

The Transportation Cooperation Between Northeast China and the Russian Far East Under the Russia-Ukraine War

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doi:10.56397/JWE.2024.06.07

Abstract

The logistics and transportation system of Russia and the world was greatly affected by the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war and the sanctions under the war. Under such circumstances, Sino-Russian cooperation in cross-border transportation is of great significance for the operation of international logistics system and the high-quality cooperation between China and Russia. The aim of this research is to find feasible paths for the transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East by analyzing the current situation and existing problems in international transportation cooperation between the two regions. It was found that the current feasible paths of transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East include: (1) carrying out transportation cooperation through “pivot cities”; (2) strengthening transportation cooperation by Russian Far East’s Territories of Advanced Development; (3) seizing the new opportunities of Harbin’s opening up to the north to promote international transportation cooperation with Russia; (4) developing transportation cooperation through the linking cooperation between the “Belt and Road” and the “Eurasian Economic Union”.

Keywords: Northeast China, Russian Far East, transportation cooperation, Russia-Ukraine War

1. The Background of Transportation Cooperation Between Northeast China and Russian Far East

1.1 *The Impacts of Russia-Ukraine War on China’s and Russia’s Transportation System*

1.1.1 China’s and Russia’s Transportation Routes Towards Europe Were Disrupted

Russia and Ukraine are important hubs connecting Asia and Europe, and have significant strategic importance for the transportation of

Eurasian continent. The Russia-Ukraine war in early 2022 has caused a destructive effect on China’s and Russia’s international transportation system to Europe. For Russia, the outbreak of war has interrupted the operation of Black Sea shipping routes, which resulted in the obstruction of logistic system between Russia and Europe as well as the increase of

transportation cost¹. In addition, the sanctions implemented by Western countries against Russia (for instance, some European countries have prohibited Russian aircrafts from flying into their territorial air space); and Russia has accordingly adopted anti-sanction measures. Both Western countries' sanctions and Russia's anti-sanctions measures have reduced the efficiency of international transportation. And for China, some routes of CHINA RAILWAY Express (CR Express) passing through Ukraine have been cut due to the negative impacts of Russia-Ukraine war, which has brought about the stagnation of land transport on the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and has caused a negative effect on the route section to Europe and the connectivity of the Belt and Road.

1.1.2 Russia Has Adopted the Strategy "Pivot to East" Due to the Increasing Risk of Industry Chain

Russia-Ukraine war has posted significant threat to the safety of global industry chain and supply chain, and has increased the uncertainty of world's economic situation. For Russia, the war and the sanctions have caused not only a decline of domestic economic growth and a greater inflation, but also a serious restriction of import and export trade between Russia and Western countries, as well as a greater impact on Russia's innovation chain and industry chain (especially energy industry). For China, though China has declared a neutral status in Russia-Ukraine war, the safety of China's international industry chain is still under the threat of the war because of the deep globalization of Chinese economy as well as the impact of secondary sanctions implemented by the US.

In order to guarantee the stability of industry chain and supply chain, Russian government has actively promoted a "Pivot to East" strategy since the outbreak of Russia-Ukraine war. Strategy "Pivot to East" provides new opportunities for the economic development of Russian Far East. Vladivostok, thanks to its important geographic location and solid industry foundation, has become the center of economic development in Russian Far East. The eastward shift of Russia's logistic system also makes Vladivostok a logistic hub and a "pivot city" enhancing the development of Sino-Russian cross-border trade,

which provides new development impetus for the city as an international logistic center. Meanwhile in China, the border economic belt in Northeast China has long been an important window for Sino-Russian cross-border economic cooperation. Northeast China's international openness can be promoted on the basis of its important role in Sino-Russian cross-border trade, and therefore accelerate the transformation and upgradation of the old industrial base of Northeast China, as well as the all-round revitalization of Northeast China. The prospect of Sino-Russian economic cooperation is relatively optimistic with the promotion of Russia's "Pivot to East" strategy. It is clear that the transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East plays an important role in the two countries' regional economic and trade cooperation, because high-quality cooperation in transportation field can effectively improve logistic efficiency in goods trade.

