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**EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION AS A TOOL OF RUSSIAN
MODERN IMPERIALISM**

Master's thesis

International Relations and European–Asian Studies

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Tallinn 2017

I declare that I have compiled the paper independently
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 4

INTRODUCTION..... 5

1. THEORIES..... 8

 1.1 From Yeltsin’s Liberalism to Putin’s Realism..... 8

 1.2 Eurasianism ideology 11

 1.3 Modern Russian Imperialism 14

2. EAEU IN TERMS OF ECONOMY 17

 2.1 Economic analysis of the EAEU 19

 2.2 Not quite a common market 23

3. EAEU IN TERMS OF POLITICS 25

 3.1 Political analysis of the EAEU 25

 3.2 The factor of authoritarian regimes 33

 3.3 The status of unrecognized territories 36

4. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT 40

CONCLUSION 43

REFERENCES 45

ABSTRACT

The Eurasian Economic Union is the most extensive integration project in the post-Soviet space and its novelty allows researchers to actively study this topic. In this study, through the method of qualitative analysis, the question of the role of Russian participation in the creation of the EAEU is put forward. The model of modern Russian politics is built through the use of the theory of classical realism and a relatively new theory of neo-Eurasianism. In the course of the study, the Eurasian Economic Union is viewed from an economic and political perspective. In the first case, the degree of dependence of the member states economies on Russia is being analyzed. In the second case, the political component is being studied, including the analysis of each member state in terms of authoritarianism of power, their political role within the EAEU, and the ambiguous position of each country regarding the boundaries of the EAEU. As a result, the study comes to the conclusion that the creation and further functioning of the organization, as well as its foreign and domestic policies, depend entirely on Russia. The remaining members of the union play a secondary role and are ready to recognize loyalty to the Kremlin in exchange for subsidizing their economies, security guarantees and other factors.

Keywords: *EAEU, Eurasianism, Political integration, Geopolitics, Russia, Vladimir Putin*

INTRODUCTION

The second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century demonstrated the impressive growth and importance of supranational organizations that gradually supplanted the typical role of empires in foreign policy and economics. The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the 20th century was marked by the emergence of 15 new states in the world's political map, which all became members of the United Nations. The end of the 1990s could be described as a period of vacuum, when the countries of the post-Soviet space were making their first steps towards integration with one or another organization. In this case the Baltic States have significantly succeeded by joining NATO (2004) and the EU (2004) alternately. The majority of countries in the post-Soviet space joined together in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The CIS was only at an early stage, which later served to develop such organizations as the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space. The final step was the launch of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on January 1, 2015, where five countries - Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan – became its members. The model of the association is very similar to the European Union, the basic principles of the EAEU are the free movement of goods and services, capital and labor. However, the main driving force and center of the organization is Russia, which amounts to 84% of union's GDP. (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2016).

The creation of the EAEU has not been recognized by all as an economic project, which aims to simplify the life of citizens and businesses. Some politicians and experts agree that this organization was created to strengthen Russia's influence on the foreign policy position of its neighbors, to make them more loyal to the Kremlin. Former US Central Intelligence Agency Director and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta claims that Vladimir Putin in his foreign policy

guided by a plan to restore the Soviet Union within a new form. (U.S. News & World Report L.P, 2016).

Recent events in the post-Soviet space show the relevance of the topic under the study. The balancing of Ukraine between the west and the east continued until the end of 2013, when the revolution called "Euromaidan" started. After the overthrow of Yanukovich, the choice of Ukraine in favor of integration with the EU led to the occupation, and then to the annexation of its territory (Crimea) by Russia. The military conflict in the east of Ukraine, supported by the Kremlin, showed signs of expansionism on the part of modern Russian foreign policy. Russia also has tangible levers of pressure on countries that are not part of the EAEU, by maintaining frozen conflicts (Transnistria - Moldova; Abkhazia, South Ossetia – Georgia; Nagorno-Karabakh - Azerbaijan). Russia's actions in the resolution of these conflicts have a major and in some cases final role, and if there is no will, then the dependence remains. At the same time, any integration into the union deprives the state of part of the sovereignty. Thus, all the EAEU members become dependent on the main market of the union – the Russian market.

Based on the current situation, the study pays much attention to such concepts as neo-imperialism (source), as well as the ideology of modern Eurasianism, on which Russia's foreign policy (source) is increasingly being built today. Classical realism is chosen for research as the main theory.

After the war in Georgia (2008), Russia's foreign policy accelerated the struggle for strengthening influence over the former Soviet states. Five years have passed since the creation of a single customs union (2010) to the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union and this rate is excessively fast. Such rush can be explained by the political goals of Russia and the EAEU called to become the main structure in a large chain of influence. In this regard, a new organization shows the relevance and demand in research.

The main question of the research is the following:

Does Eurasian Economic Union strengthen Russia's role in the region of post-Soviet countries?

To answer the main question of the study, it is necessary to get acquainted with the ideology of Eurasianism, as well as with the works of the founder of Neo-Eurasianism Alexander Dugin, who is an adviser in the State Duma of the Russian Federation and the leader of the International Eurasian Movement.

Any economic union has statistical indicators and in this case, through analysis it is possible to find out by what economic methods Russia influences the member countries. The research will be primarily based on statistical data such as the dependence of small economies on Russia, trade with Russia and the impact of sanctions on the economies of neighboring countries. It is necessary to find out what benefits the EAEU members receive and what they give in return.

The thesis analyzes the geopolitical map of the world and the current interests of Russia in the investigated arena. The political analysis will be based on the authoritarian nature of all the countries of the union and the unclearness of the borders of the EAEU. Undoubtedly, in addition to the former Soviet Union countries, Russia is interested both in the Middle East (Iran, Syria, Turkey) and in the Asian region (China, India, Vietnam).

Methodology

The main method used in the study is qualitative analysis. First of all, it is necessary to conduct a case study of the Eurasian Economic Union in order to understand what the given association is, describe its main functions and role on a regional scale.

A deep case analysis of the EAEU will allow us to proceed to an analysis of the content, since this method will answer the main research questions. As the content, it is intended to use the heads of states of the EAEU, and then to analyze how accurately these or other statements are made. Much attention will be paid to articles of experts in various regional and international periodicals, including internet resources.

The study also assumes the use of a comparative method, in particular it will help to analyze the economic performance of member countries and to identify positive and negative aspects of the participation of countries in the EAEU.

1. THEORIES

The topic under investigation implies the use of the theory of classical realism. This theory fits well with the Kremlin's foreign policy and its desire to increase its dominance in world politics. However, it should be taken into account that in the early 90s the Russian Federation was created on the basis of a liberal ideology, which was accompanied by constitutional reforms and the transition to a market economy. It is important to note that the coming to power of Vladimir Putin transformed the liberal Russia of the 90's into the Eurasian ideology. Moreover, the Russian President already published an article in 2000 where he noted that Russia has always felt itself as a Eurasian country. (Putin V. V., 2000). Up to date, Putin's governance did not change. He promoted the idea of developing this term and organized Eurasian Economic Union.

1.1 From Yeltsin's Liberalism to Putin's Realism

Historically, Russia was showing itself as an expansionist formation. The Soviet Union pursued an identical policy of the Russian Empire, but with a different ideological model. However, the oil crisis of the 80s and high inflation in the USSR led the country into a deep economic crisis, which was accompanied by a commodity deficit. The recent superpower applied for a loan from small Singapore. Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Nikolai Ryzhkov admitted in a conversation with Lee Kuan Yew that the command economy had led the USSR to a standstill and there was a huge work to transfer the country to a market economy. (Lee, 2000).

However, profound transformations and the widespread model of liberalism were applied in the newly created Russian Federation under the government of Boris Yeltsin.

Classical liberalism guarantees civil freedom and emphasizes the need for economic freedom. On the policy pursued by Yeltsin in the early 90's it is clearly visible that he conducted shock therapy, which was accompanied by radical economic reforms and price liberalization. Under his rule, for the first time in the history of Russia the pluralism of power was formed. His position as a liberal confirms the fact that after the August coup in 1991 and the collapse of the USSR he did not forbid the Communist Party and did not purge their leaders. He understood that a certain proportion of the Russian electorate still supported the Communist Party and he chose the path of political competition and participated in democratic elections against the Communists.

