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A PRAGMATIC MODEL OF RUSSIAN-KYRGYZ RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF EURASIAN INTEGRATION

The article is devoted to the consideration of the modern model of interstate relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan. The author demonstrates the asymmetry of such model, expressed in the fact that the Eurasian integration is a foreign policy priority for the Russian Federation, that considers it a strategic goal of the multipolar world. The policy of Kyrgyz Republic is based on the multi-vector principle and therefore refers to the integration project as one of the tools for achieving economic interests and a means of ensuring development. The author comes to the conclusion that the main meaning of that integration project for Kyrgyzstan is a pragmatic solution of social problems with the assistance of the Russian Federation and other EAEU member states. For Russia, in its turn, the pragmatism of this model consists in the strengthening of its strategic presence in the Central Asian region and its authority in the international arena as a whole. In the future, not only the common historical past, economic, military-political and humanitarian ties, but also joint participation in the formation of a new world order will be the dominant factor in strengthening Russian-Kyrgyz relations.

Key words: *Eurasian integration, Russia, Kyrgyz Republic, pragmatic model of interstate relations, social stability, international authority.*

The dynamic nature of international relations at the global and regional levels requires a research of the new trends that determine their content and direction. One of such trends is that the Russian Federation when building bilateral relations with the post-Soviet states should take into account the dependence of the level of its national security and the pace of its socio-economic development on the degree of complementarity or aggressiveness of the external economic and political conditions. It explains why, against the background of increasing global competition, the Eurasian integration project has become one of the priorities of Russia's foreign policy and why the involvement of new participants in its implementation meets its strategic national interests.

Unlike Russia, other states that link "the promotion of national economic interests and the security of the external environment of development" [11] with

the expansion and deepening of cooperation within the EAEU and other integration associations, at the same time do not include the concept of Eurasian integration in their doctrinal documents as a foreign policy priority.

Considering that all the EAEU member states, having the status of strategic partners and allies of Russia, emphasize the multi-vector nature of their policy and the need to comply with such fundamental principles as the inviolability of political sovereignty, economic validity of decisions, phasing, pragmatism and mutual benefit, equal representation of the parties in all integration bodies and consensus at all levels of integration interaction [2], it is possible to draw a conclusion about a new model of bilateral interstate relations between Russia and the Eurasian states. Conventionally, such model can be called “pragmatic,” and its characteristics should take into account new factors that were absent in the “pre-integration” era. From our point of view, they include:

- first, recognition of the mutual influence of economies and interdependence of the levels of socio-political stability of the EAEU member states;
- second, inclusion of the resources of the UN and other influential international organizations and financial institutions in the achievement of the integration goals;
- third, expansion of Eurasian integration, interfacing with other integration projects, especially the Chinese project “One belt – one road.”

Let us consider the effect of these factors on the example of Russian-Kyrgyz relations. It should be noted that they are taking place against the background of such meaningful interstate constants as the cancellation of the state debt of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Russian Federation and the allocation of grants to support the budget, mass labor migration of Kyrgyzstan citizens to Russia, military-political and military-technical cooperation between the two states, the preservation of Russian-Kyrgyz bilingualism and a single educational space as conditions for the strategic partnership and alliance [16. P. 106-125]. However, the post-Soviet constants do not exhaust the new quality of bilateral Russian-Kyrgyz relations that has arisen in the context of inclusion in the Eurasian processes.

In our opinion, it is fundamentally important that the *membership of the Kyrgyz Republic in the EAEU is an important factor influencing macroeconomic indicators and the level of social stability in the Kyrgyz Republic*. This fact is recognized by the government of the Republic: “Against the background of the current macroeconomic conditions in the EAEU member states <...> the main results of the development of the Kyrgyz Republic in 2017 were macroeconomic and social stability in the country, a stable positive growth of the industrial production output (in 2017 a growth rate was 11.5%), whereas in 2014 and 2015 there was a negative growth trend; an increase in the volume of export and an increase in the growth rate of foreign trade turnover. The net inflow of transfers from individuals via the transfer systems increased by 24.2% and in 2017 amounted to US\$2030.5 million [4]”.

