



Public Perceptions of the Eurasian Economic Union: A Survey-Based Analysis of Socioeconomic Impacts in Kyrgyzstan

Avrasya Ekonomik Birliği'ne Yönelik Kamuoyu Algısı: Kırgızistan'daki Sosyoekonomik Etkiler Üzerine Kapsamlı Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, several former republics sought new paths of development, leading to the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015. While earlier research has examined the institutional design and macroeconomic implications of the EAEU, there remains limited analysis of how ordinary citizens in Kyrgyzstan perceive its impact. This article addresses that gap through a large-scale, survey-based study. The study employed a structured online questionnaire in January 2024 to a voluntary, non-probability sample of 1,242 respondents across Kyrgyzstan's regions. The survey consisted of demographic characteristics and questions on knowledge of, and expectations about, the EAEU. Data were analysed using Chi-Square tests in SPSS 23 to identify significant associations between demographic variables and public perceptions. The results show that higher education positively correlates with greater knowledge of the EAEU and more substantial support for expanding Kyrgyzstan's trade partnerships beyond the Union. Income level influenced perceptions in complex ways: wealthier respondents viewed the EAEU's socioeconomic impact more positively but were less supportive of its potential transformation into a political union. Despite higher levels of awareness, younger respondents expressed more critical attitudes toward the EAEU's long-term direction. These findings underline the heterogeneity of public opinion in Kyrgyzstan and highlight the importance of demographic factors in shaping perceptions of regional integration. By situating these results within broader debates on regionalism and Eurasian integration, the study provides timely insights for policymakers and educators seeking to enhance public

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awareness, address concerns, and design inclusive strategies for regional economic cooperation.

Keywords: *Kyrgyzstan, Public Opinion, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Socioeconomic Impacts, Regional Integration*

Özet

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının ardından, bazı eski cumhuriyetler kalkınma için yeni yollar aramış ve bu süreçte 2015 yılında Avrasya Ekonomik Birliği (AEB) kurulmuştur. Daha önce yapılan araştırmalar AEB'nin kurumsal yapısı ve makroekonomik etkilerini incelemiş olsa da Kırgızistan'da halkın bu entegrasyona ilişkin algıları konusunda sınırlı sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. Bu makale, geniş ölçekli anket temelli bir analiz ile bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada Ocak 2024'te çevrimiçi olarak uygulanan, olasılıklı olmayan ve gönüllülük esasına dayalı 1.242 katılımcıyı kapsayan bir anket kullanılmıştır. Anket iki bölümden oluşmaktadır: demografik özellikler ile AEB'ye ilişkin bilgi düzeyi ve geleceğe yönelik beklentiler. Veriler SPSS 23 programında Ki-Kare testi ile analiz edilerek demografik değişkenler ile kamuoyu algısı arasındaki anlamlı ilişkiler tespit edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, eğitim düzeyi arttıkça AEB hakkındaki bilgi ve Kırgızistan'ın AEB dışı ticaret ortaklıklarını genişletmesine verilen desteğin yükseldiğini göstermektedir. Gelir düzeyinin ise algılar üzerinde daha karmaşık etkileri bulunmaktadır: yüksek gelirli katılımcılar AEB'nin sosyoekonomik etkilerini daha olumlu değerlendirirken, siyasi birlik ihtimaline daha mesafeli yaklaşmaktadır. Genç katılımcılar ise daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmalarına rağmen AEB'nin uzun vadeli yönelimine karşı daha eleştirel bir tutum sergilemektedir. Bu bulgular, Kırgızistan'daki kamuoyu algısının heterojenliğini ortaya koymakta ve bölgesel entegrasyona yönelik tutumların şekillenmesinde demografik faktörlerin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, sonuçları bölgeselcilik ve Avrasya entegrasyonu tartışmaları bağlamına yerleştirerek politika yapımcılar ve eğitimciler için kamuoyunu bilgilendirme, kaygıları giderme ve kapsayıcı stratejiler geliştirme açısından güncel çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kırgızistan, Kamuoyu Algısı, Avrasya Ekonomik Birliği (AEB), Sosyoekonomik Etkiler, Bölgesel Entegrasyon*

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), established in 2015, is a regional economic integration organisation created to develop a unified economic policy and ensure the free movement of labour, finance, services, and goods among its member states-Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former republics faced significant political, social, and economic challenges, which stimulated the emergence of regional integration projects. Within this context, a key set of questions arises: How do Kyrgyz citizens perceive the Eurasian Economic Union? What are the socioeconomic consequences of EAEU membership for Kyrgyzstan? Moreover, how do demographic factors such as education, income, and age shape public attitudes towards this regional integration project?

These questions are significant for both academic and practical reasons. While globalisation has fostered transnational connections, regionalism and strengthening regional economic organisations have become increasingly prominent. Although existing scholarship has examined the institutional

development, economic performance, and geopolitical implications of the EAEU, there is still limited research on public opinion and perceptions at the grassroots level. Understanding how ordinary citizens evaluate the EAEU is crucial for assessing its legitimacy and long-term sustainability.

This study argues that EAEU membership has generated diverse and significant effects on the everyday lives of Kyrgyz citizens, and that demographic characteristics strongly condition public opinion. The findings reveal that higher levels of education are associated with greater knowledge about the EAEU, while higher income levels correspond to more positive evaluations of its economic benefits. At the same time, the support for the EAEU's potential political dimension decreases as income rises. Thus, public attitudes towards the EAEU are far from uniform and vary according to socioeconomic background.

The broader historical context also helps to explain these dynamics. After World War II, international integration movements multiplied as states sought to address common problems and strengthen their economic, political, and military capacities. Despite globalisation, regional integration gained momentum, especially in the post-Soviet space. The idea of Eurasian integration began to crystallise in the early 2000s, as Russia regained economic strength following the collapse of the USSR. Before 1991, the economies of the Soviet republics were deeply intertwined; after dissolution, these states struggled to develop the infrastructure, technology, and human capital required for independent growth. Western powers—particularly the United States and the European Union—sought closer ties with the newly independent states. In response, Russia pursued the “Near Abroad Doctrine” to maintain its influence in the region and counterbalance the growing presence of the US, EU, and China (Koçer & Gökten, 2021). A series of bilateral and multilateral agreements paved the way for deeper economic cooperation. The most important milestones were the Customs Union Agreement among Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus (effective January 1, 2010), followed by the establishment of the EAEU in 2015, which brought together Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia to create an EU-like economic bloc.

