



# Russia's Security Influence in Northeast Asia

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## Abstract

This paper analyses Russia's security influence in Northeast Asia. It notes that while Russia's security influence in the region declined considerably in the post-Cold War era, its membership of the UN Security Council still provides it with considerable influence and opportunity to frustrate the perceived 'liberal-democratic' agenda of the West, not only in the current, vexed issues of Eastern Europe and the Middle East but also in Northeast Asia.

The paper examines the reasons why Russia does not have greater influence, and assesses Russia's recent attempts to re-engage in Northeast Asia. It outlines the implications for regional security of its prospective re-emergence, assessing that the key factor in determining whether Russia plays a stabilising or competitive role in Northeast Asia will be whether Russia decides that its security goals in its Far East are more important than its economic goals. It concludes that if its longer-term engagement favours geostrategic competition over regional economic cooperation, as recently evidenced in Ukraine, Russia has the potential to further complicate an already complex regional security environment in Northeast Asia.

# Russia's Security Influence in Northeast Asia

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## Introduction

Most of the media's recent focus on Russia has related to its actions in Ukraine, reminding us that it remains an influential and seemingly hegemonic European power, despite the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But Russia also has vast territory in Asia, as well as significant military capability in what it calls the 'Far East'. In addition, Russia's membership of the UN Security Council provides it with considerable influence—and the opportunity to frustrate the perceived 'liberal-democratic' agenda of the West—not only in the current, vexed issues of Eastern Europe and the Middle East but also in Northeast Asia.

Nevertheless, this paper will contend that Russia's security influence in Northeast Asia declined considerably in the post-Cold War era. It will examine the reasons why Russia does not have greater influence, and assess Russia's recent attempts to re-engage in Northeast Asia. It will outline the implications for regional security of its prospective re-emergence and conclude that Russia has the potential to further complicate an already complex regional security environment, particularly if its longer-term engagement favours geostrategic competition over regional economic cooperation.

## The decline of Russia's influence

As a key Cold War protagonist and sponsor of communist revolutions across Asia, Russia wielded significant regional influence during the Cold War. But from the early 1990s, Russia's influence in Northeast Asia declined dramatically, notwithstanding its possession of nuclear weapons and nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missiles, and its role in the 'Six Party Talks' on North Korea's nuclear program.<sup>1</sup> However, ascribing Russia's decline in the region solely to the end of the Cold War is simplistic and overlooks more complex processes, notably domestic factors within Russia, and Russia's often poor relationships with other regional states.

### *Domestic factors*

The core of Russian history locates Russia on the eastern edges of Europe, and this is where the bulk of Russia's population live. While Russia's territory subsequently expanded to the Pacific Ocean, its focus has historically been stronger in, and more focused on, Europe.<sup>2</sup> By comparison, the Russian Far East has a population of only around seven million people or 4.9 per cent of Russia's population, although it is the largest federal district in Russia, with an area of 6.2 million square kilometres, representing 36.4 per cent of Russia's entire territory.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the Cold War, Russia downgraded a number of its key power projection capabilities in the region (or at least allowed them to wither), as well as withdrawing troops and naval forces from Mongolia and Vietnam respectively, leaving it with fewer options to exercise direct influence.<sup>4</sup> In particular, Russia's Pacific Fleet declined markedly both in numbers and capability, including the decommissioning of its two ageing carriers, while shortages of fuel and funds for maintenance resulted in much of the fleet remaining in port at Vladivostok, gradually deteriorating.<sup>5</sup>

Another critical factor has been the economic underdevelopment of the Russian Far East, exacerbated by corruption and neglect by Moscow,<sup>6</sup> resulting in the already sparse population declining 25 per cent in the post-Cold War era.<sup>7</sup> The reality is that Russia has few people and no major industrial centres on its Pacific seaboard, other than its military footprint, limiting its ability to engage constructively and economically with the region.

