

REGIONAL STUDIES

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

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In Lieu of an Introduction

This is the second part of the historiography on literature about Central Asia which appeared earlier this year in *Central Asia and the Caucasus*.¹ It is intended to fill the gap about

the books on Central Asia which have appeared in the last two years that were not covered in the previous article.

¹ See: M. Laumulin, A. Malik, "Central Asia as

Viewed by Contemporary Political Analysts," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 11, Issue 1, 2010.

**Europe and Central Asia:
Identical Interests**

After a long interval, Romanic-speaking Southern Europe (Italy and Spain) revived its interest in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, while France, the U.K., and Germany never lost theirs.

In 2008, the Cassa di Risparmio Fund of Bologna published a fundamental work² which gathered between its two covers everything historians, ethnographers, and political scientists had to say about Kazakhstan.

² See: F. Facchini (a cura di), *Popoli della Yurta. Kazakhstan tra le origini e la modernità*, Jaca Book, Milan, 2008, 320 pp.

Five of the thirteen chapters were written by Kazakhstan historians, archeologists, ethnographers, and sociologists. Those who devised this definitive publication and identified its ideology intended to trace the cultural and civilizational developments in contemporary Kazakhstan based on rich archeological material and historical sources related to the country's nomadic past. The problems of our day and modernization of Kazakh (Kazakhstan) society have been covered in just as much detail.

It seems that Italian social anthropologists will find the book especially interesting and useful.

The Spanish academic community devoted its works entirely to Kazakhstan's current developments. *Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: A Local Perspective* was prepared with the active involvement of Kazakhstan experts and published in English by the Opex Fund operated by the Foreign Ministry of Spain.³ The joint effort was coordinated by M. Esteban and N. de Pedro, the two ideologists of this collective work. This relatively small book deals with geopolitics and the international status of Central Asia; each of its structural units looks at the regional policy of the key international actors who have their own interests in the region (Russia, China, the U.S., Turkey, Japan, and the European Union). As expected, the Spanish authors concentrated on the relations between the European Union and Central Asia, while their colleagues from Kazakhstan were given the opportunity to express their opinion about the policy of other powers.

Mario Esteban is convinced that Russia, the influence of which is shrinking, is relying on regional cooperation exercised through the EurAsEC and CSTO as an instrument to reinforce its presence in the region. The Spanish expert believes that China is rapidly building up its regional influence and is the driving force in the SCO. The United States, writes Mario Esteban, is concentrating on the Greater Central Asia (GCA) project designed to "reintegrate" the region with South Asia (particularly with Afghanistan and Pakistan). The Turkish geopolitical project is based on the idea of Turkic unity. The Spanish author regards Japan as the largest donor, which is not entirely correct; he has rightly written, however, that in Central Asia Tokyo is mainly driven by its intention to form a counterbalance to China. The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership adopted in 2007, which serves as the basis of the EU's geopolitical activities in the region, fails to fully take account of Central Asia's geopolitical specifics. The Spanish analysts intend this publication to be a geopolitical appendix of sorts to the strategic document.

Nicolás de Pedro proceeds from the assumption that Central Asia is becoming increasingly important to Europe for four reasons:

- (1) it is a source of threats which might affect Europe;
- (2) it is rich in energy resources;
- (3) it is a place where the interests of Russia, China, and America clash;
- (4) it borders on Afghanistan.

The ruling regimes and the opposition are satisfied with the EU's presence in the region, which cannot be said for other geopolitical actors. This is especially obvious in Kazakhstan, which tends to identify itself with Europe to a much greater extent than its regional neighbors and which is chairing the OSCE in 2010. The European Union does its best to avoid geopolitical intrigues—it concentrates on economic and education issues, which, the Spanish author hopes, will bear fruit sometime in the future when the present generation of regional leaders retires.

The European Union supports regional integration in principle, which can be described as a weakness rather than a strong point of its Central Asian policy: the disagreements among the republics are too obvious to be ignored. On the whole, concludes the author, the European Union is pursu-

³ See: *Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: A Local Perspective*, ed. by M. Esteban, N. de Pedro, Exlibris Ediciones, Madrid, 2009, 140 pp.

ing a simple, pragmatic, and absolutely clear policy: it is encouraging economic development and integration in the region, a lower level of political dependence on outside forces, and prevention of confrontation in the Cold War style.

The Casa Asia of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, which has pooled the efforts of French, Central Asian and Spanish experts, published the work *La situation de la gobernanza en Asia Central*⁴ dealing with the nature of the region's political regimes and socioeconomic relations in the context of its historical and structural specifics; economic and social evolution of post-Soviet Kazakhstan; the problem of effective governance in Uzbekistan; and the economic and political relations between Spain and Central Asia. The book contains political and economic statistics for each of the region's republics.

Sebastien Peyrouse, likewise, has written a lot about the EU's strategy and policy in the region.⁵

The report ordered by the Foreign Ministry of Finland and compiled by an expert group headed by Frederick Starr takes a look at the relations between Finland and the Central Asian and Caucasian countries⁶ and evaluates the level of cooperation, methods, and key trends of Helsinki's policy in the regions. According to the authors, Finland's policy is developing within the common European strategy (economic cooperation, fighting threats, etc.); however Helsinki has its own preferences: support of NGOs, promotion of gender equality, prevention of conflicts, migration, and the banking sector. The report, which offers clear recommendations to the Finnish government on its further regional policy, stands apart from other similar publications. It should be said that the presence of Prof. Frederick Starr, American political expert and author of the GCA doctrine, is very much felt in this publication.⁷

Japan, China, and Central Asia: From Eurasian to Pan-Asian Strategy

Prof. Starr, who is frequently criticized from all sides (Central Asia, Russia, and the West) for his GCA concept,⁸ had to disavow the concept⁹ by saying that his ideas had been misinterpreted and misunderstood.

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the Johns Hopkins University (SAIS), where Frederick Starr and his colleagues are based, has remained the pioneer of Central Asian studies. We have already written about some of them.¹⁰

⁴ See: *La situation de la gobernanza en Asia Central*, Coordinada pro G.M. Tabener, E. Soms Bach, Casa Asia, Madrid, 2009, 101 pp.

