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PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN RUSSIA'S GREATER EURASIAN PARTNERSHIP

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Abstract. Connectivity is one of the key trends of the 21st century, which Russia is fully embracing with its Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP) in order to counteract the chaotic processes unleashed throughout the course of the ongoing systemic transition from unipolarity to multipolarity. This outlook sets forth the grand strategic task of integrating with some of the former countries of the erstwhile Soviet Union through the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and then further afield with the other regions of Eurasia in order to benefit from the growing cross-supercontinental trade between Europe and Asia. President Putin declared during the second Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) Forum in April 2019 that this Chinese-led project “rimes with Russia’s idea to establish a Greater Eurasian Partnership” and that “The five EAEU member states have unanimously supported the idea of pairing the EAEU development and the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt project”. It naturally follows that the pairing of the EAEU with BRI would involve Russia improving its connectivity with the latter’s flagship project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in South Asia, thereby endowing Pakistan with an important role in the GEP. The rapidly improving relations between Moscow and Islamabad, as well as the peacemaking efforts undertaken by those two states and other stakeholders in Afghanistan across 2019, raise the prospect of a future trade corridor traversing through the countries between them and thus creating a new axis of Eurasian integration that would complete the first envisaged step of bringing the EAEU and BRI closer together. In pursuit of this multilaterally beneficial outcome, it’s important to explain the policymaking and academic bases behind it so as to prove the viability of this proposal.

Keywords: Greater Eurasian Partnership, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Eurasian Economic Union, Pakistan, CPEC, China, Silk Road.

INTRODUCTION

Russia’s Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP) is envisaged to become an important component of its contemporary foreign policy. President V. Putin simplified this grand strategic vision as “[being formed] on the basis of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and China’s Belt and Road initiative (BRI)” in an article published before the APEC Summit in November 2017¹. He added that “this is a flexible modern project open to other participants.” Building upon this concept, the Russian leader observed during the second BRI Forum in April 2019 that this Chinese-led project “rimes with Russia’s idea to establish a Greater Eurasian Partnership” and announced that “The five EAEU member states have unanimously supported the

¹ Putin V. The 25th APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting in Danang: Together Towards Prosperity and Harmonious Development. – *President of Russia*. 08.11.2017. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56023> (accessed 10.03.2020).

idea of pairing the EAEU development and the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt project”². Seeing as how the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one of BRI’s flagship projects as described by Pakistani Foreign Minister Qureshi in November 2019³, with \$13 billion worth of projects completed in January 2020 out of an expected eventual total investment of \$60 billion⁴ (thus making it China’s largest BRI infrastructure investment anywhere in the world), it’s inevitable that Russia will have to improve its connectivity with Pakistan in order to fulfill V. Putin’s vision of bringing the EAEU and BRI closer together to form the GEP.

Practically nothing has been written about the role that Pakistan is poised to play in the GEP despite it being an extremely important one by virtue of hosting CPEC, which functions as China’s only reliable non-Malacca access route to the Indian Ocean Region, the nearby energy-rich Middle Eastern one, and the rapidly growing continent of Africa where the People’s Republic has recently become its top trade partner in aggregate⁵. It should be pointed out that the official CPEC website of the Pakistani government states that the project has already secured at least \$46 billion in “commitment of investment and concessional loans”⁶, thus making it a promising economic opportunity that Russia certainly can’t ignore. The pivotal geopolitical location of the South Asian host state at the confluence of its home region, West Asia, Central Asia, China, and the Indian Ocean also makes it an extremely strategic gateway to each of them, which complements the connectivity vision that Russia set out to achieve through the GEP. This makes it all the more perplexing that Pakistan and CPEC aren’t included in the academic literature written about this topic, something that the authors aim to rectify through the present research. As such, Pakistan and CPEC are regularly referenced throughout the work in order to highlight their relevant significances to everything being discussed.

The article begins by analyzing the Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2016 that established the guidelines for conducting the country’s relations with other states. This section serves to explain the policymaking formulations behind the GEP, as well as make the case that Pakistan and CPEC are pertinent to it. The second part then elaborates on the EAEU that’s expected to form the core of this connectivity vision. Once that’s done, the research segues into a discussion of Russia’s trans-regional integration plans while explaining the relevance of Pakistan as appropriate. The reader should by then have a more solid understanding of the role that the country is expected to play in the GEP, after which the work will conclude with several policy recommendations for facilitating its integration into this supercontinental structure. It’s hoped that the research will prove itself useful for other academics to eventually build upon in exploring the opportunities for further improving Russian-Pakistani relations in view of this vision.

² Putin V. Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. — *President of Russia*. 26.04.2019. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60378> (accessed 10.03.2020).

³ “BRI Emerges as Most Effective Instrument of Globalism, Int’l Development Cooperation: Pakistani FM.” — *Xinhua*. 20.11.2019. URL: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/20/c_138569964.htm (accessed 10.03.2020).

⁴ CPEC: Pakistani Government Announces Completion of 13 Projects Worth \$11 Billion. — *Sputnik*. 09.01.2020. URL: <https://sputniknews.com/asia/202001091077987936-cpec-pakistani-government-announces-completion-of-13-projects-worth-11-billion/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

⁵ China-Africa Cooperation in High Gear, Powering Global Growth. — *Xinhua*. 04.07.2019. URL: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/04/c_138198759.htm (accessed 10.03.2020).

