

Regionalism in Eurasia: Explaining Authority Transfers to Regional Organizations

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Ann-Sophie Gast

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REGIONALISM IN EURASIA:

EXPLAINING AUTHORITY TRANSFERS TO REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Ann-Sophie Gast

Abstract

Corresponding to the global proliferation of inter-state activities at the regional level since the end of the Cold War, Eurasia has experienced a surge of regional agreements and organizations. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, more than 29 regional organizations (ROs) with significant membership and agenda overlap have emerged. These organizations differ significantly in terms of institutional design. Organizations that were created in the 1990s and early 2000s display very limited or no pooling of authority and low to moderate delegation. Regional organizations that were established during the past decade show pronounced delegation and median pooling. A mapping based on formal treaty analysis shows a general deepening of regional integration over time. It also reveals three phases of Eurasian regionalism with distinct integration dynamics and goals. Especially the third phase is surprising, as we do not only witness the increase of political authority of ROs, but also a more consequent implementation of agreements and the introduction of supranational elements. This deepening of regionalism is puzzling in light of 1) the rather recent independence of the Eurasian states and their colonial past under Russian domination, 2) the level of autocracy in the region, and 3) the presence of a regional hegemon, which has moreover recently experienced an authoritarian backlash. Relying on the concept of political authority, the first part of this paper gives an overview of the development of formal regional integration in Eurasia during the past 25 years. The second part of the paper asks why Russia and the smaller Eurasian states go along with increasing authority transfers to ROs. Based on a series of elite interviews conducted in Russian in February and March 2017, potential drivers of Eurasian regionalism are explained, with particular attention to Russian motives. The paper concludes with an outlook on avenues for future research.

The Author



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1. Introduction: Regionalism in Eurasia¹

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a significant increase in interstate activities at the regional level (Börzel 2011). Both bilateral and multilateral regional agreements as well as regional organizations have proliferated. Since the mid-1980s, the number of regional organizations has grown from 42 to almost 100 (CROP 2013: Dataset I; Jetschke/Theiner 2016: 2). Eurasia, too, has experienced a surge of regional activities. The region comprises the 15 newly independent states that emerged from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) after its dissolution in December 1991,² minus the three Baltic States. Since the dissolution of the USSR, more than 29 multilateral organizations with a regional focus came into existence in this part of the world. For a long time, however, Eurasian regionalism has been underestimated by comparative regionalism scholars due to the widespread belief that regional integration attempts in Eurasia were shallow and ineffective or merely Russian attempts to recreate the Soviet Union (Allison 2004, 2008; Collins 2009; Kubicek 2009; Wirminghaus 2012; Hancock/Libman 2016). The situation has changed at the latest with the signing of the Treaty of the Eurasian Economic Union in May 2014, which triggered controversial interest, both within and outside the region.

The empirical analysis of this paper is guided by the inductive question of how Eurasian regionalism, understood as “state-led processes of building formal regional institutions and organizations” (Börzel/Risse 2016: 7), has developed since the dissolution of the USSR. The focus of the analysis lies on formal regional integration as reflected by the transfer of political authority from member states to regional organizations. Relying on the concept of political authority, which allows to measure in how far member states as principals empower regional organizations as agents to govern in their name, the paper investigates changes in the institutional design of Eurasian regional organizations over time as well as emerging patterns of regional integration. It provides the first structured overview of formal regional integration in Eurasia during the past 25 years. The analysis is inspired by the cross-sectional dataset on international authority by Hooghe, Marks et al., which assesses the composition and decision-making rules of 72 international organizations from 1950 to 2010 (Hooghe et al. 2017), but so far only covers three post-Soviet organizations.

Moreover, the paper seeks to understand why Russia and the small post-Soviet states started to increasingly transfer authority to regional organizations, both in terms of pooling and delegation, and thereby gave up a certain degree of sovereignty. The empirical analysis shows that not only the quantity of regional organizations in Eurasia has increased over time, but also their quality. Changes in the Eurasian regional organizations are particularly apparent when distinguishing between pooling and delegation. While there was almost no pooling and delegation in the early Eurasian organizations, in some of the newer ones member states delegate a significant degree of authority to independent bodies of the respective organization,

1 This paper has been prepared for the KFG “The Transformative Power of Europe” Working Paper Series. The paper is a product of research and writing supported by the KFG as well as the *Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes*. During my field research in Russia, I was hosted by the School of International Relations at Saint Petersburg State University, which provided me with a space to work and valuable contacts. A special thanks goes to Nikolay Vlasov, who invited me to Saint Petersburg and facilitated my stay at the faculty.

2 The region comprises the five Central Asian states Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan, the three Caucasian states Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan as well as the three Eastern European states Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine and, finally, Russia, the official successor state of the Soviet Union. The terms newly independent states and post-Soviet states will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

such as general secretariat, and pool authority to a certain extent in intergovernmental decision-making bodies. The newest organization, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU, 2015), even disposes of a supranational organ that is able to take decisions independent of member states' interests. Furthermore, over the last decade, agreements such as the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan (CU, 2010) and the Common Economic Space (CES, 2012) have been more thoroughly implemented than earlier agreements (Hancock/Libman 2016: 206). Finally, agreements have become more consequential for their signatories, as the most recently signed treaties do not allow for the simultaneous conclusion of deep and comprehensive free trade agreements with the EU, thus compelling a choice between Eurasian or European integration. Overall, regional integration in Eurasia, whilst nowadays confined to a smaller circle of countries, has deepened over time.

This development has not been anticipated by researchers and is puzzling in three respects. Firstly, it is puzzling given the fact that all post-Soviet states were formerly part of a single polity, the Soviet Union, and ever since its dissolution have been striving for sovereignty, autonomy, and dissociation from Russia. Secondly, it is puzzling given the dominance³ of autocratic and hybrid regimes in Eurasia,³ which are unlikely to conclude deep integration agreements and accept sovereignty restrictions by regional organizations. Thirdly, and most surprisingly, the deepening of Eurasian regionalism during the past decade coincides with an authoritarian backlash in Russia and an increasingly assertive Russian foreign policy under President Putin (Ambrosio 2016; Freedom House 2017b). While it is already puzzling that a regional hegemon binds itself to formal rules and gives up sovereignty, another central question is why Russia increasingly invests in multilateral regional organizations with intrusive institutional design while consolidating autocracy on the domestic level. Therefore, the second part of the paper discusses potential drivers of regional integration, paying particular attention to Russia's role as the regional hegemon and agenda-setter. Based on the results of a series of elite interviews conducted in February and March 2017 in Russia, a causal narrative to explain the puzzle is developed.

The paper proceeds as follows: In the first part, I review the existing literature on regional integration in Eurasia, the emergence of regional organizations and the drivers of integration. Next, I introduce the Eurasian region, its characteristics and dynamics. In the second part, I explain the relevant concepts for the analysis of regional integration and introduce a model to measure the authority of regional organizations that was originally developed by Hooghe and Marks (Hooghe/Marks 2014; Hooghe et al. 2016). The empirical analysis examines how institutional design of regional organizations in Eurasia varies with regard to pooling and delegation of authority and maps all organizations along these two dimensions. In the final part of the paper, I summarize the results of the analysis, highlighting patterns and trends of Eurasian integration. Moreover, I outline a theoretical model to explain the Eurasian puzzle, proposing to open the black box of the state and study changes in ruling elites' foreign policy preferences and motivations. Focusing on Russia's role as the regional hegemon and agenda setter in Eurasia, I explain how counter alliance building and balancing can help to understand the rather untypical behavior of the regional hegemon in Eurasia. Last but not least, the paper concludes with an outlook on avenues for future research.

³ According to the Polity IV data series (Marshall/Gurr/Jagers 2016), Russia, Ukraine, and Armenia can be classified as anocracies, while Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Belarus, and Azerbaijan are autocracies. Only Georgia, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan are democracies, with scores slightly higher than six. However, the political situation has worsened in most of these countries since the last Polity IV data was published.

2. Genesis and Institutional Design of Regional Organizations in the Literature

The literature has extensively addressed the question why post-Soviet states created regional organizations in the first place and has come up with several plausible theoretical arguments. Most scholars argue from a rationalist-functionalist perspective that the creation of regional organizations was initially motivated by the need to deal with common problems, interdependencies, and negative externalities, which arose partly as a consequence of the unplanned and quick collapse of the Soviet Union (Kubicek 2009; Obydenkova 2011: 88; Libman/Vinokurov 2012: 868). The newly independent states saw regional organizations as tools to promote trade, curb economic development, and deal with the consequences of globalization. By institutionalizing cooperation at the regional level, states aimed to minimize uncertainty, transaction costs, and market failures (Dragneva/Wolczuk 2013). In line with the functional argumentation, Libman and Vinokurov define the interaction of functional bureaucracies and their ability to generate spillover effects as driving forces of regional integration (Libman/Vinokurov 2012). A more constructivist approach reckons that public demand driven by Soviet nostalgia, a feeling of solidarity, and persistent social ties between countries were crucial for the creation of regional organizations (Hancock/Libman 2016: 207).

A classical realist perspective interprets Eurasian regionalism as Russia's neo-imperial project to expand its sphere of influence and detain the post-Soviet states in its orbit of influence. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton even called Russian efforts to promote economic integration in Eurasia a "move to re-sovietize the region" (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2012). A neo-realist explanation underlines the importance of Russia as the regional hegemon in fostering and financing cooperation and providing benefits to other members on the one hand (Hancock 2009), and the interest of weaker states in reaping benefits from the powerful state on the other hand (Allison 2004). At the same time, regional organizations can also work as a form of alliance to balance powerful actors and counter threats to the region (Walt 1987). Along similar lines, some scholars argue that regional organizations in Eurasia mainly serve a regime-boosting purpose, meaning that member states exploit them to protect and legitimize their regimes and prevent regime changes (Allison 2008; Collins 2009; Söderbaum 2010). Focusing on autocracy promotion, Cameron and Orenstein maintain that regional organizations provided additional linkages between Russia and the newly independent states offering Russia means to exert leverage in its neighboring countries in ways that contributed to the erosion of rights, liberties, and democracy (Cameron/Orenstein 2012: 39). Last but not least, diffusion scholars understand the emergence of regional organizations and their designs as the consequence of a global trend of increasing regionalism as states observe each other, learn from and emulate each other (Börzel/Risse 2009; Jetschke 2010; Risse 2016).