Vladimir Putin got a country with high growth rates of oil, he did not take steps to diversify the economy. His policy is focused on increasing military power and isolating the country from democratic institutions. The theory of political realism assert that international law, as well as supranational organizations (UN), cannot adequately influence the decisions of countries adhering to this ideology. In the example with present-day Russia this works perfectly: Russia occupied the Crimea and refuses to comply the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly 68/262 (United Nations General Assembly, 2014). Further, Vladimir Putin signed a law that allows the Russian Constitutional Court to ignore the decisions of international courts (Independent, 2015). The table below shows the differences between the two presidents and their views on various issues.

Table 1. Political views of Yeltsin and Putin.

Views	Yeltsin’s Liberalism	Putin’s Realism
Constitution	Under his presidency, for the first time in Russian history a constitution with democratic values, civil rights and freedoms began to work and be respected by the state.	Under his leadership, democratic institutions are usurped, power is centralized, local authorities are limited in action, media and the courts have lost their independent status.
Federalism	Since 1996, direct elections of governors have been held in all constituent entities of Russia.	In 2004, direct elections of local self-government were abolished in all constituent entities of Russia.

International relationships	Yeltsin built good-neighborly relations based on compromise, established partnership agreements with NATO and EU. Russia was perceived as a reliable partner and accepted in the G8.	Russia left the G8. Putin's rule was marked by worsening relations not only with distant neighbors (the US and EU), but also with close neighbors (Georgia, Ukraine).
Military issues	Military spending in Russia has steadily declined and reached a minimum of \$ 14 billion in 1998. For comparison, Israel spent the same year 12.5 billion, Spain 15.3	Military spending despite of economic crises and sanctions every year grows and in 2016 amounted to more than \$ 70 billion. The military industry is actively developing (SIPRI, 2017).
National anthem	Yeltsin refused the melody of the USSR anthem and approved a new anthem of Russia named “The Patriotic Song”	Vladimir Putin returned the melody of the USSR anthem, which was approved by Joseph Stalin in 1944.
Political competition	Yeltsin was not afraid of competition and was actively engaged in the election campaign personally. The only elections that took place in 2 rounds were held in 1996. At that time, Yeltsin scored in the first round only 35.28% and 53.82% on the second. Yeltsin left power voluntarily.	During Putin's reign, election honesty fell from year to year. The constitution was changed to re-elect the same candidate for 3 and subsequent terms. The presidential term has been extended from 4 to 6 years. New political parties face registration problems.
Parliament	Existence of a multi-party system, where coalitions and factions were created. There was competition among the legislature.	The work of the parliament is reduced to a one-party system where for many years the ruling party United Russia accepts legislative acts.
National economic	Economic shock therapy, price liberalization, building and expanding foreign trade, reforms in the tax system, privatization.	Putin did not make any drastic changes in the economy. A big plus in his favor was the rise in oil prices from \$20 dollars per barrel to \$100. In addition, there have been cases of

		nationalization in the economy, especially in the raw materials and media spheres.
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Comparison of the above 8 elements shows that Putin's positions are close to conservative and to some extent continue the political course of imperialist Russia or the Soviet Union.

1.2 Eurasianism ideology

Eurasianism is an ideological movement founded by Russian emigres on the basis of spirituality and Russian culture and in parallel combining the cultural features of the west and east, but at the same time not being none of them. Eurasianism rejects the idea of globalization and considers the Western world as a world of materialism where moral interests are committed. Modern Eurasianists believe that, due to the lack of an idea after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the politicians of the early 1990's attempted to completely copy the liberal model of the American democracy. However, this model does not fully take into account the cultural and historical interests of modern Russia and is designed to absorb it on the way to a unipolar world and the presence of a single hegemon in the form of Western culture. (Dugin, 2002, pp. 6-7; 77).

Classical Eurasianism

Eurasianism appeared in 1921 among Russian emigrants in Sofia, Bulgaria by victory of the joint manifesto "Exodus to the East." The Russian revolution (1917-1918) have played a huge role in the birth of Eurasianism. Savitsky made parallels with the French Revolution (1789-1799), where he noted that the First Republic with its militaristic mission and ubiquitous occupation was carrying a "new word" throughout Europe. However, the rest of Europe

managed to curb France, returning it to the old political boundaries. Here, the Russian Empire is included within the concept of "the rest of Europe", since it was considered as a typical Western state at that time and was an ally of various European powers in different periods of history. However, with the advent of the Russian revolution, Russia is already carrying a "new word" for Europe in the sense of Marxism and Communism. At this moment in history, Russia becomes two-faced, losing the cultural values of Europe. Revolution in the name of communism was not perceived as a European revolution and it was important for world history (Savitski, 1921, p. 8).

Another ideologist, Pyotr Suvchinsky, believed that Russia was a great-power entity and would never be state-owned. Great-power has features of imperiousness and a sense of unconscious power. Before the advent of Eurasianism, the Russian Intelligentsia perceived the culture of the West not in terms of equality, but in terms of convincing its superiority and exclusivity (Suvchinsky, 1921, p. 11).

In Eurasianism, the key factor was spiritual, its followers called Russia an "Orthodox-Muslim" and "Orthodox-Buddhist" country. They invoked the fact that the Russian society had a common history with peoples as the Tatars, Khazars, Chuvashes, Mongols, etc. In this respect, the teachings of Marxism on godlessness was not relevant to the Eurasian ideology. Orthodoxy was to occupy a dominant position in Russian culture and was to be strengthened on the basis of its power.

At the same time, Eurasianism, with its deep connection to Orthodoxy, did not alienate the idea of uniting with the Eastern peoples. It was proposed to unite not by religion or nationality, but by blood and behaviour. (Trubetzkoy, 1921). By that time, most of the Turanian peoples were already under the wing of great-power Russia and the Eurasianists suggested that they reveal features in the Russian elements that could for a long time bind the eastern peoples to Russian culture. At the same time, the idea of Christianizing the Turanian peoples was strongly rejected, referring to the bad experience of the past centuries.

Neo-Eurasianism

It is worth noting that neo-Eurasianism accepts all the arguments of classical Eurasianism and is supplemented by new teachings from the late 1980s. The emergence of neo-

Eurasianism became possible due to the ideological crisis in the Soviet Union of the 1980s. The self-awareness of the population had been falling from year to year, while the refractor forces had been increasing within the party.

Lev Gumilev was one of the first Eurasianists of the new era in the Soviet Union. He introduced the concept of "super-ethnos", which arose from the theory of passionary ethnogenesis. The super-ethnos is the highest link of the ethnic hierarchy, united by groups of ethnoses. In world history Gumilev singled out 4 super-ethnoses: Byzantine - ancestor of super-ethnos, in which all ethnoses of the Mediterranean are brought into a single superethnos due to the equalization of Latin and Greek; Muslim - Arabs, Persians, Turanian peoples, Caucasian peoples; Christian - Germanic tribes, Celts; Slavic - Slavic tribes. (Gumilyov, 1989)

Here, many contemporary followers of Eurasianism ranked Russia in the notion of super-ethnos (или considered Russia a super-ethnos), which included all the peoples of the former USSR. Gumilyov himself never touched the political component of Eurasianism and completely ignored questions concerning religion. For him, Eurasianism meant "Russian-Turk-Mongolian Union". (Beliakov, 2013)

Another important person of the newest Eurasianism is Alexander Dugin. Dugin is a deeply right-wing thinker of modern Russia and an advocate of ultra-Orthodoxy. He supports the breaking of relations with the West and encourages the expansionist vector of Russia's development. He adheres to the revolutionary views and believes that for a complete transition to the Eurasian path, the Russian society needs spiritual and social revolution in. His theory does not reject classical principles of Eurasianism, but has a number of extensions. The first principle deals with the economy, Dugin calls it a "heterodox economic tradition", which means the "third way" between classical liberalism and Marxism. The second principle is the use of religion in matters of social policy. (Dugin, 2002). The third one deals with significant expansion of the doctrine of the compatibility of Islamic culture and the Eurasian movement. In his works, he asserts that the Supreme Mufti of Russia Talgat Tajuddin accepts Eurasianism in its orthodox proportions and reflects the cultural experience of the Muslims' cohabitation with the Russian people since the Golden Horde, Moscow Rus, Imperial Russia and the USSR. (Dugin, 2002, pp. 619-620).

