



DOI: 10.22363/2313-0660-2022-22-1-30-42


Research article / Научная статья

Eurasianism, Eurasian Economic Union and Multipolarity: Assessments of Foreign Experts

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Abstract. Eurasianism, in its various interpretations, from ideology to the implementation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) programs, is regarded as one of the strategies of creating a multipolar world order. This article analyzes the views and assessments of foreign authors regarding the relationship between Eurasianism and the EAEU amid the changing international context. The authors present both critical and positive opinions on Eurasianism, Eurasian integration and its political and economic interlinkages with other countries and associations (China, Vietnam, the European Union (EU), Latin America). Thus, we identify three main lines of assessments on Eurasianism and Eurasian integration. The first includes negative assessments ranging from characterizing Eurasianism and the EAEU as a threat to the EU, the US, and the West in general to deliberate misinformation about the Eurasian ideology, for instance, denoting Eurasianism as “parafascism.” The second comprises more pragmatic and balanced views, with an emphasis on economic cooperation, which may imply cooperation with the EAEU and acceptance of the Eurasian integration if specific conditions are met, or cessation of such cooperation. The third group includes positive assessments and emphasizes the need for more intensive interaction between the EAEU and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Such views are generally held by Russian and Chinese authors. Non-Russian conceptions of Eurasianism that gained popularity in Turkey or Kazakhstan are ideologically close to the classic Eurasianism and the EAEU, although these conceptions take a distinctive national shape. The article provides some examples of interregional cooperation promoted by the EAEU within the BRICS under the “outreach” model, i.e., adding new dimensions to existing cooperation formats. The authors arrive at a conclusion that most often the assessments of Eurasian integration and cooperation proposals by foreign experts are tied to Russian foreign policy (or experts’ opinion of it). They often find interconnections between EAEU, Eurasianism and Russian policy, which emphasize Russian identity as a marker of distinctive civilization. The article also notes comments of Russian authors on the EAEU — EU relations. The research is based on comparative analysis of analytical and research publications on the subject.

Key words: Eurasianism, EAEU, Eurasia, multipolarity, foreign policy, international relations

Acknowledgements: The article has been supported by a grant of the Russian Science Foundation. Project No. 19-18-00165.

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For citation: Bazavluk, S. V., Kurylev, K. P., & Savin, L. V. (2022). Eurasianism, Eurasian Economic Union and multipolarity: Assessments of foreign experts. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 22(1), 30—42. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2022-22-1-30-42>

Евразийство, ЕАЭС и многополярность: оценки зарубежных экспертов

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Аннотация. Евразийство в его различных интерпретациях, от идеологии до реализации программ Евразийского экономического союза (ЕАЭС), расценивается как одна из стратегий по созданию многополярного мироустройства. В статье анализируются взгляды и оценки зарубежных авторов в отношении взаимосвязи евразийства и ЕАЭС в контексте изменений, происходящих в мировой политической системе. Авторами показаны как критические взгляды, так и попытки определения места и роли евразийской интеграции в политических и экономических взаимосвязях с другими странами и объединениями (Китаем, Вьетнамом, Европейским союзом (ЕС), Латинской Америкой). Выявлены основные тенденции в оценках евразийства и евразийской интеграции, которые можно разделить на три группы. К первой относятся негативные оценки — от характеристик евразийства и ЕАЭС как угрозы для ЕС, США и Запада до намеренной дезинформации в отношении евразийской идеологии, в частности евразийства как «парафашизма». Ко второй — более прагматичный и взвешенный взгляд с уклоном в экономическое взаимодействие, что предполагает как сотрудничество с ЕАЭС и принятие евразийской интеграции на определенных правилах, так и отказ от подобной кооперации со стороны западных стран. Третью группу составляют положительные оценки, в которых отмечается необходимость более интенсивного взаимодействия между ЕАЭС и китайским проектом «Пояса и пути». Как правило, такой позиции придерживаются китайские и некоторые российские авторы. Нероссийские концепции евразийства, получившие распространение, например, в Казахстане и Турции, представляются как модели, которые идеологически близки к классическому евразийству и проекту ЕАЭС, хотя имеют собственные национальные формулировки. Приводятся примеры межрегионального сотрудничества ЕАЭС, осуществляемого на опыте работы БРИКС по принципу «аутрич», то есть формирования дополнительных измерений в различных форматах взаимодействия. В большинстве случаев оценка евразийской интеграции и предложений по сотрудничеству со стороны иностранных авторов напрямую относится к внешней политике Российской Федерации. Часто между ЕАЭС, евразийством и национальной политикой России находят взаимосвязи и общие основополагающие элементы, что подчеркивает российскую идентичность в качестве самобытной цивилизации. В статье также отражены замечания отечественных авторов по вопросу взаимодействия ЕАЭС и ЕС. Применяется метод сравнительного анализа источников по исследуемой теме.

