

CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR THE INTEGRATION PROCESSES IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS: EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN DIMENSIONS

Ashot ALEXANIAN

*Ph.D. (Political Science),
Assistant Professor at the Chair of Theory and
History of Political Science,
Department of International Relations, Erevan State University
(Erevan, Armenia)*

ABSTRACT

The existing political, socioeconomic, and spiritual-cultural contradictions and conflicts in the Southern Caucasus can only be overcome by means of efficient European integration and Eurasian reintegration of the countries that belong to this region. The South Caucasian countries have been carrying out reforms in all spheres of social life within the framework of European integration. These reforms were aimed at ensuring sustainable development and civilizational harmonization based on the European social model and, therefore, promoted internal and international integration. This has created prerequisites for establishing democratic institutions and rapidly forming a civil society; it has also raised government and local self-administration effectiveness, as well as the level of public capital,

legal culture, and social security of the population. The obligations the South Caucasian countries have taken upon themselves within the framework of international (including European) organizations has helped to overcome political instability, ethnic conflicts, social differentiation, and other destructive processes. The emergence of new dividing lines indicating the huge differences between the highly incompatible European and Eurasian integration projects threatens to destabilize the Southern Caucasus.

It is also important to keep in mind that the Eurasian reintegration project, which embodies a modern development concept, is still coming to fruition. It has yet to undergo the social verification and instrumentalization so necessary in the current reality of the "knowledge society."

KEYWORDS: *European integration, Eurasian reintegration, Southern Caucasus, civilizational, political stability, government effectiveness, integration barriers, integration potential, effective integration relations, integration complementarity, regional civil society, level of social responsibility, social partnership.*

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, systemic changes began in the political, socioeconomic, and cultural-spiritual spheres of social life in the South Caucasian countries. The reform of the Soviet political system that began at the end of the 1980s was carried out under slogans of “perestroika,” “glasnost,” and “new thinking;” it aggravated ethnic relations and gave rise to conflict-prone situations.

Legitimization of the new civilarchic movements, the administrative nature of the reform, and the attempts to introduce the idea of democratic socialism into a Soviet multinational society led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of newly independent states.

In the 1990s, when national-state institutions began being established in the post-Communist expanse accompanied by acute conflicts, mechanisms of strategic partnership and integration had already been elaborated in the West European countries and Euro-Atlantic organizations. As for the former Soviet states, long-festered political, socioeconomic, and cultural contradictions still exist among them.

Later, the institutional development of the EU raised the West European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes to a new level and activated the global hegemony mechanisms. This turned the EU into a kind of integration center both in Western and Eastern Europe, as well as in the former Soviet countries and made the integration processes in the nation-states more efficient.

The role the Southern Caucasus has begun playing today in the global governance system has caused the emergence of a certain political plane crisscrossed with lines of rapprochement and/or delimitation of the Eurasian and European integration processes.

The Establishment of Statehood and National Identification

After the South Caucasian republics gained their independence, the socioeconomic and political situation in the region became unstable, which is shown by the problems relating to the establishment of state and national identity. The potential for conflict that engulfed the region at the beginning of the 1990s was manifested in the Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the armed Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian opposition. For obvious reasons, “the Caucasus became a kind of generator of unrecognized state formations in the post-Soviet expanse.”¹

The results of the reforms in state governance in the South Caucasian countries show that democratization of the political system is having a positive influence on sociopolitical stability and government effectiveness, but consistent introduction of civilarchic mechanisms is needed to build a social state and civil society.²

According to the data of the Worldwide Governance Indicators project (WGI), Armenia was the leader among the South Caucasian countries in terms of the Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism indicator between 1996 and 2012 (see Fig. 1).

¹ S.M. Markedonov, “Postsovetsky Iuzhny Kavkaz: traditsionalizm plus modernizatsiia,” *Prognosis*, No. 1 (9), 2007, pp. 332-348, available at [<http://intelros.ru/pdf/Prognosis/01/Markedonov.pdf>].

² See: A.S. Alexanian, “The Civilarchic Foundations of Political Democratization in Armenia,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 12, Issue 3, 2011, pp. 116-127; idem, “Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo: tsivilitsentrizm i tsivilitet,” in: *Politicheskaya nauka i politicheskie protsessy v RF i Novykh Nezavisimyykh Gosudarstvakh*, URO RAS, Ekaterinburg, 2006, pp. 5-11.

