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A. S. Klimenko, M. A. Matros, Z. A. Karapetova
Rostov State University of Economics, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation

FEATURES OF RUSSIAN-BELARUSIAN RELATIONS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Introduction. In the documents devoted to the problems of international activity and national security of modern Russia, it is emphasized that cooperation with the CIS member states is a priority direction of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.

Main part. At the end of 1999, the Treaty on the Establishment of the Union State of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus was signed in Moscow, which became an important milestone in the integration process of the two countries. Decades later, it can be stated that the parties have made significant progress in a number of positions, especially in the defense sphere. This is evidenced by the resolution adopted in 2010. Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. [1] The Republic of Belarus is designated as the main ally of our country, and military-political cooperation with it is called a priority. At the same time, there are many areas where the construction of the Union State (Union) is stalling, and there has been no real breakthrough in its formation. Mutual fatigue and frustration from unproductive efforts accumulate. Mutual accusations are growing. The historical-transformational approach allows us to consider radical socio-political and socio-economic changes in Russia and Belarus both as a phase of a large cycle, and as a relatively short historical period, in particular, the post-Bialowieza period.

Post-Soviet Russia followed the path of "shock" reforms, including the privatization of state property, the introduction of free prices for goods and services, and the liberalization of foreign and domestic trade. There was a deindustrialization of the country, the dependence on imports increased sharply. The decline in the standard of living of the population, the polar stratification of society according to property and other characteristics, the weakening of the central government and the strengthening of centrifugal aspirations at the end of the XX century. They caused serious tension in the socio-political life of the country and led to the use of force against their opponents by the executive branch. [2] Belarus has found an opportunity to implement softer and more balanced transformations, which allowed it to preserve large industrial enterprises, avoid conflicts and large social stratification, defend the regulatory role of the state in the economy, ensure an acceptable standard of living for the population and unite the nation.

Despite the great differences between the two countries, their leaders in the 1990s set a course for mutual rapprochement, motivated by the historical and cultural-civilizational community of peoples, the interdependence of economies, and geopolitical considerations. The apotheosis of their efforts was the decision to create the Union State of the Russian Federation - the Republic of Belarus, the Treaty on which and the Program of Actions for its implementation were signed on December 8, 1999 by the Presidents of the two countries — B. N. Yeltsin and A. G. Lukashenko.

Since the proclamation of the Union between Belarus and the Russian Federation (1999 — nowadays), many documents have been adopted that develop the provisions of the Treaty. At the same time, it can be noted that a significant part of the decisions remain "declarations of intent". A single economic, legal and information space has not yet been created. There is no single currency, no single trade, tax, or pricing policy. The Constitutional Act defining the state structure of the Union State and its legal basis has not been adopted. Serious differences remain regarding the model of the Union. All this hinders the activities of the Union, moreover, undermines its idea.

The economy is the main driver of integration. Russia and Belarus have several forms of economic interaction, which are characterized by a sectorial orientation (mechanical engineering, energy, transit, radio electronics, light industry, etc.). [2] Russian-Belarusian programs are being implemented; Russian-Belarusian joint ventures and financial and industrial groups are being created. Regional cooperation is carried out, the main forms of which are trade relations, the provision of transport, construction and information technology services, industrial cooperation, and the exchange of specialists.

For Russian regions, economic integration helps to improve the financial and economic condition of enterprises, creates additional jobs (about 3 million people). For Belarus, this is a significant expansion of the sales market. All Belarusian regions and the city of Minsk are bound by cooperation agreements with most of the Russian Federation's constituent entities, and 11 Russian regions have their representative offices in the Republic of Belarus. According to the results of 2009. Belarus ranks first in Russia's foreign trade with the CIS countries and fifth among the main trade partners of the Russian Federation.

