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**UNION STATE OF RUSSIA AND BELARUS: PRIORITIES OF
INTEGRATION STRATEGIES AND POLITICAL MECHANISMS FOR
THEIR IMPLEMENTATION**

Specialty: 5.5.4. International relations, global and regional studies

Abstract
of the dissertations for an academic degree
candidate of Political Sciences

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The relevance of the research topic is determined by the fact that the Union State of Russia and Belarus (SGRB) is a new integration entity, unique both in the CIS and beyond. Studying the priorities of its integration strategies and mechanisms for their implementation is a significant research task that can enrich both the range of works on political integration and the theory of international relations in general.

The high level of study of the development of the Union State within the framework of social and humanitarian knowledge does not allow us to deny the fact that a significant part of large-scale research relates to the field of legal science, which implies a qualitative, but to a greater extent normatively formalized nature of its consideration, and makes the development of the study of the State. This position is reinforced by the fact that today it is political interaction (at the level of top officials of the Russian and Belarusian states) that is the basis of integration dynamics. Insufficient knowledge of the integration process can lead to a blurring of the political discourse and official assessment of the present and future Union State by the political elites of each state.

Another, no less important point of relevance of the research problem is due to the methodological significance of studying the CBSS. The uniqueness and novelty of this education requires a combination of a wide range of approaches in its research, such as strategic analysis, neorealism and geopolitics, as well as neo-institutional principles of integration. In combination with the methods of factor and SWOT analysis, case-study and scenario forecasting, the integrated approach makes it possible to implement academic research and analyze the features of the Union State, its development factors and problematic aspects, the potential for further institutionalization, cross-border interaction, as a significant and politically determined aspect of the formation of the State Security System in the near future.

The political and social aspect of the relevance of the stated topic is due to the current transformation of the international system. In the context of the confrontation between the Russian Federation and Western states, new integration formats of interaction are becoming particularly important, allowing the Russian state to gain support and strengthen its position on the basis of cooperation with allied states

associated with the Russian Federation in a wide range of factors: geopolitical, social, cultural, economic, etc.

The Republic of Belarus is the first State that currently concentrates the largest number of such factors. Combining the efforts of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus allows each of the states to ensure the solution of a number of key issues of foreign and domestic policy, as well as to resist the negative aspects of international influence. In this context, the development of integration processes of the Union State of Russia and Belarus (SGRB) has a special potential. The need to stimulate the integration processes of the SG and their practical implementation through political mechanisms at the time of 2024 is due to a number of factors.

The first, global, is related to the transformation of the world order and the modern system of international relations. Its essential basis at the moment is the formation of new world poles, the development of the Global East and South, which declare themselves important and do not consider it necessary to concede statuses and positions in the international arena to the West. At the same time, the subjects claiming to oppose Western actors are aware of the importance of international cooperation and coordination, which makes it possible to combine efforts and resources. In this context, the integration strategies of the Union States can serve both as an important mechanism that strengthens the positions of the Eurasian states, and as a conceptual model that can be interpreted and adapted by other union entities of the East and South.

The second, international-geopolitical, is due to the importance of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in the international arena. Before the special military operation of Russia in Ukraine and the beginning of the restructuring of the system of international cooperation, this factor was relevant due to the specific location of each of the states and borders of Russia on the modern world map. In combination with the peculiarities of the processes in the post-Soviet space, the policies of European states and the countries of the Central Asian region (CAR), this made it important for Russia to develop good-neighborly relations with the CIS countries. For Belarus, they assumed a guarantee of security, and for Russia-an

expansion of its influence and support from the eastern "neighbor", which acts as a buffer between Russia and Europe. In modern realities, these factors of national security of each of the states are growing stronger and more acute, making Russia and Belarus allies in the fight against the "collective West", ensuring the security of the entire Eurasian region.

The third factor is historical and cultural. In combination with the fourth, political one (in which about half of the population of each state continues to support integration processes between them), it forms a social base, without which the Union State would lose its legitimate conditionality and provision of resources at the level of citizens with their historical memory, common traditions, cultural norms, etc. In this context, stimulating the work of NGOs and youth organizations is one of the key factors for further integration dynamics.

