TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSIT: FROM SEA TO OVERLAND ROUTES?

Chumlyakov, Cyril S. *– Ph.D. (Tech.), associate professor of the department of economics, organization and industrial management of Tyumen State Oil and Gas University, Tyumen, Russia.*

ABSTRACT

International transit as a unique form of transport services' export is of particular importance for the country. Priority is the development of international economic relations between Europe and Asia, with a tendency of further growth. The author explores the competitive space of transit traffic through Russian transport communications. Comprehensive analysis of various trends and options for long-term predictions allowed the author to determine potential cargo flows on overland corridors of the Russian Federation, currently directed by maritime routes bypassing its territory. Special importance of rail transport in ensuring the development of foreign economic relations and international trade has been justified, need to create new overland transport corridors has been actualized.

ENGLISH SUMMARY

Background.

The growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region in the global economy plays a major role in the ongoing restructuring – there is a shift of the center of the world economy and politics to the eastern, south-eastern regions of the continent and India. Geopolitical and geo-economic position of Russia in view of these circumstances becomes a strong incentive to refocus its foreign policy and economic strategy for the Asian markets, although it remains important to preserve traditional and comprehensive relations with Europe. Thus, the problem exists to develop a true national strategy capable of ensuring more competitive opportunities for the country.

In general, the modern development can be described as a new stage in world trade. Global international integration involves the use of technically advanced and cost-effective way of cargo movement. Focus on containerization of transit cargo flows requires changes not only in the material-technical base of transport, but also in the organization and commercial practices of transportation. Strengthening of Eurasian relations will be largely possible to the multimodal system, which provides a close interaction between different modes of transport, combined in the logistic chains.

Objective.

The objective of the author is to investigate current situation related to transit transportation both on sea and overland routes.

Methods.

The author uses comprehensive analytical method.

Results.

Now in the interests of the Russian Federation to a greater extent than it has ever been, it is necessary to build a national development strategy based on macro trends in the field of international relations and world trade. The prevailing direction of the search needs conceptual solutions – identifying new approaches to the international transport corridors, optimizing freight and passenger flows in terms of their permanent growth. Comprehensive analysis of historical trends and options for long-term forecasts of world trade development made it possible to determine potential volume of cargo flows on overland corridors through the Russian Federation, which are transported today on maritime routes bypassing Russia. It is important to understand and appreciate in this perspective the main trends of transit traffic between Europe and Asia, to find an appropriate role for Russia in the system of new emerging economic relations.

As for international multimodal transportation, it should be taken into account that the integration of related modes of transport resulted in an increase in traffic volumes as a whole, as well as the appearance of three geographically close vectors of freight flows on latitudinal directions – Eurasian, Transatlantic and Transpacific. Ratio of annual growth in freight traffic (in%) of these transport routes for the period up to 2015 are presented in Pic. 1 (calculated by WTO statistics based on historical trends).

The ongoing global financial and economic crisis will definitely put some adjustments to the predictive assessment of potential freight volumes. Under the conditions of the last few years there has been some slowdown of growth in these volumes. Negative trends in the financial markets contribute to reduce the world's container traffic and limit the possibility of further containerization. However, even with a slight reduction of the volume of mutual trade, given the export-based economies of China and other Asia-Pacific countries, as well as the implementation of a number of anti-crisis measures in Europe and the United States, exports to financial reliable markets of developed countries in Europe will traditionally grow in future.

Mainly mutual trade is carried out through the supply of finished goods transported in containers. Pic. 2 shows the dynamics of growth of container traffic on major world trading areas (calculated by WTO statistics).

At the same time, due to Russia's accession to the WTO an increase in export-import trade flow and growth of container traffic are expected with participation of Russian transport companies in the traffic connection between Asia-Pacific countries and Europe. Therefore, even in the face of the current crisis it is possible to talk about huge transit potential of Russia, especially in the Eurasian area.

Growth of containerization in Russia was the result of both an increase in consumer demand, the development of export-import relations and the growth of international trade in general and marketing policy on the part of operators offering integrated transport services and full support of cargoes. Container transport is considered to be the most optimal for multimodal schemes in which there is a large amount of transshipment.

Relatively high growth of containerization in Russia is predicted in the future, which will be contributed by the development of port infrastructure, reconstruction of approaches to ports and container terminals, introduction of new modern logistics technologies.