⁶ FAQs. — *CPEC*. URL: <http://cpec.gov.pk/faqs> (accessed 10.03.2020).

THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT OF 2016

The practice of Russian foreign policy is determined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' concept paper approved by President Putin at the end of 2016⁷. As can be implied by its name, this document contains the primary guidelines that influence Russian foreign policy, and thus, it also relates to many other issues connected to International Relations in general. Only those that are pertinent to the research topic, however, will be referenced in this article. The first part of the document is about the General Provisions, which concentrate on the need "to create a favourable external environment that would allow Russia's economy to grow steadily and become more competitive" in parallel with "[consolidating] the Russian Federation's position as a center of influence in today's world". When combined, it can be understood that one of the most important objectives of Russia's foreign policy is to expand the state's international influence in order to improve its economic growth. Of topical interest, the expansion of Russian influence in South Asia could lead to Moscow reaping some of the economic benefits of CPEC.

There are some formidable challenges that stand in the way of achieving this general objective, whether in South Asia or elsewhere. The concept paper considers the contemporary international environment to be characterized by worsening tensions and expresses concern at the increasingly popular trend of using force to resolve international disputes. Its authors also believe that "global power and development potential is becoming decentralized, and is shifting towards the Asia-Pacific Region, eroding the global economic and political dominance of the traditional western powers". This is leading to a new phase in International Relations, which while promising, is also fraught with many risks of conflict unless future threats are adequately managed. They also note how the trend of connectivity is spurring regional integration processes. It's here where Russia can play a special role since its concept paper says that the country's foreign policy "is characterized by consistency and continuity and reflects the unique role Russia has played for centuries as a counterbalance in international affairs and the development of global civilization." From this position, it can be said that the EAEU could eventually fulfill that role, with the GEP taking it a step further throughout the rest of Eurasia with time.

To that end, Russia considers the overarching goal of its foreign policy to be "shaping a fair and sustainable world order". The concept paper suggests that Russia can do this by "expanding its ties with its partners within the Group of Twenty, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and the Republic of South Africa), the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), RIC (Russia, India and China) alongside other organizations and dialogue platforms". Pakistan is one of the two newest members of the SCO alongside India, which makes it an unstated party to this proposed policy. In addition, Pakistan is China's top BRI partner, and China is a leading player in all four of the aforementioned structures. It therefore follows that improving connectivity with Pakistan would add yet another layer to Russia's strategic partnership with China, especially considering that President Putin's proposed pairing of the EAEU and BRI could naturally see the two Great Powers collaborating on joint projects in CPEC as one of its many outcomes.

Recalling what was written earlier, Russia's foreign policy concept intends to improve the country's economic standing. Its authors say that Russia "contributes to the efficiency of the multilateral trade system with the WTO at its core, and promotes

⁷ Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016). — *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*. 01.12. 2016. URL: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptIckB6BZ29/content/id/2542248 (accessed 10.03.2020).

regional economic integration in line with its priorities”, and also “creates favourable conditions for expanding Russia’s presence on global markets, primarily by diversifying its exports, and specifically by increasing the volume of non-resource-based exports, and expanding the geography of foreign economic ties”. Specific attention should be drawn to the part saying that the state also “provides governmental support to Russian organizations seeking to tap new markets and gain a larger foothold in traditional ones, while countering discrimination against Russian investors and exporters”. With these guidelines in mind, it’s sensible for Russia to economically engage Pakistan.

CPEC is one of BRI’s flagship projects, and Russia’s hitherto lack of participation in it is a conspicuous absence in light of its strategic partnership with China and President Putin’s proposal to pair the EAEU with BRI. The only explanation is that Russia is deferring involvement out of respect for India’s sensitivities since New Delhi is fiercely opposed to CPEC because it regards it as traversing through Pakistani-controlled territory that it claims as its own per its maximalist approach to the Kashmir conflict. Even so, it can be argued that Russia shouldn’t sacrifice its national economic interests just to avoid offending one of its partners (India), especially when the one that it’s closest to (China) is the chief investor in the said project. It isn’t possible for Russia to accomplish the previously mentioned economic tasks if it doesn’t participate in some capacity or another in CPEC. Nor, for that matter, can it entirely succeed with the concept paper’s plan for Russia to “establish a common, open and non-discriminatory economic partnership and joint development space for ASEAN, SCO and EAEU members with a view to ensuring that integration processes in Asia-Pacific and Eurasia are complementary” since Pakistan is the third most populous member of the SCO.

12 THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION

The GEP has no practical standing without the EAEU as its core, so Russia must first concentrate on succeeding with its regional integration plans through this comparatively smaller structure and then transition to trans-regional integration afterwards. Unlike what some critics have claimed, the EAEU isn’t being created to advance national prestige or out of nostalgia for the Soviet-era past. Instead, the main purpose is to enable Russia to better compete with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, as well as to cooperate with them on a more equal footing. Russia needs their assistance for developing the Siberian and Far Eastern regions that have been neglected for decades, though without being seen as somewhat of an economic equal, it fears being taken advantage of. These Asia-directed goals underpinning the EAEU were detailed in the Valdai Club’s 2012 report titled “Towards the Great Ocean, or the New Globalisation of Russia”⁸. The authors hoped that decision makers would focus more on this trend after reading their work. The report was released while Russia was still creating a customs union with its EAEU partners, so it could have been very influential in hindsight.