The fifth factor is managerial. The will of elites, no less than the mood of citizens, determines the current agenda and sets the dynamics of integration processes within the Union State. The "reset" that was implemented in 2020-2021 and the practical steps that were implemented before and on its basis indicate the interest of the top leadership of each of the states.

The sixth factor is a wide range of cooperation in the economic sphere. Within its framework, it is worth noting the dynamics of relations based not only on the preservation and development of cooperation involving the use of "Soviet capacities" (primarily Belarus), but also new areas of interaction, such as medicine, information technology, industry and a number of others. In addition, strengthening integration ties is also implemented as a response to Western sanctions, which makes this factor an important component of the political integration process.

The need to take into account these factors, assess them, systematize them, and create a forecast potential of the Union State on their basis makes the issue of its study an important research task.

The scientific task, that the research aims to solve is to form a scientifically based vision of the strategic priorities that should guide the Russian Federation and

the Republic of Belarus in the process of developing an integration association and ensuring the security and development of each state on its basis.

The object of this study is the Union State of Russia and Belarus.

The subject of the research is the political essence and content of integration strategies for the development of the Union State of Russia and Belarus.

Accordingly, **the aim** of the work is to identify the potential of priority integration strategies of the CBSS and develop recommendations for implementing their policy mechanisms.

For its implementation, it is necessary to address the following priority **tasks**:

- * determine the place of the Union State of Russia and Belarus in the current political discourse, reflecting the importance of integration concepts in the theory of international relations;

- * follow the development of the conceptual framework of Russian-Belarusian integration, based on the understanding of the need for strategic planning of interstate interaction;

- * provide a meaningful description of the Union's programs and political mechanisms for their implementation;

- * identify the problems of institutionalization of management of integration processes in the Union State of Russia and Belarus;

- * to form a hierarchy of integration strategies for the development of the Union State of Russia and Belarus, based on the analysis of factors that determine their effectiveness;

- * identify the potential for further deepening the political integration of Russia and Belarus as the basis of interstate relations;

- based on the analysis of the components of cross-border cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus implemented within the framework of the SGRB, develop and formulate recommendations for improving its effectiveness, stimulating the development of the Union State.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was a set of approaches that made it possible to study the Union State in the context of its political

strategic definition and practical institutional implementation. The combination of strategic analysis combined with a neorealist and geopolitical vision of international processes allowed us to consider the potential of the Union State in modern geopolitical realities. At the same time, neorealism as an approach provided the study of the development of the CBSS as a process of interstate interaction, in which each of the states defends its national interests, having a certain set of priority strategies and resources. In the context of the geopolitical vision, the importance of integration association, which is growing as a result of modern international transformations, was substantiated. These approaches were supplemented by the principles of integration concepts, elitism, consistency and new institutionalism, which allowed us to characterize the internal aspects and factors of the integration processes of the Union State, as well as its dynamics.

In accordance with the chosen approaches, general philosophical and applied methods of political science were applied in the work. The former include methods of analysis, synthesis, typologization, systematization and comparison, which allowed us to determine the general retrospective of the formation of the Union State and its current dynamics. The second (applied) group includes the following methods:

- analysis of regulatory documents-allowed to determine the content and formalized aspects of the development of integration processes in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, expressed in the dynamics of the SGRB: strategies and mechanisms for its implementation;

- factor and SWOT analysis-provided an opportunity to analyze the main components of integration processes, identify and evaluate key ones, and also form the basis for forming a hierarchy of strategies and forecasting the development of the integration potential of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus;

- scenario method-allowed us to draw up a number of the most likely scenarios for the development of the SGRB;

- secondary analysis of data from opinion polls-provided an opportunity to determine the social context of problems of Russian-Belarusian integration;

- the case-study method allowed us to analyze a certain component of integration interaction between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, such as cross-border cooperation, and use it as an example to formulate a number of recommendations aimed at realizing the development potential of the SRS.

