

Greater Eurasian Partnership: China's Perspective

Zhao Huasheng

The Greater Eurasian Partnership is a newly proposed initiative. As of late, the initiative has been referred to by Russian President Vladimir Putin several times, and thus received a high level of worldwide attention.¹ Regarding China as an important target, the Greater Eurasian Partnership also covers China's neighboring countries, overlapping geographically with China's Belt and Road Initiative. In view of China's response to the initiative in the future, it is imperative to have a better understanding of the Greater Eurasian Partnership. Through an analysis of currently available research that focuses on how the Partnership has been raised and developed,² this paper will answer a series of important questions relating to the concept.

Understanding the Greater Eurasian Partnership

Eurasianism is the theoretical basis of Russia's foreign policy, and the Greater Eurasian Partnership is seen as a reflection of this theory. Eurasianism rejects

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1 An early form of the idea of Greater Eurasian Partnership came into being in Putin's 2015 Annual Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, when he initiated the idea of establishing an economic partnership between the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and ASEAN. At the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2016, Putin put forward the concept of Greater Eurasian Partnership. In the 2016 Presidential Address, Putin once again proposed to establish a multi-level greater Eurasian integration model, which is the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

2 Some scholars have systematically examined the Greater Eurasian Partnership in various perspectives. See Li Ziguo, "The Greater Eurasian Partnership: Remodeling the Eurasian Order?" *China International Studies*, March/April 2017, pp.44-65; Pang Dapeng, "Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership," *Academic Journal of Russian Studies*, No.2, 2017, pp.5-16.

the Euro-centric ideas, while similarly dismissing Pan-Slavism, a theory which primarily addressed the ethno-cultural ties among the Slavic speaking peoples of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The essence of Eurasianism is the belief that Eurasia is a geographically, economically and ethnically integrated unity.³ Within this framework, there exist classical Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism. Classical Eurasianism refers to Eurasianism during the 1920s and 30s, while Neo-Eurasianism refers to the theory after disintegration of the Soviet Union. Despite divergences within different schools of Neo-Eurasianism, they have some commonalities: first, they all support the integration of Eurasia; second, they all support President Putin's governing principles; and third, they all advocate the ontological nature of Eurasian civilization; and fourth, they all oppose postmodernism.⁴

In terms of Russian diplomacy, Eurasianism, at its core, is a theory of "empire."⁵ While Eurasianism emerged after the demise of the Russian empire, and Neo-Eurasianism came into prominence after dissolution of the Soviet Union, both call for the reconstruction of the "empire" and aim to provide a theoretical basis and an explanatory framework for the reintegration of the fallen Russian "empire." In this sense, the spiritual origin of Eurasianism lies neither in the "West" nor the "East", but in the "empire."⁶ Admittedly the former Soviet Union region is to be integrated into a union of sovereign states, which is different from the traditional structure of an empire, but Russia obviously stays at the core of the union. Russian-centrism is a key element of Eurasianism, and given the striking advantages in political, economic, military, demographic and traditional cultural fields, it is impossible that Russia will not remain at the center of Eurasian integration.⁷

3 Трубецкий Н. С. История. Культура. Язык. Москва, 1995. С.258; Кошанов А. Л., Нысанбаев А. Н. Идеи и реальность Евразийства. «Дайк Пресс», 1999. С.10.

4 Юрий Кофнер Евразийство: классическое, прагматическое, общественное. // Журнал «Новая Евразия», No.1. Март 2015 г., <http://eurasian-movement.ru/archives/747>.

5 The "empire" here is just a metaphor, without positive or derogatory tint.

6 А. А.Хомидов. Евразийская модель идеократического государства. Идеи и реальность Евразийства. «Дайк Пресс», 1999. С. 11.

7 Кошанов А. Л., Нысанбаев А. Н. Истоки евразийства в духовном наследии Чокана Валиханова. Идеи и реальность Евразийства. «Дайк Пресс», 1999. С.27.

Different countries have shown various preferences in their understanding of Eurasianism. For example, Kazakhstan is a staunch supporter of Eurasianism and has actually initiated the concept of “Greater Eurasia.”⁸ As a nation much weaker than Russia, Kazakhstan holds a different interpretation of Eurasianism that places emphasis on independence and equality, to wit, the integration of Eurasia should follow the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-involvement in political systems, voluntariness, mutual benefit, equality and economic priority.⁹ In this regard, Kazakhstan’s interpretation of Eurasianism varies greatly from traditional Eurasianism, and is remarkably distinct from Russian Eurasianism.

