

CONNECTIONS

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The Ukrainian Crisis and its Effect on the Project to Establish a Eurasian Economic Union

Marina Lapenko *

Foreword

A continuing transformation of the post-Soviet space is presently underway as it sheds the last elements of its common Soviet past. New geopolitical and spatial configurations and integration associations are being created, with a new set of players and development priorities appropriate to today's international situation and the new challenges.

The ideological dogma of "fraternal allied republics" is being replaced by the pragmatism of national interests and a desire to take a rightful place in the system of world economic ties. The topic of integration and choosing an integration vector is a central theme in the foreign policy of each new independent state.

The project to establish the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is one of the most important Russian integration initiatives since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The objectives and tasks of a new integration group, as well as the makeup of the integration core and potential participants, have now been determined.

However, until recently the question of Ukraine's participation has remained unresolved. The strategic choice between European and Eurasian integration was to a large extent the main cause of the crisis in Ukraine, and although the crisis has not yet been resolved, several diametrically opposed viewpoints on the influence of the Ukrainian crisis on the course of Eurasian integration have already formed among the community of experts. Here are a few of them:

- the Ukrainian crisis is not currently affecting the process of Eurasian integration at all;
- the Ukrainian crisis and the worsening of relations with the West may provide a new impetus and incentive to develop Eurasian integration, as well as accelerate the creation of the EEU;
- the Ukrainian crisis is exerting serious influence on Eurasian integration, but Ukraine is already lost for integration into the EEU;
- the collapse of the government in Ukraine is regarded as a challenge to Eurasian integration.

In our opinion, any given point of view on the degree of influence the Ukrainian crisis has had depends on what level is taken as the basis of analysis – the geopolitical or the intra-regional.

The present article provides an analysis of the process of developing Eurasian integration in a geopolitical context. The Ukrainian crisis is examined as an integral part of

* Saratov State University, Saratov, Russia, lapenkomv@mail.ru.

geopolitical rivalry and competition between two integration projects – European and Eurasian.

The Background and Contours of Creating the Eurasian Economic Union

Over the years of their independence allied republics have created several integration associations both in the economic and military and political spheres. The most effective of them is the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), which may ultimately become the Eurasian Union.

The term “Eurasianism” and “Eurasia” are becoming dominant in political and intellectual discourse of the late 20th and early 21st century. However, these concepts are not new for purposes of defining the geographical and cultural space of the former USSR. Classic eurasianism was created in the 1920s in works by scholars and philosophers of the Russian migration, and its roots lie in the philosophical and cultural tradition of 19th century Russian thought.

The first Eurasianists—N.S. Trubetskoy, G.V. Vernadsky, P.P. Suvhinsky, G.V. Florovsky, and especially P.N. Savitsky—made a substantial contribution to understanding the role and place of Eurasia as a middle continent. After the end of the Second World War the idea of Eurasia continued to be developed, and particularly richly in the works of L. N. Gumilev.

In the 1990s after the breakup of the USSR, a process of rethinking classic Eurasianism or the establishment of neo-Eurasianism began in the works of Russian scholars and political leaders. The neo-Eurasianist project appeared in the works of A.G. Dugin as a widescale geopolitical doctrine that went beyond conventional geographic boundaries.¹

Aside from A. Dugin, who is considered a leader and main theoretician of “right neo-Eurasianism,” attempts to develop the Eurasianism concept have been made by proponents of “left-wing neo-Eurasianism” (S.G. Kara-Murza, I. Tugarinov, R. Vakhitov and others) and representatives of “liberal” or “democratic neo-Eurasianism” (S. Stankevich, G. Popov, L. Ponomarev).²

It bears noting, however, that the chief distinguishing characteristic of neo-eurasianism of the 1990s was that it represented mostly ideological constructs and originated with opposition politicians, and as a result could not be implemented in reality.

¹ Alexandr G. Dugin, *The Fundamentals of Geopolitics. The Geopolitical Future of Russia* (Moscow, 1999) (in Russian); Alexandr G. Dugin, *The Eurasia project* (Moscow: Put Rasii, 2004) (in Russian); Alexandr G. Dugin, *The Eurasian Way as a National Idea* (Moscow: Partiya Evraziya, 2002); Alexandr G. Dugin, “The Eurasian View,” *Geopolitika* (Geopolitics) 13 (2002), 15-26.

² For more details on the three areas see: A.G. Mustafin, *Evolution of the eurasian idea: From the classical to the modern “practical” eurasianism. The eurasian idea in a new world* (Astana, 2011), 120-133.

This was at a time when the idea of establishing a Eurasian Union, voiced by President Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan, had a perfectly real chance of coming to fruition. However, it proved to be premature.

