

Spatial Measurement of Eurasian Integration

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Abstract—The institutions of Eurasian integration were formed from the experience of other integration associations, but taking into account the specifics of the participating countries. The article assesses the impact of spatial factors on the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which has not yet been sufficiently studied, although this is quite significant. Among these factors are Russia's sharp dominance in the EAEU, large social and economic differences at the country and regional levels, the predominance of energy sector and its infrastructure in the interaction of the participating countries, and the deep-seated position in Eurasia. The existing institutions are mainly aimed at ensuring freedom for mutual trade and cross-border movement of the population. Mainly, capital cities benefited from this, to which the main part of mutual trade and labor migrations is locked. At the same time, they did not stimulate the development of industrial and technological cooperation between the participating countries. Eurasian integration has done nothing to reduce the unevenness of spatial development in the participating countries, which bolsters skepticism towards the EAEU and increases internal political instability. The recently adopted Strategic Directions for Developing the Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025 presuppose correction of integration institutions towards strengthening of the coordination elements and joint design in them. This will make it possible to reduce the negative impact of the intracontinental position and more actively use the potential of a central position in Eurasia. The system of measures for joint economic policy presented in them has created a new platform for stable interaction between states, national communities, and business for more efficient use of the Eurasian space they occupy.

Keywords: Eurasian integration, institutions, EAEU countries, Russia, space, social differences, intracontinental position, international transport corridors, development coordination

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INTRODUCTION AND FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Eurasian integration, like any regional integration project, reflects the formation of a larger market space with a mutual preferential regime of economic interaction between the participating countries. Enlargement of space expands the opportunities for countries to realize their comparative economic advantages, while simultaneously ensuring that the effects from the scale of production and faster implementation of various innovations are received. Integration of national spaces significantly improves their geoeconomic position, which becomes a significant resource for subsequent development.

The objective of the institutional mechanism formed to manage the integration process is that all its participants should obtain the economic and social effects. As for the EAEU, the established integration institutions reflect the economic, social, and political specifics of the participating countries (Vardomskiy and Turaeva, 2021). To a large extent, the Eurasian integration model is influenced by the peculiarities of national economic spaces, which are based on the

Soviet legacy in the form of a network of cities, transport links, and industrial specialization, as well as their positions relative to each other and in geographic Eurasia.

The implementation of any integration project, the main driving forces of which is freedom of cross-border movement of people, goods, capital, and services, impacts the spatial development of the participating countries and the dynamics of national territorial structures of the economy. Eurasian integration is no exception. However, the freedom of cross-border movement occurs in a large integration space, with a low density of infrastructure networks, highly differentiated in socioeconomic development, remote from the main world markets. As a result, the factor of “freedom of cross-border interactions” manifests itself in a weakened form, economic incentives for integration “stall” in the friction of long distances, poor logistics, and strong uneven distribution of the economy and population. In addition, the declared “freedoms” create certain difficulties for national producers mastering new industries, which forces the participating countries to introduce various kinds of

restrictions into the regime of free interactions based on national interests.

The objective of this article is *to study the impact of the spatial (geoeconomic) conditions on Eurasian integration institutions and assess the impact of existing integration institutions on the regional economies of the participating countries*. A deeper understanding of the relationship between the institutions and spatial conditions of integration will help construct a more effective policy to unite EAEU countries.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

The study of the spatial aspects of regional economic integration was initiated in the USSR during the period of socialist economic integration under the auspices of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). 47 years ago, I.M. Maergoiz (1975) published the article “Territorial structure of the national economy and some approaches to its study in socialist countries in terms of socialist economic integration,” which outlined the methodology of such a study. Professor Maergoiz’s approaches were based on a comprehensive assessment of the role of the economic and geographical position and the main infrastructure linking the CMEA countries in integration processes, identification of regions and subregions playing a key role in them, and the idea that the macroterritorial structure of the economy European CMEA countries is formed in the course of integration. I.M. Maergoiz, as well as Yu.G. Saushkin, developed the methodology for geography, but based on material from foreign socialist countries.¹ An in-depth study of the territorial structures of the economies of foreign socialist countries during their integration made it possible to expand the arsenal of methodological approaches to studying the geography of the Soviet economy in terms of the influence of foreign economic relations on the spatial development of the state.

