

Cooperation between Russia and the South Pacific Countries: an Asia-Pacific Multilateral Dialogue Perspective

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The paper specifies the potential of Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue platforms — APEC, the ARF, the ADMM+8 and the EAS — from the perspective of re-energizing cooperation between Russia and the South Pacific countries. In the first paragraph, the authors analyze the strategy and results of Russia's policy in APEC, the principal Asia-Pacific dialogue platform aimed at stimulating economic integration; in the second, they focus on Russia's participation in ASEAN-centric multilateral negotiation venues that hold discussions on political and security issues. In the third paragraph, the degree of utility of those multilateral venues for strengthening relations between Russia and the South Pacific region that participate in those institutions — Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea — are revealed. The authors argue that the evolution of regional processes does not contribute to strengthening Russia's partnership with those states. The intensification of US-China competition (including the establishment of antagonistic structures and integration projects), the tightening of anti-Chinese rhetoric in the United States and its ally countries leads to an increasing polarization of Asia-Pacific dialogue platforms. Moreover, the agenda of those platforms, created decades ago, do not always seem to meet the present realities. The unwillingness to adapt to the urgent problems of the region results in the consolidation of a largely formal role of those platforms and in a decrease in interest of their participants.

Under these circumstances, a search for a unifying constructive agenda is difficult, while without it, finding common ground with countries that have not previously been involved in any close contacts with Russia seems almost impossible. At the same time, in the foreseeable future

Russia's relations with Australia and New Zealand will be profoundly shaped by Russia's confrontation with the West. Russia's dialogue with Papua New Guinea is more promising. Nevertheless, owing to the geographic remoteness and lack of interest from the business community, no breakthroughs can be expected either.

Keywords: Russia, APEC, ASEAN, Asia-Pacific, South Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea.

Сотрудничество России со странами Южно-Тихоокеанского региона: потенциал азиатско-тихоокеанских многосторонних диалоговых площадок.

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Статья уточняет потенциал многосторонних диалоговых площадок АТР — АТЭС, АРФ, СМОА+ и ВАС — с точки зрения активизации сотрудничества России со странами ЮТР, участвующими в упомянутых форматах. В первом параграфе авторы анализируют стратегию и результаты деятельности РФ в АТЭС — основной азиатско-тихоокеанской структуре, нацеленной на экономическую интеграцию, во втором — концентрируются на участии РФ в асеаноцентричных форматах, посвящённых вопросам политики и безопасности. В третьем параграфе выявлена степень полезности этих площадок для укрепления сотрудничества России с присутствующими в них странами ЮТР — Австралией, Новой Зеландией и Папуа — Новой Гвинеей. Авторы приходят к выводу, что эволюция региональных процессов не способствует активизации партнёрства РФ с упомянутыми государствами. Усиление американо-китайской конкуренции, выражающееся в том числе в формировании зачастую антагонистических по отношению друг к другу структур и проектов, ужесточение антикитайской риторики со стороны США и их союзников ведёт к растущей поляризации азиатско-тихоокеанских переговорных форматов. Более того, проблематика этих созданных десятилетия назад площадок не всегда отвечает потребностям сегодняшнего дня. Неготовность адаптироваться к решению актуальных проблем региона ведёт к закреплению за такими структурами формальной роли и угасанию интереса к ним со стороны их участников.

В этих условиях поиск объединяющей конструктивной повестки сотрудничества затруднён, а без неё нахождение точек соприкосновения со странами, ранее не вовлечёнными в сколь-либо тесные контакты с Россией, представляется маловероятным. При этом отношения РФ с Австралией и Новой Зеландией в обозримой

перспективе будут подвержены сильнейшему влиянию конфронтации Москвы с Западом. Диалог с Папуа — Новой Гвинеей в этом плане имеет больше перспектив, однако в силу удалённости и отсутствия интереса у деловых кругов ожидать каких-либо прорывов тоже не приходится.

Ключевые слова: Россия, АТЭС, АСЕАН, Азиатско-Тихоокеанский регион, Южно-Тихоокеанский регион, Австралия, Новая Зеландия, Папуа — Новая Гвинея.

