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Introduction

The concept

This book tries to look with a fresh eye at the integration processes in Europe. The challenge of integration in post-Cold War Europe has been considered as a process driven by the European Union. It is beyond doubt that this successful integration structure became attractive to post-communist countries in their search for regime change and economic progress. The period of steadily progressing European integration and the accompanying movement of European enlargement towards new member states seems, however, to be at an end. In a field of rapidly developing international relations new alliances arise, challenging the European Union as the sole core of integration in Europe. Perhaps these new cooperation and integration mechanisms will be inspired by the well designed EU integration methods and techniques; and perhaps they will rely on the same four freedoms, as these represent a modern form of transnational cooperation between states. Although they might not copy the European Union altogether, they will take away the uniqueness of the European Union as the sole post-Cold War integration mechanism in European territory. Here, we have discussed the Commonwealth of Independent States and, within this loose international cooperation structure, other more focused integration mechanisms, such as the Single Economic Space, the Eurasian Economic Community, and the Tashkent Security Cooperation Treaty. The challenges of integration on the territory of the former Soviet Union are among the most thrilling stories in current international relations.

The various approaches to integration processes in the wider European continent, as presented in this book, do not start from an assumption of an ever widening European Union. Instead, we regard

two major powers in the post-Soviet space: on the one hand, the enlarged European Union and, on the other, Russia, who now possesses not only the ambition to become a self-conscious nation with great power but who also has the means to do so. Russia, as repeated throughout the book, is willing to invest in further integration with its neighbours. The perception of the impact and role of these two powers in the European theatre becomes increasingly important.

Each of the chapters of the book intends to contribute to the discussion on future international developments in the post-Soviet space, and searches for an interdisciplinary approach to the challenges of integration for 12 independent states (15 republics of the former Soviet Union minus the three Baltic states, which from the very beginning firmly opted for EU integration). It focuses on Russia and the Western Newly Independent States; namely, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. In spite of the often pronounced scepticism on a possible future for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the contributors to this volume see several developments inducing new integration mechanisms in the post-Soviet territory. The loose cooperation structures between these states managed to survive and gain some strength, especially the regional initiatives for integration within the CIS territory. Apart from the CIS, this includes such frameworks as the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), the Single Economic Space (SES), the Shanghai Cooperation, the Russia–Belarus Union, the Tashkent Cooperation Treaty, and GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia and Moldova). The present situation poses multiple challenges for all participants involved: to each and every individual state in the post-Soviet space and, of course, the European Union itself. Furthermore, we thought it interesting to analyse the link between various integration mechanisms, state policies and elite interests in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

(Re-)integration in the post-Soviet space is a very recent and not particularly advanced phenomenon. The CIS marks its fifteenth anniversary in 2006. It is still a youngster among international cooperation structures.

However modest the Commonwealth's achievements might be so far, it cannot be ruled out as a failure. The CIS and several other integration frameworks have shown resilience throughout the 1990s and 2000s. They have not only managed to survive but have also advanced considerably with regard to regulatory convergence and mutual recognition arrangements.

One might be tempted to conclude that the CIS should both look at the European Union as *the* successful integration project and learn from

its experience. This thesis should, however, not be taken for granted. Integration within the post-Soviet space cannot be a mere analogy of the EU integration process since it is unfolding in its specific conditions of economic and political transformation combined with the persisting, unavoidable and specific gravity of Russia.

The political, economic and military prevalence of Russia is, indeed, a major factor for integration in the post-Soviet space. Russia takes the lead in nearly all multilateral agreements. It has also developed an extensive web of bilateral agreements with its neighbours. Russia considers the whole of the post-Soviet space to be its natural sphere of interest – particularly regarding security and economics – and it acts accordingly. This is well reflected in the content of this book: seven of the ten chapters focus explicitly or implicitly on aspects of Russia's various integration arrangements with the countries of the former Soviet Union as well as the EU.

