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Assessing the Opportunities for Expanding Trade and Economic Interactions among Countries of the Greater Eurasian Partnership

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Abstract. The Greater Eurasian Partnership initiative, announced by Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2015, aims to create a unified integration space in Eurasia. In this regard, assessing the opportunities and constraints for expanding trade and economic interactions within this space is highly relevant. The article presents a comprehensive analysis of trade and economic interactions among countries using cluster analysis tools. The study covers 18 partner countries over the period 2000–2024. A multilevel model was employed as a methodological toolkit, taking into account economic indicators and indices of the countries, as well as results from global rankings. The information base comprised open data from international organizations: UNCTAD, the World Bank, and others. The specificity of interactions among countries within the Greater Eurasian Partnership compared to other integration associations is identified. The scholarly novelty of the work lies in the development of a methodological approach to

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assessing integration potential based on cluster analysis, which made it possible to identify three country profiles – the core, the periphery, and external partners – and to conduct a quantitative assessment of foreign trade, investment-innovation, and institutional-technological activity of participating countries by calculating an index of foreign economic interaction. Based on the analysis conducted, differentiated strategies for enhancing interaction are proposed in accordance with the three identified country profiles, along with recommendations for increasing the level of interaction and engagement of a number of states using tools for standardizing and harmonizing their activities based on digitalization and the creation of unified platforms, joint investment and infrastructure projects, transport and logistics corridors, and others. The study confirms the need to overcome logistical and institutional constraints within the Greater Eurasian Partnership to realize its integration potential.

Key words: economic fragmentation, regionalization of the global economy, integration interaction, Greater Eurasian Partnership, EAEU, integration, foreign trade, investments, Global Innovation Index, balance of payments, technology readiness index.

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Introduction

The fragmentation of the global economy and the intensification of its regionalization have intensified the search for new integration models. According to the WTO, in 2022, more than 52% of world trade accounted for countries bound by regional trade agreements (RTAs), which indicates the importance of regionalization processes (Acharya, Parajuli, 2025). The number of operating RTAs in the world has increased by more than 8 times over the previous 20 years[1]. The Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership (CEP) has been consolidated in Asia, which entered into force on January 1, 2022, bringing together 15 countries[2] accounting for about 32.6% of global GDP (Yunshek, 2025). The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is being developed in Africa, which has been in effect since January 1, 2021. The agreement was signed by 54 African countries, but by 2025 it had been ratified by 47 States[3]. The full implementation of the AfCFTA is capable of increasing intra-continental trade by 52% by 2035[4].

Against the background of strengthening regionalization, Russia in 2015 proposed the concept of the Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP), which was named the flagship project in the "Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" (2023)[5]. Initially, the GEP was supposed to combine the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

[1] WTO. Regional Trade Agreements Information System (RTA-IS), 2025. Available at: https://rtais.wto.org/ui/PublicMaintainRTAHome.aspx (accessed: 06.08.2025).

[2] World Economics. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), 2025. Available at: https://www.worldeconomics.com/Regions/RCEP/ (accessed: 06.08.2025).

[3] Economic Development in Africa Report 2024. UNCTAD, 2024. Available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/aldcafrica2024-overview_en.pdf (accessed: 06.08.2025).

[4] Unlocking the Potential of AfCFTA for Africa's Young Population. UNICEF, 2025. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/11251/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-AfCFTA%20Main%20Report-Report-2025.pdf (accessed: 06.08.2025).

[5] The Concept of the Foreign policy of the Russian Federation: Approved by the President of the Russian Federation on 31.03.2023. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/ (accessed: 06.09.2025).

(SCO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) into a single integration space, but the level of actual connectivity remained low in 2025: institutional heterogeneity and sanctions barriers limit real unification.

At the same time, against the background of sanctions pressure, trade flows of the largest Eurasian countries are being reoriented: the mutual turnover of the Russian Federation and China reached 240 billion US dollars in 2023 and 245 billion US dollars in 2024[6]; and Russia's trade with India increased from 12 billion US dollars in 2021 to 49.3 billion US dollars in 2023[7]. The logistics map of Eurasia is being transformed: three key routes were actively developing in 2020–2025: in 2024, over 14 million tons of cargo passed through the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) (Iran – Russia – India); the capacity of the Trans–Caspian International Transport Route (the Middle Corridor through the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus) increased by 63% in 2020–2024; in 2023, the China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan railway corridor project was launched, which received 4.5 billion US dollars in financing. During 2024, the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) funded 0.5 billion US dollars in projects within the framework of the key infrastructure megaproject "Eurasian Transport Network", while as of July 2025, 325 projects worth more than 234 billion US dollars had been initiated in the Eurasian region, 60% of which are already being implemented. Eurasian transport corridors account for about 70% of the volume of transit traffic in the EAEU (Vinokurov et al., 2022; Petrushina et al., 2025; Vinokurov et al., 2025). These processes reflect the growing demand for new integration formats.

