

The Commonwealth of Independent States: Is there anything to be explained by Neo-Functionalists?

By Rufat R. Babayev

Introduction

The Commonwealth was established mainly “to serve further development and strengthening of relations of friendship, good neighborhood, mutual understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation between member states¹”. Within the above mentioned principles, the member states of the CIS are intended “to coordinate common foreign and security policy, to regulate economic interactions by developing common economic space with a common customs policy, to develop shared transportation and communication networks²”. Nevertheless, a short history of CIS existence has showed that abovementioned goals are just great unrealizable wishes.

The research question of this paper is to determine whether such theory like neo-functionalism can be used in order to explain processes that have occurred within the CIS. Taking into the whole history of CIS development and the main assumptions of neo-functionalists, this paper argues that because of absence of integration among member states, there is no basis for using neo-functionalism in order to explain the nature of ‘integration’ within the Commonwealth.

In order to prove the above mentioned argument, first this paper presents the basic assumptions of neo-functionalism and the Haas and Schmitter approach on patterns variables of political integration. This approach was originated by Ernst Haas and Philippe Schmitter in their work on integration process within Latin American Free Trade Area (LAFTA), where they use three types of pattern variables that according to them any integration process has to have. These are pattern variables that occur before integration process, while this process starts and during this process.

For the above mentioned arguments, the paper further refers to analysis of the basic trends of the ‘integration’ processes started between the states of the former Soviet Union. Here this paper presents an overview of the main CIS’s goals regarding integration and actual failures in

¹ Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States, January 22 1993, section 1, article 1

² Agreement on creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, December 8 1991, article 7

this field. Although, CIS member states have signed a great number of treaties and agreement, their provisions were not materialized or in other words remained on the papers.

Relying on an overview of integration trends within CIS, this paper goes further by applying the Haas and Schmitter approach on the process started between CIS member states. Here, the whole CIS's history is divided into three parts in order to determine the important pattern variables presented by these scholars. This paper presents the results for each part and at the end of this part shows an overall answer regarding the existence of these pattern variables. Basing on this section, it is showed in the paper whether the key process foreseen by neo-functionalists occurred in the Commonwealth.

Key arguments of Neo-functionalists

Being influential in the 1950s and 1960s, neo-functionalism is the first theory of regional integration that seeks to explain the process of integration, especially the process of European integration. Neo-functionalism was built on the basis of functionalism and perceived as an "attempt to account for the development of functional relationships between individual states in regionally limited system such as Europe³". Moreover as Schmitter defines, "neo-functionalism is a theory of regional integration that places major emphasis on the role of non-state actors, especially the 'secretariat' of the regional organization involved and those interest associations and social movements that provide the dynamic for further integration⁴". In this process, although member states remain important actors, nevertheless they don't exclusively determine the direction and extend of subsequent changes⁵.

Neo-functionalism is mainly concerned with *process* of integration and its main focus is on interest group activity, political party activity, the role of governments and supranational institutions that are basic 'factors' of furthering integration⁶. But the basic driving forces of integration according to Haas are "*economic technicians, the planners, the innovating industrialists and trade unions* that provide the crucial impetus in converging economic goals embedded in the bureaucratic, pluralistic, and industrial life of modern Europe⁷". (My italics)

The main concept that came from neo-functionalism is the notion of "spillover process". This concept originally formulated by Haas, refers to a way in which deepening of integration in one economic sector would automatically create trends for further economic integration in another

³ <http://www.politicsprofessor.com/politicaltheories/neo-functionalism.php>, accessed February 13, 06

⁴ Philippe Schmitter, *Neo Neo-functionalism*, in Wiener, Antje and Thomas Diez, *European Integration Theory*, Oxford University Press, 2003

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Carsten Stroby Jensen, *Neo-functionalism*, in Michelle Cini, *European Union Politics*, Oxford University Press. 2003

sector. Or in the other words, as Lindberg writes, “spillover is process where political co-operation conducted with specific goal in mind leads to the formulation of new goals in order to assure the achievement of original goals⁸”.

Another key neo-functional concept is the process of loyalty transference, which as Haas determined is a “way whereby political actors in several district national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states”⁹. As integration process gathers pace, certain associations and interest groups redirect their allegiances towards supranational institutions, which “they realize are better means to pursue material interests than pre-existing national institutions”¹⁰. Consequently the process of loyalty transfer causes another process of the formation of supranational interest groups, whereby those organized interests groups, shift their level, demanding from their governments more integration as corporations and business groups formulate their own interest towards the supranational institutions¹¹.

