

## From Yeltsin to Putin: Moscow's Perception of the Peace Process on the Korean Peninsula

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### Abstract

**R**ussia has developed multipolar paradigm in its effort to reobtain the position of the Great Power since it realized that it could not exert influence strong enough to stake its claim in the world politics. The advocacy of a multipolar world order, referred to as the "Primakov Doctrine," shifted Moscow's attitude toward the two Koreas as well. In its pursuit of multipolarity in East Asia, Russia has designed its strategy toward Korea's nuclear crisis and unification to best suit its national interest. Considering the competition among the Great Powers in East Asia, Russia's Korea policy can better be understood under such a multilateral framework.

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**R**ecognizing and accepting limitations can be an important step to move forward to the future. To Russia, that moment came in 1996 just five years after the Soviet Union collapsed. After its transition to a democratic nation, Russia anticipated that the West in the global community would regard it as an equal partner. In 1996, facing domestic instability and international marginalization, Post-Soviet Russia opted to promote a concept of multipolarity to regain its position as a “Great Power.” Therefore, 1996 marked a turning point of Moscow’s diplomacy, which eliminated reminiscence of the Cold War bilateral framework or mere hope for the strategic partnership with the United States.

This paper aims to document how and why Moscow made such a dramatic shift and what impacts it has produced on the peace process on the Korean Peninsula. The second section covers the emergence of the “Primakov Doctrine” and Moscow’s effort to create a multipolar global order in 1996. The following section briefly describes Moscow’s foreign policy from the Yeltsin era to Putin’s presidency. How Russia views the nuclear crisis involving North Korea and the Korean unification from the perspective of multilateralism is examined in the forth section. Finally, this paper suggests that Russia’s Korea policy should not be assessed in exclusively peninsular terms, but also in a wider context of Russia’s relations with the world’s “centers of power.”

## II. Moscow’s Dramatic Foreign Policy Shift in 1996

### (i) America’s Coequal Partner?

1996 marked a turning point of Moscow’s diplomacy. Since the “Primakov doctrine” was adopted, the Kremlin has shown consistency in its main diplomatic strategy regardless of leadership changes—from Yeltsin to Putin, from Putin to Medvedev, and again, Medvedev to Putin. This key concept of a multipolar world order has remained a pillar of Moscow’s diplomacy. In this regard, examining how

and why Moscow made such a fundamental shift in 1996 deserves attention.

In terms of global geopolitics, soured Russo-American relations in the mid 1990s reaffirmed that the time was not yet ripe for a new democratic condominium between Washington and Moscow. Former U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski points out that Moscow’s hope for enhanced scope and power through “mature strategic partnership” was devoid of either international or domestic realism.<sup>2</sup> Simply put, post-Soviet Russia was too weak to become America’s coequal partner in a new global order. In addition, Washington and Moscow took different approaches on some of the critical geostrategic issues in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East.<sup>3</sup> The most instructive example would be the mounting tension between the two over the expansion of NATO to Central Europe where Moscow was willing to maintain its influence. Additionally, the erosion of the political base of these reformists was accelerated as the Russian economy was in distress due to the adverse consequences of a rapid economic transition.

Now let us take a close look at the chessmen in the East Asian segment. Moscow was worried if it might be internationally marginalized in this region. After the 1993-1994 nuclear crisis, Russia proposed a “multilateral conference on security and nuclear-weapon-free status of the Korean Peninsula” based on a “2+6” mechanism—with the participation of North Korea, South Korea, Russia, the U.S., China, Japan, the United Nations, and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, against their expectations, Moscow was not perceived either as a key partner or an America’s equal partner, while the importance of Washington’s role dramatically increased. As a result, a “2+2” formula—the negotiation among North Korea, South Korea, the U.S.