⁵ See: S. Peyrouse, "Facing the Challenges of Separatism: The EU, Central Asia and the Uyghur Issue," *EUCAM Policy Brief*, No. 4, January 2009, EUCAM, Brussels, 2009, 16 pp.; idem, "Business and Trade Relationships between the EU and Central Asia," *EUCAM Working Paper*, No. 1, June 2009, EUCAM, Brussels, 2009.

⁶ See: S.F. Starr, S. Cornell, S.M. Oksajärvi, *Finland's Development Cooperation in Central Asia and South Caucasus (Evaluation Report 2009:1)*, The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Helsinki, 2009, VI+70 pp.

⁷ The EU strategies in its relations with Kazakhstan can be found in "Le Kazakhstan: Partenaire Stratégique de l'Europe," in: *Diplomatie. Affaires Stratégiques et Relations Internationales*, AREION, Paris, 2009, 16 pp.

⁸ See: G. Tulepbergenova, "The Greater Central Asia Project: Present State and Evolution," *Central Asia's Affairs* (KazISS, Almaty), No. 2, 2009, pp. 5-10.

⁹ See: S.F. Starr, "Rediscovering Central Asia," *The Wilson Quarterly* (The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), Summer 2009; idem, *In Defense of Greater Central Asia*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2008, 18 pp.

¹⁰ 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, D.C., 2008, 287 pp.; S. Horák, J. Šír, *Dismantling Totalitarianism? Turkmenistan under Berdimuhamedow*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, D.C., 2009, 97 pp.

A collective monograph called *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy*¹¹ deserves special mention. Edited by U. Tomohiko and H. Tetsuya in cooperation with C. Len, the book takes a look at what predated Tokyo's current Central Asian policy and covers practically all aspects of Japan's cooperation with the region.

The authors believe that Japan should move away from its regional policy and its concentration on economic assistance. While acting formally with the West, it preferred to ignore the democracy-related issues very much in the center of American and European attention. Tokyo should join the democratization process, write the authors.

They also suggest that Tokyo should shift its attention from geopolitical to economic issues in its relations with the region. It should be said in all justice that at no time has Japan demonstrated a bias toward geopolitics.

Experts admit that the Japanese leaders have never looked at Central Asia as a critically important aspect of their diplomatic and foreign economic strategy. It seems that this trend will continue, even if the authors would have preferred the opposite; they believe that Tokyo should abandon all forms of rivalry with Russia and China to be able to continue its policy in Central Asia. In fact, they say that Japan could have found a more constructive form of cooperation with these two countries.

The authors stress that the mounting economic influence of China and South Korea in Central Asia can no longer be ignored. As a North Asian power, Japan could have invited its neighbors to pursue a common strategy and close ranks in a united front. The authors make no secret of the fact that energy resources are today and will remain in the future the main (or even the only) driving force behind Japan's strategic activities.

The monograph dwells on another important issue: Japan's Central Asian policy in the context of its pan-Asian strategy and its strategic relations with the United States. The pan-Asian factor clearly underlies Tokyo's new conception with respect to Central Asia. Built at first on the Central Asia plus Japan formula and then on the so-called Eurasian strategy, today it rests on the so-called Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, a concept currently being elaborated in the corridors of power. The very name speaks volumes: it brings to mind the geopolitical projects Japan applied to Asia in the first half of the 20th century. Tokyo has obviously remained loyal to its pan-Asian policy in Central Asia.

The authors, however, agree that Japan should formulate its own geopolitical approach in the form of the Expanded East Asia (together with China and South Korea) or Eastern Eurasia (the same partners and Russia) projects. The Eurasian countries could have become, at least theoretically, a platform for Japan and Central Asia, as well as for all interested players.

This means that in its Central Asian policy, Japan once more runs across the dilemma (which also exists in many other foreign policy trends) of whether it should follow its interests (which will make its policy purely Asian) or continue following American strategies (to remain a hostage of American geopolitics with ensuing consequences).

A highly creative tandem formed by M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse has authored a definitive work within the SAIS program called *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies*¹² based on the thesis that since 2000 China has been playing an increasingly greater role in Central Asia. Today, it can threaten Russia's traditional domination in the region.

For a long time, China remained devoted to its traditional "wait-and-see" policy in Central Asia. Beijing looked at it as a buffer zone, however, its geographical proximity and the new economic reality are pushing China toward more active involvement. The local states have not missed the U-turn

¹¹ 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, D.C., 2009, 206 pp.

¹² See: M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, D.C., 2009, 201 pp.

either: Beijing has moved away from flexible diplomacy and “soft power” to demonstrate to some of them that they are not “equal partners,” Kazakhstan with its “strategic partner” status—a title Beijing is not lavish with—being the only exception.

The authors have dwelt in detail on the so-called Chinese Question and its numerous dimensions, the main being international policy and geopolitics. The domestic dimensions of the Chinese Question vary from country to country and depend on their domestic contexts. The ideas about the Chinese Question are different in different republics, but none of the states (with the exception of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) treats it as an important and contradictory civilizational and geopolitical issue. It should be said, however, that Beijing unwittingly pushed academic Sinology into the practical sphere of politics and international relations.

China’s strategy is aimed at filling the economic vacuum the Soviet Union left behind in the region, and elsewhere as a matter of fact. Its regional strategy is part and parcel of the Xinjiang factor, the Uighur problem, etc. Chinese investments should be treated as the means and methods used to hook the Central Asian republics; the authors, however, are very skeptical about the strategy’s long-term success.

So far, China is pushing ahead in the financial and banking spheres from which Russia is absent; Moscow is trying for all it is worth to keep fuel exports, the nuclear industry, and energy production under its control.

Moscow and Beijing share common approaches at the geopolitical level: they need stability and shrinking Western influence. Their economic interests, especially in subsurface resources, are developing into economic rivalry.

A separate chapter deals with the way the Central Asian countries treat the Chinese factor from the political, political scientific, and social points of view; much space is given to the struggle between the anti-Chinese and pro-Chinese groups in Kazakhstan. Their disputes are discussed in detail in the academic, political, and economic contexts.

It should be said that the book contains a profound and vast survey of history, as well as an assessment of the development and state of the political “think-tanks” in the local countries, their interpretation of Chinese policy, and the attitude toward China in each of them.