Relying on these ideas regarding the regional integration processes, Haas and Schmitter, founders of neo-functionalism, introduced three basic pattern variables that are crucial items in any integration processes. Haas and Schmitter determined the basic pattern variables for the process of economic integration and then politization of this process towards creation a political union. The authors divided the patterns into: “variables which obtain before the act of integration or union, variables existing at the time the union is negotiated and enters into force and variables which manifest themselves during the process which ensures after the union becomes operative¹²”. These pattern variables will be presented in more detail in the section where they were implied in the study of integration processes in the Commonwealth.

“Integration” process within CIS

The Commonwealth, established in 1991, is conceived as a successor of the USSR in the way to coordinate foreign and economic policies of 12 former Soviet republics. Basing on the goals that were embedded in the Charter of the CIS, member states intended to launch the integration process within three spheres. As Webber writes, “integration in economic sphere was planned to be accomplished through the development of economic, customs and

⁷ Ben Rosamond, *Neo-functionalism*, chapter 3 in *Theories of European Integration*, London: Macmillan, p.50

⁸ Leon N. Lindberg, *The political dynamics of European economic integration*, Stanford University Press, 1963

⁹ Rosamond Ben, *Neo-functionalism*, chapter 3 in *Theories of European Integration*, London: Macmillan, p.50

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neofunctionalism>, accessed on February 14, 2006

¹¹ Carsten Stroby Jensen, *Neo-functionalism*, in Michelle Cini, *European Union Politics*, Oxford University Press. 2003

¹² Ernst Haas and Philippe Schmitter, *Economics and differential patterns of political integration: Projections about unity in Latin America*, International Organization, vol. 18, # 4, Autumn 1964.

payments unions, integration in the sphere of national security and foreign policy through the creation of a collective security system and joint border control, and integration in the area of humanitarian cooperation and human rights, though common actions in order to protect national minorities¹³.

The Commonwealth does not hold supranational powers over member states and it was formed on the basis of sovereign equality of all members, the member states are independent and equal subjects of international law¹⁴. The interactions among member states within the CIS are coordinated through its institutions like the Council of Heads of States, Council of Heads of Governments, Council of Foreign Ministers, Interparliamentary Assembly, and the Interstate Economic Committee of the Economic Union.

To launch the process of economic integration, three contradictory models were on the agenda of development CIS economic system. First model provided maintenance of 'Soviet-era Council for mutual economic assistance' and continuation of trade and the CIS members should stay with the ruble zone¹⁵. Member states did not agree on this model, because it did not reflect their interest, except the interests of Russia, where some Russian bureaucrats were in favor of this. The mere fact that the CIS members have introduced their own currencies since 1995 can state that this model for economic integration was unrealizable.

The second model, in contrast to the first one, was a market oriented towards free trade between countries with independent and freely convertible currencies. Mainly this model was initiated and supported by the Baltic states, especially by Estonia, which was the first against the ruble zone among former Soviet republics. The third model was that of the European Union and as Olcott, Aslund and Garnett write includes some features of other two models. This model envisaged the adoption of such EU initiatives as an economic union and a customs union. Moreover, the case when EU attempted to introduce common currency was used a strong argument towards establishment the ruble zone¹⁶.

The main step toward accomplishment the economic integration was signing the Treaty on the establishment of Economic Union among CIS members. This treaty was based on the necessity to form a common economic area based on the principle of "free movement of goods, services, workers and capital; to elaborate concerted money and credit, tax, price, customs and foreign economic policies; to harmonize the methods of management of economic

¹³ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends, Russia and the former Soviet South*, royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997, p. 15

¹⁴ Charter of Commonwealth of independent States, article 1

¹⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund and Sherman W. Garnett, *Getting it wrong, Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D. C, 1999. p.38

activities and to create favorable conditions for the development of direct production links¹⁷". The goals that the treaty envisaged to implement were the creation of a "market-based common economic space by such means as free trade, involving a unified customs regime, multilateral payments mechanisms involving national currencies, followed by possible monetary union and transnational ventures in investment, finance and production¹⁸".

In addition to that Treaty, five CIS member states (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Tajikistan) signed the agreement on creation CIS Customs Union, which proclaimed a commitment to customs and payments regimes and eventual monetary union and reaffirmed the commitment of signatories to the integration process within CIS.