<sup>2</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew. 1997. *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. New York: Basic Books.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

and China) was adopted, leaving Moscow's position as an observer. Moscow changed the polarity of its approach and joined the anti-North Korean coalition in de-facto terms in the early 1990s, but Russia lost its influence in the North without any gains in the South.<sup>4</sup>

### (ii) Pursuit of the Multipolar World Order

Russia's cornered position in the international community led to post-Soviet advocacy of multipolarity. The unfavorable condition of Russia's relationship with and strategy toward two Koreas did not satisfy the pragmatic wing of the Kremlin and resulted in efforts to change its approach.<sup>5</sup> In the latter half of the Yeltsin administration, Yevgeni Primakov, who replaced Andrei Kozyrev as Russia's foreign minister, presented three principles: (1) integrating Russia into the world economy; (2) establishing a multipolar world; and (3) counteracting key United States-led initiatives including North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement, the Iraqi economic embargo, and military intervention in Kosovo.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the advocacy of a multipolar world order, referred to as the "Primakov Doctrine," can be construed as Moscow's effort to counterbalance a growing U.S. influence in world politics.

Indeed, Primakovian multipolarity reflected the view that Moscow intended to remain one of the Great Powers but at the same time it could not wield its influence as strongly as the U.S. in the international community. A multipolar world was thus considered as the best international structure for restraining Washington's influence while

enhancing Moscow's.<sup>7</sup> One year later, in 1997, Russia's growing need for creating a multipolar order was codified in the "Russo-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order" signed by Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin, President of the People's Republic of China. Though the U.S. was not obviously mentioned in the declaration, the two parties agreed that "any country should not aspire to hegemony, pursue a policy from a position of force and monopolize the international affairs."<sup>8</sup> This event signaled a remarkable transformation of Moscow's foreign policy, which had tilted toward the US-led Western community during the first half of the Yeltsin years.

In dealing with the Korean problem, the Yeltsin administration began to take a more balanced, pragmatic approach from the balance-of-power perspective. When Andrei Kozyrev proposed a multilateral framework with the "2+6" formula to solve the first nuclear crisis, Russia still remained in the pro-Western, or anti-North Korean coalition. However, Yeltsin and Russian diplomats realized that the bilateral relationship between Moscow and Pyongyang had to be improved in order to achieve a balanced position on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>9</sup> Actually, without the influence over Pyongyang, Moscow was an unattractive option to Seoul. Russia was surprised to hear later from the South Korean representatives that Russia's lack of leverage over North Korea had caused Seoul's interest in cooperation with Moscow to decrease correspondingly.<sup>10</sup> By maintaining the influence over both Koreas,

<sup>4</sup> Toloraya, Georgy. 2009 "Russian policy in Korea in a time of change." *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 21: 73.

<sup>5</sup> Vorontsov.

<sup>6</sup> "Primakov Doctrine." *Historical Dictionary of the Russian Federation*. Accessed April 7, 2013. [http://russian\\_federation.enacademic.com/458/Primakov\\_Doctrine](http://russian_federation.enacademic.com/458/Primakov_Doctrine).

<sup>7</sup> Rangsimaporn, Paradon. 2009. "Russian perceptions and policies in a multipolar East Asia under Yeltsin and Putin." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 9: 213.

<sup>8</sup> The Russo-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order. <http://the-books.biz/policy-peace-foreign/the-russian-chinese-joint-declaration-the-60993.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Vorontsov.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Russia sought to obtain its status as one of the “poles” in the multipolar order of East Asia.

Unit:

USD

Year	Registered Number	Registered Capital	Investment Amount
1992	21	7,386,432	3,247,004
1993	30	5,550,228	3,647,722
1994	42	54,321,981	13,871,446
1995	31	52,713,605	31,901,980
1996	49	74,814,068	44,132,794
1997	26	33,641,538	8,422,992