The authors concluded that throughout the last decade China has developed into the main focus of attention of regional politicians, political scientists, the media, and society; the so-called Chinese Question has become a topic of intense political debates. Despite their continued prejudices against China, the regional elites and political communities refrain from open anti-Chinese statements.

In the economy, where the interests of various groups directly depend on external investors and partners, the anti-Chinese and pro-Chinese confrontation is much more open, even though it is actively pushed into the shadows. The defense and security structures, as well as the secret services are still in two minds about China, which probably fits the mood at the top.

M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse have pointed out that the possibility of closer relations with China evokes different feelings in different countries. Anti-Chinese feelings predominate, on the whole, in Kazakhstan, while pro-Chinese sentiments are much more strongly felt in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (reference to the latter is open to doubt).

The authors have paid particular attention to the efforts of Central Asian strategists and politicians to find a certain “third way:” either an alliance with the West or an independent and relatively strong regional alliance to dispel with the need to choose between Beijing and Moscow. The region, however, has not yet arrived at a united opinion about its relations with China.

The French academics are convinced that the region—mainly Kazakhstan—criticizes Russia and does not like the West. China is hated: the authors are amazed at the regional level of Sinophobia which stems from widespread ignorance about this country.

They have concluded that the further the Central Asian country from China, the higher the tolerance level. In countries where China is present at the everyday level (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), Sinophobia is much more pronounced.

Chinese regional policy is shrewd, write the authors: satisfied with the fact that Moscow has shouldered the financial burden of the strategic balance in the region, Beijing has no intention of pushing the Russians out. Any attempt to move to the fore will arouse Moscow's stiff opposition. To avoid any confrontation with a united front of Russia and the Central Asian states (China got a taste of this when dealing with the border rivers), it relies on bilateral relations within the region.

An alliance between Russia and China will infringe on the interests of the United States and the EU (not of the Central Asian states) and deprive them of the chance to promote democracy and liberalize the local regimes. As part of the local economic landscape, China leaves Western businesses no chance (potential or real) of becoming entrenched in the region; Beijing demonstrates no mean skill in camouflaging its anti-Western policy to leave Moscow with the far from attractive role of an anti-Western force.

The authors conclude that it is in the interests of the Central Asian countries to keep the Chinese-Russian alliance in check by counterbalancing it with a "third force."

There is any number of articles and other publications dealing with the Chinese presence in Central Asia, the SCO, and many other issues (mainly the special 2009 issue of *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*).¹³

Another issue of the same publication deals with the relations between India and Central Asia.¹⁴ Western authors devote much attention to the regional security issues (drug trafficking, the SCO, and other international structures),¹⁵ as well as the situation in Afghanistan.¹⁶

¹³ See: M. Clarke, "China's Integration of Xinjiang with Central Asia: Securing a 'Silk Road' to Great Power Status," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm), Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 89-111; M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, "Editors' Note: Central Asian Perceptions of China," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1-8; idem, "Cross-border Minorities as Cultural and Economic Mediators between China and Central Asia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2009, pp. 93-119; M. Oresman, "Reassessing the Fleeting Potential for U.S.-China Cooperation in Central Asia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 5-14; S. Peyrouse, "La présence chinoise en Asie centrale. Portée géopolitique, enjeux économiques et impact culturel," *Etudes de CERI*, No. 148, 2008; idem, "Chinese Economic Presence in Kazakhstan. China's Resolve and Central Asia's Apprehension," *Chinese Perspectives*, No. 3, 2008, pp. 34-49; idem, "Central Asia's Growing Partnership with China," *EUCAM Working Paper*, No. 4, October 2009, EUCAM, Brussels, 15 pp.; Y. Schicor, "China's Central Asian Strategy and the Xinjiang Connection: Predicaments and Medicaments in a Contemporary Perspective," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 55-74; J. Šír, S. Horák, "China as an Emerging Superpower in Central Asia: The View from Ashkhabad," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 75-88; M.C. Spechler, "Why Does China Have No Business in Central Asia?" *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2009, pp. 3-15; R. Sutter, "Durability in China's Strategy toward Central Asia—Reasons for Optimism," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 3-10.

¹⁴ See: M. Balooch, "Iran and India's Cooperation toward Central Asia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 25-30; M.A. Kaw, "Restoring India's Silk Route Links with South and Central Asia across Kashmir: Challenges and Opportunities," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2009, pp. 59-74; J.P. Panda, "India's Approach to Central Asia: Strategic Intent and Geopolitical Calculus," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 103-114.

¹⁵ See: G. Germanovich, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Threat to American Interests in Central Asia?" *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 19-38; S. Peyrouse, M. Laruelle, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Successes and Challenges," *The Journal of Central Asian Studies* (Kashmir University), Vol. 28, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1-14; N. Swanström, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Aftermath of the Russian Invasion of Georgia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2008, pp. 3-8; Yang Shu, "Reassessing the SCO's Internal Difficulties: A Chinese Point of View," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 17-24; S. Hanova, "Perspectives on the SCO: Images and Discourses," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 63-82; S. Peyrouse, "Drug-trafficking in Central Asia," *Policy Brief. Institute for Security and Development Policy* (Stockholm), No. 8, September 2009, pp. 1-4.

¹⁶ See: G. Gleason, R.R. Hanks, Y. Bosin, "Afghanistan Reconstruction in Regional Perspective," *Central Asian Survey* (Oxford), Vol. 28, Issue 3, 2009, pp. 275-287; S.F. Starr, "A Regional Approach to Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," in: *Strategic Asia 2008-2009*, National Bureau of Asian Affairs, Seattle, 2008, pp. 333-362; S. Chan, "Breaking the Impasse

Regional Problems

Erica Marat, a research fellow with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, has already published two works, one of them dealing with the impact of the world crisis on labor migration in Central Asia,¹⁷ which says the following.

Three of the Central Asian republics—Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan—can be described as donors which supply Russia and Kazakhstan with workforce. The author describes Putin's Russia as a xenophobic expanse that is very hostile toward Central Asian labor migrants, while Kazakhstan is a "new home" for them.

She has also pointed out that there is practically no interstate cooperation or coordination with respect to migration policy and draws attention to numerous social and economic problems, such as extremely low wages, appalling labor and living conditions, legalized slavery, lack of rights, illegal migration, etc.

