

REGIONAL STUDIES

**CENTRAL ASIA AS VIEWED  
BY CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL  
ANALYSTS**

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*Introduction*

Throughout the two decades of independent development of the Central Asian states, world political science has formulated its own specific approaches to the region and acquired certain conceptions. Elaborated by the members of different schools and, particularly, of diverse political affiliations, the methods, ideas, and approaches, likewise, differ widely. From the

very beginning, everything written about Central Asia abroad was stamped with ideological and geopolitical approaches, which means that all of them were politicized, albeit to different degrees. More likely than not, the roots should be sought in Sovietology: contemporary Central Asian studies (particularly in the West) have inherited too many birthmarks from it.

## Classification of Scholarly Writings on Central Asia

How should we classify the varied and numerous scholarly writings on Central Asia? Classification by national schools was most effective at the early stages of contemporary Central Asian studies.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1990s, the British, French, (West) German, and American national schools predominated.<sup>2</sup> Later, Turkey, China, India, Poland, Iran, Pakistan, and others joined in the intensive studies of the political processes in the region and around it. Political literature of Russia and the other CIS countries (including those of Central Asia) is a special phenomenon.

This suggests a different classification method; everything that has been written about Central Asia can be divided into several groups:

- (1) works dealing with the regional processes, relations, and political developments of individual republics;
- (2) works dealing with the region's international status, the geopolitical processes around it, and the relations between the Central Asian states, on the one side, and the world and regional players, on the other;
- (3) works devoted to individual states of the region.

There is a number of definitive works dealing with the region as a whole and authored by G.E. Fuller, R. Dannreuther, M.B. Olcott, O. Roy, G. Gleason, F.E. Starr, and others. Collective works, which bring together experts on a wide range of subjects who represent Western and Asian scientific schools and, not infrequently, post-Soviet academic science, are the most popular form of regional studies.

This can be described as globalization in science; in any case, this is a sure sign that the academic traditions are losing their national features, while the academic world in the West is becoming more democratic than before. Political interests and geopolitical engagement, however, are evident in latent or even open form in many works not necessarily written in the West.

## Central Asia in the Mirror of Contemporary Political Science: Problems and Approaches to Them

In the West, studies of Central Asian politics knew several development stages, each of which, intimately connected with the regional processes, reflected what was going on in the region and around it.

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<sup>1</sup> We relied on it in *Tsentrāl'naia Azia v zarubezhnoy politologii i mirovoy geopolitike*. Vol. I: *Tsentrāl'naia Azia i Kazakhstan v sovremennoy politologii*, KISI, Alma-Ata, 2005, 704 pp.

<sup>2</sup> Here we have in mind only political studies; Hungary, Italy, Finland, Poland, and Turkey can boast of Oriental and Turkic studies of long standing.

The first stage (approximately 1991-1995) was dominated by geopolitics for the simple reason that Central Asia had been pushed onto the world political scene by the Soviet Union's disintegration, a geopolitical shift of grandiose dimensions. Martha Brill Olcott described this as a "catapult to independence,"<sup>3</sup> a happy term willingly accepted by the political analyst community. Western experts tried to identify the direction in which the newly independent Central Asian states were moving; whether they had completely ruptured their ties with the Soviet Union/Russia; whether the destabilization threat was great; and whether the attraction of the Islamic world was strong. In fact, these were recommendations rather than analytical works in the true sense of the word.

The very first works dealing with Central Asia (by G.E. Fuller, R. Dannreuther, G. Crichlow, M.B. Olcott, and others) clearly pointed to the threats and challenges with which the West would be confronted and which it should overcome: Moscow's restored control; Islamic fundamentalism; ethnic and religious disturbances; proliferation of WMD, etc. At this early stage, some of the authors offered the conclusion that the region had paid dearly for its stability (albeit highly relative): it had exchanged it for the road of democracy. This meant that the Western politicians accepted that the region would embrace the authoritarian development model, which had nothing to do with the West's ideas of good governance for the simple reason that the alternative—militant Islamism—was even less acceptable, as the experience of Tajikistan had amply demonstrated.

These works contained an easily recognizable geopolitical message to Western strategists: the West should go to all lengths to support the post-Soviet Central Asian republics as independent states and channel their development in the desired direction. All instruments would suffice: democratic, institutional, political, economic, energy, transportation, etc. By the mid-1990s, the most far-sighted analysts guessed that Russia (the zigzags of Yeltsin's policies notwithstanding) would not leave the region. By that time the Western political scientists had become even clearer about the desired Western regional strategies: the West should be even more involved in the struggle for the region's resources, the Caspian pipelines in particular.

At the second stage (1995-2000), many of the Western analysts were bitterly disappointed with the region's development and its results. The West had failed to detach it from Russia and the CIS; it likewise had failed to plant the West's "normative values" (democracy, market economy, human rights) there. The sporadic efforts to integrate the post-Soviet expanse inevitably alarmed the West.

At the same time, some of the Western authors pointed out that the cultural, historical, economic, etc. unity of Central Asia was nothing more than a myth. The region was acquiring two models related to the two key republics—Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. On the whole, it had become clear that national states, each with their own specific features and their own domestic and foreign policies, were taking shape.

At that time, Kazakhstan was regarded as the region's weakest link; Martha Olcott was the most eloquent on this score: she predicted an ethnic split in Kazakhstan; engulfment by Russia was offered as another possible threat. This meant that the West should come to the rescue. Shirin Akiner was the first to provide the details of the process for transforming Kazakhstan into a nation-state and conclude that the republic was moving toward a pluralist model of state identity.<sup>4</sup>

In the latter half of the 1990s, European, particularly German, authors developed a greater interest in the region. They tried to formulate the European Union's geopolitical interests in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Caspian as regions of exceptional strategic importance and as a source of raw materials, particularly hydrocarbons. Specialists knew at this early stage that the European Union would find it hard to pursue a coordinated strategy in these regions in view of the presence of other active centers of geopolitical power.

<sup>3</sup> M.B. Olcott, "Central Asia's Catapult to Independence," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1992, pp. 108-130.

<sup>4</sup> See: Sh. Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity from Tribe to Nation-State*, RIIA, London, 1995, 83 pp.

Much of what was written at that time revised the roles of Iran and Turkey in Central Asia<sup>5</sup>; it was more or less unanimously concluded that the West had overestimated the danger of Iran's expansion and export of the Islamic revolution. There was more or less unanimous disappointment with Turkey, which early in the 1990s had been seen as a leader, driving force, and "elder brother;" a moderate and secular pattern to be followed.

At that stage, the Western authors still kept Russia and its Central Asian policies in the focus of their attention. Much was written about Moscow's stabilizing role and the fact that it could block Western influence in Central Asia.<sup>6</sup> China and its Central Asian policies came to the fore: the Western authors realized that Beijing was quick on the uptake: it found a common language with the local regimes and, unlike the West, fully accepted them. By the end of the 1990s, some authors were disturbed by the fact that the Chinese had developed into another Great Game player in Central Asia.<sup>7</sup>

There was the opinion that the states had achieved so-called authoritarian stabilization. On the whole, the regimes were described as "presidential," which relied on strong personal power ("strong presidentialism").<sup>8</sup> Some authors preferred to describe authoritarianism as "sultanistic regimes."<sup>9</sup> Typically enough, some authors had predicted velvet revolutions in Central Asia even before the Color Revolutions took place. They favored stability: the "iron fist" was expected to prevent social and political upheavals.