So far, the South Pacific has not been a major priority for the Russian Federation. Although the factor of distance plays the most important role, other reasons, including lack of self-maintaining and self-reproducing ties, are in place. In case Russia aims to increase its profile in the South Pacific, it needs relevant and effective instruments. Among them, multilateral cooperation is of special importance, as Russia and three largest South Pacific states — Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea — are members of Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue platforms, namely the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (the ARF). Besides, Russia, Australia and New Zealand are members of the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus Eight (the ADMM+8) and the East Asia Summit (the EAS).

Russia has been participating in APEC since 1998, while in the ARF, the ADMM+8 and the EAS since 1996, 2010 and 2011 respectively. To trace the extent to which those multilateral venues can provide Russia and the afore-mentioned states with additional incentives to cooperate, as well as with proper institutional possibilities, is a timely and relevant exercise.

Starting from an outline of Russia's policy towards Asia-Pacific multilateral economic cooperation and the interim results achieved, the paper further proceeds with analyzing Russia's priorities and policy towards the Asia-Pacific multilateral venues focusing upon the regional security dialogue, before finally turning to a South Pacific perspective of the afore-mentioned multilateral tracks. The conclusion summarizes the foregoing analysis.

RUSSIA AND ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC REGIONALISM: ASSESSING INTERIM RESULTS

Developing economic cooperation with its Asia-Pacific partners, the Russian Federation is motivated by a clear goal, namely, to develop its Far Eastern and Siberian territories [5]. In turn,

the successful implementation of this vision means increasing the spectrum of external resources, be it investment, technologies or expertise, to the best advantage of Russia's internal modernization. This is especially important since Russia is not involved in the processes of regionalization that have been in place in the Asia-Pacific region since the 1950s, namely, grass-root exchanges between enterprises, financial structures, individual entrepreneurs etc. as the foundation on which regional institutions are premised.

Without going into detail into Russia's turn to the East since the relevant academic literature is in overabundance [3], for the Russian Federation, Asia-Pacific economic exchanges matter if three components are in place: neutrality, inclusivity and the global dimension.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum is the only regional multilateral dialogue platform in which Russia participates. After joining APEC in 1998 and as the cornerstone of its dialogue with APEC partners, Russia has traditionally prioritized cargo transportation via the Trans-Siberian railway and cooperation in the energy sector. Examples of Russia's initiatives include the Asia-Europe transit route (using railroads and the northern sea route), the development of remote areas, enhancing trade policy transparency, public e-services, etc [9]. While the transportation initiative has thus far failed to gain traction and the Trans-Siberian railway has not yet become a transit route convenient for Asia-Pacific companies, energy cooperation has been a success. Suffice it to mention, large-scale infrastructure projects like the Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok gas transmission system, the East Siberia — Pacific Ocean oil pipeline or the Power of Siberia gas pipeline are already operational and directly contribute to Asia-Pacific energy security.

Revealingly, Russia's priorities during its APEC chairmanship in 2012 — trade and investment liberalization, strengthening food security, establishing reliable supply chains and fostering innovative growth — were welcomed by APEC economies. Coupled with the demonstration effect of Vladivostok's renovated infrastructure, this convincingly suggested that Russia saw itself as a fully-fledged participant of Asia-Pacific economic exchanges while Vladivostok would be a top-level regional summit convention venue.

Discouragingly, Russia has been unable to fully reap the rewards of its APEC chairmanship. Russia's afore-mentioned APEC topics were not further developed by Moscow as a special direction of its APEC policy. The team of officials and analysts that had been involved in preparations for Russia's APEC chairmanship was delegated other tasks. But most importantly, Russia regarded its APEC chairmanship as a temporary, even one-time, project that had been successfully prepared, convened and eventually completed.

