



## RUSSIA'S INTERNATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS ON THE WAY TO BUILDING GREAT EURASIAN SPACE

### PROJETOS DE INFRAESTRUTURA INTERNACIONAL DA RÚSSIA NO CAMINHO PARA A CONSTRUÇÃO DO GRANDE ESPAÇO EURASIANO

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#### ABSTRACT:

The key actors of Eurasia – the EU, Russia and China-have been striving for many years to create conditions for the intensification of international economic exchange on the continent. One of the projects that is being considered for this purpose is Greater Eurasia Space. The research problem. The need for the study is due to the scientific and practical need to understand the potential of major international projects that pass through the territory of Russia, on the way to the formation of Greater Eurasia Space. The purpose of the study is to analyze the prospects for using the potential of Russia's international infrastructure projects on the way to building a Greater Eurasia Space. Research questions. The study raises the following questions: what factors determine the potential of the Northern Sea Route as an international infrastructure project that can accelerate integration development in the Eurasian region? What factors hinder the use of the potential of the Northern Sea Route as a project that can accelerate integration processes in the course of the formation of Greater Eurasia? What potential does the "One Belt, One Road" Initiative (BRI) have in Russia? What projects can be implemented within the framework of the BRI? Research methodology. The study uses methods of statistical analysis, graphical and tabular methods of analysis. Research results and contributions. The article analyzes the potential of the Northern Sea Route, the advantages and threats of this project on the way to creating a Greater Eurasia. The prospects for the implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" Initiative in Russia are assessed. Conclusions and justification of the novelty of the work. Based on the assessment of strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, a conclusion is made about the directions of development of the Northern Sea Route in the creation of Greater Eurasia.

**Keywords:** Epidemic; Public biopolitics; Strategic approach; Biohazards; Strategic planning; Biological security.





## RESUMO:

Os principais atores da Eurásia - a UE, a Rússia e a China - vêm se esforçando há muitos anos para criar condições para a intensificação do intercâmbio econômico internacional no continente. Um dos projetos que está sendo considerado para esse fim é o Greater Eurasia Space. O problema de pesquisa. A necessidade do estudo se deve à necessidade científica e prática de entender o potencial dos principais projetos internacionais que passam pelo território da Rússia, no caminho para a formação do Espaço da Grande Eurásia. O objetivo do estudo é analisar as perspectivas de utilização do potencial dos projetos de infraestrutura internacional da Rússia no caminho para a construção de um Espaço da Grande Eurásia. Perguntas de pesquisa. O estudo levanta as seguintes questões: quais fatores determinam o potencial da Rota do Mar do Norte como um projeto de infraestrutura internacional que pode acelerar o desenvolvimento da integração na região da Eurásia? Que fatores impedem o uso do potencial da Rota do Mar do Norte como um projeto que pode acelerar os processos de integração no curso da formação da Grande Eurásia? Que potencial a Iniciativa "Um Cinturão, Uma Estrada" (BRI) tem na Rússia? Que projetos podem ser implementados dentro da estrutura da BRI? Metodologia de pesquisa. O estudo utiliza métodos de análise estatística, métodos de análise gráficos e tabulares. Resultados e contribuições da pesquisa. O artigo analisa o potencial da Rota do Mar do Norte, as vantagens e ameaças desse projeto no caminho para a criação de uma Grande Eurásia. As perspectivas para a implementação da Iniciativa "Um Cinturão, Uma Estrada" na Rússia são avaliadas. Conclusões e justificativa da novidade do trabalho. Com base na avaliação de pontos fortes e fracos, ameaças e oportunidades, é feita uma conclusão sobre as direções de desenvolvimento da Rota do Mar do Norte na criação da Grande Eurásia.

