

S.M. Nurdavletova<sup>1\*</sup> , S. Aspandiyar<sup>2</sup> ,

K.A. Abdrakhmanov<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Astana International University, Kazakhstan, Astana

<sup>2</sup>L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan, Astana

<sup>3</sup>Astana International University, Kazakhstan, Astana

\*e-mail: saniyanm83@mail.ru

## ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING AND POTENTIAL RISKS AND THREATS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONNECTION OF THE EAEU AND THE BRI

In the modern multipolar world, regional organizations and associations are changing the existing world order. Each of these associations has its own goals and influence, which determine their place and role in the geopolitical world. As we can see, the connection between the EAEU and the BRI is one of the examples of multi-regional connectivity. If the BRI is global in nature, but economically promoted and supported by one country – China; then the EAEU is an example of regional economic integration that has historical, economic and sociocultural prerequisites. The term “conjugation” from Chinese means parallel and coordinated development and was introduced into the diplomatic lexicon by the leaders of these two countries, i.e. the term does not imply the merging of two integration projects into one but emphasizes how they develop together in certain areas.

This article identifies existing threats and risks, benefits and prospects as a result of the combination of two projects. The methodological research is based on system analysis, as well as a comparative analysis of the dynamics of GDP, exports and other economic indicators of the EAEU countries and China. Currently, the competitiveness of the EAEU countries with China, as well as the observance of the national interests of the EAEU member states remains an issue requiring attention. Based on the results of the analysis, a conclusion is drawn both about the benefits of building a new type of relationship, and about the remaining challenges.

**Keywords:** EAEU, BRI, Russia, China, Greater Eurasian Partnership, Central Asia.

S.M. Нурдавлетова<sup>1\*</sup>, С. Аспандияр<sup>2</sup>, К.А. Абдрахманов<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Астана Халықаралық университеті, Қазақстан, Астана қ.

<sup>2</sup>Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия Ұлттық университеті, Қазақстан, Астана қ.

<sup>3</sup>Астана Халықаралық университеті, Қазақстан, Астана қ.

\*e-mail: saniyanm83@mail.ru

### ЕАЭО мен БББЖ бірлестігін жүзеге асыруда туындап жатқан тәуекелдері мен қауіптерін талдау

Қазіргі көпполярлы әлемде аймақтық ұйымдар мен бірлестіктер қалыптасқан әлемдік тәртіпті өзгертуде. Бұл бірлестіктердің әрқайсысының геосаяси әлемдегі орны мен рөлін анықтайтын өзіндік мақсаттары мен ықпалы бар. Көріп отырғанымыздай, ЕАЭО мен БББЖ арасындағы байланыс көп аймақтық байланыстың бір мысалы болып табылады. Егер БББЖ жаһандық сипатқа ие болса, бірақ экономикалық жағынан бір ел – Қытай тарапынан ілгерілетіліп, қолдау көрсетілсе; онда ЕАЭО тарихи, экономикалық және әлеуметтік-мәдени алғышарттары бар аймақтық экономикалық интеграцияның үлгісі болып табылады. Қытай тілінен алынған «жұптастыру» термині параллелді, үйлестірілген даму дегенді білдіреді және дипломатиялық лексиконға осы екі елдің басшыларымен енгізілген, яғни бұл термин екі интеграциялық жобаны бір жобаға біріктіруді білдірмейді, бірақ олардың белгілі бір салаларда қалай бірге дамитынына баса назар аударады.

Бұл мақалада екі жобаны біріктіру нәтижесінде бар қауіптер мен тәуекелдер, пайдалары мен перспективалары анықталған. Әдістемелік зерттеу SWOT талдауына, сондай-ақ ЕАЭО елдері мен Қытайдың ЖІӨ динамикасын, экспортын және басқа да экономикалық көрсеткіштерін салыстырмалы талдауға негізделген. Қазіргі уақытта ЕАЭО елдерінің Қытаймен бәсекеге қабілеттілігі, сондай-ақ ЕАЭО-ға мүше мемлекеттердің ұлттық мүдделерінің сақталуы назар аударуды қажет

ететін мәселе болып қалуда. Талдау нәтижелері бойынша қарым-қатынастың жаңа түрін құрудың артықшылықтары мен қиындықтары туралы қорытынды жасалады.

**Түйін сөздер:** ЕАЭО, БББЖ, Ресей, Қытай, Үлкен Еуразиялық әріптестік, Орталық Азия.

С.М. Нурдаuletova \*<sup>1</sup>, С. Аспандияр <sup>2</sup>, К.А. Абдрахманов <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Международный университет Астана, Казахстан, г. Астана

<sup>2</sup>Евразийский Национальный университет им.Л.Н. Гумилева, Казахстан, г. Астана

<sup>3</sup>Международный университет Астана, Казахстан, г. Астана

\*e-mail: saniyanm83@mail.ru

### **Анализ существующих и потенциальных рисков и угроз реализации сопряжения ЕАЭС и ОПОП**

В современном многополярном мире региональные организации и объединения меняют сложившийся миропорядок. Каждое из этих объединений имеет свои цели и влияние, которые определяют их место и роль в геополитическом мире. Как мы видим, сопряжение ЕАЭС-ОПОП является одним из примеров мультирегиональной связанности. Если ОПОП имеет глобальный характер, но экономически продвигается и поддерживается одной страной – Китаем; то ЕАЭС является примером региональной экономической интеграции, имеющей исторические, экономические и социокультурные предпосылки. Термин «сопряжение» с китайского обозначает как параллельное и согласованное развитие и был введен в дипломатический лексикон лидерами этих двух стран, т.е. термин не предполагает слияния двух интеграционных проектов в один, а делает упор на то, как они развиваются вместе в определенных областях.