The Asia-Pacific countries, or more specifically the countries of Northeast Asia, aren’t the only ones that the EAEU aims to compete and cooperate with. Former Secretary of State for European Affairs in Portugal Bruno Maçães wrote in his 2018 article titled “Supercontinent Eurasia”⁹ that Russia “now looks in four directions

⁸ Karaganov S., Barabanov O., Bordachev T. Toward the Great Ocean, or the New Globalization of Russia. – Valdai International Discussion Club. 05.07.2012. URL: <https://valdaiclub.com/files/11443/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

⁹ Maçães B. Supercontinent Eurasia.” – Valdai International Discussion Club. 15.10.2018. URL: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/supercontinent-eurasia/?sphrase_id=1034017 (accessed 10.03.2020).

at once, a marked improvement upon the double-headed eagle of its state emblem. Traditionally, Russian elites tended to see their task as that of bringing about a gradual but complete integration with a more advanced Europe. That vision is now being replaced by a new self-image: as the center and core of the Eurasian supercontinent, Russia can reach in all directions and provide a bridge between Europe and China on both ends. In fact, Moscow is also looking south to the Middle East, and to the north, as global warming transforms the Arctic into the main trade route linking Europe and Asia.” The Middle East isn’t Russia’s only southward interest, however, since it can be argued that Pakistan’s CPEC is much more important when it comes to non-energy, commercial economic activity. This is yet another point that can be made about the importance of Pakistan in the GEP and why it’s so puzzling that practically nothing has been written about its role in Russian grand strategy.

That said, Russia’s future integration with Pakistan or any other country outside the former Soviet Union will have difficulty proceeding without the EAEU, ergo this structure’s premier importance in serving as the core of Moscow’s supercontinental plans. Interestingly, most EAEU member states are also in the SCO, which academic supervisor of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies Timofei Bordachev wrote in 2018 is the “foundation of Greater Eurasia”¹⁰. Pakistan and India were invited to join it in 2015, and the organization has since begun to take on more of an economic role atop its original security-related one. Still, the EAEU is much more of an economic actor than the SCO is by its very nature, but the two bodies have a lot in common, not only in membership, but also in overall outlook. According to the opinion of Yaroslav Lissovlik, a member of the Government Expert Council, in his 2015 article titled “Russia’s Eurasian Model of Modernization”¹¹, the EAEU was strongly influenced by Eurasianist theories. He also believes that it can achieve the objectives of “integration into the world economy”, “Eurasian integration in the ‘near abroad’”, “‘open regionalism’ and prioritizing multilateralism”, following an “Asian industrial policy” and implementing “European stabilization instruments/anchors”, and more effectively utilizing the “oil and gas sector”. In Lissovlik’s opinion, Eurasian integration “will dovetail the Chinese efforts to forge ties with Europe via the Silk Road project”. It’s noteworthy that he expressed this view several years before the Russian government formally did, which shows that his work was truly visionary at the time.

All in all, the cited experts assess Russia’s regional integration plans as proceeding along a positive trajectory. This gives hope to the vision that the EAEU will successfully function as the core of the GEP. It is also the Russian-led structure that can benefit the most from this grand strategy too, especially when it comes to prospectively achieving connectivity with CPEC. The Central Asian member states of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan could obtain a new market of over 200 million potential customers for their products, which would assist their economic diversification efforts and enable them to more confidently balance between Russia and China, thus removing any speculation that one or the other might be trying to undermine their sovereignty through economic means. Instead, both Great Powers would be enhancing their partners’ sovereignty by freeing up their economies to trade with Pakistan, or even just through it along CPEC *en route* to the Indian Ocean and the rest of the global marketplace beyond.

¹⁰ Bordachev T. The SCO as the Foundation of Greater Eurasia. — *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 03.07.2018. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-sco-as-the-foundation-of-greater-eurasia/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

¹¹ Lissovlik Ya. Russia’s Eurasian Model of Modernization.” *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 02.12.2015. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-s-eurasian-model-of-modernization/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

On an institutional level, improved Russian-Pakistani connectivity with CPEC as its centerpiece could also bring the EAEU closer to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Even though this group has been more or less moribund for the past few years owing to disagreements between Pakistan and India, it might be revived if Russia more directly began economically cooperating with Pakistan, which could in turn attract India's attention and possibly encourage it to reach a pragmatic compromise with its neighbor for rejuvenating this regional integration bloc. On a grander scale, Pakistan could be the trans-regional gateway state for the EAEU's further bloc-to-bloc integration with not only SAARC, but also the SCO and even the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) considering that the Gulf countries are investing in CPEC too and could take advantage of its terminal port of Gwadar for conducting trade back and forth with Central Asia. This is a key point that is sorely lacking in the academic literature on this topic, which is due either to of a lack of knowledge about the trans-regional integration opportunities afforded by CPEC and/or a hyper-sensitivity to India's concerns about its partners participating in that project. Nevertheless, further research should be conducted on this topic.

