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political perspective**

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The Eurasian idea from the modern political perspective

In recent years, we have been witnesses to the activation of integrational processes throughout all world continents, which has found its expression in such phenomena of modern global development as „global regionalism” and „global integrational processes.” For a rather extended period of time after the collapse of the USSR, the post-Soviet space found itself on the outer periphery of the global integrational space and was viewed as something of a „black hole” (Z. Brzezinski) on the integrational map. The main integrational structure created in the post-Soviet space back in the early 1990s was the CIS, which was more reminiscent of a „civilized divorce” among former Union republics than a truly-effective regional structure. As early as the mid-1990s, however, the need became apparent for the creation of a qualitatively-new integrational institution that would allow regional countries to effectively interact and could emerge as a part of global integrational processes. Lying at the heart of this project was the idea of Eurasian, and in the early 2000s – NEO-Eurasian integration. The lack of a universal „integration paradigm” to conceptualize and forecast the sequence and pattern of integrational and disintegrational processes throughout the post-Soviet space creates certain difficulties in theoretical analysis of the specific trajectories of integrational changes, both in the Greater Eurasian Space and in its individual Greater Spaces (in particular, the Greater Post-Soviet Space).

The modern space of the Eurasian global region does not fit within the historical framework of the Soviet past and is acquiring, under the influence of transnational processes, new spatial-temporal contours – those of the NEO-Eurasian space, wherein integration policy serves not as an internal mechanism of interaction among former Soviet republics but an instrument for building a qualitatively-new space in which, on the one hand, post-Soviet states unify and separate, and on the other, new participants of global neo-Eurasian regionalization emerge. In this context, the idea advanced by D. Trenin to define Russia as a „Euro-Pacific country”¹ is particularly intriguing. The need is objectively arising for a suitable

¹ See: D. Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*, Moscow 2012.

conceptual understanding of the emerging neo-Eurasian space as one of the centers of global politics and economics of the 21st Century. The conceptual idea of the Eurasian Union offers the opportunity to go beyond the confines of „post-Sovietism” as continental regionalism and structure „neo-Eurasianism” as global regionalism. It is precisely for this reason that the post-Soviet/neo-Eurasian space can be viewed as a unique „testing platform” insofar as, on the one hand, it represents a striking example of the interrelatedness of integrational and disintegrational processes, and on the other, is a phenomenon which has thus far lacked due theoretical elaboration in modern political science.

It is important to grasp the paradoxicality of the current situation: the USSR has not existed for more than 20 years now, yet the research community persists in returning to it terminologically, using concepts such as „post-Soviet”, „post-socialist”, „former Soviet republic”, etc. to define the spatial phenomenon that emerged after the collapse of the USSR. Modernity has effectively been left without its own conceptual image, hiding instead behind the prefix „post-”. In the political-science literature, the space at issue is most frequently referred to as post-Soviet, post-colonial, post-imperial...; still other definitions are sometimes encountered: Euro-Asian, Eurasian, continental, and even – multi-civilizational, inter-confessional, polyethnic.

Rather critical viewpoints have recently begun to emerge with respect to this conceptual problem. Intriguing in this context is the position held by Russian expert G. Trofimchuk, who has argued that the lack of a definition of the post-Soviet space adequate to contemporary political realities is leading to negative consequences:

All of the countries that formed part of the USSR (...) flail about in anti-Sovietism. That is, they talk about how bad things were, yet offer nothing (in its place). Do you know how they refer to this space in America? They call it the „West-China space”. Strategically, we’re losing. (...) One can only hope that a space will emerge to occupy a serious base between Europe and China; thus far, however, it has not.²

In this connection, G. Trofimchuk believes that the „Eurasian Union” project represents „the last chance for integration for the post-Soviet space. The CIS played its role, but we must go farther. The Eurasian Union must not stagnate at the level of words.”³ In creating this new political-economic formation, however, it is crucial to settle on the appropriate terminology.

² See: *Materials of the International Symposium „Russia-CIS: integrational strategies in the context of the multi-vector development of the post-Soviet space”*, <http://focusgoroda.ru/materials/2011-12-15/743.html> (5 X 2013).

³ *Ibidem*.