### *Relations with regional states*

Russia's often poor bilateral relationships with key regional states have also contributed to its decline in influence. Other than its tenuous relationship with North Korea, it lacks bilateral

security relationships such as the US has with Japan and South Korea. Moreover, its relations with all four key Northeast Asian players, China, Japan, South Korea and the US, have essentially been competitive. Its relationship with China has been both complex and uneasy, with both uncertain whether the other should be seen as a potential ally or adversary. Its relationship with Japan has been undermined by their unresolved and longstanding territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands.<sup>8</sup> Its relationship with South Korea has been overshadowed by Russia's continuing support for the regime in Pyongyang. And the US has treated Russia as largely irrelevant in Northeast Asian security, reinforcing Russia's frustration at its loss of superpower status.

Russia has also not been successful in participating in the regional integration processes, both political and economic, that began to occur in East Asia in the 1990s, which resulted, for example, in it not being invited to join the East Asian Summit until 2011, albeit the US was similarly excluded.<sup>9</sup> Collectively, these trends—Russia's tendency to be drawn to Europe, its regional retrenchment during the 1990s, the limited development of its Far East, and its poor relations with regional states—have contributed to the decline in Russian security influence in Northeast Asia. However, it is evident that Russia is now taking steps to redress its decline.

### Russia's re-engagement with the region – the other 'pivot'?

From about 2009, Russia's interest in its Far East began to dramatically increase, reflecting a newfound confidence and assertiveness in Russia itself, described by some as an underlying agenda to recreate 'Russian greatness' in similar terms to the 19th century Russian Empire.<sup>10</sup> After years of relative neglect, Moscow seems to have assessed that the region's rich natural resources offer viable opportunities for sustained economic development, particularly in the context that the continuing rise of China and its steadily-increasing military capabilities warrant a greater focus by Russia on the Far East.<sup>11</sup>

Russia's 'pivot'—a term which has been used by several commentators, albeit a year or so after the US began using it—includes a number of features.<sup>12</sup> The first is a focus on regional economic development, including attempts to increase regional trade.<sup>13</sup> To that end, Russia is diversifying its economic engagement with the region, including by developing a local manufacturing industry to address perceptions that it is predominantly an energy supplier and arms dealer.<sup>14</sup>

Another element—addressing its earlier regional retrenchment—is to engage more fully in East Asian economic institutions. In addition to joining the East Asia Summit,<sup>15</sup> Russia has re-invigorated its engagement with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and used its role as host of the 2012 APEC Leaders' Meeting as an opportunity to demonstrate its regional links, highlighting its desire to promote the region to foreign investors and APEC partners. While Russia reportedly spent US\$21 billion in redeveloping Vladivostok for the APEC meeting, much of this funding was allegedly squandered on corruption and related criminal activity, highlighting the challenges still facing regional development.<sup>16</sup>

A further key element of Russia's pivot is improving its standing and influence in the region. In that regard, Russia has a choice about its role—it can act cooperatively and become a stabilising force, or it can act competitively, leading to greater tension. The outcome will ultimately come down to what Russia wants and how it seeks to achieve this. On the one hand, Russia contends that it wants to develop its Far East economically,<sup>17</sup> which would imply acting in a cooperative manner that supports stability and the economic (and political) integration of the region.<sup>18</sup> There are some positive trends in this direction already, namely the investment in Vladivostok, and in the region's nascent manufacturing industry, including the development of a fighter aircraft production facility.<sup>19</sup>

Energy resources also offer significant potential for economic development, particularly if Russia can resolve its territorial dispute with Japan over the Kuril Islands, to capitalise on Japan's energy requirements and access Japanese capital. However, a resolution does not seem imminent. Following a visit by President Medvedev to the Kuril Islands in November 2010, Russia has increased its military presence on the islands, including modernising existing assets and adding new strike capabilities.<sup>20</sup> While this modernisation provides Russia with greater regional power projection capability, its military development of the islands and a further visit by President Medvedev in July 2012 would likely have caused concern in both Japan and China, with the potential to undermine regional stability.

Moreover, Russia's actions in Georgia in 2008 and in the Ukraine in 2014 suggest that Russia retains both territorial goals and a tendency to use military force to achieve such goals. Pursuing such approaches in Northeast Asia, where a number of strong militaries are present, would undoubtedly increase regional tension. Again, the choice is Russia's—between military power and potential competition on one hand, and economic development and cooperation on the other. Here again, however, the desire to stimulate economic development runs into another strand of Russia's pivot—reinvigorating Russia's regional military power—which is a key issue in determining Russia's future in Northeast Asia.