At this stage, Catherine Poujol wrote about Kazakhstan's duality or, rather, about the duality of its domestic and foreign policies which combined several principles, models, cultures, civilizations, and priorities<sup>10</sup> described as its strength and weakness at one and the same time. The author disagreed with the opinion that the republic had completed the post-Soviet development stage. In the future the republic might restore its former role of the Eurasian axis, a geopolitical mission of sorts, its pro-European development vector remaining all-important. Other authors, Sally Cummings among them,

<sup>5</sup> See: G.E. Fuller, O.E. Lesser, P.D. Henze, J.F. Brown, *Turkey's New Geopolitics from the Balkans to Western China*, Westview Press, Boulder, Oxford, 1993; G. Winrow, *Turkey in Post-Soviet Central Asia*, RIIA, London, 1995; B. Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position*, Foreword by B. Rubin, Frank Cass, London, Portland, OR, 2002; A. Rubinstein, O. Smolansky, *Regional Powers in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey and Iran*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> See: R.D. Blackwill, R. Braithwaite, A. Tanaka, *Engaging Russia*, A Report to the Trilateral Commission, The Trilateral Commission, New York, Paris, Tokyo, 1995, 183 pp.; *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. by V. Tismaneanu, NY, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 1995; *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. by A. Dawisha, K. Dawisha, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, 1995, XIII+360 pp.; W.E. Odom, R. Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire? Russia, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus*, Hudson Institute, Indianapolis, 1995, 290 pp.; *State Building and Military Power in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1995, XVI+319 pp.; *Russian Foreign Policy since 1990*. Ed. by P. Sherman, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, XII+324 pp.; *Challenges for the Former Soviet South, Russia and Eurasia Programme*, ed. by R. Allison, Brookings Institution Press, London, Washington, DC, 1996, XIV+366 pp.; H. Malik, *The Roles of the United States, Russia and China in the New World Order*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> See: L.C. Harris, "Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World," *China Quarterly*, March 1993, pp. 115-125; J.R. Walsh, "China and the New Geopolitics of Central Asia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1993; R. Munro, "Central Asia and China," in: *Central Asia and the World*, ed. by M. Mandelbaum, Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1994, pp. 225-236; G. Wacker, "China's Interests in Central Asia," in: *The Development of the Soviet Successor States in Central Asia. Its Implications for Regional and Global Security*, Hrsg. von U. Halbach, BIOIS, Köln, 1995, pp.105-110; R. Götz, "Geopolitische Rivalen oder Partner? Russland und China in der Region des Kaspischen Meers," *Eläuter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 43, Nr. 10, 1998, pp. 1200-1209; R. Stobdan, "China's Central Asia Dilemma," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, June 1998, pp. 399-408; *Rapprochement or Rivalry? Russia-China Relations in a Changing Asia*, ed. by Sh. Garnett, The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> U. Halbach, "Das Regime der Präsidenten," *Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit*, 40, Nr. 2, 1999, pp. 39-41.

<sup>9</sup> See: *Sultanistic Regimes*, ed. by H.E. Chelabi, J.J. Linz, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998, X+284 pp.

<sup>10</sup> See: C. Poujol, *Le Kazakhstan*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2000, 128 pp.

were convinced that Kazakhstan brought together the unitary state model and the authoritarian regime, which made it possible to neutralize the center/periphery contradiction as the main threat to its statehood.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the authors were evidently disappointed with Western policies in Central Asia in the 1990s; they were convinced that the Western strategy had failed because of the glaring gap between the Western normative values and the Western strategic interests when the former was sacrificed to the latter.

The third stage of foreign political studies of the region coincided with a new geopolitical upheaval—9/11 and the arrival of the United States and its allies in the center of Eurasia. The political analysis and geopolitical studies which appeared in 2002-2005 were concerned, for obvious reasons, with the geopolitical shifts and their regional impact. The regional policies of the United States and the West (the so-called Talbott Doctrine) of the 1990s were severely criticized from all sides. In the 21st century, Western political thought (it was Uwe Halbach who set the ball rolling) tried to convince the public that Central Asia was no longer a post-Soviet expanse and that the region had moved far enough from its Soviet past to make the process irreversible.<sup>12</sup>

Those Western experts, however, who took the trouble to scrutinize the regional processes discovered that the Central Asian states remained closely connected with their Soviet past. There was the opinion that by the mid-2000s they had completed the transit, something which not all academics were prepared to accept. Martha Olcott, for example, came forward with the “second chance” conception: the West should give the Central Asian countries a new chance and support the coming political changes.<sup>13</sup> Strangely enough, these recommendations coincided with the so-called Color Revolutions in the CIS. In fact, everything published shortly before Martha Olcott’s book spoke of the same.

As distinct from Boris Rumer, Marie-Carin Gumpfenberg does not believe that Kazakhstan has completed the period of transformations; she described the republic’s political system as “formal presidency.”<sup>14</sup> The “European statehood” conception which Kazakhstan embraced as its normative and civilizational development trend was another important factor. M.B. Olcott insisted on its “missed opportunities” theory; she looked at Kazakhstan as the best illustration of “missed opportunities, unfulfilled promises, and the road that was never covered:” the most contradictory and ambiguous interpretation of the republic’s post-Soviet development.<sup>15</sup>

Andrea Schmitz described Kazakhstan’s political system as “cooptational:” part of the ruling elite was continuously “coopted” into the opposition, which preserved the stability very much needed for the economic and political reforms underway in the country. She described prevention of big political, ethnic, and social conflicts as the basic philosophy of the Kazakhstan state.<sup>16</sup>

Boris Rumer has formulated the “end of transition” conception, which says that the Central Asian countries have completed the transit stage and acquired stable systems of economic and sociopolitical ties. Domestic and foreign factors, or even a regime change, will hardly affect them in a radical or even more or less noticeable way, which he describes as a source of the region’s future troubles. To-

<sup>11</sup> See: S. Cummings, *Nursultan Nazarbaev and Presidential Power in Kazakhstan*, Columbia University, New York, 1999; Idem, *Kazakhstan. Centre-Periphery Relations*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 2000, VIII+55 pp.

<sup>12</sup> See: U. Halbach, “Das nachsowjetische Zentralasien. Eine Region mit politischer Sprengkraft,” in: *Jahrbuch Internationale Politik 1999-2000*, Oldenburg Verlag, München, 2001, pp. 277-289; Idem, *Der “nicht mehr postsowjetische” Raum? Russland in der Wahrnehmung kaukasischer und zentralasiatischer Staaten vor und nach dem 11. September*, SWP/DIIPS, Berlin, 2002 (SWP-Studie. S-24), 39 pp.

<sup>13</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance*, Carnegie Endowment, Washington, DC, 2005, XIII+389 pp.