The social stability, in turn, contributed to the growth of investments made by the EAEU member states in the economy of the Kyrgyz Republic, in 2017 it amounted to US\$1 373 469.9 thousand (26.3% of the total amount of investments) [6. P. 323-324] and contributed to the development of the country's economy. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the share of the EAEU member states in the total volume of the trade turnover in January-September 2018 amounted to 34.9%, including 36.0% of export and 34.5% of import [10. P. 105].

It should be noted that among the EAEU member states Russia is the main economic partner and investor in the economy of the Kyrgyz Republic. In 2017, the investment inflow from Russia amounted to US\$1 063 904.4 thousand (20.38% of the total amount of foreign investments), while in 2013 (before the decision on the accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the EAEU) the volume of Russian investments amounted to US\$593 352.4 thousand (10.81%) [6].

Thus, we have every reason to believe that the *investment activity of Russia*, stimulated by the entry of the Kyrgyz Republic into the EAEU, *has become an important factor in the growth of its GDP*. In 2017, the GDP of the Kyrgyz Republic amounted to 520.9 billion soms, the real growth rate of the economy amounted to 4.6% with a forecast value of 3.5%. In 2019, the real GDP growth is projected at 4% with the contribution of such sectors of the economy as services, construction, agriculture and industry.

Another equally important factor ensuring social stability in the Kyrgyz Republic is mass *labour migration as a form of external employment*. The Draft Concept of the State Migration Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2040 states that “in modern conditions it is necessary to consider employment abroad as a part of the national development strategy, as it allows to take advantage of global employment and attract remittances from the migrants working abroad [7]”.

Russia is the main host country for the Kyrgyz migrant workers. According to the State Migration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, there are over 640 thousand citizens of Kyrgyzstan working in Russia, i.e. 88% of the total number of labor migrants who have left the Republic. This is partly explained by the fact that after Kyrgyzstan's accession to the EAEU its workers received a number of preferences as labor migrants in the Russian Federation.

A separate section of the Treaty on the EAEU is devoted to labor migration, it regulates the actions of the parties aimed “to harmonize the policy in the field of regulation of labor migration within the Union, as well as to promote an organized recruitment of workers of the member states for their employment in other member states” without taking into account restrictions on the protection of the national labor [1]. The Treaty provides preferences to the citizens of Russia's geopolitical allies, which include Kyrgyzstan. In accordance with the Treaty, labor migrants from the EAEU member states do not need to pass exams on the history and basics of the law of the Russian Federation and do not need to acquire a pat-

ent, which significantly reduces the financial costs and organizational efforts of labor migrants.

In addition to labor migrants, there are more than 570 thousand Kyrgyzstanis in Russia who have acquired Russian citizenship in the years after the declaration of sovereignty of the Kyrgyz Republic [9]. Money sent home by these two categories of workers constitute “about a third of the GDP of the Kyrgyz Republic and contribute significantly to its development [15]”. In 2017, the amount of transfers from Russia by the Kyrgyz labor migrants amounted to US\$1.2026535 billion [12].

The pragmatism of the Kyrgyz-Russian relations is also supported by the signing of the Pension Agreement for the workers of the EAEU member states, providing for equal rights in the calculation and export of pensions, as well as inclusion of the years spent in the EAEU states in the length of service.

No less important factor is the planned within the EAEU recognition of education documents issued by educational organizations of the member states to citizens applying for teaching, legal, medical or pharmaceutical activities in another member state without passing the procedure of recognition of education documents, as well as academic degrees and academic titles established by the legislation of the states of employment.

Another essential component of the pragmatic model of Kyrgyz-Russian relations is *the involvement of the resources of the UN and other influential international organizations in achieving integration goals* that coincide with the UN member states’ sustainable development goals up to 2030 [13]. Such goals primarily include eradication of poverty and hunger, quality education, gender equality, environmental and other problems affecting the level of social stability in the country.

Russia cooperates with organizations recognizing “the potential of the Russian Federation as a donor country and its participation in the global development processes, including its leadership in a number of formats of multilateral cooperation and primarily in the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States [8]”.

Such organizations include the UN Development Program (UNDP), the largest UN Agency in the field of international development assistance. The UNDP report, presented in 2017, positively assessed the Kyrgyz Republic’s accession to the EAEU, which opened “opportunities for attracting foreign investments, expanding export markets and simplifying the movement of labor migrants [5]”. It also noted that Russia provides Kyrgyzstan with financial assistance through the Kyrgyz-Russian Development Fund in the amount of US\$ 1 billion.