At the broader level, Russia's re-emergence is a further complication in an already complicated area. Northeast Asia includes current, former and prospective superpowers (the US, Russia and China respectively), as well as several territorial disputes and identity contests resulting from unresolved 20th century legacies.<sup>21</sup> However, Russia's re-emergence alone does not fundamentally alter the region's security dynamics.

Possibly more importantly, China now argues that it is Russia's 'gateway to the Asia-Pacific', a sentiment that Russia would find galling.<sup>22</sup> The Russia-China relationship is complex, with numerous factors causing tension, while other factors promote bilateral cooperation. One particular issue is that Russia's rich natural resources have prompted fears of an influx of economic migrants from China (and North Korea), potentially leading to irredentist or secessionist claims in the future.<sup>23</sup> Broader factors undermining the relationship include history (notably Russia's hegemonic expansion in the 19th century, and cross-border engagements in the 1960s) and Russian dissatisfaction with Chinese engagement in Central Asia.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, both states share interests in countering US influence and in cooperating on a range of economic issues, including Chinese access to Russian energy resources and water.<sup>25</sup>

In that regard, a key recent development was the signing of a major natural gas deal between Moscow and Beijing, reportedly worth US\$400 billion over 30 years.<sup>26</sup> It involves the development of refinery facilities in Vladivostok, as well as construction of a pipeline between Russian gas fields in Siberia to major centres in China, with delivery set to begin in 2018. The agreement had been under negotiation for a number of years. However, its resolution was seen as a political triumph for Russian President Vladimir Putin, particularly in terms of US and European attempts to threaten economic sanctions over Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula.<sup>27</sup> Regardless, it will be a major economic boost for the Russian Far East.

While that deal is being hailed by some as a turning point,<sup>28</sup> the Russia-China relationship still has the potential to further evolve either cooperatively or competitively. Some suggest that Russia's re-engagement is dependent on China's willingness to allow it—such as rumours that the recent gas deal was very much in China's favour<sup>29</sup>—and that Russia depends on China in the region.<sup>30</sup> As with other bilateral relationships, the outcome may be more nuanced, with increasing economic integration and cooperation, tempered by more cautious political engagement.<sup>31</sup> While this may provide the basis for a reasonably stable bilateral relationship, it also has the potential for competition, and obviously will require careful future management by both parties.

For its part, China also needs to consider what it wants from Russia. Russia may provide a valuable partner against the US but will also require its own latitude in international affairs, and may sometimes act in ways counter to China's interests.<sup>32</sup> China needs to decide whether it wants Russia to be its regional 'junior partner' or whether it is willing to support Russia in being an independent regional actor. In this sense, China also has a key part to play in shaping the nature of Russia's future regional role.

The other key bilateral relationship is between Russia and the US. Russia has been frustrated by its loss of status vis-à-vis the US, reinforced most recently by not being mentioned in the US 'pivot' to Asia.<sup>33</sup> The US and Russia (as part of the Soviet Union) were at odds for over 40 years before the collapse of the Soviet Union facilitated the rise of the US to global pre-eminence. While there are no signs that Russia will again challenge the US globally, its re-emergence regionally does offer some challenges. For example, noting that both Russia and China share interests in countering US influence, there is potential for a partnership capable of limiting US influence and promoting an international system inimical to the rule of law and contemporary Western liberal norms. Georgia and the Ukraine are cautionary tales in this regard.

However, this outcome is not pre-destined and there may be some benefits for the US in Russia's re-emergence in Northeast Asia. For example, there are few physical differences between Pacific Russia and the US Pacific coast, which in itself could facilitate economic cooperation and development.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, just as Russia's decline in Asia allowed the Chinese military to focus on the US,<sup>35</sup> the reinvigoration of Russian military forces in the region is likely to at least distract the Chinese from focusing largely on the US. As with the Russia-China bilateral relationship, some balance of competitive and cooperative elements is likely. However, the concern is that the basis for cooperation between the two may be weaker than elements favouring competition.