В данной статье определяются существующие угрозы и риски, выгоды и перспективы в результате сопряжения двух проектов. Методологическое исследование основывается на системном анализе, а также на сравнительном анализе динамики ВВП, экспорта и других экономических показателей стран ЕАЭС и Китая. В настоящее время конкурентоспособность стран ЕАЭС с Китаем, также соблюдение национальных интересов государств-членов ЕАЭС остается вопросом требующего внимания. По результатам анализа делается вывод как о выгодах от выстраивания нового типа взаимоотношений, так и о сохраняющихся вызовах.

**Ключевые слова:** ЕАЭС, ОПОП, Россия, Китай, Большое Евразийское партнерство, Центральная Азия.

## **Introduction**

The conjunction of the BRI and the EAEU has serious grounds for the development and formation of a new system of geopolitical and geoeconomic relations. Over the past few years, there has been a radical shift that has changed the entire geopolitical structure of international relations and connection with the deterioration of relations with the West, Russia has shifted its movement to the East, while China is paving its way to the West through Central Asian countries and costly investments in infrastructure and logistics.

“Belt and Road” initiative covers a large number of countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. The vast endeavor, dubbed “the project of the century” by Xi Jinping has grown to be a cornerstone of Beijing’s foreign policy and a strategic instrument that helps it forge deeper alliances and expand its influence.

Over the past 10 years, BRI has received the support of international organizations and more than 150 countries, including in the West, and has continued to expand from ports, pipelines and roads to

digital technologies, healthcare and renewable energy sources (Alimov, 2018).

For Russia, which is looking for new drivers to strengthen its influence in the post-Soviet space, pairing the BRI with the EAEU is an opportunity for economic development and an increase in status through an alliance with China.

*Relevance of the research topic.* At the present, the Eurasian continent is an arena for the development of economic, scientific and technological growth, as well as the spread of peace and stability not only in the region but throughout the world. As a result of cooperation between the BRI and the EAEU, a huge market is being formed on the scale of an entire continent, where China and the EAEU countries are the driving forces. The EAEU is an economic union and an integration association that creates a favorable environment for the participating countries; BRI is an ambitious long-term plan for China’s economic advancement around the world.

An important aspect of their interaction of their interaction is the coordination and integration of the activities of these two initiatives, which carry both new opportunities and certain risks associated with

different interpretations and sometimes obstacles in the implementation of individual projects.

In connection with promoting the combination of the two projects, Russia and China are strengthening strategic cooperation, which allows realizing the national interests of both countries. As was previously indicated, the PRC intends to use the BRI to advance economic development by opening up markets for Chinese goods and fostering international investment in initiatives that would guarantee China's economic security and be "beneficial" to the country. Meanwhile, Russia intends to implement the idea of "Greater Eurasia Partnership", which not only corresponds to Russia's interests, but also creates a basis for safe and reliable regional cooperation.

From the very beginning interaction with the BRI was considered a key element of the association's functions. Currently, the EAEU countries are striving to become the center of conceptual regional economic integration. However, the reality is not so rosy. At the moment, rather than competing, both programs enhance one another. We can discuss a possible allocation of duties. For instance, China prioritizes infrastructure and economic concerns over security one, such as CSTO mechanisms, whereas Russia, being a military might, concentrates on the latter. At the same time, Russia's economic influence in Central Asia remains significant, while China makes its contribution to ensuring collective security.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) represents China's leading investment strategy for economic growth. One policy objective pursued by this strategy is to increase China's influence abroad, including in the EU and its member states. The BRI advanced China's geostrategic aspirations for global expansion by supporting domestic growth, improving regional and global connectivity, introducing Chinese standards in less developed countries, and advancing trade facilitation, between markets along the New Silk Road.

Kazakhstan, which is China principal partner in Central Asia, actively promotes Eurasian integration, is the founder of several regional organizations, and believes that Chinese initiatives – such those the tying the development of the BRI and the EAEU are important. In addition to supporting leveraging the potential of nations in the region to create wide-ranging, transparent, equitable, and mutually beneficial partnerships, the Kazakh side anticipates that the integration of the BRI and the EAEU initiative will help to ensure sustainable growth and strengthen infrastructure connectivity.

When implementing the OBOR initiative, Russia will face the possibility of a decrease in the volume of cargo transportation along the Trans-Siberian Railway due to the PRC's preference to use the railway route through Kazakhstan, which is attractive due to its length and low tariffs. This could lead to a situation where sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway east of the Ural Mountains remain underutilized for their primary purpose, such as transit traffic.

