

Topical Issues of Russia's Positioning in the Polycentric World Order

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Abstract—The article discusses current trends and priorities of Russia's positioning in the international trade and economic system, reveals the strengths and weaknesses of Russia's participation in integration projects in the post-Soviet space, new challenges in this area, shows the need for the Eurasian neighborhood policy to reset social and humanitarian cooperation in the CIS. The opportunities and risks of expanding economic cooperation with China, including for the Eurasian economic integration, are determined. The role of Russian-Indian cooperation in diversification of cooperation vectors in Eurasia, increasing its balance and stability is shown. The potential of BRICS+ and SCO+ formats, as well as the possible interaction of the two blocks, is analyzed. New accents in the Russian policy on the African and Middle East directions are revealed. The author presents the concept of the Greater Eurasian partnership and stresses its central role in optimizing Russia's external positioning, proposes an algorithm for promoting macro-regional integration in Eurasia with Russia's active participation.

Keywords—polycentric world; politics; integration; space; project; interests; trade agreement; partnership

I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The formation of a polycentric world economic order, which was actively taking place in the 2000s, is accompanied by a rapid increase in the number and complexity of regional trade agreements, the emergence of mega-regional trade agreements, new international forums and platforms for interaction between interested countries. Theoretical substantiations of this process can be found in the approaches of representatives of the school of political realism [1] (the theory of hegemonic stability and balance of power), liberal school [2] (the so-called pragmatic functionalism), as well as in modern concepts of competitive liberalization and competitive regionalism [3].

In a polycentric world, the formation of a network of trade and economic unions and agreements with external partners becomes a necessary condition for the sustainable development of the absolute majority of countries. For major powers, this is a way to maintain or strengthen their influence in important countries and regions, while for smaller States, participation in regional trade agreements and economic associations creates opportunities to gain privileges in relations with stronger partners or to increase their own potential through enhanced intraregional cooperation.

The process of globalization, which has actually led to polycentrism in the world economy and politics, has also made

relations between countries and major groups of States much more competitive. In practice, geo-economic and geopolitical competition, the struggle for spheres of influence, the desire of large countries to lead in regional and macro-regional configurations have significantly increased. It is characteristic that even the policy of the United States under President D. Trump and the difficult situation with Brexit, which gave rise to talk about deglobalization and growth of isolationist tendencies, are in fact accompanied by a fairly active search by the US and the UK for new partners in trade agreements and allied formats in the global economy.

Russia is no exception in this case and is also actively involved in the process of building promising trade, economic and political configurations. The deterioration of relations with the West has shifted the focus of Russia's external positioning to the Eurasian region, including the post-Soviet space, China and other East Asian countries, India, ASEAN countries, Africa and the Middle East.

II. INTEGRATION PROJECTS IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

The main project of Russia in the post-Soviet space is the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (operates since 2015 encompassing five states – Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan). The main objectives of the project are the full implementation of the "four freedoms", the formation of common markets in the field of energy and infrastructure services, as well as creation of common financial market.

To date, the achievement of these goals is problematic. It is believed that by now common markets for goods and labor have been formed, the supranational functionality of the Eurasian Economic Commission as the Executive body of the EAEU has been determined. However, in addition to maintaining a significant number of exemptions and restrictions in the internal market of the EAEU, there are serious exemptions from the general obligations of the Union on the external circuit for individual member States, and this already creates risks of undermining the fundamentals of the EAEU functioning – the single customs territory and common trade regime in relations with third countries. Such exemptions exist in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, reflecting their specific tariff obligations in the WTO, most likely, they will appear in Belarus, which is in the process of discussing the terms of accession to the WTO. Russia also has exemptions in the form of sanctions and other bans on the import of certain categories of products from third countries, application of the

most favored nation regime against Ukraine (the latter enjoys free trade regime with other countries of the EAEU).