This study fills a gap in the literature by focusing on public perceptions of the EAEU in Kyrgyzstan. Whereas most previous research has concentrated on Eurasian integration's macro-level political and economic aspects, this article sheds light on how ordinary citizens understand and experience these processes. The analysis offers valuable insights for policymakers and educators seeking to strengthen public awareness and support for regional economic cooperation initiatives.

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. The next section develops the theoretical framework, drawing on neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism, and new regionalism to situate Eurasian integration from

a comparative perspective. This is followed by a literature review outlining existing academic and institutional studies on the EAEU, particularly concerning Kyrgyzstan. The methodology section then introduces the survey design, sample characteristics, and analytical tools employed in this research. The subsequent section discusses the empirical findings, linking them to theoretical expectations and comparative insights from other member states. Finally, the conclusion summarises the main results, highlights their theoretical and policy implications, and offers recommendations for future research on Eurasian integration.

Regional integration has been analysed through several major theoretical lenses, each offering distinct insights into the dynamics and limitations of cooperation.

Neofunctionalism is one of the earliest and most influential approaches, emphasising the concept of “spillover,” whereby economic cooperation in one sector generates pressures for further integration in related areas (Haas, 1958). Neofunctionalist scholars argue that supranational institutions, once established, create dynamics that encourage deeper integration beyond initial economic agreements. In the case of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), this perspective would suggest that Kyrgyzstan’s entry into the Union primarily for economic reasons—such as access to a larger labour market and reduced customs barriers—could create momentum for further integration in political and social domains. However, evidence remains limited. Survey findings indicating that wealthier groups value economic benefits while younger respondents remain sceptical suggest that spillover dynamics may be partial and socially stratified. As critics of neofunctionalism have highlighted (Schmitter, 2005), such spillovers are less likely where a single state actor heavily dominates integration projects, as is the case with Russia in the EAEU.

Intergovernmentalism provides an alternative view, framing integration as the result of bargaining among sovereign states pursuing national interests (Moravcsik, 1998). Rather than seeing integration as automatic, this perspective underscores the role of state strategies, asymmetric power, and domestic political preferences. Russia’s dominant influence within the EAEU, combined with the weaker bargaining power of smaller states like Kyrgyzstan, reflects precisely this dynamic. Kyrgyzstan’s decision to join the EAEU in 2015 was strongly shaped by structural dependencies, such as remittances from Kyrgyz migrant workers in Russia and the geopolitical imperative of maintaining close ties with Moscow. Public opinion results, which reveal support for economic opportunities but unease about political overreach, mirror this state-led, interest-driven logic. Intergovernmentalism thus helps to explain why integration remains selective and uneven.

New regionalism perspectives locate regional integration within the broader context of globalisation and the strategic responses of states to external pressures

(Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Söderbaum, 2016). Unlike classical theories that emphasise linear progression, new regionalism highlights the multifaceted nature of integration, blending economic, political, and security considerations. In the Eurasian context, Russia's efforts to institutionalise the EAEU are motivated by intra-regional dynamics and a desire to balance against external actors such as the European Union, the United States, and China. For Kyrgyzstan, this creates both opportunities and vulnerabilities: while integration facilitates trade and migration within Eurasia, it also exposes the country to the geopolitical rivalries of great powers. Survey findings that younger cohorts are more critical of the Union and more open to alternative alignments suggest that EAEU integration is interpreted not merely as an economic arrangement but as part of a broader contest over identity and strategic orientation.

Despite the richness of these theoretical traditions, the case of the EAEU—and Kyrgyzstan's membership in particular—has not been systematically embedded within integration theory. Much of the existing literature focuses on descriptive accounts of trade flows, migration, or institutional development (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2017; Vinokurov, 2017), with limited attention to how these patterns interact with theoretical debates. This study contributes by applying neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism, and new regionalism directly to Kyrgyz public perceptions of the EAEU. Doing so highlights both the limited but present potential for functional spillovers, the constraints of asymmetrical intergovernmental bargaining, and the external pressures shaping regionalism in a global context. The article addresses a notable gap in the literature by linking empirical attitudes in Kyrgyzstan to these theoretical debates. It demonstrates how public opinion can serve as a critical test case for integration theory in non-Western regional projects.

The Eurasian Economic Union, established in 2015, is an economic union between several post-Soviet countries, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan. The union's primary goal is to promote the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour while facilitating cooperation in various sectors such as agriculture, transportation, and energy. The EAEU also aims to enhance regional economic stability and integration in a globalised world. Kyrgyzstan, which joined the EAEU in 2015, has had varying degrees of public reception to its membership. While some view the union as a gateway to economic growth and better labour mobility, others criticise it for over-dependence on Russia and associated challenges in local industries.

Reports and research published by the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) provide updated insights into ongoing economic cooperation and integration trends across Eurasia, offering valuable empirical data and policy-oriented analysis for understanding the dynamics of the EAEU and Kyrgyzstan's participation. The menu of pragmatic solutions presented in the EDB's 'Practical

Solutions' report indicates that physical infrastructure development, trade facilitation, financial cooperation (especially sustainable finance), and cross-border educational programmes are viewed as priority vectors for enhancing Eurasian regional cooperation (EDB, 2024). According to another report, *Macroeconomic Outlook 2025-2027* (EDB, 2025), Kyrgyzstan's economy is projected to grow robustly in 2025, with substantial contributions from household consumption, investment demand, and gains from increased export revenues, under favourable global commodity prices.

