

The Eurasian Cooperation Agenda

The Concept of Greater Eurasia in the Turn of Russia to the East¹

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Abstract

The last two or three years have become a time of an unprecedented rise of interest to Eurasia. The Russian initiative to create Greater Eurasia, which is seen as the main conceptual framework for promoting various cooperation projects in the region, is often criticized for the lack of concrete content. Given the growing number of regional initiatives including from China and India Russia needs not only to formulate an attractive idea, but also to show its relevance and efficiency.

Despite the absence of objective historical conditions for its implementation the concept of 'Greater Eurasia' can become a rational practical embodiment of a wide range of development and security priorities for many countries in the region. The problem of the study is the absence of objective prerequisites for the creation of Greater Eurasia while there is a wide range of subjective reasons.

The article examines the preconditions for the emergence of Greater Eurasia as well as various ways of this concept's perception and political interpretation. For historical reasons projects for the consolidation of Eurasia have largely remained on paper, but the current regional and global trends create relevant conditions for their implementation.

The study analyzes the content of Eurasian integration and possible formats of cooperation within it. Particular emphasis is made on security issues, economic interaction, and the development of institutions in the Eurasian space. The authors stress the need for reform of the OSCE in order to bring its activities closer to the current geopolitical conditions. The prospects for the development of the SCO and its role in Greater Eurasia are also under consideration.

Special attention is paid to relations with potential participants of Greater Eurasia project (including European countries) and non-regional actors. Eurasian integration is also analyzed from the European integration perspective. According to authors' estimations, in EAUE there is a need for greater attention to the issue of state sovereignty (similar to the European experience of country representatives and expert groups) and strengthening the institutional capacity of organization.

Key words: Greater Eurasia; Turn to East; Eurasian Economic Union; European integration; Russian foreign policy; SCO; OSCE; international community; Russian-Chinese relations

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Introduction

In addition to offering strategic foreign policy benefits, Russia's turn to the East in response to the rise of Asia in the second half of the 2000s makes it possible to transform the Trans-Ural region, the Far East from a predominantly imperial burden – or rear in opposition to the West, sometimes in a rivalry with Japan or China – into a potential development area for the whole country [Karaganov, 2017]. It received additional impetus from the conflict with the West and successfully coincided with the new geo-economic initiatives of China [Lukin, 2016], which involved a large-scale cooperation plan in 2013 under the flag of a revived Great Silk Road. The very idea of connecting Europe and Asia by land routes, drawing on the historical connotation of the Silk Road [Wu, 2013], positions China as a proactive player whose initiatives are aimed at positive changes in the region, and as having a desire to join participation in the initiative with national development priorities.

While the specific content of the Chinese initiative to unite the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road has been a subject of wide discussion – not only within China but also abroad – since 2013, it has gradually begun to be more clearly defined. An institutional framework was established in December 2014 with the launch of the \$40 billion Silk Road Fund, and the Asian Bank for Infrastructure Investments with a capital of \$100 billion in December 2015. In May 2017, the first One Belt, One Road forum was attended by the heads of 29 states from Asia, Europe and Latin America (with nearly 100 countries represented in total) [Inosmi, 2017]. It is expected that this event will be held on an annual basis. In this sense, the positive perception of the Greater Eurasia initiative in China facilitates further joint work in the region [Zhao, 2017; Li, 2017].

Russia's turn to the East is unfolding within the framework of the Eurasian orientation of its foreign policy. The Eurasian theme is present in all international forums and is an obligatory part of public speeches. It is noteworthy that the growing interest in this topic can be observed not only among Russian authors; see, for example, the reflections on the possibility of forming a Eurasian supercontinent by Portuguese political scientist Bruno Maçães [2018].

Politically, the evolution of the Eurasian concept has, primarily for Russia, transformed from a modest idea to interlink the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and China's One Belt One Road initiative (2015) into a much larger strategy known as the Eurasian Comprehensive Economic Partnership [President of Russia, 2015]. Other countries in the region, including the originator of the modern Eurasian concept – Kazakhstan – are trying to emphasize the pragmatic aspects of regional cooperation.

At the same time, “Russia” is the key word in the phrase “Russia's turn to the East” [Bordachev, 2017B]. Russia's increased attention to the eastern dimension of its foreign policy is a logical consequence of the shifting balance of power in the Asia-

Pacific region (APR) and its increased economic and political significance on a global scale.

