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RISKS AND PROSPECTS OF KAZAKHSTAN'S PARTICIPATION IN EAEU UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF MODERN POLITICAL SITUATION

Integration is becoming the leading trend in the development of the world system. In today's global world, individual countries have less chance of effective participation in world processes, while countries acting together with their partners in the format of common integration projects receive new opportunities to increase the efficiency of their activities. The modern system of international relations is characterized by such features as increasing the importance of the regional level, strengthening the role of regions, the active creation of regional associations or even integration associations, and cooperation between regions.

Nowadays, the study of the problems of integration cooperation of Kazakhstan with other international actors in the Eurasian space is becoming particularly acute. Political and international problems and shifts arising at the top table of world affairs do not bypass the Eurasian region, which affects the interests of international actors of the Eurasian space.

The ongoing global changes, global crises, geopolitical disagreements and conflicts negatively affect the integration structures and their further development. The political-economical situation of the EAEU against the background of recent geopolitical changes requires special attention. The potential expansion of the EAEU, the conflicts of the participating countries with other international actors, financial crises have a tremendous bearing on the international policy of the member countries of the Union and raises many questions about the prospects for the development of this association.

Moreover, the worldwide geopolitical and economic crises affects on functioning and state of the integration projects. Hence, the purpose of the study is to analyze existing conditions of EAEU and factors, risks, prospects of Kazakhstan's participation in EAEU under the conditions of modern political reality and instability. The authors conclude that according to analysis the greatest risk for Kazakhstan within EAEU structure is political risk. Political risk prevails over economic one and causes the greatest concerns. Moreover, authors give different prospects as to EAEU development.

Key words: integration unions, EAEU, integration risks, integration prospects, customs union, trade market.

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Қазіргі саяси жағдайға Қазақстанның ЕАЭО-ға қатысуының тәуекелдері мен болашағы

Интеграция әлемдік жүйенің дамуында жетекші тенденцияға айналып отыр. Қазіргі жаһандық әлемде жекелеген елдердің әлемдік үдерістерге тиімді қатысу мүмкіндігі аз болса, ортақ интеграциялық жобалар форматында өз әріптестерімен бірлесіп әрекет ететін елдер өз қызметінің тиімділігін арттырудың жаңа мүмкіндіктерін иеленуде. Қазіргі халықаралық қатынастар жүйесі аймақтық деңгейдің маңыздылығын арттыру, аймақтар рөлін күшейту, аймақтық бірлестіктерді немесе интеграциялық бірлестіктерді белсенді құру, аймақтар арасындағы ынтымақтастық сияқты белгілермен сипатталады.

Қазіргі уақытта Қазақстанның еуразиялық кеңістіктегі басқа халықаралық субъектілермен интеграциялық ынтымақтастығы мәселелерін зерттеу ерекше өткір мәселе болып отыр. Саяси және халықаралық проблемалар мен әлемдік істердің жоғарғы үстелінде туындайтын өзгерістер еуразиялық аймақты да айналып өтпейді, бұл Еуразиялық кеңістіктің халықаралық субъектілерінің мүдделерін қозғайды.

Жүріп жатқан жаһандық өзгерістер, жаһандық дағдарыстар, геосаяси келіспеушіліктер мен қақтығыстар интеграциялық құрылымдарға және олардың одан әрі дамуына кері әсерін тигізіп отыр. Соңғы геосаяси өзгерістер аясында ЕАЭО-ның саяси-экономикалық жағдайы ерекше

назар аударуды қажет етеді. ЕАЭО-ның әлеуетті кеңеюі, қатысушы елдердің басқа халықаралық субъектілермен қақтығыстары, қаржылық дағдарыстар Одаққа мүше елдердің халықаралық саясатына орасан зор әсер етеді және осы бірлестіктің даму перспективалары туралы көптеген сұрақтар тудырады.