On 29 March 1994, during an official visit to the Russian Federation, President Nazarbaev visited the M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University. It was in his address to the faculty and students there that the idea of creating a Eurasian Union was first proposed. Nazarbaev proposed creating within the territory of the CIS a “qualitatively new integration association – the Eurasian Union of States.”

It is no mere chance that I announced this idea in a lecture hall of the M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University. I appealed directly to the intellectual elite of the entire Commonwealth with the firm resolve to rouse the process of multi-faceted integration out of the torpor in which it found itself two years after creation of the CIS.

I said candidly that the CIS is not meeting the objective requirements of the day and is not providing for the integration of the member states so sorely needed by our people. For that reason the need to establish a new interstate association that would operate on more clearly defined principles has come to a head.³

He saw the Eurasian Union as an association of states based on principles of equality, non-interference in one another’s domestic affairs, and respect for the sovereignty and inviolability of national borders. The basis for integration is economic pragmatism.

Nazarbaev proposed creating national bodies within the Eurasian Union that would function on the basis of consensus, taking into account the interests of each member country, and would possess clear-cut and real authority, but without handing over any political sovereignty.

Nazarbaev’s project was received positively among the political and intellectual elite of Russia, but nonetheless its practical realization was deferred due to complex internal political processes taking place in the Russian Federation at the time.

For his part, N. Nazarbaev remained a supporter of the idea of preserving Eurasian integrity and began to consistently incorporate the idea in Kazakhstan’s foreign and domestic policy. He set forth the core content of the project to create a Eurasian Union in numerous addresses, articles and books.⁴ On Nazarbaev’s initiative the Eurasian National University, bearing the name of L.N. Gumilev, was opened in Astana.

As for the region-wide level, the idea of Eurasian integration was partially realized in the year 2000 in a project to create the Eurasian Economic Community.

The creation of the EurAsEC in a format of five countries—Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan—was a crucial point in the practical application of Eurasian integration. In just 12 years an intricate structure of mechanisms in various di-

³ Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, “The Eurasian Union: From an idea to the history of the future,” *Izvestiya*, 25 October 2011, available at: <http://izvestia.ru/news/504908> (in Russian).

⁴ For example: Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, *The Eurasian union: ideas, practices, perspectives, 1994–1997* (Moscow: Fond sodeystiya razvitiyu social’nyh i politicheskikh nauk, 1997) (in Russian); Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, *A strategy for independence* (Almaty: Atamura, 2003) (in Russian); Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, “The Eurasian economic union: theory or reality,” *Izvestiya*, 20 March 2009, <http://personal.akorda.kz/ru/category/statyi/152> (in Russian).

mensions of the integration process was formed, the most effective of them being a Customs Union (CU) comprised of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia.

On 9 December 2010 the presidents of the three participant nations of the EurAsEC Customs Union signed a declaration in Moscow to establish the Single Economic Space (SES). This formalized their desire to “establish a Eurasian Economic Union for the purpose of providing for harmonized, complementary and mutually advantageous cooperation with other countries, international economic associations, and the European Union.”⁵

In late 2011 the idea of Eurasian integration found new expression in concrete initiatives. On 4 October 2011, *Izvestiya* published an article by V.V. Putin entitled “A new integration project for Eurasia: the future being born today.” Later, articles by A. G. Lukashenko, “On the fortunes of our integration,” and N.A. Nazarbaev, “The Eurasian Union: from an idea to the history of the future,” were published. On the whole, these publications by the leaders of three countries reflected similar approaches to the creation of a Eurasian Union.⁶

Most experts initially reacted to V.V. Putin’s evoking the Eurasian theme as a good public relations move in an election campaign. However, it later became clear that this appeal to the idea of Eurasian integration was not mere chance and had profound and objective underpinnings; it reflected a review of lost opportunities and Russia’s transition to a new level of interaction with the near and far abroad.

In his article, Putin stated the main objective of integration processes in the Eurasian region – creation of a Eurasian Union. The basis for the new integration association was to be the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space, the “Eurasian triumvirate.” In response to V.V. Putin’s article the leaders of Kazakhstan and Belarus expressed their ideas about development of Eurasian integration.

A comparative analysis of these publications makes it possible to identify some common positions of the leaders of the three countries regarding the development of Eurasian integration:

1. The main objective of integration is to create a robust and globally competitive economic union.
2. The Eurasian Union as a new regional association, not as a restoration of the USSR.
3. The Eurasian Union as an open project and as part of Europe-wide integration projects.

⁵ Declaration on the formation of a single economic space, available at: http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/802 (in Russian).

⁶ Vladimir Putin, “A new integration project for Eurasia – a future being born today,” *Izvestiya*, 3 October 2011, available at: <http://izvestia.ru/news/502761> (in Russian); Aleksandr Lukashenko, “On the fate of our integration,” *Izvestiya*, 17 October 2011, available at <http://www.izvestia.ru/news/504081> (in Russian); Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, “Eurasian union: from an idea to the history of the future,” *Izvestiya*, 25 October 2011, available at <http://izvestia.ru/news/504908> (in Russian).

