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# China's "New Regionalism" as a Mechanism to Strengthen the Influence of China in the Global Integration Processes: An Example of Eurasian Economic Union

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### ABSTRACT

The article presents an analysis of the role of the Chinese factor in global integration processes carried out in the context of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). It is proven that a key mechanism to strengthen the role of China in the EAEU, and other integration associations, is the strategy of the China's "New Regionalism," according to which the Chinese government provides a "soft" economic expansion using economic, political, ideological and cultural development strategies. The essence of China's "New Regionalism" is its desire for a multipolar world based on the principles of non-interference policy, and the formation of supranational and transnational integration groupings to strengthen their economic potential. At the core of the China's interest towards EAEU initiated by Russia lie the factors such of geopolitical, economic and security nature, as well as the interest in Epy "The Silk Road Economic Belt" project. The proximity of the goals of these initiatives highlights the issue of a possible competition between the two countries in the struggle for strategic resources of the Central Asian Region. It is concluded that the projects of China and Russia being implemented do not have the rivalry potential, but rather complement and reinforce each other. Moreover, the deepening of the strategic partnership between the two countries based on the principles of co-development will contribute to the successful promotion of the process of regional integration, not only in Central Asia but also in the Asia Pacific region. It emphasizes that the underestimation of the specifics of the China's "New Regionalism" by the Russian counter side might lead to a lowering of its competitive advantages in the process of implementation of joint programs and projects.

**Keywords:** China's New Regionalism, Central Asia Region, Asia Pacific Region, Eurasian Economic Union

**JEL Classifications:** E6, F5

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current development stage of the geopolitical structure of the world is determined by the processes of globalization and regionalization with the shift of the center of the global political and economic activity towards Asia. The rapid development of China that steadily strengthens its position in the international arena and pays an increasingly strong impact on various global processes, including integration, necessitates the scientific understanding and search for methods of analysis of the Chinese factor in the geopolitical architectonics of the modern world.

The most promising in this respect, in our opinion, is the concept of China's "new regionalism" being developed in the Russian and foreign science, and highlighted as a separate notion of regional studies. Specificity of Chinese regionalism is the desire for a multipolar world based on the principle of political non-interference and the pursuit of maximum economic benefit. The essence of China's "new regionalism" is the concept of a global regionalization, which advocates for the denial of political and military alliances, as well as the imposition of democratization in the Western sense. In accordance with this concept, China "regionalizes" globally through active participation in various

integration associations in the world: APEC, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, etc., while its main purpose is to gain access to natural resources, markets, convenient transportation corridors.

After the collapse of the USSR and the formation of five independent states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), the Central Asia region is of interest for many countries in the world due to its geopolitical and strategic resource opportunities. In order to realize its interests in this region, the Russian Federation has initiated the creation of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) in 2000, on the basis of which in January 2015 The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The aim of the association is to enhance the integration of the economies of the member states and their convergence to activate the process of modernization and increase their competitiveness in the world. Despite the fact that China is not showing a great interest in becoming a member of the EAEC it has been rather active in the region. This can be validated by the start of an ambitious project "The Silk Road Economic Belt" (SR), providing the formation of a single financial and economic space involving Russia, Mongolia, Countries of Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and in the future - Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.

EAEU and the SR are characterized by similar integration challenges and have significant potential for cooperation; however, insufficient consideration is given to the specificity of the China's "new regionalism," which could result in a decrease of competitive advantages in the implementation of joint programs and projects. Scientific analysis of this issue is relevant for forecasting future developments in the EAEU, defining the role of the Russian-Chinese partnership for the integration of the EAEU into the Asia-Pacific region for ensuring stability and security in the Eurasian region. The partnership based on co-development and consideration of the specifics of China when paired with Russian and Chinese initiatives is able to ensure the success of the joint efforts of the two countries to deepen integration in the Eurasian space.

Study of China's "new regionalism" as a mechanism to strengthen the influence of China in the world while allocating of its components and the implementation of targeted analysis of their application within the EAEC has a scientific novelty and practical importance. Analysis of regional practices of China's integration into the designated space through the prism of the concept of China's "new regionalism" is undertaken for the first time. Results and recommendations being relevant for management decision-making in the implementation of joint Russian-Chinese programs in Eurasia.

## 2. REGIONALISM AS A RESEARCH PARADIGM

Identification of specific forms and practices of China's "new regionalism" is associated with the methodological problems of understanding the global regionalism as a form of interaction

between the socio-cultural entities (states, regions) on the world stage in the context of globalization and regionalization.