<sup>14</sup> M.-C. von Gumpfenberg, *Staats- und Nationsbildung in Kasachstan*, Leske und Budrich, Opladen, 2002, 231 S.

<sup>15</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, Carnegie Endowment, Washington, 2002, XII+321 pp.

<sup>16</sup> See: A. Schmitz, *Elitenwandel und Politische Dynamik in Kasachstan*, SWP, Berlin, 2003, 36 S.

gether with most of the American analytical community he believes that the United States alone can pull the republic out of the stagnating "post-transit phase."<sup>17</sup>

Islam and the related problems figure prominently in Western analytical conceptions; in fact, none of the analysts has ignored it; the question is: How deep is the Islamic influence in the developing Central Asian nation-states? The most competent of the authors describe Islam as one of the main elements of the Central Asian peoples' new national identities that are taking shape before our eyes. This factor has a foreign policy dimension as well.<sup>18</sup> Sooner or later all authors dealing with the regional role of Islam inevitably arrive at the Islamic fundamentalism or radical Islam issue. According to Ahmed Rashid, the regimes which suppressed secular democratic parties and repressed practically all forms of Islam were responsible for the appearance of armed Islam in the region. His conception of the "Central Asian front of the West" describes the region as a new front of the struggle against militant Islamism, the victory of which will shatter the region and echo on the global scale. In fact, the author calls on the West to interfere in the regional developments under the pretext of fighting the Islamists and supporting the democratic reforms to establish its direct control there.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the most far-sighted authors who have the region's cultural and political future close at heart are concerned about the obvious threat of ideological Islamization of the future generations. They insist that the regional governments should develop their nation-states in the spirit of state patriotism. Some of the authors look at the domestic developments of the Central Asian states from the point of view of ethnopolitics: these states aim at creating a nation-state as their final aim together with national unity on the titular nation basis.

Geopolitical works figure prominently in the contemporary political studies of Central Asia, the pride of place belonging to the New Central Asia conception coined by the Trilateral Commission. Its authors concluded that, at the dawn of the new century, the region confronted the world with qualitatively new conditions: today, the West has a much narrower leeway when it comes to interference in the region's developments. In fact, the Central Asian states have mastered the art of maneuvering on the international arena and have learned to exploit geopolitical contradictions in their foreign policy interests. Since Europe and Japan, along with the U.S., were likewise the Commission's members, it deemed it necessary to assess the geopolitical presence of both Brussels and Tokyo. The conclusions were far from flattering: the European Union's Central Asian strategy was described as "proto-strategy," while Tokyo's "Eurasian diplomacy" scored no success to speak of.<sup>20</sup>

The events of 9/11 produced the "security manager"<sup>21</sup> conception in the American analytical community; put in a nutshell, it said that since the Central Asian states could not protect themselves

<sup>17</sup> See: B. Rumer, "Central Asia: 15 Years After," *Central Asia's Affairs* (KazISS, Almaty), No. 1, 2005, pp. 2-12; *Central Asia. At the End of Transition*, ed. by B. Rumer, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, 2005, XIII+449 pp.

<sup>18</sup> See: *Afghanistan and Post-Soviet Central Asia: Prospects for Political Evolution and the Role of Islam*, USIP, Washington, D.C., 1992, 42 pp.; Sh. Akiner, "Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia," *Harvard International Review*, Vol. XV, No. 3, 1993, pp. 18-21; R. Altoma, "The Influence of Islam in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," in: *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, ed. by B.F. Mainz, Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1994, pp. 164-181; *Islam in Central Asia*, Ithaca Press, Reading, 1994, VI+176 pp.; A. Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia. Islam or Nationalism?* Oxford University Press, London, Karachi, 1994, 278 pp.; M. Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, Macmillan Press, London, 1995, 264 pp.; *Islam in the Political Culture of the Former Soviet Union: Central Asia and Azerbaijan*, Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, Hamburg, 1995, 65 pp.; M. Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996; *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia*, ed. by L. Jonson, M. Esenov, Conference Paper No. 24, SIIA, Stockholm, 1999, VI+139 pp.; *Islam Outside the Arab World*, ed. by D. Westerlund, I. Svanberg, Curzon Press, Richmond, 1999, XII+488 pp.

<sup>19</sup> See: A. Rashid, *Jihad. The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 2003, XXIX+282 pp.

<sup>20</sup> See: Sh. Garnett, A. Rahr, K. Watanabe, *The New Central Asia. A Report to the Trilateral Commission: 54 (October)*, The Trilateral Commission, New York, Paris, Tokyo, 2000, 79 pp.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example: E. Rumer, "Flashman's Revenge: Central Asia after September 11," *Strategic Forum* (Washington, DC), No. 195, December 2002, pp. 1-8.

against “international terrorism” and since the neighboring great powers, likewise, proved unable to protect them, the United States should shoulder the task. In fact, this justified, antedate, America’s military presence in the region flawed in the summer of 2005.

This is complemented by the “strategic barrier” conception<sup>22</sup> which suggests that the United States should erect a strategic barrier of sorts on the CIS and Central Asian territories to cut Russia off from the post-Soviet expanse. The wave of the Color Revolutions of 2003-2005 suggests that Washington embraced it.

Some of the authors (R. Allison and L. Jonson) formulate the “security sub-complex” conception which treated Central Asia as a periphery of the effective security systems rather than an independent security system (CSTO and SCO). They argued that the United States, Russia, and China look at the region as a mere periphery of their geopolitical and strategic interests.<sup>23</sup>

Asian experts, Iranian analysts in particular, prefer the “geopolitical balancing” theory; the term describes the role of the regional powers, which being unable to compete with the great powers, are involved in geopolitical games of their own. Tehran itself is involved in these games to a much greater extent than any of the regional powers: it poses itself as the “natural patron” of the Central Asian states intended to protect them against the encroachments of the United States and Russia and, possibly, China and Turkey.

Most analysts were forced to revise, very much to their displeasure, Turkey’s role in Central Asia. The new “elder brother” conception fell through; in 1991, Turkey was expected to set the pattern for its “Turkic brothers” in Central Asia. In the new century, the illusion dissipated: first, the Central Asian states declined the role of junior partners; second, Turkey’s resources were too limited for any important geopolitical role in the region. Finally, Moscow let Turkey know that the region was a sphere of Russia’s interests—it seems that Ankara had to obey.

Recently, Indian strategists seem to have embraced the Big Asian Triangle (Moscow-Delhi-Beijing) conception when dealing with Central Asia. This means that India will have to operate there together with Russia and China; its strategic aims being the region’s strategic resources and defense against the Islamic world (as represented by Pakistan).