In this regard, it is particularly relevant to identify the specifics of the development of the Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP), aimed at creating a single integration space in Eurasia, expanding trade and economic cooperation between the participating countries and overcoming existing constraints. 18 countries of the GEP space were taken as the research object, including the EAEU member states (the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic), which have free trade agreements with the EAEU (Vietnam, the Republic of Serbia, Singapore, Iran), SCO members (China, India, the Republic of Uzbekistan, dialogue partner Türkiye), Eurasian BRICS members (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, with whom the EAEU signed an Economic Partnership Agreement on June 27, 2025[8]), countries whose membership, despite the difficult internal situation in them, This indicates their commitment to strategic cooperation (Israel, the Republic of Moldova, Qatar, which is interested in cooperation with Russia on the North–South international transport corridor[9]). Relations with these countries are reaching a new level. As part of the 12th meeting of the Intergovernmental Russian-Emirati Commission on Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation, the First Russian-Emirati Business Forum was held in Dubai on December 10, 2025, at which Anton Alikhanov, Head of the Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade, and Abdullah Bin Tuk Al-Marri, Minister of Economy and Tourism of the UAE, announced

[6] Tkachev I. (2025). What happened in trade between Russia and China in 2024. RBK. 23.01.2025. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/economics/23/01/2025/6790fa3e9a7947ca6e9d4c1c (accessed: 06.09.2025); Tan H. (2025). Even Russia has had enough of some Chinese products. Markets insider. Available at: https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-economy-china-trade-oil-exports-sanctions-cars-market-overcapacity-2025-8 (accessed: 06.09.2025).

[7] Smirnova D. (2023). Exports from Russia to India increased 4.7 times. Profil. 10.08.2023. Available at: https://profile.ru/news/economy/eksport-iz-rossii-v-indiju-uvelichilsya-v-4-7-raza-1373535/ (accessed: 06.09.2025).

[8] Available at: https://eec.eaeunion.org/comission/department/dotp/torgovye-soglasheniya/israel.php

[9] Available at: https://ria.ru/20240517/katar-1946655504.html

areas of cooperation in the coming years[10]. In 2026, it is planned to hold a forum of business circles of Russia and Qatar, which, according to the results of the 1st half of 2025, is among the top 5 foreign investors in Russia. In April 2025, a new agreement was signed on the creation of a 2 billion US dollars Russian-Qatari investment platform[11]. From February 11 to 13, 2026, the Days of Russian Culture in Qatar, the first major government project in the last 10 years[12], were held in Doha with the support of the Ministries of Culture of the Russian Federation and the State of Qatar. "Russian-Israeli relations are also, as noted by the Russian Ambassador to Israel, A. Viktorov, they have stood the test of time and retain the potential for further development, there are serious grounds for deepening mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields"[13]. These and other examples indicate the high need of the countries of the Eurasian space to expand their trade and economic cooperation.

The aim of the study is to develop methodological support for assessing the opportunities and limitations of expanding trade and economic cooperation between the countries of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, as well as recommendations for strengthening integration within the framework of the GEP. To achieve this aim, we set the following tasks: the development of a methodological approach that evaluates the level of integration potential of the GEP and identifies limitations for its development; carrying out a quantitative assessment of the foreign economic, investment, innovation, and institutional and technological activity of the GEP member countries by calculating the index of foreign economic cooperation (IFEC); developing differentiated strategies to strengthen the integration of the GEP and recommendations to increase the level of interaction and involvement of a number of countries in the partnership space.

Theoretical aspects of the research

An analysis of the surge in publications by domestic and foreign authors on economic fragmentation indicates the ambiguity of assessing its consequences for the global economy (Vishnevsky et al., 2025). Geo-economic fragmentation is understood as the division of the global economy into competing blocks (Bakhtizin, 2023; Blanga-Gubbay, Rubinova, 2024). A number of foreign researchers speak about an unambiguous change in the global supply chain (Maihold, 2022) and the emergence of new financial flows in this regard, replacing global ones (Nedumpara, 2024; Colombatto, Macey, 1996). At the same time, since the end of the previous century, it has been repeatedly emphasized that global players primarily pursue their own interests, rather than the goals of "universal welfare" (Colombatto, Macey, 1996; Dement'ev, 2018), only increasing the gap between the core and the periphery of the global economy. The unprecedented sanctions of the collective West against Russia have increased attention to the issues of the resilience of the Russian economy (Mal'tsev, Chichilimov, 2024) and the intensification of its interaction with friendly countries (Andreeva et al., 2025).

