



Prospects for the Institutionalization of the Integration Processes of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the prospects for the institutionalization of the integration processes of the Eurasian Economic Union. With the help of structural-functional analysis, the authors explore the mechanisms of functioning of the relevant actors in the modern environment and evaluate the effectiveness of the mechanisms of their activity in changing conditions. The article highlights the following elements: the study of the stages of integration processes in the region, the identification of factors influencing them, the analysis and comparison of statistical trade and economic indicators of the EAEU member countries, as well as the prospects for the development of integration in the post-Soviet space. As prospects for the development of the EAEU, the most optimal way is seen as its transformation into a kind of economic and political organization, that is, an economic or economic and monetary union with elements of a common security policy to respond to modern crises, as a factor in strengthening interstate ties within both the Eurasian Economic Union, and the entire post-Soviet space.

Keywords:

Eurasian Economic Union, post-Soviet space, institutionalization, integration processes, Ukrainian crisis (Ukrainian war), factors, influence.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is a dynamically developing integration association in the Eurasian space. Thanks to the efforts of its five member states - the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation, association bodies have been established, obstacles in internal trade are being eliminated, and the future agenda for the joint development of the EAEU member states is being formed. The study of the integration processes taking place within the association, as well as its international activities aimed at promoting the common interests of the member states in the global political and economic space, seems to be particularly relevant. Of particular importance to the study of the current state and possible prospects for the development of integration processes of association is given by the current

unstable political and economic international situation, which has a negative impact on the main spheres of life of the EAEU member states.

The formation of a full-fledged international organization based on the voluntary will of the parties and involving deep economic integration of its member states has become an exceptional experience of interaction for the countries of the post-Soviet space.

The structure of the economies of the EAEU member states allows, on the one hand, to form a single field of economic interaction, to strive to remove barriers in creating a common EAEU market, and on the other hand, to significantly increase the level of stability and competitiveness of economic systems, and, as a result, to strengthen the geopolitical influence of states -members in the Eurasian region. In

this regard, Eurasian integration is a priority foreign policy vector for each of the EAEU member states and occupies an important place in shaping their development agenda. The EAEU is at the initial stage of development of full-fledged integration, in connection with which, the study of possible ways of developing the association, taking into account the relationship of the EAEU member states with each other, as well as the ability to expand the spheres of integration interaction, increasing its economic and political weight in the world space, is also particularly relevant. Of course, there are many problems on the way to the formation of integration, both economic and political or institutional. An analysis of such problems and ways to resolve them will make it possible to offer the Member States an effective and balanced solution that will help expand integration cooperation, and not create insurmountable barriers.

In addition, over the past decades, the world has seen a shift in the geopolitical center of gravity from west to east. This shift facilitated by the rapid growth of the economy of the People's Republic of China (PRC), as well as its course of trade and economic expansion. One of the most ambitious and major geopolitical projects of our time, initiated by the PRC, in this regard, is the concept of "One Belt, One Road", within which it is planned to create a unified barrier-free trade and economic path that meets modern realities, is beneficial for participants and can link Europe and Asia. It seems that the active participation of the EAEU member states in such projects is especially important for them, and therefore a comprehensive study of the EAEU potential at the present stage in the context of the changing geopolitical situation is very relevant.

Thus, the theoretical basis for the foreign policy interaction of states and its constituent processes, in their modern sense, was laid by R. Dawes, J. Hughes, T. Parsons, R. Dahrendorf, C. Merriam. In particular, under the influence of R. Dawes and J. Hughes, the perception of the interaction of states was formed, within, which the categories "interaction process" and "politics" were positioned equal in semantic volume. Thanks to

T. Parsons, a functional component was introduced into the assessment of the interaction of states as a category of political science, which made it possible to perceive such interaction as an obligatory factor in the transformation of political systems and the transition to a new level of development of their structures. R. Dahrendorf significantly improved the theoretical aspects of the interaction of states from the point of view of an existing or potential conflict and proposed to consider the process of such interaction through the prism of the struggle of various political actors for the realization of their interests. Due to the emergence of conflicts, and also taking into account the fact that often the degree and nature of interaction between states depends on the behavioral characteristics of individuals (for example, the top leadership of states) or groups of individuals (in particular, the political elite with political authority). C. Merriam reasonably puts forward the postulate of the need to take into account in the interaction of states aspects of the political strengthening of foreign policy interaction.