Motives and Connotations

Greater Eurasia is a term that concerns the Eurasian region, but has no exact geographic boundary or scope. However, it is clear that the boundaries of the former Soviet Union are certainly its central and starting point. In November 2016, the concept paper on foreign policy released by the Russian Foreign Ministry did not mention the Greater Eurasian Partnership. In *Diplomacy of the Russian Federation in 2016* released in April 2017, the Foreign Ministry used the term “Eurasian Comprehensive Economic Partnership,” which had similar implications to and was regarded as a rather detailed exposition of the Greater Eurasian Partnership.¹⁰ Having said that, the Greater Eurasian Partnership, whether conceptually or practically, is still undergoing development and will continue to change.

Regional cooperation has contributed to the increase in prominence which currently surrounds the Greater Eurasian Partnership. Following its

8 In May 2015, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan put forward the proposal of a unified Eurasian economic space at the 8th Astana Economic Forum. In September 2015, he proposed to build the Greater Eurasia at the United Nations General Assembly. See Президент Казахстана предложил создать Объединенное Евразийское Экономическое пространство. // CA-News. 22 Мая 2015 г., <http://www.ca-news.org/news:1150526/#sthash.IGcV1VER.dpuf>; Назарбаев в ООН рассказал об идее «Большой Евразии». // Stan Radar. 29 Сентября 2015 г., <http://www.stanradar.com/news/full/18215-nazarbaev-v-oon-rasskazal-ob-idee-bolshoj-evrazii.html>.

9 Юрий Кофнер Евразийство: классическое, прагматическое, общественное.

10 Внешнеполитическая и дипломатическая деятельность Российской Федерации в 2016 году, <http://www.mid.ru/ru/activity/review>.

establishment, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) began to conduct external cooperation, including the commencement of FTA negotiations with many countries. In May 2015, an FTA agreement was signed by the EEU and Vietnam. Russia also shows strong interest in developing ties with ASEAN, as evidenced by the fact that the third Russia-ASEAN Summit was to be held for the first time in Russia in 2016. Russia and ASEAN drew a roadmap for trade and investment cooperation, released an integrated action plan for developing their cooperation, and struck a deal on establishing a free trade zone between ASEAN and the EEU. The genesis of the Greater Eurasian Partnership lies in Russian regional cooperation, and the aforementioned examples of foreign cooperation have stimulated demand for new concepts.

The Greater Eurasian Partnership has many fulcrums, one of which is the EEU. For Russia, the Partnership is an economic cooperative network, with the EEU as the hub. President Putin has made it clear that the EEU can occupy a central role in the efforts towards greater Eurasian integration.¹¹ Russia being the EEU's major actor, the EEU-centered Greater Eurasian Partnership is in a certain sense also Russia-centered. In effect, the objective of the Partnership is to form a network of Russia-centered economic relationships. The vast geographical region of Asia is the major target of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, especially China, India, Japan, Vietnam, ASEAN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Therefore, cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and the countries and organizations in Asia, will be the mainstay of the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

Within Russian academia, there exists opposing views on China's role in the Greater Eurasian Partnership. Some academics hold that China is Russia's most important cooperation partner, and that the "two wagons" of China and

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¹¹ Владимир Путин выступил на пленарном заседании Петербургского международного экономического форума. 17 Июня 2016 г.

Russia form the central structure of the Greater Eurasian Partnership. Some argue that since China is so influential, it needs to be balanced to prevent confrontation between China and other Eurasian countries.¹² In other words, although Russian officials have not expressed this view, providing a balance to China's influence, in addition to establishing a more balanced regional structure in Eurasia, are twin functions of the Greater Eurasian Partnership. However, it must be emphasized that this view merely insists that China should be more or less balanced, and in actuality stands in favor of a cooperative rather than oppositional relationship with China. Concerning the nature of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, some Russian scholars believe that in the future it should promote the formation of a geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-cultural community in the greater Eurasian region and should constitute a central power within the new bipolar world structure. However, as a product of Russian academics and scholars, these ideas remain purely theoretical. Primarily, Russian officials continue to explain the Greater Eurasian Partnership from an economic perspective.

