

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE EAEU UNDER ANTI-RUSSIAN SANCTIONS

Yernur Tulakbayev

PhD student of Wuhan University, department of Political Science and Public Administration.

ABSTRACT: *This article deals with the political and economic implications of sanctions against Russia for the functioning of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which became operational in 2015. Assuming that the political conduct of EAEU states is based on political pragmatism, the author concludes that in spite of the fact that they provide official support to Eurasian integration, they also have an interest in acceding to alternative projects that strengthen their sovereignty. Therefore, the major challenge to the Union derives primarily from the political sphere since the number of alternatives to Eurasian integration is gradually increasing, disrupting relations between members and Russia. In this respect, the correlation between western sanctions and the EAEU's economic growth rate is of great importance. The principal purpose of sanctions is to limit a country's ability to pursue its independent and active policy, including the development of foreign economic projects. Consequently, anti-Russian sanctions must have influenced the EAEU and its key members. In 2016, Russia demonstrated a decrease in the gross domestic product (GDP) which had an even greater negative impact on Belarus and Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, they have not only managed to regain lost ground on economic performance, but also to achieve some growth in GDP. Such dynamics confirm the author's hypothesis that the members of the EAEU have room for maneuver if some external player influences their political and economic development. However, the EAEU's internal capacities for dynamic development should not be overestimated. The Union faces problems such as weak aggregate GDP in comparison with the leading world economies, low GDP growth rates in the member states, and a relatively low rate of EAEU population growth. In this context, the Union definitely needs to expand its economic influence in the global arena. Although EAEU states might have divergent interests, the author concludes that a pragmatic assessment of the benefits from participation in the Eurasian integration project, including the preservation of their identity and greater room for maneuver in their foreign trade and economic activities, remains the principal factor maintaining the integrity of the Union.*

KEYWORDS: Sanctions; sanctions policy; unilateral restrictive measures; Eurasian Economic Union; Eurasian integration; Russia; Belarus; Kazakhstan; Armenia; Kyrgyzstan.

INTRODUCTION

The Eurasian Economic Union, which has been operating since 2015 as the first project of comprehensive economic integration in the CIS space, has faced the need to develop solutions in the face of external sanctions pressure on one of the integration members - Russia. The rest of the countries were faced with the problem of finding the optimal model of interaction in the new realities, taking into account the manifestation of their own national interest, regardless of the Russian vision. Over the years of independence, each of the EAEU member states has developed their own experience of interaction with the countries - the authors of the sanctions actions against Russia, which posed the question of how to balance economic interests within the framework of

integration while simultaneously developing contacts with external players without prejudice to themselves.

The dependence of the economies of the EAEU member states on Russia does not allow them to distance themselves from Eurasian integration, and membership in the integration association makes it possible to neutralize the negative impact of external economic challenges. Moreover, the uniqueness of the development of the EAEU in the context of anti-Russian sanctions is determined, among other things, by the lack of equivalent and comparable examples of the development of integration projects in the context of sanctions pressure on one of the key members of the association.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

Today, much attention is paid to the problems of countries' sanctions influence each other in scientific and journalistic literature. The leading countries of the world began to actively use this tool, trying in response to the changing balance of power between states to make up for the sluggishness of the system of international law and mechanisms for maintaining international stability that arose in the second half of the 20th century.

The main task of the sanctions is to limit the possibilities of the country, which is targeted by the sanctions, to pursue an active independent foreign policy, including the development of foreign economic relations. Hence, the necessary consequences should be a change in the country's position on the world stage in the direction of a more controlled and dependent state and domestic political reform aimed at expanding the rights of civil society (understood in a broad universal way, without taking into account national specifics).

Leaving the ethics of such decisions aside, we note that, as part of a strategy for shaping an international development environment, such an approach can be effective, especially if one state manages to form a coalition of like-minded people to impose sanctions and isolate another state from access to international resources and developing ties with its traditional (or "like-minded") partners [Timofeev, 2018a].