Сонымен қатар әлемдік геосаяси және экономикалық дағдарыстар интеграциялық жобалардың жұмыс істеуі мен жағдайына әсер етуде. Демек, зерттеудің мақсаты – ЕАЭО-ның қолданыстағы шарттарын және қазіргі саяси шындық пен тұрақсыздық жағдайында Қазақстанның ЕАЭО-ға қатысуының факторларын, тәуекелдерін, перспективаларын талдау. Авторлар талдау бойынша Қазақстан үшін ЕАЭО құрылымындағы ең үлкен тәуекел – саяси тәуекел деген қорытындыға келді. Саяси тәуекел экономикалық тәуекелден басым және үлкен алаңдаушылық тудырады. Сонымен қатар авторлар ЕАЭО дамуының түрлі перспективаларын ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: интеграциялық одақтар, ЕАЭО, интеграциялық тәуекелдер, интеграциялық перспективалар, Кеден одағы, сауда нарығы.

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Риски и перспективы участия Казахстана в ЕАЭС в условиях современной политической ситуации

Интеграция становится ведущей тенденцией развития мировой системы. В условиях современного глобального мира страны-одиночки имеют меньше шансов на эффективное участие в мировых процессах, тогда как страны, выступающие совместно со своими партнерами в формате общих интеграционных проектов, получают новые возможности для повышения эффективности своей деятельности. Современной системе международных отношений характерны такие особенности, как повышение значения регионального уровня, усиление роли регионов, активное создание региональных объединений или даже интеграционных объединений, сотрудничество между регионами.

Современные глобальные процессы в области построения новой архитектуры мирового экономического рынка привлекают внимание к создаваемым интеграционным объединениям. В настоящее время ЕАЭС является одним из динамично развивающихся экономических интеграционных объединений на евразийском пространстве. Союз является международной организацией региональной экономической интеграции, обладающей международной правоспособностью и компетенцией.

В настоящее время изучение проблем интеграционного взаимодействия Казахстана с другими международными акторами в евразийском пространстве приобретает особую остроту. Политические и международные проблемы и сдвиги, возникающие на мировой авансцене, не обходят стороной евразийский регион, что отражается на интересах международных акторов евразийского пространства. Происходящие мировые изменения, глобальные кризисы, геополитические разногласия и конфликты негативно влияют на интеграционные структуры и их дальнейшее развитие. Политико-экономическое положение ЕАЭС на фоне последних геополитических изменений требует особого внимания. Потенциальное расширение состава ЕАЭС, конфликты стран-участниц с другими международными акторами, финансовые кризисы имеют огромное влияние на международную политику стран-участниц Союза и порождает немало вопросов о перспективах развития данного объединения.

Более того, геополитические и экономические кризисы во всем мире влияют на функционирование и состояние интеграционных проектов. Целью данного исследования является анализ существующих условий ЕАЭС, в также факторов, рисков, перспектив участия Казахстана в ЕАЭС в условиях современной политической реальности и нестабильности. Авторы приходят к выводу, что, согласно анализу, наибольшим риском для Казахстана в структуре ЕАЭС является политический риск. Политический риск преобладает над экономическим и вызывает наибольшие опасения. В данной статье также авторами рассмотрены примерные направления развития ЕАЭС при сложившейся политической и экономической ситуации.

Ключевые слова: интеграционные объединения, ЕАЭС, интеграционные риски, интеграционные перспективы, таможенный союз, торговый рынок.

Introduction

In modern geopolitical structure EAEU is one of the most important integration systems in post-Soviet area. Organization expansion, military-political conflicts in post-Soviet area, global crises and other factors directly affect the member countries of integration association and raise many questions about the future of EAEU. Kazakhstan is one of the key members of Union, and these processes directly affect it.

Scientific-research works dedicated to the issue of Eurasian integration in Kazakhstan, Russian and post-soviet community countries are characterized through high level of intensity due to relevance and novelty of this issue.