Special attention should be paid to the most problematic component of the Russian-Belarusian economic integration, namely, cooperation in the fuel and energy sector. Belarus is 85 % dependent on external energy sources, the need for which is mainly met by Russia. In turn, Russia depends on unimpeded transit through the territory of Belarus, an increase in the volume of which would lead to a reduction in dependence on Ukraine and reduce the tension in relations with the European Union in this area. It is noted that the interaction between the allies is hindered by protectionism, constantly ongoing trade wars: “beer” (2002), “meat” (2005), “candy” (2005), “gas” (2004, 2006), “dairy” (2009), “oil” (2007, 2009). Dissatisfied with Russia’s conditions, Belarus is increasingly turning to other energy-supplying countries, including using the exotic transit of oil from Venezuela. [3]

A breakthrough in the construction of the Union State and the creation of a single economic space can be the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, officially introduced on January 1, 2010, with the subsequent completion of all necessary procedures by July 1 of this year. The formation of the Customs Union is entering its final stage. According to experts, the customs tariffs of the three countries are agreed by 95—97 %.

In the geopolitical context of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, special attention is paid to the military-strategic aspects of the Union. Belarus said that the reform of the Belarusian army, which has 75 thousand people, has been completed. Many Belarusian officers are trained in military universities in Russia. On the territory of the republic there are two important military facilities of Russia — the radar station of the space forces and the long-range communication center of the Navy with nuclear submarines. In 2009. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus have signed an agreement on the establishment of a joint missile defense system.

The geopolitical and geostrategic interests of Russia and Belarus coincide at the present stage and in the foreseeable future. Both countries are concerned about NATO's eastward advance, foreign policy pressure, and the real danger of creating a “geopolitical vacuum” [4]. It is necessary to jointly resist the relentless attempts of the West to put a barrier on the way to the reintegration of states in the post-Soviet space. For Belarus, the union with Russia is not only a preferential provision of energy resources, loans and access to the vast Russian market, but also a problem of the country’s survival, covering it with a “nuclear umbrella”, raising international prestige and the republic's exit from foreign policy isolation. In turn, for Russia, Belarus is the only ally and military-strategic partner on the western borders, a shield between Russia and NATO. The Union State will not only strengthen the geopolitical and geostrategic positions of Russia and Belarus, but also serve as an impetus for further integration processes in the post-Soviet space. [5]

During the construction of the Union, considerable attention is paid to the field of education: decisions were made on mutual recognition and equivalence of documents on education, academic degrees and titles, on equal rights, conditions for admission and training of citizens of Russia and Belarus in educational institutions of the two countries, on free defense of dissertations of Belarusian scientists in Russia.

Cultural cooperation is also significant. On a regular basis, joint meetings of the boards of the ministries of culture of the two countries are held; the years of Russia in Belarus and Belarus in Russia are organized. Thus, 2010 was declared the Year of Culture of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Belarus.

Possible scenarios for further interaction between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus can include several hypotheses. The optimistic scenario assumes a qualitative breakthrough in the process of integration of the two countries. The scenario of uncertainty in the construction of the Union, when it exists de jure, but is de facto frozen, can ultimately lead to mutual disappointment and “divorce”. The pessimistic scenario of building a Union State does not bode well for both countries. The threat to Russia’s national security will increase, and plans to re-establish a “cordon sanitaire” in the western direction of the country may be implemented. [6] It will be difficult to implement Russian projects of transit routes from Europe to Asia. There will be a loss of Russian military facilities in Belarus. The problems of Russia’s Western outpost will worsen: Kaliningrad Region and the Baltic Fleet. Kinship and traditional cultural ties will weaken, and the danger of the destruction of a single confessional space will increase. All this is fraught with a decline in the authority of Russian politics, the revival of opposition sentiment in both countries. [7]

Other scenarios regarding the Union are also possible. In particular, the transformation of its geographical and geopolitical framework, the accession of other countries to it. But the main thing is not the expansion of the Union State, but the increase in the efficiency of its activities and the transformation of the Union into a viable and attractive model of integration.

Conclusion. The hypothesis of the topic raised in the article is that the integration of Russia and Belarus is historically conditioned and meets the vital interests of the two countries and peoples. Despite the difficulties in Russian-Belarusian relations and in the construction of the Union State, the process of reintegration should not only continue, but also acquire a new quality in the form of creating common spaces: economic, political, defense, humanitarian and others. There are no insurmountable contradictions in the relationship between the two countries, and they are not hindered by the burden of past grievances. History and modern reality create the basic prerequisites for the unity of Russia and Belarus. A new union structure is being created, and the integration process, wherever it takes place, is always difficult in essence and time-consuming. It is appropriate to note in this regard that the European Union has been moving towards its current state for more than 50 years.