The latter circumstance is especially important for the purposes of this work. Not all states in the world are "motivated" to follow the lead of the leading countries. Of great importance for a number of them may be the value of preserving their identity based on the historical heritage, the traditional perception of social relations (even if it does not meet the principles of economic efficiency in modern conditions). These principles are strengthened in the conditions of promising projects of interstate cooperation that are profitable from a logistic and resource-industrial point of view. Such conditions form the preconditions for regional integration, in which the relevant political elites may be interested.

Following this logic, regional integration creates an additional degree of freedom for each of the countries of the association in the event of a sanction impact on it from the states that are not members of the association. In this case, a quick complete isolation of one country is extremely difficult. Thus, participation in an integration association creates a room for maneuver for member countries in the event of an external negative impact on their political and economic development.

One of the striking examples of recent years is the reaction of the countries of the South American common market MERCOSUR to the internal political processes in Venezuela in the summer of 2017. Despite the decision to suspend Venezuela's membership in the integration association, no sanctions measures were taken.

In this context, the example of anti-Russian sanctions and the role of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in countering them looks quite indicative. However, a comprehensive study deserves the question of whether an economic union is a way of leveling the negative sanctions effect (from direct and reciprocal sanctions) and what is the attitude of the member states of the integration entity to such challenges. This question constitutes the key research problem of this article.

Despite the obvious connection between the development of Eurasian integration and liberal and institutional approaches to explaining the dynamics of relations between states of the same region, the actions of the EAEU member states clearly show a pragmatic approach to the Union in the spirit of the school of realism. And this is understandable since the states of the post-Soviet space from among the former republics of the USSR still feel the need to strengthen their own international political subjectivity, to work out various external and internal political development alternatives. Based on this need, they are ready to consider various options for interstate relations and contacts that will strengthen their position in the regional and global context. Taking this logic as a basis, this work uses the methodological analysis of the political behavior of the state within the EAEU. Based on the idea of the pragmatism of the foreign policy of the member states of the Union, we propose scenarios from the point of view of the greatest compliance with the national interests of each EAEU country in connection with the sanctions against Russia introduced in 2014. At the same time, the analysis of possible actions of Russia was not carried out, since the Russian side acts as a kind of independent variable that significantly determines the development of the EAEU.

Problems of the Eurasian Economic Union in modern conditions

The EAEU, conceived exclusively as a project of economic integration, is at the stage of forming a single economic space, within which it is planned to conduct a coordinated, coordinated and unified policy in various areas of economic regulation, as well as regulate various industries through the creation of single and common markets. One of the key tasks of the EAEU is the formation of sectoral common markets of the EAEU in the structure-defining areas of the economy, which in the future will become the basis for the formation of a common market for the Union [Kheifets, 2019].

The economic sanctions imposed on Russia in 2014 by Western countries actually became the first serious test for the EAEU. In the same 2014, Russia took countermeasures against Western countries that joined pressure on Russia (food embargo). They included a ban on the import of certain types of raw materials and food from countries that supported anti-Russian sanctions.

The agreement on the establishment of the EAEU was signed by the heads of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan at a time when the first restrictive measures were already in force against Russian politicians. And by the time of the actual launch of the EAEU on January 1, 2015, the sanctions lists had been significantly expanded due to the banking and financial sector, Russian industrial,

defense, raw materials, oil and gas companies. Western sanctions were applied to two EAEU member states: Russia and Belarus. As subsequent events showed, for Belarus, the sanctions' effect lasted until 2016, when the EU and Canada gradually lifted the sanctions against the country [Dolinin, 2017], and the United States suspended its restrictive measures. Thus, the sanctions imposed following the results of the presidential elections in Belarus in 2006 lasted for ten years, practically not having a significant impact on the country's economy. This is largely due to the low interdependence of the economy of Belarus with the economies of the United States, Canada and the EU. Anti-Russian sanctions, on the other hand, only gained momentum as a result of the developing Ukrainian crisis. Having appeared in relations between Russia and the West in 2014, sanctions have taken a strong position in the negotiation practice of the parties. Thus, against the backdrop of a developing new international integration association with the active and interested participation of Russia, more and more attention was paid by the EU, the US and other G7 countries to the impact on Russian policy through restrictive measures.

