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LATE XX CENTURY – EARLY XXI CENTURY GEOPOLITICAL
VIEW OF THE ASIAN REGION

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Abstract:

Introduction. Describe the geopolitical structure of the Asian region - to cover political, economic, social, cultural and ethnic issues in East Asia, Southeast Asia (the main part of the Asia-Pacific region), South Asia, the Indian Ocean region, Central Asia and the Middle East. The number of dedicated scientific publications is significantly exceeding the number and volume of similar texts being written about other regions of the world. A review of Asian security shows that security concerns have spread throughout Asia. At the same time, such problems also have a significant negative impact on mutual economic, trade and investment relations.

Research methods. In writing this article, historical, the methods of comparative analysis, theoretical, general logic and forecasting of political science were used. In particular, the formation and development of the political system of different societies in Asia during this period was covered by historical and chronological approaches, while the development of individuals, social groups, nations and peoples, peoples and states was analyzed using the method of comparative analysis. Through general logic and predictive methods, political institutions and political processes, political culture and international systems, their mechanisms and tools were studied.

Results and discussions. This article describes the geopolitical architecture of the Asian region from the end of the XX century to the 20s of the XXI century. The role of the socio-political situation in India in the formation of the geopolitical map of the Asian region, the country's foreign policy principles and participation in regional security are also central to this study. New Delhi sees inter-regional existing and planned relations as promising tasks. Mutual economic interests will help maintain control over political conflicts, at least for the foreseeable future.

Conclusion. The article examines in detail the main sources of threats to regional peace and security, as well as political, social and security factors that hinder regional development and the strengthening of interregional relations.

Keywords: East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Indian Ocean Region, regional integration, geopolitics, regional security, macro region, sub region, foreign policy, international institutions, security threats, terrorism, extremism, ethnic separatism, cyber threats, illegal migration, the nuclear weapon factor.

Introduction. Regional political processes and security issues emerged as the object of research in a new scientific direction in the early twentieth century in such disciplines as political science and regional studies. The analysis of existing approaches in defining the concept of regional policy shows that they are not

theoretically sufficiently developed. In addition, they are more focused on the domestic policies of states. In our view, the complexity of the concept of region should be taken into account in the analysis of regional security policy.

The reason is that it involves a multi-part structure, i.e., regional policy is reflected in the interpretation of relationship between the center and the subregions, as well as at the level of the “macro-region”. Existing changes and innovations shape the development vector of each region, the ability of social and political actors to govern themselves, as well as affect the process of emergence of threats to peace and security. If the Cold War period was characterized by confrontations between the USSR and the USA, since 1990 the world has entered a new stage of its development: the bipolar system that emerged as a result of World War II has disappeared and the Soviet Union has disintegrated.

The world socialist system has failed to achieve its goal with the democracies of Eastern Europe and the socialist states of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The military bloc of the Warsaw Pact has ended, and it is time for NATO and the United States to take serious and unlimited dominance on the world stage. Territorial challenges in the context of rapid regional reconstruction at various levels have required new, multifaceted approaches from developed and developing countries, international institutions and non-governmental entities. In particular, the process of forming a new order in the Asian region has taken some time. This period can be conditionally divided into 3 main stages.

The first is the geopolitical events that led to the disruption of the post-Yalta peace in the ruins of the USSR in 1990-2001, with the establishment of a "one-sided" direction in regional politics and its transformation into a semi-centralized region:

- The disintegration of the USSR and the formation of the Russian Federation led to a sharp increase in US influence in the Asian region, along with its membership in the UN Security Council, gaining the status of a nuclear power;

- the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq further escalated the Gulf War (January 17-February 28, 1991) and marked the first military conflict during the period of achieving a new regional order;

- in 1993, the countries of the region took another step towards achieving national security, which consisted of the establishment of the expanded ASEAN Regional Forum. The ARF includes the United States, Canada, Australia, Russia and the European Union, as well as major Asian countries such as India, China, Japan and North Korea. The main reason for the creation of such a united forum was to gather all possible rivals on one platform to control and stop any aggressive plans against the region;

- the financial crisis in South and East Asia in 1997-1998 was considered the worst economic blow to the region in the 1990s, and an informal "Group of 20" was formed with the participation of developed and developing countries to discuss the situation and take the necessary measures;

- the start of a nuclear arms race between the major powers of South Asia, India and Pakistan, has emerged as another serious threat to regional security;

- the Bush administration lifted sanctions on India and Pakistan in May 1998 for testing nuclear weapons after they began planning a war in Afghanistan;

- the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have increased the geopolitical importance of individual regions and led to significant changes in allied relations.