The SCO abbreviation puts in a nutshell all the theories, conceptions, and doctrines that the Chinese strategic institutes have produced so far. Beijing’s interests in Central Asia are focused on this regional structure. China intends to preserve and strengthen the SCO, which can be described as its central strategic and geopolitical aim. Beijing is striving to extend its influence; it is determined to add an economic dimension to the SCO (particularly in the energy sphere), cement its regional position, and achieve regional dominance. On the whole, China aims to develop into a “soft hegemon” within, or even beyond, the SCO. This has never been openly admitted, yet we are obviously dealing with the “soft hegemony” or “soft leadership” doctrine.<sup>24</sup>

Everything said in the 1990s about the geopolitical situation in the Caspian stemmed from the Great Game conception for the simple reason that the rivalry among the great powers was especially obvious in this part of the world. In the new century, the Caspian and everything related to it came to

<sup>22</sup> *Thinking Strategically. The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, ed. by R. Legvold, The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), London, 2003, XII+243 pp.

<sup>23</sup> See: *Central Asian Security. The New International Context*, ed. by R. Allison, L. Jonson, RIIA/Brooking Institution Press, London, Washington, 2001, XV+279 pp.

<sup>24</sup> Ph. Andrews-Speed, Liao Xuanli, R. Dannreuther, “The Strategic Implications of China’s Energy Needs,” in: *Adephi Paper 346*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2002, 115 pp.; T.G. Carpenter, “Managing the US-China-Russia Triangle,” *Heartland. The Italian Geopolitical Review (Rome)*, 2002, No. 2, *The Chinese Way*, pp. 141-148; E.W. Merry, *Russia and China in Asia: Changing Great Power Roles*, American Foreign Policy Council, Washington, DC, 2002, IX+61 pp.; B. Gill, M. Oresman, *China’s New Journey to the West. China’s Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests*, A Report of the CSIS Freeman Chair in China Studies, Foreword by Z. Brzezinski, The CSIS, Washington, D.C., 2003, XI+51 pp.

the fore: we have in mind the so-called Caspian Alternative. From the geopolitical point of view, the Caspian-Central Asian region (or, broader still, Central Eurasia) should be transformed into a hydrocarbon alternative to OPEC: the United States and Europe are seeking less dependence on Arab oil. This explains America's resolution to lay the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline; the aborted petroleum-related love affair between America and Russia; Washington's obvious determination to control the region at any cost; Western fears of China's presence; the attempts to isolate Iran (and Russia for that matter) from Caspian oil, etc.

The Chinese dimension revived the problem of Europe's involvement in the big geopolitical game in the region. This sheds new light on the Stability Pact for Central Asia, an idea formulated by European (or German to be more exact) strategists. It was expected that the EU would be able to play a stabilizing and all-important role, similar to that it had earlier played in the Balkans. The European analysts proceeded from the region's highly promising energy-related future. The project, however, failed because the European Union, for want of convincing political arguments and instruments of power, has no important role to play in the Great Game. The failure of the European Constitution in 2005 (which meant failure of the idea of a single European state with a common strategy and foreign policy) merely confirmed this.<sup>25</sup>

Several conceptual works appeared after 2005, in particular a highly interesting work by Shahrām Akbarzadeh called *Uzbekistan and the United States. Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda*,<sup>26</sup> which described the worsening relations and contradictions between the United States and Uzbekistan as stemming from Washington's attempts to democratize its partner in the counterterrorist war in Afghanistan; this ran against the grain of Karimov's determination to oppose liberalization which, he was convinced, created fertile soil for militant Islamism.

In 2005, French author Gael Raballand issued the book *L'Asie Centrale ou la fatalité de l'enclavement?*<sup>27</sup> in which he discussed the problems and geographic specifics of the region wedged between two large geopolitical forces in the Eurasian center. He points to the region's land-locked position, which deprives it of free access to the world supply routes and is, therefore, responsible for its geopolitical problems. A new work by Robert Legvold called *New US Strategy in Central Asia*<sup>28</sup> revises the old and formulates Washington's new approaches to the region. The book was connected, in a very logical way, with the Greater Central Asia conception coined by Frederick Starr at approximately the same time (it caused quite a storm in the academic circles) and with the suggestions of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy to the effect that the United States should revise its tactics and strategy in some of the Central Asian states.

<sup>25</sup> See: *The Caucasus and Caspian Region: Understanding U.S. Interests and Policy: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Seventh Congress, First Session, 10 October, 2001*, Washington DC, 2001, III+58 pp.; *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*, ed. by G. Chufrin, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2001 (SIPRI), XVI+375 pp.; *The Politics of Caspian Oil*, ed. by B. Gokay, Palgrave, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York, 2001, IX+232 pp.; H. Peimani, *The Caspian Pipeline Dilemma: Political Games and Economic Losses*, Praeger, Westport (Conn.), 2001, 134 pp.; A.M. Jaffe, Y. Kalyuzhnova, D. Lynch, R. Sickles, *Energy in the Caspian region: Present and Future*, Foreword by James A. Baker, Palgrave, New York, 2002, XXIV+266 pp.; "Caspian Oil Windfalls: Who Will Benefit?" in: *Caspian Revenue Watch*, Open Society Institute, New York, 2003, 146 pp.; R.H. Dekmejian, H. Simonian, *Troubled Waters. The Geopolitics of the Caspian Region*, Tauris, London, 2003, 281 pp.; M. Menzel, *Doomed to Cooperate? American Foreign Policy in the Caspian Region*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 2003; *The Caspian: Politics, Energy, Security*, ed. by Sh. Akiner, A. Aldis, Taylor and Francis, London, 2004; *The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West*, The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, ed. by F.E. Starr, S.E. Cornell, Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Washington, DC, 2005, 150 pp.

<sup>26</sup> See: Sh. Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States. Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda*, Zed Books, London, 2005, 166 pp.

<sup>27</sup> See: G. Raballand, *L'Asie Centrale ou la fatalité de l'enclavement?* L'Harmattan, Paris, 2005, 360 pp.

<sup>28</sup> See: R. Legvold, *New US Strategy in Central Asia*, New York, 2005.



Germany's political science is represented by Joern Graevingholt's work *Schlechte Regierungsfuehrung, Krisenpraevention und das Dilemma der Entwicklungspolitik am Beispiel Zentralasiens* written in line with the European idea about the region as a conglomerate of authoritarian regimes which should be accepted for the sake of stability and security of the European Union in particular.<sup>29</sup>

Kathleen Collins' *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, which appeared in 2006, describes the so-called clan system as the key informal public institution of Central Asia. The author, however, has failed to clarify her own ideas about the local regimes and their nature. She is close to Max Weber's formula of the clan system as "patrimonial domination," yet fails to agree with the commonly accepted idea that the system is drifting toward "political clientelism."<sup>30</sup>

Adrienne Lynn Edgar published her *Tribal Nation. The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* in 2006 as part of Princeton University's research program.<sup>31</sup> The book can be described as an effort to go back into the past to seek the roots of the clan and tribal system of Niyazov's Turkmenistan, the cornerstone of the notorious regime in the recently Soviet republic. Much of what is said drew objections from experts on Turkmenistan. R. Charles Weller's *Rethinking Kazakh and Central Asian Statehood* is best described as an attempt to move away from the traditional ideas and clichés about Central Asian societies (very popular in the West) using Kazakhstan as an example. Indeed, the author presented Kazakhstan society as much more dynamic, much more modern, and much more Western than it was depicted by the Western media and public opinion.<sup>32</sup>

Two books were of an obvious economic bias. We have in mind Kelly M. McMann's *Economic Autonomy and Democracy* and Richard Pomfret's *The Central Asian Economies since Independence*.<sup>33</sup> The former contains a comparative analysis of the economic policy of Russia and Kyrgyzstan, two extremely different countries. The author associates the level of economic reforms in the two countries with the degree and speed of democratic transformations. Both economies and the corresponding regimes are described as "hybrid," as a combination of political authoritarianism and economic liberalism and vice versa: democratic institutions in the political system and sporadic state interference in the economic processes. Richard Pomfret is well known for his works of the 1990s which dealt with the post-Soviet economies of Kazakhstan and its Central Asian neighbors. This fundamental work covers 15 post-Soviet years.

