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THE POLITICAL DEMOGRAPHY OF THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION

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ABSTRACT

Currently, in Eurasia a series of integration processes takes place, the most important of which for Russia is the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union. This integration is as an alternative to the European Union in the post-Soviet space. First of all, economic preconditions and purposes of integration within the EAEU are declared.

By means of the analysis of the demographic characteristics of the member states of the EAEU the main characteristics of this unification have been identified.

It has been established that the EAEU includes two groups of countries with significant differences in demographic terms, which pursues a variety of objects in the domestic and foreign policy. In economic terms, the EAEU is a union of unequal states, where economic core and periphery become discernible. In the world's population structure the share of this union is insignificant, and it, in its present form, is unable to impact on the global trends. The development of the EAEU is possible only at the expense of further expansion, but the prospects of expansion are limited by a number of ideological, geopolitical and foreign policy factors. As a result, at this stage it can only be extensive expansion of the EAEU, through the inclusion of a number of less developed countries of Central Asia, which does not enhance the quality of its performance. It seems that the EAEU rather performs the tasks of the Geopolitics than being an economic integration union. The results of the article can be used to predict the integration processes.

Keywords*: Political demography, the Eurasian Economic Union, Russia, the economic integration, geopolitical interests.*

INTRODUCTION

New integration project, known as the Eurasian Economic Union (the EAEU) has been implemented since 2014 in the former post-Soviet Eurasia. The basis for its creation were the institutions of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) with the participation of Russia, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Belarus. At present, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan have joined it as well.

Although, on Russia's initiative at the time the various integration associations (CIS, SCO etc.) have been created, but the most important for it is the integration initiative within the framework of the EAEU. The relevance of this association increased after the attempts of the European Union to form associations with a number of post-Soviet states. Therefore, from the beginning the EAEU has positioned itself as an alternative to the EU in the "Eurasian space". At the same time the EAEU is declared, first and foremost, as a form of regional economic integration, intended to promote all-round modernization of the Member States (Access mode: www.eaeunion.org/#about, 20.05.2016).

What is the potential of this association in the world, its prospects and, finally, is it an alternative to other integration projects?

It becomes urgent to consider these aspects from the point of view of political demography, which is based on the study of the demographic characteristics of the population that have a significant impact on the development of the integration association.

METHODS

To evaluate the demographic characteristics, we used statistical data of the UN, the EAEU and the Offices for National Statistics, in particular, the indicators such as Average population, Total fertility rate, Rate of natural increase, Net Migration rate, Age-structure, GDP and GNI per capita, etc.

The basis of the study was the comparative method, which revealed the tendencies of demographic development of the countries and the balance between economic developments, compared the economic and demographic characteristics of the EAEU with other integration associations.

RESULTS

Demographic forecasts suggest a decrease in Russia's geopolitical potential in the first half of the 21st century, because it will be only 1.2% of the world population by 2050 (instead of 2.4% in 2005) (Demeny P., McNicoll G., 2000).

Compensating geopolitical costs of demographic processes is possible through the creating of integration associations, the most important of which is the EAEU. Its advantages can be ascertained through the definition of the most important demographic challenges of Russia, among which are the following:

• *Decrease in country's population;*
• *Fast aging of the population;*
• *A significant decrease in the labor resources;*
• *Depopulation in the regions of Siberia and Far East;*
• *Increase in the proportion of ethnic Muslims in the ethnic and religious structure of the population.*

Is it possible to overcome these challenges by implementing a new integration project, and what is the EAEU in the Political demography's point of view?

Currently, the population of the countries participating in the EAEU is slightly more than 182.3 million people (Table 1).

Table 1
POPULATION OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE EEU*

Country	Population by the middle of 2015 (million people)	Proportion in population of EAEU, in %
Russia	146.3	80.3
Kazakhstan	17.5	9.6
Belarus	9.5	5.2
Kyrgyzstan	6.0	3.3
Armenia	3.0	1.6
Total	182.3	100.0

* Population Reference Bureau. 2015 World Population Data Sheet. – Access mode: www.prb.org

Russia is the undisputed core of association in terms of population size. The second, union kernel but much smaller in size is Kazakhstan.

