

THE EURASIAN UNION PROJECT:
AN ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN POST-SOVIET SPACE

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List of Abbreviations

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO – Collective Security Treaty Organization
EU – European Union
EurAsEC – Eurasian Economic Community
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SCO – Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UN – United Nations

Chapter I: Introduction

Research Question and Overview

Since his return as president of Russia in May 2012, Vladimir Putin has asserted that his primary foreign policy objective is the integration of post-Soviet space into a common economic sphere by 2015.¹ The formation of a Eurasian Union would mark one of the most dramatic geopolitical shifts in the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union. By examining the effectiveness of existing regional arrangements (the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organizations, the Eurasian Economic Community, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia) and the current attitudes of the post-Soviet states toward regional integration, this thesis assesses the Eurasian Union's prospects for success.

Russia is not alone in vying for influence over post-Soviet space. Especially in Central Asia, she faces stiff competition from China, the United States, Turkey, and European states. With Russian geopolitical power declining, are the economic benefits of cooperation enough of an incentive for former Soviet republics to relinquish some of their political sovereignty to a Kremlin-led intergovernmental organization? Is Putin's proposed Eurasian Union a genuine attempt to achieve regional co-prosperity or a veiled scheme to reassert Russian hegemony? This thesis examines existing regional arrangements and the current status of economic and political integration in post-Soviet space and argues that based on the current status of formal "top-down" economic and political integration, only limited Eurasian integration will be completed by 2015.

¹ "Putin Praises Post-Soviet Integration." [RIA Novosti](#). 11 Apr. 2012. 3 Sept. 2012.

Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

There are three main approaches to regionalism and regional integration: the traditional approach, the essentialist approach, and the constructivist approach.² Muthia Alagappa is credited with the traditional definition of regionalism as “sustained cooperation, formal or informal, among governments, nongovernment organizations, or the private sector in three or more countries for mutual gain”.³ The essentialist approach places an emphasis on the “culture, ethnic origins, geopolitics or security complex” unique to a particular region and holds that there is some natural order to the way particular regions have developed and interacted over time.⁴ Finally, the constructivist approach holds that regions are social and political constructions that are constantly subject to change; what may constitute a region today may shift as norms and identities morph over time. These approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and this chapter demonstrates that elements of each understanding of regionalism have emerged in the post-Soviet space. Nevertheless, I argue that traditional regionalism best explains the reasons for why the newly independent Soviet republics cooperate with each other.⁵

Furthermore, when discussing regional integration, it is important to note that it consists of two primary components, political and economic. Although political and economic integration are often inextricably linked, it is important to note the distinction between the two. Political integration is based on several factors including power dynamics, identity and ideology, and the existence (or nonexistence) of internal and external threats.⁶ Economic integration, on the other hand, is influenced by “high levels of economic interdependence...availability of compensatory

² Karns, Margaret P., and Karen A. Mingst. International Organizations: The Politics and Processes of Global Governance. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004. 147-48.

³ Alagappa, Muthiah. "Regionalism and Security: A Conceptual Investigation." Pacific Cooperation: Building Economic and Security Regimes in the Asia-Pacific Region. Ed. Andrew Mack and John Ravenhill. Boulder: Westview, 1994. 152-79.

⁴ Jayasuriya, Kanishka. "Singapore: The Politics of Regional Definition." The Pacific Review 7.4 (1994): 411.

⁵ Karns, 148.

⁶ Ibid, 149.

mechanisms for integration, and the desire to simulate trade and attract foreign investment through the creation of a larger market”.⁷

Traditional Regional Integration

Traditional regional integration is closely tied to the theory of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism holds that states are interested in promoting mutually beneficial economic and political relations with surrounding neighbors. It focuses on the construction of institutions to aid and promote open cooperation between states. Under this model, Russia would place itself on equal footing with other post-Soviet states to strive towards co-prosperity with its neighbors. Building upon existing regional institutions, a Eurasian Union would provide a means of deepening economic ties and increasing political integration to create a more stable, peaceful region.

The majority of scholars who have written on traditional regional integration in post-Soviet space reject the notion that there has been any meaningful progress between Russia and her neighbors towards those ends. Most of these arguments focus the performance of specific institutions such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an organization whose history Robert Donaldson and Joseph Noguee describe as “one of steady decline”.⁸ Hastily constructed as a loose confederation to replace the teetering Soviet Union, Donaldson and Noguee assert that the CIS has ultimately failed to serve as a viable regional organization. Nevertheless, in 2007, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that the development of relations with the countries of the CIS was the “chief priority of Russian foreign policy”.⁹ However, it has

⁷ Ibid, 152

⁸ Donaldson, Robert H., and Joseph L. Noguee. The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009. 206.

⁹ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A Survey of Russian Federation Foreign Policy, (2007).

become clear that interest in the individual CIS member-states does not reflect interest in the CIS as a viable regional organization. Donaldson and Noguee also argue that Russia relies more on bilateral rather than multilateral negotiations to conduct their foreign policy, working state-by-state rather than through regional institutions. Russian newspapers have dismissed the idea of unified CIS policies in areas such as transportation, labor, and monetary policy as mere “paper creativity”, and Western observers claim that Putin’s plans for Eurasian integration falls into the tradition of the gap between rhetoric and behavior that has come to define Russian foreign policy. Therefore, if we consider government inaction and public opinion, there is convincing evidence against the possibility of future integration.

However, Yevgeny Vinokurov and Alexander Libman, proponents of Eurasian integration, argue that the past two years have seen promising developments that indicate that the former Soviet republics may be on the road to real integration. Libman has written extensively on the development of regional institutions in the former Soviet Union, particularly the CIS. Libman declares that the inefficiencies that led to the failure of previous Russian-led attempts at “formal” top-down regionalism were the result of a lack of coordination in “political, cultural, social and security issues”.¹⁰ In collaboration with Vinokurov, he presents compelling evidence for “bottom-up” regionalization occurring in post-Soviet space as a result of investments by Russian corporations and the expansion of labor migration.¹¹ Furthermore, they argue that while attempts at political integration have been largely unsuccessful, there is evidence of greater economic cooperation prompted “paradoxically” by the after-effects of the 2007-2008 economic crisis. They point to the 2010 formation Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan and

¹⁰ Libman, Alexander. "Regionalisation and Regionalism in the Post-Soviet Space: Current Status and Implications for Institutional Development." *Europe-Asia Studies* 59.3 (2007): 401.

¹¹ Libman, Alexander, and Evgeny Vinokurov. "Regional Integration and Economic Convergence in the Post-Soviet Space: Experience of the Decade of Growth." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* (2011): 112-28.

the signing of agreements in 2012 on the Common Economic Space (CES) as indicators of meaningful progress.

Essentialist Regional Integration

Essentialist regionalism is often critiqued by scholars as problematic due to the fact that it is often a unilateral rather than multilateral conception of a region.¹² Iver Neumann writes that essentialist positions assert that “the construct [of a region] does not assert its authority as an ‘imagined community,’ a cognitive construct shared by persons in the region themselves. Rather, it is the construct of one – the allegedly sovereign actor”¹³. In other words, essentialist notions tend to be a projection of one state’s nationalism onto other less powerful states rather than something acknowledged and accepted by all states involved. In the context of post-Soviet space, the prevailing essentialist concept is that of “Eurasianism”. Marlene Laruelle frames Eurasianism as a type of patriotic ideology that rejects the Western identity assigned to Russia and asserts the predominance the specific history, linguistics, geography, economics and ethnology that are unique to Russia and her neighbors.¹⁴ Russian dominance over its neighbors has ensured that the concept of Eurasianism remains an important concept to consider when studying the development of regional integration and how Russia perceives itself in relation to its neighbors.¹⁵

During his presidency, Putin has been a limited but consistent advocate of Eurasianism. It is rumored that Aleksandr Dugin, a radical populist, founder of the Eurasia Movement and author of the widely acclaimed geopolitical treatise *Foundations of Global Politics*, has exerted

¹² Jayasuriya, 411.

¹³ Neumann, Iver B. “A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe”. Review of International Studies. 20 (1994): 57.

¹⁴ Laruelle, Marlene. Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire. 2008. 202

¹⁵ Essentialism is critical in understanding why Putin is calling his new project the “Eurasian Union”.

influence on Putin's administration.¹⁶ Sporting a distinguished beard and frequently donned in traditional Russian garb, Dugin is the definitive image of Russian nationalism. While the extent of Dugin's influence in the Kremlin is disputed, Putin continues to promote the idea of a united Eurasia and has published several newspaper articles and books promoting the subject.

Laruelle argues that in order for "Eurasia" to be considered a viable geopolitical reality, several conditions must be met. First, CIS member-states must overcome the conflicts between themselves, a monumental task complicated by a colonial history and a severe imbalance of power. Second, and perhaps as a precursor to the first, is that CIS member-states must share a common conception of politics and agree on how to proceed with integration. Finally, successful integration can only occur if non-Russian CIS member states feel that unification will not lead to a resurgence of Russian dominance.¹⁷ While these conditions are unlikely to be met, essentialist regionalism cannot be ignored when analyzing the prospects of integration in post-Soviet space.

Constructivist Regionalism

While constructivist regionalism is often seen as a newer, alternative theory, it has gained a wide base of support among scholars.¹⁸ Constructivist regionalism holds that any conception of "region" is socially rather than naturally constructed and is not static but subject to change. Furthermore, the actions of states and their willingness to cooperate are shaped by previous interactions with other states. There certainly is evidence of shifting perceptions among the former Soviet republics away from a Russian-led "Eurasian" identity to identities relative to geographic location and newly formed national identity. This search for identity began shortly

¹⁶ "Who Is Alexander Dugin?" OpenDemocracy. Web. 26 Sept. 2012. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/russia-theme/who-is-alexander-dugin>.

¹⁷ Laruelle, 217

¹⁸ Karns, 148.

after the collapse of the Soviet Union gave the previously dominated Soviet republics the opportunity to shop around for alternatives to Kremlin hegemony. For example, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova are under pressure to align themselves with Western organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), a move which would offer these states the opportunity to construct identities as sovereign European states rather than subordinate Eurasian states. Meanwhile, China has extended its influence to nearby Central Asian republics such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, though these relationships are characterized more by normative economic factors than social ones.

A Eurasian Union?

What we know about Putin's proposed Eurasian Union is limited. Most of what we know about the project comes from articles published by Putin in the popular newspaper *Izvestia*. An article published in October 2011 describes the process of integration very broadly:

Close integration based on new political and economic values is the imperative of our time. We are proposing a model of a powerful supranational association that is capable of becoming one of the poles of the modern world and, within that, to play an effective linking role between Europe and the dynamic Asia-Pacific region.¹⁹

In the same article, Putin boldly asserts that "Membership in the Eurasian Union, apart from direct economic benefits, will enable its members to integrate into Europe faster and from a much stronger position."²⁰

It is common for scholars, politicians and other observers to compare the Eurasian Union project with European integration. The European Union is an ongoing effort by European states

¹⁹ Putin, Vladimir (3 October 2011). "Novyy integratsionnyy proekt dlya Yevrazii budushchee kotoroe rozhdaetsya segodnya " [New Eurasian Integration Project: The Future Starts Today]" (in Russian). *Izvestia* (Moscow).

