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# MEASURING THE QUALITY FACTORS OF A SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL INTEGRATION

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Regional integration is a very unique and complex process that provides specific bonds and interconnection between multiple states within the territorial, cultural and political borders of a distinct area in the international system. Given the relatively short yet intense timeline since the Westphalian system till nowadays, various factors contributed to the success or failure or stagnation of different regional integration processes. The analysis of various regional integration processes of Europe and Central Asia will ensure and facilitate arguments and reasons for their current situation with regard towards their own: distinctive approach towards regional integration, areas of common interest in regional integration, rate of developing their regional integration, and historical factors that either

enhance or generates stagnation and redundancy in engaging in higher forms of inter-dependence and cooperation within their characteristic region.

Regarding the regional integration of Europe, it can be said that it stems from the beginning of the 17th century with the rise of the Thirty Years' War and the ratification of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The Treaty of Westphalia plays also a fundamental role in defining further types of international systems which are yet to rise and fall in the next century. European integration can be divided into various levels or stages based on the nature of the interaction between the European states and their level of integration. European integration is often characterized by inner conflicts and competition for achieving unipolarity over the European continent, which, at that time meant, hegemony over all the recognized territory of the international system. Often the power of colonial powers would rely on two categories of resources: Domestic powers of a ruling dynasty which would comprise lands, wealth and powerful garrisons and the state's very own colonies that would serve as external resources that would be directly consumed by the empire's mainland. Despite the just war theory which it is safe to say was actively exercised between the 16th century and early 19th century several attempts were made during that period to enhance a specific status quo and enforce further the Westphalian system under a complex web of interconnected monarchic dynasties during the period of the international system of the Vienna Treaty of 1815, that resulted out of the collapse of Napoleon's imperial ambitions. The Vienna Treaty was meant to shape the European continent according to the "four" ambitions that fought against Napoleonic France. Despite the inner rivalries between the great powers of that time that would end up with a relative establishment of a balance of power over Europe, the lack of self-determination and representativity of various nations that would be under the rule of foreign unwanted monarchies would lead to a historical period of revolutionary of waves in 1848. Despite that only in France the revolutions experienced victory, the revolutions of 1848 created prejudice for other nations to pursue the fight for their independence and unification in the next decade which eventually was achieved within different regional and favourable circumstances. The end of the Crimean War, for example, facilitated the achievement of unifying gradually the Italian territories under one ruler absorbing the Papal States by 1870. WWI and WWII created even further distress between the European states with subjective borders depending not on historical claims but rather on who won them given the outcomes of WWII that are further seen through the distribution of the percentage of influence between the two blocks of the Allies that will furtherly be enhanced and enforced by the Iron Curtain. Despite these tense periods, the victory of democracy as the supreme political ideology would pave the way for the rise of the Global Age which will become shaped by its core values. As a result of that, on the 7th of February 1992, the Maastricht Treaty was signed and furtherly ratified in 1993 which led to the establishment of the European Union. The Maastricht Treaty is a fundamental historical document not only for the European Union as the most efficient and longlasting integrational, economic and political organization regionally and the only one that exists to such an extensive level in any part of the international but for the history of European integration itself. The Maastricht Treaty it's the very first document of an integrational nature for the European region after the Cold War, during which Europe was a subject of interest for the two super-powers of the Cold War's international system, being fragmented by the USSR's sphere of influence. Despite severe external factors that could have shaped differently the identity and political and social orientation of the European nations, the Maastricht Treaty stands for shaping a supra-national identity and economy market that covers, respects and protects the distinctive nature of the European nations that are willing to be a part of it. Moreover, the Maastricht Treaty also stands as a tribute to the European nations choosing to pursue through self-determination the choice towards a democratic successful future. The successive and relatively fast waves of enlargement which are 7 by number and more are yet to come show the successful impact of the European Union as an integrational organization critically shaped by centuries of clashes, rises and falls of various political, economic, social phenomena, events, and periods [1].