1.2 The Basis of Transportation Cooperation Between Northeast China and Russian Far East

1.2.1 Political Basis

During President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia in June 2019, the heads of China and Russia co-signed "Joint Declaration of China and the Russian Federation on Comprehensive Strategic Collaborative Partnership in the New Era" and "Joint Declaration of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Strengthening Contemporary Global Strategic Stability", announcing that Sino-Russian relations had entered "China-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Collaborative Partnership in the New Era", which formed a solid political basis between China and Russia, and demonstrated the endogenous dynamics of Sino-Russian relations.

In September 2023, the elections for chief executives are held in 21 federal subjects of Russia. In the elections, the chief executives of Amur Region, Primorsky Krai, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Magadan Region, and Chukotka Autonomous Region in Russian Far East were re-elected as the next chief executives with a high number of votes. And all five of these chief executives are the member of the United Russia Party, Russia's ruling party². The result of the

¹ XU Shuyue, HE Min. (2023). The Influence of Russia-Ukraine Conflict in the Belt and Road Economic and Trade Cooperation and Countermeasures. *Price Monthly*, (07), 29-36.

² LU Nanquan, YU Xiaoqin, PENG Chuanyong, etc. (2023). Comprehensive Revitalization of Northeast China and Development of Russian Far East: Perspectives on Sino-Russian Regional Cooperation. *Urban Insight*, (06), 29-57.

elections guarantees the political stability in Russian Far East, and then ensure the effective implementation of Russian government's Far East Development policies. More importantly, among the above five federal subjects, the Amur Region, Primorsky Krai, and Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) remain a close cooperation with China.

Under the "Pivot to East" strategy, Russia has stepped up its development of Far East by the establishment of Far East Territories of Advanced Development and Vladivostok Free Port with the purpose of attracting domestic and foreign investment, and therefore promoting the economic development of Far East. In May 2023, China's General Administration of Customs added Vladivostok port as a transit port for cross-border transportation of China's domestic trade goods, which remains a positive significance for the shipping industry of Northeast China. Supported by this policy, the transportation costs of maritime transport in Northeast China can be significantly reduced, which increases the efficiency of commodity transportation.

1.2.2 Economic and Trade Basis

In recent years, with the growth of Sino-Russian trade scale, the trade volume between China and Russia continues to grow. In 2018, Sino-Russian import and export trade volume exceeded 100 billion U.S. dollars for the first time (about 107.11 billion U.S. dollars). In 2020, this figure still remained above 100 billion U.S. dollars (about 108.19 billion U.S. dollars) even under the serious influence of COVID-19 epidemic. In 2023, this figure exceeded 200 billion U.S. dollars (about 240.11 billion U.S. dollars), increasing 26.3% over the previous year¹.

However, Sino-Russian economic and trade basis should be estimated not only by the two countries' trade volume, but also by their trade structure. The structure of Sino-Russian trade has a high complementarity: Russia's energy resources, mineral resources, agricultural products, etc. can meet China's industry demand; while China's electronic products, machinery manufacturing products, light industrial products are in great demand in Russia. While import and export trade volume rising, the scope of Sino-Russian trade products are gradually extending from raw materials like energy and

agricultural products to manufacturing products like automobile, home appliance, food, etc.

Sino-Russian trade is closely related to comprehensive transportation facilities and unobstructed logistic routeways, which are key factors in the development of Sino-Russian economic cooperation.

1.2.3 Infrastructure Basis

China and Russia are two large neighboring countries with long borders, which are mainly located in the east of the two countries. The Sino-Russian transportation infrastructure in Russian Far East is characterized by the combination of highway, railroad and waterway with border ports as its corridors (highway and railroad) and ports as its core hub (waterway). China's Suifenhe, Dongning, Hunchun and Heihe border ports serve as the bases for transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East. The port complex of Russian Far East includes the ports of Vostok, Nakhodka, Zarubino, Slavoyanka, Poshet, etc., with Vladivostok as its core port. These ports, together with the Sino-Russian border ports, form the transportation and logistics system in Sino-Russian border area².

It is worth noting that the Trans-Siberian Railway, while passing through Vladivostok, connects each port of the Far East port complex together, and leads directly to the front of the ports' terminals, which enables the direct connection between railroad and waterway transportation and eliminates the cost of secondary loading and unloading. This function of Trans-Siberian Railway provides a high level of transportation efficiency and shows great economic potential.