²⁰ Ibid.

to create an effective interstate association with coordinating bodies, a single economic space, a single currency, a single strategy for market reforms, a coordinated tax and customs policy, joint armed forces and easily crossed international borders. Over the past year, this model has presented discouraging results, and Putin has made it clear that the Eurasian Union will be similar but inherently different from European integration. Exactly how it will be different has yet to be clearly established by the Putin administration, and the language it uses to describe the future Eurasian Union is evasive and perhaps purposefully vague.²¹ Although the Eurasian Union project is still in its formative stages, Putin may have up to 12 years as president to fulfill his grand vision, thanks to recent constitutional amendments. He also has the unabashed support of Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of Kazakhstan since its independence in 1991 and a former Soviet bureaucrat who actually proposed the idea of a Eurasian Union in 1994 at Moscow State University and has always supported efforts at further integration.²²

Critics of the Eurasian Union project base their arguments on the decline of relative Russian geopolitical power, claiming that the incentives for further integration simply do not exist. Igor Torbakov presents a compelling argument that Putin's vision may be clouded by what he calls the "Tsar Paul complex."²³ When he came to power in 1796 after serving as Fleet Admiral of the Russian navy and grandmaster of the Order of Malta, Tsar Paul I of Russia became obsessed with creating a grand Mediterranean fleet to extend Russian influence. While strategically sound, Paul's plan proved to be impractical and ultimately never came to fruition.

²¹ Lukyanov, Fyodor. "What Does Eurasian Union Mean?" The Telegraph. 17 Sept. 2012.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/russianow/opinion/9548428/eurasian-union-explanation.html>.

²² Kilner, James. "Kazakhstan Welcomes Putin's Eurasian Union Concept." The Telegraph. 6 Oct. 2011. Web. 26 Sept. 2012. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/kazakhstan/8808500/Kazakhstan-welcomes-Putins-Eurasian-Union-concept.html>.

²³ "Russia: Putin's Tsar Paul Complex." EurasiaNet.org. Web. 26 Sept. 2012. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65144>.

Unless Putin develops a solid framework with tangible benefits for the potential member-states of the proposed Eurasian Union, his dream, like Paul's, may never be realized.

Methodology, Data and Organization

I begin my analysis with general review of progress made towards regional integration since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Employing qualitative research of primary and secondary sources, this chapter examines the various institutions that have been established in post-Soviet space in the past twenty years to determine the successes and shortcomings of previous attempts at regional integration. The next chapter is a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the current level of regional integration in post-Soviet space. Research for this chapter relies on trade data published in 2010 by the European Commission and international migration data published by the Russian Federal Service of Government Statistics and “The System of Indicators of Eurasian Integration”, a dataset published by Evgeny Vinokurov of the Eurasian Development Bank. I then turn to focus specifically on the purpose, structure, and organization of the proposed Eurasian Union. For this chapter I will rely on the testimony of public officials throughout the Eurasian region as well as those of foreign government agencies to construct a picture of what a Eurasian Union would look like. This includes speeches, interviews, reports, and published newspaper articles of politicians and government officials. The final chapter is an overall conclusion of the research conducted and a forecast of future regional integration in post-Soviet space.

Chapter II: Existing Regional Arrangements in Post-Soviet Space

*“Every time we signed agreements we mapped out our intentions, as it were, but we had no idea of how to achieve our goals, and we based our efforts on old principles: a single center, the management of all resources for common goals, and authority imposed by directive – we only knew how to administer, manage and distribute.”*²⁴

- Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan

Regional integration does not simply occur due to the mandate of a single leader. It is a process of repeated interaction between international actors that can take decades, even centuries to develop. Previous efforts at “formal” or “top-down” regional integration in post-Soviet space have produced mixed results.²⁵ Smaller regional organizations, such as the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus have contributed to regional integration in post-Soviet space on a limited level. But larger and more inclusive institutions have had less success in promoting regional cooperation. The current overarching regional organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, is often considered an inefficient, bloated bureaucracy and a prime example of a failed regional organization.²⁶ This chapter examines five major regional organizations in post-Soviet space: the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community, and finally the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia to examine what has previously been implemented in post-Soviet states in terms of institutional regional integration and whether an all-inclusive Eurasian Union is likely to succeed. I demonstrate that only small scale Eurasian

²⁴ Konovalov, Valery. "Nursultan Nazarbayev: A New Concept and a New Initiative." *Izvestia* 5 June 1993.

²⁵ “Formal” or “top-down” regional integration refers to regional integration directed by governments

²⁶ Donaldson and Noguee, 26.

integration has been successful and that an all-inclusive Eurasian Union does not seem likely due to diverging interests and competing foreign influences.

The Commonwealth of Independent States

From its birth, the reason for the Commonwealth's existence has been unclear. Is it a tool of Russian foreign policy or an honest means of coordination among republics with shared histories and overlapping political ties? Whatever the motives behind its creation, the CIS is never praised as an ideal model of regional integration. In its current state, the CIS is an inefficient bureaucracy with alarming budget deficits and almost no viable institutional mechanisms to develop concerted policies among its member-states. It has proved impossible to transform the organization into a tool for genuine regional integration. Nevertheless, the CIS has lasted over 20 years and there are no plans for its dissolution. The organization has served primarily as a forum to maintain economic ties and help facilitate bilateral relations among Soviet successor states, both of which are necessary precursors for future integration. In order to create a true "Eurasian Union," CIS states would be expected to accept central authority from the vastly more powerful Russia, set aside economic and political differences, and align their foreign policy interests. However, as I argue, the maelstrom of political interests in post-Soviet space and the huge disparity between Russia and her neighbors in almost every category presents an unfavorable environment for a Eurasian Union to succeed.

The CIS was "conceived in haste and without love".²⁷ It was created by Russian officials as a last ditch effort to preserve regional economic unity in the midst of Soviet collapse; a psychologically comforting gesture to indicate that the Soviet Union was not "totally gone".²⁸ It has its origins in the Commonwealth of Slavic States (CSS), an organization formed on

²⁷ Troitsky, Nikolai. "No One Observed the CIS's Anniversary." *Megapolis-Express* 6 Jan. 1993: 5.

²⁸ Lipsky, Andrei. "Will the CIS's First Anniversary Be Its Last?" *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 22 Dec. 1992: 8.

December 8, 1991 by Boris Yeltsin, Stanislav Shushkevich and Leonid Kravchuk, the leaders of the Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian Soviet Republics. Three weeks later, eleven of the fourteen former Soviet republics²⁹, anxious to maintain good relations with vastly more powerful Russia, signed the Alma-Ata Declaration with the Slavic states to form a more inclusive regional arrangement.

The hastily drawn up “Creation Agreement” signed at Alma-Ata served as the main constituent document of the organization until the CIS Charter was adopted in early 1993. In order to maintain CIS membership, states were required to ratify the charter within a year of signing it. Ukraine opted not to ratify the document and thus to this day is not considered a full-fledged member-state but rather an observer. While many states wanted to maintain some sort of economic cooperation with Russia, many leaders of the former Soviet state shared the fears of Leonid Kravchuk, then president of Ukraine, that any supranational structure would eventually come to serve as the role of “drill sergeant” in the region.³⁰ Kravchuk’s fears stemmed from the fact that CIS states were already dependent on Russian oil, gas, and currency.³¹ Furthermore, Russia’s economic power absolutely dwarfed those of the other former Soviet republics and her military was vastly superior in terms of armaments and manpower.

The introduction of a charter failed to rejuvenate interest in the CIS. At a CIS summit in Ashgabat that marked the two-year anniversary of the organization, one observer remarked, “At the end of two years, the CIS’s fate has turned out to be unenviable. No one is moved by the commonwealth’s plight. No one even sympathizes with it. People are laughing at it.”³² In order

²⁹ The Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) chose not to join and Georgia would join two years later.

³⁰ Patansky, Aleksei. "No Dramatic Events Are Foreseen at the Minsk Meeting of CIS Leaders." *Izvestia*. 20 Jan. 1993.

³¹ Most of the Soviet republics had not yet introduced their own currencies and were still using rubles.

³² Parkhomenko, Sergei. “Failure: Impromptu Diplomacy – The Results of the Ashgabat Summit.” *Segodnya*. 28 Dec. 1993.

to draw in as many of the former Soviet states into the CIS as possible, Russian politicians disregarded economists, political scientists, and other experts who warned that the more inclusive the organization became, the less effective it would be. At the Ashgabat Summit, Turkmenistan was granted full member-state status even after Saparmurat Niyazov, a Soviet-style autocrat who later received the title President for Life of Turkmenistan, declared, “We have gained something by joining the CIS...the only thing we don’t want is to have the decisions it adopts to be binding on our country.”³³ What did Russia hope to gain by extending CIS membership to the fourth-poorest of the Soviet successor states whose leader had just unabashedly expressed his reluctance to adhere to the organization’s decisions? Donaldson and Nogee argue that the CIS was never meant to be a political alliance or an economic community but rather a loose confederation to serve as a means for Russia to coordinate policy and maintain hegemony in post-Soviet space.³⁴ It has become the norm for member-states to opt out of compliance if they so choose, rendering the decisions of the CIS aspirational rather than practical. In 1994, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan remarked that most of the 452 agreements signed up to that point failed to be implemented.³⁵ Rather than a tool of genuine regional integration, the CIS has become a mere forum for Russia’s neighboring states to engage in dialogue with the Russian president.

Among the decisions that have failed to be implemented include the creation of a CIS Joint Military Command, an Interstate Bank, a Unified Monetary System, as well as a general CIS integrated market. All these decisions represent components described earlier as primary goals of successful regional integration. The failure of CIS states to form a Joint Military Command was caused by organizational, technical, economic and financial difficulties and an

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Donaldson and Nogee, 165.

³⁵ Ibid.

overall reluctance of the former Soviet republics to relinquish military command to an organization dominated by Russia. By 1993, support for a Joint CIS Military Command had completely diminished and military cooperation was supplanted to the Collective Security Treaty, described later in this chapter. Rather than an institution that would coordinate economic policy among member-states, the CIS Interstate Bank turned out to be merely a means for former Soviet citizens to settle accounts in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse. The Unified Monetary Policy, proposed during the economic chaos of 1992, was doomed to failure due to the economic disparities among member-states and Russia's wariness to prop up the budgets of her ailing neighbors. Finally, an overarching CIS market was out of the question in the early years of the organization when the economies of member states were recovering from the Soviet collapse. A common market instead took the form of the Eurasian Economic Community, a less-inclusive organization that was formed in the early 2000s.

The only truly "successful" aspect of the CIS aside from its role as a post-Soviet forum is its peacekeeping division. The concept of peacekeeping was originally developed by the United Nations as a means of settling disputes and enforcing ceasefires. However, Russian officials often complained that the UN neglected to provide adequate peacekeeping forces in conflict areas of post-Soviet space and therefore a regional solution was necessary.³⁶ Peacekeeping was adapted for use within the CIS by Nazarbayev, the great proponent of post-Soviet integration, who in 1992 called for the use of military observers and collective CIS forces to step into conflicts in former Soviet republics under conditions that (1) the peacekeepers were neutral, (2) forces were composed of volunteers, (3) there was joint command, (4) peacekeeping forces were approved by the CIS Council of Heads of States, and (5) the belligerent states/parties had to

³⁶ Kozыrev, Andrei. "Russia Alone in Shouldering Burden of Peacekeeping." *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 22 Sept. 1993.

agree to the deployment of peacekeepers.³⁷ However, these terms were never met whenever peacekeeping forces were employed in hotspots throughout the former Soviet Union.