Georgia ranked first in terms of the Government Effectiveness indicator between 2006 and 2012 (see Fig. 2).

In a relatively short time, certain achievements were made in establishing state governance, on which raising government effectiveness, the level of development of social capital, sustainable

Figure 1

Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (1996-2012)

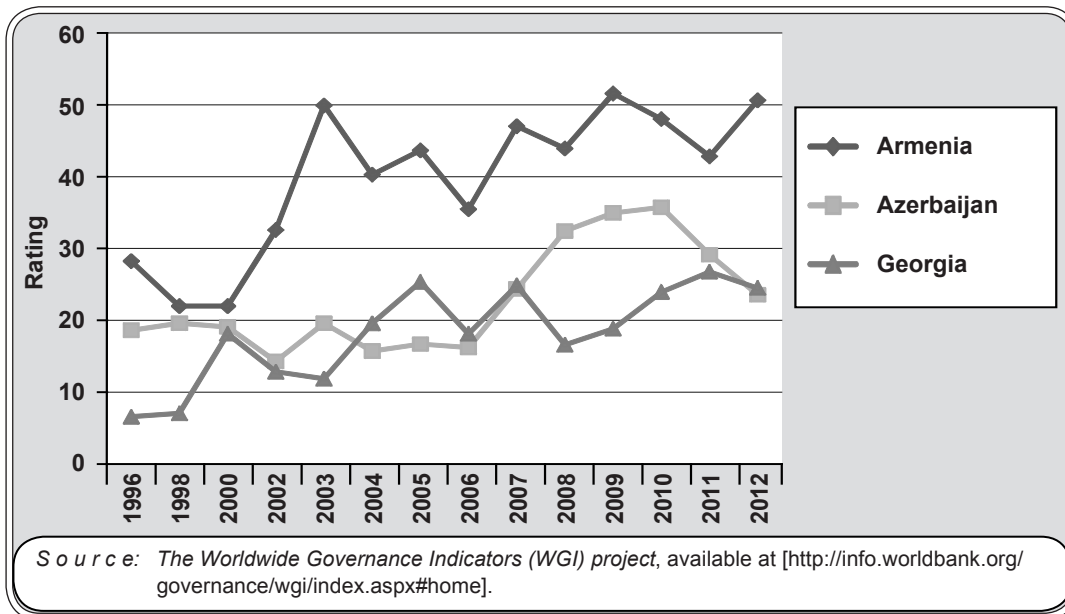
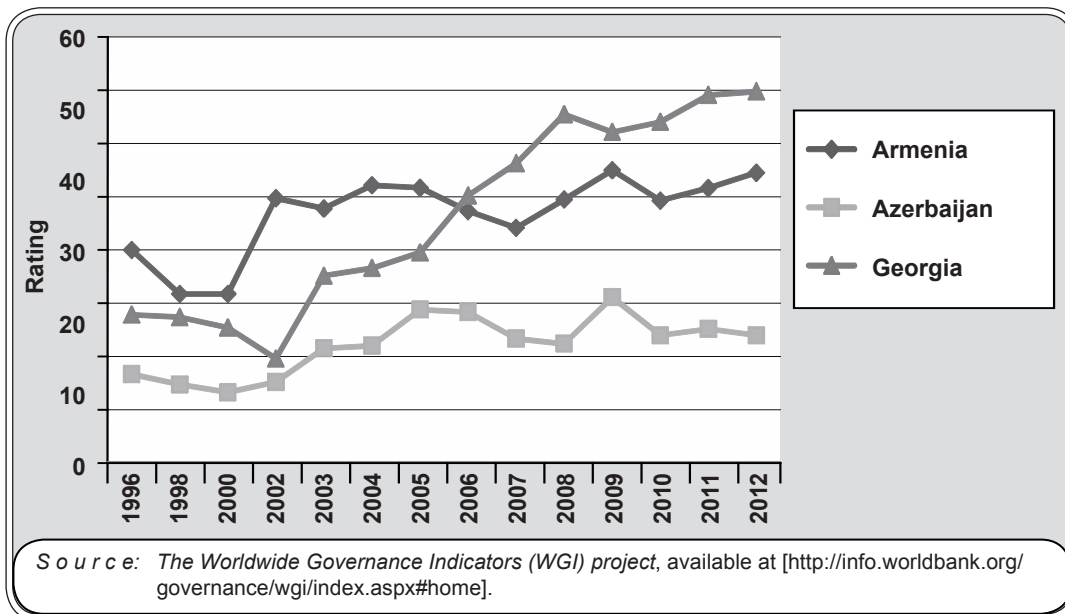


Figure 2

Government Effectiveness (1996-2012)



development, transparency and accountability, as well as further strengthening of the rule of law depend.