While there are many convincing arguments to explain the emergence of regional organizations in Eurasia, the deepening of regional integration in this region still poses a puzzle. Mainstream theoretical perspectives in International Relations lack convincing rationales to account for the divergence of pooling and delegation of authority and change of authority over time. Firstly, they face difficulties explaining the deepening of integration among autocratic states. While governments might have incentives to cooperate in order to lock-in autocratic rule and stabilize their regime, the literature assumes a reluctance of autocratic states to enter into intrusive integration agreements, since the latter can limit their freedom of maneuver as well as opportunities to provide rents to their supporters (Söderbaum 2004; Mansfield/Milner/Pevehouse 2008). The presence of a regional hegemon also presents a challenge to explaining the deepening of integration. When there is a strong regional hegemon, hegemonic stability theory predicts the prevalence of bilateral

and, in any case, intergovernmental agreements, in which the hegemon exploits power asymmetries with its neighbors (Krasner 1976; Gilpin 1987; Solingen 2008). Although hegemons can induce the creation of regional institutions and exert significant influence on their design (Gilpin 1987: 87-90), they are usually reluctant to bind themselves to formal rules and give up sovereignty themselves. Russia, however, gave up sovereignty in the EAEU with its supranational commission and equal voting rights for all members.

Neoliberal institutionalism does not fit the Eurasian case either as it tries to explain variations in institutional designs of regional organizations with varying degrees of regional interdependence. High levels of regional interdependence produce high levels of institutionalization and require more delegation (Keohane 1984). In Eurasia, however, interdependence was highest when the USSR collapsed. At the same time, authority transfers to early regional organizations were very limited. The rationalist institutional design literature offers more useful arguments to explain differences in institutionalization at the regional level, assuming that states use international organizations to achieve their goals and design organizations accordingly. Koremenos et al. (2001) define five institutional design features (membership rules, scope of issues covered, centralization of tasks, rules of control, and flexibility) whose variation can be explained by variables such as distribution and enforcement problems, number of actors as well as uncertainty about behavior, the state of the world, and preferences. While this approach is certainly very useful, it is also very technical and fails to identify key actors and their foreign policy interests and motivations. Moreover, it cannot account for identity changes of foreign policy actors that might consequently lead to shifts in foreign policy preferences and strategies at the regional level. Last but not least, some of the independent variables are in practice very difficult to observe.

Constructivism assumes that institutional design reflects cultural and bureaucratic traditions as well as domestically rooted norms and political cultures (Solvingen 2008; Acharya/Johnston 2007). Acharya and Johnston, for example, argue that democratic regimes are more likely to accept authority transfers to regional organizations than autocratic regimes, because elites in democracies are more familiar with power-sharing mechanisms from their domestic context (Acharya/Johnston 2007: 262). Another constructivist argument emphasizes norms and identity. Katzenstein (2005) maintains that states in some regions have cultural predispositions towards consensus-building, thin institutionalization, and informal structures. Those arguments, however, cannot explain change over time either as cultural predispositions, bureaucratic traditions, and regime type have remained mostly unchanged in the concerned states.

Diffusion approaches assume that institutional design of regional organizations does not evolve independently, but is influenced and shaped by other organizations within or outside the region via processes of learning or emulation (Jetschke/Theiner 2016). In particular, the EU serves as a global blueprint for regional organizations worldwide (Lenz/Marks 2016: 522; Acharya 2016). Even though regional institutional design in Eurasia was clearly inspired by EU structures and institutions, the diffusion perspective faces difficulties explaining why it took the states of the region more than 15 years to deepen integration significantly.

To understand the Eurasian context better, the next section is therefore devoted to introducing the region, its specifics and characteristics. While comparison between regions is often very useful, the Eurasian region disposes of some unique features that have to be understood and considered when trying to explain the development of regionalism and the deepening of integration since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

3. Introducing the Regional Setting: Eurasia – a Region in Motion

While this paper theoretically can be located in the field of comparative regionalism and the study of regional organizations, it is empirically confined to one region, namely Eurasia. Eurasia refers to the region constituted by the former republics of the Soviet Union minus the three Baltic states: Russia, the official successor state of the USSR, the five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), the three Caucasian states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) and the three Eastern European states (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine) (Qoraboyev 2010; Laruelle 2015; Hancock/Libman 2016). Unlike “post-Soviet space,” the term Eurasia, which refers to the geographic location of the region between Europe and Asia, does not per se carry any political connotation, which is why I prefer to use this term instead of post-Soviet. Also the states of the region themselves have started to use “Eurasia” and “Eurasian” more frequently to describe themselves without referring to the Soviet legacy, which is reflected in academic publications, newspaper articles, but also in the naming of regional organizations and institutions (Pryce 2013; Laruelle 2015; Hancock/Libman 2016; Vinokurov 2017).

For the past 25 years Eurasia has been undergoing geopolitical changes, experiencing conflicts and even wars, the interference of different external actors and the formation and dissolution of different regional sub-groupings. Since the collapse of the USSR, Eurasia has been characterized by transition and constant transformation, leading to parallel dynamics of conflict and fragmentation on the one hand, and cooperation and interdependencies on the other hand. Several former Soviet republics have sought to deflect their colonial past under Russian domination. The Baltic states, for example, invested a significant effort in distancing themselves from their previous regional belonging and in (re-) constructing their European identity. Since their accession to the EU and NATO in 2004, they have been considered as part of the European regional complex (Hancock/Libman 2016: 203). Ukraine was lingering between Europe and Eurasia for many years, but – at the latest since the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine – turned its back on the Eurasian regional project (Litra 2016). Georgia has also been pursuing a strictly pro-European agenda since the five-day war with Russia in 2008 and has left all Eurasian regional organizations and free trade agreements (Kuchins et al. 2016).

Many of the other post-Soviet states conceive and actively promote themselves as part of two or more regions (Buzan/Waever 2003: 398; Markedonov 2009). While Belarus uncompromisingly chose Eurasia, Moldova remains divided between Europe and Eurasia, between further integration with the EU or closer relations with the EAEU (Rumer 2017). Some of the Central Asian states see themselves not only as part of Eurasia, but at the same time as part of a genuine Central Asian region, the Black Sea region, the Turkic community as well as the broader West and South Asian region. However, the Central Asians failed to create lasting exclusive Central Asian formats at state level due to numerous tensions, conflicts, and personal hostilities (Allison 2004, 2008; Collins 2009; Qoraboyev 2010). The Caucasian sub-region remains highly divided due to the ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Georgia’s struggle to move closer to the EU (Bolgova 2017). Furthermore, there are adjacent countries with stakes in Eurasia such as China, which is a member state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and has been investing heavily

in its Silk Road initiative,⁴ or Mongolia and Afghanistan, which were not part of the USSR but share large borders with the region and are associate members of some Eurasian regional organizations.

Unique in comparison to other world regions, Eurasia's constituent states have once formed a single state for almost 70 years. The starting point of regional integration is usually the absence or low levels of regional interaction and the desire to intensify exchange. In Eurasia, regional integration started the other way round, namely from high levels of interaction when the states formed a single polity to the collapse of that polity and subsequent disintegration (Libman/Vinokurov 2012: 868). After the official dissolution of the USSR on December 26, 1991, two parallel developments of integration and disintegration set in. On the one hand, the need to dismantle the Soviet Union peacefully and deal with persisting economic, infrastructural, and cultural links and interdependencies led to the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a regional organization with the goal of "economic and political integration without the communist ideology" (Hancock/Libman 2016: 203). On the other hand, the newly independent states began to engage in nation-building and the creation of a distinct national identity and narrative, which in almost all cases implied a strong focus on norms such as sovereignty and non-interference as well as a process of dissociation from Russia. Thus, on the one hand, the post-Soviet states were forced to continue cooperation in order to deal with common problems, interdependencies, and negative externalities resulting from their past. On the other hand, they were keen to disintegrate the structures of the USSR, decrease their dependence on Russia, develop their own national identities, and diversify their foreign relations.

Another defining characteristic of the Eurasian region is the presence of a hegemon that pursues an assertive, if not aggressive, foreign policy towards its neighbors. Russia is by far the most powerful player in Eurasia with a large nuclear arsenal and a GDP of \$ 1.331 trillion in 2015, which is more than seven times as big as the GDP of the second strongest Eurasian state in economic terms, Kazakhstan (GDP = \$ 184.38 billion in 2015; World Bank 2016). Overall, the Russian economy accounts for 2.14 percent of the world economy, but for approximately 76 percent of the regional GDP (Hancock/Libman 2016: 207; World Bank 2014). A prominent tool in Russia's foreign policy is destabilization. In the past years, Russia supported separatist movements in Georgia, Moldova, and, most recently, in Eastern Ukraine, annexed Crimea, and provided both Azerbaijan and Armenia with weapons in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Furthermore, Russia bluntly uses its energy leverage as a foreign policy tool to blackmail its neighbors. Despite its assertive foreign policy towards its so-called "near abroad," Russia actively promotes multilateral regionalism and has been initiating and sponsoring most of the numerous regional organizations that have emerged during the past 20 years. In the 2016 Russian Foreign Policy Concept, regional integration is conceptualized as a tool to "strengthen competitiveness, security, and financial and economic stability" (MFA of the Russian Federation 2016). To reinforce the Eurasian integration process, to expand the Eurasian Economic Union and develop multilateral cooperation with the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States are priority foreign policy goals for Russia (MFA of the Russian Federation 2016).

4 The Silk Road initiative, also called „One Belt, One Road“ (OBOR), is a development and infrastructure strategy by China to connect China with Eurasia and the European continent through roads, railroads, pipelines, and ports along the old trade route through Central Asia.

Last but not least, Eurasia is one of the most autocratic regions in the world (Swedberg/Sprout 2008), as most of the Eurasian states are non-democratic with several of them residing in the group of the most autocratic regimes worldwide (Freedom House 2017a).⁵ While Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan are ranked as partly free, Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan belong to the group of the most repressive states worldwide. Moreover, during the past years some post-Soviet states have experienced authoritarian backlashes as shown by impaired ratings. Especially Russia has moved away from democracy under the Putin administration, reflected by the centralization of power, the erosion of civil and political liberties, and increasing state control over the economy and the media (Ambrosio 2016: 4f). However, despite an overall increase of autocracy in Eurasia, multilateral cooperation and regional integration gained new momentum among post-Soviet states during the past decade.