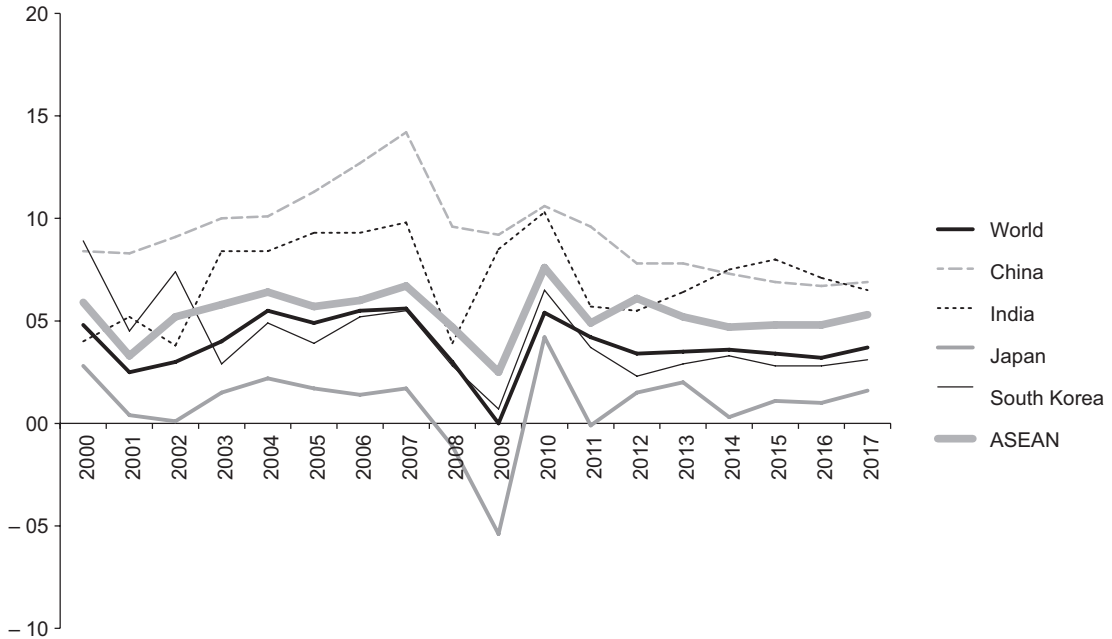


Fig. 1. GDP Growth Rates in Key APR Countries Compared to World Rates

Source: [Euromonitor International].

Russia has already begun to take advantage of the rise of Asia as a counterbalance to the long-prevalent western vector in its foreign policy. As Galushka noted, 26% of all foreign investments in Russia in 2017 went to the Far East: “The Far East as a whole showed an increase in investment by more than 17% in 2017, which amounted to 117.1%, when this indicator was 104.4% on the average for Russia. In the Far East it is the best indicator in the country. At the same time more than half of the investments out of 17% of the growth were made by residents of the territories of advanced development and the free port, including foreign ones” [Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East, 2018].

Increasing attention is paid to building constructive relations with partners in Eurasia. The EAEU is the most important part of Russia’s Eurasian strategy. Recently, the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) has developed a system of indicators showing the level of integration taking the United Nations’ sustainable development goals into account. According to the research, the level of integration in the EAEU is second only to the European Union (EU), ahead of the Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose histories are 30 and 50 years longer, respectively. At the same time, the EAEU does not close itself off; on

the contrary, it seeks to build cooperation with foreign countries – Singapore, Iran, India, Korea, Egypt, Israel and Serbia are among its potential partners). [EEC, 2018]

In this sense, the conclusion of a free trade agreement (FTA) between the EAEU and Vietnam reflects the desire of the Russian Federation to diversify cooperation with its Asian partners. Despite the shortcomings, we note positive dynamics of this trading agreement: the trade turnover between the EAEU countries and Vietnam since the entry into force of the agreement in October 2016 to June 2017 increased by 11.8% compared to the same period in 2015–2016 [Tynnikova, 2017]. Under the agreement, states committed to an 88% reduction on customs duties for goods, 59% of which was applied immediately [TASS, 2015]. The remaining duties will be cut over the next five to 10 years.