A comparative analysis of the indicators for the South Caucasian countries under the Political Atlas of the Modern World project based on five indicators (*stateness, external and internal threats, potential of international influence, quality of life, institutional basis of democracy*) makes it possible to judge the forms and ways in which their political systems function (see Table 1).

Table 1

Ratings of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia

Country	Stateness Index		External and Internal Threat Index		Potential of International Influence Index		Quality of Life Index		Institutional Basis of Democracy Index	
	rank	score	rank	score	rank	score	rank	score	rank	score
Armenia	177	1.85	120	2.97	108	0.06	104	2.13	67	5.86
Azerbaijan	141	3.21	24	6.85	83	0.11	122	1.71	135	3.46
Georgia	183	1.37	38	6.32	110	0.05	114	1.91	160	1.79

S o u r c e: Political Atlas of the Modern World: An Experiment in Multidimensional Statistical Analysis of the Political Systems of Modern States, MGIMO-University Press, Moscow, 2007, 272 pp.

The data of this study show that the South Caucasian countries where sociopolitical stability is still rather tenuous are likely to encounter an aggravation of certain threats.

In the rating of 192 countries, Azerbaijan ranks 141st, Armenia 177th, and Georgia 183rd in terms of the *stateness* index, while according to the *external and internal threats* indicator, Azerbaijan ranks 24th, Georgia 38th, and Armenia 120th.

Integration Vectors

At the initial stage of state-building in the South Caucasian countries, their integration vectors were first directed toward Russia and other former Union republics and later reoriented toward the U.S. and West European countries. In keeping with the reality of the current geopolitical situation, the South Caucasian countries began to gradually develop cooperative relations with the U.N., OSCE, Council of Europe, NATO, BSEO, and EU. The efforts of Georgia and Azerbaijan to draw closer to NATO as it enlarged toward the East and the activation of Turkey's regional policy gave rise to the emergence of new geopolitical risks and problems for the CSTO countries.

In this context, the following integration models should be noted: *interstate integration, regional integration, geopolitical integration, European integration, and Eurasian reintegration*. From the political, socioeconomic, and spiritual-cultural viewpoints, all the integration models have their specific features, while no one really knows how unique their combination might be.

In order to retain stability in the South Caucasian countries and the region as a whole, a model must be formed that is built on the basis of complementarity of different vectors and forms of integra-

tion. In so doing, it is worth noting that integration complementarity is still a basic problem for the national interests and security of the South Caucasian countries. Its absence is preventing an increase in their socioeconomic prosperity, spiritual-cultural development, cooperation, and establishment of a dialog among them.

The deepening of integration processes is leading to an expansion of integration relations and strengthening of integration contacts, but, on the other hand, it is also leading to a worsening of integration conflicts.

There is a certain pattern that says, "*Raising the South Caucasian countries' preference for a particular integration model always leads to an increase in the level and dimensions of integration conflicts.*" This gives rise to such concepts as "compromise integration," "forced integration," or "compulsory integration;" they fit very well into the concept of the "South Caucasian corridor" and the logic of spatial continuums.

The dichotomy of integration conflicts and integration potential can lead both to an increase and a decrease in the positive/negative impacts on each of the countries separately and on the entire region as a whole. This is leading to greater contradiction of national integration interests. The paradox of the situation lies in the fact that it can only be overcome if the integration potential of the South Caucasian countries is realized. This, in turn, means that constructive reintegration is required in the post-Soviet expanse that will lead to greater efficiency of the regional, European, and global integration processes. From this it follows that harmonious integration relations are the main guarantee of domestic stability and sustainable regional development.

The current integration interaction among the South Caucasian countries, on which the foreign political actors pursuing their strategic goals are having an influence, has generated a huge integration zone. It is characterized by particular functioning conditions that require adhering to a hierarchy of multilevel integration processes.