Many observers, including most Westerners, consider CIS peacekeeping as a tool of Russian foreign policy to manipulate the outcome of conflicts to the Kremlin's advantage. Emil Pain, then a member of the Russian Presidential Council, declared in 1993 that "The actions (or inaction) of Russian troops in conflict zones is nothing but an imperial policy in hidden form on the part of the Russian government."³⁸ He noticed that there were contradictions among the approach of various governmental departments in regard to peacekeeping missions. While the Russian Foreign Ministry would vow to take a particular course of action at United Nations Security Council meetings, the Russian Defense Ministry would implement a completely different policy in the conflict zone, as was the case in the Tajik and Abkhaz conflicts in the mid-1990s.³⁹

Therefore, if we critically examine the efficacy of the Commonwealth of Independent States, we see that while it has ultimately failed as a vehicle for genuine regional integration, it has served the important function of helping former Soviet republics coordinate foreign policy and engage in open dialogue, a prerequisite for future integration. Putin describes it as "an irreplaceable mechanism that helps bring our positions closer together and enables us to elaborate a common view on key issues facing our region...it has enabled the launch of many-tiered, multi-speed integration process in the post-Soviet space".⁴⁰ However, it can also be argued that the CIS serves Russia as a veiled attempt to assert its dominance over her neighbors under the guise of peacekeeping and shrewd institutional mechanisms. In any case, there are no

³⁷ Ibid, 180.

³⁸ Pain, Emil. "Can Russia Be a Peacemaker?" *Izvestia*. 29 Sept. 1993.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Putin, "New Eurasian Integration Project: The Future Starts Today".

plans for the dissolution of the organization despite its many flaws. Due to the all-inclusive nature of the CIS, political divergence among members has supplanted many aspects of regional integration to other regional institutions discussed below.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization

The idea of a collective security arrangement among former Soviet Republics emerged after the CIS Joint Military Command failed to materialize. The purpose and efficacy of the CSTO, like the other existing regional arrangements of the post-Soviet space, is the subject of wide debate. According to Yulia Nikitina, many Westerners see the organization as “a waning and superficial, Russia-dominated, anti-Western club of dictators who want to protect their regimes from new color revolutions”.⁴¹ However, Nikitina asserts that this is an erroneous view when in fact the CSTO has reported “successful joint operations and incidents of multilateral cooperation in dozens of different security fields and tried to establish relations with NATO”.⁴² She further argues that the CSTO should not be held to the same criteria as Western security arrangements when it is not a Western organization. I reject Nikitina’s argument of Russian exceptionalism and claim that a detailed analysis of the organization presents valid reasons for why member states prefer cooperation with the SCO, NATO, and EU over the CSTO.

The Collective Security Treaty was signed in Tashkent in May 1992 by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as a classic military alliance with a mutual assistance clause but no legal obligations on the part of signatories.⁴³ Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Belarus signed on the following year. Throughout the 1990s, the CSTO served as a do-nothing

⁴¹ Nikitina, Yulia. "The Collective Security Treaty Organization Through the Looking Glass." Problems of Post-Communism. May-June 59.3 (2012): 43.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

alliance that could only nominally be considered a regional organization. Without any charter, there were no mechanisms to compel member states to act in concert. With the CSTO headquartered in Moscow, the former Soviet republics were reluctant to invite a Russian-dominated military force into their territory. The same financial shortcomings that plagued the CIS Joint Military Command precluded the CSTO from taking any real action. For example, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan could not afford to allocate funds stipulated by the Tashkent Agreement. In 1999, the five-year membership period that the original treaty established expired. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan refused to renew their membership, further weakening the organization.

In the early 2000s the geopolitical landscape of the former Soviet Union transformed dramatically. The September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks prompted the United States and NATO to invade Afghanistan to overthrow the *de facto* Taliban government. Newly elected Vladimir Putin was initially an enthusiastic supporter of the “war on terror”, as he saw it as an opportunity to justify his occupation of Chechnya. He allowed the transportation of NATO military equipment through Russian territory and did not object to the establishment of American military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, a move that effectively “transformed Central Asia into an unsinkable aircraft carrier” as one Russian journalist described.⁴⁴ Although the Collective Security Treaty forbade member-states from allowing non-member states to station troops within its territory, the Kyrgyzstani designation of American servicemen as “special diplomatic mission personnel” offered a way around this rule. This was a clear indication that the organization lacked the integrity to uphold its own stipulations.

⁴⁴ Grigoryev, Aleksandr. "America Will Build Military Bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan." *Izvestia*. 16 Jan. 2002.

The United States overthrew the Taliban in Afghanistan in a matter of weeks. As one Russian observer noted, “the United States’ effective political actions and its global military power were demonstrated to the entire world, showing even the average peasant in some village deep in the mountains just who could really serve as the sole arbiter of Central Asia’s tangled disputes at that the current juncture.”⁴⁵ This military success was short lived, as the conflict eventually transformed into a bitter insurgency. However, the United States possessed the financial resources and political prowess that Russia lacked and remained a force to be reckoned with in Central Asia. The extended American military presence in the region prompted Putin to view the United States as a rival for control over Central Asia. In response, the Russian ministry of defense drafted a charter for the CSTO that would strengthen the organization’s focus and garner the support of the other former Soviet republics.

After member states signed the charter in 2002, the CSTO became a functioning security alliance. Cooperation with NATO has been limited, as both organizations regard the other as competitors for regional influence. However, as Nikitina emphasizes, the CSTO has been especially effective at combating the trafficking of illicit drugs, an achievement that is often overlooked by Western observers.⁴⁶ Furthermore, in 2009 member states agreed to create the Collective Rapid Reaction Force to respond to threats that require immediate mobilization of forces. These achievements, while limited, demonstrate a growing significance previously unseen during the turbulent decade that followed the Soviet collapse.

Nikitina asserts that in the sphere of international affairs, Russia prefers unilateral action over multilateral action in association with its neighbors.⁴⁷ This was certainly a valid assertion

⁴⁵ Khodaryonok, Mikhail. “Unnecessary Alliance – The Tashkent Collective Security Treaty’s Tenth Anniversary Could Be Its Last”. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. Jan. 21, 2002.

⁴⁶ Nikitina, 45.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 51.

during the 1990s and early 2000s when Russia could not afford nor was it willing to provide security and economic support to her neighbors. However, with Putin's announced goal to form a Eurasian Union, we may see the CSTO transform into a Russian instrument of regional integration throughout Central Asia. As Nikitina concludes, in order for the CSTO to be effective and act in a concerted manner, member states must create a shared identity based on ideology to unite its members and foster cooperation. This is precisely what a Eurasian Union seeks to do. However, to the West and in Central Asia, NATO maintains a strong presence and challenges the integrity of the CSTO. To the east, China and the SCO present both an opportunity and a new and formidable challenge to Russia.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

At its core, the SCO is a tactical partnership between China and Russia and a counterweight to NATO. The organization's formation in 1996 was a reaction to growing American influence in Central Asia following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Anti-Western and anti-democratic in ideology, the SCO is viewed by most scholars as a superficial marriage of convenience between two geopolitical rivals that reject a unipolar international system. While there is space for economic development and cooperation among the states of the SCO in countering what are known as the "three evils" (extremism, separatism, and terrorism), mutual distrust and the lack of a common identity preclude the organization from becoming a tool of future integration.⁴⁸

Konstantin Syroezhkin, chief researcher at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, claims that the main problem that plagues the SCO is that member states think of the

⁴⁸ McDermott, Roger. "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Impact on Central Asian Security." Problems of Post-Communism. July-August 59.4 (2012): 61.

organization in a different way. While Russia perceives the SCO as a security arrangement, China considers it more of an economic framework.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the way in which other Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) view the organization further complicates the matter. Like the CIS, they view the SCO mainly as a forum to discuss various issues with the two dominant powers in the region. While they enjoy the economic benefits of partnering with two economic superpowers (economic relations among SCO member states increased almost ten-fold from 1997 to 2005), they are still reluctant to allow the SCO to interfere in domestic matters.⁵⁰ As Syroezhkin notes, “full participation of the SCO in resolving internal conflicts that may occur on the territories of member-states is difficult to imagine -- even in theory.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, many Central Asian leaders were anxious to secure the support of SCO during the “color revolutions” of the mid-2000s, as many thought they were the result of a United States extended presence in the region. However, it seems that because Central Asian states are not willing to depend solely on Russia or on China for economic and security benefits, the SCO serves as a balancing act in which member states “sell their cooperation to the highest bidder”.⁵²

Therefore, in terms of essentialist and traditionalist approaches, there is little prospect that the SCO will serve as a tool for future regional integration in post-Soviet space. As it stands today, the SCO is a loose tactical partnership constructed between China and Russia, geopolitical rivals temporarily united in their opposition to American influence in Central Asia. Aside from this opposition to the unipolar international system, Russia and China have few reasons to cooperate and share little in common. The addition of observer states like India, Pakistan, and

⁴⁹ Ibid, 60.

⁵⁰ Azarkan, Ezeli. “The Interests of the Central Asian States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.” *Ege Academic Review*, 10.1 (2010): 415.

⁵¹ McDermott, 60.

⁵² Azarkan, 415.

Iran has further complicated an organization that already had an identity crisis. When the SCO charter was signed in 2002, many Russian officials were skeptical about the SCO, urging a reorientation towards Europe rather than increasing cooperation with the East. Nevertheless, the SCO serves as a tool for Russia to remain influential in Central Asia without having to directly confront rising China, something that may change as relative American power declines.

Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, the Eurasian Economic Community

Regional integration is typically more successful on a smaller scale, and this rule holds true for post-Soviet integration. The wide range of diverging interests in the CIS has made these smaller arrangements a tool of choice in orchestrating foreign policy. It is no coincidence that Belarus and Kazakhstan have become Russia's closest partners for cooperation. Unlike many of the other former Soviet republics, Belarus lacks a strong national identity, with a language and culture very similar to those of Russia proper ("Belarus" literally means "White Russia"). Additionally, for most of its independent history it has been controlled by Alexander Lukashenko, a leader often described as the "last dictator of Europe". Because of his Soviet-style leadership, Lukashenko has rejected the democratic-oriented European Union and instead has opted for closer cooperation with Russia. The relationship between Belarus and Russia was cemented in 1998 with the signing of a treaty that created a Union State between Belarus and Russia and called for rapid integration between the two states. While there are occasionally spats between Lukashenko and Putin, the Union State remains perhaps the closest bilateral relation that Russia maintains, with Kazakhstan following.

Kazakhstan's relationship with Russia is sustained through geography, demographics, and politics. The two countries share a 7,000 kilometer long border, and its vast steppes made it

ideal for the construction of cosmodromes, one of which Russia still administers. Almost a quarter of Kazakhstan's population is ethnically Russian, and the absolute majority of migrants coming to Russia are citizens of Kazakhstan.⁵³ Perhaps one of the largest contributing factors to Kazakhstan's interest in integration comes from President Nursultan Nazarbayev. A former Soviet bureaucrat, Nazarbayev is one of the most vocal advocates for closer cooperation among the post-Soviet states.

