



ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ РЕГИОНОВЕДЕНИЯ В XXI ВЕКЕ

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DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OF THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION AS A REGIONAL INTEGRATIONAL ORGANIZATION

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Abstract. *Introduction.* It has been almost thirty years since the idea of forming Eurasian space was voiced and seven years since that idea was embodied in the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Despite the acknowledgment of the EAEU importance and the recognition of the need of its further development by its member states, the organisation's future is still in question. For instance, an increase in barriers has been observed, despite the fact that at the very beginning in 2015 when the EAEU was established, a gradual creation of the Eurasian customs union without exceptions and restrictions was proclaimed as one of its principles. Internal problems emerging between the EAEU member states considerably slow down the EAEU activity both within the EAEU and with its partners, and require a discussion of a broader agenda that goes beyond the economic sphere. In this regard, the authors set the *goal* of researching approaches to further development of the Eurasian economic integration as well as the harmonization of the EAEU member states in socio-cultural area. During the research, the authors used *methods* of scientific cognition, consistency, analysis and legal comparison. In order to examine the EAEU bodies' development the authors also used legal research. *Results.* The authors' position substantiated in the work is based on the history of the development of Eurasian economic integration, the influence of foreign policy, internal factors and soft power carried out by the neighboring countries of the region in various socio-economic spheres. *Conclusions.* As a result of the research, the authors come to the conclusion that it is necessary to restore and deepen cultural and historical ties between the participants of the Eurasian Economic Union, as a separate area of activity of the Eurasian Economic Commission.

Key words: Eurasian Economic Union, soft power, Eurasian Economic Commission, history of development, integration process.

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ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РАЗВИТИЯ ЕВРАЗИЙСКОГО ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО СОЮЗА КАК РЕГИОНАЛЬНОГО ИНТЕГРАЦИОННОГО ОБЪЕДИНЕНИЯ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* После создания Евразийского экономического союза прошло уже пять лет, а идее создания евразийского пространства уже больше 20 лет, однако его будущее до сих пор находится под вопросом. После создания Евразийского экономического союза наблюдается рост барьеров несмотря на формально принятое постепенное создание общего рынка без изъятий и препятствий. Внутренние проблемы среди участников интеграционного объединения требуют обсуждения более широкой повестки, выходящей за рамки экономической сферы. В связи с этим авторами в работе поставлена **цель** исследования дальнейшего пути углубления экономической интеграции, а также интеграции бывших советских республик в социально-культурных областях. *Методы.* Методологическую основу данного исследования составляет совокупность методов научного познания, среди которых основное место занимают методы системности, анализа и сравнительно-правовой. *Результаты.* Авторская позиция опирается на историю развития евразийской экономической интеграции, влияние внешнеполитических, внутренних факторов, мягкой силы, проводимой соседними странами региона в различных социально-экономических сферах. *Выводы.* В результате исследования автор приходит к выводу о необходимости восстановления и углубления культурно-исторических связей между участниками Евразийского экономического союза, как отдельного направления деятельности Евразийской экономической комиссии.

Ключевые слова: Евразийский экономический союз, мягкая сила, Евразийская экономическая комиссия, история развития, интеграция.

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Introduction. Today the structure of the world economy and politics is undergoing dramatic changes and becoming more polycentric. In this global architecture new poles will inevitably appear that will be represented by key economic associations. The Eurasian Economic Union is considered as a promising international organization capable of competing with the European Union.

However, the stages of development, the goals of its creation and legal foundations significantly distinguish the two blocks.

It is noteworthy that after the signing of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of May 29, 2014, the number of trade restrictions between the EAEU members increased significantly compared to the period before its formation. The Parties, as a justification for the application of any

measure, be it sanitary, veterinary and phytosanitary measures in the field of government procurement, began to apply systematically and on an ongoing basis as a threat to national security [8].

The current situation makes us talk about the need to update the EAEU development strategy. Moreover, it concerns not only partial improvement of the implemented strategy, but also the discussion of fundamental alternative ideas [6].

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the issues of unification or integration in any form could not be supported by sovereign states. On the other hand, the economic dependence of the independent Republics on each other forced them to look for options for cooperation.