Despite certain achievements, Russia's turn to the East is still perceived ambiguously by the international community. As Spanger notes, "with a delay of three years, Moscow has followed the example of Washington and now 'moves' towards Asia, and, in essence, towards China" [Spanger, 2016]. China at this time turns to the West [Spanger, 2016] or, as noted by Shambaugh, enters the global level [Shambaugh, 2013]. The Russian initiative to create a "Greater Eurasia," which is seen as the main conceptual framework for promoting various cooperation projects in the region, is often criticized for the absence of specific content or a roadmap for its implementation. As Tsvetov notes, "almost two years after the first reports there was no programme document or public speaking about it at any high level in public space, which would describe the specific content or at least a clear format of this new great idea" [Tsvetov, 2017].

Despite the absence of objective historical conditions for its implementation, the concept of "Greater Eurasia" could become the rational, practical embodiment of multiple development and security priorities for many countries in the region. The problem is the absence of objective prerequisites for the creation of a "Greater Eurasia" despite a wide range of subjective reasons.

The present research hypothesis is that the concept of "Greater Eurasia" can be viewed as a consolidation of Russia's new global strategy which may form the basis for its most important foreign policy priorities.

In this regard, this article undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the initiative to create a "Greater Eurasia" as well as possible formats for its further development, including an analysis of the EU experience as a case study.

Background to the Formation of the Concept of "Greater Eurasia" and Features of the Perception of the Eurasian Space

In the context of the crisis of the western model of the world, a number of non-western centres of power offer different visions of regional and international order. China's Belt and Road Initiative is valuable not only for its potential to implement concrete projects, but also for its conceptual design (a historical link and a single framework for the implementation of regional initiatives). India, in turn, began actively promoting the con-

cept of the development of the Indo-Pacific region [Kuo, 2018]. Other examples include ASEAN Connectivity, Mongolia's "Steppe Road," Kazakhstan's "Bright Path," Turkey's "Central Corridor," Poland's "Amber Route," and Great Britain's Northern Powerhouse [Leksyutina, 2017].

This variety of regional development programmes fills the global idea gap regarding the crisis of the western development model. At the same time, this aggravates the competition between different regional actors and complicates the issue of the future model of the world, the formats of interaction and the coexistence of various approaches to maintaining international stability. The development of the idea of "Greater Eurasia" is closely related to this process.

Russia's political exaltation over the Eurasian issue is natural and easy to understand. Many analysts see it as an attempt to break away from the historically determined choice between Europe and not-Europe, and in this context the idea of "Greater Eurasia" is perceived as a kind of reincarnation of a "Greater Europe" [Luzyanin, Zhao, 2017 pp. 61–63]. This choice is particularly tragic because it is obviously impossible to ever make Russia part of Europe. However, the political events of the past few years give hope that Russia has shed its ambivalence and now sees itself as an independent centre of development rather than as the periphery of either Europe or Asia. But it is necessary to harness Russia's nascent self-identification in collective institutions for regional cooperation and to integrate Russia's national interest with those of Eurasia as a macroregion.

However, there are a number of important regional factors and political problems that may constrain the translation of Eurasian ideas into practice. First, it is necessary to eliminate the mental walls that prevent the convergence of Eurasian peoples on a pragmatic basis [Kuznetsova, 2017]. While bright intellectuals over the last two centuries have suggested building a common Eurasia based on an internal unity of values or an objective opposition to other macroregions [Entin, Entina, 2016], these ideas have not yet been put into practice.

In addition, the states of Eurasia (and Russia is no exception) remain extremely receptive to external narratives [Starr, 2014, pp. 191–199] which are often based on pragmatic considerations and the search for the national good. However, they may overlook the fact that due to the objective laws of international politics for any extra-regional player, the fate of distant peoples is only a way of achieving their own national interests. Therefore, the Eurasian narrative is now, perhaps, one of the most "littered" geopolitical constructions brought from outside.

Greater Eurasia remains a conceptual and metaphysical notion rather than a political or economic reality. The blurring of physical borders has been invariably accompanied by the erosion of conceptual borders and an inability to delineate Eurasia as a unit on the political and mental map. This is a major component of the "Eurasian curse" – because of the region's inability to conceive itself in terms of common values, cooperation and shared benefit, it is also unable to identify as an integral element of the global arrangement.

