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The main tendencies of integration processes in the post-soviet space

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Abstract

This article explores the main problems affecting on the integration and disintegration processes in the frame of the modern regional associations of the post-Soviet space. The author analyzes the main trends of these processes. The article also describes the main factors affecting on the integration and disintegration processes in the region.

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Introduction

In 2019, the integration processes in the space of the Commonwealth of Independent States will be 28 years old. From a historical point of view, this is a rather short period, but for the analysis, to identify a number of trends and to summarize some of the results of integration and disintegration processes in the region, this period is quite sufficient.

The Commonwealth of Independent States as an international regional organization, created as a result of the collapse of the USSR and uniting 11 former union republics, is mercilessly and often criticized. At the same time, the historical mission that this association fulfilled is often forgotten - on the peaceful and civilized separation of the newly emerged states in a vast space, on the resolution of very many and quite complex problems that had no analogues in history and related to the collapse of the largest and one of the most powerful states of the world. The CIS contributed to the formation and development of new states, the implementation of significant reforms in them, made a certain contribution to the resolution of intrastate conflicts in a number of participating countries. The Commonwealth has become the institutional and legal form of establishing and developing relations between the former union republics.

After the collapse of the USSR, it was thanks to the CIS that there were no military conflicts between the states of the region, and the vast majority of countries managed to maintain a visa-free regime in relations with each other. A free trade zone has been formed in the Commonwealth space, and individual countries that are most prepared for even higher levels of integration have created a customs union and a single economic space in the format of the Eurasian Economic Union, a military-political bloc within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The integration processes in the post-Soviet space also contributed to the accumulation of a rich legal framework and the formation of an integrated system of various bodies of industry cooperation in the format of the Commonwealth.

However, despite significant successes, problems in integration processes in the post-Soviet space remain. Many areas of integration are either stalled or not developed at all. This is especially characteristic of the CIS itself as an international regional organization. And this is very surprising, given that the countries of the region have common borders, close historical and cultural ties, are interconnected in transport and communication routes, infrastructure, production, trade, energy, etc. Moreover, the CIS countries are generally threatened by one set of modern security challenges, which can only be confronted through joint efforts. These countries, in fact, are faced with the same problems associated with the modern development of the world economy, politics, and culture. Despite all this, integration and disintegration processes in the post-Soviet space are developing parallel to each other.

Theoretical background

A serious obstacle to the development of integration processes in the post-Soviet space is the national interests of states, or rather, their divergence. In our opinion, the national interests of individual CIS countries either do not always reflect the interests of their peoples, or are replaced by the interests of a narrow group of people who are in power in a particular country and affect the process of political decision-making. At the same time, the countries of the Commonwealth need to realize that the main priority in the evolution of their foreign policy and foreign economic relations may be, first of all, the post-Soviet space, taking into account the factors connecting them, and only then other regions of the world. As practice has shown, the desire of individual new independent states to act, relying on the priority of other non-regional associations for themselves, had a deplorable result. The CIS and other integration structures of the post-Soviet space remain an important potential for the development of member states of the Commonwealth, which is far from being fully realized. At the same time, it must be emphasized that cooperation and integration in the post-Soviet space should develop on a truly equal and mutually beneficial basis, without prejudice to the interests of the participating countries. Modern economic integration in a number of regions of the world is more likely to further demonstrate the inequality of states, since more powerful states, using weaker ones, care primarily about their benefits in integration processes.