Given the previous comprehensive and critically summarized analysis of European integration, it is important to highlight that regional integration doesn't have to follow the European model to achieve

the same outcomes, given the distinctive nature and characteristics of other regions of the world. In Asia the predominant existence of nomad and semi-nomad civilizations and nations along with imperial nations and civilizations especially since the early periods of the world's history led to creating a very distinctive geo-political landscape to which it is safe to say that the Westphalian system couldn't be established given the lack of greater powers to rather seek a balance of power in the region in the detriment of their expansionist policies and the dynamic character of the nomadic and semi-nomadic people that wouldn't have settled or distinctively defined borders mainly because of the systematic collapse of the ruling houses of various forms of territorial units of administration- also known as protostates that spanned longer over the history of Asia than in Europe, for instance. To further exemplify the complexity of the integrational process in Asia, it's relevant to emphasize the evolutionary process of achieving distinctive identity and permanency based on constant interaction and clashes with both nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes along with imperial nations. The Karakhanid state located in Zhetysu and in part of Eastern Turkestan throughout its existence that spanned for several centuries (942-1212) provided one of the key elements of cultural homogeneity for the other centuries to come and further enhanced the pan-Turkic sentiment among the Turkic nations of Central Asia- the proclamation of Islam as the state religion in the Kharakhanid state by Musa, the son of the founder of the Kharakhanid state, Satuk Bogra Khan [2].

Making abstraction of Musa's interests in consolidating his power through the sanctification of his rule which was a common practice in all of the civilizations at that time, the proclamation of Islam as the Kharakhanid's state religion, facilitated the spread of the faith across the people of Central Asia, which to some extent it can be said that it provided a certain sense of unity among the Turkic people of Central Asia mainly because they all share a cultural element that originally stems from the Semitic Arab world. On top of that, the Mongolian period reached its peak under the successor of Genghis Khan, Ögedei Khan took power in 1229[3] and started to collapse in 1269 and ceased to exist in 1368, despite all of the terror and massacre[4] within the empire given the Genghis Khan philosophy, it can be said that it lead to the very first attempts for defining borders and limits and therefore integration in Central Asia, in the post-mongol period. The successive and systematic clash and collapse of khanates characterized by various and interconnected ethnical compositions of various states that would eventually englobe one another through absorption and eventual fall provide arguments for considering the postmongol period of central Asia as the main integrational process of Central Asia such as from the rise of the Great Turkic Khanate in 552 to its split in 602 and establishment of the Western Turkic Khanate and it's fall in 704, replacement of Eastern Turkic Khanate with the Uyghur Khanate in 744-840, the push of the Oguz tribes out of Semirechye by the Karluk Khanate and the formation of the Oguz state which will cease to exist in the XI century because of the Kipchak tribes attacks, while the Karluk Confederation will contribute significantly to the formation of the Kharakhanid state.

The expanding conquest of the Tsarist Empire and China over it, along with the protectionist policies of Tsarist Russia over the Kazakh Khanate, while experiencing colonizing attempts, altered the integrational process of Central Asia isolating China from intervening any further as well. This dominant connection with Tsarist Russia led eventually to the wipe of the Khanate system and replace it with sultanates- transitional forms of ruling meant to serve the former khanates and khans to the mainland policies of the Tsarist Russia. The deep connection between Tsarist Russia and Central Asia's people started to have mixed dynamics on various levels including resistance in the 17-18th century which would overall conclude with the security of Eastern borders of Russia as Peter I was actively pursuing by creating a military alliance with the Kazakhs leaders Sultan Khaip and Abulkhair given the recognition of the Kirghiz-Kaisat Horde as significant military addition for security reason and a great subject for integration within Russia's borders[5]; the internal strife within the Central Asia against the tsarist expansion and domination will be defeated temporarily at the end of the 19th century and the rise of Bolshevism in 1917 and its consequent civil war the Russian Revolution led to the rise of communism. The Russian Revolution resulted in mass casualties and terror including, freezing by all means of the