Dugin has long been in the political field of the Russian elite, he has served since 1998 as an adviser to the chairman of the State Duma Gennady Seleznev. Many experts call him an unofficial adviser to Vladimir Putin. This is confirmed by the fact that he accompanied Putin

in 2004 in an official visit to Turkey. (Korsunskiy, 2016). After the return of Putin in 2012, Alexander Dugin appeared more frequent on Russian media and television channels. In an interview with French journalist Vincent Jauvert, he said that he met with government officials at least once a week. He also received invitations to senior positions in the Kremlin, however he refused them because of excessive bureaucracy. (Jauvert, 2014).

Thus, the main ideologist of modern Russia has a direct access to the top of the Russian government. His frequent presence on TV and the media definitely affects a large part of Russian society. His position on the annexation of the Crimea, calls for the creation of Novorossia did not go unnoticed in the west; The United States and Canada entered him to the sanctions list.

1.3 Modern Russian Imperialism

Imperialism is a form of policy that is based on territorial expansion, the establishment of political and economic control over other countries, and the use of resources of the occupied territories by the central government.

Nowadays, imperialism in its classical sense has ceased to exist. The last collapsed empire was the Soviet Union, but this historical fact did not transform the country into democratic rule (or governance). The idea of modern Russian Imperialism does not have a strong scientific and evidence base. However, it is possible to draw parallels with the present-day Russian state and its periphery, based on the researches of Professor James Petras on the topic of American Imperialism, American Imperialism is seen as an economic and militaristic expansion, due to its dominant role in the world economy and due to the presence of many its military bases around the world. (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2015). The Russian Imperialism has a regional direction and the following characteristics mix well with the ideology of Eurasianism.

High centralization. Under the constitution, Russia is considered as a federal state, but the history of the past years has shown that the central authority in Moscow controls the rest of the country. Rich Siberia and the Far East have great opportunities to have a standard of living no lower than in Moscow, however the Kremlin controls all the resources of these territories. The control of resources through state-owned enterprises leads to the control of cash flow and

the establishment of state monopolies for production and transportation. Money control and enrichment of Moscow leads to the establishment of relations in the form of center-periphery. In addition to its own territories Russia has a high level of control of other territories, such as South Ossetia, Transnistria, etc.

Assimilation. The Russian expansion of the territories took place in parallel with the Western empires growth. The only difference was that Russia did not face resistance during the acquisition of other territories and did not conduct full-scale colonial wars with other empires. Its colonies adjoined territorially to the borders of Russia itself and that allowed a deep process of assimilation of these peoples. Today Karelians or Chuvashes are far from the autonomy which is applicable in Western federal countries. Today's Russia is formed by means of the unification of many peoples and cultures by force of Moscow authorities in the 16-20 centuries. Assimilation would have been expected in the territories of former post-Soviet countries, but it is extremely difficult to provide this in relation to Muslim culture in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and in the West (Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine) due to a surge in the creation of small national states.

Militarism and annexation. This policy has always been characteristic of the imperial powers. Russia increased its military budget every year even in times of the economic crisis and sanctions. Russian military bases are located in many post-Soviet countries and Moscow has created a military alliance of Collective Security Treaty Organization. Russia was the guarantor of preserving the state integrity of Ukraine in exchange for renunciation of nuclear weapons. However, annexation of the Crimean peninsula in March 2014 showed the first case of annexation in Europe after the Second World War. International agreements were destroyed (нарушены? Тогда лучше violated), and international law ceased to work for Russia. This behavior of the country is well associated with imperialist ambitions.

Hybrid Annexation. Russia has always had the ability to interfere in the internal affairs of neighboring countries and this trend has not stopped since Vladimir Putin came to power. The war in South Ossetia and its subsequent recognition gives Russia the room for maneuver for the future. Russia uses the policy of distribution of Russian passports in frozen territories (Transnistria, Donbass, Abkhazia, South Ossetia). This can turn into the next referendum on the accession of these territories to Russia in the future,. In this case, such steps could be considered as a hybrid annexation.

EAEU and Eurasianism. The creation of such an integration project, using the term of Eurasianism in its geographical sense, could eventually turn into a deeper political union and make their members completely dependent on the will of the Kremlin. Today, relations between the union countries and Russia are built in the form of a center-periphery, but at a higher level and based on the wishes of these countries.

2. EAEU IN TERMS OF ECONOMY

The study of the theory allows us to conclude that a short period of liberalism could not last for long. The coming to power of Vladimir Putin is rebuilding Russia from a country open to investment into a more closed conflict state. A return to realism results in creating the projects as the Customs Union, the Eurasian Economic Union. Russia also acted as main originator of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Russia's military intervention in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), as well as the occupation of the Crimea, gives a clear signal to other post-Soviet countries that leaving the fields of the Russian Federation may lead not only to the economic, but also to the territorial problems.

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev and President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko constantly declare that the EAEU is not a political project and it should not influence the sovereignty of member states. However, the degree of politicization of the union depends on the level of economic integration. Modern researches identify five standard levels of economic integration. (Rodrigue). The first level is free trade. Free trade is the economic policy mainly used between two sovereign countries, which in most cases are not part of customs or economic unions. Such agreements were previously signed and common among the newly formed states of the former Soviet Union. The second stage of integration is the customs union. The heads of the countries ratified the customs union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus in 2009, which became the framework for the creation of the current organization. The third stage is the creation of a common market with free movement of goods and capital. Since January 1, 2012, the Eurasian Economic Space has started functioning. The next stage is the economic union or otherwise a single market. At this stage, labor migration and liberalization of monetary policy are permitted. In some cases, there is a use of a single currency, for example, the euro in the European Union. Also, for a long time there were rumors about the introduction of a single currency in the EAEU called Altyn. A high-ranking member of the Eurasian Development Bank Evgeny Vinokurov stated this in particular. (Vinokurov, 2017).

The most recent stage of economic integration is a political union, where a single parliament of a union comes into force, which requires an executive, legislative and judicial system. At this level, politicization and a significant cut in sovereignty already occur. Russia in its foreign policy believes the fifth stage is final, while the rest of the countries oppose it. The removal of the word “economic” from the name of the organization will lead to the creation of the Eurasian Union, thereby realizing the idea of Eurasianism in reality.

Table 2. Levels of economic integration applied to the EAEU

Integration level	Agreement	Year	Main aspects
Free trade	Bilateral agreements between CIS states. Commonwealth of Independent States Free Trade Area	From 1992; 2012	Tariffs are reduced or completely removed for certain types of goods, however each state could establish own tariffs when trading with third countries.
Custom union	Eurasian Customs Union	2010	A common tariff is established at the external borders of the association.
Common market	Eurasian Economic Space	2012	Freedom of movement of capital and goods
Single market	Eurasian Economic Union	2015	Absence of tariffs within the association, free movement of labor, application of uniform production standards
Political union	Eurasian Union (?)	?	The creation of a supranational government, the development of a single political guideline

2.1 Economic analysis of the EAEU

The EAEU is primarily an organization focused on economic integration. In international practice, there is no clear understanding of what economic integration is, but its purpose is obvious - to increase the welfare of the country and their citizens. Based on this, it is necessary to analyze how effectively this has impacted on the well-being of the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union. For this the main economic indicators of the state will be taken, which are the GDP, and its activity in the world market. These indicators mostly reflect the economic development of the state from which its budget is formed and foreign exchange reserves are build. The second group of indicators are the level of inflation and the size of labor remuneration in US dollar terms. These indicators have mainly an impact on the welfare of citizens.

As a time interval it was selected the year of creation of the Eurasian Customs Union in 2010, as well as the year before the creation of the EAEU and during the existence of the union (2015, 2016). This interval allows us to track the economic performance of countries during their membership in the customs union and to conclude how beneficial it is for member countries to integrate into a broader association.

Table 3. Main economic indicators by country. (Source: The Economic Complexity Observatory; Trading economics).

