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The scientific journal is published since 2011 at the "Publishing House "Science Today". Translated (eng.) version of the journal is published since 2016. Since its inception, the journal was guided by high scientific and ethical standards and today it is one of the leading political science journals in Russia.

The purpose of the journal is to promote scientific exchange and cooperation between Russian and foreign political scientists.

The journal is intended for the publication of the results of fundamental and applied scientific research. Thematic focus of the journal is reflected in the following permanent headings: "History and philosophy of politics," "Political institutions, processes and technologies," "Political regionalism and ethno-politics," "Political culture and ideologies," "Political problems of international relations and globalization."

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The Editorial Board and the editors of the journal in their activities are guided by the principles defined by VAK of Russia for scientific journals, including: presence of the institute of peer review for the expert quality assessment of scientific articles; information openness of the publications; availability and compliance with the rules and ethical standards for the submission of manuscripts by the authors.

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ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF RUSSIA AND CHINA IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This article identifies and analyzes the economic interests of key geopolitical players in the Central Asian region. The authors conclude that Russia and Central Asia have long maintained very close relations. For the Russian Federation, the interests of Central Asia are one of the most important conditions for ensuring its strategic security and economic development. China is also paying close attention to the region and strengthening of its ties there. The question of how to achieve a harmonious and mutually beneficial situation between these three parties should be considered by China, Russia and the countries of Central Asia.

Key words: *Russia, China, Central Asia, economic interests.*

Improving the level of economic development in Central Asia concerns prosperity and economic development in Asia and Europe as a whole. The economic status and cooperation mechanisms in this region contribute to creating prospects for regional development and cooperation between China, Russia and other countries. China and Russia, as the two powers that occupy the highest position in the region, should achieve the common goals of continuous regulation and regional development through consultations on equal terms between States. For the two BRICS member countries, cooperation with Central Asian States is also an important practice for developing regional economic governance.

Russia's economic interests in the Central Asian region. For the Russian Federation, it is extremely important to have a stable strategic position in this region, because it facilitates access to China, India and the Muslim countries of the East. Russian interests in Central Asia can be defined as follows:

- 1) ensuring stability based on cooperation agreements with all countries in the region;
- 2) using their geopolitical capabilities to address practical issues that Russia faces as a global and regional power;

3) international recognition of the key role of the Russian Federation in this region.

In this regard, Russia faces a number of practical challenges, namely:

- 1) effective use of existing multilateral cooperation mechanisms;
- 2) ensuring the security of the southern borders;
- 3) development of military cooperation;
- 4) use of Central Asian energy resources;
- 5) providing assistance to Russian companies' business activities in the energy sector and encouraging regional states to import more goods from Russia [4].

In 2018, the Russian-Tajik military alliance further strengthened its position. On June 6, the State Duma of RF ratified the "Agreement on strategic partnership between Russia and Turkmenistan," which provides for the creation of a strategic partnership. In 2018, Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed a new agreement on economic cooperation. As for the economy, the Russian Federation has fully used its technical and market advantages to open up the markets of Central Asia [3].

At the same time, Russia is experiencing a crisis connected with the export of oil and gas from Central Asia, dominated by external factors. The Russian Federation pursues a policy of rapprochement with the countries of this region and at the same time seeks to ensure its presence in Central Asia. Russia manages to achieve this by several methods:

- 1) economic support, creation of the Eurasian Economic Union;
- 2) participation in the development and construction of oil and gas fields;
- 3) export of oil and gas to the countries of the region at a lower price than supplies to Europe.

As for oil and gas exports, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia continued its previous mode of transportation of oil and gas, mainly through Central Asia. Transit Russia is the most important route for exporting natural gas to Asia.

Kazakhstan's energy exports remain largely dependent on Russia. by the end of 2017, 97% of the country's crude oil and 80% of its natural gas were exported through Russian infrastructure. As for Uzbekistan, currently about half of Uzbekistan's gas is exported through Russian pipelines. Thus, Russia's position as a transit state in Central Asia is not of strategic importance for the region.

China's economic interests in the Central Asian region. China is the most active player in this region. The project to revive the Great Silk Road is an attempt to strengthen the sphere of trade and also to promote Chinese influence in the region in all directions. The resource and energy factor is also of great importance in China's foreign policy strategy. The need for access to the natural resources of Central Asia is dictated by the China's close proximity to this region [1].

Turkmenistan has special relationships with China, and the country's leadership has granted the right to develop its hydrocarbon resources on land to China. In 2007, the Chinese national oil company (CNPC) received a license to produce gas in Uzbekistan, and in 2009, China provided Ashgabat with a loan of five billion dollars for the development of the large South Kolotan gas field.

Kazakhstan is also becoming a key energy partner of the PRC. In 2008, China controlled a fifth of the country's oil production. In 2009, over 6 million tons of Kazakh oil were delivered to China. China and Kazakhstan are closely linked by the construction of the Kenkiyak – Kumkol oil pipeline leading to the fields of the Caspian region.