Especially useful are scientific developments of such modern Russian scientists as Y.V. Vinokurov[1], Y.V. Kossov[2], S. Lantsov[3] and other. These authors studied the problematics of CIS development.

One of originator of the Eurasianism is the first President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – N.A. Nazarbayev, whose articles, monographs, addresses, speeches made a great contribution into this work. Special place is occupied by the book “On the threshold of XXI century”, which highlights the challenges in the early nineties, political transformations, willed decisions of the President [4].

Also it is necessary to especially highlight program articles of leaders of Russia – V.V. Putin [5] “New integration project for Eurasia – future being born today” and Belarus – A.G. Lukashenko [6] “About future of our integration”.

Among Kazakhstan researchers the scientific works of V.Y. Dodonov [7], N.K. Isingarín [8], K.G. Sheryazdanova [9], S.K. Kushkumbayev [10], M.T. Laumulin [11], T.A. Mansurov[12] and other can be mentioned. These authors study the issues of integration cooperation of CIS countries as well as issues of regional economic integration.

Formation of economic association within Eurasian area initially pursued one goal – creating conditions for development of national economies of member states. For sure each country had its own specific expectations from joining EAEU. Main expectation of all three countries was associated with increase in exports to common market. Kazakhstan and Belarus initially expected the rise of national economies through access to 180 million market. In particular Belarus counted on unhindered access to oil, oil products and gas. Kazakhstan was counting on quick economic gains. However, many data in-

dicating that Russia pursued more geopolitical goals than economic ones.

To begin with, it is necessary to understand how the expansion of market for goods could provide advantage for the countries participating in Customs Union (hereinafter – CU).

According to Taybekuly A., the first advantage lies in facilitating access for Kazakh producers to Russian and Belarusian markets for finished goods. Secondly, for example, for production of complex products, huge number of intermediate commodity items are needed, absence of custom duties could facilitate their greater availability from CU countries [13].

According to some sources, before Kazakhstan joined EAEU, assessments of this event were assessed differently by experts. It was assumed by the experts in international studies that the membership of Kazakhstan in the EAEU should have optimistic impact on Kazakhstan's trade market through:

- attracting foreign international investment by producing advanced goods in this area;
- improving export to EAEU members, hence, decreasing the vulnerability of national economy;
- strengthening EAEU bodies in order to decrease interdependence on global market;
- realizing of four freedoms (labor, goods, human capital, services) EAEU partner countries;
- minimize the cost of goods and services in order to raise competitiveness of Kazakhstan in both markets (internal, external);
- accelerate the active participation of Kazakhstan in global market”.

Unfortunately, there were particular threats and risks which were caused by the participation of Kazakhstan in EAEU:

- suppression of national producers by competitors from EAEU partner countries;
- leakage of highly qualified personnel to countries with better working conditions and higher wages;
- occurrence of dependence of Kazakh financial institutions on large Russian banks as part of the formation of joint financial market or on large foreign investments from outside EAEU;
- need to obey supranational institutions of economic regulation within the framework of integration process” [14].

These risks largely depended on the degree of integration of Kazakhstan into EAEU, as well as on the processes taking place within the framework of integration formation.

The former General Secretary of EurAsEC Mansurov T. assumed that the first years of economic

integration brought to our country worthwhile effect and that most of the threats were exaggerated [15].

According to Kazakh economist Kazhyken M., Kazakhstan faces number of risks:

- risk of restoring ties in the field of technology interrupted in Soviet era with the Russian side, which could “restore” the raw material specialization of Kazakhstan;
- risk of loss of financial sovereignty as a result of integration of banking systems of EAEU countries and implementation of single monetary policy, as well as impact of sanctions on the Russian economy;
- risk of turning into zone for supply of “outdated” machines and equipment from the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus;
- risk of excessive growth in dependence of Kazakhstan economy on the Russian one [16].