Currently, trade turnover between Europe and Asia is about $ 600 billion per year, Russia accounted for less than 1% of trade turnover, with transit potential of 10–15% of the market [5]. Almost all available volume of mutual trade between Europe and Asia Pacific is delivered by sea through the Suez Canal, which is due to technological reasons that should be considered when creating effective overland transport corridors.

In 2010 11.7 million TEUs were transported in global transit by sea to Asia – Europe, and by 2020 two-fold excess of this volume is projected. Maritime container traffic growth is largely due to advance indicators of maritime complex development in comparison with the world economy. Table 1 presents data on the turnover of containers at major ports around the world in 2011 (formed on the basis of official data) [1,4,7,8].

Asia-Pacific countries are currently the world's largest importers and exporters. Over 20% of the world's container turnover is concentrated in the seaports of China. As it is shown in Table 1, the Russian ports often lose the competition for their own traffic. However, in accordance with the development strategy of the sea port infrastructure in Russia until 2030 [6], the country's demand in the transportation of goods by sea trade will increase in the long term, the average annual growth of freight flows will amount to 3%.

This is proved by statistics. According to the Association of Commercial Sea Ports of Russia, freight turnover in 2013 increased by 3.9% compared with 2012 and is fixed at the level of 589.0 million tons [1]. Volume of transshipment of dry cargo increased by 1.6% – to 255.7 million tons (see Pic. 2), including: coal – 101.1 million tons (+13.3%), containerized cargo – 44.4 million tons (+4.1%), mineral fertilizers – 12.9 million tons (+24.0%), ore – 7.4 million tons (+2.8%). At the same time the volumes of transshipment reduced: ferrous metals up to 22.0 million tons (–14.0%), grain – to 18.3 million tons (–23.4%), timber – up to 4.4 million tons (–25.9%). The volume of liquid cargo transshipment amounted to 333.3 million tons (+5.7%), including crude oil – 207.5 million tons (+4.6%).

It should be noted that Russian largest container terminals in 2013 worked in excess of the transshipment volume of the previous year. The transshipment volumes amounted to: export cargo- 460.1 million tons (+ 2.8%), import – 48.4 million tons (+7.3%), transit – 44.5 million tons (+4.6%), cabotage – 360 million tons (13.2%) [1]. In addition, the existing capacity of ports, both Russian and European remains inadequate; some of them approach their maximum possible traffic performance. An uncertainty in sea transportation sector is observed.

Due to high load of ports congestions occur on the approaches to them, there are problems of port and coastal waters where there are limitations in the passage of ships due to lack of deep water area and as a consequence – the trade imbalance of loaded and shipped containers.

Under these circumstances, the search for new alternative overland routes between Europe and Asia would be highly relevant. The undeniable advantage of overland transit route passing through the territory of the Russian Federation, are the terms of cargo delivery. And this fact should be assessed taking into account the dynamic development of the western and central provinces of China, where a significant increase in the production of goods for export, which tend to be transported to Europe on overland routes, is expected.

At the moment, the main priority for the implementation of the transit potential of Russia is the development of rail corridors, which have a more sophisticated and advanced communication system in comparison with the port infrastructure.

Benefit from the option, involving accommodation of Trans-Siberian Railway for international transit, is obvious. The creation of new, parallel extending rail routes will assist such an adaptation. An attention should be paid to involvement in the field of export and import transportation of the Baikal-Amur Mainline, North-Siberian Railway and other existing and planned sections of tracks (Priobe – Agirish, Nizhnevartovsk – Surgut – Salim – Khanty-Mansiysk, etc.), and ports of Arkhangelsk, Vanino and Sabetta.

Large-scale diversification of existing routes and rail and port infrastructure will allow more efficiently transporting cargo. Further development of new routes will finalize the alternative routes of transport corridors between Europe and Asia, and the presence of other parallel arranged transport artery will contribute to the establishment of a competitive transport network and its integration in the sphere of international transit traffic.

Conclusion.

Summing up, it should be noted that sea transport is dominant today for Euro-Asian trade flows, but timely and strategically sound development of domestic overland routes provide additional efficient and competitive transport capabilities for Russia. Creation and optimization of such routes can be an effective instrument of economic growth and technological progress of enterprises of Russian transport sector.

Keywords: transport infrastructure, development strategy, international trade, international transit traffic, transport corridors, maritime routes, overland routes, prediction, possible alternatives.

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Координаты автора (contact information): Чумляков К. С. (Chumlyakov C. S.) – k8sc@yandex.ru.
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