### Methods and materials

*The purpose of the study* is to analyze the prospects for connecting the BRI and the EAEU, identify problems and outline a further format of cooperation.

The following methods formed the methodological basis of the study: the historical-systemic method was used to study the evolution of the idea of the BRI, its historical background, in order to give a brief description of the main stages; the chronological method was used to examine phenomena and events from the point of view of their sequence, dynamics, and changes in accordance with the course of history.

For instance, the system analysis approach was employed to determine the elements impacting China's ability to attract investment, and with its assistance, causal links affecting the dynamics and degree of ties between China and the EAEU member states were formed.

The authors employed the institutional method to analyze and evaluate the role of the EAEU in the processes of interstate integration. A problem-based method was also utilized to take into account specific phenomena and factors influencing the development of the implementation of the integration of the BRI and the EAEU.

The economic data of China and the EAEU member states were compared using the comparative technique, and a SWOT analysis was performed to determine the challenges and opportunities facing the growth of the BRI and the EAEU.

### Literature review

The study's theoretical foundation is research in the Russian, English, and Chinese languages (articles and analytical notes), which was used to analyze the current bilateral relations between the PRC and the Russian Federation in the context of cooperation. Various researchers looked at different aspects of integrating the two projects (Leksyutina,

2020; Myasnikovich, Kovalyov, 2023; Nezhdanov, 2022). Their work examines the key issues and opportunities for merging two international initiatives that are taking place in the Eurasian continent. Within the Greater Eurasian Partnership, it is stated that they have serious difficulties in deciding on allies, economic partners, and bringing their respective national interests together (Shamakhov, Sluchevskiy, 2023).

Certain details of the Chinese scientific school are linked to the party's continued stronghold over ideology. Chinese scientists' works are particularly useful since they possess insider knowledge of the subject, which provides them an advantage. These works address issues related to the BRI project's continuity with past political and cultural traditions, ideals, and values. Concepts and ideas from the "Way" discourse, like as "common destiny" and "Chinese dream", are being researched in depth. They point out that in addition to being solely economic, the "One Belt and One Road" program also has political and cultural potential for promoting the fusion of civilizations. The megaproject known as "One Belt and One Road" is positioned as a bridge connecting the Eurasian region and a symbol of a new kind of cooperative, "soft" dominance (Chen Minghua, Wang Shan, Liu Wenfei, Liu Yuxin, 2021). This analysis examines the political and economic dimensions of interactions between the Eurasian Economic Union member states within the context of the "Belt and Road". These pieces highlight the conflicts of interest, political dangers, and difficulties that impede the integration of the Belt and Road Initiative with the EAEU (Zhang Yaojun, 2019).

As a result, a review of the scientific literature reveals that there is ongoing interest in this subject among experts and scientists, that empirical knowledge is expanding, and that the project's findings and evaluation are being generalized. The prominence of this issue in the current era's international relations among world powers directly affects the quantity and caliber of research on the subject of Eurasian integration under the framework of the "One Belt and One Road" initiative.

## Results and discussion

Currently, the Eurasian continent is a stage for the development of economic, scientific and technological growth, as well as for the spread of peace and stability not only in the region but throughout the world. As a result of the cooperation between the EAEU and the BRI, a huge market

spanning an entire continent is being formed, where the driving forces are China and the EAEU countries. The EAEU is an economic union and integration association that creates a favorable environment for participating countries; BRI is an ambitious long-term plan for China's economic advancement around the world.

In connection with the progress of the integration of the two projects, Russia and China are strengthening strategic cooperation, which allows realizing the national interests of the two countries. The People's Republic of China, as already noted, plans to develop its economy through the BRI, creating markets for Chinese products and conditions for investing in international projects that are "useful" for China and that ensure national economic security. While Russia intends to implement the idea of a "Greater Eurasia", which not only satisfies Russia's interests, but also creates the basis for secure and reliable regional cooperation. In 2019, Chinese leader Xi Jinping emphasized that China supports the concept of Greater Eurasia and is willing to make efforts to develop it (press releases, 2019). If we look at it this way, the national interests of both countries coincide, since Beijing sees in the development of the Eurasian initiative the creation of a positive political and conceptual framework that allows it to expand its economic presence to almost the entire continent. Both strategies have common goals and objectives. They are characterized by a comprehensive and open approach. If you look at it from the other side, the EAEU is "led by Russia" and in "regional economic integration" it wants to maintain its influence. However, due to the current situation, Russia can no longer compete with China, which ranks first in terms of GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) and second in terms of nominal GDP, second only to the United States. In this case, Russia becomes dependent on China and succumbs to Chinese influence in the EAEU. This discrepancy can lead to competition between partner countries in Eurasia (EBR, 2021).

The perception of the Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road (BRI) initiative in Russia has its own characteristics, since it is not limited solely to economic aspects and integration. In Russia, much attention is paid to the geopolitical aspects of the BRI. Therefore, the Chinese initiative is seen in the context of China's alleged desire for economic, cultural or even military influence in the center of the Eurasian continent. The BRI is seen as a new geopolitical reality to which Russia, as a major power, must respond accordingly.



