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## Eurasia and Eurasian Integration: Beyond the Post-Soviet Borders

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‘Eurasia’ seems to be a relatively clear concept in terms of physical geography, but much less so for social sciences. While the word ‘Eurasia’ is constantly used in various contexts (more today than twenty years ago), the specific notion of what it actually means is unclear. According to Laruele (2008), the term ‘Eurasian’ was actually invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to refer to children of mixed European-Asian couples, and it was later used to highlight the geological unity of the continent. Throughout the last two decades, ‘Eurasia’ has been used more commonly by both scholars and practitioners, but the definition of the term remained unclear. It goes even to a greater extent for the concept of ‘Eurasian integration’ – which is, in fact, what this yearbook (and the companion Journal of Eurasian Economic Integration, which is published in Russian) is devoted to. This paper intends to elaborate on the concept of Eurasia and Eurasian integration, distinguishing between three notions of ‘Eurasia’ and corresponding views of Eurasian integration, considering their importance in the literature and possible research developments. The ideas presented in this paper heavily draw from the discussion in our book, published in English (Vinokurov and Libman, 2012a) and in Russian (Vinokurov and Libman, 2012b).

### THREE CONCEPTS OF EURASIA

#### Post-Soviet Eurasia

The first and probably the most often cited concept of Eurasia is also the youngest one: it came into existence in December 1991, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist. While originally the former Soviet republics have been naturally described as ‘post-Soviet’ or ‘post-Communist’ (also terms like ‘new independent states’ or – in Russia – the ‘near abroad’ were used), over time using this term became less and less reasonable: defining a group of countries only through their common historical past, even if the latter is highly important, is a questionable approach. In fact, more and more voices (as early as Carothers 2002) call for an abandonment of the transition paradigm in investigating the post-Soviet space. However, in spite of the changes within the two decades following the collapse of the USSR, there is still a lot of work focusing on these countries as a comparable group: Frye (2012) in his recent survey even suggests that these countries become more important for investigations of political and economic institutions.

There are three reasons why the post-Soviet countries are considered as a unified entity in academia and outside it. First, they still constitute a natural group for comparison of different institutional, political and economic developments. While this view seemed to be obvious twenty years ago, today it requires justification: it is likely that, for some research questions, comparing post-Soviet countries is meaningful, while in other aspects they deviate a lot from each other (Stykw, 2012, offers an excellent discussion of the topic). Secondly, there exist intensive links between these countries, so they do influence each other strongly. Third, and finally, studying most of these

countries still requires a set of common skills: for example, knowledge of the Russian language still may suffice for a researcher dealing with these countries (although less so than twenty years ago). Since the skills of the researchers have a crucial influence on the chosen objects of investigation (Libman, 2007), this is an issue of extreme importance. Therefore, it is necessary to find a new name for the region under investigation: a natural solution chosen within academia and outside it seems to be 'Eurasia'.

The examples of how Eurasia is used as synonym for the post-Soviet space are numerous; it pops out in multiple academic articles (e.g. Bruckbauer, 1994; Fish, 1999; Beissinger and Young, 2002; Rivera, 2003; Hale, 2005; and many others – sometimes the former Eastern Europe is included in the concept of Eurasia as well). Many scholarly journals dealing with the region were renamed in a way using 'Eurasia', and new journals in the field were named applying the same word: examples include *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, *Eurasian Review* and *Journal of Eurasian Studies* outside the region and *Russia and New States of Eurasia* (published by the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences), *Eurasian Economic Integration* (published by the Eurasian Development Bank) and *Eurasian Integration: Economy, Law, Politics* (published by the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community). Numerous research centres were renamed in the same way in Harvard (Davis Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies), Columbia (Harriman Institute: Russian, Eurasian and Eastern European Studies), Berkeley (Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies), Stanford (Centre for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies), Illinois Champaign-Urbana (Russian, East European and Eurasian Centre), Toronto (Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies), Leuven (Russia and Eurasia Research Group), Oxford (Russian and Eurasian Centre), Uppsala (Department of Eurasian Studies) and Cambridge (Eurasia Centre at the business school). The name of the leading American scholarly society dealing with the region was changed to The Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, and the International Council of Central and East European Studies, although it did not change its name, devoted its world congress in 2010 to the topic of Eurasia.