In 2006, Prof. Starr of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and his academic group dominated Central Asian studies. Their publications dealt with all aspects of the region's economy and politics. Suffice it to mention *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia* by F. Starr; *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus* by Z. Baran, F. Starr, and S. Cornell; *Anatomy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations* by J. Daly, K. Meppen, V. Socor and F. Starr; *Central Asia's Economy* by M. Dowling and G. Wignaraja,<sup>34</sup> and others.

<sup>29</sup> See: J. Graevingholt, *Schlechte Regierungsfuehrung, Krisenpraevention und das Dilemma der Entwicklungspolitik am Beispiel Zentralasiens*, Nomos Verlag, Baden-Baden, 2005, 410 S.

<sup>30</sup> See: K. Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, 376 pp.

<sup>31</sup> See: A.L. Edgar, *Tribal Nation. The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ), 2006, XVI+296 pp.

<sup>32</sup> See: R. Ch. Weller, *Rethinking Kazakh and Central Asian Nationhood. A Challenge to Prevailing Western Views*, Asia Research Associates, Los Angeles, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> See: K.M. McMann, *Economic Autonomy and Democracy. Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, 278 pp.; R. Pomfret, *The Central Asian Economies since Independence*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ), 2006, 256 pp.

<sup>34</sup> See: S.F. Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington D.C., 2006, 27 pp.; Z. Baran, S.F. Starr, S.E. Cornell, *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington DC, 2006, 57 pp.; J.C.K. Daly, K.H. Meppen, V. Socor, S.F. Starr, *Anat-*

In 2006, the German academic community published several highly interesting definitive works, such as *Die Zentralasiatische Politik der Europäischen Union: Interessen, Strukturen und Reformoptionen* by Alexander Warkotsch.<sup>35</sup> His studies of the local regimes suggested several new terms such as “Demokratatur” (democracy + dictatorship) for the regime in Kyrgyzstan and “neo-totalitarianism” as applied to Turkmenistan. The author has pointed out that the European Union failed to achieve any of its strategic goals of the 1990s: poverty is as obvious as ever; the resistance to the reforms in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is as strong as ever; the human rights record and democracy level are basically the same, while the energy-related interests of the EU are as vulnerable as before. The same applies to the security sphere. Alexander Warkotsch suggests that the EU should revise its Central Asian strategy and tactics in order to “regain the faith in the EU.” He writes that in the security sphere Brussels should demonstrate determination and power rather than look like a “toothless paper tiger;” Brussels should look more confident when it comes to its energy interests and more realistic when invading the sphere of democracy. The author is convinced that the European Union should achieve closer strategic coordination with other international actors (NATO and OSCE in particular).

Dörthe List’s *Regionale Kooperation in Zentralasien. Hindernisse und Möglichkeiten* has very much in common with what German economists wrote in the mid-1990s; the author confirms that the EU is still placing the stakes on regional integration (cooperation in the 2000s) of Central Asia as a means of the region’s self-identification and self-determination despite the past negative experience.<sup>36</sup> In his *Rechtsreformen entlang der Seidenstraße. Aufsätze und Vorträge während der beobachtenden Teilnahme an einem gewaltigen Transformationsprozess*, Rolf Knipper looks at the way some of the CIS countries addressed legal reforms.<sup>37</sup>

In 2006, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation introduced a very good practice of publishing books by local authors on Central Asia in German and Russian. The first of the books was called *Tsentral’naia Azia: vzgliad iznutri*<sup>38</sup> (Central Asia as Seen from the Inside). In 2007, the Fund published a work by Kyrgyz academics *Istoria i identichnost: Kirgizskaia Respublika* (History and Identity: The Kirghyz Republic).<sup>39</sup> Another publication dealt with the Central Asian countries’ extra-regional contacts.<sup>40</sup> This is an obviously useful practice which brings to the German-speaking audience ideas about the region that are alternatives to those imposed, wittingly or unwittingly, by Western authors.

In 2007, Frederick Starr of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute coordinated a large-scale project which produced an internationally authored volume entitled *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*.<sup>41</sup> The international collective included authors from Central Asia, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, China, Turkey, and Russia. This continues, in a conceptual way, Prof. Starr’s idea of Greater Central Asia, which caused quite a stir in its time. In the Introduction, he drew paral-

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*omy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations: 2001-2005*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2006, 110 pp.; M. Dowling, G. Wignaraja, *Central Asia’s Economy: Mapping Future Prospects to 2015*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2006, 114 pp.

<sup>35</sup> See: A. Warkotsch, *Die Zentralasiatische Politik der Europäischen Union: Interessen, Strukturen und Reformoptionen*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a.M., 2006, 253 S.

<sup>36</sup> See: D. List, *Regionale Kooperation in Zentralasien. Hindernisse und Möglichkeiten*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a.M., 2006, XII+237 S.

<sup>37</sup> See: R. Knieper, *Rechtsreformen entlang der Seidenstraße. Aufsätze und Vorträge während der beobachtenden Teilnahme an einem gewaltigen Transformationsprozess*, Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, Berlin, 2006, 353 S.

<sup>38</sup> See: *Zentralasien: eine Innenansicht*, FES, Berlin, 2006, 498 S. (in German and Russian).

<sup>39</sup> See: *Geschichte und Identität: Kirgisische Republik*, FES, Bishkek, 2007, 273 S. (in German and Russian).

<sup>40</sup> See: *Zentralasien: der Blick nach Aussen. Internationale Politik aus zentralasiatischer Sicht*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Berlin, 2008, 615 S.

<sup>41</sup> See: *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*, ed. by S.F. Starr. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2007, 510 pp.

lels between the Great Silk Road of the past and the present transport capabilities of Eurasia. He is convinced that today Western Europe, China, the Near and Middle East, and Hindustan can be reliably connected by transportation routes and that America is responsible for this and should contribute to the Eurasian system of transportation corridors.

In 2007, David Lewis published a book under the fairly pretentious title of *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia*<sup>42</sup> as part of the Columbia University security series. The author proceeds from the assumption that the military and economic aid of the West, which allied with the local countries for the counterterrorist campaign in Afghanistan (they became America's key allies in the struggle), should have encouraged democratic changes and stability in the region. The author has concluded: Washington was tempted to enter into allied relations with the local "tyrannies" to achieve the strategic aims of its antiterrorist struggle yet failed to change the nature of the local regimes.