In these conditions, it is extremely important for researchers to address the problems of Eurasian integration. Leading Russian scientists note the strategic and geopolitical importance of the GEP integration initiative. As K.V. Babaev notes, "within the framework of the megatrend of Russian politics, the turn to the East, the idea of a Large Eurasian Partnership occupies a special place"

[10] The authorities of Russia and the UAE named eight directions. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/politics/10/12/2025/693968429a79470a4ed4e19f (accessed: 17.02.2026).

[11] In 2026, Russia and Qatar will host a business forum. Available at: https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/news/v_2026_godu_rossiya_i_katar_provedut_forum_delovyh_krugov_.html (accessed: 17.02.2026).

[12] Days of Russian Culture open in Qatar. Available at: https://culture.gov.ru/press/news/dni_kultury_rossii_otkryvayutsya_v_katare/ (accessed: 17.02.2026).

[13] Ambassador Viktorov: Relations between Russia and Israel have stood the test of time. Available at: https://ria.ru/20260213/izrail-2074112269.html (accessed: 17.02.2026).

(Babaev, 2024). S.A. Karaganov calls "the general movement from the West to the East of the center of the world economy" among the driving goals of the development of the concept of a Large Eurasian Partnership (Karaganov, 2019). S.Yu. Glazyev and G.I. Osadchaya also highlights the strategic aspects of GEP formation, emphasizing the need for institutional and economic coordination to create an integration space (Glazyev, 2021; Osadchaya et al., 2025). I.F. Kefeli emphasizes the geopolitical aspects of GEP formation, but notes insufficient attention to logistics and technology (Kefeli, 2019). U.A. Abbasov notes: "Despite the lack of a clearly defined structure and specific mechanisms, the BEP project represents a promising model of regional integration that can make a significant contribution to the development of the Eurasian space" (Abbasov, 2024).

The transport and logistics component and infrastructure projects play an important role in the Eurasian integration. E. Vinokurov emphasizes the role of the EAEU transport corridors in integration with the Belt and Road initiative, noting the growth of container traffic, but points to dependence on Chinese subsidies[14]. V.E. Seliverstov notes the special role of the "digital connectivity of the Eurasian space" in cross-border interaction (Seliverstov, 2025). Studies by other authors, for example, A.S. Korolev, identify the limitations of the EAEU's foreign economic policy, including non-tariff barriers (Korolev, 2023).

Thus, the scientific literature substantiates the importance of the integration initiative of the Greater Eurasian Partnership as a promising model of regional integration, outlines possible tools and mechanisms for its development, but the lack of its institutional design at the moment makes it even more important to understand the essence and specifics of Eurasian integration in the context of fragmentation and regionalization of the global system, which involves assessing the integration potential in within the framework of the GEP and the development of directions for its further development.

Methodological aspects of the research

The study is based on an analysis of foreign economic indicators and ratings for 18 countries of the GEP area for 2000–2024, presented in the databases of international organizations: the World Bank (including the World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS); The annual collection of international statistics on global development by the World Development Indicators (WDI), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the official international trade statistics database, created by the United Nations Statistics Division (UN Comtrade), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the EU Statistical service Eurostat (Eurostat), namely:

– IMF World Economic Outlook (WEO): GDP, GDP per capita, GDP by PPP, inflation, balance of payments[15];

– UN Comtrade: bilateral trade flows (exports, imports of goods)[16];

– UNCTAD: trade flows, foreign direct investment (FDI) trade flows, foreign direct investment (FDI)[17], Frontier Technology Readiness Index (FTRI)[18];

[14] Vinokurov E., Adakhaev A., Akhunbaev A. et al. (2024). Economic cooperation in Eurasia: practical solutions: Reports and working papers 24/2. Almaty: Evraziiskii bank razvitiya.

[15] IMF World Economic Outlook Database. Available at: imf.org (accessed: 01.05.2025).

[16] UN Comtrade Database. Available at: https://comtrade.un.org (accessed: 01.05.2025).