Undoubtedly, another major gravitational force for the post-Soviet states is the European Union. In May 2004, the EU launched its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a new approach to further enlargement strategies. That policy is not without ambition, as it exceeds the borders of Europe as a continent. The European Union is, however, not the only actor worrying about friendly relations with its neighbours. Russia is also very active in redefining its state concept and building its ties with neighbouring independent states, which happen to be former republics of the Soviet Union. Presumably, what we can call 'the New Neighbourhood Policy of Russia' finds its roots in 1991 with the declaration that the Soviet Union no longer existed (the Belavezha treaty).

How will the European Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States relate to each other within a decade? Perhaps the area in question will turn into a distinctive hub-and-spoke system with the EU as the sole hub. Another scenario is that the Newly Independent States will be divided in two groups: the ones that allied with, or even became, members of the European Union (although such a scenario is less optimistically envisioned after the negative referenda on the EU Constitution) and another group of pro-Russian countries who allied with Russia through various integration arrangements. Perhaps the Russia–Belarus Union state will then be headed by President Putin. Or perhaps Russia will by then have absorbed some states (such as Belarus) and regions with frozen conflicts (such as Transnistria and South Ossetia) within the borders of its own state.

Today it becomes apparent that the New Independent States are not immutable as political and legal entities. The former Union republics are going through a 'kaleidoscope stage', during which the New

Independent States form an assortment of new regional cooperation and integration structures. On the subnational level, we also see colours and structures changing; frozen conflicts are carefully watched by Russia, the European Union, and the USA. All three powers play major roles in designing this kaleidoscope process.

It is obvious that the situation in CIS territory is rapidly changing and the desire for stability will only increase. Soon we can expect a feeling of fatigue, and a longing for more stability. Our perspective is that we should look at this development in a pan-European framework. One reason for the rapid change is that the CIS is not hesitating to copy or, better, to utilize eclectically the legal texts as well as the political experiences of the European Union. But the European Union has lost its legitimacy as Europe's representative. Forced to change its profile and ambitions, the European Union is seriously thinking about a new design – for example, a core Europe surrounded by a loose confederal structure. Moreover, the European Union launched its far reaching European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). While Russia is not a party to this, the majority of other post-Soviet states are.

How compatible are these (EU and CIS) integration processes? CIS integration mechanisms, and especially the rhetoric that was used, reminded us of EU phrases and procedures. Indeed, why reinvent the wheel if the European Union proves to be such a successful example of integration? However, with the move toward the four EU–Russia Common Spaces, on the one hand, and Russia taking the lead of the SES with Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, on the other, the question of compatibility arises regarding these so-called integration mechanisms. The compatibility of regulatory convergence and free trade arrangements, let alone the more developed forms of integration, such as a customs union, cannot be taken for granted.

In the field of human rights, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe published its advice on the compatibility of the European and CIS treaties on human rights in the early stage of CIS development. Economically, there is a serious dilemma of the EU–Russia Common Economic Space, on the one hand, and the Single Economic Space within the CIS, on the other. In the field of security and defence, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) seems to be developing a unified staff, after the CIS Military Coordination Staff was shut down. However, we again see that a number of countries are pursuing military-economic and geopolitical interests that differ from those of Russia.

Kto kogo? Will Russia be strong enough to renew and relegitimate its geopolitical influence, and what choices will the individual post-Soviet countries make?

The structure

This book comprises ten chapters written by researchers from Russia, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United States. It is divided into three interrelated parts. The first introductory part is entitled 'In Pursuit of Integration in the Post-Soviet Space'. It contains chapters which aim at providing a more general picture of the CIS to date. Chapter 1, written by Irina Kobrinskaya, 'The Post-Soviet Space: From the USSR to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Beyond', contains an analysis of the main factors (domestic political, socio-economic, security, institutional and foreign) and actors (political, business and so on) influencing the developments in the post-Soviet space since the demise of the USSR, and the changes in conceptual approaches to Russia and the New Independent States. Russia's policy in the post-Soviet space is assessed against a background of changing national and international priorities. Special attention is given to the changes in the decision-making process regarding the CIS and the legitimacy of the policy from the perspective of the elite and societal support in Russia.