2. The Existing Problems of Transportation Cooperation Between Northeast China and Russian Far East

2.1 Insufficient Infrastructure Development in Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation

2.1.1 Insufficient Development of Cross-Border Traffic System Between China and Russia

In land transportation, the existing problems of transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East mainly include: the differences in railroad gauges between China and

¹ General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China. <http://stats.customs.gov.cn/>

² HU Zheng. (2023). China-Russia Economic and Trade Cooperation and Building of China-Russia Far East Logistics Channel. *Academic Journal of Russian Studies*, 13(05), 27-43

Russia, and the limited capacity of China's and Russia's railroads. On one hand, there are differences in China's and Russia's railway gauges: China uses international standard railroads, while Russia adopts wide-track railroads. Therefore, a railroad switching is inevitable in the middle of the routeways of Sino-Russian cross-border railroad transportation. In addition, there still remains a significant difference in China's and Russia's railroad switching efficiency, and China's railroad reshipment facilities are more complete than Russia's. For instance, China's Suifenhe railroad reshipment station has 4 routeways for the loading and unloading of bulk cargo, with a maximum of 8 trains' reshipment per day; in contrast, Russia's Pogranichny railroad reshipment station, 16 kilometers away from Suifenhe station, also has 4 routeways for bulk cargo's loading and unloading, but only with a maximum of 4 trains' reshipment per month. Thus, it can be seen that the difference in China's and Russia's railroad reshipment efficiency can easily bring about congestion in the process of Sino-Russian cross-border railroad transportation¹. On the other hand, the demand for Sino-Russian railroad capacity exceeds its supply. It is estimated that the demand for Sino-Russian railroad transportation exceeds 19 times current capacity of Sino-Russian railroad transportation, i.e., the total capacity of Russian railroad transportation towards China only meets 1/20 of the demand of transit application. Insufficient railroad capacity seriously restricts the development of Sino-Russian railroad transportation².

In sea transportation, the existing problem of transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East consists in the difference in the work capacity between China's and Russia's ports. For instance, the annual cargo throughput of Russia's Vladivostok port is 13.2 million tons, and about 859,000 international

standard containers are handled in this port every year³; while China's Dalian port reaches an annual cargo throughput of 310 million tons, and the port handles about 4,459,000 international standard containers every year⁴. The gap between Chinese and Russian ports should be narrowed, for effective and adaptable port facilities is a prerequisite for both China and Russia to optimize the two countries' seaway transportation cooperation.

In air transportation, the existing problem consists in the underdevelopment of airport economy both in Northeast China and in Russian Far East. Slow implementation of the strategies for the airport development, limited scale of civil aviation transportation, lack of hub airports, insufficient function of mainline airports as hub airports and small number of aviation bases result in the underdevelopment of air transportation between Northeast China and Russian Far East⁵.

2.1.2 Insufficient Construction of Sino-Russian Border Ports

On one hand, the infrastructure construction in China's and Russia's border ports needs to be strengthened. The slow economic development of Northeast China and Russian Far East results in some problems, such as low infrastructure standards and equipment aging, in the construction of Sino-Russian border ports. In China, it is difficult for some border ports to operation all year round. For instance, some China's water transportation border port can only seasonally operation. In Russia, the lag of economic development and the lack of investment in Far East lead to the underdevelopment of the infrastructure construction of border ports; the uneven distribution of railroad network and its equipment aging, and the underdeveloped electric power infrastructure further impede the improvement of border ports' constructure⁶.

¹ HU Zheng. (2023). China-Russia Economic and Trade Cooperation and Building of China-Russia Far East Logistics Channel. *Academic Journal of Russian Studies*, 13(05), 27-43.

² ZHANG Xien, ZHANG Xinling, LU Xiaoxuan. (2024). The Analysis of the New Paths and Countermeasures on Hunchun Marine Economic Development Demonstration Zone under the New Situation. *Northeast Asia Economic Research*, 8(01), 78-94.