From the Treaty Economic union and in subsequent agreements among CIS members, it can be stated that different pro-economic integration ambitions were formulated; nevertheless all of these goals remained on the papers and were not realized in reality. The main reason of that can be refer to different attitudes of member states to the whole Commonwealth and willingness of some members to have more bilateral economic relation with each other and especially to interact with states outside of CIS. This in its turn cause that "the end purpose of the Commonwealth was never articulated clearly and the actual development of CIS has been characterized more by rhetoric than by deed, more by trial and error than by policy and plan¹⁹".

Besides economic integration, some people also saw some integration trends in the sphere of security and military issues and consequently at the political level. Military and security integration mainly has occurred at the level of CIS and bilateral agreements. The main CIS mechanism for military and security integration is Collective Security Treaty, which was signed by all member states. According to Collective Security Treaty and subsequent agreements among CIS member states, the main areas of cooperation were air defense, border protection and peacekeeping. Military and security integration has been overseen by several CIS institutions that were included in the Charter. Thus, Council of Heads of States, Council of Heads of Governments, and Council of Ministers of Defense are the main bodies that adopt decisions in areas of military and security cooperation. But as Webber points, there are several features of these bodies that make them weak and unable to implement taken decisions. The first reason is that Russia has preponderated weight in each body, second "different rates of participation among member states (Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have adopted a less

¹⁶ Ibid. 40

¹⁷ cns.miis.edu/pubs/inven/pdfs/cis.pdf, Commonwealth of Independent States, Center of nonproliferation studies, accessed on February 15, 2006

¹⁸ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends, Russia and the former Soviet South*, royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997, p. 50

¹⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund and Sherman W. Garnett, *Getting it wrong, Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D. C, 1999. p.40

enthusiastic attitude toward military cooperation), third there appears some duplication in functions of these bodies²⁰.

Integration at political level like an economic and military integration was extremely weak. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, majority of CIS member states took a path towards independent development. The mere fact of cultural and social differences and the existence of different political values has played crucial role in the process of disintegration among CIS member states. Another important reason why political integration within CIS failed to occur is the absence of supranational authority of CIS institutions. As it known political integration is a process of convergence of interests of different states and consequently transfer of domestic jurisdictions to the supranational institutions. This process of transference can be seen neither at political level among CIS members nor at economic and military level.

Patterns of integration in the CIS

Before analyzing the Commonwealth, basing on the pattern variables formulated by Haas and Schmitter, it is worth to stop on the notions of economic and political union presented by two neo-functionalists. Thus, according to Haas the aspects of economic integration must possess these characteristics: "gradual but complete elimination of tariffs, quotas and exchange control on trade; abandonment to restore trade restrictions on a unilateral basis; joint actions to deal with problems resulting from the removal trade barriers; some degree of harmonization of national policies that affect price structures and the allocation of resources; and free movement of capital and labour²¹".

If one applies all these characteristics on economic integration within the CIS, it will be obvious that all agreements among CIS member states reflected the unrealistic desire of economic integration within CIS. Why it was like this? First although the Treaty on economic union and subsequent agreements envisaged liberalization of trade among member states, all of its provisions did not become material. Moreover, in contrast to further integration, mutual intra-CIS trade plummeted from 57% to 33% during the period since 1992 to 1997²².

Under the notion of political union, both authors understand as "any arrangement under which existing national states cease to act as autonomous decision-making units with respect to an

²⁰ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends, Russia and the former Soviet South*, royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997, p. 36.

²¹ Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, Stevens & Sons Limited, 1958, p. 12

²² Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund and Sherman W. Garnett, *Getting it wrong, Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D. C, 1999. Table 2.7. – from 122.178 million \$US to 79.335 million \$US.

important range of policies and delegate part of sovereignty to central institutions²³". The mere fact that the Charter contains provision that the CIS central bodies have not any supranational authority and the member states did not cease their autonomous decision-making power can be a strong evidence that political integration among CIS members was another unrealistic desire.

