

Academician presents idea of Eurasian Land-Bridge in Russian industry journal

Issue #3 for 1997 of the Russian-language quarterly Metallurgy Yevrazii (Eurasian Metals), circulation 15,000, featured a six-page article by Academician Vladimir Myasnikov, deputy director of the Russian Academy of Sciences Far East Institute, titled "The Continental Bridge—Project of the 21st Century." Academician Myasnikov's argument that Russia's destiny "between East and West" should include beneficial participation in the Land-Bridge, is an important intervention into the public discussion in Russia of Eurasian development, since others have insisted that the central, "Silk Road" line of infrastructure building there will take business away from the Trans-Siberian railroad and otherwise damage Russian interests.

This article provides a Russian specialist's view of Chinese strategic thinking about the Land-Bridge, as well as other Land-Bridge elements, such as the spin-off effects of new transportation technologies. It also reflects the widespread attention, in Eurasian nations, to EIR's January 1997 Special Report, "The Eurasian Land-Bridge." Metallurgy Yevrazii is edited by specialists from the former Soviet steel and non-ferrous metals industries, now working in privatized companies, as well as research institutes. The translation excerpted here was done by EIR and is published by permission of the author.

In January of this year, Executive Intelligence Review (EIR) News Service in Washington published a Special Report: "The Eurasian Land-Bridge. The New Silk Road—Locomotive for World Economic Development." . . . The author of this article took part in the first international conference on problems of "The Transcontinental Economic Bridge," held in Shanghai, and became acquainted with the elaboration of this idea. . . . On the basis of the EIR report and related materials, we can give *Eurasian Metals* readers a picture of the steps that have already been taken, to implement this most grandiose Eurasian project for the 21st century, which directly concerns Russia and several other CIS countries.

The view from Russia: between East and West

There are attempts to develop the Eurasian or, more precisely, the neo-Eurasian idea in Russia and some other CIS countries, along three lines: ideological, political, and scientific. S. Shakhrai tried to use it as a party-state ideology, when he established the Party of Russian Unity and Accord (PRES).

N. Nazarbayev has decided to use it as a political banner, to smooth the way for integration processes in the post-Soviet area. Finally, several organizations have arisen in academia, which are developing the heritage of the Eurasians—a group of Russian emigré philosophers, who came up with an original theory on the special Eurasian path of Russia, during the period after the revolution.