The guest workers market has remained almost intact: most guest workers have retained their pre-crisis jobs, however the inflow of new workers has noticeably dwindled.

To decrease the region's dependence on workforce export and to minimize its negative effects, Erica Marat suggests the following: developing local small and medium businesses; encouraging stronger interstate cooperation in the sphere of migration (especially between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan); rendering support of international (obviously Western) structures in the field of professional training; launching wider information campaigns against illegal workforce traffic; making investments in secondary specialized education; promoting education for women; fighting corruption, etc.

Another, and bigger, work by the same author called *The Military and the State in Central Asia*¹⁸ and subtitled "From Red Army to Independence" shows the author's desire to create a wide historical panorama. As far as we know, this subject has been avoided by Western political commentators, which makes her choice very interesting indeed.

The author deals not so much with military history and the Soviet traditions still alive in Central Asian society. She looks into the army's Bonapartist and political potential in the post-Soviet expanse as a whole and Central Asia in particular and concentrates on the Central Asian military's situation in Soviet times; the contradictory assessments of the Afghan campaign ("we won the war"); military institutions as part of the post-Soviet development of the national states; rivalry among regional security structures; NATO's and America's presence in the region; and transformation of the "internationalist" armed forces into nationalist. The result is a mixture of historical, social, political, organizational, technical, and geopolitical problems.

The author proceeds from the assumption that from the early 20th century to the present time, the military remains a political factor with the main role to play in politics, state development, foreign policy, and everyday life.

The author's obvious competence would hardly have made this thesis palatable for the Soviet leaders (starting with Trotsky and Stalin); the presidents of the newly independent states, likewise, will never accept it: the army should remain an instrument rather than an independent political force.

Certain debatable issues nevertheless, the book's highly specific subject makes it an important and interesting contribution to Central Asian studies.

in Afghanistan: Problems with Neighbours, Brothers and Guests," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2008, pp. 103-128; S. Khan, "Stabilization of Afghanistan: U.S./NATO Regional Strategy and the Role of SCO," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 11-16.

¹⁷ See: E. Marat, *Labor Migration in Central Asia: Implications of the Global Economic Crisis*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2009, 48 pp.

¹⁸ See: E. Marat, *The Military and the State in Central Asia. From Red Army to Independence*, Routledge, London, 2009, 176 pp.

Another no less interesting book familiarizes the Western reading audience with the architect of the most successful Central Asian state. I have in mind the book by Jonathan Aitken *Nazarbaev and the Making of Kazakhstan*¹⁹ which summarized the long talks between the President of Kazakhstan and the author, with whom Nazarbaev shared his reminiscences and ideas. The work is full of information previously unknown to the wide public and specialists; it is highly unlikely that the President could have permitted such a confidential and open conversation with any other foreign journalist.

The author not only described the path covered by the main character of his book, but also revealed what circumstances and personal qualities made him the “father of the nation” and the architect of modern Kazakhstan.

Jonathan Aitken describes the Kazakh President as having the iron core of a steelmaker and the foresight of a reformer. He writes that Nazarbaev remains untainted by the scandals, even though they inevitably and indirectly affect his reputation. He points out: “On progress toward religious freedom, press freedom, human rights and fair elections Kazakhstan has done more than Russia, China and other states of the region put together” (p. 4). The author describes the gist of the policies of the republic’s leader as slow progress from autocracy to democracy. He readily agrees with President Nazarbaev’s slogan: “The economy first, political restructuring next” (p. 4).

In the foreign policy sphere, the President is skillfully maintaining good relations with Moscow, Beijing, and Washington, a no mean achievement and guarantee of the republic’s stable position on the international arena; the middle class ensures domestic stability.

The author explains his self-appointed task of telling the Western audience about Nazarbaev’s role in contemporary Kazakhstan without which establishment of the young state would have been impossible by the fact that the West rarely or never identifies the republic’s achievements with the name of its first president.

The book is divided into 14 chapters: the first half deal with the Soviet period and the second with the post-Soviet period of his life. For obvious reasons, the story of the post-Soviet period is highly dramatic: it was at that time that Nazarbaev shouldered his historic mission of building a modern Kazakhstan.

Chapter Eight, aptly called “The Birth Pains of Independence,” describes the problems the young state had to grapple with.

The key chapter entitled “Entering the 21st Century,” a story about the current stage of the country’s development, is divided into two parts: “Part I—The Domestic President” and “Part II—The International President,” which are dealing with domestic and foreign policy issues, respectively.

In an effort to explain to the Western reader why no Western-style democracy is possible within a relatively short time in a country with a decade or even centuries-long authoritarian tradition, the author asks himself, “Does this mean that Nazarbaev’s glass is half empty or half full?” He seems to understand and justify his protagonist.

The book is not limited to the problem of democracy; the author touches upon the far from simple relations inside the president’s family and the not entirely legal activities of his former son-in-law Rakhat Aliev.

Education is one of the central domestic issues because, the author argues, the President is shaping the elite, the leaders destined to continue his cause. The President is a past master of balancing all foreign policy issues and an ardent supporter of active involvement in every possible international organization.

¹⁹ See: J. Aitken, *Nazarbaev and the Making of Kazakhstan*, Continuum, London, New York, 2009, IX+256 pp.

The author appreciates the President's sense of humor, which helped him get out of a fairly sensitive situation created by the film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* and its author Sasha Baron Cohen.

As an international personality, says the author, Nazarbaev is neither an "ex-communist leader" nor a "Moscow-style autocrat," tags popular late in the 20th century. He is a much more sophisticated international politician.

Jonathan Aitken has written that the president's complicated and contradictory foreign policy course, a so-called multivectoral policy, and its fairly hazardous balancing between Moscow and Washington in particular, were justified by the republic's OSCE chairmanship, a strategic goal realized despite the U.S. Department of State and the fairly cool relations with Dmitry Medvedev at the start of his presidency.

The author ends the book with a chapter about Astana, the country's new capital, which the President treats as his favorite child: it is much more than a capital, a successful project, or a symbol.