Against this background, the question of the strength of the Union is natural, in the functioning of which the role of the Russian economy, innovative solutions and opportunities for strengthening the international image of the EAEU, offered by Russia, are one of the decisive ones. Russia, as a member of the Eurasian integration project, faced the need to speed up the deepening of integration processes within the EAEU to develop alternative sources of economic development in the face of increased external pressure.

By the time the Eurasian integration project was officially launched, the aggregate GDP of the EAEU countries was \$ 1.632 trillion [EEC, 2014]. Compared to global indicators, this is quite modest. For example, the GDP of China alone in the same period, in 2015, was \$ 10.48 trillion [WB, n. d. a]. In Germany, in the same year this figure was \$ 3.38 trillion, in the UK - \$ 2.9 trillion, and in India - \$ 2.1 trillion [WB, n. d. b].

Table 1: The volume of GDP of the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2016–2020, million US dollars, in current prices

EAEU Member State	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Armenia	10 553	10 546	11 537	12 428	13 671
Belarus	55 317	47 478	54 413	59 585	63 231
Kazakhstan	184 387	137 278	162 887	172 939	170 326
Kyrgyzstan	6 678	6 813	7 565	8 093	8 312
Russia	1 374 665	1 285 713	1 577 870	1 660 950	1 610 381
<i>Total</i>	<i>1 631 600</i>	<i>1 487 829</i>	<i>1 814 272</i>	<i>1 913 995</i>	<i>1 865 921</i>

Source: [EEC, n. d. a].

Table 2: Dynamics of GDP growth in the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015–2019,% to the previous year, in current prices

EAEU Member State	2016 (compare to 2015)	2017 (compare to 2016)	2018 (compare to 2017)	2019 (compare to 2018)
Armenia	–0,07	9,40	7,72	1,2
Belarus	–14,17	14,61	9,51	7,6
Kazakhstan	–25,55	18,65	6,17	4,1
Kyrgyzstan	2,02	11,04	6,98	4,5
Russia	–6,47	22,72	5,27	1,3
<i>Total</i>	<i>–8,81</i>	<i>21,94</i>	<i>5,50</i>	<i>18,7</i>

Source: [EEC, n. d. a].

Analysis of the dynamics of changes in the GDP of the EAEU member states shows that the development of national economies has not been consistently positive, despite a noticeable increase in the GDP of the EAEU as a whole in 2015–2019. Formally stable growth was demonstrated by Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia have shown a noticeable interdependence in the dynamics of GDP. Following the drop in GDP in 2016 in all three countries, which is largely due to anti-Russian sanctions, economic growth has been outlined.

Thus, the EAEU, both at the start of its work, and later, it is vital to expand its international economic influence, search for new markets for its products. Despite the difficult geopolitical background, the Russian leadership is considering the possibility of combining the potentials of the EAEU with its largest partner markets - the European Union and China. In 2015, during negotiations between V. Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, it was decided to pair the EAEU with the Economic Belt of the Great Silk Road. In 2018, a non-preferential agreement on trade and economic cooperation was signed between the EAEU and China. This kind of rapprochement is the reaction of the parties (and above all, China itself) to the integration uncertainty and the primitivization of trade policy in the Western world, while the non-Western world is increasingly moving along the path of mega-regionalism [Spartak, 2019]. A free trade zone (FTA) agreement was signed with Vietnam and an interim agreement with Iran as a soft form of developing a network of contacts as opposed to full membership. A number of memorandums were signed between the EAEU and the governments of foreign states, which speaks of the prospects for the development of in-depth trade and economic relations with international partners. Mongolia, Chile, Peru, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Cambodia, Moldova, Greece, Jordan, Ecuador, Cuba, Faroe Islands, Thailand expressed their intention to cooperate. Such a strategy still reduces the effectiveness of the sanctions' impact on the member states. For some of the noted countries, this opportunity is practical, since they are affected by US sanctions.