Ключевые слова: евразийство, ЕАЭС, Евразия, многополярность, внешняя политика, международные отношения

Благодарности: Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда (проект № 19-18-00165).

Для цитирования: Базавлук С. В., Курылев К. П., Савин Л. В. Евразийство, ЕАЭС и многополярность: оценки зарубежных экспертов // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2022. Т. 22, № 1. С. 30—42. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2022-22-1-30-42>

Introduction

There is a certain interconnection between current trends in Russia's changing foreign policy vectors, the process of Eurasian

integration and the emphasis on a multipolar world, which is reflected both in domestic political debates and expert analysis and in critical assessments, including by foreign authors. These interrelated trends reflect political

processes in the post-Soviet space that have not yet been fully understood and fixed in discourse, and also elicit a certain reaction abroad.

The article examines the assessments of foreign authors from various schools and countries. For this purpose, the comparative method of analysis is widely used.

Currently, there are several perspectives on Eurasian integration. Western approaches are based on the following lines:

1) linking classical Eurasianism and its modern interpretation to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU);

2) assessing the EAEU as some kind of competitive economic project that may threaten the interests of both the European Union (EU) and the United States;

3) objectively examining the links between Russia's foreign policy, Eurasian integration and global geopolitical developments.

The Chinese scholars generally stress that the EAEU and the Belt and Road Initiative are mutually complementary. The Greater Eurasia Project, or Greater Eurasian Partnership, is usually viewed in the same light. For example, Sri Lankan diplomat D. Jayatilleka believes that “what seems most feasible for Russia today would be the extension of the Primakovian ‘multi-vector’ concept to the domain of ideology, and the evolution of a soft power that is truly multi-vector: right, left, and center... Only then could Russia rediscover its role as the vanguard of a new historic project bearing a new synthesis of ideas and values.”¹

This range of opinions and comments is important as it allows for better understanding both expectations and reactions, and methods of opposition to Eurasian integration coming from the EU and the US.

In the first subsection of the article, the authors will examine the views of foreign authors on Eurasian ideology (Eurasianism).

¹ Jayatilleka D. Toward a New Eurasian Geopolitics // *Global-e Journal*. 2019 (September 12). Vol. 12, no. 39. URL: <https://globalejournal.org/global-e/september-2019/toward-new-eurasian-geopolitics> (accessed: 29.08.2021).

Other sections move on to various aspects of Eurasian integration.

Eurasianism

First of all, let us start by stressing that even talking about Eurasia as a political-geographical reality, “some researchers use the term both to refer to Russia and the newly independent states and to refer to these states without including Russia” (Bazavluk, 2018). A similar approach can be found in relation to Eurasianism.

According to M. Laruelle, the flexibility of Eurasianism as an ideology explains its popularity, diversity and breadth. In her view, Eurasianism is a political doctrine in the strict sense of the word — a theory of nation and ethnicity, an alter-globalist philosophy of history, a new pragmatic formulation of “Sovietism,” a replacement for the global explanatory schemes of Marxism-Leninism, a set of expansionist geopolitical principles for Russia and much more. Eurasianism often claims to be a science, whose message about Russia does not depend on personal considerations but is a methodical and objective analysis of Russian interests. The success and popularity of Eurasianism is linked to its commitment to creating new academic disciplines such as geopolitics, cultural studies, conflict studies, ethnic psychology, etc. (Laruelle, 2008).

M. Laruelle defined the theoretical premises of Eurasianism as: 1) a rejection of Europe, the West and capitalism through a critique of “Atlanticist” domination, is believed to have catastrophic consequences for the rest of humanity; 2) an affirmation of cultural unity and a common historical destiny for the Russian and non-Russian peoples of Russia, the former Soviet Union and parts of Asia; 3) the idea that the central geographical location of this Eurasian space naturally and inevitably entails an imperial form of political organization and that any secession is doomed to failure, leaving the newly independent states no choice but to

return to a single political entity; 4) the belief in the existence of cultural constants that explain a deeper meaning of contemporary political events (Laruelle, 2008; 2020).

However, summarizing the various doctrines as reflected through Russian culture, Laruelle calls Eurasianism parafascism because, in her view, it is “an extreme expression of belief in Russia as the pivot of Eurasia” (Laruelle, 2020, p. 111).