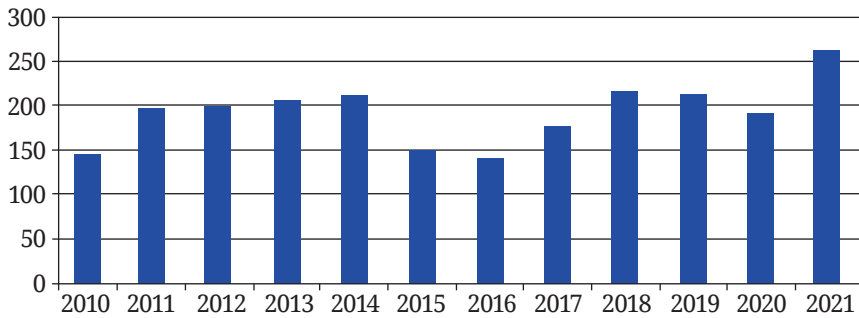


Fig. 1. Russia-APEC trade, bln.USD

Russia's trade with the APEC economies is characterized by the absence of sustainable trends (pic. 1). The largest increase in trade turnover was in 2011 — the volume of trade amounted to US\$196.5 billion, while a year before it had been only \$145 billion. For several years, it continued to grow (\$211.2 billion in 2014), however, anti-Russian sanctions led to its 30% decrease to \$147.8 billion (2015). Then there was a stable moderate increase in trade turnover — to \$212.7 billion in 2019, but the COVID-19 pandemic caused a decrease to \$192.1 billion in 2020. The post-COVID recovery influenced the Russian-APEC trade, the turnover reached \$261.5 billion in 2021 (Russian exports amounted to \$130.3 billion, imports — \$131.2 billion). It is noteworthy that in the last decade the share of APEC economies in the structure of Russian trade has been consistently growing — it was 23.2% in 2010 and 33.3% in 2021 [2].

But, on the whole, the Russian “turn to the East” has been stagnating. The reasons are numerous and range from deep contradictions between the approach of the federal center and Far Eastern authorities regarding the substance of the “turn” and the role of Far Eastern residents in making it efficient. As Russian foreign policy experts note, unless Russia's “turn to the East” is able to radically increase the living standards of Far Eastern residents, for the rest of Russian citizens it will be useless. Apprehensions are rising that the development of Far East will result in demonstrative window-dressing (or, as Russians say, Potemkin villages), large-scale embezzlements and individual flourishing enclaves for highly-qualified expatriates in stark contrast with the rest of the Far East, as well as a massive influx of low-qualified person-power [4]. This demonstrates that the ultimate goal Russia attaches to its participation in APEC remains far from fulfilled.

Simultaneously, the course of APEC development suggests that all the three components in regional multilateral cooperation which correspond to Russia's interests are missing. With regard to inclusivity, APEC seems to be torn between China and the US. Suffice it

to recall, intra-APEC contradictions have been in place since APEC's inception but markedly intensified since the early 2010s and resulted in APEC's inability to produce a Leaders' Declaration in 2018. This trend has been reinforced by the evolution of Asia-Pacific multilateral economic initiatives like TPP/CPTPP and RCEP. The same is true concerning a collapse of APEC neutrality since the Sino-American controversy over trade and technological issues hampers the implementation of intra-APEC projects — first and foremost, the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). With specific respect to global implications, APEC mirrors shortcomings of the global regulatory institutions, contradictions between global powers and their inability to develop a consolidated approach to global issues which require collective responses. This is especially discouraging, since in terms of representation APEC is a multilateral venue which, in theory, has ample opportunity to shape the parameters of the most promising region of the global economy.

Nevertheless, prospects for Russia's contribution to the economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region are positive, since Russia remains an important energy exporter. What is especially important, Russian gas is likely to remain high in the priorities of many Asia-Pacific states since natural gas is a relatively ecologically-friendly fuel while environmental problems in these states are very serious. Of special note is the mainstream position in the Russian expert community that resource abundance is a blessing rather than a curse and the development of an innovative resource economy should be among Russia's pressing tasks [6]. Examples that Russia performs this task successfully, as exemplified by measures to stimulate green energy, are already in place [7].

The afore-discussed developments reveal an ambiguous picture. On the one hand, developing economic cooperation with its Asia-Pacific partners through multilateral economic formats and initiatives, Russia has been unable to achieve much. The reasons stem from lack of strategically important assets like diasporas, supply-production and product-processing chains, and well-developed infrastructure coupled with the effects of anti-Russian sanctions and of the COVID-19 pandemic. Taken together, these factors have contributed to the eventual unsatisfactory outcome.

On the other hand, Asia-Pacific multilateral initiatives are undergoing a profound transformation with unpredictable results. The Asia-Pacific multilateral institutions were either established in the late 1980s, like the APEC forum, or did not evolve successfully in the new legal and organizational framework (TPP/CPTPP). This generates an imbalance between the priorities of development and the milieu in which it takes place. In these circumstances,

the parameters of cooperation are defined by China and the US, between which elements of confrontation are steadily increasing. As a result, as Russian experts suggest, the optimum strategy for Russia would be a policy of focused partnerships without fixed obligations instead of pan-regional multilateral initiatives promoted by Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue platforms [10]. This factor decreases the significance of the latter in Russia's regional priorities.