"Regionological" approach enables us to consider the regional context of the implementation of foreign policy practices of modern China as part of a strategy for the China's new (harmonious) regionalism, which serves as basic research method. Categorical triad "region - regionalization - regionalism" forms the basis of regionological approach being one of the most common and productive in the research practice of the spatial forms of organization of the international space and is defined by began its operation. Sophisticated essential characteristics and the ratio of the concepts themselves.

Regionalism as a cognitive paradigm and a new type of scientific thinking uses the term "region" and its derivatives, explaining the essence and principles of cooperation between the country (national) and global (supranational) levels of the organization of world space (Abramov, 2010). The scientific concept of regionalism in its modern sense studies the objective processes of the formation of large multi-dimensional spaces and other territorial communities (e.g., supranational groupings, regional geographic and intra-state communities) that have civilizational code, seeking the most effective use of internal and external factors of development (Dergachev, 2008). At the end of XX - the beginning of XXI centuries it was formed in response to the strengthening of the role of regional (i.e., supra-national and cross-border) groups in the international cooperation system.

Modern ideas about the region as a form of organization of space being generated by the integration processes in international relations are reduced to the problem of formation of a new (global) regionalism. New regionalism is developing as a modern version of multipolarity; being formed "bottom-up" it contains elements of spontaneity and autonomy of its actors; seeks to implement the ideas of "open regionalism" that is compatible with economic interdependence. It is multidimensional and includes a trade and financial, environmental, social, political and other dimensions, as well as involves non-state and sub-national actors (Hettne et al., 1999).

New regionalism is formed in a search for the optimal balance between globalization and regionalization, acquiring features of global regionalism. While globalism reduces the importance of the geographical factor, regionalism stresses the role of regional communities, their boundaries and identities formed by cultural and civilizational features (Makarychev, 2013).

The heuristic potential of modern theories of new regionalism is useful in the study of Chinese practice of participation in international integration processes. In conjunction with hermeneutic, systemic, structural and functional, civilizational, and sociocultural approaches, the regionological paradigm forms a comprehensive methodology that can be applied for the analysis of Chinese regionalism in the fullness of its cultural and civilizational manifestations.

The present study aims at identifying the specifics of China's "new regionalism" as a mechanism for participation of China in the

international integration processes and practices in the Eurasian space in the context of co-development with Russia. This objective involves a phased implementation of the following tasks:

- Identify of the essence of the phenomenon of China's "new regionalism", with allocation of a certain stage of its development, forms and basic characteristics.
- Define the specifics in the use of mechanisms of the "new regionalism" by China in strengthening of its influence in the various integration groupings and associations.
- Analyze the China's experience of international integration in the Eurasian space (i.e. EAEC) and the role of the China's "new regionalism" in the given process.
- Characterize the Russian-Chinese practices of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAEC, revealing their competitive potential.

### 3. THE ESSENCE OF THE PHENOMENON OF CHINA'S NEW REGIONALISM

The main trend in shaping the development course of modern civilization is globalization - a process of ever-increasing impact of various factors of a transformed world order on political, economic, environmental, informational, and cultural reality of individual states. In turn, globalization explains their commitment to regionalization as a means to strengthen their own positions and opposition to other actors of the global geopolitical process. A key system-determinant factor that defines a modern model of world order is the economy, which is based on the reproductive system, spanning beyond national borders and forming a giant global internationalized reproductive cycles (Abramov, 2010). Moving the economic factor beyond the state borders, the formation of transnational financial and reproductive systems are responsible for the activation of integration processes, resulting in the transformation of traditional center-periphery system of international relations with the redistribution of roles between its members. Integration associations and groupings created in the various regions of the world are starting to act as new entities in this regard: The European Union (EU), the Union of South American Nations, the SCO, and others.

In order to realize its interests, China is going "outside," offering investments and an upgraded transport and logistics infrastructure to the world, while receiving access to resources and markets in return. Furthermore, while declaring the principles of political non-interference and cooperation, China involves an increasing number of participants in an innovative spatial structure of the national economy. The region as part of a group of states, with China as the region-establishing element, acts as an independent subject of international relations, having its competitive resources as well as socio-economic and cultural-civilizational benefits necessary for securing its sustainable development.

