

Siberia in the geo-strategic calculation of Russia, 2000-2016

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Abstract: The Siberian region was considered one of the most neglected corners of the world in the past decade. But over the past years, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Siberia's significant in the Russian federation has increased due to its location and its huge findings of oil and natural gas. The ongoing shift of economic and political activities to the East has put Siberia and the Russian Far east in the spotlight. Siberia is no longer on the world's outskirts yet near one of the focuses of the new worldwide request. Recent finding of huge energy resource has brought this region into mainstream political discourse. It is also serves as a corridor to the Asian-Pacific countries. It has emerged as one of the most promising regions of the world. Due to its resources it is significant to the Russian Federation as well as as the global economy. It has been projected as the future of Russian Federation. The involvement of America and Canada makes it more vital region. Moreover, the involvement of China, India, Japan, South Korea, Germany and France further enhances the importance of the region. So in this context, the present study is going to enhance the current knowledge pool in many ways. The present study will be focused on how Siberia is geostrategically significant to the Russian Federation and it will also analyse Russia's State policy towards Siberia. Present study has analysed the geopolitical and geo-strategic significance of Siberia in the Russian Federation. Further it has analysed how Russian policy acquired a new orientation with the coming of Vladimir Putin. Moreover, due to its geographical contiguity with China, and proximity to the Pacific Ocean, Siberia has been viewed as an opportunity for Russia to gain entry to integrative processes in the Asian Pacific Russian.

Keywords: economic, Russia, geo-strategy, Asia-Pacific.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the 21st century, rivalries over natural resources have become intense among the great powers. This competition has reaffirmed itself in rapid growth of commodity prices and some adjustments in geopolitical considerations. Russia has been benefiting from this situation due to its abundant natural resources on its vast territory. As a result, Russia is now gradually recovering its position as a major power in international politics (Tsygankov 2006)(1). Following a time of shortcoming and insecurity, Russia reestablished itself as a superpower on the worldwide stage, recovered its impact in its neighbourhood and past through Putin's pragmatic diplomacy. From its geo-vital perspective, Russia's remote strategy motivation has indicated a progression from the Putin administration to the present. With coming to power of the new president and relative stabilisation of macroeconomic position in the country the present stage of a state policy concerning Siberia begins which appears again in the list of priority macro a region. According Ronald Schweller, "In terms of geopolitics, we have moved from an age of order to an age of entropy...Problems and crises will arise more frequently and, when they do, will be resolved less cooperatively" (Schweller, 2014)(2). Another noticeable feature of the global development is the steady increase of influence of Asia-Pacific, mainly as a key driver of global economy. In the meantime, the central point of worldwide economic development, as well as numerous uncertain inconsistencies between the worldwide forces are moving towards this area. In the 1990s Moscow totally ignored the Russian Far East, under Vladimir Putin, the Russian government started to reassert its impact. Putin's strategies in the Siberian region mirrored his aim to assert Russia's situation in worldwide politics and his desire to make a multipolar world. He communicated faith in the greatness of Russia, saying that Russia

was, and will remain an extraordinary power, preconditioned by the qualities of its geopolitical, economic and social presence.

II. CONCEPT OF GEO-STRATEGY

The relationship between geopolitics and geo-strategy is often seen from different perspectives. The geo-strategy is seen as a sub-discipline of geopolitics (Sykulski, 2009)(3), while their relationship is understood in terms of their equal status in the political thinking (Baczwarow-Suliborski 2002)(4) or even in terms of the status of geopolitics as an auxiliary discipline of geo-strategic studies (Dobczyński ed. 2013)(5). Interconnection with geopolitics is very narrow and geo-strategy without geopolitical substrate loses its beneficial value. C. Jean (2003) promotes the idea that geo-strategy is a "military geopolitics". According to C. Jean, "the concept of geo-strategy is traditionally exclusively related to the military field, has a much broader dimension nowadays, aimed at the study of the large topics – military, economic, political on a global scale, and not just in relation to geography". Geo-strategy means the importance of a country or a region by virtue of its geographical location.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this thesis has been historical analytical approach, which makes use of observations based on past events. The research has used quantitative method of social research. The study is mainly based on the primary and secondary sources. The primary data will be based on government documents, sources reports and surveys conducted by the government and various national and international organisations, speeches of prominent of political personalities, economists and strategic thinkers will be carefully studied. The secondary sources of data includes books, news reports, journals, articles published from time to time, news paper coverage, reportage, unpublished papers, media and any insightful thoughts expressed by any individual working on this related research. The study has relied on various information and data collected through Internet sources.