Uncoordinated multi-speed development of the legal framework of individual EAEU countries with the EU (Kazakhstan and Armenia have already concluded new basic agreements with the EU, negotiations on such agreement between the EU and Kyrgyzstan have successfully finished, the probability of concluding bilateral agreement between the EU and Belarus increases, but for Russia this prospect is not yet visible) in practice can and most likely will create more favorable conditions in bilateral relations between the EU and Russia's partners in the EAEU than those that exist between the EU and the Russian Federation. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a channel of direct interaction between the institutions of the EAEU and the EU to conduct a meaningful inter-bloc dialogue on the conditions and directions of economic cooperation.

The problem of unfair use of the opportunities of the single customs territory by individual EAEU members remains, including unregistered imports of clothes, textiles and shoes from China by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan for subsequent sale in Russia, "gray" supplies of fruits and vegetables from Uzbekistan through Kazakhstan to the Russian Federation, incorrect schemes of Belarus in the export of petroleum products, etc. Moreover, the negative effects for Russia in connection with the abuse of the EAEU partners of the single customs territory regime are very significant.

In recent years, the estimated volume of smuggled Chinese textiles, clothing and footwear through Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to Russia – an average of about 5–6 billion dollars in 2016–2018 – became comparable to the gross output of light industry in Russia. As the order with Chinese imports on the Russian-Chinese border was established ("gray" supplies of clothing, textiles and footwear from China to Russia, according to "mirror" statistics, only for the period 2016–2018 decreased by 1.1 billion dollars), the main routes of smuggling predictably moved to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which recorded a noticeable growth of "gray" imports from China after 2015.

To conceal the actual volume of export of petroleum products on which Russia and Belarus agreed on return of export duties and energy balance, Belarus a decade ago began to practice the delivery of petroleum products to third countries under other commodity codes (solvents, lubricants, bitumen mixes, etc.), and for the period 2008–2018 the total amount of understating actual exports of petroleum products exceeded 15 million tones.

All these factors reinforce centrifugal trends in the Union, need open discussion and concerted measures to reduce the risks associated with them.

Economic indicators of integration do not yet allow to speak about the success of the project. The share of mutual trade in the total turnover of the EAEU since the creation of the Customs Union in 2010 remains low and ranges from 12 to 14%, which is less than in foreign economic associations with a comparable number of participants (NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ASEAN.) The volume of mutual trade is still under influence of the common past of the countries of the EAEU as part of the unified economic complex of the former USSR, calculations based on gravity model show that the States of the EAEU even

overtrade with each other against a situation where countries with similar GDP and distances between them form a Customs Union [4].

Analysis of changes in the structure of consumption in the domestic commodity market of the EAEU in the 2010s showed significant differences in consumption trends by industry (data of the Eurasian Economic Commission on production, foreign and mutual trade by economic activity within the EAEU were used to analyze changes in the structure of consumption by industry). However, at the level of two major economic sectors – agriculture and manufacturing – we can see prevailing tendency for increasing importance of mutual trade against a reduction in the share of the component "supply of national products to national markets" and/or a decrease in the contribution of imports (in both cases, the share of mutual trade increased by 1 percentage point in 2018 to 2011). Improvement of the economic situation and expansion of domestic demand in the EAEU in 2018 in most processing industries and in the manufacturing industry as a whole, was not followed by the increase in the share of imports, which indicates the sustainability of processes in the development of mutual trade and/or import substitution.

Another quantifiable, though of course only indirect, measure of the degree of progress towards the common market is the price level indices (PLIs) obtained as a partial from dividing purchasing power parities by market exchange rates. Eurostat publishes a price convergence indicator calculated as the coefficient of variation of the PLIs (the ratio of standard deviation to average value) for a group of countries, such as the EU-28 or the Eurozone. A number of experts also suggest the use of PLIs at fixed exchange rates (to exclude the impact of exchange rate volatility) and in relation to actual individual consumption, which gives a complete and more comparable picture of household consumption levels [5].

The analysis on the basis of the PLIs, showing differences in price levels in the EAEU countries, reduced to the common currency, indicates the absence of price convergence for the GDP of the member States of the Union to date. Moreover, the divergence of price levels after the establishment of the EAEU has increased. However, the PLIs for GDP are not always indicative because of the sufficiently volatile PLIs for investment, exports and imports.