4. The Eurasian Union as a new geopolitical project and integral part of a new world order.

Nursultan Nazarbaev's article "The Eurasian Union: from an idea to the history of the future" may be regarded as the culmination of a unique discussion of what a new integration union should be. No major departures from the ideas expressed by the Russian prime minister and Belarusian president are to be found.

That being said, in his article the president of Kazakhstan highlights the points that jibe with the interests of his country and with his personal position on the issue of developing integration in Eurasia:

- development of Eurasian integration solely on an evolutionary and voluntary basis without any artificial acceleration of the process;
- a multi-vector approach to integration involving the participation of post-Soviet countries in various regional organizations as well as the possibility of creating interstate associations other than the EurAsEC, first and foremost a Central Asian Union;
- creation of EurAsEC as a competitive global economic association;
- formation of EurAsEC as a self-sufficient regional financial association, and establishment of a Eurasian national unit of account – ENUA;
- broad public support as an indispensable condition for creating the EurAsEC;
- the need to locate executive bodies of the new association in Astana, which "would be a rightful sign of gratitude to Kazakhstan as the initiator of the idea of Eurasian integration."⁷

Thus, the idea of creating the EEU was born in addresses by leaders of the Eurasian triumvirate, although it had completely objective internal and external underpinnings.

The development of mutual relations among Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus allow us to say that these three countries are gradually developing integration based on a common scheme and have already achieved significant results. The single customs territory of the Customs Union of Russian, Belarus and Kazakhstan began functioning on 1 July 2011. The next important phase was the three states' decision to move on to the SES as of 1 January 2012. Thus it is only logical that the next stage of Eurasian integration should be an economic union.

Aside from internal motivations to move toward creating the EEU, the situation in the world (global financial crisis, intensification of the struggle for spheres of influence and so forth) and geopolitical rivalry in the post-Soviet region substantially affected this process.

The economic situation and increased competition necessitated reconsideration of the approach to further development of the post-Soviet space. It was gradually realized that the establishment of ties to the wider world must be based on a foundation of stabil-

⁷ Nazarbaev, "Eurasian union: from an idea to the history of the future."

ity within the integration association itself, to include political and economic stability and security.

For a long time the Russian Federation lacked a clear strategy in its relations with the newly independent states. Statements that the countries of the CIS were a priority area of the Russian Federation's foreign policy were of a declarative nature and did not correspond to the real state of affairs (in reality there was shrinking mutual trade, insufficient attention was being given to the near abroad, the Russian elite was distancing itself, humanitarian and educational programs were being cut, etc.).

All of this led to Russia, by many parameters, losing its role as political leader and chief trading partner of the CIS countries. The weakening of Russian positions led to a number of initiatives by the United States, European Union, China, and Turkey to establish their own spheres of influence in the post-Soviet space and implement competing projects.

For example, the European Union initiated the adoption of a Central Asian Strategy and an Eastern Partnership Program. The United States is seeking to implement a project for the rebirth of the Great Silk Road and has significantly increased its military presence in Central Asia. Turkey is lobbying for the idea of a union of Turkic-speaking states. China is the main trading partner of many countries in the post-Soviet region and also one of the most active investors.

Many Russian politicians have come to believe that successful processes of economic and political integration with the former Soviet republic may result in Russia re-establishing its influence, becoming a world center of power, and filling the vacuum in Eurasia that formed after 1991.

Thus, Eurasia has gradually become a vital strategic area of Russian foreign policy. As for the other participants, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the new integration project has also served their interests. Despite existing real difficulties, a legal and regulatory framework for Eurasian integration required for the signing of the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty by 1 January 2015 was to be produced in 2013–2014.

Structural Principles and Tasks of the Eurasian Economic Union

The main principle of structuring the new integration union was declared to be the principle of equal rights and voluntary participation. The union is comprised of three sovereign states, autonomous subjects of international relations with their own set of interests, development goals and objectives, current priorities, and history of relations with other countries.

A second vitally important principle is the national nature of the new integration association. Considering the experience of the CIS, the EU, and NAFTA, no one denies the importance of this principle for ensuring the effectiveness of integrating groups.

In this regard the agenda includes creating within the future EEU a sufficiently flexible integration model capable of establishing a balance of all parties' interests and a correlation of sovereignties not from the standpoint of quantitative parameters—volumes and sizes of economies, territory, and population—but qualitative characteristics.