RUSSIA AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC MULTILATERAL DIALOGUE ON POLITICS AND SECURITY: VISION AND CONSTRAINTS

With specific relevance to multilateral cooperation in politics and security, Russia prioritizes the same goals, namely, neutrality, inclusivity and favorable global implications.

Among the Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue platforms, Russia participates in ASEAN-led venues — the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus Eight (ADMM Plus) and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

The ARF, ADMM Plus and EAS matter to Moscow as dialogue formats for several reasons. They contribute to maintaining a peaceful international milieu in the region that Russia declared as its priority for the twenty-first century [8]. Consequently, the development of Siberia and the Far East will directly depend upon the way the Asia-Pacific international milieu evolves. In addition, they provide the Russian leadership with a permanent channel of communication with Asia-Pacific partners along the diplomatic, military and top-level tracks. For instance, on the sidelines of these venues, Russian top officials may hold bilateral discussions with their US counterparts, which otherwise would be problematic in the present circumstances. More than that, by participating in the ARF, ADMM Plus and EAS, Russia can monitor the Asia-Pacific security milieu simultaneously stressing that, along with a rapid polarization of the global international system, Russia supports cooperative trends in the Asia-Pacific region regardless of the on-going global political and security developments. But most importantly, these multilateral dialogue platforms may contribute to strengthening Russia's global status since, in the world, as we know it today, it is impossible to remain an established global power without strong positions in the Asia-Pacific region.

As a member of the ARF, ADMM Plus and EAS, Russia prioritizes combating terrorism and trans-national crime, emergency responses, non-proliferation of WMD, military medicine and cybersecurity. One of the most important topics for Moscow is a multilateral dialogue on the formation of regional security architecture.

Russia assists on an ongoing basis in the training of military personnel of the ASEAN countries and provides them with assistance in case of natural disasters.

Russia's activity in the ASEAN-led multilateral venues has its shortcomings. After Russia joined the East Asia Summit in 2011, Russia's top leadership missed several EAS sessions. Also, Russia has been insufficiently engaged in maritime security cooperation which remains pivotal for ASEAN and many of its partners, as well as traditionally being among the top priorities of the ARF, ADMM Plus and EAS. But most discouragingly, underdeveloped economic ties between Russia and ASEAN tarnish Moscow's image as a contributor to Asia-Pacific security since, in ASEAN's vision, economics and security are closely intertwined.

From the practical perspective, as outlined above, for Russia the ASEAN-led multilateral dialogue platforms are instruments to maintain neutrality and inclusivity.

In Russia's view, this system allows the Asia-Pacific countries, both big and small, to collectively keep the Asia-Pacific region neutral. Simultaneously, this system reduces chances that Russia may be dragged into a conflict that will cause Russia heavy damage. Arguably, if the ASEAN-driven system of cooperative security in the Asia-Pacific region should collapse, the US-led hub-and-spoke system, underpinned by the Quad and the recently created bloc AUKUS, will remain the only pan-regional multilateral dialogue mechanism. Needless to say, this runs counter to Russia's interests.

The transformation which ASEAN-led multilateral dialogue platforms are undergoing at present is hardly positive for Russia. In terms of inclusivity and neutrality, China and the US are developing separate tracks along which their military cooperation with ASEAN is organized [11]. Both countries launched separate maritime exercises with ASEAN — China in 2018 and the US in 2019 respectively. This is coupled with the ever-rising frustration that the ASEAN-led system inefficiently performs its function since key Asia-Pacific security challenges remain far from resolved. In the years to come, the US-led collective security system is very likely to come into contention with the system of common security developed by China and premised upon the Belt and Road Initiative. As a logical consequence, neutrality and inclusivity will soon be eroded. Long-standing controversies between China and the US over a wide range of issues, from maritime security to trade and 5G technology, leave few doubts that prospects for Asia-Pacific polarization are very real, to the disadvantage of its economy, politics and security.