Challenges for “Greater Eurasia”

Historically all Eurasian states, including Russia, have used Eurasia as a tool, a space for strategic maneuver and a means of achieving narrow foreign policy goals. They never managed to rise above their national interests as the Europeans did when they built a new Europe on the ruins of the old order in the second half of the 20th century. This new Europe was based on cooperation for the sake of shared benefit and on clearly defined opposition to other regions and civilizations [Hix, 2007, p. 574].

However, even while Eurasia is the homeland of many nations, it has never been home to any of them. In most cases, nations that emerged in parts of Eurasia later left. This was the case with the majority of Finno-Ugric peoples and, to a lesser extent, Turkic peoples. Eurasia’s most powerful states saw themselves as belonging to other – European and Asian – civilizations. They considered themselves empires that did not need an identity beyond their national one [Zhang, 2013]. Medium and small Eurasian nations do not have enough resources to develop their space without reliance on external players. As a result, Eurasia has always been an abstract idea, a dream, and could not become an object of geopolitics.

It is both possible and necessary to resolve this problem as the relative fragmentation of the global space into regions and macroregions is gaining momentum and, under certain conditions, could even be the only salvation for globalization and openness. It is thus important to understand the extent to which Eurasia engages in regional cooperation to derive common benefits and resolve the national development tasks of individual Eurasian states.

Today this goal is fairly difficult to achieve in practice. The major trends in modern development point toward states becoming less prepared to consider cooperation as a way to achieve national goals, both internally and externally. As Diesen noted, “economic nationalism becomes a strategy for the development of rising states, allowing them to change the unfavourable asymmetry of interdependence to their own advantage” [Diesen, 2017]. National egotism, whipped up by the psychosis of media, particularly social media, is growing stronger. Politicians are becoming more dependent on public opinion, less focused on common benefit, and increasingly interested in seeking solutions with unilateral advantages [Tomz, Weeks, Yarhi-Milo, 2017].

In mid-summer of 2017, several Chinese warships entered the Baltic Sea for joint exercises with the Russian fleet [Grigoryev, 2017]. Most western observers interpreted both events as a mere demonstration by Moscow and Beijing of their mutual support in the most conflict-ridden areas [Higgins, 2017]. Diplomatic actions with no serious systemic significance vividly illustrate that it is no longer practical to limit discussion of security problems to only the local or global level [Savic, 2016].

The conflict between Russia and the West does not significantly affect the interests of China or any other major Eurasian power directly. However, in a broader sense and taking a long-term perspective, this conflict is extremely serious in that it influences the potential for China to implement its most important initiatives, which require

the participation of both Russia and the countries of the West. For example, representatives of some Eastern European countries insist on the development of corridors bypassing Russia through Kazakhstan, the Caspian and Black Seas, despite the fact that such projects are practically meaningless in economic terms [Platonova, 2015].

Meanwhile, from 2014 to 2016 the volume of China's trade with countries along the "Way" exceeded \$3 trillion, and the investment of China exceeded \$50 billion. At the opening of the One Belt, One Road forum China announced that it would send an additional \$14.5 billion to the Silk Road Fund. The Chinese enterprises created 180,000 jobs in more than 20 countries and built 56 economic cooperation zones [Inosmi, 2017]. As the initiative develops, it is becoming more noticeable on the geopolitical landscape.

In addition, the conflict between Russia and the West creates tension in the international environment in general. China is not interested in such tension, as the longer that a direct collision with the U.S. can be avoided, the more likely it is that China will achieve its strategic goals. However, Russia is the only significant power whose relations with China can be characterized as frankly friendly. This cannot be said, for example, about relations with India, China's large and nuclear-armed neighbour [Lidarev, 2018].

This, as well as the unique nature of the relationship between the leaders of China and Russia, complicated China's provision of assistance to Moscow in 2014–2016. China can be considered a winner in the conflict between Russia and the West, but it should be noted that China was nevertheless extremely interested in its resolution. The same can be said about other important countries such as Japan and Korea. Neither state wants the continuation or escalation of the Ukraine conflict because it directly threatens their investment plans in Russia. So, why do these countries not participate in the discussion of European security issues?

