

Conjugation of the One Belt, One Road Initiative with the Greater Eurasian Partnership: New Opportunities in the 21st Century.

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Abstract. The article provides a retrospective analysis of the significance of two initiatives - One Belt, One Road (PRC) and the Greater Eurasian Partnership (Russian Federation). The points of correspondence and conjugation of these two are considered. Ways of combining the two key initiatives are discussed concerning the reinforcement of international cooperation and regional integration. The options of the current international situation are considered. The coronavirus epidemic is continuing to circulate all over the world and its impact changes economy. Global trade protectionism exacerbates the evolution of the global political framework. Today, the signing of the Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership (CEP) Agreement and the return of the Indo-Pacific Strategy to the Asia-Pacific region has accelerated the process of regional integration in Asia. In the new international setup, One Belt, One Road and the Greater Eurasian Partnership - the geostrategic concepts of China and Russia, respectively, have many intersection points in political, economic, humanitarian and other aspects. The combination of these two strategies will become one of the important areas of political and economic activity of the two nations, within the framework of the "comprehensive partnership and strategic interaction between China and Russia entering a new era", especially. China and Russia have a common task - to implement the conjugation of the two initiatives, to fully utilize their strategic attributes and pragmatic cooperation in the global-regional game, as well as promote the development of cooperation, getting maximum benefits and creating a win-win situation.

Keywords. China and Russia, One Belt and One Road, Greater Eurasian Partnership, integration, energy cooperation, new era

Introduction.

The One Belt, One Road Initiative inspired by China, and the Greater Eurasian Partnership put forward by Russia, are of particular importance within the framework of the Eurasian strategy, since China and Russia are the two leading powers in Eurasia, facing profound changes of the international situation. These initiatives are considered as a common strategy for the joint integration development of Eurasia from East to West. At the same time, they will inevitably affect other nations of Eurasia. China's One Belt, One Road Initiative is a transcontinental long-term political and investment program aimed at developing infrastructure and accelerating economic integration of countries located along the historic Silk Road. The Greater Eurasian Partnership is a way to implement the Russia's important strategy of Facing the East and building Eurasian economic integration. The format of the Greater Eurasian Partnership has several basis points, the Eurasian Economic Union being one of them. From Russia's point of view, the partnership based on the Union as a starting point, forms a network of economic cooperation having the EAEU as its center. Two Eurasian strategies - China's and Russia's ("westbound" and "eastbound") - will not only expand the scope of strategic interaction between the two nations, but also provide a realistic basis for a new model of Sino-Russian cooperation. As China develops westwards in various ways, the Greater Eurasian Partnership and the One Belt, One Road Initiative must get integrated.

The Background of the One Belt, One Road Initiative and the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

The rise of great powers usually manifests itself as a geopolitical rise. Due to various geographical features, the rise of each of those has its peculiar geopolitical track. Z. Brzezinski noted: "Geopolitics has advanced from regional thinking to global, wherein superiority over the entire Eurasian continent serves as the central basis for global dominance" [Brzezinski, 1998: 1].

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Currently, a multipolar model of further developments has been adopted globally. American domination over international politics has been shaken, the global economic center gradually drifting to Asia. Considering Eurasia as the central arena of global geopolitics, the Eurasian countries have put forward their own strategic plans in a new setup. For example: the Mausam Project (India), Vision 2025 (Pakistan), the Prairie Road (Mongolia), the Bright Road (Kazakhstan), the Middle Corridor (Turkey), etc. The One Belt, One Road Initiative and the Greater Eurasian Partnership, being the regional strategies of China and Russia in Eurasia, are based upon economic cooperation as the main content of the interregional strategy. These are the programs of cooperation between China and Russia in a new complex and volatile situation, which will help to cope with the shift of the international model of cooperation.

On the part of China, the One Belt, One Road Initiative was fashioned by the Chinese government in a new historical period. It is aimed at accelerating China's socio-economic development, facing new challenges on the world stage, including those caused by a decline in global economic development, as well as coordinating the international and domestic general situation for making important strategic decisions. The One Belt, One Road strategy is a key link and an important means of accomplishing the age-old dream and the rise of the great powers [Lu Wei, Li Dawei, 2016: 8]. Geopolitically speaking, this is a strategic move by China to break through the pressure between East and West, break through the strategic blockade by the U.S., and expand its own space of further development. Considering economic development, the One Belt, One Road Initiative is China's understanding and vision of new international relations based on its growing economic power and diplomatic capabilities [Liu Changming, Yao Shifan, 2016: 11]. As for multilateral cooperation, the One Belt, One Road initiative led to the development of the Belt and Road through bilateral trade, expanded the economic interests of the countries located in the One Belt and One Road zone, and strengthened China's global influence furthermore.

