



**INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION AND COOPERATION IN EURASIA: A NEW  
MODEL FOR SOCIAL SECURITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION OF  
GREATER EURASIA**

**INTEGRAÇÃO E COOPERAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL NA EURÁSIA: UM NOVO  
MODELO PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO DA SEGURANÇA SOCIAL NA  
REGIÃO DA GRANDE EURÁSIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** The study aims to analyze the integrative processes in Eurasia, focusing on the development of a new social security model within the framework of international cooperation. The research evaluates Russia's "Greater Eurasia" initiative and its impact on fostering socio-economic partnerships in the region.

**Methods:** The study utilizes a combination of theoretical systematization, generalization, and statistical data presentation. Structural and system analysis methods were applied to examine the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as a model for international interaction and its role in facilitating macro-regional cooperation.

**Results:** The findings show that the "Greater Eurasia" initiative, despite lacking substantial economic and institutional support, presents potential for promoting social security across the region. The Eurasian Economic Union emerges as a crucial center for integration, offering an institutional platform for socio-economic development. However, there are challenges in fully realizing this potential due to political and economic tensions within the region.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that joint efforts are required to develop a new social security model between Eurasian and Asia-Pacific countries. The results provide insights for government policies aimed at intensifying integration efforts and ensuring social security in the Greater Eurasia region.

**Keywords:** Integration processes; Eurasian economic union; Social security; Direct investments; Partnership.





## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** O estudo visa analisar os processos integrativos na Eurásia, com foco no desenvolvimento de um novo modelo de seguridade social no âmbito da cooperação internacional. A pesquisa avalia a iniciativa "Grande Eurásia" da Rússia e seu impacto na promoção de parcerias socioeconômicas na região.

**Métodos:** O estudo utiliza uma combinação de sistematização teórica, generalização e apresentação de dados estatísticos. Métodos de análise estrutural e de sistemas foram aplicados para examinar a União Econômica Eurasiática (UEE) como um modelo de interação internacional e seu papel na facilitação da cooperação macro-regional.

**Resultados:** Os resultados mostram que a iniciativa "Grande Eurásia", apesar de carecer de um suporte econômico e institucional substancial, apresenta potencial para promover a seguridade social na região. A União Econômica Eurasiática surge como um centro crucial de integração, oferecendo uma plataforma institucional para o desenvolvimento socioeconômico. No entanto, há desafios para concretizar plenamente esse potencial devido a tensões políticas e econômicas na região.

**Conclusão:** O estudo conclui que são necessários esforços conjuntos para desenvolver um novo modelo de seguridade social entre os países da Eurásia e da Ásia-Pacífico. Os resultados fornecem insights para políticas governamentais destinadas a intensificar os esforços de integração e garantir a seguridade social na região da Grande Eurásia.

**Palavras-chave:** Processos de integração; União Econômica Eurasiática; Segurança social; Investimentos diretos; Parceria.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In today's environment, the strategic culture of Russia is an important notion. It is formed by its strained relationships with Europe and the West. Historically, any attempts to reorient Russia towards Asia were the by-product of its declining relations with Western countries. Most of these attempts failed. The current Eastward strategy tries to accomplish Russia's long-term strategic objective of international cooperation. As an answer to the Chinese "Belt and Road Initiative," Russia has proposed the "Greater Eurasian Partnership," which promotes the Russian vision of Eurasian integration and cooperation with China's growing influence. The importance of integration and international cooperation in the





Eurasian space (Greater Eurasia) is an object of scientific and political debates (Biryukova, 2017; Lewis, 2019; Alimov, 2018a; Sokolovskaya & Stepanov, 2018).

On the one hand, the notion of “Greater Eurasia” today has no real economic and institutional support, existing only on the rhetorical level (Kovalev et al. 2019; Novikov 2018). It replicates the historical challenges of Russia’s Asian policy and depends on Russia’s problematic relations with the West. This fact promotes the “Greater Eurasia” initiative as an emerging anti-Western bloc. On the other hand, some researchers note the opportunities for developing a new social security model, with Russia at the helm of Eurasian integration. (Bordachev & Pyatachkova, 2018; Kolin, 2019). Eurasia’s current geopolitical environment is quite strained due to the political and economic pressure from the leading countries and the coronavirus pandemic. In these conditions, the strengthening of integration allows expanding social security and solving economic problems in Eurasia.

## 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the author employed: the dialectical method of research for social security modeling; the monographic and system–analytical methods for substantiating the proposals on improving the integration and cooperation methods in Eurasia; the methods of description, clarification, and formalization for researching the practical aspects of countries’ socio-economic cooperation; the methods of systematization, summarization, structural analysis, and graphical representation.

The author used the descriptive and analytical form of the research to ensure that the issues of regional integration and social security were thoroughly analyzed and interpreted. The research is based on qualitative and quantitative data.

This study’s objective was accomplished by systematizing international integration methods. S. Hitimana, J. Shukla, and G. Bajpai distinguish between two main international integration methods—functional and institutional. Functional integration happens due to protectionism weakening, and, therefore, increased free trade and Laissez-faire tendencies. The institutional model of integration realizes itself through governmental measures on socio-economic policy coordination and unification. In practice, these two models combine, forming the





functional–institutional model, which serves as a basis for most integration processes (Hitimana et al., 2014).

### 3 RESULTS

International integration promotes countries' economic growth and development (Baier et al. 2018). The socio-economic results of integration differ depending on the integrating states' institutional structures. Integration can be seen as an attempt to gain more from the free flow of international trade and investments. From the author's perspective, international integration cannot be viewed as a purely economic or political notion in the present. The definition of integration should also be complemented by the sociological side of this process, i.e., the interweaving of integrating countries' social systems, forming a system of social interdependence and complementarity, the unification of socio-economic policies, and the formation of supranational political governance.