Outside academia, those regional organisations created by post-Soviet states from the early 2000s onwards also tend to use the word 'Eurasia' more and more often. Again, it is hardly surprising: the early titles like the 'Commonwealth of Independent States' did not provide any reference to a particular region or even any common feature of the member states (in fact, the titles stressed only the fact that they were 'independent' of each other). The most notable examples are the Eurasian Economic Community and the Eurasian Development Bank. However, the idea to use the word 'Eurasian' to describe these countries is older than the last decade – Andrei Sakharov's project of the Soviet Union

new constitution intended to rename it into a 'Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia'; and Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative to create a more advanced regional organisation for the post-Soviet space in early 1990s called it the 'Eurasian Union'. Outsiders also seem to 'naturally' call the region 'Eurasia': e.g. the 'European and Eurasian' bureau at the US State Department. The word 'Eurasia' (including post-Soviet states) found its way into definitions of regions used by many businesses (e.g. Nordic Investment Bank).

Strictly speaking, the 'post-Soviet Eurasia' is, unlike another concept of Eurasia, which we are going to present below, free from any ideological connotations. It is merely a designation of a particular region, chosen for the lack of better words to describe it. However, it still relies on a debatable assumption: it claims that the post-Soviet space is going to stay a relatively interconnected entity and that the countries comprising this region will be relatively comparable to each other. Whether this is indeed the case is debatable; while some researchers point out that the countries of the region still strongly depend on each other (Buzan and Waeber, 2003), others, on the contrary, proclaim the 'End of Eurasia' (Trenin, 2002; 2011; Tsygankov, 2012). Typically, in this case it is assumed that the pre-Soviet legacies of the individual parts of the post-Soviet world are going to dominate and eventually lead the countries on very different paths. As one could probably expect, the reality in the post-Soviet region is more complex than any of these views: while in some cases 'Eurasia' seems to dissipate, in other areas integration becomes stronger.

### **Eurasianism**

The second concept of Eurasia is much older than the collapse of the Soviet Union and can be traced back to the 1920s Russian emigrants, promoting the ideas of 'Eurasianism'. Unlike the post-Soviet Eurasia, the concept of Eurasia in Eurasianism has a clear ideological connotation: it represents the 'Eurasian' world as a distinct reality from the European 'Western' civilisation, but also from the Asian cultures. While the last contradiction is typically not pointed out, the first one constitutes the main element of Eurasianism in many (though not all) of its varieties, which came into existence during the last hundred years. Somewhat simplified (and without attempting to provide a detailed analysis of Eurasianist ideology, which has been discussed e.g. by Laurelle, 2008), it is possible to distinguish among several variants of the 'Eurasian space' as defined by the 'Eurasianists'. First, Eurasia can be perceived as a unity of the Russian-Slavic culture and the nomadic cultures of the Inner Asia (this would probably be primarily the Eurasia of Gumilev). Second, Eurasia can be viewed as a unity of Russian Orthodox and Islamic peoples. Third, the focus can be made on connections between Russian and Asian cultures. Fourth, Eurasia can be viewed as a unity of 'continental' countries as opposed to the Atlantist island nations (the list of which countries are 'continental' differs: for example,

while China is for many Eurasianists a natural continental empire, it is not the case for another famous Eurasianist, Dugin, who sees Japan and Germany as a continental nation). Fifth, Eurasia can be primarily linked to the Russia-centric Slavic-Orthodox civilisation. Sixth, it is very common among Russian scholars (especially in the International Relations) to use the word 'Eurasia' just to stress the 'geopolitical importance' of Russia (a hundred years ago, probably 'greater Russia' would be used, with this word being old-fashioned now), taking a special place of dominance among its neighboring countries. These varieties are very often combined and mixed with each other, consciously or unconsciously, and the list is certainly not exclusive.