The purpose of the study is to find out real risks and threats of Kazakhstan’s participation in EAEU in the conditions of new geopolitical changes which directly affects on economy of integration organizations and the attempt to predict further development of the EAEU.

Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives

The purpose of this study is to analyze the participation of Kazakhstan in the EAEU, what changes brings to the EAEU the global political situations and how it affects on Kazakhstan as a part of EAEU.

The objectives of the authors of this study are:

- to analyze the modern state of the EAEU and its influence on Kazakhstan;
- to identify the possible risks and threats of Kazakhstan as a member of the EAEU;
- to conduct an expert survey in order to predict scenarios for the development of the EAEU.

Research methodology

A row of methodological approaches was used with the purpose of studying and analyzing the risks and prospects of Kazakhstan’s participation in EAEU under the conditions of modern political situation.

The following article is based on the Desk Research method, which refers to collecting information from open sources. To address posed research questions, we analyzed the survey findings and statistical data carried out by government institutions and international organizations, such as Eurasian Development Bank (hereinafter – EDB) and Eurasian Economic Commission.

Moreover, an important role in studying of this issue is assigned by the authors to sociological method – expert polling. The authors has developed a questionnaire consisting of 10 questions. The polling involved domestic experts studying the issue of the Republic of Kazakhstan regional integration and foreign policy. Total number of experts was more than 30 persons. Through this questionnaire experts were polled by issues of efficiency of functioning unions, the main emphasis was made on EAEU, prospects and tendencies of development of this project, possible risks and threats.

Results and discussion of the study

According to survey results conducted by authors of the paper, among answers about the risks of Kazakhstan’s membership in EAEU, more than half of experts considered that Russia’s dominance in all parameters of cooperation should be considered the main threat. Every fifth respondent fears the loss of independence and non-competitiveness of local producers. Also, the category of most frequent risks included “rise in price of goods”, “drop in external exports” and “loss of single national currency”.

Table 1 – Distribution of answers to question: “What risks and threats does membership in EAEU bring for Kazakhstan?”

Answer options	Quantity	Percentage
Russia's dominance in all spheres of cooperation	19	57,6
Threat of loss of independence	7	21,2
Lack of competitiveness of local producers	7	21,2
Rising prices for goods	4	12,1
Reduction in external exports	3	9,1
Loss of single national currency	3	9,1
Deterioration of standard of living of the population	2	6,1
Aggravation of migration problem within labor market	1	3,0
Loss of national identity	1	3,0
Difficult to answer	2	6,1

Note:
 1. The sum of the values in “Percentage” column is not equal to 100%, because Respondents could select more than one option.
 2. Compiled by author based on results of the survey.

According to results of the survey, respondents tend to see more political risks and threats in membership in EAEU rather than economic ones. Issues of national security come to the fore, including loss of sovereignty. This approach is characteristic of political scientists who proceed from protection of country's national interests. Kazakh officials and experts have always been worrying of Russia's geopolitical goals. Kazakh side has repeatedly made statements that Kazakhstan only stands for the development of economic ties. In our opinion, these fears are justified, since even at the stage of creating EAEU Treaty, the first versions of draft contained proposals of political nature from Russia. Deputy Foreign Minister Ordayev S. pointed out on this issue in due time that Kazakhstan tried to avoid politicization as much as possible and questions relating to common currency, citizenship, foreign policy, etc. were excluded [17].

Separate political risk for existence and effective functioning of EAEU is the threat of the Taliban in Afghanistan and beyond. Deputy Director of Institute of CIS Countries Zharikhin V. believes that Russia's allies in EAEU and CSTO can take active part in reconstruction of Afghanistan. Russian allies in CSTO and EAEU in Central Asia have their compatriots in Afghanistan. These are the Kyrgyz, and Tajiks, and Uzbeks, so these countries are actively involved in process of reconstruction of Afghanistan. And if Russia has the opportunity to help, primarily with investments, then the countries of Central Asia can help, for example, with labor for implementation of these projects" [18].