It should be said that the decision to move away from Almaty, the republic's capital, was not an easy one: the President appreciated its elegance, international culture, dynamic lifestyle and the picturesque mountains that surround the city. But it was these mountains that limited the further development of Almaty (in the past this happened to Manhattan and Hong Kong). The author refers to other reasons: ecological problems, potentially destructive earthquakes, dangerous proximity of the Chinese border, and the rarely mentioned excessively Soviet (or Russified) context.

Nazarbaev, who followed in the footsteps of Peter the Great, George Washington, and Kemal Atatürk, was not guided by what Aitken described in French as "*folie de grandeur*" and not because he wanted to distance himself from the opposition based in the southern capital. It was a well-justified and strategically correct decision which confirmed the President's foresightedness and wisdom, as well as his willpower and determination as a truly national leader.

The "Epilogue" does not offer fundamental conclusions about Nazarbaev's role in history; the author points to the emotional nature of the story based on 23 hours of personal interviews.

The author, who writes that President Nazarbaev knows that his mission is far from complete, deems it necessary to ask: "What is his legacy to his people, his region and the international community?" (p. 245). "Kazakhstan's glass deserves to be described as half full rather than half empty" (p. 246) which constitutes a positive (with reservations) assessment of what has been done.

When writing about a certain ambiguity in the President's personality, Jonathan Aitken quotes former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev: "Never forget that Nazarbaev is a man of two cultures. He is both Russian and Asian in his roots and outlook" (p. 247). The author adds: biculturalism explains Nursultan Nazarbaev's political achievements and the historic scope of his personality.

The book, which brims with hitherto unknown facts derived from confidential talks with the President and his personal archive, is of potentially great importance for Kazakhstan experts.

A revised and extended edition of D. Schreiber's book about Kazakhstan²⁰ should be also mentioned. It is a classical travel guide for German speakers with a lot of useful information; none of the locally published guides can rival it.

The Friedrich Ebert Fund published the book *Zentralasien: der Blick nach Aussen* (in Russian and German) dealing with the foreign policies of the region's countries as assessed by corresponding expert communities. The book, the third one dealing with this subject, is intended for wide readership.²¹

²⁰ See: D. Schreiber, *Kasachstan. Nomadenwege zwischen Kaspischem Meer und Altaj*, Trescher Verlag, Berlin, 2009, 430 S.

²¹ See: *Zentralasien: der Blick nach Aussen. Internationale Politik aus zentralasiatischer Sicht*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Berlin, 2008, 615 S.

The joint Indian-Kazakhstan publication *Contemporary Kazakhstan: The Way Ahead* deals with the republic's foreign policy status.²² A group of French academics (P. Chuvin, R. Létolle, and S. Peyrouse) produced *Histoire de l'Asie centrale contemporaine*.²³

René Létolle in his *La mer d'Aral*²⁴ looked at the region's ecological plight.

A short essay by Sebastien Peyrouse deals with local agriculture and its problems.²⁵

India and Central Asia: Geopolitical Reconnection

The collective work *Reconnecting India and Central Asia: Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions* prepared under Prof. N. Joshi's overall guidance and editorship has revived the rather neglected issue of Indian and Central Asian contacts. The very fact that the work appeared in the United States rather than in India or any of the Central Asian republics speaks volumes about India's greatly increased geopolitical importance and, hence, its influence in Central Asia. The book, which was published within the SAIS program at the Johns Hopkins University headed for many years by Prof. Starr, testifies to American and Western attention to India and its role in Central Asia.²⁶

Strictly speaking, the monograph deals with two key problems which found their way into the book's title: security and economics. It raises another, no less consequential question: the status of each of the partners in the context of the new geopolitical developments.

In general, the authors look at India and Central Asia as parts of GCA, which also includes South Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey. They have not limited themselves to geopolitics and security, but have moved on to discuss economic contacts, which supplies them with the clout and importance they have not yet acquired.

The above fits into the notorious GCA concept Frederick Starr put into circulation; his foreword sets the tone, while his ideas dominate the book.

What do the authors think about the community of Indian and Central Asian interests in the context of their identical interpretation of the threats and challenges?

They proceed from the assumption that at all times India has been and is aware of Central Asia's geopolitical importance as part of a vast and strategically pivotal area. There is a strong conviction in the Indian corridors of power that the changing geopolitical and strategic situation in Eurasia calls for India's restored (allegedly) regional role. Today the country, along with the global players, is trying to join the geopolitical struggle for the region's resources.

Seen from New Delhi, the Big Game around the region looks like a cooperation/competition between two pairs of geopolitical actors: the U.S. and the EU, on the one side, and Russia and China, on the other. So far, carried by inertia, India is still cooperating with Russia, while China's increasing presence is pushing it toward the United States.

²² See: *Contemporary Kazakhstan: The Way Ahead*, ed. by A. Mohanty, S. Swain, Axis Publications, New Delhi, 2009, XV+314 pp.

²³ See: P. Chuvin, R. Létolle, S. Peyrouse, *Histoire de l'Asie centrale contemporaine*, Fata Morgana, Paris, 2008, 375 pp.

²⁴ See: R. Létolle, *La mer d'Aral*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2009, 318 pp. (J. MacKay discusses similar problems in his "Running Dry: International Law and the Management of Aral Sea Depletion," *Central Asian Survey* (Oxford), Vol. 28, Issue 1, 2009, pp. 17-27).

²⁵ See: S. Peyrouse, "The Multiple Paradoxes of the Agriculture Issue in Central Asia," *EUCAM Working Paper*, No. 6, 2009, 14 pp.

²⁶ See: *Reconnecting India and Central Asia: Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions*, ed. by N. Joshi, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program- A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2010, IX+182 pp.

Delhi is convinced that the Central Asian countries share its belief that no single power should dominate the region. At the same time, the Indian expert community believes that the Russian and Indian perceptions about China's future role in Central Asia are likely to coincide and can be described as immediate concerns.

Central Asia might become part of the strategically hazardous neighborhood dominated by expanded Af-Pak, which Delhi fears more than anything else. India and the Central Asian countries should pool forces to address the problem of Afghanistan. The authors even criticize the Obama Administration, which is prepared to flirt with the so-called Taliban moderates and is even encouraging the forces responsible for the 2008 heinous terrorist act in Mumbai.