Speaking directly about the theories of international integration it should be noted that P. Gonidek and R. Charvin were among the first to present to the public a systematic approach to the study of this political category. Within the framework of this approach, an understanding of integration was formed, firstly, as a process taking place between states, the purpose of which is to create a single space instead of the existing disparate one, and, secondly, as a state, that is, already as a result of the actions of states to strengthen foreign policy interaction.

The "institutional" stage developed rapidly and unevenly. As important characteristics, it should be noted the allocation of an "integration core" in Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan (moreover, the last two countries experienced an upswing in national economies at that time due to the "oil boom"), the emergence of new international organizations in the post-Soviet space (the Eurasian Economic Community (Eurasian Economic Community). EurAsEC, the Collective

Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB)). However, the emergence of small groupings reduced the effectiveness of overall integration (primarily the CIS). In addition, common projects also slowed down political changes, called "color revolutions", as well as the growth of interest from external actors (NATO, the European Union) through various programs (for example, the "Eastern Partnership"). All these factors largely caused the rapid curtailment of the "institutional" stage and the transition to actual integration. The latter is currently the pinnacle of all integration processes that have taken place in the post-Soviet space, although 20 years have passed between the declaration of the need for its organization and the actual creation.

Five years after the start of the functioning of the EAEU, it can be stated that the Eurasian integration is being carried out, albeit at a low pace, but without significant crises and recessions. At the same time, the achievements of the Union coexist with a whole range of problems that may become systemic in the future. This applies both directly to the economic factor (which will be discussed below), and to a certain political opposition within the elites of the EAEU member states regarding this integration project. In order to understand the causes and preconditions of the current situation, one should turn to the origins of integration in the post-Soviet space, as well as analyze the features of the conditions in which the Eurasian Economic Union was conceived and the ideas of Eurasian integration were implemented in practice. In modern domestic and foreign literature in recent years, several areas of research on Eurasian integration in general and the Eurasian Economic Union in particular have been formed. The works of Uzbek research authors touch upon such aspects as the features of the development of integration processes in the post-Soviet space, the current state and prospects for the development of the Eurasian Economic Union as the most promising and institutionalized organization in the region. At the same time, crisis phenomena (for example, Euromaidan and its consequences) and

contradictions between the EAEU member states, which have a significant impact on the pace and level of integration, are also reflected in the works of Russian researchers and their colleagues from the Union member countries.

In less than thirty years of existence of the post-Soviet space, this region has gone through a number of significant transformations, conflicts and crises. These include the decline in the influence of "traditional" international organizations, "color revolutions", the "integration dilemma", the emergence of "frozen" conflicts and unrecognized states, the Ukrainian crisis and its consequences, etc. Sometimes these processes had a significant impact not only on the pace of regional integration, but also on the post-bipolar system of international relations.

It should be emphasized that the declaration of the ideas of Eurasian integration, its institutionalization and direct implementation in practice were carried out in completely different conditions both within the post-Soviet space and in the international arena. If the end of the XX century passed under the motto of "civilized divorce" of the former Soviet republics and the search for the most optimal option for building relationships, 2000s. marked the internal split of the region and the beginning of active competition between two integration projects, already in the next decade a number of significant events took place, which, on the one hand, marked the success of Eurasian integration, and on the other hand, called into question its future prospects and the fate of the post-Soviet space as a whole. The latter include, first, the Ukrainian crisis, that is, the war, which became, among other things, a consequence of the "dilemma of integration".

The Ukrainian war acted as a stimulus for the development of Eurasian integration only in part. Despite the introduction of anti-Russian sanctions by the US and the EU, the process of creating the EAEU was not stopped, but continued on the whole. Nevertheless, Russia did not dare to radically revise its foreign policy priorities, which could make it possible to redirect the freed resources to intensify Eurasian integration. It should also be

noted that the "integration dilemma" has not lost its relevance for the states of the post-Soviet space, especially for Russia's closest partners in the region - Belarus and Kazakhstan.