As G. P. Sachko rightly notes,

there is no universally-accepted interpretation of the very concept of Eurasia. In the vernacular, geographical Eurasia is understood as the Earth's largest landmass, divided into European and Asian parts. The emergence of geopolitics brought with it the interpretation of Eurasia as the center of the world – the heart of the Eurasian continent (the „Heartland“). Almost simultaneously with the formulation of the Russo-emigrant concept of Eurasianism, the geopolitical substance of the concept was augmented with the culturological (civilizational) aspect. Specifically, Eurasia was understood to occupy a special developmental space (largely coinciding with the territory of imperial Russia and the USSR), representing an integral whole in the geographical, geopolitical, historical, culturological and other senses.⁴

The first ideological underpinnings of the concept of „Eurasia“ were provided by Russian scholars who, after the fall of the Russian empire, found themselves in emigration. Prominent among representatives of the „Eurasianism“ school is the creator of the “geosophy” concept P. Savitsky,⁵ who managed to creatively summarize the theoretical advancements of Russian geographers, historians and ethnographers (L. I. Mechnikov, P. P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky, and others). According to P. Savitsky, discernible within the vast expanse of the Euro-Asian continent is a certain organic whole (with its specific geographical, climactic, and natural-landscape characteristics) among the European and Asian parts of the continent (the so-called „developmental space“ of Russia) that could reasonably be termed Eurasia. In the Eurasianist mindset, the history of Eurasia is the centuries' long struggle between the „forest“ (the forest belt settled by the Slavs) and the „steppe“ (travelled by the Ural-Altai prairie nomads), which predetermined the nature of Russia – Eurasia in terms of its „developmental space.“ It is precisely Russia's central situation that predicates, in the opinion of the theorists of classical Eurasianism, the centripetal developmental thrusts of the remaining parts of the Euro-Asian continent (Europe, Western Asia, Iran, India, China and Japan). It is precisely for this reason that, within the context of Russian Eurasia, what emerged was a striking (in the cultural and civilizational sense) conglomeration of peoples, which found, *inter alia*, its expression in the linguistic diversity of the Russian language.

Gaining renewed relevance in the current environment are the ideas of the classical geopolitics of the 20th Century (H. Mackinder, F. Ratzel, K. Haushofer), in particular, the concept of „axial region“, which assumes the vast internal expanse of Eurasia. The modern conclusion drawn from this theoretical premise

⁴ G. Sachko, *Eurasia in the global politics of retrospective and prospective discourse*, http://www.lib.csu.ru/vch/10/2005_01/001.pdf (5 X 2013).

⁵ See: P. Savitsky, *The Eurasian Continent*, Moscow 1997.

of the last century is that the Eurasian space (considering the concentration of the economic power, demographic resources, hydrocarbon reserves and military-political potential of the states involved) represents, in the context of the 21st Century, the main link in global and regional politics. It would be difficult to argue with the position advanced by the Ukrainian expert A. Irkhin⁶ to the effect that intense competition is currently building between the U.S., Russia, the European Union and China for the dominant role in managing the integrational trends unfolding within this space. Overall, however, the space is far from homogenous, which, in the opinion of V. Kuvaldin,⁷ forms the basis for the distinction of individual regions. For instance, the European part of Eurasia can be divided into „EuroWest” and „EuroEast”. „EuroWest” is broadly concentrated within the EU, whereas „EuroEast” has essentially been whittled down to the confines of the post-Soviet space. Connected by geography, history and culture, these two halves of the European space differ dramatically from one another. As V. Kuvaldin goes on to note,

though „EuroEast” is five-times greater than „EuroWest” in terms of territory, it is almost half the size of its counterpart in terms of population, five-times smaller in terms of GDP (PPP), and more than three-times smaller in terms of per capita GDP (PPP). While the development driver is located in EuroWest, the resource base (oil, gas, metals, forests, etc.) is found in EuroEast. The countries of EuroWest are classified as highly-industrialized states, while the countries of EuroEast are classified as mid-industrialized, though the rate of economic growth in EuroEast is significantly higher. Whereas EuroWest features several leading states, EuroEast exhibits tremendous asymmetry of national power between Russia and the remaining countries. Russia accounts for 3/4 of the territory, 2/3 of the economic potential, and roughly 1/2 of the population of EuroEast. If one were to attempt to estimate its specific weight within the post-Soviet space, it would be greater than that of Brazil in South America and comparable to that of India in South Asia.⁸

Drastic transformation of the political map of Eurasia is distinguished by the processes involved in the search for the optimal development model by all of the countries (from the Baltics to Mongolia) finding themselves – in yet another twist of history – under incredible modernizing pressure: either blend into the integrational course of Westernization or formulate a Eurasian integrational strategy. In

⁶ A. Irkhin, *Reintegration of the post-Soviet space: conditions, theoretical conceptualization, possible scenarios*, <http://rusprostranstvo.com/article/view/337> (5 X 2013).

