

Core Mechanisms of Bilateral Cooperation Between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea

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Abstract—The article is devoted to the study of the mechanisms of bilateral cooperation between Russia and South Korea and its importance for the further development of relations. The authors consider the importance of high-level contacts, cooperation in the framework of the Russian-Korean Joint Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation and the role of branch committees in the development of various areas of cooperation between the two countries.

Keywords—Russia; Republic of Korea; development; bilateral cooperation; summit; Joint Committee

I. INTRODUCTION

Over more than 25 years, relations between Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea have reached the level of strategic partnership. Russia and Korea signed a number of agreements in various areas of cooperation. Meetings at various levels have become permanent. However, it is important to consider, what is the mechanism of cooperation between the two states?

The development of bilateral dialogue between Moscow and Seoul began only in 1990. Up to this point, due to ideological differences, the USSR did not recognize the ROK. Diplomatic relations between states were established on September 30, 1990. Starting from this time, joint seminars, lectures, forums between government agencies, private individuals and public associations has become an important component of the interaction of Russia and Korea in the field of economics and trade, science and technology, industry and engineering, education and tourism, business and the development of cooperation in the peaceful exploration of space and many other spheres of Russian-Korean cooperation.

II. IMPORTANCE OF HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS

Summits and high-level meetings have been taking place since 1990 and play an important role in the development of Russian-Korean relations. There have been 27 high-level meetings so far. Summits are held both in Russia and Korea. The leaders of states conclude fundamental documents on bilateral cooperation between Russia and Korea defining the main areas and guidelines for cooperation. The vector of foreign policy cooperation depends on interpersonal relations developing among the two leaders. Thus, the Declaration on the General principles of relations between the USSR and Republic of Korea dated December 14, 1990 was adopted during the visit of the then South Korean President Roh Tae-woo to Moscow in 1992. When Boris Yeltsin paid an official visit to South Korea, he signed an Agreement on the basics of the relations between Russia and Korea on November 19, 1992. During the visit of the President Roh Moo-hyun to Moscow in September 2004, the Russian-Korean Joint Declaration was signed. Similarly, during Lee Myung-bak's official visit to Moscow in 2008, the leaders signed a Joint statement between the states. Key issues of bilateral cooperation discussed at those summits create the ground for future mutually beneficial and fruitful cooperation. The meetings of heads of state show the mutual interest in conducting dialogue in various spheres. We are talking not only about bilateral negotiations, but also about trilateral summits of Seoul — Moscow — Pyongyang, as well as six-party summits for settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue.

Personal contacts between the presidents of Russia and the presidents of Korea are important for the development of Russian-Korean relations. Thus, it was the 2008 summit where the presidents declared that bilateral cooperation had moved to the level of strategic partnership. During the meetings, the leaders have the opportunity to express their positions on various political, economic, socio-cultural and

other issues, to analyze the ways of cooperation, to draw certain conclusions about the existing results of cooperation and to build prospects for the interaction between states. Within the framework of cooperation between Moscow and Seoul, the following areas of cooperation were developed: science and technology, trade, economy and investment, industry, culture and education.

In addition to the high-level meetings, we should also mention the meetings of heads of government, particular, a number of documents confirming the intention of states to cooperate in certain areas signed by the heads of government on December 14, 1990, such as the Intergovernmental agreement in the field of trade, Scientific and technical cooperation agreement, as well as the Intergovernmental agreement in the field of exploration and use of outer space in 2004 and 2006, the Agreement on mutual abolition of visa requirements in 2013, etc. Meetings of heads of government are not an alternative to the high-level summits, it carries out more detailed cooperation in certain areas.

States also cooperate in various international forums providing a platform for discussion of critical regional and global issues. Firstly, both states are members of the UN, and therefore, bilateral relations must fully comply with the generally accepted principles of international law, which is stipulated in the preamble of each document concluded by both states. Secondly, the dialogue is carried out in the framework of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), which gives Russia a way to improve the lives of the people of the Russian Far East, as well as a full-fledged development of the region. The well-being of Russia in the future will depend on the well-being of this region [1], therefore, ensuring its security and economic stability is one of the main goals of the Russian internal policy.

Another platform for cooperation between Russia and the Republic of Korea is the Group of Twenty (G-20), which combines the 20 strongest economies constituting about 75% of the world's GNP. Initially, the conference was created by the ministries of economics of developed countries to establish contact with developing countries for consultations on key economic and financial issues. Later, the summit received a more general direction, and now it provides a convenient platform where general issues of interaction between the G-20 member states are discussed. One way or another, the bilateral cooperation between two states has a wider scope.