Theoretical analysis of the Greater Eurasian Partnership

A topic that merits further attention is the relationship between the Greater Eurasian Partnership and Russia's diplomatic shift to the East in 2011. The Greater Eurasian Partnership and the Pivot to the East share the same connotations and conceptual essence, the minor difference being that the Greater Eurasian Partnership is the development and upgrade of the Pivot to the East, not only covering the contents of the Pivot to the East, but also containing a broader meaning than the latter. Russia's Pivot to the East is not an appropriate concept in that its literal definition means "to turn its back on the West," which is generally understood as a diplomatic leaning towards the East.¹³ The Greater Eurasian Partnership has no such trouble,

12 At an Astana Club meeting on November 13, 2016, Professor Karaganov said China is so strong and it is necessary for China to join the Greater Eurasia system to strike a balance that will lower other countries' fears about China.

13 Timofei Bordachev, "Russia's Pivot to the East and Comprehensive Eurasian Partnership," August 31, 2016, <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-pivot-to-the-east-and-comprehensive/>.

and it can reflect Russia's diplomatic pursuit in a more accurate manner than the Pivot to the East.

Russia's relationship with the West is also a problem. Integrating into Europe was once Russia's grand strategy. In 2005, Russia and Europe decided to establish four common spaces: the common economic space, the common space for internal security and justice, the common space for external security and the common space for science and education. However, Russia's integration into Europe proved to be a difficult process. Subsequently, Russia abandoned its original goals and focused instead on building peace, security and stability with Europe.¹⁴ With the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, mutual resolve dissipated, and the political foundation for Russian integration into Europe was lost. However, it is wrong to conceive that the Greater Eurasian Partnership is in confrontation with Europe. The Greater Eurasian Partnership will not refute Europe, as its boundaries overlap with parts of Europe and naturally will not oppose cooperation with EU nations. If obstacles are removed, the EEU will not refuse dialogue and cooperation with the EU.¹⁵ Although the Greater Eurasian Partnership is a substitute for and fills the vacancy left by the shattered "Greater Europe" concept, it does not reject the idea of developing ties with Europe. The difference is that Russia has taken a different stand, and the Greater Eurasian Partnership develops ties with Europe under a different framework.

The Greater Eurasian Partnership can be conceptually framed as a redress of both Westernism and the Pivot to the East. In a philosophical sense, the exact nature of the Greater Eurasian Partnership comes back to the ontology of Russia, relying on Russia and developing relations with both the East and West.

A thorough analysis of Greater Eurasianism and Eurasianism must aim

14 Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В. В. Путиным 30 ноября 2016 г.). 1 декабря 2016, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2542248.

15 In his 2016 State of the Union address, Russian President Putin said that the Eurasian Economic Union is willing to hold dialogues with EU countries. See Послание Президента Федеральному Собранию. 1 декабря 2016 г., <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53379>.

to discern between the types of relationships held by the two. Eurasianism and the Greater Eurasian Partnership are similar in that they both look upon Eurasia as the ontological source, and seek to promote the eventual integration of the Eurasian region. For this, the Greater Eurasian Partnership is very likely to be regarded as an extension of Eurasianism, or an enlarged form of

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Eurasianism. There is no doubt that, either spiritually or diplomatically, the Greater Eurasian Partnership has some connection to Eurasianism. The EEU is the materialization of Eurasianism, and the Greater Eurasian Partnership will seek to develop on this foundation. However,

compared with the EEU, the Greater Eurasian Partnership strives for quality over quantity.