⁷ V. Kuvaldin, *EuroEast. Post-Soviet transit*, [„Roundtable” talking points. Italian Center for Strategic and International Studies, Rome, 15 I 2007], www.gorby.ru/img.php?img=file&art_id=25500 (5 X 2013).

⁸ *Ibidem*.

this context, what emerges as particularly complex is the role of Russia, which, in the opinion of contemporary Russian Eurasianists⁹, constitutes a „bridge between West and East. (...) This is not the subjective or voluntary aspiration of Russia but its destiny, predetermined by its very *developmental space*”.¹⁰ In general, the position held by the neo-Eurasianists (A. G. Dugin, A. S. Panarin, B. S. Erasov) boils down to the need for Russia to assume an active role in world politics, which means formulating a strategy of civilizational offensive as opposed to fending off „Atlantic provocations”. Thus, A. S. Panarin saw Russia’s higher calling not in geopolitical battles but in advancing a „global civilizational alternative”, meaning contrasting the „radical version of American-centric technical civilization” against a Eurasian model of civilization, where the accent would be placed on preserving cultural memory and promoting spiritual priorities.”¹¹ In other words, the scholar asserts that the modern Eurasian space must go beyond the confines of the „post-Soviet” and encompass new realms, including, first and foremost, Turkey and China. Thus, A. S. Panarin distinguishes the following trends in Eurasian development:

- union with the Turkic peoples, objectively exhibiting the civilizational and political prerequisites for aligning themselves with Russia and its near abroad;
- revival of the historical ties between the European and Asian parts of the Eurasian space (transit project via the Russian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific);
- formulation of a Eurasian „ecumene” based on a dialogue of cultures, religions and historical traditions.

Should the Russian leadership fail to seize this strategic opportunity to strengthen its role in the Eurasian space as a unifying element between Europe and Asia in the 21st Century environment, A. S. Panarin believes that this failure will be followed by „annihilation” of the integral spatial whole. The resulting geopolitical void could be filled by powerful actors unwilling to consider Russian interests and capable of „turning Russia into a battlefield.”¹²

Expanding upon the notion of A. S. Panarin, of particular interest is the idea advanced by B. S. Erasov, who views modern Russia as a load-bearing structure of Eurasia. By „rebuilding itself, by creating stability for Russia as the load-bearing structure – the very *centrum medianum* – of the entire Eurasian space, our country – to a certain extent, at least – effectively ensures the stability of the entire

⁹ See: V. Pantin, V. Lapkin, *Russia between the West and East: problems of geopolitical and geopolitical self-determination*, „Russia and the Muslim world” 2007, No. 2 (176), s. 12.

¹⁰ G. Sachko, *op.cit.*

¹¹ A. Panarin, *At the turn of the millennium: Russia in search of civilizational and geopolitical equilibrium*, [w:] *Civilizations and cultures. Scientific almanac*, Moscow 1996, s. 78.

¹² *Ibidem*.

continent".¹³ Eurasia's critical integrational factor, in the scholar's opinion, is not economics but ideology, encompassing not just political elements but academic and scientific aspects as well.¹⁴

The logical progression of today's disunity among the states of the European part of Asia would be their integrative unification. Such a policy is being pursued by the EU, under its „Eastern Partnership” program. Yet this option for the development of integrational trends is not in the best strategic interests of Russia, insofar as Russia is not a European but a Eurasian country, which is why it has recently activated, as a counterweight to the European integrational trend advanced by the EU, its own Eurasian trend, with its obvious aspiration to emerge not as a part of the European integrational space but a center of the Eurasian integrational space. The Belarusian expert A. Toma¹⁵ distinguishes a number of fundamental factors in development of the Eurasian integration concept:

- the terms „Eurasian project”, „Eurasian space” et al, as introduced into the post-Soviet political lexicon, rest on a well-developed conceptual foundation (the works of the classical school of Russian Eurasianism, the works of the Russian thinker L. Gumilev and the advancements made by modern Russian intellectuals);
- the Eurasian (neo-Eurasian) school arose not merely as a result of conceptualization of the driving forces behind the historical processes forming the „greater space” as cohesive organisms, but as an adequate response to the concepts of Atlanticism, mondialism and the new world order;
- proceeding from „economic pragmatism”, the following can be confidently asserted. Today's Russia has become the supplier of both material and intellectual resources for Western civilization. It is also faced with the pressing issue of Chinese expansion. A scenario under which a coalition of the West and China seizes the „world's storehouse” (Siberia) could become reality in the near future. The fate of Russia (= Eurasia) depends on whether or not it is able to regain control over the „Heartland”. Without addressing this challenge, the new integrational project could emerge as nothing more than a mondial program and devolve into a centralized mechanism for funneling resources to the West.