In the sphere of final consumption of households of the EAEU, the most significant component of national markets, in contrast to calculations for the entire GDP, after 2012, when the mechanisms of the Customs Union and single economic space, the CIS multilateral free trade area (important for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) became operational, there was a noticeable and fairly steady decline in the coefficient of variation, which means a convergence of price levels between the countries. Although not everything is clear, the ratio of the Russian and the EAEU partners PLIs in different periods varied in different directions, plus the PLIs of final consumption are not quite comparable, since, for example, in the EAEU countries the state participates differently in the provision of "non-market" services, such as healthcare and education.

Thus, based on the dynamics of the PLIs, it is impossible to draw an unambiguous conclusion about the convergence of prices within the EAEU, especially about the influence of the integration factor on the convergence of prices, which, from the

point of view of the theory, should accompany the movement to the common market.

In addition to the EAEU, Russia participates in two other integration projects in the post-Soviet space—bilateral (Union state of Russia and Belarus) and multilateral framework project (Commonwealth of Independent States). In the first case, during 2019, additional efforts were made and sectoral "roadmaps" were developed in the direction of creating an Economic Union, deepening cooperation in the areas of finance, tax regulation and monetary policy. The need to intensify work on the bilateral integration agenda and achieve balanced mutually acceptable agreements is primarily related to the implementation of a tax maneuver in Russia (transfer of export duties on fuels to internal taxation), which leads to an increase in fuel prices in the internal market of the EAEU and will have an increasing negative effect for Belarus. In general, taking into account the joint work of Russia and Belarus on the EAEU platform, the integration project of the Union state is the most advanced in the post-Soviet space, includes cooperation in the field of foreign and defense policy, social and humanitarian spheres, in the implementation of joint projects financed with the participation of the budget of the Union state.

Another regional project – the CIS (covering 11 post-Soviet States, including Ukraine and Moldova, which have signed Association Agreements with the EU) is a format of interstate cooperation in the areas of mutual interests. A characteristic feature of the CIS is the exclusively voluntary participation of countries in the proposed programs and activities. There are more than 60 interdepartmental sectoral councils in the structure of the CIS in almost all areas of the economy, social and humanitarian spheres. But in the vast majority of cases, the functions of industry and sectoral councils are limited to coordinating the plans and actions of the parties. However, the CIS can be qualified as a trade bloc, since 9 of the 11 participants signed the agreement on the CIS free trade area (except Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan). A draft regional agreement on trade in services has also been prepared, but its prospects are not clear.

Integration processes in the post-Soviet space with Russia's participation are developing at different levels and speeds, which suits all participants and allows them to harmonize their interests in the development of intraregional cooperation.

Independently and as part of the EAEU, Russia is developing a significant number of trade policy and privileged partnership formats of cooperation with foreign countries.



Fig. 1. Russia's Integration and Trade Policy projects.

Source: compiled by the author.

The post-Soviet space from geo-economic and geopolitical positions is extremely important for Russia. Without cooperation with the CIS countries, Russia cannot fully claim the status of a Eurasian power that serves as a bridge between Asia and Europe and ensures the functioning of trans-Eurasian transport routes in the East-West and North-South directions. Without being the leader in the integration space of the CIS and the EAEU, Russia will not be able to go beyond a purely regional power and become, under certain conditions, a significant center of influence in the global trade and economic system, and not only in the military and political sphere. The implementation of the concept of macro-regional integration in Eurasia in the format of the Greater Eurasian partnership (see further in the article) is also impossible in the absence of the CIS and the EAEU as supporting structures. To this we must add a significant interest of Russia in the CIS markets for the sale of its agricultural and manufacturing products (in 2018 the share of the Commonwealth in Russia's exports of non-primary non-energy goods was almost twice as higher than in total exports – 23% and 12%, respectively), as well as in the steady inflow of labor migrants from the region (in 2018 4.7 million people arrived from the CIS to Russia for employment).