Equally, the conflicts around the Korean Peninsula or the South China Sea could directly affect Russian security interests. Russia is also a significant participant in the international diplomatic process on the North Korean nuclear missile problem, a making joint proposals with China in July 2017. This begs the question of why China is in no way involved in the discussion of the Donbass problem and Kiev's failure to implement the Minsk Agreements of 2015.

However, there are deeper reasons that make the existing regional security systems obsolete. To some extent, the precursor of the processes observed in Asia and Eurasia was, oddly enough, the "neighbourhood policy" proposed by the EU to countries to its south and east after the expansion of 2004–2007. However, there is a fundamental difference between this initiative and the current concepts and formats of joint development in Eurasia. At the heart of the neighbourhood policy was the idea of the so-called "Europe of concentric circles" [Lavenex, 2011, p. 373]. However, the project turned out to be entirely ineffective as a tool to avoid confrontation or direct efforts to achieve development goals in the space from Marrakesh to Vladivostok.

If we apply the logic of concentric circles in Eurasia, it can be divided geographically into a core and three peripheries. The core is Central Asia, Russia, China and Mongolia. Turkey, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Korea constitute a second Eurasian ring. Europe, Southeast Asia and the Middle East make up the peripheries. Maintenance of stability in the core, the involvement of the second ring and the absence of threats from the periphery is the task for international cooperation in the field of security.

New partnerships in Asia and Eurasia are formed on completely different principles, the most important of which should be democracy. Among other things, the reason for this is the absence of an obvious dominant leader willing and able to offer a model of unified and centred development for others. Occasionally, China attempts to pursue such a strategy [Brown, 2016], however, this approach is not entirely correct.

First, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has no historical experience constructing formalized unipolar structures of interstate interaction. Second, apart from China, there are at least three players in Eurasia that are crucial for the implementation Chinese initiatives, but which cannot be junior partners (Russia, India and Iran). Finally, China has no interest in further antagonizing the small- and medium-sized countries in Asia and Eurasia, as this could be exploited by extra-regional players and paralyze Chinese initiatives in the field of cooperation and development.

Of course, how far China's power in a Greater Eurasia could be immersed will remain an important issue. The experience of reunified Germany and the impact of European integration on its power under the leadership of Chancellor Helmut Kohl is ambiguous. At first, the consequences of this decision were positive. However, Germany became the main recipient of the benefits of European integration, affecting the confidence of other EU countries and the stability of the entire structure. Apparently, in the long-term, if German leadership in its present form continues, it will lead to partial shedding of the EU. This experience indicates the need to be extremely careful about the role of the objectively most powerful player when creating a macroregional partnership.

Russia's Greater Eurasia community is aimed specifically at removing the reasons for these fears. Russia's goal is to create an international environment in which China's energy will be directed toward meeting development challenges – both for itself and for other states [Karaganov, 2017]. The most important of these is the creation of conditions for the equal and democratic participation of all interested countries and unconditional respect for sovereignty. In addition, such a community should not be formally limited to a certain geographical space. There should be no discussion about what Eurasia is in the space from the Atlantic to the South China Sea, and what it is not.

It is already quite obvious that Greater Eurasia and the Asia-Pacific region share features of interrelated macroregions. Moreover, Greater Eurasia is a geographically more localized space. There is no direct physical presence of the territories of states separated from the mainland by the world's oceans. It is limited in the east, west, north and south by the four oceans – the Arctic, Atlantic, Pacific and Indian. Eurasia is in-

ternally connected with developing East-West and North-South transport and logistics corridors among the most important of which is the Russian Trans-Siberian Railway [Bordachev, 2017A]. On the periphery, Eurasia is connected to a network of sea trade routes, which, as calculations show, will be the most profitable for transportation of the main goods produced in Asia in the foreseeable future.

But there is one significant problem. In Eurasia, there is no platform even for discussing issues of macroregional security. The existing Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) includes Western and Eastern Europe and the space of the former USSR, but bypasses Iran, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Korea. It includes, for example, the UK but not Japan, and the U.S. and Canada, but not China. There is an obvious vacuum of international institutions in the sphere of security. The reform of the OSCE can contribute to the elimination of this vacuum.