Source: The Export-Import Bank of Korea

### III. Overview of Moscow’s Foreign Policy since the 1990’s

#### (i) Democratic Romanticism (The First Half the Yeltsin Years)

In 1992-1995, Russia’s foreign policy was “pro-Western.” In consideration that it could maximize political and economic benefits, Boris Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev advocated West-centric policy. This period has recently been labeled “democratic romanticism.”<sup>11</sup> Upgrading partnership with South Korea was one of these West-centric policy agendas. Accordingly, Russia actively reached out to South Korea, anticipating tremendous potential for cooperation with Seoul in the political and economic arena. Yeltsin’s three-day official visit to South Korea from November 18 to 20, 1992 would be an illustrative example that shows their improved bilateral relations. Issuing a joint statement, South Korean President Roh Tae-woo pledged more vigorous participation in Russia’s economic development to Yeltsin.<sup>12</sup> The rapid pace of diplomatic and political cooperation laid the groundwork for South Korea’s brisk investment in Russia. In particular, the invested amount increased more than 13-fold, continuously going up from 1992 to 1996 until the Asia Economic Crisis hit both of them (See Table 1). From the perspective of Moscow, such a developed relationship with Seoul seemed beneficial to drawing political and economic support for its reform drive.

At the same time, Moscow’s policy put its relations with Pyongyang into the freezer. The ruling elite in Pyongyang, who openly supported the anti-Gorbachev coup, now had to deal with Moscow’s “pro-Westerners.”<sup>13</sup> Above all things, Moscow’s declaration to cut off military aid was a serious blow to Pyongyang’s nuclear aspirations. Speaking at a news conference during his visit to Seoul in November 1992, Yeltsin mentioned that Russia had already stopped providing nuclear technology and materials to North Korea.<sup>14</sup> Earlier in spring 1992, then Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev announced plans to suspend all military cooperation with North Korea in order to pressure it into giving up its nuclear weapons development plan.<sup>15</sup> When the global community was at loggerheads over the Clinton administration’s proposal to impose sanctions against North Korea in

**Table 1: South Korea's Investment in Russia**

<sup>11</sup> Vorontsov.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. “Korean-Russian Joint Statement.” <http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/korboardread.jsp?typeID=12&boardid=660&seqno=304702>

<sup>13</sup> Wishnick, Elizabeth. 2002. “Russian—North Korean Relations: A New Era?” in *North Korea and Northeast Asia*. ed. Samuel S. Kim and Tai Hwan Lee. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

<sup>14</sup> Pollack, Andrew. “Yeltsin Vows Curb on North Koreans.” *The New York Times*, Nov. 21, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Koh, Jae-nam. 1999. “The Rising Role of Russia in Settling a Peace on the Korean Peninsula.” *East Asian Review* 11.

1994, Kozyrev expressed its readiness to accept them as a last resort.<sup>16</sup>

**(ii) Primakov Doctrine (The Latter Half the Yeltsin Years)**

As Brzezinski pointed out in the previous section, Russia suffered several internal and external problems in the middle of the 1990’s. In terms of economic growth, Russia’s GDP fell for five years in a row from 1991 to 1996, which was directly opposed to its hope (see Table 2). With regard to the problems on the Korean Peninsula, a series of major events took place and weakened the position of “pro-Westerners” in 1996. Russia was excluded from the “2+2” mechanism (North Korea, South Korea, the U.S. and China) to deal with the nuclear crisis in North Korea, which broke out in early 1990s. Furthermore, it was also excluded from the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). Moscow’s marginalization reflects a grim situation where Russia was losing leverage over North Korea at the expense of economic gains from improved relations with South Korea. Frustrated with the limited benefits from the West-centric foreign policy, in July 1996, Yeltsin appointed Yevgeni Primakov as a new foreign minister and began to pursue more balanced and pragmatic diplomatic strategies.

**Table 2: GDP of the Russian Federation (1991-2000)**

Unit: Billion USD

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
GDP	509.4	406.2	435.1	395.1	395.5	391.7	404.9	271.9	195.9	259.7

<sup>16</sup> *Los Angeles Times*. “Cooling Off a Hot Head : Administration's phased-in approach toward North Korea gains backing.” Jun. 16, 1994. [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-06-16/local/me-4585\\_1\\_north-korea](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-06-16/local/me-4585_1_north-korea).