The authors are quite open about the fact that India is focusing on Central Asia's energy resources, Kazakhstan being the attraction; the two countries are already tied by the Strategic Partnership Agreement; this and Afghanistan's possible membership in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will allow India to knock together a regional bloc of sorts as part of the "Look West Policy" it has been working on since the early 1990s. If realized, Delhi would become the leader of the GCA project recognized by the West and other actors. Successfully completed, the project would allow India to establish the trade and transport contacts with Central Asia it badly needs.

The authors supply relevant figures to clarify the geopolitical interests of some countries. By 2015, India's trade with the EU, CIS, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan could reach \$500-600 billion annually. Even if 20 percent of the trade were to pass by overland routes through Afghanistan and Central Asia, it would be worth \$100-120 billion (in transit revenues? What about the cost of the goods themselves?). Some of the northern Indian states prefer the transit route across Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is geographically much more expedient. India still needs a pipeline to bring fuel from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The authors are fully aware of the GCA project's mainly hypothetical nature: instability in Afghanistan and the acrimonious relations between India and Pakistan, etc. being too high political obstacles to be easily negotiated. In view of the above and bearing in mind that the country's strategic establishment is prepared to study it, they put a new geopolitical agenda on the table. For strategic reasons and to gain access to the region's energy resources through direct supply lines with Central Asia, India should work toward stabilization in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

India can count on the United States as a partner in this geopolitical project (we have in mind unification of Central and South Asia); at the practical level, America can also help to stabilize Pakistan. The authors are convinced that the strategic partnership between New Delhi and Washington could be extended to Central Asia as well. This will create a geopolitical U.S.-India-Russia triangle.

Tajikistan (which is very close to Afghanistan and Pakistan topographically, religiously, socially, and economically) can be described as one of the closest targets of cooperation. For the sake of the country's future, experts suggest that India should pay more attention to the youth and the new elite that is gradually emerging in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

On the whole, write the authors, India's Central Asian policy should be correlated to a much greater extent with its Asian strategy.

Some time later India will probably find it possible to invite some of the local countries (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) into the SAARC, of which it is the leader. Experts warn India against becoming dependent on integration or stabilization in Afghanistan and Pakistan; Iranian ports and railways offer an excellent alternative for its contacts with Central Asia.

The authors describe India as a "latecomer to the region," which accounts for their inflated attention to geopolitical issues. At the same time, they are obviously out to present India as a global player to account for its regional interests and to link it to certain strategic triangles (which involve

America, Russia, or China). India's real interests are much more modest—they are regional rather than global, on a par with Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey.

The book, which traces the progress of global thinking in India in search for a worthy place in the world, makes for interesting reading. It is even more interesting because it concentrates on Central Asia, a geopolitical target of long standing (prize No. 1 in the Great Game on the Eurasian chessboard). India does not want, and cannot afford, to be left in the cold.

Russia: More Than a Neighbor

Russia's never flagging interest in Central Asia is amply confirmed by a large number of publications, many of them worth closer attention. One is the collective effort *Gody, kotorye izmenili Tsentral'nuiu Aziu* (The Years which Changed Central Asia) published in 2009 under the joint leadership of V. Naumkin, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, and German expert P. Linke.²⁷

Russian academics have identified five groups of key problems still present in the region.

- First, has transformation of Central Asia been completed? A positive answer suggests another question: What state models have been created? The authors concluded that the Central Asian political systems and models are moving toward consolidated national states.
- The second problem deals with the ideology and research instruments individually or collectively employed in Central Asian studies. This chapter is openly critical of the West and its ideologists who, the authors insist, demonstrate abstract (at best) or even malicious approaches designed to tear the region away from Russia, which treats Central Asia not as a geopolitical abstraction but as a very real extension of its territory.
- The third, longest, chapter deals with the states, their political evolution and socioeconomic transformation. The authors concluded that Kazakhstan has not yet achieved the main goal of transformation. The republic has failed to transform the relations of ownership to means of production to create a class of free personified owners as the main driving force behind economic development and the cornerstone of civil society. They describe the republic's political reality as a symbiosis of power and property which serves as an impressive façade far removed from genuine democracy.

The situation in Kyrgyzstan is tagged as "retreat to authoritarianism": in an effort to build up his own vertical of power, Bakiev curtailed many of the democratic achievements. The events of April-June 2010, however, indicate that the republic has been drawn into another period of turbulence. If they continue, these trends, the authors warn, might split the country and make it easy prey for its stronger neighbors. Today, it is moving in this direction.

When writing about Tajikistan, the authors concentrate on the negative factors such as the clan nature of the republic's politics and economy, the low economic development level, the widespread poverty, and strong outside influence.

Turkmenistan stands apart from the other Soviet-successor states, however the progress of its transformation can easily be analyzed within the context common for all the Central Asian countries.

²⁷ See: *Gody, kotorye izmenili Tsentral'nuiu Aziu*, TsSPI-IV RAN, Moscow, 2009, 331 pp.

Its totalitarian political regime can be described as one of the dominant factors underpinned by the hydrocarbon factor greatly responsible for the country's economic and foreign policies.

The section dealing with Uzbekistan is of a descriptive rather than analytical nature: it is defined as the region's pivotal state, which inevitably affects its development and international status. A thesis which is at least ten years old is still alive: the republic has not realized its vast socioeconomic, political and international potential.

External actors and recommendations received a lot of attention. Uzbekistan, for example, is advised to address the following priorities: fighting poverty; supporting the Russian language; and carrying out an in-depth analysis of the local specifics and political culture. It should also drop the double standard practice. The republic's leaders should pay particular attention to NGOs and all sorts of funds in order to prevent them from turning into the opposition's purse. The powers that be should create a more competitive milieu for the local elites and pay less attention to the fairly formalized opinions of foreign experts who know next to nothing about the local reality.

The authors have pointed out the obvious differentiation among the local states brought about by their transformation pace: Kazakhstan is moving toward a regional status, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan remain "poverty poles." There is another, no less important, observation: despite their numerous failings and errors, none of the local countries has degenerated into a "failed state" (so far the events in Kyrgyzstan have not yet suggested this conclusion).

As distinct from the post-Soviet Caucasian states, the Central Asian republics have proven stable enough even though they have their share of troubles: Will they remain secular or will they become Islamic states? The answer is not clear. The widespread poverty and pressure from the West are playing into the hands of the Islamists. There is another problem rooted in the region's past: none of the states has been able to separate the government from the economy.