Possible violation of Kyrgyzstan borders by the Taliban will most likely put doubt on possibility of free movement of goods, services and especially labor and stop all logistics projects in this territory.

On the other hand, situation in Afghanistan increases the importance of SCO and, to a large extent, CSTO. "I think the answer is obvious," Foreign Minister Lavrov said. – We are allies with Tajikistan. An attack on Tajikistan from the territory of Afghanistan will be immediately considered through CSTO" [19]. The insecurity of borders due to withdrawal of US military poses a real threat to all countries of Central Asian region.

There is growing concern about "Chinese threat" in the Central Asian countries. For Kazakhstan this threat is manifested by dependence on neighboring imports, low potential of domestic production, lack of competitiveness of national enterprises, etc. Realizing the fear of Central Asian countries, China seeks to improve its image by promoting educational and cultural programs.

Another potential risk could be national security risks. Conflict situations between other EAEU members and third countries can negatively affect the country within international arena. A vivid example of this is the situation between Russia and the West. Kazakhstan is constantly in position to be drawn into political conflicts.

According to another EDB survey, which revealed among the countries participating in survey, which countries are considered the friendliest and capable of providing support to their country according to their population, one can see the answers of Kazakhstanis (Figure 1).

In Kazakhstan, the index of confidence in Uzbekistan increased by 9 percentage points (up to 24%) (trend towards improvement), the indicators in relation to Turkey (up to 18%) and China (up to 16%) increased by 7 percentage points, and by 6 percentage points – to Republic of Belarus, which amounted to 41%, and finally, the indicators of trust to Kyrgyzstan improved by 5 percentage points.

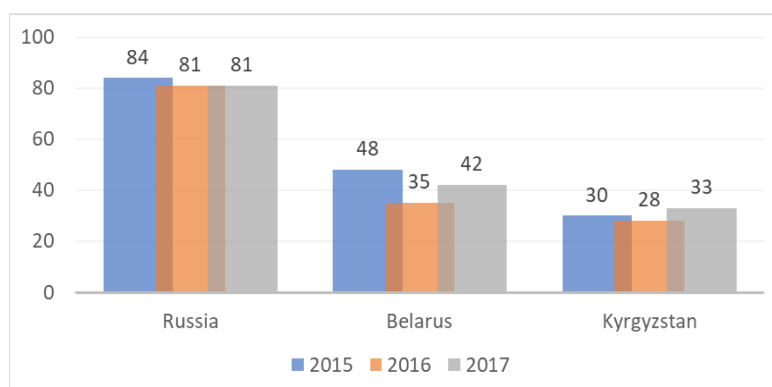


Figure 1 – The three most attractive countries for Kazakhstan for which the highest shares of preference were shown on average for 2015-2017.

Note – Compiled according to the source [20].

Threat to country development may also be posed by the individual strategies of EAEU possible applicant countries, which may not match with the main developed and implemented tasks of Eurasian integration;

– incoherence of economic models used by various post-Soviet states (strategy that involves relying on their own development resources);

– weakness or insufficient consolidation of political and power management institutions within some states – potential participants, which limits their ability to participate in integration and, more broadly, modernization processes within post-Soviet area;

– lack of proper level of political consensus among the elites of some countries – potential members of EAEU, which makes it difficult for them to choose integration strategy;

– incompleteness of formation of EAEU structures itself, designed to direct integration processes and ensure their high-quality content” [19].

Ensuring equality of EAEU member states also poses threat. In this matter the position and role of Russia, as dominant country, in preventing conditional center and periphery in EAEU system is important. The potential of Union member states cannot compete with initial data of Russia, since they are hardly comparable. Therefore, Russia should put forward mutually beneficial proposals for integrated development of socio-economic potential of participating countries and avoid some kind of “neo-imperial course” so as not to scare away and not lose partners.