Socialist economic integration was carried out on a planned basis, one of the main principles of which was to even the levels of socioeconomic development of both the participating countries and their least developed eastern regions. Shifts in the location of industry, geography of the population, transport, and tourism under the influence of socialist economic integration were studied in detail by P.M. Alampiev, N.V. Alisov, A.N. Barkovsky, E.B. Valev, Yu.V. Ilinich, A.A. Kutuzov, N.S. Mironenko, S.L. Matytsin, T.E. Tkachenko, V.V. Frolov, and the author of this article.

The founder of the Soviet study of the regional aspects of European integration was the well-known geographer S.B. Shlikhter, a disciple of I.M. Maergoiz, who published a number of pioneering works (Shlikhter and El’ke, 1986).

¹ In this regard, Professors I.M. Maergoiz and Yu.G. Saushkin, to a certain extent, were competing, which benefited geography.

In EU countries, one of the main research directions into the spatial features of integration was assessment of the impact of “disappearing borders” on the development of EU member states and the European space as a whole. The weakening of the regulatory functions of internal state borders and the expansion of the common market space based on liberalization of mutual economic ties has had a significant impact on the spatial development of the participating countries (Niebuhr and Stiller, 2002). However, it has an ambiguous character, since the freedom of cross-border movement of production factors intensifies competition between regions of the countries participating in integration, which has no less an influence on spatial development. The strongest cities and regions benefit mainly from integration within the EU (Brakman et al., 2012). Lagging regions are pulled along via financial support from EU funds for certain infrastructure and social projects.

In Russia, scientists from the Institute of World Economy and International Relations RAS (IMEMO RAS), under the supervision of A.V. Kuznetsov, studied in detail the issues of regional policy implemented at the level of both the EU and individual member states, in the context of evening out development levels. Studies have shown that bridging large gaps in the development levels of participating countries and their regions requires large material costs, via EU funds, and a significantly longer time frame than supposed (Regional’naya ..., 2009; Regional’naya ..., 2015).

The bulk of the research into the spatial problems of post-Soviet integration projects was related to studying the development of new border regions that arose after the collapse of the USSR, as well as cross-border cooperation. They addressed the following issues: the actual cross-border cooperation and its institutions; the formation of cross-border regions and clusters; social processes in adjacent regions of the countries; changing ratios of barrier and contact functions of boundaries; cross-border social communication; interaction of “big” interstate and “small” (transboundary) integration. These issues were studied in a number of universities in Russian border regions (Dnepro–dvinskii ..., 2019; Strategiya ..., 2018), but the undisputed leader became the Laboratory of Geopolitical Studies at the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, under the supervision of V.A. Kolosov, whose long-term work was crowned by the seminal work (Rossiiskoe ..., 2018).

Another direction in studying spatial factors was related to the connectivity of the newly independent states (NIS) in the implementation of integration projects. In particular, studies by I.P. Gurova, M.V. Efremova, L.Z. Zevin, and A.G. Pylin noted a drop in trade connectivity of the economies of the CIS and EAEU countries, reflecting lower rates of mutual trade compared to trade as a whole and GDP growth

(Evraziiskaya ..., 2019; Gurova and Efremova, 2012; Rossiya ..., 2021). This was manifested in the difficulties for Russia and other NIS to adapt to the geopolitical changes and market transformations that were taking place, which dealt a strong blow to their economies and social spheres. The NIS tried to reduce losses from disintegration and move to positive economic dynamics by creating a Customs Union (CU) and a free economic zone within the CIS. However, they were implemented in a period of turbulence in the global economy, which influenced the effectiveness of these projects (Perekhod ..., 2019).

The importance of the NIS for Russia and the strengthening of geopolitical and geoeconomic competition in them from global and regional centers of power increased the relevance of studying countries of the “neighborhood belt” and integration models of interaction with this belt in terms of Russian interests. These studies were concentrated at the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Ushkalova and Vardomskiy, 2020).

Another important spatial aspect of the study of Eurasian integration is assessment of the influence of the intracontinental position of the majority of NIS on national socioeconomic development and integration processes. Studies by L.A. Bezrukov (2008) and Ya.D. Lisovolik (2017) occupy a central place in the study of this problem.

All of the above-mentioned spatial aspects of studying regional integration (or disintegration) were in some way related to assessment of the changes taking place in the territorial development of the participating countries and the role of the relevant state and supranational institutions in them regulating integration interactions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article was prepared from official national and international (Eurasian Economic Commission of the EAEU, World Bank, UN) statistical and information sources, as well as materials published in line with the article by Russian and foreign authors. The methodological basis of the study comprised interstate, inter-regional, and dynamic comparisons in the context of geopolitical and economic transformations taking place in the world. For the purposes of the study, the author cites national statistics, in particular, on the gross regional product of EAEU countries, in a comparable form by recalculation into Russian RUB at the average annual rate of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation.