Table 2
BASIC INDICES OF POPULATION'S REPRODUCTION OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE EAEU

Country	Crude birth rate (per 1000 people)	Crude death rate (per 1000 people)	Rate of natural increase (per 1000 people)	Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	Total fertility rate
Russia	13	13	0	9.3	1.8
Belarus	13	13	0	4.4	1.7
Armenia	14	9	5	9	1.5
Kazakhstan	25	8	17	25	3.0
Kyrgyzstan	27	6	21	24	4.0

* Population Reference Bureau. 2015 World Population Data Sheet. – Access mode: www.prb.org

According to the type of fertility and mortality (Table 2), two groups of countries can be divided into: "European type" (Russia, Belarus, Armenia), characterized by low Rate of natural increase, and "Central Asian type" (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), characterized by high Rate of natural increase. The countries of "Central Asian type" demonstrate high Rate of infant mortality and Total fertility rate, which are the characteristics for traditional society.

Table 3
AGE-STRUCTURE OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE EAEU

Country	Percentage of population under age 15 years (%)	Percentage of population at the age of 65 and older (%)
Russia	16	13
Belarus	16	14
Armenia	19	11
Kazakhstan	25	7
Kyrgyzstan	32	4

* Population Reference Bureau. 2015 World Population Data Sheet. – Access mode: www.prb.org

In the age structure of population one can trace back the "European type" with a low proportion of population under age 15 years and a significant proportion of the elderly population (Russia, Belarus, Armenia) and "Asian type" with a high proportion of juveniles and a small proportion of the elderly population (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan). The age structure of population sets different vectors of development of social policy: if for the first group of the countries, important are the issues of the functioning of pension and health care systems, for the second group – the issues related, first of all, to youth. High proportions of juveniles (over 25%) in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are also a potential factor of the socio-political instability ("youth bulge").

Table 4 demonstrates the population forecast of the countries in the 21st century which fixes two trends: "depopulation trend" (Russia, Belarus and Armenia), and "growing population" (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).

Table 4
POPULATION FORECASTS OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE EAEU BEFORE 2100

Country	Population Forecasts (million people)			
	2025	*2050*	*2075*	*2100*
Russia	141.2	128.6	119.4	117.4
Kazakhstan	19.4	22.5	24.1	24.7
Belarus	9.2	8.1	7.3	6.9
Kyrgyzstan	6.8	8.3	8.9	9.1
Armenia	3.0	2.7	2.2	1.8

* United Nations Population Division. The 2015 Revision of World Population Prospects. –
Access mode: www.esa.un.org/unpd/wpp

An important indicator that characterizes "demographic divide" among the countries of the EAEU is the Median age of the population, which in 2010 was 38.0 in Russia, 38.9 - in Belarus, 31.6 - in Armenia, 28.9 - in Kazakhstan, 23.8 - in Kyrgyzstan (Access mode: www.esa.un.org, 20.05.2016) . Thus, in the EAEU a two-level system of demographic ("intensive aging countries" and "growing countries with a relatively young population") has developed.

Regarding the ethnic composition of the population it should be noted the following. The population of the Russian Federation is a multiethnic and a number of ethnic groups of the former Soviet Union have significant Diasporas in its territory (see Table 5).

Table 5
THE BIGGEST DIASPORAS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (ACCORDING TO CENSUS OF THE POPULATION 2010)*

Diasporas	Size, thousand people
Azerbaijanians	603.1
Armenians	1182.4
Belarusians	521.4
Georgians	157.8
Kazakhs	647.7
Kirghiz	103.4
Moldavians	156.4
Tajiks	200.3
Uzbeks	289.9
Ukrainians	1928.0

* Information data of total population census of 2010 – Access mode:
http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm

Diaspora is an important factor in the integration attraction, enhancing economic ties and providing the lobby. Thus, from this point of view, Russia has the greatest attraction of the integration with Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Belarus, and the three of them

are included in the EAEU. Concerning the Russian-speaking population in the republics of the former Soviet Union, the largest coverage of ethnic Russians are in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan.

At the same time, migration data fix reduction of migration exchange between Russia and all member countries of the EAEU in 2015, despite the declaration of the elimination of barriers to the movement of the labor force (Table 6). The question arises whether the EAEU helps solve the problem of depopulation and shortage of labor resources in the Russian Federation?