The second period, 2001-2010, was the final part of the transition period in the evolution of regional relations, that is, as a step from bipolar to post-bipolar. This stage was highlighted as the period of the fight against regional terrorism, and the most visible regional events of this period were mainly characterized by:

- The terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 in the United States proved that terrorism is not only a threat to the Middle East, but now its scale has spread throughout the Asian region and has become a transnational threat to neighboring regions. Under the pretext of this incident, the United States and its allies have now begun to show their hostility to the Islamic world;

- the USA and NATO military operations in Afghanistan (December 2001 to 2014) culminated in the elimination of the Taliban regime and certain parts of al-Qaeda in the country;

- the USA government's war on Iraq, in its continued interpretation of the fight against terrorism, ended with the overthrow of Hussein's dictatorship and the occupation of Iraq (March 20, 2003 - December 18, 2011), which undermined the Middle East quo status;

- in 2006, Russia was admitted to the "Group 7" and this "Group 8" was formed to some extent as a regional economic and political institution;

- the year 2008 has undoubtedly had a huge impact in this decade, with the global economic crisis and the ensuing mass protests in the Middle East "Arab Spring". This campaign of action, which has been going on since late 2010, has undermined political stability in the Middle East and North Africa and has led to a significant change in the political landscape of the region;

- the resumption of US-Russian relations since 2009 has not, in fact, led to any radical changes.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the region has taken on a new look in terms of achieving political security. The process of assembling mechanisms and institutions at different levels in regional relations has become more complicated. The degree of interdependence of the countries of the region has increased, and with the end of the Cold War, the lost balance and competitive environment began to show signs of recovery:

- The "triple disaster" in Japan in 2011 - a devastating earthquake, a powerful tsunami and a radiation disaster at the Fukushima-1 nuclear power plant - was assessed as the largest and most devastating of the regional losses at the beginning of this period;

- the center of international political competition has moved from Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region. Now the US government has begun to view the Asia-Pacific region as a future "key mechanism of global policy" for the United States;

- at the same time, the stability of non-state actors such as ethnic separatism, religious extremism, the uncontrolled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the possibility of terrorist organizations buying and using nuclear and other weapons have led to an increase in international threats. The arms race was multifaceted in

nature, leading to the formation of a 'multipolar nuclear world'. At the same time, events such as international crime, drug trafficking, and cyber-threats have also taken on a new evolving image;

- the "energy race" for the use of energy resources has intensified. In addition, in the process of forming alternative energy sources, countries with large oil and gas reserves, in particular, have defined the global economic environment;

- in addition to the traditional participants - international and interstate structures, new participants - business corporations, civil society institutions, various non-governmental organizations, interethnic associations, multidisciplinary structures - have now joined the international regional relations. In the context of globalization, they began to actively develop new transnational levels and forms of international and regional interaction and world politics;

- by this time, the new centers of regional development - the political influence of China and India in the region have increased. It is argued that the coming period will not talk about a particular "superpower", but will witness the emergence of dozens of states that have risen militarily, economically, diplomatically and culturally in the international arena;

- the United Nations Security Council has developed cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other subregional organizations in the fight against threats to international peace and security, including terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime and extremist ideology.

Methods. If we look at the formation of a regional policy aimed at reducing various levels of threats and ensuring regional security in the Asian region since the 1990s, the collapse of the bilateral system has had a negative impact on regional peace and security. For example, US-China relations have been strained because neither Washington nor Beijing need each other to stand up to the former Soviet Union. The Korean Peninsula has also been further strained by the withdrawal of aid from Moscow, its economic backer and Cold War-era sponsor. For a number of reasons, the US did not want to play the former role of the Soviet Union and take its place in the region.