The issues of formation of global regionalism are discussed in the works of Chinese authors - Xiefeng (2003); Nuying (2002); Suisheng (1998), Xiaotong and Xiaoyue (2014) - the employees of the Research Center for Economic Diplomacy at Wuhan University, China, made a significant contribution to the theoretical

understanding of China's regionalism. They have provided a detailed understanding of China's regionalism and highlighted the main directions and stages of its evolution, allocated the constraints and drivers of its development, defined the specific features of China's regionalism while designating the future developments of China's new regionalism.

The initial stage of the development of China's regionalism (1990-2012) is associated with the expansion of China's participation in trade and economic cooperation and the creation of free trade zones in Asia. This stage is characterized by the evolution of China's regionalism in three areas: Firstly, the transition from hostile attitude towards regionalism in Asia as a whole to the active participation; secondly, a significant expansion of the geographical area of regional cooperation (by now there are two main directions of China's regionalism: Western - Eurasian space, the southern - to the Indian Ocean); thirdly, the transformation of the role of China in Asia - the positioning of the role of a great power - the Daguo state." During this phase, the China's regionalism is filled and determined by such basic principles as the need to develop cooperation based on mutual trust and benefits, while respecting the principles of harmonious co-development, mutual consultation, the diversity of forms, introduction of innovation and openness. However, the provided idealized model is not without drawbacks. The constraints of China's regionalism in Asia are: The dissemination of "China threat" theories, a competition with the United States and Japan for regional leadership, territorial disputes with neighboring states. In contrast to the previously mentioned factors, scholars distinguish the conditions conducive to the development of China's regionalism in Asia, they are: Rapid economic growth, the success of reforms conducive to economic integration; positive economic image of China; success of Chinese diplomacy in the framework of the SCO and the development of good-neighborly relations with many countries in Asia.

The second stage of the development of China's regionalism (2012 - present) associated with economic diplomacy of Xi Jinping. At this stage, China is in search of the conceptual foundations of economic cooperation, as which are mentioned in-depth cooperation on the basis of building a "community of common destiny," "community of common interest;" construction of a regional identity based on common history and culture of Asia (Xiaotong and Xiaoyue, 2014).

Chinese scholars also highlight eight major features of "regionalism with Chinese characteristics," which include:

- Construction of regionalism aimed at the economic rise of China, based on mutual trust and mutual benefit under the concept of "peaceful development."
- The priority of sovereignty in the regional integration process.
- Rational approach to the implementation of regionalism within the concept of "scientific development," involving timely and informed decisions.
- Gradualism, which manifests itself in the implementation of areas of economic integration and the geographical area of distribution of China's regionalism.
- Construction of a regional identity with the universal regional values as the basis for the realization of China's regionalism

- and positioning the image of China in the region.
- The open nature of regionalism for the countries of the region, in contrast to the American and European model of regional integration.
- The policy of China's regionalism is one of the most important mechanisms of internal reform and openness.
- Conceptually grounded regionalism that implements the idea of a community of common destiny and common interests in maintaining the balance of "morality - interest." At the heart of such regionalism is common history and culture of the region and the most important tool is the "soft power."

While elaborating a structural model of regionalism, professor Dergachev (2008) attaches a special importance to the civilization code. He highlights three well-established models of regionalism: (1) European or Western, based on the priority of individual rights over the rights of society; (2) American, in which the liberal values act as a factor of transformation of peripheral areas, in terms of geography, into poles of high-tech development; and (3) the Chinese globalizing regionalism, the essence of which lies in the combination of openness to the world economy with an authoritarian type of state power. However, the definition of Chinese regionalism does not adequately disclose its specificity.

The essence of China's new regionalism is the formation of such an international situation along the borders of the state, which would be favorable for the stable development of China in the future. According to the paradigm of the China's new regionalism, the alignment of "China's regional order" is expected, the so-called Pan-Sinica, which would be achieved by using "soft" mechanisms of economic, political, ideological and cultural development strategies (Kuchinskaya, 2011).

The strategy of "new regionalism" invisibly expands the sociocultural space of globally regionalizing China (Rithmire, 2014). Under the influence of the China's "new regionalism," the level of integration cooperation in the region significantly increases. This type of integration is called as the informal integration or soft regionalism. The implementation of the "new regionalism" acts as a factor of formation and the establishment of a special consciousness of belonging to a particular region, first of all it is typical for East Asia, where a special identity of belonging to the expanding Chinese space is forming. Cooperation within the region becomes institutionalized, expanding the essence of the new regionalism, defining its features. "New regionalism" is the driving force in the integration of the APR (Abramov, 2010).

