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‘GREATER EUROPE’ OR ‘GREATER EURASIA’? IN SEARCH OF NEW IDEAS FOR THE EURASIAN INTEGRATION*

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Abstract. The article considers the genesis of the idea of ‘Greater Eurasia’ which refers to the common humanitarian, economic, political and security space from Lisbon to Shanghai. In the first part of the article, the author focuses on the development of the idea of ‘Greater Europe’ and its historical background. The author notes that the idea of ‘Greater Eurasia’ was preceded by the idea of ‘Greater Europe’ as a project of integration or convergence of the leading European countries and Russia. In the second part of the article, the author considers possible ways and prospects for cooperation of the EU and the EAEU in the framework of the idea of ‘Greater Europe’. The article emphasizes that under the implementation of the project of the Eurasian Economic Union, the idea of ‘Greater Europe’ was associated not only with the interaction of the EU and Russia, but also of the EU and the EAEU. However, from the author’s point of view, today the idea of ‘Greater Europe’ from Lisbon to Vladivostok is losing its relevance due to China’s ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative. The author considers the perceptions of the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative by the EU and the EAEU and concludes that the idea of ‘Greater Eurasia’ with the participation of the EU, the EAEU and China is a new geo-political phenomenon which will represent a common space between Europe, the EAEU states and Asia and in which Russia and other members of the EAEU can become a centre for integration of Asia and Europe. According to the author, this idea has a number of advantages as well as risks that are presented in the article.

Key words: ‘Greater Eurasia’; ‘Greater Europe’; EAEU; EU; China; ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative; integration

The modern world is characterized by the intensive formation of a polycentric system of international relations, whose main actors are sovereign states and international organizations. The recent developments in the international relations prove that the changes in the system of international relations are not complete and lead to the future multipolar world order. It is the three integration projects implemented in Eurasia today that can become the most important actors in the multipolar world: the European Union (the largest economic bloc), the Eurasian Economic Union (the largest geographical bloc), and the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative of by China (with the largest population). China, whose the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative includes Central Asian states, Russia, and Eastern European states, can become a partner for both the European Union and the EAEU [5]. This would connect the EU and the EAEU with China in a new broader geopolitical framework ‘from Lisbon to Shanghai’ [1], create ‘Big Eurasia’ with an active role of the European Union, the EAEU and China, promote protectionist tendencies, stimulate inter-regional cooperation and lead to greater prosperity across the whole Eurasia [19].

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The idea of ‘Greater Eurasia’ was preceded by the idea of ‘Greater Europe’ as the project of integration or convergence of the leading European countries and Russia. This concept has existed for quite a long time and has been discussed since the beginning of the twentieth century. Most scientists use the term ‘Greater Europe’ referring to the space from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean including all states located in Europe and the member states of the current Eurasian Economic Union. It was H.J. Mackinder’s geopolitical theory that first presented ‘Greater Europe’ as an entity or a common space [7]. In his fundamental work “Geographical Pivot of History”, Mackinder introduced the concept ‘heartland’ as the hypothetical heart of Eurasia. From Mackinder’s point of view, the ‘heartland’ had a fundamental influence on the events that took place in Europe throughout its history [14]. According to Mackinder, Europe was a birthplace of progress and modern civilization; however the ‘heartland’ controlled by Russia was the force directly affecting it. Mackinder noted that the union of the continental Europe and Russia as the ‘heartland’ could create a powerful and dominant world power centre.

The ideas of the German geopolitician Karl Haushofer can be considered as developing this concept. He called on the Soviet Union, Germany and Japan to unite into a geopolitical bloc to confront the dominant Anglo-Saxon marine civilization. In the 1950s, French President Charles de Gaulle introduced the expression ‘Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals’ as a designation of a political rapprochement of France, Germany, countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the USSR. In the 1980s, the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev spoke about a ‘common European house’. In his opinion, the implementation of this idea would lead to the development of integration of the West and the East of Europe. This rapprochement was meant to result in the elimination of the military-political confrontation of the socialist and capitalist systems in Europe.

‘GREATER EUROPE’ FROM LISBON TO VLADIVOSTOK, AND COOPERATION OF THE EU AND THE EAEU

In 2001, the European Commission President Romano Prodi suggested that the EU and Russia should create a Common European economic space. The idea seemed utopian as the parties did not even have a free-trade agreement. However, the very fact of such a proposal indicated that the European partners took into consideration the concept of ‘Greater Europe’ and wanted to promote its implementation [15]. From their part, at the EU-Russia summits, the Russian leaders repeatedly declared their desire to accelerate the construction of ‘Greater Europe’ from Lisbon to Vladivostok. Thus, the President of Russia Vladimir Putin referred to the idea of ‘Greater Europe’ in his speech at the EU-Russia summit in 2005. According to him, this process has continued since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 [7].