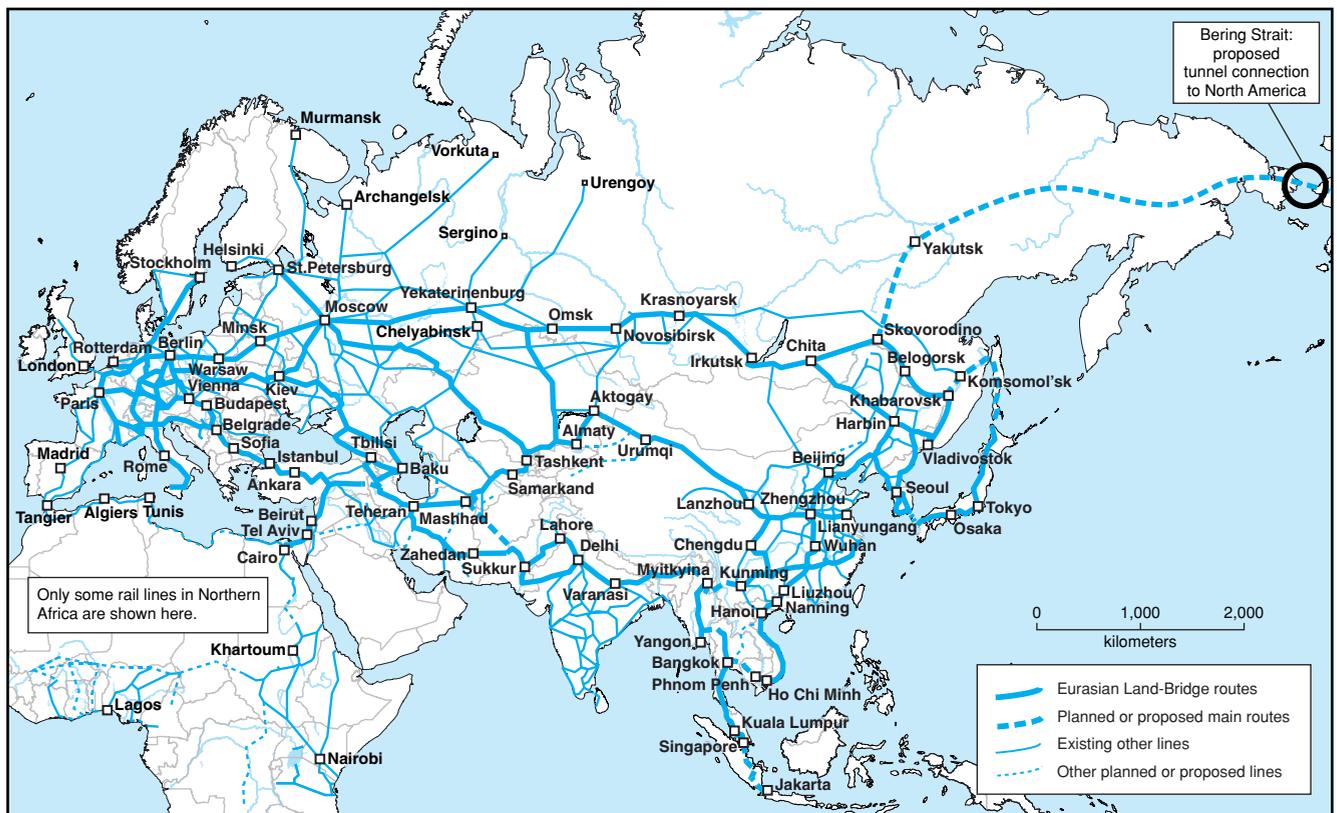
The problem of Eurasianism existed for Russia from the moment of its birth as a national state. It is closely connected with the consolidation of Rus and then Russia, first as a European (that is, recognized by Europe) state, and then as an Asian and a world power. Russia's Asia policy is a multifaceted theme, but one of its chief aspects, as in European affairs, is the competitiveness that follows from the uneven development of various states, existing at all stages of history. The 13th century was key for Russia in its relations with Asia; this was the period of the first large-scale collision with the power of the nomadic world of Asia. Highly developed, yet politically disunited, Rus fell. The further development of its indigenous Slavic culture was forcibly slowed and distorted, by the implantation of an Asian component. That was the beginning of our Eurasianism.

The peculiar path of historical development, which Russia took during the subsequent centuries, converted Russia into a sort of "intercivilizational civilization," with Great Russian culture as its basis, but assimilating the cultural achievements of many other peoples, above all the Turkic ones, and itself generously fertilizing the cultures of the peoples inhabiting the expansive territory from the Baltic to the Pacific Ocean, and from the tundra to the Pamirs. The exponents of the Eurasian school in Russian historiographical thought came to that conclusion, which is fully justified, in my view.

The policy of self-preservation and self-fortification, adopted by the ruling elite in the years of struggle against the [Tatar-Mongol] yoke, led to the consolidation of Rus and its entrance into the world arena, with the strategic goal of becoming an equal partner of the leading European and Asian states. Europe, though the most advanced, and experiencing the first jolts of the industrial revolution, was enmeshed in the wars over the Spanish succession. The Russian state, entering into diplomatic ties with the great states of Asia—Turkey, Iran, India, China—during the 17th century, fought for equality in these diplomatic contacts. The idea of such equality was based on the real correlation of forces, which still today

FIGURE 1

Eurasia: main routes and selected secondary routes of the Eurasian Land-Bridge



determines the total power of a state: economic development, scientific knowledge, unity of the nation, and skillful diplomacy.

Emboldened by the reforms of Peter the Great, Russia made a civilizational stride forward and, relying on European experience in technology and statecraft, overtakes its Asian partners. At the same time, Russia began to play an independent role in European politics. This is when the myth of a Russian “threat” first appeared in Europe.

The problem of uneven development continued to make its mark many times, with bitter military defeats—at the hands not only of European, but of some Asian countries. Only the gigantic exertion of the Russian and other peoples of the U.S.S.R. brought our country into the ranks of leading powers, by the middle of the 20th century.