RUSSIA'S TRANS-REGIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY

Zachary Paikin, Senior Editor at Global Brief magazine and a Visiting Fellow at the London-based Global Policy Institute, set the backdrop against which Russia's trans-regional integration plans can be analyzed. His April 2019 article "Orders Within Orders: A New Paradigm For Greater Eurasia" begins with him discussing Moscow's dilemma, which he characterizes in this way: "As long as relations with the West remain in the doldrums, Moscow has no choice but to make its strategic partnership with Beijing the lynchpin of its plans to maintain great power status. Russia is but a secondary actor in Asia's regional order, which casts significant doubt on the ability of the EAEU minus Ukraine to become major pole at the global level on its own. But at the same time, failure to mend ties with the West will result in growing dependence on China, thus undermining the very aim that Russia seeks to achieve – preserving its status as an independent great power"¹². The ideal solution, then, is to apply Paikin's "order within orders" paradigm that he describes as "conceptualizing EU-Russia relations as forming a regional international order within the broader Greater Eurasian order, operating according to its own principles and initiating its own separate bilateral dialogue on global ordering practices". This would enable Russia to better balance its relations with China considering President Putin's plans to pair the EAEU with BRI.

Paikin references another expert in his work who he quotes as saying that "the future of global politics will be determined by interactions not between powers but blocs", and the "order within orders" paradigm can be regarded as a "reframing of the Greater Eurasian partnership designed to maximize the number of partners with which Russia can develop constructive relations." This is a very useful concept that doesn't exclusively consider the EU and China as the only "orders" of relevance in principle. Although Pakistan can be described by some as falling within the Chinese order, its massive market size and geostrategic location could change the strategic calculus by making it more of an independent player in the event that Russia is successful with fostering improved economic-connectivity relations with it, which would also benefit all of the EAEU's member states. Pakistan, and by extrapolation

¹² Paikin Z. Orders Within Orders: A New Paradigm for Greater Eurasia. Russian International Affairs Council, 24.04.2019. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/orders-within-orders-a-new-paradigm-for-greater-eurasia/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

the SAARC bloc of which it's a part, is but one example of a so-called third order that could revolutionize the strategic balance and thus give Russia more flexibility for interacting with all other poles of economic significance.

Lissovlik has written extensively about his ideas for how Russia can expand its global economic and institutional reach so it's worthwhile to analyze some of his most pertinent work. The first one that should be covered is his 2017 analysis titled "Re-Thinking the BRICS: On the Concepts of BRICS+ and BRICS++"¹³. This article suggests that "Russia in the Eurasian Economic Union, Brazil in MERCOSUR, South Africa in the South African Development Community (SADC), India in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and China in the Shanghai Organization for Cooperation (SOC)" form the constituent entities integrating with one another through BRICS+, while "these countries and/or regional blocks that have concluded agreements with BRICS countries' regional blocks" would constitute BRICS++. Of immediate relevance, Pakistan is a member of both SAARC and the SCO, thus making it doubly important in this context although that's not stated in the article. Still, the takeaway is that the regional integration structures that each BRICS member is in could come together through that platform to form the super-structure of BRICS+, which by implication suggests that Russia should enhance its economic ties with Pakistan in order to take maximum advantage of this idea.

Lissovlik also published an article titled "BRICS Plus: New Technology, New Vision for Economic Integration"¹⁴ later that same year. In it, he wrote that the objective of BRICS+ is "to create a network of alliances that would be comprehensive and representative of all of the major regions/continents across the developing world. In this respect, the BRICS+ paradigm is more about inclusiveness and diversity rather than about selecting the largest heavyweights. By its very nature of being present in all of the key regions and continents of the developing world the BRICS could perform the unique role of a comprehensive platform for economic cooperation across the globe. Accordingly, the BRICS+ concept is first and foremost about a different approach to economic integration and a different technology of how alliances are structured globally". Another important passage from his article proposes that "BRICS+ could perhaps be termed as semi-globalism" because it "would represent an intermediary layer of coordination and integration between the global level institutions (WTO) and the amalgam of countries and regional blocks." This focus on regionalism dovetails with the trend in regional integration processes earlier described by the Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2016, thus demonstrating strategic continuity with the state's officially promulgated policy and further making the case that it's only natural for Russia to seize the opportunity to improve its economic connectivity with Pakistan because of CPEC's potential to link together the EAEU, SCO, SAARC, and even the GCC.

The next article that Lissovlik wrote about trans-regional integration which will be discussed is "The Mechanics of BRICS+: A Tentative Blueprint"¹⁵. The author

¹³ Lissovlik Ya. Re-Thinking the BRICS: On the Concepts of BRICS+ and BRICS++. – *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 07.02.2017. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/re-thinking-the-brics/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

¹⁴ Lissovlik Ya. BRICS Plus: New Technology, New Vision for Economic Integration. – *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 23.03.2017. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/brics-plus-new-technology-new-vision/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

¹⁵ Lissovlik Ya. The Mechanics of BRICS+: A Tentative Blueprint. – *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 15.06.2017. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-mechanics-of-brics-a-tentative-blueprint/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

makes the point that BRICS+ can play the role of a “sufficiently strong starting engine” for global integration processes by “creating a new platform for forging regional and bilateral alliances across continents”. According to him, this could include a “platform for trade and investment integration”, “cooperation in international organizations”, “cooperation between the respective development banks and other development institutions formed by BRICS+ economies”, “use of national currencies/payment systems”, and “cooperation in establishing own reserve currencies/regional and global financial centers”. Of pertinence to the research topic is that Pakistan would inevitably participate in these proposed ideas, yet scant research has been carried out about how this would work, which places both countries in a disadvantageous position because they might not be able to fully exploit these opportunities. From the opposite angle, those said opportunities are plenty, so the incentive is certainly there to motivate other researchers once they become more aware of the mutual benefits.

