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INTEGRATION ORIENTATIONS OF THE CIS COUNTRIES POPULATION: DYNAMICS AND PROSPECTS

The foreign policy orientations and sentiments of the citizens, especially regarding the near-abroad countries, usually are of no interest to the Russian politicians. There are several, at first sight rather sound reasons. First, foreign policy traditionally belongs to the competent domain of the elite that rather rarely feels necessity to “consult with people” on anything regarding other countries. Second, politicians usually depend on the position of the voters concerning the domestic affairs of the country to a greater extent than on their approval of the international problems that are of far less interest to them (with the exceptions being the questions on war and peace). Third, the attitude of the Russian people towards the CIS countries seems absolutely clear and constant, which does not need any further confirmation. According to the opinion established in the political circles, *the Russian people regret the USSR collapse, sincerely sympathize with the majority of the former “fraternal” republics and are eager to unite them within a new union.*

I would like to doubt the validity of each of statements mentioned above. In the sphere of foreign policy there is a number of issues that in the democratic countries can not be resolved without taking into account the people’s opinion, in the first place these are questions of integration (neglecting this factor might lead to serious embarrassments such as the failure of the voting on the European constitution etc.). The relationships with the CIS neighbors are of no less, sometimes even of more importance to the Russian people than the internal problems. Finally, the perception of the CIS is gradually changing and is no longer of such positive nature as it used to be. Furthermore, I argue that the social moods can not but influence the foreign policy games within the post-Soviet space. Integration, as love, needs mutuality: if it is absent, even the most well-intended courtships will cause rejection.

The republics of the former USSR are not (already for a long time) the “sisters-twins” anymore; they significantly differ from each other in many respects, including social sentiments and ideological conceptions prevailing in their mass consciousness. In order to understand to which extent these differences impact the population attitudes towards some forms of cooperation and integration within the post-Soviet space or any other, above all it is reasonable to analyze the New Independent States (NIS) ordinary citizens attitude towards the USSR and its collapse as the prime cause of the very question on integration¹.

¹ With exception of the specially stipulated cases, the article uses the data of the “Eurasian monitor” (“EM”) that is the initiative project of the research companies of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine conducted since 2004. The basis of the project is regular (once in 6 months) synchronized population polls in the countries within the post-Soviet space employing the same tooling (questionary). Since 2006 sociologists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kirgizia have been permanently participating in the project. In the last two surges of the polls (2007 and 2008) already all the countries of the former CIS and the Baltic states, except for Turkmenia, have taken part in the project. For more details see the web-site www.eurasiamonitor.org.

**Back in the USSR?
The Resource
of the Public
Support for
Reintegration**

The issue of the NIS citizens' attitude towards the USSR and its collapse is of paramount importance in terms of the integration processes prospects in the post-Soviet space. On the one hand, nostalgia for the USSR and positively colored memories about the common historical past are used by a number of politicians to support the idea on the possibility and even desirability of reintegration, that is unification of all (or most of them) former union's republics into a single state. On the other hand, the existence of such sentiments is sort of a limiter that is taken into account by the opponents of any integration within the post-Soviet space when they are conducting the respective political course. In both cases the masses attitude towards the USSR (either positive or negative) is regarded as the political resource, and it is important to evaluate to which extent this resource is great and efficient.

Discussing the attitude of the NIS towards the USSR collapse, it is useful to remember that when in 1991 the former union republics were obtaining their independence, there were almost no cases of "struggle for independence" from the side of this same population (the exception was only 3 Baltic republics and perhaps Ukraine). In this sense, the peoples of the USSR can not be considered the active subjects of the radical geopolitical changes. For many CIS countries the independence literally dropped from the clouds being the result of the self-interested (in Russia also irresponsible) actions of some national elite groups. This is exactly why the thesis that *the Union was destroyed by the ambitious politicians violating the people's will expressed in the referendum results in March 1991* is so popular within the public discourse on the collapse of the Soviet empire and emergence of the post-Soviet space. Of course, the main counterargument of the "responsible" political figures throughout all these years has been the thesis about *the inevitability of the USSR collapse and the salvation role of fast dealing with the "divorce" proceedings that allowed to avoid the yugoslavization of the country*. Let us take a look at which response these theses find in the mass consciousness of the object of those historical decisions, i.e. the population of the CIS countries.

