

# Preface

The Slavic Research Center (SRC) of Hokkaido University held an international symposium entitled “Eager Eyes Fixed on Slavic Eurasia: Change and Progress” in Sapporo, Japan, on July 6 and 7 of 2006. The symposium was mainly funded by a special scientific research grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education’s Twenty-first Century Center of Excellence Program (“Making a Discipline of Slavic Eurasian Studies: 2003–2008,” project leader, Ieda Osamu) and partly assisted by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (“An Emerging New Eurasian Order: Russia, China and Its Interactions toward its Neighbors: 2006–2009,” project leader, Iwashita Akihiro).

The symposium started with an opening speech, Martha Brill Olcott’s “Eyes on Central Asia: How To Understand the Winners and Losers.” The aim of the symposium was to redefine the former Soviet space in international relations, paying closest attention to the “surrounding regions” of Eurasia. Well-known specialists on the region came together in Sapporo to debate topics such as “Russian Foreign Policy Reconsidered,” “South Asia and Eurasia,” “Central Asia and Eurasian Cooperation,” “Challenges of the Sino-Russian Border,” and “Russia in East Asia.”

All of the sessions noted China’s presence in the region. Central Asian issues and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization were mentioned in the sessions on South Asia and East Asia. Every participant recognized the crucial importance of increasing interactions in and around Eurasia. Eighteen papers were submitted to the symposium: four from Japan, three from China, two each from Russia and the United States, and one each from Korea, Hungary, India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Australia. As China is a decisive factor in the region, differences within the country

should be taken into account: the Chinese speakers came respectively from Beijing, Shanghai, and Harbin. At the symposium, the SRC showed the will to function as a hub center for Eurasian Studies on Northeast Asia as it forges new ties of research cooperation with academic institutions in South Asia that share common interests on the topic.

Considering the topics we debated during the symposium were far reaching and diversified, we decided to invite experts in specific fields. Five excellent contributions came from Russia, China, India, Korea, and Japan. They covered the new dynamics of the bilateral and multilateral relations emerging and developing in Eurasia as an entity. Their presence undoubtedly strengthened the contents of the proceedings.

The first volume is entitled “Russia and Its Neighbors in Crisis.” Here, we selected twelve papers for Central Asia—Heart of Eurasia, Russian Foreign Policy, and South Asian views on Eurasia. The first part, “Geopolitics at the Crossroads of Eurasia,” covers Central Asia. As an opening chapter, Olcott shows us as an introduction to not only the part but also the volume as a whole how to keep our “eyes” on the region while tackling issues deriving from the “crossroad nature” of Central Asia. She fully analyzes the power orientations and balance sheets of foreign influence over the region—coming from the United States, Russia, and China. Nevertheless, she does not seem to accept the so-called “Great Game” concept as prevailed in the nineteenth century in the region. The active existence and creditable performance of the Central Asian states are progressing well.

Also in the same volume, Farkhod Tolipov, Sun Zhuangzhi, and Yuasa Takeshi follow the same topic from a different perspective. Recently, owing to some political disturbances in Central Asia, local experts face the challenge of expressing their own sincere and objective analyses. Tolipov has done this with success. His well-balanced contribution should be respected and accepted by most readers. Sun Zhuangzhi’s presence is also splendid. He is one of the most famous specialists in China in the Central Asian issue. His observations and conclusion closely relate to China’s official position. Understanding his chapter is a must for further discussion on China’s attitudes toward the region. Yuasa Takeshi is a leading Japanese scholar on the foreign policy of Russia and Central Asia. He tries to depict the details of Japan’s non-veiled involvement in Central Asia, using only resources that he knows. The information should be shared with other researchers to develop the

discussion on why and how Japan could develop active commitment toward the region.

The second part of the volume, “Russian Foreign Policy Multivector,” is vital for reconsidering Russian foreign policy. As Russia’s revival is creating a “regional hegemon,” some Western researchers cast doubt on the goodwill and orientation of Russian foreign policy: Russia is beginning to use its resources to maintain and increase its sphere of influence over its surrounding neighbors, and Russia is proceeding to ally with other powers to counterbalance the United States. Indeed, Vladimir Putin’s recent speeches contain some of the elements that the researchers considered, but the exact orientation of Russian foreign policy should be tested against not only the discourse but also the realities in and around Russia.

First, we introduce a Russian scholar’s view on Putin’s foreign policy. Tatiana Zakaurtseva covers all-round orientations. Readers can easily acquire current basic knowledge from her chapter. László Póti’s work functions to reduce political exaggeration and make Russian foreign policy understandable. His persuasive analysis on Russian policy toward Central Europe calms down some sensational views on Russia and gives some hints for comparative studies on its foreign policy toward Eurasia. Mark N. Katz, observing three challenges in Russian foreign policy, i.e., from the West, from the Muslim world, and from China, concludes that Russia faces difficulties in overcoming the dilemma. Ko Sangtu, using a theoretical framework, analyzes the shift in Russian foreign policy from bandwagoning with the United States to counterbalancing the United States. Ko’s chapter sheds some light on the Russian upsurge, while Póti and Katz’s discussions pay great attention to the weakness of Russia (the latter sounding bitter to Russia, while the former has a more positive tone). A feature of Russian foreign policy is that it is now multifaceted and multivector. What aspect to emphasize leads often to different conclusions. How to compile these differences in a consistent manner remains in the readers’ own hands.

The third part, “Russia and Its Southern Front,” is unique and notable in the volume. Iwashita Akihiro’s chapter combines the argument on Russian foreign policy with Russo-South Asian relations. He proposes a new model for analyzing Eurasia in international relations: border dynamism versus power balance. In this hypothesis, he endeavors to reveal the essential difference between Russo-Chinese relations and

Russo-Indian relations. His theoretical work is backed by empirical studies on Russo-South Asian relations. Nirmala Joshi and Fazal-ur-Rahman's contributions to the volume represent a historic precedent for the Slavic Research Center. We have never invited Indian or Pakistani experts on Eurasia before. The two South Asian strategists' discussions during the symposium profoundly attracted all of the participants. As the Eurasian world widens and Russian and Chinese relations with South Asia deepen, Indo-Pak dialogue on Eurasia represents an emerging new order in the region. Yoshida Osamu, a Japanese specialist on South Asian international relations, moderates the discussion and puts it in a global context. He wraps up the current meaning and importance of Indo-Pak relations for Eurasian unity.

The fruits of the contributing authors' intellectual endeavors are much appreciated. It is our goal that these small but important academic contributions by some of the leaders of our field of study prove to be an impetus for further academic inquiry. If this goal is achieved, it will be our great pleasure.

This volume greatly benefited from the contribution of Japanese colleagues, who participated as discussants in the symposium. For the first volume, we particularly owe Hyodo Shinji, senior researcher at the National Institute for Defense Studies, and Oka Natsuko, senior researcher at the Institute of Developing Economies, for adding fuel to the discussion. I would like to express my gratitude to Seth Cervantes, lecturer at Tomakomai Komazawa University, for his special contributions during the editing phase of this volume. I owe much to Ito Kaoru for kindly agreeing to take on the laborious task of designing the cover of the volume. I would also like to thank Hosono Mitsue, Okada Yukari and Miyazaki Haruka for their tireless efforts towards the completion of this volume.

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Editor  
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