Many Western authors have focused on A.G. Dugin’s theoretical works, seeing them as a link between classical Eurasianism and integration within the EAEU.² Some authors have pointed out that “the influence of Dugin on Russian geopolitics and military strategy is self-evident, even though it is debatable exactly how much Putin buys in to the underlying theories behind Dugin’s ideology... It is clear that the Russian government has taken his Foundations of Geopolitics as a blueprint for their foreign policy.”³ Others tend to simplify Eurasianism and see it solely as anti-Western rhetoric. This leads to the belief that “Eurasianism has a touch of truth to it, enough to make it compelling to some. Overall, though, it is a crackpot theory, based on some rather bizarre and obviously false ideas from a hundred or so years ago.”⁴

Pennsylvania researcher M.R. Johnson, who specializes in Russian history, notes that “the shocking ignorance of American

intellectuals trying to grapple with Eurasian concepts they do not understand underscores Dugin’s main concerns. The US does not have the conceptual apparatus to properly understand the sweeping ontology of Eurasianism. Western and westernized writers, such as Gene Veith, Doug Sanders, Anton Barbashin, Hannah Thoburn, and Anton Shekhovtsov display a disgraceful ignorance born of two things: first, their utter lack of intellectual preparation for the ontology and metaphysics of Dugin or anyone else outside of the western mainstream, and just as importantly, the fact that few of their readers know any better. This latter problem is everywhere, and gives the above a license to write as they please. This both frees them from actual understanding and insulates them from serious criticism.”⁵

The United States also believes that “understanding the Eurasianist vision that inspires Russia’s leaders will enable us to adopt a rational approach to dealing with an adversary whose goals stem from an irrational and dangerous ideology”. In “a post-NATO ‘multipolar’ world, where American power and leverage is significantly reduced, the Eurasianists that drive Russian foreign policy, fueled by their fascistic hatred for liberty, would threaten and undermine American interests and global stability for years to come.”⁶ Despite the open discursive stigmas used to discredit Eurasianism, M.R. Johnson, however, makes no secret of the fact that the combination and arrival of a multipolar world poses a threat to American interests.

All this, however, does not diminish coordinated actions by the West to discredit both Eurasianism and the EAEU. The fruits of

² See: Barbashin A., Thoburn H. Putin’s Brain. Alexander Dugin and the Philosophy behind Putin’s Invasion of Crimea // *Foreign Affairs*. March 31, 2014. URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-31/putins-brain> (accessed: 04.08.2021); Gilbert J. Aleksandr Dugin Wants to See a Return to Russian Imperialism // *Vice*. April 28, 2014. URL: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3b7a93/aleksandr-dugin-russian-expansionism> (accessed: 04.08.2021).

³ MacCormac S. Aleksandr Dugin: Putin’s Rasputin? // *Center for Security Policy*. March 4, 2015. URL: <https://centerforsecuritypolicy.org/aleksandr-dugin-putins-rasputin/> (accessed: 22.08.2021).

⁴ Robinson P. Crackpot Theories: Eurasianism // *Irrussianity*. September 30, 2014. URL: <https://irussianity.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/crackpot-theories-urasianism/> (accessed: 17.08.2021).

⁵ Johnson M. R. Russian Nationalism and Eurasianism: The Ideology of Russian Regional Power and the Rejection of Western Values // *Rusjournal.org*. URL: <https://www.rusjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Eurasianism.pdf> (accessed: 30.06.2021).

⁶ Rice-Cameron J. Eurasianism is the New Fascism: Understanding and Confronting Russia // *Stanford Politics*. February 2, 2017. URL: <https://stanfordpolitics.org/2017/02/02/eurasianism-new-fascism/> (accessed: 25.07.2021).

the indicated ignorance can be further exploited both in the Western media and as justification in the preparation of academic texts.

Thus, manipulating the narrative related to the terms “Eurasia” and “Eurasian” can be found in the Freedom House Special Report 2020, since it focuses on the activities of various political groups in the post-Soviet space. At the same time, most of them exhibited anti-Russian sentiments and opposed the EAEU. It states that “in Eurasia, too, activity by far-right groups is increasingly visible. These antiliberal, antiglobalist, radical nationalist groups support a return to what they describe as ‘traditional’ values and the ideal of a ‘pure’ nation-state, and often support violence or the threat thereof as an acceptable tactic to advance this vision.”⁷

Since 2014, the Western press and academic political science have been actively criticizing Eurasianism in general, whether it is its classical version or some aspects related to current Eurasian integration. There is a clear link to the Crimean referendum and efforts to falsify any information related to the Russian leadership.⁸ For example, one publication mentions Eurasianism among the ten most obscure ideologies, along with Salafism, Hindutva, Great Han Chauvinism, Anarcho-Primitivism and the movement for a universal basic income. At the same time, classical Eurasianism, national Bolshevism, Dugin’s neo-Eurasianism, Customs Union and Eurasian Integration are mixed in the description of Eurasianism.⁹

⁷ Gordon A. A New Eurasian Far Right Rising. Reflections on Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia // Freedom House. 2020. URL: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/new-eurasian-far-right-rising> (accessed: 17.08.2021).

⁸ Busygina I., Filippov M. Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union: Conflicting Incentives for an Institutional Compromise. WP BRP 31/IR/2018 // National Research University Higher School of Economics. 2018. URL: <https://wp.hse.ru/data/2018/12/10/1145002418/31IR2018.pdf> (accessed: 30.01.2022).