#### 4. MECHANISMS OF THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF CHINA IN THE GLOBAL INTEGRATION PROCESSES

Nowadays, China is implementing the concept of the China's "new regionalism", the key mechanisms of which are: economic, political, ideological and cultural development strategies. As a result, one can witness the expansion of China's representation in integration associations. Increases the number of "satellite states" supporting the "Beijing Consensus" in different regions of the

world. The greatest success of China in the implementation of "soft" or "harmonious" regionalism (Dellios, 2012; Kuchinskaya, 2014) has made in a number of geopolitical regions (Africa, Latin America, Asia), as well as in the respective institutionalized integration associations and groupings (ASEAN, SCO, BRICS, etc.), defining the contours of the expansion of its socio-cultural space.

After analyzing the spread of China's influence in the African region, Kurlantzick (2009) concludes that "China's image" in African countries is more positive than in other countries of the world. Such a "charm offensive" approach of China is due to increasing economic (market, energy) and the political interests of China in Africa. The success of the "soft power" of China in Africa is due to a weak potential of "hard power" in the region.

In Latin America, China uses similar scheme, particularly as regards political, economic and energy regional leaders - Venezuela and Brazil. For Venezuela, Beijing offered to support social sector investment in the amount of 8 billion USD in exchange for an agreement on oil production, the creation of the company for the construction of tankers and refineries in China for processing Venezuelan oil. In total there have signed more than 300 bilateral agreements. With Brazil, China signed an agreement under which Brazilian suppliers will export to China 60-100 thousand. Barrels of oil per day (Karimova, 2011). During the visit of Xi Jinping and Hu Liangyu to Latin America in 2009, it has been repeatedly stated that in the new time efforts should be made to enhance the humanitarian and cultural exchanges between China and Latin America (Paladini, 2011).

While analyzing the rise of China's impact in Southeast Asia, Wibowo (2009) notes that, the Chinese influence in the region already existed in the period of "cold war," when China supported revolutionary movements in the region. In 1997 due to the Asian financial crisis, China has offered the financial and economic assistance to many countries in the region, and has demonstrated a successful anti-crisis solution. After that, the East Asian community has started to look at China with admiration and respect, which paved the way for the approval of the "Beijing Consensus," with the exception of countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia.

Mishina (2011) identifies three components of China's soft regionalism in Southeast Asia: First, political - ASEAN serves as a platform for China's impact on international processes occurring in Southeast Asia; second - economic: Economic diplomacy, the development of cross-border projects, etc., and third - cultural component; the spread of Chinese culture and language in the region.

The cultural component of "soft power" in Central Asia is intended to become an auxiliary tool of a regional strategy aimed at expanding its socio-cultural space in the region. Image component is closely related to the economic and political factors. Kazakh scientist Kaukenov (2012) notes that the CA has now become a training ground for many of the "soft" diplomatic initiatives of China to implement a number of new diplomatic methods and mechanisms, never been previously applied by elsewhere.

Primarily, it is about the creation and subsequent development of the SCO, which has become one of the major conductors of China's "soft" diplomacy in the region.

## 5. CHINA'S "NEW REGIONALISM" IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EAEU

Regional context becomes an arena of struggle for influence in Central Asia. It attracts more and more players, including not only the state but also a variety of funds, both secular and religious organizations. Currently, the CA is the formation of two new integration associations - the EAEU and "The Silk Road Economic Belt" that can have a serious impact on the balance of geopolitical and geo-economic power in the region. The key players in this process are the Russian Federation and China, who are equally striving to strengthen their positions and increase influence in the region to implement their national interests.

The EAEU is a new economic integration association established on the basis of the Customs Union of the EurAsEC to promote economic development and foreign trade interaction between the participating countries as well as increasing their competitiveness in the global market. To date, the member-states of the EAEU are Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. EAEU is a young international organization, however, considering previous experience of the EurAsEC, one can already estimate the role of this integration association, not only for the participating countries, but also for the Euro-Asian region. The importance of the establishment and effective operation of the EAEU has been repeatedly emphasized by the Russian leaders as one of the priorities of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. EAEU is designed not only to establish the most beneficial cooperation in the sphere of economic relations within the CIS, but also become a model for the integration of a new type, which determines the future development of post-Soviet countries. In addition, the EAEU has all the prerequisites to become a driving force behind the integration of the participating countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

A number of factors facilitate the process of integration in the EAEU: Geographical and civilizational proximity of the participating countries, their economic relations and complementary economies, similar problems associated with the need for economic diversification and modernization. As a result, EAEU currently becomes a platform for a zone of free movement of capital, goods, labor and services. In addition, the conditions are being formed for equal access to the transport and energy infrastructure, the uniform customs regulations are imposed (Shuchun and Qingsong, 2014).

