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International Transport Corridors in the Eurasian Region: the Realities and Prospects

The process of globalization, which today engulfed the majority of world countries, is most closely related to the development of international transportation infrastructure. Simultaneously high tempos of the international cooperation force to search for the new ways of upgrading the efficiency with the aim to satisfy the time economy demands. Starting from this fact there is an observed need for opening international transportation corridors, long-distance lines and high speed roads and other innovations based on the recent science and technology achievements. The use of unified forms of customs clearance and passing through the state borders in these corridors not only expedites the cargos and passengers delivery but it serves an important step to gradual integration of national transport ways of the developed and developing countries into the single international transport system.

The emergence of new economic centers in the Asia-Pacific Region and the increasing trade turn-over between Asia and Europe have put on the agenda an acute question of constructing new trans-continental land transport routes. The competition for the implementation of transport projects between the U.S., China and Europe has sharply increased. After the dissolution of the USSR the former Soviet Central Asian republics showed interest in diversifying their economic and transport ties with other Asian countries. In this context the question of finding and diminishing the threats to its economic interests in Asian transport sphere is extremely significant for Russia.

The U.S., EC and in particular Chinese transport projects of “the Silk Way” are very competitive to Russia. The Chinese project aimed at creation of “Economic belt of the Silk Way” (hereinafter referred to as EBSW) is completely inconsistent with the economic and geopolitical interests of the U.S.A. and only partially is inconsistent with Russia’s interests. If at the moment of the birth of the concept of EBSW it was one of the responses of China to the U.S. actions aimed at the creation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) today this motif has lost its urgency.

The goal of this project is the unification of the transport infrastructure of China and of Central Asian region in order to solve the problem of Western territories of China and to ensure the route for the Chinese goods to Europe. This

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project is integrational and only in case of Russia's participation within the framework of SCO and Euro-Asian Economic Community (EAEC) it can become more attractive for Russia.

Russia can persuade PRC in expediency of building of one of the new main Euro-Asian transport bridges via Russia within the framework of these regional associations. China is only partially interested in the development of Euro-Asian land transport routes on the territory of the Russian Federation. Potentially such transport bridge can be a force-major alternative to other routes (by-passing Russia) due to the following reasons: First, a whole number of territorial disputes between new Central Asian States has not been settled which can lead to an international conflict and could hamper the delivery of cargo transportation; secondly, the aggravation of relations between the U.S.A. and China can lead to the blocking of the sea routes between China and Europe and the only land transport bridge via still instable region of Central Asia is a bad prospect for China. To convince the Chinese of the fact that the development of the international transport corridors is not a threat to its national interests but is rather a guarantee of their security represents an important task that Russia is facing. But for that purpose the Russian Federation should ensure the efficiency of the cargo transportation across its territory and, in the first turn, for the account of creation transport and logistics' system involving the entire East-West route and its more sustained integration into the world transport space.

The U.S. Project of "New Silk Way" going via Afghanistan envisages the realization of the U.S. plans to establish their dictate over the Central Asian countries and to counter Russia's influence. The prospects of the implementation of this project are quite vague taking into consideration the instability in Afghanistan. Moreover, the retreat of new U.S. President Donald Trump from Neo-Liberal model of economic development, which has a theoretical motivation substantiated by the prominent American economist and Nobel Prize winner Friedman, to protectionism will lead to a reduction of American global geopolitical and economic ambitions including the curtailing of the American "New Silk Way" Project.

The EU Countries' International Transport Corridor TRASEKA stampedes due to the economic unprofitability of the cargo transportation via this route and due to absence of final solution to the problem of the Caspian Sea status. Despite this fact about 80 projects were implemented and are now successfully working along this corridor [2]. Thus during the analysis of the joint Russian – Chinese infrastructural projects one should very carefully calculate their possible agglomeration effect which, as the experience of construction of high-speed rail-roads in China shows, could appear to be very considerable.

Russia's North Siberian Eurasian railroad which will connect the Japanese sea shore at the East with the Baltic and Barents seas in the North–West of Russia has a special interest for Russia. This railroad will connect Western European countries with the Asia-Pacific states. This new magnitude axis will cross over all the territory of our country to the north of Trans-Siberian railroad and will go

along the route of “Port of Vanino — Khrebtovaya — Ust-Ilimsk — Bogchany — Lesosibirsk — Belyi Yar — Surgut — Ivdel — Syktyvkar — Sankt-Petersburg (Arkhangelsk, Indiga). In prospect it will go to the Sakhalin and under certain conditions to Japan. The calculations using the models of inter-branch transport and industry branch balance showed that for the raising of socio-economic level of life Russia will face the necessity of the beginning to form up the intensive development of the second (Northern) magnitude belt of economic development of the country inside the zone leaning toward the North Russia Eurasian railroad already in the first quarter of 21st century.

For the development of the Eurasian connections Russia has a big interest in the so-called North-Japanese railroad transport corridor. According to this project it is supposed to connect the network of the Japanese railroads with the Pan-European railroads’ network via the Vakkanai Port (Hokkaido island) and the port of Korsakov (on Sakhalin island) where the tunnel under the Tatar straits is being designed. The Japanese consider this project of the transport corridor between Japan and Europe together with the plan of railroad service between the port of Simonoseki and port of Pusan (South Korea). The railroad transport corridor as an alternative to the sea transport route from Asia to Europe will provide for the increase of the transportation of cargoes between Japan, South Korea and Europe.

With the opening of North Japanese railroad transport bridge one of the predictions of the prominent American scholar and political figure La Rouche about the key role of the railroad transport corridors including the one between Japan and the continental part of Asia in ensuring economic ties between the “poles of growth” in Europe and Asia has become true.

The competition of the projects of Russia, China, the U.S.A. and EU for the construction of the International Transport Corridors essentially requires that Russia should act in the lead. Transportation means and transport routes of the Russian Federation which has the unique place on the geopolitical map of Europe can give the country the historic chance of stable inclusion into the process of integration in the region of Central Asia and will give impetus to the development of all Russia and especially the Russian Far East. And it also can ensure the geopolitical and economic security to our country as well. Besides that Russian transportation means could become the main connecting link in the trade between the growing regional economic centers and Europe.