[17] UNCTAD's Frontier Technologies Readiness Index 2024. Available at: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre (accessed: 01.05.2025).

[18] UNCTAD World Investment Report 2024. Available at: https://unctad.org/topic/investment/world-investment-report (accessed: 01.05.2025).

– the World Bank (WDI, WITS): the share of foreign trade turnover in GDP, the Logistics Performance Index (LPI)[19], based on the perception of international logistics professionals of their partner countries and measuring the speed of global trade using information on supply chain tracking in 139 countries;

– WIPO: Global Innovation Index (GII)[20];

– WTO: number of regional trade agreements (RTA)[21];

– ESCAP, Eurostat: data on intra-group trade between ASEAN and the EU[22];

– EDB: FDI and trade in the EAEU[23].

The forecasts of the IMF and the EDB were used for 2024 due to the lack of final data. The data is standardized for comparability.

According to the data of 2024, cluster analysis (k-means method) based on four standardized indicators was applied to cluster the GEP countries: GDP, volume of foreign trade, FDI, GII. A quantitative assessment of the validity of the selected number of clusters and their structure is provided by the silhouette criterion, a clustering quality metric that shows how similar objects within a cluster are to each other and how different they are from objects in other clusters. A value close to 1 indicates a clear and stable division of objects into clusters. The obtained silhouette criterion (0.78) confirmed a clear division into three clusters: core, environment, and external partners. The correlation of integration coefficients (core: $\rho = 0.85$, environment: $\rho = 0.65$, external partners: $\rho = 0.45$) further confirmed the results.

A comparative analysis was also used to extrapolate the share of potential intra-group trade in GEP based on the shares of the EAEU and ASEAN in comparison with the EU and MERCOSUR based on data from the World Bank, UN Comtrade, Eurostat and ESCAP for 2000–2023.

This methodological approach makes it possible to provide comprehensive coverage of current GEP integration processes, identify groups of countries according to the degree of their participation in the GEP, and assess the impact of economic and institutional factors in the development of GEP integration. The analysis is complemented by institutional characteristics (the number of RTA), innovation indices, technological and logistical connectivity (GII, LPI). The developed methodological approach made it possible to collect and analyze an extensive array of data published by the world's leading research centers and development institutes, and to quantify the integration interaction within the emerging BEP. The next section presents the results, including the macroeconomic indicators of the analyzed countries of the FEP area, the calculation of the index of foreign economic cooperation (IFEA), the identification of profiles of GEP countries and comparison with indicators of other integration blocks.

The main results of the research

Analysis of macro-economic indicators of countries

Table 1 presents macro-economic indicators, indices and ratings of 18 GEP countries for 2023. China leads by a wide margin in terms of GDP by PPP (34,660 billion US dollars) and GDP (17,794 billion US dollars). India's lag behind China in terms of GDP by PPP is significantly less than in terms of GDP (14,619 billion US dollars and 3,567 billion US dollars), which once again proves the importance of which indicator we compare.

[19] World Bank World Development Indicators. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org (accessed: 01.05.2025).

[20] Global Innovation Index 2024. Available at: https://www.wipo.int/web-publications/global-innovation-index-2024/en (accessed: 01.05.2025).

[21] WTO Regional trade agreements. Available at: https://rtais.wto.org/UI/PublicMaintainRTAHome.aspx (accessed: 01.05.2025).

[22] ESCAP. Available at: https://www.unescap.org (accessed: 01.05.2025); Eurostat. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat (accessed: 01.05.2025).

[23] Monitoring of mutual investments of the EDB – 2024. The Eurasian region. Available at: https://eabr.org/analytics/special-reports/monitoring-vzaimnykh-investitsiy-eabr-2024-evraziyskiy-region (accessed: 01.05.2025).

Table 1. Macro-economic indicators, indices and ratings of 18 countries of the GEP area, 2023

