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**POSITION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS  
IN THE PROCESSES OF INTEGRATION  
ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT**

Development of the processes of integration in Europe in the scopes of the European Union (EU) enlargement is a factor that determines the tendencies of forming and transforming the spatial structure of the states' economies located at the borders of the new members of EU. Spatial model of the European integration includes, at least, four basic territorial macroareas of acceptance and diffusion of integrative innovations:

- in the borders of the "euro" zone;
- in the borders of the "old core" of the union (this comprises 15 states, which formed the core of the European integration in 1995);
- in the borders of the countries - new members of EU, which became the members after 1995;
- in the borders of the so-called "buffer" geopolitical and geoeconomic zone, which has been formed by the states situated in direct vicinity to the frontiers of the countries - members of EU.

With membership of Poland and the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) in EU on May, 1, the Republic of Belarus has also become part of the "buffer" zone of the united Europe. Possible consequences of changing the economic-geographical location of Belarus as a result of given political fact are discussing today in Belarusian mass-media from positions of general political and economic tendencies of development of Belarusian statehood. Discussions of this issue are determined by contradictions between two diametrically opposite points of view. Official Minsk is not prone to dramatize the future of currently undertaken in the republic economic reforms, which are quite not popular with the European and American elites in view of EU coming directly to the borders of Belarus. In practice, all the old vectors of reforming its economy and external economic and political activity are kept. Possibility of further enlargement of integrative relations

with the European Union are not considered today as an alternative instead of reintegrative tendencies on the post-Soviet territory; it also does not weaken "pro-Russian" vector of Belarusian reforms. Enlargement of economic and political relations with the countries - members of EU, according to official authorities, must correspond to the processes of internal development of Belarus from position of its possible economic and political union with Russia and other countries of CIS. As an alternative of the existing schemes of building Belarusian statehood, the government of A.G. Lukashenka, is prone to consider enlargement of economic cooperation with the countries of East Asia, many of which are referred to "unfavorable" states. Last three years a stable tendency of growth of the volumes of export of Belarusian goods and services in China, Northern Korea, Iran and other countries of above region is clearly visible. From geoeconomic point of view, Minsk "is bringing back" the markets of the former Soviet Union, which have not been occupied by the "rivals" from developed countries of the Western Europe and Northern America. Due to the tendency of reducing an export opportunities of Russian market for Belarusian goods, EU enlargement in eastern direction and connected with this process "removal" of Belarusian export from the markets of the Eastern-European states, it can only increase external economic cooperation with the Eastern-Asian region.

"The radical" opposition considers enlargement of EU as a main factor of fundamental changing the contents of Belarusian reforms and as a shift of priorities from "pro-Russian" vector to "pro-European". With all this, it is necessary to admit that Belarusian opposition (unlike the officials) is not prone to constructively take into account and model all specific features of internal economic and political development of Belarusian statehood. Possible integration of Belarus in EU with further copying "the economic model of Europe" is considered as the only global medicine to solve the problems of transitional period in the republic.

Analysis of correspondence of diametrical positions of future development of Belarus in terms of the factor of the European integration in discussions of general, scopes-like conditions of Belarusian statehood is actual in order to solve a scientific problem of finding geopolitical place of the republic in the system of the world economy. Nevertheless, this necessity, in authors' opinion, is not so constructive and useful right now, at this moment. While working out the programmes and vectors of reforming Belarusian economy, both official Minsk and opposition are prone to exaggerate the external factor, without taking into account the analysis of nature of its impact. Either European or CIS integration is considered as "formless quality", which fulfills the contents of economic development of Belarus. The external part of it, in case of integration in Europe or in case of integration in CIS, will determine economic "flourishing" of Belarus, having at once solved many problems of supporting stability of its external development even by means of its only emerging. But the process of integration is not only a factor of transformation of vertical part of the economy structure, but and, first of all, this is a factor of development of spatial basis of economy - its territorial organization. Determination, rationa-

lity of functioning the territorial structures, which form territorial organization, is, in the authors' opinion, a decisive factor of efficiency of economic development. Territory and its qualities is a factor, conditions and environment of development of statehood simultaneously. The authors consider integration as a process of expanding spatial area of presence and appearance of definite economic and political organizational forms of one type, managing the functions of territorial systems of different hierarchical rank. In other words, the European integration is a regional part of globalization process of the West-European economic and political traditions and "know-how" technologies for managing the state systems (in accordance with hypothesis of I. Galtung about "seven parallels of a single-pole world's space"). The main creative core of EU is economic and political systems of Great Britain, France, Germany. The internal stability of economic development of these states is determined, in many aspects, by stability of territorial organization of "the big European banana" - from London and Rotterdam to the riverheads of the Rhine, which is being kept in conditions of decreasing the raw materials potential at the cost of import of the raw materials and artificial integrative policy of declining concentration of industries with one-type specialization out of the borders of given territorial structure in frontiers of the European Union. The level of "changing" a spatial organization of economy of the new members of EU is determined, in the authors' opinion, by factors of historically formed concentration of similar (in specialization) with "creative" regions of EU, industries, by raw materials, labor resources, consuming factors as well as by a factor of distance from the main industrial axes of development of the states of the Western Europe. Alterations in territorial organization of economy of the new members of EU are a result, in given case, of the branch restructuring, what sometimes happens when a social pressure grows. On the other hand, the aim of policy of spatial consolidation of EU means a rapid development of trans-border regions and strengthening close-to-borders cooperation, what pulls a spatial carcass of economies of the Eastern-European countries from the pole-mono-center to periphery, enabling thus forming the international industrial agglomerations and optimization of geographical distribution of industry. Despite the evident "pluses" of the European integration, "the break" of the formed territorial organization is accompanied by negative factors of strengthening social conflicts. The very fact of necessity of the branch restructuring of economy and possible, connected with this, social consequences is an irritant for Belarusian authorities while considering all the possibilities of strengthening integrative relations with EU. One of the most concentrated industrial-territorial complexes has been created in Belarus during the times of the Soviet Union; it was done in the scopes of a single Union's market, which specialized in highly-qualified labor-required machine-building, mineral fertilizers production, oil-refining industry, textile, wood-processing industries. In order to describe the depth of industrial specialization of the former BSSR and the functions which it was response for in the common Union's labor division, the following fact must be mentioned: about 75% of products of machine-building and metal-processing industries were exported to other republics of the former Soviet Union in