Some experts in Belarus and Kazakhstan believe the countries are joining in this association for the very purpose of more effectively defending their sovereignty. “That is why such methods as domination, forcing things through, ignoring one another and one-sided neglect, blackmail and intimidation are unacceptable. They only increase skepticism and ultimately give rise to the urge to leave the association. Work in this integration association should be built on principles of respect for the sovereignty of each member of the association and on meticulous and careful activities aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable consensus on a democratic basis.”⁸

The successful development of an economic union will inevitably raise the issue of a political union, which is the highest form of an integration association. The most daunting task will be to find a political formula of integration that on the one hand does not infringe upon the national sovereignty of the member states of the future union, and on the other hand would make the new association a capable player in international relations.

It is for this very reason that the question of creating a robust mechanism for taking decisions and seeing them through to execution, the formation and development of Eurasian national institutions, continued rapprochement, and the harmonization of national laws are all of the utmost importance.

The main task of the EEU is to build a competitive economic union. The path forward for building this new association as proposed by the leaders of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus is based on the economic component and must address such shared tasks as modernization and the formation of a sustainable and competitive social and economic system that will create the conditions for increased stability and an improved standard of living for the population.

In addition, the future union must facilitate its member states’ transition to an innovative development path, and the Eurasian region must become a place of innovation and a powerful technological leap forward. Aside from economic aspects the project should also have a geopolitical aspect that all members of the project will have a stake in developing.

Many experts are quite optimistic about the geopolitical implications of the idea of creating the EEU not only as a model of regional integration but as a political project to create a multipolar world.

For example, in the opinion Leonid Vladimirovich Savin, editor-in-chief of the information and analysis publication “Geopolitika” [Geopolitics] and managing director of the “Eurasian Movement” International Public Movement, “The formation of the Eurasian Union, along with other integrational processes in other parts of the world will be a movement toward creating a multipolar (polycentric) world. The sooner a Eurasian Union is created, the sooner the states comprising it, as well as other countries that are

⁸ A. Amrebayev, “President Nazarbaev’s concept of an “open Eurasian integration model and current issues of Kazakhstan’s national identity,” *Kazakhstan in global processes* 2 (2012), 47.

making their own strong contribution to shaping a new world order, will be able to come out from under the hard power or soft power influence of the United States.”⁹

So the idea of a Eurasian Union can be viewed both from an economic and geopolitical perspective in the context of shaping a new world architecture. The geopolitical aspect of creating the Eurasian Union involves many important issues: the project’s spatial characteristics and the question of interaction with other regional integration associations such as the European Union and the Asia-Pacific Region.

Russian–Ukrainian Relations and Ukraine’s Potential Participation in Eurasian Integration

Russian–Ukrainian relations after the breakup of the USSR developed erratically: from confrontation to cooperation and back to confrontation. The most difficult issues in the bilateral relationship were always Sevastopol and Crimea, and the status of the Russian-speaking population and the Russian language in Ukraine. The regional division of Ukraine, the particular features of how Ukrainian nationhood evolved, and issues of identification have been of great importance.

A negative type of identification developed in Ukraine along the lines of “We are Ukrainian because we are not Russian,” and as a result there occurred a reevaluation of the shared imperial and Soviet past, falsification of the historical heritage, and mythologization of some historical periods (a vivid example is the written history of the forced famine), which not only negatively affected relations with Russia, but, more importantly, caused a split in Ukrainian society itself. However, the geopolitical situation surrounding Ukraine has played a no less important role in the development of bilateral relations.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union Ukraine occupied an important geostrategic position and possessed a solid base in terms of human and material resources. For this reason all the leading world players had an interest in cooperating with the new Ukrainian state.

Ukraine was chosen by the United States as its main partner in the European part of the CIS, and its breaking away from the integration process and distancing itself from Russia became a primary issue for the USA and NATO in the post-Soviet space. As Brzezinski famously said: “Without Ukraine Russia is unable to regain the capabilities of a super power.” Proceeding from that we see attempts by the United States to bring Ukraine into NATO and to facilitate the coming to power of pro-Western politicians during the “Orange revolution” and “EuroMaidan.”

The European Union also demonstrated a particular interest in developing cooperation with Ukraine inasmuch as the country came under the European Neighborhood Policy and represented an important transit territory, a promising market and a source of resources.

⁹ Leonid Savin, “The formation of an Eurasian geopolitical context,” *Kazakhstan in global processes 2* (2012): 34–44, 39, available at <http://2010-2013.iwep.kz/uploads/files/Magazine/2-2012.pdf>.

However, the Ukrainian leadership's initial plans for rapid integration into the EU did not materialize. The only thing upon which Ukraine could rely after implementation of the Eastern Partnership Program began was an Association Agreement (planned for late November 2013) and no more. The EU signed similar agreements with many countries, such as Algeria or Egypt, for instance. And even such an agreement was frowned upon by Russia and was considered an attempt to enhance the EU's geopolitical influence in the post-Soviet space.