Country	GDP by PPP (million USD)	GDP (million USD)	Export of goods (million USD)	Import of goods (million USD)	Share of foreign trade turnover (% of GDP)	Net inflow of FDI (% of GDP)	Annual inflation (%)	GII (points)	LPI (points)	RTA (number, 2025)	HHI (export)
China	34 660 138.18	17 794 783.04	3 379 748	2 556 763	37.32	0.09	0.23	55.3	3.7	20	889.46
India	14 619 765.55	3 567 551.67	431 412	672 140	45.92	0.42	5.65	38.1	3.4	19	742.12
Russian Federation	6 454 737.77	2 021 421.48	424 749	303 086	41.83	-1.03	5.85	33.3	2.6	10	1344.95
Türkiye	3 611 520.83	1 118 252.96	255 627	361 967	66.28	0.42	53.86	38.6	3.4	27	659.67
Saudi Arabia	2 032 545.22	1 067 582.93	320 018	206 940	62.13	-0.35	2.33	34.5	3.4	4	629.28
Iran	1 600 138.34	404 625.66	97 357	65 826	52.18	0.33	44.58	30.1	2.3	3	1192.55
Vietnam	1 502 662.08	429 716.97	353 078	325 444	166.32	4.53	3.25	36.0	3.3	16	807.10
Singapore	837 663.63	501 427.50	475 349	422 420	311.24	19.28	4.82	61.5	4.3	28	708.98
UAE	797 922.32	514 130.43	570 245	470 536	202.33	1.63	1.6	43.2	4.0	7	627.79
Republic of Kazakhstan	783 017.69	262 641.89	78 736	61 161	61.77	0.88	14.72	26.7	2.7	12	797.37
Israel	527 413.00	513 611.10	58 905	91 877	57.53	1.26	4.23	54.3	3.6	12	619.39
Republic of Uzbekistan	395 989.16	101 591.77	21 017	36 660	64.38	2.14	9.96	26.2	2.6	5	663.35
Qatar	342 411.79	213 002.81	97 751	31 431	100.21	-0.13	3.03	33.4	3.5	4	677.75
Republic of Belarus	282 352.16	71 857.38	39 840	43 091	133.00	2.83	5.00	26.8	2.7	6	2881.99
Serbia	190 406.42	81 342.66	30 935	39 838	114.49	5.61	12.37	33.1	2.8	10	703.26
Republic of Armenia	63 833.33	24 085.75	8508	12 474	119.71	1.62	1.98	28.0	2.5	12	1064.53
Kyrgyz Republic	50 454.31	13 987.63	3385	12 516	140.16	3.50	10.75	20.2	2.3	11	827.33
Republic of Moldova	43 249.32	16 539.44	4049	8674	95.13	2.52	13.42	30.3	2.5	10	999.47

* HHI (Herfindahl – Hirschman Index) is calculated as the sum of the squares of the export shares of each partner country in the total exports of the reporting country for 2023. HHI < 1,500: low concentration (diversified exports); 1,500 ≤ HHI < 2,500: moderate concentration; HHI ≥ 2,500: high concentration (dependence on few partners).
Sources: World bank, WTO, Unctad, WIPO, UNDP data.

Table 2. Index of foreign economic cooperation for the countries of the GEP area, 2023

Country	Z_{Trade}	Z_{FDI}	Z_{GII}	Z_{LPI}	Z_{RTA}	IFEC	IFEC (normalized)
Russian Federation	-0.89	-0.78	-0.25	-0.81	-0.27	-0.60	0.07
Republic of Kazakhstan	-0.61	-0.36	-0.85	-0.64	0.01	-0.50	0.10
Republic of Belarus	0.42	0.07	-0.84	-0.64	-0.81	-0.37	0.14
Republic of Armenia	0.23	-0.20	-0.73	-0.97	-0.00	-0.36	0.14
Kyrgyz Republic	0.52	0.21	-1.43	-1.30	-0.14	-0.46	0.11
China	-0.96	-0.54	1.73	1.01	1.07	0.48	0.38
India	-0.84	-0.47	0.18	0.51	0.94	0.07	0.27
Iran	-0.75	-0.49	-0.54	-1.30	-1.21	-0.85	0.00
Türkiye	-0.54	-0.47	0.23	0.51	2.01	0.33	0.34
UAE	1.41	-0.20	0.64	1.50	-0.67	0.55	0.40
Saudi Arabia	-0.60	-0.64	-0.14	0.51	-1.08	-0.37	0.14
Qatar	-0.05	-0.59	-0.24	0.68	-1.08	-0.24	0.18
Israel	-0.67	-0.28	1.64	0.84	0.01	0.34	0.34
Vietnam	0.90	0.44	-0.01	0.35	0.54	0.43	0.37
Singapore	2.98	3.70	2.29	2.00	2.15	2.62	1.00
Republic of Uzbekistan	-0.57	-0.09	-0.89	-0.81	-0.94	-0.66	0.06
Serbia	0.15	0.68	-0.27	-0.48	-0.27	-0.04	0.23
Republic of Moldova	-0.13	-0.00	-0.52	-0.97	-0.27	-0.39	0.13

According to: World bank, WTO, Unctad, WIPO data.

