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## EURASIAN INTEGRATION – THE BASIS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MULTINATIONAL REGION

Global changes in human worldview and world order determine the vector and speed of historical development of civilization. These changes are due to a multitude of achievements, setbacks, and unforeseen events in the scientific, economic, political, and spiritual domains of the society. The times in which we live are unique: the exponential growth in the quantity and quality of transformations is accompanied by an increase in their mutual connection, as well as the speed of penetration into all civilizational processes. Assessment of the vectors of current global changes suggests the need for a global rethinking of established approaches, concepts, ideas, development strategies at different levels of government – all the way to the individual.

Modernization mechanisms of the existing world order were catalyzed by many phenomena: the global economic crisis, the desire of several states for a unipolar world order, the imbalance in the development of new technologies, the displacement of traditional values by ideas of “new ethics,” the climate change and the pandemic.

Rethinking the domestic and foreign policy is a natural response of the state to the threats posed by the intensification of these global challenges. In such circumstances, it is necessary to strengthen the ties with allies, form communities and coalitions that increase competitive advantages and the ability to jointly overcome the increasing threats. The Eurasian Union has become one of the most promising areas of interstate integration for Russia.

The desire of the Eurasian peoples to unite is based on their spiritual and moral unity and thousands of years of cultural and historic interaction. The idea of Eurasian unity is also important in terms of the concept of a multipolar world, designed to become a new worldview platform of mutual understanding and cooperation for a wide range of different states, peoples, cultures and faiths that reject unipolar globalization.

The ideological basis for Eurasian integration was the historical and philosophical *concept of Eurasianism*, which originated in the 1920s in the enlightened environment of the Russian emigration intelligentsia, and at the present stage has received adequate economic content and enough incentives for implementation by the leading economies in the CIS space.

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### A Modern Interpretation of the Eurasian Idea – Humanistic Pragmatism

The initial essence of the Eurasian idea was that a special civilization has developed on the vast continent of Eurasia that combines features of the West and the East, but at the same time differs significantly from both Western and Eastern culture.

One of the authors of the concept of Eurasianism, Nikolai Sergeyevich Trubetsky, linguist, philosopher, and culturologist, said that the nature itself indicates to the peoples of Eurasia “the need to unite” and “create their national cultures through working together.”

The concept of Eurasianism has gone through periods of criticism, split, excessive politicization, and a certain populism, and in recent history has been revived in the form of the Neo-Eurasianism movement. However, in the modern context of global development and changes in the geopolitical and geo-economic configuration, it makes sense to ask the question: *What is the Eurasian idea now? A speculative concept*, rather emotional than rational, a *myth* that may be inspiring but difficult to implement, or a *real opportunity* to unite the country potentials – in the broadest sense: economic, geostrategic, social, cultural?

Due to its location, the Eurasian space is often perceived as a bridge, a link between Europe and Asia. There is an urgent need to solve the problem of forming global logistical chains, and in this sense, the connecting role of Eurasia is of great importance. However, we must not forget the intrinsic value and uniqueness of our “*place-development*,” in the words of the Eurasianists. Historian Georgy Vladimirovich Vernadsky provides a very accurate wording in his book “The Outline of Russian History”: “People’s mastery of their historical place-development is only strong when people are *aware* of it.”

It is clear that “*Eurasian identity*,” that is, the awareness of being Eurasian, will come to the citizens of the CIS gradually, as the integration develops. This process is objectively lagging in comparison to the European Union, where the so-called European identity as a kind of supranational affiliation began to take shape since the first attempts at European integration – from the Middle Ages.

In our opinion, a modern interpretation of the Eurasian idea should combine *humanitarian values* (guided by the “know to understand” approach: studying each other’s way of thinking and cultural heritage, which is the “heart” of any nation) and *pragmatically built economic integration* – the development of common industries, major infrastructure projects, and joint innovative developments. All this is already possible in modern conditions, on the basis of the established integration nucleus – the Common Economic Space of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. But humanism in the Eurasian context is highly pragmatic: the interaction between Eurasian peoples and their understanding of common goals and objectives of development will determine the degree of effectiveness of the Eurasian macro-region as a single participant of the global competition.

### **Eurasian Space as the Place of Diversity**

One of the main competitive advantages of the geopolitical and, more importantly, geo-economic space of Eurasia is its *diversity* – of the peoples, historical traditions, cultures, religions, ways of life, historical experience, and business practices. At a first glance, the idea of the advantage of diversity is paradoxical: in assessing the effectiveness of integration, we always speak of the degree of unification, harmonization of conditions, norms and rules, and the degree of homogeneity of space. However, in today's world, the diversity of the Eurasian space is consonant with the growing diversity of the global economy: the benefits of this diversity outweigh certain difficulties in establishing norms and mechanisms of interaction. Such a fundamental principle of the Eurasian doctrine as *polycentrism*, from the point of view of preserving the cultural codes of the nations comprising the Eurasian space, is very important and relevant in the context of globalization, which often means not only unification of approaches to doing business, but also convergence of cultures and languages, erasure of unique national characteristics, and a certain “global simplification.”

In this context, the Eurasian idea has such a great potential precisely because of the synergy that can arise from the development of a unified but diverse Eurasian space, the additional energy that will exceed the sum of the potentials of the uniting countries.

