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POSTSCRIPT

CHAPTER 9

Welcome to Asia Pacific for a New Russia

AKINO YUTAKA

In the spring of 1997, Akino Yutaka, then associate professor of international relations at the University of Tsukuba, was asked by Watanabe Kōji, former Japanese ambassador to Russia, to join the "Engaging Russia in Asia Pacific" project of the Asia Pacific Agenda Project as the adjunct director. At that time, Watanabe asked Akino to outline for project members Russia's wider geopolitical and geoeconomic setting, that is, Asia Pacific. Indeed, there was not a better man for the job, as Akino was endowed with both an astronaut's field of vision commanding a much broader horizon than conventional area specialists as well as a surveyor's intimate knowledge of land and people. When Akino presented his overview at the project's Tokyo workshop in August 1997, he not only struck the participants with his unconventional approach but also sparked imaginative musings on the region.

Around the time of the project's second workshop, Akino was in Tajikistan serving as a political officer for the United Nations peacekeeping operations. On June 20, he sent Noda Makito of the Japan Center for International Exchange what would be his final e-mail message, apologizing for not being able to attend the workshop. Akino's written contribution to the project was attached to the e-mail message, and it was evident that he had managed to obtain clear objectivity in the midst of extremely dangerous missions in Tajikistan. The last eight paragraphs are, admittedly, not very relevant to the central theme of the project. They are nevertheless precious

firsthand observations based on a profound understanding of international relations—a typical embodiment of Akino's detailed yet integrated approach. To immortalize the last works of this great man, we have decided to include herein his chapter in its entirety.

When Akino was brutally murdered on July 20, 1998, by the very people for whom he had dedicated his life, the project lost its great inspirer, its members lost a very dear friend, and the world lost an important intellectual adventurer. —NM

We Asians sincerely welcome a new Russia to Asia Pacific. We look forward to seeing your forward-looking, imaginative, and creative policy toward us, and we want you to live in Asia Pacific not only as our geographical neighbor but also as a full-fledged member of the region. The Soviet Union, ruled by a universal ideology, regarded Asia only as an arena where either proxy wars or diplomatic wars were fought. In that sense, the Soviet Union did not live in Asia, although two-thirds of Soviet territory lay in Asia. Now that the universal ideology has gone, along with the Soviet Union, and indigenous factors are much more prominent, Moscow should take seriously our message that we welcome a new Russia to live in Asia Pacific.

Russia, as the successor state of the Soviet Union, has lost the Baltic States to the northwest; Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova to the southwest; and the Caucasus and Central Asia to the south. The changes Russia faces after the collapse of the Soviet Union are of special importance to Asia Pacific in many ways.

First of all, Russia has lost all the warm-water Baltic Sea ports, such as Klaipeda, Liepaja, Ventspils, and Riga. Russia still depends heavily upon these ports in its trade with countries outside the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). But, as eloquently shown by the recent deterioration in relations between Russia and Latvia, the loss of the Baltic Sea ports is highly significant to Moscow, especially as long as the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to the region remains a real possibility. And the warm-water port of Kaliningrad, now a complete enclave due to the independence of Lithuania, has become hardly accessible to the main Russian territories.

The independence of Ukraine and Georgia has deprived Russia of important Black Sea ports, such as Odessa, Sevastopol, Poti, and Batumi.

And Turkey's control over the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits means that Russian oil tankers' usage of these passages is restricted. Therefore, Russia can no longer behave on the premise that the Black Sea is Russia's. In fact, Russia has only about six hundred kilometers of coast along the Black Sea. Russia faces the same fate along the Caspian Sea. Since the Soviet Union's Caspian Sea coast is now shared by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, Russia also has only about six hundred kilometers of Caspian Sea coastline. Hence, Makhachkala, the Dagestan Republic's capital, is Russia's southernmost seaport.

Thus, the only ice-free Russian seaports directly connected to the open sea are those in the Far East, such as Vladivostok, Nakhodka, Vanino, Zarubino, and Posyet. These ports will doubtlessly be important if Japan and other countries substantially help Russia develop its Asian region, particularly the transportation sector. This will be all the more true in view of the strong demographic trend for the majority of the world's population to gravitate to coastal areas in the not-too-distant future. So we welcome Russia to live in Asia Pacific. Here we are linked with one another by the sea.