IV. GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF SIBERIA

Siberia is the recently rising financial and key area and is viewed as the core of economic advancement in the Russia of the 21st century whose vitality and mineral assets are significant for Russia as well as for other nations, especially in the Asia-Pacific area. The term "Siberia" is basically Tartar¹ origin. From 13th century onwards, Mongolia captured the area and they named it Siberia. Thus "Siberia" comes from the Mongolian root "sibir", which means 'sleeping land'. Siberia is also known as an Asiatic colony in the imagination of Russia. The vision that the improvement of the Far East and Siberia is fundamental for Russia's involvement into Asia-Pacific can be followed back to the time of Mikhail Gorbachev. In 1988, Gorbachev argued that, "The economic position of the USSR in the Asia-Pacific region is the subject of our major concerns, reflections, and concrete measures. We would like to make the effective foreign economic links of the USSR's Far East serve the goals of social and industrial development of this Soviet region. It is not an ad hoc but a long-term task. It is not a tactical but a strategic goal." In his renowned speech in Vladivostok in 1986, he attempted to organize relations with Asia and the advancement of Russia's eastern domains. In the past Siberia has gotten expanding consideration both in the Tsarist and Soviet framework because of its geo-key significance and its potential as a noteworthy wellspring of natural wealth. Indeed, even today, Siberia is a stage for Russia to recapture its lost vital impact in Eurasia and to advance as a solid column in the global framework. Russian contribution in Siberia is essentially strategic in nature. Without a doubt Siberia's key significance in the Russian Federation is developing since the previous years. The geo-political noteworthiness of the Siberian locale can be gotten from the way that it is situated at the crossing point interfacing Europe, the Asia-Pacific district. Siberia verges on Mongolia, China, North Korea and Japan, and also the United States in the Bering Strait and the Aleutian Island. The geostrategic location of Siberia makes it vital for Russia to have a solid presence in the region. Siberia as a region represents a very valuable Geo-economic and geostrategic gain for any great power outside the region that would be able to control its energy resources. As Eugene Lawson points out, "the Russian Far East is adjacent to two of the world's top three energy markets and is ideally suited to serve as a major energy supply link between Russia's Background of Siberia oil and gas fields and China and Japan, as well as Korea, India, the countries of South East Asia, and the U.S."

¹ In Russian language the term "Tatar" was used to denote the peoples of the Mongol hordes.

Siberia superbly added to the treasury of the Russian realm. Since ages, Siberia has dependably had uncommon geo-key significance. As per authentic criteria and definitions, Siberia involves the distance from the Urals to the Pacific and possesses around 13 million square kilometres, which is 60 per cent of the whole domain of the USSR. Siberia and the Far East region are one and one-third times bigger than of Canada, one and a half circumstances that of the United States, and four times the span of India. Siberia is the name given to the immense region of northern Asia extending from the Urals in the West to the Pacific watershed in the East and the Arctic Ocean in the North to the outskirts of Central Asia, Mongolia, North Korea, and the People's Republic of China in the South. Aside from its size, this region has dependably been known for its brutal atmosphere and the immense assorted variety of its scene and characteristic highlights. Siberia has six prominent language to be specific, Turkic, Mongolian, Turgus, Samodi, Yugruian and Palaeo Asiatic. Each and every group differs in economic and social term. Lion's share of the general population has originated from European part, other pieces of previous Russia and the Soviet Union. 35 of indigenous dialects are perceived in Siberia today yet the official dialect is Russian. There is a variety of beliefs all through Siberia: Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism; yet Shamanism is well known among all. Russia did not have any extraordinary relationship with its Asian neighbours in the past century. It was persistently concentrating on Europe and the United States. Russian Far East was viewed by Moscow as a hotspot for natural resources and a military station. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the region experienced fall of its economy. At that time of disintegration, Siberia's huge natural resources helped Russia to reshape its essence in Asia. Siberia is once in a while alluded to as the "Fridge of the World". With its high latitude location and much of the region lying beyond the Arctic Circle, it is generally quite cold. The absence of broadened daylight also causes the land to remain "refrigerated" or "deeply frozen" most of the time (Resnick, 1985)(3).