1. Public Perception and Sociopolitical Context

The literature on public perceptions of the EAEU in Kyrgyzstan shows a mixed response, influenced by socioeconomic conditions, geopolitical dynamics, and public trust in government institutions. Scholarly interest in the Eurasian integration process and its implications for Kyrgyzstan has been developing gradually. One of the early contributions is Avcu's (2014) study, which examines the advantages and disadvantages of Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Eurasian Customs Union. Avcu highlights that membership offered potential benefits such as increased trade opportunities, improved market access, and closer ties with Russia and Kazakhstan, but also warned of structural weaknesses and dependency risks for the Kyrgyz economy. Notably, the study emphasised that integration would generate economic gains and produce asymmetric costs and challenges, particularly for weaker economies like Kyrgyzstan.

Survey data from the CA Barometer indicate that public support for Kyrgyzstan's membership in the EAEU has declined over time. While in earlier waves of the survey, 73.2% of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that EAEU membership benefited the national economy, by 2021, this figure had dropped to 63.2%, with negative responses rising to 26.9% (CA Barometer, 2022). In addition, the EDB Integration Business Barometer (2022) reveals that while most business leaders in EAEU countries expect further deepening of integration, Kyrgyz respondents remain cautious, citing concerns over asymmetric gains and Russia's economic dominance. These findings highlight a gradual erosion of public enthusiasm, complementing previous studies emphasising the opportunities and concerns associated with EAEU membership.

1.1. Positive Perceptions

For some segments of the population, especially the business community and labour migrants, the EAEU is perceived positively. Studies show that access to the Russian labour market has provided better employment opportunities for Kyrgyz migrants, leading to increased remittances, which form a significant portion of Kyrgyzstan's GDP (Mogilevskii, Thurlow, & Yeh, 2018). Some traders and manufacturers also appreciate eliminating customs duties and greater access to a larger market (Peyrouse, 2017, s. 11). Similar arguments are made by Vinokurov (2017), who notes that the EAEU has contributed to labour mobility

and regional economic integration, particularly benefiting countries with large migrant populations like Kyrgyzstan.

1.2. Negative Perceptions

Other studies indicate scepticism toward the EAEU, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and local producers. The influx of cheaper goods from Russia and Kazakhstan has increased competition, hurting domestic industries such as agriculture and textiles (Juraev, 2016). Furthermore, concerns over Kyrgyzstan's dependence on Russia for economic and political stability, and the perception that the EAEU disproportionately benefits larger member states, have fueled public criticism (OSCE Academy, 2018; SIPRI, 2017). Dragneva and Wolczuk (2017) also underline that the institutional asymmetry within the EAEU tends to reinforce Russian dominance, leading to doubts about whether weaker economies like Kyrgyzstan can achieve balanced benefits.

1.3. Economic Impacts of EAEU Membership

The economic impact of the EAEU on Kyrgyzstan has been widely discussed in academic literature, focusing on various aspects such as labour mobility, trade, and local industry competitiveness.

Labour Mobility: Labour migration is one of the most studied aspects of the EAEU's impact on Kyrgyzstan. According to the University of Central Asia (2018), the EAEU has encouraged Kyrgyz workers to learn and exercise their enhanced legal rights in Russia, suggesting improved legal protection after the country's accession. Russia remains the primary destination for these workers within the EAEU (ICMPD, 2019). Meanwhile, remittances have surged—reaching about 35% of Kyrgyzstan's GDP in 2018—and continue to play a crucial role in the economy (United Nations in Kyrgyzstan, 2019). However, this reliance on remittances raises concerns about the country's long-term economic sustainability, as studies show that heavy dependence can lead to macroeconomic risks such as inflation, currency appreciation, underinvestment in productive sectors, and vulnerability to external economic shocks (Prokhorova, 2017; Stojanov, Němec & Židek, 2019). The unification of the pension system with Russia reinforced the already high trend of remittances, leading to a further increase after Kyrgyzstan acceded to the EAEU.

Studies have shown that while the EAEU has enhanced Kyrgyzstan's trade with member states, particularly Russia and Kazakhstan, the overall benefits have been uneven. The trade deficit with Russia, for example, has widened, as Kyrgyzstan imports more goods than it exports within the EAEU (Gast, 2018). Furthermore, According to Batmaz (2021), while Russia has reaped the most significant economic benefits from the EAEU, countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Armenia have experienced increases in foreign trade deficits, suggesting that

restrictive trade policies and imbalance of advantages may be limiting economic diversification.

Impact on Local Industries: Kyrgyz local industries' competitiveness is a significant concern. Studies show that agricultural producers, especially small-scale farmers, have struggled to compete with subsidized agricultural products from larger EAEU countries (Murzakulova, 2020). Additionally, the textiles industry, which was once a thriving sector, has seen a decline due to increased competition from larger EAEU producers (Nicharapova, 2024). Complementing these perspectives, Cerqua et al. (2024) conducted an ex-post quantitative assessment of the first decade of Eurasian integration, finding that the EAEU has had a measurable but uneven effect on bilateral trade flows among member states. Their results suggest that while trade intensity has generally increased, the benefits remain disproportionately concentrated in larger economies, reinforcing concerns about asymmetry for smaller members such as Kyrgyzstan.

More recently, Hakhverdyan (2025) analysed the impact of Eurasian Economic Union membership on trade, tariff regimes, and the exchange of services, emphasising both opportunities and structural constraints for smaller economies such as Kyrgyzstan. The study highlights that while EAEU membership facilitates greater access to regional markets, it also exposes vulnerable sectors to heightened competition, echoing earlier concerns raised in the literature about asymmetric integration benefits. Bekbolotova (2025) further investigates the trade effects of EAEU membership for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan using a multilevel modelling approach. The study finds that integration has facilitated greater export opportunities, especially in agricultural and light manufacturing sectors. It has also intensified import dependence, creating persistent trade deficits for smaller economies. These results align with earlier studies emphasising the asymmetric nature of Eurasian integration and its mixed implications for Kyrgyzstan's long-term economic resilience.

1.4. Social and Political Impacts

In addition to economic effects, the EAEU's influence on Kyrgyzstan's social and political environment is an area of growing interest.

Political Alignments: Some scholars argue that Kyrgyzstan's membership in the EAEU has reinforced its geopolitical alignment with Russia (Schenkkan, 2014). This has raised concerns about the country's political autonomy and the potential for Russia to exert undue influence on Kyrgyz domestic policies. Others argue that the EAEU has created a platform for Kyrgyzstan to negotiate more favourable terms in bilateral and multilateral agreements (Akhmatbekov, 2019).