In fact, the beginning of the functioning of the EAEU fell on anti-Russian sanctions. Realizing the likely impact of sanctions against Russia on the economies of all EAEU countries and potential participants in the association (as well as the curtailment of a full-fledged dialogue between Russia and most Western countries), other EAEU participants emphasized the exclusively economic nature of the Eurasian integration project, cutting off the political component. For example, among

the consistent adherents of economic interaction within the EAEU is Kazakhstan, whose leadership denies the transition to any other level of integration, except for the economic one [Mir24.tv, 2018]. This allowed the EAEU member countries to preserve the established trade and economic ties with Western countries, maintain and develop political relations with them in the tense geopolitical situation in 2014–2015. [Kuzmina, 2015].

Taking into account the uniqueness of the sanctions' impact on Russia as a member state of the EAEU, it can be assumed that this kind of experience has both positive and negative consequences for the entire Eurasian economic project.

Assessment of the consequences of the sanctions policy in relation to Russia in the context of Eurasian integration in 2015–2019.

Despite the difficult geopolitical conditions, political and economic pressure on one of the key members of the association, mutual interest in trade with each other among the EAEU countries is increasing, although this indicator remains extremely low. So, if by 2015 the volume of mutual trade amounted to 11.7% of the total volume of trade, then by 2019 this figure had grown to 14.5% [EEC, 2019]. In this case, it is difficult to say unequivocally that the sanctions played a decisive role in the growth of mutual trade. Perhaps their influence was rather informational and background for market participants from the EAEU countries. First of all, the policy pursued by the EEC to eliminate exemptions, mutual restrictions and barriers in the internal trade of the EAEU is of decisive importance, despite the fact that five years after the official launch of the EAEU, not all restrictions have been removed.

According to the EEC [EEC, 2019], 85.5% of the EAEU merchandise trade is foreign trade with third countries. Moreover, Russia has the highest indicator as a percentage of the total (91.1%). In second place is another key player in the EAEU - Kazakhstan (77.6%), in third place is Armenia (71%). The indicator of domestic trade over foreign is exceeded only by Belarus - 47.5% goes to the external market. If we turn to the EAEU statistics on the volume of mutual trade for January - December 2019, the figures are as follows. The volume of mutual trade amounted to 122.109 billion dollars. Russia remains the leader (48.3% of the total for the EAEU), in second place is Belarus (30% of the total for the EAEU) [EEC, n. d. b]. Russia is the leading exporter of its goods to the EAEU market (63.5%), and Belarus is the first in terms of imports (36.3%). In the case of Belarus, one can make the assumption that this statistics takes into account the goods re-exported from the EU countries, going to Russia already under the guise of Belarusian. Such statistics allow us to say that, despite the sanctions regime, the general negative geopolitical and economic background, trade with third countries significantly predominates, and the capacity of the intra-Eurasian market does not allow it to compensate for the market volumes that Russia first of all lost with the introduction of sanctions and counter-sanctions.

Mutual trade in goods of the EAEU member states for January - December 2019 (USD million)

Country	Turnover	Export	Import	Balance	In %, Jun – Dec 2019		
					Turnover	Export	Import
Armenia	2 452,4	760,9	1 691,5	-930,6	115,2	110,5	117,4
Belarus	36 721,4	14 549,0	22 172,4	-7 623,4	100,1	104,4	97,4
Kazakhstan	21 296,0	6 317,2	14 978,8	-8 661,6	105,7	104,5	106,3
Kyrgyzstan	2 636,7	621,1	2 015,6	-1 394,5	94,1	96,9	93,3
Russia	59 003,1	38 785,9	20 217,2	18 568,7	101,3	99,6	104,9

Source: [EEC]

The fact is that the demographic indicators of the EAEU countries do not allow making optimistic forecasts regarding the high potential for personal consumption of products produced in the Eurasian space. At the time of the start of the EAEU on January 1, 2015, the population of the Union was 182,069.5 thousand people [EEC, 2014]. The growth rates in the Union as a whole are insignificant - from 0.11 to 0.35% annually (the main contribution to population growth is provided by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan - about 1.15-1.65% on average since 2015 each country annually) [EEC, n. d. b]. This trend makes it possible to predict the continuing interest of the EAEU countries in actively maintaining foreign trade and economic relations.