However, under the implementation of the project of the Eurasian Economic Union, the idea of ‘Greater Europe’ was associated not only with the interaction of the EU and Russia, but also of the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union [3]. In the article the Russian President Putin published in the newspaper ‘Izvestia’ in 2011,

the future Eurasian Economic Union was presented as a bridge between Europe and the dynamically developing Asia-Pacific region [10]. Some European leaders expressed support for the development of relations between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union [12]. Thus, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for the discussion of trade cooperation of two integration projects. During his visit to Kazakhstan, the former President of France Francois Hollande called for starting a dialogue between the EU and the EAEU.

According to experts, the natural foundation for cooperation of the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union has already developed. These are impressive traffic flows, potential investment ties, economic security issues, the EAEU interest in the European export of technologies, and cross-border infrastructure issues [11]. However, the Ukrainian crisis caused a political conflict between Russia and the European Union. Nevertheless, being interested in infrastructure, energy, investment, scientific and technological cooperation with the European Union, Russia put forward the concept of 'integration of integrations' or 'pairing' of the EU and the EAEU [20]. Other Eurasian Economic Union member states willingly supported this initiative. Thus, a non-preferential agreement that would not increase trade liberalization beyond the level established in the World Trade Organization became possible though it would contribute to the development of cooperation in the above-mentioned priority areas of mutual interest.

In October 2015, the Eurasian Economic Commission submitted a proposal to the European Commission to establish official contacts and start a dialogue on a common economic space [9]. However, the response was intended not for the ECE (and, thus, the EAEC), but for Russia. In November 2015, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker sent an official letter to the Russian government to advocate the development of relations between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union, noting that he had already instructed the European Commission to develop proposals on the potential areas of cooperation with the EAEU. However, he emphasized that the decision on the implementation of this idea should be made by the consensus of all EU members and synchronized with the implementation of the Minsk Agreements on Ukraine. Juncker's initiative drew sharp criticism, especially in Poland and the Baltic States. In turn, Russia expressed doubt about the necessity to connect the dialogue between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union with resolving the Ukrainian crisis, noting that the implementation of the Minsk Agreements largely depended on Kiev. Despite the failure of his first initiative, Jean-Claude Juncker made another symbolic step towards Moscow, when in June 2016 he visited the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum though only to exchange views and express common commitment to the multilateral dialogue.

As a result, the EU-EAEU 'pairing' remains an elusive idea despite its importance for the development of the relations between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union. The EU prefers to promote the bilateral dialogue with the countries of the EAEU and sign the corresponding agreements, in particular with Armenia and Kazakhstan. According to the experts of the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), by

2025 the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union are not just to conclude the free trade agreement, but also to discuss a comprehensive bilateral agenda with issues of mutual interest such as the reduction of non-tariff barriers to trade, access to financial markets, regulation of intellectual property rights, visa liberalization, energy cooperation, development of international transport corridors, etc. However, the comprehensive approach entails a number of risks. First, the regimes such as free trade or visa-free zones require not only the resolution of the crisis in Ukraine, but also a certain political rapprochement and profound structural trust between the European Union and Russia. The EU approach towards Russia is based not only on the idea of a comprehensive arrangement ('big deal'), but also on the idea of a gradual restoration of mutual trust through bilateral pilot projects. Second, to develop the partnership with the European Union, the EAEU needs to have not only political, but also an attractive economic basis. Only with the restoration of the stable economic growth in Russia and Kazakhstan, and positive dynamics of structural reforms in these countries enhancing competitiveness and openness of their economies, the European business and officials taking political decisions will pay more attention to the Eurasian Economic Union.

Proceeding from the European approach of 'connectivity' within 'Greater Europe', the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union could discuss such issues as: simplification of customs and visa procedures, removal of non-tariff barriers, gradual opening of financial markets, convergence of technical regulations and other standards, development of infrastructure projects. By 2025, the EU and Russia could start developing and then signing a renewed bilateral agreement, which in the long term could be projected to the level of the entire Eurasian Economic Union.

THE 'BELT AND ROAD' INITIATIVE AND THE PROSPECTS OF 'GREATER EURASIA': PERCEPTIONS FROM THE EAEU AND THE EU

The idea of 'Greater Europe' is losing its relevance due to the realization of the 'Belt and Road' Initiative (BRI) proposed by China's President XI Jinping in 2013. This project can seriously change the geopolitical situation in Eurasia. The concept of the 'Belt and Road' Initiative consists of two major logistic and economic projects: the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century. Both projects are based on the transport and logistics network in Eurasia including railways and highways, air and sea routes, oil and gas pipelines, and communication lines. Along the transport routes appropriate infrastructure is to be created or modernized. It is assumed that the 'Belt and Road' Initiative will lead to the integrated economic corridor through the entire Eurasian space that will connect China with European countries. The implementation of the BRI hypothetically gives to all countries of Eurasia involved in the project such advantages as: development of transport and logistics networks connecting all countries of Eurasia; prospects for creating a common economic space in Eurasia; new possibilities to overcome political contradictions by intensifying economic cooperation, etc.