4. Studying Regional Organizations: Institutional Design and Authority Transfers

Regions are a “fundamental, even driving force of world politics” (Fawn 2009: 5), as they structure international affairs and cut across every dimension in the study of International Relations (Katzenstein 2005). Located between the national and the global level, regions constitute rather subjective categories. There is no uniform definition of what a region is, the only common denominator of all extant definitions is that regions contain more than two countries that are geographically close. Next to geographical proximity, many scholars define regions based on tangible criteria and common features, such as economic interdependence; social, linguistic, and cultural homogeneity; historical and political bonds; or religion (Russett 1967; Cantori/Spiegel 1970). However, regions are often contested and subject to changes, interpretations, and manipulations. Also, certain areas of the world can belong to different regions. I therefore find it more suitable to understand regions as political constructions that refer to territorial location and to geographical or normative contiguity (Börzel/Risse 2016: 7), and treat them as products of culture, economics, history, and politics (Katzenstein 1997: 2, 9). Eurasia, for example, is a highly contested region, which not only has several designations, e.g. the post-Soviet space, newly independent states, or the CIS region, but also includes sometimes more, sometimes fewer countries.

Studying regional organizations is at the core of comparative regionalism, a growing field of study dedicated to the comparative analysis of regional cooperation and integration and regional order in and beyond Europe. This research agenda, which has emerged during the past 25 years, reflects a worldwide phenomenon, namely the steady increase of intra- and cross-regional activities and the proliferation of regional organizations. Regionalism is also a concept within the discipline of International Relations, which can be defined as “state-led processes of building and sustaining formal regional institutions and organizations among at least three states” (Börzel/Risse 2016: 7). This definition conceptualizes regionalism as a top-down, state-induced process of region-building, which entails the creation of formal institutions as well as their empowerment. Regional organizations, which are a type of institutionalized cooperation “among

⁵ Freedom House uses a scale of 1 (the most free) to 7 (the least free) to evaluate civil liberties and political rights worldwide. Countries can be placed into three categories according to their average combined score: 1.0 – 2.5 = free, 3.0 – 5.0 = partly free, 5.5 – 7 = not free.

three or more countries within a geographic space” (Jetschke/Lenz 2013: 626), are thus central to the study of regionalism as they are the most visible outcomes of state-led processes of region- and institution-building, representing valuable indicators of states’ willingness to cooperate and integrate. Regional organizations, however, differ a lot with regard to their purpose, membership, and institutional design (Lenz/Marks 2016). Especially the degree of autonomy from member states’ control varies starkly.

4.1 Authority Transfers from Member States to the Regional Level: The Institutional Design of Regional Organizations

In this paper, I am focusing on authority transfers from member states to regional organizations as reflected by their institutional design, arguing that it represents an important benchmark for the depth of regional integration. Institutional design describes the “set of institutions governing political decision-making” within the organization (Weingast 1995: 2) and is represented by the institutions, rules and policies mentioned in the regional organizations’ founding and amending agreements. An organization’s design reflects which governance competences states are willing to delegate to regional bodies, how much sovereignty they are willing to give up, and which policy domains they are keen to negotiate jointly at the regional level. I am especially interested in how far member states empower regional organizations to fulfill state functions, such as solving collective action problems or providing common goods.

Even though there can be a vast difference between the legal framework defining how the organization should function and the functioning of the organization in practice, the question of why an organization is designed in a certain way is important. Robust institutional design that grants regional organizations authority and thus power and agency is the formal basis for effective organizations. It reflects which governance functions are delegated to regional bodies. Furthermore, there are significant differences among organizations, even within the same region, as the Eurasian case shows. The founding treaty of the EAEU, for instance, comprises more than 800 pages and is extremely precise with regard to rules, rights, and obligations of member states. Other founding treaties are mere eight pages long and leave plenty of room for interpretation. The question is thus not only why states bother writing detailed and ambitious agreements since negotiating them involves significantly more costs than negotiating shallow ones, but also why institutional designs of regional organizations within a region comprising more or less the same member states can differ so much.

There are several ways to study the institutional design of multilateral organizations. By assessing organizations’ institutional similarities and convergences, it is possible to trace diffusion processes between them (Jetschke/Theiner 2016). Other options are to evaluate organizations’ degree of institutionalization, measured by the frequency of meetings, the level of centralization and membership rules (Haftel 2007, 2013) or to define organizations’ degree of legalization, operationalized as precision, obligation, and delegation (Abbott et al. 2000). I am, however, mostly interested in how far member states empower regional organizations to govern in their name. To capture state-like functions of regional organizations and thus the degree of formal regional integration, political authority is the most useful concept. It allows to measure what kind of rights member states transfer to regional organizations, in which field of actions they

empower them to act independently, and on which terms they want to cooperate with the other member states. Political authority comes close to what Weber named legal authority, which is based on rational grounds and embodied in a system of impersonal rules that are contractually established and legally enacted in accordance with known and recognized principles (Weber 1922). Political authority thus differs from charismatic and traditional authority, the first one relying on the charisma or appeal of a leader and his extraordinary qualities, and the second one resting on the belief in the sanctity of traditions and the heredity of power.

Political authority is a distinct form of power, describing the capacity to make binding and legitimate decisions for a collectivity (Lake 2010: 592), which is at the core of governance. In general, authority describes a relation in which actor A claims authority and actor B recognizes actor A's claim to authority as legitimate (Lake 2010; Zürn 2012). It does not necessarily rely on absolute compliance, but rather on the general acceptance of the rules concerning non-compliance. Authority differs from other forms of social power such as force, coercion, persuasion, or argumentation in the sense that obedience is voluntary, based on the belief that the actor possessing authority can claim the legitimacy and competence to exert it. Authority rests on a social contract that exchanges political order for compliance by the governed (Lake 2010: 596). Authority is not confined to the state, but can also reside with Non-Governmental Organizations, transnational firms, or international organizations (Cutler et al. 1999; Lake 2010: 590). In the latter case, member states transfer authority to organizations that promise order in international governance in exchange for restriction of state sovereignty (Kahler/Lake 2009: 247; Lake 2010; Hooghe/Marks 2014). Political authority has to be distinguished from expert or epistemic authority, which refers to the capacity to make competent statements, judgments, assessments, and recommendation based on knowledge and relies on the recognition of competence and expertise of an actor or institution (Simmerl/Zürn 2016; Busch/Liese 2017).

4.2 Dimensions of Authority Transfers: Pooling and Delegation and Why It Is Important to Distinguish between Them

According to the degree and level of authority transfers from member states, regional institution-building processes can be placed on a continuum ranging from intergovernmental cooperation to regional integration. The latter involves supranational elements as states shift political authority to collective bodies that can make binding or authoritative decisions for their members (Lindberg 1963; Kahler/Lake 2009: 246; Börzel 2011). In intergovernmental cooperation, states retain their veto right in decision-making, meaning that they reserve their option to block any proposal by other parties and thus do not give up sovereignty. When member states shift authority to collective bodies, for example by waiving their veto in decision-making, by enabling bodies to implement policies, or by establishing independent dispute settlement bodies, organizations move towards supranationalism (Lenz/Marks 2016: 514). Generally, states are reluctant to delegate comprehensive political authority to regional organizations, but they often agree to formalize decision-making processes, establish dispute-settlement procedures, or create secretariats with wide-ranging competencies (Börzel 2011: 13).

There are two conceptually, logically, and empirically distinct modes of authority transfer to international organizations: pooling and delegation. Pooling characterizes joint decision-making among the states themselves, whereby authority is transferred from individual member states to a collective intergovernmental body of the organization, in which member states directly participate, but give up their capacity to block decisions and to control the body (Keohane/Hoffmann 1991: 7). Pooling comprises formal rules about joint decision-making procedures, the procedure by which decisions are ratified and the extent to which they are binding (Hooghe/Marks 2014: 307). Its main purpose is to enhance efficiency of the organization and to reduce blockades in decision-making (Hooghe/Marks 2014: 317). Delegation describes a conditional grant of authority by member states to an independent body of the organization, such as the general secretariat, enabling it to fill in or decide about the practical details of incomplete contracts and to perform certain limited tasks (Kahler/Lake 2009: 246; Hooghe/Marks 2014: 309). Delegation helps to reduce the transaction costs of decision-making, provides information to all member states, avoids issue cycling, and sustains credible commitments (Hooghe/Marks 2014: 309f).

The degree to which states are willing to delegate or to pool authority differs significantly. In their mapping of 72 international organizations, Hooghe and Marks found out that pooling and delegation vary independently as they involve different trade-offs: pooling can lead to a de facto loss of sovereignty as member states forgo their veto right and accept the risk of being outvoted by the other member states, while delegation implies the empowerment of an independent body that could pursue its own agenda independent of member states' interests (Hooghe/Marks 2014: 310). It is therefore crucial to distinguish between these two dimensions when assessing the authority of regional organizations. Authority of regional organizations is codified and institutionalized through rules that are established in contracts, in which states voluntarily agree to bind themselves to a set of formal rules to facilitate cooperation (Hooghe/Marks 2014, Lenz et. al 2014).

5. Empirical Analysis: Regional Organizations in Eurasia and Their Political Authority

There is a broad variety of regional organizations in Eurasia with overlapping agendas and membership. The first regional organization emerged immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was meant to limit the costs of disintegration and ensure a “civilized divorce” of the former member states of the USSR, was created in December 1991 at the same meeting where the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus agreed on the dissolution of the USSR (Hancock/Libman 2016: 206; Vinokurov 2017: 56). At the beginning of the 2000s, three major post-Soviet regional organizations emerged. The Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), which was recently merged with the newest regional project, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), was founded in 2000. In 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) comprising Russia, four Central Asian states, and China⁶ was created, and one year later, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a security and defense alliance between Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, came into existence. The newest addition to the spaghetti bowl of regional organizations in Eurasia is the EAEU, which started working at

⁶ The SCO used to comprise Russia, China, and all Central Asian States except for Turkmenistan. At a recent SCO summit in June 2017 in Astana, Pakistan and India joined the organization.

the beginning of 2015. The EAEU is a comprehensive economic union with an institutional design closely resembling the European Union and developed out of the Eurasian Customs Union (2010) and the Single Economic Space (2012).

Overall, more than 29 regional organizations have been established in Eurasia since 1991, but not all of them are relevant for the analysis of post-Soviet integration.⁷ Some organizations have a very broad membership including states from adjacent regions, others are administered by international organizations, such as the UN or the EU. The following criteria should therefore ensure that regional organizations that are included in the analysis of pooling and delegation of authority match my research interests:

- they have been established by at least two contiguous states that define their membership on a regional basis,
- they are sufficiently institutionalized in terms of regular meetings and written rules governing decision-making,
- they are not administered by other international organizations,
- the large majority of member states (two thirds) are post-Soviet states.