RESULTS

Initially, the EU model was seen as an institutional basis for Eurasian integration, but in its implementation, it deviated greatly from the prototype, since the liberal basis of European integration in the EAEU

proved applicable only to a limited extent (Strategiya ..., 2020).

Eurasian integration institutions, with some limitations, ensure freedom of movement of goods and people across internal borders, transit links of different geographic directions, and the activities of the common labor market. Its successes include the formation of a common customs space, albeit with a number of exemptions and exceptions; the creation of a system for protecting the domestic market from dumped and low-quality goods; convergence of the levels of development and personal incomes of the participating countries via labor migration and financing of business projects from both multi- and bilateral funds for their support, created with the participation of Russia and Kazakhstan; and the provision of a number of social guarantees to citizens of the participating countries throughout the EAEU.² An important achievement of the EAEU was the widespread use of national currencies in mutual settlements of accounts. According to the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), the share of national currencies in the structure of foreign trade payments increased from 63% in 2013 to 74% in 2019.³

At the same time, the existing institutions did not stimulate the development of industrial and technological cooperation of the participating countries. Mutual economic ties of the EAEU countries, based on the Soviet economic legacy, agrarian–climatic, natural-resource, and demographic differences, approached the limits of possible growth, as evidenced by the dynamics of their mutual trade in 2010–2020 (Table 1). During the period the EAEU was in force, the connectivity of the economies of the participating countries increased slightly, but it, reflecting the fluctuations in the global market situation, including under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, was unstable.

In general, the integration project over the past 5 years proved less successful than expected (see Report on the main directions of integration within the EAEU⁴ and (Evraziiskaya ..., 2019)). This is evidenced by delays in the formation of common sectoral markets and the coordination of national economic policies. Several studies explain this low level of diversifi-

² Report on the main directions of integration within the Eurasian Economic Union, EEC, 2018. <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/Documents/Доклад%20о%20реализации%20основных%20направлений%20интеграции-2018.pdf>. Accessed May 12, 2021.

³ Analytical report of the Eurasian Development Bank “Increasing the role of national currencies of the EAEU in international settlements.” https://eabr.org/upload/iblock/a2f/EDB_2021_Report_National-currencies_rus.pdf. Accessed July 10, 2021.

⁴ Report on the main directions of integration within the Eurasian Economic Union, EEC, 2018. <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/Documents/Доклад%20о%20реализации%20основных%20направлений%20интеграции-2018.pdf>. Accessed May 12, 2021.

Table 1. Dynamics of trade connectivity of EAEU countries

Year	Volume of mutual trade (five countries), USD bln	Total GDP at purchasing power parity EAEU/CU, USD bln	The ratio of mutual trade to total GDP at purchasing power parity, %
2010	47.1	3434	1.37
2011	63.1	4026	1.56
2012	68.6	4274	1.61
2013	64.5	4385	1.48
2014	57.4	4422	1.29
2015	45.4	4281	1.05
2016	43.0	4310	1.00
2017	54.7	4524	1.22
2018	60.3	4943	1.22
2019	61.6	5059	1.22
2020	54.9	4896	1.12

Compiled and calculated according to World Bank. Open data (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locale=ru&locations=>. Accessed July 12, 2021); EEC. EAEU statistics. Foreign and mutual trade statistics. January–December 2011–2021 (http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/integr_i_makroec/dep_stat/tradestat/tables/Pages/default.aspx). Accessed July 12, 2021.

cation of national economies, macroeconomic instability, and underdeveloped financial markets.⁵ In the author's opinion, this is also influenced by the peculiarities of the space in which the integration is implemented. The most significant is *Russia's sharp predominance in the EAEU* (Table 1). Russia's population is four times larger than the total population of the other partners. In GDP, it surpasses them by almost seven times. This predetermines not only the importance of the Russian market for the sale of goods and services for the EAEU partners, but also for their relations with the outside world (Rossiya ..., 2021; Vardomskiy and Turaeva, 2021).