The most promising small-scale economic integration project in the post-Soviet space kicked off in 1995 with the formation of a loose Customs Union between Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. The relationship between the three states further developed in 1996 with the signing of a treaty that called for closer economic cooperation and eventual integration. The goals stated in the treaty are drawn from traditionalist notions of economic integration: "The formation of a single economic space that envisages the effective functioning of a common market in goods, services, capital, and manpower, and the development of unified transportation, energy, and information systems."⁵⁴ Although there were initial doubts about retaining sovereignty, the three countries with the addition of Kyrgyzstan formalized the organization in 2000 to create the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). Voting rights within EurAsEC were set up to guarantee Russian dominance, leading many critics to lambast the organization as a tool for Russia to control her trading partners. Nevertheless, EurAsEC remains a sign of progress in terms of post-Soviet economic integration. Furthermore, it has served as a spring-board for a multitude of economic integration projects, including the EurAsEC Customs Union.

⁵³ Golunov, Sergey. "Ethnic Migration: A Challenge to Russian Border Security?" Ponars Policy Memo. 432 (2007): 4.

⁵⁴ Kalashnikova, Natalya. "Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan Sign an Agreement to Integrate". Kommersant-Daily. March. 29, 1996.

The EurAsEC Customs Union is an intensified version of the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus created in the late 1990s. The framework documents for this new project were signed in 2009. As of January 1, 2012, there are no customs borders between these three countries.⁵⁵ Having seemingly successfully established this customs union, officials from EurAsEC have set their sights on the larger project of establishing a Eurasian Economic Union, which Putin has declared will eventually transform into a Eurasian Union. The Eurasian Economic Union is set to launch in 2015, and thus far its membership will be limited to Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, though Putin has announced his intention to include a large swathe of the former Soviet Union.⁵⁶

Conclusion

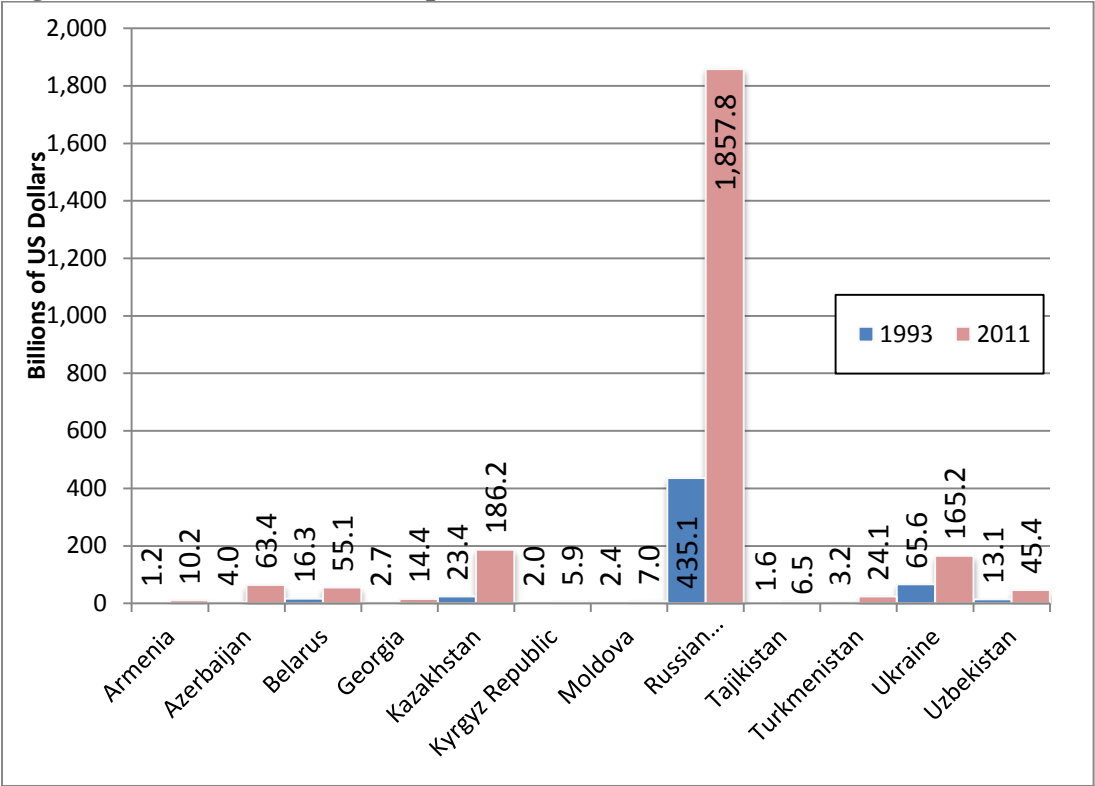
This chapter has examined five major intergovernmental organizations in post-Soviet space in order to measure the region's progress toward "top-down" or "formal" political and economic integration. This chapter has also demonstrated the stiff competition facing Russia in garnering the influence of the former Soviet Republics, especially in those states nearest to the European Union and China. As my research has demonstrated, regional organizations in the post-Soviet space that are smaller in size, have more focused objectives, and have greater historical ties to Russia have generally been more successful (however limited) at achieving their aims. While the Commonwealth of Independent States, by far the most inclusive and ambitious of the organizations analyzed, has become a bloated bureaucracy rife with inefficiency, the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia has somewhat met its goals and has evolved into a more functional organization over time.

⁵⁵ "Common Economic Space as Russia's Priority." *Voice of Russia*. 7 Sept. 2012. Web. 27 Nov. 2012. http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_09_07/Common-economic-space-as-Russia-s-priority.

⁵⁶ Putin, "New Eurasian Integration Project: The Future Starts Today".

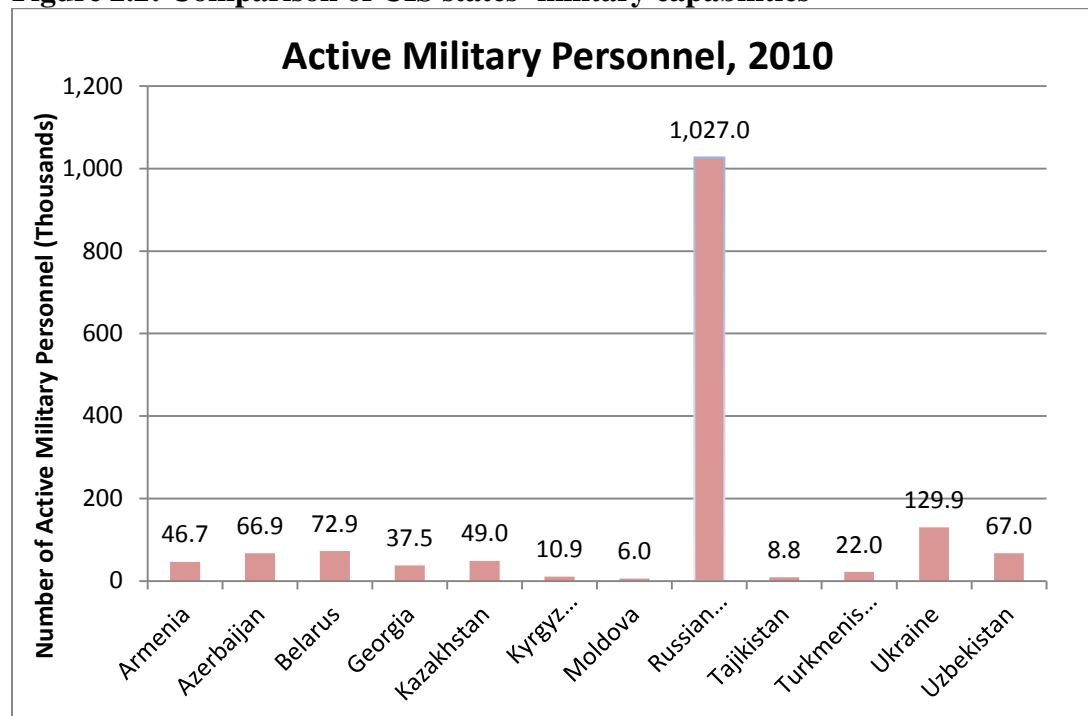
Therefore, based on my assessment of existing regional institutions in post-Soviet space, the prospects for an all-inclusive Eurasian Union currently do not seem favorable due to diverging interests and a lack of a common identity. It seems that a Eurasian Union would need time to develop and would have to move past the current handful of willing states (Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan). The next chapter seeks to describe the current status of regional integration in post-Soviet space based on quantitative and qualitative analysis to determine whether a Eurasian Union is feasible within the next few years and which states are the most likely to be included in such an arrangement.

Figure 2.1: Nominal GDP Comparison of CIS states



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators

Figure 2.2: Comparison of CIS states' military capabilities



Source: The Military Balance 2010, International Institute for Strategic Studies

Table 2.1: Regional Organization Membership of the Former Soviet Republics

Regional Organization Membership, Former Soviet Republics				
Country	CIS	CSTO	SCO	EurAsEC
Armenia	x	x		Observer
Azerbaijan	x	Withdrew (1999)		
Belarus	x	x		x
Georgia	Withdrew (August 2009)	Withdrew (1999)		
Kazakhstan	x	x	x	x
Kyrgyzstan	x	x		x
Moldova	x			Observer
Russia	x	x	x	x
Tajikistan	x	x	x	x
Turkmenistan	Unofficial Associate Member			
Ukraine	<i>de facto</i> member			Observer
Uzbekistan	x	Withdrew (2012)	x	Suspended Membership (2008)

Chapter III: The Current Status of Regional Integration in Post-Soviet Space

*“We inherited a great legacy from the Soviet Union – an infrastructure, specialized production facilities, and a common linguistic, scientific and cultural space. It is in our joint interests to use this for our development.”*⁵⁷

- Vladimir Putin, 2011

This chapter seeks to describe the current status of regional integration among the former Soviet republics in order to determine if and how soon a Eurasian Union will develop. I begin with a quantitative analysis of two general indices of regional integration: trade and international migration. I then perform a qualitative analysis of the prevailing attitudes of states in the region towards economic and political integration based on newspaper articles and official government dialogue. The states I examine include all current and former CIS member states (collectively denoted as the CIS-12), states that would be the most receptive to the idea of forming a Eurasian Union.

My analysis indicates that Belarus and Kazakhstan are the most integrated of the former Soviet republics with Russia, both in terms of economics and politics. High levels of trade and a shared interest in Eurasian integration have brought about the creation of a functional Customs Union between the three states. This Customs Union is set to transform into the more dynamic Eurasian Union by 2015. As for the rest of the former Soviet republics, attitudes toward integration vary based on previous ties to Russia, economic interdependence, and whether other integration opportunities exist.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Interstate Trade

The volume of trade between states is a major indicator of their willingness to cooperate on other international issues. The elimination of tariffs and other barriers to trade is a prerequisite to successful regional integration and one of the main goals of Putin's Eurasian Union project. Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan have eliminated most trade barriers with the formation of the Customs Union. The majority of CIS-12 states are looking outside of the former Soviet bloc for more favorable and lucrative trade opportunities. Specifically, trade with China and Turkey is on the rise for many of the Central Asian states while the European Union is an attractive partner for trade for the East European republics. A minority of the CIS-12, specifically Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have adopted strict trade policies designed to limit their economic ties with the outside world.