This definition understands regional organizations as multilateral international organizations with a regionally defined membership, which is reflected by the first criterion. In contrast to international organizations, regional organizations are created and empowered by geographically proximate states that want to “develop their common belonging to a geographical space” (Laruelle/Peyrouse 2012: 5). The second criterion excludes “zombie” organizations that only exist on paper but in fact do not meet nor produce any policy outcomes. Moreover, it ensures that there is a basis for analysis, as the evaluation of political authority relies on codified and institutionalized rules. The third criterion aims to exclude organizations that were initiated and are administered by international organizations, such as the UN or the EU. Organizations that are not run by member states themselves but by external actors do not constitute genuine regional projects that allow for conclusions about member states’ preferences and interests regarding regional governance. Last but not least, due to the regionally confined focus of my analysis, the fourth criterion requires a two-thirds majority of post-Soviet member states to guarantee that regional organizations are not dominated by the interests of actors external to the region. The threshold of a two-thirds majority allows to capture the volatility of the Eurasian region as neighboring states can be included in regional organizations.

This definition leaves me with 14 regional organizations for analysis that were established between 1991 and 2015 and are in equal parts multi-purpose and task-specific. The smallest organization in terms of membership has two member states, while the largest has 13 members. The overview reveals that the majority of regional organizations in Eurasia deal with economic and/or security issues. While the main economic goals are to enhance trade between member states and to curb economic development of the region, in the security realm organizations aim to fight terrorism, separatism, and extremism (as in the SCO)

⁷ A complete list of all regional organizations in Eurasia can be found in Annex 2.

or to create a common defense alliance (as in the CSTO). Further issue areas covered by regional organization are finance, transport and infrastructure, cultural affairs, and political cooperation. The selected 14 organizations are analyzed in more detail in the next section.

Table 1: Overview of regional organizations in Eurasia that will be included in the analysis of authority

Name of Organization	Year of Establishment	Member States	Main Issue Areas	Purpose
<i>Eurasian / Post-Soviet Organizations</i>				
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	1991	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Economy, security, political affairs	Multi-purpose
Union State of Belarus and Russia	2000	Belarus, Russia	Economy, security, political affairs, cultural and societal affairs, etc.	Multi-purpose
Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC)	2000 - 2014 (merged with EAEU in 2015)	Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Economy	Multi-purpose
Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)	2001 (successor of Shanghai Five 1996)	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Uzbekistan	Mainly security, but also trade, border management, politics, tourism, etc.	Task-specific
Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)	2002 (originated from Collective Security Treaty 1992)	Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan	Security	Task-specific
Eurasian Development Bank (EDB)	2006	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Finance, research on regional integration	Task-specific
Eurasian Customs Union (CU)	2010 (successor of CES, merged with EAEU in 2015)	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia	Economy	Task-specific
Common Economic Space (CES)	2012 (developed out of CU, merged with EAEU in 2015)	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia	Economy	Task-specific
Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)	2015 (successor of EurAsEC, CU and CES)	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia	Economy, transport, energy, agriculture	Multi-purpose
<i>Eurasian Organizations created to promote integration without Russia</i>				
GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development	1997 (2001, 2006)	Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine (Uzbekistan 1999-2002)	Security, economy, Energy, democracy promotion, European integration	Multi-purpose

Central Asian Organizations				
International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS)	1993	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Environment, water management	Task-specific
Turkic Organizations				
The Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council)	2009	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey	Culture, economy	Multi-purpose
Asian Organizations				
Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)	1985/1992	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Economy, energy, transport	Multi-purpose
European Organizations				
Intergovernmental Commission Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (IGC TRACECA)	1998 (developed out of TRACECA 1993)	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Iran, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan	Economy, transport	Multi-purpose

Source: Own illustration.

6. Mapping Regional Organizations in Eurasia: Patterns and Trends

To study and map the evolution of Eurasian regionalism, and particularly the development of regional authority, I analyze Eurasian regional organizations and their institutional design applying text analysis. The information for interpreting the authority of regional organizations in Eurasia is extracted from primary sources such as founding treaties, amending treaties, annexes, conventions, charters, or rules of procedures of regional organizations. The main focus is on formal rules, but to narrow the gap between intention and actual practice, the translation of formal rules into institutions is also investigated. All in all, more than 35 treaties, most of them in Russian, were coded and analyzed for this paper.⁸

6.1 Operationalizing Authority Transfers to Regional Organizations: Pooling and Delegation

Departing from a model to assess authority in international organizations developed by Hooghe et al. (Hooghe/Marks 2014; Lenz et. al 2014; Lenz/Marks 2016; Hooghe et al. 2017), I operationalize authority

⁸ Often, rules of procedure, rules for decision-making procedures, and competencies of delegated bodies are defined not in the founding treaty but in separate documents, such as rules of procedures, charters, or amending treaties of RO bodies.

transfers to regional organizations as 1) pooling of authority in the highest intergovernmental body and 2) delegation of authority to an independent body across several decision areas. Pooling of authority captures decision-making rules of regional organizations and is measured in the highest intergovernmental body with regard to voting rules, bindingness of decisions, and ratification procedures at the stage of final decision-making. States can take decisions by unanimity or consensus, by supermajority, and by simple or absolute majority. They can be nonbinding, partially binding, or binding. Last but not least, sometimes decisions have to be ratified by all or by some member states in order to come into effect. Consequently, states have a variety of options at their disposal when designing decision-making rules.

As the sovereignty loss is highest when member states waive their right to veto by agreeing to majority voting and thereby accepting the risk of being outvoted by others, the score for voting rules counts double and is thus multiplied by two, while the scores for bindingness and ratification are just counted once. Hence, the maximum score of 4 is reached when the highest intergovernmental bodies of regional organizations take binding decisions that do not require ratification, by simple majority voting. The minimum score of 0 is reached when they take nonbinding decisions by unanimity or consensus that only enter into force after ratification by all members. In the latter case, member states retain complete control over the decision-making process.

Table 2: Operationalization of Authority Transfers

Authority Dimension	What It Means	Trade-off	Operationalization	Measurement
Pooling	Joint decision-making among states in intergovernmental bodies of RO	Loss of veto/ sovereignty: member states can be outvoted	Voting rules, ratification procedures and bindingness of decisions in the highest intergovernmental body of RO	Summated rating scale from 0 (no pooling) to 4 (maximum pooling)
Delegation	Conditional grant of authority by member states to an independent body of the RO	Loss of sovereignty: Member states empower third actor	Delegation of authority to secretariat in 11 decision areas	Summated rating scale from 0 (no delegation) to 11 (maximum delegation)

Source: Own illustration, based on conceptual distinction by Kahler/Lake 2009 and Hooghe/Marks 2014.

Delegation captures the existence of a delegated body and measures authority transfers by member states to general secretariats or executive committees that fulfill the role of a secretariat, in ten decision areas, such as membership accession or suspension, policy initiation, or budget drafting.⁹ Delegated bodies are still under member states' ultimate control, but they often enjoy autonomy to fill in the details of incomplete contracts, provide expertise, or propose policy initiatives. At the upper end of the delegation scale, some secretariats can even make binding decisions or punish non-compliance. Delegation is calculated as

⁹ An overview of all eleven decision areas as well as the detailed operationalization for both dimensions of authority transfer can be found in Annex 1.

a summated rating scale ranging from 0 (no delegation) to 11 (maximum delegation). Member states can also delegate authority to other independent bodies of regional organizations, such as consultative bodies, parliamentary assemblies, or judicial bodies, but in this paper, I am only analyzing delegation to secretariats or executive committees that function as secretariats. Both numeric indicators for pooling and delegation are transformed into qualitative indicators, indicating high, medium, or low levels of pooling or delegation.¹⁰

6.2 Authority of Regional Organizations in Eurasia

The mapping of Eurasian regional organizations and their authority shows some surprising results (see Table 3 below). Contrary to the assumptions formulated by most theories of regional cooperation and integration, there is a significant divergence of pooling and delegation across time and organizations. While organizations that were founded in the 1990s and early 2000s display a rather low level of authority, some of the newer organizations score almost double as high on both pooling and delegation. There is not much change of authority within organizations over time, with regional institutional design in Eurasia proving to be rather static. The only organization whose design has changed over time is the EAEU, which developed out of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space. Both predecessor agreements already provided for a permanent non-state organ, the Eurasian Economic Commission, which also became the central organ of the EAEU. The Commission developed from a purely intergovernmental to a supranational organ that is now able to make binding regulatory decisions on matters relating to member states' domestic jurisdiction.

Overall, there is a wide variation of pooling as some organizations reach medium to high scores between 1.5 and 3.5, while others do not pool at all. Several of the highest intergovernmental bodies take binding decisions that do not require ratification, but only the Eurasian Development Bank's (EDB) Council takes decision by supermajority or simple majority, depending on the matter. The EDB is therefore the only organization in Eurasia in which member states waived their right to veto in the highest intergovernmental body. The same variation can be found with regard to delegation, where organizations reach scores between 1 and 7. Approximately two thirds of the analyzed organizations dispose of secretariats with low to medium authority, reaching scores between 1 and 4.5. Four of the analyzed secretariats/executive committees are equipped with more comprehensive competences and are able to perform tasks beyond infrastructural and administrative support, such as to draft the annual budget, recruit staff or initiate and draft policies. Overall, delegation is more pronounced than pooling: in most Eurasian organizations member states take decisions in the highest intergovernmental body by consensus and thus preserve their veto power. By contrast, several secretariats dispose of wide-reaching competences. In this regard, regional authority in Eurasia corresponds to a global trend, according to which pooling decision-making is the exception rather than the rule as opposed to increasing levels of delegation in regional organizations worldwide (Lenz et al. 2014; Hooghe/Marks 2014; Lenz/Marks 2016).

Given the sample size of 14 regional organizations, it is difficult to establish an explicit temporal trend. However, the mapping reveals a gradual deepening of formal regional integration over time, which started to gain momentum in 2006 with the creation of the EDB. Regional organizations that were created in the

¹⁰ The numeric indicators and the transformation details can be found in Annex 1.

1990s and early 2000s display rather low levels of pooling with scores between 0 and 2 and low to medium levels of delegation with scores between 1 and 4.5. The CIS, the very first regional organization, and IGC TRACECA, an organization that was initiated by the EU but is now run by the member states themselves, represent exceptions in this group of ROs as they score higher on delegation. Moreover, membership in the early years of Eurasian regionalism varies a lot as some organizations consist of 13 member states (IGC TRACECA), while others have only four members (GUAM). Regional organizations that were created after 2005 demonstrate both more pronounced delegation with medium to high scores between 4 and 7 and higher levels of pooling with scores between 1.5 and 3.5. The Turkic Council is an exception among the younger organizations, displaying the weakest institutional design of all analyzed regional organizations. Overall, membership is smaller and more stable with four to six member states on average.

