

REGIONAL POLITICS

TRANSPORTATION COMMUNICATIONS AND GEOPOLITICS IN THE GREAT SILK ROAD REGION

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One hundred years ago when scholars were just beginning to coin the term “geopolitics,” states relied on force to protect their interests. No matter how skillful the diplomats were, the army remained the only guarantor of all treaties and agreements. A new force destined to change the world—transnational corporations—came to the fore in the latter half of the 20th century and gradually developed into a new political factor. These giants were born in the developed and rich countries, which, however, were not very strong militarily. Indeed, some of them represented Japanese and German capital (the military budgets of these countries could hardly be compared with America’s military spending). Without a single shot the transnational corporations, as welcome guests in nearly all Third World countries, accomplished what in the past could be secured solely by the use of arms: economic and political domination. It was the transnational corporations that gave birth to the globalization ideas; it is the transnational corporations that are translating them into life as being best suited to their interests.

The world economic space is becoming a reality at a fast pace, with the European Union setting an example. It took it over 50 years to move away from local agreements, under which neighbors acquired the status of most favored nations (the European Coal and Steel Community, etc.), to common governing bodies (the European parliament and its institutions). United Europe with its single currency and transparent internal boundaries is the ideal, which the larger part of mankind is aspiring to achieve and which it will achieve by all means.

The national interest idea is the key concept of geopolitics, geographic location being one of its basic factors. Indeed, the place where the nation takes shape is the most stable parameter of its existence.

What is a strategic forecast of the world’s geopolitical makeup for the 21st century? What place can Central Asia and its closest neighbors hope to acquire? The answers are not merely interesting, they are

vitaly important for all of us living in Central Asia. Political scientists and futurologists predict clashes of civilizations in the 21st century.

Nikolai Danilevskiy, Russian publicist writer and sociologist, was the first to tie together historical progress and civilizations in his famous book *Rossia i Evropa* (Russia and Europe) first published in 1868.¹ He described cultural-religious communities, or cultural-historical types, rather than states and nations as the main actors on the historical scene. (Later political scientists agreed to call them “civilizations.”) Still later the theory was further developed by German philosopher Oswald Spengler, Russian philosopher Konstantin Leontiev, and prominent Eurasians Petr Savitskiy and Lev Gumilev. British historian Arnold Toynbee in his definitive multi-volume work *A Study of History*² offered even more profound treatment of the same subject. He classified civilizations and formulated a theory of their development, which he called *Challenges and Responses*.

Today, the science of geopolitics is being developed by Harvard professor Samuel Huntington, who in 1993 published his definitive work *The Clash of Civilizations*, in which he convincingly demonstrated that economics and ideology would no longer provoke conflicts in the 21st century. This role, he argued, would belong to the differences between civilizations which would thus emerge as the dominant factors of world politics.

Military-strategic theories, all of them being greatly affected by the theories of the great strategists of the past (Machiavelli, Clausewitz, and Moltke), are part of the science of geopolitics. In fact, two admirals—Englishman Philip Colomb and American Alfred Mahan—left the deepest imprint on the military-strategic theories of today. The latter published his *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*³ in 1890; the former, his *Naval Warfare*⁴ in 1891. Alfred Mahan introduced the term “coastal nation” into scholarly circulation and studied in detail how the closeness of sea (ocean) and indentation of the coast affected the history of coastal nations. It was he who pointed out that conflicts were mainly limited to the space between the 30th and 40th parallels (he called this space “the shatterbelt”). It was in this zone that the interests of a sea power which controlled the oceans and a mighty land power which dominated in the middle strip of Eurasia clashed, irrespective of the wishes of politicians. The sea power was obviously Great Britain, while the land power that opposed it was Russia. To win, the sea power had to push the land power as far inland as possible. Britain did this until confronted with a more formidable enemy, the German Empire, which threatened its interests across the world.