We will note that integration conflicts are leading to disintegration and distancing of the region's countries from each other.

Strategic European Integration

The first EU meeting with participation of the heads of state of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia was held on 22 April, 1996 in Luxembourg. It saw the signing of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) among the European community, EU member states, and South Caucasian countries.³ Implementation of these agreements was supposed to strengthen the democratic institutions and socioeconomic infrastructure of the South Caucasian region by strengthening cooperation and the political dialog among the countries belonging to it. On 22 June, 1999, a Joint Declaration was signed in Luxembourg by the EU and South Caucasian countries. Its main aim was to continue the democratic reforms in all spheres of social life, as well as support the peace process in the Southern Caucasus.⁴

³ See: "Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs): Russia, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia," available at [http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17002_en.htm].

⁴ See: *Joint Declaration of the European Union and the Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, 22 June, 1999, Luxembourg, available at [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-99-202_en.htm?locale=en].

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) developed in 2004 became a strong integrator in implementing the agreements signed with the EU and harmonizing the European and South Caucasian regulations and standards. It was called upon to ensure the future enlargement of the EU and its rapprochement with 16 of its closest neighbors aimed at strengthening overall social prosperity, political stability, and regional security on the basis of democratic values, rule of the law, and the protection of human rights and freedoms.

In 2003, the communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and Council called “Wider Europe—Neighborhood: A New Framework for Relations with Our Eastern and Southern Neighbors” noted that the EU will assist regional and interregional cooperation in order to unite partners, reduce the poverty level, promote social prosperity, create a zone of economic integration, and activate political and cultural relations by strengthening transborder cooperation and offering ways to assume joint responsibility for preventing conflicts.⁵

The dynamics for enlarging the EU and institutional integration of the South Caucasian countries presuppose performing several obligations. In the short and long term, this will ensure their step-by-step and gradual integration into the European community. The dialectics of European enlargement requires establishing closer relations with each of the partner countries on the basis of a high level of political trust keeping in mind the differentiation of their political elites and civil society institutions.

In particular, special attention should go to the participation of civil society institutions in political decision-making. Country Reports and Action Plans have helped to strengthen the role of civil society and intensify civil control in the South Caucasian countries.⁶

Civil society institutions play a central role in the integration processes going on in all spheres of life. Cooperation among the civil society organizations of the South Caucasian countries is opening up new opportunities for raising the sustainability and stability of democracy, as well as reducing the threat of the emergence of sociopolitical risks.

The joint measures of civil society organizations in the South Caucasian countries are aimed at widening the civilizational dialog at the national and regional levels. This dialog is helping to develop strategic programs for managing social resources. These programs, in turn, will make it possible to develop regional mechanisms of civil control.

In this context, it should be noted that as of today, the role of trade unions, international and European nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social media, religious institutions and civil movements in the efficient management of social resources in the Southern Caucasus is underestimated. In time, the activity of the few regional networks of NGOs and nongovernmental actors will increasingly help to raise the level of civil culture and public consciousness.

Vivid examples of the civilizational discourse are the National Platforms of the Civil Society Forum of Eastern Partnership⁷ in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, the Czech NESEHNUTÍ NGO,⁸

⁵ See: Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament “Wider Europe—Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours,” COM (2003) 104 final, Brussels, 11 March, 2003, available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf].

⁶ See: “EU-Armenia Relations,” available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/armenia/index_en.htm]; “EU-Azerbaijan Relations,” available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/azerbaijan/index_en.htm]; “EU-Georgia Relations,” available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/georgia/index_en.htm].

⁷ See: *Civil Society Forum of Eastern Partnership (CSF EP)*, available at [<http://www.eap-csf.eu/ru/home>]; *The Armenian National Platform of CSF EP*, available at [<http://www.eap-csf.eu/ru/countries/armenia>]; *The Azerbaijani National Platform of CSF EP*, available at [<http://civilsocietyforum.az/en>]; *The Georgian National Platform of CSF EP*, available at [<http://eapnationalplatform.ge>].

⁸ See: *Path of Initiative—Support Program of Civil Society Development in the Southern Caucasus, 2014-2015* (Czech noncommercial organization NESEHNUTÍ), available in Russian at [<http://ru.cestainiciativy.cz>].

joint projects of the Erevan Press Club,⁹ Open Society Institute, Eurasian Cooperation Fund, Human Rights House Network,¹⁰ and so on.