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Source: Tradingeconomic.com & World Bank  
<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/russia/gdp>

The key principle that shifted Moscow’s approach in the latter half the Yeltsin years was the “Primakov Doctrine.” Yeltsin and Primakov aimed to establish a multipolar world order, moving away not only from the bipolar framework during the Cold War era but also from its mere hope to be treated as an equal partner by the U.S. Russian foreign policy had to be balanced in order to ensure the necessary environment for domestic development and avoid the international marginalization. Under this framework, Russia sought to maintain a balanced attitude between North Korea and South Korea, avoiding unnecessary confrontation with the West. Accordingly, Moscow implemented separate strategies toward Pyongyang and Seoul: Russia tried to secure its interests regarding both South and North Korea, but did not connect them with each other.<sup>17</sup> This logic behind the Kremlin’s calculation explains why Russia accelerated its effort to improve the bilateral relationship with North Korea in the latter half of Yeltsin’s presidency.

**(iii) Pragmatism (The Putin and Medvedev Administrations)**

“Primakov Doctrine” has been inherited to the current Putin’s diplomatic principles in the form of the “Putin Doctrine,” but Putin’s view on multipolarity is different from that of Primakov’s. This difference originates from Putin’s realization that Russia can only encourage the establishment of a multipolar world when Russia itself is politically stable and economically vibrant. Therefore, the Russian government’s Korean strategy evolved toward a concept asserting national interest

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

in the Putin administration. The essence of Putin's foreign policy concept is to promote the construction of a fair democratic order in the world, to broaden the range of friends and partners of Russia, and—most importantly—to firmly and consistently protect the national interest of Russia.<sup>18</sup> This is why Putin vigorously cultivated ties with Pyongyang to gain the leverage on the Korean Peninsula while at the same time trying to maintain cooperative relations with the Great Powers, especially the U.S.

Like his predecessor, Medvedev succeeded Primakovian multipolarity as described in the Concept of Foreign Policy adopted in July 2008. The second principle of Medvedev's doctrine says that "The world must be multipolar ... Russia cannot accept a world order with only one decision maker, even one as serious as the U.S.A."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Medvedev also put the effort to protect Russia's national interest based on pragmatism. In his doctrine, Medvedev pleaded for a modernization strategy that would use technological know-how and innovation to boost efficiency in consideration that Russia could join the ranks of the most advanced economies through modernization.<sup>20</sup> Putin has maintained his consistent approach toward the two Koreas since he took office again after the end of Dmitri Medvedev's term in 2012. His stress on multilateral frameworks, friendly relations with its neighboring powers and favorable market conditions is a

symbolic sign that shows Putin's orientation to pragmatic thinking.<sup>21</sup>

#### IV. Moscow's View on the Peace on the Korean Peninsula

##### (i) Nuclear Crisis

There are three main points that Moscow stresses to deal with North Korea's nuclear ambitions, all of which are in line with the key principles mentioned above. First, Moscow prefers to solve the nuclear impasse under a multilateral framework. Resuming six-party talks remains Moscow's highest priority among its policy agendas regarding Pyongyang's denuclearization. This stance is affirmed by a recent official comment made by Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashovich about two months after North Korea's third nuclear test. On April 19, 2013, he said, "Russia hopes that the six-party talks on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will remain the priority one and help resume negotiations to resolve all issues."<sup>22</sup> Then, how does Moscow perceive the threats from Pyongyang's nuclear potential? Georgy Toloraya's analysis provides a clue to interpreting Moscow's strategy toward the current nuclear impasse. According to his assessment, Pyongyang's use of nuclear weapons is highly improbable, but turmoil, resulting from loss of nuclear materials control or technical accidents, does constitute possible dangers.<sup>23</sup> All in all, one can conclude that Russia holds firm to the six-party talks while not taking the actual threats seriously.

Second, Russia is keenly interested in playing a "balancing role" rather than a "leading role" in resolving the nuclear crisis involving North Korea. In other words, Moscow seeks to balance tensions, especially between Washington and Pyongyang, in

<sup>18</sup> Afanasiev, Evgeny. 2000. "Vladimir Putin's New Foreign Policy and Russian Views of the Situation on the Korean Peninsula." *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 12: 8.

<sup>19</sup> Chugrov, Sergei 2010. "Russia's Foreign and Security Strategy in the 21st Century." In *Russian National Strategy and ROK-Russian Strategic Partnership in the 21st Century*. ed. Jung-Ho Bae and Alexander N. Fedorovskiy. Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia. "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation."