III. RUSSIAN-KOREAN JOINT COMMISSION ON ECONOMIC, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Today, the development of economic, scientific and technical cooperation has become increasingly important for bilateral relations. In this regard, it should be noted the importance of the Joint Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation created to stimulate cooperation and strengthen the. The Commission was formed by article 13 of the Trade agreement concluded between the governments of the USSR and the ROK on December 14, 1990 [2]. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Joint Russian-Korean Commission on Economic, Scientific and

Technical Cooperation created by the Agreement of January 22, 1991 [3] became its successor. The purpose of the commission is to review the implementation process of the contract, and to develop recommendations for the parties on possible measures to expand Russian-Korean trade. The Commission consists of permanent sectoral committees in charge of various activities of the Commission. The Commission operates within the framework of meetings held in the territory of Russia or Korea. There were 15 meetings held, discussing the development of trade and economic cooperation.

The structure of the Commission consists of two chairmen from both states, 10 sectoral committees and a working group covering a wide range of areas of bilateral cooperation [4]. The competence of the chairmen includes representation of the party in the Commission, negotiating during the meetings of the Commission; the chairman is also responsible for the activities carried out by the delegation. Diplomatic missions play a special role as links between states as a means of information exchange. As a rule, ambassadors of states participate in joint meetings of the Commission. Russian side in the Commission is headed by Deputy Prime Minister for Development of the Russian Far East Yuri Trutnev, the chairman of the Korean side is Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Strategy and Finance of the Republic of Korea Yoo Il-ho.

In August 2016, the 15th meeting of the Joint Russian-Korean Commission was held discussing issues of cooperation in the field of energy and natural resources, science and technology, agriculture, etc [5]. The parties discussed the development of bilateral relations, summed up the interim results and discussed the difficulties hindering the development of bilateral cooperation. Korean side was informed about the accelerated development of the Far Eastern region and made proposals for financing joint projects in the Primorsky district [6].

Separately, the implementation of the DPRK-RK-Russia trilateral projects were discussed implying the development of a railway construction project, within the framework of which a single energy bridge will be built passing through the Trans-Korean Main Line to the Trans-Siberian Railway and connecting Russia and South Korea. The results of the activities of the relevant committees and the progress of negotiations were also agreed within the framework of the meeting.

The delegations gave an assessment of the current economic situation in both countries, in particular, in connection with the sanctions partially imposed by South Korea on Russia in 2015. An important point is that foreign trade turnover between Russia and Korea increased by 130 times from 1992 to 2012 [1] indicating a positive development of trade and economic relations. However, due to the economic crisis, the turnover began to decline in 2014, this trend continued in subsequent years. It also affected the slowdown in business cooperation. At the same time, the parties agreed to continue their efforts to conclude a Free Trade Agreement between the Republic of Korea and the Eurasian Economic Union. Following the meeting, the

parties concluded that the implementation of the agreements reached at the 14th meeting in 2015 remains relevant; the delegations stressed the positive development of bilateral cooperation but noted that there were a number of factors that slowing down the cooperation.

IV. OTHER COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Various sectoral committees play an important role in the development of cooperation between Russia and Korea.

The Russian-Korean Committee on the Far East plays perhaps the most important role in the bilateral cooperation. South Korea is the third most important vector of the Russian foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of turnover (after China and Japan). Today, the development of the Far East is a priority goal for Russian internal policy. As mentioned above, there are a number of projects aimed at the development of the Far East within the framework of the Russian-Korean cooperation. Areas of cooperation are limited to industrial cooperation and cooperation in the development of natural resources. However, large areas of Russia in combination with its natural resources, are of particular interest for the Korean investors. During the 10 years, 9 meetings were held, within the framework of which issues of bilateral cooperation of states and cooperation within the framework of existing regional organizations were discussed.

The Russian-Korean Joint Coordinating Committee on nuclear energy was established in accordance with the Protocol on cooperation of 1990, signed by the Ministry of Nuclear Engineering and Industry of the USSR (the Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation) and the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Korea in 1991. The parties are engaged in a dialogue on cooperation in the field of nuclear energy. For the moment, 16 meetings of the Committee have been held raising the most important issues of cooperation in this field. Namely, Russia is of particular interest to the Republic of Korea in view of its obligations to supply non-enriched uranium, as well as to assist in designing of reactors for floating nuclear power plants.

Russia's vast natural resources are of great interest for the development of Russian-Korean cooperation in the energy sector. Today, Russia supplies various types of natural resources to Korea, such as coal, oil, gas, etc. In this regard, the states seek to expand the scope of cooperation and develop joint projects in this sphere. To facilitate the coordination of actions the governments established the Russia-Korea Joint Committee for Energy and Natural Resources. The Committee was established on May 22, 1992 in accordance with the Protocol signed by the Ministry of Fuel and Energy of the Russian Federation (now – the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation) and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of the Republic of Korea [7]. Today, South Korea is interested in investing joint Russian-Korean energy projects. Issues of the state's cooperation in this area were discussed during 14 meetings of the Commission, in particular, the implementation of the Irkutsk gas project, the oil and gas project on Sakhalin, and

the joint development of natural resources in the Russian Federation.