⁹ Tormsen D. 10 Obscure Ideologies Influencing The World Today // Listverse. March 29, 2015. URL:

The publication by the American historian T. Fox on the website of the American Institute of Modern Warfare is very illustrative. He points out that “this concept of Eurasianism continually views the region in a historical context, making an argument that that because of their past experiences together they have a ‘shared destiny’... The linkage to history is an understudied — but disproportionately important — element of Russia’s effectiveness at information operations and ‘hybrid warfare.’ It (appealing to the historic past. — *Author’s note.*) has allowed Russia to deliver an effective narrative in the region, and underpins a recent Russian effort across the region, ‘aimed at improving cooperation in the foreign dissemination of information to draw attention to Russian history... and to promote achievements in military history research, inspire patriotism and preserve Russia’s military history heritage in other countries’... Narratives serve as a powerful tool to reach the Russian objectives.”¹⁰

Therefore, the Eurasian ideology is seen as one of the key elements of the information war, that the author believes Russia is waging. Such assessments are far from isolated among the US military. Thus, a report on possible geopolitical changes after the coronavirus pandemic, prepared by the US Air Force, in a scenario called “systemic collapse” mentions EAEU activity in the same context as the Chinese Belt and Road initiative.¹¹

<https://listverse.com/2015/03/29/10-obscure-ideologies-influencing-the-world-today/> (accessed: 17.08.2021).

¹⁰ Fox T. Eurasianism, History, and the Narrative Space: Why Russian Information Operations Are so Effective // Modern War Institute. December 3, 2018. URL: <https://mwi.usma.edu/eurasianism-history-narrative-space-russian-information-operations-effective/> (accessed: 26.08.2021).

¹¹ U.S. Air Force Global Futures Report: Alternative Futures of Geopolitical Competition in a Post-COVID-19 World // Air Force Warfighting Integration Capability (AFWIC), Strategic Foresight and Futures Branch. June, 2020. P. 10. URL: https://www.afwic.af.mil/Portals/72/Documents/AFWIC%20Global%20Futures%20Report_FI%20NAL.pdf?ver=2020-06-18-124149-070 (accessed: 30.01.2022).

The former high-ranking CIA official points out in his publication that “the meaning of the term ‘Eurasian’ has changed a good deal, but it still suggests strategic rivalry... In short, the new Eurasianism is no longer associated with the land and sea power of the 19th century. It is an acknowledgment that the era of Western (and especially American) global dominance is over. Washington can no longer maintain and afford to maintain long-term dominance in Eurasia. In economic terms, no state in the region, including Turkey, is so unwise to ignore the growth of the ‘Eurasian’ potential, which also provides a strategic balance and economic opportunities... The more Washington attempts to contain or throttle Eurasianism as a genuine rising force, the greater will be the determination of states to become part of this rising Eurasian world, even while not rejecting the West. All countries like to have alternatives. They don’t like to lie beholden to a single global power that tries to call the shots... It would seem short-sighted for Washington to continue focus upon expanding military alliances while most of the rest of the world is looking to greater prosperity and rising regional clout.”¹²

The same idea is expressed more rationally by the researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) J. Mankoff. He notes that “the United States has reason to be wary. While the economic and political logic for deeper integration across parts of the post-Soviet region is strong, and although regional integration could strengthen weak economies, especially in Central Asia, Russian-sponsored integration also brings another threat: deepening dependence of neighboring countries on Russia that could compromise not only development but also foreign-policy autonomy.”¹³ At the

same time, the American expert emphasizes that the integration trends on the Eurasian continent fit well into global patterns: “The most significant benefits of a new Eurasian Union would be the creation of a huge single market and the lowering of barriers to the movement of goods and people. That would make it easier for migrant workers from Central Asia to move back and forth to Russia for work and to legally repatriate their earnings.”¹⁴

P. Stronsky and R. Sokolsky of the Carnegie Endowment compare the roles of the EAEU, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS as international organizations which contribute in practice to implementing Russia’s aspirations for multipolarity. They write that “Russia continues to use a mixture of coercion and economic enticements to encourage its neighbors to join and current members to remain in the organization... For Russia, the importance of BRICS and SCO is more symbolic than substantive. They help the Kremlin to highlight, both at home and abroad, that Moscow retains international standing, that it has the diplomatic means to counter the expansion of Western influence around its periphery and U.S. and European efforts to isolate Russia, and that Russia is a global, not just a Eurasian or regional, power. Engaging in these international organizations and groups also helps Moscow push back at Western efforts to isolate Russia diplomatically following a long series of transgressions (international norms. — *Author’s note*.) Russia may be isolated from the Euro-Atlantic community, but participation in these organizations demonstrates that Moscow is not isolated from the rest of the world.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Stronski P., Sokolsky R. *Multipolarity in Practice: Understanding Russia’s Engagement with Regional Institutions* // Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. January 8, 2020. URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/01/08/multipolarity-in-practice-understanding-russia-s-engagement-with-regional-institutions-pub-80717> (accessed: 17.08.2021).

