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Common Leadership Identities and Divergent Interest in Regional Cooperation in the Former Soviet Union.

The general literature on regional formations suggests, inter alia, the importance to success of common elite/leadership values and also the role of a hegemon in either encouraging existing inclinations towards a common regional identity or of forming, even compelling one. The post-Soviet space shows both of these tendencies, particularly the former, where generally the elites share the same educational backgrounds, have a lingua franca, exhibit similar patterns of political rule, share legislation, and have even come to resist outside normative (ie democratising) influences. Furthermore, Soviet economic, industrial, and infrastructural legacies also offer what would otherwise be taken as positive foundations for, and even compellence towards regional cooperation and integration. The fSU, however, has provided a series of counterexamples to such expectations, the chief explanations for which could be found in leadership style and governance expectations. That experience contrast very sharply with regional achievements in Central Europe, which in turn have had unexpected and positive impacts on leadership perceptions and actions.