Environmental degradation is also an issue discussed within the framework of Russian-Korean cooperation. The Republic of Korea is a state actively developing “green technologies” and having some success in this area. Korean green technologies are based on the principles of international environmental law — sustainable development and reuse of natural resources. The main purpose of using green technologies is to minimize the negative impact on the environment, firstly, by reducing the amount of waste, secondly, by reducing the amount of resources consumed or reusing them, thirdly, by increasing energy efficiency. The production of renewable energy also plays an important role, i.e. search for alternative energy sources. The development of green technologies covers all sectors of the national economy: industry, transport, construction, and energy. Korea, based on technological breakthroughs and achievements, is looking for solutions to the most acute social problems that may arise from the perspective of climate change, as well as the emergence of problems of food, water and energy security. The government is building a national strategy for the environmentally oriented growth of the state [8] aimed at minimizing the use of natural resources, energy and other resources, as well as reducing the impact on the environment. Russia is very interested in cooperation in this field, because it allows to use the achievements of Korean scientists and to create joint projects. The ROK-Russia Joint Committee on Environmental Cooperation has been held since 1995, after the signing of the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environment” in 1994. Since 1995, the Committee has held 7 meetings to discuss the rational use of natural and other resources. Parties repeatedly support the desire to establish the principle of sustainable development and preservation of the environment in the context of the global environmental crisis.

In addition, there is also the Russian-Korean Fisheries Commission. It was established on the basis of article 13 of the International Agreement between the Government of the USSR and the Government of the Republic of Korea on fisheries cooperation dated September 16, 1991 [9]. According to the document, the parties drew attention to the common interest in the rational use of marine living resources. At the same time, the states agreed to cooperate not only in the conservation and allocation of resources, but also in the development of the ocean and aquaculture; carry out fisheries research, create technological equipment in order to prevent environmental pollution. The main goal of the Commission is to oversee the implementation of the Agreement.

The activities of the Korea-Russia Joint Committee on Science & Technology Cooperation and the Russian-Korean Committee on Cooperation in the Field of Industry should also be mentioned. Since 1990, the Committee on Science & Technology has held 11 joint meetings discussing joint issues of science and technology cooperation. The Industrial Cooperation Committee is a platform for reviewing and developing joint projects in mechanical engineering,

aerospace industry and other areas. The committee meetings are rarely held: there were only 6 meetings held since its establishment in 1999. The low activity of these two committees can be explained by the duplication of their functions with the functions of the Joint Russian-Korean Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation and other committees.

The existing Russia – Korea Transportation Cooperation Committee was established in 2001 by the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Korea. The main issue on the agenda of the Committee since the establishment has been the restoration of the Trans-Korean Railway and the connection of the Trans-Korean Railway with the Trans-Siberian Railway. These projects seem to be very relevant and can help to simplify the interaction of states.

The important issue of bilateral cooperation is the maintenance of small and medium-sized businesses. In 1998, the parties established the Joint Committee on Management of Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises. Subsequently, Russia and Korea signed memorandums of understanding in 2006 and 2012. The parties, noting the growing role of small and medium-sized businesses, agreed to exchange management experience in this area, and welcomed the exchange of technical specialists contributing to the more efficient development of entrepreneurship.

For the development of business contacts, Russia and Korea have created a Working group on investment facilitation and implementation; the first meeting was held on March 4, 2016. International experience shows that the base of bilateral cooperation can be strengthened through mutual investment and the creation of joint production assets. On the one hand, Russia is of interest to South Korea for investment in natural resources. On the other hand, Russian economy is not stable, which undoubtedly reduces the interest in investing in it. Nevertheless, the parties expressed their desire to maintain mutually beneficial relations, primarily in the field of investment.

Today, the Russia — Republic of Korea Dialogue has become an important forum for discussing topical issues of cooperation between Russia and Korea at the non-governmental level. On September 30, 2008, President of the ROK Lee Myung-Bak visited St. Petersburg State University, where he announced a proposal to create a civil society forum "Dialogue between Russia and the Republic of Korea", which would contribute to the development of bilateral cooperation at the non-governmental level with the assistance of the public, scientific, educational, and business circles. The proposal was supported by the then President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, and the parties agreed to hold this forum annually on the territories of Russia and Korea. The structure of the forum includes a Coordinating Committee, Secretariat, and 6 working groups (politics and international relations; media and civil society; culture and art; economics and business; ecology and resources; youth dialogue).

The Russia – Korea Dialogue has become an important element of cooperation between states, because the

discussion of topical issues of interaction between countries was reflected not only in official documents signed by officials, but also in the discussion at the civil society platform. The establishment of cooperation between non-state elements demonstrates the strengthening of cooperation between states and a deeper understanding of the political, economic and social situation in Russian and Korean societies.

V. CONCLUSION

Thus, the mechanisms of cooperation between Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea can be considered real strategic partnership. Dialogue between states is established both at the high-level — between the leaders of the state and heads of governments, — and at the level of departments. Continuous cooperation within the framework of various forums becomes an important platform for discussing topical issues of cooperation between two countries. In addition, states seek to establish cooperation not only between public persons and authorities, but also between non-state actors and individuals. Russian-Korean cooperation has shown efficiency and mutual interest in a relatively short period of time.

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