	Customs union		EAEU	
	2010	2014	2015	2016
GDP, USD billion				
Russia	1524.9	2063.6	1365.9	1283.2
Belarus	57.23	78.81	56.45	47.43
Kazakhstan	148.05	221.4	184.39	133.66
Kyrgyzstan	4.79	7.47	6.68	6.55
Armenia	9.26	11.61	10.53	10.55
Foreign trade turnover, USD billion	2010	2014	2015	2016
Russia	615	745	502	463
Belarus	57.3	73.6	54.5	49.7
Kazakhstan	79.7	110.5	72.6	61.9
Kyrgyzstan	5.83	10.38	5.96	5.26

Armenia	4.72	5.9	4.92	4.98
Inflation rate, %	2010	2014	2015	2016
Russia	8.78	11.36	12.9	5.4
Belarus	9.9	16.2	12	10.6
Kazakhstan	7.1	6.7	6.7	14.6
Kyrgyzstan	8.0	7.5	6.5	0.4
Armenia	7.3	3.0	3.7	-1.4
Average monthly wages, USD	2010	2014	2015	2016
Russia	687	829	551	605
Belarus	408	603	412	359
Kazakhstan	523	662	480	421
Kyrgyzstan	183	240	191	195
Armenia	284	412	332	383

It can be clearly seen from the table above that GDP of all countries within 4 years term has grown more than 25%, foreign trade turnover also showed growth until 2014. Such stable growth allowed the states of the customs union to expand the union agreement; citizens of states based on social surveys also supported the entry despite high interest rates and volatile inflation. Besides, citizens of the EAEU countries could freely move around the territory of the union and work in large cities of Russia, where wages are significantly higher. It should be taken into account that the support of the citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Armenia for joining the EAEU was lower than in others states and free movement of labor and capital allowed to increase the approval rating among these states.

It is obvious that the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union would increase the interconnection within the member countries and, would limit the maneuverability of small countries in the long term. Therefore, the following table provides information on the share of Russia's participation in the foreign trade of the member countries of the agreement. The given data compares the indicators of 2010 and 2016; it will help to understand how much the situation on the market has changed.

Table 4. Position of Russia in trade relations of EAEU countries. (Source: The Economic Complexity Observatory).

Imports	1st (2010)	2nd (2010)	3rd (2010)	1st (2016)	2nd (2016)	3rd (2016)
Belarus	Russia (51%)	Germany (7.7%)	Ukraine (5.5%)	Russia (56%)	China (7.9%)	Germany (4.9%)
Kazakhstan	Russia (21%)	China (17%)	Germany (7.6%)	Russia (36%)	China (15%)	Germany (5.7%)
Kyrgyzstan	China (36%)	Russia (24%)	Kazakhstan (10%)	China (38%)	Russia (21%)	Kazakhstan (17%)
Armenia	Russia (20%)	China (11%)	Iran (6.2%)	Russia (31%)	China (11%)	Turkey (5.3%)
Russia	Armenia+ Belarus+ Kazakhstan+ Kyrgyzstan (5.61%)			Armenia+ Belarus+ Kazakhstan+ Kyrgyzstan (7.5%)		
Exports	1st (2010)	2nd (2010)	3rd (2010)	1st (2016)	2nd (2016)	3rd (2016)
Belarus	Russia (38%)	Netherlands (11%)	Ukraine (10%)	Russia (48%)	Ukraine (12%)	UK (4.7%)
Kazakhstan	China (19%)	France (7.9%)	Italy (7.3%)	Italy (20%)	China (11%)	Russia (9.5%)
Kyrgyzstan	Switzerland (23%)	Russia (19%)	UAE (18%)	Switzerland (46%)	Kazakhstan (11%)	Russia (10%)
Armenia	Russia (16%)	Bulgaria (15%)	Germany (14%)	Russia (21%)	Bulgaria (9.1%)	Georgia (7.9%)
Russia	Armenia+ Belarus+ Kazakhstan+ Kyrgyzstan (6.15%)			Armenia+ Belarus+ Kazakhstan+ Kyrgyzstan (9%)		

Statistics show that the role of Russia for 6 years has grown significantly in the trade with the EAEU countries. The statistical indicators of Belarus show how much this country was dependent on Russia in 2010 and the situation for the next 6 years only has deteriorated. It

must be borne in mind that Belarus has a good geopolitical location, which connects Europe and Russia. It has a relatively cheap labor force and could become a good investment ground for Europe. Instead, Russia is the main supplier of goods and services with a share of 56%. The Belarusian exports to Russia also increased from 38% to 48%.

As for Kazakhstan and Armenia, there also was again in their trade with Russia, both in the export of goods and in imports. The second significant fact is that the share of Russian goods and services in the market of the countries participating in the EAEU is growing significantly faster than the share of these countries' goods on the Russian market. Cheap and low quality Russian goods displace foreign products due to the depreciation of local currencies and to some extent make local producers vulnerable.

The only country that showed a negative trend was Kyrgyzstan, where Russia's share in imports and exports went down, however the loss of Russia was filled by Kazakhstan and in percentage terms the share of the EAEU in trade has increased.

It is clearly seen from the analysis that Russia has many levers of influence on neighboring countries, but the construction of economic and trade dependence on it allows the country not to apply tough power in relations. Russia simply makes it difficult for Western countries to build independent relations with Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the imposed on Russia sanctions directly affected the member states' economies, each of the five currencies went through a devaluation, and the GDP level of three of the five countries fell below the 2010 level. In 2014, Russia imposed a food embargo on countries that applied sanctions. This decision contradicts the rules of the customs union and limits the free movement of these goods across the territory of the EAEU, as other members of the union did not support the initiative of Russia. This shows that the laws of the union are not equal for all its participants, Russia could discard customs arrangements to the background.

It was revealed from economic analysis that Kyrgyzstan's trade with Russia is much lower than it was in 2010, Russia's share has dropped both in imports and in exports. However, trade with Kazakhstan raised and Nazarbayev began to have interests in Kyrgyzstan.

2.2 Not quite a common market

As noted above, the Eurasian Economic Union has gone through four stages of the integration process and at first glance it seems that everything is integrated in the union, except for a single currency. However, in fact, the union has many contradictions. Some sectors of the economy still do not have a common market and this state of things indicates a lack of consensus among countries. To get a truly unified market of the EAEU is being prepared by 2025, when the oil and gas market will function under general legal acts.

Absence of a common oil and natural gas market.

This segment of the economy assumes a unified use of oil and gas infrastructure, unhindered purchase and sale of oil by any of the participants in the organization. The solution of this issue has been rejected until 2025, as Russia and Kazakhstan are exporters of oil and gas, and Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Armenia are importers. There is a huge imbalance in the market, for example, Kyrgyzstan receives only 0.001% of Russian oil exports, Belarus has difficulties in buying Kazakh oil.

Absence of a common electricity market.

Approximately the same state of affairs exists in the electricity segment. For example, considering that there is also a certain imbalance in this market, companies and ordinary citizens from Belarus would like to receive electricity at the lower price level.. Armenia has an excess of electricity due to nuclear power plant and it could increase energy production and sell it in the internal market of the EAEC. However, the lack of a single market in this segment limits Armenia in this step. The unity of the electricity market is expected to reach by 2019. (Pastukhova & Westphal, 2016)

Absence of a common transport space.

The transport system is no less important, and countries have not been able to reach agreement even on this issue. For example, vessels under the flags of the EAEU countries do

not have the right to freely enter the water area of another member state. In addition, Russia imposes taxes on heavy vehicles, which are more than 12 tons. For each kilometer traveled, the truck must pay a certain sum, set by the tariff. Such a fee is not provided in other countries, and this significantly increases transportation cost from Kyrgyzstan to Belarus. While there is no specific date to address this issue.

3. EAEU IN TERMS OF POLITICS

3.1 Political analysis of the EAEU

The Eurasian Economic Union pursues economic and welfare goals on official papers. Russia is an active participant and promoter of the union unlike other members. The way the Russian authorities behave can be called paradoxical, and this is explained by the fact that trade with member countries for Russia is only 5% of the total turnover. A significant part of Russian goods goes to the EU countries and China, thus Russia does not receive large economic benefits from the union.

Therefore, the Eurasian Economic Union is mostly a political project for Russia, which aims to create an alternative primarily to the European Union. Russia already has an alternative to NATO - the Collective Security Treaty Organization, established in 2002, whose members are all the current countries of the EAEU plus Tajikistan. One more organization must further integrate the countries with Russia and create a periphery under the Russian government.