Singapore (311% of GDP) and the UAE (202% of GDP) are the leaders in terms of trade openness and Vietnam (166% of GDP), which confirms their high degree of involvement in foreign trade relations. Attracted FDI as a percentage of GDP is high in Singapore (19.28%), Serbia (5.61%), Vietnam (4.63%), while the Russian figure (-1.03%) was affected by sanctions. Singapore (61.5), China (55.3), Israel (54.3) have a high innovation index (GII), and they also have a high logistics performance index (LPI): 4.3 for Singapore, 3.7 for China, 3.6 for Israel, while the EAEU countries, Serbia, the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Republic of Moldova They are almost twice as far behind the leaders. Singapore (with 28 RTA) and Türkiye (27 RTA) can be considered the most institutionally integrated.

Table 2 presents the calculation of the authors' index of foreign economic cooperation (IFEA) for the countries of the GEP area for 2023, including accounting for foreign trade, FDI, innovation (Global Innovation Index, GII), Logistics Performance Index (LPI) and regional trade agreements (RTA).

For each indicator of the z estimates, the mean (μ) and standard deviation (σ) are calculated, on the basis of which their normalization is performed:

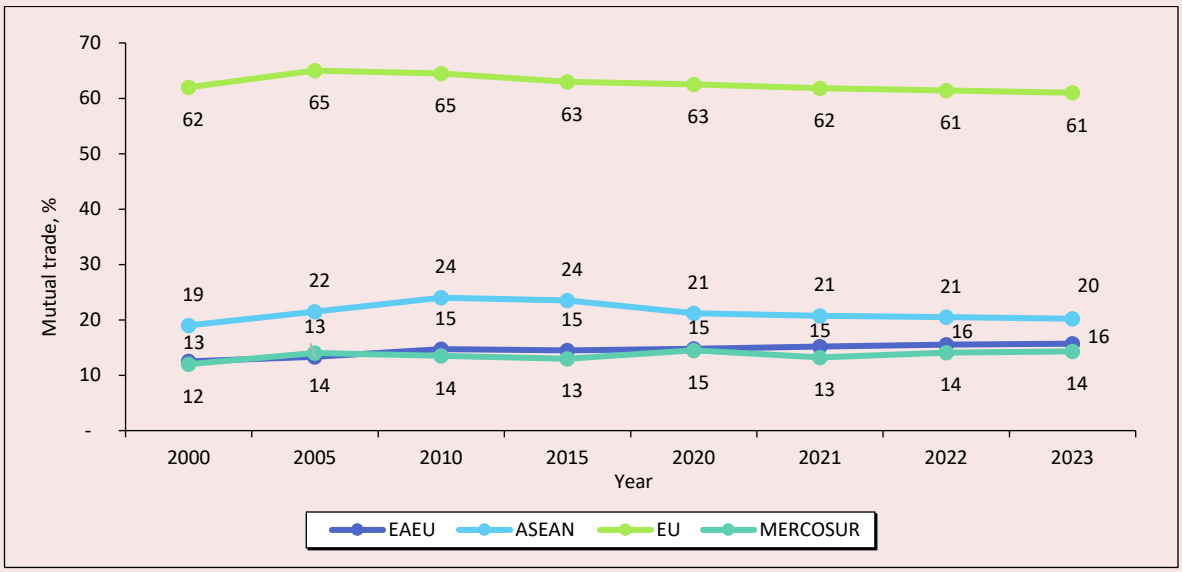
- trade share: $\mu = 104{,}00$, $\sigma = 69{,}52$;
- FDI: $\mu = 0{,}03$, $\sigma = 0{,}05$;
- GII: $\mu = 36{,}09$, $\sigma = 11{,}10$;
- LPI: $\mu = 3{,}09$, $\sigma = 0{,}61$;
- RTA: $\mu = 12{,}01$, $\sigma = 7{,}44$.

Using the PCA method, the weights of the main factors in the composition of the IFEC were obtained, explaining the variation of the indicators: Z_{Trade} – 18.76%; Z_{FDI} – 20.64%; Z_{GII} – 20.83%; Z_{GII} – 21.01%; Z_{RTA} – 18.76%.

Normalization of the IFEC in the range [0; 1] ensures comparability of countries with different scales of economies, allows aggregating indicators of different dimensions, simplifies the interpretation of the level of integration involvement and ensures the correctness of subsequent clustering.