Table 3.1 gives a breakdown of the total trade that takes place both within the CIS-12 and between the CIS-12 and other influential powers of the region (the European Union, the United States, China, and Turkey). Interestingly, Russia's trade with the CIS-12 amounts to only 7% of its total trade, making it the least integrated state in terms of international trade. Belarus appears to be the most integrated in terms of trade followed by Tajikistan and Ukraine, whose economies have always been closely tied to Russia. According to trade statistics, the United States (unlike the European Union, China, and Turkey) does not constitute a major trading partner for any of the CIS-12 states, but it definitely has a major military presence in the region. Data from Table 3.1 was cited for the qualitative analyses of each CIS-12 state.

Table 3.1

Total International Trade (Exports/Imports) Among CIS Member-States, 2010 (Millions of Euros)												
Trading Partner	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Moldova	Russia	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
Armenia		X	36.3	155.9	10.7	0.3	1.8	419.6	0.3	25.5	165.7	5.5
Azerbaijan	X		110.2	550	238.7	35.5	5.8	1405.9	7.2	184	1175.7	25.1
Belarus	27.8	90.5		44.4	667.9	77	150.5	X	39.3	74.7	3381.1	119.6
Georgia	78.2	348.7	48.9		104.2	3.5	9.9	389.8	2.3	51.1	500.3	12.2
Kazakhstan	11.3	255.5	660.8	107		471.7	35	5812	236.1	161.1	1566.8	720.8
Kyrgyzstan	X	32.4	X	3.4	458.4		2.3	1032.3	16.8	5.7	X	337.4
Moldova	1.8	4.6	188.1	9.2	36.2	2.4		549.8	3	2	596.3	6.1
Russia	751.6	1453.8	21,063.5	245.1	6019.2	1079.1	747.8		723.6	702.5	26917.3	2430.6
Tajikistan	X	7.2	36.1	1.9	217.5	16.3	X	669.4		58.3	X	56.5
Turkmenistan	26.6	169.1	68.4	54.3	168.1	5.5	2	658.1	64		182	118.2
Ukraine	182.6	1022.9	3 362.8	501.5	1612.4	66.5	469.8	20,887.80	151.7	195.5		246.7
Uzbekistan	5.7	24.4	116.5	12.4	721.7	330.1	6.1	2409.7	60.7	125	234.9	
Overall Total	3615.9	20962.6	45,314.3	5082.6	58636.3	6248.9	4068.2	443919.4	2906.4	6791.9	85071.4	10786.7
CIS Total	1085.6	3409.1	22328.8	1685.1	10255	2087.9	1431	34234.4	1305	1585.4	34720.1	4078.7
Trade Total	30.0%	16.3%	49.3%	33.2%	17.5%	33.4%	35.2%	7.7%	44.9%	23.3%	40.8%	37.8%
EU27	1155.5	8914.4	11,433.50	1324.1	18990.3	237.8	1842.7	208998.8	230.3	1093.1	24335.2	1677.6
	32.0%	42.5%	25.2%	26.1%	32.4%	3.8%	45.3%	47.1%	7.9%	16.1%	28.6%	15.6%
USA	146.6	1480.7	387.3	271.1	1951.2	68.7	63	16512.3	71.9	67.9	1956.4	131.9
	4.1%	7.1%	0.9%	5.3%	3.3%	1.1%	1.5%	3.7%	2.5%	1.0%	2.3%	1.2%
CHINA	329.2	697	1,627.8	271.3	15304.1	3439.3	243.3	44495.5	516.1	1157.1	4556.9	1868.6
	9.1%	3.3%	3.6%	5.3%	26.1%	55.0%	6.0%	10.0%	17.8%	17.0%	5.4%	17.3%
TURKEY	160.2	714	273.2	835.8	2373.4	127.8	206.5	14238.8	329	1212.6	3271.4	828
	4.43%	3.41%	0.60%	16.44%	4.05%	2.05%	5.08%	3.21%	11.32%	17.85%	3.85%	7.68%

Source: European Commission, Main Economic Indicators.

Indicates an insignificant amount of trade

International Migration

One of the features of a highly integrated region is the presence of easily crossed international borders. If we examine the current status of international migration among CIS-12 states, we find that international migration to Russia has boomed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union (with the notable exception of Georgia), but not necessarily because of governmental cooperation. This section analyzes both official migration statistics from 2011 and unofficial estimates of migration (legal and illegal) from 2008 to capture the volume of people traveling to and from Russia.

Unlike trade, migration is not always indicative of regional integration. At present, migration in post-Soviet space is a symbiotic but highly unequal phenomenon. As Table 3.2 and 3.3 indicate, Russian emigration is dwarfed by immigration from the other post-Soviet states. The Central Asian post-Soviet states have weak economies that cannot support their large populations. However, Russia has a relatively strong economy but a declining native population to support it. As a result, a huge number of labor migrants travel to Russia to find work and send back remittances that make up a sizable portion of their native country's GDP.⁵⁸ The case of Uzbekistan illustrates the fact that we must proceed with caution when equating international migration with regional integration. Uzbekistan, the most populous Central Asian state, consistently sends the largest number of migrants to Russia. However, it is one of the least receptive to Moscow's integration projects. Therefore, while international migration can potentially be an indicator of integration, the migration flows of Russia prove otherwise. Migration patterns are nevertheless helpful in analyzing the attitudes of states toward integration.

⁵⁸ It has been estimated that 35% of Tajikistan's GDP comes from remittances from labor migrants in Russia.

Table 3.2: Official International Migration to Russia from CIS

Officially Recorded International Migration to Russia from CIS States, 2011			
Country	Immigration	Emigration	Net Migration
Azerbaijan	22,316	1,255	21,061
Armenia	32,747	1,000	31,747
Belarus	10,182	2,622	7,560
Kazakhstan	36,474	6,176	30,298
Kyrgyzstan	41,562	976	40,586
Moldova	19,578	771	18,807
Tajikistan	35,087	1,070	34,017
Turkmenistan	4,524	191	4,333
Uzbekistan	64,493	2,207	62,286
Ukraine	43,586	6,300	37,286
Total CIS	310,549	22,568	287,981
	87.10%	61.37%	90.06%
Total Migration	356,535	36,774	319,761

Source: Russian Federal Service of Government Statistics

Table 3.3: Labor Migration, 2008

Estimated Labor Migration to Russia, 2008	
<i>Country</i>	2008
Armenia	100,000
Azerbaijan	76,000
Belarus	100
Georgia	4,000
Kazakhstan	10,000
Kyrgyzstan	5,300
Moldova	122,000
Tajikistan	391,000
Turkmenistan	3,000
Ukraine	245,000
Uzbekistan	643,000
Overall Total	1,599,400

Source: CIS Interstate Statistics Committee

Qualitative Indicators of Migration

This section presents brief analyses of each of the CIS-12 states in order to demonstrate the general attitudes toward integration in post-Soviet space. These attitudes are subject to swift change, as many of the former Soviet republics do not possess stable political institutions. Nevertheless, I attempt to capture a general snapshot of regional integration based on recent newspaper articles and official government dialogue. Supporting evidence is provided by quantitative factors that were examined above. The countries are broken up into the three traditional regions of the former Soviet Union: Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

Eastern Europe

While Russia exerts a large amount of influence in the Eastern European region of post-Soviet space, the European Union has actively worked to counter Moscow's influence even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Of the three countries, Moldova is the least likely to join the Eurasian Union due to its European Union aspirations and its opposition to the Russian presence in the disputed Transnistria region. Ukraine is torn between pursuing Eurasian Union membership at the expense of European Union membership, but economic factors and the disposition of the current government favors closer cooperation with Russia. Belarus is one of the most tightly integrated states with Russia because of the attitude of its Soviet-style dictator and reliance on Gazprom subsidies.

Moldova

Since gaining independence, Moldova has distanced itself from post-Soviet integration projects, instead making European integration its top priority. In May 2011 the pro-Western

Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat announced, “The Republic of Moldova has set a very clear goal. This aim is the European Union integration, which erases from the beginning the possibility to join another community.”⁵⁹ Culturally and linguistically, Moldova shares strong bonds with neighboring Romania, a European Union member state. However, with high levels of unemployment, a large foreign debt, and one of the poorest performing economies of Europe, Moldova’s progress towards EU ascension has been minimal. Nevertheless, Moldova was among three states of the “Eastern Partnership” that were promised preference over other post-Soviet states for future EU membership. Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Popov stated that “Putin’s project might work for bigger CIS members, but would not be a good fit for Moldova...a small country like Moldova would be a minor shareholder in an organization like the Eurasian Union, where decisions would be made according to the economic power of the member states”.⁶⁰

One issue that can explain Moldova’s reluctance to cooperate with Russian integration projects is the ongoing Transnistria conflict. There is a large population of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians in Transnistria, a strip of land between the Dniester River and the border of Ukraine. Transnistria declared its independence from the newly independent Moldova in 1990, prompting a bloody conflict that resulted in hundreds of casualties. Russian peacekeepers intervened in 1992 and have remained ever since. The ongoing conflict is a constant reminder to Moldovans of Russia’s disregard for Moldovan state sovereignty. In conclusion, Moldova is reluctant to join an organization headed by Russia and is working toward greater cooperation with Europe.

⁵⁹ "Moldova Gets New Pro-Western PM." [BBC](#). 25 Sept. 2009. Web. 10 Feb. 2013.

⁶⁰ "Moldovan Officials Not Interested In Putin's 'Eurasian Union'" [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#). 5 Oct. 2011. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

Ukraine

Despite cultural similarities and the large volume of trade and migration that takes place between Russia and Ukraine, historical animosity may dissuade Ukraine from joining another Kremlin-led organization such as the Eurasian Union. Ukraine has sought European Union membership since the dissolution of the USSR, but Eurasian Union membership would be easier for Ukraine to obtain and is an attractive option for Ukrainian oligarchs and the political elite. It is unlikely that Putin's Eurasian Union would impose any sort of "democracy requirement", like the European Union, which is favorable since the status of democracy in Ukraine remains uncertain.⁶¹ International observers panned the parliamentary elections in 2012, prompting harsh responses by European Union officials.⁶² It is also important to note that partnership with Moscow could mean access to cheap gas that would otherwise be restricted.⁶³

But with Eurasian Union membership would inevitably come a loss of economic and political sovereignty. In the wake of centuries of Russian dominance, independence is something that many Ukrainians worked hard to achieve, and they prize it dearly. Furthermore, increased ties with Russia would only diminish the chances of Ukraine becoming a European Union associate member, which in 2010 was declared to be a major strategic aim of President Viktor Yanukovich, despite his reputation as "Russia's placeman".⁶⁴ In conclusion, while Ukraine enjoys a high level of integration with Russia in terms of international trade and cultural similarity, it remains uncertain whether Ukraine will fully commit to a total realignment with the aspirations of Moscow or continue to pursue partnership with the European Union.

⁶¹ In addition to international criticism of Ukrainian democratic institutions, fistfights are not an uncommon occurrence in the chambers of the Ukrainian parliament.

⁶² "EU Concerned about Ukraine Democracy." *Financial Times*. 29 Oct. 2012. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

⁶³ Martsynovski, Anatoliy. "Ukraine's Choice 2013: European or Eurasian Union?" Web log post. *On EU-Ukraine Relations*. 7 Jan. 2013. Web. 15 Feb. 2013.