Both the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union are particularly interested in the implementation of the Silk Road Economic Belt, as the EU and the

EAEU member states are involved in the project either as transit countries (the EAEU), or as the final destination of trade routes from China to Europe (the EU). At the same time, China proposed to create a regional free trade area in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The initiative of China was perceived by the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union differently. All EAEU member states agreed that under the significant deficit in the trade balance with China the free trade zone between China and the Eurasian Economic Union would be a serious challenge for many domestic industries and agriculture of the EAEU countries. However, the EAEU member states have different approaches to the cooperation in investments and transport infrastructure development. Thus, Russia is traditionally wary of the expansion of economic cooperation with China fearing primarily the geo-economic consequences [16]. Nevertheless, today there are preconditions that would urge the Eurasian Economic Union countries to find a common approach to participation in the Silk Road Economic Belt.

First, Russia is also interested in China's investments in its major infrastructure and energy projects [8]. The problem is only in finding mutually acceptable conditions for investments. Second, Russia, Kazakhstan and other EAEU countries (except Armenia) are on the same transport routes that are to be developed in the framework of the 'Belt and Road' Initiative. Therefore, these countries need to coordinate the pairing of their transport systems, primarily in technological and regulatory terms [21]. Third, the Eurasian Economic Union countries, in particular Kazakhstan, take into consideration the fact that the protection of their national interests in the collective format under the dialogue with China could be more effective than at the bilateral level. Therefore, both in the framework of the Russian-Chinese bilateral dialogue and at the level of the EAEU-China cooperation, there already exist different institutional formats for the implementation of the idea of 'pairing' of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt [17]. Thus, in June 2016, the joint statement on the transition to the negotiation phase of the Agreement on trade-economic cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and the People's Republic of China was signed. In October 2017, at the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Hangzhou, the parties announced the end of the negotiations. In early 2017, the Eurasian Economic Commission published a list of priority projects to be implemented by the Eurasian Economic Union in the framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Most of them involve construction of new routes and modernization of the existing roads, construction of transport-logistic centers, and development of key transport hubs [2].

In the European Union, the opinions on the prospects of its cooperation with China differ. The European states did not pay much attention to Xi Jinping's proposal on the launch of the 'Belt and Road' Initiative. Nor did any European government immediately give a positive response to China's call for the countries to become members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the China-led multilateral financial institution which was officially created in October 2013 and became a key source of financial support for the BRI. However, from the moment most EU member states became the

co-founders of AIIB in March 2015, their interest in the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative began to increase steadily. The issues of cooperation in the framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt were included in the agenda of meetings of the officials of China and the European Union states; the leaders of most European countries in a declarative manner supported the idea of the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative [18]. As a result, all the EU countries are involved in the BRI (most EU countries are members of the Asian infrastructure investment Bank, and participate in the projects of European transport infrastructure development financed by Chinese investors). The amount of Chinese investments in the EU increase [13]. However, the Western European countries are wary of the investment policy of China in the framework of the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative. Besides the European Union lacks a common foreign policy strategy regarding China especially in the context of the EU cooperation with China in implementing the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative. China, in turn, changes its investment strategy in Europe which manifests in developing relations with EU countries at the bilateral level, primarily with the countries of Central, Eastern (in the format of 16+1) and Southern (primarily, with Greece) Europe. China not only increases investments in the countries of these regions, but also gets their political support.

One of the most popular perceptions of ‘Greater Eurasia’ is that it is a new geo-political phenomenon. ‘Greater Eurasia’ represents a common space between Europe, the Eurasian Economic Union states, and Asia, so Russia and other members of the EAEU could play the role of a centre of integration for Asia and Europe [6].

The idea of a ‘Greater Europe’ is losing its relevance due to a number of factors, such as: the deterioration of relations between Russia and the European Union; the Russia’s ‘pivot to Asia’, changes in the Russian foreign policy strategy towards the development of the Eurasian Economic Union, and ‘pairing’ of its activities with other integration projects in Eurasia; implementation of the China’s ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative, and so on. The idea of ‘Greater Europe’ was replaced by the concept of ‘Greater Eurasia’. Therefore, in the long term the European Union would not stay on the periphery of the Eurasian integration processes.