While governance is often complicated by new concerns about security and stability stemming from the phenomenon of globalization, some of the traditional weaknesses of the post-Cold War security environment in the Asian region stem from the very weak governance capacity of states. During this period, significant changes in the structural balance of power in East Asia and the crisis of Soviet rule in Central Asia naturally led to an increase in the US influence in the region. As a result, there were large differences in the balance of power in the region, although this was not immediately apparent. Many analysts have described the East Asian region as less prone to conflict as the risk of conflict with Russia has been eliminated.

The situation in the 1990s affected states' security issues differently. In particular, Japan, whose economic performance was markedly broken in the late 1980s, was in a period of rising economic power in the early 1990s. Many voices in Japan and Southeast Asia have called on the country to move away from "record diplomacy" and play a major political role at the international level, and even increase regional military influence while maintaining its economic potential. At the same time, the Japanese government and other US allies in Asia have expressed concern about America's

reputation in the region. They were particularly concerned that the US's display of military prowess in the 1990 war against Iraq could undermine its future influence in Asia. The country's Desert Storm Operation required Japan and countries in the western and southeastern parts of the Pacific to deploy large numbers of troops to their territories and to mobilize about \$ 13 billion from Japan.

A positive result was noted in Vietnam, namely that Hanoi intensified its economic modernization and within ten years became a member of the ASEAN. Vietnam has signed a bilateral trade agreement with the United States, its arch-enemy. The US has agreed with the country to introduce market liberalization measures in the coming years.

Similarly, the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and China's own internal problems caused many difficulties in governing the country. In particular, protests against the Chinese leadership ended in May 1989 with the massacre in Tiananmen Square. Focusing on liberalizing the economy, China's decision to suppress democratic movements had a major impact on regional stability. The Tiananmen massacre led to a deterioration in the West's relations with China over the years, especially since US-China relations have been severely strained in the wake of the incident. Over time, the pragmatism associated with integration into the global economy began to prevail in both countries, particularly China. However, it is clear that the reason for the Tiananmen incident was that China "successfully" accepted the status of the main enemy of the United States in the region from the USSR.

At the end of 1991, as a result of negotiations and agreements signed between North and South Korea on the denuclearization of the peninsula and a number of other issues, the ever-changing relations between the two countries began to stabilize.

After the onset of the Asian financial crisis in July 1997, the interrelationship between economic efficiency, governance, and regional security and stability became more apparent, casting doubt on previous predictions for the ever-expanding Asia-Pacific region. It also marked a political shift that had a significant impact on the stability of the region, and economic indicators as a source of legitimacy for the governments of Southeast Asian countries were virtually eliminated.

Markets in crisis-hit countries have remained relatively closed to things other than capital goods, high technology, chemicals and raw materials. Therefore, going the path of openness to foreign investment and technology has brought in more revenue than losses in terms of domestic economic benefits and employment. The Asian financial crisis has not only weakened the countries affected by it, but has also done enormous damage to the institutional and structural foundations of regional stability and security. Among other consequences, the crisis has cast doubt on the United States' readiness to play the expected role as a key pillar of the international economic system in the region. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have become an ineffective negotiating center that has not been able to coordinate relations in the region.

The Asian regional crisis and Japan's inherent severe economic problems have seriously undermined the country's regional leadership ambitions, opening up new opportunities for China to take its rightful place in Asian politics. Japan has only been able to allocate secondary financing and export credits and guarantees to support rescue programs in Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea.

The financial and economic crisis has also affected democratization and political stability. But overall, the crisis has intensified the movement for democracy in Asia. In the case of South Korea, it has become clear that poor governance can have serious negative consequences in such a precarious situation. The problem of corruption exacerbated the problem of instability of parties, which led to a significant destabilization of policy. Democracy in Thailand developed rapidly, with the support of the emerging professional and middle-class democratic-minded opposition leader, Chuan Lekpain, and the peaceful transfer of power to him. The Thai parliament has adopted a more democratic constitution that was previously rejected.