Eurasianism and Putin

If Vladimir Putin at the beginning of his first presidential term was mainly concerned with internal problems of Russia, then from his second presidential term Russia increasingly began to take an active part in international politics. After Putin's speech at the Munich conference in 2007, US Senator John McCain called it as “most aggressive remarks by a Russian leader since the end of the Cold War”. The main message of that speech was that NATO continues to expand its borders to the east, that Russia will build its independent foreign policy and that for the world only multipolar system is acceptable. (Fidler & Sevastopulo, 2007). This

speech became a turning point in relations between Western countries and Russia and the subsequent war in Georgia (2008) became evidence of this.

Putin's personality is of great importance for the functioning of the union. He has repeatedly stated in public that the collapse of the USSR is the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. (Putin V. , 2005). In recent years, his sympathy for the imperial and Soviet period of Russia has only intensified. In his speeches, the theme of democratic values is rarely touched upon, and the policy of Western countries is increasingly being criticized. When the negotiation method does not help to achieve the desired goals, Russia's foreign policy with the post-Soviet countries is built on a system of subordination through pressure.

Of course, it is impossible to restore Imperial Russia or the Soviet Union and Putin understands this perfectly. However, it requires a different path to build a similar model. The ideology of Eurasianism is perfectly suited to such goals. It will allow to build a supranational structure that could be optimal for Russia under the leadership of Putin. The structure of the Eurasian Economic Union, centralizing the post-Soviet region around Russia, will make it possible to reestablish a new old union into reality. Putin accepts one of the basic principles from Eurasianism that consists in the development of spiritual and religious values. This is confirmed by the expansion of the influence of the Moscow Orthodox Church, the number of churches has increased from 6,000 in 1988 to 36,000 in 2017. (Lenta.Ru, 2017).

Nevertheless, in Putin's Eurasianism there are disagreements with the viewpoints of his contemporary thinker Alexander Dugin. Firstly, Putin is not a supporter of the idea of a superethnos Eurasianism, in this regard he is committed to conservative views, when Russian people and Russian language should prevail in the post-Soviet region. Secondly, he partially rejects the economic model of modern Eurasianism. An unconventional economy with a partial borrowing of Marxist ideas would alienate the oligarchic way of the modern Russian establishment on which Putin's regime holds. Thus, Vladimir Putin adheres to centrist views within this ideology, for him Eurasianism is primarily a geopolitical and spiritual path, he is not inclined to radical movements as it seen by Alexander Dugin. (Umland, 2015). Such ideologists as Dugin are necessary for the ideological upbringing of modern Russian youth, alienating them from partnership with the Western path of development.

The Armenian dilemma

Cooperation between Armenia and the European Union has always proceeded in a positive manner. Armenia has for many years maintained a balance and friendly relations with both Russia and the EU. The driving force in the EU-Armenia relations is the policy of the Eastern Partnership. Within the framework of this partnership, the EU assisted Armenia with reforms in the judicial and administrative spheres, as well as in supporting democratic institutions, and in reducing poverty. Armenia received 281.5 million euros through European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument in 2007-2013, this was the third indicator among six countries per capita. (European Commission, 2014). In the period 2014-2017 Armenia will receive through the European Neighbourhood Instrument from 140 to 170 million euros.

Reduction of financial support is not accidental, as Armenia refused to trigger the Association Agreement with the EU at the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2013. In the same year, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan made a statement that Armenia will join the Customs Union. An agreement on Armenia's accession to the EAEU was signed at the summit of the Eurasian Economic Union on October 10, 2014. For incomplete 2 years Armenia managed to enter both the Customs Union and the EAEU. Such a rush was promoted by events in Ukraine, when Russia lost significant levers of influence on this country as a result of the revolution.

The choice of Armenia in favor of the EAEU is determined for reasons of national security. The borders of Armenia are in blockade by Turkey, and from time to time fighting clashes with Azerbaijan are happening. Under such circumstances, the security of the country depends on an alliance with Russia, therefore the borders with Turkey and Iran are protected by Russian soldiers in the framework of bilateral agreements. Russia has a military base in Armenia and views this country as an exclusive territory of its influence. Many experts in Armenia still argue that joining the Eurasian Union restricts trade with neighboring Georgia and Iran. However, Armenia in exchange for its security is ready to deprive a part of its sovereignty. (Almasian, 2014).

Ultimately, Armenia chose a more pragmatic approach in which the country and clan regime of Sargsyan could be relatively safe. In addition, Armenia has unimpeded access to the labor market of Russia, this can reduce the unemployment rate and reduce the burden on the social sphere. Armenia's accession to the EEA assures Russia that Armenia will not be associated with any integration projects with Europe in the future and thereby increase its

dominant role in the Transcaucasus region. In the long term, this gives Russia an entry to the region of the Middle East and to closer cooperation with Iran.

Symbolic sovereignty of Belarus

With the current dictatorship and low level of civil liberties in the country, Belarus can not build mutually beneficial and friendly relations with the European Union for more than 20 years. The Belarusian elite and officials were often imposed under EU sanctions for pressure on opposition members and independent media; this has created problems in relations between the parties for years. Today Belarus is the only country among the Eastern Partnership states and Russia, which does not have a bilateral agreement on partnership and cooperation with the EU. (European Commission, 2017).

In this connection, since the independence of Belarus, Russia has been its main trading partner, and this is confirmed by economic analysis, where Russia's share is more than 50% of the total. At the same time, integration processes began to develop between the parties. The Union of Belarus and Russia was created on April 2, 1997 to improve economic and military relations. With the advent of Putin to power, integration expanded in 2000 and became known as the Union State. Its functions included questions concerning foreign policy, energy system, tax, monetary policy and customs. Under this agreement, there is also no guarded border and checkpoints, citizens of the two countries are free to move and have equal rights to work within borders of the Union State.

However, for Putin integration policy remained the main tool in rehabilitating former Soviet influence. Therefore, in 2010, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan united in the Customs Union. By that time, Belarus-EU relations were in deep crisis and cooperation with Russia was seen as a necessity. The withdrawal of Ukraine from the Russian patronage contributed to a more rapid process of adopting the Eurasian Economic Union. Belarus had no other option than to join this union primarily for financial and energy reasons.

The International Monetary Fund estimated Russia's support for Belarus for 2005-2015 in the amount of \$106 billion. In different years, the share of Russian support ranged from 11 to 27% of Belarusian GDP. Among \$106 billion there are not only direct government loans (more than \$6 billion), but also loans issued by state banks of Russia (\$4.9 billion) and loans through the Eurasian Stabilization and Development Fund (\$2.7 billion), where 88% of assets

are made up from Russian capital. (International Monetary Fund, 2016). In addition, Russia is the main investor in the economy of Belarus and its share accounts for 57 to 64% of the total volume of foreign investment. The Eurasian Development Bank estimates the amount of Russian accumulated direct investment in the amount of \$8.3 billion in 2015. (Feinberg & Tkachev, 2017).

An important factor is the hidden financial support of Russia. Such support includes subsidized prices for oil and natural gas. Belarus buys it for significant benefits, and between 2001 and 2015 gas subsidies amounted to \$49.4 billion, oil - to \$46.9 billion. In total, it amounts to \$96.3 billion, and this could be counted as a missed profit of the Russian budget.

Certainly, disagreements and disputes arise between Belarus and Russia. Lukashenko often shows a desire to cooperate with the EU and does not support Russia's policy towards Ukraine. He often recalls that Belarus is an independent country and has the right to have an independent foreign policy. Many experts regard Minsk's behavior as a desire to receive from Moscow more favorable conditions for subsidizing or regular financial support. In fact, Moscow buys political loyalty of Belarus with such support. Fundamentally, relations between the parties are still stable. Economic indicators show that without Russian support, the Belarussian economy could fall to a deep crisis, therefore participation in the Eurasian Economic Union is considered as a reality that Minsk must accept.

As for relations with other EAEU members, their gains or losses will not be significant compared to 3 years earlier, as the total share of imports from Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is only 0.25%, exports 1.9%.