The Cold War and the resultant dismemberment of the U.S.S.R. changed the geopolitical map of Eurasia. Neither Russia, nor the new Asian states of the CIS, could continue to exert that counterweight to the policy of third powers, which for two and a half centuries had limited the possible influence of the latter upon the situation in the interior regions of Eurasia. Moreover, the problem of uneven development again arose for Russia in its relations with Asia. Japan sur-

passed us in economic might, even while the U.S.S.R. still existed. China overtook Russian in GDP in 1993. Turkey and India, Iran, and Korea, striving for reunification, have taken on a different character than they had before. Russia has been confronted by new historical challenges in Asia.

If we look at politics as a totality of deliberate actions, we cannot fail to recall one of the basic laws of physics: An action is equal to its counteraction. Of course, we are not going to apply these physical laws to society directly, but, nonetheless, it is impossible not to acknowledge, that a balance of power in relations among states expresses the possibilities for action and counteraction by states that are equal in power. If the balance of power is upset, with the emergence of a so-called political influence vacuum, then the counteraction is lessened, and sometimes even reduced to nil, in which case room is opened up for outside forces. This observation is necessary, in order to understand the policy of Russia, Iran and Turkey, China and Japan, the U.S.A. and France, as well as other Asian and European powers, regarding the southern flank of the CIS, the region that, in combination with Russia, comprises the concept of Eurasia in the works of our scholars. Today there are ceaseless arguments about the destiny of this Eurasia.

The view from China: alliance for development

In China, the approach to the Eurasian idea has been rather more pragmatic. Sensing an abrupt weakening of political and economic power in the expanses of Eurasia, the P.R.C. leadership decided to put forward a plan for the economic transformation of a great part of the Eurasian space. The concept of "Eurasia" was taken in its broad interpretation: not in the ethnocultural sense, but the geopolitical, encompassing China, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.

In May of last year, the "International Symposium on the Economic Development of the Regions Along the 'Euro-Asian Continental Bridge'" took place in Beijing. The symposium was in preparation for two years, and 460 experts and diplomats from 36 countries took part. Strange as it might seem, this symposium passed almost without notice from the Western press, although it was part of a more than remarkable foreign policy initiative by the Chinese government, directed at uniting the peoples of Europe and Asia into a new type of alliance for development. The immediate goal of such an alliance is the joint creation of supermodern, integrated infrastructure for transportation, electric power, and communications, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. This provides the basis for the rapid economic development of the entire Eurasian continent during the 21st century.

The Chinese leadership links this grand design with an impressive conception of the future: The creation of this intra-continental infrastructure marks the beginning of a new era of civilization. After geopolitical manipulations, disunity and conflicts, having survived the "Great Game" of the colonial powers and the epoch of the Cold War, the peoples of the greatest continent, at last, have reached the point where they can overcome the chronic underdevelopment of the "interior" of Eurasia, using the most modern technologies. For the first time, Eurasia as a coherent whole will achieve a very precise economic reality, composed of sovereign nations, intensively collaborating with each other.

This design, obviously, is also interwoven with the plan to create "Greater China," i.e., the integration of the Chinese economic space, uniting the economies of mainland China, Taiwan, Hongkong, and Singapore, as well as the Chinese diaspora around the world, the *huachiao*. This is China's answer to the numerous prognoses of Western political scientists, about its inevitable disintegration in the "post-Deng" era.

The project for the Eurasian transcontinental bridge cannot be viewed separately from the Asia-Europe dialogue that has begun on the inter-governmental level. In March 1996, the first meeting of leaders from the two continents took place in Bangkok. In the spring of 1998, a second such forum is planned to take place in London. It is being prepared at the level of foreign ministers of the countries concerned. China is especially active.

"The new Eurasian continental bridge" literally means a railroad, which begins from the major containerized port and city of Lianyungang in Jiangsu Province on the coast of the

Yellow Sea, crosses China in a northwesterly direction, passes through Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, and proceeds across Russia to Europe, on the route Moscow-Minsk-Warsaw-Berlin, to the "Europort" of Rotterdam, where it ends.

The rail mainline, approximately 11,000 km long, was opened to traffic in 1992. Thus, a new transportation artery between Europe and East Asia came into use, one which is significantly shorter than the northern route along the Trans-Siberian mainline, and which connects Europe directly with the interior of China.