Second, the map shows that Russia's east-west axis has not changed an inch since the time of the Soviet Union. Kaliningrad is still Russia's western end and the Bering Strait is still its eastern end, whereas its north-south axis has lost territorial depth due to the independence of the former Soviet republics in the Baltic, Carpathian, Caucasian, and Central Asian regions. We can say, then, that post-Soviet Russia is significantly overextended along its east-west axis, though only in relative terms. This relative east-west extension and actual north-south contraction are unfortunate developments for Russia, because building up the new Russia's east-west axis is a task that goes against historical logic. How can Russia manage to run a state stretched unnaturally east-west, with more than ten hours' time difference between the eastern and western ends?

The first order of politics is usually along the south-north axis, which features a natural order among regions with different climates. Therefore, trade among regions is necessary, and the stronger side in a north-south regional conflict naturally attempts to conquer the other ("defeat" in Japanese and Chinese, according to my layman's interpretation, means "the losing side is driven to the barren north").

The second order of the east-west axis, on the other hand, is the order among world powers. Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Napoleon,

and Hitler moved along this axis. The Great Game between Great Britain and czarist Russia is also a case in point. This seems to me a matter of historical logic. Thus, the new Russia, faced with the formidable task of state and nation building, needs to secure truly region-based partnerships to its south on the Eurasian continent, particularly in East Asia and Southeast Asia, to give it depth along its north-south axis. We welcome Russia to live in Asia Pacific.

Third, Russia today is in a sense comparable to Russia after its defeat in the Crimean War. After that war, Russia's advance to the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Far East was greatly spurred to make up for defeat. The Russians moved south and east as if cutting butter with a hot knife until they encountered imperial Meiji Japan. After a century and a half, the new Russia is being warded off from Europe and pushed eastward by the expansion of NATO. According to a simplistic analogy, Russia might try again to bring the Caucasus and Central Asia within its orbit, and something could be attempted in the Far East. However, Russia is losing ground in the Caucasus and Central Asia, though recently it has activated a new policy in the region, as I will discuss later.

As for the Far East, China today is, of course, not the weak and sick Qing-dynasty state of the nineteenth century. The overall power balance between Russia and China is increasingly in the latter's favor. Therefore, Moscow had no option but to make its first "strategic partnership" with China. This is the most substantial strategic partnership Russian President Boris Yeltsin has forged, to say the least. But as modern history shows, the Russia-China relationship belongs fundamentally to the second order of the east-west axis, reflecting East-West relations. And perhaps it is not easy for Russia to forge a truly friendly region-based first order of north-south relations with China. Bilateral trade relations lack complementarity, and the outlook for increasing bilateral trade is not at all bright, despite the fact that Moscow and Beijing have repeatedly declared their intention to boost trade. If the two countries again adopt an open-border trade policy, as they did in 1992 and 1993, their southern neighbors will surely engulf the Russian Far East, with its mere 7.4 million people.

Mention must also be made of the security aspect. Russia is going to lose its military deterrent against China well within ten years unless a successful renewal of Russia's nuclear armament system is undertaken. Even if this does not happen, according to Alxei Arbatov, the level of Chinese military forces will reach the level of the Soviet army ten years ago.

In this sense, though China is Russia's priceless strategic partner in its efforts to make the post–cold war world more multipolar, China is not able to fill the depth Russia has lost in the south. More importantly, China will be Russia's formidable rival in having foreign direct investment in a money-strapped world after the "Asian flu," whose aftermath is still undermining the former Soviet economy.

A couple of decades after the Crimean War, Russia was reintegrated into Europe to counterbalance the emergent Germany. Today's new Germany is deeply anchored in the European order and is a driving force behind European integration, which means there will be no historical repeat of Russia's return to Europe. Thinking in this way, we can say that the expansion of NATO has resulted in Moscow's defeat in the Second Crimean War. That NATO's possible future inclusion of not only the Baltic States but also Ukraine eventually induced Russia to give up snatching Crimean Sevastopol from Kiev is symbolic. The point is that Russia should react to this Second Crimean War quite differently to the way it reacted after the first. We welcome the new Russia to the new Asia.