³ Sputnik: In 2023, the Container Throughput of the Commercial Seaport of Vladivostok Set a New Record to Almost 860,000 TEUs <https://sputniknews.cn/20240117/1056462592.html>

⁴ Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development of Dalian City, 2022 https://www.dl.gov.cn/art/2023/5/23/art_8760_2078236.html

⁵ JIN Ye. (2019). Study on Countermeasures for the Development of Transportation Industry between Heilongjiang Province of China and Russian Far East in the Context of "One Belt, One Road". *Theoretic Observation*, (10), 65-69

⁶ SUN Haojin, YANG Jiayu. (2022). Study on the Path of Cooperation between Heilongjiang FTZ and Russian Far East's Territories of Advanced Development. *Siberian Studies*, 49(03), 21-30.

On the other hand, the customs clearance efficiency still remains low. Though the facilitation and efficiency of customs clearance have been improved thanks to the digitalization of Sino-Russian border ports, there still remains a significant difference in the efficiency of customs clearance between Northeast China and Russian Far East, which results in cargo retention due to lengthy inspection, seriously affecting the logistics turnover efficiency.

2.2 Limited Investment in Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation

External factor that limits Sino-Russian investment consists in the sanctions implemented by Western countries, which has led to the freezing of a large number of Russia's foreign assets, and thus put a greater pressure on Russia's funding source. With a relatively small scale of mutual investment between Northeast China and Russian Far East and its lack of diversity in investment fields, as well as the long revenue cycle of infrastructure investment projects, it is more difficult for Sino-Russian transportation and logistics cooperation projects to attract private investment and obtain financial support; most of this type of projects highly depends on government's financial support.

Internal factor that limits Sino-Russian investment consists in the investment environment between Northeast China and Russian Far East. On one hand, there is still an underdeveloped policy environment in investment cooperation and a high investment risk in Russian Far East. On the other hand, a stable and effective mechanism for coordination, management and information exchange between Northeast China and Russian Far East has not been established yet. Moreover, fixed development model in the cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East has not been formed, which increases its investment risk. In addition, the low administrative efficiency, the lack of administrative windows for foreign investors and the lengthy customs procedure in Russian Far East cause foreign companies to spend a lot of money to simplify vetting process¹.

3. Feasible Paths for the Transportation Cooperation Between Northeast China and Russian Far East Under the Russia-Ukraine War

3.1 "Pivot Cities" as a Platform to Undertake Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation

3.1.1 The Strategic Layout of Vladivostok as a "Pivot City" in Russian Far East

"Pivot city" refers to a city with significant economic development potential, which can realize industrial agglomeration and high-quality economic development through technical innovation, thus promote the production capacity in surrounding underdeveloped areas, make an effective transformation from unbalanced to balanced development, and realize the overall economical progress of the whole region. Such city with economic development potential can be called a "pivot city".

In 2012, an informal meeting was held by APEC leaders in Vladivostok, Russia. Since the Vladivostok has become an important "pivot city" for Russia's international cooperation with eastern countries. Since 2014, the beginning of Russia-Ukraine conflicts and Western sanctions, Russia has strengthened the economic construction of Far East, and Vladivostok has gradually become an important hub for the regional economic cooperation between Russian Far East and other neighboring countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2015, the first Eastern Economic Forum was officially held in Vladivostok. Since then, the Eastern Economic Forum is annually held in Vladivostok, with the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, representing the host country. The strategic significance of Eastern Economic Forum is to enhance Russia's participation in international cooperation of Asia-Pacific region, provide a platform between Russia and its business partners in Asia-Pacific region for the improvement of industrial layout and the optimization of Asia-Pacific resources allocation.

3.1.2 The Transportation Infrastructure Development of Vladivostok

In 2015, President Vladimir Putin signed an act on the establishment of Vladivostok Freeport, i.e., "The Vladivostok Freeport Act", which made Vladivostok Freeport the first free port in Russian history. The aim of establishing Vladivostok Freeport is to simplify the procedure of visa and administrative approval for foreign citizens, and

¹ DIAO Xiuhua. (2018). Study on Linking Cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East's Territories of Advanced Development. *Research on Financial and Economic Issues*, (04), 116-122.

to reduce or exempt land tax, cooperate income tax, property tax, etc. within 5 years for companies registered in Vladivostok Freeport. The establishment of the freeport has given Vladivostok a strong economic boost thanks to the increase of new jobs created by new companies set up in Vladivostok Freeport, which improves employment as well as the production capacity of Russian Far East.