Table 3: Analysis of Authority of Eurasian ROs

Name of RO	Founding Year	Member States	Initiating/ Founding States	Scope of Integration	Authority Pooling	Authority Delegation
CIS	1991	AZ, AM, BY, MD, RU, KZ, KG, TJ, UZ	RU, BY, UA	Multi-purpose	Medium (1.5)	Medium (4.5)
ECO	1992	AF, AZ, IR, PK, TR, KZ, KG, TJ, TM, UZ	IR, PK, TR	Multi-purpose	Medium (1.5)	Low (3)
IFAS	1993	KZ, KG, TJ, TM, UZ	KZ, KG, TJ, TM, UZ	Task-specific	Low (0)	Low (3)
GUAM	1997	AZ, GE, MD, UA	AZ, GE, MD, UA	Multi-Purpose	Medium (1.5)	Low (1)
IGC TRACECA	1998	AM, AZ, BG, GE, IR, MD, RO, UA, TJ, KZ, KG, UZ	AM, AZ, GE, TJ, TM, KZ, KG, UZ, EU	Task-specific	Medium (2)	Medium (5.5)
Union State	2000	RU, BY	RU, BY	Multi-purpose	Medium (2)	Medium (4.5)
EurAsEC	2000	RU, BY, KZ, KG, TJ	RU, BY, KZ, KG, TJ	Multi-purpose	Medium (1.5)	Low (3.5)
SCO	2001	CN, RU, KZ, KG, TJ, UZ	CN, RU, KZ, KG, TJ	Multi-purpose	Medium (1.5)	Low (3)
CSTO	2002	AM, BY, RU, KZ, KG, TJ	AM, RU, KZ, KG, TJ, UZ	Task-specific	Medium (2)	Low (3)
EDB	2006	AM, BY, RU, KZ, KG, TJ	RU, KZ	Task-specific	High (3.5)	High (7)
Turkic Council	2009	AZ, KG, KZ, TR	AZ, KG, KZ, TR	Multi-purpose	Low (0)	Low (1)
CU	2010	AM, BY, RU, KG, KZ	RU, BY, KZ	Task-specific	Medium (1.5)	Medium (4)
CES	2012	AM, BY, RU, KZ, KG	RU, BY, KZ	Task-specific	Medium (1.5)	High (7)
EAEU	2015	AM, BY, RU, KZ, KG	RU, BY, KZ	Task-specific	Medium (2)	High (7)

Source: Own illustration, based on analysis of primary sources.

The four weakest Eurasian organizations with regard to authority transfers are ECO, IFAS, GUAM, and the Turkic Council. It is noteworthy that Russia is not a member of any of these four organizations. When comparing the aggregated pooling scores of organizations without Russian membership to scores of organizations with Russian memberships, the latter score almost three times as high. The same ratio holds true for aggregated delegation scores. Even when counting CU, CES, and EAEU as one organization, the scores are still double as high. This observation hints at Russia's central role for regional integration in Eurasia, but will be explored more in depth later.

6.3 A Closer Look at Eurasian Regional Organizations

The most remarkable organizations in terms of institutional design are the EDB and the EAEU, both of which display pronounced pooling and delegation. The executive committee of the EDB, which fulfills the role of a permanent secretary, is not only tasked to draft the organization's annual budget, to recruit its own staff, and to initiate contacts with other ROs, but also has the right to initiate policies and to carry out executive functions, for instance to draft policies and take decisions on issues within its competence. Especially the right to initiate and draft policies provides the committee with agenda-setting power. Moreover, the EDB is the organization that scores highest with regard to pooling of authority. Decisions in the supreme intergovernmental body, the Council of the Bank, are adopted by supermajority in vital areas, such as constitutional amendments or membership accession, and by simple majority in all other decision areas. However, votes in the EDB are distributed according to the shares the member states hold in the bank's capital. Not surprisingly, Russia holds the majority of shares (66 percent) and therefore cannot be outvoted by the other member states. The other five members, however, waived their veto and accepted the risk of having to adopt decisions that are not in their interest.

The EAEU developed out of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, and has an integrated market of 183 million people and a GDP of \$ 2.2 trillion (EAEU 2016). The idea of creating a Eurasian Union already emerged in 1994, but it took 21 years and many treaties more for the idea to fully materialize in 2015. The institutional design of the EAEU differs from its predecessors in several regards. Decisions in the highest intergovernmental organ of the EAEU, the Eurasian Supreme Council, are taken by consensus, meaning that member states preserve their veto. Decisions are binding for all member states and do not require ratification. The most remarkable feature of the EAEU is its permanent regulatory organ, the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), which was modelled on the European Commission.

The EEC disposes of wide reaching competences and can initiate and draft policies, adopt decisions, monitor the implementation of international treaties, frame strategic plans, and even conclude international treaties on behalf of the EAEU (Treaty on the EAEU 2014). Most importantly, the ten members of the board of the commission take their decisions independent from member states governments' interests by qualified majority, introducing a supranational element to the EAEU. Members of the board are appointed for a term of four years. Decisions by the Commission have a directly binding and regulatory effect for all member states. It is particularly noteworthy that Russia can now be outvoted by other members as all member states are equally represented and have the same amount of votes. Russia's dominant position in

the preceding Commission of the Customs Union was guaranteed by weighted voting, with Russia disposing of 57 percent of the votes and Belarus and Kazakhstan each having 21,5 percent of the votes. By contrast, the rules of the EEC grant every board member and council member one vote. Another institutional novelty is the establishment of the Eurasian Court and the creation of a dispute resolution mechanism, which enables member states and private parties to appeal against the actions of their business partners or decisions taken by EAEU bodies. The EAEU thus disposes of two supranational organs. Interviews with officials at the Eurasian Economic Commission in Moscow, which were conducted in February and March 2017, confirmed that formal rules as defined in the treaty are indeed applied.¹¹ Moreover, my interlocutors maintained that Russia was making an effort to observe the rules and recognize the supranational competencies of the Eurasian Economic Commission.¹²

6.4 Phases of Eurasian Regionalism: From Shallow to Meaningful Integration

The mapping of regional institutional design in Eurasia in terms of authority transfers, member states, purpose, and policy agenda not only reveals a gradual deepening of regional integration over time, but also roughly sketches three phases of regionalism. The first phase begins in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of the CIS and lasts approximately until the end of the nineties. This phase is characterized by ambiguous and wide-reaching integration goals and large membership as almost all former Soviet republics participate in regional initiatives. There is cooperation, but no real integration as member states remain in full control of regional organizations and decision-making at the regional level. Regional cooperation is mainly seen as a way to coordinate reforms and limit the costs of disintegration (Hancock/Libman 2016). This picture coincides with the general center-periphery understanding of the Yeltsin government. Naturally, Russia took over the permanent seat of the Soviet Union in the UN Security Council and assumed most Soviet assets (Curtis 1996). Soon after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the term “near abroad” emerged, which referred to the former Soviet republics in a rather diminutive way, distinguishing them from the rest of the international community (Safire 1994).

The second phase of Eurasian regionalism starts at the end of the 1990s and largely coincides with Putin’s first presidential term. There is a proliferation of rather shallow regional agreements, including regional organizations founded by smaller states without Russian participation. Authority transfers to regional organizations are limited and many agreements are not fully implemented (Hancock/Libman 2016). With the creation of the SCO and the CSTO two security organizations emerge in Eurasia. Moreover, the basis for the Eurasian Customs Union is established. Especially during this phase, a somewhat fragmented landscape of regional organizations with overlapping memberships and agendas evolves.

¹¹ The list of all interviews conducted in Russia can be found in Annex 3.

¹² Interview with Sergej Shukhno, Moscow, March 7, 2017; interview with Tatjana Valovaya, Moscow, March 16, 2017; interview with Aleksandr Shamshurin, Moscow, March 21, 2017.

The third phase, which witnesses real integration, begins in 2006 with the creation of the EDB and culminates in the establishment of the EAEU in 2015. This phase sees not only greater authority transfers to regional organizations and actual implementation of agreements, but also the creation of supranational organs. At the same time, this phase is centered on a core of six countries in favor of Eurasian integration: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The focus of cooperation is on economic integration. Agreements concluded in this phase represent more advanced “hard-law” integration projects that bind member states to comprehensive commitments (Delcour 2015: 2; Dragneva 2013: 41). The Eurasian Economic Commission, for instance, can issue decisions with direct binding regulatory effect for member states. Within its sphere of competence, it can adopt policies independent of national governments’ interests (Treaty on the EAEU 2014). Furthermore, membership in the CU, the SES, and the EAEU is incompatible with EU Free Trade Agreements or membership in the EU, which leads to a de-facto mutual exclusiveness of the EU and Eurasian regional projects and increases the costs of joining Eurasian organizations for its members (Delcour 2015, 2016). The third phase sees a rhetoric shift away from the term post-Soviet integration to the term Eurasian integration. Eurasia is the new buzzword which is used to frame a unique region that functions as a bridge between Europe and Asia, but is based on genuine characteristics and values that differ from Asian and European ones. Eurasian integration is mentioned as a key strategic priority for Russia for the first time in 2007 in the strategy for long-term social-economic development 2020 (RANEPA 2008).

6.5 The Eurasian Puzzle

The results of the empirical analysis are surprising and point to an atypical behavior of both the regional hegemon and the smaller Eurasian states. Firstly, all states were formerly part of a single polity, the Soviet Union, and ever since its dissolution have been striving for sovereignty, autonomy, and dissociation from Russia. Now some of these states have entered deep integration agreements with Russia, which create mutual dependencies and partly reinforce hierarchies and power gaps. Moreover, the evolution of Eurasian regionalism differs significantly from other world regions. While it is typically the absence of regional interactions that provides the starting point of regional integration, in Eurasia, it was the collapse of a single political entity that kicked off regionalism, driven by the desire “to mitigate the consequences of cutting the existing ties” (Libman/Vinokurov 2012: 868).

Secondly, autocratic states are usually reluctant to conclude deep integration agreements and accept sovereignty restrictions by regional organizations due to the lack of incentives to delegate power and the problem of credible commitments. Moreover, giving up on the right to veto can limit member states’ room for maneuver and opportunities to provide rents to their supporters. Remarkably, the deepening of Eurasian regionalism during the past decade coincides with an authoritarian backlash in Russia and an increasingly assertive Russian foreign policy under President Putin (Ambrosio 2016; Freedom House 2017b). As autocracy on the domestic level is deepening, Russia increasingly invests in multilateral regional organizations with intrusive institutional designs. Thirdly, it is surprising that a disproportionately strong regional hegemon binds itself to formal rules and gives up sovereignty. Hegemonic stability theory predicts the prevalence of intergovernmental arrangements and bilateral agreements in which the hegemon exploits

power asymmetries with its neighbors (Krasner 1976; Gilpin 1987; Solingen 2008). Russia, however, seems to actively pursue the creation of multilateral organizations with authoritative institutional designs and is even willing to accept supranational elements as it has been a founding state of all ROs that score high on pooling and delegation.