Geopolitical views in Russia vary depending on the ideological attitudes of experts, which leads to certain difficulties in determining the main trend in modern discourse. However, it can be said that the current Russian elite mainly supports a geopolitical approach that can be described as “neo-Eurasian”. According to this approach, the West seeks to maintain its monopoly position in the world and prevent the formation of a multipolar world order in which Russia and China, as major powers, play a key role.

Supporting the idea of insoluble contradictions between China and the United States, proponents of the “neo-Eurasian” approach are confident that close relations between Russia and China can counterbalance US dominance. China is perceived as a “natural ally” in the fight against Western dominance. Various forms of cooperation with China are being considered, including participation in integration associations such as the SCO, BRICS, as well as interaction between the EAEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative.

There is some concern about the possibility of a debt trap, since as part of its investment program, China is actively providing loans to participating countries for the construction of transportation infrastructure, but these states cannot guarantee repayment of the loans of investment, which endangers sovereignty risk.

Disagreements and increased tension also persist among EAEU participants due to different visions of future integration. The reason for this problem comes from the difficult economic situation in Russia, which, like an anchor, drags everyone with it.

Russia and the Central Asian nations do, however, realize that cooperating with China on projects entails making investments in regional economies, expanding chances for energy exports, and gaining access to Chinese resources. Countries that are isolated from important global markets and lack direct access to the sea, or that are unwilling to collaborate on international transportation connections, are destined to stagnate in the modern world. In the context of globalization, transit is turning into a prerequisite for nations to actively engage in international trade and the growth of the transportation sector. It also provides a source of income for governments through the collection of transit-related fees.

Chinese experts also characterize the BRI as an innovative global strategic concept that supports

neoliberal principles of development of the world economy and politics. The project provides a platform for common development and harmonious coexistence of all countries, which are politically independent of each other, but economically will be interdependent for common prosperity (Lukyanov, 2020).

From a strategic point of view, the union of both projects must be based on the principles of harmonization of interests and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The aforementioned idea of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, the economic part of which is the coupling of the EAEU-BRI, should be based on equal and equally beneficial interactions between countries and integration formations with undoubted respect for the national sovereignty of the participating countries and the non-interference in internal affairs. Taking into account the above, the following directions can be pointed out for the practical implementation of the EAEU-BRI interface as an element of the BEP:

- a) take political measures to regulate economic development strategies;
- b) interconnection of the infrastructure of the EAEU member states and China;
- c) development of measures to improve investment and jointly reduce trade barriers;
- d) deepen monetary and financial partnerships;
- e) the development of digitalization, which is an element that can act as a process that guarantees the interaction of the main subjects of the EAEU-BRI interface (Panteleev, 2021).

Due to recent events, the economic development of the EAEU is taking place under difficult conditions. The Union has faced a number of external challenges, such as the epidemiological situation in 2021 and full sanctions against Belarus and Russia in 2022, which have an impact on the course of economic development of the integration partnership.

Economic growth in the EAEU at the end of 2021 reached 4.6%; In China, compared to the previous year, GDP growth was 8.1% (Table 1). In Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, GDP volumes reached pre-pandemic levels (growth in 2021 amounted to 2.3%, 4.0% and 4.7%, respectively). In Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, growth rates increased in the fourth quarter of 2021, resulting in an increase in economic growth rates to 5.7% and 3.6%, respectively (EAEU Report, 2021).

**Table 1** – GDP at constant prices, % growth

	2015	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
EAEU	-1,6	2,1	2,7	1,7	2,9	4,6	3,8	3,7
China	6,9	6,9	6,8	6,1	2,3	8,1	3,0	5,2

Source: EEC, World Bank, IMF.

The short- and long-term external environments and economies of the Union's member countries shift as a result of the tightening economic sanctions. The banking industry as well as international trade operations are impacted by the systemic restrictions. Trade, remittances, and foreign direct investment are the primary conduits via which contagion effects spread. A slowdown in Russia's economic activity is anticipated given the severity of the restrictions. Several expert estimates place the country's economic losses in 2022 alone between 5% and 10% of GDP, while other EAEU members suffered losses between 1% and 4% (Armenia: 1.9-3.7%, Belarus: 1.9-6.0%, Kazakhstan: 1.1-2.2%, Kyrgyzstan: 1.6-3.2%). By the end of 2022, the EAEU economy is expected to contract by 6.1%. China's share of the EAEU's foreign trade turnover decreased for the first time since the creation of the Union in 2015. At the end of 2021, it amounted to 19.7%, down from 20.2% in 2020, due to a reduction in Belarus and Russia (Shamakhov, Sluchevskiy, 2023).

One lingering concern is that the EAEU's position in international trade has not been significantly strengthened. The EAEU's portion of global exports climbed from 2.4% in 2020 to 2.7% in 2021. In 2021, China's foreign trade volume climbed by 30.3% to a record 6 0.05 trillion dollars. In monetary terms, this corresponded to an 18.1% growth in exports from China. Due in December in contrast to 2020; in November, there was a record growth of 21.1%, while imports increased by 6.5% (China's Custom Report, 2022).