In 1993, when the constitution was adopted, there were 89 subjects recorded. Some of them Were later consolidated. Of the 89 substances of the Russian Federation, 29, belong to three major economic areas:

- East Siberia
- West Siberia
- the Far East

East Siberia was the largest administrative territorial unit in the USSR but at present that position is now held by the Far Eastern Federal District. Eastern Siberia lies between Western Siberia and the Far East. It is the largest region of the Russian Federation with regard to its area. Under Tsarist, it had a backward insufficiently developed agriculture and a very weak industry. It was forced to bring grain and almost all manufactured goods it required from the West. Gold mining and Fur trade were the only economic branches whose output was shipped beyond the territory of Eastern Siberia. But in the soviet period, great successes have been attained by Eastern Siberia in the development of both its old and new branches of economy. The gold industry has rehabilitated the old gold mines and developed new gold-fields, the biggest of the being located in Yakutia². A number of mining industries have been created, the extraction of tin, and non-metallic minerals and graphite. Machine-building, predominantly supplying equipment to mining industry, to agriculture and to railway and water transport, is being developed in Eastern Siberia (Mote, 1998)(4).

West Siberia occupies the western portion of Siberia between the Ural Mountains in the west and the Yenisei River in the East. The Ob is the important waterway of Western Siberia and one of the biggest river on the planet. The weather of Western Siberia isn't as severe as the other two areas. Western Siberia is loaded with astoundingly rich assets required for the improvement of industry, for example, coal, the water vitality, mineral crude materials and ample woods. As per Oil and Gas Resources of the West Siberian Basin, it is the source of 70 per cent of Russia's oil and 90 per cent of its petroleum gas. As indicated by the address by Industry and Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko at the Fifth Russian Oil and Gas Week, 31st October, Russia's oil creation achieved 530 million tons and oil trade 310 million tons by 2015. The West Siberian oil and gas area was declared the primary oil base of the nation in this period.

The Soviet Far east is the third region of Siberia. The Far East is rich in natural resources, including gold, diamonds, oil, and natural gas. The district's leading industries are the mining, forestry, woodworking and fishing industries, as well as

²The Sakha (Yakutia) Republic is a federal subject of Russia.

non-ferrous metallurgy, maritime and railroad transportation, machine-building, and hydropower engineering. Reindeer herding, hunting, and fur farming are also traditional industries in the Far East. Sakhalin Island³ is situated here. Sakhalin Island is very well known due to its rich deposits of coal, oil and gold (Mote, 1998)(5). The Russian Far East accounts for 4.5% of national GDP, but fully 15% of national mining output. Magadan is Russia's second largest gold-producing region, while the huge, sparsely populated region of Yakutia which now calls itself the Republic of Sakha produces 95% of the country's diamonds.