mid-70s of the last century, including more than 90% of tractors and its details, about 95% of automobiles and products of device building industry, 70% of chemical fabrics, 73% of technical bearings, 70% of potash salts, 54% of veneer, 45% of clothes. Occupying less than 1% of territory and having a bit more than 3,5% of population of USSR, Belarus produced about 50% of its potash salts, 19,4% of polyethylene, 10,4% of chemical fabrics, 18% of tractors, 13% of metal-cutting devices and automatic lines, 100% of silos-harvesters, 20% of flax fabrics, 54% of glass tubes resistant to high temperatures in the first half of 70s. The volumes of concentration of industry in the borders of the Union's market has grown to mid-80s years of the 20th century, but not decreased. Possessing a limited mineral-resources potential, Belarus created export-oriented economy with enormous import-dependence on the main kinds of the raw materials from 1945 to 1990. In conditions of transitional period Belarus cannot afford itself to survive without a large industry, because this is automatically fraught with political collapse in terms of impossibility to solve a social problem of mass unemployment. The very expected fact of possible branch restructuring of economy in terms of enlargement of integrative relations with EU is the most important negative factor for Belarusian officials. From this position, integration with Russia is more actual issue for Belarusian economy. However, successes of integrative processes between Belarus and Russia are not so significant as the processes of the Eastern-European states inclusion in EU. Belarus needs Russia today as a tool to preserve Belarusian industry, as a condition of Belarusian producers' expansion to the world's markets. But the level of concentration of Belarusian industries is so high, that its preservation in "alive state" with help of Russian investments and raw materials has a real threat of these producers to conquer "the narrowed" Russian markets. Integration of Belarus with Russia is only possible at the cost of bankruptcy of Russian producers, which are competitive in respect of Belarusian industrial giants. Russia cannot skip the idea of integration with Belarus because it is afraid of possible emerging political "hot-spot" on the main transport highway between Russia and Western Europe.

As it is clearly seen from above analytical review of perspectives of development of integrative processes with participation of Belarus, official Minsk is eager to keep the formed spatial carcass of economy in the scopes of emerging integrative structures. Paradox of policy of official Minsk in the questions of perspectives of integration with EU is, in the authors' opinion, in insufficient taking into account aspect of potential specialization as part of the united Europe. Deindustrialization of economies of the countries of the Eastern Europe, connected with the process of the branch restructuring, is a quite short phenomenon. Deindustrialization will destroy a considerable part of created in the second half of the 20th century averagely technological, depreciative part of local industry. The new industrial boom in the Central European countries will, evidently, take place on the basis of applying here relatively new industrial technologies. The new industries will emerge, likely, close to the border with Germany and at the ports on the Baltic Sea, but not in old industrial centers on the east.

Influence of integrative processes in Europe, from positions of preservation of the formed basic economic carcass in the scopes of Belarusian state, is not so actual in its transformations on the regional level. Spreading close-to-border cooperation with Poland and Lithuania on the west is getting more and more actual in this aspect. Belarus differs essentially from Russia and Ukraine: it possesses a more stable internal spatial socio-economic structure. Nevertheless, it can be clearly divided into two parts - West and East along the former Soviet-Polish border from the socio-cultural point of view. Western part of Belarus occupies about 40% of the territory and has almost the same rate of population. In aspect of economic development, the western part is more agricultural, unlike the eastern one. The rate of two western regions (Hrodno and Brest) in costs of produced industrial outcome does not exceed 20%; simultaneously, its rate in costs of produced agricultural outcome is about 36%. Also, radicalism can be clearly observed in preferences of political electorate of the Western Belarus. EU approaching directly to the borders of Western region enables strengthening the tendencies of spatial hierarchy to the "steps" of development of the European border areas.

Thus, position of Belarus in integration processes on the European continent is defined by a factor of development of the branch structure of its economy in the scopes of a single industrial complex of the former Soviet Union and some regional particularities, which have been formed in the process of its historical evolution in the 17th - 20th centuries. Possibility of integration of Belarus in EU is determined by perspectives and a depth of possible transformation of territorial structure of its economy.

## **POZYCJA BIALORUSIW PROCESIE INTEGRACJI NA KONTYNENCIE EUROPEJSKIM**

### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł dotyczy najbardziej prawdopodobnych konsekwencji zmieniającego się ekonomiczno-geopolitycznego położenia Białorusi, które nastąpiło w rezultacie ostatniego poszerzenia Unii Europejskiej. Głównym problemem, który analizują autorzy, jest możliwość integracji Białorusi ze strukturami Unii Europejskiej.