

# 14 Choices of the post-Soviet Eurasian states amid globalization

## Contextualizing the role of civil society in Central Asia

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### Introduction

The idea of globalization as a liberating force, promoted by the Western political, business and cultural elites, became a potent force in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Significantly, there is also a growing number of equally enthusiastic affluent middle classes across the global geographical space who subscribe to this line of thinking. Furthermore, there are scholars who believe that, in the contemporary world, it is only through the processes of globalization that positive and progressive programmes for the development of humanity can be effectively executed.<sup>1</sup> The dissolution of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) in December 1991 is of enormous historical significance as it marked the collapse of an alternative economic model of development to the forces of capitalist global hegemony. However, after almost three decades of the unchallenged reign of neo-liberalism, the crisis of such a model is too stark to be ignored. The promise of an affluent and secure life, improving continuously from generation to generation, continues to elude the majority of the population in the world. On the contrary, very little has trickled down from the 'wealth creators' and in most of the industrialized countries of the Western world the middle classes have shrunk and wealth has become concentrated in the hands of the super-rich.<sup>2</sup> More and more people are beginning to realize that laissez-faire capitalism has served a limited purpose. Too many people across the globe have found themselves left behind, convinced that the system is rigged as they watch the upper classes withdrawing themselves from the common lives of their respective societies. Increased mistrust in the institutions of governance, particularly in the so-called well-established liberal democracies has become the order of the day. The Western model of development appears to be losing attraction as the sentiment in favour of nationalism, populism and protectionism gains traction all over the world. Significantly, an increasing number of politicians across the globe now subscribe to these ideologies. The chapter attempts to understand the experiences of the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia as they strive to deal with the onslaught of the forces of globalization on their economic, political and social lives. The place of the post-Soviet Eurasian states, located on the periphery of the hierarchical world-system, and the

impact of the ideological environment on these states, namely liberalism, religiosity and nationalism, is examined in this chapter. The role of civil society as it actualizes the hard choices not only for the political classes in these states but also for the expert communities, the intelligentsia and academia, is also evaluated. The choices, as discussed in this chapter, are primarily between laissez-faire capitalism or welfare state, civic or ethnic nationalism, modernity or religiosity and traditionalism. The capacity of civil society to facilitate the right choices given its ideological limitations and lack of vision for the future is also examined.

## Globalization and economy

Although some sort of globalization is argued to have existed in the form of the trade ties of the ancient empires<sup>3</sup> (and the world capitalist system since the fifteenth century) and was consolidated through colonialist expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,<sup>4</sup> we shall limit the notion of globalization to the processes that accelerated in the late 1970s. This, in Friedman's apt words, would mean a shift from industrial to post-industrial mode of development, the rapid advancement of technology, open global economic systems and the growing weight of the developing South as opposed to the developed North.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, it would be pertinent to ask how has globalization 2.0 affected the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia? Having been insulated from the discourses and realities of globalization by the 'Iron Curtain' in the 1970s and 1980s, these countries found themselves exposed to all its potency only in the 1990s. It is important to note that the impact of globalization has been accelerating since the 1990s and the attitude of the people and the elites to it has also been changing. Initially, globalization was viewed positively rather than negatively by both the political leadership in these countries and also the intelligentsia. The common people were hopeful that they would soon be a part of a global system in which their consumerist aspirations would be met. The economic hardship experienced by the overwhelming majority of the people living in these states was believed to be of a temporary nature.

The analysis of the economic impact of globalization on the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia, presented below, is based on the world-system theory of Wallerstein<sup>6</sup> and Amin<sup>7</sup>. This theory represents a departure from both Lenin and Luxembourg's perspectives on imperialism and offers an alternative to the later dependency and modernization theories. Wallerstein's critique of the modernization theory mostly refers to the focus of the latter on the nation-state as the only unit of analysis, its disregard of transnational actors and its insistence on the singularity of the development pattern. The dependency theory, which mainly talks about the relations between the core and periphery countries in the development of Third World economies, nevertheless upholds the nation-state as the basis of analysis, much like that of the modernization theory. The main argument of the dependency theory is the assertion that the 'exploitation of the poor countries' has been replaced in the world-system by the principle of the 'exploitation of workers' occurring in all areas of the world

economy so as to enable the redistribution of the surplus value in favour of the capitalists of the core countries. In other words, 'countries do not have economies but are part of the world-economy' that is hierarchical and unequal.<sup>8</sup>