Russia looks better among other EAEU members in terms of most macroeconomic indicators per capita. This allows it to provide financial assistance to countries in need on a bilateral basis and through the financial organizations of the union, to be the main investor in the economy for a number of participating countries, help in labor force training, provide financial, information, and engineering services. Due to higher salaries and a shortage of labor of different skill levels, Russia is attractive to labor migrants from partner countries. At the same time, in economic growth rates in 2010–2019, it was inferior to other members of the union. Its weak point remains the relatively high poverty level and highest income polarization (according to the Gini coefficient) among EAEU countries. Taking into account social inequality in the human development index (HDI), Russia ranks third in the EAEU (Table 2).

⁵ Analytical report of the Eurasian Development Bank "Increasing the role of national currencies of the EAEU in international settlements." https://eabr.org/upload/iblock/a2f/EDB_2021_Report_National-currencies_rus.pdf. Accessed July 10, 2021.

Big problems for EAEU partners are created by the strong dependence of the Russian economy on the situation on world markets, which affects the ruble exchange rate and domestic demand for the goods they produce. In addition, the partner countries take into account the possibility of being subject—directly or indirectly—to Western sanctions due to cooperation with Russia.⁶

The dramatic predominance of the Russian economy in the EAEU makes countries with small economies fearful of an economic takeover by Russia.⁷ The positive trade balance between the Russian Federation and other EAEU countries in 2020 was USD 14.7 bln, indicating the asymmetric complementarity of the structures of their economies. In other words, Russia for other partner countries is both the main focus of integration and the limiter of its depth. Important institutions that make it possible to balance the Russia's contradictory influence are: adoption by consensus of all important decisions in the EAEU; the focus of Eurasian integration on strengthening national sovereignty; and the unpunishable possibility of complying with adopted decisions.

In other words, the created institutional model of the EAEU combines two contradictory elements: mutual opening of national economies, on the one hand, and ensuring national sovereignty, on the other. At the same time, the greatest progress is observed in

⁶ Certain problems for the participating countries are also created by the "post-Soviet syndrome"—the fear of the destructive consequences for the national economy as a result of interdependence—which the countries faced as a result of the collapse of the USSR.

⁷ Regionalization of the world and Eurasian integration, *EDB*, June 18, 2019. <https://eabr.org/press/news/regionalizatsiya-mira-i-evraziyskaya-integratsiya/>. Accessed June 10, 2021.

Table 2. Macroeconomic indicators of EAEU countries per capita, 2019

Indicator	Armenia	Belarus	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
GDP (PPP), USD	14220	19943	27444	5471	29181
Current account of goods and services, USD	-618	-44	775	-393	876
Fixed capital investment, USD	306	1464	1760	356	1906
Direct foreign investment, USD	85.8	135.3	180.9	52.4	218.0
Balance of cross-border transfers of individuals, USD	170	22	-217	284	-115
Gross external public debt, USD	4169	4842	8511	1291	3351
Salary, USD	380	523	488	247	740
Internal costs for research and development, USD	8.2	39.6	11.6	1.2	119.5
Unemployment rate, %	18.3	4.2	4.8	5.5	4.6
Poverty rate, %	26.4	5.0	4.3	20.1	12.3
Gini coefficient	0.381	0.272	0.290	0.364	0.411
Human Development Index (HDI)	0.776	0.823	0.825	0.697	0.824
HDI taking into account social inequality	0.699	0.771	0.766	0.630	0.740
Share of mutual trade in total volume of foreign trade, %	30.2	50.7	22.2	39.3	8.9
Share of mutual transfers in their total volume, %	44.7	40.3	32.2	98.0	9.3

Source: (Vardomskiy and Turaeva, 2021).

integration segments in which the interests of the countries coincide, in particular, the formation of a common labor market. It is based on *vast differences in the regions of the participating countries in economic development and generated income*. They are especially large in Russia (Mikheeva, 2021). In 2019, in Russia, GRP per capita in Moscow was 10.7 times higher than in Ingushetia, the region with the lowest value of this indicator; in Kazakhstan this gap (between Almaty and Turkestan oblast) reached eight times; in Kyrgyzstan (between Bishkek and Osh oblast), 6.3 times; and in Belarus (between Minsk and Mogilev oblast), only 2.1 times.