Social Integration: On the social front, Kyrgyz labour migrants in Russia face integration challenges despite legal protections. Issues such as wage

disparities, lack of formal contracts, and accommodation difficulties remain key obstacles (Sagynbekova, 2017). Moreover, studies on social perceptions reveal that while older generations in Kyrgyzstan support the EAEU due to Soviet-era ties, younger generations are more critical and tend to favour closer relations with China or Western countries (Bissenova, 2020).

Savelyeva (2020) attempted to explore the mutual perception of governmental power between residents of Russia and residents of the participating countries of the EAEU. The article is based on materials from a study of mutual perceptions of Russia and the EAEU countries, collected from 2017 to 2019. The article analyses only the image of power as one of the components of the country's image. The study is based on 400 focused semi-standardised interviews. The study involved respondents from Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan (50 people from each country) and respondents from Russia (200 people, 50 people from each EAEU country). The results obtained made it possible to identify the peculiarities of the formation of the image of Russian authorities in the minds of citizens of countries participating in the Eurasian integration and the image of the authorities of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan among Russian citizens.

Legal analyses have also examined Kyrgyzstan's adaptation to EAEU norms. Zhusupbaev (2025) investigates the implementation of international law norms on customs transit in Kyrgyzstan's legal system, noting both progress in harmonising legislation with EAEU standards and persistent institutional shortcomings. His findings underscore the legal and administrative challenges smaller member states face in aligning domestic frameworks with supranational commitments, reflecting broader intergovernmentalist dynamics of bargaining and compliance.

In addition to Kyrgyzstan's challenges, looking at the integration experiences of other member states also reveals divergent outcomes. Armenia, similar to Kyrgyzstan, has faced persistent trade deficits, demonstrating the structural vulnerabilities of smaller economies (Bekbolotova, 2025). Belarus has benefited from preferential access to Russian energy and industrial markets, yet this advantage has reinforced its economic dependence on Moscow (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2017). Kazakhstan, by contrast, has capitalised on its stronger industrial base to expand exports and attract investment, positioning itself as one of the primary beneficiaries of the Union (Cerqua et al., 2024). As the largest economy, Russia has consolidated its dominant role, capturing a disproportionate share of the benefits and shaping the institutional agenda of the EAEU (Vinokurov, 2017). Taken together, these cases underline the asymmetrical nature of Eurasian integration and highlight that while the EAEU provides opportunities for all members, the extent of benefits is heavily mediated by national economic structures and political alignments.

2. History of the Eurasian Economic Union

Regarding ideas, the beginning of working on a big project between different countries started with a speech by the President of Kazakhstan, N. A. Nazarbayev, at Moscow State University in March 1994. This speech introduced a new way of bringing countries together, focusing on the economy and defence, to create a Eurasian Union. In 1995, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed an agreement to form a Customs Union. However, this failed and was considered as the first attempt (Vakhshiteh, 2022). In 2000, five countries -Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan- created the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). Many agreements were made about customs, trade, and working together in industry, infrastructure, agriculture, and services. EurAsEC also helped lead to bigger steps in the late 2000s, as the group making plans for the Customs Union worked within EurAsEC. EurAsEC officially ended on January 1, 2015, while the Eurasian Economic Union was created. The idea of establishing a Eurasian union has been interpreted from different perspectives. Dugin (2003) evaluated it as a political alternative project for Russia's future regional influence. Similarly, in his article *Geostrategy for Eurasia*, Brzezinski (2005) did not refer to the Eurasian Economic Union (formally established in 2015) but to the broader concept of Eurasian integration. He described it as a potential union that could emerge after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, aiming to incorporate CIS countries into three major geo-economic areas to increase their effectiveness in the global order.

Kireyev explains the reason for the establishment of the EAEU: The only way for the Russian Federation and the CIS to escape their current situation was by establishing the Eurasian Union. Therefore, such activities. This union was established because it shows that the Eurasian Region, as a fourth area outside the geoeconomics areas, has entered into a new formation in economic, political, cultural and many other aspects worldwide (Kireyev, 2003, s. 199).

Even if the countries formerly dependent on Russia declared their independence after 1991, it does not want these countries, which are of great importance to Russia, to be included in the EU and international organisations such as NATO, as it would threaten its security. For this reason, the EAEU was established to regain its former effectiveness by gathering the countries under the EAEU (Karluk, 2017).

The EAEU, as an economic group, has certain key features that are shaped by its history and influence its current and future direction. Russia plays a significant role in the union's economy, especially in GDP, population, trade, and investments. Around 86% of the total GDP comes from Russia, about 10% from Kazakhstan, and the remaining 4% is from Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan. Regarding population, Russia has around 146.8 million people,

which makes up 80% of the EAEU's total population. Kazakhstan is next with about 20.8 million people, or 10% of the total. The other countries in the union make up about 10% of the total population. These numbers are the most important facts when understanding the integration process. Because of this, it is not right to make positive or negative judgments or predictions based on these figures alone.

3. The Integration Process and Public/Business Perceptions of the EAEU

The Kyrgyz economy has some important traits when considering how it fits into the Eurasian integration process. Unlike Belarus and Armenia, Kyrgyzstan's trade and investment focus is not just on Russia. It also depends a lot on Kazakhstan. Both countries are where Kyrgyz goods are mainly sold and where most foreign investments come from. Kyrgyzstan has a long history of political problems, and now Russia and the EAEU act as a stabilising force, helping to keep things more secure.

The state and prospects for the development of Eurasian integration cannot be assessed in isolation from their public perception. The change in generations of the population of the countries involved in these processes, as well as the decrease in international support for Eurasian integration, often puts the issue of attractiveness and understanding of these processes for the general public on a par with the assessment of their economic feasibility (Makanov, 2015). Therefore, public perception emerges as a decisive factor that complements economic considerations in evaluating the future of Eurasian integration.