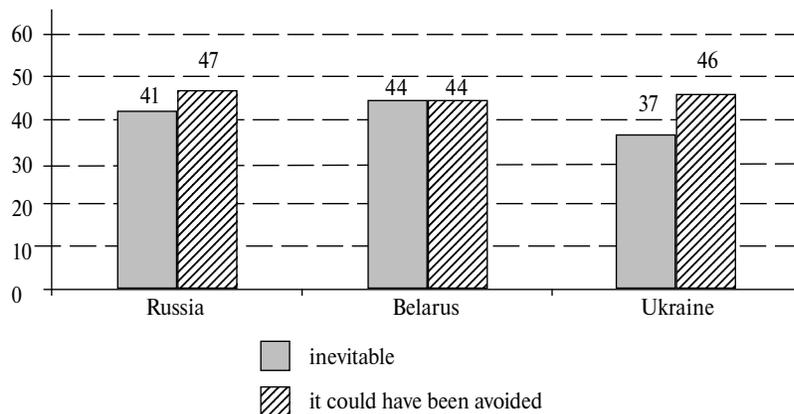
First, the deep differentiation of the opinions on the inevitability of the USSR collapse strikes the eye. In all three countries (Russia, Ukraine and Belarus), where on the eve of the 15th jubilee of the Belovezhsk accords the population polls were conducted within the sixth surge of the "EM" (November 2006), the respondents split around fifty-fifty (see *Picture 1*). Around half of the respondents supposed that the collapse was inescapable, whereas the other half — that it could have been avoided. It is worth noting that the quantity of the second response a little exceeded that of the first in Russia and Ukraine.

In all three countries the majority of the respondents "regret about what happened". Most often one can observe such attitude, of course, in Russia (66% in 2005 and 68% in 2006²) that was the core of the former united state, but it is also spread in Ukraine (55–59%) and Belarus (52–55%) as well.

Therefore, one can state that the socio-psychological damage of the "divorce" is well-entrenched in the mass consciousness of these three Slavic peoples, and the arguments of the disintegration leaders in the eyes of many ordinary citizens are no longer as compelling as they used to be in December 1991.

² The question "Do you regret or not the fact that the USSR collapsed?" was asked twice — within the fourth (October 2005) and sixth (November 2006) surge of the "EM".

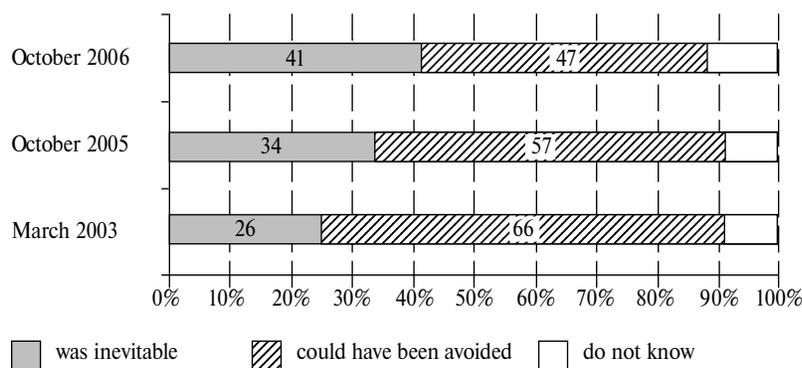
Picture 1 Answers to the question: "15 years ago the Soviet Union collapsed. Do you think the USSR collapse was inevitable or it could have been avoided?"



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At the same time, it should be admitted that the CIS population's attitude towards those events is changing rather rapidly. According to the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center, in Russia a number of respondents supposing that the USSR collapse was inevitable only over the period from March 2003 till October 2006 increased one and a half times (see *Picture 2*). This process is not accidental. The recent years have seen the active "relegendization" of the revolution at the end of the 1980s — beginning of the 1990s with the youth lacking the personal "Soviet" experience being its main target audi-

Picture 2 Answers to the question: "Do you think the USSR collapse was inevitable or it could have been avoided?" (Russia, All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center)



ence. The young generation already often treats this new legend as a true history of the USSR and its collapse.

The history has seen a lot of examples when 15–20 years after some revolutionary events or other, the problem of their legitimization all out of a sudden gained its acuteness. The thing is that by this time the generation without their own experience of those events starts to become active, and the ruling elite has to find the ways of legitimizing its position in the eyes of this generation. Therefore, there is a need in explaining where actually the current power originates from, why it acts this way and not another. Under such conditions justification of history became just a social necessity for the dominating class.

For young people who are coming into politics today in different CIS countries and are reconsidering the USSR collapse a lot of episodes of the epoch, which the elder generation feels nostalgia of, are already incomprehensible. Therefore, the struggle for the respective interpretation of history begins, which usually results in some “Brief course of the history of something...” that is different from the real history, in the first place in terms of its so called cognitive simplicity. In other words, this course like any myth draws a clear distinction between the good and the bad that is easily understandable for the mass consumer so that each can understand who played the devil’s role and who the angel’s one. This regards the history of the October Revolution as well as the Great Patriotic War; now the “brief course” of the USSR collapse is being written in the same format, in a certain way that created the impression of the inevitability of what happened.