As a result, the entire path of the Eurasian Economic Union creation was built purely on the

economic interests of the founding states, as the heads of state reiterate nowadays. We could not agree more that foreign policy and internal factors have a direct impact on the development of the international organization of regional economic integration that is confirmed by the third Kyrgyz revolution, unprecedented protests in the Republic of Belarus, the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, the introduction of a food embargo by the Russian Federation against certain countries.

It is noticeable that the introduction of economic sanctions in 2014 against the Russian Federation and the introduction of counter-sanctions tested the strength of the fundamental basis of the integration organization. At the beginning, the economic interests of the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Kazakhstan were above the idea of a strong integration bloc – “passing” European goods across their borders to the market of the Eurasian Economic Union. However, the events of 2020 after the elections in the Republic of Belarus and the January events of 2022 in the Republic of Kazakhstan forced the countries to reconsider their positions regarding the implementation of a unified policy. The need to develop a common course to reduce the negative effect of “external pressure” on the EAEU countries is being actively discussed on the sidelines of the EAEU bodies [13]. The military operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine will only increase the relevance of these actions.

The Eurasian Economic Union needs a solid foundation to be recognized as a full-fledged actor of international law and a center of international trade. In order to understand the prospects for further development of the Eurasian Economic Union, it is necessary to return to the history of its creation and further steps for its development, including those not related to economic activity.

The history of the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union. The idea of forming the Eurasian Union of States, as mentioned above, was put forward by the President of Kazakhstan on a visit to Russia on March 24, 1994, proposing the formation of a Eurasian Economic Union on the basis of a single economic space and a joint defense policy [3]. It is worth noting that Aliyev considers the next step to strengthen the EAEU as the idea of uniting the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization [1].

The first step was the signing of the Agreement on the Customs Union, signed by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia in 1995.

In the early 2000s, countries gradually began to realize the need for closer integration in order to prevent further breaking of trade and economic ties. It was necessary to create a working mechanism that in practice could effectively solve the issues of socio-economic interaction of the former Soviet republics. Such a structure became the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), officially formed on October 10, 2000.

The next stage of integration was the signing by the heads of the three countries in October 2007 of the Treaty on the Establishment of the Unified Customs Territory and the Formation of the Customs Union. At the same time, that Agreement established the Commission of the Customs Union – a supranational permanent regulatory body of the Customs Union, which main task was to ensure the conditions for the functioning and development of the Customs Union [3].

As of January 1, 2010, the Customs Union of the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation began to function, which provided for the application of a unified customs tariff, a unified commodity nomenclature for foreign economic activity, and the Customs Code of the Customs Union. In addition, a significant part of the supranational powers of the state bodies of the Parties in various spheres of the economy was transferred to the main executive body, the Customs Union Commission.

In 2021, the Eurasian Economic Commission have marked ten years since creation, on the basis of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Commission of November 18, 2011. In addition, on October 19 of the same year, the Declaration on the Development of Eurasian Integration was adopted, which marked the next stage in the development of integration – the Single Economic Space [7].

Already in 2012, the Union determined the basic principles for the functioning of the internal market and formed uniform rules for the implementation of coordinated actions in key sectors of the economy, which then formed the basis of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of May 29, 2014. The rapidly developing

supranational institutional system and the wide range of issues in which the Eurasian Economic Commission was immersed alerted some heads of state regarding their sovereignty. As Lukashenko pointed out, Russia is giving an agenda that is unrealistic today. Stating his dissatisfaction, he emphasized that “one is talking about the political superstructure, the other is about the introduction of a monetary system, we have not yet come to this, we are creating an economic union and have not yet felt the dire need for this” [12].

On January 1, 2015, the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union entered into force, which was signed by the Presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia in Astana on May 29, 2014 [1]. However, in fact, the Treaty significantly limited the powers of the Eurasian Economic Commission and suspended the rapid pace of development of integration. Subsequently, Armenia (from January 2, 2015) and Kyrgyzstan (from August 12, 2015) have already joined the created Eurasian Economic Union.

It was became another barrier in the development of the integration barrier due to the different levels of the economies of the EAEU member states. As noted by K.M. Turgunov, B.M. Turdubekov, K.A. Baktilek, the main problem between countries is the creation of the foundations of a market economy, and often because of this they cannot integrate until the development of the market of a certain country reaches the level of employment of another country [9].