In Indonesia, Suharto's authoritarian rule has replaced democracy. However, two parliamentary offices and the powers of the president were developed. Freedom of the press and assembly was accepted, and the Indonesian military moved into the background in governance. Nevertheless, there were still riots and ethnic-religious violence being experienced by the central government in the country, low-paid helpless police officers, and armed Islamic extremist movements. Undoubtedly, Indonesians have moved towards a more democratic system. Parliament focused on a variety of important national issues, and the president was supported by the people. Despite some progress in changing the country's political institutions, Indonesia remained in fact an oligarchy thriving on "cunning capitalism". The military, with all its shortcomings, has truly become the only institution on a national scale. In particular, the weakness of governance in Indonesia has also had a serious impact on political stability in Southeast Asia.

In Malaysia, the arrest of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and the widespread use of police powers against political enemies undermined political freedom. However, some critics feared the consequences of the weakening of Mahathir and the United Front. Through the middle ground between the catastrophe and the surrender to the "Washington Consensus," Mahathir managed to control the Malaysian economy in a corporate style and now finds himself a worthy partner of the United States in the fight against terrorism. However, this new role has exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions in Malaysia. The pressures of globalization have gradually halted the implementation of Malaysia's Thirty-Year New Economic Plan.

Results and discussion. Political instability in many Asian countries and the inherent limitations of the East Asian model in a globalized economic and financial environment have made it difficult to fight corruption. Eventually, the notion that politics is about power and money was formed. Reforms have become a luxury for rich and developing countries, and the shrinking economic opportunities have largely intensified competition to manage scarce resources.

Shortly after the Asian economic crisis that began in 1998, the "Group 20" was formed. This has somewhat limited the participation of developing countries in Asia in the discussion of important issues in the world economy and the international financial system. At the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the "Group 20" sought to work with Group 8 to address global economic and financial challenges.

The weakness of the system of governance in the countries of the region, including Indonesia and Thailand, in particular, has prevented them from responding to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. This, in turn, has made terrorism one of the most serious threats to regional security. The long-running Islamic separatist movements and

terrorist groups in the Philippines have further weakened governance in the country. Also, Islamic parties were more successful than others because Suharto's political disputes in Indonesia was conducted under the banner of Islam. As a result, the elected Megawatt government failed to adequately respond to America's request for assistance in the fight against al-Qaeda-linked extremist groups.

In addition, within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), a "WTO Group 20" was formed as a coalition of developing countries, in which developing countries discuss the proposals and comments of Western countries on trade and economic issues. The novelty of the global international political situation was explained by the emergence of a small group of "growing" forces in recent years. These forces typically included India, China, the Arab monarchies, some countries in East Asia, South Africa, Brazil and Russia.

Energy-exporting countries in this group have been able to raise per capita income to a level comparable to that of developed countries, and sometimes even higher, by redistributing oil rents. The relatively stable political situation, favorable geographical location, cheap labor, availability of large quantities of raw materials or rare species, and other factors allowed many of them to successfully enter the international division of labor.

As for China and India, which emerged as leaders in the Asian region and possessed nuclear weapons, they were sometimes referred to as the "great powers". However, in the new era, this concept has changed its meaning. It no longer required a complete set of tools to become a global power. In addition, the geopolitical potential of China and India was also determined by their internal problems (demographic, social, economic, energy, environmental, etc.).

In 2010, some other potential sources of conflict were preserved not only because of the influence of Washington, Moscow, Beijing, and Tokyo, but also because the interests and interests of many other countries were in conflict.

On October 4, 2011, Russia and China vetoed 33 UN Security Council resolutions threatening Syria with Libyan-style sanctions. On November 24 this year, the deputy foreign ministers of the BRICS group (part of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) met in Moscow to hold consultations on the situation in the Middle East. The meeting resulted in the issuance of a joint statement calling for "respect for the sovereign independence, territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of the crisis in the Middle East."