Th. Gomart and T. Kastueva-Jean issued a monograph called *Understanding Russia and the New Independent States*,<sup>43</sup> in which they summarized what had been done by the group of authors of the Russia and the CIS department of the Institut français des relations internationales (l'IFRI). They gathered between the two covers the analytical efforts of the institute's fellows and their colleagues from the CIS dealing with security-related geopolitical problems and the CIS (and Central Asia) international situation.

Central Asia attracts scholars outside the West and China. In 2007, for example, Indian and Kazakhstani academics published their joint work called *India-Kazakhstan Perspectives. Regional and International Interactions*. Prof. K. Santhanam and R. Dwivedi supervised the progress from the Indian side. The monograph deals with practically all aspects of bilateral relations, including international and the geopolitical factors.<sup>44</sup>

In 2007, the regular publication *Central Asia and South Caucasus Affairs*, supervised by Prof. B. Rumer and Lau Sim Yee, which had been appearing under the aegis of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Davis Center at Harvard University since 2002, was published for the last time.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation discontinued its funding of 15 year-standing.

In 2007, the German Federal Center of Political Education undertook a grandiose attempt to cover the past and present of Central Asia in one publication. Edited by M. Sapper, V. Weichchsel, and A. Huterer, it appeared with the support of the legendary Osteuropa publication under the title *Machtmosaik Zentralasian. Traditionen, Restriktionen, Aspirationen*.<sup>46</sup> From the very beginning, it was a grandiose project which provided the widest coverage of the problems and a matching 52-strong author group. The book presents the best of the best of German political science, yet it can be described as an international project with Anglo-Saxon (M.B. Olcott, E. Rumer and R. Allison) and French (S. Peyrouse and M. Laruelle) participation. The book, however, is dominated by German political scientists, which left its imprint on the selection of material and the nature of the problems discussed.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See: D. Lewis, *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, 224 pp.

<sup>43</sup> See: *Understanding Russia and the New Independent States*, Travaux et recherches de l'Ifri, ed. by Th. Gomart, T. Kastueva-Jean, IFRI, Paris, 2007, 204 pp.

<sup>44</sup> See: *India-Kazakhstan Perspectives. Regional and International Interactions*, ed. by K. Santhanam, K. Baizakova, R. Dwivedi, ICAF, New Delhi, 2007, XXII+270 pp. (Russian translation: *Kazakhstan i India. Perspektivy mezhdunarodnogo i regionalnogo vzaimodeystvia*, Almaty/Delhi, KazNU, 2007, 283 pp.).

<sup>45</sup> See: *Central Asia and South Caucasus Affairs: 2006*, ed. by B. Rumer, Lau Sim Yee, The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Tokyo, 2007, 283 pp.

<sup>46</sup> See: *Machtmosaik Zentralasian. Traditionen, Restriktionen, Aspirationen*, Hrsg. M. Sapper, V. Weichchsel, A. Huterer, BPB, Bonn, 2007, 648 S.

<sup>47</sup> For more detail, see our review in *Kazakhstan v globalnykh protsessakh*, No. 2, 2008.

The Central Asia-Caucasian Institute published Erica Marat's work entitled *National Ideology and State-building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*.<sup>48</sup> The author traced how national ideologies developed in Soviet times in both countries and how new ideologies based on new national identities were built in the post-Soviet period. The author has rightly noted that the multinational nature of the Central Asian post-Soviet states created problems for the regional leaders busy building new identities. First, this limited the efficiency of the ethno-centric instruments; second, having been recognized by the international community, the local elites could not completely ignore the citizenship principle, whereby Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan progressed further than their neighbors; and third, all regional elites had to cope with the role and place of Islam in the new ideology.

In his *The Economic Aspects of the Chinese-Central Asia Rapprochement*, Sebastien Peyrouse discusses China's Central Asian policy.<sup>49</sup> He has identified four major problems in the sides' trade and economic relations. The first chapter deals with the history and nature of these relations; the author points to the fact that from the very beginning China was the dominant side. The role of checkpoints in transborder trade is another problem. Chapter three deals with Chinese investments in the region's economy and infrastructure. The Chinese are interested in four investment fields: ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, hydropower production; transport infrastructure; and telecommunications. The last chapter deals with relations in the hydrocarbon sphere, the key one in China's multi-sided regional strategies. He has also presupposed that the land-locked nature of Central Asia will be responsible for China's role in the region's future. In fact, in the 21st century China will play the same role as Russia in the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>50</sup>

Marlene Laruelle studied Russia's policies in Central Asia from the point of view of the impact of Russian nationalism on Moscow's tactics and strategy. Her work entitled *Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism* deals not so much with the region proper as with the domestic political processes and the struggle inside the Russian elite over Russia's policy in the region.<sup>51</sup> She has described Russia's return to the region in the 21st century and the related political and economic repercussions and has written that the Russia-Central Asia agenda consists of three main points: so-called soft power (cultural influence and the tongue); the problem of the Russian and Russian-speaking diaspora; and migration. On the whole, she has concluded that all groups, trends, and circles of the Russian political elite (their disagreements notwithstanding) tend to look at Russia's presence (domination) in Central Asia as good and inevitable, each of the political forces operating with arguments of its own.

Two studies produced by the same Central Asia-Caucasus Institute deal with Kazakhstan.

- The first of them, *Parliament and Political Parties in Kazakhstan*, was written by Anthony Bowyer.<sup>52</sup> The author introduced the text with a concise overview of the party and political system of Kazakhstan and its evolution; he acquaints the reader with the contemporary political landscape and concentrates on the so-called pro-presidential parties, Otan in particular, and on the "soft" and "hard" opposition. He has supplied two groups of recommendations:

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<sup>48</sup> See: E. Marat, *National Ideology and State-building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 103 pp.

<sup>49</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, *The Economic Aspects of the Chinese-Central Asia Rapprochement*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 73 pp.

<sup>50</sup> See also: M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2009, 201 pp.

<sup>51</sup> See: M. Laruelle, *Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism*, A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2008, 79 pp.

<sup>52</sup> See: A.C. Bowyer, *Parliament and Political Parties in Kazakhstan*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 71 pp.

the first is for the country's leaders, while the second is addressed to the American government with a request for assistance in developing a civil society.

- The second, *Kazakhstan's Emerging Middle Class*<sup>53</sup> by John Daly, asks: What is Kazakhstan's middle class? The author has concluded that the middle class is the aim of the republic's economic policy. The government sees its task as protecting the middle class against numerous challenges and problems such as corruption and overcoming the wide gap between the rural and urban lifestyles, inflation, and the destructive effects of the global financial-economic upheavals. The vast hard currency reserves accumulated in Kazakhstan suggest the optimistic conclusion that the state will have enough money to support the middle class in the future.

Central Asia's avid interest in Poland is a recent phenomenon. In the past, the Polish People's Republic and the Soviet Central Asian republics belonged to the same geopolitical expanse, Pax Sovietica, a socialist universum of sorts. The stormy events of the late 1980s and the 1990s pushed Poland and Central Asia into different cultural-civilizational and geopolitical contexts. An analysis of Polish publications on Central Asian subjects shows that there is still a lot of academic interest in the region. The Polish Central Asian studies are of an obviously political nature even though some of them touch on ethnographic or, rather, social anthropologic issues.