**Palavras-chave:** Rota do Mar do Norte, Iniciativa Cinturão e Rota; "Um Cinturão - Uma Rota"; Grande Eurásia; Integração; Potencial do Grande Espaço Eurasiano.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The new trend of trans-regionalization of integration processes has not spared the Eurasian region. The key subjects of relations in this region – the EU, Russia and China-despite occasional contradictions, are interested in strengthening economic ties and deepening relations. The most active parties in the trans-regional integration process are Russia and China. In this regard, major international infrastructure projects are of great importance, which will serve as a "natural" attractor of the global economy. The combination of major economic projects over the past years of cooperation between Russia and China is considered as the main mechanism for building a Greater Eurasia Space (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Overview of the provisions of the joint statements of Russia and China in terms of setting goals for the development of the common Eurasian space

Name of the bilateral document	Some provisions concerning the development of relations to
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	<i>create a common Eurasian space</i>
Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in Linking the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt, Moscow, 2015	Continue to search for points of convergence of integration processes within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the "Silk Road Economic Belt" (BRI) in order to ensure sustainable growth of the Eurasian region on the basis of equal cooperation between the parties and trust. The desire for negotiations between the EAEU and China on the conclusion of an Agreement on trade and economic cooperation.
Joint statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China (Beijing, 25 June 2016)	Special attention is paid to the implementation of agreements on cooperation in the direction of the development of Greater Eurasia Space, including the integration of the EAEU and the. Development of measures by the parties to intensify integration processes.
Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on Further Deepening the Relations of Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Cooperation (Moscow, July 4, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strengthening of mutual cooperation between China and Russia in the Arctic region, supporting the development of cooperation between the authorized bodies of the parties, research organizations in the development and use of the potential of the Northern Sea Route;</li> <li>- the parties' efforts to deepen practical cooperation in key areas, to link the development strategies of the countries and the construction of the EAEU and the BRI Initiative;</li> <li>- work on linking the EAEU and the BRI Initiative, promoting the conclusion of an Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the EAEU and the People's Republic of China;</li> <li>- elaboration of measures for the creation of the Eurasian Economic Partnership;</li> <li>- implementation of major transport and infrastructure projects in the region.</li> </ul>
Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the Development of Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Cooperation entering a New Era (Moscow, June 5, 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Russia's support for the "One Belt, One Road" initiative" (BRI);</li> <li>- Promotion of integration processes in the EAEU by the Chinese side;</li> <li>- enhancing the coordinated efforts of the parties to link the EAEU and the BRI;</li> <li>- Support for the formation of the Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP) by the Chinese side);</li> <li>- recognition by the parties of the possibility of parallel and coordinated development of BRI and BES, their contribution to the development of regional associations;</li> <li>- activation of work on the integration of the construction of the EAEU and the BRI;</li> <li>- Promoting the formation of effective mechanisms for dialogue between the EAEU and the People's Republic of China;</li> <li>- ensuring the implementation of priority projects for the development of the EAEU.</li> </ul>

Source: compiled by the author

The development of the world economy in recent years has been increasingly influenced by the EAEU and the Chinese initiative "One Belt – One Road" (Stepanov, 2020b). The harmonization and integration of the activities of the two initiatives requires the use of the full range of opportunities, including in the formation of international infrastructure projects.





Thus, based on the analysis of the key components of the Russian-Chinese dialogue, it can be concluded that the creation of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is considered by the parties as one of the priority areas for further cooperation and the institutional basis for the formation of Greater Eurasia. The parties identified a number of significant infrastructure projects, the potential of which requires analysis on the way to the formation of Greater Eurasia:

- The Northern Sea Route (NSR);
- The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI);
- transport and logistics projects that pass through the territory of Russia, China and other countries.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the prospects for using the potential of Russia's international infrastructure projects on the way to building a Greater Eurasia. The objective of the study: to analyze the potential and problems of the Northern Sea Route as a key international project for the creation of Greater Eurasia Space (GES).

## 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study uses data from the Federal State Unitary Enterprise "Atomflot", the Federal State Budgetary Institution "Administration of the Northern Sea Route", the Unified Interdepartmental Information and Statistical System, and the Ministry of Transport of Russia (EMISS– state statistics).

