

ЕВРАЗИЙСКИЙ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЙ СОЮЗ И ШЕЛКОВЫЙ ПУТЬ: КАК СОСУЩЕСТВОВАТЬ И СОДЕЙСТВОВАТЬ ПРОЦВЕТАНИЮ

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В статье рассматриваются современные интеграционные процессы, новые тенденции в евразийском регионе. В фокусе внимания ЕАЭС и проект Шелкового пути, вопрос совместимости данных интеграционных объединений; сосуществование Китая и России в данном регионе. По мнению автора, диалог культур и коммуникация жителей в рамках этих крупнейших интеграционных проектов не менее значимы, чем торговля и экономика. Не стоит недооценивать, что исторически центр Евразии являлся самым динамичным и преуспевающим регионом в глобальном экономическом масштабе. И Россия, и Китай имеют ключевое значение для региона, и их взаимодействие будет способствовать укреплению отношений между Центральноазиатскими странами и двумя крупными соседствующими государствами в эпоху глобализации и международной интеграции.

Ключевые слова: ЕАЭС, Шелковый путь, Россия, Китай, ЕС.

HOW EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION AND SILK ROAD CAN COEXIST AND PROSPER

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The article examines modern integration processes, pointing new trends in Eurasia region, with focus on the Eurasian Economic Union and silk road project; the coexistence of China and Russia in this region. While a new question arises, are Eurasian Economic Union and Silk Road Economic Belt compatible, the views of Chinese scholars on integration processes in the region differ. The author's view on the Eurasian Economic Union and Silk Road Economic Belt is that cultural dialogue and people-to-people communication are not less important than trade and economy. We cannot underestimate that historically, the heartland in Eurasia was the most dynamic and prosperous region in the global economic landscape. Both Russia and China attaches great importance to Central Asia, progress in either mechanism or proposal will be conducive to strengthening the relationship between the Central Asian countries and two neighbouring countries in the epoch of globalization and international integration.

Keywords: Eurasian Economic Union; Silk Road Economic

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, almost all former members of the USSR signed the Treaty of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in December 1991. This agreement was the first step in a string of integration processes. On 18 November 2011, the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed an agreement, setting a target of establishing the Eurasian Union by 2015. The agreement included the roadmap for the future integration and establishing the Eurasian Commission (Modeled on the European Commission) and the Eurasian Economic Space, which started work on January 1st 2012. It was first proposed as a concept by the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, during a 1994 speech at a Moscow university.

In September, 2013, China's President Xi Jinping had a successful state visit to four countries in Central Asia. During his speech at Nazarbayev University, Xi proposed establishing a Silk Road Economic Belt. This aroused considerable interest among the international community and received a positive response from countries that might make up the proposed belt. Xi's initiative represents the grand blueprint for deepened cooperation among Eurasian countries in the new era.

The treaty aiming for the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) was signed on 29 May 2014 by the leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, and came into force on 1 January 2015. Then the treaties aiming for Armenia's and Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union were signed (in October and December 2014, respectively). Armenia's accession treaty came into force on 2 January 2015.

Most researchers point positive side of the Eurasian Economic integration, but analyze problems, as well. The EAEU objectives include not only trade development among member states, but the free movements of goods, people, services and capital; the development of market economies, economic growth; regional integration in the fields of macroeconomics, financial policy, energy sector. At the same time the disparities of the member-countries economics remain huge [1].

Located between China and Russia, Central Asia is a region unavoidable for China and Russia to meet. Russia is adopting a strategy of "Pivot to Asia Pacific", which is clearly different from the one US is taking, as is more containment-oriented¹. Just as one article stated that a number of signs indicate that the US policy toward China intend to "contain" rather than "engage"² China neighbors three of the five Central Asian states and shares more than three thousand kilometers of borders with Central Asia. Due to this geography, the coexistence of China and Russia in this region is more than natural. Both Silk Road Economic Belt proposed by Xi and Eurasian Union underway among some of CIS states focus their attention on Central Asia.

There are quite a few researches on Eurasian Union by Chinese scholars as well as a new inspiration on Silk Road Economic Belt. While a new question arises, are Eurasian Economic Union and Silk Road Economic Belt compatible? Why? Different perspectives have been adopted by Chinese scholars on their researches on Eurasian Union. As early as 1995, an academic article on "Integration of CIS States: Reality and Future" was published in a journal [4].

In the author's view, integration process of CIS states was stagnant without substantial improvement, while bilateral or multilateral connections are in progress at an accelerated rate. For some reasons, only three countries were taking pro-active measure to establish a Custom Union, which would facilitate free flow of goods and trade.

In November 2011, an analytical article on "Eurasian Union Proposal: Its Background, Objectives and Possibility" was published in Shanghai's journal "Current International Relation"[2].

The author viewed that Russia had not gained a favor in dealing with the relationship between itself and the West, instead at the expense of strategic space pressed step by step. A re-orientation was both necessary and practical, as Asia-Pacific region is booming. A four-step procedure will be carried out to achieve the integration objective by 2015. The author stated that there would be some obstacles ahead to be overcome.