Karl Haushofer⁵ of Germany and Halford Mackinder⁶ of Britain made a weighty contribution to the science of geopolitics. They perceived the world in a state of permanent instability and saw it as an arena of struggle between two leading political elements—sea and land powers. Sir Halford Mackinder became famous with his geographical pivot of history theory that divided the world into three parts—the pivotal region, the inner, and the outer crescents. By the pivotal region he meant Midland Eurasia occupied mainly by Russia; the large inner crescent was formed by Germany and Austria-Hungary (the division dates back to 1904), Turkey, India, and China. The outer crescent included Britain, South Africa, Australia, the United States, Canada, and Japan. Mackinder termed the inner, or the pivotal region of Eurasia, the Heartland, the struggle for which would seal the planet’s future.

Later Nicholas Spykman, American expert in geopolitics, disagreed with Mackinder over the definition of the pivotal region. For him it was America (the United States) that held the central place in the pivot and, correspondingly, the central place in the world thanks to its domination over two oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific.⁷

¹ See: N.Ia. Danilevskiy, *Rossia i Evropa*, Glagol Publishers, St. Petersburg, 1995.

² A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, New York, 1972.

³ A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1805*. Abridged ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1980.

⁴ P.H. Colomb, *Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated*, 2d ed., W.H. Allen & Co., Limited, London, 1895.

⁵ See: K. Haushofer, *Bausteine zur Geopolitik*, Berlin, 1928.

⁶ See: H. Mackinder, “Geographical Pivot of History,” *Geographical Journal*, 1904.

⁷ See: N. Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics*, Harcourt, Brace & Co, New York, 1942.

Geography does affect politics, but is its influence on economic and social development as tangible? The answer is “no.” A nation’s creative energy and its “growing power” exert the greatest influence. Nations with weak creative energy and growing power cannot hope to advance far. This did not escape the attention of the academic community: combined studies of external (geographic) and internal (historical and social) factors produced impressive results. The state, wrote German geographer Friedrich Ratzel, author of *Politische Geographie* published in 1897, was a living organism that combined the properties of the nation and the land on which this nation lived.⁸ Contemporary political scientists, in particular Pierre Gallois from France, author of fundamental *Geopolitique. Les voies de la puissance*⁹ has added several more elements to the classical definition of geopolitics: weapons of mass destruction that can reduce to naught the advantages or shortcomings of geographic location, which is itself a geopolitical factor along with landscapes, climate, population size, and transportation routes. In addition, the French scholar described the “massovization” of society, the phenomenon of people’s mass behavior, and also added this element to contemporary geopolitics.

The mondialist and multipolar models of world division are two of the latest geopolitical theories. Mondialism talks about the division of our planet into the dominant civilized center of the highly organized space (the West), the technological zone, which serves the “golden billion” with its raw materials (Eastern Europe, the CIS countries, the Near and Middle East, Southeast Asia minus Japan, and South America), and the destitute periphery of no use to the West (most of African countries). The multipolar model looks at the world as a totality of many poles. For its author, Saul Cohen,¹⁰ the ideal world order consists in dynamic equilibrium; objectively, economic globalization maintains such equilibrium—in fact, it is possible only under the conditions of equilibrium.

Let us concentrate here on a relatively narrow geographic area—Central Asia—and let us limit ourselves to a fairly short span of time—from the time of the Soviet Union’s disintegration and formation of new independent states in its stead to the present (when these countries, having taken several steps toward independence, can compare what they wanted with what they’ve got, and what their neighbors have acquired). There is a very significant detail: on 30 August, 2004 BBC reported that a railway between Termez, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Herat (in Afghanistan) was being built. In the future it will reach Bandar Abbas and Chāh Bahār, two Iranian Gulf ports. Afghanistan, an unstable country torn apart by internal strife, which drug dealers have turned into a huge poppy plantation, interfered with communication between its northern and southern neighbors. This instability is gradually being overcome; very soon it will become possible to lay railways and pipelines across its territory in order to bring Caspian oil and gas to Pakistan and India.