Empirical base of the study:

1. Normative-legal, legislative acts and documents of the CSSS, the Russian Federation, and the Republic of Belarus that allowed us to consider the normative and political-conceptual components of integration processes within the framework of the genesis and current state of the CSSS.

2. Program base (in the format of "road maps" and union programs) in the field of implementation of the goals and objectives of the development of the Union State.

3. The results of sociological surveys, materials of sociological surveys that allowed us to assess public attitudes and opinions regarding Russian-Belarusian integration.

4. Materials of information and analytical portals covering various aspects of the development of relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus within the framework of the CGRB.

The main scientific results obtained by the author:

1. It is determined that in the political discourse, the integration processes of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus have been conceptualized from the 1990s to the present, and have included the narratives of the political union, its various spheres and foundations (economic, institutional, cultural, etc.), and the international context. It is established that as a result of transformations in the theoretical understanding of the CBSS, the key integration approach has been changed: from federalist to neo-functional, expanding the range of integration strategies of Russia and Belarus.
2. It is determined that the conceptual framework of the Union of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus was created in the 1990s and assumed the gradual formation of a single integration entity capable of countering

international threats. In the 2000s, these concepts were reflected in the strategies and plans of joint activities of the Russian and Belarusian states.

3. Based on the analysis of the union programs and practical mechanisms for their implementation, it is revealed that agreements between top officials of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus became an incentive for their development and implementation. It is established that in full compliance with neo-functionalist concepts, the economic components of integration interaction have received practical development.
 4. The problems of institutionalization of management of integration processes in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus are revealed, based on the insufficient efficiency of the created union institutions, their formalism, the priority of national interests over union ones, etc., as well as the absence of a number of important institutions of the political and legal field of the State Security Council (such as the Constitutional Act, the Court,
 5. The key factors of Russian-Belarusian integration are identified. On their basis, a hierarchy of strategies for the development of the SRS is constructed, which includes three key levels:
 1. economic, foreign policy, and political and legal issues;
 2. cultural and humanitarian, informational, social;
 3. regional information.
 6. As a result of constructing three polar forecast scenarios for the development of the SGRB, the potential for further deepening the political integration of Russia and Belarus was determined, which implies the need for strategic planning and focusing on joint activities in certain areas: economic (in the areas of trade, industry, transport), institutional and legal, military (including geopolitical issues, international security), cultural- humanitarian and scientific-technological issues.
 7. A set of directions for joint work on the development of cross-border cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, based on the specifics of the economic development of the regions, their
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institutional initiative and autonomy of integration decisions, cultural and humanitarian, military, scientific and technological activities, was recommended, systematized according to key factors and their interrelations.

The scientific novelty of the research results consists in the following provisions:

* The author's approach to the analysis of the State Security System is formed, the use of which makes it possible to justify the hierarchy of integration strategies of the Union State and form scenarios for its development based on them. Its implementation is based on the thesis that at the moment the study of SG has a significant academic and applied potential, which makes it possible to supplement modern theories of political integration and the practice of actual interstate interaction, taking them beyond the models used by the most famous integration education – the EU and based on a complex of economic, military, (after them) institutional and further, cultural, humanitarian, social and scientific and technological factors.

* Conceptualization of the foundations of the Union State of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus as a new integration entity is implemented, taking into account the most relevant conditions of the updating international system and taking into account the impact on the development of the SGRB of the special military operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, political events in Belarus and the participation of the West in them, and in general the situation of joint confrontation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to the Western world. As a result of the analysis of all integration documents, it was revealed that the integration strategies of the CSSS have their own priority: the dominant role is played by economic and foreign policy (including military) factors. They are followed by institutional and legal ones. The rest are "peripheral".