The authors have admitted that the West has successfully destroyed all the elements of socialism—a dubious victory to say the least. The West, determined to prevent the revival of the Soviet system and socialism as well as what it calls the Soviet Empire in any form, played in the hands of large corporations and the local regimes. The results left the designers openmouthed.

Several chapters deal with the close contacts between Europe and Central Asia; seen from both sides, they do not look like peripheries, and this not only because of the local states' membership in the OSCE. Europe has much closer relations with Central Asia than any other Western country or region.

Radical Islam and its role in the region are discussed in the fourth chapter. Political Islam sprang into life while Soviet power was dying. Today, there are three possible approaches to this phenomenon: total suppression (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan); neutralization of the radical groups and a cautious dialog with the moderates (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan); and cooperation up to and including involvement in the power structures (Tajikistan).

Chapter Five looks at the external factors that have a role to play in the political transformations and regional security. Russia, China, the U.S., and the EU are described as the principal actors, while the others (Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, and Japan) are left outside the scope of the analysis.

The authors do not beat about the bush: Russia is the key regional actor, the relations of which with the Central Asian countries go far beyond interstate limits: the historical, cultural, socioeconomic, civilizational, and geographic ties between the former metropolitan state and the regional states are too strong to be ignored. The human (humanitarian) factor is also very important. Russia is mostly concerned with stability; it seeks to rely on the region's geopolitical potential to upgrade its own status among the other key actors and to achieve international recognition of its regional role.

Russia and the United States are locked in latent rivalry. Washington, which is firmly determined to squeeze the pragmatically minded RF out of the region (and the post-Soviet expanse, for that matter), is guided by ideological considerations (this was true, at least, of George W. Bush's policy).

As distinct from the United States and the European Union, Moscow does not indulge in moralizing, avoids double standards, and never flirts with antigovernment forces. Free from unpleasant surprises, its open and predictable political course does much to uphold its current advantageous position. Moscow rejects the Islamic alternative for Central Asia as incompatible with Russia's strategies; this explains its strong opposition to the forces backed by certain circles in Pakistan and the Arab countries.

China, which has armed itself with the American "soft power" doctrine, is demonstrating a lot of caution in the region. In its effort to slow down or even halt China's discreet progress, Washington is fanning the "Chinese threat" theory welcomed by certain forces in Russia and the Central Asian states. In the event of dramatic negative developments in the region potentially detrimental to its interests, the authors write, Beijing will hardly remain neutral.

This chapter offers even more scything criticism of America's regional policy. In 2005, the Bush Administration armed itself with the GCA project now being used as a battering ram to achieve undivided political and economic domination and drive out potential rivals (Russia and China).

The European Union stands a better chance of gaining more ground in Central Asia: there are no negative connotations; as distinct from the United States, which is exporting democracy far and wide, the EU looks at democracy as a cultural value to be grown at home. Its presence in the region will add to stability and give democracy a better chance.

The EU Central Asian policy is best described as cautious; according to lavishly quoted European experts, more active involvement of the European Union would trim down the excessive vigor of America, Russia, and China to create a more balanced context.

On the whole, the authors describe Western policy as "democratic messianism" geared at what the West and the loyal elite can use to their advantage and ignoring alternatives. Tested in Latin America, this model was found wanting: the resultant gap between the very poor majority and the filthy rich minority proved unacceptably wide.

Put in a nutshell, the following sums up the above:

- First, economic liberalization should outstrip political, not vice versa;
- Second, the Central Asian countries failed to transform the nature of ownership; the state acts instead of civil society, which is split along the "rights-privileges" line;
- Third, the set of democratic institutions in all countries is mistakenly taken for democracy.

The main conclusion is that none of the political regimes of the new type which sprang into existence in post-Soviet Central Asia has anything in common with any of the known political scientific models of transit from authoritarianism to consolidated democracy of the liberal type.

This means, write the authors, that each of the states will have to come up with its own transformation model.

Prof. I. Zviagelskaia of the Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, has chosen a different approach in her recent book *Stanovlenie gosudarstv Tsentral'noy Azii: politicheskie protsessy* (Development of Central Asian States: Political Processes)²⁸: it is neither a political scientific nor an analytical work.

The first three chapters look at the history of the Russian Empire's conquests, colonization of Turkestan, and the development of Central Asia and Kazakhstan as parts of the Soviet Union to reveal the paradigm of Central Asia's historical movement toward Russia.

²⁸ See: I. Zviagelskaia, *Stanovlenie gosudarstv Tsentral'noy Azii: politicheskie protsessy*, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2009, 208 pp.

When dealing with post-Soviet independent development, the author pays particular attention to nation-building, political culture, the Islamic factor, ethnic and labor migration, outside influences, and potential and real threats and conflicts.

A member of the group involved in establishing a dialog between the sides in the Tajik civil war, which was very conducive in settling the conflict, Irina Zviagelskaia dwells on the civil war of the early 1990s in greater detail.

The holidays and rites of the Central Asian peoples were not forgotten either.

The 200-odd pages of her monograph come to the conclusion that the region's future is still vague. It will obviously diversify its contacts for the simple reason that Russia neither has the desire nor the ability to monitor them. "The natural and mutually needed ties should not be broken when the Soviet generation leaves the stage. We cannot afford this." Very true.

China in Central Asia is a subject that cannot be ignored: its increasing relevance has become too obvious. A monograph coauthored by S. Zhukov and O. Reznikova of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, RAS entitled *Tsentral'naia Azia i Kitai: ekonomicheskoe vzaimodeystvie v usloviakh globalizatsii* (Central Asia and China: Economic Cooperation in the Globalized World)²⁹ says that globalization alone provides the relevant framework within which the content and direction of accelerating China-Central Asia cooperation can be adequately analyzed. This rising world power is involved to a much greater extent than the others in transforming the Central Asian economic expanse. To channel the Central Asian economic processes in the desired direction, China is relying on its market and non-market competitive advantages and skillfully using global and regional mechanisms of cooperation (the WTO and, to an ever increasing degree, the SCO).

Neither the Central Asian nor the Eurasian countries can compete with China in the non-raw material branches; this means that the future and the structure of their economic growth is fairly limited.