Vladivostok is important for the construction of international transportation corridors “Primorye-1” and “Primorye-2”, two major systematic cooperation projects of national level which include the construction of highways, railroads, ports, airports, border ports, etc. The aims of the two projects is to simplify the procedure of custom clearance, and reduce the cost of goods circulation, thus stimulate the transportation potential of Sino-Russian international corridor and enlarge the scale of Sino-Russian goods circulation. The transportation capacity of “Primorye-1” and “Primorye-2”, together with enterprises’ combined effect made by freeport, enables Vladivostok become a “pivot city” for transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East.

3.1.3 Practical Paths for Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation on the Basis of “Pivot Cities”

Harbin, the provincial capital of Heilongjiang Province, China, is a “Friendship City” of Vladivostok, Russia. As a demonstration city of Sino-Russian regional industrial cooperation, Harbin keeps close relationships with Vladivostok in transportation cooperation. In 2017, the air route between Harbin and Vladivostok was officially launched. In 2021, the Harbin-Russia railway route via Suifenhe border port was officially launched. At present, the integration of Harbin-Vladivostok highway, railroad and air route has been realized, which can be regarded as a prerequisite for Sino-Russian cross-border transportation and logistics.

Dalian, a city of Liaoning Province, China, together with Vladivostok, has formed an vital link for Sino-Russian economic and trade cooperation, as the two cities are both important coastal cities. Today, as the transportation cooperation between Dalian and Vladivostok deepening, sea route, international passenger service routes and direct flight routes between

the two cities has been opened. In addition, there is a deep industrial cooperation between Dalian and Vladivostok in high-speed railway components. Carrying a special mission for the connectivity of Sino-Russian offshore goods transportation, the link between Dalian and Vladivostok is a key factor for high-quality economic development between Northeast China and Russian Far East.

3.2 Russian Far East Territories of Advanced Development as a Platform to Undertake Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation

3.2.1 An Overview of Russian Far East Territories of Advanced Development and Their Transportation Industry

Territory of advanced development refers to a particular area where special administrative management measures are implemented, and registered enterprises and organizations are provided with tax incentives and some policy support that are different from that in other regions. The establishment of Territories of Advanced Development is to improve production capacity and expand export, thus magnify the economic radiative effect of those zones on their neighboring regions. In 2013, President Vladimir Putin proposed in the State of the Union Address the idea of establishment of a network of Territories of Advanced Development in Far East. In 2015, the Federal Law on Russian Territories of Advanced Socio-Economic Development came into force, making a legal recognition of the establishment of these territories. The establishment of territories of advanced development in Russian Far East is to attract domestic and foreign investment by tax incentives, labor and social insurance incentives, tariff incentives, etc., and therefore accelerate the economic development of some particular areas of Russian Far East and their neighboring areas. At present, Russia has set up 18 territories of advanced development. Among them, territories of Primorsky, Amur, Khabarovsk, Yakutsk and Kamchatka have taken transportation and logistics as key industries for their regional economic development¹.

Infrastructure construction plays an important role in the development of transportation industry in Russian Far East Territories of Advanced Development, thanks to its positive effect in attracting investment and increasing the

¹ Far East and Arctic Development Corporation
<https://erdc.ru/about-tor/>

usage efficiency of financial funds. On one hand, comprehensive infrastructure ensures unobstructed transportation and logistics channels, and improves trade efficiency. On the other hand, there is a large investment demand and a long payback period in transportation infrastructure construction in Russian Far East Territories of Advanced Development, thus the infrastructure construction projects rely mainly on government's financial support, which can guarantee the usage efficiency of financial funds, because the priority target of government's financial support usually lies in social benefit, preceding over economic interest. The improvement of transportation infrastructure construction made by government's financial support is accompanied by the increase of private investment from Russia and abroad because of the leverage effect, which increases the efficiency ratio between infrastructure investment and private investment (i.e., the amount of private investment brought by a unit of infrastructure investment).