The new realities of global politics and economy turned out to be unfavorable for Russia, prompting its leadership to make adjustments to the hierarchy of strategic priorities. Russia's proposal to create the Greater Eurasian Partnership is motivated by a number of factors.

Firstly, it is the rise of Eurasia against the background of the European Idealism failure. The paradigm shift from Greater Europe to Greater Eurasia has lasted for a long period of time during the Cold War and ever after. As a consequence of the Ukrainian crisis, EU sanctions have pushed Russia to completely abandon its previous idea of Greater Europe. On September 12, 2015, this diplomatic concept was finalized in a speech at the XX annual Baltic Forum conference in Riga. Russia's ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov has acknowledged the impossibility of the Greater Europe concept for the Russian Federation. He pointed out that "the paths of Europe and Russia will diverge gravely for a long period of time – not months or even years, but probably for decades to come. The processes of Eurasian integration and cooperation are gaining momentum. These are the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the New Silk Road project. It has become trendy to declare that Greater Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok is being replaced by Greater Eurasia from Shanghai to Minsk... Euro-Atlantic and Eurasia are being formed as new focuses of global attraction, and the relations between them are making the main axis of world politics of the future" and "in the new geopolitical reality, Russia ceases to be the Eastern flank of the failed Greater Europe and turns into the Western flank of the emerging Greater Eurasia" [Ivanov, 2015: 2].

Russia has strived to reinforce economic cooperation with the Asian economies, particularly with China, through the concept of Greater Eurasia, in order to return to Europe. The idea of Greater Eurasia is another ambitious strategic model put forward by Russia after the failure of the idea of Greater Europe. It renders Russia's unwillingness to be singled out, its will to reshape the international political and economic order, and to have its superpower dream on the international stage back again [Lu Ping, 2019: 9].

Secondly, the Greater Eurasian Partnership is also a product of the Russian way of regional cooperation. Building conceptual commanding heights is an important factor in promoting the

Russian partnership proposal, which is based on the Eurasian Economic Union as a starting point and forms a network of economic cooperation having the Eurasian Economic Union as its center [Zhao Huasheng, 2017: 15].

Thirdly, the Greater Eurasian Partnership requires maintaining political stability in the face of slowing or even declining economic growth, as well as rapid development of its own economy, especially in the Far East and Siberia, due to the eastern vector of China's economy and regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region [Pang Dabeng, 2017: 13]. Russia hopes to develop the economy of Siberia and the Far East within the framework of the Greater Eurasia Initiative, which will make it an important basis for national development strategies of the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century [Zhang Haoqi, 2017: 14].

One can say that Russia and China are struggling to promote the transformation of the international order and optimize the structure of global leadership in order to make it more stable and effective for achieving global and regional stability. In this vein, the strategy of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is a response to the Chinese initiative One Belt, One Road. By combining these two initiatives, Russia continues to implement the Greater Eurasia strategy, which can be regarded as a positive consequence of China's One Belt, One Road Initiative. And the conjugation of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union makes full use of the comprehensive advantages of both sides, contributing to the strategic alignment of interests, providing cross-border strategic examples of conjugating for regional economic cooperation.

Points of Correspondence in the Conjugation of the One Belt, One Road Initiative with the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

Today's Eurasia, which has 75% of the world's population, 60% of total wealth and 75% of fossil energy, has two (the European Union and East Asia) of the three existing largest world economic centers (North America, the EU, East Asia). Collision of complex religious and civilizational forms, geographical interests of major powers and various belief systems have shaped a complicated state of fierce competition. No matter how the world situation develops in the future, the basic structure of global strategic resources focused on Eurasia will not change. Participation in the game of great powers on the Eurasian continent will mean the rise of China and Russia.