Uzbekistan has been waiting for this far too long: in many respects independence took the Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) unawares. They were not ready to accept it: like all the other Soviet republics, they were part of a huge state which they supported and obeyed. Independence primarily presupposes a wide range of contacts with the outside world. During the years of independence, Central Asia has learned how to use them.

Central Asia is a vast region of about 4 million sq. km populated by 55 million people. It is a natural bridge between Europe and East Asia, the communication along which is ensured by latitudinal railways and highways. Today, the use of them depends on the goodwill and enterprising efforts of the interested states. Its natural riches, primarily hydrocarbon resources, as well as non-ferrous and rare metals are large enough to interest China, South Korea, Japan, India, and Pakistan. This has already created a new powerful development stimulus and attracted billions of dollars in foreign investments. And that is not all: the world needs more fuel. Oil production in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan is keeping pace with this growing demand.

The Central Asian nations need stability and good-neighborly relations; they need thrifty use of water—their common natural resource—and transparent borders within a united region and sin-

⁸ See: F. Ratzel, *Politische Geographie. Einleitung*, Leipzig, 1897.

⁹ See: P.M. Gallois, *Geopolitique. Les voies de la puissance*, Paris, 1990.

¹⁰ See: S.B. Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a Divided World*, New York, 1963.

gle economic expanse. This is how the Central Asian countries describe their political priorities, which are still very distant. Today Russia, whose interests used to prevail in the region, has to compete with China, America, Japan, as well as Iran and Turkey (and the Muslim world as a whole) with uncertain results.

The tradition of the most favored nation that Russia enjoyed in the past can still be clearly seen in its relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; two other states—Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan—insist on equal relations and, as a rule, succeed. The economic contacts previously limited to Russia have become more varied: China, Japan, South Korea, the United States, the EU, Turkey, and Iran are coming to the fore in the region's economic life.

All Central Asian states are CIS members and belong to the Organization of Central Asian Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization (along with Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey); they cooperate with NATO within the Partnership for Peace Program and with the EU under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Four of them (with the exception of Turkmenistan) are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) along with Russia and China. This is not merely an antiterrorist structure: it initiates interaction and cooperation on the widest range of questions (including setting up JVs in transport, energy, and mining). Construction of hydropower stations on the Naryn and Vakhsh rivers has been resumed after many years of idleness jointly with RAO EES Rossii. The energy they produce will be exported north, to Kazakhstan and Russia, and south, to Pakistan.

Active involvement in various international structures is not the latest fashion—we are concerned about our safety and a speedy and painless transfer to the market. The 9/11 events heightened the interest in Central Asia: the American military presence is an accomplished fact (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan let the United States use their first-grade air bases). Central Asia became actively involved in the rapidly changing world order. In December 2001, when commenting on Washington's policy in the region, Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary of State, said at the hearings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "When the Afghan conflict is completed we shall not leave Central Asia. We want to support the Central Asian countries in their desire to reform their economies and society in the same way as they supported us in the war on terror."¹¹

Reorientation toward the market did not happen all of a sudden: different countries followed different paths. The Civil War undermined Tajikistan's economy and crippled its international prestige; Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan opted for a stage-by-stage and gradual transfer; after overcoming the trying period of "shock therapy," Kazakhstan is moving ahead at a fast pace.

The Central Asian countries established transportation links with China, Iran, Turkey, and the Georgian Black Sea ports. During the years of independence the newly established links have enlarged the region's potential, armed the local countries with export and import tools, and created prospects for international transit. Today, only Afghanistan remains outside the process. The international community has turned its attention to the Great Silk Road, which in the past crossed Central Asia to connect China and Europe. Its speedy revival connected Chinese and Kazakh railways, as well as Turkmen railways with those in Iran. The cargo traffic along the restored Great Silk Road cannot yet be compared with that which crosses Russia; to achieve this, China, the Central Asian and South Caucasian states, Iran, and Turkey must unite their railways into a single system and coordinate their transport, border, and customs laws. These routes must become attractive price- and time-wise. Herculean efforts are needed because Russia is persistently creating the most favored nation regime for European, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese shippers by modernizing the Trans-Siberian Mainline, lowering tariffs, improving cargo security, etc.

