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Greater Eurasian Partnership – a «Great» Chance for the Russian Transport Industry?



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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the priorities of the Russian Federation's Transport Strategy in the context of forming the «Greater Eurasian Partnership». The key area is development of international transport corridors in Eurasia.

The authors, summarising in a brief review documents, their own publications and the works of other authors on this topic, emphasise the process of systematic advancement of issues of Eurasian transport connectivity to the agenda of international organisations, and the contribution of the Russian Federation to this process.

Keywords: *Greater Eurasian Partnership; transport strategy; international transport corridors; Euro-Asian transport connectivity.*

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BACKGROUND

Against the backdrop of strengthening integration processes in the world, Russia, advocating for the synergy of national and international development projects while maintaining a balance of interests of all participants, has put forward a strategic initiative to form a Greater Eurasian Partnership, which provides for establishment of multilateral cooperation between the member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) [1]. As noted, «the Russian initiative involves formation of a set of national and regional integration strategies and projects that develop in a coordinated manner in the interests of peace, security, and prosperity of the people of Eurasia»¹. We are also talking about connecting with the Chinese «One Belt, One Road» initiative, which unites the projects of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road of 21st century.

As noted earlier, «the potential of «Greater Eurasia» is not limited only to economic integration. This concept can also act as a strategy to overcome the global crisis and form a sustainable multipolar world order based on the dialogue of civilisations. In this context, we can say that the concept of the «Greater Eurasian Partnership» acts as an «integration of integrations» [1]. In the speech of the President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin at the International Forum «One Belt, One Road» on May 14, 2017, it was emphasised that «...greater Eurasia is not an abstract geopolitical scheme, but, without any exaggeration, a truly civilisational project aimed at the future»².

In terms of its sectoral structure, the Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP) could include the following components:

- Network of international trade and investment agreements.
- Common transport space.
- Single network of economic corridors and development zones.
- Digital dimension.
- Energy space.
- Financial dimension³.

The project is being implemented on multiple tracks.

Among them, for example, there is an educational one. An example of successful activity in this area was the holding of the Educational Forum of the Greater Eurasian Partnership on September 25, 2023. The forum was organised as part of the International Partnership Week of the National Research University Higher School of Economics, timed to coincide with the Russian Federation's chairmanship of the EAEU bodies and aimed at linking the strategies and initiatives of its participants in the field of education, science and technology. The forum was attended by representatives of 23 countries and more than 40 scientific and educational organizations⁴.

A modern high-tech transport network is an integral element that contributes to the deepening of modern Eurasian integration. In this regard, the transport sector is invariably a priority of the Greater Eurasian Partnership. As is rightly noted, «the transport system is the framework of any economy for increasing foreign trade flows. Russia, occupying 1/7 of the world's land and located along the entire Eurasian continent, can offer a wide range of competitive air, road, rail and sea routes for all modes of transport. System work is underway to develop transport infrastructure in the East–West and North–South directions... The Northern Sea Route has good prospects for commercial exploitation»³. In general, due to its geographical location

¹ Greater Eurasian Partnership: View from East and West. Project. Presidential Grants Competition [In Russian]. [Electronic resource]: <https://xn-80afedbalict6afooklqi5o.xn--p1ai/public/application/item?id=a043d464-2eac-42de-a275-706fb8c3d858>. Last accessed 30.05.2023.

² Speech by V. V. Putin at the International Forum «One Belt, One Road». Administration of the President of the Russian Federation: official website, 2017. [Electronic resource]: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54491>. Last accessed 04.04.2021.

³ On the Russian initiative of the Greater Eurasian Partnership. [Electronic resource]: https://www.mid.ru/ru/activity/coordinating_and_advisory_body/head_of_subjects_council/materialy-o-vypolnenii-rekomendacij-zasedanij-sgs/xxxvi-zasedanie-sgs/1767070/. Last accessed 30.10.2023.

⁴ The HSE hosted the Greater Eurasian Partnership Educational Forum. [Electronic resource]: <https://www.hse.ru/gepf2023/#news>. Last accessed 30.10.2023.



and scale, Russia has significant transit potential in ensuring Euro-Asian transport links.

In this regard, the concept of «transport connectivity» acquires special significance. This term has become firmly established on the agenda of international organisations and bilateral meetings, including at the highest state level⁵.