With specific relevance to the global implications of the ARF, ADMM Plus and EAS, the following points are worthy of note. A rise

of the global dimension in ASEAN's prospective plans, which has been especially noticeable since the late 2000s and in which ASEAN-led multilateral dialogue venues and initiatives play a special role, has seen the Association adapt its policy to global developments. In their turn, these developments contradict the very essence of the ASEAN Way and the modality of cooperation ASEAN has been favoring since its inception and especially since the ARF was established. As things currently stand, color revolutions, state-sponsored political murders (exemplified, among other cases, by the assassination of Qasem Soleimani in January 2020), sacrificing promising economic projects for the sake of on-going political ambitions are the new norm of global politics. Stating that ASEAN would hardly regard such developments positively if they happened in Southeast Asia, it is obvious that the ASEAN-led multilateral dialogue platforms decrease in value as instruments to promote ASEAN's policies at the global level.

A SOUTH PACIFIC PERSPECTIVE

Seen through the prism of Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue, the afore-mentioned developments have direct relevance to Russia's policy in the South Pacific. In this regard, several points deserve mentioning.

First, the region is encountering a rising geopolitical competition, exemplified primarily by the Sino-American rivalry. The multilateral dimension of this competition is evident. The US is implementing its project of Indo-Pacific region (IPR), while China is pulling the region into the orbit of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). For Russia, this means a polarization of the regional political and economic landscape. Assuming that Russia currently does not offer any comparable project that would cover this part of the world, and is aimed at pragmatic non-ideologized cooperation with all states of the region, the aftereffects of the BRI and the IPR does not respond to its priorities.

On the one hand, Moscow openly opposes the idea of Indo-Pacific and supports synergizing the BRI with its own initiatives in Eurasia. On the other hand, it does not seek to take sides with any mega-project—the IPR or the BRI—in the Asia-Pacific region and the South Pacific as its part. Supporting any party is unlikely to contribute to Russia's goals in the region that, as mentioned above, are concentrated on the development of the Far East and Siberia.

Second, multilateral dialogue platforms in which Russia and the South Pacific states participate are encountering difficult times and need to re-energize their agendas. For instance, APEC seem to be fading into irrelevance, since its result have been unable to meet

the priorities of its participants. In the present circumstances, as Russia is likely to remain under Western economic pressure for years, if not for decades, to come, its practical participation in multilateral initiatives, the more so in those relating to free trade and investment, is fraught with serious difficulties.

In their turn, ASEAN-led dialogue platforms cannot boast of remarkable achievements, like, for instance, a decrease of tensions in the Korean peninsula (North Korea has been participating in the ARF since 2001) or in the South China Sea. As Russia can neither re-energize ASEAN-led venues nor offer their participants a unifying agenda of cooperation, it will implement a low-profile policy at those discussions.

Third and perhaps most importantly, multilateral cooperation is just another instrument to add value to what has been developed and is functioning rather than a silver bullet that can produce impressive results within a short time. Regarding economy, trade figures between Russia and the South Pacific states are far from impressive. More or less stable trade figures are only between Russia and Australia — almost 1 billion USD annually during the last decade. Russia's trade turnover with New Zealand is moderate and less stable — while it has been fluctuating from 400 to almost 600 million USD during the last decade, it decreased to 283 million USD in 2021. Russia's trade relations with Papua New Guinea are insignificant — much less than 10 million USD annually. In general these three countries combined account for less than 0.2% of Russian foreign trade [2]. Investment projects and technological exchanges between Russia and Australia, Russia and New Zealand and Russia and Papua New Guinea are virtually non-existent.

Predictably, within APEC, Russia and those economies have not implemented joint projects, for instance, in the field of food security and food safety or mining. Within the ASEAN-led dialogue venues, no joint projects between Russia and those countries have been carried out as a special value-added to the initiatives undertaken by, for instance, the agendas of Expert Working Groups under the ADMM+8 auspices.

Discouragingly, the potential of academic diplomacy as an instrument to stimulate multilateral cooperation within the afore-discussed multilateral dialogue mechanisms remains underdeveloped. People-to-people contacts and academic exchanges have not gained momentum. Although there are projects implemented, for instance, by the Mikluho-Maclay Foundation, they cannot contribute to accumulating the critical mass necessary to re-energize the presently stagnating cooperation between Russia and those countries, including its multilateral dimension. To substantiate this point, suffice it to look at the interim results of the All-Russian Association of the South

Pacific Researchers. At the time of preparing this paper (as of early September 2022), the most recent event posted on the English version of the website of the Association dated as back as late December 2021, while the most recent English-speaking comment dated as back as mid-August 2021 [1].

