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## Eurasian Economic Union Came into Force

Alexander MEZYAEV

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As the new year started, the Eurasian Economic Union (the EEU) signed on May 29, 2014 came into force to include Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kirgizia. The EEU boasts the population of 183 million (the seventh largest in the world) and covers over 20 million square kilometers (15% of the earth's land). The organization is the largest world gas (22% of global output) and oil (14, 6% of global output) producer, the second largest producer of mineral fertilizers (14% of world output), the third largest energy (9% of global output) producer and the fourth largest producer of steel (6% of global production) and coal (6% of global output)...(1) But what really matters is that the Eurasian Union is «a model of a powerful, supranational

association capable of becoming one of the poles of the modern world ...to play an effective bridge role between Europe and the dynamic Asia-Pacific region». (2) The EEU is an international organization based on regional economic integration or an international entity. It means that the decisions of its organs (the Eurasian Economic Council, the Economic Commission, and the Economic Court) become norms of international law. It's very important. For a long time Russia has adhered to the legal norms created by others. It has become unacceptable as the current system of international law is being destroyed to be replaced by repressive legal system. The adoption of common foreign trade and customs policy is a matter of special importance. The foreign commerce will be based on the principles of free trade and the regime of most favored nations. The EEU members will coordinate the activities in agriculture, industry, energy and stick to common sanitary and technical standards. A common market of pharmaceuticals is to be in place by 2016. A common energy market is to be formed by 2019 and a common oil, gas and oil products market is to become a reality by 2025. It is emphasized that the Union is an economic organization. The history has the examples of international economic organizations gradually turning into political or even military unions. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a good example. Not much time passed since its inception as it shifted the focus from purely commercial projects to military operations on the territories of member-states. There have been attempts made to create an association of post-Soviet countries going beyond the limits of economic cooperation. They all have failed. Some time ago the President of Kazakhstan opposed the accession of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia to the Customs Union. At the same time he supported the idea of Turkey's membership only to prevent the Union from becoming a supranational political entity like the European Union. The provisions on common citizenship, common foreign policy and common protection of borders were excluded from the text of the treaty.

The EEU is coming into force against the background of Russia's visible intensification of policy aimed at achieving agreements with the neighboring states, especially with the ones tied to Russia by the Union. On December 22, the presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan exchanged ratification documents on the Russia-Kazakhstan Treaty on Good-Neighborly and Allied Relations in the 21st Century. The treaty does not cancel the basic Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance signed between Russia and Kazakhstan in 1992. To the contrary the both treaties complement each other to be implemented in parallel. On December 23, a treaty on the relations between Russia and Abkhazia was submitted to the State Duma for ratification. It was signed on November 24 to bring the relationship to a new level. As far back as 2008 (right after Abkhazia became an independent state) Russia and Abkhazia concluded a friendship, cooperation and assistance treaty. The new document is called the Russian-Abkhazian Treaty on Allied Relations and Strategic Partnership. The treaty will make Russia invoke Article 15 (clause 4) of the Constitution which proclaims the priority of international law over Russian domestic law. The new document streamlines the procedures required to grant Russian citizenship to the citizens of Abkhazia. It is mainly focused on common foreign and military policy, as well as social and political issues. The common foreign policy presupposes closely coordinated activities aimed at strengthening peace and enhancing stability and security. In particular, Article 4 of the treaty envisions that the Russian Federation «will in all possible ways contribute to strengthening the international ties of the Republic of Abkhazia, including expansion of the range of states that officially recognized it, and creation of conditions for the admission of the Republic of Abkhazia to international organizations and associations, including

those established on the initiative and/or with assistance from the Russian Federation». Article 6 is also important. It says that should one of the sides come under aggression (armed attack) from any state or a group of states, «this will be considered as aggression [armed attack] also against the other State party». In this case, the sides will grant each other «the necessary assistance, including military, and render support by available means to exercise the right to collective defense». The provision corresponds to international law, especially to Article 51 of the UN Charter. The treaty states that the defensive measures are to be reported without delay to the Security Council of United Nations and their implementation is to be carried out in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The treaty stipulates the establishment of a Joint Group of Forces of the Russian Federation's Armed Forces and Abkhazia's Armed Forces to repel aggression. It will have joint command structures and defense infrastructure. The respective Russian organ is to assign a commander in the period of immediate threat or combat action. (3) A more detailed agreement will make precise the procedures. (4) The document envisions the creation of common defense, security, social, economic, cultural and humanitarian space. A new treaty with South Ossetia is being prepared (5). It will to large measure amend the 2008 treaty concluded immediately after the recognition of South Ossetia by Russia as an independent state. Anatoly Bibilov, the speaker of South Ossetian parliament, said the treaty will meet the basic interests of the republic striving for maximum integration with Russia and the development of cooperation in different spheres.

Going back to the Eurasian Union treaty it should be noted that the organization is open to any state which shares its goals and principles on the conditions agreed with all member-states. In the second half of 2014 two states became the Union's members. Armenia signed the treaty on October 10, 2014 to be joined by Kyrgyzstan on December 23. Armenia also joined the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space. President Putin visited Uzbekistan. The both parties agreed to hold consultations on possible conclusion of free trade zone treaty between Uzbekistan and the Eurasian Economic Treaty. The Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation reported that the consultations are held on possible accession of Tajikistan to the Eurasian Economic Union...

The creation of the Eurasian Economic Union is a result of long preparatory work within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community and the Customs Union. Summing it up President Putin said «Our integration project is already producing practical results. Trade within the Customs Union has increased by 50 percent since July 1, 2011, and now comes to more than 64 billion dollars. We have improved our trade structure. Processed goods have gradually started replacing raw materials. Their share has risen considerably, while the share of raw materials has fallen from 40 percent to 28.9 percent».

The West fiercely opposes the Eurasian Economic Union and the plans for its development. It should be realized that the construction of «a model of a powerful, supranational association capable of becoming one of the poles of the modern world» will require great efforts. The process will not be limited by economic issues only. It will be opposed in all spheres.

#### **Footnotes:**

- 1) The official website of the Eurasian Economic Union:  
<http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/Pages/ses.aspx>
- 2) That's how President Putin described the process Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan unification in one of his articles which became part of his pre-election program in 2012.
- 3) The joint force will include the units of Abkhazian and Russian armed forces. The military and the Ministry of Defense of Abkhazia continue to function as before under the national command.
- 4) Such an agreement may be concluded in three months after the treaty comes into force.
- 5) On December 22, 2014, Vladislav Surkov, a presidential advisor, said that Work on a new treaty on alliance and integration between Russia and South Ossetia will be over by late January 2015.