Polish studies of Central Asia are developing in keeping with several trends:

- (1) the region's history;
- (2) the theory and practice of systemic transformations;
- (3) political and social systems of the regional countries and development of the political elites and the opposition, the media and NGOs;
- (4) modernization of social structures, clashes between tradition and contemporary development; clan structures; cultural and linguistic policies, religion, etc.;
- (5) and history and the present day of the region's cultures. Over time, an interest in the economy and foreign policy of the local countries also grew.

Between 2000 and 2005, the Institute of Political Sciences published five collective monographs, each dealing with one of the republics; its history and social and political processes.<sup>54</sup> Twelve monographs appeared in the Contemporary Central Asia series published by the IPS WU series; the best of them being *“Walczący islam” w Azji Centralnej. Problem społecznej genezy zjawiska* by S. Zapaśnik (2006); *Azja Centralna—problemy historii i współczesności*, edited by T. Bodio and others (2007); S. Redo's *Zwalczanie przestępczości zorganizowanej w Azji Centralnej* (2007); *Konstytucje państw Azji Centralnej* by T. Bodio and T. Moldawa (2007); *Region Azji Centralnej jako obszar wpływów międzynarodowych*, edited by B. Bojarczyk and A. Zietek (2008) and *Elites of Power in Central Asia* by T. Bodio and P. Zalenski.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> See: J.C.K. Daly, *Kazakhstan's Emerging Middle Class*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 100 pp.

<sup>54</sup> See: *Kazachstan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka*, ed. by T. Bodio, R.A. Wojtaszczyk, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2000, 500 s.; *Uzbekistan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka*, ed. by T. Bodio, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2001, 536 s.; *Tadżykistan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka*, ed. by T. Bodio, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2002, 649 s.; *Kirgistan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka*, ed. by T. Bodio, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2004, 897 s.; *Turkmenistan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka*, ed. by T. Bodio, Elipsa, Warszawa, 2005, 840 s.

<sup>55</sup> See: S. Zapaśnik, *“Walczący islam” w Azji Centralnej. Problem społecznej genezy zjawiska*, Wrocław, 2006, 215 s.; *Azja Centralna—problemy historii i współczesności*, ed. by T. Bodio, W. Jakubowski, P. Zalenski. Pismo Edukacyjne, Pultusk, 2007, 376 s.; S. Redo, *Zwalczanie przestępczości zorganizowanej w Azji Centralnej*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2007, 314 s.; T. Bodio, T. Moldawa, *Konstytucje państw Azji Centralnej. Tradycje i współczesność*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2007, 607 s.;

The following Polish works deal with the problems of contemporary Kazakhstan: P. Zalenski's *Elity władzy politycznej Kazachstanu* (2006); P. Grochmalski's *Kazachstan. Studium politologiczne* (2006); A. Zamarajewa's *Kazachstan-Uzbekistan: rywalizacja o przywództwo w Azji Centralnej* (2007); A. Wierzbicki's *Ethno-politics in Kazakhstan and Other Countries of Turkic Community in Central Asia* (2008), and others.<sup>56</sup>

Interest in Turkmenistan is a more or less recent phenomenon. In his *Turkménistan. Un destin au carrefour des empires*, Sebastien Peyrouse of France has pointed out that the first decade and a half of the country's independence were closely associated with the ambitious personality of its president Saparmurat Niyazov.<sup>57</sup> The author is convinced that the clans and their role in the country's politics are an important element in the political life of Turkmenistan and that once independent the republic could not embrace the "European development" model the West presents as the only one conducive to democratic institutions and market relations. On the other hand, President Niyazov's responsibility for the allegedly special Turkmen development pattern should be clearly recognized. What looked comical or even pathological from the outside was a real drama for the republic's population.

Slavomir Horák and Jan Šír from the Czech Republic published their book *Dismantling Totalitarianism? Turkmenistan under Berdimuhamedow* two years after S. Peyrouse published his.<sup>58</sup> They have pointed out that the realities of the last days of the Niyazov regime differ greatly from the post-Niyazov context. Today, it is a much more open and liberal society; the odious bans and the worst of the excesses of Niyazov's time were removed, while the republic is gradually opening to the world. The authors proceed from the assumption that Berdymukhammedov's regime is qualitatively new and stable and that the country's foreign policy has changed a lot. First, the republic has abandoned the isolationist policy of the past; the young president has inevitably been drawn into the great powers' struggle for hydrocarbon resources and their geopolitical maneuvering. The world, the West in particular, is interested in Turkmenistan's strategic importance as Afghanistan's close neighbor. President Berdymukhammedov promptly mastered the art of maneuvering among the interested sides—Russia, Europe, America, and China. The seemingly unexpected opening up to the world bred excessive and, according to the authors, unjustified expectations in the West of the new regime's liberalism. Outside interference for the sake of liberalization and improvement of the social climate is fraught with domestic instability.

The book by prominent American political scientist Ariel Cohen entitled *Kazakhstan: The Road to Independence*<sup>59</sup> is another important publication. The author writes that Kazakhstan could have never become an independent and successful state had it not been what is known in the Western political science as a petro-state. Normally, this is a negative definition, but in his work Ariel Cohen uses it in a positive sense. He has pointed to the fact that the builders of contemporary Kazakh-

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Idem, *Constitutional Reforms in Central Asian States*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2008, 350 s.; *Region Azji Centralnej jako obszar wpływów międzynarodowych*, ed. by B. Bojarczyk, A. Zietek, UMCS, Lublin, 2008, 286 s.; T. Bodio, P. Zalenski, *Elites of Power in Central Asia*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2008.

<sup>56</sup> See: P. Zalenski, *Elity władzy politycznej Kazachstanu*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2006, 310 s.; P. Grochmalski, *Kazachstan. Studium politologiczne*, WUMK, Torun, 2006, 765 s.; A. Zamarajewa, *Kazachstan-Uzbekistan: rywalizacja o przywództwo w Azji Centralnej*, Akademia Humanistyczna, Pultusk, 2007, 167 s.; A. Wierzbicki, *Ethno-politics in Kazakhstan and Other Countries of Turkic Community in Central Asia*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2008; "Problemy transformacji, integracji i bezpieczeństwa państw Azji Centralnej," *Studia politologiczne* (IPS UW, Warszawa), Vol. 12, 2008, 422 s.; *Transformation, Integration and Security Problems in the States of Central Asia*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2008, 422 s.

<sup>57</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, *Turkménistan. Un destin au carrefour des empires*, Edition Belin, Paris, 2007, 184 pp.

<sup>58</sup> See: S. Horák, J. Šír, *Dismantling Totalitarianism? Turkmenistan under Berdimuhamedow*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2009, 97 pp.

