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Eurasian economic Union: the prospects for further integration and challenges in implementing.

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Abstract

The domestic social philosophy studies focus on the modern aspects of social life such as globalization and integration overcoming national borders in various areas of public life such as education, culture, and at the same time the EAEC (Eurasian economic union) economic integration is given scant attention. This paper deals with the EAEC further integration perspectives and obstacles hindering the integration processes within the EAEC and preventing its members to use the accumulated potential of social and cultural ties after the USSR collapse. The research was conducted in the field of social philosophy, as this science studies the laws, which stipulate that the society forms stable large groups of people, sets the relations between these groups, their ties and social roles.

Keywords: Eurasian economic union, integration, integration process, coordination, cultural and civilizational basis, sovereignty.

1. Introduction

The EAEC (Eurasian economic union) is an international organization aimed at economic integration of several post-Soviet countries. It was finally established in 2015 when three founding members (the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Republic of Belarus) signed the main documents and two other members (the Republic of Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic) joined the union. It is claimed that EAEC project largely focused on the EU's integration experience as it is pointed out by some experts' interviewees. However, at this moment it is hard to compare these integration associations because of different scales of integration and nature of their problems. The name “Eurasian economic union” is used instead of previously planned name “Eurasian union”, it has already established the main, and the only sphere for integrating union members' cooperation and this sphere is economy. The treaty on the establishment of the EAEC also features the concept “Eurasian economic integration” excluding the politics and other possible components. It also reflects the EAEC countries unwillingness to establish a supranational control that successfully operates in the EU. Nevertheless, at the same time all EAEC members were a part of a single state, thus, they have a set of social and cultural ties. This fact allows suggesting that there is a possibility of further integration in other spheres of public life. Consequently, the question currently confronting the researchers was what the peculiarities and problems of the EAEC integration were that we must have paid attention to before speaking about a full-fledged Eurasian Union. This issue will be considered in a social philosophy, as this science studies the laws, which stipulate that the society forms stable large groups of people, sets the relations between these groups, their ties and social roles [2].

2. Discussion

From a philosophical perspective, integration is generally referred to a single system characteristic, whether it is a culture, a civilization or a society. The notion “integration” was used for the first time by the sociologist, Herbert Spencer. This term covered the identity between the society development process and the human body development process [4]. Great attention is given to structural functionalists' interpretation of this concept. Structural functionalism describes the society as a system with internal consistency and integrity, and its main elements restore and ensure its viability.

Concerning coordination as a major function of social integration, we inevitably face the necessity to provide it with a center exercise of power. This makes us discuss the political aspect of further EAEC integration. Bearing in mind that all EAEC members were parts of a single state (the USSR), different experts who studied the integration said that these countries had a positive future expectation. “Modern regional political and economic unions in most cases are built on a common cultural and civilizational basis’ [3], thus the members of such unions are coming to their social and cultural origins. Additionally, the EAEC community’s official working language is Russian, and each member of the union is able to speak it. In these sphere the EAEC has even more promising basis for successful integration than the EU had. The EU’s official language is English, however, most EU members are not native speakers and this sometimes creates a mess in a paper context.

Speaking about the prospects of political integration it is essential not to forget about the most important feature of national state that was a part of USSR – they are eager to protect state sovereignty. When states take part in integration associations there are tends to sovereignty reductions. These specific features created numerous disputes between member states within the integration associations, which tend to continue creating in the future. A.L. Strizoe introduces the term “Allergic to integration” [5] in his research where he describes a negative side of Soviet legacy it can be described as a desire to enjoy a newly-found independence and to solve personal problems. This problem is able to go away by itself over time or due to political elites and leaders’ rotation, however, the serious integration projects and the well-thought-out decisions are required. The post-Soviet countries have to think about their own welfare on relations with their neighbors and ask themselves if their intentions to develop as a separate nation-state will become a loss of historic time and resources and if it creates a strategic gap in various spheres of public life in relation to neighbors. The only solution is considered to be based on the post-Soviet countries experience of painful reorganization of their economies after USSR collapse, and it should form a strategy of nation’s losses compensation for the union’s newcomers. We believe this option increases the probability of further political integration.

Prospects of EAEC political integration lead to the second problem observed – the attractiveness of EU in the West and the Silk Road, project of China, in the East. These projects tend to be a bifurcation point for some EAEC members. We discovered two additional problems that have to keep in mind. One of them is the problem of a center and periphery correlation in an integration association and the second one is best described as “a matter of prestige”. “The matter of prestige” is understood as the position of a state in the integration association and it is well illustrated through the example of European Union. It is quite convenient for the nation state to enter the prestigious EU with its well-organized center and a great number of candidates wishing to obtain a place in it. However, due to objective reasons a new member state of this union will not get the privileged place and will not be free from serious commitments. If we compare the EAEC with the EU, this young integration project will not be so attractive for newcomers, because its center has lack of considerable progress made in the fight against corruption and a socio-economic sphere development. However, it still has one attractive feature for the potential participants. New states entering the EAEC with certain probability will not have to adapt themselves to the strict rules and commitments set by the integration association’s members. Moreover, they will be able to take part in their formation process. In fact, states willing to become a part of an integration association have to choose the optimal strategy taking into account such factor as temporality. The example mentioned above explains that the EU membership gives its participants a set of legal and financial possibilities but there is no clarity in these instruments. The EAEC membership provides a problematic initial stage, but at the same time, it provides interesting long-term perspectives.

With regards to determine the center and the periphery of integration association, we have to pay attention to member states’ organizational interactions with the “core” which consists of founding members of the union. “Interaction with the centers of capitalism, probably, will continue to be the main element of region’s foreign economic relations. It will also determine the external economic environment for its development” [1], despite the self-sufficiency of the integration space. The term” periphery” is often perceived negatively and considered as obviously-oppressed by the center, which owes its existence to periphery’s resources and capital. Additionally, all transformations, innovations and intellectual developments take place exactly in the center and then broadcast to the periphery. The researchers usually describe this relationship as a negative issue, considering that the center of integration association imposes its own values on peripheral countries not taking into account their own preferences and values. This model makes the integration quite similar to the relationship of post-colonial period. However, we should examine the fact that the ratio of center and periphery is determined by the different level of integration association member’s civilizational development as well as their political influence power. Thus, it could be concluded that the states relations with the center of integration association appear to be the result of the integration development strategy, which is an outcome of many long negotiations before entering the integration project.

3. Conclusion

Having concluded the consideration of possible prospects for further EAEC integration and potential obstacles of its implementation, we would like to focus on some important issues. First, we would note the importance of globalization and informatization processes in the contemporary world. In these circumstances, the alternative of integration association membership for national states is independent existence and isolationism, which, according to historical experience, inevitably lead to underdevelopment in relation to the neighbors. The project of Eurasian integration has a common cultural-civilizational basis, the common working language providing easy communication. The risks and problems appear in further integration might be minimized or averted by the creation of loss compensation strategy. The social integration will be achieved with the formation of integration center that performs coordination functions. At this moment, it is difficult to describe the formation of political or social integration in the EAEC, but the member states of this integration association have a great basis to make it real. At this moment, it is difficult to describe the formation of political or social integration in the EAEC, but the member states of this integration association have a great basis to make it real.

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