In terms of internal relations, Eurasianism has the relations between Russia and the former Soviet republics as its focal point, while the Greater Eurasian Partnership will focus more on the relations between Russia (and the Russian-centered EEU) and other Asian and European countries. Russia has special relations with the former Soviet republics, but its relations with other countries are formed through ties between ordinary countries. Therefore, Russia has different ideas, principles and goals relating to its practice of Eurasianism and role within the Greater Eurasian Partnership. Conceptually, Eurasianism contains political, economic and geographic content that has historical, cultural and ethnic characteristics. However, the Greater Eurasian Partnership has no historical, cultural or racial implications and remains a diplomatic concept, existing in its main form as an economic assemblage of aggregate countries. In terms of internal goals, the establishment of a new confederate country or a “united” country constitutes the final eventuality of Eurasianism. The Greater Eurasian Partnership has no such inherent pursuit. Its goal is only to form a network of relations and establish a loose regional integration, with Russia as the starting point. In essence, Eurasianism is a nation-state constructivist theory and the Greater

Eurasian Partnership is a theory of foreign relations. The Greater Eurasian Partnership may likely have given birth to Greater Eurasianism as a new concept, but in actuality, has nothing to do with Eurasianism.

Implications of Greater Eurasia for China

Greater Eurasia is largely a geopolitical and geo-economic concept. It has no definite geographical boundary. It can be said to extend to Europe, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia. The uncertainty of the scope of greater Eurasia adds to the difficulty in defining China's interests. Therefore, the scope of discussion will be limited to China's interests within the framework of the Eurasian region, the central region of greater Eurasia.

In addition to the usual economic interests, such as massive investment and myriad cooperative projects, the Eurasian region holds special importance for China.

Anti-terrorist and security interests

Compared with other periods in history, the current rise in non-traditional security threats has highlighted the strategic importance of Eurasia for China's security. While traditional security threats still exist, they are no longer the most challenging. China has altered the features of its Eurasia security policy to reflect these grave new challenges.

For China, the most prominent and acute security threat in Eurasia is terrorism, extremism and separatism. The special complexity of the security situation in northwestern China, especially within the province of Xinjiang, lies in the fact that the forces of terrorism, extremism and separatism are stubborn; at the same time, the region is connected to the area where international terrorist forces are active, forming a belt extending from Kashmir, Central Asia, Afghanistan, the Caucasus and to the Middle East, where the three forces are interconnected and mutually-supportive.

We must face these challenges with a renewed understanding of international terrorism. In the past, terrorism was perceived as temporary and

eliminable. However, in light of the current facts, we should realize that it is impossible to quickly or completely root out international terrorism. In the past two decades, despite the constant efforts put forth by the international community to fight against terrorism, the number of international terrorist incidents has risen dramatically.

Terrorist groups no longer act within their own regions. Rather, they have become a fluid network of international terrorist forces. The proliferation of modern communication technologies, such as the internet, have tremendously facilitated the quick and easy dissemination of extremist ideas, while traditional methods of control, such as border checks, are either less effective or totally void. These new communication technologies also make it simple to plan and organize effective terrorist attacks.

The fluidity of international terrorist groups and the rapid spread of extremist ideas through new methods of communication signify that terrorism in the Eurasian region will be a grave and lasting threat to China's security. Security, as it relates to anti-terrorism, constitutes China's long-term and distinctive concern in this region.

A stable strategic rear region

Eurasia, which covers the northeastern, northern and northwestern regions of China, holds a very important position in China's geostrategic security system. Eurasia provides a stable "strategic rear region" for China, which is significant for China's geopolitical security. At present, the security environment in China's periphery is extremely complicated. In Northeast Asia, the Korean Peninsular issue remains unresolved, and as deep-seated tensions continue to rise, the danger of a military conflict persists. In the East China Sea, the dispute over the Diaoyu Islands between China and Japan has been plaguing bilateral relations in recent years. Although the Sino-Japanese relationship has improved, it will be difficult to restore. In the South China Sea, although China has eased its relations with some South China Sea claimants, the intervention by powers outside of the region has muddied the waters and China will continue to face long-term challenges in this

region. In South Asia, although Sino-Indian relations have developed with twists and turns, they have basically stabilized. Notwithstanding, intractable territorial issues have become an obstacle to the further development of Sino-Indian relations. At the same time, there remains the possibility that new Sino-Indian conflicts will arise, with the Doklam crisis being the latest case. Against this backdrop, the strategic value of a stable Eurasia is particularly important to China.

An important base of resources

Eurasia abounds with, among others, mineral resources, forestry resources, and agricultural resources. Its energy resources are most prominently featured and have become an important pillar of China's energy security.