Firstly, Eurasia plays and continues to play an extremely important strategic role. The formation of a global power should possess three fundamental features: geographical size, national power and global influence. And, in particular, it must have a global strategic mind and the ability to influence, plan and control world affairs [Ma Zhenggang, 2015: 12]. Chinese economy, culture, diplomacy, military, etc. are not "influential" in the world, but only "exist". So China is just an "unfinished superpower," according to Shen Dawei, Professor of International Relations at George Washington University [Shen Dawei, 2014: 16]. Since it is not a global power in the full sense of the word, China's strategic influence can be concentrated in Eurasia only. Control over the implementation of the regional strategy is also mainly limited to the adjacent areas of China. China's global interests objectively require the state to formulate its international uplift strategy, as soon as possible – a geogeneral strategy corresponding to the strategy of peaceful development, and to carry out strategic planning and deployment on a global scale with a global perspective [Du Deben, Ma Ya Va, 2015: 7]. The same applies to Russia, whose strategy for the development of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is conditioned by Russia's political, economic, diplomatic and strategic alienation from the West. This is not only due to the Ukrainian crisis caused by Western economic sanctions, but also to Russian "Europeanism" and "Eurasianism" as signs of identity and national disposition. The Greater Eurasian Partnership is a transformation of Russia's failed Greater Europe Strategy and a continuation of its Eurasian geopolitical game.

Secondly, China and Russia have the same concept of strategic transfer. The Eurasian region, encompassing Northeast, Northern and Northwest China from the North, plays an extremely important role in the country's geostrategic security system. The importance of Eurasia for China's geopolitical security lies in safeguarding China's stable strategic rear. As for South Asia, the nature

of Sino-Indian relations in recent years has become an obstacle to their further development. Moreover, there is a possibility of new confrontation between China and India, an example of which is the Sino-Indian border conflict in the Galvan River Valley. Besides, Eurasia has a land corridor connecting China to Western Asia, Africa and Europe, which plays a key role in promoting the One Belt, One Road project. As for Russia, the post-Soviet space is seen as a matter of key national interest in order to protect Russia's sphere of influence. So, Russia has promptly developed and launched a foreign policy pattern for the CIS countries, while simultaneously commencing to promote the process of integration with the countries of the post-Soviet space. President Putin's proposal on the initiative of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, designed to replace the original strategy of Greater Europe and integration into Europe, reflects a serious adjustment of Russia's diplomatic strategy. This is not only an inevitable result of its geopolitical game with the United States and Europe, but also a trend of international political and economic development. Given Russia's current predicament, it is obvious that the Greater Eurasian Partnership Initiative will provide her with more opportunities.

Thirdly, One Belt, One Road and the Great Eurasian Partnership - are two strategic junctions to become a new engine of economic development and cooperation between the two nations. Currently, the world economic system has entered a period of profound restructuring. The condition of regional integration has been gradually consolidated and entered a new stage of development, especially after the epidemic. The countries' hopes for the institutionalization of economic and trade cooperation relations and avoiding external shocks caused by the uncertain global economic situation have increased. The official signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) on November 15, 2020 confirms this point. In this context, the mentioned initiatives seek to expand their development area through large-scale strategic partnership agreements between the regions, thereby achieving a favorable position within the Eurasian economic landscape.

Chinese scientist Liu Fenghua believes that "Russia is adjusting its economic structure, actively expanding economic ties abroad, putting forward the idea of creating the Greater Eurasian Partnership, hoping to expand trade and economic cooperation with the Asia-Pacific countries in order to give impetus to Russia's economic recovery and development in the Eastern part. It goes without saying that Russia is bound to continue seeking external assistance for its economic and social development through the connected cooperation of the Belt and Road, building out the Eurasian Partnership and other ways" [Liu Fenghua, 2017: 10]. Besides, it will become an important starting point in Russia's struggle for the geo-economic and geopolitical dominance over Eurasia in the future [Wang, Shuchun, Zhu Yan, 2017: 5]. Combining the two strategies, expanding economic and trade cooperation between the two countries, can both upgrade cooperation between developing economies and lead to the formation of a new type of international economic power, which will even out the influence of developed economies.

Priority Proposals for the Conjugation of the One Belt, One Road Initiative with the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

The two main enterprises for regional cooperation - One Belt, One Road and the Greater Eurasian Partnership - are not mutually exclusive, but on the contrary, have much in common, regarding the strategic perspective. So, the conjugation of these two requires stronger consensus at the highest level, as well as closer cooperation in trade, economic and humanitarian realms for general reinforcing of the region integration situation.