From this point, we proceed to a discussion on the 'Russian Approaches to Integration in the Post-Soviet Space in the 2000s' by Evgeny Vinokurov. The author sets the general context of Russia's global and regional vectors of integration. Two vectors, the CIS and the EU, form the focus of this contribution. It is argued that Russian integration politics within the post-Soviet space in the 2000s can be divided into two periods that approximately coincide with the first and the beginning of the second of Putin's terms in power. The first period has shown the gradual move towards a greater role of economic considerations, which is based on the desire to defend national economic interests. The beginning of the second period of Putin's presidency has demonstrated the reassertion of the old paradigms. Considerations for reasserting the Russian zone of influence on the post-Soviet space are gaining ground at the expense of the pragmatic spirit of the benefit/cost calculations. It is argued further that Russia employs a wide variety of means to push the CIS states toward integration. Russia is ready to pay a high price while hoping that integration will pay off threefold – economically, in terms of security, and geopolitically – by asserting Russia's leading role in the post-Soviet space and increasing its weight in the global arena.

With the framework in place, we proceed to John P. Willerton and Mikhail A. Beznosov's chapter on 'Russia's Pursuit of its Eurasian Security Interests: Weighing the CIS and Alternative Bilateral–Multilateral Arrangements'. The study outlines the results of a project that entailed creating and analysing a database of all CIS security treaties from

1992–2004, with the goal of examining the dynamics of regional security and economic negotiations among the FSU states. Nearly a decade and a half of extensive negotiation has yielded a complex set of arrangements that represent varying levels of collective security for different groups of FSU–CIS states. The authors argue that FSU–CIS regional security interests have advanced by both multilateral and bilateral means. With no state seceding its sovereignty, and a resurgent Russia continuing to assert its ‘natural’ regional leadership role, any region-wide collective security arrangement will have to be sufficiently flexible to maintain all states’ active engagement. The multi-tiered approach that FSU states have taken has a logic that permits engagement with unilateral discretion. In this regard, the CIS’s past achievements and future promise should not be discounted. The analysis of the multilateral CIS security architecture in 1992–2004 reveals that a workable foundation of understandings and arrangements was laid.

At this point in the book, we take a look at the other side of the story. Part II delves into the complex relationship between the EU and the post-Soviet space. The three chapters of this part are closely interlinked, approaching the problem from different perspectives. While Tom Casier attaches more importance to the issue of norms and values in the EU’s relations with third countries in the framework of the ENP and Russia, the institutionalist approach undergirds both Holger Moroff’s and Marius Vahl’s contributions. Moroff looks at the EU as an actor within the post-Soviet space, while Vahl gets to the heart of EU–Russian relations from a comparative perspective.

Chapter 4, ‘The Clash of Integration Processes? The Shadow Effect of the Enlarged EU on its Eastern Neighbours’ by Tom Casier, focuses on the ENP of the EU, which aims to establish privileged and differentiated relations with the states surrounding the enlarged Union. The objective of this policy is to create stability around the EU by offering the new neighbouring states the opportunity to share the benefits of European integration without offering them the prospect of accession. The paper analyses the ENP via some constructivist concepts that have already been applied to enlargement. The central question is whether the ENP will be characterized by a compelling ‘logic of appropriateness’ (Schimmelfennig),¹ similar to the one underlying the most recent enlargement wave. The political conditionality on which the ENP is based does not fundamentally differ from the conditionality on which enlargement was based. The crucial incentive, however, is absent: new neighbours can yield some of the fruits of European integration but lack the prospect of membership. The chapter investigates the

hypothesis that the nature of enlargement is characterized by certain paradoxes (that is, it creates external effects that run against the Union's founding principles) that might force the EU into a logic of appropriateness. Casier elaborates on the clash of two integration processes. He remarks that, first, the strategies of Russia and the EU differ; second, the two regional forces have different interests in the area; and third, the overlapping integration processes in the CIS and EU are different in nature.