Table 6
THE RESULTS OF MIGRATION EXCHANGE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION WITH THE STATES OF THE FORMER USSR IN 2014-2015

Country	Migration balance in 2015	Migration balance in 2014
Armenia	+20563	+24006
Belarus	+4912	+6757
Kazakhstan	+34817	+40814
Kyrgyzstan	+9993	+15259
Moldova	+17398	+17574
Tajikistan	+11374	+19362
Turkmenistan	+2320	+2603
Uzbekistan	-20433	+37096
Ukraine	+146136	+94370
Georgia	+3311	+4218

* Information data of Russian Statistics. – Access mode: http://www.gks.ru

According to the typology of the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), there are six main types of Regional integration unions (RIU) (Data Base of Regional Integration of the Eurasian Bank of Development, 20.05.2016). The EAEU claims the status of "Active RIU", the organization really tending to economic integration. The main factor in the formation of the "Active RIU" is the level of economic development of member countries, the average GDP per capita (17,800 US $) in them duplicates the average GDP of other types of RIU (Data Base of Regional Integration of the Eurasian Bank of Development, 20.05.2016).

Currently, the average GDP of the countries of the EAEU is low and the EAEU cannot be considered as "Active RIU" (Table 7).

Table 7
GDP PER CAPITA OF THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE EEU*

Country	GDP per capita in 2014, (US$)
Russia	12735,9
Armenia	3873,5
Kazakhstan	12601,7
Kyrgyzstan	1269,1
Belarus	8040,0
GDP per capita in average in the EAEU	*6605,7*

* The World Bank. – Access mode: data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD

The statistics of IRR also shows the "economic difference" between the member states of the EAEU (Access mode: www.prb.org , 20.05.2016). It reflects the fact of the presence in the structure of the EAEU countries approaching the average for *the developed countries* (Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus), and the countries not having reached the average for *developing countries* (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan). On the one hand, the difference in GNI per capita between Russia and Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan is 10 times. The result is a "two-level reality" (core and periphery countries).

According to the forecasts for the first half of the 21st century the population size will grow in all integrations, but not in the EAEU, which in 2050 will cover only 1.7% of the world population, instead of the current 2.8%. Therefore, the EAEU will have to think about expanding its membership. The experts call a number of countries as the prospects of union enlargement (Table 8). Among them only Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Turkey have a GDP per capita higher than the average for the EAEU, and they are economically equal partners. Iran, Georgia and Ukraine have a GDP per capita equal to only half of the average for the EAEU. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons none of these countries cannot be seriously considered as a potential member of the EAEU so far.

Table 9
GDP OF THE POTENTIAL MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE EAEU

Country	*GDP per capita in 2014, (US$)*
Ukraine	3082,5
Uzbekistan	2036,7
Turkmenistan	9031,5
Moldova	2238,9
Azerbaijan	7884,2
Georgia	3670,0
Iran	5442,9
Turkey	10515,0
Pakistan	1316,6
Tajikistan	1114,0
GDP per capita in average for the EAEU	6605,7

* The World Bank. – Access mode: data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD

The real claimants to join the EAEU for the present are only Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the GDP figures per capita of which are 3-6 times less than the average for the EAEU.

SUMMARY

In our opinion, the chosen foundation for the formation of the integration project of the EAEU (Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus) in terms of Political demography should be recognized relatively rational. Accession of Armenia, the demographic characteristics of which are close to Russia and which actively cooperates with it in terms of migration, and considering the substantial Armenian diaspora, should be recognized quite reasonable too. Although this solution actually "blocked" the road to the EAEU for economically more developed Azerbaijan. The

entry of Kyrgyzstan into the EAEU has to be considered as an extension at lower quality (demographic and economic) characteristics of association.

DISCUSSION

In terms of political demography, the population size of the EAEU is insufficient for the present to compete with other integration projects and requires the inclusion of new countries. Therefore, it is difficult to agree with the assessment of the EAEU as a "new center of the power of the global world and one of the leading authors of the scenario of future development" (P.A. Tsygankov, 2015).