As a result, if among the Russian respondents of the age over 60 59% think that the USSR collapse could have been avoided, and twice as less think it was vice versa, among the youth of the age between 18 and 24 the split was directly the opposite (50% think “the collapse was inevitable”, while 27% that “it could have been avoided”).

The answers to the question “Do you personally regret the USSR collapse or not?” (see *Picture 3*) shows the same high correlation with the age. If the majority of the elder generation of the Russian people regrets (83% in 2006) the USSR collapse, the youth feels the same much rarer (44%).

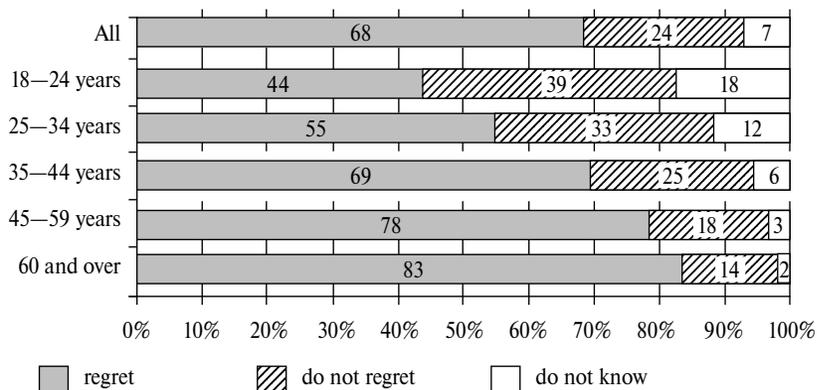
The similar picture is also being observed in all other countries where the corresponding question was asked³, with even greater age differentiation. In Belarus and Kazakhstan, for instance, less than 20% of the respondents under 24 expressed their regret regarding the USSR collapse (with more than 50% who do not regret it).

It is natural that now the overwhelming majority of the respondents (68% in Russia up to 76% in Belarus according to 2006 data) gave negative answers to the question “*In your opinion, is it possible or not to restore the single union of the former republics today?*” Moreover, in this case the age factor no longer has its impact: neither the elder nor the younger ones believe in the revival of the USSR anymore.

The public opinion of the NIS regarding the USSR collapse in many respects corresponds to the famous expression by V.Putin: “*The one who regrets the Soviet Union’s collapse, lacks the heart, whereas the one who presumes*

³ *In October 2005, along with Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, it was also asked in Kazakhstan.*

Picture 3 Answers to the question: “Do you personally regret the USSR collapse or not?” (Russia)



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■ regret ▨ do not regret □ do not know

its restoration, lacks the mind”. The formula ‘Regret, but do not believe that anything can be repaired’ holds the predominant position among three Slavic peoples that to the great extent constituted the core of the USSR. It means that *the mass nostalgia of the Soviet empire*, although creating the certain emotional background for a new integration processes, can no longer be viewed as a serious political recourse turning into nothing else but the subject of the historico-philosophical discussions and literary reminiscences.

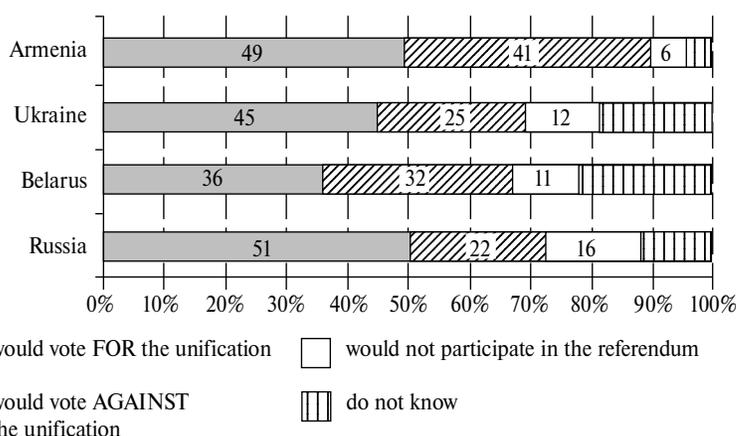
Moreover, one should be aware of the fact that the positive attitude towards the USSR can have very different reasons. On the one hand, it might imply the positive attitude to the big international country and great power (empire in a good sense of the word), on the other hand, people are grieving for the social guarantees and collectivist ideology, with the first not always being tied with the second. Among those respondents dreaming about the restoration of the Soviet Union there are a lot of people who miss their youth (for them the expression “*how great it was in the USSR*” is almost equal to “*how great it was in the youth*”). In other words, one can decisively exclude a rather big group of people who basically want to return back to socialism or their youth out of the real adherents of the restoration of the international empire (usually, the representatives of the elder groups).