⁶⁴ "Ukraine Country Profile." *BBC*. 12 May 2012. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Belarus

In 2011, shortly after Izvestia published Putin's article that laid out his vision for a Eurasian Union, President Aleksandr Lukashenko commented:

This is not meant to be a compliment to my colleague, the former Russian president and current prime minister, but I must say that this article was a real event. Russian has stated clearly and unambiguously for the first time in many years about the priority of the relations with the states with which it shares a common Soviet background.⁶⁵

As demonstrated in the section on the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, Belarus is one the strongest supporters of Eurasian integration. With its failing currency, some observers believe that Belarus is an even more ardent supporter of a common Eurasian monetary policy than Russia.⁶⁶ Its economy is state-controlled and heavily subsidized by Russian gas, with the country receiving more than 4 billion dollars in gas subsidies from Russia in 2012 alone.⁶⁷ Almost half of Belarusian trade is conducted with the CIS-12 (See Table 3.1). Furthermore, Belarus is regarded as the "last dictatorship of Europe", and therefore the European Union has grave misgivings about the state's prospects as a potential member.

It is potential member-states like Belarus that leads many experts to question whether a Eurasian Union can succeed as an organization dedicated to mutually beneficial economic and political relations. With its failing economy and consistently dictatorial political structure, Belarus seems like more of liability to Russia than a contributing member state. But as long as the political economy of Belarus remains so inextricably tied to Russia, Minsk will remain firmly under the influence of Moscow. Along with Kazakhstan, Belarus remains a strong supporter of

⁶⁵ "Belarus Leader Backs Putin's Plan of Eurasian Union." *Russia Today*. 18 Oct. 2011. Web. 18 Mar. 2013.

⁶⁶ Khodasevich, Anton. "Belarussian Opposition Opposes Eurasian Union." *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 6 Oct. 2011.

⁶⁷ Dynko, Andrej. "Europe's Last Dictatorship." *The New York Times*. N.p., 17 July 2012. Web. 15 Feb. 2013.

Putin's Eurasian Union project and perhaps the most integrated of the post-Soviet states with Russia.⁶⁸

Caucasus

Moscow has lost much of its influence in the Caucasus region since the collapse of the Soviet Union. War with Georgia in 2008 resulted in Tbilisi departing from every post-Soviet regional institution and developing closer ties with Brussels and Washington. Upon obtaining political independence, Azerbaijan also gained economic independence as it began to generate income oil wealth that was previously allocated throughout the Soviet Union by Moscow. Baku has undergone impressive development and has a very realpolitik approach to international relations. Due to its stagnant economy and the ongoing Nagorno- Karabakh conflict, Armenia has struggled to catch Brussels' attention as a potential European Union member-state. While Armenia is suspicious of Moscow's intentions in forming a Eurasian Union, it is the only state in the Caucasus receptive to post-Soviet integration projects.

Georgia

Georgia is the least likely of the CIS-12 to join the Eurasian Union. Relations between Moscow and Tbilisi have been notoriously sour since the 2008 South Ossetia War and little progress has been made by either side to normalize diplomatic relations. After the conflict, Georgia actively worked to diminish Russian influence. Many Soviet World War II memorials have been removed and a push was made to invite American citizens to teach English to youth

⁶⁸ It should also be noted that Minsk is the capital of the CIS and, as described in Chapter 2, entered into a Union State with Russia in 1998.

(as opposed to traditional Russian courses being taught).⁶⁹ Having withdrawn from the CSTO in 1999 and the CIS in 2008, Georgia has effectively halted any efforts at reintegration with the former Soviet republics. Shortly after Putin announced the Eurasian Union project, Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze declared, "Georgia's position is clear: all sovereign states are entitled to set up a political or economic organization or a union. As for the so-called common customs area, or a Eurasian Union, or any other organization set up under the Russian Federation's auspices, Georgia has no desire or plans to join it".⁷⁰

Georgia is currently developing its relations with the West and also working to repair its damaged relationship with Russia. After the South Ossetia conflict, Tbilisi immediately began to engage in political dialogue with NATO in hopes of gaining full membership. Following his election in the October 2012, Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili made his foreign policy intentions clear by making his first official diplomatic visits to Washington and Brussels. However, Ivanishvili has also worked to reengage Georgia in diplomatic relations with Russia.⁷¹ Georgia's top trade partner is the EU-27, with neighboring Turkey and Azerbaijan following. While European Union membership remains distant, it is expected that Georgia will prefer to cultivate relations with Europe and the West over Russia.

Azerbaijan

Due to its booming petroleum industry, Azerbaijan has experienced phenomenal economic development since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Its status as a major energy producer has made the country a target of exceptional foreign interest. If the announced Nabucco

⁶⁹ Schwirtz, Michael. "Georgia Surprised By Russian Offer To Reopen Ties." The New York Times. 03 Mar. 2012. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

⁷⁰ "Georgia Not Planning to Join CIS Free Trade Area." KyivPost. 19 Oct. 2011. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

⁷¹ "Georgia Continues Improving Relations with Russia" The Voice of Russia. 5 Feb. 2013. Web. 18 Mar. 2013.

Pipeline is constructed (which could take some time due to Russian political maneuvering), Azerbaijan would link Central Asia to Turkey and Europe, thereby bypassing Russia's South Stream pipeline and boosting its position in the global arena.⁷²

While President Ilham Aliyev has announced the country's interest in maintaining ties to fellow CIS states, Azerbaijan is reluctant to join the Eurasian Customs Union despite pressure from Moscow.⁷³ This may be related to the fact that its trade with the European Union is more than double than its trade with the CIS-12. We can expect Azerbaijan to continue to demonstrate a very realpolitik approach to international relations as long as revenue from its oil fields is generated. In 1996, it obtained advanced weapons systems from Israel in exchange for oil and subsequently opted to not renew its membership with the CSTO. Azerbaijan has dabbled with European Union ascension, but the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia and the Aliyev regime's obstruction of political competition and spotty human rights record has precluded any real progress for closer integration with Europe. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan's society is receptive to European cultural influence; Baku was chosen to host the prestigious Eurovision Song Contest in 2012 and its material wealth has made it a popular destination for European tourists.⁷⁴

Azerbaijan's petroleum wealth makes it one of the most interesting of the former Soviet republics to study and one of the most difficult to analyze. Based on official government dialogue, it remains unlikely that Aliyev will forfeit the country's economic independence and commit itself to Putin's Eurasian integration project, but that won't prevent the Kremlin from trying its best to bring Azerbaijan on board.

⁷² Savodnik, Peter. "Azerbaijan Is Rich, Now It Wants to Be Famous." The New York Times. 8 Feb. 2013. Web. 9 Feb. 2013.

⁷³ "Azerbaijan Not to Join Eurasian Customs Union." RZDPartner. 16 July 2012. Web. 10 Feb. 2013.

⁷⁴ "Behind Baku's Bling." New York Times. 24 May 2012. Web. 18 March 2013.

Armenia

Yerevan is cautious to pursue Eurasian integration at the expense of European integration, yet remains open to considering both options. In 2004, the European Union invited Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to participate in the European Neighborhood Policy. While Armenia's prospects for full European Union membership remain doubtful due to the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict⁷⁵ with Azerbaijan, EU officials have praised Armenia for its democratic progress and increased attention to human rights.⁷⁶ In late 2012, Brussels declared that Armenia would receive preference over Ukraine, Belarus, and Azerbaijan in moving closer to European Union ascension.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Armenian public and opinion leaders have responded positively regarding the policies of the EU and its presence in Armenia.⁷⁸

Armenia's relations with Russia are mostly amiable, and the country has been receptive to previous efforts at regional integration in post-Soviet space. It is a member of the CSTO and is an observer of EurAsEC. However, members of both the majority and opposition parties of the Armenian National Assembly have expressed their doubts as to the true intentions of Putin's Eurasian Union. In reference to a 2003 "shares-for-debt" deal that effectively gave Russia control over several Armenian state-run companies as compensation for Soviet-era debt, Republican Armenian MP Shirak Torosian declared, "We have to think very carefully not to fall into another – this time, final – trap."⁷⁹ Armenian National Congress politician Davit Shahnazaryan praised the European Union as "an institution guided by universal human values"

⁷⁵ It is important to note that Russia fully supports Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

⁷⁶ Council of the European Union. "13th EU – Armenia Cooperation Council". 17 Dec. 2012. Web. 11 Feb. 2013. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/134405.pdf.

⁷⁷ Yavlyansky, Igor. "Eastern Partnership Gets Its Grades." *Izvestia*. 4 Dec. 2012.

⁷⁸ European Union. ENPI Info Centre. "Perceptions of the EU in Neighbourhood Partner Countries: Armenia". 2012. Web. 13 Feb. 2013.

<[http://www.enpiinfo.eu/files/interview/a110070_ENPI_Armenia\(EUprcptns\)EASTen.v.5.pdf](http://www.enpiinfo.eu/files/interview/a110070_ENPI_Armenia(EUprcptns)EASTen.v.5.pdf)>.

⁷⁹ "Armenia: Yerevan Mulls Pros and Cons of Putin's Eurasian Union Vision." *EurasiaNet.org*. 31 Oct. 2011. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

while decrying the Eurasian Union as “a political model of a new empire with vague future.”⁸⁰

Therefore, while Armenia will continue to cooperate with Russia, it is unlikely that it will opt to join the Eurasian Union.

Central Asia

Support for Eurasian integration in Central Asia ranges from fervent opposition in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to strong support in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The strategic location and abundance of natural resources in Central Asia means that Russia faces stiff competition in the region. There is a wide range of influences over the region, with China to the East, Turkey to the Southwest, and the United States in the South. Every post-Soviet Central Asian state is controlled by an autocratic government. While some regimes have been entrenched since the collapse of the Soviet Union, others are subject to swift change. Moscow’s strong military presence in the region and its efforts to bring the Central Asian states under Russian economic control has had mixed results.

Tajikistan

As a result of CIS peacekeeping operations and economic dependency on Russia, Tajikistan is one of Moscow’s closest allies and a very likely candidate for Eurasian Union membership. As the Soviet Union was collapsing in 1991, a complex and bitter civil war broke out among numerous factions within Tajikistan over political, ideological, ethnic and regional issues.⁸¹ Claiming that the civil war posed a risk to stability throughout the region, Moscow deployed 25,000 troops under the guise of a CIS peacekeeping operation into Tajikistan in 1993.

⁸⁰ "Russia Presses Armenia into Joining Eurasian Union." [PanArmenian.Net](#). 17 Jan. 2013. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

⁸¹ Donaldson and Noguee, 181.

The conflict was resolved in 1997 by a Kremlin-brokered ceasefire, but not before Tajikistan was effectively transformed into a Russian protectorate.⁸² In late 2012, Russia and Tajikistan signed an agreement to extend the Russian military presence to 2042, ensuring that Russia will remain a dominant influence over the country for the foreseeable future.⁸³ Along with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan is a member of every post-Soviet regional integration project (including the SCO).