The ideas of this 'ideological Eurasianism' are deeply rooted in the self-perception of Russian peoples (Rose and Munro, 2008) and elites. According to a survey, conducted by Russian Public Opinion Research Centre (VCIOM) in 2001, 71% of respondents said they believe Russia to be a one-of-a-kind civilisation – 'Euro-Asian or Orthodox', as it was formulated in the poll. Only 13% believed that Russia belongs to Western civilisation. To some extent, they can be perceived as a continuation of the ideas of the Russian Sonderweg of the nineteenth century (although many Eurasianists would probably disagree with this assessment). To some extent, the following statement of Trubetskoi (2005) seems to be an accurate description of most varieties of Russian Eurasianism: "The territory of Russia [...] constitutes a separate continent [...] which in contrast to Europe and Asia can be called Eurasia [...]. Eurasia represents an integral whole, both geographically and anthropologically [...]. By its very nature, Eurasia is historically destined to comprise a single state entity. From the beginning, the political unification of Eurasia was a historical inevitability, and the geography of Eurasia indicated the means to achieve it". In Russia and some other post-Soviet countries, some varieties of the Eurasianism enjoy the status of a recognised field in academia (e.g. the writings of Lev Gumilev) and they are present in the political arena (e.g. several 'Eurasian' parties and movements in Russia). However, Eurasianism of this sort has never been, even rhetorically, adapted as a guiding ideology of the Russian policy in the post-Soviet space or in Asia.

An interesting notion of the Eurasianists is that their picture of 'anti-Western' Eurasia seems to be accepted by some Western observers, of course, with the opposite ideological connotation: now Eurasia is treated (politically) as a zone of Russian influence and (culturally, socially and economically) as a domain of non-democratic regimes, oligarchic economies and archaic social orders. This is, for example, the picture offered in Bugajski (2008) and Ryabchuk (2001); the latter, for example, describes the modern Ukraine as a battleground between 'European' and 'Eurasian' elements. From this point of view, Eurasia can expand or shrink at its borders. However, while the word 'Eurasia' is used, it is typically 'Russia' which is in mind of the observers – as Russia has a long tradition of the Sonderweg thinking, Europe does have a long tradition as defining Russia

as 'the Other' outside of the European civilisation (e.g. Neumann, 1999). It is interesting to notice that for the people in Asia (e.g. China), Russia is unambiguously perceived as a 'European' country (both in positive and in negative sense; Russia also has its tradition of colonialism in Asia), different from what Eurasianists would expect.

### **Eurasia as a continent**

The third concept of Eurasia focuses on interdependencies between the European and the Asian parts of the continent. To some extent, the very approach of dividing Europe and Asia as two continents is artificial. As for Asia, as Freeman (2011) notices, "for thousands of years after strategists in Greece came up with this Eurocentric notion [of Asia – E.V., A.L.], the many non-European peoples who inhabited the Eurasian landmass were blissfully unaware that they were supposed to share an identity as 'Asians'". In the same way, Europe was constructed over millennia. However, during this period there was, as we will discuss in what follows, a vivid economic and political exchange spanning the entire Eurasian continent. The third notion of Eurasia perceives it exactly as this web of connections, which, after a period of decline over several centuries, start reviving now. As such, Eurasia naturally spans beyond the Soviet borders.

This perception of Eurasia faces serious difficulties while searching for its way in the academic literature, clouded by two previously defined concepts of Eurasia. Nevertheless, several papers describe the economic links between China and the EU (e.g. ASEM) as 'Europe-Asian' regionalism (see e.g. Stockhof et al., 2004; Roessler, 2009; Dent, 2003). Among other studies, the work of Johannes Linn (Linn and Tiomkin, 2006, 2007) should be emphasised, as it explicitly concentrates its attention on the emerging economic ties in the Eurasian 'supercontinent' (Linn, 2006).