As we can see from Table 2, Singapore occupies a leading position due to its high trade openness (311% of GDP), the share of FDI in GDP – 19.28%, high innovation (GII = 61.5) and logistics

Share of mutual trade in the total volume of foreign trade of the EAEU, ASEAN, EU, Mercosur, 2000–2023, %



Source: UN Comtrade, Eurostat, ESCAP, EEC data.

Table 3. Differentiated strategies for expanding cooperation within the GEP

Group of countries	Profile (key parameters)	Main limitations	Strategic directions for expanding cooperation in GEP
1. The Core *(Republic of Armenia, Republic of Belarus, Republic of Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Russian Federation)*	High institutional connectivity (EAEU/SCO); heterogeneous IFEC: high in China, low in most EAEU countries; China has high GII/LPI values and technological positions; significant trade and transit volumes	Sanctions; insufficient logistics (LPI in some countries <2.7); low innovation in some countries; sanctions, narrow export niches	1) Modernization of logistics ("North–South", "West – East"); 2) joint technology parks (AI, 5G); 3) diversification of export flows and reduction of dependence on major partners; 4) cooperative infrastructure funds (Russian Federation – China – UAE)
2. Environment *(Israel, India, Iran, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye)*	Average IFEC level; high economic potential; high GII/LPI in Israel and the UAE; the significant role of raw materials and technological suppliers	Inflation and sanctions risks; weak institutional compatibility; lack of FTAs with the EAEU and inflationary risks; sanctions restrictions	1) Harmonization of standards and conclusion of FTAs with the EAEU; 2) expanding commodity and energy alliances; 3) joint R&D and digital hubs (Israel, UAE); 4) investment funds and settlements in national currencies
3. External partners *(Vietnam, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Singapore, Republic of Uzbekistan)*	Medium or low IFEC; Singapore's high logistics and innovation; moderate economic weight; integration through FTA or observer status	Low GII/LPI in a number of countries; narrow export specialization; limited infrastructure	1) Inclusion in the East–West and North–South corridors; 2) digital integration (customs, e-commerce); 3) support of export niches (agro, industrial cooperation); 4) institutional convergence with the EAEU
Source: own compilation.			

level (LPI = 4.3), as well as the largest number of trade agreements (RTA = 28). China ranks second with an IFEC of 0.38 due to innovation (GII = 55.3), trade openness (37.32% of GDP) and logistics (LPI = 3.7), as well as a large number of RTA. The Russian Federation (IFEC = 0.07), the Republic of Uzbekistan (0.06) and Iran (0.00) have a relatively low index due to sanctions, underdeveloped innovation and logistics.

If we compare the share of intra-group trade in 2000–2023 in existing integration associations, among which, although with a downward trend, the EU (~60%), ASEAN (~21.1%), the EAEU (~14.4%) and MERCOSUR (~13.5%; *Figure*) are leading, then we can assume that the association the existing potential of the EAEU, which has a moderate level with a steady growing trend, and ASEAN, which has demonstrated 20–24% since the 2000s. against the background of a decrease in the EU's share from 65% in 2010 to 61% in 2023, it allows forming an approximate estimate of the potential upper limit of intra-group trade of the GEP countries of about 40%, possible under the condition of institutional convergence and reduction of logistical barriers.

The k-means cluster analysis allowed identifying three groups from the analyzed countries: core, environment, and external partners. The silhouette criterion (0.78) and correlations of indicators between countries within the group (core $\rho = 0.85$, environment $\rho = 0.65$, external $\rho = 0.45$) confirm a clear division into three groups and suggest the development of differentiated strategies to expand cooperation in the GEP (*Tab. 3*). The core countries include Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan, which is reflected in the existing integration of these countries into the EAEU and SCO and the strengthening of their economic and technological capabilities within the framework of the GEP. The role of the Russian Federation and China with exports of 476 billion US dollars and 3.54 trillion US dollars. Accordingly, in 2024, it was to form the basis of the GEP, ensuring the development of trade (98.3 billion US dollars within the EAEU in 2024 and about 230.7 billion US dollars). mutual trade of the EAEU with China), investments and technological cooperation, including projects of Russia and China in the field of 5G, the "green" and digital economy, etc. within the framework of the GEP.

