

Dialogue Forums as a Subject of International Economic Relations (Using the Eastern Economic Forum as an Example)

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to the analysis of the current situation of dialogue forums aimed at facilitating open and genuine exchange between civil society actors and international economic institutions.*

Keywords: dialogue forums, international economic relations, Eastern Economic Forum, Asia.

In the early 2000s, international relations started to reach a new level of openness resulting in the emergence of dialogue forums aimed at facilitating open and genuine exchange between civil society actors and international economic institutions. After more than 20 years of their existence in - depth studies of these dialogue forums remain rare. Despite criticism, international forums are changing, transforming and continue to devolve¹. In this article we will consider the young but steadily developing Eastern Economic Forum (EEF), which is held annually in Russia (Vladivostok). The aim of the work is to conduct an empirical analysis of the results of the EEF's work and to determine the feasibility of the existence of this platform as a public relations event.

The Eastern Economic Forum is an international business event and the world's first inter - industry platform designed to stimulate transformation of the manufacturing sector, encourage investment and promote innovation in the Asia - Pacific region (APR) since 2015. At the same time, since its creation, the EEF has undergone changes, primarily related to economic sanctions against Russia. Thus, being a kind of international institution, the Forum demonstrated viability and flexibility in diversification of the Russian economy with turn to the East. As a result, EEF has influenced the emergence of new growth points for Asian countries. The agreements primarily concern infrastructure, transport projects, mining, construction, industry and agriculture².

Considering that the dialogue forums were developed based on the ideas of deliberative democracy, over time, three typical dimensions of operation: openness, transparency and consistency have become crucial in ensuring the smooth

operation of this forum³. EEF fully meets the above 3 criteria. Every year the scale and scope of EEF are increasing. Every year the Forum brings innovative ideas and solutions to problems. It is worth noting that this platform has ceased to be only economic. Experience from previous years shows that leaders of Asia - Pacific countries, as well as representatives of ministries and departments, raise the most pressing issues of international cooperation for discussion, thereby turning the Eastern Economic Forum into a political and economic dialogue.

However, an analysis of the EEF's activities shows that this platform is focused primarily on Asia - Pacific countries. At the same time, the main financial actors in the international dialogue, in addition to Russia, are India and China. Taking into account the dynamically developing economies of these countries, the EEF displays the economic potential, suitable business conditions and investment opportunities in the region. Thus, Sino - Russian cooperation is not limited to energy. Russia's largest aluminium producer, Rusal, reduced sales to Europe and increased the share of exports to Asia in its first - half revenue to 30 percent, up from 23 percent a year earlier. The nickel producer Norilsk Nickel is also reorienting its exports to China and other Asian countries⁴.

But Russia in this forum not only acts as an importer, but is also an impressive sales market. Thus, on the sidelines of the Forum in 2023, China concluded a number of deals that pushed global brands out of Russia. Thanks to the agreements, China is increasing sales of consumer electronics and passenger cars in Russia.

Four of the ten best - selling car brands in Russia are Chinese: Haval, FAW, Great Wall and Tank. Chinese smartphones now occupy 75 percent of the Russian market.

¹ - Felix Anderl, Nicole Deitelhoff and Regina Hack, 'Divide and rule? the politics of self-legitimation in the WTO', in Felix Anderl, Christopher Daase, Nicole Deitelhoff, Victor Kempf, Jannik Pfister and Philip Wallmeier, eds, *Rule and resistance beyond the nation state: contestation, escalation, exit* (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), pp. 49–68; Robert O'Brien, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte and Marc Williams, *Contesting global governance: multilateral economic institutions and global social movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

² - <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/expained-the-eastern-economic-forum-and-indias-balancing-act/article65894341.ece>

³ - Deitelhoff, 'Leere Versprechungen?'; John S. Dryzek and Simon Niemeyer, 'Discursive representation', *American Political Science Review* 102: 4, 2008, pp. 481–93, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055408080325>. We use these three dimensions of deliberative quality instead of others such as common good orientation because they are comparatively easily accessible for empirical analysis.

⁴ - <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202309/12/WS64ffe3e3a310d2dc e4bb54c8.html>

Ozon, one of Russia's largest online retailers, has opened an office in Shenzhen and invited Chinese sellers to use its platform to help expand the product range for Russian consumers after many Western brands halted sales in Russia⁵.

Let us recall that the key event in 2018 Forum was the plenary session "The Far East: Expanding the Range of Possibilities with the participation of the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, President of Mongolia Khaltmaagiin Battulga, Prime Minister of Japan Shinzō Abe, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea Lee Nak - yon.

A meeting of this scale indicates the interest of the states of the Asia - Pacific region in discussing new projects for economic cooperation. Then in 2018, more than 6, 000 delegates and 1, 357 media representatives from 60 countries took part in the Forum. The largest delegations were from China (1, 096 people), Japan (570 people), the Republic of Korea (335 people), as well as Mongolia, the USA and Great Britain. The participation of foreign companies is of particular interest. Thus, the number of agreements signed at the EEF increased from 217 in 2017 to 380 agreements in 2021, which amounted to more than 40 billion US dollars. As of 2022, there are approximately 2, 729 investment projects planned in the region. For Asia - Pacific countries, the indicated amount of contracts is indeed an attractive share in international business. Therefore, Chinese structures implementing global projects within the framework of the One Belt One Road pay close attention to this aspect.

Thus, the EEF acts as a full - fledged subject of the international economic institution that meets the criteria. The Dialogue Forum succeeded in increasing competition among Asian countries. Openness and transparency open up new markets for global manufacturing giants in Asia. With the EEF held annually in September, the event has historically served as a launching pad for BRICS. As a result, delegates use the Forum's international arena to explore prospects for participation in larger cooperation formats.

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<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202309/12/WS64ffe3e3a310d2dc e4bb54c8.html>