Having studied the positive and especially negative experience of the OSCE, it makes sense to create a new international security institution in Greater Eurasia with the participation of the maximum number of states in this macroregion. For Russia, taking part in regional security institutions with China, Iran, India and others can become an important asset of foreign policy.

One of the greatest challenges is to avoid going down the same path chosen by Europe after the Cold War – to establish a formally integrated core and determine the place of others by their geographical and institutional proximity to that core. That strategy created new dividing lines and ultimatums. But is it avoidable? A major task of conceptualizing the Eurasian future is determining how cooperation can be compatible with openness and universality.

Regrettably, the relevant experience is negative on balance. A vivid example is the fate of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) where openness led to a crisis of cooperation in relations between participants. The military and diplomatic conflict between India and China over control of small common neighbours threatens to paralyze the SCO for a long time. One of the most productive formats in the SCO is cooperation in countering terrorism, but there is no clear understanding of how it will develop after expansion (for example, how effective intelligence exchange between India and Pakistan will be) [Denisov, Safranchuk, 2016].

The main factor that will influence the further development of the SCO and its potential for the Russian Federation will be the process of adapting the organization to function with new members. On the one hand, the expansion gives the SCO a new diplomatic status: although no one expects a quick solution to the Indo-Pakistani problem, within the SCO India and Pakistan will have the opportunity to build a constructive joint dialogue that in the long-term can positively affect the situation in the region. It will also open new opportunities for discussing the Afghan and Syrian problems [Gabuev, Mohan et al., 2017]. India's presence in the SCO is seen by Russia as an opportunity to contain China's ambitions in the region and encourage India to more actively cooperate. In addition, India's accession to the SCO allows for a new assessment of the interaction of China, Russia and India within the BRICS grouping (which also

includes Brazil and South Africa) and other fora for cooperation that could be useful to Russia in a confrontation with the West.

Analysis of the European Experience of Integration

The state of Eurasian economic integration is troubling. At the same time, the reserves of internal stability of the EAEU is much less than in the EU, where after decades of cooperation enormous bureaucratic and institutional inertia has set in.

The experience of European integration, which is now experiencing significant challenges, is interesting from this point of view. The powerful construct of the European Union has lately been subjected to one political barrage after another. These include the failure of the Constitution for Europe in 2005, the financial and economic crisis of 2009–2013, the refugee crisis of 2015, the referendum in the UK and the beginning of negotiations on its withdrawal from the EU in 2016–2017 and, finally, the unfolding crisis around Catalonia in the fall of 2017. These events in turn have questioned the basic values on which European integration was founded. Inside the EU, there is a problem of leadership: France has significantly weakened in recent years and its ability to balance the power of Germany is no longer the same.

In the middle of the 19th century the Swiss philosopher Henri-Frederic Amiel wrote: “Everyone starts the road in the world anew. Only institutions are becoming wiser. They store our collective experience” [Bordachev, 2017B]. Here, Europe was able to do the main thing – to create institutions that work under any political climate. In other words, whatever we say or write about the complexities of the European Union, these difficulties are problems of a much higher order than those that threaten the development or even the existence of the EAEU.

Strong institutions, primarily intergovernmental ones, are exactly what other integration associations lack most of all and the vivid example here is the EAEU. The Union periodically suffers from a fever; in 2017, the fact that the countries of the Union were ready to risk its ability to function in connection with bilateral political and diplomatic problems was fully revealed. But most alarming is that the countries of the EAEU are systemic, and Russia is not an exception – they are unable to fulfill their obligations fully in accordance with the Treaty on the EAEU and secondary legislation. In a number of cases, such as the relations between the countries of the Union and the EU, external players are guided by the undermining of Eurasian integration as such.

Attempts to include Russia in the western international community ended in 2007 with the presentation of a well-known report by the Russian head of state at a conference on international security in Munich [President of Russia, 2007]. However, European attempts to galvanize the relationship were still being made until 2014 (for example, the Partnership for Modernization).

China is integrated into this system to a significant extent [Friedberg, 2005, p. 14]. Chinese companies have long been confident in the U.S. market; they play by

the existing rules. But at the same time, China is not included in the main institutions that determine the development of the community led by the United States. China is not and cannot be a market democracy and is unlikely to be recognized as an equal participant in the West under any circumstances. That said, China does not aspire to either of these things. Its conflict with the West is of an existential nature because the rise of China will require a redistribution of consumption on a global scale. Are the U.S. and Europe ready to limit themselves in order to incorporate China as an equal distributor and recipient of global goods?