Firstly, considering the political aspect, China and Russia should strengthen partnership relations at the highest state level. Within the framework of the "Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the development of comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation entering a new era", a consensus on linking at the highest level has been consolidated. At the 2nd International Forum One Belt, One Road in April 2019, Vladimir Putin pointed out that "the Russian part has repeatedly stressed that the initiative of the President of the

People's Republic of China One Belt, One Road is consonant to the Russian idea of creating the Greater Eurasian partnership, which precisely implies "integration of integrations", that is, close conjugation of various bilateral and multilateral integration processes in Eurasia" [International Forum, 2020: 3]. In the "Joint Statement of the PRC and the Russian Federation on the development of comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation entering a new era", it was stated that "the Chinese part supports the initiative to form the Greater Eurasian Partnership. The parties believe that these initiatives can develop in parallel and in a coordinated manner, that they will contribute to the development of regional associations, bilateral and multilateral integration processes for the benefit of the peoples of the Eurasian continent" [Joint Statement, 2020: 4]. The initiative and the multilateral mechanism for the development of the strategy require that both China and Russia coordinate the interests of the countries located along the path of the Greater Eurasian Partnership. Thus, this requires reinforcing of regular and high-quality contacts between the leaders and governments of the two nations at the highest level and promoting the integration of the two strategies, based on the interests of China and Russia, as well as the interests of the Eurasian region.

Secondly, considering the economic aspect, it is necessary to reinforce mutually beneficial energy cooperation between China and the EAEU member states, thereby contributing to the integration of the One Belt, One Road Project and the Greater Eurasian Partnership. In recent years, China has become the largest trade partner among the most important trade and economic partners of the Eurasian Economic Union. Despite a slight decrease in trade turnover due to the COVID-19 pandemic, China remains the main strategic partner of the EAEU member states. According to the Eurasian Economic Commission, the main trading partners of the EAEC in January-April 2020 were China (29.3% of the union's trade volume), Germany (8.3%), Turkey (4.4%), Italy (4.1%), and the USA (3.3%). China is the largest trading partner of the EAEC [17]. The main commodity exported by the EEC to China is crude oil (sales amounted to \$8.4 billion, an increase of 101% compared to January-March 2019), with 93% of oil supplies coming from Russia [6]. The EAEU, owing to its favorable geographical location and general regulation, has become an economic bridge between the One Belt, One Road strategy and the Greater Eurasian Partnership. China and Russia should expand energy cooperation in all directions simultaneously, stimulate the energy infrastructure construction in other countries, achieve complementary advantages of supply and demand markets of energy in Eurasia, turn the advantages of resources into economic advantages. China should continue to reinforce cooperation in the energy sector with other EAEU member states as an important starting point, as well as carry out practical cooperation in the field of supplies, localization of production of modern equipment, digitization of energy industry and financing.

Thirdly, in terms of public opinion, it is necessary to reinforce the socio-political foundation of the One Belt, One Road and the Greater Eurasian Partnership. In recent years, the political trust and economic potential of China and Russia have constantly been on the rise, and cooperation in various fields has been carried out comprehensively. Considering the epidemic, the impetus for the rise of trade between China and Russia is obvious. Both countries have made significant progress in humanitarian exchanges in recent years, in particular within the framework of the Chinese Initiative One Belt, One Road, while mutual awareness and mutual understanding of the peoples of China and Russia still need further enhancement. The two sides should reinforce cultural exchanges and friendship in the realm of culture.

CONCLUSION

The One Belt, One Road Initiative is supposed to use the economic corridors of five "communications" - political contacts, infrastructural interconnectedness, free trade, financial flows and humanitarian exchanges - as its foundation. This will activate a new point of economic growth in Eurasia, serve its stable development and economic prosperity, and will ultimately make it possible to form a uniform economic area in Eurasia. Similarly, Russia's intention to build the Greater Eurasian Partnership with China means using her unique geopolitical and economic

standing in Eurasia to obtain more foreign markets through broader regional cooperation and provide more space for her own development. This will create a new pole of global economic growth, founded on the Eurasian Economic Sector.

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