Therefore, one can undoubtedly state that within the mass consciousness of the former union republics citizens the common historical past is increasingly losing its function as the foundation for the common future in the framework of some new union. In the first place it regards the youth, for which the common past (the Soviet as well as the earlier one) often is not just unattractive, but also rather blurred and lacking any emotional or rational loading.

The attitude towards the USSR collapse is clearly revealed in the hypothetical referendums on the Union’s restoration. Within the polls conducted

in October 2006 the respondents of the “EM” were asked the following question: “If a referendum on the unification of the former union republics into a new Union were held today, would you personally vote for or against the unification?” The results of “voting” appeared to be rather curious. While in Russia and Ukraine the number of those who would support the unification substantially exceeded the ones who are against it, in Belarus and Armenia the margin of the first ones is cliff-hanging (see *Picture 4*).

Picture 4 Answers to the question: “If a referendum on the unification of the former union republics into a new Union were held today, would you personally vote for or against the unification?”

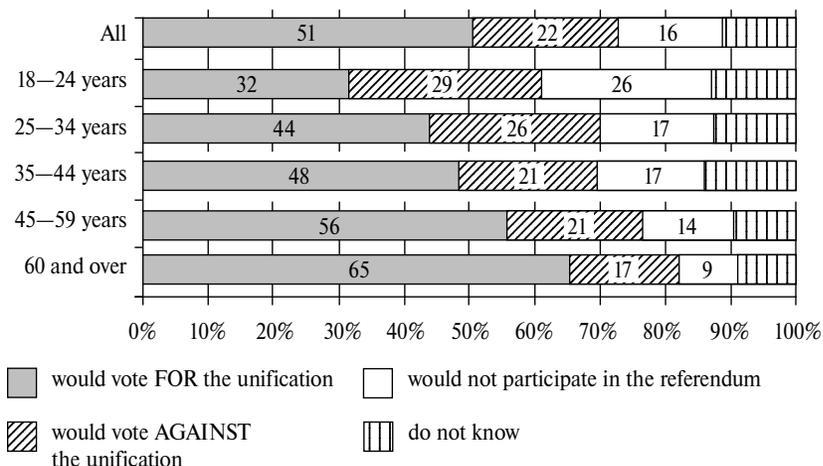


However, the age factor again “works out” here. In Russia, for example, the large majority of the elder generation would vote for the unification, whereas the youth split: 32% for the unification and 29% against (see *Picture 5*). The youth from other NIS is even more prone to supporting separate and autonomous existence of their countries.

The data presented here suggests that if the referendum about the restoration of the USSR actually took place “on the nearest Sunday”, it would probably result in the negative answer. To put it differently, it is rather doubtful that in the core countries of the former USSR (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan) the proponents of the Union’s revival would gain the constitutional majority of 50% of votes. In the near future (in 7–8 years), when the change of generations finally comes to its end, the probability of the choice for a new Union will be rather small, which is indicated by the dynamic of the public opinion and age structure of the proponents and opponents of the respective decision.

Therefore, the issue on reintegration (in the sense of the recreation of a similar Union) for the NIS citizens is if not closed, then irrelevant. However, is a “new integration” popular?

Picture 5 Answers to the question: “If a referendum on the unification of the former union republics into a new Union were held today, would you personally vote for or against the unification?” (Russia)



New Orientations of Integration

Within the discussions of a “new integration” based on the economic and political expediency, rather than the aspiration to restore the “violated economic connections” and “historical unity”, two aspects deserve the particular attention: first, new *vectors* (directions) of integration that the CIS and Baltic countries’ population opts for, and second, the *stimuli* for integration, i.e. factors and conditions encouraging (or vice versa, inhibiting) formation of the integration moods of the NIS citizens.

Talking about some vectors of integration aspirations, it is important to understand that after the USSR collapse the mass consciousness of the once fraternal republics inevitably refused to choose their allies only from the limited circle determined from “above”. In the hard times of the socio-economic and political crises people are inclined to reconsider their friends, the more so in the 1990s the political elites of the NIS rather actively oscillated in their search of new “buttresses” and “backings”, and these hesitations could not have failed to impact the mass consciousness. Therefore, it is very interesting to look at which countries the NIS citizens hold for allies today and want to “make friends” with.