In the 1990s and early-2000s, the western and international communities became practically synonymous. The United States and its closest partners controlled the agenda of leading international institutions with confidence. At that point, the unity of the western community and its institutionalized regimes was not questioned. But then, everything changed [Mead, 2009]. New U.S. sanctions initiatives created (under certain circumstances) a threat to the energy security of the European Union, and also to the long-term plans to organize the supply of natural gas to Japan. The deployment of the U.S. antimissile defense system in Korea has already created extremely serious problems for Seoul and South Korean companies in the Chinese market. What is being done and said now, puts before them a choice that cannot be made.

The most prepared for the new dynamics are the individual Baltic and Eastern European countries which are ready to deny themselves real benefits in order to meet the requirements of allies of the United States. But they, of course, do not have a significant impact on the evolution of the community of western countries, regimes and institutions. Therefore, now it is especially important that the signs of a split are not outlined on the periphery, but in the core of this community. It is very likely that the transatlantic allies are poised to cross a line beyond which their relationship will never be the same. Thus, the actual question is how the U.S. will control Europe. This means that the influence of international security regimes and communities under the leadership of the United States will also undergo transformation.

It may sound trivial, but lessons must be learned in order to avoid the repetition of mistakes. The uniqueness of the situation in the Eurasian space is that its emerging international environment excludes the both possibility and the necessity of an undisputed hegemon. A space that includes at least three great powers – India, China and Russia – as well as a large group of significant medium-sized countries – Iran, Pakistan, Vietnam and Korea – may be a region of fierce competition, but it may also promote the emergence of a unique international regime. And, consequently, the megaregional international community and the regimes that arise and operate within it, could be ideal from the point of view of democracy and stability.

A separate practical issue related to broader Eurasian cooperation is the potential for economic integration its core. This needs to be understood theoretically.

In 2018, Russia chairs the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council. Judging by all signs, the Russian government takes the tasks related to the chairmanship very seriously [EEC]. It is possible that the Russian presidency of the EAEU may offer a reasonably

convenient opportunity to set up a working group of government representatives from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia in order to create an inventory of all outstanding obligations and mutual claims, and to determine ways to address and reduce them. This is not, and cannot be, the task of the supranational institute of the EAEU or the Eurasian Economic Commission. Only governments appointed by popularly elected heads of state can take responsibility for solving such a serious task. It has become a commonplace understanding that the powers of the EEC, the main executive body of the EAEU, are extremely limited and do not allow it to properly address integration (the problem of cooperation on customs barriers has been repeatedly discussed [Vinokurov, 2016, p. 58]).

The experience of integration in Western Europe was far less ambiguous. Participating countries, despite decades of cooperation, accept only legislative acts made by the Council of the EU, which includes the plenipotentiary ministers of the EU states. Without their decision, the European Commission, the executive body of the EU, cannot adopt any act of secondary legislation. Therefore, complaints about the fact that in the EAEU more issues are being resolved at the level of the Intergovernmental Council rather than the Eurasian Economic Commission, show insufficient knowledge of the European experience.

However, the difference is that in the European Union the council of ministers functions as a permanent institution with the apparatus, history and mechanisms necessary for coordinating positions before decisions are put to a vote. There is an institution for permanent representatives of members in Brussels and permanent expert committees. This avoids the gap between supranational bodies and states and enables the constant involvement of the governments of participating countries in coordinating positions on each issue. In this respect, Eurasian integration, unlike Europe's, stands on one leg – it has a relatively strong Eurasian Economic Commission and powerful higher decision-making bodies – the Supreme Eurasian Council and the Intergovernmental Council. But there is absolutely nothing between them that would allow governments directly accountable to heads of state and parliaments to work together on a more or less permanent basis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

At the moment, the objective preconditions for the promotion and development of the initiative for the creation of Greater Eurasia have been formed. In order to understand the rational bases on which it can be built, it is necessary to study its past, to find in it ideas and narratives that do not divide, but rather unite the peoples of our macroregion. It is vital to assess the development goals of Eurasian peoples in order to understand where they intersect, where they need to be harmonized, where they are complementary, and to highlight those goals that can be achieved jointly through the coordination of efforts at the interstate level.