Russia in turn was interested in integrating Ukraine in the Customs Union (CU)/ Single Economic Space (SES) and then in the Eurasian Union. Ukraine's participation is exceptionally important in order to strengthen the capabilities and influence of the Eurasian Union. In the opinion of most Russian experts, first, the new union would be incomplete without Ukraine and, second, Ukraine would not have to choose between European and Eurasian integration vectors.

The official position of Kiev and President V. Yanukovich during the time Eurasian integration was being stepped up was to display interest in the EEU project and in the need to study the practical results, but nothing more than that. In Kiev's view, only a special form of development of cooperation between Ukraine and the future Eurasian Union under the "3+1" plan would be possible in the near term. However, public opinion polls showed that 50% of the population of Ukraine supported Eurasian integration.¹⁰ Thus, the Ukrainian leadership was faced with the need to make a strategic choice between European and Eurasian integration models.

With all the democratic character of the declared objectives in the Eastern Partnership program, the EU pursued completely pragmatic and strictly defined objectives – deliveries of energy resources (primarily from Ukraine's nuclear industry and uninterrupted supplies of Russian gas through Ukrainian territory), the extension of cooperation and economic ties, and an increase in the scientific and cultural dialogue. And, in addition, the conclusion of an association agreement, which would have inevitably entailed serious negative consequences in Ukraine's relations with countries of the CU/SES.

First of all, after Ukraine signed an association agreement with the EU it would become impossible not just to join the Customs Union, but also to maintain a relatively liberal customs regime in its trade with members of the CU/SES, which would lead to a steep drop in mutual trade volumes. Secondly, this could result in a dismantling of scientific and technical cooperation in the space and aviation industries and in shipbuilding, and in the introduction of restrictions on delivery of Ukrainian animal products to the Russian market.

It is for this very reason that attempts to bring Ukraine into the free trade zone with the EU were harshly criticized by leaders of the Russian Federation. In late September of 2013 the RF State Duma passed a declaration which characterized the EU's aspiration to include Ukraine in a "zone of its exclusive interests" as "neo-imperialist ambitions." The conditions for participation of CIS countries in the Eastern Partnership Program

¹⁰ Eurasian Development Bank integration barometer – 2013, http://www.eabr.org/r/research/centre/projectsCII/integration_barometer/?id_16=32343.

were termed “semi-colonial dependency.” The document also stated that if Ukraine signed the Association Agreement it would certainly lose some of its autonomy, which would make its economic partnership with members of the CU more difficult.¹¹

In the first half of 2013 the decline in mutual trade between Ukraine and Russia accelerated due to problems that had arisen in their trade and economic relations. This resulted in a marked reduction in the volume of Ukrainian industrial output.

Economic problems on Ukraine’s way to signing an association agreement with the EU were also intensifying because the European Union had in fact ignored repeated Ukrainian requests for financial aid. In particular, virtually no compensation was offered for Ukraine’s very costly transition to European standards and regulations.

In these conditions the decision taken by the Ukrainian government on 21 November 2013 to suspend preparations for signing the association agreement with the EU was perfectly logical. In a statement on the matter, the decision was explained by the necessity of “taking measures for the national security of Ukraine” and “more detailed study” of steps to restore “lost areas of trade and economic relations with the RF and other CIS countries.”¹²

After the Ukrainian government’s November decision the leaders of the political opposition organized mass protests in Kiev, Lvov and a number of other Ukrainian cities demanding to continue the country’s path to “Euro-integration.” The protests, which often took extremely radical forms and were aimed not so much at supporting association with the EU as changing the political power in the country, continued even after the end of the European Union summit in Vilnius. Nonetheless, it was the issue of Association with the EU and the creation of an all-inclusive free trade zone that provoked the Ukrainian crisis and exacerbated both internal and external tensions.

Due to the lack of political will on the part of Ukrainian President V. Yanukovich and the nonviability of key institutions of state power the Ukrainian crisis gradually became systemic and was transformed into a civil confrontation.

“EuroMaidan” and the ensuing government overthrow in Ukraine facilitated the strengthening of openly anti-Russian authority in Kiev and Ukraine’s moving toward geopolitical control by the USA and the EU, which came to be regarded as a direct threat to the security of the Russian Federation. This was in fact the reason for Moscow’s severe reaction to the Ukrainian crisis and Russia’s subsequent actions to return Crimea.

The referendum in Crimea and the subsequent return of Sevastopol and Crimea to the Russian Federation as federation subjects occurred in accordance with international norms and served the national interests of Russia as well as being an expression of the Crimean people’s right to self-determination. However, it was also something of a fork in the road for Russian-Ukrainian relations.

¹¹ Transcript of 20 September 2013 meeting, <http://transcript.duma.gov.ru/node/3921/>.

¹² Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 21 November 2013, # 905-r., <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/ru/cardnpd>.