At the same time, the Ukrainian crisis (that is, the Ukrainian war) had a negative impact on Russia's relations with these countries, which could not but affect the pace of Eurasian integration and the efficiency of the EAEU. Minsk and Astana (now Nur-Sultan) have repeatedly made demonstrative statements regarding support for and criticism of Eurasian integration, the role of Russia in this process, and the national interests of their countries. An example of the deterioration of relations between partners in the EAEU is the recent dispute between Russia and Belarus regarding oil supplies and statements by President A.G. Lukashenko on Moscow's actual blocking of Minsk's purchases of energy resources in Kazakhstan. The reasons for these changes can be considered the presence in both Belarus and Kazakhstan (albeit to a much lesser extent) of the same ethnic and linguistic problems that aggravated during the period of internal political confrontation in Ukraine. Also, do not forget about the traditional fears of the post-Soviet elites about the possibility of "imperial revenge" on the part of Russia.

In particular, such fears are typical for the states of Central Asia, as described in detail in the report "Post-Maidan Outlines of Eurasian Integration: Transforming Constraints and Prospects", published in June 2022, and this refers not only to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, but also to potential participants Eurasian projects - Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Thus, the authors identify several threats to the Eurasian initiative in the context of the Ukrainian crisis:

1) positioning of integration processes as a means of drawing the Central Asian states into the Russian sphere of political influence;

2) assessment of Eurasian integration as a direct threat to the sovereignty of the states of Central Asia;

3) information policy aimed at blurring the population's perception of a common historical past within the framework of the Russian Empire and the USSR;

Kazakhstan). In this regard, attention is focused on the fact that Russia has lost the "moral right" to exercise its "soft power" in the region;

5) the concentration of public opinion around the theses about the economic unprofitability and failure of the Eurasian integration projects and initiatives. Eurasian structures are characterized as "superficial", "authoritarian", "corrupt", where Russian protectionism plays a big role;

6) appeal to the nationalist ideology.

Although these ideas are not yet widely accepted, the example of Ukraine clearly demonstrates how nationalist slogans can be used to achieve political goals. The active introduction of such ideas into the information field of the Central Asian states can both contribute to the aggravation of the internal political situation in individual countries of the region and influence the integration processes and their perception in society.

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If we turn to the analysis of the trade and economic component as the basis for the integration of the EAEU, we can say that, despite the consequences of the sanctions of foreign states against Russia due to the situation around Ukraine, retaliatory Russian sanctions, the depreciation of the ruble, a decrease in the value of exports of mineral products, etc. the EAEU statistics are gradually improving. Although in 2015-2016 there was a significant decrease in the volume of trade of the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union both in foreign and mutual trade compared to 2014, since 2017 growth is already obvious, despite a slight decrease in the volume of foreign and mutual trade in 2021-2021 compared to 2017-2018.

At the same time, with clear progress both in the dynamics and development of relevant joint initiatives, it is impossible to call the trade and economic component of integration within the EAEU central and significant in comparison with the volume of trade with some partner countries outside the group and consider it as a reliable base on which can be relied upon in the future.

Firstly, the dominant place in mutual trade in goods in the EAEU is occupied, of course, by the Russian Federation (the share of Russia in deliveries in the Union as a whole is almost 65%, and if purchases are taken into account, then almost 97%), and among bilateral interaction - Russia's relations with Belarus and Kazakhstan (about 60 and 30% respectively).

Today, due to the continuing high risk of political and economic contradictions in relations between the EAEU countries (for example, between Russia and Belarus over the supply of energy resources, etc.), the most likely scenario for the development of events seems to be a combination of intensification of integration processes with a decline in the pace of integration and slowdown in the development of the EAEU. This implies certain achievements in integration, albeit with a delay in the implementation of the original plans. High dependence on such a political and economic situation fundamentally distinguishes the Eurasian Economic Union from the European Union, which finds ways to overcome integration crises (for example, helping Greece during the debt crisis, designating the prospects for EU expansion at the expense of the Western Balkans against the backdrop of the UK exit).

Under these conditions, as already noted, the most optimal way for the development of the EAEU is its transformation into a kind of economic and political organization, that is, an economic (or additionally, monetary) union with elements of a common security policy to respond to the crises of the modern world. The emphasis on strategic planning, strengthening the systemic component of integration processes within the EAEU, and developing ways out of crises based on consensus can significantly strengthen interstate communications within the Eurasian Economic Union. In addition, this will make it possible to pursue a stable course towards rapprochement of countries throughout the entire post-Soviet space and make the EAEU more attractive to other states in the region.

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