¹² Fuller G. E. *What is Eurasianism?* // Graham E. Fuller. September 14, 2016. URL: <https://grahamefuller.com/2520-2/> (accessed: 23.07.2021).

¹³ Mankoff J. *What a Eurasian Union Means for Washington?* // *The National Interest*. April 19, 2012. URL: <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/what-eurasian-union-means-washington-6821?page=2> (accessed: 24.08.2021).

Turkish researcher G. Mostafa believes that, in fact, the concept of Eurasianism and Eurasian politics have turned into state ideologies, which are reflected in domestic, regional and foreign policies, as well as in the foundation for the recent process of regional integration. At the same time, there are several versions of Eurasianism. The Russian geopolitical concept of Eurasianism, with all its changes and modifications, remains very powerful, dominant and alive in historical and cultural, academic, as well as national political and ideological debates and discourses. Turkish Eurasianism is basically the idea and vision of creating a community of Turkic states inhabited by Turkic peoples, including parts of Russia and Central Asia. The Kazakh vision of Eurasianism and the creation of the Eurasian Union based on Eurasian solidarity is an official policy (ideology) developed, launched and implemented by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, which is fundamentally different from Russian, Turkish and other forms in terms of fundamental goals, objectives, methods, directions and implementation mechanisms (Mostafa, 2013).

Moreover, it should be taken into account that “Eurasianism is an ideology of statehood. All of its geopolitical, socio-cultural, religious and other aspects revolve around the problem of power” (Isaev, 1994, p. 55). This can be added to its metapolitical phenomenon, where “various ideas and concepts from culture, religion, philosophy, humanities and natural sciences were combined” (Bazavluk et al., 2021, p. 60).

Eurasian Integration

Turning from Eurasian ideology to the practice of integration processes in the EAEU, the role of the West is also visible here, as “the development of Eurasian regionalism in the 2010s was influenced by Russia’s fears about external threats and its control over the Eurasian space” (Libman & Obydenkova, 2020, p. 360).

At the initial stage of Eurasian integration, the Western community reacted quite

aggressively to the processes that took place in Russia and the member countries of the Customs Union, which was subsequently reshaped into the EAEU. In particular, it was pointed out that Moscow’s initiatives in the post-Soviet space were nothing more than “another attempt by Russia to move against Europe’s transatlantic linkage.”¹⁶ In this respect, it has been argued that “Putin is basing his Eurasian Union on the model of European integration and Putin sees the Eurasian Union as a part of ‘Greater Europe’ that rests on shared values like freedom, democracy and the market economy.”¹⁷ At the same time, the author wonders whether the Eurasian Union might not act as a kind of “counter-model” that Russia would use to compete with the EU through the integration of Russia’s neighbors.

In a comparative analysis of the two integration models, it has been argued that the EAEU would become a kind of quasi-state, similar to the one developed in the EU on the basis of the Maastricht Treaty and the Citizens’ Rights Directive, which were the actual codification of preexisting case law. Granting certain rights to economically inactive migrants, such as family members and job seekers in the EAEU member states, seems to be a definite step in this direction. It is assumed that when analyzing the quasi-state development before the conclusion of the Maastricht Agreement, the fundamental role played by the court, whose case law has largely contributed to changes in the EU, cannot be ignored. Therefore, the question is whether the EAEU court will be able to follow the same path and contribute to a gradual change in the regulatory and procedural framework while relying on teleological interpretation? (Pirker & Entin, 2020, p. 530).

Western experts were particularly interested in the process of establishing the

¹⁶ Halbach U. Vladimir Putin’s Eurasian Union. A New Integration Project for the CIS Region? // German Institute for International and Security Affairs. January, 2012. P. 2. URL: https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2012C01_hlb.pdf (accessed: 25.08.2021).

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 4.

EAEU Free Trade Zone with Vietnam. The idea itself was born even before the formal establishment of the EAEU during the visit of the Minister of Industry and Trade of Vietnam to Moscow in 2009, and Russian President Vladimir Putin presented a feasibility study for such an agreement at the APEC summit in Vladivostok in September 2012¹⁸. Essentially, the agreement provided for the liberalization of 88 % of trade in goods. In October 2016, when the agreement entered into force, 59 % of customs duties were cancelled. “The EAEU will open its market for Vietnamese exports while reducing the average duty rate from 9.7 to 2 % by 2025.”¹⁹

This outreach model²⁰ has raised concerns among Western countries about the establishment of Russia’s influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America. At the same time, the Russian author V.S. Izotov suggests that the “outreach” model, which was applied to the BRICS format (at the initiative of South Africa), should be applied to Eurasian integration. The basic document prepared in 2018, i.e. the Agreement “On International Treaties of the Eurasian Economic Union with Third States, International Organizations or International Integration Associations,” will suit for this purpose (Izotov, 2020, p. 22).