V. IMPORTANCE OF SIBERIA IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

There are various focal points and advantages that Siberia plays for Moscow(Akaha, 1997:49)(6). The most evident favourable influence of the Siberian region is its rich natural assets, which makes it noteworthy to the East Asian countries. Second, the area's geographical closeness to East Asia offers the Russian exporters favourable position in light of the fact that the Russian Far East needs substantial venture capital for its modernization and improvement. By interfacing Asian-pacific nation the Russia Federation get an opportunity to build up its eastern area. Third, with East Asia's venture capital and its advances can offer extensive help with the modernization of the Russian Far East. Fourth, the Russian Far East will get advantage from East Asia as far as inexpensive Chinese labour, especially in those parts where work deficiencies are relatively incessant including farming, development and administrations. The key significance of Siberia became obvious once Germany attacked The Soviet Union in 1941. As the German War machine crushed through quite a bit of Belorussia, through Ukraine and into the Caucasus, the Soviets moved a lot of industry eastwards past the Urals, creating a huge build-up of industry in West Siberia. In excess of 300 whole enterprises and factories were moved eastward, making an immense industrial base, e.g. 59,000 fighter planes were built in Siberia during the war (Wood 1987a)(7). Likewise, most Lend-Lease aid provided by the US would arrive in the Soviet Union via sea and air across the Pacific and through the Far East. Unfortunately, this trend of regional industry and manufacturing did not continue after the end of World War II, with the exception of specialised military manufactures. At the same time, it was during this period that the true economic resources of Siberia became apparent.

As worldwide interest for energy supplies developed, Russia's far east and eastern Siberia in 2016 gained perpetually significance in the region's geopolitics. For a variety of economic and geo-strategic reasons, Russia is currently Again trying to build its attempts to build up the economy of its eastern Territories and integrate more deeply into the rapidly developing Asian Regional economies. The Russian Far East has three imperative qualities that make it worthy of consideration. Together with eastern and western Siberia, the region is a huge place for natural resources, particularly energy, that can supply the enormous populations and booming economies of East Asia. The Russian Far East can help keep enterprises running and meet fundamental living needs. At the same time, as seen from the European part of the country, the regional bloc qualifies Russia as a rightful member of the Asia-Pacific and Northeast Asia regions, extending its geopolitical influence. In and outside Russia there are a variety of approaches, views and opinions regarding the role and status of the region, which is traditionally called the "Far East." Within the context of the global trends, and furthermore, the procedures occurring in Asia-Pacific, East Asia and Russia toward the start of the 21st century, this region plays out a few vital national (with regards to Russia) and territorial (in East Asia and the Pacific) functions. These functions themselves make it important to include the regions of Pacific Russia in financial as well as in social, political and cultural communications in Northeast Asia and the whole Asia Pacific region for their own good. The first and the most crucial role that Pacific Russia can perform today for the advantage of herself and of the whole region is a stabilizing one. The rich natural and spatial resources of this area provide Moscow with a certain margin of safety to meet the challenges of economic, political and social reforms in the country. They can be the "most important factor to ensure wealth and growth of Russia's power in general", the "strategic rear and reserve" for Russia's prosperity in the 21st century (Bogaturov, 2004)(8). In the meantime, as depicted above, numerous Pacific nations see this area as a dependable wellspring of assets and a promising region where certain promising financial undertakings could be started.

The second potential of the area is that it fills in as a solid transit and transportation connection between European Russia and European markets with the economies of the Asia-Pacific. However, the technical equipment, management and

³Sakhalin Island is Russia's largest island, and is administered as part of Sakhalin Oblast. Sakhalin is a classic "primary sector of the economy" relying on oil and gas exports, coal mining, forestry, and fishing.

logistical capacity of Russian railways and port facilities are far from desirable. This is why stakeholders have to consider pouring in a massive investment to raise the standard of the system. An encouraging fact in this regard is that the Russian government has already recognized that efficient infrastructure is critically important for making Russia's "turn to the East" real. The recently accepted Russia Far East and Baikal Region Development Program up for 2014–2018 is really an arrangement of modernization and improvement of the transportation system of this district. In Moscow's view, Russia's Pacific wilderness is a springboard to enter the Asia-Pacific area. *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation of 2008* points out the Kremlin's intention to use the potential possibilities of the Asia-Pacific region to develop Siberia and the Far East, and thereby strengthen "Russia's belonging to this dynamically developing region of the world" The third function concerns cultural and civilizational interactions. Russia is the only European country sharing a border with East Asian cultures (China, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia). While the region is experiencing another surge of ethnic nationalism, the territory of Pacific Russia, where different cultures and people coexisted for centuries, can become a testing ground for closer interaction, compromise and mutual understanding between civilizations.