With the beginning of the “Crimean phase” of the Ukrainian crisis, the opinion that the accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia would have a greatly negative effect on processes of Eurasian integration became widespread among western and liberal Russian analysts. The desire to support the Russian speaking population and attempts to return historic lands caused particular consternation. Many foreign publications published articles on the expansionist nature of Russia’s foreign policy, which after the “annexation” of Crimea was aimed at accession of Northern Kazakhstan.

This reaction was more propaganda than objective analysis, but it did have a certain negative influence. Such publications as *EurasiaNet* sought to form an aggressive and imperialistic image of Russia, discredit the very idea of Eurasian integration and its image, and depict the President of the Russian Federation as a “schemer and militant mischief maker.”

A lot of work was being done in social networks as well. The main objective was to present the CU and the EEU as a direct threat to the sovereignty of Kazakhstan (and of other Central Asian countries). These efforts were being made mainly in the Kazakh-language segment of the social networks, since this part of the population, who consider themselves to be nationalists and patriots, has the most opponents of integration with Russia.

The Non-Governmental Organization “Berlek-Edinstvo” [Berlek-Unity] prepared a report just for this topic entitled “Post-Maidan Lines of Eurasian Integration.” The report’s authors conclude that nationalists speak of Eurasian integration in the language of colonial discourse. The authors note the following aspects as being among the most negative points being played up in nationalist sources. First, Russia’s post-crisis loss of the authority that had allowed it to exert soft power in Kazakhstan in the form of developing the “Russian world” (language, culture, history). Second, the authoritarian, superficial and corrupt nature of Eurasian integration that does not allow for active discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of Kazakhstan’s participation in these processes in the society. Third, Russian protectionism, which is not inclined to allow Kazakhstan products into Russian markets.¹³

Nonetheless, despite this information attack the official position of Kazakhstan and Belarus—and that of other potential participants in Eurasian integration—regarding Crimea’s and Sevastopol’s accession was rather restrained.

On 18 March the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan recognized the Crimea referendum, thus coming out in support of Russia. On the same day, the presidents of Russia and Belarus had a telephone conversation in which they noted the “importance and historical significance of the reunification of the peninsula with the Russian Federation that occurred today in full compliance with the virtually unanimous will of the peo-

¹³ Analytical report: “Post-Maidan contours of Eurasian integration: transformation of constraints and prospects” (Ufa, Bashkortostan, Russia: Center for Geopolitical Research, 11 September 2014), <http://berlek-nkp.com/doklady/2282-analiticheskiy-doklad-postmaydannye-kontury-evraziyskoy-integracii-transformatsiya-ogranichiteley-i-perspektiv.html>.

ple of Crimea.” So, there was no criticism or condemnation on the part of the main allies in the Customs Union.

The potential candidates—Kyrgyzstan and Armenia—also reacted to the reunification of Crimea and Russia with approval.

On 20 March the Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: “...the results of the Crimean referendum of 16 March of this year represent the will of an absolute majority of the population of the Autonomous Republic. And this is also an objective reality, regardless of whatever antithetical assessments have been made of the referendum.”¹⁴

The president of Armenia stated his position during a telephone conversation with the president of the Russian Federation. In summary, the sides stated that the referendum in Crimea was the latest example of the exercise of peoples’ right to self-determination through the free expression of their will.

Thus, only Western or pro-Western Russian and Kazakhstan analysts, whose purpose is to discredit the Russian position and Eurasian integration, are talking about a negative effect of the reunification of Russia and Crimea on the process of Eurasian integration. On the whole, despite the most heated phases of the Ukrainian crisis, the Eurasian integration project is proceeding according to plan, but the struggle for Ukraine continues.

The next important stage in the development of the Ukrainian crisis was the proclamation of the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics in the South-East and their unification into Novorossiia. The self-identification of so-called Novorossiia has deep historical, socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and political causes. But the geopolitical aspect unquestionably plays an important role. The further political and socio-economic development of Ukraine and the validity of Ukrainian statehood, as well as the entire future security architecture of Europe, depends on the outcome of events in the South-East. Russia’s support of the protests in the South-East was and is a way of compelling the Kiev authorities to compromise and guarantee the geopolitical aspect, including the neutrality of Ukraine.

Russia’s position on Crimea and Novorossiia was the basis for a geopolitical challenge from the West. Even in this situation, however, the Russian Federation proved to be capable of continuing the establishment of the Eurasian economic union.