For example, energy forms one of the main components of Russia's economic relationship with China. However, as the US is returning to energy self-sufficiency—and in any case has rarely if ever sourced energy supplies from Russia—this stabilising element does not exist in the Russia-US relationship. Similarly, as Russia and the US do not share a land border, cross-border trade is also far more limited than between China and Russia: in 2009, 38 per cent of Russia's exports to APEC economies, and 44 per cent of its imports, came from China, whereas the figures for the US are 18 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.<sup>36</sup>

Two further issues may affect Russia's influence in Northeast Asia—the warming of the Arctic, and North Korea. Foreign ships are increasingly using the Northeast Passage through the Arctic as a transit route to Northeast Asia, increasing the region's strategic importance.<sup>37</sup> However, while this increases Russia's influence, through control of the passage and its littoral, it also affects Chinese interests, seen through increasing Chinese exploration of the region.<sup>38</sup> This provides another incentive for closer Russian-Chinese relations, while adding a further element of potential friction if their relationship deteriorates.

North Korea is an example of the decline in Russian regional influence. Russia was once North Korea's major ally and sponsor, although this relationship ended shortly after the Cold War and has now declined to the point where Russia has limited capacity to influence North Korea.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, as a member of the Six Party Talks and the UN Security Council, Russia retains a significant role in being able to influence North Korea's future. In addition, North Korea is also important to Russia both as a potential source of labour, and to support energy and transport links to South Korea.<sup>40</sup> Like China, Russia has a clear interest in preventing the collapse of the North Korean regime. Moreover, as a result of its reduced economic and political influence, Russia may have a greater capacity to act as an honest broker for North Korea—an example where Russia has the capacity to act as a stabilising force if it desires.

## Conclusion

Following the post-Cold War decline of Russia's security influence in Northeast Asia, Russia is now re-emerging, and reinvigorating its regional presence both economically and militarily. Sustaining this regional re-emergence will require continued focus and investment, hence the re-emergence is not assured. However, it clearly has the potential to further complicate an already complex regional security environment, although it is largely Russia's choice as to whether it becomes a force for regional stability or whether it promotes competition.

Nevertheless, while the nature of its regional role is largely Russia's decision, other actors have the opportunity to shape Russia's choices. China needs to decide whether it wants to try and subordinate Russia as a regional 'junior partner', at the risk of tension between the two, or allow Russia freedom as an independent actor which, while it may have some negative impacts on China, may promote Russia as a more powerful partner in opposing US influence. The US also has choices. While it often finds itself opposing Russia on issues such as Syria and the Ukraine, a cooperative relationship (if a *modus vivendi* can be found) offers greater opportunities to promote good Russian behaviour and potentially balance against China than a competitive relationship.

Most would agree that a stronger Russia in the Pacific is preferable to a weak one,<sup>41</sup> although states such as the US and China may consider this is only true if Russia decides to pursue cooperative rather than competitive regional relationships. The elements of cooperation clearly exist, focusing particularly on Russian energy exports and facilitating reciprocal foreign direct investment. But Russian foreign and defence policy may not always align with this approach.

Ultimately, the key will be whether Russia decides that its security goals in its Far East are more important than its economic goals, for this will be the key factor in determining whether Russia plays a stabilising or competitive role in Northeast Asia. Current Russian actions in the Ukraine suggest that Russia may be inclined to pursue a competitive approach, leaving open the question of whether it will pursue a similar, destabilising approach in Northeast Asia.