China's top energy partner in Eurasia is Russia. In 2016, China imported 52.38 million tons of crude oil from Russia, accounting for 13.75% of China's total oil imports in 2016, making Russia the largest source country for the year.¹⁶ At present, Russia's export of natural gas is negligible. However, if the eastern and western routes of a natural gas pipelines can be realized, Russia will be able to export 68 billion cubic meters of natural gas to China.¹⁷ By that time, Russia will inevitably become China's largest strategic energy partner.

Kazakhstan is another one of China's strategic energy partners in Eurasia. From 2010-2016, over 10 million tons of oil was delivered annually by the China-Kazakhstan oil pipelines, and by the end of 2016 the total volume of oil delivered to China reached 100 million tons.¹⁸ China also imports a small amount of natural gas from Kazakhstan, but Turkmenistan is China's most important source of natural gas. By December 2016, the China-Central Asia pipelines delivered a total of 164.5 billion cubic meters of gas to China.¹⁹

16 "Russia Is Largest Source of China's Crude Oil Imports," February 9, 2017, <http://mt.sohu.com/20170209/n480258815.shtml>.

17 Liu Guizhou and Xu Gang, "Thoughts on Some Strategic Issues in Sino-Russian Oil and Gas Cooperation," *International Petroleum Economics*, No.10, 2016, p.9.

18 "Crude Imports via China-Kazakhstan Crude Oil Pipeline Tops 100 Million Tons," March 30, 2017, <http://oil.in-en.com/html/oil-2639936.shtml>.

19 "Gas Imports via China-Central Asia Gas Pipelines Increased by Over 10% in 2016," June 5, 2017, <http://news.hexun.com/2017-01-05/187631186.htm>.

Covering half of all natural gas imports, the majority of China's imported natural gas is transported via pipeline from Central Asia. When China's new natural gas project with Turkmenistan and Russia is implemented, the two countries will begin to scale up their exports of natural gas to China.

A crucial region for China's external cooperation in production capacity, technology and infrastructure

Eurasia makes up a small proportion of China's foreign trade structure, but it represents an important avenue for growth. There is great potential for cooperation in industrial capacity, technology, and infrastructure construction in particular. China and Russia maintain a great deal of cooperation projects, as well as opportunities for further cooperation in the fields of aviation, aerospace, information technology, high-speed rail, ships, port construction, and reconstruction. Central Asia, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe are important regions, for both the exportation of China's industrial capacity, and for the help they can provide China when carrying out infrastructure construction projects in local countries. Restrained by weak infrastructure, low industrialization or outdated technological facilities, these countries have strong demand for infrastructure and industrialization. For example, Chinese enterprises built the first electrolytic aluminum plant and the first large-scale hydropower station in Kazakhstan. The two countries cooperated on 51 capacity projects worth a combined total amount of over \$26 billion dollars.²⁰ In May 2017, China and Uzbekistan signed 105 cooperation agreements, worth a total of \$23 billion dollars. In other Eurasian countries, Chinese enterprises have also taken on many projects.²¹

A pivotal position in Belt and Road construction

Eurasia is a land corridor connecting China with West Asia, Africa, and

20 Zhang Hanhui, "China-Kazakhstan Relations in the Past 25 Years: Fruitful Achievements and Promising Future," *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, Jan. 24, 2017, <http://kz.chineseembassy.org/chn/sgxx/sgdt/t1433441.htm>.

21 "Uzbekistan and China Sign Cooperation Agreements Worth \$23 Billion," Kazakh International News Agency, May 16, 2017, http://www.inform.kz/cn/230_a3026768.

Europe, which plays a crucial role in promoting the development of the Belt and Road. China plans to build six economic corridors along the Belt and Road, and many of the participating countries are located in the Eurasian region²² China's ambitious plan to link up with the Eurasian region will allow China to form a broad transportation network with Central Asia, West Asia, Russia, and Europe, transforming China's external traffic structure and pushing the formation of a new geo-economic landscape. The development of this transportation network will pull the economic relations between China and the Eurasian region closer together, allowing China and the Eurasian region to integrate through deeper economic ties, while promoting the overall growth of the Eurasian economy.