The Post-Brussels Period of the Ukrainian Crisis and Prospects for the Development of Eurasian Integration

On 29 May in Astana a historic document was signed – the Treaty on the Establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union. This treaty is the basic document to establish the EEU in order to continue to deepen cooperation; to remove barriers to the free movement of

¹⁴ Statement of the Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 20 March 2014, http://www.mfa.kg/vistupleniya/zayavlenie-ministerstva-inostrannih-del-kirgizskoi-respubliki-ot-20-marta-2014-goda_ru.html (accessed 15 August 2014).

goods, services, capital and labor; and to pursue a coordinated and agreed (unified) policy in key sectors of the economy.¹⁵

The European Union in turn continued deepening the integration with post-Soviet republics. Despite the unresolved Ukrainian crisis, a package of documents on economic association between the EU and three countries of the former USSR—Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia—was signed in Brussels on June 27.

New geopolitical realities—the signing of association agreements between the EU and three eastern partners (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and the signing of the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty by the presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus—effectively form a new Europe-wide agenda and intensify geopolitical rivalry.

In the opinion of Sergey Glazev, having delegated part of their sovereignty to the European Commission Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia can no longer be participants in either the Customs Union or the Single Economic Space. This is a significant loss, he believes, from the standpoint of expanding opportunities for cooperation, including with the European Union itself, by the way.¹⁶

Aside from openly infringing upon the national interests of Russia in the post-Soviet space, the European Union, under pressure from the United States, for the first time in the current period of relations moved to institute economic sanctions and pushed the Ukrainian leadership to do so as well.

The breaking of economic ties between Russia and Ukraine may have a negative effect on the economic development of the Russian Federation, but any such negative effect will not be long lived.

Some conclusions can already be made. In an environment where deliveries from Ukraine are being cut back if not completely stopped, as is the case with cooperation in the military technology sphere, Russian companies in the relevant sectors have boosted production, which has had a positive effect on industrial growth. The positive effect of banning deliveries to Russia of products from the Ukrainian military industrial complex can only increase in the future. The need to completely move the production of all critically important goods and components to Russian Federation territory will force the state and state-owned companies to increase investments in creating new production capacities and modernizing old ones. This will lead to an increase in industrial output, and mostly in high tech.

For example, Russian companies are already prepared to independently produce cruise missile engines, helicopter engines and gas turbine units. A program to develop the Strategic Rocket Forces already does not call for participation by any Ukrainian

¹⁵ Treaty on the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union, <http://www.stanradar.com/news/full/10195-polnyj-tekst-dogovora-o-sozdanii-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-sojuza.html> (in Russian).

¹⁶ Glaz'ev: "With the signing of an agreement with the EU Ukraine will cease to be a full-fledged partner for Russia," <http://regnum.ru/news/fd-abroad/belarus/polit/1702070.htm> (accessed 10 August 2014); "Glaz'ev acknowledges that the Customs Union has lost Ukraine," *Fakti*, 25 June 2014, <http://fakty.ictv.ua/ru/index/read-news/id/1519781> (in Russian).

manufacturers. All new Russian rockets will be produced completely in Russian engineering facilities.

The institution of economic sanctions by Western countries and Ukraine with respect to agricultural products can actually be regarded as a chance for Russia to develop its own agricultural sector and as an aspect of extending Eurasian economic integration.

The First Forum of the Regions of Belarus and Russia was held in Minsk in early June. Issues related to the effective development of the two countries' agro-industrial complexes were discussed, this being a vital condition for food security. The forum resulted in adoption of a protocol containing specific recommendations on key areas of the development of the agro-industrial complexes. It gave special attention to the need for unified legal norms and rules for agricultural development. At the present time a proposal is being considered to restructure the bilateral forums with Kazakhstan and Belarus into a single tripartite forum of regions under the protectorship of the presidents of the three countries.

A considerable re-invigoration of the national agrarian economies of the countries has been noticed. In an environment of ever harsher economic sanctions Russian farmers are preparing to provide for the Russian market on their own and are geared up to increasing production volumes.

The Ukrainian crisis and the worsening of relations with the West may also provide a new impetus toward developing the economy through a policy of import replacement and development of the nation's industry and technological base.

The Ukrainian crisis has also had a positive effect on the internal political situation in Russia. For the first time in the post-Soviet period a consolidation of society is occurring and patriotism is growing in Russia. The standing of Russian Federation president V.V. Putin has undoubtedly grown in the country and abroad. For the first time since the 1990s Russia has openly stated its national interests and has been able to prove its ability to stand up for them. Political consolidation in the country is continuing and the image of a West that is hostile to Russia has played a positive role in that. The liberal opposition has been deprived of any serious arguments in the struggle for political power and influence.

Increasing trust in the President of the RF is also reflecting favorably on integration initiatives of the President and his Administration. Before the Ukrainian crisis the Eurasian Economic Union project was not popular among the Russian political or economic elite, not to mention that it was hardly understandable to the wider public. The Ukrainian crisis demonstrated the importance of Russia's active role in CIS countries, further integration, and consolidation.