3.2.2 Practical Paths for Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation on the Basis of Far East Territories of Advanced Development

In August 2019, Heilongjiang Free Trade Zone (FTZ) was established in China, with the purpose of implementing government's requirements for the comprehensive and all-round revitalization of Northeast China, upgrading the Sino-Russian pragmatic cooperation, and creating a central hub for the regional cooperation with Russia and Northeast Asia. The transportation cooperation, supported by the link between Heilongjiang FTZ and Russian Far East Territories of Advanced Development, can help promote Sino-Russian transportation cooperation by enhancing infrastructure connectivity and increasing investment opportunities. For Russia, attracting foreign investment has always been an important purpose for Far East Territories of Advanced Development. With Heilongjiang FTZ as a window for Sino-Russian transportation cooperation, China can provide financial support for infrastructure projects in Territories of Far East Advanced Development, thus can form a complementary cooperative mode between Northeast China and Russian Far East and ensure the stability of infrastructure construction

cooperation in transportation and logistics field.

At present, the cooperation in cross-border infrastructure construction between Heilongjiang FTZ and Russian Far East Territories of Advanced Development has reached significant achievements, establishing a cross-border transportation system including highway, railroad and shipping. For instance, the construction of Tongjiang Cross-River Railway Bridge, Heilongjiang Highway Bridge and Heihe B-type Bonded Logistics Center, has been completed. In addition, Heilongjiang FTZ is committed to the establishment of "cross-border logistics cluster", investing the construction of Sino-Russian cross-border logistics hub in Heihe¹. It can be seen that in recent years, the transportation cooperation between Heilongjiang FTZ and Russian Far East has been improving, with the reduction of time and money cost, which is beneficial for the profitability of China's and Russia's enterprises.

3.3 Harbin's Opening up to the North as a New Opportunity for Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation

3.3.1 Harbin's Advantages as a City Opening to the North

As the provincial capital of Heilongjiang Province, Harbin can meet various aspects of demand of international economic and trade cooperation such as rapid trading of commodities, financing, human resources and technological innovation, with Harbin's highly-clustered and functionally-advanced industries like transportation, logistics, finance, information technology, etc. In the field of international transportation and logistics, located in the center of Northeast Asia, Harbin serves as an important hub connecting various Eurasian transportation channels such as China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor. Harbin has direct Moscow-Harbin freight trains, and is China's first provincial capital which has stable return train public service with Russia's European hinterland centered on Moscow. It can be seen that Harbin has rich experience on Sino-Russian transportation and logistics infrastructure construction cooperation. Harbin, as a city of opening up to the north, has a far-reaching significance in the modernization of Harbin and

¹ SUN Haojin, YANG Jiayu. (2022). Study on the Path of Cooperation between Heilongjiang FTZ and Russian Far East's Territories of Advanced Development. *Siberian Studies*, 49(03), 21-30.

the high-quality development of Heilongjiang Province¹.

3.3.2 Practical Paths for Transportation Cooperation Between Harbin and Russian Far East

Supported by the strategy “One Window and Four Zones” of Heilongjiang Province, Harbin is committed to the transportation cooperation with Russian Far East by building platforms and implementing cooperation projects. Since the establishment of Heilongjiang FTZ (Harbin Section), Harbin has been strengthening its functional positioning and regional advantages, and has then achieved preliminary results in Sino-Russian transportation cooperation.

In land transportation, Harbin, having gathered cross-border logistics companies such as Harbin-Russia International Train Operation Co., Ltd, has opened and operated highway freight routes as well as railroad routes to Russia, with Harbin itself as the routes’ distribution center. In addition, the Harbin-Suifenhe-Vladivostok frozen seafood cold chain transportation corridor was established in Harbin Comprehensive Bonded Zone, carried by international transportation corridor “Primorsky-1”, which has solve a series of problems in Sino-Russian border inspection, border port declaration, etc., and has increased efficiency of customs clearance and reduced the cost of goods circulation and warehousing. In sea transportation, Harbin actively participates in the cooperation of sea-land combined transportation with Russian Far East, and takes part in the operation of Russian Far East’s ports such as Vladivostok Port, Nakhodka Port, Vostochny Port, Zarubino Port, etc., forming a “Harbin-Suifenhe-Russia-Asia” land-sea combined transportation system. In air transportation, Harbin has enhanced its functional positioning as an aviation hub in air transportation cooperation with Russian Far East by promoting the construction of airport economic zones and increasing the number of Sino-Russian air routes. At present, the air routes of “Harbin-Vladivostok”, “Harbin-Khabarovsk” and “Harbin-Krasnoyarsk” have been operated².