China's Choice on Greater Eurasia

The Chinese perception of Eurasia generally refers to the region that was once occupied by the former Soviet Union. Currently, China has not yet formalized a fixed concept of Eurasia, let alone greater Eurasia. Few people talk about China's Eurasian policy and there is no official statement that fully explicates the new concept of Eurasia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, China has not treated the former Soviet Union as a cohesive region. Instead, it usually divided the region into several sub-regions such as Russia, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe. It is the distinction between these regions and the variation in their geographic distances to China that leads to differentiated security, diplomatic, and economic significance for China. The concept of Eurasian cooperation has only recently begun to arouse attention.

China's practice of Eurasian cooperation

Eurasia is an important geopolitical region in traditional international

22 The six economic corridors are the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, New Eurasian Continental Bridge, China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor, China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

politics. Mackinder's classical geopolitical "Heartland Theory," places Eurasia as the heartland of the world: "Whoever rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; whoever rules the World-Island commands the World." There are divergent views toward this conception, but as for the importance of Eurasia's geopolitical position, there is no doubt. In recent years, two forces are pushing forward the reconstruction of Eurasia: one force, advancing from South to North, is the Silk Road Economic Belt, represented by China; the other force, advancing from North to South, is the Russia-centric EEU. The two forces converge in the Greater Eurasian region, where they are mutually adaptive and interwoven. China has actively participated in and pushed forward Eurasian cooperation, even though it adopted the concept of Eurasia very late. In 2001, China and the Russia initiated the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), along with other founding members, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In light of the current understanding of Eurasian cooperation, the SCO falls in line with the concept of Eurasian cooperation. With India and Pakistan's entry into the SCO, the majority of Eurasian countries are now member-states of the SCO, providing the latter with the framework of the greater Eurasian cooperation. Greater Eurasia is an important area for the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Russia, Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe are participants of the initiative, so construction of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" adheres to and promotes the concept of Greater Eurasian cooperation.

Implications of greater Eurasian cooperation

China and Russia have reached an important consensus on greater Eurasian cooperation, announcing that they will establish a comprehensive "Greater Eurasian Partnership" initiative, which will likely take in members of the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and ASEAN.²³ Sino-Russian relations are at the core of greater Eurasian

23 "Joint Statement Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation," June 25, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-06/26/c_1119111908.htm.

cooperation. Russia intends to enhance the position of Japan, India and ASEAN countries, however, in terms of political, economic and diplomatic criteria, these countries fall well behind China. Take foreign trade as example, in 2016 China accounted for 14.1% of Russia's total foreign trade, while Japan accounted for 3.4%, India accounted for 1.6% and ASEAN accounted for about 3%.²⁴ In the foreseeable future, the relative position of Japan, India and the ASEAN countries may elevate, but China's primacy will not be fundamentally altered. Under the framework of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, Russia aims to develop in the southeast direction, while China can set its focus in the northwest direction, which includes Central Asia, West Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe. China's participation in the Russia-proposed Greater Eurasian Partnership is deemed as a positive response to Russian initiative, reducing obstacles to China's previously-stated development goals in the Eurasian region.

Of course, China can enrich and develop the implications of greater Eurasian cooperation. From China's perspective, greater Eurasian cooperation can include the following three aspects: First, China-Russia cooperation in the greater Eurasian region. This will strategically resolve the problem what roles the two countries will play in this region. In other words, greater Eurasian cooperation can prevent the two countries from falling into contention in this region, maintain the lasting stability of strategic relations between China and Russia, and add new impetus to Sino-Russian cooperation. Second, it can create a greater level of synergy in the region, specifically in relation to the Belt and Road Initiative which entails extensive cooperation on national development strategies between China and Eurasian countries. Eurasia is both a major pathway for the Silk Road Economic Belt and a key area of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Greater Eurasian cooperation can serve as the regional framework for the construction of the "Silk Road Economic Belt." The "Silk Road Economic Belt" spans many different regions. As each region has distinct

24 Внешняя торговля Российской Федерации по основным странам за январь-декабрь 2016 г., http://www.customs.ru/index2.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=24785:-----2016--&catid=125:2011-02-04-16-01-54&Itemid=1976.

circumstances, it is imperative to have a diverse set of regional frameworks to support the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Greater Eurasian cooperation can be advanced through the synergy of the Silk Road Economic Belt with the Eurasian Economic Union. However, such a synergy will not be sufficient for greater Eurasian cooperation, since many Eurasian countries are not members of the Eurasian Economic Union. Third, it is advisable to

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establish a trilateral cooperation between China, Russia and Europe. If a trilateral cooperation network between China, Russia and Europe can be formed, it will facilitate the effective promotion of the construction of the Belt and Road, bringing a positive impact to the international political and economic structure, and will be beneficial to the overall stability of the greater Eurasian region.