Kazakhstan, as one of the main countries of the Union, feels all possible risks in being a member of association. But, for Kazakhstan possible risks and threats from membership in EAEU and difficulties in joining the Union could not tip the scales. Country has chosen the path of integration development and economic benefits.

The above-mentioned possible risks and threats for Kazakhstan are relevant at this time, however, further development of political and economic situation in world can demonstrate real results from participation in EAEU [21].

Analyzing further prospects for EAEU development, including Kazakhstan participation in it, one cannot abstract from global unprecedented situation regarding the spread of coronavirus infection, which has captured the whole world. This pandemic literally paralyzed all the mechanisms of world order,

which led, besides the great human losses, to disruption of global supplies, falling markets, unemployment and financial volatility. The service sectors (tourism, catering), transport industry, electronics sector, retail trade, mechanical engineering, energy industry, construction, agriculture, etc., suffered the most.

Business activity of EAEU member countries in the first half of 2020 decreased significantly. Work of most business entities was suspended due to strict self-isolation measures. Thus, the financial entities of Union countries suffered enormous losses. From the second half of 2020, countries gradually began to emerge from the “lockdown”. Economy of the region began to move towards recovery and out of the current situation. In its turn EAEU does not stand aside, and also reacts to process of economic recovery by restricting export from territory of participating countries of medical devices that are of high importance in preventing the virus spread and ensuring easy access of these goods to EAEU area, as well as food important goods.

Further development of EAEU requires adjustment of development strategy, taking into account the changing unstable political situation. The EAEU demands political, economic augmentation in order to increase the level of integration processes. Formation of sustainable regional policy will make it possible to better use the resources of states that are part of the EAEU.

All together EAEU as an integration project should be attractive to other candidate countries. It means that the strategy of the Union needs to be comprehensive and attractive to meet the expectations and requirements of new countries.

The past seven years of EAEU existing, showed us positive changes in economies of partner countries of the Union. EAEU meets significant assignments, successfully solving of them will lead EAEU to the new level of the global market.

EAEU faces number of important strategic tasks, implementation of which will allow moving to another level in system of world relations.

Experts answering questions about EAEU prospects chose the wording “State of EAEU will remain at current level without any changes” – 36,4%. Every fourth expert expects the expansion of union and the entry of other interested countries. At the same time, 12,1% of experts considered that EAEU would soon cease its activities as integration association.

Table 2 – Distribution of answers to question: “In your opinion, what kind of development does EAEU expect in future?”

Answer options	Quantity	Percentage
EAEU development up to creation of political integration with single currency system	2	6,1
Merging EAEU with China's “One Belt and One Road” Initiative	2	6,1
The state of EAEU will remain at current level without any changes	12	36,4
EAEU will cease its activities as integration association	4	12,1
EAEU expects expansion, entry of other interested countries	9	27,2
Stagnation of relations and distrust of EAEU participants.	1	3,0
For the success of this project, it is necessary to establish competitive industry within participating countries	1	3,0
Difficult to answer	2	6,1
Total	33	100,0
Note – compiled by author based on results of the survey.		

In general lack of unity in experts' opinion is to some extent explained by the influence of coronavirus pandemic, when supranational associations and organizations “went into shadows”. At the same time one can observe the strengthening of national governments, which, having closed the borders, tried to accumulate efforts to protect population. Moreover, some experts believe that Kazakhstan does not receive significant dividends from membership in integration associations.

As part of expert survey respondents were asked to form a forecast for development of union in the near future. When analyzing development scenarios, several positions dominated.

Scenario 1. “Development with caution”, which assumes gradual development up to the 4th–5th phase of integration. Union will last at least 10-15 years, and integration will take new forms in the future, taking into account regional competition from EU and China.

Scenario 2. Stagnation, including due to public perception. Project is causing more and more complaints among Kazakhstani population, perhaps strengthening the entrepreneurial lobby, which will block decisions that are inconvenient for them, which will come from Russia. Or, due to international sanctions and lack of proper political reforms, the Russian market is stagnating, there is no growth, there is no access to investments, and this directly affects all EAEU members.