## NOTES

- 1 For example, Park, Tan and Govindasamy refer to Russia's 'diplomatic impotence in Northeast Asia during the 1990s', while Dittmer describes Russia in 2000 as a 'diplomatic nonentity'. See Chang Kyoo Park, Er-Win Tan and Geetha Govindasamy, 'The Revival of Russia's Role on the Korean Peninsula', *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 37, 2013, p. 130; and Lowell Dittmer, quoted in Stephen Blank, 'The End of Russian Power in Asia?', *Orbis*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Spring 2012, p. 249.
- 2 Viacheslav B. Amirov, 'Russia's Posture in and Policy towards Northeast Asia', in Stephen J. Blank (ed.), *Russia's Prospects in Asia*, Strategic Studies Institute: Carlisle, December 2010, p. 1.
- 3 See <<http://eng.kremlin.ru/terms/F>> accessed 18 April 2014.
- 4 See Alexey Muraviev, 'The phantom of the Pacific: reconsidering Russia as a Pacific power prior to APEC-2012', *Policy Analysis* 95, Australian Strategic Policy Institute: Canberra, 8 December 2011, p. 2; and Dmitri Trenin, 'Moscow on the Pacific: the missing piece in the "pivot" to Asia', *Current History*, October 2012, pp. 270-5.
- 5 See, for example, Olga Oliker and Tanya Charlick-Paley, *Assessing Russia's Decline: trends and implications for the United States and US Air Force*, RAND: Santa Monica, 2002, pp. 61-81.
- 6 R. Craig Nation, 'Russia in East Asia: aspirations and limitations', in Blank, *Russia's Prospects in Asia*, p. 51.
- 7 Mark Hong, 'The Rise of Asia and Russia's Options', in Victor Sumsky, Mark Hong and Amy Lugg (eds.), *ASEAN-Russia: foundations and future prospects*, ISEAS Publications: Singapore, 2012, p. 10. Also Paul Richardson, "'A Germany in the Pacific": the role of Japan in Russia's turn to Asia', UNISCI (Research Unit on International Security and Cooperation, Madrid, Spain) Discussion Papers, No. 32, May 2013, p. 217. Gaye Christoffersen, 'Russia's breakthrough into the Asia-Pacific: China's role', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2010, pp. 69-70 also cites a similar decline. This trend aligns with a broader decline in the overall Russian population since the end of the Cold War.
- 8 On the territorial dispute, see Alexander Bukh, 'Constructing Japan's 'Northern Territories': domestic actors, interests, and the symbolism of the disputed islands', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2012, pp. 483-509; K. D. Kapur, 'Russia-Japan Relations: politico-strategic importance of the disputed Southern Kurile Islands/Northern Territories', *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 4, 2012, pp. 385-405; and Mihoko Kato, 'Japan and Russia at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: new dimension to maritime security surrounding the "Kuril Islands"', UNISCI Discussion Papers, No. 32, May 2013, pp. 204-14. Dave Sloggett, 'North Pacific Maritime Confrontation', *The Naval Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3, August 2012, pp. 231-6 also provides a useful outline of the strategic implications of this dispute from a naval perspective.
- 9 See Victor Larin, *External Threat as a Driving Force for Exploring and Developing the Russian Pacific Region*, Carnegie Moscow Center: Moscow, May 2013, p. 13. Also see Rangsimaporn Paradorn, 'Russia's Search for an Enhanced Role in Southeast Asia', in Sumsky et al, *ASEAN-Russia*, p. 328.
- 10 Brett Logiurato, 'Bill Clinton Just Gave a Grave Warning About Putin's Plan for Ukraine', *Business Insider Australia* website, 15 May 2014, available at <<http://www.businessinsider.com.au/bill-clinton-putin-ukraine-russia-obama-2014-5>> accessed 19 June 2014.
- 11 See, for example, John W. Parker and Michael Kofman, *Russia Still Matters: strategic challenges and opportunities for the Obama Administration*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, Strategic Forum No. 280, National Defense University: Washington DC, March 2013, p. 6; Muraviev, 'The phantom of the Pacific', pp. 5-6; and Larin, *External Threat as a Driving Force for Exploring and Developing the Russian Pacific Region*, p. 4. Lee suggests that Moscow's fears of the region seceding from Russia played a role (see Rensselaer W. Lee, 'The Russian Far East: opportunities and challenges for Russia's window on the Pacific', *Orbis*, Vol. 57, No. 2, Spring 2013, p. 316, while Rozman suggests a desire to maximise Russian power in relation to China and the US also played a role – Gilbert Rozman, 'Russian Repositioning in Northeast Asia: Putin's impact and current prospects', in Blank, *Russia's Prospects in Asia*, p. 64. In line with renewed military interest in the region, Russia also sought to revive its warm water ports on its Pacific coast; see Park, Tan and Govindasamy, 'The Revival of Russia's Role', p. 127.