Unlike Europe, Asia is not a world of zero-sum games. In future, more than half the world's labor force will come from China, India, Indonesia, and Russia. The Asian pie is growing. Today's concession could well be tomorrow's gain. Seen against the series of bilateral summits among China, Japan, Russia, and the United States that started in late 1997, *concession* may be the word to characterize the current political atmosphere in Asia Pacific.

Cases in point are the resolution of Sino-Russian border disputes and Russo-Japanese rapprochement. In Asia, there are certain grounds for us to expect changes in the regional political economy. We are witnessing four important developments that suggest the advent of the new Asia: (1) some territorial disputes are being handled in a serious manner; (2) the introduction of a new regional energy supply system is at issue; (3) a post–cold war structure of the international system may be in the making; and (4) the Asian flu is changing the contours of the Asian political economy. We welcome Russia's playing a creative role in the new Asia. The problem is what the content of the new Asia is going to be—whether Asia is going to have an international system for its own sake. Many things suggest that this may be the case. With the end of the cold war, the age of European-led "Euro-Eurasia"—in which the Great Game was played and the First World War, the Second World War, and

finally the cold war were fought—has gone, and the age of Asian-led "Asia-Eurasia" may be about to begin. This new age will be inaugurated by the rich, untapped energy resources of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and the possibility that the east-west corridor connecting Asia and Europe that transports these resources will be located farther south in Eurasia than before. The old corridor of the Trans-Siberian Railway runs between fifty and sixty degrees latitude, while the new corridor, tracing the ancient Silk Road, will run between forty and fifty degrees latitude.

Until several years ago, Central Asia and the Caucasus looked as though they might end up as a playground between the northern Slavic civilization and the southern Islamic civilization. But in 1997, they captured world political attention in the context of creating the second order of the east-west axis, and the age of Asia-Eurasia was suddenly upon us. The United States now plays a major role in this area, especially in the Caucasus, and China looms large in Central Asia, in Kazakhstan in particular. And if the relationship between the United States and Iran improves step by step—which means that Iran will "return" to world politics after being released from its U.S.-led ostracism—and if the conflicts in Afghanistan and Tajikistan can be ameliorated so that they are less painful and chaotic, then the first order of the south-north axis and the second order of the east-west axis will be established in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Under such circumstances, Central Asia and the Caucasus will be an important linchpin in the Asia-Eurasian international system. This unique linchpin will join East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, the Slavic world, and Europe.

In this sense, the new Asia has three important tasks. First, we have to work out the plan of an "Eastern TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia)." So far, the TRACECA backed by Europe has been envisaged as starting in Europe and ending in Central Asia via the Caucasus. This should certainly be extended to the Pacific Ocean. Second, we have to coordinate the two corridors, the new one of the TRACECA and the old one of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Third, we have to work out a new Asian energy supply system. Here the problem is how best to coordinate with one another in order to secure energy supplies from the Caucasus and Central Asia, eastern Siberia, and the Russian Far East while Asia Pacific's major energy supply source continues to be the Middle East.

Of course, we will have to wait some time to see whether an Asia-Eurasian international system will replace—or at least be as important

as—the Euro-Eurasian international system. If the early twenty-first century witnesses this, we naturally welcome the new Russia playing a constructive role as an intercivilizational intermediary in the new system.

Finally, let me add my analysis of recent developments in the heart of Asia-Eurasia. Since I went to Dushanbe, I have observed a series of events of some strategic importance in and around Central Asia. Perhaps we are now witnessing the start of Russia's newly activated policy toward the Caucasus and Central Asia, which may well be in liaison with China.

Tajikistan's recent decision to participate in the Customs Union is important in that it shows that Russia still retains the desire to widen and consolidate the pro-Russian union. This union may eventually result in a six-member pro-Russian bloc, as was suggested recently by Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev when he mentioned to Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov that Armenia would soon follow Tajikistan. No less important is the role of Russian entrepreneur Boris Berezovsky in renovating the CIS. Russia will no longer sit idly by watching the United States' presence and influence grow in its southern backyard.