Recently, the idea of Eurasia in this context has been picked up by several Russian observers (Bykov, 2009; Chernyshev, 2010; Krotov, 2011; Spartak, 2011), discussing the development of the post-Soviet integration. An area where the minority of Eurasia faces less difficulties is Central Asian, or (following the name of the leading scholarly association in this area in the US) Central Eurasian studies – indeed, it is difficult to study the history, the current economic development or the ethnography of the modern 'post-Soviet' Central Asia while simultaneously ignoring its links to Chinese Turkestan, Afghanistan and Iran (Gleason, 2003). Since the focus of this concept of Eurasia is on ties and exchange, it is less bound by ideological considerations than the Eurasianism described above – in fact, if there is a lesson to be learned from the last two millennia of Eurasian history it is that trade transcends all differences and crosses all barriers. As such, this Eurasianism can be styled as 'pragmatic' Eurasianism.

As such, the ‘pragmatic Eurasianism’ is entirely compatible with focus on institutional and technological transfer from the West; in the sense, it is related to what Trenin (2006) describes as the ‘new West’, that is, the modernisation and marketisation of non-Western societies following the blueprints of the West. Of course, it does not imply the unequivocal acceptance of particular institutions and practices (which also differ greatly within the group of the Western nations), yet it is very different from creating the rejection of the Western ideas and the explicit attempt to construct an alternative to them typical for many branches of the Russian ideological Eurasianism, or the view on the relations between ‘Eurasia’ and ‘the West’ as inevitably hostile and competitive.

It is likely that the country where the ideas of this pragmatic Eurasianism received the greatest recognition was Kazakhstan, where the Eurasian idea is, unlike Russia, very often recited and accepted on the level of political ideology. It is important to stress that we do not, under any conditions, claim that pragmatic Eurasianism is the ideology of Kazakhstan – what we see is rather a combination of Eurasian rhetoric (paying tribute to various branches of Eurasianism, e.g. to Lev Gumilev, and also to the idea of the ‘post-Soviet Eurasia’), nation-building effort and some elements of pragmatic Eurasianism, which are, however, stronger than in other parts of the post-Soviet space; it is rather a set of rhetorical statements and political goals than a philosophy or ideology of some kind. The Eurasian idea has a firm position in Kazakhstan, partly because

	Eurasia as the post-Soviet area	Eurasianism as ideology	Pragmatic Eurasianism
Constituent factor for Eurasia	Shadow of the Soviet past	Cultural, historical and geopolitical commonality	Emerging economic linkages
Perception of Europe	Excluded (with possible exception of post-Communist countries)	Excluded (and treated as the Other constituting Eurasia)	Included
Perception of Asia	Excluded (with possible exception of Mongolia and China)	Partly included (depending upon particular approach: China, Japan, Great Steppes)	Included
Perception of Westernisation and modernisation of Eurasia	Limited probability of the Former Soviet Union countries becoming an integral part of the Western world (therefore a long-term special designation needed)	Rejection of modernisation through Westernisation and search for ‘another way’	Learning from the West as the strategy of modernisation; limited attention to ideology and focus on economic aspects
Nature of the concept	Geographical notion, definition of an area for research, policy and business purposes	Science or ideology	Set of foreign policy or economic policy ideas without ideological pretence

**Table 5.1.**  
**Three concepts of Eurasia**

Source: Vinokurov, Libman 2012

of its focus on the links between Slavic and Turk cultures (e.g. the ideas of Olzhas Suleimenov), but it clearly assumes that “Eurasia is not synonymous with Russia” (quoting the famous 19<sup>th</sup> century Kazakh ethnographer Chokan Valikhanov, see Nysanbayev and Kurmanbayev, 1999). As such, Eurasianism does not serve as a Sonderweg ideology (in fact, of many alternatives available to Kazakhstan it is one of the least compatible with it) and instead concentrates on perceiving the country (as Nursultan Nazarbayev calls it) a “Eurasian bridge”. The effort of Kazakhstan to develop integration both within the post-Soviet world, with its Asian neighbors, as well as with Europe (e.g. OSCE presidency), and a widespread economic liberalisation fit under the umbrella of this notion of Eurasia.