In order to understand the economic challenges of globalization faced by the states of post-Soviet Eurasia, we shall consider their relative position among other countries in the world. In this regard, it is noteworthy that all these states have faced similar challenges and that they have all had to integrate into the world as autonomous actors. However, the places available to them had already been predetermined in a system that was established long before these states actually resumed independent development. As such, they joined the numerous peripheral countries which, unlike the core countries enjoying all the benefits of higher skilled labour and capital-intensive production, have mainly low-skilled, labour-intensive production and economies dominated by the extraction of capital and/or raw materials.<sup>9</sup>

When discussing the place of post-Soviet Eurasia in the world economic order, it is important to note that not all its countries are very poor. Kazakhstan is ranked 54th and 70th in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (purchasing power parity and nominal, respectively), while Russia stands in 48th and 62nd position. Moreover, in terms of the structure of their economies, services appear to make up a considerable share. For example, services constitute 60.8 per cent of Kazakhstan's GDP and only 34.4 per cent is derived from industry and 4.8 per cent from agriculture. According to 2012 estimates, in Kyrgyzstan services accounted for 52.5 per cent of GDP, industry for 27.3 per cent and agriculture for the remaining 20.2 per cent. In Tajikistan, these figures were 53.9 per cent, 22.8 per cent and 23.3 per cent, respectively, in 2012. In Turkmenistan, the figures were 37.9 per cent, 49.3 per cent, 12.7 per cent in that year, and in Uzbekistan they were 49.5 per cent, 32 per cent and 18.5 per cent, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

Some of these countries brand themselves as open (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and partly Tajikistan), while others are quite isolationist both politically and/or in terms of their investment climate (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). However, for the world economy, what a country sells in the global market is the most significant factor. Thus, all the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia share characteristics mentioned by Halsall: undiversified economies depending heavily on extracting and exporting raw materials.<sup>11</sup> For example, Kazakhstan's main exports are oil, oil products and ferrous metals. Kyrgyzstan mostly exports gold, cotton, wool, meat, tobacco, mercury, uranium and electricity. Tajikistan sells electricity, cotton, fruits, vegetables, oil and textiles. Turkmenistan sells gas and oil. Uzbekistan's primary exports are cotton, gold, mineral fertilizers, ferrous and nonferrous metals and food products. It is also important to remember that when these countries export goods of higher added value, the more developed countries of the core are never their final destinations; on the contrary, such exports go to their peripheral counterparts. Specialization, non-diversification or monoculture of their economies and exodus of capital are apparent<sup>12</sup> as are the oligarchic system of government and corruption.<sup>13</sup>

Wallerstein's claim that countries do not have economies but instead are part of the world economy problematizes the sovereignty of the peripheral states. Can there be political sovereignty without economic sovereignty? Amin answers negatively to this assertion. The bulk of the economy in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and even Turkmenistan is owned by transnational capital.<sup>14</sup> Only 28 per cent of oil from Kazakhstan actually belongs to Kazakh corporations. China has become the major player in the economies of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and also the rest of Central Asia. For the political leadership of these countries, admitting to having such a situation is problematic. The discourses on the importance of independence and self-determination are crucial for the vitality of the political regimes in most of the states of post-Soviet Eurasia. Rather, the arguments in favour of such a model of economic development have been so constructed to brand these economies as open, contemporary, investment friendly and competitive.

For example, the political elite in Kazakhstan have been promoting economic liberalism with its policy of lower taxes and individual responsibility. In 2012 Kazakh President Nazarbayev argued that the successful implementation of his comprehensive modernization reforms would result in the elimination of the attitude of dependency, infantilism and paternalism in the economic behaviour of the Kazakhstan people.<sup>15</sup> In neighbouring Russia, the discourses on rampant capitalism have been occasionally challenged by experts, while on the contrary, in Kazakhstan, political figures, civil society actors as well as the political and intellectual elite have been rather congruous.<sup>16</sup> Capitalism is strongly associated with independence and future success, while socialism is associated with lack of independence, with the USSR and also the continuation of the Russian Empire. The economic hardship experienced by the people in these societies is mostly attributed to the corruption, nepotism and incompetence of the bureaucracy. All of these characteristics, according to the popular discourses, are the legacy of the Soviet era. It is believed that the right kind of capitalist development in contrast to the flawed version currently witnessed would eventually pave the way for political democratization and the consolidation of the rule of law and also of civil society institutions.