Double-digit inflation rates are seen in the EAEU countries as a result of negative transient variables such rising food prices, declining value of national currencies, and sanctions against Belarus and Russia. Some countries are taking measures to curb the rise in prices of socially important goods to control social tension in the country.

According to updated data, the GDP of the EAEU member states in 2022 decreased by 6.1% and in 2023-2024. Growth of 0.1% and 3.3%, respectively, is expected as a result of the recovery

of domestic and external demand. Medium-term economic growth risks shift in a negative direction, as any deterioration in external conditions will lead to increased risks to the growth of the EAEU economies, mainly raw material exporting countries (China's Custom Report, 2022).

In 2018, Central Asia saw an investment flow of \$96.6 billion spread across 148 projects out of a total of 570. Kazakhstan, which has received large foreign investments compared to its neighbors for over a decade, is now consolidating its partnership with Beijing, especially in the energy, chemical and transport sectors. However, investments between 2015 and 2018 decreased by 50% compared to the previous four years. On the contrary, Chinese (and not only) support for the government plan for the development of renewable sources, which began in the early years of the century, seems more constant. In Kyrgyzstan, projects are underway to build hydroelectric power plants, a railway network with Uzbekistan to exploit deposits in both countries, a new highway and a large complex of energy pipelines. Turkmenistan is the recipient of a 3666 kilometer long gas pipeline, which supplies almost 80% of China's natural gas. Despite this, China's main trade target is Europe, and Central Asia's infrastructure is at its heart, with the new Special Economic Zone in Horgos, a border town between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, playing a key role in transport and logistics.

Tajikistan has also attracted the attention of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for the redevelopment and modernization project of the hydroelectric power plant and the Nurek dam. However, China's outlook is uncertain due to impending challenges. All the countries involved are recording an increase in imports from China, while some, such as Kazakhstan, have seen exports to the Asian giant decrease. Most goods sold in Central Asia come from the east and are consumer goods rather than raw materials, raising concerns about consistency with goals of regional growth and cooperation and hopes for local economic development.

There is a risk of increasing debt dependence on China. For example, vulnerable Kyrgyzstan sees the Chinese bank Exxim hold 40% of its debt (90% is held abroad), while Tajikistan, the region's poorest economy, sees 80% of its debt held by the People's Republic. The more prosperous and focused Kazakhstan also has significant financial dependence on Beijing, although it appears stable at the moment.

Maybe only a more extensive social inclusion program could ensure the viability of this enormous endeavor without endangering growth in a more general sense. If the planned infrastructure is not in line with social investments and budget controls – which are crucial for maintaining socioeconomic and political stability – Central Asian countries might not fully benefit from it.

There are numerous chances to increase the potential of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as a result of the development of the EAEU in collaboration with China, namely under the BRI program. This is supported by the possibility that some BRI routes would cross Union territory and by the fact that the EAEU – especially Russia – represents a sizable market for Chinese exports.

The capacity to properly move goods to EU countries is a critical component for the success of the Belt and Road Initiative. On the other hand, there are certain security issues throughout Central Asia and along the Silk Road. This applies to Central Asia and includes worries about government corruption as well as the terrorist danger posed by Afghanistan. In addition, crime is still an issue in this area because of the high degree of poverty. Along the Maritime Silk Road, shipping cargo is confronted with a number of difficulties, including as the potential for South China Sea disputes, piracy off Africa's east coast, and other difficulties pertaining to safeguarding Chinese investments in African nations.

Investing is the BRI's second avenue of development. Under these circumstances, the project benefits China as well as the EAEU. China is prepared to spend a lot of money to penetrate new markets and increase its industrial dominance. China finds the nations with stable political systems and robust economies to be the most appealing. China is thus making more investments in Central Asian and African nations that promote the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and present business prospects for Chinese enterprises. Still, there is little assurance in these kinds of investments.

A partner nation's vulnerability to the risk of sinization increases with its economic weakness. Thus, in the framework of the relationship

between the EAEU and the BRI, the development of the national economies of the EAEU becomes a crucial task. This can be accomplished by developing the concept of a currency partnership, forging a single market for services, fortifying market control mechanisms, overcoming internal tensions within the EAEU, and making situational decisions on economic issues. Trade in national currencies should become a required component of economic interactions in the Union, even though currency partnerships shouldn't inevitably result in the creation of a single currency within the EAEU.

It is also worth noting the manifestation of Sinophobic sentiments in the countries of Central Asia, which is supported by the active economic expansion of China and the corruption of local authorities. However, Chinese companies continue to increase their investments in the region.