The tonality of A. Toma's position is appropriate to the objective situation currently faced by the Eurasian peoples and, first and foremost, the peoples inhabiting the territory once occupied by the former USSR: on the one hand, the fine-tuned totalitarian system of administration and cooperation has disappeared,

¹³ B. Erasov, *The ethnic – national – civilizational in the Eurasian space*, [w:] *Civilizations and cultures...*, s. 102.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, s. 94.

¹⁵ A. Toma, *Eurasian project: The Belarusian perspective*, <http://tpp-inform.ru/global/1807.html> (5 X 2013).

while on the other, newfound independence has led to anarchy and mutual grievances that threaten to spill over into armed conflict. In essence, what has emerged is a power vacuum, which naturally, in the opinion of Russian expert L. Ivashov, has resulted in a situation where

today's Eurasia is the main prize for the global victor or several global players – if they are able to agree amongst themselves. The key element of Eurasia – Russia – still resembles the subject of a global game. From a geopolitical standpoint, it is the center not just of the Eurasian continent but of the whole world. Six of the world's eight civilizations are tangential to its space. No other world civilization enjoys such an advantage. Then there is the protracted historical experience of global unification within the framework of a common civilizational project and the single state of two hundred peoples, nations and nationalities (second only to India). Thus far, the CIS is home to a common system of values and traditions, the living memory of the common struggle against external enemies and great victories, vibrant cultural proximity, and the enduring Russian language. (...) The Eurasian Union, as proposed by Kazakh President N. A. Nazarbaev and expanded upon by V. V. Putin must emerge not as the pet project of pragmatists from the world of business and power, but as the product of the reason and intellect of the entire Eurasian space.¹⁶

Thus, 20 years after the collapse of Soviet civilization, objective trends of modern global development have prompted the Eurasian peoples to grasp the very real need for the formulation of new geopolitical and theoretical concepts of neo-Eurasian integration.

In recent times, in the wake of real political steps by the leadership of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus towards the creation of a Eurasian integrational space, the topic of the Eurasian space and its institutional structuring has gone into active development by the academic circles of the abovementioned countries. Yet, the countries' leaders also aspire to make their own contribution to development of the Eurasian concept of integration.

Immediately noteworthy are the ideas advanced by President N. A. Nazarbaev, who lays out his concept of neo-Eurasianism from the standpoint of the Kazakh political elite and therefore views

Kazakhstan as a unique Asian state where European and Asian roots are intertwined. (...) This confluence of disparate cultures and traditions enables us to absorb the best achievements of European and Asian cultures. (...) We understand the essence of our geopolitical positioning – furthermore, we are prepared

¹⁶ L. Ivashov, *The Eurasian Union – guarantor of stable world order in the 21st Century*, „Military-Industrial Courier”, 9 V 2012, <http://www.russianskz.info/politics/3191-evraziyskiy-soyuz-garant-ustoychivosti-miroporiyadka-hhi-stoletiya.html> (5 X 2013).

to emerge as the center for the strengthening of security throughout the Asian continent.¹⁷

The position held by N. Nazarbaev is distinctly geopolitical in nature, insofar as he views the future role of Kazakhstan as the „economic and cultural interlink between three rapidly-developing regions – China, Russia and the Muslim world”¹⁸ Lying at the heart of the conceptual musings of N. Nazarbaev is the proposition that

in the 21st Century, it is impossible to conceive of the Eurasian Union existing as a successful center of global power outside of clearly-detectable trends of global development. In this century, regionalization has become a universal trend. Over the next few years, the European Union (EU) plans further expansion thanks to the ascension thereto of Croatia, and over the longer-term – Serbia, Montenegro and other countries. East Asia is moving forward with the largest free trade zone on the planet featuring the participation of China and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries encompassing two billion consumers in one fell swoop. In the financial-economic sense, the Persian Gulf Region is pursuing self-organization. Integration amongst the countries of North and South America, and Africa, is intensifying.¹⁹