In addition, if you look at the structure of mutual trade between the EAEU countries [EEC, 2019], then by 2019 the first place was occupied by mineral products (27.7% of the total). The second place is taken by machinery, equipment and vehicles (18.5%). That is, the structure of mutual trade is dominated by goods that are not directly demanded by ordinary citizens, and for the products of light industry and agriculture, one still has to turn to foreign markets.

Another acute problem of the EAEU was the issue of moving away from the peg to the US dollar in mutual settlements and the transition to a single currency. And although this issue remains controversial for many years, it was during the period of the EAEU's functioning that especially close attention was paid to it. It should be noted that the weakening of the ruble in 2014, after the first wave of anti-Russian sanctions, led to sequential fluctuations in the currency markets of almost all EAEU countries. Kazakhstan felt especially acute weakening of the national currency tenge, which is strongly pegged to the ruble.

In Russia, the dollar exchange rate against the Russian ruble increased by more than five rubles in August alone. If on August 1, 2018, the official rate set by the Central Bank of Russia was 62.3 rubles per dollar, then on August 31 it was already 68.08 rubles per US dollar. Following the ruble, a sharp drop occurred in the Kazakh tenge. In daily trading on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange, the dollar added one or two tenges. For comparison: the official exchange rate as of August 1 was 346.7 tenge per dollar, on August 31 the indicators changed markedly - 363.43 tenges per one US dollar. In September, the tenge's fall accelerated. The official rate set by the National Bank of Kazakhstan for September 12 is 380.93 tenge per dollar.

The wave of anti-Russian sanctions a little later, and not so revealingly, reached the currency of Kyrgyzstan. If on September 12 the official exchange rate set by the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan

was 69.75 soms per dollar, then since August 1 the American currency has shown a slight increase, having added 1.75 soms in weight.

Belarusians survived the currency crisis earlier than anyone else, in March 2011. On May 24, 2011, the National Bank of Belarus had to devalue the exchange rate of the Belarusian ruble by about 56 percent. The dollar began to cost 4,930 Belarusian rubles. However, four years ago (July 1, 2016), the national currency of Belarus was denominated, and the Belarusian ruble lost four zeros. The denominated Belarusian ruble turned out to be stronger than the currencies of the country's partners in the EAEU. The official rate of the National Bank of Belarus on August 1 was 1.98 rubles per dollar, on August 31 the rate changed to 2.07 rubles per dollar.

The Armenian dram also showed a slight decrease during August: 481.01 drams per dollar on August 1 and, accordingly, 484.94 drams per dollar on September 12. As can be seen from the official data, the national currencies of Russia and Kazakhstan suffered the most in the foreign exchange market over the past month.

The unstable state of the national exchange rate of the currency has caused in Kazakhstan polar opinions both about the need to leave the Russian currency, to pursue an independent exchange rate policy, and about even closer convergence of national currencies up to the complete rejection of the dollar in trade between the EAEU countries. Moreover, Kazakhstan, as one of the members of Eurasian integration, has become a platform for all sorts of political discussions about the need not only to move away from ruble dependence but also to withdraw from the Eurasian project in general against the background of sanctions against Russia [Danilin, 2018].