<sup>59</sup> See: A. Cohen, *Kazakhstan: The Road to Independence. Energy Policy and the Birth of a Nation*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 287 pp.

stan concentrated not only on domestic (first the economy, then politics) and foreign policy (multivectoral policies and Eurasianism): they were guided by a detailed and profound energy strategy. They are determined to avoid the traps many of the oil-rich countries fall into either by nationalizing their oil industries or squandering their natural riches by distributing them left and right among transnational companies. A. Cohen is convinced that Kazakhstan has achieved a balance between the geopolitical forces and their interests, on the one hand, and a balance between the outside players and the country's national interests, on the other. The same applied to the relationships between the elites and the majority of the country's population which have acquired their shares of national wealth.

In her *Kazakhstan—Ethnicity, Language and Power*, Bhavna Dave from Britain describes the evolution and historical experience of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods as unique: the republic survived a series of experiments in its identity, while it managed to preserve its ethnicity thanks to its system of power.<sup>60</sup> She compares the experience of nation-building in Kazakhstan with a similar process in India and Malaya and concludes that in Kazakhstan this process was mainly limited to consolidation of the power of the local elite. The strengthening patron-client system transformed Kazakhstan into a patrimonial state. The Kazakhs became “the first among equals,” a status not formally registered either by the Constitution or by law. On the whole, the Kazakhs as an ethnic group enjoy no special economic advantages over other nationalities (if we take the average statistical rather than the Kazakh elite's standard of living). In their own country, the Kazakhs enjoy mainly psychological (rather than real) advantages, such as the state status of the Kazakh language, from which, however, the bulk of the population derives no profit.

The book *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing* brings to mind a similar publication of the Tripartite Commission<sup>61</sup>; here, however, Russia replaced Europe, while China took the place of Japan. America is facing three strategic alternatives:

- (1) to continue the same course;
- (2) to abandon the idea of reforms in Central Asia and concentrate on the security issues and America's Realpolitik interests;
- (3) to devise a new strategy which will take into account the region's specific features and the new geopolitical realities.

Russia is obviously trailing behind the U.S. and China when it comes to preserving its political and economic influence. According to one of the authors, the Russian politicians who refused to abandon the old imperial style and paternalist rhetoric (in relation to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, two of the region's leaders, in particular) are to blame for the fact that the local states are leaving Russia's orbit. On the whole, Russia's influence in the region is limited in time; the situation may change if Russia manages to modernize the economy and the political-social systems in the region. The Chinese author believes that Central Asia is and will remain a unique region in which America, Russia, and China will cooperate for the sake of their common security.

The collective monograph called *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy. Paving the Road Ahead*<sup>62</sup> testifies to the interest displayed by the Japanese academic community in Central Asia. The authors believe that their country should move away from its former policies of concerted actions with the West

<sup>60</sup> See: B. Dave, *Kazakhstan—Ethnicity, Language and Power (SOAS)*, Routledge, London, New York, 2008, XIV+256 pp.

<sup>61</sup> See: E. Rumer, D. Trenin, Huasheng Zhao, *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing*, With an Introduction by R. Menon, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, 2007, VII+224 pp.

<sup>62</sup> See: *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy. Paving the Road Ahead*, ed. by C. Len, U. Tomohiko, H. Tetsuya, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2009, 206 pp.

and economic aid to the region coupled with Tokyo's unwillingness to pay more attention to the democracy issues (something which the United States and Europe believe to be most important). At no time did the Japanese ruling circles regard Central Asia as critically important for the country's diplomacy and foreign trade. There is the conviction that in Central Asia Japan should not compete with Russia and China in any form whatsoever. The authors write that the rising economic influence of China and South Korea in Central Asia should no longer be ignored. As a North Asian power, Japan can offer its neighbors a joint Central Asian strategy which will amount to a united front in the region. The authors invite the ruling circles to formulate their geopolitical approaches in the form of Greater Eastern Asia (together with China and South Korea) or Eastern Eurasia (with the same powers and Russia).

Richard Weitz's *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia* is essentially the first Western work dealing mainly with Kazakhstan's international ties and foreign policy<sup>63</sup> prompted by the fact that the republic has moved to the fore in regional economic and political integration. He has identified several factors on which the republic's ability to achieve its regional integration aims depend: transition to the "post-Nazarbaev" generation of political leaders; Kazakhstan's successful OSCE presidency; and the Eurasian countries' economic status. The author is convinced that the great powers—Russia, China, and particularly the United States—will strongly affect the process. Kazakhstan's Eurasian strategies and their realization are limited in many ways by factors outside its power: the continued threat of Islamic extremism and the future use of its hydrocarbon resources. Indeed, it is hard to realize its own strategy while Russia and China are working on theirs. Kazakhstan's growing economic and political might scares its Central Asian neighbors. In the future, Kazakhstan diplomacy will spare no effort to prevent a Chinese-Russian condominium in the region.

The Russian and Russian-language historiography of Central Asia is beyond the scope of this article. We deem it necessary, however, to mention at least one work: a monograph by Andrei Kazantsev, a fellow at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of Russia's Foreign Ministry, entitled "*Bolshaia Igra*" s neizvestnymi pravilami: mirovaia politika i Tsentral'naia Azia<sup>64</sup> (The "Great Game" with the Rules Unknown: World Politics and Central Asia), in which he has analyzed the structure of international cooperation which took shape in the region in 1991-2008 and its impact on the regional policies of the world's largest state. He has concentrated on the problem of whether Central Asia, as part of the world, is a "temporary and short-lived factor" or a long-term constant of world politics. The author is convinced that the regional states are pursuing multivectoral policies and are seeking cooperation with the largest possible number of partners. The "responsibility" or "the freedom of action" dilemma proved to be the central one for the actors involved in the region. The author proceeds from his conviction that the Central Asian states observe no generally accepted standards, values, or principles in their policies. The region has no mechanisms to impose such principles; for this reason the possibility of regional identity remains vague.

## Conclusion

The corpus of recent writings about Central Asia is highly varied: none of the more or less outstanding issues remains outside the attention of foreign authors; nor have individual republics escaped

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<sup>63</sup> See: R. Weitz, *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 189 pp.

<sup>64</sup> See: A.A. Kazantsev, "*Bolshaia igra*" s neizvestnymi pravilami: mirovaia politika i Tsentralnaia Azia, Nasledie Evrazii, Moscow, 2008, 251 pp.



scrutiny. Western political thought, on the whole, has not abandoned its former ideas, approaches, and stereotypes either at the methodological or at the ideological level. On the other hand, it offers new methods and abandons some of the clichés and old ideas. Very much as before, Central Asian studies are concentrated in Europe, the U.S., Turkey (albeit to a lesser extent than before), India, and China (the efforts of Chinese academics are worth special attention). There is another positive trend: more and more frequently foreign and post-Soviet authors are joining forces to produce collective monographs and joint projects which offer them a chance to share opinions, even if not always successfully.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> For lack of space we have covered here less than one-tenth of what has been written abroad about Central Asia and concentrated on the most important conceptual efforts. For more detail, please see: M.T. Laumulin, M.E. Shaykhutdinov, *Bibliograficheskiy ukazatel po Tsentralnoi Aziii, mezhdunarodnym otosheniam i geopolitike*, IMEP, Alamy, 2008, 320 pp.