The inclusion of Eurasian economic integration among the priorities of the transport complex of the Russian Federation reflects the fact that «the concept of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is based on the fact that trade and economic ties are a key instrument for uniting the countries of Eurasia and linking integration projects throughout the vast Eurasian space» [2].

The Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2030 with a forecast for the period up to 2035, approved by the Government of the Russian Federation in November 2021, notes the need to implement the transit potential of our country through the accelerated development of transport infrastructure, as well as the use of the geographical features of the Russian Federation as a competitive advantage⁶. Also, one of the objectives of the Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation is «effective servicing of foreign trade of the Russian Federation, development of export of transport services and development of international cooperation»⁶.

An important area is implementation of a coordinated (agreed) transport policy within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, which can be considered as a key centre for formation of the integration contour of the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

⁵ See, for example: Transport connectivity for efficient and sustainable value chains. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Committee on Transport. Sixth session. Bangkok, 12–13 November 2020. Item 3a of the provisional agenda. Cross-cutting issues in transport. [Electronic resource]: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/RU_2_TRANSPORT%20CONNECTIVITY%20FOR%20EFFICIENT%20AND%20RESILIENT%20SUPPLY%20CHAINS.pdf. Last accessed 30.10.2023..

⁶ Order of the Government of the Russian Federation dated November 27, 2021 № 3363-r «On approval of the Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2030 with a forecast for the period until 2035». [Electronic resource]: <https://mintrans.gov.ru/ministry/targets/187/191/documents>. Last accessed 23.10.2022.

System work is carried out to promote initiatives to develop Eurasian transport links, introduce digital technology in the transport and logistics process within the framework of such international organisations as ESCAP, SCO, ASEAN. In particular, at the initiative of the Russian Federation, the international transport route «Europe – Western China» was included in the List of Asian Highway Routes approved by the ESCAP Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network⁷. With the active participation of Russian experts, the ESCAP technical assistance project «Improving the Efficiency of Intermodal Transport in Asia through the Development of Coordination Measures to Support a Balanced Account of Economic, Social and Environmental Factors» was implemented⁸. The project included a comparative analysis of four intermodal transport corridors and existing transport coordination mechanisms. Based on the results of the study, it was decided to focus the project work on the North–South ITC⁸.

Many researchers note the great potential for expanding international transport corridors as a basis for developing the Greater Eurasian Partnership (e.g.: [3]). It is reasonably noted that «following the creation of the ITC, the accompanying infrastructure, industrial production in neighbouring areas, and customs regulation begin to develop – such corridors are a powerful impetus for the development of a number of industries. In addition, effective and mutually beneficial joint infrastructure projects are a significant guarantee for maintaining friendly relations among the participants implementing these projects... It is the launch and uninterrupted operation of international transport corridors that can become a driver for expanding cooperation in the format of the Greater Eurasian Partnership and deepening cooperation between all interested participants in priority sectors of the economy».

⁷ Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highways Network. UNESCAP. [Electronic resource]: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/intergovernmental-agreement-asian-highway-network>. Last accessed 23.10.2022.

⁸ Dry Ports and Intermodal Transport. Text: electronic // United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. [Electronic resource]: <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/dry-ports-and-intermodal-transport>. Last accessed 23.10.2022.

An essential factor contributing to implementation of the transport component of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is the possibility of creating a single transport space, integrated implementation of the tasks of all participants. For example, the authors [4], highlighting the priority areas of integration of individual EAEU member states in the transport sector, note that «when forming a common market for transport services of the EAEU, it is necessary to achieve such a level of cooperation that a balance will be found between the national interests of each member state of the Union and the goals that are set at the supranational level in terms of implementing a coordinated (agreed) transport policy of the EAEU». The attention of researchers is drawn to promising areas of interaction, individual projects and formats of cooperation in the transport and logistics sector between the EAEU and the countries hosting transport and logistics corridors (eg: [5]).

The transport component of the Greater Eurasian Partnership remains an important subject of scientific research both as a specific topic and in the context of broader discussions (e.g. [6–7]).

In general, the concept of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is intended to become an alternative to both the processes of globalisation and the processes of nationalisation in the modern world. Therefore, the concept of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is intended to replace both the globalisation that has compromised itself and the nationalisation that is limiting itself.

The rapid and irreversible changes taking place in the modern world, with all the difficulties and challenges, provide a unique opportunity for a global restructuring of the transport industry, while one of the main vectors of development of modern Russia is the development and implementation of the concept of «Greater Eurasia».

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