To date, the EAEU members have not developed a single mechanism for responding to such external challenges, so their actions are situational and based more on the personal agreements of the heads of state than on existing institutional practices. Russia's decision to introduce counter-sanctions in 2014 was unilateral, since none of the members of the Customs Union joined this decision. Accordingly, the trade policy within the EAEU ceased to be coordinated already by the time of its creation [Suslin, 2016]. At the same time, the issues of the supply of Western goods through the territories of individual EAEU countries to Russia, primarily through Belarus, have automatically arisen and are still relevant [Knobel, 2015; Drobot, Abrosimova, Savitskaya, 2017]. In the overall design, such a situation contradicts the functioning of a single customs territory, since when crossing the external customs border, goods must move freely within the integration association.

A contradictory situation is created in which Belarusian goods can freely enter the Russian market, but goods from the list of prohibited countries cannot be imported. To determine the country of origin of goods within the EAEU for a long time, the relevant provisions of the agreement "On Uniform Rules for Determining the Country of Origin of Goods" dated 25.01.2008 (not valid from 12.01.2019) were used. The document states that the goods are considered to be produced in the territory of the country if the goods have been fully produced or have undergone sufficient processing. In this case, the country of origin of goods can be understood as a group of countries or customs unions of countries, or a region or part of a country, if there is a need to separate them for the purpose of determining the country of origin of goods.

The absence of common principles for the settlement of such problematic issues among the participating countries leads to the fact that the full functioning of a single customs space becomes difficult. The EAEU member countries (and this, in addition to Belarus, mainly Armenia and Kazakhstan), get the opportunity to benefit from this situation by re-exporting goods prohibited from the EU to Russia. In particular, after Russia introduced a ban on the supply of European agricultural products, a multiple increase was observed in the export of apples from Belarus to Russia in 2015 compared to 2014. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, in January-December 2014, imported 254 thousand tons of fresh apples, and already for the same period in 2015 - 518 thousand tons. A tangible difference in the volume of exports of goods that have come under the embargo in Russia is also observed in relation to meat. So, if in 2014 2,409 kg of fresh and chilled pork were imported to Russia, then already in 2015 - 17616 kg [National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, n. d.]. That is, in the case of Belarus, the most noticeable increase in goods under sanctions in Russia. Russian control authorities carried out checks for compliance of agricultural products imported from Belarus with the legislation of the Russian Federation, however, there was no control at the Russian-Belarusian border in accordance with the basic

The high principle of the EAEU on the free movement of goods makes it difficult to streamline the supply of agricultural products to Russia. The current situation, in addition to the economic aspect, revealed significant political contradictions between Russia as a member of the EAEU and Belarus as a key ally of Russia in the region. Belarus, has chosen for itself the path of balancing between the conflicting centers - Russia and the Western countries, seeking to extract both financial, economic and geopolitical benefits from the situation [Suzdaltsev, 2019]. In addition, Western investors get the opportunity to create production facilities on the territory of Belarus and Kazakhstan and then enter the Russian market without duties and any other restrictions. Secondly, the functioning of the EAEU implies the absence of a customs border between Russia and Belarus, and goods from the prohibited list freely penetrate into the territory of Russia. Thirdly, if the control bodies of Russia perform their functions in full, then in fact this means the return of control on the border of Russia and Belarus, which contradicts the principle of free movement of goods, and therefore the very logic of the economic union.

A similar position is taken by the leadership of Kazakhstan, on the one hand, positively assessing the very idea of Eurasian integration, but on the other - defending the priority principle of national sovereignty and avoiding deepening integration. For Kazakhstan, the optimal status would be the status of a "bridge" between Asia and Europe [Malysheva, 2019]. Political Challenges of Sanctions for Eurasian Integration: Key Factors and Possible Development Alternatives The main threats to the Union currently come primarily from the political sphere. They are inevitably associated with the active proliferation of alternatives that shake the foundations of the EAEU and are aimed at undermining the relations of the member states with Russia. A major breakthrough in strengthening the independence and development of alternative EAEU projects is possible when each country implements very painful decisions.