The paper's main goal is to provide an overview of regional integration in Eurasia by mapping regional organizations and their authority in terms of pooling and delegation. Nevertheless, the next section asks why Russia and the smaller Eurasian states decided to transfer more authority to regional organizations and give up sovereignty. Potential explanations offered by extant theories of regional cooperation and integration are discussed with regard to their explanatory power, paying particular attention to Russia's role as the regional hegemon and agenda setter.

7. Explaining the Increase in Regional Authority: Ruling Elites' Interests in the Deepening of Regional Integration

Russian participation seems to be a crucial driver for the transfer of authority to regional organizations, since Russia is a founding member of all organizations that score medium to high on pooling and delegation whereas it does not participate in the organizations with the lowest scores. However, not everything can be reduced to Russian hegemony. Several of the smaller post-Soviet states are in favor of Eurasian regional integration, too. They are willing to access multilateral organizations with strong delegated bodies and intergovernmental decision-making organs in which they are required to waive their veto. Some of these states, for example Kazakhstan and Belarus, even take pro-active stances towards integration, voicing their interests and demands firmly. In this regard, the EAEU presents an interesting case as Russia agreed to be equal among other member states in the EAEU's reformed Economic Commission. While Russia's dominant position in the preceding Commission of the Customs Union was guaranteed by a majority of shares and weighted voting, the rules of the new Commission grant all ten commissioners one vote. Additionally, weighted voting was abolished. Recent field research in Russia has shown that the reform of the Commission was mainly a result of pressure by Kazakhstan and Belarus, who wanted to increase their influence vis-à-vis Russia and curtail their neighbor's dominance in the new organization.¹³ A comprehensive account to explain the deepening of regionalism in Eurasia should therefore not only illuminate Russia's role as the hegemon in the creation and set-up of regional organizations, but also smaller member states' interests and motives to go along with Russian proposals. For reasons of scope, the remainder of this paper will largely focus on Russia, proposing to open the black box of the state and study ruling elites' motivations.

Why do we see deeper regional integration from 2006 onwards after 15 years of shallow regionalism? Why did the Eurasian states create a regional organization disposing of a supranational commission in

¹³ Mentioned in interview with Evgeny Vinokurov, Saint Petersburg, February 22, 2017; interview with Evgeny Treshchenkov, Saint Petersburg, February 21 and 28, 2017; interview with Alexander Gabuev, Moscow, March 6, 2017 and in interview with Konstantin Misherjakov, Saint Petersburg, March 13, 2017.

which even Russia waives its veto power? Most theories of regional cooperation and integration cannot fully account for the deepening of regional integration as the explanatory variables they propose have not changed over time in Eurasia (see literature review in Section 2). It is not only the fact that the post-Soviet states needed almost two decades and many shallow initiatives to come up with deep regional integration, but also the existence of a hegemon that is willing to accept sovereignty restrictions in the Eurasian Economic Commission, that challenge common explanations. Last but not least, it is difficult to account for why authoritarian states access or even create regional organizations that put constraints on their domestic room for maneuver. What many theories have in common is that they understand the state as a unitary actor. However, sometimes it can be useful to turn to the second image and study the internal structure of states when analyzing international politics (Waltz 1959). I argue that on an empirical level solving the Eurasian puzzle requires us to stop treating the state as a unitary actor. Instead, we need to open the black box of the state and study ruling elites' threat perceptions and foreign policy preferences concerning regional integration and how they have changed over time. As most Eurasian states are authoritarian or hybrid regimes, civil society interests can largely be ignored. Almost all of my interview partners in Russia confirmed that Eurasian integration is first and foremost a presidential project, which is conceptualized and implemented by the top of the Russian government.¹⁴ The same holds true for the other member states of the EAEU.

I contend that the deepening of Eurasian regionalism as reflected by increasing authority transfers to regional organizations and the introduction of supranational elements hints at changed threat perceptions and foreign policy preferences among ruling elites, which in turn resulted in changed foreign policy strategies. In any given setting, actors prefer some outcomes to others and pursue strategies to achieve their most preferred possible outcomes (Frieden 1999: 41). Strategies are tools that actors use to get as close to their preferences as possible taking into account their environment, other actors' strategies, and power disparities (Frieden 1999: 41f). There is thus a logical chain: actors constantly observe their environment and evaluate their options. When they perceive new threats, their foreign policy preferences adapt to the new environment. These altered preferences are then translated into foreign policy strategies. I assume that altered threat perceptions, foreign policy preferences and strategies should be reflected in the official rhetoric of ruling elites as they alter their narratives accordingly.

In the 1990s, integration initiatives by Russia were met with public skepticism as a throwback to the Soviet regime. In the mid-2000s, closer cooperation with neighboring countries with shared history, language, and business culture in the security and economic spheres gathered public support (Kirkham 2016: 116). A closer look at official strategies of the Russian government shows that the significance of Eurasian integration in the official Russian discourse has indeed increased. The term is mentioned for the first time as a key strategic priority in 2007 in the strategy for long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation until 2020 (RANEPa 2008). From then on, it has prominently featured in every official strategy concerning foreign policy or socioeconomic development of the Russian government. Several interlocutors in Moscow and Saint Petersburg stated that the significance of Eurasian integration in Russian foreign policy has steadily amplified over the past years.¹⁵ Some connected this development to President Putin's

¹⁴ See Annex 3 for an overview of all interviews.

¹⁵ Interview with Sergej Karaganov, Moscow, February 17, 2017; Interview with Evgeny Vinokurov, Saint Petersburg,

third presidential term: “While his first and second presidential terms were largely about domestic reform and modernization, the third term is centered on foreign politics, the formation of a genuine Eurasian space and decoupling from the West. Eurasian integration provided Putin with a new concept to run his campaign on.”¹⁶

The question that immediately emerges is why this change in foreign policy strategy came about. Why did Putin need a new concept for his presidential campaign? One way forward is to analyze perceived internal and external changes that required ruling elites to change their foreign policy preferences and strategies. I assume that there were certain structural incentives that provoked elites to change their foreign policy strategies. However, I am mostly interested in how these incentives were perceived and filtered by key actors among elites. Whereas a detailed analysis of threat perceptions and foreign policy preferences as reflected in official discourses would go beyond the scope of this paper, several Russian experts I talked to claimed that it was the increasing influence of both the EU and China in Eurasia that compelled ruling elites to change their regional strategy. However, while the EU is mostly perceived as normative threat, China is feared because of its economic and demographic strength.¹⁷ Regional integration in that regard was seen as a means to strengthen Russia’s role in the world and to increase Russian power through pooling capabilities at the regional level.¹⁸

I therefore propose that the reasons for the shift in preferences, motivations, and strategies in Russia can best be explained with an altered version of balance of power theory (Waltz 1979; Keohane 1988; Snyder 1990; Walt 1985, 1987, 1993), focusing on the alliance-building argument. An alliance is a coalition of states to accomplish a certain goal – for instance, to counter a common adversary or to pool capabilities and power. Usually, an alliance is a response to a threat. When perceiving threats, actors can either counter them by internal means, e.g. by investing in their own capabilities, or by external means, e.g. by forming alliances (Goldstein 1995). While the classical understanding framed the main purpose of alliances as military- or security-related (Snyder 1990; Walt 1987, 1993), contemporary accounts reckon that alliances may also serve political, economic, strategic, or ideational interests and motives. However, classic balance-of-power approaches, just like many other theories, understand the state as a unitary actor. As opposed to neo-realists, Barnett (1996) argues that alliances are formed in response to perceived threats. While Walt (1987) maintained that the level of threat a state poses to another state is a function of its power, geographic proximity, military capabilities, and perceived aggressiveness, for Barnett (1996) the perception of threats originates from actors’ differing conceptions of identity. Thus, alliances do not form because of differences in power, but because of divergent ideas, beliefs, and social constructions among ruling elites. It is thus not about objective threats, but rather about how elites perceive and make sense of other states and their incumbent governments. Moreover, threats do not necessarily have to be located at the international

February 22, 2017; Interview with Evgeny Treshchenkov, Saint Petersburg, February 21 and 28, 2017; Interview with Alexander Gabuev, Moscow, March 6, 2017; Interview with Andrej Devjatkov, Moscow, March 6, 2017.

16 Interview with Andrej Devjatkov, Moscow, March 6, 2017.

17 Interview with Fyodor Lukyanov, Moscow, February 16, 2017; 2017 Interview with Alexander Gabuev, Moscow, March 6, 2017; Interview with Andrej Devjatkov, Moscow, March 6, 2017; Interview with Stanislav Tkachenko, Saint Petersburg, March 15, 2017.

18 Interview with Evgeny Treshchenkov, Moscow, February 21 and 28, 2017; Interview with Alexander Gabuev, Moscow, March 6, 2017; Interview with Konstantin Misherjakov, Saint Petersburg, March 13, 2017.

level, they can also be perceived at the regional or even the domestic level. Thus, the argument is that there are structural incentives to create alliances. But these incentives are perceived and filtered by ruling elites, who alter their foreign policy preferences and strategies and mobilize their resources accordingly, including changing or adapting policies and narratives.

Relying on this approach, the EAEU can be understood as a non-traditional means of counter-alliance building, serving economic and political interests. It is the Russian government's response to perceived threats, which derive from starkly differing ideas about world order and hierarchies as well as social constructions of roles. Russians feel increasingly encircled by unfriendly regimes. While the EU is perceived as a normative threat, China is mostly feared because of its aggressive economic policy and sheer demographics. By integrating smaller states into comprehensive regional agreements and by making Eurasian and European integration projects mutually exclusive, ruling elites can prevent those states from concluding agreements with external actors, such as the EU. Regional organizations in that regard serve as tools to re-unite the former Soviet republics under a common institutional architecture, protect them from external influence, create new vertical dependencies, and promote a Russian regional blueprint based on the understanding of a natural Russian sphere of interests. At the same time, Russia can improve its own position both on the regional and the international level by building a more stable region of states that are mutually dependent. Especially the Eurasian Economic Union is seen as a tool to create stability through economic growth in the region. As a Russian foreign policy expert said: "Russia wanted its own European Union to be taken more seriously as the center of gravity in Eurasia. Today you need your own regional bloc to increase your bargaining power."¹⁹

But membership in effective regional organizations can have more side effects. Ambrosio (2016), for instance, argues that Russia purposefully bolsters authoritarianism abroad, as democratic reform and revolution in neighboring countries could endanger its own regime survival. The ability of one country to resist democratic pressures by external actors benefits all other autocratic states in the region. Failed transition delegitimizes democratization efforts and serves as a warning example for other governments (Ambrosio 2016). Membership in regional organizations can provide rulers with ideational and material resources to stabilize their regimes and ensure their survival (Börzel 2011: 18; Söderbaum 2004, 2010).