Unjustified hopes of Kazakhstan

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev was the first who put forward the idea of creating the Eurasian Union in 1994. Then the newly created states took the idea of economic integration with skepticism and were satisfied with the creation of the CIS. The expectations of the Kazakh leader were realized after 21 years. Kazakhstan viewed this project not only as an entry to a large market, but also as a connecting role between the dynamically developing market of Asia and the solvent market of Europe.

The President of Kazakhstan expected to receive high dividends from the transit of goods from Asia, as well as from a single energy market, especially the oil market. This would

significantly allow to deliver Kazakh oil to Europe minimizing the transit fee. In 2016, Kazakhstan exported more than 57% of its output to the EU and Switzerland, most of which are oil and gas, therefore an unimpeded and non-tariff access to the world's oceans is possible through the ports and pipelines of Russia. However, the creation of the common oil and gas market was postponed for 2025.

The creation and subsequent operation of the Eurasian Economic Union for Kazakhstan can not be called successful. There are many geopolitical and economic reasons for this. Firstly, the creation of the union and the subsequent initialing of the agreements took place in 2014. This year was remembered by the annexation of Crimea and the Russian hybrid war in the east of Ukraine, after which there were active discussions about the creation of Novorossia. As a result, with the support of Russia, there were formed two unrecognized republics and another regional conflict in the post-Soviet space. This turn of events clearly alarmed the leadership of Kazakhstan, as more than a quarter of the population of Kazakhstan are Russians; the Russian population is major in two regions of Kazakhstan. In the same year, Putin made an ambiguous statement that Nazarbayev was able to create a country on the territory where never was a country. (Birnbbaum, 2015). Russia has fears that after Nazarbayev's rule, Kazakhstan's foreign policy may change toward China or the West. In such a case the Russian population could be used for manipulative purposes and to put pressure on Kazakhstan's political decisions.

Secondly, the annexation of the Crimea led to sanctions against Russia. This, together with the fall in oil prices, negatively affected the economic situation in Russia and in general in the EAEU. As a result, the main currency of the EAEU ruble collapsed. This also affected other currencies of member states. During 2014-2015 Kazakhstan's national currency tenge depreciated by more than 40%. Moreover, with the accession to the EAEU Kazakhstan as an ally will have to discuss trade and to some extent political issues with member states especially with Russia.

Finally, Kazakhstan expected to play an important role in the functioning of the organization, as country was the first lobbyist of the project. Nazarbayev expected that some integration and supranational structures should be located in Astana, however Kazakhstan's interests in this issue have not been taken into account and none of the structure is currently located on the territory of Kazakhstan. On February 11, 2016, the President of Kazakhstan spoke about the need for greater integration and cooperation of the EAEU with the Chinese project "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the European Union. However, Russia's position

remains unchanged, China's stable presence in the post-Soviet countries contradicts Russia's interests and all negotiations on free trade or transit projects should be conducted in line with the position of Kremlin.

As a result, Kazakhstan's accession to the union resulted in exposure to Russian decisions and deprivation of a part of its sovereignty. Kazakhstan has to wait for several years until the organization creates a single oil and gas market, and for now it has to accept the negative influence of the Russian foreign policy on its economy.

Forced Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is the most open and democratic country of the Eurasian Economic Union. In 1998 Kyrgyzstan became the first post-Soviet country to join the WTO and has earned the reputation of an open country for trade in Central Asia. Before joining the EAEU, Kyrgyzstan had low customs duties on imports, which allowed the country to become the main re-exporter of Chinese goods. Kyrgyzstan's Dordoi and Karasu markets are the largest in Central Asia and due to low prices, it provides a large flow of buyers from Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The country's accession to the EAEU increases customs duties for Chinese goods and thus takes away the status of re-exporters and significantly increases the cost of imported goods in the country.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia during Yeltsin's presidency devoted little attention to the countries of Central Asia and lost a significant share of influence there. In general, in economic and trade terms, Russia did not consider Kyrgyzstan as a zone of interest. During the period when Kyrgyzstan had a wide and free choice for political maneuver, it built good relations with the United States of America. As a result, in 2001 the United States placed a military air base on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. The military base functioned during the rule of Vladimir Putin and obviously, the US base was not part of Russia's growing geopolitical interests. Despite the desire of the US to extend the lease of the military base, Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev in 2011 decided not to extend it. The lease period ended in 2014 and the last US military left the territory of the base.

Parallel to this, Russia began to strengthen its military presence in Kyrgyzstan. In 2009 Russia prolonged the lease of the military air base by 49 years. After the country's accession to the EAGE, in June 2017, Presidents Putin and Atambayev held talks on the opening of a second

military base in southern Kyrgyzstan, and it would be much larger in size and would include ground forces. (Pannier, 2017). Strengthening Russia's position in Kyrgyzstan means strengthening its position throughout the Central Asian region. In geopolitical terms, Russia is trying to build a barrier and keep at a distance China's growing interests in the region. In addition, there is a large contingent of US troops in the Central Asian region (Afghanistan).

The process of Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union was significantly different from the accession of other countries. The country did not act as one of the founders of the organization. This indicates that the country was not interested in establishing the EAEU as it was not a member of the customs union as well. After Kyrgyzstan showed indifference to the Kremlin's integration projects, Atambaev's rhetoric began to change drastically. He said in particular that if the country does not join the EAEU, then the price per ton of gasoline would rise by \$ 300. The Minister of Economy of Kyrgyzstan also stated that the risks from non-entry into the EAEU are much greater than the risks from entry. (Sarabekov, 2015). Such statements by official representatives could be regarded as pressure exerted on them by Russia. Ultimately, Bishkek decides to join the EAEU six months later than other members of the union.

It was revealed from economic analysis that Kyrgyzstan's trade with Russia is much lower than it was in 2010. Russia's share has dropped both in imports and in exports. However, trade with Kazakhstan grew and Nazarbayev began to have interests in Kyrgyzstan. Presidential elections were held in Kyrgyzstan on October 15, 2015. According to the constitution of the country, the president can not be elected for a second term and therefore Atambaev was to leave office. A representative of the ruling party Sooronbai Jeenbekov and his main competitor Omurbek Babanov attended the presidential race. Before the elections Omurbek Babanov went to a meeting with the president of Kazakhstan and after that a diplomatic scandal broke out between the two countries. Atambayev accused Kazakhstan of interfering in the election process and many experts called Babanov a Nazarbayev's portage. (Reuters, 2017).

Babanov's defeat at the elections worsened relations between the two members of the EAEU and this had a negative impact on the border. More than 500 trucks and 12-kilometer traffic jams were formed at the entrance from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan, many of the goods being transported were perishable and Kyrgyz companies began to suffer heavy losses. Ordinary citizens and cars also faced great difficulties and could not cross the border for several

hours. This situation is a gross violation of the agreement of the EAEU, including customs and immigration regulations.

Thus, the existence of such problems makes the Eurasian Economic Union a weak organization where rules do not work and basic principles are not observed. Kyrgyzstan was pushed to join the EAEU not on its own initiative and did not receive significant dividends.

3.2 The factor of authoritarian regimes

The history of international relations both in ancient and in modern times has a key feature. It is always common for different countries to have allied or close relations with another group of countries that are closer to them ideologically, economically or for any other reason. In the 20th century, the main ideological confrontation was democracy / liberalism against communism / socialism and in the world political map the first ideology won. The main ideological confrontation of the 21st century are democracy in its direct sense (USA, EU, Japan, Australia) and totalitarian democracy, where the authorities seek to control society (Russia, CIS countries, countries of Africa, Venezuela).

Countries that belong to these two groups tend to cooperate among themselves, for authoritarian countries it allows to hold power in the hands of one person, political party or clans (family or oligarchic). When researching the case of the Eurasian Economic Union it turns out that member countries belong to a group with totalitarian democracy. According to Democracy index 2016, only Kyrgyzstan has a hybrid regime with an index of 4.93 out of 10. All other countries of union belong to the group of authoritarian regimes. (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2017).

Kazakhstan (index 3.06)

Nursultan Nazarbayev stays in power from 1989 when he became first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR, and since December 16, 1991 he was declared the president of the independent republic of Kazakhstan. The first constitution

of the country, adopted in 1993, gave the right to elect the President for 5 years by popular vote, the restriction was in 2 terms. However, since then, more than 5 changes in the constitution have been carried out, each of which has changed the period, the number of years and the age limits for the president of the country. Today, the president of Kazakhstan could be elected for 5 years for 2 terms, but Nursultan Nazarbayev has the status of the leader of the nation under the constitution and has the right to be elected for unlimited number of terms. The usurpation of democratic institutions in Kazakhstan has transformed it into an authoritarian state, where power is concentrated in the hands of one person.