<sup>22</sup> "Russia hopes 6-party format on Korea remains priority." *Itar-Tass*, April 19, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Toloraya, Georgy. "Russia and the North Korean knot." *Asia Times Online*, Apr. 23, 2010.

maintaining the six-party talks. Russia often criticized the Bush administration's get-tough policy toward North Korea and urged the U.S. to solve North Korean conflicts through peaceful means.<sup>24</sup> For example, when the six-party process reached a deadlock in 2007 as North Korea's funds in the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) was frozen for two years, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov accused the U.S. of hindering progress of the multinational nuclear talks.<sup>25</sup>

Simultaneously, Moscow continues to make sincere efforts to resume the negotiation process when Pyongyang withdraws from the talks. Most recently, as the six-party talks had been suspended since 2009, a Russian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Alexei Borodavkin paid a visit to Pyongyang in March, 2011, urging North Korea to return to the 6-party talks. North Korea responded by saying that it was willing to accept Russia's proposal without preconditions.<sup>26</sup> All in all, within the six-party talks, Russia's main role has been to voice for the need for peaceful solutions and to prevent too much pressure on North Korea.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, Russia takes a stand against North Korea's nuclear weapons program based on the concept of the peaceful co-existence of the South and the North. Political instability driven by nuclear issues on the Far East border is likely to harm Russia's interest, hampering its plan of developing the Far East and producing a massive inflow of refugees. Moscow's stance toward a non-nuclear status of the Korean peninsula was confirmed by Losyukov when he was quoted by China's Xinhua news

agency on his arrival in Beijing in 2003 to join a preliminary meeting for the six-party talks. "We consider that the presence of a nuclear weapon on the peninsula is of a destabilizing nature that does not meet the interests of all the states that are located in the region," he was quoted as saying.<sup>28</sup> On March 7, 2012, the UN Security Council unanimously approved a resolution to impose the fourth set of sanctions on North Korea. Speaking after the vote, Russia's Permanent Representative to the U.N. Vitaly Churkin, who is also the current president of the council, described the resolution as an "appropriate measure".<sup>29</sup>

### (ii) Unification

Before examining the Russian attitude toward Korea's unification, it should be noted that while various political forces in Russia have varying points of view on the two Koreas. Alexander Lukin, a professor at the Department of Political Science of Moscow State Institute of International Relations, introduces these different approaches. According to Lukin, the political elite and specialists are divided into three groups.<sup>30</sup> First, pro-Western politicians and specialists, called rightists in Russia, argue that Russia should stimulate the collapse of the "communist dictatorship," or at least should not prevent it from collapsing. Then, there is a leftist group with a more traditional Soviet-style policy, which sympathizes with North Korea, considering it as an ally in the ongoing struggle against the U.S.-led world politics. However, Lukin points out that these two groups do not have a decisive influence on Moscow's foreign policy.

Indeed, Moscow's diplomatic circles have been occupied with a pragmatist or

<sup>24</sup> Joo. "Chapter 8. Russia and the Korean Peace Process."

<sup>25</sup> Xinhua News Agency. "Russia criticizes U.S. for delay in solving financial dispute with DPRK." Mar. 16, 2007. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-04/16/content\\_5985102.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-04/16/content_5985102.htm).

<sup>26</sup> Kim, Hyung-jin. "North Korea 'not opposed' to discussing uranium enrichment if 6-nation nuclear talks resume." *The Washington Post*, Mar. 15, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Blank, Stephen and Younkyoo, Kim.

<sup>28</sup> Xinhua News Agency.

<sup>29</sup> BBC News. "UN adopts tough new North Korea sanctions after nuclear test." Mar. 7, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21704862>.

<sup>30</sup> Lukin, Alexander. 2009. "Russia's Korea Policy in the 21st Century." *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 18: 43-4.

centrist group during the Putin and Medvedev years. They promote the pragmatic approach toward the two Koreas, which treads a middle path between the two more radical views.<sup>31</sup> In this regard, it would be fair to consider this centrist approach Russian's mainstream view on the unification of the Korean Peninsula. Thus, this section covers the main points presented by this centrist view. Also, it is interesting to see that Russia's view on Korea's unification reflects the concept of multipolarity.