Nevertheless, the idea of cooperation between the EU and the EAEU also has its supporters in Europe. Discussions at the highest political level regard a potential deal as a way to achieve peace in Ukraine. This initiative was

¹⁸ Vladimir Putin took part in the APEC Business Summit // President of Russia [Владимир Путин принял участие в работе Делового саммита АТЭС // Президент России]. September 7, 2012. (In Russian). URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/commitment_meetings/16410 (accessed: 30.01.2022).

¹⁹ Dragneva R. The Eurasian Economic Union: Putin’s Geopolitical Project // Foreign Policy Research Institute. October 15, 2018. P. 14. URL: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/10/the-eurasian-economic-union-putins-geopolitical-project/> (accessed: 30.01.2022).

²⁰ The outreach format, initially used in the BRICS framework, assumes the involvement of regional neighbors of a member state in an alliance.

moved forward in 2015 as the European External Action Service explored possible formats for cooperation. However, at present, the EU maintains only technical ties and contacts with officials in the EAEU Commission and institutions of individual member states. The prospects for improving relations or concluding a ‘mega-deal’ in the near future remain dim. At the same time, it is noted that concluding an FTA with the EAEU would make economic sense for the EU. Both parties would benefit from the common technical standards already achieved through using European templates by the EAEU.²¹

The EU also doubts whether trade liberalization is Russia’s ultimate goal. Since the EAEU was established, Europeans have viewed the bloc as a quasi-customs union with a dubious economic basis that promotes “regional protectionism as opposed to open regionalism.”²² The events in Ukraine were also interpreted in the EU countries as a manifestation of Russia’s greater interest in geopolitics than in rule-based cooperation.²³

However, doubts have also been raised about the possibility of fruitful cooperation with the EEU. It is noted that “if we turn to the current problems of the EU, they are mainly associated with the ‘sybaritism policy,’ when the main production was transferred to the developing world (especially to China), and the

²¹ Emerson M. Prospects for ‘Lisbon to Vladivostok’: Limited by a Double Asymmetry of Interests // CEPS. June 12, 2018. URL: <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/prospects-lisbon-vladivostok-limited-double-asymmetry-interests> (accessed: 20.06.2021).

²² Speech by President Barroso at the Russia — European Union — Potential for Partnership conference: “Moving into a Partnership of Choice” // European Commission. March 21, 2013. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_13_249 (accessed: 20.06.2021).

²³ Dragneva R., Delcour L., Jonavicius L. Assessing Legal and Political Compatibility between the EU Engagement Strategies and Membership of the EAEU // EU-STRAT. Working Paper. 2017. No. 07. URL: <http://eu-strat.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/EU-STRAT-Working-Paper-No.7.pdf> (accessed: 30.01.2022).

ideology of uncontrolled consumption and ‘life on credit’ was promoted... One of the primary tasks for the Eurasian Union is investing in human capital” (Vasilieva & Lagutina, 2013, p. 239). At the same time, the EAEU takes into account the experience of the EU development (Glazyev et al., 2013; Suyunchev et al., 2020; Ushkalova, 2017), including the neo-functional ‘spillover’ effect (Fatykhova, 2019, p. 172).

There are also more moderate views on the possibility of cooperation between the EU and the EAEU. Thus, Ch. Devonshire-Ellis believes that “the members of the EU need to patch up differences with Russia and also need to engage with developing free trade agreements with EAEU members and beyond, including with Africa, parts of the Middle East, Central Asia, India, and so on. The status of countries such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine as well as others in terms of being able to access a trade bloc as a member still needs to be determined.”²⁴ In his opinion, the evolution and development of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is already underway and will have significant implications for global supply chains. It will create new opportunities across the entire region and have major impacts on the economy of China and Russia, and then, as agreements currently under negotiation come into effect, on India, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Central Asia. This will be followed by a renewal of treaties with Africa, with Europe possibly joining the process later on.²⁵

Ch. Devonshire-Ellis also stresses that due to the geographic location of each of these countries and blocs, unification is largely inevitable. At the same time, “there can be expected to be other developments as well. Given the sanctions and threats of tariff

problems created for virtually all of the Eurasian regions by the US, the introduction of a Eurasian Clearing Bank system cannot be ruled out... Other initiatives and ideas to compliment, support, and develop what is happening will also arise. This is an exciting time for companies to get ready for the emergence of a new trade bloc dynamism — that of the Eurasian land mass.”²⁶

Overall, the changes in the Eurasian space are themselves driving Chinese participation in many aspects of the Eurasian process with China increasingly having to lead regional transformations and forge key partnerships (Ferguson, 2018). Since there was a shift in thinking about multipolarity in the 2000s, China and Russia have become the core of an order competing with the US, capable of exerting both military and economic influence in neighboring areas with a touch of ideological distance. G. Rozman suggests that “China would at most pay occasional lip service to multipolarity, while Russia strives to preserve a semblance of it centered on its own presumed capabilities, an illusion of the EEU’s worth, and vague hopes for an expanded SCO.”²⁷

