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THE CONFERENCE WITH THE THEME “RUSSIA – VIETNAM COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN EAST ASIA”

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Abstract. The article is a review of the conference with the theme “Russia – Vietnam Cooperation in the Context of the Current Geopolitical Situation in East Asia”, having been held jointly with the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia and Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. Russian and Vietnamese researchers discussed a wide range of issues and interaction perspectives of Russia and Vietnam in the current international situation. Also, the participants considered at length the development of Vietnam’s relations with other influential world’s actors, including the US and the PRC.

Keywords: SRV, RF, strategic partnership, South East Asia, Vietnam’s foreign policy, Russia – Vietnam cooperation.

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On February 25, 2022 the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN) and Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) held in online format the international conference with the theme "Russia – Vietnam Cooperation in the Context of the Current Geopolitical Situation in East Asia". The participants were leading expert-Vietnamists and specialists on the Southast Asian region from Russia and Vietnam.

The participants were welcomed by special guests: Nguyen Thi Hong Nam, Ph.D. (History), Head of the Political Department in the Embassy of the SRV in RF, E.V. Koldunova, Ph.D. (Politics), the Director of the Center for ASEAN at the MFA MGIMO, and K.P. Kurylev, D.Sc. (History), Deputy Head of the RUDN Department of theory and history of international relationships. They emphasized that currently the development of relations between Russia and Vietnam are very important for maintenance of the regional stability between Russia and the ASEAN countries as a whole. In the authors' opinion, such joint measures and development of joint scientific projects contribute to strengthen friendly links in the current complicated geopolitical conditions.

The first section of the conference discussed the bilateral cooperation between Russia and Vietnam, challenges and perspectives of the bilateral interaction. The section's moderators were Vu Thuy Trang, Ph.D. (History), Director of the Center for Russia and CIS Studies at the Institute of European Studies VASS, and D.V. Mosyakov, D.Sc. (History), Head of the Center for Southeast Asia, Australia and Oceania of the RAS Institute of Oriental Studies, the Editor-in-Chief of the journal "Southeast Asia: Relevant Development Issues".

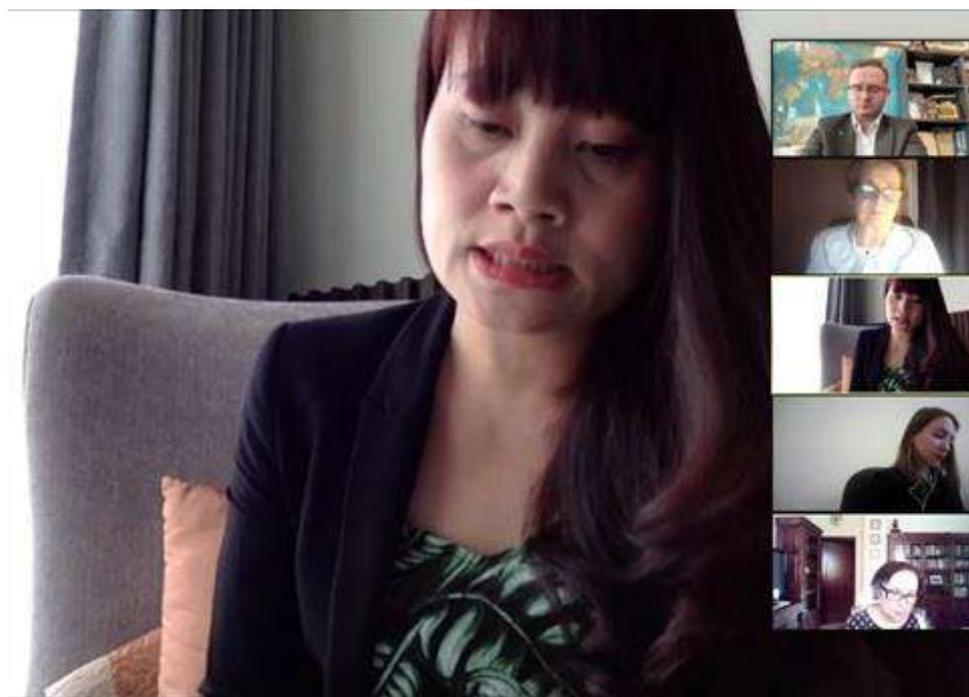


Fig. 1. Vu Thuy Trang, Director of the Center for Russia and CIS Studies at the Institute of European Studies VASS. *Photo by the RUDN*

In her report Vu Thuy Trang noted that the deterioration of Russia – West relations will soon result in the priority of eastern direction for Russian foreign policy (Fig. 1.). Southeast Asia, in her opinion, will become the priority region for Russia in the aspect of economic and integration processes in the region, but bilateral relations with Vietnam require, she believes, a higher degree of political involvement and the development of additional diplomatic tracks. V.N. Kolotov, D.Sc. (History), Professor, Head of the Department of Far East History, Director of Ho Chi Minh Institute at Saint Petersburg State University, continued the discussion. He addressed the history of Russia-Vietnam relations and pointed that the USSR was one of few countries which had contributed to Vietnam's independence, at that time having been the reflection of the rivalry of the great powers and the attempts of the USSR to oppose the making of unipolar international relationship system under the US and their allies' authority, also, in Asia. (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. V.N. Kolotov, D.Sc. (History), Professor, Head of the Department of Far East History, Director of Ho Chi Minh Institute at Saint Petersburg State University. *Photo by RUDN*

He also mentioned that currently at the background of the formation of arcs of instability in various world's regions the successful cooperation of the two countries will allow to respond adequately to quick changes within the world system and adapt to multilateral fair formats of a new reality, first of all, opposing the US attempts to establish the American world order.