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- 12 See, for example Parker and Kofman, *Russia Still Matters*, p. 2. Also Baladas Ghoshal, 'The Russian Pivot to Asia Pacific', *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* website, issue brief November 2013, <<http://www.ipcs.org/issue-brief/china/the-russian-pivot-to-asia-pacific-242.html>> accessed 19 June 2014.
- 13 While Russia's trade with the APEC forum economies is concentrated in Northeast Asia, only 24 per cent of Russia's total trade is with APEC. See Carlos Kuriyama, 'Russia's Economic Relations with the APEC Region', in Sumsky *et al*, *ASEAN-Russia*, p. 227; and 'Russia signals shift towards Asia-Pacific at APEC summit', *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, 10 September 2012.
- 14 See Muraviev, 'The phantom of the Pacific', p. 4.
- 15 In fact, Russia sought membership as early as 2005. On this issue, and the factors that first prevented, and then eventually supported, its accession, see Victor Sumsky, 'The Enlargement of the East Asia Summit: the reasons and implications of bringing Russia in', in Sumsky *et al*, *ASEAN-Russia*, pp. 70-9.
- 16 See 'Russia signals shift towards Asia-Pacific at APEC summit', *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, 10 September 2012. Also Parker and Kofman, *Russia Still Matters*, p. 6.
- 17 See Amirov, 'Russia's Posture', p. 21 and Park, Tan and Govindasamy, 'The Revival of Russia's Role', p. 126.
- 18 Such an approach might include moderating the military upgrade of the Kuril Islands and concomitantly seeking to resolve the territorial dispute with Japan, which would have great value for both parties – it would provide Japan access to Russian natural gas from Sakhalin Island, while Russia would benefit from Japanese investment into the Far Eastern Federal District; see Kapur, 'Russia-Japan relations', p. 389. Others note that Russia's relationship with Japan is the weakest of its regional relationships, and hence there are benefits in improving bilateral ties: see Richardson, 'Germany in the Pacific', p. 218.
- 19 See Muraviev, 'The phantom of the Pacific', p. 4. Russia has also established a Ministry for the Far East to support the region.
- 20 On Russia's steps to increase its military capability in the Kuril Islands, see Kapur, 'Russia-Japan Relations'; Kato, 'Japan and Russia'; Blank, 'The End of Russian Power in Asia?'; and Sloggett, 'North Pacific Maritime Confrontation'.
- 21 Both Larin, *External Threat as a Driving Force for Exploring and Developing the Russian Pacific Region*, pp. 4-11, and Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography – What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*, Random House: New York, 2013, pp. 168-74, discuss some of the history of the Russian Far East and surrounding regions.
- 22 Christoffersen, 'Russia's breakthrough', p. 62. Nation argues that Russia does not want to be subordinate to China in the region; see Nation, 'Russia in East Asia', p. 36.
- 23 This is especially the case noting that Russia and China have historically contested sovereignty over parts of this region – see Larin, *External Threat as a Driving Force for Exploring and Developing the Russian Pacific Region*, especially pp. 4-11. Importantly, the extent and implications of Chinese migration are highly contested. For example, some authors see this as a threat – such as Hong, 'The Rise of Asia', p. 14. On the other hand, some argue that there are more Russians settling in China than vice versa (see Sergei Karaganov, 'Russia's Asian Strategy', in Sumsky *et al*, *ASEAN-Russia*, p. 350) and that, in any case, Russia needs migrant workers to help economically develop the region – see Maria Teploukhova, 'Russia and International Organisations in the Asia-Pacific: agenda for the Russian Far East', *Security Index*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2010, p. 79. Of note, Park *et al* suggest there are also up to 20,000 North Koreans labourers working in this part of Russia: Park, Tan and Govindasamy, 'The Revival of Russia's Role', p. 137.
- 24 See Rozman, 'Russian Re-positioning', p. 73 and Nation, 'Russia in East Asia', p. 41.
- 25 Both Rozman, 'Russian Re-positioning', p. 69, and Lee, 'The Russian Far East', p. 319, discuss Russia and China's shared interests in countering the US. Lee also notes the increasing energy cooperation between the two states: Lee, 'The Russian Far East', p. 320.
- 26 See, for example, Alexei Anishchuk, 'As Putin Looks East, China and Russia Sign \$400 billion gas deal', *Reuters* website, 21 May 2014, available at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/21/us-china-russia-gas-idUSBREA4K07K20140521>> accessed 20 June 2014.
- 27 Anishchuk, 'As Putin Looks East, China and Russia Sign \$400 billion gas deal'.
- 28 See, for example, Lamont Colucci, 'The Dragon and the Bear Inch Closer: a natural gas deal enhances the strategic partnership between Russia and China', *US News* website, 28 May 2014, available at <<http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/05/28/whats-driving-the-china-russia-natural-gas-deal>> accessed 20 June 2014.