Writing in his report about “BRICS-Plus: Alternative Globalization in the Making?”¹⁶, Lissovolik added another major benefit that could be derived from BRICS+. He said that “the new vision of integration in the form of BRICS+ could drag the world economy out of its misery of persistently low growth rates. It appears that new principles and new approaches in advancing openness and integration are required. We need to think about integration, growth and globalization in new and in hitherto abnormal ways to surmount the ‘new normal’. We need to shift gears from the old ‘core-periphery’ paradigm to veritable sustainable development, which in the integration sphere is to be based on greater diversity, equality of opportunity and due care with regard to spillover and trade diversion effects.” Put into topical context, Pakistan is geographically on the periphery of Eurasia, but it’s connected to one of the cores of the global economy, China, through CPEC. This has enabled its economy to grow well over the past few years. Its location can serve as a conduit for Siberia and Central Asia to more easily trade with the global economy through the access that CPEC could provide them to the Indian Ocean and partners further afield. If institutionalized through BRICS+, this could prospectively have a multiplying effect for all stakeholders, thus improving global growth rates and therefore benefiting the world economy.

Lissovolik elaborated more on his ideas that BRICS+ is crucially important for the global economy. In his article titled “On the Paradox of Global Economic Integration”¹⁷, he observed that “the economies most in need of economic integration are the ones that are the most left out from regional and global economic alliances and ‘clubs’“. Generally speaking, Lissovolik believes that a “new paradigm needs to be based on new types of integration arrangements that focus more on issues of connectivity that in turn are paramount for landlocked developing countries.” All of this holds particularly true for Pakistan, which while being a formal member of SAARC, never really integrated its economy with India’s owing to political reasons on both sides. Its decades of strategic partnership with the US also didn’t yield any lasting economic benefits either. Awareness of this might have contributed to China’s decision to build CPEC and economically integrate with Pakistan instead. That said integration does indeed “focus more on issues of connectivity that in turn are paramount for landlocked developing countries” such as the Central Asian ones

¹⁶ Lissovolik Ya. BRICS-Plus: Alternative Globalization in the Making? – *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 12.07.2017. URL: <https://valdaiclub.com/files/14927/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

¹⁷ Lissovolik Ya. On the Paradox of Global Economic Integration. – *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 30.10.2017. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/on-the-paradox-of-global-economic-integration/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

that are part of the EAEU, which could then utilize CPEC's terminal port of Gwadar to more easily access the global economy.

More specifically, Lissovlik signaled that BRI and BRICS+ could fulfill this role because they function as platforms for regional integration, pan-continental integration, and trans-continental integration when taken to their maximum extent with time¹⁸. Pakistan is part of both, BRI (of which CPEC is one of the flagship projects) and BRICS+ (of which it's included within SAARC and the SCO), so its experience can be extremely useful for helping other countries and is yet another reason why researchers should study it more within this larger context, especially in terms of its relevance to the other countries that are could join the GEP. Bridging BRICS+ and BRICS++, Lissovlik talks about something that he describes as InPEAKS/PEAKS in his article that takes "A Look at BRICS Derivatives and Alter Egos"¹⁹, which he says are the BRICS' countries' "partners in key regional blocks or continental alliances with a substantial size of the financial market/economy and scope for playing catch-up to the BRICS core: Argentina in South America, Kazakhstan in the CIS, Pakistan in South Asia, Egypt in Africa, Indonesia in East Asia. The unifying acronym for this group of countries is InPEAKs – the countries in this group may be viewed as the 'second generation' of BRICS countries coming from the same regions as the BRICS themselves. A moderate variation of the composition of this group would involve the selection of the largest economies by GDP in the respective regions: Egypt in Africa, South Korea in East Asia, as well as Pakistan in South Asia, Argentina in South America, and Kazakhstan in the Eurasian Economic Union. The resulting acronym – PEAKS – is suggestive of a strategy of portfolio allocation in EM and frontier markets that targets an optimal derivative set of countries from the main regions/continents of the developing world. The value of deriving a grouping such as PEAKS/InPEAKs lies in the expansion of the BRICS investment domain to include more markets, resulting in superior optionality, longer investment horizons and risk diversification."

To the best knowledge of the present article's authors, this is the first time that Lissovlik or any Russian expert for that matter has discussed the role that Pakistan can play in Russia's trans-regional integration strategy. He unfortunately didn't elaborate on it and mostly just mentioned its name and that was it, but it's a starting point from which to justify further research by Russian academics if they were so inclined. Lissovlik, who is well respected in the Russian academic community and whose work can objectively be described as influential, recognizes that Pakistan can be a more active player in trans-regional integration processes than it's oftentimes portrayed as being by his peers, if even talked about at all in this context. It's a member of SAARC, the SCO, BRICS+, and what he calls PEAKS/InPEAKs. It's China's top BRI partner, too. The case can therefore be made that it's much too important of a partner for Russia to pass up, and that it's unfortunate that more research hasn't already been undertaken along this promising vector. Pakistan's over 200 million people represent a promising market for the EAEU's exports, and it would be extremely symbolic for the cause of civilizational cooperation (in contrast with Huntington's fearmongering thesis about a supposedly inevitable "clash of civilizations" [Huntington 1996] if Russia and its economic partners greatly expanded their trade ties with such a massive Muslim country.