The next historical moments in the development of the integration association were the adoption by the heads of state of a Declaration on the further development of integration processes within the Eurasian Economic Union and Strategic Directions for the development of Eurasian integration until 2025 in December 2018 and in December 2020 respectively [10].

By the end of 2020 the EAEU ranked second after the European Union in institutional integration and macroeconomic convergence. As it is noted in the review, it point to the efficiency of the established institutional framework, the elaboration of key integration agreements, the quality of public administration, as well as the gradual convergence of the EAEU member states on key economic indicators [14].

At the same time, in the composite integration index, which evaluates progress in all

areas, the EAEU ranked third right after the EU and ASEAN. A slight lag behind ASEAN (by 1.13 points) is due to the low share of mutual trade within the Union compared to other associations. This indicates that the EEC as well as the EAEU member states institutional efforts are not fully translated into interaction in the real sector [15].

This mainly concerns the objective reasons that influenced mutual trade between the EAEU member states, including the introduction of the necessary measures related to the spread of COVID-19. Thus, in 2020, the volume of mutual trade decreased by 11%, while in 2021 the volume of mutual trade increased by 31% compared to 2020 and by 15% compared to the pre-pandemic period [16].

The Strategic Directions provide for measures that can effectively bring the Eurasian Economic Community to a new qualitative level of integration. This, among other things, is recognition at the international level: obtaining observer status in the UN General Assembly and in the bodies of the World Trade Organization.

Concept for the development of social and cultural initiatives within the Eurasian Economic Union. The Eurasian Economic Union must establish a solid foundation of interaction and trust between countries in this region, which neither foreign policy factors, nor internal crises, nor the influence of soft power of Western and Asian countries can destroy to become center of world trade [7].

The latter factor plays a significant role in the development of economic integration in the Eurasian region. At the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Jintao, notes priority directions of the country’s foreign policy, separately highlighted the point of development of “cultural soft power” [2]. Under this idea, Confucius institutions were opened in the countries of Central Asia, operating under state universities. Today, there are five Confucius Institutes in Kazakhstan, four in Kyrgyzstan, and two in Uzbekistan, as well as in Tajikistan. At the same time, the number of students in the region studying Chinese in state universities is growing [3].

In fact, the “Sinicization” of the post-Soviet space is taking place. When implementing foreign economic policy, China proceeds from its national interests, flexibly uses the principle of “soft

power,” expanding its economic and political influence over the new states. This leads to a partial “erosion” of the Eurasian integration processes [5].

Another example is the tendency to switch from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet in the countries of Central Asia. This process has already been completed in Uzbekistan, in the process of being completed in Kazakhstan and early stages in Kyrgyzstan [4]. One way or another, the removal of the Cyrillic alphabet from everyday life leads to a decrease in the role of Russian culture and language in people’s lives, and this in the post-Soviet space actually means cutting off the country from intercultural communication with many countries. In fact, the displacement of the Cyrillic alphabet will undermine the cultural and historical basis of the unity of a large number of people.

The above-mentioned strategic document for the development of Eurasian integration, in addition to joint activities aimed at developing economic relations, provides for forms of cooperation in the field of education, health care, sports and tourism. However, they are declarative in nature and will in no way change the general trend of disintegration at the cultural and social level.

This disunity of the countries of the Eurasian region and the lack of interest in promoting common historical and cultural values leads to unthinkable consequences. An illustrative example is the worldwide distribution and receipt of global, prestigious awards, in the form of Oscar nominations and Golden Globe awards, of the film “Borat”, which discredits Kazakh culture, its historical values and the national identity of the Kazakh people and the entire region as a whole.

These factors prove the need to develop joint socio-cultural initiatives based on the historical development of the region while preserving national interests and sovereignty. It is not a question of deep connection, but only of supporting good-neighborly initiatives that can help in the development of economic integration and the advancement of an international organization on the world stage.

The concept of cultural and ideological integration should be based on the common historical and cultural values of Eurasian nations. This is, firstly, the victory in the Great Patriotic War, which united the peoples in the region.

Secondly, the community of culture, which can be expressed in the holding of film festivals and joint film projects, memorable historical events, joint concert events with the participation of artists from various member states of the integration association, annual gastronomic exhibitions and festivals under the auspices of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Also, another significant event may be the creation of unified sports competitions in various sports, including with the participation of observer states of the EAEU, where it is possible to hold the EAEU Cup on football with the possible participation of such football clubs as Ararat (Erevan), BATE (Borisov), Dynamo (Minsk), Kairat (Almaty), Astana (Nur-Sultan), Dardoy (Bishkek), Pakhtakor (Tashkent), Sheriff (Kishinev), Zenit (Saint Petersburg), Spartak, CSKA and Lokomotiv (Moscow).