The idea of ‘Greater Eurasia’ with the participation of the European Union, Eurasian Economic Union and China has a number of advantages. First, the idea of ‘Greater Eurasia’ from Lisbon to Shanghai with the prospects for strengthening political cooperation of the EU, EAEU and China and ‘integration of integrations’ would contribute to the transformations of the system of international relations, and to the construction of a multipolar world based on the principles of transparency, equality and mutual respect. Second, the European Union, Eurasian Economic Union and China could improve the mechanisms of coordination of actions on prevention and resolution of conflicts by addressing challenges and threats to the energy, environmental, information and food security. This idea would promote the international prestige of the EU, EAEU and China, and strengthen the UN role in international affairs for Russia (EAEU), France (EU) and

China are permanent members of the UN Security Council. Third, in the geo-economic sense, all the parties concerned need a common economic space from Lisbon to Shanghai, primarily as the alliance of the European capital and technology with the Eurasian resources and human capital. Only such an alliance would be a competitive pole in the new global architecture. Fourth, given the fact that all the countries of the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union participate in the Silk Road Economic Belt, the trade and economic cooperation between them could be complementary rather than competitive [22]. The construction of the transport and logistics network within the Silk Road Economic Belt would lead to the increase of goods turnover between the Eurasian Economic Union, China and the European Union, and would help all the member states to oppose discrimination in the world markets.

However, there are some risks in implementing the idea of ‘Greater Eurasia’. First, historically, if the great powers had overlapping spheres of influence, there would almost certainly be a conflict. There is a great risk of ‘rivalry of integrations’ rather than of ‘integration of integrations’. There is a high probability of a clash of interests of Russia and China in Central Asia, interests of Russia and the European Union in the countries of the Eastern partnership, interests of China and the EU in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Second, in the trade and economic cooperation in the EU-EAEU-China triangle, there is a large asymmetry towards the Sino-European trade relations (in 2016, the EU-China trade turnover reached \$547 billion, the EAEU-China trade turnover — \$78.6 billion, and the EU-the EAEU trade turnover — \$237.6 billion). Third, the political crisis between the European Union and Russia, as well as the EU sanctions against Russia have a negative impact on the ‘political climate’ of cooperation in ‘Greater Eurasia’. Besides, the European Union considers the idea of a common economic space with Russia rather than with the EAEU considering the Eurasian Economic Union as a ‘Russia’s political project’. Thus, the EU demonstrates that it is not yet ready to recognize the Eurasian Economic Union as a subject of the international law. Fourth, in the relations of the European Union and China, there are also issues that should be resolved (lack of an investment agreement between the EU and China, non-recognition of China’s market economy status in the WTO, human rights issues in the China-Europe relations, etc.). Fifth, the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union and China have a number of internal problems to be solved (the situation in the EU after the Brexit, the migration crisis, political instability in some countries of the Silk Road Economic Belt, etc.). Finally, the rapprochement of the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union and China in Eurasia may face opposition of the United States for its foreign policy under the Trump’s administration is becoming increasingly unpredictable.

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«БОЛЬШАЯ ЕВРОПА» ИЛИ «БОЛЬШАЯ ЕВРАЗИЯ»? В ПОИСКЕ НОВЫХ ИДЕЙ ДЛЯ ЕВРАЗИЙСКОЙ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ*

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Статья посвящена идее построения «Большой Евразии» как общего гуманитарного, экономического и политического пространства от Лиссабона до Шанхая. В первой части статьи автор рассматривает популярную в 1990-е годы концепцию «Большой Европы», которая предшествовала идее «Большой Евразии». Идея «Большой Европы» затрагивалась в выступлениях таких политиков, как Ш. де Голль, М. Горбачев и др. и предполагала постепенное сближение и последующую интеграцию России и европейских государств. Во второй части статьи автор оценивает перспективы сотрудничества Евразийского экономического союза и Европейского союза в контексте реализации идеи «Большой Европы». Несмотря на множество преимуществ идеи «Большой Европы», автор обозначает ряд факторов, оказывающих на нее негативное влияние: ухудшение российско-европейских отношений, вызванное украинским кризисом и нелегитимной антироссийской санкционной политикой Евросоюза; стремление Евросоюза развивать отношения со странами Евразийского экономического союза на двустороннем, а не на наднациональном уровне и др. В третьей части статьи автор отмечает, что концепция «Большой Европы» постепенно утрачивает актуальность как в связи с ухудшением отношений России и Евросоюза, так и вследствие реализации Китаем инициативы «Один пояс, один путь» — создания сети экономических коридоров и транспортных маршрутов, которая связывает Европу, Россию и страны Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона. По мнению автора, в настоящее время актуализируется идея построения «Большой Евразии» с географическими границами от Лиссабона до Шанхая, в которой Россия и страны ЕАЭС могли бы стать центром евразийской интеграции. Эта идея имеет ряд рисков и преимуществ, которые и обозначены в статье.

Ключевые слова: Евразия; ЕАЭС; Китай; «Большая Европа»; «Большая Евразия»; интеграция

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