¹⁸ Lissovlik Ya. The Integration Platforms of the Global South. – *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 29.03.2018. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-integration-platforms-of-the-global-south/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

¹⁹ Lissovlik Ya. A Look at BRICS Derivatives and Alter Egos. – *Valdai International Discussion Club*. 27.04.2018. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/a-look-at-brics-derivatives-and-alter-egos/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

Given everything that's been discussed thus far in the present article, the conclusion can be made that the next logical step of Russian foreign policy is to prioritize its connectivity with Pakistan through the GEP. The Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2016 clearly describes the country's grand strategic goals, of which the strengthening of the EAEU is one of the most important. This regional integration organization is envisaged to function as the core of the GEP and the broader connectivity initiatives proposed by Lissovolik. In pursuit of the latter, it's only natural for Russia to expand its economic influence beyond the borders of its "Near Abroad" with both developed and developing economies alike such as Germany, Turkey, Iran, South Korea, and Japan. Pakistan fits into this strategic paradigm by being a nearby country "beyond the Near Abroad" just like the aforementioned five, among others. Although its economy isn't yet as impressive as them, it has enormous potential because of the \$60 billion that China plans to invest into CPEC, which is one of BRI's flagship projects. China is expected to rely more upon this trade route in the future because of its grand geostrategic significance in connecting the People's Republic with the Indian Ocean Region, the Mideast, and Africa. It would therefore be an inexplicable neglect of Russia's foreign policy goals not to explore the potential for strengthening relations with Pakistan, which is why it's hoped that the present article can inspire others to fulfill that role and make up for lost time. Relations between both continues to improve, so now is an advantageous moment to do so. With this in mind, several proposals can be made for taking relations to the next step and fully exploring the future role that Pakistan could play in the GEP.

POLICY PROPOSALS

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Most immediately, Russian experts need to appreciate the significance that Pakistan holds for the GEP, something that is evidently lacking at present and which explains the dearth of research into this topic. That can prospectively be accomplished by more interactions between each country's professional communities, whether academic, diplomatic, business, or otherwise. There are already small-scale engagements between the two, but they must be intensified and expanded as soon as possible. This could be brought about by engaging with one another's existing contacts and expressing a willingness to expand ties. Still, without the proper framing, this might not accomplish much, hence why it's imperative that Russia becomes better acquainted with CPEC, both in general in the sense that it's one of the flagship projects of BRI and more specifically with the many projects that comprise it, both current and planned. One effective proposal would be to request the Pakistani Embassy in Moscow to help arrange CPEC tours, or even better, for that said diplomatic office to proactively suggest as much through its contacts with Russia's leading think tanks. CPEC tours could be separate from, or in parallel with, Russian visits to Pakistani think tanks and government bodies that could directly help take ties to the next level.

Once Russians are more aware of what CPEC is and how it endows Pakistan with an important prospective role in the GEP, the next step is to discuss modalities for tapping into these opportunities. The expert communities of both countries should organize topical conferences on this dealing with the political, economic, and other aspects of bilateral cooperation and the potential for multilateral cooperation. For example, serious discussions could be held about the companies most likely to take advantage of the future establishment of the reliable banking system that the Russian Trade Representative to Pakistan proposed in November 2019 following the settle-

ment of the two sides' Soviet-era debt around the same time that had hitherto been an obstacle to significant economic cooperation between them²⁰. Russia's state-owned companies might be interested in participating, though Pakistan also has the responsibility to propose relevant projects that they might be best suited for. These could be determined by their expert communities after holding conferences on this topic. In addition, economic ties must broaden to include small- and medium-sized businesses, to which end it's necessary to figure out the most cost-effective logistical connections between these two connections, which brings to mind the possibility of a trans-Afghan economic corridor in the event that the war in that landlocked country eventually ends. This too could be a subject of intense discussion between both sides.

Impressive progress was recently made on this front in December 2019. RT reported that a 64-member delegation of Russian businessmen led by Russian Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov traveled to Pakistan for a four-day visit and signed several billion dollars' worth of mostly unspecified agreements²¹. Some of the details that were disclosed revealed that "Russia will provide financial assistance worth \$1 billion for the rehabilitation and upgrading of the Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) project" and "the two sides also discussed investments in the much-delayed North-South gas pipeline." In addition, "Russia's Sukhoi Superjet 100 (SSJ-100) planes will be supplied on both wet and dry lease with an option to purchase, according to Pakistani officials", and "Moscow will also help to construct a railway track from Quetta to Taftan." The report also went on to remind the reader that "earlier this year, Russia promised a \$14 billion investment in Pakistan's energy sector, including \$2.5 billion for the North-South pipeline project", which is why "a Russian company has developed a project to convert the Muzaffargarh thermal power station to coal and establish a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant at Jamshoro." Importantly, RT also shared some hard data about the current state of trade between Russia and Pakistan. According to the outlet, "the two nations aim to increase bilateral trade which last year stood at \$700 million. Pakistan's exports to Russia reached \$150 million while imports from Russia are worth \$250 million." Another RT report released around the same time quoted Alexey Kupriyanov, a research fellow at Moscow's Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), as "suggest[ing] that Russia will not go to extremes even if Pakistan truly wishes this to come true. When engaging Islamabad, Moscow could rely on 'some traditional spheres of cooperation,' namely economy and security, provided that 'it doesn't touch upon Pakistani actions and claims regarding Jammu and Kashmir.'"²²