With the high importance of the EAEU and the CIS for Russia, the latter is facing increasingly serious challenges in the post-Soviet space.

The development trajectories of the CIS countries, for objective reasons, are becoming more individualized, this leads to the diversification of their economic interests, which increasingly reflect the country specifics. This can be manifested in the implementation of industrial projects competing with Russian ones, including on the Russian market, in taking decisions to limit the admission of Russian suppliers to their domestic markets in the case of implementation of national development programs.

The CIS found itself between two powerful centers of geopolitical and economic attraction – China and the EU, which led to the emergence of the strongest lines of tension in the post-Soviet space (the Ukrainian crisis, problems of divided Moldova, critical financial and economic dependence on China in a number of Central Asian countries, etc.). Moreover, Russia

cannot and will not be able to give a symmetrical response to the strengthening of the influence of non-regional players in the CIS, because it simply does not have enough resources. Accordingly, there is a need for the development of Russia's partnership strategy for the wider Eurasian space, which could propose comfortable way for all or most participants to harmonize their interests, promising directions or development and cooperation of States in the macro-region of Eurasia.

In the 2000s, there was a gradual but steady decline in the role of the common Soviet past as a factor in preserving the integrity of the post-Soviet space from both economic, social, humanitarian, cultural and ideological positions. The answer to this process in the economic sphere was the Eurasian integration project, designed to form a single economic space for the participating countries. It is not all smooth sailing, but there is concrete work in this direction.

The social, humanitarian, cultural space of the CIS is another matter. No large-scale initiatives or projects have been implemented in this area. The EAEU project was initially declared and continues to be declared as purely economic. Even in the Declaration on the further development of integration processes within the Eurasian Economic Union, signed by the leaders of the States on December 6, 2018 in Saint-Petersburg (Russia), socio-humanitarian agenda holds a minimum place and is interpreted it through the potential of economic integration to the Union's citizens, increase of their awareness and involvement in integration processes, and not as a self-valuable agenda. Such an agenda is present in the CIS activities, but more in terms of coordination of individual events and exchange of information, without resource support. At the level of bilateral cooperation between Russia and the CIS countries, the social and humanitarian component, except in some areas, is not systematically promoted and is very poorly funded. In this area, the efforts of China, the European Union and Turkey look more consistent and ambitious.

The Russian expert community discusses the idea of implementing a comprehensive multi-level approach to the development of social and humanitarian cooperation between the CIS countries in the format of the Eurasian neighborhood policy. Such a format should include a broader and more focused participation of Russia in humanitarian projects in the CIS, the formation of a significant, independent humanitarian agenda in the activities of the EAEU, its expansion and structuring in the work of the CIS, as well as financing of this agenda by regional financial institutions (Eurasian Development Bank, Eurasian Stabilization and Development Fund), special interstate programs and funds.

III. ASIAN AND OTHER VECTORS OF COOPERATION

China is a key partner of Russia in the Asian direction, its share in the trade turnover of the Russian Federation reached 15.7% in 2018 compared to 8.3% in 2009. The absolute value of mutual trade in goods and services, according to Russian sources, exceeded \$ 114 billion in 2018. The governments of the two countries set a goal to increase the volume of bilateral

trade in goods and services to \$ 200 billion by 2024. A road map to mate the above goal feasible is being developed. Our analysis showed that this is an achievable figure, but the main growth on the Russian side can be obtained through the supply of energy, ores and metals – almost 70%, although some diversification of Russian exports to China will occur as a result of joint projects in the field of agriculture and engineering. In general, one of the serious problems in Russia's interaction with China is that the strengthening of the Eastern vector in the foreign economic policy of the Russian Federation initially assumed not only geographical diversification of foreign economic relations, but also commodity-industry diversification, however today the share of fuels in Russian exports to China is approaching 3/4 (74% in 2018), almost as in the European direction.