The minimum GRP values, less than RUB 50000, are characteristic of two agrarian regions in Kyrgyzstan: Batken (RUB 42 000) and Osh (RUB 38 000) oblasts. The highest GRP values (over RUB 1 mln per person) are in the main oil and gas producing and capital regions of Russia and Kazakhstan. The Nenets Autonomous Okrug demonstrated the maximum value in the Russian Federation in 2019: RUB 7.5 mln. The difference between the maximum and minimum indicators was about 200 times. The difference in this indicator between the capitals of the Russian Federation and Kyrgyzstan was greater than seven times. Accordingly, there are large differences between countries in wages and personal incomes, which determines the importance of labor migration as the main element shaping the labor market. Before the pandemic, this circumstance played an important role in Eurasian integration, but it made progress difficult in creating sectoral markets, from the activity of which the participating countries could have suffered significant budget losses.

The course of Eurasian integration is greatly influenced by the leading role that the oil and gas industry and industries using oil and natural gas as raw materials play in the revenues of the national budgetary systems of Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belarus. The location of these industries largely determines the existing interregional differences. On the other hand, revenues from these industries underlie the implementation of national development programs, which prevents the formation of integrated oil, petroleum products, and gas markets. Belarus's opinion is that "fair prices" for oil and gas should become part of the Eurasian integration process. However, for the Russia and Kazakhstan, this means loss of sovereignty over the most important sector of the economy.

A peculiarity of the EAEU space from the viewpoint of conditions of social and economic cohesion is that the countries adjoin each other mainly through regions with close, but relatively low, per capita indicators of socioeconomic development. The highest connectivity in the EAEU space of Russia and Belarus is largely due to the proximity of the Moscow and Minsk agglomerations. The ties between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are largely due to the mutual proximity of Bishkek and Almaty. Customs statistics show that the framework of mutual trade is made up of metropolitan agglomerations. Eurasian integration is mainly based on the capital regions, which in each of the countries grow increasingly detached from their peripheral territories in the pace of economic modernization. Capital regions with higher wages are also more attractive for labor migrants.

At the same time, the border regions of neighboring countries, which possess the greatest social and

mental closeness in terms of people, represent a serious resource for increasing the economic and social integration of the post-Soviet space, which is being used to a limited extent at the current stage of integration for structural reasons. In particular, in the border regions of Russia and Kazakhstan, fuel and raw materials industries prevail, which have lost their role as drivers of growth of the national economies (Rosiya ..., 2021; Vardomskiy, 2017).

The integration policies of the EAEU countries show *two conditionally extreme options*: (1) based on the priority of national economic sovereignty, attracting foreign technologies and entering the emerging common market with new goods and services; and (2) deep economic cooperation between countries and their regions, aimed at realizing potential resource advantages. Until now, the first option has prevailed. The optimal one, in the author's opinion, is the search for the most rational combination of these options. The wider the inflow of technologies from third countries to the EAEU countries, the broader the basis of trade relations between the EAEU countries, but this is subject to the coordination of national sectoral policies. If there is none or if it is inadequate, then this becomes a source of economic contradictions, reflected in the preserved barriers to mutual trade.

Another feature of the integration space is related to its *intracontinentality*. Russia and other EU countries occupy an intracontinental position in geographic Eurasia, which predetermines, on average, the smaller involvement of the countries in international economic relations, a raw-materials nature of the economy, greater dependence on transit traffic, and low investment attractiveness.

The world is developing towards polycentricity and multifunctional regionalization. The economic and political power of potential centers is measured by the number of countries gravitating towards them. Countries neighboring the EAEU or groups of countries striving for central status use different models of expanding their influence: ethnocultural (Turkey), credit infrastructure (China), and liberal democratic (EU). In this sense, the EAEU space and post-Soviet space as a whole are in the field of the powerful gravitational influence of their neighbors, which creates risks to their development according to the limitrophic space scenario, as a battlefield for the centers competing for it (Tsymburskii, 1999).

The Declaration of the Further Development of Integration Processes within the EAEU dated December 6, 2018, sets the task of transforming the EAEU into one of the most significant centers of the modern world. In other words, if the EAEU countries do not move towards the formation of a Eurasian center, then they will inevitably become a gap between the already existing centers. To avoid this, the EAEU countries need harmoniously combined development of integration institutions and integration projects involving

all member countries; active joint work is also required to create a Greater Eurasian Partnership. Its achievement will require the development of a common strategic idea of the EAEU that would unite all participants. As such a unifying idea, one can suggest *coordinated development of the integration space of the participating countries, as a space of common cultural, historical, natural, and economic heritage*.

The flip side of intracontinentality is the central position in Eurasia, which emphasizes a wide range of neighboring countries with which the EAEU countries can communicate, as well as their neighbors along the shortest and fastest land transport corridors (Torgovaya ..., 2020). *The joint use of the potential of the centrality of the position can become one of the areas of joint development of the EAEU space*.