Tajikistan is second only to Kyrgyzstan as the poorest of the CIS-12 states. But in terms of its limited volume of trade, Tajikistan is highly integrated with Russia. Furthermore, more than a million Tajik labor migrants live and work in Russia, and their remittances make up roughly 35% of Tajikistan's GDP.⁸⁴ While Tajikistan's economic reliance on Russia is unparalleled, China has recently begun investing in Tajikistan's infrastructure and its oil, gas and mineral industries. Nevertheless, Tajikistan will remain a steadfast Kremlin ally as long as a Russian military presence remains in the country and Tajiks continue to work in Russia. The government has expressed its readiness to join a Eurasian Economic Union, seeing it as a "significant step towards economic integration with Russia and other Customs Union members".⁸⁵

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is an active member of every major post-Soviet integration project (See Table 3.1). President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has held office since Kazakhstan gained its independence (through a combination of wealth, popularity and iron-fisted rule), is a former

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ "Russia Signs Deal To Prolong Troop Presence At Tajik Military Base." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 5 Oct. 2012. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

⁸⁴ "With a Russian in a Tajik Jail, Moscow Aims Its Reprisal at Migrant Workers." The New York Times. 16 Nov. 2011. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

⁸⁵ "Tajikistan Expresses Readiness to Become Customs Union Member." Satrapia. 27 Sept. 2012. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

Soviet bureaucrat and staunch Eurasian integrationist who coined the term “post-Soviet space” in 1994. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moscow and Astana have developed a warm relationship and cooperate closely with each other for a number of reasons. First, the oil fields and uranium mines of Kazakhstan make it an attractive partner and strategic target for Russia.⁸⁶ Second, Kazakhstan hosts the Kaikonur Cosmodrome, a facility Russia utilized for the majority of its commercial, military, and scientific spaceflights. Finally, the two countries share the lengthiest continuous border in the world that is host to a huge amount of narcotraffic.⁸⁷

While Russia and Kazakhstan are strong political allies, their trade is not as large as one would expect. Kazakhstan’s trade with Russia amounts to only 10% of its total trade, much less than its trade with the EU-27 (32.4%) and China (26.1%). Its trade with the CIS only amounts to 17.5% of its total trade, the lowest of all CIS-12 countries except Azerbaijan and Russia.

Therefore, while Kazakhstan’s foreign policy is firmly aligned with Moscow, it also has a vested interest in maintaining good relations with Brussels and Beijing. This may be evidence that the Eurasian Union -- likely to initially be limited to Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan -- is more of a geopolitical gambit than a mutually beneficial economic union as suggested by its name.

Nevertheless, in January 2013, Nazarbayev stated, “We will continue to strive toward our common goal, and I want to stress once again that Eurasian integration, which is proceeding under my personal initiative, has never been, and never will be, a reincarnation of any political union, and particularly of the now-defunct Soviet Union.”⁸⁸ As long as Nazarbayev remains in power, it is expected that Russia and Kazakhstan will continue on the path to integration.

⁸⁶ "Global Insights: Kazakhstan as Model, and Mediator, for Iran's Nuclear Program." World Politics Review. 5 Feb. 2013. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

⁸⁷ Golunov, Sergey. "Drug-Trafficking through the Russia-Kazakhstan Border: Challenge and Responses." Slavic Research Center (2007): 331-49. Web. 9 Feb. 2013.

⁸⁸ "Eurasian Integration No 'Reincarnation of USSR' - Nazarbayev." RIA Novosti. 18 Jan. 2013. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

Kyrgyzstan

Landlocked and possessing very limited natural resources, Kyrgyzstan has the lowest GDP of the former Soviet republics and has experienced very little economic development since gaining independence. Furthermore, the country has been plagued by political instability, corruption and ethnic conflict between its Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities. Bishkek's foreign interests are currently divided between the United States, Russia, and China. Kyrgyzstan became a crucial supply hub for the United States in 2001 during the war in Afghanistan, but a 2010 coup brought about a shift of Kyrgyzstan's foreign alignment from Washington to Moscow. While Putin considers Kyrgyzstan a prospective candidate for the Eurasian Union, the country also has interests in developing its trade with China, which currently makes up over 55% of its total trade.

In 2009, the United States persuaded former President Kurmanbek S. Bakiyev to keep the American supply base open in exchange for a sharp increase in annual rent and renovation of the Manas airport. However, a Russian propaganda campaign led to violent mass protests that ousted Bakiyev.⁸⁹ Opposition leader Almazbek Atambayev was elected in 2011 and has declared his intention to close the base at the end of its lease in 2014.⁹⁰ Atambayev, who in 2011 as prime minister demonstrated his support of Moscow by sponsoring a bill to name a mountain in Kyrgyzstan after Putin, has expressed deep interest in joining the Eurasian Union.⁹¹ In 2012, the two countries continued to strengthen ties when Putin agreed to sign of Kyrgyz debt and successfully negotiated a deal to maintain the Russian military presence.⁹²

⁸⁹ Schwirtz, Michael. "New Leader Says U.S. Base In Kyrgyzstan Will Be Shut." The New York Times. N.p., 02 Nov. 2011. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Schwirtz, Michael. "As Kyrgyzstan Votes, Some Consider a Turn to Russia." The New York Times. 30 Oct. 2011. Web. 15 Feb. 2013.

⁹² "Russia and Kyrgyzstan Sign Base, Debt and Power Deals." RIA Novosti. 20 Sept. 2012. Web. 15 Feb. 2013.

While Kyrgyzstan currently favors cooperation with Russia, the precarious political climate of the country may eventually push Bishkek in a different direction. From an economic perspective, China dominates trade in the region, but Kyrgyzstan is wary of Beijing's influence over its other neighbors and resents the importation of Chinese workers for infrastructure projects throughout the country.⁹³ It should be noted that Kyrgyz officials have demonstrated skill at playing various powers off each other throughout its short-lived history, and after a decade of a United States military presence, cooperation with Russia is at present a more attractive option.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is tightly controlled by a government headed by President Islam Karimov, a former Soviet strongman who retained power after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although he headed the Communist Party apparatus in Tashkent, he resented Soviet treatment of Uzbek nationals and is now an ardent defender of Uzbekistan's sovereignty.⁹⁴ Ironically, the Karimov administration is infamous for having one of the worst human rights records in the world. Human rights organizations have reported thousands of cases of kidnapping, imprisonment, ill-treatment, and torture of citizens.⁹⁵ Media censorship and the rigging of elections are also widespread. Due to Karimov's tight control over almost every political and economic aspect of the country, prospects for integration with Russia are low.

In recent years Tashkent has turned away from regional integration projects, and has instead pursued closer relations with Washington. In 2008, Karimov suspended Uzbekistan's

⁹³ "Chinese Workers Fingering in Southern Kyrgyzstan Fracas." EurasiaNet.org, 9 Jan. 2013. Web. 16 Feb. 2013.

⁹⁴ "Uzbekistan's Karimov Lashes Out at Putin's Union." EurasiaNet.org, 9 Dec. 2011. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

⁹⁵ Swerdlow, Steve. "Uzbekistan Can't Muzzle the Messenger." [The New York Times](http://TheNewYorkTimes.com). N.p., 05 Apr. 2011. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

EurAsEC membership after only two years of participation, citing inefficiencies in the organization and Uzbekistan's reluctance to adhere to the economic standards of other member-states. In 2012, Uzbekistan announced its withdrawal from the CSTO, claiming that it disagreed with the organization's Afghanistan policy and was only a CSTO participant on paper. Uzbekistan is currently negotiating with the United States on becoming a transport center for supplies to Afghanistan.⁹⁶

As a result of Uzbekistan's poorly managed economy (for which Karimov blames his interior minister), thousands of Uzbeks migrate to Russia and Kazakhstan for work.⁹⁷ This labor migration is not indicative of integration, but rather the spillover of the most populous Central Asian state. Karimov's draconian business policies and rampant corruption in the country has created an unfavorable environment for investors, leading to overall economic stagnation.⁹⁸

In conclusion, Uzbekistan has firmly rejected cooperation with Russia. Shortly after Putin announced his intention to form a Eurasian Union, Karimov lambasted the project, declaring, "I want to say that it is impossible to turn back history. Our people, our young generation that grew up in the past 20 years have huge confidence in our future and will never, I repeat, never retreat from the chosen path."⁹⁹ Karimov has ensured that Uzbekistan is cut off from outside influences, and deals with other powers only when it is advantageous to his regime. As a result, the country remains devoid of substantial economic development and efficient governmental institutions.

⁹⁶ Kramer, Andrew E. "As NATO Prepares for Afghan Withdrawal, Uzbekistan Seeks War's Leftovers." The New York Times. 01 Feb. 2013. Web. 18 Feb. 2013.

⁹⁷ "Tighter Uzbek Migration Rules Cause Border Back-Up." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 19 Feb. 2013. Web. 17 Feb. 2013.

⁹⁸ "Uzbekistan: Tashkent's Sticky Fingers Spoiling Foreign Investors' Appetites." EurasiaNet.org. 1 Aug. 2012. Web. 17 Feb. 2013.

⁹⁹ "Uzbekistan's Karimov Lashes Out at Putin's Union." EurasiaNet.org. 9 Dec. 2011. Web. 17 Feb. 2013.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan has the smallest, most homogenous population of the former Soviet republics and has pursued an isolationist foreign policy since gaining independence. Having never ratified the CIS charter, Turkmenistan is only an unofficial member of the CIS-12 and is not involved in any other post-Soviet regional institution. As a result, it is the least regionally integrated state of the post-Soviet Central Asian region. Its strategic geographical location and abundance of oil and natural gas make it an attractive potential Eurasian Union member-state, but Moscow's relationship with Turkmenistan has deteriorated in recent years.

The rigid political structure and ethnic homogeneity of Turkmenistan are the principal causes of its isolation. Since gaining independence, Turkmenistan has been controlled by the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan. Former President Saparmurat Niyazov consolidated power in the 1990s and maintained a personality cult that pervaded every aspect of Turkmen society until his death in 2006. His successor, Kurbanguly Berdymuhamedov, promised political reform upon taking office, but the country remains extremely autocratic.¹⁰⁰ It is unlikely that the current government of Turkmenistan will relinquish the tight control over its currency and population in exchange for greater integration with the rest of the CIS-12.

Turkmenistan is wary of the previous Russian dominance over its economy. In an Izevestia article, Turkem analyst Amanmurad Bugaev wrote, "When it comes to Turkmenistan, Putin has always wanted to keep the Turkmen economy dependent on Russia. He does not even hide this."¹⁰¹ Gazprom was once the exclusive buyer of Turkmen natural gas, but Asghabat has in recent years collaborated with Iran and China to build alternative pipelines.¹⁰² Turkmenistan is

¹⁰⁰ "Turkmenistan Country Profile." BBC. N.p., 17 Oct. 2012. Web. 18 Feb. 2013.

¹⁰¹ "Putin's Return to Kremlin Could Boost Eurasian Union Project." Voice of America. 8 Mar. 2012. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

¹⁰² "Putin's Grandest Dream".

also negotiating with the European Union and may join in on the construction of the Nabucco pipeline.¹⁰³

Conclusion

This chapter was a qualitative and quantitative analysis to demonstrate the current level of regional integration in post-Soviet space. Quantitative factors that were examined include interstate trade and migration. Qualitative analysis of recent newspaper articles and government dialogue was performed to ascertain the current attitudes of the former Soviet republics toward Russian-led integration. The results indicate that Belarus and Kazakhstan are the most integrated with Russia, while the level of integration of the other CIS-12 states varies based on economic independence and the availability of other options for cooperation. At present, a Eurasian Union would be limited in size and scope were it to be implemented by the year 2015, as most of the CIS-12 states are conflicted over reintegration with Moscow.

¹⁰³ "Turkmenistan Rolls up Sleeves on Nabucco Pipeline." [Reuters](#). 13 Oct. 2011. Web. 19 Feb. 2013.