The EAEU remains an important integration project for the association's members, both economically and politically. At the same time, the high expectations of participants from Eurasian integration have not yet been met. Among the main problems of the EAEU are the lack of institutional discipline and a significant number of exemptions and barriers to mutual trade. The main risks for Eurasian integration come from the fact that the countries in the region are not all prepared in the same way. This is because they have different levels of economic development and differ in how open their economies are to international trade and cooperation.

As many researchers note today, the perception of power is largely modelled using the informational presentation of the media image of the head of state, which, in turn, is controlled by the elites of the countries and depends on their relationship with Moscow: either support for the Kremlin's course or opposition. The answers of the participants who took part in our research confirm this. For example, in Armenia, which significantly stands out from all countries in terms of the number of negative assessments (40%), many interview participants, arguing their attitude towards V.V.Putin, relied on information from the media. As we found out, Armenia's agenda now includes many online information resources that gained popularity during the "Velvet

Revolution” (2018), representing the interests of the opposition (Savelyeva, 2020). These findings highlight how political events and media landscapes shape public perceptions of leadership within the EAEU member states.

The survey results showed that, as a percentage of the total number of respondents from the EAEU countries, the image of the Russian government so far has a relatively positive connotation. A particularly positive attitude is observed among representatives of Central Asian countries, where the “attractiveness” indicator is higher, and the number of negative responses is much lower than in Belarus and Armenia. Russia significantly influences the internal processes in each country: thus, 64.5% of the total number of respondents answered “yes”, 25% - “partially”, and only 13% - overlooked the influence. To the question: “What is this influence?” — the most popular categories of answers were: “military power” (this is especially noted in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan), “political and economic potential” (representatives of all countries recognise them). Assessing Russia’s influence in the world, residents of the union states generally noted that it was strong and more positive than negative. Representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan showed confidence in these issues. Armenia and Belarus recognise that Russia profoundly influences the world, but significantly fewer citizens can evaluate it positively than in Central Asian countries. Armenia stands out, with only 21% considering Russia’s influence positive (Savelyeva, 2020). The results demonstrate that Russia’s role within the EAEU is perceived as a source of stability and influence. However, the degree of positivity attached to this perception varies significantly across member states.

Director of the Center for the Study of Integration Prospects, editor-in-chief of the analytical portal RuBaltic.Ru and one of the creators of the Eurasian Media Index project Sergei Reveda explained the image and perception of the Eurasian Economic Union in countries EAEU from the side of the media and social networks based on the work that has been carried out within the framework of the Eurasian Media Index project for three and a half years, starting in 2017, every quarter. The methodology of the “Eurasian Media Index” is that every quarter, on average, 465 sources are taken from all five countries of the EAEU (this is approximately 45 thousand messages, and not only websites, but also videos, radio, etc.), and the media field is assessed at seven criteria. Analysis of these seven indicators showed no stable leader in promoting the Eurasian agenda in our five EAEU. In 2017, Armenia scored the most points, in 2018 – Russia, and then in 2019 – Kazakhstan. According to him, one of the main problems is the excessive formality of Eurasian integration. Another feature of the Eurasian information field is that Russia is at the centre of all events. Sometimes, Kazakhstan comes out on top regarding activity and the

number of mentions. Russia and Kazakhstan, at the centre of the integration agenda, act as two locomotives of Eurasian integration.

EAEU is an economic union that should primarily benefit businesses and the economy. Accordingly, EAEU should most often be written in business publications. However, analysis of business publications showed that the proportion of materials occupied by articles about the EAEU in 2018-2019 was less than 20%. According to Rekada, one of the reasons for this is that Eurasian integration is, by and large, bureaucratic, virtual, and does not penetrate the depths of economic processes, so business publications do not particularly see the point in writing about it. Another reason could be that business publications do not grasp the essence of Eurasian integration.

Comparative analysis of the perception of the EAEU on classical media and social networks such as Facebook, V Kontakte, Instagram, etc. showed that the generation under 35-40 years of age, who mostly, even if they read and watch media materials, receive them mainly on social networks, do not see a positive picture of the EAEU. This report is based on a survey of businesspeople from big and medium-sized companies in Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. These companies do business in foreign markets within the EAEU and the CIS region (Rekada, 2020). The study was conducted by the EDB Centre for Integration Studies and the International Non-Profit Association of Research Agencies, known as "Eurasian Monitor." The study aims to discover how much businesses know about Eurasian integration, their views on the challenges they face and the support they get in international trade, and what they hope for regarding integration and collaboration in the EDB region.

Knowing what large and medium-sized businesses think about the benefits of economic integration is important. These businesses play a special role in shaping, carrying out, and improving these international processes. The survey included 337 companies from the six countries involved in foreign trade. The results show that most companies are aware of the EAEU and its institutions, with a high level of awareness found in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan (Chimiris et al., 2022). This highlights the critical role of business awareness and engagement in determining Eurasian integration's effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

Most companies surveyed (73% on average) believe that Eurasian integration makes it easier to do business in the territory of the EAEU member states. For some, significantly, for others, to some extent: the share of such answers in total was 79% and 78% in Kazakhstan and Belarus, respectively, 75% each in Russia and Armenia, and in Kyrgyzstan, 60%. Moreover, in Belarus and Kazakhstan, no companies have been identified that believe the EAEU's work complicates doing business. In Russia, more often than in other

countries, respondents found it difficult to answer this question (Chimiris et al., 2022). These differences suggest that while the overall perception of Eurasian integration is positive, the depth of its impact on business practices varies considerably across member states.

Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan companies often face trade challenges in the EAEU and CIS regions. These challenges include technical issues like labelling and product certification, along with problems with customs procedures and health standards. The most common issues mentioned by these companies are: 1) intense competition, 2) not having enough information about foreign markets and possible business partners, 3) limits on selling their products, and 4) financial issues like exchange rate rules, payment term restrictions, and difficulties in getting or using credit for importing goods. Less commonly mentioned problems include issues with export support, protecting intellectual property, government rules on buying goods, and controlling prices. Companies also reported other issues (Chimiris et al., 2022). These findings indicate that while the EAEU provides a framework for integration, persistent structural and regulatory barriers hinder fully realising its economic potential. Chimiris (2022) continues that at the same time, the central area of interaction between companies is trade, which is true both for the EAEU countries and for 12 countries in the CIS region (more than 90% of responses favour trade). The second most popular area was the industrial sector, but it is mentioned about half as often.