*Table 5.1* provides a brief summary of three concepts of Eurasia discussed in this paper. Again, it is crucial to stress that three notions we describe are rather brute generalisations than descriptions of precise and well-defined intellectual positions or camps. Furthermore, it is incomplete: the ‘Eurasianism’ has its own tradition, for example, in Ukraine and in Turkey, very different from what we have described above. Yet even this simplification could form a good basis for further discussion of what ‘Eurasian integration’ is, which we will address in the next section.

## POST-SOVIET AND CONTINENTAL EURASIAN INTEGRATION

### Waves of exchange in Eurasia

Each of the concepts of Eurasia has its own distinct picture of what may be called ‘Eurasian integration’. For the post-Soviet Eurasia it is a clearly defined set of regional integration organisations created by the post-Soviet states (regionalism), as well as persistent and emerging ties between these countries (regionalisation). There exists a large amount of literature on these organisations in Russian academia, and a much smaller amount in the West (Libman, 2012), though the area as a whole remains generally under-researched (Wirringhaus, 2012). For the Eurasianism regional integration in some form is also important, although in this case the focus is rather on the possible development of Eurasian integration than on the actual regional organisations. Laruelle (2008) even describes the attention to restoring economic and political ties between former Soviet republics as one of the most attractive features of Eurasianism. Yet typically perception of regional integration in Eurasianism shares several common features: (i) regional integration ought to be Russia-centric (this is indeed true for many post-Soviet regional organisations, although even in this case Russia has been often less active in their design than some other countries like Kazakhstan or Belarus); (ii) regional integration is perceived primarily as a tool in the general confrontation between ‘Eurasia’ and ‘Europe’ and (iii) the focus is either on military and political cooperation, or at least on intergovernmental cooperation, and much less so on spontaneous economic links between countries of the region.

The third concept of Eurasia offers a distinct picture of Eurasian regional integration, which, unlike the 'post-Soviet Eurasian integration', could be called 'continental Eurasian integration'. The focus is in this case on emerging economic linkages spanning the entire Eurasian continent, and, more specifically, on economic links between individual macroregions in Eurasia. It is, indeed, interesting to notice that contrary to the expectations of the ideological Eurasianists, in Eurasia in general and in the post-Soviet space in particular, bottom-up economic integration has been substantially more successful than the top-down regionalism. From this point of view, Eurasian continental integration is, however, not a recent phenomenon: it can be embedded into the framework of the so-called Eurasian exchanges, waves of developed exchange of goods and ideas across Eurasia, which have been observed over the last two and a half millennia (Bentley, 1998), or probably even earlier – Diamond (1997) points out that the vast Eurasian landmass spread from the East to the West supported the spread of domesticated animals and plants.

It is possible to distinguish between three waves of Eurasian exchange (Gunn, 2003; Abu-Lughod, 1989; Frank, 1992; Chaudhuri, 1985). The first wave has been observed in the first to third centuries A.D., and resulted from the emergence of a set of large stable empires spanning the Eurasian continent from the Roman Empire to the Han dynasty empire. The eastern commerce of the Roman Empire flourished after Augustus primarily through two routs: sea trade with Arabia, East Africa and India, with the centre in Alexandria, and caravan trade with China through Parthia and Central Asia (Thorley, 1969). These linkages collapsed after the end of the Roman Empire. The second wave of Eurasian exchange occurred a century later, in the 11-13 centuries A.D. Unlike the first wave, this time Europe remained at the margins of the existing trade network, which mostly spanned India, China, the Byzantine Empire and the Arab world. Again, three routs came into existence. The northern route, which is often referred to as the famous Silk Route (on various points of view on this concept see Christian, 2009; Rezakhani, 2010), connected the Arab world and China through Central Asia. The middle route connected the Mediterranean region with the Indian Ocean via Baghdad and Basra. The Southern route connected Egypt through the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Both Central Asian and Indian Ocean trade was implemented without great powers uniting the entire territory by merchant networks – the system of free harbours in the Indian Ocean from this point of view differed greatly from the Mediterranean experience (Hourani, 1951/1995) and has had a positive impact on the contemporary development in India until the present day (Jha, 2008). The second wave culminated under the Mongol Empire, which for the first time united the Eurasian landmass and created unprecedented opportunities for exchange (Kotkin, 2007). The third wave came into existence in the 16-19 centuries and was associated with European discoveries and colonisation.