Russia (index 3.24)

In the theoretical part of the work it has already been researched that the country has shifted from liberalism to realism since Vladimir Putin has come to power. As a result of the end of the 2 term of office, the power in the country passed to Putin's closest associate Dmitry Medvedev. As a result of amendments to the country's constitution in 2008, the term of office of the president increased from 4 to 6 years. Russia has a system where the power is concentrated in the hands of one person, but Putin encourages oligarchy and corruption. There are billionaires from the list of Forbes among his friends of childhood and youth: the brothers Rotenbergs, Gennady Timchenko, Sergei Roldugin, Yuri Kovalchuk, and others.

Belarus (index 3.54)

After gaining independence, there was no presidency institution in the country. The first presidential elections were held in 1994 and Alexander Lukashenko won in the second round. In 2006, an amendment to the constitution was adopted, which removed restrictions on the number of presidential terms. Alexander Lukashenko took part in the presidential elections five times and the power has been concentrated around him until today.

Armenia (index 3.88)

The situation in Armenia is slightly different, since there is political diversity in the country and power is not concentrated in the hands of one person. since 1998 the power in the country is concentrated in the hands of the Karabakh clan. Second Armenian President Robert

Kocharian was the president of the self-proclaimed Karabakh Republic from 1994 to 1997. However, this did not prevent him from becoming the president of Armenia in 1998. Under his rule the current President Serzh Sargsyan managed to work as the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Defense (2000-2007) and the Prime Minister (2007-2008).

Kocharyan's confidence in Sargsyan is not accidental, they were both born in Stepanakert in 1954 and both are from the Karabakh region. Since assuming the presidency of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan transferred the country from semi-authoritarian to authoritarian regime. In 2015 he initiated a referendum on the transition of governance from the presidential system to the parliamentary. His term ends in 2018 and the next president will be elected by the parliament. Such casting will allow Serzh Sargsyan to become prime minister after the presidential term and continue to lead the state.

Kyrgyzstan (index 4.93)

Kyrgyzstan is in the middle of the rating and it could not be called a democratic or an authoritarian country. Since independence, six presidents have been replaced in the country. However, the first president of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, ruled the country for 3 terms and in 2005, in the wake of the tulip revolution, fled the country to Russia. The reason for the revolution was the falsification of elections, constitutional changes and the building of a family-clan management system. In the wake of the revolution, Kurmanbek Bakiyev came to power, who was also overthrown after the revolution in 2010. After these events, the term of office of the president was set at 6 years with no opportunity to run for a second term.

Summary

The study of the form of government in the member countries showed that authoritarianism is inclined to all countries. Kyrgyzstan removed the totalitarian regime, but only the next years will show how successful the path to the formation of full democracy will be. Totalitarian democracy is characteristic for all other countries, when parliamentary and the presidential elections are conducted with obvious violations and falsifications. The population of these countries does not take any part in the decisions of the authorities; the political party

system is dominated by a single ruling party; the mass media is under the control of the state; there is lack of fair courts; the rights and freedoms of citizens are being violated.

The listed facts are characteristic to the EAEU countries and, in conditions of authoritarianism, rapprochement with Western countries is fraught with negative consequences for the leaders of the EAEU members. The leaders of small countries are ready to accept Russia as a big brother because of the fear of losing power, and from time to time accept Putin's proposals that do not correspond to the interests of their countries. It is also important for Vladimir Putin that the current leaders of Armenia, Kazakhstan and Belarus stay in power, since they have been in close contact with him for a long time. In case the leaders of these countries change, the changes in the political course are also possible and this will not suit Russia.

All members of the union are acting as a non-systemic opposition political alliances, which are inclined to carry out global reforms in the field of administrative management, forms of government, fighting corruption and a deeper partnership with Western countries. Considering that there was a pluralism of power in Russia during Yeltsin's rule, the activity of the non-systemic opposition is higher. Alexei Navalny acts as the leader of the non-systemic opposition. In Belarus and Kazakhstan there was no pluralism from the day of the obtaining of sovereignty, therefore any activity of the opposition is persecuted at the stage of its inception.

Thus, it can be concluded that the leaders of authoritarian regimes created the Eurasian Union and if in the future the regime changes in one of the countries in favor of a democratic rule, the functioning of the organization may be violated. In the case of democratic reforms in Russia, the existence of the EAEU could be completely paralyzed.

3.3 The status of unrecognized territories

The legal status of these territories is the subject of discussion. The Eurasian Economic Union positions itself as an equal organization in the post-Soviet space. Consequently, the organization should have unified borders recognized by all participating countries. However, it

is difficult to imagine a more silent topic for the EAEU than the status of the Crimea and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Crimea

Russia annexed the Crimea on March 21, 2014. In terms of international law, this territory is considered as part of Ukraine. The UN General Assembly adopted resolution 68/262, which confirms the territorial integrity of Ukraine and does not recognize the holding of a referendum on March 16, 2014. However, it is necessary to consider the status of the peninsula within the union. Based on the official documents of the EAEU, Crimea is the territory of the Russian Federation and it is designated as part of Russia in all the maps of the Eurasian Economic Union. 11 checkpoints across the external border of the EAEU exist on the territory of the Republic of Crimea. One more border point exists on the territory of Sevastopol, the city of federal significance. These points are also customs control posts from where goods could be sent or received. (Eurasian Economic Commission).

There are only six countries, recognizing the Crimean peninsula as part of Russia: Afghanistan, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea and Syria. No of the EAEU members except Russia recognized Crimea officially as a Russian territory, there is no official documentary confirmation of this. The leaders of these countries want to maintain friendly relations with Ukraine, they often make vague statements about Crimean status and try to avoid discussing this issue in every possible way.

In 2016, there was a case in the city of Pavlodar, Kazakhstan when the tax authorities of the city asked the local company for a customs declaration and demanded to pay a duty for the import of goods from the Crimea. The tax authority indicated in the letter to the entrepreneur that the Republic of Kazakhstan is not recognizing the territory of the Crimea and taxes should be paid in accordance with the requirements for trade with third countries. (Maricheva, 2016).

Nagorno-Karabakh

The situation with Nagorno-Karabakh is more complicated. Armenia occupied Karabakh during the war with Azerbaijan in 1992-1994, however the self-proclaimed republic has not been recognized by any country in the world, including Armenia itself. Legally, this means that a customs point should be established between Armenia and the self-proclaimed

republic. Nursultan Nazarbayev at the EAEU summit in May 2014 stated that Armenia could enter the union with the internationally recognized borders. Later, the Armenian Foreign Ministry announced that a border checkpoint will be established between Armenia and Karabakh.

However, the border crossing point has not yet been established. Armenia has 7 customs points (4 on the border with Georgia, 1 with Iran and 2 at Yerevan and Gyumri airports). (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2015). Thus, goods and labor from unrecognized territories could freely enter the EAEU market, which these territories themselves do not recognize.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

After Russia's military campaign against Georgia in 2008, Abkhazia and South Ossetia received recognition from Russia. The sovereignty of these self-proclaimed states was also recognized by Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru. As can be seen, the remaining members of the Eurasian Union are not represented in this list and therefore the union does not have a specific or unified position on this territorial issue, and this confirms the weakness of the organization as a single mechanism.

Russia, in contrast to Armenia, has checkpoints on the borders with Abkhazia and South Ossetia and all goods pass through the standard procedure of customs clearance. However, this does not mean that goods from unrecognized territories cannot get to the shelves of Kazakhstan or Belarus.

More than 90% of the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have Russian passports and it was the main reason why Russia inducted its troops to the territory of Georgia - to protect its citizens. (Artman, 2014). In the long run, this has the effect of a delayed bomb, as rumors are already going around in Abkhazia and South Ossetia about joining Russia. Anatoly Bibilov, president of South Ossetia, in June 2017 said that the referendum on joining Russia would take place sooner or later. (RIA Novosti, 2017). Such a policy towards Georgia is another evidence of the Kremlin's realism policy.