Based on this idea, it is possible to more accurately determine the priority tasks of the EAEU, as a tool for the development of national economies, and develop many business projects in different spheres of the economy. This will make it possible to overcome the constraining influence of intracontinentality on the development of national economies.

The economic meaning of Eurasian integration at this stage is to strengthen its emphasis on solving social problems in the participating countries. Recent years have shown the significant influence of the social factors of integration on spatial development. On the one hand, they increase interregional differences in countries by concentrating business activity in large cities, and on the other hand, they equalize the differences through income received from labor migration, in which the poorest regions are widely involved. However, this influence is based on intercountry differences in human potential, which cannot be a long-term factor in the development of the Eurasian integration project. A program is needed to redirect the activities of the EAEU towards the coordinated and joint development of human potential and its more efficient use, primarily through the coordination of national development strategies and the implementation of joint economic and social projects.

Another purpose of the EAEU, closely related to the first, is seen in the activation of land and land-sea communications on a modern logistic basis. This takes advantage of the central position between the aforementioned global centers of new technologies, capital and consumption. These general lines of development of Eurasian integration combine the two mentioned options of integration behavior. In practice, this means a radical improvement in the social and logistic conditions of intrastate (interregional) and integration interaction, as well as interaction with the markets of the non-EAEU countries, and at the same time coordination of this interaction. Modern high-tech digital infrastructure and logistics will increase the complementarity of the economies of the EAEU countries

and, at the same time, expand the export potential of goods and services for third countries.

These ideas have been laid in the recently adopted Strategic Directions for Developing the Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025 (Strategic Directions-2025).⁸ The document identifies new instruments and areas of cooperation that will help overcome difficulties in harmonizing national interests, building ties in production cooperation, subcontracting and technology transfer. The negative impact of the pandemic and related events in the partner countries, which caused the radicalization of public relations, showed the importance for all participants in the progressive development of the EAEU. Strategic Directions-2025 are aimed at deepening the integration process, converging the levels of socioeconomic development of the participating countries, improving the regulatory sphere, which will reduce the number of barriers to integration to a minimum.

CONCLUSIONS

Eurasian integration has not yet had a significant impact on solving social problems in the participating countries, which fosters skepticism towards the EAEU and increases internal political instability.

New problems for the EAEU countries are posed by the ongoing struggle for a low-carbon economy in the world, which, as its initiators believe, should stop unfavorable climate change. For the countries under consideration, we are talking about changing the resource base of development. Unfortunately, the Strategic Directions-2025 have given little attention to this issue. However, they propose parallel development of the EAEU “in breadth” and “in depth,” based on the joint development of low-carbon export production and import substitution. One example of such joint actions was the establishment of vaccine production for COVID-19 in Belarus and Kazakhstan based on Russian developments. Greater prospects for the development of a low-carbon basis for Eurasian integration are created by the more active use of the potential of the EDB, the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development, the Astana International Financial Center, and national banks, outlined in the Strategic Directions-2025.

Much attention in the document is paid to the conjugation of the development strategy of the EAEU and the Chinese megaproject the Belt and Road Initiative. These two projects largely complement each other in the context of more efficient and quickest use of the transit potential for the transcontinental movement of goods and people along international transport corridors.

⁸On Strategic Directions for Developing the Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025, EEC, December 13, 2020. https://docs.eaeunion.org/docs/ru-ru/01428320/err_12012021_12. Accessed July 12, 2021.

The modernization of existing international transport corridors and the creation of new ones is an important factor in adapting this space to the rapidly changing external conditions of development. Occupying a central position in geographic Eurasia, the EAEU, with broad cooperation with China and other countries of Asia and Europe, can become the focus of a comprehensive continental partnership.⁹

The increasing international role of intracontinental transport routes creates prerequisites for strengthening the internal connectivity of this space. To use these prerequisites, appropriate institutions are needed, which would combine flexibility and the ability to quickly respond to external changes and changes in national interests through the timely coordination of integration and national development. In this coordination, programs of regional development of countries should take place, as well as broader opportunities for cooperation at the regional and municipal levels. The Strategic Directions-2025 do not directly take into account the regional aspect of Eurasian integration. At the same time, the system of joint economic policy measures presented in them actually creates a new platform for sustainable interaction between states, national communities and business for more efficient use of the Eurasian space they occupy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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