The picture of Eurasian exchanges brings conjectures that there existed an uneasy relationship between the economic exchange and political integration. In some cases, exchange was facilitated by political unity, while in others, barriers created by new empires have in fact brought the Eurasian exchange to a halt, as it happened, for example, with the continental exchange over Central Asia after the emergence of the Ottoman, the Qing and later the Russian Empires. It also demonstrates a complex interplay between the maritime and the continental routes, as well as the importance of exchange not only for purely commercial issues (although during most of the period of existence of the Eurasian exchange goods travelled farther than people, see Abu-Lughod, 1989), but also for the movement of ideas, ideologies, technologies and religions, and also diseases and pandemics; to some extent, the Black Plague, which was the most disastrous epidemiological event in the history of the Western world (but also one of the key factors pushing the essential changes in the European economy contributing to the Age of Geographic Discoveries (Findlay and O'Rourke, 2007)), was a product of facilitated exchange between the West and the East during the Mongol Empire.

### **Eurasian integration in the last decades**

While economic connections across Eurasia played a vital role for the world economy during three waves of Eurasian exchange, the situation changed dramatically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the post-World War II era, the global economic integration became mostly concentrated in the Transatlantic (the economic ties between the European countries and the US, as well as within Europe) and later Transpacific (with the growth of Japan and other Asian tigers) areas. The Central Eurasia and China areas were basically cut off from the global economy, with some exceptions (for example, the growing export of Russian oil and gas to Europe since the 1970s), and India also turned to protectionist trade policies and high regulation. Thus – although to a lesser extent than, say, Sub-Saharan Africa – Central Eurasia constituted a hole in the emerging web of globalisation.

The situation changed dramatically in the last two decades due to two major trends. One is the collapse of the Soviet bloc, forcing the post-Communist countries to search for alternative paths of integration into the world economy. This, in turn, resulted in two contradicting outcomes. On the one hand, most countries of the former Soviet Union developed firm ties with extraregional partners – starting with Russia, which is in fact the post-Soviet country with the lowest level of intraregional integration (Vinokurov and Libman, 2010). In Central Asian states, for example, China became a crucial trade partner; however, at least for some of them the development of informal trade to China is rather linked to the use of these countries as gateways into the post-Soviet space. On the other hand, therefore, the post-Soviet trade ties turned out to be more resilient than expected originally (Fidrmuc and Fidrmuc, 2003). In other areas

(like migration), the post-Soviet space actually became more integrated over the last few years (Libman and Vinokurov, 2012). There also persist issues of common infrastructure, which keep the region together; thus, the development of economic ties with extraregional partners coexists with persistence of intraregional integration at least in some areas. Second, a prominent change in Eurasia in the last two decades has been the growth of China, with trade between China and Europe becoming one of the key economic links in the modern world.