Moreover, the EAEU allows member states to face international partners on more equal terms. By pooling their capabilities, member states can exert greater leverage in their bargaining with other states or organizations. Balance of power theory also helps to understand smaller states' motives for joining regional organizations. Regional integration allows for bandwagoning as smaller states bind themselves to institutions to enhance their power within them and profit from the hegemon's influence and resources (Waltz 2000; Solingen 2008: 263). All member states of the newer Eurasian ROs depend on access to Russian markets as well as on Russian resources. Moreover, membership in regional organizations can increase the countries' economic and political weight on international markets (Hancock 2009: 25-29). At the same time, membership in regional organizations allows smaller member states to balance the hegemon and commit it to rules and obligations. Exploring the smaller member states' perspective, however, requires a more in-depth analysis of threat perceptions and foreign policy preferences among ruling elites.

¹⁹ Interview with Alexander Gabuev, Moscow, March 6, 2017.

8. Conclusion and Outlook

The goal of this paper was to analyze the development of regional integration in Eurasia since the break-up of the Soviet Union by mapping regional organizations, analyzing their institutional design, and identifying patterns of integration. The mapping revealed a general deepening of regionalism over time, reflected by increasing authority transfers to newer regional organizations and the creation of supranational organs. Moreover, the implementation of agreements has improved. While regional organizations that were created in the 90s and early 2000s display only limited pooling and low to moderate delegation, regional organizations that were created after 2005 show pronounced delegation and median to high pooling.

Overall, three phases of Eurasian regionalism can be distinguished. The first phase lasting from the beginning until the late nineties was characterized by ambiguous and wide-reaching integration goals. Regional organizations under full control of member states mainly pursued the goal to coordinate reforms and limit the costs of disintegration. The second phase, coinciding with the transition from Yeltsin to Putin and Putin's first presidential term, saw the increase of rather shallow regional agreements. Integration was still limited. Finally, there was a significant deepening of integration during the third phase, which began in 2006 with the creation of the EDB. Regional organizations created in this phase display both increased pooling and delegation and are centered on a core of six countries in favor of Eurasian integration: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Furthermore, agreements in these organizations are incompatible with EU Free Trade Agreements or EU membership, increasing the costs of joining them. The most remarkable organization is the EAEU, which disposes of two supranational organs and relies upon the principle of equality of all members.

The results of the analysis pose a puzzle to scholars of comparative regionalism in several aspects: Firstly, it is surprising that the states of the region have concluded deep and consequential integration agreements with Russia despite the fact that they have been striving for sovereignty, autonomy, and dissociation from their former occupant ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Secondly, it is surprising that autocratic states conclude deep integration agreements and actually also implement them, as they limit their room for maneuver and opportunities to provide rents to supporters. Moreover, the deepening of Eurasian regionalism during the past decade coincides with an authoritarian backlash in Russia and an increasingly assertive Russian foreign policy under President Putin. Thirdly, it is surprising that a regional hegemon binds itself to formal rules and gives up sovereignty. Russia has been actively pursuing the creation of multilateral organizations with authoritative institutional designs and has even agreed to supranational bodies.

Since the discussion of potential drivers offered by mainstream theories of regional cooperation and integration finds that none of the explanations seems to fit the Eurasian context, the paper proposes to open up the black box of the state and study ruling elites' threat perceptions and foreign policy preferences instead. This is preliminarily sketched out for the Russian case, taking into consideration that Russian participation seems to be crucial for authority transfers to regional organizations in Eurasia. It is argued that new threat perceptions led to an alteration in foreign policy preferences, which in turn resulted in a changed foreign policy strategy with regard to regional integration. Those changes should also be reflected in official discourses, for instance in speeches, statements, and articles by government officials as well as in official strategies of the Russian government, as ruling elites adapted their policies and narratives accordingly.

Regional organizations do not represent an end in themselves, but are presumably tools to achieve other goals. I therefore propose to apply an altered version of balance of power theory and understand regional organizations as alliances, or more precisely, as counter-alliances to counter perceived threats. Russian elites feel increasingly encircled by unfriendly states and fear interventions of the European Union and China in a region that is considered Russia's natural sphere of influence. Applying a more constructivist stance, I argue that those perceived threats do not result from material factors, such as differences in power, but from starkly differing ideas of hierarchy and order, value beliefs and social construction of roles and enemies. Over the years, Russian elites have understood that only functioning regional organizations provide efficient alliances and have therefore decided to create the EAEU and agreed to give up a certain amount of sovereignty for the greater good. Moreover, given Russia's recent involvement in several conflicts, Belarus and Kazakhstan most likely would not have joined the EAEU if Russia had not made any concessions.

Regional organizations therefore serve political, economic, strategic, and ideational interests and motives. Moreover, they allow their member states to pool their capabilities and consequently exert greater leverage in their bargaining with other states or organizations. As a member of a recognized regional bloc, it is easier to face international partners on equal terms. In that regard, the EAEU from a Russian perspective presents the Eurasian counterpart of the EU. Especially in the early phase of the organization, Russia was keen to initiate inter-institutional contacts between the EAEU and the EU. At the same time, regional organizations allow Russia to create closer bonds with the smaller Eurasian states and, by making Eurasian and European integration projects mutually exclusive, prevent them from concluding agreements with external actors, such as the EU. Regional integration also allows for bandwagoning as less powerful states bind themselves to institutions to enhance their power within them and profit from the hegemon's influence and resources. Simultaneously, membership in regional organizations allows smaller member states to balance the hegemon and commit it to rules and obligations. A region-internal side effect of regional organizations is the possibility to stabilize incumbent regimes by preventing democratic reform and revolution in neighboring countries and by providing rulers with ideational and material resources.

A constructivist account of the balance of power theory provides a promising way forward to solve the Eurasian puzzle and investigate ruling elites' motivations and should therefore be pursued in future research. Theoretical parameters should be translated into concrete and observable expectations with regard to changes in official discourses and narratives, followed by a comprehensive analysis of foreign policy discourses in Russia, and where applicable, in other member states of the EAEU over the course of the past 10-15 years.

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Annex 1: Operationalization of Pooling and Delegation

Authority has been defined as the capacity to make legitimate and binding decisions for a collectivity. My empirical analysis of authority transfer relies on an analytical framework and the corresponding coding scheme developed by Hooghe, Marks et al. (Hooghe/Marks 2014; Hooghe et al. 2017), which differentiates between the two modes of authority transfer, pooling and delegation. Pooling characterizes joint decision-making among the principals themselves, whereby authority is transferred from individual member states to a collective intergovernmental body of the organization (Keohane/Hoffmann 1991: 7). Pooling comprises formal rules about joint decision-making procedures, the procedure by which decisions are ratified, and the extent to which they are binding (Hooghe/Marks 2014: 307). Delegation describes a conditional grant of authority by member states to an independent body of the organization, such as the general secretariat, enabling it to fill in or decide about the practical details of incomplete contracts and to perform certain limited tasks (Kahler/Lake 2009: 246; Hooghe/Marks 2014: 309). Delegation helps to reduce the transaction costs of decision-making, provide information to all member states, avoid issue cycling, and sustain credible commitments (Hooghe/Marks 2014: 309f). Regional organizations are conceived as delegated bodies under member states' control, whose autonomy can differ across organizations and over time. The following coding scheme is taken from Hooghe et al. (Hooghe/Marks 2014; Hooghe et al. 2017). Changes to the scheme are indicated.

Operationalizing Pooling

Pooling refers to the transfer of authority from member states to a collective body of the RO in which member states directly participate, but which they do not individually control. Pooling of authority is measured in the highest intergovernmental body with regard to voting rules, ratification procedures, and bindingness of decisions at the stage of final decision-making. I evaluate whether decision rules depart from unanimity to some form of majoritarianism, whether the decision requires ratification, and whether the decision is binding. The measure consists of four elements: composition of the highest RO body, voting rule, binding character of the decision, and ratification rules. Regarding the operationalization of pooling, I use Hooghe et al.'s model.

- 1. Composition:** Pooling pertains to assemblies or executive organs that are fully or primarily composed of member state representatives.
- 2. Voting rule:** Voting rule captures the formal rule by which decisions are taken in the highest intergovernmental body. Decision rules are coded from 0 to 1, with consensus, unanimity, no voting rule = 0; supermajority (e.g. two-thirds majority) = 0.5; simple or absolute majority²⁰ = 1. Technocratic decision rules receive an intermediate code.

²⁰ While simple majority means a decision passes when the majority of those states that cast a vote voted in favor, absolute majority means a decision passes when the majority of all states that are eligible to vote voted in favor. Simple majority disregards absences and votes to abstain, absolute majority does not.

3. Bindingness: Bindingness measures whether decisions are nonbinding, partially binding, or binding. Decisions are coded from 0 to 1, with nonbinding decisions = 0, partly binding decisions = 0.5, and binding decisions = 1. A decision is nonbinding if there is a voluntary provision or if objections by one or several countries postpone or annul the decision. A decision is partly binding if an individual member state can opt out or postpone a decision without affecting the binding character for other member states. A decision is binding if there is a formal legal provision to this effect or if there is no provision for a member state to opt out or postpone implementation of a decision.

4. Ratification. Ratification measures whether decisions have to be ratified to come into effect. There are three possibilities: a) the decision comes into force for all states if ratified by all, or comes into force only for those member states that ratify (coded as 0); b) the decision comes into force for all states after ratification by a subset of states (coded as 0.5); c) the decision comes into force without ratification (coded as 1).