Holger Moroff, the author of Chapter 5, 'EU Policies Towards Russia: Secondary Integration by Association?', starts with the following question: Is the EU a collective actor or a loose network of actors in its foreign policy domain? He concludes that out of a foreign policy project of member states (EC/EU integration) grew a foreign policy actor in its own right, and with its own new policies. The EU policy towards Russia as its largest and arguably most important neighbour is a very telling test case for the functioning of EU policies against the backdrop of potential competition and cooperation within their overlapping 'near abroad's'.

In Chapter 6, 'EU–Russia Relations in EU Neighbourhood Policies', Marius Vahl analyses EU–Russian relations from a comparative perspective. He also frames his subject in the context of the EU foreign policy. EU relations with neighbouring countries and regions were the main priorities of the Common Foreign and Security Policy at its inception in the early 1990s. While Russia and the other former Soviet republics were one of the stated priorities, it is argued that EU relations with the countries of the CIS have subsequently been least developed. In the course of the 1990s, Russia emerged as the EU's principal partner in the CIS. Vahl demonstrates that the EU may now be turning away from this 'Russia first' policy, focusing its efforts on developing relations with the other countries of the CIS. This is due to a confluence of factors, including EU enlargement, the accumulating EU competences in foreign policy, growing differences among the countries of the CIS with regard to their political and economic systems and policies, and their goals in relation to the EU. The most important reason for the absence of a real 'strategic partnership' is, however, that the two sides have different conceptions of what such a partnership entails in practice.

The third part of the book consists of four elaborate case studies. Lien Verpeest looks into the parallels of institutional integration in Ukraine and Belarus. Rilka Dragneva and Antoaneta Dimitrova provide a well-grounded case study of Ukraine torn between integration with Russia and the EU. Katlijn Malfliet and Gennadi Kurdiukov's chapter concerns the politically sensible question of 'integration by absorption'; that is, of

Russian–Belarusian relations but also of Russia swallowing up the regions of the currently frozen conflicts (such as South Ossetia and Transnistria). Finally, Evgeny Vinokurov analyses the EU–Russian Common Economic Space in the making.

The post-communist transition led to a significantly heterogeneous political landscape in the post-Soviet space. Lien Verpoest focuses on how geopolitical pluralism is reflected in the institutional changes of Ukraine and Belarus. Their disparate institutional development and apparent divergence in foreign policy preferences can lead to the question as to whether the institutions and state administrations in these countries have been (re)drafted to the liking of the EU or of the CIS cooperation structures. A particularly intriguing point of interest here are the institutional parallels between the CIS's and EU's organizational structures. A screening of CIS integration mechanisms in general and sub-regional initiatives in particular reveals interesting similarities with EU integration efforts. For example, the institutionalization of the Belarus–Russia Union State, as well as Putin's repeated statements that Belarusian–Russian integration should evolve in the line of EU integration appears to be an explicit case of institutional mirroring between organizational fields.

Interesting parallels can be drawn between Verpoest (Chapter 7), Vinokurov (Chapter 2), and Willerton and Beznosov (Chapter 3). Vinokurov comes to the conclusion that Russia's integration policy became more flexible and pragmatic in the 2000s. Willerton and Beznosov come to the same conclusion in their chapter on CIS security integration. Likewise, Verpoest confirms this observation in her analysis of Russian–Belarusian integration.