It is essential to study modern collective security systems and to understand what experience is most applicable to present-day Eurasia. It is important to define a set of basic values of internal structure and international communication shared by all the peoples of the region. Among them, it is especially important to identify those spiritual and unifying values that can play a role in the future creation of their collective identification.

A general assessment is needed of the applicability of the most established concepts and rules of international communication to the Eurasian political and cultural environment in order to understand how these concepts and rules are refracted under Eurasian conditions. The most effective mechanisms and methods of cooperation arose on the western periphery of Greater Eurasia – in Europe, where they are based on a different political tradition. The tradition of cooperation as a result of rational choice can and should be applied in Eurasian conditions and re-interpreted to suit local contexts.

This requires looking at the strategic perspectives and motivations of each of the most important Eurasian players. China is the largest Eurasian state. It is practically self-sufficient due to a unique demography, and at first glance it does not need a broader community. But even China cannot return to the policy of closure which brought great shocks to the Chinese people. Russia, also due to its demography, cannot be self-sufficient and therefore should create international communities within which rules of communication will be more advanced and participants will be able to share a set of common values. The states of Central Asia, like Mongolia, try to formulate their development goals consistent with the need to preserve themselves as independent units of international relations. They have a stake in interaction with large regional and extra-regional players to balance their powerful neighbours. That said, of course, the degree of practical interdependence between the countries of Central Asia, China and Russia is great.

As for the functioning of institutions in Greater Eurasia (in particular, the EAEU), it is necessary to create optimal conditions for effective intergovernmental interaction in the present day rather than the 1950s when European integration began. It is obvious that the state is the supreme carrier of sovereign power and cannot renounce its sovereignty because of responsibility to the population. And it is this experience that should be carefully studied in order to preserve Eurasian integration. It is necessary, therefore, to concentrate efforts on comparing the approaches and representations of the main regional players and translate these approaches into already existing regimes and institutions – including the SCO, the OSCE and the BRICS.

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Концепция Большой Евразии в повороте России на Восток²

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Последние два-три года стали временем небывалого по масштабам всплеска интереса к евразийской тематике. Российская инициатива создания Большой Евразии, которая видится как основная концептуальная рамка для продвижения различных проектов сотрудничества в регионе, часто критикуется за отсутствие конкретного наполнения по ее реализации. Учитывая растущее число региональных инициатив, в том числе со стороны Китая и Индии, России необходимо не только сформулировать привлекательную идею, но и показать ее востребованность и эффективность.

Концепция Большой Евразии, несмотря на отсутствие для ее реализации объективных исторически сложившихся условий, может стать рациональным практическим воплощением широкого спектра приоритетов развития и обеспечения безопасности для широкой группы стран региона. Проблема исследования заключается в отсутствии объективных исторических предпосылок создания Большой Евразии при наличии широкого спектра субъективных причин.

В начале статьи анализируются предпосылки возникновения Большой Евразии, а также различные способы восприятия и политической интерпретации евразийского пространства. В силу исторических причин проекты по консолидации Евразии в основном оставались на бумаге, однако текущие региональные и глобальные тренды создают подходящие условия для их воплощения на практике.

В исследовании проводится анализ содержательного наполнения евразийской интеграции и возможных форматов сотрудничества. Особый акцент сделан на вопросах безопасности, экономическом взаимодействии, а также развитии институтов на евразийском пространстве. Подчеркивается необходимость реформы ОБСЕ с целью приближения ее деятельности к текущим геополитическим условиям. Также рассматриваются перспективы развития ШОС и ее роль в Большой Евразии.

Отдельное внимание уделяется отношениям с потенциальными участниками Большой Евразии (включая европейские страны) и внерегиональными акторами, а также использованию опыта европейской интеграции для развития евразийского пространства. Подчеркивается необходимость большего внимания к вопросу государственного суверенитета при взаимодействии в рамках ЕАЭС (по аналогии с европейским опытом представитель и экспертных групп), а также укрепления институционального потенциала ЕАЭС.

Ключевые слова: Большая Евразия; поворот на Восток; ЕАЭС; европейская интеграция; международное сообщество; внешняя политика РФ; ШОС; ОБСЕ; российско-китайские отношения

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