¹ URL: <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/pivot-to-asia-us-strategy-to-contain-china-or-to-rebalance-asia.html>

² URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/the-us-china-and-the-containment-trap/>

One can easily find that in 2013 and 2014, researches on Eurasian Union are at an ascending path. This can be attributed to the fruits that have been reaped on the all-round cooperation between China and Russia. In a 2013 article, one author holds the view that Eurasian Union is not to re-sovietize, that is to the contrary the U.S. has been clamoring. It is also natural that some scholars are positive while others are negative towards Eurasian Union. In fact, currently Ukraine crisis are bringing more uncertainties.

Even before Xi's proposal on Silk Road Economic Belt, there has been much endeavor on its study. While most researches focus their attention on issues such as Xinjiang's position and development, tourism development, energy cooperation. Most views are more domestic rather than international. My view on Eurasian Union and Silk Road Economic Belt is that cultural dialogue and people-to-people communication are more important than trade and economy.

We can understand that both concepts are delivered at a speech by leaders in a university. It clearly illustrates that universities are good platforms to spread new ideas or concepts. With concrete actions, new ideas or concepts will be brought into reality. Whether Eurasian Union or Silk Road Economic Belt, both have sound fundamentals, they are not derived from void.

Historically, the heartland in Eurasia was the most dynamic and prosperous region in the global economic landscape. There were vibrant trading activities, as west Asian merchants took horses, iron tools, linen and wool products from the West to the East, in exchange for silk, gemstone and spice. It lasted hundreds of years. Due to multiple factors, some countries in Eurasia are exploring the track to prosperity. Countries in Eurasia are in a critical state of economic and social development, shouldering the urgent task of economic reform and upgrading. With no access to the sea, Central Asian countries are paying high transportation costs due to their severe lack of modern rail and road networks.

Those countries come to realize that one cannot develop itself in isolation. In order to translate the potential strengths in population, resources, and market and technology into development advantages, countries in Eurasia need to further expand all-round openness and cooperation. Epistemology is important because it is fundamental to how we think. The importance of integration processes is also pointed out in the articles of other authors [3. – P. 32–33].

Both Russia and China attaches great importance to Central Asia, progress in either mechanism or proposal will be conducive to strengthening the relationship between the Central Asian countries and two neighbouring countries. The strategic partnerships relationship between former Soviet Union states and China has been established and enhanced.

Stability and development are in the interests of all concerned countries. In order to deepen cooperation, Eurasian countries need to establish a new concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, support each other. Both bilateral and multilateral cooperation should not be detrimental to the other party.

The initiative of the Silk Road Economic Belt is an open concept. Russia, Central Asia, South Asia and other countries and regions are welcomed to participate in it. Its foothold is openness, inclusiveness as well as cooperation, just as the five points Xi has advocated, namely policy communication, road connectivity, trade facilitation, monetary circulation and people-to-people exchanges. Eurasian Union also attaches importance to cooperation when it was first proposed in 1994. To realize its potentials, more countries in Central Asia and South Caucasus are expected to join in and cooperate. A possible outcome is that it can be comparable with European Union, which neither Russia nor China can pay less attention on. In China's view, Silk Road Economic Belt might span from Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea, and gradually move toward the set-up of a network of transportation that connects Eastern, Western and Southern Asia, with focus on economic and cultural cooperation. Eurasian Union is also an open system. Neither exclusive blocks nor zones should be delimited, with no access to other economic entities.

Silk Economic Belt is foremost conceptual framework which needs to be further enriched if it is to realize its full potential. It is a flexible form of cooperation rather than integration. While the aim of the Eurasian Union is to facilitate free exchange of trade, service, finance and labour. Some proactive measures should be taken to make the two compatible and complementary. From a long-standing point, cooperation and competition should be the main theme of the time.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has been pursuing an all-round openness; Silk Road Economic Belt is just one of those initiatives. For example, The China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone has been established, with new zones to blossom in succession. In Boao Forum, China's Premier Li Keqiang pointed out that China is ready to draw up plans for a Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is on the way to operate, with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan as signatories.

China respects the development paths and policies chosen by peoples of regional countries, and will never interfere in the domestic affair of relevant countries. China will never seek a dominant role in regional affairs, nor to nurture a sphere of influence.

The launch of Chongqing-Xinjinag-Europe railway has opened a new transport and logistics route between Asia and Europe. Many scholars cite it as an example that China should upgrade its international logistics. While

Russia is a country in transit, what China hopes is that Pan-Asian Railway can come into being as envisioned and planned. The Chinese government wished to propose that the Eurasian countries promote the building of the new grand Eurasia passage, and develop the Eurasian Land Bridge into a new growth pole that integrates transportation, oil and gas pipelines, telecommunication cables, logistics and trade, so as to boost regional cooperation. The more striking news is that high-speed train construction projects between Russia and China is in full swing.

Blessed with splendid cultures, the Eurasian countries enjoy dynamic people-to-people exchange. China and many other countries in Eurasia have hosted theme-year and theme-month events. The Eurasian countries need to uphold the principle of mutual respect, equality, inclusiveness and mutual learning, expand exchange in education, science, culture and press, and promote mutual understanding and friendship between our peoples.

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