Geopolitical Approach and Multipolarity Context

In summary, the Western view of the EAEU and Eurasianism goes beyond economic analysis. Eurasian integration is considered as one of the elements of Russia’s regional policy, where security issues are also important. The RAND report entitled *Russian Grand Strategy. Rhetoric and Reality* argues that “Russian documents state its intention to promote the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and other regional structures to maintain regional influence and to uphold its mutual defense and

²⁴ Devonshire-Ellis C. Xi and Putin Place the Greater Eurasian Partnership on the Path to Realization // China Briefing. June 14, 2019. URL: <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/xi-putin-place-greater-eurasian-partnership-path-realization/> (accessed: 15.08.2021).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Rozman G. Multipolarity versus Sinocentrism: Chinese and Russian Worldviews and Relations // The Asan Forum. 2020. URL: <https://theasanforum.org/multipolarity-versus-sinocentrism-chinese-and-russian-worldviews-and-relations/> (accessed: 04.08.2021).

security cooperation agreements with its regional allies.”²⁸ RAND refers to Russia’s interest in dynamic and cooperative relationship with the new centers of power, such as China, India, Brazil, ASEAN and the Persian Gulf states.²⁹

The EAEU completely occupies the economic sector in the suggested model of regional relations built on the triad of security, economy and leadership for Russia. This configuration also touches upon security issues since all the EAEU members are part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). In fact, the study equates the post-Soviet space with Eurasia.

Since the text mentions states and alliances outside Eurasia, it suggests that the US is linking Eurasian integration, limited to the post-Soviet space, to broader Russian interests, including attempts to establish a multipolar world order.

A recent paper on maritime communications around Eurasia has openly pointed out that the changing role and status of leading Eurasian actors will lead to a shift in the balance of power at the global level. It is noted that “a geopolitical and economic shift is approaching us, manifesting itself in various maritime regions of Eurasia. The Eurasian powers, including Russia, China and India, are increasingly using their maritime geography to expand and strengthen their emerging economies, increase their ability to predict military power to protect strategic national interests, and increase their global influence... This changing dynamic has already begun to change maritime trade and investment patterns and, consequently, the global political economy. It also poses a rising threat to the current status quo of the world order that has long been

²⁸ Charap S., Massicot D., Priebe M., Demus A., Reach C., Stalczyński M., Han E., Davis L. *Russian Grand Strategy. Rhetoric and Reality* // RAND Corporation. 2021. P. 22. URL: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR4200/RR4238/RAND_RR4238 synopsis.pdf (accessed: 30.01.2022).

²⁹ Ibid.

dominated by the Atlantic World and the United States specifically” (Gresh, 2018, p. 1).

However, the Western authors’ assessments with positive connotations are of particular interest. Thus, one of the studies of the RAND corporation dated 2019 indicates the following: “Ideally, the vision of Lisbon to Vladivostok — i.e., a common economic space spanning the EU, the EAEU, and the in-between states... It is important to begin with an understanding of which arrangements are and are not possible for the in-between states... More broadly, it is possible for nonmembers (of these organizations. — *Author’s note.*) to establish enhanced economic relations with both blocs. And it is possible for the blocs themselves to agree on mutually acceptable arrangements... Our proposal provides an opportunity for in-between states to benefit from trading with both blocs, rather than fully siding with one of them and losing out on connectivity with the other. Such a development would help in-between states become more prosperous and stable. It would also help them develop agency with both the EU and Russia and the EAEU, rather than opportunistically showing loyalty to one or the other side and receiving economic benefits as a reward.”³⁰

At the same time, the authors have their insight into geopolitical dualism. Since they also noted in relation to Eurasia a year earlier that “the regional order is defined by the existence of two rival sets of institutions, or even blocs: the Western or Euro-Atlantic NATO and the EU on the one hand, and the Eurasian or Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on the other.”³¹

³⁰ Charap S., Shapiro J., Drennan J., Chalyi O., Krumm R., Nikitina Y. Sasse G. *A Consensus Proposal for a Revised Regional Order in post-Soviet Europe and Eurasia* // RAND Corporation. 2019. P. 43. URL: https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF410.html (accessed: 30.01.2022).

³¹ Charap S., Shapiro J., Demus A. *Rethinking the Regional Order for post-Soviet Europe and Eurasia* // RAND Corporation. 2018. P. 6. URL:

The RAND authors state that a lot of problems related to Russia's dialogue with the West have accumulated, however "there are alternative paths. The proposed details are subject to debate — but at this moment, it is precisely the lack of debate and discussion of this issue that is the main challenge to finding a mutually acceptable way forward."³²

In this regard, the remarks of the Russian researchers, who previously noted that "it seems fundamentally important to actively discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the new project by representatives of various scientific communities in the absence of a developed conceptual framework for neo-Eurasian integration. It is in these disputes that the scientific arguments and analytical calculations regarding the Eurasian Union project are accumulated, and this can provide the theoretical basis for the formation of a strategy for neo-Eurasian integration. Presenting classical Eurasian ideas in a completely different way makes this topic innovative. Their modern sound is determined not by the ideology of opposing the West to the East but by the pragmatic idea of uniting the disparate parts of Eurasia into a single space of the global region" (Vasilieva & Lagutina, 2013, p. 230).