Chapter IV: The Eurasian Union

*“It took Europe 40 years to move from the European Coal and Steel Community to the full European Union. The establishment of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space is proceeding at a much faster pace because we can draw on the experience of the EU and other regional associations. We see their strengths and weaknesses. And this is our obvious advantage since it means we are in a position to avoid mistakes and unnecessary bureaucratic superstructures.”*¹⁰⁴

- Vladimir Putin, 2011

In 1994, the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, paid an official visit to Moscow to meet with Russian President Boris Yeltsin.¹⁰⁵ Rather than working to settle the many difficulties that had arisen between Russia and Kazakhstan since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Nazarbayev outlined his vision of what he called the “Eurasian Union,” an intergovernmental organization comprised of former Soviet republics. After privately meeting with Yeltsin, Nazarbayev delivered a speech at Russia’s premier educational institution, Moscow State University. Acting as a mouthpiece for circles of Russian intellectuals pressing the global initiative of a reunited Eurasia, Nazarbayev placed particular emphasis on the implementation of common Eurasian Union citizenship and freedom of movement. He explained that the institutions of the current regional organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, with its overly complex but inherently weak structure, had become almost completely defunct. He assured concerned audience members that the Eurasian Union should bear a closer resemblance to the European Union than to the collapsed Soviet Union.

As for representation in the Eurasian Union, Nazarbayev declared that it was only logical for Russian representatives to be predominant, but he noted that each member-state would possess a

¹⁰⁴ Putin, “New Eurasian Integration Project: The Future Starts Today”.

¹⁰⁵ Portnikov, Vitaly. "A Eurasian Union, Nazarbayev-Style." N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2013.

veto to prevent Moscow from dominating the organization. Proponents of a reunited Eurasia hailed the non-Russian and levelheaded Nazarbayev as the ideal political figure to lead efforts at integration.¹⁰⁶ However, Nazarbayev's proposal was largely disregarded by other post-Soviet states that had only just recently gained independence and were extremely suspicious of any efforts at reintegration.

In late 2011, the idea of the Eurasian Union resurfaced when Vladimir Putin and Nazarbayev published articles in the newspaper *Izvestia* calling for a new integration project based on "economic interests, not just some abstract geopolitical ideas and slogans".¹⁰⁷ The precedent for Putin's proposal was the formation of the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia in 2010 and the anticipated implementation of the Single Economic Space in 2012, which both presidents hailed as a huge step toward mutual economic prosperity. While Putin's article was vaguely worded and somewhat evasive, its emphasis on gradual integration, voluntary membership and mutual prosperity set it apart from previous strategies for integration, such as the hastily drawn up and overly inclusive CIS.¹⁰⁸

The Stages of Integration

Based on the testimony of public officials throughout the former Soviet republics, especially those of Nazarbayev and Putin, this section outlines what the development and eventual structure of the Eurasian Union might look like. This "official" prognosis of Eurasian Union development adheres to the traditionalist theory of regional integration: a means of deepening economic ties and increasing political integration to create a more stable, peaceful region with every member-state on equal footing. In general, three stages have been identified by Nazarbayev. The first

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Nazarbayev, Nursultan. "Eurasian Union: From Idea to Future History". *Izvestia*, 26 Oct. 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Putin, "New Eurasian Integration Project: The Future Starts Today".

stage is the gradual economic integration of a small group of member-states. This includes the development of the current Customs Union and the creation of a common currency and payment system. The second stage is the enlargement of the organization, which involves convincing other post-Soviet states to join the Eurasian Union. The third and final stage is political integration that includes the implementation of common citizenship, open borders, and common external policy. While it took Europe nearly 40 years to develop the European Economic Community into the European Community and other 20 years for the European Union to replace the European Community, Putin has stated that by learning from Europe's mistakes, Eurasia will be able to integrate at a much faster pace¹⁰⁹.

Stage One: Economic Integration

Putin and Nazarbayev both consider the first step toward greater regional integration to be the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union by 2015. Citing the European Union's path to integration, they maintain that pragmatic economic goals like a "common payments system and a common currency" constitute a logical and pragmatic path of integration. In 2009, Nazarbayev suggested that a supranational Eurasian payment unit (colloquially referred to as the yevraz) should be introduced. While the members of the SES agree that a common currency is the next logical step, Russia continues to promote the ruble for the role.¹¹⁰ We also know that voting within the Eurasian Economic Union is likely to be based on the relative size of each member-state's economy, giving Russia an extremely disproportionate amount of voting power. This stage of integration is currently in progress and is expected to take some time to develop as it forms the basis of all future integration.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ "Kazakhstan Suggests a New Currency." The Moscow Times. 12 Mar. 2009. Web. 25 Feb. 2013.

Stage Two: Enlargement

After establishing a solid framework for economic integration, the Eurasian Economic Union must convince other post-Soviet states to join the organization. Chapter 2 demonstrates that while there are a handful of the former Soviet republics that have declared intent to join the Eurasian Union (Kazakhstan, Belarus, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan), most have expressed strong opposition to integration with Russia due to competing influences and historical animosity with Moscow. Therefore, this stage will require prolonged negotiations with the various post-Soviet republics and also the establishment of a strong popular support for the integration project within each country. Although many of the prospective Eurasian Union states are autocracies or have weak democratic institutions, the effects of regional integration have a very real effect on the populace and thus the average citizen should be considered a relevant actor. One strategy to build popular support suggested by Nazarbayev is the launch of a 24-hour news channel “Eurasia24” that would broadcast the activities of the Eurasian Union and benefits of joining the organization throughout the region.¹¹¹ This sort of soft power strategy was used effectively (though maliciously) by Moscow in 2010 to incite riots throughout Kyrgyzstan that led to the overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

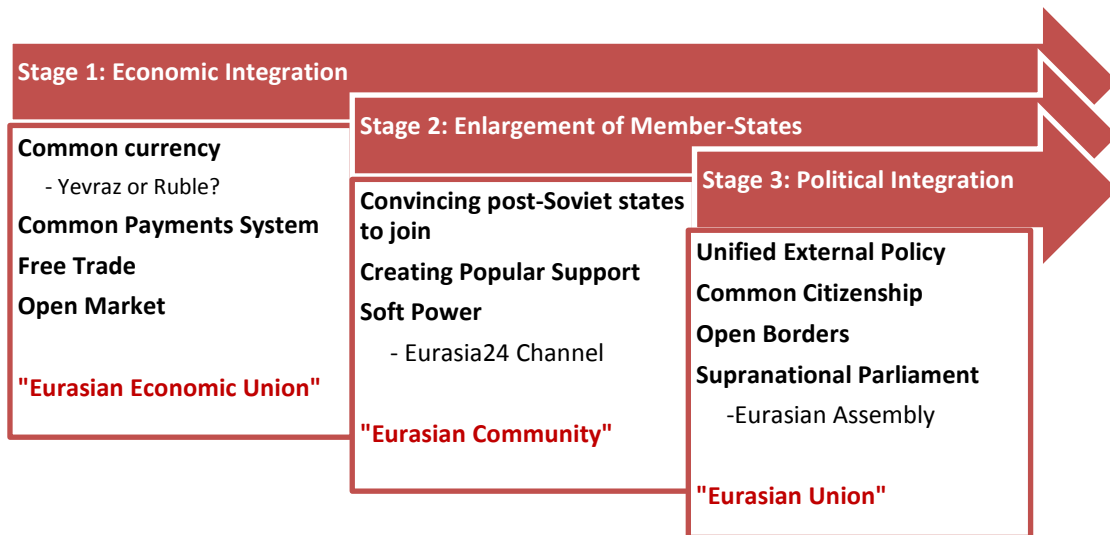
Stage Three: Political Integration

A fully developed Eurasian Union would require the integration of the political systems of member-states. Political integration requires member-states to relinquish a large amount of their territorial sovereignty to the organization, and therefore it is the most delicate and complex of the three stages. As Nazarbayev has stated, the lofty goal of political integration is to create

¹¹¹ Nazarbayev, “Eurasian Union: From Idea to Future History”.

“an alliance of states based on the principles of equality, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, respect for each other's sovereignty and the inviolability of national borders.”¹¹² The Putin administration has been particularly evasive when describing which model of political integration that the Eurasian Union should pursue.

Figure 3.1 The Path to the Eurasian Union



Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the limited information available on the topic of the Eurasian Union, which remains a tentative project still in its infancy and limited to Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. It is the official prognosis of how the Eurasian Union might develop following the traditionalist theory of regional integration. Rather than an accurate representation of the forces at play, it is an idealized version of how integration should occur as opined by Nursultan Nazarbayev and Vladimir Putin. The next and final section will consider the Eurasian Union project from a more practical and realist standpoint.

¹¹² Ibid.

Chapter V: Conclusion

“Anyone who does not regret the breakup of the USSR has no heart. Anyone who dreams of restoring an exact copy of it has no brains.”¹¹³

- Vladimir Putin, 2011

Vladimir Putin and Nursultan Nazarbayev present the Eurasian Union as a modern integration project based mutually beneficial economic and political cooperation that will restore Eurasia as major competitor in the twenty-first century global arena. However, my analysis of the post-Soviet regional integration indicates that historical animosity of potential Eurasian Union member states toward Moscow, competing foreign influences, and the ambiguous nature of Putin and Nazarbayev’s model of traditional regional integration will prevent the formation of a successful Eurasian Union. While the Eurasian Union is advertised as integration modeled on the European Union, the post-Soviet states possess neither stable democratic institutions nor strong economies, both of which formed the foundation for European integration. Therefore, Putin and Nazarbayev’s intentions to base the Eurasian integration model on the European Union seem neither feasible nor appropriate.

The small number of states that have declared their intent to join Eurasian Union are states that have exceptional explanations for their cooperation with Russia. Belarus is led by a Soviet-style dictator whose poorly performing command-economy has led to extreme reliance on gas subsidies from Moscow. Kazakhstan’s president, who has retained power through shrewd means since independence, is obsessed with the reintegration of post-Soviet space and consequently has gained support among Russia’s elite political and intellectual circles. While he

¹¹³ Adelaja, Tai. "The Rise and Rise of Capitalism." RIA Novosti. 7 Sept. 2011. Web. 11 Dec. 2012.

is pressing his own agenda for how Eurasian integration should unfold, he is likely to be overshadowed by officials in the Kremlin. Tajikistan has been host to a large Russian military garrison since Moscow intervened during a conflict that began shortly after independence. Remittances from labor migrants in Russia make up 35% of the Tajik GDP, illustrating extreme economic reliance on Russia. Finally, Kyrgyzstan is politically volatile country that only recently aligned with Russia after a Kremlin-orchestrated propaganda campaign overthrew a pro-American regime. As five states of the CIS-12 have opted to join the project, only limited regional integration will occur by the proposed start date of 2015 for the Eurasian Union.

In conclusion, the prospects of genuine regional integration in post-Soviet space are not as promising as Putin or Nazarbayev would like the international community and states they are soliciting to believe. Rather than a mutually beneficial economic and political arrangement, a Eurasian Union would more closely resemble a motley crew of economically dependent Russian protectorates led by autocrats who have a vested interest in cooperation with Moscow. Furthermore, competing foreign influences offer more attractive alternative integration projects and opportunities for cooperation. Before successful Eurasian regional integration can take place, Russia will have to prove to potential member-states that it is committed to a mutually beneficial partnership. Until then, a functioning Eurasian Union remains viable only on paper.

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