3.4 The Link Between “Belt and Road” and the

Eurasian Economic Union as an Impetus for Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation

3.4.1 The Basis of Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation in the Framework of the Link Between “Belt and Road” and the Eurasian Economic Union

On February 8, 2015, President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin signed “Joint Declaration of the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Cooperation in Linking Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union”, indicating that the heads of China and Russia have reached a consensus on the linking between the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union (hereinafter referred to as “the Belt and the Union”), which formed a stable political foundation for Sino-Russian cooperation. The link between “the Belt and the Union” can provide new opportunities for the transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East with further innovation of Sino-Russian cooperation mode.

At present, the basic conditions for Sino-Russian transportation cooperation through the link between “the Belt and the Union” have formed in Northeast China. On one hand, the construction of Northeast Asia Shipping Center has enhanced the interconnection between Northeast China and Russian Far East, supported by the well-developed communication infrastructure and comprehensive transportation infrastructure in Northeast China. On the other hand, the industrial advantage of Northeast China has been formed thanks to its developed equipment manufacturing industry, which creates a huge space for the transportation cooperation in the coastal region of Northeast China and Russian Far East³.

3.4.2 Practical Paths for Sino-Russian Transportation Cooperation on the Basis of the Link Between “Belt and Road” and the Eurasian Economic Union

The most important project in the cooperation between “the Belt and the Road” is the construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, which has a great

¹ LI Hong, SHI Junpu. (2023). Analysis of the Effectiveness and Countermeasures of Harbin in Creating the City of Opening up to the North. *Economic Research Guide*, (22), 24-28.

² BIAN Jinghan. (2018). Study on the Construction of “One Window and Four Zones” in Heilongjiang Province. *Shangye Jingji*, (12),11-13.

³ DIAO Xiuhua. (2018). Study on Linking Cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East’s Territories of Advanced Development. *Research on Financial and Economic Issues*, (04), 116-122.

significance in the interconnection of Sino-Russian transportation corridors¹, such as the comprehensive construction of transportation infrastructure in Russian Far East, the promotion of transportation capacity in Russian Far East and the expansion of Northeast China's international markets (such as the markets of mechanical equipment, construction materials, etc., which are related to transportation infrastructure)².

The primary task in the construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor is to promote the construction of cross-border transportation infrastructure. At present, the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor consists of two main corridors: the North China Corridor and the Northeast China Corridor. The route of the latter is Dalian-Shenyang-Changchun-Harbin-Manzhouli-Chita-Europe.

The development of Northeast China Corridor can significantly promote the transportation infrastructure cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East. First, it can help improve the linking construction of Sino-Russian cross-border railroad, including the Suifenhe-Grodskovo Railway, the Arxan-Choibalsan Railway, the Mudanjiang-Vladivostok Railroad, etc. Second, it can help enhance the construction of cross-border highway, including the highway bridges of Sino-Russian boundary rivers (such as boundary rivers in border ports of Heihe, Dongning, etc.), Heihe Ropeway and other highway infrastructure. Third, it can help strengthen the construction of land-port corridor, including three major corridors, i.e., "Liaoning-Northeast Passage-Europe", "Liaoning-Manzhouli-Russia-Europe" and "Liaoning-Mongolia-Europe". With the support of these three corridors, goods produced in Northeast China can be transported to Japan, Korea, North America and Europe from Russia's Vladivostok Port, Nakhodka Port, Vostochny Port, etc., which can strengthen the cross-border transportation cooperation between Northeast China and Russian Far East³.

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¹ JIANG Jing. (2023). The Impacts of Western Sanctions on the Eurasian Economic Union: Development Trends and the Connection between the BRI and EEU. *Russian, East European & Central Asian Studies*, (03), 142-156+161-162.

² PENG Guangyu. (2020). The Present Situation, Problems and Countermeasures of Production Capacity Cooperation between Northeast China and the Far East Federal District of Russia. *Price Monthly*, (02), 79-83.

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