The Haas-Schmitter Model Distribution of Pattern Variables <i>The Commonwealth of Independent States</i>		Table 1
Background Conditions		
Size of units		mixed
Rate of transactions		high
Pluralism		low
Elite Complementarity		mixed
<i>Total Judgment</i>		mixed
Conditions at the time of economic union		
Possible common governmental purposes		low
Powers and functions of new region-level institutions		low
<i>Total Judgment</i>		low
Process conditions		
Decision-making style		low
Rate of growth of transactions		mixed
Adaptability of government/private actors		low
<i>Total Judgment</i>		low
Chances of Automatic Politization		Possible – doubtful

From the table 1 presented above, the first major pattern among background conditions has to be the size and power of the units that participate in the integration. According to Haas and Schmitter, "here it is not important the absolute military power or industrial capacity of the participants but the relative weight of these features in the specific functional context of the union²⁴". In case of CIS the size and power of members is mixed, because there is great difference taking into account the weight of each member in the integration process, especially basing on the terms of industrialization, per capita GNP, capacity to export and import. Thus, Russia possesses the first place on its role in this process. In contrast such states as Belarus, Armenia, and Tajikistan have little weight in the functional context of CIS as they are more dependent on Russia.

²³ Ernst Haas and Philippe Schmitter, *Economics and differential patterns of political integration: Projections about unity in Latin America*, International Organization, vol. 18, # 4, Autumn 1964.

The second pattern is about the rates of transaction among the participants before the process of liberalization of trade. During early years of CIS (1991 – 1993) the total rate of transactions among members was high in comparison with transactions outside CIS²⁵. Roughly 80% of total trade of members took place within the CIS. This was due to interdependence of all former Soviet republics on each other, as these new states were recently parts of one state. Regarding the third pattern as background condition, the CIS member states lacked pluralism, since there were not great differences in the social structure in the member states during early years of CIS integration. It is difficult to say that one member was extremely pluralistic, but another differed with “particularism” or “diffuseness²⁶”.

The last pattern CIS integration is also indicated as mixed. The authors under the elite complementarity mean whether certain national groups inspired by similar or differing values. Basing on that it can be said that during the early years of CIS, elites in the national governments were members of former Soviet Communist Party and a long time were under the common Soviet “values”. But this can not be said regarding all national elites, because for example elites in Baltic states completely differs from elites in countries of Central Asia or Caucasus. Taking into account all above mentioned patterns, the total judgment on background conditions will be mixed.

The first pattern variable of condition at the time of the union that Haas and Schmitter touch upon is whether “parties possess a strong commitment towards political union and whether there is a distinction between a comprehensive and explicit economic agreement and a more ambiguous meeting of minds²⁷”. In the other words the authors try to identify the level of convergence of interests of the national government concerning economic or political union. The authors determine four types of convergence²⁸ and in the case of CIS, it is the fourth type and it can be traced that member states had certain converging economic aims but with a very weak political component. This has been inferred this mainly on that that all member states signed the Treaty on Economic Union and participated in creation of the CIS payment union, though these agreements were not implemented. There was little willingness of members regarding political union within the CIS. It is no less difficult to build a smaller integrative structure than a larger one, if the “participants do not share basic approaches to the tasks and structure of the organization and thus, as an example common market and free trade areas

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ I made this conclusion basing on the table 2.5 on intra-CIS trade of CIS counties from the book of Olcott, Aslund and Garnett “Regional Cooperation and CIS”, 1999, 60

²⁶ I have borrowed these expressions from Haas’s and Schmitter’s article

²⁷ Ernst Haas and Philippe Schmitter, *Economics and differential patterns of political integration: Projections about unity in Latin America*, International Organization, vol. 18, # 4, Autumn 1964.

²⁸ 1. Identical economic aims with strong political commitment, 2. Converging economic aims with a strong political commitment, 3. Identical economic aims with a weak political commitment, 4. Converging economic aims with a weak political component.

cannot emerge if the tensions between cooperation are not resolved²⁹. These are the main reasons why it has a “low” rate on the box on possible common governmental purposes.

As it has been mentioned above, no CIS body has supranational power over the members and this mainly caused lagging in the implementation of adopted decisions. The main CIS bodies became simple annual conferences without any material results. Moreover, this inefficiency in its turn caused that some member states lost their interests in CIS integration. New states emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union have begun to understand that “post Soviet” is “a description of their past, not a single prescription for their futures and the weakness of these states and of their political and economic arrangements has driven them to establish links with stronger partners outside the CIS³⁰”. This situation with weak CIS institutions deserves a “low” rating. And in general, the total judgment of conditions at the time of economic union also gets a “low” rating.