Scenario 3. EAEU Expansion through entry of new members, possibly Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, further development of integration processes to-

wards establishment of uniform rules and formation of new markets and areas of development.

Scenario 4. Politicization of the union with Russia's attempts to “push” the single currency and deepen integration up to political unification.

Thus, future of the union is ambiguous from the point of view of experts. Both positive and negative scenarios are equally observed.

As positive overall integration effects expected in all Member States in the medium term, the following can be noted:

- enlarging the influence area of the EAEU (new members);
- increasing the level and quality of domestic goods, services;
- improving the attractiveness of countries to foreign investment;
- development of transport potential and logistics infrastructure;
- diminishing all barriers and restrictions in trade areas.

EAEU prospects are confirmed by Strategic Direction for Development of Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025, which was signed by the heads of state on December 11, 2020. Implementation of this strategy gives rise to the need to sign more than 13 international treaties, 60 internal regulatory legal acts of the Union, as well as introducing about 25 amendments and additions to the Treaty itself. Moreover, it caused documents' ratification by participating countries and introduction of changes in national legislation. Implementation of Strategy provides for accelerated development of national

economies through the growth of foreign direct investment and innovation activity.

Key strategy areas include:

1. Complete elimination of barriers and reduction of exemptions and restrictions for free movement of the four freedoms;

2. Improving efficiency of functioning of goods markets;

3. Improving customs regulation within the Union;

4. Ensuring quality assurance, safety of traded goods and proper protection of consumer rights;

5. Formation of Union digital area, digital infrastructures and ecosystems;

6. Development of flexible mechanisms for targeted assistance to economic development;

7. Building an effective system for managing joint cooperation projects and their financing, creating and developing highly productive sectors of the economy;

8. Combining efforts to stimulate joint research work;

9. Ensuring the most efficient Union institutional system, which guarantees implementation of adopted agreements;

10. Development of international relations in the field of healthcare system, labor market, culture, sport and education;

11. Building of the EAEU as an attractive, comprehensive centers of trade market.

The Council of Eurasian Economic Commission adopted plan for implementation of Strategic Directions for Development of Eurasian Economic Integration during meeting on April 5. Plan specifies specific activities for implementation of the Strategy, deadlines and responsible executors. Significant part of activities is planned to be implemented during 2021–2023.

One of the main directions of Strategy is digitalization of EAEU activities. Digitalization projects include: unified search system “Work without Borders”, Eurasian network of industrial cooperation, subcontracting and technology transfer, ecosystem of digital transport corridors of the EAEU, digital technical regulation within the Union. E-government is a form of digital economy, consisting of provision of services in the field of e-commerce, Internet banking, healthcare, education, etc. Such measures demonstrate potential in formation of single digital area of services.

In addition to internal expansion EAEU is also expanding cooperation with other supranational organizations. Possible subjects of cooperation include:

1) *SCO*. On September 17, 2021, in Dushanbe Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between secretariats of EAEU and SCO within the framework of SCO Summit [22]. According to EEC Chairman Myasnikov M., SCO-EAEU cooperation is in line with principles of all member states of both organizations. Memorandum provides for cooperation in the field of trade, transport, finance, information technology, digitalization of the energy sector, customs issues and much more.

2) “*One Belt and One Road*”. This project declared by the Chinese government will be implemented within the framework of Eurasian Economic Cooperation. The Chinese Initiative is an important part of Greater Eurasian Partnership.

“One Belt and One Road” Initiative will include not only transport issues, but also include issues of trade and economic cooperation.

3) *EU*. Eurasian Economic Union is aimed at strengthening the economic security and socio-cultural identity of its member states. In this sense, it is similar to European Union.