The effect of globalization on the economies of the post-Soviet Eurasian states has been consistent with the logic of the world-system, i.e. it has been similar to that experienced by other peripheral countries. Kazakhstan, significantly, has been articulating the aspirations of these countries and has also initiated steps to elevate the economic status of these states within the world-system and thereby mitigate the consequences of their being on the periphery.<sup>17</sup> Yet the living standards in most of these countries are far from satisfactory. Under such circumstances, the political classes have been trying to harp on the discourses on sovereignty and their success in maintaining the same. However, the key issue remains the response of the political elite in dealing with the socio-economic challenges of globalization. The alternative strategy of 'delinking' as suggested by Amin<sup>18</sup> is clearly not an option as there is a growing realization that the capacity to change the terms of participation in a world-system

of such unequal states is limited, perhaps non-existent. One of the possible responses could be the 'race to the bottom' approach, i.e. cheap labour, deindustrialization, demolishing of workers' rights, collective bargaining and environmental protection mechanisms and the dismantling of the welfare state. As for the discursive practices, they might differ from country to country, but they are almost always inconsistent with economic policies and hence result in the further consolidation of the dependency of these counties. Alongside the exodus of capital, these countries lose their human capital as well; all of them suffer from considerable brain drain.<sup>19</sup> Today, the cheap labour of migrant workers is the major export having competitive advantages for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>20</sup> In Kazakhstan, the 'Program for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship for 2017-2021' aimed at the young unemployed<sup>21</sup> reveals that in the wake of limited employment avenues self-employment appears to be the most feasible life strategy in the country for the foreseeable future.

To what extent the policies of Nazarbayev's successor Kassym-Jomart Tokayev will be different from those of the first president of Kazakhstan remains to be seen. Tokayev's manifesto during the presidential election campaign was that of continuity in both the domestic and foreign policy spheres. Tokayev, however, has already initiated some measures to address the socio-economic difficulties of the common man in Kazakhstan. The salaries of doctors and teachers have been raised and consumer loans of the people most severely in debt have been written off. According to a survey, about 80 per cent of Kazakhstan's population support a stronger welfare state and welcome greater government intervention in dealing with socio-economic issues, while the affluent middle classes, intelligentsia, students and the youth seek political reforms and greater democratization.<sup>22</sup>

### Globalization and ideology

Although globalization has had profound effect on the post-Soviet Eurasian economies, situated as they are firmly on the periphery of the world-system, its influence is not limited only in the material sense. Globalization also means the penetration of new and old ideas mostly associated with religiosity, social liberalism and nationalism. Ever since the collapse of the USSR, the countries in the region have found themselves in the middle of a rather unfamiliar discursive space, i.e. amid competing ideologies. Thus, under the competing influences of external ideological actors, none of the countries of the post-Soviet Eurasia, with the exception of Russia and, to a much lesser extent, Kazakhstan, have been willing or have been able to craft their own version of ideology. Kazakhstan's brand of ideology was largely connected to the idea of Central Asian integration, and was later replaced with the idea of 'Eurasianism'<sup>23</sup> as well as with that of inter-confessional and inter-ethnic peace and tolerance.<sup>24</sup>

Almost all the countries in post-Soviet Eurasia have been experiencing in varying degrees the influence of Russia in their economic and social lives. Since the later Soviet period, the Russian intelligentsia have been advocating

adherence to the Western liberal values in both the economic and social spheres, and from 1993 onwards Western liberalism temporarily became the most prominent ideology within Russia, supported by its political, business and cultural elites. For most of the 1990s, Russia almost completely withdrew itself from the neighbouring Eurasian countries in terms of exercising any kind of soft power. In the 2000s, however, Moscow became rather proactive starting with the Russian version of Eurasianism, which for some was more akin to the ideology of an empire.<sup>25</sup> Determined initiatives were undertaken to enhance Russian soft power throughout Central Asia mostly through the initiatives of the Russkiy Mir Foundation<sup>26</sup> and the Russian electronic media presence in these countries.<sup>27</sup>