As regards the Eurasian Union project in the post-Brussels period in general, Eurasian integration will proceed in spite of the crisis in Ukraine. Ukraine's participation is problematic due to the fact that the country is in a deep political and moral crisis and also in a full-scale social and economic crisis.

The Ukrainian crisis has become the most serious test on the path to establishing a unified Greater Europe. It has again demonstrated an unwillingness to consider the interests of the Russian Federation and its special position in the post-Soviet region. The

Ukrainian factor has again confirmed the existence of intense geopolitical rivalry and has set the Eurasian project against the Euroatlantic project.

It is for that reason that the Ukrainian crisis is capable of affecting the substantive elements of the Eurasian Union project. Influenced by the Ukrainian crisis, the project's authors, who initially sought to build equitable and mutually beneficial relations with the West and a free market from Lisbon to Vladivostok, have begun to rethink the substance of the project. What possible adjustments might the Ukrainian crisis bring?

- First, a strengthening of the unity of the Eurasian triumvirate—"strengthening from within"—is on the agenda;
- Second, a rethinking of plans for military force development and improving the defense capabilities of the new integration association;
- Third, a search for a new direction of developing integration, by bringing in Turkey, for instance.

Recent events in the Ukrainian area attest to the Eurasian integration association's increasing influence. In particular, the meeting in Minsk on August 26 was the first to be held in the EU-Ukraine-CU/SES format (the Eurasian triumvirate). No major agreements were achieved at the Minsk summit, but this meeting has great geopolitical significance in and of itself. At the opening of the summit Nursultan Nazarbaev proposed that the next meeting be held in the same format in the capital of Kazakhstan.

The position of parties in and around the Ukrainian conflict are intransigent and not open to compromise. On August 27 P. Poroshenko signed a decree to dissolve the Rada and hold new elections, which is a required condition for strengthening the political power of the president and consolidating the legislative authority, which should be completely loyal, given ratification of an agreement with the EU and consideration of a bill by the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers "On making changes to some laws of Ukraine regarding the support of sovereignty and protection of the territorial integrity of Ukraine." This law would create the legislative premises to integrate Ukraine into the Euroatlantic security space.

Conclusion

Geopolitical rivalry in the post-Soviet space has intensified recently. Russia is seeking to structure the sphere of its own interests. However, possessing fewer resources in comparison with the West, it is using such advantages as the territorial expanse of the Russian world, political and administrative assets, and economic clout (including the fuel and energy sector).

The policy of the EU in the post-Soviet space has in recent years taken on the character of a process of "integration without accession." And, nonetheless, the Russian Federation is taking a harsh view even on relations as these.

The main integration initiative in the post-Soviet space has been the Eurasian Economic Union, with serious work set to begin in 2015. Initially the project was conceptualized in quite broad terms as part of a Europe-wide integration process. However, the Ukrainian crisis exacerbated a range of existing tensions between Russia and the West

and made it impossible to harmonize the two European spaces and integration projects – European and Eurasian.

The formation of the Eurasian Union continues, it is being imbued with substance, and expansion of its participants is under discussion. For example, President Serzh Sargsyan of Armenia does not preclude the possibility of signing a treaty of accession to the EEU before this autumn.

Further confrontation between Russia and the West may be conducive to bringing Turkey into the Eurasian integration project. Turkey plays a special role in the Turkic world. The closeness of cultures of the peoples of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Turkey and their religious and ethnic kinship would strengthen the integrity of the Eurasian Economic Union, and would also provide Russia with strong ties to the Islamic world.

Ratification of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union is on the agenda of national parliaments. The prospects for development of Eurasian integration do not come down solely to what is happening in Ukraine, but to a certain degree are being modified based on how the so-called “post-Maidan geopolitical configuration” develops.

The signing of the Brussels documents and the Ukrainian crisis directly create new difficulties for Eurasian integration. Finding itself in a situation of growing international competition and direct threats to its interests, the Eurasian Economic Union must strengthen itself from within, which in the future will lead to new dividing lines and exacerbation of the international situation.

Further protraction of the Ukrainian crisis and the spread of russophobia may make the inevitable normalization of relations and resumption of an integration project from the Atlantic to the Pacific more difficult, and can also lead to an increase in NATO’s military and political presence in Eastern Europe.

The annexation of Crimea and civil confrontation in the South-East of Ukraine require that a new Russian strategy toward Ukraine be worked out. Russia’s official position regarding the South-East of Ukraine is that there is a need for free expression of the will of the residents on the issue of possible federalization of the Ukrainian state. Normalization of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine will be a difficult and lengthy process, just as it was with Georgia after 2008. The numerous civilian victims, nationalist propaganda in the Ukrainian media, the rise of nationalism, the absence of legitimate authority and political stability – all this is preventing not only Ukraine’s participation in any integration processes, but also the preservation of its sovereignty and national integrity.

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