

# Chapter 7

## Eurasian Integration and Problems of Civil Society: Trends and Limits of Development

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### ABSTRACT

*The chapter studies the relationship between the development of integration processes and the development of civil society in the post-Soviet space and, in particular, in the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union. It consists of five parts. The introduction presents the main trends and vectors of integration processes in the post-Soviet space. The first part considers the concept of “civil society” and its features in Western and Russian political thought. The second part highlights the features of building a civil society in the independent states of the EAEU. General points and differences in the emerging civil societies of the EAEU countries are revealed. Further, in the fourth part, the “Eurasian idea” is considered in terms of its compatibility with the peculiarities of the development of civil society in the post-Soviet space. The final part proposes a discussion topic on the possibility of political integration within the EAEU.*

### INTRODUCTION

Regional integration is a trend in the modern development of states and international relations. Integration basis - common economic (ideological) goals, benefits leading to the consolidation of the political position of each participant. However, the post-Soviet space is a special case. The socialism system, which has lost its attractiveness, has led not only to the collapse of the USSR, but also to the logical desire of the former republics to build independent national states, form a new identity, and create new alliances. However, due to the geographical, economic, cultural and historical factor, the former countries of the socialist empire have many common problems and opportunities for cooperation with each other. This led to the creation in 2014 of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on the basis of an agreement between three countries - the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Belarus. (*Dogovor o Evraziyskom ekonomicheskom soyuze*, 2014). Subsequently, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined the organization. De-

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spite the possible options for expanding and attracting other countries of the former Soviet Union, the membership of the organization today remains unchanged. This is normal for a very young organization. However, many questions arise to assess the prospects for its future development. Most of them relate to economic development, tariffs, preferences, customs agreements, organizational management and the development of the digital environment. But there is another layer that lies in the field of the ideology of integration and the real desire of citizens of member states to continue integration, its new stages leading to a new political unification.

The purpose of this chapter will be to identify the opportunities and development limits of the EAEU integration association, taking into account the development of civil society of the participating countries, its problems and needs.

In this aspect of the analysis, it is necessary to consider the following questions: how does the civil society of the EAEU countries perceive integration, and is it ready for its new stages? Is the expert community developing? Is there an ideology of integration? - Of course, all these tasks require deep study, and each is worthy of a separate study. This is especially true for analyzes of empirical data, opinion polls, discourse analysis of the press and social networks. One chapter cannot claim to be complete, but it can outline the scope of problems and identify trends.

It is also necessary to give an idea of how the concept of civil society in the Western tradition differs from what is built in the EAEU countries under this definition.

The analysis is based on a) theoretical and empirical studies of civil society in pro-Soviet and post-socialist countries, b) on the materials of the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Eurasian Development Bank, the Russian Council on Foreign Affairs, etc.

This chapter has four parts. The first part will be devoted to the analysis of the concept of civil society in the EAEU countries and its differences from the Western interpretation. The second is to assess the real situation of civil society, and its perception of Eurasian integration. The third part will examine the question: is a special ideology of integration possible within the EAEU? The fourth part: The expert community of the EAEU countries, its capabilities and assessments of integration discourse.

## **BACKGROUND**

A combination of the topic of integration and the theme of development of civil society in the EAEU countries is considered in the scientific literature in connection with various studies. First of all, these are theoretical works on the analysis of the concept of civil society, as well as studies of civil society in post-Soviet and post-socialist countries, made by both foreign and Russian experts.

The concept of public was introduced into scientific circulation in the doctoral dissertation of J. Habermas "Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere", published in 1962. The key to understanding the complexity of the concept of civil society is the monograph by J. L. Cohen and A. Arato "Civil Society and Political Theory", where the authors analyze the main scientific discussions about the nature of civil society. Very interesting and indicative is the study of M. M. Howard, professor at the Department of Management at Georgetown University, "The weakness of civil society in post-communist Europe." The discussion on civil society in post-socialist and post-Soviet countries continues S. Salmenniemi in the article "Theory of Civil Society and Post-Socialism". Among the numerous works of domestic authors, it is worth noting the works directly related to the study of this phenomenon in the post-Soviet space. Note several monographs: I. Khaly "Institutions of civil society in modern Russia. "To the methodol-

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