Transit cargo transportation along the East-West transport corridor (China-Europe and back) is growing. According to the Main computing center of Russian Railways, the volume of freight transit through Russia in the East-West connection increased in 2018 compared to 2012–2013 levels by 5 times – up to 2.4 million tons.

Assessment of the real scale of Russian-Chinese investment cooperation on the basis of official data is difficult, since the major partners of Russia and China in the field of investment are offshore jurisdictions, through which a significant part of operations is carried out. Back in early 2017, Chinese Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng estimated the indicator of accumulated Chinese investments in Russia at \$ 42 billion [6]. According to the Russian Ministry of foreign affairs, Russian-Chinese investment projects totaling \$ 120 billion are currently being worked out [7].

In order to create favorable conditions for the further development and deepening of Russian-Chinese trade and economic cooperation, work is underway on a bilateral agreement on the Eurasian economic partnership, which involves trade facilitation, efforts on regulatory convergence, elements of preferential treatment for services and investments, mechanisms to promote sectoral cooperation, etc.

In addition to bilateral cooperation, Russia is developing cooperation with China within the Eurasian Economic Union.

Launched in mid-2010 years the initiative of conjugation of building the Eurasian Economic Union and the Economic belt of the Silk Road (in fact, this format serves for the inclusion EAEU in the Chinese mega-project "One belt, one road") contributed to boosting the bilateral economic ties of the States – participants of the EAEU with China, accelerating the growth of mutual trade and Chinese investment in partner countries, the entry of Chinese capital into separate strategic assets in Russia and other EAEU members. The institutional and legal framework of the interface today is determined by the non-preferential Agreement on trade and economic cooperation between the EAEU and China, signed in May 2018.



Fig. 2. Framework for the RF and Eurasian Economic Union Cooperation with China.

Source: compiled by the author.

Positively assessing the overall initiative of conjugation, it is necessary to pay attention to the following points. Despite the initial integration, multilateral vision of conjugation, in fact, this initiative has resulted almost entirely in bilateral projects with a primary focus on the countries of Central Asia. In these countries the main infrastructure and production projects of the PRC are being implemented, including the transfer of environmentally disadvantaged enterprises from China, the main investments are also directed there. To the moment the conjugation initiative has led to a growing orientation of the economies of the EAEU on China, especially the Central Asian (both members and not members of the EAEU), the latter elaborated or are elaborating their own programs and plans of pairing the development of national economies with China's initiative "One belt, one road". Such multi-level interaction with the PRC generates differences within the EAEU in the formation of common markets (in particular, Kazakhstan retains exemptions and postponements for the liberalization of services markets serving infrastructure and other projects of the PRC in the country), leads to competition of Trans-Eurasian "belt and road", transport routes, passing through the territory of Russia, with routes going through Kazakhstan, including those completely bypassing the Russian Federation (Trans-Caspian and southern routes) [8].

The role and influence of China on Eurasian economic integration is a very difficult topic. Chinese-style globalization and traditional regional integration are at least very low compatible. In our opinion, the Chinese factor (of course, not only because of it) is slowing down integration processes around the world. And the EAEU is no exception.

China already occupies a key position in the foreign trade of the EAEU States, especially in imports. In fact, through massive supplies to the EAEU of all possible range of manufacturing products, China devalues, makes unnecessary (and more costly) its own efforts of the EAEU countries to establish industrial cooperation, reduces the potential and need for the development of intra-industry trade within the Union. Moreover, the financial conditions of Chinese supplies are the most favorable.

TABLE I. CHINA'S POSITIONS IN EXPORT AND IMPORT OF GOODS OF EAEU COUNTRIES IN 2018 [9]

	Export	Import
1st place	Russia	Russia, Kyrgyzstan
2nd place	Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus

The investment and project component of Chinese business activity in the EAEU also poses a serious challenge to Eurasian integration. As a result of the expansion of Chinese capital, the value chains and business processes are increasingly closed to the Chinese economy, the elements of competition in the economic specialization of the EAEU countries are increasing. In particular, this is happening in auto assembly production, production of primary non-ferrous metals, metal products, petrochemicals, mineral fertilizers (first of all, we are talking about joint projects of Kazakhstan and China within the framework of bilateral program of industrial and investment cooperation).