In China, there is no doubt that the "continental bridge" will soon become pivotal for world trade. In preparation for this, the Chinese authorities have double-tracked the 2,000 km Chinese section of the new "bridge," electrified significant parts of it, and built numerous parallel lines and branches. The ports of Lianyungang, Rizhao, and Qingdao are being expanded and modernized. Quite a number of industrial projects have been developed, for exploiting the rich mineral resources of the interior provinces, located along the "continental bridge." Russia and China, for example, have reached agreement on construction of a natural gas pipeline from Irkutsk Province, which will end at Rizhao.

The Silk Road and diplomatic ravines

Not only China is preparing for the new era of Eurasian joint development at this time. In the spring of 1996, there was a ceremonial opening of the second "Eurasian Continental Bridge": a new railroad, linking Mashhad in Iran and Tadjik in Turkmenistan, connected the rail networks of Central Asia and Iran. Thus a new "southern route" has been created between China and Europe. Beginning in China, it goes into Kazakhstan, then south across Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to Iran, and thence across Turkey and the Balkan countries to Europe. Simultaneously, the construction of a transcontinental network of fiber-optic cables is nearing completion—the longest in the world. Innumerable other impressively large-scale projects, connected with Eurasian infrastructure construction, are in the development and implementation stage. Among them are the construction of new pipelines, to exploit the huge oil and natural gas resources of Central Asia.

Iran, like China, wants to make use of its geographical position, to provide access to the sea for the republics of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, which (excepting Georgia) have no direct access to world trade routes.

What is important for the Russian side in these projects, is that they do not exclude, but, on the contrary, include the future joint development of the Great Siberian rail line, as well as the rail networks in Southeast Asia and northern India. These are corridors, where 60 of the world's largest cities are located, and over a billion people live. In order to lift these zones to the required level of development, a five-fold increase in power generation capacity is required.

Regarding post-Soviet Eurasia, it is, first of all, important for the integration processes among Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyr-

gyzstan, and Belarus to be formalized by treaty. Secondly, it should not be left out of account that the Kazakhstan and Russian “corridors” of the transcontinental bridge pass through regions, where there is prospecting and development of very rich natural resources: oil and gold, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, and much more. Thirdly, there are major extractive and refining industries located here, as well as world-famous steel plants and machine-building factories. While today’s economic crisis has led to the collapse and shutdown of these enterprises, this is only a temporary phenomenon; what’s important, is that the infrastructure already exists here, and only needs to be renovated on a new technological basis.

The authors of the project give a high assessment to the scientific and technological, as well as natural resource potential of Russia, noting its historical role in development of the first northern bridge across the Eurasian continent. Incidentally, in my view, the proposed conception of a continental bridge does not contradict the idea of modernization and utilization of the Northern Sea Route, currently proposed by a number of Russian scientists. These are complementary projects, whose viability will be determined by whether or not they are economically appropriate.

China is also carefully considering internal factors. Construction of the “Eurasian Transcontinental Bridge” and related infrastructure projects is seen by the Chinese leadership

as a unique means for settling a number of domestic problems. This applies, above all, to the growing differentiation in levels of development, between the coastal and the interior regions of the country. The Program for Development of the P.R.C. to 2010, adopted in March 1996 alongside the ninth five-year plan, is designed to liquidate these disproportions.

There was an interesting reaction to the Chinese project by the vice-president of the European Union, author of the book *Capitalism with a Human Face*, Sir Leon Brittan, who officially took part in the conference. In his speech before the opening session, as the EIR report notes, he “launch[ed] an insulting, diplomatically shocking attack on the economic policies of the Chinese government. The Chinese policy to develop the country by means of ‘dirigistic’ measures, is unacceptable, Brittan said. China must stop using large-scale state investments as the locomotive for infrastructure development of the country. Instead, the market must decide everything. Sir Leon voiced an unmistakable threat: Either China must submit itself to the rules of the game of ultraliberal free trade, or else there will be no credits and no investments for the new ‘continental bridge,’ nor would there be political stability.”

China, however, is planning its march into the 21st century, creating zones of economic development on its territory, which act as a sort of bearer of advanced infrastructure and technology; these are designated as corridors and rings. They

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include the corridor of the Yangtze River valley, with Shanghai as a key region; the south-west seacoast economic zone, chiefly in the Xi Jiang River delta and southeast Fujian Province; the coastal economic ring of the Bohai Gulf, basically comprised of the Liaodung Peninsula, the Shandong Peninsula, Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei Province, and the corridor that links the Eurasian bridge, Beijing-Hankou railroad and other main railroad lines.