There are still certain misconceptions and barriers to their execution at the level of implementers and in the national public consciousness of both countries, even if Russia and China have managed to reach accord on topics of cooperation at the highest level of government. Particularly when it comes to understanding the significance of the BRI and the EAEU, Russia and China vary cognitively. There are some differences in how the principles are expressed in the official documents of the two nations. Official sources state that the BRI is a national mechanism intended to employ soft power in order to achieve its objectives with some degree of flexibility, rather than an international organization or legal institution. On the other hand, the EAEU is a classic example of a regional economic integration organization that is overseen by a supranational regulatory authority and comprises a common market and customs union. As a result, the issue of a lack of shared understanding of interaction processes will arise due to the establishment of arbitrary interpretations brought about by revisions of meanings and deviations from official interpretations. Furthermore, the names "BRI" and "EAEU" are associated with cognitive biases among scientists from China and Russia. Many times, the OBOR is seen by some Russian media as a political "envelope" that China uses to further its economic goals through massive infrastructure projects. Transcontinental rail and road networks, sea and air ports, logistics hubs, and other facilities are connected to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the minds of Russian citizens. It is stressed that by expanding the markets of the participating nations, these programs hope to strengthen the Chinese economy's foreign "periphery".

For Russia, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) poses both economic and geopolitical challenges. On the economic front, there are concerns that the BRI's transcontinental transport corridors could potentially pass through neighboring countries, causing the Silk Road to bypass Russia. This could be particularly detrimental to the development of Siberia and the Far East, as future Chinese investments may be made mainly in the European part of Russia, which in turn could result in a decline in the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM).

In the geopolitical context, the possible effects of Chinese investments are also viewed critically. Not all Chinese investments are viewed as beneficial; in particular, the prospect of "linked" loans, which could possibly be granted by the Chinese side without any direct benefit to the Russian economy, is critically questioned by experts from Russia.

The analysis's strengths and weaknesses can be used to identify important areas for process modifications and further development. The initiative is currently actively developing, but there are a number of dangers and issues that will arise during implementation that must be minimized in order to achieve the main objective of interconnection. All participating countries stand to gain from increased trade flows, sustained economic growth, and development.

On the one hand, the initiative to link the EAEU and the BRI poses a significant challenge to the Union and carries significant risks; on the other hand, in the best-case scenario, it opens up new opportunities for the advancement of Eurasian integration and the modernization of the economies of EAEU members.

There are several reasons why the EAEU is facing difficulties. First, from a Chinese perspective, the primary objectives of linking the BRI with the EAEU are to address the strategic issues associated with the PRC's economic development, such as modernization and promoting economic growth, particularly in the country's western and central regions; to establish markets for Chinese goods; to create an environment conducive to investment in foreign projects deemed "useful" for China; and to guarantee the country's economic security. The significance of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and connectivity factors as potential new sources of economic growth sharply increases when one considers the increased likelihood of a "hard landing" of the Chinese economy already in the medium term (i.e., a decrease in GDP dynamics

to an unacceptable level for servicing the public debt and maintaining employment), which is made worse by US protectionist statements. China will adamantly maintain its regulations over the implementation of BRI projects and connectivity under these circumstances. When it comes to the overall effects of Chinese efforts on the economies of the Eurasian Economic Union member states and Eurasian integration as a whole, there is a risk of losing control over projects, both in individual cases and particularly.

The coordination of the two initiatives will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the model of international relations, primarily on the deepening of Eurasian cooperation in the context of Chinese-Russian relations. This process actively harnesses trans-Eurasian potential in various fields, including transport, agriculture, mining and tourism. Such interaction should lead to closer integration within the Eurasian regions. For Kazakhstan, inclusion in the BRI within the EAEU is of particular importance, as it opens up new opportunities for regional development, increases the attractiveness of individual territories for investment, stimulates interregional cooperation and promotes accelerated economic growth.

In practice, the BRI's project-oriented structure and coupling may exacerbate centrifugal tendencies. Due to the individual interests of the Union members being divided among them in the lack of duties and channels for coordinating activities, bilateral approaches to collaboration with China are prioritized over the original paired integration model. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, which serve as China's primary entry points into the EAEU, collaborate on infrastructure projects and international investment on behalf of the PRC. They have already achieved a high level of actual integration between national development plans and strategies and PRC plans. Due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, China does not prioritize the construction of the Northern Eurasian transport corridor through Russian Federation territory, but it actively supports the Central Eurasian and Trans-Asian corridors. As a result, Russia's interests in the BRI and connectivity are still far from fully taken into account. Belarus views the SREB and interconnection primarily as a means of obtaining Chinese funding for the modernization of infrastructure and production facilities, albeit Chinese investment is currently relatively minor. There have been some opportunities for bilateral collaboration in the high-tech sector.



## Conclusion

Numerous experts point out that, despite being informed by disparate theoretical frameworks, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aim to complement rather than compete with one another. Therefore, the core idea of the Chinese effort is the establishment of extensive free trade zones, whereas the ideology of the EAEU is focused on safeguarding the domestic markets of its member nations. Aspects of trade and economy are also discussed, such as the challenges of payment between Russia and China in the banking sector, the public-private partnership system, exhibitions, the export of Russian timber to China, and the Tumangan project, which involves China, Mongolia, North and South Korea, Russia, and both countries.

Particular attention is also paid to China's relations with the former republics of the Soviet Union and the level of strategic partnership between Russia and China in the economic and geopolitical spheres. Initially, when the EAEU was created, it was supposed to be coupled with the BRI initiative. At present, it can be noted that an unusual, rather original division of labor has formed between them. China is primarily focused on economic cooperation and infrastructure projects, while Russia, as a military superpower, is focused on security. However, this does not mean a weakening of Russia's economic activity in the countries of Central Asia or a reduction in China's role in maintaining collective security.