The one of the major items of the last condition is decision-making style, which as Haas and Schmitter write develops among the actors once they confront one another regularly in the act of implementing their economic union³¹. The “high” rank would be attached to the decision-making style that suggests a rapid passage into supranationality. This process can be observed in the integration process within the European Union. In the case of the Commonwealth, only “low” rating can be attached. The “low” decision-making style, being an opposite to supranational style, is a style of bargaining in which the participants tend to disagree on the outcome they desire but nevertheless agree on many of the background factors entering into a decision. All of CIS member states became a participant of Economic and Payments union, but did not actively involve in subsequent agreement on particular issues of Economic union, for example Customs union³².

The rate of transactions within process conditions is “mixed” ranking, because of several reason. Taking into account the statistical data³³, during the period since 1997 -98 the decline of intra-CIS trade can be traced. This decline was caused mainly by the crisis in Russia that affected almost all members of CIS. What the crisis seems to have taught to members of the Commonwealth is that the less trade a country had with Russia and with other CIS members,

²⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund and Sherman W. Garnett, *Getting it wrong, Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D. C, 1999, p. 179

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ernst Haas and Philippe Schmitter, *Economics and differential patterns of political integration: Projections about unity in Latin America*, International Organization, vol. 18, # 4, Autumn 1964.

³² Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends, Russia and the former Soviet South*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997, Appendix table. Only Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan joined Customs Union.

³³ <http://www.unece.org>. Interstate Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, April 1998

the better off it is³⁴. The results of this can be seen from the data on export and imports for the period of 2000 – 2004, when all members except Belarus, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have more export – import relations with outside the CIS³⁵.

Finally, the last pattern is government adaptability that concerns “new purposes develop in the interaction among the participants as a result of difficulties and disappointments experienced with reference to the attainment of the original aims of the participants³⁶.” Taking into account the previous patterns in all three conditions, it can be stated that the government adaptability has gone very slow. As there is low level of economic integration and no signs of political integration, these new rules that government should adopt have not arisen. As Webber writes, “the reasons of that mainly depend on absence of clear and elaborated notion of functional specialization within the CIS and in addition, the CIS, being functionally overloaded and under-resourced, simply lacks of over-ambitiousness³⁷”.

Basing on the simple logic and the information from the table 1, it can be inferred that the integration process within the CIS is “poor” due to the facts that there are no sufficient conditions for economic union and its politization to occur. Thus, it can be said that there is no integration within the Commonwealth from the perspective of neo-functionalism.

Conclusion

The Commonwealth of Independent States was established as an organization that will provide sufficient basis for integration among member states. But the history has showed that the CIS has failed to accomplish the main goals that were formulated in its Charter. Although “CIS documentation has registered a pretension towards the integration, but in reality the practices of multilateral cooperation set in motion so far have been fragile, controversial and lacking in any appearance of effective intergovernmental decision-making, let alone a serious aspiration towards the creation of supranational structure of authority³⁸”.

Using the pattern variables formulated by neo-functionalists, I identify that there were not sufficient grounds for integration within CIS to occur. The Commonwealth lacked of the main conditions that according to neo-functionalists are necessary for each integration process.

³⁴ Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund and Sherman W. Garnett, *Getting it wrong, Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D. C, 1999, p. 69

³⁵ <http://www.cisstat.com/eng/mac-08.htm>, Export and Import of the CIS member states.

³⁶ Ernst Haas and Philippe Schmitter, *Economics and differential patterns of political integration: Projections about unity in Latin America*, International Organization, vol. 18, # 4, Autumn 1964.

³⁷ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends, Russia and the former Soviet South*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997.

³⁸ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends, Russia and the former Soviet South*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997, p. 67

Although at the early years the background conditions, such as high rates of transaction and elite complementarity in majority of member states could be a sufficient fundament of integration, the absence of such items as shared ideology, common perception of an external threat or consensus on economic priorities played crucial role in becoming the CIS a very weak organization.

Within lack of main condition for integration process, one can state that it is obvious that such process as spillover process, loyalty transference and process of formation of supranational interest groups did not occur in the Commonwealth. Though at an early stage of the CIS, there were some prospects for spillover process due to high level of transactions among members, such as establishment of Payments Union and Customs Union after Economic Union, but later there was reasonable decline in the trade among the CIS members. Moreover, besides that only four members joined Customs Union and small regional alternatives emerged such as GUUAM, Central Asian Economic Community and Russian-Belarusian integration.

As a final word I would like to summarize that the Commonwealth lacks of necessary features of integration that is why there no reasons to use key arguments of neo-functionalism as the first regional integration in studying the CIS.

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