According V. V. Putin, Russian president and one of the conceptual masterminds behind the Eurasian Union, the alliance must emerge as one of the poles of the modern world while playing the role of an effective „connector” between Europe and the dynamic Asia-Pacific Region. The real challenge is to position the Eurasian Union as a leading driver of global integrational processes while shaping it into a global region:

The combination of natural resources, capital and impressive human potential will allow the Eurasian Union to be competitive in the industrial-technological race, in the rush for investors, and in the creation of new jobs and advanced production lines, and, in tandem with other key players and regional structures such as the EU, the U.S., China and APEC, to ensure the ongoing stability of global development.²⁰

In his program-related article entitled: „The New Integrational Project for Eurasia – the Future Being Born Today”, V. V. Putin emphasized the main charac-

¹⁷ N. Nazarbaev, *The Eurasian Union: Ideas, practice, outlook. 1994-1997*, Almaty 1997, s. 28.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 404.

¹⁹ N. Nazarbaev, *The Eurasian Union: from idea to the story of the future*, „Izvestiya”, 25 X 2011.

²⁰ V. Putin, *The European Union – an open project*, <http://www.kpe.ru/sobytiya-i-mneniya/ocenka-tendencii-s-pozicii-kob/2728-putin-es-eto-otkritiy-proekt> (5 X 2013).

teristics of the Eurasian Union in the context of global integrational processes. At issue is a conceptual project defined by the following principles:

- principle of „globality”;
- principle of „unity through diversity” as the basis for intercivilizational dialogue throughout the Eurasian continent;
- active interaction with Eurasian Union neighbors as the mechanism for modernization of the Greater Neo-Eurasian Space (the „Eurasian Neighborhood”);
- principle of „multi-speed, multi-level integration” as an instrument for multi-channel interaction among the participants of neo-Eurasian integration („open regionalism”).

For his part, Belarusian President A. Lukashenko declared in one of his program-related speeches that he views the Eurasian Union project as the interlink between the European Union and Asian economies. In particular, he made the following observation:

In the East and in the West, two powerful economic poles are emerging – the European Union and the East-Asian Region, encompassing two colossal countries – China and Japan. It’s almost as if geography itself were dictating to us the need for the emergence between them of connecting links, better still – a link.²¹

In his view, the Common Eurasian Space should be regarded as a „bold, global step – but just the first step.” That said, the Belarusian leader stressed the fundamental originality of the emerging Union:

Many assume that, in creating the European Union, our countries’ politicians are guided by the past – that for Kazakhstan, the idea of Eurasianism is akin to resurrection of the steppe empire of Genghis Khan, for Moscow – a renaissance of the empire of the Russian tsars, for Belarus – a return to USSR redux. (...) In all actuality, it’s being created not as a new version of old empires but as an integrative alliance for the 21st Century.²²

Thus, at the present stage, institutionalization of the Eurasian Union is moving full steam ahead. Already settled upon is the deadline (2015) for practical implementation of the new integrative alliance. Yet, it is important to grasp the distinguishing features that this particular integrational model will assume in the context of the global world. From the theoretical standpoint, it is important to elucidate the interrelationship between institutions and organizations as the forms

²¹ A. Lukashenko, *The Eurasian Union – created for integration of the EU and Asian economies* [2 VII 2012], <http://vz.ru/news/2012/7/2/586530.html> (5 X 2012).

²² *Ibidem*.

and substance of the integration process, as noted, in particular, by D. North, who regarded institutions as the rules of the game and the organizations and individuals formulating them as the players.²³ As concerns, in this connection, the process of creating the Eurasian Union, it is important to note that the decisions made in recent times (for instance, on creation of the Eurasian Economic Commission, headed by V. Khristenko) do not automatically create an institution of the international integrational organization: what's critical is the practical implementation of high-level agreements via a series of actions by the creators (players) of the Eurasian Union.

Whereas institutions model creation and development of the rules and the consequences of their application, organizations model the strategy, skills, talent and interaction of their members in achievement of the objective within the scope of the rules put forward by such institutions. The emergence of certain organizations is predicated on the institutional matrix²⁴

which is expressed, inter alia, in the developmental particularities of such integrative organizations as the EU.