In the case of Belarus, the relevance of the development of the openness of the political regime will remain. With the start of the Minsk process, the country has shown its commitment to the value of international dialogue. Moreover, freedom of movement as one of the indicators of human rights development in Belarus has broad support. For example, it is noted that the country is among

the leaders in terms of the number of "Schengen visas" per capita. In January 2017, by the decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus, a visa-free regime was established for foreigners from 80 countries when staying in the country for no more than five days in case of entry through the National Airport of Minsk (Decree

No. 8 "On the establishment of a visa-free procedure for the entry and exit of foreign citizens" dated 09.01.2017) [Official Internet Portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus, 2017]. Economic development, which is so far difficult to achieve apart from Russia, will remain topical. Taking into account the above-mentioned aspects, the western partners of Belarus expect to involve the country in various projects, an alternative to Eurasian integration [Barakhvostov, Rusakovich, 2017; Tony van der Togt, 2017]. And the impact of the sanctions may again be the result of a negative assessment by the West of the observance of human rights in Belarus.

In Armenia, with the coming to power of the opposition forces in May 2018, the issue of foreign policy priorities has become topical. In 2015, when Armenia made the decision to join the EAEU, the Russian factor actually played a decisive role. For both parties in that context, it was a mutually acceptable decision. But can it be called strategic? Armenian Prime Minister N. Pashinyan tried to find new sources for the country's development, without destroying the constructive ties developed in the past. The task can hardly be called easy, given the geographical position of Armenia and historical ties with its neighbors. One of the options could be the development of ties with Georgia and Turkey with the subsequent more active involvement of Armenia in projects related to the Black Sea region. And although this approach today can hardly have serious support, in the context of a search for alternatives to Eurasian integration with active assistance to such a dialogue from the outside, it can become a noticeable challenge to the EAEU. In the current context, one should hardly expect the introduction of sanctions against Armenia for close cooperation with Russia. However, stimulating the use of other opportunities may become the main strategy of countries seeking to reduce the level of contact between Russia and Armenia.

For Kazakhstan - in fact, one of the key initiators of Eurasian integration projects - any alternatives to the EAEU may affect a change in strategic development plans. However, this does not negate the need to develop our own economic positions and develop a new positive agenda for relations with Russia. One of the alternatives to Eurasian integration can be the strengthening of contacts between Kazakhstan and China, as well as the translation into a practical plane of discussion of independent Central Asian integration, in which Kazakhstan, along with Uzbekistan, is showing a certain interest [Makhmutova, 2018]. Today, the growing attention to such cooperation within the Central Asian region is demonstrated by the European Union, which since 2007 has been developing a Strategy for a New Partnership with the Region. Despite the possibility of strengthening ties with European countries, Kazakhstan is unlikely to be able to promote the initiative of cooperation between the EAEU and the EU and get a positive effect from this. As in previous cases with Belarus and Armenia, Kazakhstan will be under the close scrutiny of Western countries, for which the involvement of Kazakhstan in alternative EAEU projects may be one of the desired goals.

For Kyrgyzstan, a serious challenge to participation in Eurasian integration remains its own industrial and human potential, which is necessary for active participation in the EAEU. There are practically no full-fledged alternatives to such participation. Any other project proposed by

neighboring Central Asian states or China will not involve cooperation with Kyrgyzstan as an equal partner. This prospect makes the country's authorities give priority to the EAEU. At the same time, there remains an opportunity for more active entry into the Kyrgyz market of institutions and organizations related to the Islamic economy. However, such an alternative may not find support from the current partners of the republic and marginalize the country within the Central Asian region as a whole. To stay in line with the chosen priorities of Eurasian integration, Kyrgyzstan needs to engage in an even more intensive mode in modern industrial development and training of personnel for the modern economy, as well as to build clear and pragmatic relations with neighboring states.