With its goals of stepping up international cooperation on issues and stepping up energy and creative technology exchanges, China's move

genuinely offers up new avenues for tying the EAEU and "One Belt, One Road" together. However, numerous questions regarding the prospects of these processes still persist, even in the face of the upbeat rhetoric, objective preconditions, and particular plans.

The development of the coupling of two projects must be a flexible and well-managed process, with the definition of control points and the involvement of all interested actors. It is necessary to create a system of roadmaps for interconnection and cooperation in key areas with the participation of international organizations with members from the EAEU countries and the People's Republic of China, joint institutions (for example, the Joint Commission), development and also, if necessary, the formation of new institutional units.

A thorough analysis of the project's potential expenses for the implementers as well as the economic viability and advantages for the EAEU member states is deemed crucial for the process's transparent and successful implementation. These are the indisputable benefits of participating in the BRI initiative as part of an integration project, as nations cannot lobby for improved cooperative circumstances and cooperative project implementation on their own with China.

## Funding

*This research was funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Grant #AP14870606 "Research of the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the context of changing geopolitical conditions")*

## References

- Alimov, R. (2018). The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Its role and place in the development of Eurasia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 9(2), 114-124. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eu-ras.2018.08.001>
- Аналитический доклад ЕАБР. (2021). URL: <https://eabr.org/analytics/special-reports/mezhdunarodnyy-transportnyy-koridor-sever-yug-investitsionnye-resheniya-i-myagkaya-infrastruktura/>
- Главное таможенное управление КНР. (2022). URL: <http://dzs.customs.gov.cn/>
- Годовой доклад ЕЭК за 2021 год. (2021). URL: [https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/medialibrary/d19/Annual\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/medialibrary/d19/Annual_report_2021.pdf)
- ЕБР: Национальные валюты во взаиморасчетах в рамках ЕАЭС: препятствия и перспективы. (2021). URL: <https://eabr.org/analytics/integration-research/cii-reports/natsionalnye-valyuty-vo-vzaimoraschetakh-v-ramkakh-eaes-prepyatstviya-i-perspektivy/>
- Лексютина, Я. В. (2020). Контуры экономического присутствия Китая в Центральной Азии. Китай в мировой и региональной политике. История и современность. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/kontury-ekonomicheskogo-prisutstviya-kitaya-v-tsentralnoy-azii>.
- Лукиянов, Ф. (2020). Многовекторность закончилась. Российский совет по международным делам. URL: [https://russian-council.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/mnogovektornost-zakonchilas/?sphrase\\_id=53890473](https://russian-council.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/mnogovektornost-zakonchilas/?sphrase_id=53890473).

Мясникович, М.В., Ковалёв, В.С. (2023). Новые страницы интеграции в Евразийском экономическом союзе. Россия в глобальной политике. 21(2). 207-218.

Нежданов, В. (2022). Сопряжение ЕАЭС и Шелкового пути: Китай меняет стратегию. URL: <https://zen.yandex.ru/media/eurazia/sopriajenie-eaes-i-shelkovogo-puti-kitai-meniaet-strategiiu-5c0780bd73372000a9a3b7d7>.

Пантелеев, А., Желябовская, К., Рябцев, Н., Хажгериева, А., Петакчян, Н. (2021). Доклад департамента макроэкономической политики «Сопряжения стратегий развития ЕАЭС и китайской инициативы «Один пояс один путь». URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/opublikovan-doklad-o-perspektivah-sopryazheniya-strategii-razvitiya-eaes-i-kitajskoj-initsiativy-%C2%ABodin-poyas-odin-put%C2%BB/>

Чэнь, Минхуа, Ван, Шань, Лю, Вэньфэй, Лю, Юйсинь. (2021, March 23). Чжунго дуй «Идайилу» яньсянь ди цюй OFDI дэ цюйюй чаи цзи цюйши яньцзинь [Региональные различия Китая и эволюция тенденций вывоза ПИИ в районы, расположенные вдоль «Пояса и пути»]. URL: <http://proxy.library.spbu.ru:2808/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?recid=&FileName=>.

Чжан, Яоцзюнь. (2019). Возьмем за руки для строительства «Пояса и пути» как пути цивилизации. 张耀军. 携手共建“一带一路”文明之路. URL: [http://obor.bisu.edu.cn/art/2019/11/26/art\\_16666\\_236276.html](http://obor.bisu.edu.cn/art/2019/11/26/art_16666_236276.html).