The authors have found enough arguments to describe the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) as a rapidly developing center and a leader of GCA economic activities. Today, the growing macroregion includes Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia's neighboring regions and, to a certain extent, Tajikistan. Turkmenistan, and probably Uzbekistan will be drawn in later.

The microregion is building economic structures designed to complement what Central Asia has at its disposal; it serves as a transit route leading to Greater China. The volume of industrial production and investments and the scope of construction of the transborder transport infrastructure testify to XUAR's fast progress toward a leading economic role in GCA.

Xinjiang owes its impressive achievements to its new role as a bridge between Central Asia and the developed central and southern Chinese provinces, write the authors, as well as to the fact that Beijing still redistributes considerable economic resources in favor of the XUAR.

The Russian authors have pointed out that China regards its economic cooperation with Central Asia as a byproduct of the main task: accelerated development of the country's western fringes.

Beijing treats Kazakhstan as a strategically important partner because of its transit capacities, which are very much needed for obtaining energy resources from its Central Asian neighbors. Experts believe that Astana deliberately invited Beijing to discuss the regional gas projects in order to prompt Moscow to make concessions.

After carefully analyzing the subject and summarizing the results, the authors arrived at the following conclusions.

²⁹ See: S.V. Zhukov, O.B. Reznikova, *Tsentral'naia Azia i Kitai: ekonomicheskoe vzaimodeystvie v usloviakh globalizatsii*, IMEMO RAN, Moscow, 2009, 179 pp.

- First, in the coming decade economic cooperation between China and Central Asia will develop by leaps and bounds; this fits the global trends, while China is gradually becoming a powerful economic center.
- Second, despite the growing flow of goods, services, investments, and technology between China and Central Asia, the importance of these contacts for the sides involved will remain lopsided because of their incommensurable economies.
- Third, for objective reasons, China's economic interests in the region are concentrated in Kazakhstan, the region's economic leader.
- Fourth, very much like the other centers of global economic might, China needs the region's natural resources, particularly Kazakh oil and Turkmenian natural gas.
- Fifth, China agreed to set up the SCO to promote its economic interests in Central Asia (there were other reasons as well); it relied on all forms of multisided diplomacy and rhetoric to win over Central Asia in a non-confrontational manner.
- Sixth, slowly but surely the Central Asian countries are developing into a raw-material appendage not only of the European, but also of the Chinese economy.

The main conclusion is that Central Asia is confronted with the need to adapt to China's economic upsurge. The authors have not missed another aspect: Russia's interests are affected by the mounting economic cooperation between China and Central Asia, and they suggest that the Kremlin should take into account Chinese experience when drafting Russia's long-term national strategy.

Dr. Chufrin's recent monograph³⁰ can be described as a continuation of the previous publication (in 2008 he headed the collective of authors of a monograph dealing with Russia's regional policy).³¹ The monograph comprises three parts.

- The first part looks at regional security; it investigates the non-traditional security threats, what is being done to fight them, and the points on which the region's states disagree or even conflict. One of the chapters deals with Washington's regional policy, which the author puts in a nutshell as another frontier of its foreign policy or, to be more exact, military political strategy. The author investigates the regional role of the CSTO and Russian-American relations in the regional security sphere. The first part ends in a chapter dealing with the Afghan (or rather Af-Pak) impact on Central Asian security: it censures America's Central Asian policy and what has come of it.
- The second part looks at trade and economic cooperation, as well as other aspects of the relations between the Russian Federation and the Central Asian republics, the most important issues being migration, financial cooperation, transport and communication, and joint use of hydropower. A detailed analysis of the relations between Russia and Kazakhstan described as the linchpin of the integration processes conducive to closer economic ties in the eastern part of the CIS is offered in one of the chapters.
- The third part looks into the past and present of the SCO, the evolution of its tasks, and the forms and methods employed to respond to the security threats, as well as economic cooperation within SCO and the prospects for its expansion. Its further expansion (in the form

³⁰ See: G.I. Chufrin, *Rossia v Tsentral'noy Azii*, KISI, Almaty, 2010, 220 pp.

³¹ See: *Novye tendentsii vo vneshney politike Rossii v Tsentral'noy Azii i na Kavkaze.*, ed. by G.I. Chufrin, IMEMO, Moscow, 2008, 181 pp.

of fully-fledged membership) is hardly expedient, yet partnership looks promising and potentially attractive: the United States and Japan might be tempted, to say nothing of Afghanistan.

Dr. Chufrin points out the recent serious political and economic contradictions between Russia and Central Asia which should be carefully analyzed and smoothed out.

He offers four reasons for what is going on:

1. The objective political and socioeconomic complications in the local countries.
2. The negative impact of regional and global developments.
3. The inconsistent and contradictory policy of the Central Asian leaders with respect to the scope and aims of cooperation with Russia.
4. The rapidly developing competitive potential of third countries: the local states are willing to cooperate with the West and the East.

Russia should pursue a pragmatic policy in the political sphere, says the author, and rely on the CSTO and SCO to promote regional and its own security.

In the economic sphere, Russia should work toward as favorable a cooperation climate as possible for the sake of its continued economic influence. Dr. Chufrin is convinced that Russia should and can present itself not only as an attractive economic partner, but also as an effective guarantor of the local states' economic independence.

The bold and far-sighted recommendations of the Russian academic refute the clichés, myths, and sentiments current in the West and among certain Central Asian elites about Russia's determination to regain control in the colonial-imperial style. Dr. Chufrin has proved the opposite.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

This far from complete survey of the literature on Central Asia shows that the academic and political scientific communities have not lost their interest in the region. The past few years have abounded in collective and personal monographs about Central Asia; Kazakhstan is treated as a topic in its own right. The authors are obviously interested in long-standing issues, such as geopolitics, international relations, domestic policy, and the economy, as well as in recent ones (the military as a regional factor). Political science and auxiliary disciplines are as interested in Central Asia as ever, their interest going beyond purely academic boundaries.

Those who wonder whether foreign writings about the region are worth reading should understand that wittingly or unwittingly our foreign colleagues help us to understand ourselves better and take a detached view of our problems. The experience of foreign countries may be invaluable in helping us to correct our errors and improve our situation.