Within the fourth surge of the “EM” (October 2005) the respondents were asked the direct question: “Which countries of the world would you like to see among the allies and friends of your country?” The data obtained in the survey (see *Table I*) definitely point out that a lot of citizens of the once united countries still treat Russia being the former center of the USSR as the most desirable partner and ally. At the same time, new sympathies and antipathies are obvious⁴.

⁴ On the possible enemies see the “EM” fifth surge’s data (www.eurasiamonitor.org).

Table 1 Answers to the question: “Which countries of the world would you like to see among the allies and friends of your country?” (%)

	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Belarus</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>	<i>Kazakhstan</i>
England	7	4	5	4
Belarus	25		28	8
Germany	18	17	12	11
Kazakhstan	12	5	7	
China	6	3	1	11
Lithuania	0	5		0
Poland	1	20	9	0
Russia		64	55	55
USA	11	7	9	16
Ukraine	23	32		11
France	10	7	5	5
Japan	4	1	1	7
None	15	3	7	10
No answer	22	11	20	19

The big part of the Belarusian and Ukrainian citizens would like to see among their states' allies their European neighbors, such as Germany, France, and Poland. On the contrary, many Kazakhstani would welcome friendship with the USA and China. In other words, Russia being the traditional “elder brother” of the former union republics has been for a long time facing its competitors. Furthermore, Russian people themselves are rather pluralistic in their choice of friends: they do not possess clear preferences on that, although the attitudes towards their brothers-Slavs — Ukraine and Belarus — are expressed stronger (more than one third of the respondents, i.e. 37% that is more than anywhere else — did not name any country they would like to have as an ally).

It is clear that alliances and mutual aid viewed in the global scale is something different from the integration within the post-Soviet space. One can have “backing” and friend in the face of the US, but it is unlikely that anyone hopes in the foreseen future to become the US partner within a certain international association. Thus, since May 2006 the question “*What do you think, which of the listed countries our state should unite with?*” has been regularly asked within the “EM” project. In contrast to the previous year, it is formulated in the closed question, i.e. respondents are offered a fixed range of the answer's variants, embracing mostly the NIS, which allows revealing the preferable vectors of integration within the former Soviet Union.

As it is indicated in the *Table 2*, Russia still remains to be the center of gravitation and the most preferable integration partner for many post-Soviet countries. It regards the citizens of Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Tajikistan (according to some data, Uzbekistan as well). At the same time, two Transcaucasian republics (Georgia and Azerbaijan), let alone the

Table 2 Answers to the question: "What do you think, which of the listed countries our state should unite with?" (October 2007, %)

⁵ The data on Azerbaijan refer to May 2007.

	Russia	Belarus	Ukraine	Kazakhstan	Kirgizia	Tajikistan	Armenia	Georgia	Azerbaijan ⁵	Moldova	Latvia
With Russia		52	52	51	73	78	71	12	12	42	18
With Belarus	34		34	7	4	13	4	0	2	2	8
With Ukraine	31	24		7	6	10	4	7	12	5	7
With Kazakhstan	24	12	20		37	30	2	0	5	1	1
With Kirgizia (Kyrgyzstan)	11	2	4	4		16	2	0	1	1	0
With Tajikistan	10	3	4	2	2		2	0	1	1	1
With Armenia	12	3	4	1	0	4		1	0	1	1
With Georgia	9	3	4	2	0	4	3		9	3	1
With Azerbaijan	11	3	5	2	0	7	2	4		1	1
With Moldova	11	5	5	2	1	5	2	0	1		2
With Uzbekistan	11	3	5	5	9	24	2	0	1	0	0
With Turkey	2	3	2	5	9	10	2	1	31	1	1
With the European Union	14	25	23	16	13	15	22	21	21	31	30
It should not unite with anyone	37	21	20	33	16	10	8	52	29	13	39

Baltic states, in fact withdrew out of the zone of the Russian influence, and their population mostly prefers other integration directions, in particular the *European Union*. For Azerbaijan Turkey being close in terms of the language, religion and culture is even more desirable integration partner than the EU, whereas the Georgians more often than other peoples speak out for the *independent development* without entering any alliances, unions and associations. The situation is rather hard in Moldova: its population splits practically fifty-fifty into the champions of the European and Russian (post-Soviet) integration directions, with the later having a narrow margin for now (although one should also take into account 17% of the respondents who are ready to unite with Rumania). The similar bivectorness of the integration aspirations also starts to show through in the closest neighbors of Russia, i.e. Ukraine and Belarus.

What about Russians? Many of them would still like to re-gather the once united peoples into a single state, in the first place the peoples of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, however, the increased number of the "autonomists" is also evident, i.e. those respondents who think that "*our country should not unite with anyone of the listed countries or associations*" (32% in

May and 37% in October 2007). In this sense, our citizens begin to resemble the Kazakhstani, among which the number of the adherents of the autonomous development is also increasing (from 24% in October 2006 to 33% in October 2007).