Altogether, the above listed circumstances require the creation of a coherent model of the development of Siberia and the Far East, the realization of which requires common efforts of the international community. Currently, the Siberian region constitutes the historical, cultural, and geographical basis for Russia's status as a great power and its distinctiveness from the West. Under President Putin's administration, Russia has sought to define its national identity as *Eurasian* by connecting the ideas of great powerness, multicultural and bi-continental country, and economic integration. One of the key components used to manage Russia's goals to be an awesome power is its Asiatic Russia. It is often argued by the Russian elites that Russia by virtue of its history and geography, the country was, is, and will be a great power. Thus, Siberia is normally observed as an advantage. From the Russian point of view, Siberia was vital in the ascent of the Soviet Union as a superpower. In this way, it is in Siberia that the assets and the space that backings, in expansive part, Russia's claim to extraordinary power status, are found. Russia owes its status as a worldwide capacity to Siberia, which makes Russia more than enormous eastern European nation.

The geopolitical hugeness of the RFE lays on its natural riches—oil, gas, petrol, coal gold, precious stones, uncommon earth metals and so forth and its closeness to the Asia-Pacific nations. Its significance is likely to grow with the shift of gravity of the global economy to the Asia-Pacific and as U.S.-China rivalry increasingly defines the contours of international politics in the Far East and beyond. Far east, Russia's gateway to the Asia-Pacific region, the economic and strategic value for Russia is inestimable. Only the island of Sakhalin's oil reserves accounts for 25% of Russian total oil reserves. There are abundant minerals, forestry and fishery resources in the region. Siberia is the area which has richest natural resources in the world. Eastern Siberia alone contains as much oil as the entire United States (about 20 billion barrels) as well as tremendous quantities of natural gas. Siberia has vast deposits of coal; 70% of Russia's coal reserves are concentrated in this area. Here has the world's most vast area of virgin forest, forest resources are accounted for 23% of the world. 80% water resources of Russia are concentrated in Siberia. Here is also extremely rich in mineral deposit and almost all the world's mineral resources have been found here. Three centuries ago, Russian scientist Mikhail Lomonosov foretold that, "Russian power with Siberia will increase".

VI. RUSSIAN POLICY UNDER VLADIMIR PUTIN

Following a time of shortcoming and change, Russia came back to the world stage amid Vladimir Putin's eight-year administration, recovering impact in its neighbourhood and past, and wandering into parts of the globe from which it withdrew after the Soviet fall. Russia's push to reestablish its situation as a superpower on the worldwide stage turned out to be valid through Putin's down to business tact. As a result, Russia is now gradually recovering its position as a major power in international politics (Tsygankov 2006)(9).

Vladimir Putin acquired the nation from Boris Yeltsin with a demolished economy and a poor masses. As per official measurements, under Yeltsin Russia's GDP declined by about 60% – which is uncommon in peacetime with all the resulting outcomes. Russia ended up weak and concentrated upon domestic issues, and by 1998 it had lost its erstwhile part and all impact in East Asia. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia figured out how to coordinate its own GDP of 1990 just in 2006! Putin demonstrated compelling at halting political and financial tumult, relieving furnished clashes inside Russia, and reestablishing a level of social and monetary advancement. Therefore, Russia has come back to the world stage as a solid state. Russian President Vladimir Putin participated in different summits: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation,

Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the East Asia Summit. Every one of these activities improved Russia's participation with East Asian nations and entrenched its part in provincial issues.