Шамахов, В. А., Случевский, В. В. (2023). Некоторые аспекты сопряжения проектов ЕАЭС — «Один пояс — один путь». URL: <https://www.ejournal.ru/jour/article/viewFile/205/190>

## References

Alimov, R. (2018). The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Its role and place in the development of Eurasia. Journal of Eurasian Studies, 9(2), 114-124. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eu-ras.2018.08.001>

Analiticheskiy doklad EABR. (2021). URL: <https://eabr.org/analytics/special-reports/mezhdunarodnyy-transportnyy-koridor-sever-yug-investitsionnye-resheniya-i-myagkaya-infrastruktura/>

Glavnoe tamozhennoe upravlenie KNR. (2022). URL: <http://dzs.customs.gov.cn/>

Godovoi doklad EEK za 2021 god. (2021). URL: [https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/medialibrary/d19/Annual\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/medialibrary/d19/Annual_report_2021.pdf)

EBR: Nacionalnye valyuty vo vzaimoraschetakh v ramkakh EAES: prepyatstviya i perspektivy. (2021). URL: <https://eabr.org/analytics/integration-research/cii-reports/natsionalnye-valyuty-vo-vzaimoraschetakh-v-ramkakh-eaes-prepyatstviya-i-perspektivy/>

Leksyutina, Y.V. (2020). Kontury ekonomicheskogo prisutstviya Kitaya v Tsentralnoi Azii. Kitai v mirovoi i regionalnoi politike. Istoriya i sovremennost. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/kontury-ekonomicheskogo-prisutstviya-kitaya-v-tsentralnoy-azii>.

Lukyanov, F. (2020). Mnogovektornost zakonchilas. Rossiyskiy sovet po mezhdunarodnym delam. URL: [https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/mnogovektornost-zakonchilas/?sphrase\\_id=53890473](https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/mnogovektornost-zakonchilas/?sphrase_id=53890473).

Myasnikovich, M.V., Kovalyov, V.S. (2023). Novye stranitsy integratsiy v Evraziyskom ekonomicheskom soyuze. Rossiya v globalnoi politike. 21(2). 207-218.

Nezhdanov, V. (2022). Sopryazhenie EAES i Shelkovogo puti: Kitay menyaet strategiyu. URL: <https://zen.yandex.ru/media/eurazia/sopriajenie-eaes-i-shelkovogo-puti-kitai-meniaet-strategiiu-5c0780bd73372000a9a3b7d7>.

Panteleev, A., Zhelyabovskaya, K., Ryabtcev, N., Khazhgeriyeva, A., Petakchyan, N. (2021). Doklad departamenta makroekonomicheskoi politiki «Sopryazhenie strategiy razvitiya EAES i kitajskoj initsiativy «Odin poyas, odin put». URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/opublikovan-doklad-o-perspektivah-sopryazheniya-strategii-razvitiya-eaes-i-kitajskoj-initsiativy-%C2%ABodin-poyas-odin-put%C2%BB/>

Chghen, Minghua, Wan, Shchan, Lyu, Wanghfei, Ly, Yusighn. (2021, March 23). Regionalnye razlichiya Kitaya i evolyutsiya tendentsiy vyvoza PII v raiony, raspolozhennyye vdol «Poyasa i puti». URL: <http://proxy.library.spbu.ru:2808/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?recid=&FileName=>.

Chzhagn, Yaoczyun. (2019). Vozmemsya za ruki dlya stroitelstva «Poyaza i puti» kak puti tsivilizatsiy. 张耀军. 携手共建“一带一路”文明之路. URL: [http://obor.bisu.edu.cn/art/2019/11/26/art\\_16666\\_236276.html](http://obor.bisu.edu.cn/art/2019/11/26/art_16666_236276.html).

Shamakhov, V. A., Sluchevskiy, V. V. (2023). Nekotorye aspekty sopryazheniya proektov EAES — «Odin poyas — odin put». URL: <https://www.ejournal.ru/jour/article/viewFile/205/190>.

### **Авторлар туралы мәлімет:**

Нурдавлетова Сания Морьяковна (корреспондент автор) – т.ғ.к., қауымдастырылған профессор, Астана Халықаралық университетінің «Халықаралық зерттеулер орталығының» директоры (Қазақстан, Астана қ., e-mail: [saniyanm83@mail.ru](mailto:saniyanm83@mail.ru));

Аспандияр Саида – Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия Ұлттық университетінің «Халықаралық қатынастар» факультетінің 3 курс докторанты (Қазақстан, Астана қ., e-mail: [saidaiksanova@gmail.com](mailto:saidaiksanova@gmail.com));

Абдрахманов Қайрат Амангелдіұлы – Астана Халықаралық университетінің Халықаралық ынтымақтастық және студенттер ісі жөніндегі вице-президенті (Қазақстан, Астана қ., e-mail: [kairat.amangeldyuly@gmail.com](mailto:kairat.amangeldyuly@gmail.com))

**Information about authors:**

*Nurdavletova Saniya Moryakovna (corresponding author) – candidate of historical sciences, Associate Professor, Director of the Center for international studies of Astana International University (Kazakhstan, Astana, e-mail: saniyanm83@mail.ru);*

*Aspandiyar Saida – 3rd year doctoral student at the Faculty of International Relations of the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (Kazakhstan, Astana, e-mail: saidaiksanova@gmail.com);*

*Abdrakhmanov Kairat Amangeldinovich – Vice President of International Cooperation and Student Affairs of Astana International University (Kazakhstan, Astana, e-mail: kairat.amangeldyuly@gmail.com).*

*Previously sent February 9, 2024.*

*Re-registered March 5, 2024.*

*Accepted May 27, 2024.*