‘Eurorepair’ for old lady Europe

The development of the transportation network in the expanses of Eurasia presumes the introduction of qualitatively new technologies. The railroad network will include high-speed lines, on which magnetic-levitation trains should be used, which can reach speeds of 800 km/hr. They will require the most modern road-building machinery and portal-cranes. For example, a modern portal-crane with 700 meter-long tracks, parallel to the train tracks, takes 70 minutes to unload an ordinary 600-meter-long container train, carrying 40 containers. The first new-generation automated, rapid-transfer system will be able to do this work in 15 minutes. The Krupp firm is already testing such systems.

As for maglev technologies, there is already a technological revolution in this area under way, during construction of the Berlin-Hamburg line, which is to begin operation in 2005. The “continental bridge” project anticipates the development of such lines, during the next 5-10 years, chiefly for passenger transport in the most developed parts of the Eurasian corridors. In parallel with this, existing railroad lines should be modernized in correspondence with European standards. With the growth of population and business activity in the Eurasian corridors, high-speed maglev lines will be expanded, while conventional rail lines assume the volume of freight shipments. This process will go from 2005 to 2015. In the concluding phase (2015-2030), the maglev system will encompass all corridors and their branches. It can take over part of the passenger and freight transfers, currently made by air.

Building the system of maglev lines (their total length in the development zones is between 60,000 and 100,000 km) will require capital investments on the order of \$1 trillion. At first glance, that is a horrifying figure, but, in reality, it means approximately \$220 per capita in Eurasia, during a period of 12-15 years, or, in other words, 1% per annum of the GDP of the Eurasian countries for 10 years. The technologies used in building the maglev lines can be used with success in other areas of industry. For example, the principle of magnetic levitation, as a controlled electromagnetic transmitter, will be used more and more in turbines and other rotary machines.

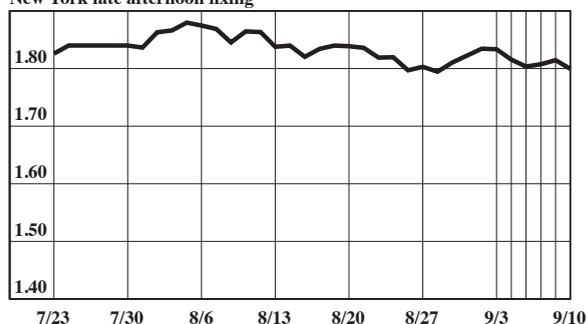
The water transport system in Eurasia should also change. High-speed hydrofoil ships, developed in Russia, Germany, and Japan, will replace the traditional river fleet.

The project anticipates intensive development of energy-conserving technologies, and the latest technologies for the production of cheap electric power, especially nuclear energy.

Currency Rates

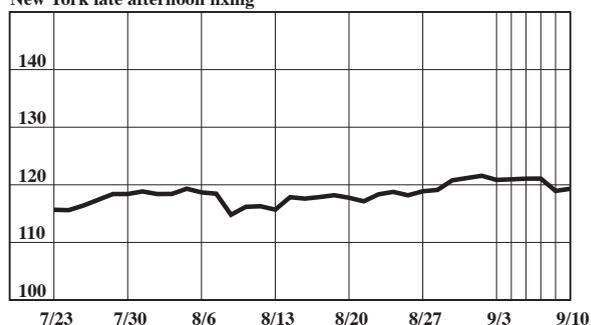
The dollar in deutschemarks

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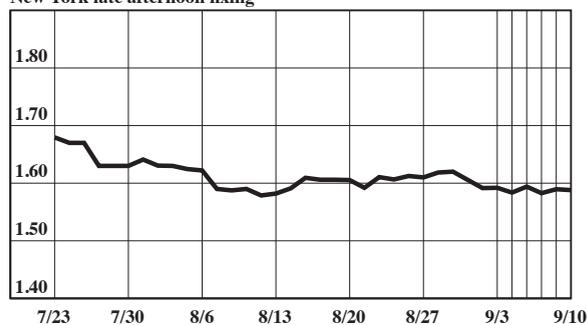
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



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New York late afternoon fixing



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