In fact, the westward transportation routes Central Asia badly needs (which go to the Black Sea and Mediterranean), the eastward routes which connect it with the ports on the Yellow and South China seas, and the southward routes which end at the ports of the Persian Gulf and the Bay of Bengal are functioning even though they are still underloaded. This positively affects the sovereignties of the Central

¹¹ *Tsentral'naia Azia: geoeconomika, geopolitika, bezopasnost*, ed. by R.M. Alimov, Sh.R. Arifkhanov, et al., Shark Publishers, Tashkent, 2002, p. 14.

Asian states. Very soon the region will be connected with China by another railway, and Uzbekistan and China are building the Osh-Kashgar highway. Connections with the Karakorum Highway of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan offer another promising southward perspective: they link Central Asia with Pakistan, India, and the ports of the Bay of Bengal. The same links will allow India to move its goods to Europe by land.

The Central Asian pipeline network includes the gas pipelines that move Turkmen and Uzbek gas to the north along the Bukhara-Urals and Central Asia-Center lines and to the region's neighbors; there are also pipelines that move Kazakh oil from Tengiz to central Russia and Novorossiisk on the Black Sea.¹² Active cooperation between Turkmen and Uzbek gas companies and their Russian colleagues helps the Russian Federation and Gazprom to retain their foothold on the European markets (the gas extracted in Russia is not enough). Pakistan and India are showing a lot of interest in Turkmenistan's oil and gas. Very soon they will be connected by pipelines, most probably via Afghanistan. China is very interested in Kazakhstan's oil. There are plans to lay a 2,900-km pipeline with an annual throughput capacity of up to 40 million tonnes of crude oil to China in less than three years.

In this way, during the economic upsurge, the Central Asian transportation complex, which is able to offer high-quality transit services to European and Asian consignors, is developing into an important tool of the region's integration into the world economy. These stretches can be described as a trans-Asian route parallel to the Trans-Siberian Mainline, which runs 2,000 km to the north. It serves a territory of over 10,000 sq. km (the Central Asian republics, western China, northern India, northern Pakistan, and Afghanistan).

There is tough competition among the Central Asian republics for freight traffic; each is developing its own system bypassing the neighboring territories, therefore Kazakhstan's vast territory is to its obvious advantage. The Great Silk Road, however, demands cooperation, otherwise the project will remain undeveloped.

The local countries are modernizing their economies through a combination of tradition and modernity in the hope of rapidly changing the social, economic, political, and cultural spheres for the better in order to raise the standard of living and join the international community as equal members. While Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are pinning their hopes on increased oil and gas production (by 2010 Kazakhstan plans to produce 100 million tonnes of oil; Turkmenistan has set a goal of 50 million tonnes of oil and 120 billion c m of gas) in order to achieve economic progress in other branches, Uzbekistan is concentrating on the in-depth processing of cotton, vegetables, and fruit and on the motor industry. In Kyrgyzstan, economic growth (about 6 percent a year), spurred on by the rapidly developing market infrastructure, resumed in 1996; in Tajikistan, the GDP showed an increase in 1998; prior to that, the republic experienced its greatest production decline (in 1996 its level was 40 percent of the 1991 level). While in Kyrgyzstan 40 percent of population are living below the poverty level, in Tajikistan the share is much larger—60 percent. All the Central Asian countries are doing their best to create a favorable investment climate to develop the private economic sector.

Economic growth encourages integration, while healthy economies are a powerful stability factor. Today, integration obviously dominates over disintegration; cooperation and interaction are obviously profitable. Still, much remains to be done to create an efficient single economic space of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (the corresponding treaty was signed in 1994). Reality, however, is much more somber than the sides' declarations. The Central Asian leaders, however, do not doubt that the region will profit from a single economic and transport space with a common market, as well as from a common foreign policy, common customs and tax control, and a common security system.