The development of integration and disintegration processes is also significantly affected by the lack of sophistication of the mechanism for implementing the decisions taken within the various associations of the post-Soviet space. As a result, in the CIS, and sometimes in other organizations of the region, member states may not comply with their obligations. In addition, a number of sections of the CIS Charter have long lost their relevance and require processing in accordance with modern realities. At the same time, one should not forget in what environment the formation of integration processes took place. At that time, the new independent states, or rather, their leaders and political elites, sought to independently manage their republics, to break existing ties in order to strengthen their own position in their countries. It is also natural that if the founding documents of the CIS and other associations of the post-Soviet space at the time of their formation contained provisions on the supranationality of their powers and structures, then it would not have been possible to create these organizations and include the former union republics in their composition. The leaders of the states proceeded from the principle that through independent and independent development and use of the capabilities and potential of their countries, great successes can be achieved in the development of their states. Practice has shown the exact opposite. Only together, by joining joint efforts, we can resist modern threats and security challenges, get out of the financial and economic crisis, etc. However, even now, the states participating in the integration processes in the post-Soviet space see their development in different ways, have different attitudes to regional associations, to delegate part of their sovereign powers in favor of supranational structures, and are differently prepared to deepen cooperation. While Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan demonstrate the highest level of readiness for integration, the rest of the CIS countries, on the contrary, strive to interact only in certain areas of cooperation, often ignoring the implementation of these areas as well.

Main part

Despite the fact that after the collapse of the USSR, the CIS member states agreed to recognize each other's borders, nevertheless, undivided borders and related border and ethnic contradictions seriously affect the interstate relations of post-Soviet states. At the same time, the heads of the post-Soviet republics could, despite the disintegration situation and the rush of the first years of the formation of integration processes, find a better solution to the problems in interstate relations that were inherited by our countries with the collapse of the USSR and have not been resolved to this day. In addition, we can observe how the heads of the post-Soviet republics, having divided the all-union property, use it to exert pressure in interstate relations, instead of using this inheritance together and receiving mutual benefits from it.

Unfortunately, during the period of independent development of the post-Soviet republics, not only long-standing conflicts escalated, but moreover, new contradictions appeared in interstate relations. The level and degree of development of interstate relations at the present stage, in turn, affect the integration and disintegration processes. Experience shows that with mutual interest, political will and desire to maintain established ties, it is quite possible to solve even the most serious problems of interstate cooperation in the CIS.

Thus, it can be noted that in the integration processes in the post-Soviet space the Commonwealth of Independent States remains the only political platform of its kind, where 11 former union republics can freely exchange views, coordinate their positions on various regional and global issues. To improve the effectiveness of the Commonwealth, it is necessary to further reform it, which at the same time should not continue continuously, as has been happening since almost the first years of the functioning of the association to this day. At the same time, with regard to integration processes in the CIS, time and patience are needed. With respect to the organization, initially very high expectations remain, which should not be. In our opinion, the Commonwealth has certain prospects and has not yet fully realized its potential.

Another organization of the post-Soviet space, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, remains a very important factor in ensuring security in the region. However, the main problem of military-political integration within the framework of the CSTO, in our opinion, is a different understanding of the priority of the main threats and challenges to the security of the participating states, that is, if for some members of the CSTO the issue of NATO expansion is most relevant, for others - conflicts and separatism, and for thirdly, terrorism, drug trafficking and extremism. On the other hand, the current situation in the Middle and Middle East, in our opinion, will help to deepen cooperation within the framework of this organization. The CSTO member states really achieved much within the framework of this organization, having managed to form a whole series of different types of joint collective forces, conducting sufficiently effective preventive operations to combat crime (Channel, Illegal, and others), agreeing on preferential arms transfers, rendering mutual assistance in case of real threats to each other's security. However, further, the CSTO member countries will have to do much more to improve the organization's work and strengthen joint security.

Conclusion

A very successful and promising example of the development of integration processes in the post-Soviet space is Eurasian economic integration. The Eurasian Economic Union, while maintaining the continuity of the Eurasian Economic Community, has achieved its main goals in the formation of a customs union and a single economic space. However, other areas of cooperation that have not found their development within the framework of the EurAsEC should be implemented in the Eurasian Economic Union. In our opinion, the EAEU will slowly but surely expand due to the accession of new member states, primarily from among the post-Soviet republics. This process can be accelerated even more if integration processes in the economic field are developed on an equal footing and do not pursue, first of all, geopolitical tasks, but are aimed at improving the living standards of our citizens and ensuring the sustainable development of new independent states.

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