To achieve the objectives set in the study, methods of statistical analysis, methods of graphical and tabular analysis, methods of data synthesis were used.

## 3 RESULTS

The NSR and its potential have been considered for a long time, including since the 1980s, as one of the sources of accelerating integration processes in the territory of the future Greater Eurasia (Starodubtsev, 2017; Zalyvsky, 2015). The integration potential of the NSR is mainly represented by transit transportation (in addition to them, domestic and export transportation are distinguished) (Tianming, 2018). The general task of transforming the NSR into a full-fledged international route and increasing the



demand for this route among the Eurasian participants in foreign economic activity is to expand and increase the number and volume of transit traffic. In addition, it is necessary to create conditions for a significant change in the structure of cargo transportation on the NSR (Stepanov, 2020a).

For the first time, the institutional support for the development of the potential of the NSR in Russia was fixed in 2008 in the Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period up to 2020 and beyond. This document defined the use of the NSR as a single transport communication of Russia in the Arctic region. In the future, the institutional support for the development of the NSR was reflected in a number of other documents:

Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 164 of March 5, 2020 "On the Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period up to 2035" (President of the Russian Federation, 2020);

Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 (Government of the Russian Federation, 2021);

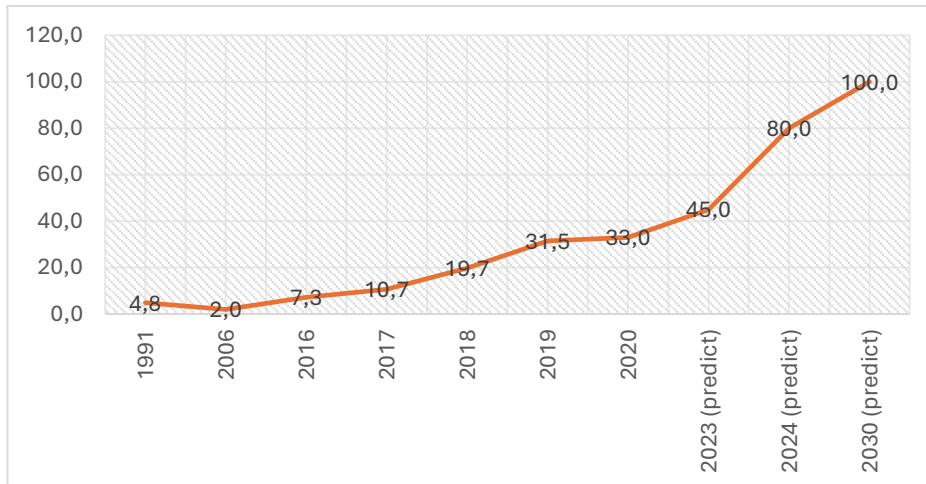
Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1596 of December 20, 2017 "On Approval of the State Program of the Russian Federation "Development of the Transport System" (Government of the Russian Federation, 2017);

Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 3120-r of December 21, 2019 "On Approval of the Northern Sea Route Infrastructure Development Plan for the period up to 2035" (Government of the Russian Federation, 2019).

These documents form the regulatory framework and set priorities for the development of the international infrastructure project "Northern Sea Route", including in connection with the task of creating a Greater Eurasia. The water area of the NSR includes 28 districts, which determines the economic potential of this route.

Assessing the state of cargo transportation in the NSR in recent years, we can identify both positive and negative trends. The growth of cargo flows along the NSR is positive (Figure 1). According to the forecast of the Federal project "Northern Sea Route" and JSC "Atomenergoprom", it is projected to increase cargo transportation by 2030 to 100 million tons per year, or 3 times more than in 2020.





**Figure 1.** Dynamics of cargo transportation in the NSR, 1991-2020 with a forecast until 2030  
 Source: based on the data of the Federal State Unitary Enterprise "Atomflot", the Federal State Budgetary Institution "Administration of the Northern Sea Route", the Unified Interdepartmental Information and Statistical System, the forecast of the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation (EMISS – State Statistics, 2020; JSC Atomenergoprom, 2019; Kommersant, 2019).