The next author was E.A. Kanaev, D.Sc. (History), Head of the Asia-Pacific sector of the Center for complex European and International Studies of the Department of the world economics and world politics of the Higher School of Economics. He presented an interesting paper with the theme of the interaction of business and power in the system of bilateral Russia-Vietnam relations. In his opinion, in the conditions of growing global uncertainty it is necessary for Russia to strengthen the instrumental component of Russia's foreign policy, including also business contacts. In this connection, he believes, it is important to understand the features of interaction of the state and business in the SRV, which is shown in the practices of corporative management in Vietnamese companies. From E.A. Kanaev's standpoint, building its relationships with the SRV, Russia also must work with Vietnamese professional associations more actively, as well as build alliances, strategical ones among them, with the SRV public and private enterprises on the ground of comprehension of their corporative qualities.

Beside business, another important sphere of Russia-Vietnam interaction, in Tran Thi hanh Ha opinion (a researcher of the Institute of European Studies VASS) is education. She noted that Russia and Vietnam collaborated in the sphere of education since the era of the Soviet Union, and nowadays Russia is perceived in Vietnam as a country with a high educational level, especially, technical education. Vietnam realizing the projects within Industry 4.0. considers Russia to be one of the leading partners in the aspect of personnel training and cultural and educational cooperation.

V.V. Vershinina, PhD (History), an expert of the Center for ASEAN at the MFA MGIMO, addressing the evolution of total strategic partnership, in the aspect of long-term perspectives of Russian policy in the Asia-Pacific region, concludes that Vietnam will always remain crucial strategic partner of Russia. At the same time Vietnam is also interested in the increase of the comprehensive strategic partnership's potential. Russia can be an important strategic and high-tech partner well-experienced in the field of energy, as well as in financial, military-technical, digital, scientific and educational spheres.

In his turn, Hoang Van Tham, a representative of the RUDN students, analyzed the perspectives of Vietnam's collaboration within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in the current conditions, having mentioned that with the appropriate degree of activity the mutually advantageous collaboration of the two countries can become still more advantageous. In conclusion of the section the participants of the discussion pointed that, of course, in new geopolitical reality the cooperation of Russia and Vietnam would require to increase the involvement of the both countries, as well as to set clear goals and tasks of their interaction.

The second section of the conference discussed a new bipolarity and regional context in the Asia-Pacific region. A special attention was paid to Vietnam-US and Vietnam-China relations. Thus, Professor D.V. Mosyakov mentioned that for a long time Vietnam has been pursuing the maneuvering policy between the US and the PRC. At the same time the SRV desires to benefit from the both sides, and to have freedom to determine its foreign policy goals and tasks. In this policy Vietnam has adapted well enough to the current situation in the region, but his interests are, as usual, under the threat of the further escalation of Sino-American contradictions. The theme of the great powers' role was continued by Dang Thi Phuong Hoa, Ph.D. (Economics), Associate Professor, the Editor-in-Chief of "The European Studies" journal published by the Institute of European Studies VASS. Thus, she mentioned that China, despite its significant influence, has interdependent relations with Southeast Asian countries as a whole and with Vietnam in particular. In her opinion, Beijing will continue the Chairman Xi Jinping's strategy of soft regional influence, as it responds to the PRC's current foreign policy interests.

Continuing the theme, P.Yu. Tsvetov, Ph.D. (History), Associate Professor of the Chair of International Relations at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation presented a detailed analysis of the US-Vietnam relations under President Joe Biden. Thus, he mentioned that J. Biden is more actively interested in Vietnam and in the Southeast Asian region than the Donald Trump administration, but, as usual, there are "internal limiters" in the US – Vietnam relations. In the expert's opinion, the sphere equally important for the both sides is security. For instance, Vietnam is ready to support some interaction formats in the region with the purpose to improve the general level of the regional security.

Also, no less discussed theme was the interaction of Vietnam and ASEAN. M.S. Zelenkova, a senior expert of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS), mentioned that attempts to stop the increasing tension in the region force the Association, as usual, to adapt to the new conditions and try to find the balance in the relations with China, on the one hand, and with the US and their allies

on the other. I.R. Dubrovsky, an applicant at the RUDN, suggested to address the internal grounds of the great powers' foreign policy, in particular to China's active defense doctrine, the ideological support of the PRC's Army and Navy's modernization in the conditions of conflicts in the South China Sea. Thus, in his opinion, the active defense in China's coastal seas is closely connected with the urgent need to ensure economic prosperity, and regional cooperation and to level threats of stirring up the sovereignty disputes into open war conflicts.

In conclusion of the discussion both the Russian and Vietnamese sides warmly thanked each other and mentioned productive and rich intercourse, appropriate to high academic standards of the both countries (Fig.3). The participants of the conference are of the opinion that such meetings are necessary to strengthen scientific and educational interaction of the two countries.



Fig. 3. The participants of the conference. *Photo by RUDN*