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- 29 See, for example, Elizabeth Buchanan, 'Consumers will win in the Russia-China gas deal', Business Spectator blog, 20 June 2014, available at <http://www.businessspectator.com.au/article/2014/6/20/resources-and-energy/consumers-will-win-russia-china-gas-deal> accessed 20 June 2014.
- 30 Such authors then take this further, arguing that Russia sees China as a rival and even a threat. See Hong, 'The Rise of Asia', p. 15; Christoffersen, 'Russia's breakthrough', p. 66; and Lee, 'The Russian Far East', p. 319. Parker and Kofman argue that 'Russia knows that any cooperation with China inherently relegates Moscow to a junior partner role, and Russian elites believe that China is liable to treat it far more ruthlessly as an inferior partner'; see Parker and Kofman, *Russia Still Matters*, p. 6.
- 31 This is the prognosis in 'External Affairs, Russian Federation', *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, 29 January 2014.
- 32 For example, Russia's support of secessionist movements in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and the Crimea may be inimical to China's interests in retaining sovereignty over both Xinjiang and Tibet.
- 33 On the lack of mention in the US 'pivot', see Trenin, 'Moscow on the Pacific', p. 270. Others have also noted US 'neglect' of Russia's role in the region; see Blank, 'The End of Russian Power', p. 261. However, this trend may be beginning to be reversed. For example, Parker and Kofman note in a recent paper that '[i]gnoring Russia as an irrelevant power has not proved an effective strategy': see Parker and Kofman, *Russia Still Matters*, p. 2.
- 34 Lee, 'The Russian Far East', p. 323. However, it is important to note that the current difficulties in the relationship between the respective 'centres' of both states may inhibit such cooperation. Of note, at p. 315, Lee also notes that the Russian Far East has yet to figure prominently in US security thinking in the Western Pacific, which arguably is something the US should look to remediate.
- 35 Blank, 'The End of Russian Power', p. 259.
- 36 See Carlos Kuriyama, 'Russia's Economic Relations with the APEC Region', in Sumsky *et al*, *ASEAN-Russia*, pp. 219-44.
- 37 Kato, 'Japan and Russia', p. 208. However, it is important to recognise that while the numbers of ships transiting the Passage is increasing, the overall numbers are still very small. Kato also notes that the increasing use of the Arctic may increase the importance of the Kuril Islands to Russia – p. 212 refers. Parker and Kofman suggest that the warming of the Arctic will facilitate Russia's pivot to Asia – see *Russia Still Matters*, p. 7.
- 38 Kato, 'Japan and Russia at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century', p. 211.
- 39 See Amirov, 'Russia's Posture', p. 11. However, it also needs to be noted that the ability of other states to influence North Korea is also highly questionable.
- 40 On North Korean labourers in Russia, see footnote 23; on potential transport and energy links, see Muraviev, 'The phantom of the Pacific', p. 3, and Paul Richardson, 'Russia in the Asia-Pacific: between integration and geopolitics', *Asia-Pacific Bulletin*, No. 150, East-West Center, 16 February 2012. Reports in April also suggested that Russia was willing to forgive up to 90 per cent of the debt owed to it by North Korea (nearly \$11 billion) to support the construction of an energy pipeline to South Korea: see 'Russia writes off 90 per cent of North Korean debt, expected to build gas pipeline', *ABC News online*, 20 April 2014, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-19/russia-writes-off-90-per-cent-of-north-korea-debt/5400274> accessed 20 April 2014.
- 41 Trenin, 'Moscow on the Pacific', p. 273.

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