The level of awareness among business representatives from the six countries about Eurasian integration was measured by how well they knew about the EAEU as a whole, its key bodies like the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council, the Eurasian Economic Commission, and the EAEU Court, as well as the Business Council of the EAEU and the EAEU Development Bank. On average, businesses across the six countries have an 85% awareness of the EAEU. The highest level of awareness was seen in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, with 98% and 92% of respondents, respectively, saying they knew the EAEU well or had a general understanding. Kazakhstan also had a high level, with 84%. Russia and Belarus had similar levels, with a third of companies having good knowledge and more than half having a general understanding. Tajikistan, which is not a member of the EAEU, had the lowest awareness, with a third of respondents having no information at all, and another 11% saying they had only heard about the EAEU for the first time (Chimiris et al., 2022). These variations in awareness reflect the degree of formal participation in the EAEU and the extent to which businesses in each country are integrated into its institutional and economic structures.

Thus, in all EDB member countries, the majority of surveyed representatives of companies engaged in foreign economic activity in the EAEU and the CIS region positively assess Eurasian integration and admit that the functioning of the EAEU, to one degree or another, facilitates doing business in the territory of the Union member states. However, companies often do not understand how the EAEU can help them develop their business and need relevant information and support. To develop cooperation between companies, especially in knowledge-intensive industries, it is advisable to more actively inform businesses about the opportunities of the EAEU and expand formats for involving companies in the implementation of the goals of Eurasian integration (Chimiris et al., 2022). Strengthening communication channels and improving institutional transparency could enhance the practical benefits of Eurasian integration for the private sector.

Director of the Centre for the Study of Integration Prospects (CIPi), editor-in-chief of the analytical portal RuBaltic.Ru and one of the creators of the Eurasian Media Index project, Sergei Vyacheslavovich Reveda answered such questions as “What is the image of the Eurasian Economic Union in the EAEU countries now? How is the perception of this association different in the eyes of residents of the EAEU member states?” during the round table “Media coverage of Eurasian integration: post-pandemic challenges”. He explained what the Eurasian Economic Union looks like from the side of the media and social networks based on the work that has been carried out within the framework of the Eurasian Media Index project for three and a half years, starting in 2017, every quarter (Reveda, 2020). These insights illustrate the extent to which media narratives shape public understanding and perception of Eurasian integration.

According to Reveda (2020), one of Eurasian integration’s main problems is its excessive formality. While the process has a human dimension, it remains confined to official events. The level of attention it receives is often linked to the rank of officials attending such meetings. However, this resonance tends to be short-lived—limited to the event, the days leading up to it, and its immediate aftermath. Afterwards, public interest declines, and Eurasian integration disappears from the agenda.

Another feature of the Eurasian information field is that Russia is at the centre of all events. Sometimes, Kazakhstan comes out on top regarding activity and the number of mentions. Russia and Kazakhstan, at the centre of the integration agenda, act as two locomotives of Eurasian integration. As we remember, the EAEU is an economic union that should first benefit businesses, the economy, etc. Accordingly, most often we should read about the EAEU in business publications. That is why we specifically selected business publications among the sources we monitor. There, we looked at the proportion

of materials articles about the EAEU. From 2018 to 2019, the share was relatively low, less than 20% (Rekeda, 2020).

Suppose you look at the top, most resonant, most interesting publications circulated in the media and social networks. In that case, they are connected, first of all, with the socio-economic agenda, and not with political or ideological topics. In this situation, Kyrgyzstan is the most social because the main agenda around the EAEU is related to the labour market, migration, and problems related to migration (Rekeda, 2020).

4. Research Method

4.1. Purpose and Contribution

This article does not claim that Russia's withdrawal from the EAEU is currently under discussion; instead, it employs a purely hypothetical scenario to explore Kyrgyzstan's potential economic future in the event of such a development. Given the historical context of the Soviet Union's dissolution and Russia's pivotal role in the EAEU, this approach aims to provide a theoretical framework for considering Kyrgyzstan's possible economic alliances and shifts in public opinion.

Through a comprehensive survey conducted with 1242 Kyrgyz citizens, this study gauges the awareness and expectations of the Kyrgyz populace regarding their country's economic ties within the EAEU. By analysing the survey results using the Chi-Square method in SPSS 23, the article seeks to identify significant patterns and correlations in public opinion and knowledge levels.

The contribution of this article lies in its timely investigation of a critical geopolitical scenario that could significantly impact the economic stability and future of Kyrgyzstan. By understanding the perspectives of Kyrgyz citizens and their potential preferences for alternative economic partnerships, policymakers and stakeholders can better navigate the challenges and opportunities that may arise from changes in the EAEU's composition. This research adds to the academic discourse on regional economic cooperation and provides practical implications for strategic planning and international relations in the Eurasian region.

4.2. Universe and Sample

The study universe comprises Kyrgyz citizens, and the sample consists of 1242 participants. As shown in the table, the demographic characteristics of these 1242 participants were examined. 38.5% (478) of the participants were male, and 61.5% (764) were female. Regarding marital status, 47.3% (587) of the participants were married, and 52.7% (655) were single. When looking at the age distribution, 46.5% (578 people) of the participants were between the ages of 18-24, 22.3% (277 people) were between the ages of 25-34, 28.3% (352 people) were between the ages of 35-60, and 2.9% (35 people) were 60 years

old and over. When the education levels are evaluated, 17.8% (221 people) of the participants have a low education level, 23.6% (293 people) have a medium education level, and 58.6% (728 people) have a high education level. When the income levels are examined, 7.5% (101 people) of the participants are low-income level, 78.7% (969 people) are middle-income level, and 13.8% (172 people) are high-income level. In the distribution by field of work, 25% (311 people) of the participants are students, 21.1% (262 people) are self-employed, 32.8% (407 people) work in the private sector, 14.5% (180 people) are homemakers, and 6.6% (82 people) are unemployed.