Under analysis of the developmental patterns and determination of the possible paths of integrational development throughout the neo-Eurasian space, it seems possible to combine the conceptual provisions of the policy of „European Neighborhood” (the EU model) and those of the Asian policy of „open regionalism” (the APEC model). Studying the particularities of neo-Eurasian integration, the authors deemed it prudent to take into account the experience of the integrational construction of the European Union and the Asia-Pacific Region as two models of global regionalization. Whereas the EU can be viewed as the classical form of integration (gradual expansion and development), integrational structures in the APR space are less rigidly-institutionalized than in the EU and aspire to develop the principle of „open regionalism”. That said, while it is certainly important to study the experience of such global models of integration, wholesale copying of such forms is incapable of yielding positive results for neo-Eurasian integration. In this connection, the authors of the article insist on the need for further theoretical-methodological advancements in the study of integration throughout the space of the Eurasian global region, taking into consideration both the strengths and weaknesses of the classical models of integration and more recent trends in global development (for example, transnationalization). The final result of their synthesis of European and Asian integration experience was the authors' concept of the Eurasian Neighborhood as a theoretical approach to solv-

²³ D. C. North, *Economic performance over time*, „Domestic proceedings” 2004, No. 6 (21), s. 88.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

ing the dilemma of the stagnating disintegration of the post-Soviet space.²⁵ That said, the Eurasian integrational space is regarded as an intrinsically-organized MULTI-vector integration, which underscores its variability and range of possible integrational forms, where the principle of unification (as in the Westernized model of European integration) is absent but the principle of unity through diversity (the mosaic principle) is present.

Based on the proposition of the variability and diversity of possible forms of integration, the authors of the article opine that immediate perception of the Eurasian Union project could proceed along the following projections:

- Eurasian Union as an actor of global integrational processes (*planetary strategy*);
- Eurasian Union as an actor of regional integrational processes (*regional strategy*);
- Eurasian Union as an actor of the integrational policy of the states of the neo-Eurasian space (*sub-regional strategy*).

The authors view the planetary strategy for the formulation of neo-Eurasian integration policy from the standpoint of two theoretical concepts: global geopolitics and the theory of transnationalism. As a result, in the context of the first theoretical approach, the planetary sweep of the Eurasian Union assumes its interpretation as a rejection of „unipolar globalization” and the basis for creating the system of a multipolar world whose elements are played by global regions destined to include the Eurasian Union. Within the scope of the theory of transnationalism, emphasis is placed on the importance of interplay between three administrative components: state, business and society, making it possible to move away from the territorial state-centric understanding of integration and towards a spatial, cross-border augmentation of global integrational processes.

The regional strategy for the formulation of neo-Eurasian integration policy is viewed by the authors as an assumption of the policy of „open regionalism” and the format of informal co-administration with potential partners within the scope of the Global Eurasian Region. The authors deem it necessary to develop reciprocity with the system-forming participants of the Eurasian „middle space”.

As concerns neo-Eurasian integration at the sub-regional level, the authors of the article lean towards the idea that the failed lessons of the „expansionist policy” of the European Union, coupled with the political wavering of most potential participants of Eurasian integration, should convince the leadership of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan of the need, at this stage, for a more stable arrangement – first and foremost, that of their „union troika”. The events of recent years, associated with the economic difficulties faced by the European Union, have prompted the

²⁵ See in detail: N. Vasilyeva and M. Lagutina, *Global Eurasian region: experience of the theoretical conceptualization of socio-political integration*, Saint-Petersburg 2012), s. 172-194.

former Soviet republics to take a sober second look at their political preference in favor of the European Union. Yet, the creators of the next-generation integrative alliance would do well to guard against undue optimism in sizing up their current position, insofar as most of the statements made by the countries' leaders are predicated on the fleeting demands of today's political environment.

In conclusion, it must be stressed that the speed of recent political decision-making by the „neo-Eurasian troika” of Kazakhstan-Russia-Belarus with respect to creation of the Eurasian Union has sparked renewed interest within international academic circles in prospects for a new global-regional integration project, though the political elites of the EU, U.S. and even China, in the opinion of the article's authors, have thus far been unable to clearly formulate their position and assessment regarding a new Eurasian Union. Such disregard on the part of the world's leading countries for the new integrative formation stems from the experience of integration throughout the post-Soviet space, which has until recently been negative. As a result, part of the Western establishment simply refuses to take the intentions of the „integrational troika” seriously. While Western political circles have thus far refrained from advancing clear positions with respect to the Eurasian Union, the academic and expert community has already commenced energetic discussion of assessing the prospects of neo-Eurasian integration.

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