


# The Necessity of Continuing with the Eurasian Initiative Policy



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The area of the Eurasian continent north of the Korean Peninsula not only has special historical-cultural significance for the Korean people, but is also important in terms of national security and the economy of the Republic of Korea. Bearing these facts in mind, the present Korean government has been pursuing the Eurasian Initiative Policy to strengthen relations with countries in this region.

It is perfectly reasonable that Korea's Eurasian Initiative Policy focuses especially on the Russian Far East and the Chinese Northeast Provinces, where large-scale regional development has been underway. As development plans in both regions are mainly aimed at modernizing regional industrial structure, numerous industrial complexes and infrastructure are currently being constructed with the intention of increasing efficiency in production and transportation networks across the two regions.

Moreover, that both Chinese and Russian governments are more than ever emphasizing international cooperation for their regional development plans is very meaningful for Korea's Eurasian Initiative. The Russian government under President Putin, for example, has long been considering "integration into the Asia-Pacific region" as one of the basic

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tenets of Russia's external economic policy. In the Federal Program for Developing the Russian Far East, expansion of trade and economic exchange with Asia-Pacific countries was adopted as one of the main tasks, while a number of important projects related to the development of mineral resources and transportation infrastructures were set up, with full consideration to establishing direct connections with neighboring countries.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government has been emphasizing international cooperation in connection with its development plans for the Northeast Provinces since the mid-2000s. In particular, the Chinese government has been pushing forward policies to develop their border regions in close connection with its neighboring countries. These policies were well-expressed in the "plan for the integration of land routes, sea ports and zones with North Korea" and "plan for integration of land routes, sea ports and customs with Russia" formulated by the Chinese central government in 2007. Later on, such policies were reflected in numerous bilateral cross-border cooperation projects enacted by the three Northeastern Provinces of China.

All in all, the extensive development of the Russian Far East and the Chinese Northeast, and the strong international orientation of the development plans could provide a firm base for Korea's Eurasian Initiative Policy. As economic development in these regions is the most important driving force that will bring about changes in the Eurasian continent area north of the Korean Peninsula, the Eurasian Initiative Policy should utilize it as a foothold.

Korean policymakers should bear in mind that the Eurasian Initiative Policy is about national strategy, and as such must be driven forward from a long-term point of view. Policy tools can be alternated in line with changing international circumstances, but the fundamental ideas of the Eurasian Initiative Policy, in other words the expansion of our nation's cooperation spaces through stronger relations with Eurasian countries, should remain intact.

In this light, concerns over the positioning of the ROK with regard to the recent confrontational relationship between China and the US should not be easily translated into claims that the Eurasian Initiative Policy should be abandoned. On the contrary, a well-prepared Eurasian Initiative Policy could contribute to the relaxation of the confrontation among countries in the Northeast Asian region. Therefore, patience is required in dealing with such a policy like the Eurasian Initiative. 