At one time, Mackinder¹³ wrote about the region's high potential. He described it as part of the Heartland (continental Eurasia far removed from the oceans). He said in particular that this vast economic world was absolutely self-sufficient because of its irrigated land, which could grow wheat, cotton, veg-

¹² See: S.S. Zhiltsov, I.S. Zonn, A.M. Ushkov, *Geopolitika Kaspiyskogo regiona*, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia Publishers, Moscow, 2003, p. 153.

¹³ See: H. Mackinder, *op. cit.*

etables, and fruit, as well as due to its energy sources and non-ferrous and rare metals. He claimed it could develop efficiently even though it was a long way from the world oceans. Land transport (railways and pipelines) could help it maintain economic ties with neighbors and the rest of the world. His conclusion fit perfectly with the time it was drawn: "Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island (Eurasia.—*Ed.*); who rules the World-Island commands the World." At that time it was next to impossible to predict that Central Asia, or rather its five independent states, would rule itself. However, today their interests are closely related not only to the interests of their closest neighbors (Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, India, Pakistan), but also to the interests of far-away and equally influential international actors (the U.S. and the EU, Japan, and South Korea).

Some of those who predicted a clash of civilizations in the 21st century never suspected that international terrorism would emerge as a frightening, perfidious, and unpredictable force able to change the political course of the world's leading countries. On 9/11 it came to the fore as the main destabilizing element in mankind's recent history; the terrorist acts in the United States started a chain of inhuman acts of violence in Russia, Spain, Turkey, Israel, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The world community has to put a bold face on the new threat, study its roots and breeding ground, and identify the perpetrators and the manipulators, "the puppets and the puppeteers." This will not be easy.

The war on terror is one of the most important aspects of Central Asia's geopolitical situation; cooperation among the local countries and with the world's leading powers is becoming more constructive. The military presence of the United States in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and of Russia in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan guarantees stability in the region. It will continue until the local countries acquire battle-worthy rapid deployment forces. The economic upswing has practically neutralized the threat of ethnic conflicts, yet the Islamist threat is as great as ever.

There is a mounting awareness in the United States that by encouraging economic growth in Central Asia it will consolidate political stability and will effectively oppose Islamic radicalism. The Export-Import Bank of the United States, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency are actively functioning in Central Asia, encouraging the American companies involved in improving railway and air transportation infrastructure, energy, TV communications, and laying oil and gas pipelines. The United States encourages market developments in the local economies and regional cooperation projects. Washington is especially interested in promoting democracy and a civil society; it helps democratic institutions and the media.

Cooperation with the United States is growing more varied; the problems of global and regional security, the counterterrorist struggle, cooperation in conversion of the defense industry, non-proliferation of WMD and nuclear technologies, as well as interaction within the Partnership for Peace NATO program are receiving special attention. Despite its counterterrorist vector, the White House is not ignoring its support of the countries wishing to consolidate their market economies and democratic institutions. All the Central Asian countries are finding it important to develop their relations with the United States on the basis of their common regional interests.

Russia, which occupies a huge chunk of Eurasian territory, is a bridge between the West and the East. This gives Moscow the freedom of geostrategic maneuver. The Russian Federation supports the idea of a multipolar world and looks at itself as one of its poles. It has so far failed to formulate a new, post-Soviet national idea—this will take some more time. Russia is paying particular attention to Afghanistan: it needs a stable and predictable Afghanistan, loyal to the world community, and free from secret camps training terrorists for all hot spots around the globe, primarily Chechnia; and it needs a country without vast poppy plantations and heroin-producing laboratories. This is what the Central Asian countries and the United States also want. The common interests serve as a solid basis for cooperation and joint opposition to world terrorism and international drug trafficking.

Russia has had to accept the greater involvement of the West in Central Asian economic and security issues. It seems that Russia's military presence in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan will continue for a long time, because these countries also want it. The West for its part is taking into account Moscow's interests in Central Asia.