Starting with Vladimir Putin's tenure in 2000, and the financial recovery helped by high oil costs, the local government started to reestablish control over areas, including the Russian Far East, as a major aspect of its general political centralization plan. By the end of Putin's first term in office in 2004, the RFE no longer seemed in imminent danger of drifting apart, or being taken away, from Russia. However, Putin's administration set a considerably more driven objective than simply anchoring the RFE inside Russia. Since around 2007, Moscow has started a variety of measures and approaches intended to quicken altogether the RFE advancement. The region was broadcasted one of Russia's best "national priorities," which was emphasized by large-scale state-funded investments, and preferential tax policies to attract private investment. Increased consideration regarding the RFE has been connected up with Moscow's other vital necessity—the upgrade and extension of financial participation with East Asia to capitalize on the rise of Asian economies and to diversify away from Europe. Holding the 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok, and the use of huge assets (about \$23 billion) on an extraordinary makeover of the city, exhibited the RFE to the world and underscored the Kremlin's duty to connect with the Asia-Pacific.

Putin's long administration is basically about two things: keeping Russia in one piece and reestablishing its status as a worldwide. The Kremlin's foreign policy moves east of the Urals are geared to attaining both these main objectives: making sure that the Far East and Siberia remain Russian, and that Russia itself plays a major role in the Asia-Pacific. With coming to power of the new president and relative stabilisation of macroeconomic position in the country the present stage of a state policy concerning Siberia begins which appears again in the list of priority macroregions. While in the 1990s Moscow totally dismissed the Russian Far East, under Vladimir Putin, the local government started to reassert its impact including in the area of the region's external links. A standout amongst the most important advancements has turned into the lunch of a variety of significant state-financed ventures intended to support the economy of the Russian Far East and empower its incorporation into the Asia-Pacific. The September 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok is an essential advance toward that path, went for giving an additional catalyst to the Far East and exhibiting it to the worldwide network. President Putin has left no doubt he intends to promote and control the development of East Siberia and the Far East. In a speech in Yakutia in January 2006, he declared an efficient national program to build up the area and furthermore to support large-scale energy exports to Asia. The beginning of development on the Taishet-Nakhodka principle pipeline is an indication of the president's commitment to this process.

Especially in the year 2000, when the first Putin government was launched, President Putin picked the East Asia as the goal for his first diplomatic visit and visited China, North Korea, and Japan. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which later formed into a security system for the Central Asian district, was likewise made in 2000. In 2003, Russia additionally joined the Six-Party Talks on the Korean Peninsula to examine North Korea's atomic improvement, and at the Economic Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) held in Sydney in 2007, Russia communicated its aim to have the APEC summit in Vladivostok. With its promotion to the Asia-Europe Meeting in 2010 and investment in the East Asia Summit in 2011, Russia has now been numbered among the individuals from the greater part of Asia's key discussions, leading to it's hosting of the of the APEC summit in Vladivostok in 2012. Under the leadership of President Putin, Russia is at last changing into high gear with its advancement procedure for long-haul improvement of the Far East while establishing economic relations with quickly developing Asia-Pacific countries. Putin's aim was to make Russia great power, turning Russia into a strong and respectable member of the international community. He emphasized economic modernization and development as the foundation for restoring Russia's greatness (Tsygankov, 2006)(8). In December 1999 in his political treatise before getting to be President, he declared that 'Russia was and will remain an incredible power, adapted by the innate characteristics of its geopolitical, financial, and social essence' (Hill, Gaddy, 2012)(10). Nevertheless, Russia has placed increasing emphasis on the benefits of integration with the Asia-Pacific region, suggesting that integration will help to solve problems of development in Russia's Far Eastern regions, and the border regions in particular. Along these lines, under Vladimir Putin and afterward Dmitri Medvedev, local and outside linkages have been made undeniably explicit: this is obvious from the Foreign Policy Concept of 2008; the National Security Strategy of 2009, the Long-Term Socio-Economic Development Concept to 2020, and in addition the Energy Strategy to 2030 – all are interlinked as a major aspect of the modernisation plan which organizes financial improvement and technological advancement. Putin and outside leaders never call Russia "Eurasian" yet a "Euro-Asian nation". Putin recognises that Russia is a Euro-Asian country, as the greatest part of its territory is in

