

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 various specific fields. Five excellent contributions come 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. The discussion undoubtedly strengthened the contents of the proceedings.

The second volume is entitled “Russia and Its Eastern Edge.” We selected eleven papers for Sino-Russian relations, multilateralism for regional cooperation, and the Russian presence in East Asia. As a guide to the volume, Alexei D. Voskressenski’s contribution is especially useful. He elaborately depicts the recent rise of China and the transformation of Sino-Russian relations. He also provides a structural overview and clues on China and Russia in East Asia to add fuel to the discussion on related topics that are thoroughly reviewed in the volume.

In the fourth part of the series, “Beyond Conflict: A New Era for Partnership in Russia and China?” Neville Maxwell and Dmitri Ryabushkin had a heated debate on the past “tragedy” of Zhenbao/Damanskii Island of 1969. Maxwell’s argument firmly places the incident in the long run of Sino-Russian/Soviet relations. He traces chronological trends of the relations and shows how China and Russia finally reached a deal to resolve the deeply troubled border problems. In contrast, Ryabushkin clings tenaciously to debunking the myth of the 1969 incident and ascertaining the truth regarding the following questions: Which side was mainly responsible for the incident, or why and when was the island in question de facto controlled by China? Some facts that Ryabushkin found are a must to be considered for researchers. Nevertheless, interpretations of the incident are not necessarily finalized. Even if China intentionally planned a “sneak attack” on the Soviet border guard on the island, failure of the 1964 Sino-Soviet consultation on the border undoubtedly caused China’s frustration with “unfair” borders that had been “forced” by the Russian Empire since the late nineteenth century to peak. Historic judgments both on “intentions” and “structural

background” are always fraught with difficulties. Nonetheless, the discussion provides rich materials for further analysis and review.

Su Fenglin, a Harbin historian on Russia, suggests a different image of Sino-Russian relations. His message is that a researcher should not play up the conflictual aspects of relations. His work sheds light on the positive history of the early period and draws an apt analogy between the past and the present. Su’s argument serves as a counterbalance vis-à-vis the former two chapters.

The fifth part of the series, “Multilateralism: An Emerging Test for Regional Cooperation,” is newly added. Kato Mihoko’s article was presented at the Third International Workshop for Young Scholars at the SRC on July 5, on the eve of the symposium. She uniquely covers Russia-Southeast Asian relations. Her contribution is also closely related to the part on “Russian Foreign Policy Multivector” in the first volume. Jia Qingguo and G. V. C. Naidu’s papers presented at the Slavic Eurasian Seminar “The Quadrangle on Eurasia: Russia, China, India, the US, and Central Asia” at the SRC on December 13, 2006. Both articles clarify some of the new trends in multilateral approaches in East Asia. Jia’s article refers to China’s will and policy orientation and gives details on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an illustration. Naidu’s contribution touches upon some of the various tendencies of multilateralism, simultaneously considering the “balance game” played by the great powers.

The final and sixth part of this series, “Russia’s Perspective in the East Asian Community” is the highlight of the volume. Ha Yongchool and Shin Beomshik’s presence provide enlightening accounts of Russia’s dilemmas in the Korean nuclear crisis. Readers learn much about the limited but constructive commitments made by Russia as an intermediary during the crisis. Feng Shaolei, a talented Shanghai scholar with a command of both Russian and English, and Sergey Vradiy, a Russian sinologist in Vladivostok, do a great job covering Sino-Russian relations. The former also conducts comparative studies on Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese relations in the whole of East Asia, while the latter pays attention to the relatively unknown relations between Russia and Taiwan. Finally, Yokote Shinji wraps things up by explaining the context and strategic environment emerging in East Asia and tackles Japan’s possible involvement with Russia.

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 Japan's sinologists, who participated as discussants in some sessions. For the second volume, we owe much to Ishii Akira, professor at the University of Tokyo, for playing the role of moderator in the heated debate on the Zhenbao/Damanskii Incident. Nakai Yoshifumi, professor of Gakushuin University, Mifune Emi, associate professor at Komazawa University, and Zhao Hongwei, professor of Hosei University, were highly appreciated for their contributions to the seminar dated December 13 as mentioned before. We also thank Takagi Seiichiro, professor at Aoyama Gakuin University, for offering pertinent comments for all of the papers in the sixth part.

I would like to express unchanging 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.

Iwashita Akihiro
Editor
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