In researching the “social security” notion in the context of integration, the author analyzed several standpoints. L. Artige et al. believe that regional integration helps fight poverty, thus ensuring the state's social security. However, their work relies on examining trade costs, meaning that from this standpoint, the developing countries social security is lower, since they incur higher trade costs (Artige et al. 2014). Some researchers tie the integrating states' social security to the integration groups political initiatives (Alimov, 2018b; Hitimana et al., 2014).

The author of this study believes that social security is a part of national security, reflecting society's protection from threats to its interests, rights, and freedoms. Therefore, the subject matter of social security is the rights and freedoms, such as the right to a decent standard of living, to work, to remuneration and recreation, to education, and social protection by the state. The social security model must combine the national security issues with the social policy priorities of the state.

In analyzing the international integration groups' work (Hitimana et al. 2014; Artige et al. 2014), the author highlighted the likely threats to social security in Eurasian integration, such as • unemployment; • illegal employment; • illegal labor migration; • poverty. These threats must be researched systematically, since, in



the context of integration, the social structure is viewed as system, consisting of states that combine into inter-country groups to eliminate emerging threats. Therefore, the impact on social system might be constructive or destructive. The destructive impact is predetermined by the countries' interests in their interaction with each other and the environment. These facts determine the importance of eliminating the conflict between the Greater Eurasia countries during the development of a new social security model.

This model must accompany and complement the economic cooperation, especially in today's volatile environment, when international crises reduce international economic integration. "Greater Eurasia" is one of the regional order concepts that affect the integrating countries foreign policy, primarily of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU from now onward) members. Russian government seeks to create a shared space in Eurasia for cooperation between the EAEU member-states, India, China, Pakistan, such organizations as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO], and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but with the Russian Federation as an indispensable pillar of social integration (Potemkina 2018).

Russia's decrease in cooperation with other EAEU states signifies the increased need for international integration. Table 1 presents the dynamics of foreign direct investments (FDI) in EAEU.

**Table 1.** Dynamics of foreign direct investments in EAEU, mln. USD

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total FDI	31.870	16.204	51.641	34.630
Mutual FDI	1.760	2.139	1.434	1.122
Mutual FDI proportion (%)	5.52	13.20	2.78	3.24

Source: Department of Statistics at Eurasian Economic Commission (2019)

The proportion of EAEU members' mutual FDIs is falling, while the total volume of FDIs is rising. The same patterns can be discerned in the mutual trade of EAEU.

## 4 DISCUSSION



Russia has long sought a way to maintain its leading position in the post-Soviet space using such organizations as the Eurasian Customs Union, proposed after the economic crisis of 2008–2009, the Eurasian Economic Union, etc. The increased tensions between Russia and the West in 2014 has predetermined a new way of EAEU development—furtherer eastward. However, Russia faced other problems in the East. In fall 2013, Xi Jinping announced a new “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI from now onward) aimed at the post-Soviet countries. Russia responded by announcing the “Greater Eurasia” initiative, commonly referred to as the “Greater Eurasian Partnership” in scientific discussions (Sokolosky & Stepanov, 2019). The initiative was first proposed at the “Valdai” Discussion Club in 2015, as an idea of “Central Eurasia” combining Russian and Chinese projects.

On the one hand, its concept was a vague vision of multilateral cooperation between Russia, China, India, the SCO, and ASEAN, with the Eurasian Economic Union at its core. On the other hand, this initiative aimed to eliminate the shortcomings of the Eurasian Economic Union and, thus, revive Russia’s regional strategy. However, the concept of “Greater Eurasia” allows Russia to go beyond the post-Soviet space, without losing its leading position among its neighbors (Zhilbaev et al., 2018). According to this concept, EAEU must be the core pillar of regional cooperation. This concept’s vagueness gives Russia the right to decide on the time frame and ways of achieving the set objectives. Any form of cooperation with China, India, or ASEAN countries, including such minor deals as the free trade agreement between the EAEU and Vietnam, can be presented as another successful step in implementing the concept. The Greater Eurasia initiative presents Russia as an equal partner to the EU and China (Loiko, 2019).

There is no point in discussing Russia’s inclusion (or non-inclusion) into the “BRI” initiative, which suggests some form of submission towards China, since Russia is perfectly capable of demonstrating its strategic independence and exercising its regional influence (Tsvyk, 2018). The author believes that today the two countries should coordinate these two projects, and China must join Russia in building the Greater Eurasian Partnership. All these aspects of the Greater Eurasia concept have one thing in common: allowing the integrating states to develop a new social security model.

Russia can either become an independent representative of Eurasia on a global scale or a co-leader in the Sino–Russian Eurasian bloc. The concept of Greater





Eurasia allows for flexible and rapid adaptation to changing circumstances, regardless of the extent of its application to specific policies. The Greater Eurasia's development beyond being just a concept relies on solving a series of arduous tasks. Russia faces several obstacles that prevent it from making Greater Eurasia a viable social security project. In the strategic security area, Russia's biggest problem is assuring the reconciliation between India, China, and Pakistan.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The potential of Greater Eurasia as a pillar of macro-regional cooperation is immense. Its concept is an invaluable tool for the Russian Federation. Today, social security is an essential vector of international cooperation. To ensure social security, the integrating countries governments, especially that of Russia, need to intensify the integration with SCO and EAEU, expand the international trade agreements, and involve more countries in the integration.

However, the integration processes must respect the international legal norms of sovereignty and equality of states, people's right to determine their internal order, and not submit to external legitimacy standards. Thus, Eurasian integration is a chance for post-Soviet countries to become an independent center of global development, not a backwater of Europe and Asia.

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