Greater Eurasia provides China with a new perspective and framework: China can implement diplomatic integration in this vast area, making it coalesce more with China's diplomacy, and shaping it into a more cohesive and comprehensive cooperative region. Security cooperation is an especially important issue for the Eurasian Region. Eurasia has long been under terrorist threat, and with the increasingly interconnected nature of terrorist activities in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan and Kashmir, this is the case now more than ever before. Divided governance can achieve a partial effect, while anti-terrorism cooperation under the framework of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, can effectively eliminate cross-regional terrorist movements. Moreover, greater Eurasian cooperation can break through the line of demarcation that exists between the former Soviet Union region and the non-former Soviet Union region. This will help to achieve a more robust level of regional security cooperation, which is beneficial to the stability of the greater Eurasian region. Under greater Eurasian cooperation, China, Russia and other countries in

the region can join hands to cope with security threats in the region, combat the three forces, namely, terrorism, separatism and extremism, and deal with prospective turmoil in the region.

Greater Eurasian cooperation will inevitably result in geopolitical effects, whose significance to China is that, on the one hand, it can consolidate China's strategic rear; on the other hand, it can provide a basis for the rise of China and influence the reshaping of the world structure, or even become a useful platform for global governance and the building of international order.

Principles of greater Eurasian cooperation

Greater Eurasian cooperation should have these fundamental principles.

First, openness. The greater Eurasian cooperation should be open to all countries in the region. It is particularly important that the European countries not be excluded from greater Eurasian cooperation in terms of politics, economy and security.

Second, a diversified mechanism of cooperation. At present, as there are many countries in the vast greater Eurasian region that differ greatly, it is unrealistic to establish a unified greater Eurasian cooperation mechanism. It is possible however, to have a diverse range of multi-level mechanisms that co-exist. Having said that, in the long run, the greater Eurasian cooperation should orient the region toward integration rather than division. The most effective way to prevent divisions is to synergize the development strategies of different countries and to find new avenues of cooperation between the different cooperation mechanisms.

Third, market-oriented economic cooperation. Economic cooperation requires market-based rules for economic negotiations and effective operation. Market principles will often bring about resentments if viewed from a political standpoint. However, as economic activity has its own rules, cooperation will only be sustainable when it follows the rules of economics. In the interim, economic cooperation, as well as cooperation in other areas should transcend the artificial and customary geographic boundaries, and

take place in various groupings and form in accordance with the demand.

Fourth, it does not target the third party. To be objective, greater Eurasian cooperation will lead to the formation of a geo-economic continental plate. The formation of this continental plate is not just the result of external stimulus, but stems from its internal demand: the regional countries are geographically adjacent and they are mutually supplementary, both in economic structure and need of each other. At present, the world economy remains murky, and every country is trapped in economic difficulty. Regional economic cooperation will be the most effective way to spur economic development. The primary goal of greater Eurasian cooperation should be the promotion of inter-connectivity within the greater Eurasian region, and the acceleration of the development of the economy and society of every country in the region,²⁵ greater Eurasian cooperation should not pursue opposition and confrontation at the geopolitical level.

Conclusion

It is not clear whether the Greater Eurasian Partnership will be a long-term strategy or merely a transitional policy for Russia. As a grand framework, it is doubtful that Russia has strong enough power to advance the Greater Eurasian Partnership, therefore it remains unclear just how far the Greater Eurasian Partnership can go. Even though the prospects for the Greater Eurasian Partnership remain dim, rationality and necessity still exist in advancing the economic, diplomatic, and security cooperation in the greater Eurasian region. Greater Eurasian cooperation coincides with China's national interests, especially in that it is conducive to the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative. China should, together with Russia and other countries concerned, push forward greater Eurasian cooperation. 🌐

25 The ocean plate here refers to an economic group represented by the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). In fact, China and Russia are both mainland countries and maritime countries. After the Trump government announced the withdrawal from the TPP, it is a question now if the US-led ocean plate has existed.