The proposed scenarios have an alternative character for the EAEU member states in their cooperation with Russia and may receive an additional incentive for implementation in the event of an increase in contradictions between Russia and the West. The experience of applying sanctions shows that they are most effective when used in a complex manner, when there is a coalition of countries applying sanctions against their opponents, and states that have not clearly taken sides, along with a "negative" motivation to be classified as violators of the sanctions regime, an alternative to cooperation with the country "under sanctions" is proposed. That is why an assessment of the potential of alternatives to Eurasian integration can be of great practical importance, especially when Western countries strive to continue sanctions pressure on Russia.

Despite the economic component, the sanctions largely influenced the political context of the EAEU development, in particular, exposed the existing competition between the participants. In this case, there are several "pain points" that will determine the development of the EAEU in the medium term. To do this, we will unite the countries into groups.

First of all, the trend towards independence within the EAEU on the part of the drivers of its integration - Belarus and Kazakhstan. Generally supporting the line on deepening economic integration, the leaders of these countries regularly emphasize their independence in political decision-making. The course towards import substitution, taken by Russia in 2014 after the introduction of counter-sanctions, allowed Belarusian and Kazakhstani producers to increase their presence in the Russian market, and in this sense there is reason to believe that these countries will continue to adhere to the course of Eurasian integration. At the same time, Belarus and Kazakhstan are very cautious about the scenario of pulling Russian political and economic interests into the orbit, which will determine the nature of relations between key players in the medium term. Since Russia has the greatest economic potential, therefore, it has the ability to exert political influence on its partners in the EAEU. Given that building a single market remains the predominant interest, Russia has to resort to political measures to achieve the goals of the EAEU. In particular, when discussing the expansion of the EAEU network of contacts, it should be borne in mind that the union itself and its participants will not receive tangible benefits from the creation of numerous FTAs, but this step allows Russia to overcome the consequences of sanctions.

Another area that will influence the dynamics of the EAEU development is the more active and meaningful involvement of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan in Eurasian integration. These countries have embarked on the path of Eurasian integration relatively recently (in comparison with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, which came to the EAEU through the Customs Union). Taking into account the political instability and difficult economic situation in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, it can

be argued that their integration aspirations were based on the motive of ensuring national security, which they will be guided by in the future when making decisions within the EAEU.

Given the uneven nature of the economic development of the EAEU member countries and their multidirectional interests, it can be assumed that these countries will continue to emphasize their state sovereignty and adhere to it in their behavior. Russia's attempts to bypass external pressure through institutions and development projects within the EAEU will face cautious and, to a large extent, tough opposition from national elites who fear the growth of Russia's political influence on their territory.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the development of relations between the EAEU member states in the context of anti-Russian sanctions for the period from 2015 to 2020, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The unfavorable political and economic context around Russia as one of the main forces of Eurasian integration has put other participants in a difficult position. On the one hand, the logic of Eurasian integration presupposes the consolidation of positions with one's partner, rendering assistance and support to him, but at the same time, each of the participants in the integration project has his own experience of interaction with other countries and his own economic interest. This is due to the presence of different-vector approaches to achieving the key goal of the EAEU - the formation of a single economic space.

The logic of integration implies strengthening mutual trade within the EAEU (shifting trade and investment activity deep into the integration project, moving to a policy of import substitution and focusing on goods of its own products from countries that are allies in the Eurasian project). In this context, any sanctions impact on countries supporting Eurasian integration has a limited effect in terms of effectiveness and time, provided there is no additional military-political pressure from the countries that initiated the sanctions.

During a crisis period, the EAEU countries receive preferential access to the markets of partner countries (first of all, the most capacious Russian market), which can significantly contribute to overcoming the crisis phenomena. The member states have greater trade and economic maneuverability in comparison with the players outside the integration association.

Despite the emphasized economic nature of the EAEU, relations within the Eurasian integration project have a pronounced political component. This is explained by the uneven economic development of all participants, the presence of a pronounced leader capable of accumulating the economic potential of all other EAEU members, as well as the variety of interests with which all participants embarked on the path of integration. Deepening integration by striving for consistency and compromise in decision-making within the EAEU could become a mechanism for overcoming the politicization of the EAEU.

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