chuy”. The planned volume of supply will be 30 billion cubic meters. Starting gas is expected at the end of 2015.

The second landmark for the Russian Federation East Asia is the Republic of Korea, which Gazprom would not refuse to supply with pipeline gas. On the road to this project initiative is North Korea, which has some economic problems; however nothing prevents them from making a decision. According to China Daily, over the last two years, Russia has settled all commercial issues with the North Koreans, including trade debt and unpaid loans. As a result, Russia and North Korea have set the base for a significant improvement in economic relations. Thus, Gazprom and the Ministry of Energy of North Korea reached agreements for the construction of a pipeline that will pass through the territory of North Korea to supply gas to South Korea. In addition, there is an accompanying project to build a modern railway line from Kazakhstan through Russia to North Korea, with connection to the Trans-Siberian Railway. The later will allow for high-speed rail from Kazakhstan to the European markets.

The third landmark in East Asian markets for Russia is Japan, whose demand for natural gas is very high. The Government of the Rising Sun’s policy views on this question is quite reasonable, aiming for the maximum diversification of imports. Its pricing policy, in contrast to the pricing policies of the Chinese government, is not so rigid. The Japanese are most interested in guarantees and the security of supply. Meanwhile, Russia can supply only LNG to Japan, since the laying of pipeline Sakhalin-Hokkaido inefficient both economically and technically, as per the head of Gazprom, Alexey Miller.
Russia’s economic interests towards East Asia are entangled with political and military-strategic interests of other countries; and foremost is China. China would like to see Russia as a friendly country, in so much as that would allow it to reduce the cost of the land contingent of armed forces and give more attention to its navy and missile defense. Why is that?

It is quite clear that China has significant political influence in East Asia, and it aims to maintain it and even strengthen it. But it is impossible without a strong aircraft carrier fleet to solve strategic problems in the region and confront the U.S. Navy. Only in this manner can China ensure the safety of its maritime trade routes. Japan doesn’t possess such a possibility, because after World War II Japan was forbidden to have a strong navy and she will always be dependent on the U.S. Navy.

Naturally, Chinese attempts at increasing its influence in the region warrants from Washington a sharp, negative reaction and works to rally its allies in East Asia, for example, the very same Vietnam, which recently held massive anti-Chinese riots over oil shelves in the South China Sea. China does not think retreat, but carries itself boldly. Thus, recently, a Chinese ship deliberately collided with a Vietnamese fishing boat 30 kilometers south of the established Chinese oil drilling platform. The Vietnamese fishing vessel as a result of the collision sank.

Literally within a few days, a Russian-made Chinese Su-27 flew within a dangerous distance, 30-50 meters from a Japanese YS-11 aircraft in an area where the two countries declared air-defense zones intersect.

On the 30th of May, Japanese Prime Minister, Abe communicated Japan’s willingness to assist countries having grievances with China, particularly Vietnam. He is prepared to provide patrol ships, military personnel and weapons.

China, in its turn, relies on North Korea. The North Koreans have a very powerful army and some nuclear missile potential. Pyongyang traditionally holds Tokyo with a high degree of hostility and is never against heightening tensions in northeast Asia.

Russia must be very careful in conducting its relations with countries of East Asia and try every possible way to emphasize the primacy of economic interests over political and military, strategic ones. Particularly important in this case, is good-neighborly relations with China. To contrive some kind of special relationship with Japan hardly makes any sense, in as much as it is controlled by Washington’s foreign policy.

A Moscow-Beijing relationship is not rules by the formula “the enemy of my friend is my enemy”. Even if the very same Vietnam intends to arrange Vietnam dispute with China because of oil drilling in the region of the Paracel Islands, it should be their strict private issues that should neither affect the Russian-Vietnamese relations or Sino-Russian relations.

The main problem in the region is the behavior of the White House, concerned about their exclusive right for world domination and the belief that they alone are entitled to the uncontrolled use of force anywhere in the world. Whether gypsies fought with Caucasian traders in the market in the Belarusian city of Zhdanovichi, or masked men captured an administrative building in a Ukrainian bank, or if a hurricane swept over Jamaica, and if some madman kidnapped a girl in Zimbabwe, everywhere there should be the American soldier, ready to restore order.

However, if were so!

Realpolitik of Washington is grazing together of peoples and of nations, Japanese and Vietnamese against Chinese, Ukrainians against Russians, Albanians against Serbs, Pakistanis against Indians and hired terrorists against the Syrians, etc. etc. etc.

It is precisely in this circumstance that Russia fits into its “Asian course”, hoping to trade effectively in the markets of East Asia and to promote peace in the region.

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