Assessing prospects, unrealistic expectations regarding the aims, as well as tempo and scale, of Russia's policy in the South Pacific should be avoided. Arguably, in the years to come Russia will increasingly focus on cooperation with partners other than the South Pacific states. Relations with the "collective West", China, India, Iran, the ASEAN countries, as well as policy across the post-Soviet space, will capture Russia's attention. If so, along the multilateral track of its diplomacy Moscow will prioritize injecting new energies in BRICS, the SCO, the EAEU and other multilateral dialogue venues in which it participates rather than concentrate on APEC and ASEAN-led formats. This will further narrow the spectrum of multilateral instruments of cooperation between Russia and the South Pacific states.

Since relations are a two-way road, a look at the activities of the three South Pacific states within the framework of the ARF and APEC is relevant. Here, the situation is hardly encouraging either. In recent years, none of these countries has offered any initiatives in which Russia might be interested. More than that, bilateral cooperation with Moscow is surely not a priority in the foreign policy of Canberra, Wellington or Port Moresby.

In the practical realm, few options for cooperation are available. As Australia and New Zealand supported anti-Russian sanctions and are included in the List of Unfriendly Countries and Territories [13], projects and initiatives are possible with only Papua New Guinea. Within APEC, it is hardly realistic to expect that Moscow and Port Moresby will initiate a large-scale project conducive to APEC agenda and corresponding to its lines of cooperation. To realize this scenario, the parties need a qualitatively different critical mass of grass-root cooperation. In the ARF framework, realistic options available are few and limited to theoretically possible joint measures to relieve the aftereffects of natural and technological disasters, and combating pandemics [12].

In sum, multilateral dialogue as an instrument to develop cooperation between Russia and Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea has very limited potential. More discouragingly, the spectrum of possibilities presented by APEC and ASEAN-led dialogue venues is constantly narrowing, as the potential of those institutional frameworks was not properly explored by those states at a time more conducive to implementing joint projects. If so, it is hardly realistic to expect much from APEC, the APF, the ADMM+8 and the EAS.

CONCLUSION

The analysis performed above of the degree of utility of Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue platforms APEC, the ARF, the ADMM+8 and the EAS in stimulating cooperation between Russia and Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea reveals several broad assessments.

First, the recent multilateral initiatives, mostly the Indo-Pacific region, the Quad and AUKUS have contributed to making the Asia-Pacific region and the South Pacific as its part an increasingly conflict-prone geopolitical area. With regard to those initiatives, of note is their clearly pronounced anti-China component. Notably and regrettably, this negative effect extends to the multilateral dimension of regional cooperation, as, for instance, the Quad and AUKUS undermine ASEAN-centric multilateral dialogue venues. Taken together, those factors act as strong disincentives for Russia to develop relations with the countries of the South Pacific region, including by means of multilateral instruments.

Second, the development paradigm of Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue platforms, both economic and political-security, in which Russia participates and the priorities of the Russian Federation are visibly losing synergy. As demonstrated above, the fundamental aims that Russia pursues in APEC, the ARF, the ADMM+8 and the EAS run counter to the present-day international realities. Arguably, Russia's partners are aware of this widening gap. If so, neither Russia, nor its partners, for instance, among the APEC economies, including Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, will create additional incentives to cement their relations by means of APEC institutional possibilities.

Third, regardless Asia-Pacific mechanisms of multilateral cooperation, in the years to come Russia is unlikely to focus on developing relations with the South Pacific countries. Realistically, under the present international circumstances, differences between Russia and Australia and New Zealand will only sharpen, while Papua New Guinea will be sliding into China's orbit. In light of this, Russia's dialogue with those states is likely to be situational and narrow-focused. Coupled with the factors noted above, this will further decrease the significance of the South Pacific states in Russia's order of international priority.

In order not to encounter setbacks and disappointments, a realistic assessment of available instruments and of their efficiency should be among Russia's top priorities. Implementing its policy in the South Pacific region, the Russian Federation must have a broad

vision of what it can and cannot expect from Asia-Pacific multilateral dialogue frameworks in which it and its South Pacific partners participate. Arguably, it is hardly expedient to exaggerate the potential of those multilateral venues as an instrument to re-energize relations between Russia and its partners in the South Pacific region.

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Дата поступления в редакцию 06.09.2022