An important specificity of the EAEU is a differentiated approach to the requirements for the member states, - "based on individual ability," i.e., each country makes a contribution corresponding to the level and conditions of its economic development. It is obvious that the main burden falls on the more economically stable countries, such as Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. However, based on the geopolitical interests of all participants, and especially Russia, non-inclusion of Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and other countries

of Central Asia in the process of integration will lead to the fact that they fall under the impact of other strong actors who are not interested in maintaining stability in the region. This in turn could have a negative impact on the stability and security of Russia, Kazakhstan and even Belarus. In other words, integration in the EAEU is designed to pull the economies of weaker participants, to maintain their internal stability, so that each country was a reliable element of the security of the entire integration association.

Certainly, by building a network of integration ties worldwide via the mechanisms of the China's new regionalism, China conducts its own game in the Central Asian Region (CAR). In parallel with the Russia's EAEU initiative, China invites all Central Asian countries to work together on an effort to create a "The Silk Road Economic Belt" project, which was first officially declared by the president Xi Jinping in September 2013. According to the China Development Bank, the framework of the New Silk Road presumes the implementation of 900 projects in 60 countries, and the total investment will account to approx. 890 billion USD. According to Beijing, the New Silk Road will become an innovative model of integrative interaction, which will contribute to the deepening of mutual cooperation, the expansion of the development prospects of countries in the region and, as a consequence, ensuring security and stability throughout Eurasia.

China's desire to strengthen its position in the region of Central Asia is fully consistent with the overall strategy of the state, interpreted as China's new regionalism, implemented by Beijing towards all geopolitical regions of the world, and primarily towards the neighboring countries. Key interests of China in the CA Region can be roughly classified into three groups: Economic, political and security issues. Economic interests are conditioned by the fact that the region has concentrated significant reserves of strategic resources, including energy (approximately 2% of global oil reserves and 4% of natural gas), in addition, the region has great potential for the Chinese market expansion. From the security point of view, the presence of China in CA is vital due to the following factors:

- The passage of the state border along the troubled (in terms of separatism and religious extremism) western regions of China, especially Xinjiang, their proximity to Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Emphasis on maintaining stability in Central Asia because of the instability of relations in Southeast Asia due to unresolved territorial disputes.
- Interest towards the region shown by the United States, seeking to maintain the status as a global leader, and using all available means to restrain China. For example, in order to reduce the dependence of Turkmenistan on natural gas supplies to China and refocusing it on India, Washington is actively helping Ashgabat in the construction of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India gas pipe.

The political component of China's national interests in Central Asia is determined, first of all, by the Beijing's desire to intensify political contacts with the West, which will be largely contributed by the transport corridors of the Silk Road. Additionally, an important role in China's foreign policy today is given the further

deepening of cooperation with Russia and other countries of the CAR, including in the framework of the SCO.

## 6. RUSSIA AND CHINA IN THE EAEU: COMPETITION OR PARTNERSHIP

A situation when two large-scale project, characterized by similar objectives, are offered in a single region has caused an active discussion in the political and expert community of many countries, particularly China and Russia. The greatest popularity received two diametrically opposite positions. According to first, despite the fact that Russia and China develop strategic partnerships, their relationship in Eurasia is competitive. Beijing conceives the creation of EAEU as a threat to its economic and geopolitical interests. The implementation of the Silk Road project will confront the EAEU; it will consolidate the position of China in the CA Region and enable to take control of transport corridors of South-East Asia to Europe. Supporters of the second position positively evaluate China's initiative, believing that the projects are not competing, but complementary. The desire of Russia and China to mutually beneficial cooperation in the framework of "The Silk Road Economic Belt" project will enable both countries to further intensify economic cooperation, falling beyond the Far Eastern and Siberian regions, reaching the European part of Russia. Let us try to give an assessment of the situation.