The new civil-archic culture of government bodies and nongovernmental organizations can promote sustainable regional development. In this respect, it is necessary to improve not only the social partnership and dialog mechanisms, but also the tools of civil participation in political decision-making. Active participation of civil society institutions in the implementation of regional projects will help to improve the results achieved.

Successful regional projects and the quality of civil initiatives are indicators of cooperation and sustainable development. When promoting different projects and initiatives, the U.N., EU, Council of Europe, and OSCE are keeping in mind the special features of the national contradictions existing in the region, which is necessary for preserving civil stability.

Institutionalizing regional civil society and raising the social status of its members are strengthening the position of the nongovernmental sector, although this is not enough to activate partner relations. Corruption and other law violations, excessive powers of the executive power branch, underdeveloped market mechanisms, growing economic inequality, low level of social responsibility of the state, and weakness of local self-government all have an extremely negative impact on the stability of social society organizations.

It must be recognized that “most of the posts in self-government bodies are occupied by representatives of the ruling party, which is still unable to make use of party structures to hold a dialog with the center. They are often unable to oppose even mid-level officials from the central government when the latter interfere in the realization of the exclusive rights of the self-government bodies.”¹¹ This reduces social management effectiveness and participation of citizens in the political processes, and also raises the level of civil mistrust and social alienation, etc.

In actual fact, active civil participation is gradually leading to an increase in the social competences of federal government and local self-government bodies, which are beginning to take a more responsible attitude toward executing their powers.

It should be noted that Armenia ranks second after Ukraine in the Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index 2011 (CSO) in the Russia, Western CIS Countries and the Caucasus region (see Table 2).

The Eastern Partnership Program¹² aimed at bringing Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine closer to the EU has raised relations among the regional countries to a qualitatively new level.

In 2007, the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)¹³ was created, which offered the partner countries a real opportunity for developing their institutional and integration po-

⁹ See: “South Caucasian Network for Civil Consent (2001-2003)”; “Armenia-Azerbaijan-Turkey: Journalist Initiative-2002”; “Armenia-Azerbaijani/Azerbaijani-Armenian Information Center (2002-2003)”; “Quality Coverage in the Media of Events in the South Caucasian Countries as a Way to Overcome Regional Problems (2006)”; “Journalist Support of Stability and Cooperation in the Caucasus (2010)”; “Assessment of the Partiality of Online Media when Covering Armenian-Azerbaijani Relations (2010-2011)”; “Development of the Dialog between Armenia and Turkey (2010-2011)”; “Assistance to the Settlement of Armenian-Turkish Relations (2010-2012)”; “Monitoring Media Freedom in the Eastern Region of the European Neighborhood Policy (2013-2015)”, in: *Erevan Press Club*, in Russian at [<http://www.ypc.am/projects/ln/ru>].

¹⁰ See: *Human Rights House Network*, available at [<http://humanrightshouse.org>].

¹¹ D. Losaberidze, “Mestnoe samoupravlenie v Gruzii,” in: D. Tumanian, D. Losaberidze, M. Giulaliev, *Mestnoe samoupravlenie na Iuzhnom Kavkaze: munitsipalnye finansy i uslugi, vzaimootnosheniia mezhdru organami tsentralnogo upravleniia i mestnogo samoupravleniia*, Erevan, 2009, p. 75, available at [http://cfoa.am/Gorchunejutjun/Hratarakcutjunner/LSG%20in%20South%20Caucasus_2009.pdf].

¹² See: *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit*, 7 May, 2009, Prague, available at [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/10758.pdf].

¹³ See: *Eastern Neighborhood: Communication of the European Commission to the European Parliament and European Council*, COM (2008) 823 final, Brussels, 3 December, 2008, available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/docs/com08_823_ru.pdf].