Asia, but he has never claimed that Russia belongs to an Eurasian civilisation, “Stressing that Siberia and the Far East are geographically Asia, and pursuing an active diplomacy in favour of regional integration in the most dynamic part of the world is no more than political common sense.” (Laruelle, 2008)(11)

Since the beginning of President Vladimir Putin, the expression "Leave Europe, Enter Asia" has been heard among Russian scholarly people. "Leave Europe, Enter Asia" is the phrase wording emblematic of the Putin administration's shift in the emphasis of policy emphasis from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region. The Russian government took the opportunity of hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Vladivostok in September 2012 to put more effort than before into the development of the Far East. Behind this is nothing less than Russia's political and economic intention to benefit from take in the "dynamism" of the Asia-Pacific region, with remarkable development for Russia's economic growth with the Far East serving as a gateway. Putin used the 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok as a means to turn assertively to East Asia and to push for development projects in the region. The government spent more than \$5 billion dollars in upgrading the city's infrastructure in order to transform it into a 'gateway to Asia'. In Soviet times, Vladivostok was not a gateway but a fortress; it hosted the Soviet Pacific Fleet and remained a closed city until 1992. "A politically, economically and culturally European country, Russia's ambition to shift its foreign policy and trade to Asia and the Pacific is evident through its hosting of the APEC summit in Vladivostok, a city that has only 600,000 residents and is located 9000km from Moscow." (Jiao, 2012)(12) With the economies of Europe, hitherto the cornerstone of its external economic relations, remaining sluggish in the wake of the Eurozone crisis, Russia wants to find a way out by searching for new opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region. In the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in December 2013, President Putin referred to the importance of developing relations with the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, Putin has insisted that Russia is an inalienable part of Asia and therefore has several interests on it. In a speech in 2000 Putin said that: "Russia has always felt itself to be an Eurasian (evroaziatskaya) country. We have never forgotten that a greater part of Russian territory lies in Asia. But frankly speaking, we have not always used that advantage. I think the time has come for us and the countries of the Asia-Pacific to go over from words to deeds, that is, to build up economic, political and other contacts. Russia has all the requisite possibilities for this now". In 2013, in his Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, President Putin reconfirmed the strategic importance of developing RFE and Siberia by calling this task Russia's "national priority for the entire 21st century" It was emphasized that Russia's reorientation toward the Pacific Ocean and the development of its eastern territories "will not only open up new economic opportunities and new horizons, but also provide additional instruments for an active foreign policy." Given the rich regular assets and geopolitical qualities of RFE and Siberia, the advancement of these areas, which are presently "Asia Pacific's Last Frontier," and their combination with neighboring Asian economies can possibly reshape the financial and political scene in Asia-Pacific as well as the entire world.

VII. CONCLUSION

During the last two decades, Russia and Northeast Asian countries have been slowly coming to the general recognition of the importance of Siberian and the Far Eastern energy resources. The ideas to attract massive foreign investment to develop the Far East, which looked infeasible a decade ago, now became the only chance for Moscow to jump on the Pacific Express. On the other hand, the global energy crisis of the early 2000s and China's activity on the world energy markets have forced Russia's Asian neighbors to switch from talks about the value of Siberian resources to actions to secure priority access to those resources. In this context, they began to consider China's increased economic activity in Siberia as a threat to their national interests. In this context, Russia has to look for a new model of the development of its eastern territories that can serve Russia's geopolitical interests in the Asia-Pacific and satisfy its need for capital, technology and human resources. At the same time, the model should meet the needs of North East Asian countries. The most important thing is to identify the areas where international cooperation in the development of energy resources in the region is feasible and to create favorable conditions to implement specific projects there. It is not difficult in theory, but only time can tell how it will happen in practice.

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