Pooling is calculated as a summated score of the voting rule, bindingness, and ratification. As sovereignty loss is biggest when member states waive their veto right by agreeing to majority voting and accepting the risk of being outvoted by others, the score for voting rules counts double and is thus multiplied by two, while the scores for bindingness and ratification are just counted once. The maximum score of 4 can thus be reached when regional organizations take binding decisions that do not require ratification by majority voting. The minimum score (0) is reached when a regional organization takes nonbinding decisions that have to be ratified by all member states by unanimity. Intermediate scores such as 1.5 or 2.5 are also possible since provisions such as supermajority voting of partly binding decisions yield half points. Pooling scores are first calculated for each domain and summated on a scale from 0 (no pooling) to 4 (maximum pooling) and then transformed into qualitative indicators, indicating high, medium, and low levels of pooling. Scores from 0 to 1 translate to low, scores from 1.5 to 2.5 translate to medium, and scores from 3 to 4 translate to high levels of pooling.

Operationalizing Delegation

Delegation measures authority transfers by member states to independent bodies of regional organizations, such as general secretariats, executive committees, non-state assemblies, consultative bodies, and judicial bodies. Delegated bodies are primarily or wholly composed of non-member state representatives. Delegation is an additive index that measures delegated bodies' competencies in agenda-setting, decision-making, and adjudication. In this paper, delegation is only evaluated in general secretariats and executive bodies fulfilling the function of a secretariat.

Delegation to the general secretariat

Hooghe, Marks et al. (2014, 2017) assess delegated bodies' competencies in the following six decision areas: accession, suspension, constitutional reform, budgetary allocation, financial non-compliance, and policy-making. After having gone through the treaties of Eurasian regional organizations, I decided to revise the operationalization of this measure and made the following changes: 1) I merged the domains "membership accession" and "suspension" as they are mostly covered in the same paragraph in the treaties and the competencies of delegated bodies do not differ. 2) I account for whether regional organizations dispose of a permanent secretariat that performs infrastructural and administrative services, as this is the first step of delegation. In fact, not all regional organizations dispose of a permanent secretariat – instead, member states sometimes take care of secretarial tasks on a rotating basis. 3) I merged the domains "substantive non-compliance" and "financial non-compliance" as those two issues are usually treated within the same paragraph. 4) I added the following two decision areas: human resource management (appointment of staff) and initiation of cooperation with other international organizations. These task domains have not been covered by any of the domains in Hooghe et al.'s model. A general secretariat is usually not a final decision-maker, so the coding assesses to which extent the secretariat can go beyond infrastructural functions to act as an agenda setter.

1. *Existence of a secretariat that performs basic infrastructural services*: Does the RO dispose of a secretariat that is authorized to deliver infrastructural services such as running the RO's headquarters, organizing meetings, and maintaining records?
2. *Membership accession and suspension*: Is the secretariat authorized to vet, solicit, negotiate, or to suspend membership of the RO (0, 1)?
3. *Constitutional amendments*: Is the secretariat authorized to initiate or negotiate constitutional amendments (0, 1)?
4. *Non-compliance*: Is the secretariat authorized to initiate a formal proceeding against a member state in case of non-compliance with rules or decisions of the RO or in financial arrears (0, 1)?
5. *Drafting the budget*. Is the secretariat authorized to (co-)draft the annual budget of the RO (0, 1)?
6. *Policy initiation*: Is the secretariat authorized to propose one or more of the following: recommendations, resolutions, or declarations; programs or projects; laws, regulations, decisions, or directives; protocols or conventions (0, 1)?
7. *Monopoly of policy initiation*: Is the role of the secretariat in initiating policies a) not mandated, b) mandated by the RO's treaties but shared with other bodies, or c) anchored in the RO's treaties and exclusive (0, 0.5, 1)?
8. *Executive powers*: Is the secretariat authorized to carry out executive functions, such as framing multi-year strategic plans, drafting policy, or turning general legislation into directives or executive orders (0, 1)?

9. *Monopoly of executive powers*: Is the role of the secretariat in carrying out executive functions a) not mandated, b) mandated by the RO's treaties but shared with other bodies, or c) anchored in the RO's treaties and exclusive (0, 0.5, 1)?

10. *Staff recruitment/management*: Is the secretariat authorized to recruit staff or higher experts and consultants (0, 1)?

11. *Initiation and maintenance of cooperation with other IOs*: Is the secretariat authorized to initiate and maintain communication and cooperate with other international organizations?

Delegation to general secretariats is first calculated as a summated rating scale ranging from 0 (no delegation) to 11 (maximum delegation). The numeric indicators are then transformed to qualitative indicators, indicating high, medium, or low levels of delegation. Scores from 0 to 3 translate to low, scores from 4 to 6 translate to medium, and scores from 7 to 11 translate to high levels of delegation.

Annex 2: Overview of all Regional Organizations in Eurasia

Name of organization	Year of Establishment	Member States	Issue areas
<i>Eurasian / Post-Soviet Organizations</i>			
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	1991	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Economy, security, political affairs
Union State of Russia and Belarus	1996	Belarus, Russia	Economy, political affairs, security, culture
Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC)	2000 - 2014	Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Economy, trade
Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)	2001	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Uzbekistan	Mainly security + trade, border management, politics, tourism, technology, etc.
Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)	2002	Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan	Security
Eurasian Development Bank (EDB)	2006	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Finance, research on regional integration
Eurasian Customs Union (CU)	2010	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia	Economy
CIS Free Trade Area	2011	Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan	Trade
Common Economic Space (CES)	2012	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia	Economy
Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)	2015	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia	Economy, transport, energy, agriculture
<i>Eurasian organization created to promote integration without Russia</i>			
GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development	1997 (2001, 2006)	Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine (Uzbekistan 1999-2002)	Security, economy, energy, democracy promotion, European integration
<i>Central Asian organizations</i>			
International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS)	1993	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Environment, water management
Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (CANWFZ)	2006	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Nonproliferation
Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC)	1997	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan + 6 IOs	Economy, trade, transport, energy
Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)	1998	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Economy, transport, energy
Turkic Council	2009	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey	Economy, culture

Black Sea Organizations			
Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)	1992	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine	Economy, culture
Black Sea Environment Program (BSEP) or Black Sea Commission (BSC)	1992	Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine	Environment
Black Sea Trade and Development Bank	1999	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine	Finance
Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BlackSeaFor)	2001	Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine	Security, humanitarian interventions
European Organizations			
Intergovernmental Commission Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (IGC TRACECA)	1993	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Iran, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan	Economy, transport
Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe (INOGATE)	1996	EU + Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Energy
Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA)	2003	Border management program of EU and UNDP to assist 5 Central Asian countries	Security
Central Asia Drug Action Program (CADAP)	2000	EU program to assist 5 Central Asian countries	Security
West and South Asian Organizations			
Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)	1985	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Economic
Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA)	1999	26 members including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Security, political affairs
The Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)	2002	33 members including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Trade, infrastructure, energy, tourism etc.
UN Programs			
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)	1997	Regional offices in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Security
United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)	2007	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Security, environment

Annex 3: List of interviews conducted in Russia

During my fieldwork in Russia from February 15 until March 31, 2017, I was hosted by the School of International Relations at the Saint Petersburg State University, to which I am very thankful. I conducted 18 interviews in both Saint Petersburg and Moscow with foreign policy experts, advisors, bureaucrats, and staff at regional organizations. The interviews were conducted in Russian, English, and German, depending on my interlocutor's preference. I met 16 interlocutors for personal interviews. With two interlocutors I talked as a participant of the "Meeting Russia" Public Diplomacy Program of PICREADI (Center for the Support and Development of Public Initiatives *Creative Diplomacy*) at the beginning of February 2017. These two encounters were not one-on-one meetings, but group discussions.

Number	Name	Position	Place/ Date/ Interview Language
1	Fyodor Lukyanov	Editor-in-Chief of Russia in Global Affairs, Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Research Director of the Valdai International Discussion Club	Office of Russia Beyond the Headlines, Moscow / 16.02.17 Group Talk within the framework of the Meeting Russia Public Diplomacy Program
2	Sergej Karaganov	Foreign Policy Advisor of the Russian Government, Dean at Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, Higher School of Economics	HSE Moscow / 17.02.17 Group Talk within the framework of the Meeting Russia Public Diplomacy Program
3	Evgeny Vinokurov	Director of the Centre for Integration Studies, Eurasian Development Bank	Centre for Integration Studies (EDB) Saint Petersburg / 22.02.17 Interview in English
4	Evgeny Treshchenkov	Associate Professor at the School of International Relations / Saint Petersburg State University	School of International Relations / 21.02.17 and 28.02.17 Interview in English
5	Ekaterina Romanova	Project Coordinator at Konrad Adenauer Foundation Moscow	Konrad Adenauer Foundation Moscow / 06.03.17
6	Alexander Gabuev	Senior Associate and Chair Russia in the Asia-Pacific Program of the Carnegie Moscow Center	Carnegie Center Moscow / 06.03.17 Interview in English
7	Andrej Devyatkov	Senior Expert Center for Strategic Research Moscow, Senior Fellow at Institute for Economy, Lomonosov University	Moscow / 06.03.17 Interview in German
8	Sergej Shukhno	Director of the Integration Development Department of the Eurasian Economic Commission	Eurasian Economic Commission / 07.03.17
9	German Embassy Moscow	Background Talk, no quotes allowed	German Embassy Moscow / 07.03.17 Interview in German

10	Jurij Kofner	Founder and director of the Center for Eurasian Studies and the Center for Continental Cooperation, Head of the Eurasian Movement of the Russian Federation	Café in Moscow / 08.03.17 Interview in German
11	Maria Lagutina	Associate Professor at the School of International Relations, Saint Petersburg State University	Saint Petersburg State University / 13.03.17 Interview in Russian
12	Dmitrij Baryshnykov	Professor at the School of International Relations, Saint Petersburg State University, Expert at the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of CIS	Saint Petersburg State University / 13.03.17 Interview in Russian
13	Konstantin Misherjakov	Professor for International Relations in the post-Soviet Space at the School of International Relations, Saint Petersburg State University	Saint Petersburg State University, 13.03.17 Interview in Russian
14	Stanislav Tkachenko	Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, Saint Petersburg State University and Advisor to the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of CIS	Saint Petersburg State University / 15.03.17 Interview in Russian
15	Tatjana Valovaya	Member of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission - Minister of Integration and Macroeconomics (Russian Federation)	Eurasian Economic Commission / 16.03.17 Interview in English
16	Daria Ushkalova	Lecturer at the Moscow School of Economics, Head of the Center for International Macroeconomics and Foreign Economic Relations, Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Science	Moscow School of Economics, Moscow State University / 17.03.17 Interview in Russian
17	Dmitrij Kononenko	Division Manager Digitalization and Future Technologies, Relations with the Eurasian Economic Union	German-Russian Chamber of Commerce / 20.03.17 Interview in German
18	Aleksandr Shamshurin	Third Secretary at the First CIS Department (1CISD), Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation	Russian MFA / 21.03.17 Interview in Russian

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