Table 2

Results of Measurements of
the Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index of the South Caucasian Countries
(1998-2012)

Country/Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<i>Legal Environment</i>															
Armenia	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9
Azerbaijan	7.0	7.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.7
Georgia	3.0	3.5	3.0	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
<i>Organizational Capacity</i>															
Armenia	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	3.9	3.6	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.8
Azerbaijan	6.0	5.8	5.2	5.0	5.0	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
Georgia	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.2
<i>Financial Viability</i>															
Armenia	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2
Azerbaijan	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.8	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.7	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Georgia	4.0	4.5	6.0	5.0	4.9	4.6	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.1	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.0	5.0
<i>Advocacy</i>															
Armenia	6.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
Azerbaijan	6.5	6.0	5.5	5.0	5.0	4.8	4.8	5.1	5.1	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6
Georgia	4.0	3.5	2.0	4.0	4.3	4.0	3.7	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.2

Source: The 2012 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, available at [http://www.usaid.gov/europe-eurasia-civil-society].

tential. In order to ensure the multi-diversity of the integration processes and support of the civilizational dialog with the federal government and local self-government bodies, the European Commission initiated the creation of a Civil Society Forum within the framework of Eastern Partnership.¹⁴

A comparative analysis of the indices of European integration of the Eastern Partnership countries was first published in 2011 (see Table 3). According to its data, Georgia leads among the South Caucasian countries in terms of support of the EU initiatives.

Table 3

**European Integration Index
for Eastern Partnership Countries for 2011-2013**

Country	Year	Linkage Dimension	Approximation Dimension	Management Dimension
Armenia	2013	0.49	0.59	0.51
	2012	0.41	0.59	0.31
	2011	0.42	0.57	0.32
Azerbaijan	2013	0.41	0.42	0.33
	2012	0.36	0.44	0.31
	2011	0.32	0.49	0.28
Georgia	2013	0.57	0.63	0.58
	2012	0.51	0.60	0.51
	2011	0.53	0.63	0.92

Sources: *European Integration Index 2013 for Eastern Partnership Countries*, International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations and Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, available at [http://www.eap-index.eu/images/Index_2013.pdf]; *European Integration Index 2012 for Eastern Partnership Countries*, International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, available at [<http://www.eap-index.eu/sites/default/files/EaP%20Index%20%202012.pdf>]; *European Integration Index 2011 for Eastern Partnership Countries*, International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, available at [<http://www.eap-index.eu/sites/default/files/EaP%20Index%202011.pdf>].

On the one hand, European integration is leading to the development of strategic cooperation, democracy, and market relations, but, on the other, it is giving rise to sociopolitical, economic, spiritual, and cultural problems. The dialectics of integration and dynamics of disintegration show the existence of immense integration potential capable of forming all the necessary resources. The European integration evolution and activation of integration processes in the post-Soviet expanse have led to a Eurasian integration revolution.¹⁵

As for Georgia, it is the first of the South Caucasian countries to sign the Association Agreement with the EU, which can be divided into three parts: political cooperation, branch cooperation, and a deep, all-encompassing, free trade area.

¹⁴ See: *Civil Society Forum of Eastern Partnership*.

¹⁵ See: *Novaia Bolshaiia Strana. Evraziiskiy soiuz—edinaia tsivilizatsiia, mnogo gosudarstv*, Proektno-analitichesky doklad, Rukovoditel razrabotki—Iu.V. Krupnov, Dushanbe, Moscow, 2012.

Armenia did not sign the Association Agreement with the EU, but, as the country's Prime Minister T. Sarkisian said, "relations with the EU remain an important priority of Armenia's foreign policy."¹⁶

Azerbaijan is not planning to become an associated member of the EU. However, as deputy head of the presidential administration of this country N. Mamedov noted, Baku asked the EU, "keeping in mind the level of cooperation reached, to sign an agreement on partnership."¹⁷

Nevertheless, relations with the EU and further European integration are more important for Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The political, socioeconomic, and spiritual-cultural processes going on today in the South Caucasian region are acquiring an increasingly global nature. Paradoxically, even the fact that the countries belonging to it are isolated from each other cannot prevent them from being incorporated into regional integration.

The global community, which is open to new knowledge and ideas, is based on institutions of polyarchic and democratic relations. The opposition between the strategic interests and ambitions of the global actors in the Southern Caucasus can be called quite unusual; its first stage is characterized by self-isolation both on the part of the West European countries and on the part of Russia.

In the conditions of a knowledge society, the content of the regional processes is determined by the striving for global supremacy; in so doing, the main criteria is social capital. The existence of integration conflict potential in the Southern Caucasus makes it possible to conclude that the global actors do not have any prerequisite to put up passive resistance (as is implied by the logic of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain format). On the contrary, open competition is seen in the region in all spheres of the post-industrial society, as well as the continuous use of so-called warm war mechanisms, while partnership is slightly conflict-prone.

