

# The union integration of the Eurasian ethnic communities: political projects in the history of Russia

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this research is to analyze the objective prerequisites and authorial constitutional projects of the union integration of the ethnic communities of Eurasia on the basis of extensive documentary material. The author considers and compares the projects developed by V. I. Lenin, A. D. Sakharov, O. O. Suleimenov, and N. A. Nazarbayev. In the author's opinion, the convergent evolutionary model of the renewal of the union statehood, developed in 1989 by Academician A. D. Sakharov in cooperation with leading legal experts, was the most realistic. This project took into account the real advantages of the two conflicting world political systems: capitalist and socialist. The author concludes that the integration process on the territory of Eurasia is due to a number of historical circumstances and factors and is of an organic nature. Consequently, the modern process of reintegration of the ethnic communities of the subcontinent in one way or another has a perspective.

## 1 Introduction

In ethnological and geopolitical terms, the problem discussed below undoubtedly retains its scientific relevance to the present day.

Indeed, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Russia as a Eurasian empire was formed during the stage-by-stage integration of diverse territorial and ethnic entities that had entered it. Contrary to popular belief, it was not a “people's prison” at all. Many of the ethnic communities subject to the imperial regime could later become independent nations (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Poland, Finland, Estonia, etc.). It is difficult to recognize the definition of Russia in the period of the empire as a unitary state. The Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Finland, the Bukhara Emirate, the Kokand and Khiva khanates, the Uryanghai Territory, and other enclaves had autonomous authorities, their own legislation, armed forces and police, as well as local self-government. At the same time, the majority of non-Russian peoples could use administrative autonomy and self-government at the level of local ethnic communities (“foreign volosts,” “kurultai,” “Steppe Duma,” etc.) [2].

In addition to the features of the statehood of a unitary type, the features of the union prototype are also seen in the system of internal governance of the Russian empire. Their

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presence testifies to the fact that Russia could be transformed into a voluntary community of equal peoples under favorable conditions. The dramatic experience of the history of the Soviet Union (1922-1991) serves as an indirect proof of the organic nature of this trend, undoubtedly increasing by the beginning of the 20th century. Hardly the ruling communist party could, for decades, exploit a doctrinally alien idea to it, if in reality there were no fundamental prerequisites for its implementation.

## 2 Building the Red Empire

This fact was clearly taken into account by V.I. Lenin in his project of the union integration of the territories of the disintegrated Empire (1922). In comparison with his successor, who proposed to include them into the Russian Federation (RSFSR) on the rights of local autonomies, the leader of the RCP(b) demanded to build a union state differently. “One concession to Stalin,” he notes in a letter to LB. Kamenev, “has already agreed to do so. [...] The spirit of this concession, I hope, is understandable: we recognize ourselves as equal with the Ukrainian SSR, etc. and together and on an equal footing with them we are entering a new union, a new federation, the Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia” [1]. So during this period, Lenin adhered exactly to the federalist point of view on the problem of integration of the ethnic communities of Eurasia.

However, his project of the union reorganization of the country in the early 1920s it was not feasible in practice due to several factors. The first factor is a steady archetype of bureaucratic imperial centralism, which is very difficult to overcome. The second doctrinal factor is associated with inertial etatism, which constitutes the systemic core of the ideology of “scientific communism,” prevailing in the minds of the Bolsheviks. The third factor is due to the catastrophic consequences of the world and civil wars. They contributed to the consolidation in the regime of totalitarian methods aimed at solving internal problems, which inevitably led to the elimination of the social foundations of a market economy.

In fact, V. I. Lenin, who acted as a revisionist in relation to Marxist orthodoxy, fell into the “dialectical trap of history.” It should be borne in mind that the Bolshevik October Revolution of 1917 denied the previous (February-March) democratic people’s revolution, which in turn was a radical denial of the Empire. “The leader of the victorious proletariat” was in the paradoxical situation of the “denial of denial.”