The most important development is the May 6, 1998, declaration in Moscow of an anti-Islamic fundamentalist tripartite alliance among Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Its importance is that it marks the return of the 1992–1993 formation, within whose framework the present-day United Tajik Opposition (UTO) was eventually driven out of Tajikistan in the Tajik civil war. In fact, it was Uzbek President Islam Karimov himself (an ethnic Tajik from Samarkand) who successfully involved Russia in the Tajik war at that time. In the same vein, though Yeltsin is reported to have taken the initiative in creating the tripartite alliance, the truth is that Yeltsin again has come to see eye to eye with Karimov regarding the danger of Wahhabism, or fundamentalism, in Central Asia. Karimov recently warned, "Tajikistan will come to Uzbekistan tomorrow," indicating that the Islamic Warrior leaders Tahir Yoldoshev and Djumaboy Namangani (a mining specialist, his nickname is "Professor") have found a haven in Tajikistan's opposition-controlled Tavildara region. They are actually UTO field commanders returned from Afghanistan and have more than three hundred fighters, most of whom are Uzbeks from Namangan (an eastern Uzbek town in Fergana). According to the Uzbek authorities, they are responsible for the recent

killings of police and government officials in Namangan. The upsurge of Tajik nationalism in Samarkand and Bukhara and the Wahhabism in Fergana are lethal dynamite for the Uzbek government. Both may come to Uzbekistan, nurtured and strengthened in Tajikistan.

The timing for Karimov to persuade Yeltsin to conclude the tripartite pact was good. First, Yeltsin's special representative in Chechnya was kidnapped; second, the Kofarnikhon-Dushanbe incident occurred toward the end of April; and finally, large-scale fighting broke out in Afghanistan. These three things apparently triggered the return to the 1992–1993 formation. Rakhmonov's recent strongly worded declaration that the Dushanbe incident was "a well-planned plot to take over power" and the government's recent uncompromising military stance vis-à-vis the UTO field commanders could well be in line with the above-mentioned policy.

Also interesting in this context is that Rakhmonov and Akayev seem to have promised to cooperate on this front at their recent meeting in Bishkek. Later, Kyrgyz Security Minister Misir Ashirkulov confirmed that there were religious leaders in the Kyrgyz Republic propagating Wahhabism, and promised that his ministry would "continue taking resolute steps" to stop its spread in Kyrgyz and was ready to cooperate with the Tajik and Uzbek security ministries in doing so. He also said that Kyrgyz counterintelligence was ready to take part in any operations the recent Russian-Tajik-Uzbek pact might be planning and went on to say that the spread of Wahhabism was being promoted by camps "training religious extremists" in neighboring Tajikistan. This is a significant change in Kyrgyz policy toward Uighurs and Tajikistan. Kyrgyz is a de facto member of the tripartite pact.

Finally, mention must be made of a Chinese factor. Akayev was in China when the CIS summit took place in Moscow. Soon after he returned from Bishkek, the Kyrgyz security service undertook an unprecedented clamp down on the Uighur Organization for Independent Uighurstan. In the past, the security authorities had often cautioned Uighur Islamic groups not to engage in too much anti-Chinese behavior, but they had never resorted to this type of police action. And Han Chinese police again started crushing recalcitrant Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. This latest clash more or less coincided with Akayev's visit to China, taking place just after he left Beijing.

In addition, the Kazakh government may follow suit. Kazakh Prime Minister Nurlan Balgymbayev said on May 8 in Beijing that Kazakhstan

had shown a "strong interest" in developing China's western regions and that his republic would not support Uighur separatists in the neighboring Chinese region of Xinjiang. He continued, "We know only a unified China. The territory of Kazakhstan has never had, nor has now, any separatist organizations." Taking into account the current low level of world oil prices, the huge Chinese oil business in Kazakhstan is more and more important to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Perhaps a Chinese-Kazakh-Kyrgyz triangle vis-à-vis the Islamic movement is in the making. It remains to be seen whether Kazakh security police will start clamping down on Uighurs in Kazakhstan.

In conclusion, I would like to point out: (1) Russia may be going to implement a newly activated policy to its south, particularly in Tajikistan with the renewed cooperation of Uzbekistan, while strengthening the framework of the Customs Union and the CIS; and (2) Russia's new policy is not only coordinated with the former Soviet republics in Central Asia but also synchronized with Beijing and possibly with Teheran. In this sense, frantic efforts by Moscow to create a sort of anti-American united front may be in the offing, at least in its south.