### **The Impact of Modern Global Challenges on Eurasian Integration Strategy**

The world keeps changing. The global economy as a system linking the parts of this world is changing as well. The speed of such changes is constantly increasing, primarily as a result of advances in technology and the increasing speed of information transmission. Perhaps the increase in the speed of changes is the most serious challenge today; we need faster, but equally effective solutions for the implementation of the chosen integration strategy – movement towards the Eurasian Union.

The second challenge is the increasing uncertainty of the global world development. Here are just a few trends: growth in the number of participants of the world economy (countries, companies, international organizations, even individuals who can become prominent figures in the global market due to the development of global networks), increasing amplitude of price fluctuations for almost all goods and assets in a broad sense, and even growth in the amplitude of climate change. In this context, the increasing diversity of actors in the world economy and politics, their decisions and actions play a cruel joke on us: instead of stabilizing the system, the diversity unbalances it.

According to various estimates, the world economic system is currently approaching the bifurcation point or has already achieved it. At this point, the types of solutions change and the spatial and temporal organization of objects can transform. (Remember the works by Ilya Romanovich Prigogine, Belgian and American physicist and chemist of Russian origin, Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry in 1977, author of the concept of “philosophy of instability”). With the world economy at a bifurcation point, it is necessary to modify all strategies of economic life accordingly, including the development models of regional integration associations.

Thus, it is becoming increasingly difficult to predict further development of world politics, economy, and climate, and to determine the megatrends of global development. The 2011 Nobel Prize in Economics was awarded for empirical studies of cause-effect relationships in macroeconomics, namely between economic policies and macroeconomic variables such as GDP, inflation, employment and investment, confirming the urgent need for greater certainty in medium- and long-term economic decision-making for all economic actors. In the meantime, many economic laws that have long been considered immutable (such as the rational behavior of economic subjects), begin to be questioned in the crisis period and require rethinking by both theorists and practitioners of economic life. This fully applies to the theory of international economic integration, which builds on the principle of explaining the ongoing processes of creating regional economic blocs, but does not offer a viable model for the future development of integration associations.

Therefore, it is advisable to determine the conditions under which the Eurasian macro-region will become an effective spatial and economic system, capable of withstanding external shocks and possessing its own identity and certain competitive advantages.

1. It is necessary to develop an adequate balance between the “top-down” development of the institutional environment (it will contribute to the clear adherence to a certain “roadmap” of Eurasian integration) and corporate “bottom-up” integration based on the mutual interest of companies of the participating countries and adequate models of cooperation.

2. The key economic mechanism and simultaneously a criterion of effective development of a unified Eurasian economic macro-region should be the degree of cooperation between industrial enterprises of traditional and new industries, scientific and educational centers as the basis of innovation infrastructure, which implies continuous development of mutual interest between participating countries and formation of super-productive regional manufacturing systems.

3. The available global integration experience provides us with certain learnings: for various reasons, many regional associations of states have entered a phase of internal contradictions. Some of these reasons are more objective – economic (financial imbalances, lack of economic controllability in the European Union), some are more subjective – geopolitical (multiculturalism crisis in Europe, contradictions in the Asia-Pacific region in the form of the conflict between China and Japan over islands and resources in the South China Sea). This experience is very important for us: we need to build cooperation mechanisms within the framework of Eurasian integration under the principles of equality of existing participants and openness to new ones; to conduct regular monitoring of the economies of member states; and to develop an adequate mechanism for accepting new countries.

4. Education and science in the Eurasian region are an important connecting factor that supports its common identity and objective competitive advantages. This factor can unite leading scientific schools and talented young people of the macro-region through virtual networks. We can discuss building a model of intelligent network infrastructure of the future – with the Eurasian Association of Universities as its potential basis.

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Fulfillment of these conditions, which are largely inter-related, will enable the Eurasian space to evolve into a single effective macro-region. However, the current situation in the world economy is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty. It can be more accurately described as “multiple uncertainties”; that is, a set of global economic development factors that are external to regional integration in the Eurasian space and whose impact is difficult to assess because of the increasing speed and multidirectionality of their impact.

Nevertheless, the constant aggravation of the struggle of national economies for different types of resources (financial, natural including territorial, information including innovation, etc.) changes the geo-economic state of the world and requires the integrating states to constantly monitor the international economic processes and adjust the integration strategy accordingly.

First of all, following the results of the acute phase of the crisis, the integration concept should include opportu-

nities for self-stabilization in the face of an aggressive external environment. This can be implemented, in particular, through the diversification of economic specialization of member countries of the integration grouping, which will lead to diversification of exports and less cyclic fluctuations in their economies. For Eurasian integration, this task is a priority, and it is achievable. In our opinion, as this macro-region expands geographically, it can also self-stabilize, primarily due to the common lingual and intellectual space, allowing for quick strategic decisions and development of a common vision of the future Eurasian Union.

Thus, the current “starting point” for the development of a new macro-region in the Eurasian space is characterized by numerous external uncertainties, but at the same time provides the participating countries with a unique opportunity, in the absence of a clear global economic leader, to form an effective integration system, protected from external economic shocks and open to interaction with the modern global economy.