Eurasian Reintegration or Reintegration of Compatriots

When discussing the expediency of Eurasian reintegration, it would be good to know whether it will become an alternative to European integration, "the next, higher level of integration" and "multilevel and different-rate integration."¹⁸

Today, problems relating to preserving relative stability and the effective management of integration processes are still the most urgent for the South Caucasian countries.

The chaotic collapse of the Soviet Union led to the sovereignization of the Union republics belonging to it; on 8 December, 1991, the heads of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine signed the Agreement on the Establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹⁹ It stated that "The Soviet Union as an entity of international law and geopolitical reality ceases to exist." The Agreement also talked of the striving to build democratic law-based states and establish the CIS.²⁰

¹⁶ "Signing the Political Part of the Association Agreement with the EU is the Best Route for Armenia: Prime Minister," 21 March, 2014, available in Russian at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1781457.html>].

¹⁷ "Azerbaijan Refuses Association with the European Union," 25 November, 2013, available in Russian at [<http://www.km.ru/world/2013/11/25/evropeiskii-soyuz-es/726011-azerbaidzhan-otkazalsya-ot-assotsiatsii-s-evrosoyuzom>].

¹⁸ V.V. Putin, "Novy integratsionnyy proekt dlia Evrazii—budushchee, kotoroe rozhdaetsia segodnia," 3 October, 2011, *Izvestia*, available at [<http://izvestia.ru/news/502761>].

¹⁹ [<http://www.cis.minsk.by/page.php?id=176>].

²⁰ "Three states joined the CIS and invited the new states of the former Soviet Union to join the Commonwealth. Why, of the 15 Union republics, was it these three that assumed the right to cancel the 1922 Treaty? They were the only remaining

On 21 December, 1991, eleven of the former Union republics, including Azerbaijan and Armenia, signed a Protocol to the Agreement on the Establishment of the CIS.²¹ Between 1991 and 1994, the other former Soviet republics, apart from the Baltic countries, joined the CIS.

The initial stage of reintegration marked by attempts to restore the infrastructure inherited from the Soviet era was of an inert and informal nature. One of its main tasks was to minimize the threats generated by the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the “most civilized manner.”

As Russian President Vladimir Putin said at one time, “whereas in Europe countries have worked together within the framework of the EU to achieve unity, the CIS was created for the purpose of a civilized divorce.”²²

The strategies of national security and sustainable development of the South Caucasian countries encountered unusual threats to security and difficult institutional transformations manifested while the state government bodies executed their powers and during the self-organization of civil society.

Unfortunately, the reintegration advantages of the post-Soviet countries were realized very irrationally, while the absence of a general development strategy led to destruction of the existing ties and relations. It later became clear that the conceived integration was unlikely to be achieved. The relative stability of the integration processes was largely related to the strategic strivings of the West European countries. They compensated for the vacuum created, ensuring integration from above and from below.

Systemic relations among the countries of the post-Soviet reintegration union formed with the appearance of the new political elites, establishment of a civil society, liberalization of the economy, privatization of public property, and the state’s inefficient interference in the economy, which led to its stagnation.

In the mid term, reintegration of the post-Soviet countries carried out within the EurAsEC, CU, and CES was aimed at strengthening and combining their socioeconomic advantages. But, in contrast to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are interested in gaining access to the common labor market of the Eurasian space only if they see real positive development dynamics in the new economic relations.

At the initial stage, Eurasian integration should be aimed at social consolidation, regulation of labor migration instruments, strategic management of labor resources and social capital, protection of rights and freedoms, and strengthening of the role of the trade union movement, etc.

It is very important to keep in mind that due to the increase in number of global threats and emergence of new conflict areas, there can be no talk of demonstrating geopolitical supremacy or domination. On the contrary, in order to create competitive infrastructures capable of ensuring a rise in the quality of life, the positive and negative experiences of the Soviet period and global development trends must be synthesized.

The development of post-Soviet integration has found its embodiment in the establishment of the CIS, Union State of Russia and Belarus, the CSTO, and the EurAsEC. But it has not been possible to achieve radical restructuring of the post-Soviet expanse.