The current EAEU is heterogeneous and consists of two groups of countries with absolutely different demographic characteristics, which determines multi-directional vectors of the development. In fact, the EAEU is a two-level system (core and periphery) with a significant "differences" in the economic development and the quality of human capital. Also, the countries of the EAEU and potential candidates for membership in it are different models of economic development (Alan, A., and Banerji, A., 2000). The significance of these differences is intensified against the background of the reduction of interdependence of the Central Asian states (Libman, A., and Vinokurov, E., 2011).

One can agree with the opinion that Russia should not be the only "locomotive" of integration, and its scope should not be confined to the former Soviet Union (The Conflict of Two Integrations, 2015). Unfortunately, all the prospects of expanding the EAEU are connected only with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the accession of which will strengthen the demographic and economic heterogeneity of the union. The most promising participants of the EAEU in terms of political demography could be Ukraine, Turkey and Iran. According to the author, without including these countries, the EAEU should be considered as a desire to preserve Russia's geopolitical control than the real union for creating a qualitatively new economic space. Of course, the membership of Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in the EAEU will reduce the Russia's role in the union but will also seriously increase the potential of the union. Moreover, if the EAEU does not demonstrate its effectiveness and transparency in the short term, the interest in it on the part of potential candidates can extinguish. It should be taken into consideration that in the post-Soviet space there have already been alternatives to the EAEU such as SCO or CAREC (Vinokurov E.Y., 2012).

Does the EAEU make for overcoming demographic challenges of Russia? Formation of the EAEU does not solve, unfortunately, any of the challenges that modern Russia faces: the growth of population of the union is not expected; the size of "young" population of the countries of the EAEU is not sufficient to "solve" the problem of "aging"; influx of migrants from the countries of the EAEU does not allow to improve the situation of labor shortages; the problem of depopulation in Siberia and Far East is not affected; on the other hand, the proportion of Muslims will increase. This suggests that the real goals of the formation of the EAEU lie not in the level of economy or demographics, but in the geopolitical level.

What are they? From our point of view, the central purpose of the EAEU is to try to maintain control over the post-Soviet geopolitical space and to prevent the implementation of alternative integration projects. According to the author, one should have other tools to solve these problems. It makes more sense to develop closer integration with Belarus and Kazakhstan in economic and political terms, and to build relations through bilateral agreements with other post-Soviet republics.

Will the EAEU become an alternative to the EU in the post-Soviet space? Many researchers consider the European Union as a main long-term partner of the EAEU to provide modernization and development (The Conflict of Two Integrations, 2015). This is well justified, given the structure of foreign trade of Russia and Kazakhstan. However, the issue is being hampered by the goal of integration association. If the goal is to protect the post-Soviet space from the other players, then the EAEU will be positioned as an alternative. Ukrainian crisis of 2014 has showed that in the foreseeable future the agenda of EAEU does not aim to intensify integration with the EU.

The researchers call one of the obstacles to the expansion and intensification of the Eurasian integration differences of the integrating states politically, because the project involves countries with relatively democratic regimes and openly authoritarian states. The prospects for expansion of the EAEU are also connected with countries having "democracy deficit". It is known that the implementation of integration associations with the participation of non-democratic states have additional difficulties due to the specific character of their political system (Mansfield, E. D., Milner, H. V., Pevehouse, J. C., 2008; Mansfield, E. D., Milner, H. V., Rosendorff P. B., 2002).

One is to understand that the differences in demographic and economic characteristics of the states of the EAEU define the differences and their integration goals. E. Y. Vinokurov and A. M. Libman correctly point out that the interaction of the Central Asian countries does not mean the search for "the only one patron" (Vinokurov E.Y., 2012). The attempts made by Russia in the 1990s to play the role of the sole mediator in the region failed and led to the decrease of Russia's political influence (Spechler, M. C., and Spechler, D. R., 2010). Therefore, we should not seek to turn this integration project into the "Russia-centered" one.

CONCLUSION

Thus, we have managed to determine that the EAEU is a two-level organization in terms of Political Demography. The prospects of developing the EAEU and increasing its role in the World Economy can only be associated with qualitative enhancement of its composition in the demographic and economic relations. However, further development of the Union is hampered by a number of subjective and objective factors, one can argue that the EAEU largely solves the problem of geopolitics than being a real economic alternative to the EU.

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