Similar competitions can take place in hockey, basketball, volleyball and other sports, which are complex in nature, which can be called the Eurasian Games. Joint events can be support popularity of the integration association and can unite world-class athletes in various types of martial arts among the EAEU members and observer states (Cuba, Uzbekistan, Moldova).

The Eurasian Games can become an excellent platform for preparation for the Olympic Games of the member states, as well as for the establishment of good relations and mutual understanding between countries. It can be noted that this experience of holding complex regional competitions has a rich history namely the Pan-Asian Games, the British Commonwealth Games, the Pan-African Games and the Pan American Games.

These initiatives are important not only for the image purpose, but will also help the development of sports in the Eurasian region, taking into account the discriminatory measures from of international organizations. Recently, athletes from the Eurasian region have faced tremendous pressure in international competitions, and it is not just Russian athletes. From the XXIX Summer Olympic Games 2008 in Beijing to the XXXI Summer Olympic Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro, of all the participants deprived of Olympic medals (there are about 50 athletes), 80 percent of the medals were deprived of athletes from the countries of the Eurasian region:

21 athletes from the Russian Federation, 8 athletes from the Republic of Kazakhstan, 3 from the Republic of Belarus, 2 from the Republic of Armenia, 2 from the Republic of Moldova, 1 from the Kyrgyz Republic and 1 from the Republic of Uzbekistan. Only one participant from the United States and Turkey were deprived of their medals – the rest are from Ukraine.

However, the most important non-economic and non-political problem of the EAEU is insufficient information coverage of Eurasian integration.

One can agree with the conclusions of A.N. Mikhailenko and M.Yu. Ilyina that the information support of Eurasian integration should be discussed at a new, qualitatively higher level. About 90% of the citizens of the EAEU countries are neutral about integration – they, as a rule, know little about it and do not understand it. As a result, Eurasian integration in such conditions is vulnerable to unjustified public criticism and provocations. Further development of the integration project without public support will not be able to develop successfully, and this support largely depends on the effective work of the media [6].

An illustrative example of “ignoring” the work of a supranational body of the EAEU can be the work to eliminate mutual barriers between EAEU member states in the formation of a single market for goods, services, capital and labor resources. According to one of the cases, the court of the Eurasian Economic Union on December 7, 2018, concluded that athletes from the EAEU member states who work in other EAEU member states cannot be considered foreign legionnaires and they cannot be subject to measures on limits when forming the composition commands [11]. However, almost all the media presented this news as the work of national ministries and relevant federations, without mentioning a word about the work of the supranational bodies of the EAEU.

And public activity in relation to the activities of the EAEU bodies manifests itself only in a negative way, where an example is the issue of customs clearance of cars with Armenian numbers in the EAEU space after the termination of the transitional provisions of the Treaty on the accession of the Republic of Armenia to the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of May 29, 2014, in part payment of

customs duties. Although this issue did not belong to the competence of the supranational body, most of the negative reaction of citizens who bought such cars was directed specifically at the Eurasian Economic Commission, which naturally affects the general perception of the integration project and its further development.

Results. The historical events of the member states on the external contours at the beginning of the last decade force the EAEU to act as a united front. However, the imposition of sanctions by individual countries is only a temporary factor in strengthening the integration association, the EAEU member states need to reach a qualitatively different level of integration.

Thus, the process of even economic integration should be built through unified complex with the development of cultural and social ties between countries in the region in order to successfully operate a common economic market.

This is also confirmed by the history the Eurasian Economic Union development that shows that the EAEU further successful integration is impossible in isolation from other spheres of public relations. In this case, the Eurasian Economic Commission as an executive body should become a center for arranging cultural, social, educational and sports events that can promote the ideas and principles of the Union as well as establish the basis for the development of good-neighborly relations of sovereign states in the region, united by a common historical and cultural heritage.

Such work is already in progress within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, however the main goal of such cultural and social events should be creation of conditions for the stable development of the member states economies to improve its populations living standards, as it is covered by the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of May 29, 2014.

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