In accordance with the Framework Partnership Agreement between UNDP and the Russian Federation, the Russian government has financed or is currently funding the following projects:

“Comprehensive Development of the Naryn Region of the Kyrgyz Republic.” Implementation period is 2014 and 2015, the total budget is US\$ 3.5 million.

The aim of the project is to reduce poverty in the Naryn Region through the restoration of agriculture and industry, the creation of new industries and processing enterprises, the creation of jobs, water lines and sewerage, the use of renewable energy sources, training and advanced training of farmers and workers of various specialties, organization of hot meals in schools and many others;

“Integrated development of Osh Region”. Implementation period is from June 2016 to December 2019, the total budget is US\$ 3.5 million. The aim of the project is to assist the government of the Kyrgyz Republic in creating conditions for conflict prevention and ensuring sustainable human development in the Osh Region through the implementation of integrated interrelated measures aimed at reducing poverty and improving the living standards of the vulnerable segments of the population;

“Training and advanced training of specialists of the Kyrgyz Republic for the organization of the system of identification and tracking of cattle in the framework of participation in the Eurasian Economic Union”. Implementation period is 2017, the total budget is US\$ 450 thousand. The aim of the project is to create an effective, modern and meeting the requirements of the EAEU animal identification system in the Kyrgyz REPUBLIC, which is an important part of not only the country’s participation in the EAEU, but also the most important factor in improving food security, improving the epizootic situation, control and prevention of the spread of animal diseases, improving the situation in the veterinary industry as a whole. Identification of animals also creates conditions for increasing the competitiveness of livestock products produced in the Kyrgyz Republic and its free access to the markets of the EAEU and other countries;

“Socio-economic development of settlements situated near radioactive tailings dumps.” It is a UNDP project designed for the years from 2013 to 2018 and the Russian government has allocated US\$ 1.476 million for its implementation. Reclamation of five “Rosatom” uranium dumps in Kyrgyzstan is carried out in the framework of the program “Recultivation of the territories of EurAsEC member state that were subjected to the impact of uranium production.”

In addition, Russia participates in the financing of the following UNDP projects aimed at the socio-economic development of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- poverty reduction – in the amount of US\$ 0,477 million;
- poverty and environment – in the amount of US\$ 0,9 million;
- improving energy efficiency in buildings – in the amount of US\$ 0,9 million;
- control of polychlorinated biphenyls – in the amount of US\$ 1,065 million;
- small hydropower development – in the amount of US\$ 1.61 million;
- climate risk management – in the amount of US\$ 0,6 million;
- environmental protection for sustainable development – in the amount of US\$ 0.45;
- consolidation and expansion of the DOTS program through access to diagnosis and treatment of drug-resistant forms of tuberculosis – in the amount of US\$ 19.51 million;

- the cessation of malaria transmission at the local level and transition to its elimination – in the amount of US\$ 1.17 million;
- support of the government in its response to HIV – in the amount of US\$ 0.132 million.

Partnership with the UN World Food Program (WFP) is another priority area of international humanitarian activity of the Russian Federation, which contributes to the enhancement of its international authority. Russia is the main donor of humanitarian operations and WFP development projects in Kyrgyzstan. It transferred more than US\$70 million to support programs aimed at creating conditions for the economic and social development of the Republic, improvement of food security and nutrition, especially for the poor, strengthening social protection measures for the vulnerable population and optimization of school meals.

In the years from 2014 to 2016, Russia acting within the framework of the WFP program “Assistance in strengthening national social protection measures and enhancing social and economic sustainability of communities” [3] allocated to Kyrgyzstan US\$24 million. In the years from 2014 to 2017, over 2.5 thousand projects were implemented in 142 rural districts and 5 small towns, 633 260 people received food aid in the total amount of 19.547 tons, 572 km of irrigation networks were restored, 47 thousand hectares of farmland were put into operation. Each participant of the project received 225 kg of enriched flour of Russian production and 20 liters of fortified vegetable oil.