This demographic distribution reflects the general characteristics of the research participant population and shows which demographic groups provide the research results. This information is important for better interpretation and analysis of research results.

	Frequency		Percent (%)
Gender	Male	478	38,5
	Women	764	61,5
Marital status	Married	587	47,3
	Single	655	52,7
Age	18-24 age	578	46,5
	25-34 age	277	22,3
	35-60 age	352	28,3
	60 over	35	2,9
Level of Education	Low	221	17,8
	Middle	293	23,6
	High	728	58,6
Income Level	Low	101	7,5
	Middle	969	78,7
	High	172	13,8
The Field of Work	student	311	25
	S.Employe	262	21,1
	Private Sector	407	32,8
	Homemaker	180	14,5
	Unemployment	82	6,6

Table 1: Demographic Distribution Table (Table prepared by the author)

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis Method

The study employed a survey method as the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire was structured in two sections: the first part captured the demographic characteristics of respondents. In contrast, the second part assessed their knowledge of and future expectations regarding the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Data were collected in January 2024 through an online survey. A total of 1,242 individuals participated in the study. The regional distribution of respondents shows that 36.8% resided in Bishkek, 7.2% in Osh city, 9.8% in Chui region, 3.3% in Talas region, 4.8% in Naryn region,

6.2% in Batken region, 12.6% in Osh region, 3.5% in Issyk-Kul region, 10.5% in Jalal-Abad region, and 1.9% abroad, while 3.5% of cases were missing. A non-probability, convenience sampling approach was applied, as participation was voluntary. Accordingly, the findings reflect the opinions of the surveyed group and may not fully represent the entire Kyrgyz population.

Hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant association between the level of education and the level of knowledge about the EAEU.

H2: There is a significant association between age and the level of knowledge about the EAEU.

H3: There is a significant association between income level and change in living standards after joining the EAEU.

H4: There is a significant association between age and change in living standards after joining the EAEU.

H5: There is a significant association between income level and views on the need to make agreements with other countries and the potential of the EAEU to form a political union.

H6: There is a significant association between education level and views on the need to make agreements with other countries and the potential of the EAEU to form a political union.

4.4.Results

How much have you been informed about the EAEU?

Table 2: Level of education Crosstabulation

		High School	Vocational School	University	Total
How much have you been informed about the EAEU?	I do not have any information	68	66	119	253
	I have some information	100	134	288	522
	I have an average level of information	43	87	294	424
	I have expert-level information	1	4	23	28
	Total	212	291	724	1227

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	52,078 ^a	6	,000
Likelihood Ratio	53,768	6	,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	50,630	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	1227		

a. 1 cell (8,3%) has an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4,84.

According to the chi-squared test results, there is a significant association between the level of education and the level of knowledge about the EAEU. Individuals with a higher level of education have a higher level of knowledge about the EAEU than those with a lower level of education.

Table 3: Informed Level Age Crosstabulation

		18-24	25-34	35-60	60 +	Total
How much have you been informed about the EAEU?	I do not have any information	142	59	47	5	253
	I have some information	236	113	162	14	525
	I have an average level of information	182	95	136	10	423
	I have expert-level information	13	8	7	0	28
	Total	573	275	352	29	1229

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19,967 ^a	9	,018
Likelihood Ratio	21,519	9	,011
Linear-by-Linear Association	9,562	1	,002
N of Valid Cases	1229		

a. 1 cell (6,3%) has an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 66.

According to the chi-squared test results, there is a significant association between age and the level of knowledge about the EAEU. The level of knowledge about the EAEU varies among age groups. It is seen that young people have more knowledge about the EAEU, and the group with the least knowledge is the over-65s.

How have your living standards changed after our country joined the EAEU?

Table 4: Family's Income Level Crosstabulation

		High	Middle	Low	Total
How have your living standards changed after our country joined the EAEU?	Without changes	42	267	31	340
	slightly improved	80	504	47	631
	increased significantly	48	164	6	218
	Decreased	2	21	1	24
	Total	172	956	85	1213

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20,752 ^a	6	,002
Likelihood Ratio	21,108	6	,002
Linear-by-Linear Association	10,920	1	,001
N of Valid Cases	1213		

Two cells (16,7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1,68.

According to the results of this chi-squared test, there is a significant association between income level and change in living standards after joining the EAEU. Individuals with higher income levels experienced more positive changes in living standards after joining the EAEU. However, these changes cannot be attributed solely to Kyrgyzstan's membership in the EAEU, as other domestic and international factors may have played a role.

Table 5: Living Standards Age Crosstabulation

		18-24	25-34	35-60	60 +	Total
How have your living standards changed after our country joined the EAEU?	Without changes	162	72	102	6	342
	slightly improved	295	151	172	17	635
	increased significantly	100	45	66	6	217
	Decreased	12	4	7	1	24
	Total	569	272	347	30	1218

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,670 ^a	9	,932
Likelihood Ratio	3,722	9	,929
Linear-by-Linear Association	,176	1	,675
N of Valid Cases	1218		

a. 1 cell (6,3%) has an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 59.

According to the chi-squared test results, there is a significant association between age and change in living standards after joining the EAEU. The change in living standards after joining the EAEU differs between age groups. While low-income respondents did not see any significant change after joining the EAEU, middle and upper-income respondents did see a difference. However, it was not a very large difference.

Shortly, the EAEU may lead to political unity, as in Soviet times.

Table 6: Political Unity Family's income level

		High	Middle	Low	Total
Shortly, the EAEU may lead to political unity, as in Soviet times.	Completely agree	18	88	5	111
	Agree	60	242	17	319
	I have no opinion	47	353	43	443
	Disagree	32	205	20	257
	Completely disagree	15	77	2	94
	Total	172	965	87	1224

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20,628 ^a	8	,008
Likelihood Ratio	21,586	8	,006
Linear-by-Linear Association	2,061	1	,151
N of Valid Cases	1224		

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6,68.

According to the results of this Chi-Square test, there is a significant association between income level and the idea of the near future; the EAEU may lead to political unity, as in Soviet times. The results show that it varies according to income status. High-income respondents see a political union as less likely. As their income increases, respondents move away from the idea that the EAEU will form a political union in the future.