Moscow, with its new conservatism, has in recent years been presenting itself, with varying degrees of success, as a principal adversary to the liberal West. While there have been some visible achievements, especially among the far-right circles of Europe and the USA, its influence in post-Soviet Eurasia is strongest among the Russian-speaking members of the diaspora. Russia's soft power, however, is diminishing among the Russian-speaking intelligentsia with a Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek ethnic background, and is, understandably, virtually non-existent among the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek or Tajik-speaking masses, especially among young people who were not raised as citizens of the USSR.<sup>28</sup> The intensity of Russian influence has been decreasing in those countries where the Russian language is less widespread. Thus, the ideological presence of Moscow is the most visible in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and least visible in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Western influences in the region have mainly been manifested in the form of economic and social liberalism. Privatization and deregulation have been enthusiastically promoted by the political leadership in Kazakhstan; it has been trying to get ahead of the other countries in the post-Soviet Eurasian space in terms of maintaining a favourable investment and business climate that is attractive to both large transnational companies and small and medium-sized enterprises. According to the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business' index,<sup>29</sup> in 2018 Kazakhstan's score was 77.89 and it was ranked in 28th position out of all the economies surveyed, which is higher than that of the Russian Federation which scored 77.37 (31st); both are considerably higher than Uzbekistan which scored 67.40 (76th), Kyrgyzstan which scored 68.33 score (70th) and Tajikistan which scored 57.11 (126th). Turkmenistan is not even mentioned in the report; its tight administrative controls and the dominant role of the public sector has hindered private sector development. According to the World Bank, in 2019 foreign direct investment remained limited apart from the hydrocarbon sector.<sup>30</sup>

Social liberal attitudes reached a peak just after the dissolution of the Soviet system in the 1990s. The possible explanations for this are twofold. On the one hand, there was some inertia towards the existing model of modernization on account of the impulses of the Soviet past. On the other hand, the Western version of political and social orders were regarded favourably by the people, who had been living behind the Iron Curtain for such a long time, as it seemed to be the route through which their material desires and aspirations for self-fulfilment

could be achieved. This is not to say that social liberal attitudes were universally popular in all the post-Soviet republics, but in those republics that shared such attitudes there was hope and enthusiasm among the people. It is noteworthy that in the early post-Soviet years there were many more Russian-speaking non-Turkic people living in these countries.<sup>31</sup> Gradually, however, more traditional attitudes—which had been suppressed during the Soviet era—started to re-emerge and found favour not only among the rural population, but notably among the new business and political elites and also sections of the intelligentsia. This undoubtedly meant a return to nationalism and religiosity.<sup>32</sup>

According to the World Value Survey—the global research project which assesses countries in terms of their support for democracy—when it comes to tolerance of foreigners and ethnic minorities, gender equality, religion and religiosity, environmental issues, family, politics, national identity, culture, diversity, insecurity and subjective well-being, Kazakhstan has drifted from the margins of the ‘ex-Communist’ cultural space to the margins of the ‘African Islamic’ one.<sup>33</sup> In terms of traditional versus secular/rational values, it sits almost in the middle (-0.2), being ahead of such countries as Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, while in terms of survival versus self-expression values, it is tied with Kyrgyzstan, at -0.7, slightly ahead of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan but behind Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova.<sup>34</sup>

Globalization has made the ideological boundaries of the post-Soviet Eurasian space more penetrable. Inevitably, this has resulted in enhanced religiosity in most countries. In all the countries of post-Soviet Central Asia, although the return of Islam has been feared as a potential replacement of the existing political regimes, it is also simultaneously promoted as a tool to discipline the population and to maintain the ethical and moral foundations of the new social order. Although Islam is a supranational ideology, it has been reinforced in the post-Soviet Central Asian states by reviving national consciousness. ‘I am Tajik (or Uzbek, Kazakh, etc.), therefore I am Muslim’ has become the most predominant formula of self-identification. Growing inequalities and economic injustices may also be regarded as a push factor for further Islamization in the more deprived rural areas of the Central Asian countries.

In sum, when Islam was viewed as a force for possible change, it was deemed ‘radical’ and, therefore, malevolent. The Islamic schools and practices that arguably prevented such changes were promoted as being ‘traditional’, i.e. benevolent.<sup>35</sup> In all cases, the religious sphere has been particularly tightly controlled in the states of post-Soviet Eurasia. The level of religiosity differs from country to country. The discrepancy of religiosity between the strata of the population also differs from one country to another. For example, Uzbekistan is the most homogeneous of all the Central Asian countries in terms of the religiosity of its people, while Kazakhstan is the most pluralistic.<sup>36</sup>

In the early 1990s, these countries faced the task of affirming themselves as nation-states. Soon enough, the national question assumed centrality as these states declared that they had resumed their independent nation-building that historically had been interrupted first by the Russian Empire and, later, by the