With a view towards achieving the aforementioned aim of increasing bilateral trade, a post-war trans-Afghan corridor could conceptually function as the northern branch of CPEC, prospectively called N-CPEC+ (with "N" referring to North and the "+" referring to the expanded framework like it does in BRICS+). Russia, both as a state and also some of its state-owned and even private companies, might be re-

²⁰ Saif Kh.A. Pakistan, Russia: 'Reliable, Mutually Acceptable Banking System Imperative.' – *Business Recorder*. 21.11.2019. URL: <https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/21/546275/pakistan-russia-reliable-mutually-acceptable-banking-system-imperative/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

²¹ Russia Looks to Invest in Pakistan in a Big Way. – *RT*. 09.12.2019. URL: <https://www.rt.com/business/475368-russia-pakistan-investments-energy/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

²² "We've Always Been on Receiving End of US Hegemony": Pakistan Seeks Closer Ties with Russia, and Has a Real Chance of Success. – *RT*. 15.12.2019. URL: www.rt.com/news/475952-russia-pakistan-boost-relations/ (accessed 10.03.2020).

luctant to participate in any CPEC-branded projects owing to their sensitivities about offending their Indian partners, so bilateral economic cooperation could proceed according to a different conceptual euphemism even if it's still referred to as N-CPEC+ for simplicity's sake inside of Pakistan. What's most important, however, is to create a frame of conceptual reference within which to view their developing trade and integration ties. That said, it's equally important to be aware of the limitations involved, such as the near-impossibility of formal trade ties between the EAEU and Pakistan owing to Islamabad's refusal to recognize EAEU member Armenia out of solidarity with Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, just like Russia and other EAEU members have strong bilateral trade ties with Azerbaijan in spite of its disagreements with Armenia, so too can they have the same with Pakistan. In other words, while the national interests of Russia's Indian and Armenian partners might pose some political challenges to its closer trade ties with Pakistan, they aren't insurmountable by any means since pragmatic workarounds can easily be devised to overcome them.

If successful, then N-CPEC+ could do more than just improve Pakistan's trade ties with Russia, but also boost its trade with the Central Asian Republics. Pakistani-Kyrgyzstani trade was practically non-existent at only slightly more than \$3.5 million in 2016²³, which is why both sides agreed in May 2019 to try to raise it to \$10 million a year²⁴. As for Pakistani-Kazakhstani trade, it fell well short of its potential at less than \$25 million a year in 2018, but that didn't stop the latter's ambassador in Islamabad from hoping that it could one day grow to \$250-500 million as part of his country's his country's "Strategy 2050"²⁵, to which end he drafted a roadmap for achieving this in early 2019²⁶. Pakistani-Turkmenistani trade was slightly better at \$29 million in 2016²⁷, but has the possibility to greatly increase upon completion of the planned Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistani-India (TAPI) pipeline sometime later this decade. Pakistan's trade with Tajikistan is more than double that at \$62 million a year²⁸, though they ambitiously plan to increase it to \$500 million a year in the future²⁹. Out of all the Central Asian Republics, it's Pakistan's trade with Uzbekistan that's by and far the most impressive, more than doubling from \$36 million in 2017 to over \$90 million in 2018³⁰, with an eye towards tripling its 2019 amount of around

²³ Country Series: Kyrgyz Republic. — *The Pakistan Business Council*. 11.2017. URL: <https://www.pbc.org.pk/research/country-series-kyrgyz-republic/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

²⁴ Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan Agree to Raise Trade Volume to \$10mn. — *Radio Pakistan*. 22.05.2019. URL: <http://www.radio.gov.pk/22-05-2019/pakistan-kyrgyzstan-agree-to-raise-trade-volume-to-10mn> (accessed 10.03.2020).

²⁵ Kazakh Envoy Calls for Raising Trade to \$500m. — *The Express Tribune*. 11.10.2018. URL: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1822982/2-kazakh-envoy-calls-raising-trade-500m/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

²⁶ Roadmap Ready to Intensify Pak-Kazakh Trade Ties. — *The Nation*. 01.02.2019. URL: <https://nation.com.pk/01-Feb-2019/roadmap-ready-to-intensify-pak-kazakh-trade-ties> (accessed 10.03.2020).

²⁷ Country Series: Turkmenistan. — *The Pakistan Business Council*. 11.2017. URL: <https://www.pbc.org.pk/research/country-series-turkmenistan/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

²⁸ Tajik Envoy for Steps to Bolster Economic Ties with Pakistan. — *The News International*. 14.06.2019. URL: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/484247-tajik-envoy-for-steps-to-bolster-economic-ties-with-pakistan> (accessed 10.03.2020).