Below is information about Russia’s financial assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic by year:

- in 2013, the Russian Federation provided financial resources in the amount of US\$ 10 million to the WFP UN school nutrition optimization program (the project was implemented in 2013-2017);
- in 2014, after the approval of the new WFP project “Assistance in strengthening national social protection measures and improvement of the social and economic sustainability of communities” (the project was designed for 2014-2016), Russia allocated US\$ 6 million;
- in 2015, over US\$ 10 million were allocated in support of that project, and, given the high efficiency of the school nutrition optimization program, it was decided to allocate an additional grant of US\$ 2 million to support the program;
- in 2016, another US\$5 million were allocated in support of the project “Assistance in strengthening national social protection measures and improvement of the social and economic sustainability of communities”;
- in 2017, US\$ 10 million were allocated to expand the project on the reform of school nutrition (the project is designed until the year 2022);
- in 2018, US\$ 10 million were allocated to support 100 thousand poor families (the project is designed until the year 2022).

Russia also cooperates with other UN specialized agencies. Through the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) it participates in the financing of the project “Improv-

ing access to water, sanitation and hygiene in schools”, which covers 90 schools of the Republic with 22 thousand students. The Russian Government allocated US\$ 1 million to the project.

Since 2014, through the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Russia has been involved in the financing of the project “Development of production of cost-effective building materials in Kyrgyzstan to create jobs and support business activities” (US\$ 198.58 thousand). Its aim is to provide comprehensive assistance in the production of innovative, cost-effective and environmentally friendly building materials with extensive use of local raw materials in the construction of affordable residential buildings. The project is one of the first in the field of building materials in the country and serves as a basis for the revitalization and implementation of UNIDO’s mandate on universal and sustainable industrial development (ISID) in order to reduce poverty, promote globalization and environmental sustainability.

In 2016, it was decided to allocate US\$2.0 million on the implementation of the UNIDO project “Development of the producing industries in the Issyk-Kul oblast, Kyrgyzstan, and strengthening of their linkages with the tourism sector”, implementation period is from 2016 to 2018. The project envisages the development of cooperation between agricultural production and tourism in the resort area of Lake Issyk-Kul. In particular, we are talking about the establishment of direct supply of farmers’ products to the hotels and resorts located in the resort area.

As a part of a whole complex of projects, such as “Improvement of the systems of prevention of HIV/AIDS, STIs and viral hepatitis among the population groups especially vulnerable to these infections, including migrants” and “Technical assistance program for Eastern European and Central Asian countries in the field of prevention, control and surveillance of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases,” the Government of Russia on a gratuitous basis has transferred 4 mobile full-profile medical diagnostic clinics to Chui Region (in 2014), Osh Region (in 2015), Issyk-Kul and Naryn Regions (in 2016) and Bishkek (in 2018).

On March 2, 2018, the Embassy of Russia in the Kyrgyz Republic hosted a presentation of the new project of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) “Kyrgyzstan: Strengthening the system of state statistics in Kyrgyzstan in the field of collection, analysis and dissemination of demographic data.” The project will be implemented jointly with the National Statistical Committee and the State Registration Service. The project budget is US\$ 1.43 million. The purpose of this project is to strengthen the capacity of the system of state statistics in the field of collection, analysis and dissemination of reliable, complete and relevant demographic data in accordance with the international standards.

The above-mentioned programs and projects clearly demonstrate the mechanisms for the implementation of Russia’s strategic presence in the Kyrgyz Republic. Thus, the main meaning of the integration project for Kyrgyzstan is a pragmatic solution of social problems, which is provided with the participation of

the Russian Federation. In turn, the pragmatism of this model for Russia is to strengthen its position and authority in the Central Asian region and in the international arena.

The pragmatic model of inter-state relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan means not only participation in Eurasian integration, but also *the inclusion of the Kyrgyz Republic in the process of interfacing with other integration projects*, first of all, *with the Chinese project “One belt – one road”* and the project “Greater Eurasia”. In other words, it implies “active participation in the formation of a new world order to consolidate the foreign policy interests of the Kyrgyz Republic [11]”, which in many respects coincides with the geostrategic and socio-economic interests of the Russian Federation.

It is obvious that in the future, not only historical experience, economic, military-political and humanitarian ties, but also joint participation in the formation of a new world order can further strengthen Russian-Kyrgyz relations.

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