In recent years relations between the two unions have become more complicated due to sanctions measures taken by Western countries against Russia. Although EU remains one of the main foreign trade partners for EAEU. Despite political difficulties, representatives of the two unions periodically hold discussions, meetings and discuss issues for further development. For example, in 2019 a meeting was held between representatives of EAEU and EU, where issues related to Lisbon-Vladivostok project were discussed. Issues of customs and technical regulation, the taxation system, etc. are discussed during various negotiation platforms [23].

Due to tense relations, EU prefers to conclude bilateral agreements with individual countries of EAEU than with the Union itself. In 2015 EU signed an agreement on cooperation and partnership with Kazakhstan. Similar agreement was signed with Armenia in 2017 and with Kyrgyzstan in 2019 [24].

4) *MERCOSUR*. Peculiarity of relationship between the two integration blocs lies in mutual desire for cooperation. In 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the associations, where attention is paid to customs administration, digitalization, standardization and technical regulation issues. Another achievement was signing of memorandum of cooperation in the field of agro-industrial complex.

5) *ASEAN*. Both associations are open and ready for cooperation. In 2018, representatives of ASEAN and EAEU signed cooperation agreement that focuses on trade policy, energy, law enforcement practice and legislative framework. In the second half of 2019 the first interstate seminar was held with the involvement of experts from EAEU and ASEAN. Main agenda of the seminar was the issues of expanding foreign trade relations and the Greater Eurasia project.

As part of sociological survey, the experts were asked to assess prospects for implementing the idea of “integration of integrations” to establish cooperation between EAEU and EU. The vast majority of experts are confident in low probability of cooperation between the two unions due to large number of disagreements. 12,1% of experts are more optimistic and believe that mutual cooperation can be achieved by overcoming the conflict of interest.

Table 3 – Experts’ answers to question “In your opinion, what are the prospects for implementing the idea of “integration of integrations” to establish cooperation between EAEU and EU?”

Answer options	Quantity	Percentage
High probability of mutual cooperation (all differences can be overcome)	4	12,1
Low likelihood of cooperation (a lot of disagreements)	23	69,7
Possibility of cooperation is real, but there are difficulties	1	3,0
Difficult to answer	5	15,2
Total	33	100,0

Note – Compiled by author based on results of the survey.

By 2050 it is possible to work out and start implementing scenarios for deeper cooperation between EU and EAEU, on the one hand, and EAEU and China, on the other one, with the prospect of full continental integration.

Provided that the targeted use of soft power is activated within EAEU. EAEU project will gain great popularity among the population of EAEU countries themselves, their neighbors, and, possibly, in European countries. This can create foundation for further cooperation between EU and EAEU, provided that economic blockade of Russia is ended [24].

Conclusion

World practice shows that each integration formation develops faster than its predecessor, applying the accumulated experience. Therefore, despite unstable political and economic indicators, EAEU has all the prerequisites to develop faster than its European counterpart. Union initially had good start and pace of development, which slowed down in 2016–2017 and 2020. The first period of recession led to devaluation of currency, fall of national currencies, due to falling prices of energy and other

minerals. The second period was marked by worldwide pandemic which froze all economic mechanisms.

Therefore, there is a necessity to EAEU partners to build strong integration policy, which will let to systematic use of regional resources in all spheres of development.

Consequently, Kazakh model of integration focuses on multi-vector policy and integration of integrations. At the same time, the risks are: for EAEU – likelihood of remaining in state of stagnation due to lack of investment. New security challenges are strengthening integration processes, which will become more connected in the near future through EAEU integration with Chinese “One Belt and One Road” Initiative, EU and SCO.

According to analysis the experts have different prospects as to EAEU development. Over the six-years period of existence the EAEU probably did not produce expected economic benefits to countries-members nevertheless the results of the Union activity may not be nullified. Besides, the six-years period is an insufficient time indicator for drawing of any conclusions. As history shows the process of integration is always oriented at long-term time horizon.

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