Our country must enter into agreements with other countries to develop trade turnover.

Table 7: Alternative Partnerships- level of education

		High School	Vocational School	University	Total
Our country must enter into agreements with other countries to develop trade turnover.	Completely agree	82	114	351	547
	Agree	104	142	311	557
	I have no opinion	22	28	49	99
	Disagree	3	7	9	19
	Completely disagree	1	0	1	2
	Total	212	291	721	1224

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15,700 ^a	8	,047
Likelihood Ratio	15,596	8	,049
Linear-by-Linear Association	10,742	1	,001
N of Valid Cases	1224		

a. 5 cells (33,3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 35.

According to the results of this chi-squared test, there is a significant association between the idea of agreements with other countries and the level of education. Individuals with a higher level of education have more positive views on the need to make agreements with other countries.

Hypothesis	Statement	Result (Chi-Square Test)	Supported?
H1	There is a significant association between education level and knowledge about the EAEU.	$\chi^2(6) = 52.078, p < .001$	Yes
H2	There is a significant association between age and knowledge about the EAEU.	$\chi^2(9) = 19.967, p = .018$	Yes
H3	There is a significant association between income level and change in living standards after joining the EAEU.	$\chi^2(6) = 20.752, p = .002$	Yes
H4	There is a significant association between age and change in living standards after joining the EAEU.	$\chi^2(9) = 3.670, p = .932$	No
H5	There is a significant association between income level and views on agreements with other countries / potential of the EAEU to form a political union.	$\chi^2(8) = 20.628, p = .008$	Yes
H6	There is a significant association between education level and views on agreements with other countries / potential of the EAEU to form a political union.	$\chi^2(8) = 15.700, p = .047$	Yes

Table 8: Summary of Hypotheses and Results**Conclusion**

This study has comprehensively analysed the socioeconomic impacts of Kyrgyzstan's nine-year Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) membership, focusing on public perception. Through a structured survey conducted with 1,242 Kyrgyz citizens and analysed using the Chi-Square method, the research identified significant associations between key demographic variables—

education, age, and income—and citizens' levels of awareness, experiences, and attitudes toward the EAEU.

The results show that education is pivotal in shaping knowledge and opinion about the EAEU. As educational levels increase, so does awareness of regional economic structures and support for diversified trade partnerships beyond the EAEU. Increasing educational outreach and economic literacy can enhance constructive public engagement with regional integration policies.

Income level also emerged as a critical determinant of perception. Higher-income individuals view the EAEU more positively in improving living standards but are less supportive of its potential transformation into a political union. This indicates a pragmatic, economically driven outlook among wealthier citizens, who focus more on the tangible benefits of integration than on symbolic or ideological alignment.

Interestingly, younger age groups—despite often being more informed—show a more critical stance toward the EAEU's long-term strategic direction. This generational divide signals the need for policymakers to develop targeted engagement strategies that address the concerns of younger, globally connected Kyrgyz citizens who may favour alternative alliances with the EU, China, or other regional blocs.

Moreover, while the EAEU has facilitated labour mobility and access to larger markets, concerns persist over trade imbalances and the negative impact on local industries, particularly agriculture and textiles. These challenges, echoed in both public opinion and expert analyses, underline the necessity for domestic policy reforms that bolster local competitiveness and reduce overdependence on any single trade partner.

The findings on H5 and H6 have important political implications. The declining support for political union among higher-income respondents suggests that Kyrgyz citizens with greater economic resources prioritize pragmatic benefits of integration rather than symbolic or ideological unity. For this group, economic growth, trade opportunities, and mobility outweigh the appeal of supranational political structures. At the same time, the stronger endorsement of diversified trade agreements by more educated respondents indicates a demand for broader international engagement beyond the EAEU. This reflects a shift toward a more globally oriented outlook among the educated classes, who may perceive closer ties with other regional actors, such as the EU or China, as complementary or even preferable. Together, these results point to a potential gap between official narratives of deeper Eurasian political integration and the actual preferences of economically secure and educated segments of Kyrgyz society. Policymakers must take this divergence into account, balancing commitments within the EAEU with strategies that address citizens' aspirations for diversification and autonomy.

These findings resonate with broader debates in the literature on Eurasian integration, particularly regarding Russian dominance (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2017) and asymmetric benefits across member states (Avcu, 2014). From a theoretical standpoint, the results reflect important insights from the three main integration frameworks discussed in this study. Neofunctionalist expectations of automatic spillovers are only partially visible in Kyrgyzstan, where economic benefits are acknowledged by wealthier groups but do not generate widespread support for political integration. Intergovernmentalism more convincingly explains Kyrgyzstan's experience, as membership was driven by state-level bargaining, structural dependencies, and Russia's dominant role, while public attitudes reflect pragmatic calculations rather than supranational loyalty. Finally, new regionalism helps account for generational divides: younger, globally connected citizens view the EAEU not merely as an economic arrangement but as part of broader geopolitical competition, and often express greater openness to alternative alignments with actors such as the EU or China.

From a policy perspective, these findings underscore the importance of expanding economic diplomacy beyond the EAEU to ensure diversification, investing in education and public awareness programs to deepen understanding of economic integration, and designing inclusionary trade strategies that protect vulnerable sectors while leveraging EAEU membership benefits.

In conclusion, Kyrgyzstan's experience within the EAEU reflects both opportunities and limitations of regional integration. By explicitly linking public perceptions to integration theories, this study contributes to filling the gap in the literature where empirical data from Central Asia is rarely integrated into broader theoretical debates. Public perception—shaped by socioeconomic realities—should serve as a guide for future policy formulation. Strengthening local resilience, ensuring equitable integration and benefits distribution, and transparently addressing public concerns will be key to sustaining Kyrgyzstan's strategic position in Eurasia.

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The authors declare that ethical rules and scientific citation principles have been followed in all preparation processes of this study. In the event of a contrary situation, Ege University Journal of Turkish World Studies has no responsibility, and all responsibility belongs to the authors of the article.

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