The Delhi Declaration adopted by the BRICS countries after the Summit held in the Indian capital on March 28-29, 2012, noted that the reforms of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have been slow. It also protested the West's indifference to the redistribution of votes in favor of countries with a fast-growing market and growing share of the world economy.

All this did not deny the existence of multifaceted foreign policy directions as well as regional geopolitical contradictions (e.g., China-India rivalry) within the BRICS. The fact that the members are not a single place in terms of geography, economy and civilization is one of the main factors that negatively affected the development of the association. In addition, there were significant differences in the pace and prospects of economic development of the BRICS countries.

In addition to the countries that make up this informal union, a number of other major developing countries (Bangladesh, Vietnam, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, the Philippines, South Korea), which are a significant source of economic and international political influence, have also grown significantly. Analysts at Goldman Sachs, one of the largest US commercial banks in the world, have given these countries a distinctive “Next 11” name. It is noteworthy that this group also included countries that until recently were considered “unsuccessful” (e.g., Iran).

As a separate group, the India, Brazil, South Africa Association (IBSA) has begun to focus more and more on preventing security threats. It can be concluded that the “new” forms of governance were seen as a factor in Asian stability and security. Although events related to economic integration and globalization have had a significant positive impact on regional peace and security, a number of Asian countries have been deprived of these benefits due to weak governance challenges, and they have even become new sources of threat in the region. Rapid globalization, on the other hand, required at least naturally stabilizing internal socio-economic changes. Consequently, prudent governance remains a necessary condition to prevent the benefits of globalization from being overshadowed by inevitable dislocations.

Indonesia has begun to fear its own disintegration due to China’s ability to exert a strong influence on Southeast Asia. In particular, Japan has long been deeply concerned about the fragmentation of a region of strategic importance. The reason was that at such a time it was clear that the inclination of the WTO countries towards China or the reunification under the wing of Japan would have a significant impact on regional peace and stability. In this situation, the fact that the WTO countries and Japan were able to overcome the economic and financial difficulties, as well as China's efforts to solve deep structural problems, prevented the situation in the region from becoming too complicated.

However, the formation of a truly coherent and effective institutional architecture that would ensure the existence of a peaceful and stable international order in East Asia largely depended on the political will of the key actors and their willingness to compromise.

According to external observers, Southeast Asia will be formed as a single economic bloc in its short-term perspective (up to 5 years). In turn, heads of state also seek integration because it suits their interests. In the medium term (up to 15 years), however, the regionalization trend will require the natural unification of subregions, and the pursuit of maintaining political and economic momentum on a global scale will further accelerate this integration process in Asia. Some subregions are also more likely to remain politically and militarily autonomous. During this period, accelerated militarization is observed in Asian countries. The importance of the Asian component in world trade, international security and global politics is growing. The long-term prognosis (15-20 years) is considered within a series of scenarios. In turn, if we exclude worrying scenarios such as large-scale regional conflicts or a world war, the future political and economic processes look like this: the processes of forming national associations will be more important than global cooperation. At the same time, regionalization also affects the structures of Asian countries, where the leadership of some countries in the region has a higher position than the center. It is possible that

social institutions, including religious institutions, will form parallel governance structures in all areas of state activity”.

It is clear that even in the distant future, it is impossible to speak of a decline in the importance of Southeast Asia. First, due to historical inertia, the current processes of regional integration are at their peak, and, accordingly, this trend will continue in the coming years. Second, the pace of geopolitical change in the rest of the world is also not accelerating enough to keep up.

Conclusion. It can be concluded that the “new” forms of governance were seen as a factor in Asian stability and security. Although events related to economic integration and globalization have had a significant positive impact on regional peace and security, a number of Asian countries have been deprived of these benefits due to weak governance challenges, and they have even become new sources of threat in the region. Rapid globalization, on the other hand, required at least naturally stabilizing internal socio-economic changes. Consequently, prudent governance remains a necessary condition to prevent the benefits of globalization from being overshadowed by inevitable dislocations.

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