Meanwhile, a similar problem can be found in the concept of Greater Eurasia, since the concept itself has entered the scientific and political vocabulary relatively recently and is being intensively filled with new content which requires a comprehensive elaboration (Kefeli & Shcevchenko, 2018). For example, Greater Eurasia can evoke associations both regarding cooperation between the EU and Russia and the interaction between the EU and the EAEU (Tsvyk, 2018).

The Chinese view of Eurasian integration as a Russian foreign policy strategy goes beyond the efforts to establish multipolarity and differs noticeably from the Western view. Thus,

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE297.html>
(accessed: 30.01.2022).

³² Ibid. P. 33.

Li Yongquan points out that the development of Russia and the EAEU is inseparable from the development of the world economy. According to him, Russia cannot accept a reality in which it is excluded from the development of international trade rules; therefore the Greater Eurasian Partnership is a new approach to foreign policy that destroys traditional concepts, which attach importance only to relations with the United States and the West. He believes that it is crucial to link the development strategies of Russia and China not only to build the Eurasian Economic Partnership, but also for the future prospects of this organization (Yongquan, 2018).

The author also considers potential risks noting that Russia is concerned about the Chinese economy, which could harm the integration of the EAEU processes, as well as about the competitiveness of Chinese goods which could put strong external pressure on the EAEU economy. In addition, changes in the SCO might have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the multilateral cooperation mechanisms and consultations within this organization. However, he believes that it is quite realistic to link the Greater Eurasian Partnership with the Belt and Road Initiative. China's political and economic relations with the EAEU countries, the level of China's practical cooperation with the ASEAN countries, and close cooperation between Russia and the ASEAN countries give grounds for confidence that linking the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Partnership has a future. Moreover, Sino-Russian negotiations on the Eurasian Economic Partnership are a crucial link in this process (Yongquan, 2018, pp. 97—98).

However, when analyzing Sino-Russian cooperation, Western authors note that it can lead to global, not only regional, changes. "Eurasia has most of the world's wealth, resources, and population — yet there is very low economic connectivity. A Sino-Russian partnership can collectively create a gravitational pull that allows

them to capture the geoeconomic levers of power by creating an alternative to the Western-centric model.”³³ Accordingly, the emphasis on multipolarity complements the vision of the Greater Eurasian Partnership as a unique intercivilizational megaproject (Yakovets, 2018). Latin American researchers, who also see Eurasian integration as an integral part of the movement towards multipolarity, are of the same opinion (Serbin, 2020).

Conclusion

To sum up, a number of conclusions can be drawn. China has a certain interest in the EAEU, and it considers Sino-Russian cooperation as a mutually beneficial partnership in this regard. Although there is a possibility that Sinocentrism may prevail in China’s foreign policy, it is beneficial for Russia to interact with Beijing in order to create a counterweight to the US and the EU. Moscow’s multi-vector approach, including the outreach strategy, may contribute to Russia’s foreign policy goals. The USA and the EU will view the EAEU to a greater or lesser extent as a competitive project veiling the realistic analytical and expert assessments with criticism of Russia’s inefficiency and excessive

geopolitical ambitions. The EU and the USA consider the EAEU as a possible pole of a multipolar world order which (together with the growth of Chinese power) will significantly transform the global economic and political system. At the same time, the EAEU is clearly interpreted as a competing geopolitical project initiated by Russia.

Despite a number of differences, the general assessments of foreign experts on the inclusion of the ideas of Eurasianism in the current geopolitical processes agree with the opinion of the Russian authors who believe that “the conceptual solution of Russia’s modern national policy in line with Eurasian ideas determines the task of modernizing and integrating the mechanisms for creating and transferring national mental paradigms that are traditional for our country. This will allow the country to preserve its spiritual and ethno-cultural unity, consolidate forces based on common values and goals, ensure independence and development of the Russian state under the difficult conditions of a globalizing world and restore the lost parity in the global multipolar structure” (Zamaraeva, 2016, p. 154).

At the same time, the position of Russian and foreign authors is that Russian Eurasianism, as well as its Turkic variants (Turkish, Kazakh) and China’s interest in Eurasian integration in general, are in opposition to modern Western values and geopolitical projects.

³³ Roberts G. The Rise of Multipolarity through Greater Eurasia // *Covert Geopolitics*. November 7, 2019. URL: <https://geopolitics.co/2019/11/07/the-rise-of-multipolarity-through-greater-eurasia/> (accessed: 15.06.2021).

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 19.09.2021

Revised / Доработана после рецензирования: 11.11.2021

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 21.12.2021

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