Looking at the survey data of Russians, one can follow some historians and philosophers draw the conclusion about the “historical tiredness” of Russian people. This tiredness from extension, expansion is rather clear in the presented answers. Today the Russians are more often prone to the autonomous development (“concentration”) rather than expansion. I am not ready to right away agree with the term “new isolationism” that is used by some authors for the description of this phenomenon, but these surveys’ data undoubtedly call the famous myths about the “imperiality” of the Russian people into question.

All in all, should ordinary citizens of the post-Soviet states have the right to determine the fate of integration, may be they would create a new integration association on the debris of the USSR, but at least 6 out of 15 former republics (the list of Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Baltic states should be added with Turkmenia) would not enter it. However, two alliances are likely to emerge simultaneously: the *European* (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, and Russia) and the *Asian* one (Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and again Russia) with the second being much more plausible and stable than the first.

In general, the intention to choose neighboring countries as potential partners for integration is clearly indicated within the respondents’ answers. These countries are known and clear to a respondent, close to him in terms of culture, religion, citizens’ mentality. This results in a great proneness towards bilateral and narrowly regional alliances, rather than multilateral ones, which benefits should be explained and proved to the population. By all appearances, the dynamic of the integration aspirations is seriously influenced, on the one hand, by the situation inside the respective countries (stability and economic progress encourages the increasing number of the “autonomists”, and vice versa), on the other hand, the successes and failures of the already “declared” unions and integration formations. In particular, according to many indirect data, one can state that the significant decrease in the number of the Russians viewing Belarus as the potential integration partner (from 46% in April 2006 to 33.5% in October 2007) is caused by the disappointment in the failed Union of two states that has been recently demonstrating exacerbation of the economic and political controversies, rather than deepening of the partnership.

The above revealed tendencies in many respects are also confirmed by the results of the monitor research of the NIS citizens’ attitude to the possible unification with the whole integration formations, including the hypothetical ones, rather than with separate states (see *Table 3*).

It is easy to notice that when it is offered to choose for “cohabitation” the whole union rather than a separate country, the number of the proponents of the autonomous development in some countries greatly increased. If more than 70% of the Armenian respondents were ready for the integration with

Table 3 Answers to the question: “If you were to choose, which country or association would you like to live in?” (October 2007, %)

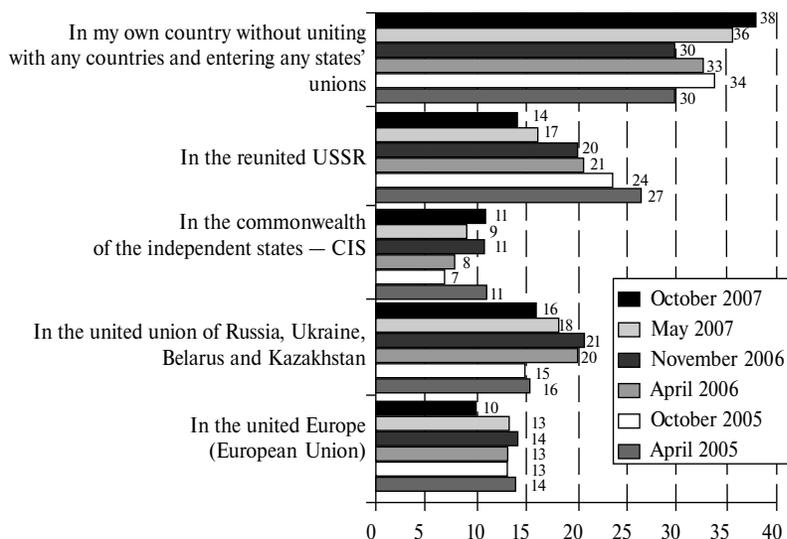
	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Belarus</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>	<i>Kazakhstan</i>	<i>Armenia</i>	<i>Kirgizia</i>	<i>Tajikistan</i>	<i>Georgia</i>	<i>Moldova</i>	<i>Latvia</i>
In the united Europe (European Union)	10	20	22	11	12	7	12	27	42	37
In the united union of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan	16	22	31	17	11	38	16	10	22	6
In the commonwealth of the independent states — CIS	11	12	6	21	6	14	10	1	3	4
In the reunited USSR	14	12	9	10	5	16	13	3	10	7
In my own country without uniting with any countries and entering any states' unions	38	23	26	36	56	23	47	47	13	34
Do not know	11	11	6	6	10	3	3	12	10	12

Russia (8% did not want to unite with anyone), then less than one third wanted to live in a broader union. The similar picture is typical of Tajikistan and Kirgizia. The citizens of the countries with the hampered economic situation seem to be more attracted by the integration with one strong partner that is able to help and to protect, rather than with many countries that are equally weakened and problematic. In this situation the benefits of the bilateral integration are obvious, whereas the possible consequences of the multilateral union are blurred and even frightening. At the same time, as it was mentioned before, it is the hard economic situations in the country that often stimulates its citizens' integration sentiments.