By the means of "soft" mechanisms of China's "new regionalism", China is becoming an indispensable, often unalternative partner for a growing number of countries around the world. Certainly, Beijing has objective reasons to strengthen its influence in the CA Region; however, it should recognize the fact that Central Asia is just one of the many areas of its supranational regional policy. This fact is fully confirmed by the wide geography of the "The Silk Road Economic Belt," covering in addition to Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) four sub-regions being very important for the project: South Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India), West Asia (Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey), Eurasia (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova) and Russia, representative of an individual regional grouping. Thus, the formation of the regional cooperation within the framework of the New Silk Road, requires to maintain, sustain and strengthen the friendly partnership relations with all countries along the "The Silk Road Economic Belt." Only then, it will be possible to realize the main objective of this project - strengthening economic cooperation, deepening of integration cooperation, expansion of cooperation area.

Russia, promoting the EAEU, is also seeking to deepen the integration cooperation with the greatest possible number of the CIS countries, noting the openness to other potential participants. In terms of promoting the Eurasian integration, EAEU is a unique opportunity to all participating countries in terms of sustained economic development, guaranteed security and stability, the formation of a common economic and humanitarian regional space.

In such circumstances, the emergence of competition between China and Russia for the right to rule in the region is possible only at first glance. Despite the fact that China's economic influence in the region today is stronger than Russia has, Beijing is not interested in projects that may affect the interests of the Russian Federation and thereby jeopardize the highly valued relations of good-neighborliness, friendship and strategic partnership. Moreover, the partnership between Russia and China, based on the principles of co-development is an important factor in strengthening regional integration and the expansion of China in the Asia Pacific region.

As for the Russia, improvement of the effectiveness of its foreign policy in Central Asia requires a consideration of the specifics of the China's "new regionalism". Implementing such an ambitious project as the "The Silk Road Economic Belt" with an unprecedented amount of funding, China does not leave any other opportunity for other countries to refuse to participate in the integration initiative. For example, Russia is very much interested in the construction of a highway Moscow-Kazan, which, according to the project, will become a part of a new highway from Moscow to Beijing, via Kazakhstan. However, the implementation of this part of the plan would have a serious impact on the Trans-Siberian Railway, linking today the Asia-Pacific region and the Far East with Europe that plays a very important role in the economic structure of the Far Eastern part of Russia. On the other hand, Moscow cannot refuse to construction of a transport corridor through Kazakhstan, because otherwise participate in the China might choose an alternative route via Central Asia and the Middle East, leaving Russia aside. Therefore, Russia should become a member of the integration project of the Silk Road. Thus, it is necessary to maximize the associated opportunities and minimize possible negative effects.

Implementation of the China's "new regionalism" mechanisms in the Central Asia region does not threaten Russia's interests in the framework of EAEU; on the contrary, it opens up new opportunities for the integration in the Asia-Pacific region. However, the overall growing influence of China in the CAR and around the world identifies the need to acknowledge the Chinese factor by the Russian counterpart and take appropriate decisions to maintain and strengthen national competitiveness.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The study showed that the China's "new regionalism" is a scientific category, which enables for a more accurate understanding of the specifics of the modern Chinese state development. The essence of this regionalism is the "invisible extension" of the boundaries of the geopolitical and geo-economic space of China through participation in integration associations at various levels, both institutionalized and allocated on a geographical basis.

China's "new regionalism" is an open form of regionalism, which is confirmed by the steady increase in the number of countries involved in the sphere of influence of the expansively growing Chinese economy. At the same time the main specificity of the China's "new regionalism" is the exclusive use of "soft"

mechanisms, which are based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, attractive image of successfully developing economy, the desire for the development of international humanitarian cooperation, the ideological policy of building a harmonious international order. Today, via the principles of new regionalism, China increases its influence in many integration groupings and regional entities throughout the world, which implies the use of targeted mechanisms that take into account the key interests of each entity.

It is justified that the main factor determining the specifics of the China's "new regionalism" in the CAR is the intersection of interests of a number of actors, including Russia, in this territory. Promotion of two initiatives of Russia and China consimilar by goals and objectives - the EAEU and the "The Silk Road Economic Belt," does not give a reason to fear the competition between the two countries. In contrast, the combination of Russian and Chinese initiatives has great potential for further deepening of integration and the strengthening of economic cooperation, expansion of interaction space. Although, underestimation of the Chinese factor, and neglecting of the "soft" mechanisms imposed by China could lead to a reduction of the competitive potential of Russia in the international arena. In this regard, it is of particular importance for the Russian Federation to retain the diversification of foreign economic relations and expand its geography. Russia should shift the focus from the resource component of the foreign trade turnover towards the high-tech products, should comply with the priority of national interests in the process of international cooperation, and develop effective mechanisms to maintain economic and political stability within and along the national frontiers.

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