• Based on the analysis of the union programs and the problems of institutionalization of the management of integration processes of the CBSS identified in the course of the study, the factors that ultimately formed the hierarchy of integration strategies of the CBSS were identified. It is based on economic and foreign policy strategies, supplemented by political and legal ones. The second level of less

significant factors was also formed by a set of strategies: cultural and humanitarian, informational and social. The hierarchy was completed by a regional strategy (involving cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus at the regional level), which is of great importance, but has the least degree of conceptualization and practical implementation at the level of the work of the CBSS institutions.

* Forecast scenarios for the development of SGRB (positive, neutral and negative) have been formed. For the first time, when studying Russian-Belarusian integration, they were based on a system of key factors identified in the course of the study and their interrelations that characterize the processes of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. It was determined that for the implementation of the "positive" scenario, strategic planning and targeted activities are necessary within the framework of at least five key components of the development of the SRS: trade, industrial and transport, institutional and legal, military, cultural and humanitarian, and scientific and technological.

• Based on the case study of cross-border cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, recommendations were proposed based on an analysis of the transformation of factors and their relationships, as ensuring positive dynamics of Russian-Belarusian integration. It was found that the border area has internal features that suggest the need to increase the economic level of the regions, increase institutional autonomy in decision-making, differentiate cultural and scientific-technological content activities, etc.

Provisions that are submitted for defense and have a scientific novelty.

1. The author substantiates the combination of neorealist and neofunctionalist approaches to international relations and integration, which determined the methodological framework for analyzing a single set of economic, institutional and procedural factors that determine both the policy of modern states and the system of international interaction and security. Within the framework of the author's vision, integration cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus is defined as a unique international association, the algorithm of

formation of which is based on the neo-functionalist principle of priority of economic factors that create the basis of integration processes. However, along with them, joint foreign policy activities (including military cooperation) have an important impact on the unification process. Institutional and legal factors are the third of the bases, but they act indirectly, mostly based on the practice of political interaction. The basis of their normative component is strategic planning, without which the practice of developing the SRS becomes situational, episodic content. (item 1 " Theory and methodology, methods of analysis, development of the conceptual apparatus of the study of international relations and world politics. Western and non-Western research traditions. International political Analysis " (scientific specialty 5.5.4. International relations, global and regional studies).

2. It is proved that the cultural, humanitarian, informational and social impact of the components of the integration processes of the CSSS is less important, but it is obvious. Due to their inclusion in the conceptual definition of the directions of Russian-Belarusian cooperation only at the last (to date) stages of integration construction, as well as their practical non-systemic nature and mediated by priority factors, their role in the development of the SG is defined as secondary, complementing key processes. Also, a separate segment is regional cooperation, which is local, but contains all the significant factors and gives it a positive dynamic. (item 2 " Subjects of international relations. Activities of state and non-state actors. Formal and informal institutions in international relations and world politics. Formation and implementation of foreign policy strategies, concepts and doctrines " (scientific specialty 5.5.4. International relations, global and regional studies).

3. It is argued that the union integration programs, as well as the processes of institutionalization of the management of the SRS, implemented over the past decades, are based on a strategic component that has ensured the dynamics of economic interaction, combined with weak institutional and legal development. The sphere of institutions and law is fundamentally contradictory within the framework of the development of the CSSS. On the one hand, it ensures the development of integration relations between Russia and Belarus at the level of "higher policy" and

within the framework of strategic planning. In this context, political factors are of primary importance and serve as the basis for Russian-Belarusian integration. On the other hand, the institutional and legal sphere contains significant obstacles to the construction of the CSSS based on the principles of federalism, with the potential to create a single state in the medium term, which in practice implies the search for alternative foundations for its development, such as the economy and foreign policy (military) cooperation. (paragraph 2 " Subjects of international relations. Activities of state and non-state actors. Formal and informal institutions in international relations and world politics. Formation and implementation of foreign policy strategies, concepts and doctrines " (scientific specialty 5.5.4. International relations, global and regional studies).