The dynamic of the responses to the mentioned question during 2.5 years of observations (from April 2005 to October 2007) has not been that discernable, but distinguished. In Russia, for example, within this time period the number of people willing to live in the revived USSR decreased by more than 10%, whereas the number of the “autonomists” increased by 8% (see *Picture 6*). There are reasons to assume that such weakening of the Russians eagerness towards the “construction of unions” is related to the improvement of the country's economic position.

In Belarus and Ukraine some circumstantial fluctuations around the average values are observed, whereas in Kazakhstan the number of those willing to live in their own country without uniting with any countries and entering

Picture 6 Answers to the question: “If you were to choose, which country or association would you like to live in?” (Russia)



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any states’ unions is increasing (over 2.5 years it increased by 11%) with the same decrease in the number of those preferring the “union of four”. It is indicative that in all countries of the “big four” with except for Ukraine the category “in our own country” is gaining the majority of the votes. Thus, Ukraine appears to be one of the most “open” countries for integration initiatives, while the Russians and Kazakhstani demonstrate their inclination towards the “isolationist” moods. By the way, the Ukrainian citizens most critically evaluate their material position among the citizens of the “big four”. Is it not the key explanation of their integration aspirations?

Nevertheless, it should be noted that all countries (except for, perhaps, Armenia) overall lack the consolidated position vis-à-vis potential integration projects. Each country this way or another has a “variety of opinions”. The stable foreign policy and integration orientations have not been established in the mass consciousness yet. Furthermore, the inter-generation differentiation of opinions inside the country is usually higher than between the countries.

It is true that the elder and younger respondents’ answers to the question on the preferable vectors of integration are strikingly different. As an example, I would cite the data obtained from the survey conducted in four countries: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan (see *Table 4*). The variant “post-Soviet integration” covers the preferences of the USSR, CIS and the “union of four”.

A new generation on the whole does not welcome the USSR as well as its successor — the CIS. The youth of Belarus and Ukraine more often prefer

Table 4 Answers to the question: “Which country or association would you like to live in?” in different age groups (October 2007, %)

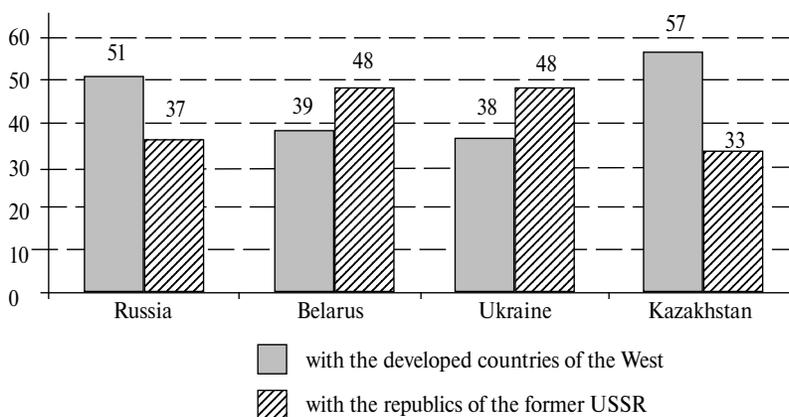
	Belarus		Russia		Ukraine		Kazakhstan	
	18–24 years	60 years and over						
European integration	36	8	19	3	34	12	17	6
Post-Soviet integration	28	61	23	57	32	55	35	38
Autonomous development	22	20	45	29	26	27	43	48
Do not know	14	11	13	11	8	6	6	8

integration with the EU, the youth of Russia and Kazakhstan – the autonomous development. The elder generation, on the contrary, often chooses the USSR and other variants of integration within the post-Soviet space.

Generally speaking, the issue on the external (“European”, “Western”) and internal (“post-Soviet”, “Eurasian”) vector of integration is a serious splitting factor. In many CIS countries this question practically splits the society fifty-fifty (see *Picture 7*).

The presented data suggests that although regretting the USSR collapse, the Russians are likely to be concerned about the destruction of the great, strong power, rather than “divorce” with some republics of the former Soviet

Picture 7 Answers to the question: “Who is it today more important for your country to develop partnership relations with?” (October 2005, %)



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Union. The pro-Western orientation of the significant part of the Kazakh population is mainly related to the fact that this country has many more economic connections with the West (therefore, dependence on it as well) than, for instance, with the same Ukraine or Belarus.