Meanwhile, the implementation of the NSR project is hampered by a number of problems and obstacles. This is due to the insufficient development of the project infrastructure, insufficient financing of the project infrastructure facilities, the lack of guaranteed supplies and the system of contracts for the NSR, the unstable structure of cargo flows, and many other reasons.

The threat to the implementation of the NSR is sometimes considered by other Russian projects that simultaneously act as "integrators" on the way to creating a Greater Eurasia. For example, studies indicate a possible risk of reducing the competitiveness of the NSR in comparison with the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Baikal-Amur Mainline, and the Beijing-Moscow high-speed railway project. Thus, after the introduction of the high-speed railway line from Beijing to Moscow, the transportation time will be reduced from 5 days to 30 hours (Lukin, 2015).

Along with the NSR, the OBOR will play an important role in the integration of the regions and countries of the Eurasian space. As part of this direction, priority is given to promoting the implementation of transport and infrastructure projects: the Moscow – Kazan high – speed highway, the Nizhneleninskoye – Tongjiang railway bridge, and the Blagoveshchensk-Heihe cross-border road bridge.

#### 4 DISCUSSION





The economic potential of the NSR is associated with the prospects for the development of oil and gas infrastructure (RIA-Novosti, 2011). Meanwhile, this direction on the way to creating a Greater Eurasia seems destructive, since it becomes a factor in increasing the dependence of transit traffic on a narrow group of goods. Prospects and potential of the NSR, in addition to China's interest in the project, is associated with the following: its transit potential as a transport communication between Asia and Europe (Andreeva et al., 2015); the potential of the route as a transport artery between the countries of Europe and Russia (Yuntunen & Heiskanen, 2015); commercial prospects for the transport of certain types of goods (Raza & Schøyen, 2014).

The obvious advantage of the NSR project, which determines its transit potential, is a shorter route between the ports of Southeast Asia and Europe (Chumlyakov & Chumlyakova, 2016; Faury & Cariou, 2016; Grigoryev, 2020; Todorov, 2017) in comparison with competitive transport arteries.

At the same time, it is important to take into account that the potential of the NSR can be leveled by a number of its weak points. Among the main obstacles to realizing the potential of the international project under consideration are the high operating costs of ship owners, the high risks of cargo transportation in the Arctic region, and the low probability of matching the supply and demand of icebreaking equipment in time and place (Zalyvsky, 2015).

In some studies, the authors conclude that reducing the distance of transportation by 40 % when using the NSR does not necessarily entail a reduction in operating costs. The main factor hindering the reduction of operating costs is the need to use icebreakers to escort cargo (Liu & Kronbak, 2010).

According to other estimates, reducing the distance does not lead to a significant reduction in fuel costs, since climatic conditions and the need for maneuvering determine an increase in fuel consumption, negating one of the advantages of the NSR over the distance of the route (Faury & Cariou, 2016).

In northern latitudes, it is difficult to ensure high traffic congestion – this circumstance should also be taken into account when assessing the potential of the NSR (Lasserre, 2014). At the same time, the workload is mainly provided by the transportation of natural resources.

Thus, the competitive advantages of the NSR for foreign trade participants can be perceived in a very relative way. Russia's tasks as the main stakeholder in the



development of the NSR and the beneficiary include the further development of the infrastructure project and the creation of conditions for increasing the volume of private and public investment in the project.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The analysis allows us to conclude that one of the priority tasks of the development of the NSR is the modernization of the infrastructure of this project. In particular, it is necessary to solve the following tasks: the development of master plans for the development of seaports, the development of mechanisms for investing in related infrastructure, the creation of a legal framework for regulating investment activities in the region, etc.

The development of the OBOR initiative on the territory of Russia may involve competition with domestic Russian highways. In these circumstances, in addition to financing future major international infrastructure projects, a deep and comprehensive analysis is required, with the preparation of a detailed action plan to anticipate possible transport and logistics crises in the future.

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