Summary

The existence of four territorially controversial issues within the organization indicates that the union has no clear boundaries and ignores compliance with its own regulations. The small states did not recognize the Crimea as a purely Russian territory, but the pressure from Russia forces them to close the eyes on this question. The same situation is characteristic for the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia had levers of pressure on Armenia and could promote the construction of a border point, but it is advantageous for Russia to manipulate with this conflict and to keep this issue in a frozen position as long as possible. For Russia, this conflict is becoming a subject of bargaining in relations with Azerbaijan.

Problems with these territories is a vivid example of the fact that the EAEU is an imitation of fair organization. The voice of Russia is dominant, while the position of other countries is not considered with seriousness. Belarus and Kazakhstan are more worried about the annexation of the Crimea, as an impressive share of the Russian-speaking population live in these countries. In this regard, the recognition of the Crimea is contrary to their security policy. However, the borders of the EAEU make the Crimea legitimate for all member states even if this against their will.

Separately should be noted that Russia often uses the instrument of naturalization of the Russian population. Several thousands of Russian passports have been issued on the territory of Transnistria, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic States. Distribution of Russian passports is carried out in advance and, as the experience of South Ossetia and Crimea has shown, Russia introduces troops under the pretext of protecting the Russian population and Russian citizens. In the future, this can have a major impact on territorial integrity of Kazakhstan or Belarus.

4. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Eurasian Economic Union was created too quickly and many aspects are not properly organized, the organization does not have unanimous borders, there is no unanimous sanctions policy towards the West and this leads to a rise of re-export of Western sanctions goods through Belarus and Kazakhstan. Member states do not have a common access to energy and transport system. The organization lacks strict compliance with legislation and large countries often put pressure on small member states. All this is happening amid worsening democracy index, increasing corruption index and authoritarianism in the EAEU.

Therefore, the expansion and development of the organization is possible in two parallel ways. The first one is territorial expansion, where the post-Soviet countries should predominantly enter. The second is the expansion of economic cooperation aimed at stimulating the economy of the EAEU. The signing of a free trade agreement with a number of countries may be among these measures.

Territorial expansion

It is possible to conclude that a harmoniously working union will be difficult to create realizing the nature of modern Russian politics and ideology. In this regard, the Eurasian Economic Union is the complete opposite of the European Union, where the laws operate at a high level and where exist a more equal structure. Undoubtedly, with such existing problems, the enlargement of the union could turn into a difficult task. However, the conducted economic and political analysis shows that countries do not always enter based on a mutually beneficial agreement, especially small members, whose risks are very high.

The ideas promoted by Vladimir Putin are reminiscent of the restoration of the Soviet Union, but this time the moderate Eurasianism serves as an ideology. Russia does not aim at

instilling the ideology of Eurasianism in the minds of post-Soviet states citizens, this should not resemble the methods of the USSR with forced promotion of communism. However, it is very important to Putin that these people perceive Eurasianism as a territorial community where societies of different nationalities and confessions can live peacefully.

Potential expansion may be extended to all countries of Middle Asia and Azerbaijan, they share similar political atmosphere as in the EAEU states: authoritarianism in governance, lack of political competition, lack of diversified economy, low level of welfare. It is very important to maintain power and stability on national borders for the leadership of these countries and they are most receptive to Russian influence. The head of the customs service of Tajikistan reported in 2016 that a special government group is studying the question of joining the union. (Asia-Plus, 2017).

Expansion of economic cooperation

The Kremlin will take steps to stimulate the economy and increase trade with non-CIS countries for the long-term existence of the organization and for the level of satisfaction of member states. One of the measures may be signing the agreements on free trade.

Today, the EAEU has free trade with Uzbekistan, Moldova and Ukraine. They came into force before the union had been created in the framework of the free trade agreement of the CIS countries. However, the situation with Ukraine is specific. Russia suspended the free trade agreement with Ukraine, as Ukraine signed Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU and it could lead to a situation when European goods can enter the territory of the union without taxes. However, other members of the Union did not suspend agreements with Ukraine, and this proves once again that there is no unanimity in the EAEU and the organization stays on unstable track.

The EAEU has also free trade with Vietnam since October 5, 2016. Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus have a free trade zone with Serbia, and now the process of unification of the agreement is going to cover the entire space of the EAEU and extend the agreement to Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

The main difference between economic and territorial expansion of the EAEU is that in economic expansion advanced trade countries and organizations could be considered as potential partners such as China or ASEAN. In this case, there is no method of political

similarity between Russia and potential partners and the relations can be developed with most of countries in the world. The main task will be to expand the trade diversification of the EAEU in order to drive economic benefits.

Geopolitics

Vladimir Putin pays close attention to such a concept as geopolitics, control over the territory and the alteration of spheres of influence, which are one of the vectors of the Kremlin's foreign policy. Based on geopolitics, Putin will try to build the best relations with authoritarian and anti-Western regimes around the world. In addition, Putin's geopolitics means involving countries into their sphere of interest.

Russia's foreign policy activity in the west has shown its unsuccessfulness and Putin lost Ukraine in this direction, which has always been considered the sphere of influence of Russia. The support of extreme left and extreme right European parties of Russia also does not lead to significant changes. Consequently, Putin attaches great importance to the south direction.

For instance, it is extremely advantageous for Russia to shake the more or less democratic Turkey to a more authoritarian one. All support will be provided to any Turkish leadership who will be ready to abandon the idea of joining the EU and in the long term to withdraw from NATO. In addition to that, Russia is interested in building strong relations with Iran. In this direction, it is expected to complete the North-South railway project, which will connect Russia and Iran, and later the Baltic countries and India, with direct railroad communication. (Nazarli, 2017).

Geopolitics will play an important role in the development of the Eurasian Economic Union, as with provided Russia's policy, a range of countries will be established with which partnership or tense relations will be maintained. The EAEU member states will not be able to play a significant role in building independent relations and will directly or indirectly observe Russian interests.

CONCLUSION

The Eurasian Economic Union is a relatively new organization on a political map that has gone through several levels of integration, but still has the prospect of growing into the highest degree of integration - a political union with the parliament and common currency. The leading link in the development and functioning of the organization is Russia, the current president of which relies on the ideology of Eurasianism in its moderate territorial understanding.

As a result of the conducted economic analysis, it was revealed that economically for Russia, the EAEU does not represent an impressive positive growth of its economy and the union can not be put in economic comparison not only with the EU, but also with ASEAN or MERCOSUR, as there no large players among its members. For the remaining countries, the integration project is ambiguous. On the one hand, borders open for the free movement of labor and capital, countries gain access to the ocean and large market. On the other hand, member countries risk losing part of their sovereignty and playing a lesser role in foreign policy. The growth of the trade turnover of these countries with Russia indicates the lack of diversification in the international market and the long-term focus on Moscow. Furthermore, the EAEU has weak institutions and an inefficient legal framework, which does not allow countries to assert their rights in the court of the EAEU.

The imperfection of the economic mechanisms of the EAEU and the dominant role of Russia lead to the fact that the project was implemented in the geopolitical interests of the Kremlin and does not imply improving the welfare of states. In the political aspect, the project is needed to strengthen Russia's sphere of influence in the territory of the post-Soviet countries and make it unlikely that these countries will turn to the west or into China's sphere of influence. In general, the EAEU is built and based on the enthusiasm of authoritarian regimes and as soon as in some of the countries power changes to a democratic one, the continued participation of

this country in the EAEU will be called into question. If the democratic regime is established on the territory of Russia, then the functioning of the union will cease altogether.

The Eurasian Economic Union is an organization strongly influenced by Russia, where it builds foreign and domestic policies and where the role of other countries is minimized. Russia subsidizing all members except Kazakhstan and it allows these countries to remain loyal to the Kremlin and maintain the level of approval of the union among citizens at a controlled level. All these factors indicate that the EAEU is Russia's tool in building a new modern imperialism under the ideology of Eurasianism.

The creation of the EAEU undoubtedly strengthens Russia's role in the international arena and this integration project is primarily a geopolitical goal of the Kremlin and does not seek to improve the welfare of member countries. Modern Russian imperialism is very much connected with geopolitics, economic and political absorption of post-Soviet countries. Therefore, the primary task for Moscow is to unify as much as it possible CIS countries under the EAEU umbrella.

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