Despite the challenges arising from the steady strengthening of China's economic influence in the world, the expansion of its commercial presence in Eurasia, the further development and deepening of trade and economic ties with this country is invariant for most States, especially those located in the Eurasian region, and above all, for Russia, which has the world's longest land border with China. The sanctions confrontation between Russia and the West, the growing uncertainties and risks of global development, i.a. due to the escalation of trade protectionism and restrictions on international business, – all this determines the strategic nature of the Russian-Chinese business cooperation, allows to count on an increase in its scale and diversification of cooperation area.

In addition to China, India is becoming increasingly important as Russia's partner in the Asian region and globally. Russia, India and China are developing cooperation on such international platforms as G20, BRICS, SCO (India became a member of the organization in 2018), RIC (Russia-India-China). The leaders of Russia and India set a goal to increase the volume of bilateral trade to \$ 30 billion by 2025 (\$12 billion in 2018) and mutual investments up to \$ 15 billion on each side.

In order to achieve the set targets, the parties at the Eastern economic forum in early September 2019 in Vladivostok (Russia) adopted an action Strategy to intensify Russian-Indian trade, economic and investment cooperation [10]. The main focuses of the Strategy are the improvement of mutual trade and investment regime, cooperation in the financial and banking sector and the development of transport and logistics infrastructure, diversification of energy cooperation, cooperation in the agro-industrial complex, in the field of science, technology and innovation. A list of sectoral projects and activities until the end of 2021 has been developed, and the mechanism of the Russian-Indian strategic economic dialogue has been launched in 2018.

A strategic joint Russian-Indian project in the transport and logistics sector is the North-South international transport corridor, the full-scale launch of which will, according to some estimates, double the mutual trade turnover. According to the calculations of the author, cargo transportation potential via the corridor "North-South" due to the redistribution of traffic flows and expanding the export base of the countries-participants of the project exceeds 30 million tons per year to be reached in the period of 5–7 years after the start of full-scale operation,

including a significant volume of long-haul international transit (about 2 million tons per year in the direction India, Iran – Europe and back).

India's wider involvement in large-scale Eurasian projects, which include the North-South transport corridor, will contribute to the deepening and diversification of cooperation vectors in Eurasia, strengthen the Meridian dimension (along with the latitudinal dimension, actively promoted by China within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative) of economic cooperation, important for the balanced and sustainable development of the entire Eurasian space.

As the scale of Russia's interaction with China and India grows, while maintaining complex relations with the West, the role of the SCO, BRICS and RIC formats in Russia's foreign and economic policy increases.

Currently, SCO members are 8 countries, including Russia, China and India, as well as Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Through the institutions of the SCO observer state and dialogue partner, a total of 18 countries are in the orbit of the organization, including all the EAEU States, 3 more CIS countries outside the EAEU (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan), 8 Asian countries (an addition to China, India, Pakistan also Mongolia, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka), 2 Middle Eastern States (Iran and Turkey). Such a representative composition of the SCO makes it possible to discuss a very wide range of issues of Eurasian cooperation on its platform and, under certain conditions, become a support structure for negotiations on the formation of a Greater Eurasian Partnership.

The BRICS forum, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, is becoming an increasingly important format of cooperation for world politics and economy. The BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy is being implemented (currently being updated), cooperation within the BRICS Partnership for a New Industrial (digital) Revolution (PartNIR) is being strengthened, sectoral cooperation is expanding (in the spheres of energy and infrastructure, industry, agriculture, environment and sustainable development, social and humanitarian sphere, in the field of trade regulation, investment, intellectual property, customs and antimonopoly regulation, etc.).

The formats of expanding the partnership to third countries – Outreach Dialogue and BRICS+ – are being consistently promoted, including by Russia, which will chair the Association in 2020.