China aims to provide mainly technical support to Kyrgyzstan. China is implementing small-scale projects in the mining and transport industries, as well as in the construction materials industry. At the same time, projects in the fuel and energy sectors are isolated and not large-scale.

China occupies a leading position among Uzbekistan's trade partners. There are 300 enterprises in the country created jointly with Chinese participation, they specialize in light, processing and agricultural industries, as well as in information technology. At the end of 2009, the bilateral turnover amounted to US\$ 2051.4 billion.

The strengthening of the Chinese trade presence in Uzbekistan was made possible primarily due to the export credit program implemented by China – the provision of targeted loans that are used to purchase Chinese goods and services [6].

Consuming the natural resources of Central Asia, the PRC sells high-value-added goods (products of mechanical engineering, light and electronic industries) to the region. In order to expand sales, the PRC uses three main tools:

- 1) allocates tied loans;
- 2) builds the infrastructure between Central Asia and Xinjiang;
- 3) takes steps to increase the turnover of the yuan in the regional trade.

If we talk about loans, in total, by the beginning of 2016, China provided about 30 billion dollars to the countries of the region. These funds were mainly used for the implementation of raw materials projects of interest to China in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, as well as infrastructure projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In many cases, when the return of funds is difficult, Beijing offers contractors so-called “investments in exchange for raw materials.”

China also participates in the development of the region's infrastructure. Construction of the new Asia-Europe continental bridge is moving forward. As of 2018, the Central European countries transported in total more than 1.1 million tons of cargo, opening up new opportunities for China's export and trade [10].

As a part of the Silk Road Agreement, US \$ 11 billion is invested, the actual financing is about US \$ 77 billion, and two billion dollars are allocated for the creation of a cooperation Fund in the field of industrial energy of China and Kazakhstan. During the second forum at the highest level of international cooperation on regional routes, the Silk Road Foundation decided to invest in oil and gas projects in Astana (Kazakhstan), the International Stock Exchange in Uzbekistan and the International Conference in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) [7].

Cooperation and competition between Russia and China. While maintaining peace and stability in Central Asia as a whole, China and Russia do not have an absolute conflict of interest in this region, and both sides have the opportunity to cooperate. The New Silk Road project has significantly strengthened

ties between China and Russia in Central Asia. The use of this route can play an important role in the economic sphere:

- 1) create a joint plan for the development of Central Asia and industrial and social infrastructure in the lagging regions of China and Russia;
- 2) coordinate the interests of Russia, China and their partners in Central Asia in various markets, including discussion of transnational problems of labor migration;
- 3) coordinate macroeconomic policy [11].

Thus, the organization of cooperation is constantly being improved, as a result of which the interests of the Russian Federation, the Central Asian member countries and the PRC are taken into account.

It is necessary to further strengthen strategic cooperation between China and Russia in accordance with three principles: non-accession, non-confrontation and non-targeting at the third parties. The link between the “regional route” and various regional cooperation programs should be strengthened in order to actively search for places where major powers can combine their interests in Central Asia. The development of strategic cooperation with Russia, joint construction of the Eurasian economic partnership and the formation of a fair and rational new regional order are necessary [2].

It should be noted that in recent years, China's relations with Russia and Central Asian countries have significantly improved, and direct supplies between the countries continue to grow. China has always recognized that Central Asia is Russia's traditional sphere of influence, and Russia has abandoned competition and confrontation in the region.

The EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) seeks to deepen cooperation with China. China, in turn, has clearly expressed its support for European and Asian economic integration and is ready to push forward the Silk Road initiative, which is linked to the countries' development plans [9].

The strengthening of China's strategic coordination and cooperation with Russia has reduced resistance to Chinese diplomacy in Central Asia. Regardless of historical, cultural, traditional or practical influences, Russia undoubtedly occupies a dominant position in the region [5]. Without Russia's participation in any undertaking in Central Asia, it is difficult to achieve success. China has always respected the interests of the Russian Federation and maintained strategic relations: from working together for the resolution of border issues between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Chinese-Russian cooperation in Central Asia is gradually being institutionalized. After China has proposed the Silk Road initiative, it assumed responsibility for interacting and coordinating with Russia the implementation of the project in Central Asia.

Cooperation in the region provides basic institutional guarantees. At the same time, China responded positively to Russia's proposal for a greater Eurasian partnership: in June 2018, the Ministry of Commerce of China and the Ministry of economic development of the Russian Federation signed a “Statement on the

completion of a joint feasibility study of the agreement on the Eurasian Economic Partnership” [8]. This has further expanded the space for cooperation between China and Russia in Central Asia.

Conclusion. China and Russia should work together to create conditions for investment cooperation between the countries of Central Asia. The countries of this region face many problems that negatively affect stability, such as international terrorism, religious extremism and national separatism. They must find effective ways to deal with these problems, which will help the region’s economic development, increase the people’s livelihoods and promote long-term peace and stability in Central Asia.

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