In case of Ukraine and Belarus, we observe the oscillations of the mass consciousness between Russia and the West. If the elder generation chooses the post-Soviet East, the youth — the European West. What is more, the latter is also typical of the Russian and Kazakh youth (50–60% of the age group).

To conclude, one can state that new integration orientations of the majority of the former USSR states population are still being shaped, and this process is far from its termination. The choice of one vector of integration or another (or the autonomous development without entering any alliances and unions) is greatly influenced by the current economic situation in the country (the inclination towards integration significantly increases when the latter is worsening) as well as economic successes and/or failures of the main centers of gravitation — Russia and the European Union. At the same time, of course, studying the factors encouraging or discouraging integration aspirations should be continued since a lot of socio-cultural (humanitarian) prerequisites of integration remain beyond our analysis, which, I am sure, the research studies of the “Eurasian Monitor” will cover in the future.

* * *

To sum up, one can claim that reintegration of the post-Soviet space based on the common historical past is no longer desirable (or even simply attractive) for a lot of NIS citizens, although nostalgia of the USSR as the friendly family of the peoples and the great international power is still rather popular.

In the first years after the USSR collapse the “union of the sovereign states” (N.Nazarbaev) might have had a chance to be materialized, but this opportunity was missed. In the independent states emerged on the debris of the Soviet Union new national elite, which is already not related to the Soviet past, appeared and strengthened. The self-realization of the elite is based on strengthening the state sovereignty, rather than transferring it to the national bodies. New politicians want to see themselves as the leaders of the sovereign states, with their status being equal to that of the great, rather than administrators of the “self-governing” autonomies.

The respective attitudes of the NIS leaders are already in many respects shared by the society. A new national identity is being formed that includes perception of the country as part of the whole world, rather than just the post-Soviet space. What the elder generation conceives as an absolutely unnatural and painful break of the single whole, the young people from the same countries view it as their state’s natural obtainment of sovereignty, whereas it is transfer of this sovereignty to some “union center” or unification with some far-away country that seems unnatural and obscure to the younger ones. All of this generates each country’s torturing search for its new position in the space

of the world centers of power. Although Russia is still appealing as an integration partner to the significant number of the former republics' citizens, a new national identity is being often constructed through the opposition towards Russia. Unfortunately, a lot of NIS political activists securing their legitimacy as national leaders, also thanks to the forced justification of sovereignty and independence of the states headed by these leaders, can not justify this sovereignty other than through the opposition towards Russia⁶.

⁶ *The discernable illustration of such approach is the famous book of the former Ukrainian President L. Kuchma "Ukraine is Not Russia". In my opinion, its very name clearly reveals the weakness of the national self-identification (the author failed to find more important words about Ukraine rather than about Russia) and the so called external locus of control (the explanation of one's own position mostly by the external circumstances). It is common knowledge that these both qualities are typical of the adolescent psychology.*

One can not fail to take into account the elites' obtainment of "selfhood" when pursuing integration policy. The once stated motto "take that much sovereignty as you can swallow" has not elaborated its own historical resource yet — new national elites have not "satisfied" their hunger yet. Since the process of the sovereignization within the post-Soviet state has not passed its high point yet, contrasting it to integration process means subjecting the latter to the risk of being discounted and belied (today any integration project can be interpreted as Moscow expansionist searches). A new integration that is not based on the common past should be thoroughly prepared and justified, since its expediency is no longer obvious and requires explanations and proves to the population.

In order to be accepted by the peoples of the integrating states, a new integration, by all appearances, should be grounded on three important principles:

- **economic and humanitarian cooperation first, political and military alliances aftermath**; first, the economic benefit from the partnership, and only after that securing this benefit through the political unions (if this sequence is violated, the military-political agreements will inevitably appear to be "payment means" and the way of obtaining economic preferences; moreover, the economic benefit in contrast to the military-political expediency, does not require justification in the eyes of masses);
- **from the narrow and local to the broad and global**, i.e. the overall integration should be preceded with the stage of the bilateral and regional alliances (it is easier for ordinary citizens to adjust to the union of the several rather than the Union of the many; in this sense, the experience of including the countries that were not part of the Soviet Union, such as Mongolia, Serbia etc., might prove rather interesting);
- **gradualism and historicalness** (new integration is the historical process with "history being change of generations"; ultimately, disintegration and isolationist elite will be replaced by the integration and globally oriented one, but for that to happen, the generation should change; any enforcement of the process is risky).