

## Chapter 14

# “External Contour” of Eurasian Integration: Cooperation Between the EAEU and the ASEAN

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Eurasian Economic Union is interested in development of cooperation with external actors. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is considered as a prospect partner. ASEAN states play a significant role in economy and international relations in the Asia-Pacific region. The ASEAN is seen as one of the key institutions in Asia-Pacific integration. Moscow keeps stable and friendly relations with many states of Southeast Asia and the ASEAN. It lays a solid foundation for development of a dialogue in Eurasian format. The EAEU signed with Vietnam a free trade agreement in 2015 and it is negotiating on similar treaties with some other states of the ASEAN. The Association expressed readiness to consider the issue of a comprehensive free trade zone between the EAEU and the ASEAN. In November 2018 the Eurasian Economic Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat adopted a memorandum of understanding. The dialogue in Eurasian format can accelerate cooperation between states of the EAEU and Southeast Asia and create more benevolent conditions for alignment of the EAEU and the ASEAN.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the framework of chapter the author is going to define key directions of current interaction between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and prospects of their further cooperation. Southeast Asia is one of the most intensively developing regions and the ASEAN plays the significant role as both regional and global actor. The ASEAN is trying to broaden interaction with actors beyond Southeast Asia. The EAEU is also interested in the development of

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integrating ties with “external” actors (including Asia-Pacific states). Russia traditionally keeps friendly relations with many Southeast Asian countries and has the status of dialogue partner of the ASEAN. These circumstances can be a foundation for development of relations between the EAEU and the ASEAN.

Main focus will be made on interaction with the Association on the whole. Cooperation between the EAEU and separate states of Southeast Asia will be reviewed first of all from the angle of its impact on development of a partnership with the ASEAN. To achieve this aim the author set the following tasks: define main elements of Eurasian integration in the context of development of contemporary regionalism; underline reasons for cooperation of the EAEU and the ASEAN; define evolution of the dialogue with the ASEAN in Eurasian format; find the role of cooperation with Vietnam and some other states of Southeast Asia in EAEU-ASEAN interaction; characterize the current EAEU-ASEAN interaction and its meaning for Eurasian integration; propose a forecast on future trends of cooperation between the EAEU and the ASEAN.

The chapter consists of a background, main part, solutions and recommendations, future research directions, and conclusion. At the main part the author analyzed the following issues: EAEU-Vietnam free trade zone (history of its establishment and its role for EAEU-ASEAN interaction), the first steps for cooperation between the EAEU and the ASEAN (evolution of negotiations with the ASEAN for problems of participation in Eurasian integration until the Memorandum of understanding between the EAEU and the ASEAN, signed in November 2018), the current trends of interaction between the EAEU and the ASEAN after the signing of the Memorandum of understanding, the role of cooperation with the ASEAN for the Greater Eurasian Partnership, the factor of China for the EAEU-ASEAN interaction.

## **BACKGROUND**

Eurasian integration is now one of key directions in Russian foreign policy. The idea of Eurasian integration was proposed by the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev in 1994 yet. Interaction in Eurasian format must strengthen and develop historical ties between states of post-Soviet space. Eurasian integration processes had passed several periods and were embodied in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), having functioned since the beginning of 2015. Great role for development of Eurasian integration is played not only by deepening of cooperation inside the EAEU, but also by enlargement of ties with external actors, including states of the Asia-Pacific region (APR). The idea of connectivity between integration processes in the post-Soviet space and the APR has been declared both politicians and experts for a long time ago. For example, the President of Russia Vladimir Putin at the APEC summit in Vladivostok in 2012 told on the possibility of participation of the Customs Union (the predecessor of the EAEU) in economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region. (Vladimir Putin prinyal uchastie v rabote Delovogo sammita ATEES, 2012) Thai researcher Paradorn Rangsimaporn stressed in 2006 yet the linkage between Eurasian ideas and interaction with the Asia-Pacific region in Russian public discourse. (Rangsimaporn, 2006, 385)

The role of the Asia-Pacific region in the foreign policy of Russia has been constantly increasing and it is connected as with rise of influence of the APR in world policy and economy, so with the initiative of “the Pivot to the East” in Russian foreign strategy. In the 1990s Russia was developing cooperation with China, Japan and South Korea in regional format. But, unfortunately, crisis in Russian economy and difficult situation in the Russian Far East were serious obstacles for full-scale cooperation with the Asia-Pacific states. Many Soviet positions in the Asia-Pacific were lost. Also the Kremlin in that period

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