Debates in CIS countries have often revealed a perceived incompatibility between a Russian and pro-Western orientation. Recognizing their interest in participating in the CIS, many former USSR republics have been ambivalent in their CIS policies and have been reluctant to commit to hard law institutions within a Russian-led organization. Chapter 8 by Rilka Dragneva and Antoaneta Dimitrova, 'Patterns of Integration and Regime Compatibility: Ukraine between the CIS and the EU', studies an extremely important case. Seeking closer integration with the EU has become a realistic policy proposition since the Orange Revolution. The question arises, nonetheless, whether an essential incompatibility exists between membership in the EU and the CIS. In answering this question, the Chapter 8 examines the current commitments of Ukraine within the CIS in terms of legal arrangements, political ties, participation in decision-making or consultation structures, economic commitments, and expectations arising from the nature of the CIS as an international regime. This

exploration is followed by a similar examination of the EU's current commitments to Ukraine and potential steps towards closer cooperation and membership. The authors come to the conclusion that at present there are few real incompatibilities between Ukraine's legal obligations, institutional arrangements and 'soft' rules in the context of the two regimes discussed here. Obligations under the CIS remain 'soft' and Ukraine remains able to pick and choose the institutions it participates in. Obligations under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU take into account CIS obligations, so no real incompatibilities exist there.

In terms of both regimes, however, Ukraine is in a kind of halfway house. Both SES and the EU application lead to customs union arrangements, which are perceived as incompatible. There is also a certain incompatibility in governmental perceptions and statements. Furthermore, there are a number of developments that suggest potential changes to the middle of the road position Ukraine has held so far. The presence of the European Union as Ukraine's new neighbour and most important trade partner is one. The Orange Revolution of December 2004, with its drive not only to remove the previous corrupt leadership and hold free and fair elections, but also to join the West, the European Union, is another. Joining the EU has been reframed by President Yushchenko as Ukraine's civilizational choice. This gives Ukraine's bid to accede to the EU a new dimension – that of domestic mobilization for modernization and Europeanization – and may lead to changes that go beyond the mixed foreign policy messages which have maintained Ukraine's balancing act so far.

A distinctive facet of integration, absorption, is looked at by Katlijn Malfliet and Gennadi Kurdiukov in Chapter 9. The Russian Federation in its domestic law made possible the admission of states or parts of states as new subjects of the Russian Federation. In this way, the thesis of a potential absorption of newly independent states or parts of them into the Russian Federation lost its purely hypothetical character. The authors argue that the Russian federal constitutional law of 17 December 2001 did not appear by coincidence, as it opened avenues for Russia to profile itself as a multi-tier governance structure and as an actor of 'modernized Russification'.

Finally, Evgeny Vinokurov assesses the developments of the EU–Russian Common Economic Space (CES) in Chapter 10. The chapter delineates the phases and primary activities of the negotiation process in the CES. It argues that the CES Concept of 2003 and the CES Road Map of 2005 contain an original model of integration, combining elements of the EEA and 'Swiss' models, and uniting horizontal and sectoral approaches. However, there are multiple concerns in this respect. First of all, the documents are

fuzzy and on the verge of being devoid of substance. Second, it is questionable whether the model envisaged by these documents would be capable of providing a satisfactory solution to the policy-taker challenge for Russia; that is, the obligation to converge unilaterally on EU legislation and to follow the changes in EU legislation while possessing only limited leverage in the EU's internal affairs. The policy-taker problem may represent a major hurdle to the EU–Russian economic integration in view of Russian multilateral foreign policy and its official goals.

Overall, the book intends to provide a comprehensive picture of integration processes in the post-Soviet space and the challenges to which the post-Soviet states and the European Union will have to provide proper responses. First of all, we look at the Russian integration challenge. Second, we delve into the specific challenges of integration facing other CIS states, particularly in its Western part, wherein our approach explicitly takes into account the predominant role of Russia as well as the major gravitational force exercised by the EU. Third, we regard the challenge to the EU in its European Neighbourhood Policy and in its relations with Russia. A large variety of integration scenarios are analysed in the book. Among them are the CIS as the oldest reintegration arrangement; the more recent initiatives, such as EurAsEC and SES; an important bilateral integration case of the Russia–Belarus Union; the opportunity for Russia directly to incorporate other states or parts of states; and the various integration schemes with the European Union.

KATLIJN MALFLIET
LIEN VERPOEST
EVGENY VINOKUROV

Note

- 1 F. Schimmelfennig, 'The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union', *International Organization*, 1 January 2001, vol. 55, issue 1, p. 7.

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