USSR.<sup>37</sup> Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the old rivalry between ethnic and civic nationalisms re-emerged in most of these countries.<sup>38</sup> Although globalization is often seen as a force that weakens ethnic nationalism, its revival could be attributed to the fact that due to globalization, the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia became more open and exposed to external influences. Consequently, it created a situation whereby both the public and the elites in these states were influenced by competing ideas. In this tussle between competing ideas, nationalistic ideas became more attractive due to their simplicity, familiarity and 'naturalness'. Moreover, because of the history of suppression of ethnic nationalism in the Soviet era, globalization found great traction among the post-Soviet youth and intelligentsia in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR. Ethnic nationalism therefore became visible everywhere throughout post-Soviet Eurasian landscape, although some states have taken a more ambiguous position in regard to the national question due to the less homogeneous ethnic composition in these countries. In Kazakhstan, for instance, the manoeuvring of the political classes between the two major versions of nationalism—ethnic and civic ones—resulted in the Doctrine of National Unity of 2009.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, the ideological configuration around and within post-Soviet Eurasia are the competing ideological influences, namely social liberalism from the West, traditional or radical Islam from the East, as well as the locally born nationalism.<sup>40</sup>

### The role of civil society

The relations between civil society and the state in the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia have been unequal. Although they may differ, sometimes quite considerably, from country to country, there are some common features. The legislation on civil society in many of these countries still does not meet the international human rights standards. The authorities have chosen far too often to persecute civil society activists and journalists and to suppress dissent and peaceful protests with the objective of maintaining such an order that renders civil society apolitical. In Kyrgyzstan, the rhetoric stigmatizing and discrediting specific non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists has been rather common. In Tajikistan, civil society is mostly understood as the activities of the NGOs receiving international grants and is therefore a major factor in the domestic labour market. In Turkmenistan, civil society is almost non-existent, while in Uzbekistan it is poorly institutionalized.<sup>41</sup> In Kazakhstan, until quite recently the main actors in civil society as recognized by the state were the NGOs, and their primary role was to help to reduce social tensions resulting from the state's neo-liberal policies. In other words, the government is interested in the gradual reduction of the welfare state and the outsourcing of its duties to the socially responsible NGOs that, most importantly, are expected to remain politically neutral.<sup>42</sup> This enforces the vision of the relationship of civil society and the state as reflected in the proclaimed formula 'economy first and only then politics'.<sup>43</sup>

The impact of globalization has far-reaching implications for the states of post-Soviet Eurasia. The peripheral economic position of these societies makes welfarism less feasible and their populations less economically secure. Increasing religiosity in these countries has weakened social liberalism, thus pushing it further to the margins. The rise of ethnic nationalism makes nativist, isolationist tendencies more prominent when the economic realities require greater regionalization and integration. The question therefore arises, whether civil society in these countries is in a position to influence the elites in regard to the future development of these societies.

When conceptualizing civil society institutions, both the state and civil society actors primarily refer to political parties, local communities, trade unions, religious and professional associations, the media, and the NGOs. These institutions serve as the channel of communication between an individual and the state, thus facilitating the promotion of individual interests of the members of the general public. Yet the specificity of our topic makes it imperative to shift the focus on a very particular segment of civil society, namely the community of intellectuals, intelligentsia and academia in the respective countries. Therefore, it is argued that the concept of cultural hegemony over a culturally heterogeneous society is the most appropriate tool to address such a question.<sup>44</sup> Within a hegemonic culture, particular values and norms become the 'common sense' values. Such a culture is maintained through the nexus of institutions, social relations and ideas, by the alliances of a variety of forces that form, in Gramsci's term, a 'historic bloc'.<sup>45</sup> The role of intellectuals and education is, therefore, indispensable. Thus, within the hegemonic cultures of post-Soviet Eurasian states, economic thinking is still neo-liberal, although in the social and cultural space the trends of reversed modernity are apparent and ethnic nationalism is strengthening. One may argue that the role of 'organic intellectuals' is to maintain the status quo, not to change it. However, it is also possible to claim that the current realities within and outside the countries of the post-Soviet Eurasia actualize the choices of the future strategy that may either be to maintain the status quo or to alter it. The previous analysis established the location of the choices with which the political elites in the respective countries are confronted. In the economic dimension, this can be whether to proceed with the neo-liberal course or to turn to a more interventionist, redistributive policy; in the social and cultural dimension, whether to promote or prevent increasing religiosity, or to remain neutral; in the political dimension, whether to choose a purely ethnic version of nationalism or to make an effort and promote a more civic one.