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Yuchuan Zhang

College of Agronomy, Northwest A&F University, Shaanxi Province, People's Republic of China

AN ANALYSIS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BELARUS AND AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND BELARUS UNDER THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVES

Introduction. Belarus is located in the center of Europe, at the crossroads of transportation between Eastern and Western European countries and countries bordering the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, with advantageous geographical position [1]. Belarus used to be the fourth largest economic country in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Its agriculture was relatively developed, and it was the main producer of meat, milk, potatoes and flax in the former Soviet Union [2]. In 2013, Chinese President proposed the construction of "The Silk Road Economic Belt", and Belarus, located in the heart of Europe, has become an important node of "Silk Road Economic Belt" [3]. With the continuous development of bilateral trade between China and Belarus in recent years, the agricultural trade between China and Belarus has become more frequent. Therefore, an in-depth study of the current situation of agricultural development in Belarus, a full understanding of its advantages and disadvantages, and a clear understanding of its agricultural development situation are of great practical significance for promoting the "going out" of Chinese agriculture, exploring opportunities for Sino-Belarus agricultural cooperation under the background of "Belt and Road Initiatives", and promoting the development of bilateral trade.

Main part. 1. Current situation of agricultural development in Belarus. Belarusian agriculture is mainly divided into planting and animal husbandry. In 2019, the gross agricultural product of Belarus was \$4.277 billion, accounting for about 6.78% of GDP. The gross agricultural product of planting industry was 2.053 billion US dollars, accounting for 48% of the total agricultural product. The gross agricultural product of animal husbandry was US \$2.224 billion, accounting for 52% of the total agricultural product. In 2019, the number of agricultural employees in Belarus accounted for 10.8 percent of the country's total employment, a decrease of 2.5 percent compared with 2004.

The planting industry in Belarus mainly includes cereals and legumes, cash crops, forage crops, potatoes, etc. The main grains are wheat, rye, rye, barley, oats, corn, buckwheat and so on; Cash crops include flax, sugar and rape. In 2019, the total sown area of agricultural products in Belarus reached 5.902 million km², an increase of 6.52% compared with 2004. The sown area of grain and legume crops accounted for 41.56 percent of total sown area, second only to forage crops. The sown area and yield in 2019 increased by 2.63 percent and 4.49 percent over 2004, respectively. Flax and potato are two traditional crops of high reputation in Belarus, and the production of which is among the highest in the Commonwealth of Independent States. However, due to the complexity of flax planting technology and the large loss of rural labor in recent years, the flax planting area in Belarus is only 52,000 hectares in 2019, 34.2% less than in 2004, and the yield is also reduced by 19.3%. The potato sown area also decreased year by year. In 2019, the sown area decreased by 47.3% compared with 2004, and the yield decreased by 38.3%. With the rapid development of animal husbandry in Belarus, the sown area of forage crops, such as silage corn and forage root crops, has been expanding year by year. In 2019, the sown area of forage crops reached 2.56 million hectares, accounting for 43.4 percent of the total sown area of agricultural products in the country.

The livestock industry in Belarus is dominated by cattle and pigs, followed by sheep, horses and poultry, with a high level of automation. The main export products of animal husbandry are meat, eggs and milk, etc. In 2019, the annual output value of animal husbandry reached 2.224 billion US dollars, accounting for 52% of the total agricultural output value. In 2019, the number of cattle in Belarus reached 4.34 million, an increase of 10.6 percent over 2004. In 2013, several outbreaks of African Swine Fever (ASF) in Belarus led to a significant decline in the pig population. In 2019, the pig population was only 2.841 million, a decrease of 33% compared with 2013. Poultry farming in Belarus has developed rapidly in recent years, the per capita output of meat and milk was higher than that of other CIS countries.

2. Current situation and suggestions of China-Belarus agricultural cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiatives. 2.1. *Current situation of China-Belarus agricultural cooperation.* 2.1.1 Trade situation of agricultural products. In recent years, with the continuous advancement of the Belt and Road Initiatives and the continuous development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Belarus, the economic and trade cooperation has been deepening, and the trade in agricultural products has become increasingly frequent. According to the statistics of the National Statistical Commission of Belarus, the total trade volume between China and Belarus