regional and natural integrational process in central Asia [6]. Undoubtedly, Russia's conquest of Central Asia between 1845 and 1895 became the beginning of the period from which all prospects for independent determination of Central Asia's people were stalled as a result of the evolution and heritage left by Tsarist Russia, taken by the Bolsheviks which is noticeable throughout the Soviet Union. In this regard, Masov R. and Дубовицкий Dubovitzki V. in "The annexation of Central Asia to Russia: events through the prism of three centuries // Russia and the Muslim world" state the following: "Soviet researchers assessed the accession process as a manifestation of the aggressive policy of tsarism, while at the same time emphasizing the progressive consequences of this phenomenon, which led to the involvement of the peoples of the region in the revolutionary process, revolutionary transformations and the further construction of Soviet society.[...] The Soviet Union is extremely overloaded with ideologized and emotional assessments, which often replace the scientific analysis of the topic. To a greater extent, this is typical for educational literature intended for the education of citizens of newly independent states, where an important role is played by the emotional mobilization of the national spirit, including through the mythologization of the history of their ethnic group, the construction of the heroics of the past[...] The weakening of the influence of the theory of historical materialism, and ideological and methodological differences in the approach to the study of history suggest the use of theories of geopolitics as methodological guidelines. Among the wide variety of them existing in the modern world, the most fruitful for studying the conditions of the formation of the multinational Russian Empire and the forms of entry of other peoples and states into it is the Eurasian theory, developed in detail, Russian scientists in the 1920s and 1940s, as well as the theory of neo-Eurasianism, created on its basis in the 1990s in the Russian Federation" [7].

The regional integration of Central Asia has been retaken with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the cooperation at a multi-regional level by the newly independent states of Central Asia played a significant role in the further recognition of Central Asia as an independent part of the international system with distinctive and undoubtable features and characteristic. The regional main representative state of Central Asia nowadays is the Republic of Kazakhstan which is widely appreciated for its neutral policy and multi-vector policy as well [8]. The Republic of Kazakhstan proved and manifested progressive and efficient multilateral diplomacy and cooperation with various actors of the international system which benefitted both the regional integration process and the state's interest. The extensive cooperation with the European Union in the last 25 years granted positive prospects through the ratification of the Enhancement Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that covers over 29 key areas of interest for both parties involved [9].

Moreover, given the benefits of the Global Age, the achievement of regional integration in Central Asia serves as a global interest for global democracy and as a result of the Global Gateway policy further investments are being made for Central Asia as a whole in addition to other policies that support directly and individually the economic development of the 5 states such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan through the GSP policies and not only [10].

The Global Age for Central Asia's regional integration process provided equity and global recognition which facilitated objectively the development of its support by various global actors as well as the manner through which the global actors of the current international system refer to them.

In conclusion, the comparison of the historical processes of regional integration between Europe and Central Asia proves the importance of the characteristics of the international system to which they belonged and to what extensive degree the progress of the integrational process of these regions has been hindered in various ways enforcing the statement to which our current Global Age holds untapped potential for boosting even further the integrational processes world widely and interconnection to even greater means, Central Asia being a living and ongoing proof of what our current international system is capable of harvesting in relatively short periods.

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# "HUMAN SILK ROAD": THE PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE ASPECT OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

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In contemporary international relations outcomes of globalization lead to the growth of the importance of interaction between countries. That made it inevitable for the emergence of such initiatives as One Belt One Road. The "One Belt, One Road" initiative is a strategic policy of the Chinese nation aimed at opening up to the world and promoting national development. Its impact has been significant worldwide, garnering attention from the international community. By fostering joint participation and mutual benefit among countries along the route, the initiative has become a globally recognized consensus. The Silk Road spirit, which emphasizes ideals such as peace, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutual benefit, has been jointly created by China and its global partners. To continue practicing this spirit, it has to adhere to the fundamental principle of "co-discussion, co-construction, and sharing" and work towards building a community with a shared future for mankind, which is the ultimate objective.

The Silk Road of China is a model of peaceful cooperation in world history, promoting economic development, political stability, cultural prosperity, and interconnection. It has paved the way for