In familiar terms of 'conservatism', 'liberalism' and 'socialism', the description of civil society in the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia would be as follows. The liberals, having the most popular ideological stance among those we attribute as civil society, are pushing for political reforms that could result in further democratization. The urban middle classes and the intelligentsia, so used to believing that Western liberal democracy is the only model, are either unable or unwilling to see the systemic nature of the acute crises thereof and the endemic lack of trust in

all its institutions and the resulting failure of governance. They still insist on proceeding along the familiar route towards liberal democracy and ignore the manifest inability of its institutions to resist growing inequality, the scale of which is so grotesque that it already threatens the democratic character of the political order.

The conservative position may be summed up as the desire to preserve the capitalist economic order while returning to the social relations that very much resemble pre-modern ones. Women's emancipation, youth self-determination, secular thinking—all of these are deemed to have been forcefully imposed by the Soviets and because they are contrary to the legacy of the forefathers they must be rejected. Although these attitudes are believed to prevail among rural populations and, to a lesser extent, among some business leaders, in fact they are quite popular with the intelligentsia, artistic circles, students and youth. Numerous ethnic and cultural associations functioning in Kazakhstan under the auspices of the People's Assembly, for example, may very well harbour the most conservative strata of the population.

The socialist trend is virtually invisible everywhere in post-Soviet Eurasia except for Russia, where the version of socialist response to the current challenges of globalization is backward-looking and superficial. Simulation and symbolic repetitions often act as a substitute for any robust critique of the current historical moment, not to mention the failure to propose any tangible solution. Given the growing nationalist tendencies, 'Russian' socialism lacks the potential to make any considerable impact on people's thinking in the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia except, maybe, a segment of the Russian-speaking Slavic population.

The systemic nature of the acute challenges facing the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia, coupled with the reactive behaviour of the political elites and the intellectual secondariness of the experts and opinion-makers, has necessitated the task of building a counter-hegemony both within the political classes and civil society, outside of the intelligentsia and academia. However, due to the current culture of civil society, the counter-hegemonic discourse is seen as being aimed either at the promotion of the interests of individuals, according to the liberal concept, or the interests of a particular ethnic or religious community, according to the conservative paradigm. Yet the nature and the scale of the current challenges require responses that would go beyond conventional liberal or conservative thinking. A counter-hegemony of this kind must contribute to the promotion of greater solidarity both in behaviour and thinking. However, due to the current situation in the post-Soviet Eurasian region, a deficit of both material and intellectual capacities at the disposal of civil society makes the state the most likely actor capable of articulating and implementing any policies that would depart from reactive ones.

## Conclusion

The chapter has broadly discussed the impact of globalization on the states of post-Soviet Eurasia in economic and ideological terms. The analysis of the impact leads to some important conclusions. The peripheral character of the

economies in post-Soviet states of Eurasia within a hierarchical world-system of unequal exchange considerably limits the room for manoeuvre and makes welfarism less feasible. Contrary to a more conventional understanding of globalization, greater exposure to the ideas and trends from beyond has undermined social liberalism and increased the hold of religiosity on the societies of post-Soviet Eurasia. The collapse of the forward-thinking internationalist Soviet project has renewed and reinforced the value of the nation-state through the apparent dominance of ethnic nationalism.

Furthermore, the possible role of civil society in the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia in influencing the trajectories of development is very limited. The analysis is based on the concept of cultural hegemony that explains why ‘organic intellectuals’ within the ‘historic bloc’ existing in the contemporary societies of the post-Soviet states in the region have been unable to imagine and articulate any feasible alternatives to the hegemonic culture where economic thinking is still neo-liberal. In contrast, social and cultural space is less about modernity and ethnic nationalism has become the norm.

The chapter thus problematizes the probability of building a counter-hegemony within the civil society space beyond the intelligentsia and academia. This explanation is grounded in the concept of hegemonic culture. Within civil society, the counter-hegemonic culture should not be aimed at the promotion of individual interests, since the nature of the current challenges require responses that have more to do with solidarity beyond ethnic and religious community. Thus, it is evident that any feasible strategies to address the globalization-induced challenges faced by the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia are more likely to be articulated by the state and not by civil society, as the latter lacks both the material and intellectual capacities to do so, although it is possible that the response of the former will remain reactive.

## Notes

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