4. Forecast scenarios for the development of the SGRB are formulated and describe the possibility of implementing a positive, negative, and the most realistic, moderate scenario that determines the potential for the development of Russian-Belarusian relations. Moving towards a positive scenario implies successful achievement of indicators in each of the elements of development identified in the study (trade, industrial and transport, institutional and legal, military, cultural and humanitarian, scientific and technological). On the contrary, a negative trend is possible in the absence of dynamics and relationships between each of the indicators. Based on the formation of scenarios, it is possible to assess the current state of the Union State and determine its development potential based on the implementation of the most positive trends in integration dynamics, reflected in the "moderate" and "positive" forecasts. Meaningfully, this implies identifying as the most likely forecast of events the process of dynamic economic integration and moderate interaction of managerial institutions, which allow overcoming a number of problems of cross-border cooperation and socio-cultural interaction. (item 1 " Theory and methodology, methods of analysis, development of the conceptual framework for studying international relations and world politics. Western and non-Western research traditions. International political analysis"; item 2 " Subjects of international relations. Activities of state and non-state actors. Formal and informal institutions in

international relations and world politics. Formation and implementation of foreign policy strategies, concepts and doctrines " (scientific specialty 5.5.4. International relations, global and regional studies).

5. The significance of cross-border cooperation within the Union State is determined, which demonstrates that within the local segment of integration interaction between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, all the previously identified elements (economic, institutional, legal, military, cultural, humanitarian, scientific and technological) find expression and have a direct impact on its development. Improving the efficiency of interaction within these elements, which serve as factors for the development of the CBSS, and strengthening the interconnectedness between them, which forms a system of integration interaction, is the basis for cross-border cooperation. Taking into account regional specifics is necessary to increase the effectiveness of cross-border cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus and its positive contribution to the development of the SRS. (item 2 " Subjects of international relations. Activities of state and non-state actors. Formal and informal institutions in international relations and world politics. Formation and implementation of foreign policy strategies, concepts and doctrines " (scientific specialty 5.5.4. International relations, global and regional studies).

Research hypothesis. The development of the Eurasian space and the system of international relations as a whole presupposes purposeful strategic planning and political strengthening of integration associations with the participation of the Russian Federation, one of the most promising of which today is the CGRB.

The theoretical significance of the work is related to the conceptualization of the foundations of a new integration education, the scientific understanding of which currently involves the formation of integrated approaches that create a new vision of interstate interaction in the most relevant realities of the transforming international system. Combining the neorealist and neoinstitutional approaches in the basis of the analysis provided for the formation of a comprehensive vision and provided for the consideration of the Union State of the Russian Federation and the Republic of

Belarus from the standpoint of not only institution-building, but also as a response to sanctions pressure and threats to the national security of each of the states. The presented vision has an innovative potential that makes it possible to expand the understanding of integration processes, as well as to supplement modern integration concepts with a new vision of strategies and practices of interstate interaction, which is studied on the basis of the post-Soviet (rather than European or other) space.

The practical significance of the work is due to the fact that the materials and conclusions of the study can be used in the process of forming strategies and plans for the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in relation to the Republic of Belarus, in the development of interstate interaction between these states, ensuring regional security and the potential for integration activities in the CIS and the Eurasian region as a whole. The set of recommendations formulated as a result of the study can be used to form a strategy for cross-border cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus and to develop the integration processes of the SGRB.

In addition, the research materials can be used in the educational process, for teaching subjects of the specialty "International Relations", as well as for students studying the problems of Russian-Belarusian relations and international integration. The content of the dissertation can become the basis for compiling research and analytical works devoted to the study of Russian-Belarusian integration processes.

Testing of the study:

The main provisions and conclusions of the study were tested at an international scientific and practical forum. The main results of the presented dissertation research are presented by the author in publications in political science journals recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, as well as other publications with a total volume of 3.15 (pp).

Scope and structure of work:

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, including seven paragraphs, a conclusion and a list of sources and literature used, set out on 252 pages. The list of sources and literature includes 315 sources, including: monographs and

dissertations, scientific publications, newspaper and electronic publications, scientific literature in Russian and foreign languages, Internet sources.