


Opinions

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Russia's New Concept of Foreign Policy and Korea-Russia Cooperation



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Since 2000, Russia has announced a series of foreign policy doctrines under the name of “the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation” (hereinafter, the “Foreign Policy Concept”). The Foreign Policy Concept, which is prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and approved by a Presidential Decree, is the most basic document that defines the basic principles, preferential orientations, objectives, and tasks of all foreign policies, including a line of foreign policy, namely, foreign economic policy.

The Foreign Policy Concept announced on February 12, 2013 is structured in a fundamentally similar manner as those of 2000 and 2008. In terms of content, however, it reflects the

global economic crisis and the global econo-political situation that has been changed since Arab Spring. Accordingly, it can be deemed as a new doctrine that defines the orientation of the foreign policies of the third-term Putin Government, in that, priority tasks on the global and the regional levels have been modified.

Priorities of foreign policies at the global level have been readjusted to include: “Emergence of a New World Order”, which is based on the reinforced roles of UN and the collective leadership of major superpowers; “Rule of Law in International Relations”, which is centered around conformance with international legal norms and securing of national sovereignty; “Strengthening of International Security” through control of military power and reinforcement of military trust; “International Cooperation in the Sphere of Economy” for innovative development of national economy and for minimizing risks; “International Humanitarian Cooperation” on the global level that contributes to the guarantee of human rights of the Russian diaspora and the enhancement of “soft power”; and “Information Support for Foreign Policy Activities”, which increases efficiency of the fulfillment of foreign policies.

Russia's regional-level priorities have also been modified and supplemented to reflect econo-political changes of various regions of the world, such as post-Soviet region, Europe, USA, the Arctic and the Antarctic regions, the Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, Northern Africa, the Latin Americas, and Africa, and the changed relationship between Russia and other countries. Most remarkably, Russia has presented a new concept of economic integration pivoting around the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), namely, the “Eurasian Economic Union”, clearly expressed a negative viewpoint and concern about the activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and demonstrated a strong warning toward the foreign policies of USA as well as volition to improve its relationship with USA. In addition, priorities in the Arctic and the Antarctic regions, which have not at all been uttered in the past “Foreign Policy Concepts”, have been established. Moreover, reinforcement of relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific and in its neighboring regions has been further emphasized.

The implications of the adoption of the new Foreign Policy Concept are as follows:

First, foreign perception of the third-term Putin Government has been officialized.

The third-term Putin Government is revealing its foreign perception that instability and unpredictability are increasing on the global and regional levels because the world order is

under transition to a multipolar system in which major superpowers share responsibilities and because, in such process, global economic crisis is persisting, balance of military powers is being changed, influence of ideological factors is increasing, risk solution is being tried, detouring the UN Security Council, and “soft power” is being misused.

Second, the foreign policy tasks, which have been mentioned by President Putin, have been materialized and systematized. Pivoting around the key contents of the “Decree by the President of the Russian Federation on Measures to Implement the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (No. 605 of 7 May 2012)”, which was signed by President Putin immediately after his inauguration on May 7, 2012, major contents of various articles, which Putin had publicized during his premiership and presidential campaigns, have been materialized and systematized into foreign policy tasks.

Considering such background, Korea can set the following tasks in cooperating with Russia:

First, Korea needs to consider establishing a cooperative relationship with the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, which are being led by Russia in post-Soviet region, for the realization of the “Eurasia Initiative”. The “Eurasia Initiative” includes the proposal that they should promote the formation of the Eurasian economic zone on the level of a large region by connecting economic zones on the level of small regions, which exist in various areas of Eurasia, under the concept of “one continent”. Russia has formed the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space with Belarus and Kazakhstan, EU being to its west and APEC to its east. On such basis, the third-term Putin Government is pursuing the founding of the “Eurasian Economic Union” by 2015. In addition, other CIS countries are expressing their intention to participate in such post-Soviet regional economic integration. In order for Korea to become the starting point of the “Eurasian economic zone” and the portal through which Eurasia and the Pacific are connected, it should consider establishing an institutional basis on which it can reinforce economic solidarity with post-Soviet region, as well as with the Asia Pacific region. Accordingly, events though method of participating in such initiative might require more policy reviews. It is deemed necessary to participate in the Customs Union and to establish a cooperative relationship within the Common Economic Space.

Second, as Russia is pursuing the development of the Far East region to utilize the potential of the Asia Pacific, Korea urgently needs to expand Korea-Russia

economic cooperation targeted at the pertaining area. Now that Russia has not solved conflicts with Europe and USA in the areas of energy and national security, it would naturally reinforce its relationship with Asia Pacific countries. In actuality, the third-term Putin Government is putting a great meaning on the economic-political emergence of the Asia Pacific region and is showing a significant interest in the expansion of economic cooperation with northeastern countries, such as China, Japan, South Korea, and North Korea. Therefore, utilizing such beneficial situation, South Korea should seek for various measures to expand Korea-Russia economic cooperation in the region.

Third, as Russia is maintaining a balanced friendly relationship with South Korea and North Korea, while it is pursuing the realization of trilateral economic cooperation projects, Korea should actively utilize such background to advance the “Korean Peninsula Trust Process”. South-North-Russia trilateral economic cooperation projects, which are pursued by Russia to connect railways, construct gas pipelines, and interlink power system networks, will stimulate North Korea's economic development and establish infrastructure connecting the South and the North in preparation for the unification of the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, the realization of trilateral economic cooperation projects will become a major means for advancing the “Korean Peninsula Trust Process”.

Fourth and lastly, Korea needs to establish and implement tasks of cooperation with Russia in the Arctic region. The fact that the Arctic region is mentioned in the “Foreign Policy Concept” for the first time in history dramatically shows the special interest of the third-term Putin Government in the region. Considering that the areas under the Russian sovereignty or jurisdiction have the largest petroleum and gas reserves and that it is needed to pass through waters under the Russian jurisdiction by using Russian ports and icebreakers to access the Arctic route, which is a new international maritime trading passage, Korea-Russia cooperation in the Arctic region is considered significant. Therefore, for Korea to enter the Arctic region in full scale, it is needed to establish and implement cooperative tasks in a systematic manner through generating an “Overall Strategy for Cooperation with Russia in the Arctic Region” or a similar initiative. 