On this occasion, Professor Y. Lisovolik notes that "by creating a network of economic alliances on different continents, the BRICS (through the BRICS+ and BRICS++ formats – ed.) can lead the global integration process in the economic sphere against the background of fading impulses towards integration in the developed world... the BRICS could also play the role of an "aggregation platform" for some free trade agreements and other types of treaties." The expert clarifies that the first circle includes about 30 countries that are part of regional unions and agreements, where the leading role is played by the BRICS States. The second circle includes already a much larger number of countries entering into bilateral or plurilateral alliances with the countries of the first circle. According to Y. Lisovolik, "the concept of BRICS+ is, first of all, a new approach to economic integration and another

technology for structuring alliances on a global scale... BRICS+ is in a sense a technological step forward compared to the principle of territorial and exclusive regionalism". To the latter, the expert refers to the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which are "limited to a certain region, albeit large-scale in geographical scope" [11].

In another study, Y. Lisovolik And M. Uzan point to the important role of BRICS+ and SCO+ in the formation and coordination of interaction of integration platforms of the "Global South", the practical implementation of the concept of "syndicated regionalism" [12].

Russia presides in 2020 not only in the BRICS, but also in the SCO. Both summits will be held almost simultaneously in July 2020 in St. Petersburg (Russia), which is symbolic. One can evidence an objective convergence of the two formats, which have their own specifics, but strategically perform a similar function in the global context – the promotion of new institutions and forms of cooperation in a polycentric world with the participation of leading non-western countries. In the future, we should expect the emergence of sustainable joint formats of BRICS and SCO in a number of areas, including, for example, the development of small and medium-sized businesses (the Forum of small and medium-sized businesses of the SCO and BRICS member states already operates), interregional cooperation, etc.

Taking into account the high dynamism and attractiveness for cooperation of many ASEAN economies, the traditionally large role played by the Association and its member countries in the integration processes in the Asia-Pacific region and on a global scale, Russia has consistently increased the level of interaction with this Association. At the Russia-ASEAN summit in November 2018, it was officially announced that the level of strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and the Association had been reached. [13] Free trade agreements have been concluded with Vietnam and Singapore, and the possibility of liberalizing trade with a number of other ASEAN countries is being discussed.

Along with the Asian, the African and Middle Eastern vectors of Russia's foreign and foreign economic policy have become more active.

Russia's position in Africa in the post-Soviet period has greatly weakened, while African countries, on the contrary, have made significant progress in economic development, and many of them have become major importers. Against the background of a very young population and the penetration of digital technologies, new business opportunities arise; in the process of in-depth study of the continent's subsoil, its resource potential grows and diversifies.

The first ever Russia-Africa Summit was held on October 23-24, 2019 in Sochi (Russia) with the participation of more than 40 African heads of state. As a result, agreements on the implementation of joint projects worth about US \$ 13 billion were signed. USA. The Russian Government and the Eurasian Economic Commission have signed memorandums of understanding with the African Union.

In the adopted Joint Declaration, the parties announced the establishment of a mechanism for dialogue partnership (holding a Russia-Africa Summit every three years and annual political consultations of Foreign Ministers), mutual support

for entrepreneurs and investors, and the intention to promote a significant increase in the volume and diversification of the structure of mutual trade. Special attention is paid to the creation of the African Continental Free Trade area, Russia considers this as a significant factor in increasing the attractiveness of cooperation with Africa, since by creating a foothold on the territory of certain countries of the continent (for example, the Russian Industrial Zone in Egypt), it is possible to use the free trade regime for preferential access to the markets of other African States. The joint opposition to "political dictatorship and currency blackmail in the implementation of international trade and economic cooperation, ... manipulation of the requirements of the global non-proliferation regime in order to exert pressure on unwanted countries and unfair competition" is stipulated [14].