Eurasian integration was inopportune to a certain extent. The thing is that integration ties with other states and different international organizations were needed to carry it out and intensify it. It is

legal founders by that time and, consequently, successors of the former treaty (the fourth party to the agreement, the Zakavkazskaia S.F.S.R. had long ceased to exist). This is what served as the legal ground the initiators of the Belovezh Agreement decided to take advantage of” (“Collapse of the Soviet Union and Formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States,” available at [<http://www.protown.ru/information/hidden/3710.html>]).

²¹ [http://www.cismission.mid.ru/ii1_4.html].

²² “Putin: The CIS was Created for the Purpose of a ‘Divorce,’” 25 March, 2005, available in Russian at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/russia/newsid_4382000/4382389.stm].

obvious that the different levels of interest of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia in Eurasian integration at this stage will not make it possible to fully implement the concept of the EEU in the Southern Caucasus.

It is extremely problematic to satisfy the interests and demands of all the countries of the region. Cooperation among “unequal partners” is only possible if the strategic national priorities of each of them are taken into account. Within the framework of European integration, the South Caucasian countries have drawn up national mechanisms for carrying out joint policy, striving to combine their sovereignty and interests with the European development model. It is a little difficult to develop a supranational policy within the framework of Eurasian reintegration, which is explained by the significant differences in the approaches of the CIS countries.

The initial stage of Armenia’s striving on the way to Eurasian integration is even more noteworthy. For example, during a meeting of the Higher Eurasian Economic Commission, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev said that “Armenia should join the EEU without Nagorno-Karabakh.”²³ Meanwhile, as early as 2013, Armenia signed the Road Map²⁴ for joining the CU and performed all of its points, while in September of the same year it stated its intention of participation in the formation of the EEU.²⁵ The letter the President of Azerbaijan sent to the heads of the EEU member states (about Armenia’s membership in the CU and EEU) can serve as another example.

Conclusion

Keeping in mind the integration potential and strategic significance of the South Caucasian countries, the global actors should promote the strengthening and development of interregional relations. In so doing, the differences in integration strategies of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia can be smoothed out by expanding regional cooperation among these countries.

European integration and Eurasian reintegration are taking place in conditions of forming a multipolar world that is not only of a global, regional, and national nature, but also civilizational, anthropocentric, and sociocratic.

The sociocultural dimension of the economic and political processes going on in the South Caucasian countries is of key significance for European integration of the 21st century. The human dimension, social values, national features, active civil society, protection of human rights and freedoms, development of social capital, raising the quality of life, social partnership, and social dialog, etc. are primarily the guarantees of its success.

The process of European integration lies in civil centrism and the realization of human capital that ensure “civil rule carried out by citizens for the sake of citizens.” European integration has strategically strengthened the geopolitical status of the region and paved the way for essentially new interstate relations.

²³ See: “Nursultan Nazarbaev Believes that Armenia Should Join the EEU without Nagorno-Karabakh,” 2 June, 2014, available in Russian at [<http://eurasianews.md/eurasia/nursultan-nazarbaev-schitaet-cto-armeniya-dolzha-vstupat-eaes-bez-nagornogo-karabaha.htm>].

²⁴ See: “Action Plan Aimed at Implementing the Program of Measures (Road Map) with the Aim of Membership in the Customs Union and Common Economic Space of the Republic of Belarus, Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Russian Federation,” available in Russian at [https://www.e-gov.am/u_files/file/decrees/kar/2014/01/Mar1maqsayin.pdf].

²⁵ See: “Armenia Performs Essentially All Points of the Road Map for Joining the Customs Union—Nalbandian,” 22 April, 2014, available at [<http://novostink.ru/armenia/67354-armeniya-vypolnila-prakticheski-vse-punky-dorozhnoy-karty-po-vstupleniyu-v-tamozhenny-soyuz-nalbandyan.html>].

The integration processes have encompassed essentially all spheres of public life of the South Caucasian countries. Moreover, they have affected the state power system and local self-government bodies, as well as civil society institutions. Their strengthening can help the countries of the region overcome different crisis situations, strengthen their political stability, and create prerequisites for developing the Caucasian model of social partnership and market relations.

Integration processes are creating favorable conditions for forming a common political, socio-economic, and spiritual-cultural space in the Southern Caucasus.