First of all, Moscow supports the idea of a democratic, gradual and peaceful unification of Korea. Vasily Mikheev, Director of the China-Japan Centre at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow, argues that the best variant of the possible scenarios will be co-existence of two Korean states on the Korean Peninsula in the form of diplomatic relations while North Korea learns how to live on market-democracy principles before full unification with the South.<sup>32</sup> He further claims that the Permanent Five need to establish a special fund to support North Korean market transformation in order to make the process smoother.<sup>33</sup> To sum up, it is clear that Moscow is opposed to the abrupt collapse of North Korea but prefers the gradual process assisted by neighboring powers.

Second, Moscow is willing to secure its economic and geostrategic interest on the Korean peninsula. Moscow's aspiration can be construed as the attempt to pursue its national interest in an East Asian multipolar world. In economic cooperation, Russia expects a unified Korea to be a larger and more active partner and investor provided that it would more closely resemble the current South Korean model than the North

Korean system.<sup>34</sup> In particular, considering that the development of its Far Eastern region is one of the key agendas, a unified Korea would certainly be an attractive economic partner. Also, Russia anticipates geopolitical shifts after the unification. A decrease in the U.S. role in Korea may bring about a relocation of the line of China's "deterrence" eastwards to Japan.<sup>35</sup> In addition, a unified Korea friendly to Russia would serve as counterbalance against Japan and China. While Russian leaders often say that only Russia supports Korean unification, one should note that Russia would support a unified Korea only if it would be willing to accommodate Russia's interest.<sup>36</sup>

Last, Moscow is convinced that it can perform a unique role in the process of Korea's unification. Russian experts believe that its traditional ties with Pyongyang and its experience of democratic transition will be beneficial to the reform in North Korea. For example, Lukin claims that it is in Russian's interest to demonstrate to the North Korean regime the advantages of the market economy, and to encourage reformist tendencies within it.<sup>37</sup> As mentioned above, it should also be noted that it is hard to accept this claim as it is. Considering Russia's pursuit of pragmatism, it is probable that Russia would assist the unification process in a way that it is favorable to Russia's interest.

## V. Conclusion

After a dramatic shift in its foreign policy in 1996, the Kremlin has taken a balanced and pragmatic approach based on multipolarity in a bid to regain its status of a super power of the world. When the scope of this study is confined to the Korean Peninsula, it is observed that Moscow's

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Mikheev, Vasily. "The Korean Problem: The Vision and Philosophy." Presentation at the 1st JPI-FNF-KF Joint Workshop, Jeju, South Korea, October 15-16, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Lukin. 57.

<sup>35</sup> Toloraya, Georgy. 2008. "Russia's East Asian Strategy: The Korean Challenge." *Russian in Global Affairs* 6: 181-2.

<sup>36</sup> Joo.

<sup>37</sup> Lukin. 45.

strategy in this region can also be explained through its pursuit of multipolarity and diplomatic pragmatism. In this case, the poles consist of the multipolar world in East Asia would be Russia, the U.S., China and Japan. It is also discovered that Moscow's strategy toward Korea's peace process is designed in a way that Russia could maintain its influence and secure its national interest in a multipolar order of East Asia. As for the nuclear issues, Moscow prefers multilateral mechanism, plays a "balancing role" and strongly opposed Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. With regard to the unification, it emphasizes a gradual process assisted by neighboring powers, its expected economic and geostrategic interest, and its unique role that could contribute to the unification process.

This paper suggests that Russia's Korea policy is a byproduct of its effort to create a multipolar order in East Asia. In fact, the Korean Peninsula is one of the venues where the Great Powers vie for the hegemony in Asia-Pacific. As Georgy Toloraya suggests, "Russia's Korea policy should not be evaluated in exclusively peninsular terms, but also in a wider context of Russia's relations with the world's centers of power."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, in examining Russia's view on the peace process on the Korean Peninsula, competition among the Great Powers deserves equal importance as Russo-Korean relations.

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