Although the Bolsheviks disguised themselves as “left” revolutionaries, in fact they acted in the historical role of counter-revolutionaries and were called upon to restore the Empire. And if you consider that V. I. Lenin was an uncompromising enemy of the imperial state, for him personally such a situation meant an inevitable political death. In contrast, I. V. Stalin, being a pragmatist, began to consistently restore the state of the traditional type. It was useful to him and Marxist to cover under the concept of “state communism.”

Under the camouflage of the federalist abbreviation “USSR,” in reality, the imperial state with unlimited expansionist aspirations was hidden. As for the personality of the supreme ruler of the Red Empire during the era of its triumph, the ceremonial portrait of the Generalissimo is a graphic illustration of this. The military form already recalls its demonstrative continuity with the Russian emperors.

The grandiose experiment subsequently ended in failure. Yes, but if the blocks of the crumbling communist empire were still useful for new nation states, the fate of the Russian people who cemented it was at least problematic. Over the course of a century, after experiencing the tragedy of the collapse of the two empires created with their own participation, the Russians suffered more than other neighboring ethnic groups.

### 3 Sakharov's project

Among the projects of the union-integration character, A. N. Sakharov's works are very prominent (1989). They provided for the evolutionary reformatting of the "Red empire" into the Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia [5]. The Sakharov project also maintained a formal continuity with the Lenin's federalist plan of 1922. But its ideological meaning is quite different. "The Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia (abbreviated as the European-Asian Union)," A. D. Sakharov argued, "can only be renewed as a 'voluntary union of the sovereign republics of Europe and Asia,' the basis of which is the result of an organic synthesis of 'the moral and cultural traditions of Europe and Asia'" (Article 3) [5]. And in the 12 article of the Constitutional draft, it is stressed that "the Union has no goals of expansion, aggression, and messianism" [6].

A. D. Sakharov was, like Stalin, a pragmatist. However, the similarity of their views ends here. The Stalinist principle of dividing the ethnic and territorial entities of the USSR into four groups was ensured by strict subordination of the supreme power. In turn, Sakharov's approach to integration is the opposite: all subjects are equal in rights regardless of the size of their territory, the number of residents, the presence of an external border with neighboring states, etc. Unification in the union is assumed on a strictly voluntary basis. It is not the "center" that grants sovereign power to the republics, but they delegate "authority" from them to the central government under the Union Treaty.

In the opinion of A. D. Sakharov, his policy should define "the principles of the market and competition." However, it is necessary to preserve and develop the valuable historical experience of the former Union. State regulation of the economy notes the author of the project, as well as the need to preserve the positive aspects of this experience, is carried out through the development of economic activities of state enterprises and through legislative support for market principles, pluralistic competition, and social justice [5]. Unfortunately, the convergent ideas of this social-democratic project were not understood even by the reformist grouping of the *nomenklatura*, although they were quite timely.

### 4 Eurasian union after the collapse of the USSR

In the post-Soviet period (1992), the prominent Kazakhstani politician, public figure, and poet Olzhas Suleimenov was the first to initiate the creation of the Eurasian Confederation. This idea was formulated in the program documents of the political party "People's Congress of Kazakhstan" headed by Suleimenov [6, 7]. In 1994, the project of Suleimenov received unconditional support from the Kazakh president N. A. Nazarbayev [3].

With some delay (2000), the idea was accepted by the Russian leadership. "For example, the two largest associations of our continent - the European Union and the emerging Eurasian Union," the Russian president noted in a program article published before the Ukrainian crisis (in 2011). "basing his interaction on the rules of free trade and the compatibility of regulatory systems, <...> are able to extend these principles to the entire space, from the Atlantic to the Pacific" [4].

In the interpretation of V. V. Putin, the strategic goal of the contemporary integration process should not be limited to the territory of the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire, but rather it should cover the whole Greater Europe, "from Lisbon to Vladivostok." On January 1, 2015, the agreement on the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union was signed by the leaders of the three countries, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia.

## 5 Conclusion

So, let's hope that the imperial "track," which always interfered with the federal-federal integration of the Eurasian space, could be overcome this time irrevocably.

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