²⁹ Tajikistan Wants to Take Bilateral Trade with Pakistan to \$500m. — *The Express Tribune*. 19.03.2019. URL: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1932248/2-tajikistan-wants-take-bilateral-trade-pakistan-500m/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

³⁰ Uzbekistan for increased trade with Pakistan. — *Dawn*. 08.12.2018. URL: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1450128> (accessed 10.03.2020).

\$100 million³¹ to \$300 million “very soon”³². The successful completion of N-CPEC+ would therefore greatly contribute to the growth of Pakistan’s trade ties with the Central Asian Republics, especially since the latter could use CPEC’s terminal port of Gwadar to access the vast Indo-Pacific marketplace. Furthermore, Pakistani-Afghanistani trade, which sat at around \$1 billion in 2018 (representing a 20% decrease from the year prior³³ after Afghanistan began using India’s Iranian port of Chabahar more frequently for political reasons), would also likely increase as well, to say nothing of Afghanistan’s trade ties with the Central Asian Republics and Russia further afield as the latter two conduct more trade with Pakistan via its territory.

* * *

In conclusion, the research argues that Pakistan could play a somewhat surprising role (relative to the existing opinion of most Russian experts) in the GEP, though this hasn’t been widely recognized because of an overall lack of interest in the country and an unawareness about CPEC. This is attributable to the fact that Russia and Pakistan only recently began their rapprochement and still have a long way to go before entering into a meaningful partnership that goes beyond diplomatic coordination in bringing peace to Afghanistan and carrying out yearly anti-terrorist drills, both of which are enormous milestones compared to their previous state of relations but which are still insufficient for inspiring a critical mass of proactive research into the other’s long-term potential as a partner. As has been demonstrated through the research, however, Pakistan is poised to play a promising role in the GEP given that it’s indispensable to the success of this vision. It is the last remaining piece of the Eurasian connectivity puzzle which Russia has yet to fully appreciate, though it may only be a matter of time before that realization dawns on its decision makers. As BRI becomes a more influential catalyst for international systemic change, it’s predicted that Russia will naturally become more aware of its flagship project of CPEC, and with that, a new trend of research into Pakistan might commence shortly thereafter.

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РОЛЬ ПАКИСТАНА В БОЛЬШОМ ЕВРАЗИЙСКОМ ПАРТНЕРСТВЕ РОССИИ

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Аннотация. Взаимосвязь между различными акторами современных международных отношений – одна из ключевых тенденций XXI в., которую Россия последовательно воплощает в политике

³¹ Uzbekistan, Pakistan Have Big Economic Potential: Envoy. – *The News International*. 07.01.2020. URL: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/594850-uzbekistan-pakistan-have-big-economic-potential-envoy> (accessed 10.03.2020).

³² Rana I. Trade between Pakistan, Uzbekistan Doubles. – *The Express Tribune*. 18.09.2019. URL: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2058798/2-trade-pakistan-uzbekistan-doubles/> (accessed 10.03.2020).

³³ Rohullah A. Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade Volume Shrinks by 20 Percent. – *TOLONews*. 22.12.2018. URL: <https://tolonews.com/business/afghanistan-pakistan-trade-volume%2%A0shrinks%2%A0-20-percent> (accessed 10.03.2020).

Большого Евразийского партнерства. Эти усилия направлены на то, чтобы противостоять хаотическим процессам, протекающим на фоне длительного системного перехода от однополярности к многополярности. Стратегическая задача инициативы Большого Евразийского партнерства – интеграция с рядом стран бывшего Советского Союза посредством Евразийского экономического союза (ЕАЭС), а затем и установление более тесного сотрудничества с другими регионами Евразии для получения преимуществ от набирающей обороты торговли между Европой и Азией. В ходе второго форума инициативы “Один пояс – один путь” в апреле 2019 г. президент Путин заявил, что возглавляемый Китаем проект импонирует идее России по созданию Большого Евразийского партнерства и что пять государств – членов ЕАЭС единодушно поддержали идею расширения сотрудничества с проектом “Экономического пояса Шелкового пути”. Из этого следует, что данная интенсификация взаимодействия между ЕАЭС и инициативой “Один пояс – один путь” будет способствовать усилению связей России с флагманским проектом Китая по китайско-пакистанскому экономическому коридору в Южной Азии, что обеспечит Пакистану важную роль в Большом Евразийском партнерстве. Интенсивно развивающиеся отношения между Россией и Пакистаном, а также миротворческие усилия, предпринятые двумя странами и другими заинтересованными сторонами в Афганистане в 2019 г., открывают перспективу будущего торгового коридора, который пройдет через граничащие государства и тем самым создаст новую “ось” интеграции в Евразии. Это стало бы важным шагом по сближению ЕАЭС и инициативы “Один пояс – один путь”. Авторы приводят теоретические и практические основания жизнеспособности этого проекта и дают обоснования его потенциальной выгоды для всех сторон, а также выдвигают политические рекомендации по рассматриваемому вопросу.

Ключевые слова: Большое Евразийское партнерство, Один пояс – один путь, Евразийский экономический союз, Пакистан, китайско-пакистанский экономический коридор, Китай, Шелковый путь.

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