

## 4.2. Russia's Role in US Contemporary Pacific Policy\*

Today, as global transformations brought the Asia-Pacific to the center of world economics and politics, it has become urgently important for Russia to find a "constructive place" in the region. Russia's opportunities and prospects in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) in the 21st century will depend, to a great extent, on relationships with the USA – the world and regional leader with its traditional East Asian partners and allies. East Asia countries account for a quarter of the current world GDP. Three countries in Northeast Asia (Japan, China and South Korea) account for more than 90% of the regional economy. According to many forecasts, over the coming 20 years, Asia will be the main engine of global growth. In this regard, economic and political integration in the Asia-Pacific region, or even a simple geographical belonging to it, means a competitive advantage for any country, including Russia. During the last decade, the Russian Federation has been positioning herself as a Pacific nation. The coming APEC summit in September 2012 is clear proof of this policy, as it's being held in the Russian Far East city of Vladivostok.

According to V. Ishaev – the Minister of Far East Development and Presidential Envoy to the Far East Federal District, "the current balance of forces is such that the six countries comprising Northeast Asia are all involved in economic cooperation, yet tend to be more and more divided into two groups. China, Japan, and South Korea, appear to be the leaders in economic development making up this first group. The other countries – Mongolia, DPRK and Russia – represented by the Far East and Trans-Baikal region, remain at the periphery."

To overcome Russia's outlying position in the Asia-Pacific region, the Russian government expounded a number of targeted programs for Far East development, including the Federal target program "Economic and Social Development in the Far East and Trans-Baikal Area until 2013". The purpose of the program is to create a necessary infrastructure and a favorable investment climate for the development of priority sectors of Pacific Russia's economy, taking into account geo-strategic interests and the security of the Russian Federation. For

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Russia, an overcoming of her peripheral position in the Pacific region also means increased economic and political cooperation with countries in this region. Today Russia's place in the Asia-Pacific region is perceived as that of a major regional "supplier" of hydrocarbons and other natural resources, and her territory as a potential transport corridor between Europe, Asia and America.

Due to the natural geographical and socio-economic specifics RFE tends to develop its ties with China, Japan, Korea and the U.S. (West Coast), which are not only the most developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region, but Pacific Russia's major economic partners as well. The share for these countries, in the export and import operations of the Russian Far East, is about 80%.

The USA – the modern world and regional leader – has been positioning itself, in contrast to Russia, as a Pacific nation for nearly two centuries. Pacific direction in the American foreign policy has traditional, historical significance and was officially formulated in the famous Monroe Doctrine in 1823. Already in the nineteenth century, Americans firmly believed in the Pacific future of their country, and they continue to operate around this belief in the twenty-first century. President Barack Obama's administration (2009–2013) has chosen the Asia-Pacific region as the main focus of its foreign policy. Americans believe that the prospects of the Asia-Pacific region are directly dependent on US interests and activities in the region. According to a former U.S. Consul General in Vladivostok T. Ambruster, "The United States has been a Pacific nation for two centuries, and the leadership role in promoting integration in Asia is natural for us. It is within the scope of our national interests, and, at the same time, it is good for our Asian neighbors. Asia is not so far away; it has been, and remains, a close partner for us".

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton convincingly explains the reasons for America's interests in the Asia Pacific region:

We are a main trade and investment partner; a source of innovation that benefits workers and businesses on both sides of the Pacific; a host to 350 thousand Asian students every year; a champion of open markets; and an advocate of universal human rights. In 2010, U.S. exports to the Pacific totaled 320 billion dollars, supporting 850,000 jobs in America."

The main US foreign policy interests and priorities in East Asia are concentrated in Japan, South Korea and, especially, China – Russia's nearest neighbors in the Asia Pacific region.