There is increasing emphasis on cooperation with Middle Eastern States, as they are geographically close and quite large economies, with many of them there is a significant common interest in regulating energy markets, with a number of States were signed or being discussed preferential trade agreements (Iran, Egypt, Israel). Some large Middle Eastern States are promising partners of Russia in the field of nuclear energy, as well as markets for Russian food (Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, etc.), sources of investment in the Russian economy (sovereign funds of the Gulf States). Relations with Iran are developing in the plurilateral formats of Russia-Azerbaijan-Iran and the Caspian five, as well as within the framework of the North-South transport corridor project.

IV. CONCLUSION

While there is at a multiplicity of important vectors of international cooperation, a Central element in the optimization of the external positioning of our country today is the concept of the Great Eurasian partnership – in fact, the promotion of ideas and approaches that ensure progress towards macro-regional integration in Eurasia on the principles of removing barriers to trade and investment and convergence of regulatory systems.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed that the Eurasian Partnership Project "is a flexible, modern project, open for other participants to join" [15]. The likely beneficiaries of such a partnership are the EAEU States and China, other CIS and SCO countries, individual APEC, ASEAN members, and other interested Eurasian States.

The concept of the Great Eurasian Partnership envisages the enhancement of foreign economic and trade policy of Russia and its partners in the EAEU in Eurasia and Asia Pacific with access to the complex multi-level preferential and non-preferential trade and economic agreements with third countries and their associations, as well as targeted activities at sites of regional organizations and forums in formats of intrablock dialogues and multilateral initiatives to promote the economic interests of Russia and the Union as a whole.

The institutional core of the pan-Eurasian integration project may be the projected Russian-Chinese Agreement on the Eurasian Economic Partnership (EEP), which allows for the possibility of scaling up due to the accession of other Eurasian countries.

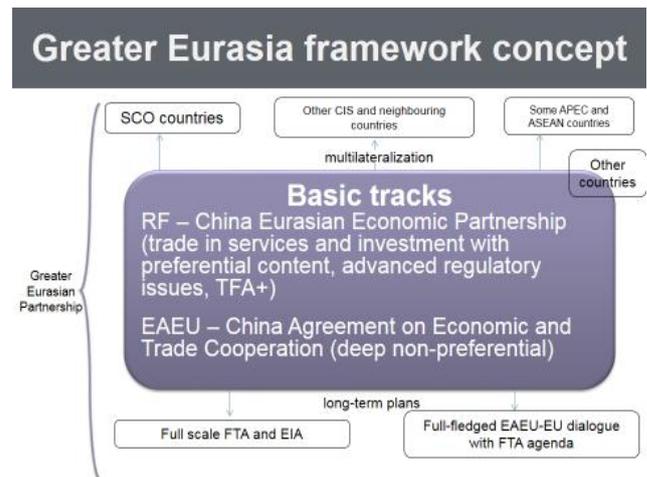


Fig. 3. Greater Eurasia Framework Concept.

Likely strategic scenarios of EEP implementation are that (1) EEP will not be able to go beyond bilateral Russian-Chinese project (negative scenario in terms of consolidation of the economic space of Greater Eurasia), (2) limited format of the Russian Federation plus the EAEU partners – China (inertial scenario), or (3) EEP will be able to draw a wider range of CIS countries and far-abroad states (optimistic scenario).

The expansion of the bilateral Russian-Chinese EEP in the format in which it is currently being promoted is possible, apparently, primarily at the expense of countries under significant influence of China and/or Russia, having trade and economic agreements with China and/or Russia, potentially interested in a regulatory and sectoral agreement, without a preferential component in trade in goods. In this case, the new EEP participants will have to generally accept all the regulatory provisions of the Russian-Chinese EEP with some exceptions and agree on their list of obligations in the preferential part on access to the services and capital markets.

To streamline the negotiation process to expand the EEP such an expansion is to be undertaken in stages, depending on the willingness of the individual groups of States, their interest in the EEP and appeal to the founders of the EEP – Russia and China. The gradual expansion of the EEP will allow better structuring of the negotiation process, not only to limit exemptions and specific market access obligations, but also to make meaningful changes to the text of the agreement.

The success of the EEP promotion, of course, strongly depends on the prospects for improving Russia's relations with Western countries.

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