Based on the clusterization of the GEP countries, we can conclude that the GEP space is a multi-level structure with high internal differentiation in terms of integration. The core countries are characterized by higher institutional connectivity between the EAEU and the SCO, however, the actual intensity of foreign economic interaction, reflected in the values of the IFEC, remains heterogeneous, and in a number of core countries – low. The core countries are also limited by sanctions and logistical barriers, which requires priority infrastructure modernization and diversification of foreign trade and investment flows. The environment is characterized by high internal heterogeneity: from technologically advanced and institutionally open economies (Israel, the UAE) to countries with low IFEC, limited by sanctions, inflation and logistical barriers (Iran), which requires institutional harmonization and elimination of inflationary and political-economic risks. External partners perform various functions in the GEP space, from global logistics and institutional hubs (Singapore) to peripheral participants with limited infrastructure and technological base (Republic of Moldova, Republic of Uzbekistan). Nevertheless, external partners play the role of points of expansion of coverage and distribution channels, while their participation in the GEP needs the support of export specialization, the development of infrastructure nodes and inclusion in the digital interaction system. A differentiated approach to the development of each of the three groups of countries makes it possible to increase the sustainability and synergetic effect in the formation of GEP.

Discussion and recommendations

The obtained results reveal the specifics of the foreign economic interactions of the GEP countries, offering interpretations that contribute to the understanding of integration processes. The importance of economic growth through GDP and GDP per capita highlights the important role of this indicator in integration processes, but it is necessary to take into account the structural features of the economies of the GEP countries. Countries with high GDP, such as China, India, and the Russian Federation, have the opportunity to strengthen their trade positions, while countries with low GDP, such as the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Armenia, and the Republic of Moldova, face a lack of integration cooperation. GEP integration requires differentiated expansion strategies. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the development of areas of cooperation between the GEP countries in terms of their main competitive advantages. The role of innovation as the most important driver of integration, which requires bridging the technological gap between countries, is emphasized. Technological readiness is the link between short-term costs and long-term benefits, which offers a new approach to assessing innovation and technology policy within the framework of the GEP.

The calculations confirmed that logistical difficulties, measured by the LPI indicator, and limited trade agreements, taken into account through the RTA indicator, cause a slowdown in integration into the GEP. The GEP development will be facilitated by the strengthening of logistics and RTA while reducing institutional barriers, and the harmonization of standards and requirements.

The IFEC calculation quantified the leadership of Singapore (1.00), the United Arab Emirates (0.40) and China (0.38), while the foreign economic cooperation of the Kyrgyz Republic (0.11), the Republic of Kazakhstan (0.10), Iran (0.09), the Russian Federation (0.07) and the Republic of Uzbekistan (0.06), in addition to sanctions restrictions, is characterized by a low level of transport and logistical efficiency and innovation, which can be overcome by the development of the GEP space.

Cluster analysis revealed the presence of three groups of countries: the core, the environment and external partners, which requires differentiated strategies for their interaction within the framework of the GEP. To develop the integration of the GEP countries, the core needs a phased expansion of digital infrastructure, starting with the unification of customs procedures, digital document management and basic logistics digitalization, followed by a transition to more complex technological solutions to simplify trade and diversify exports, which will reduce dependence on key partners. China, as a technology leader (GII = 55.3), can support technological exchange in the EAEU by harmonizing standards for 5G and artificial intelligence (AI), while the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in green energy and IT through the EAEU–China interaction. The countries of the Environment cluster are recommended to reduce non-tariff barriers and expand trade agreements with the EAEU, strengthen the North-South corridor, create technology parks for AI and cybersecurity, and develop settlements in national currencies. External partners can diversify commodity flows, integrate into the East–West and North–South transport and logistics corridors, and implement digital customs solutions.

Conclusion

The study confirmed that the GEP space has the potential for integration expansion, but also has a number of limitations that hinder development, which requires a multi-level approach to GEP expansion. Core countries should pay special attention to logistics modernization, technology transfer, and institutional integration. The surrounding countries should diversify trade, upgrade technology, and integrate into transport and logistics

corridors. External partners can enhance integration into GEP through technology transfer and capital raising, facilitating digitalization and modernization processes.

The developed GEP space expansion model develops an approach to assessing integration processes in conditions of geo-economic instability. The use of the clustering method provided comprehensive coverage of the current processes of GEP integration, identification of a group of countries according to the degree of their participation in the GEP, assessment of the influence of various factors in the development of integration within the partnership. The results obtained are of theoretical interest for further study of the specifics and prospects of the development of integration processes in the context of economic fragmentation and regionalization of the world economy, as well as practical significance in the development of strategies and models for the development of cooperation between countries within the framework of the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

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