Thus, Eurasian continental integration is again on the move. It is particularly pronounced in the area of trade (both formal and informal), where interregional trade ties grow faster than intraregional trade linkages. It is also present in the area of foreign direct investments (FDI), where new generation of multinationals from China and Russia become important players influencing the economic development of Eurasia. It is, however, much less successful in the area of migration, where the Eurasian continent still consists of a number of isolated areas. Two key bottlenecks in the development of the Eurasian continental integration are the lack of intergovernmental cooperation and the problems of infrastructure. It is important to understand, however, that the land connections and sea connections (and hence transoceanic and transcontinental) integration are very different in terms of the infrastructure, policy and governance. An obvious issue is that transcontinental trade inevitably crosses borders of multiple jurisdictions, which are required to show at least some level of cooperation. Furthermore, it is very often much more costly in terms of infrastructure required (railroads or roads) than the maritime trade. This infrastructure should be, once again, jointly constructed and maintained by many countries (and the associated redistributive conflicts should be resolved – what is, as for example Central Asian experience shows, a very difficult task, see Granit et al., 2012). That is why the development of the global economy mostly went along the lines of transoceanic trade in the last few centuries. There are, however, some examples of trade where transoceanic linkages have been less developed than transcontinental: examples include oil and gas, to some extent, and also illicit drug trade, which is mostly land-based. Eurasian continental integration so far has been also very much based on maritime routes (e.g. trade between China and the EU); understanding the potential of the continental infrastructure in this respect is of vital importance.

To conclude, Eurasian continental integration is a vivid process shaping the economic development of the continent. Interestingly, again, contrary to what ideological Eurasianists would expect, it is mostly market-driven – much more than integration in the EU, for example, where top-down coordination played a crucial role. However, there is also a substantial ‘shadow’ side to the regional integration in Eurasia, which, in turn, is related to two aspects. On the one hand, partly because of the fast-track development of Eurasian continental

integration, many Eurasian countries experience strong economic growth and industrialisation, which in turn are associated with stronger ecological problems. Issues of environment protection in border regions or pollution call for cooperation across different countries of the continent. On the other hand, the increasing movement of goods, trade in services and somewhat larger migration are also used for illegal trade in drugs, human beings and firearms, which is strengthened by the presence of essentially lawless territories (like Afghanistan) in the direct vicinity of the borders of key Eurasian states and the inefficient corrupt bureaucracies in other countries. Finally, diseases also spread across Eurasia, much faster and with possibly more disastrous consequences than five hundred years ago. Hence, a certain form of top-down integration in Eurasia is also advisable.

## CONCLUSION

It remains to summarise the main arguments of this paper. First, we have presented three concepts of Eurasia, as they are used by researchers and practitioners. Clearly, the most troublesome is the second type of 'ideological' Eurasianism, which is hardly compatible with both empirical realities of market integration in Eurasia, as well as normative goals of modernisation and development. For us, it is crucial to stress that there exists a need to conceptualise and to understand Eurasia and Eurasian integration beyond the ideological Eurasianism, and there is no reason why the latter should keep monopoly rights on the application of the concept of Eurasia. As for the post-Soviet Eurasia versus Eurasian continent (and also post-Soviet Eurasian versus continental Eurasian integration) contradiction, here the situation is more complex. The authors of this paper themselves seem to mix up these concepts sometimes, as they do also in their publications in the EDB Eurasian Integration Yearbook. However, reserving the word 'Eurasia' merely for twelve post-Soviet states seems to rob this concept of the possible broad applications: it may be that referring to the region as 'Northern and Central Eurasia' (Vinokurov, Libman, 2012) is more applicable.

For us, however, two issues are crucial in this respect. First, continental Eurasian integration remains an under-studied phenomenon, which requires further work, especially empirical (for several areas, like informal trade, emergence of cross-border networks or FDI, we simply lack reliable data for more elaborated analysis). It is also an issue that should be taken into account by policy-makers and which is often overlooked. Second, for the post-Soviet space the interaction of two Eurasian integrations: the continental and the post-Soviet one, remains a crucial challenge. As of now, the post-Soviet regional integration projects face substantial difficulties in terms of coping with Eurasian economic ties; and although the understanding of the importance of this issue is growing, it is still insufficient. Thus, redesigning post-Soviet regional organisations in a way that is compatible with both European integration in the West and multitude of regional projects in Asia, as well as with the developing intraregional and

interregional economic interests of the post-Soviet companies and households, remains an issue of crucial importance.

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