

EDITORIAL

The concept of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” (SREB) embraces many countries of the Eurasian continent and some countries of North America. It was first formulated by Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan in 2013. The concept provides for the deepening of economic cooperation of the participating countries and their political and humanitarian rapprochement, in the long-term leading to a more efficient model of economic relations. In the new geopolitical conditions of Eurasia, the Great Silk Road affects the interests of many countries. Undoubtedly, the creation of new multinational corridors of cooperation (transport, economic) will lead to a significant structural adjustment of geographic space of the entire Eurasian continent, change vectors of spatial development, and substantially influence the process of transformation of natural and social-economic systems.

In 2015, Russia and China have signed a joint statement on cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union and the SREB trans-Eurasian trade-infrastructure project. The Russian approach to the creation of SREB is based on the idea of linking it with the Eurasian Economic Community, with a focus on the creation of the single Eurasian Economic Space.

The XX collaborative session of the Joint Academic Council on Fundamental Problems of Geography of the International Association of Academies of Sciences and the Academic Council on Fundamental Problems of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, dedicated to the issue “West and East: Spatial Development of Natural and Economic Systems,” took place in Ulan-Ude,

September 19–23, 2016. A round-table meeting “On the Great Silk Road Project,” led by V.M. Kotlyakov, was among the key activities of the session. The outcomes of the Joint Session were incorporated in the following proposals: to (1) analyze the state and prospects for the potential integration of China’s initiative “New Silk Road,” Mongolia’s initiative “Steppe Road,” and Russia’s initiative on the trans-Eurasian transport corridor; (2) formalize interaction with scientists from academic institutions of these countries; and (3) develop proposals for the creation of a federal research program on the implementation of the SREB mega-project on Russia’s territory.

Following the discussion, GES Journal has prepared a special issue dedicated to the issues related to the creation of SREB and sustainable development of countries in the zone of its influence. The authors whose papers are published in this issue are from Russia, China, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan. Their work examines geographic aspects of the “Belt and Road” initiative (V. Kolosov et al.), development of transport infrastructure (A. Tulokhonov; N. Bekturganov and A. Bolaev), prospects of the creation of investment environment (Li Yu et al.), innovations in autoindustry (G. Ferrara), potential of geoinformation support of tourism related activities in the Great Silk Road zone (V. Tikunov et al.), and characteristic features of “green economy” advancement (Dong et al.).

By publishing this special GES Journal issue, the magazine’s editorial board hopes to continue the discussion on the most pressing problems of the New Silk Road and related initiatives.