Recently, the largest Russian companies—Gazprom, RAO EES, and others—have stepped up their presence in the region. They are re-opening Central Asia; Gazprom entered into an agreement with Turkmenistan for 20 years which will bring Ashghabad \$5 billion every year. Astana and Moscow will jointly develop some of the gas fields of Kazakhstan. Construction of the highly promising hydropower stations on the Naryn and Vakhsh rivers will resume. The number of JVs is increasing; Russia is willing to cooperate with China within the SCO, and Iran, two long-term enemies of Atlanticism. At the same time, it is cooperating with the Atlantic world more and more frequently and shares many viewpoints with NATO. There is the opinion among political scientists that if Moscow assumes the role of an accelerator of the integration processes in Central Asia, its influence and prestige will grow. If it limits itself to the role of a passive spectator, its influence and prestige will soon be exhausted.

China has set up several large research centers for Central Asian studies. By 2020 (or even earlier), the GDP of this fast developing great power with relatively moderate military spendings will outstrip the GDP of America. China has long overstepped the annual threshold of 100 million tons of steel; and it built one of the largest hydropower stations on the Yangtze River within ten years. Intensive development helps resolve the unemployment problem, the worst headache in this overpopulated country. The Chinese are ready to actively participate in developing the vast expanses of their neighbors—Russia, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan—with a population density 20- to 40-fold lower than that of China. Tens of thousands of Chinese are working in Kazakhstan; there are Chinese communities (Chinatowns, exact copies of the Chinatowns in Canada and America) in all of its large cities.

China is especially interested in the Central Asian raw material branches; it is also looking at the region as a capacious market for its cheap and fairly good-quality consumer goods. By constantly extending its foreign trade, China is using the region's transit communications to move its goods to Europe and to decrease its spending in this sphere. Beijing regards the revival of the Great Silk Road as a priority task, which may make its goods even more competitive. After acquiring access to the railways of Kazakhstan and connecting its highways with those of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, China started building the Osh-Kashgar highway to acquire the shortest possible routes to Europe and the Middle East. A parallel railway will be built some time later to reduce China's dependence on Russia's railways. Beijing hopes that the new land routes to Europe will cross reliably secure and stable territories.

China has already settled its border disputes with Russia and the Central Asian countries; there is no longer any military pressure from the north, because the new independent Central Asian states present no threat to China. It can now safely develop its eastern regions, the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region included. Beijing supports the region's republics in the security sphere through the SCO.

China does not hail America's military presence in Central Asia in the immediate proximity to its borders; in fact, it regards it as a threat. Beijing does not want Russia's restored influence there either; it is doing its best to isolate the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region from Islamic fundamentalism and the ideas of pan-Turkism. In the economic sphere, China is creating the best possible conditions for its businessmen working abroad: it is investing increasingly large sums of money in the Kazakh oil fields in the hope of uniting them with its western regions by a large pipeline. Its geopolitical interests in Central Asia are consistent, stable, and long-term. By establishing partner relations with Russia in the region, China regards them as another stability factor on its northwestern borders.

Iran promptly established political and economic ties with all new countries in the hope of influencing them by actively promoting its religious ideas. The Iranian formula of an Islamic state was not welcome in Central Asia. After realizing this, Tehran turned to purely pragmatic relationships. The local countries are completely satisfied with this course: Iran, in particular, is opening the road to the Persian Gulf as an extension of the Great Silk Road. In 1996, a Mashhad-Tedzhen-Serakhs railway was built in a very short time to connect the railways of Turkmenistan and Iran. Iran's Gulf terminals, in which the Central Asian countries are especially interested, supply Tehran with additional arguments when it comes to protecting its interests in the region. On the other hand, its continued cooperation with the local countries (especially its emerging good-neighborly relations with Turkmenistan) is helping Iran to alleviate its international isolation somewhat, on which the United States insists. By spreading its influence, Iran

is trying to undermine America's foothold in this part of the world, which was previously closed to the White House. Russia, India, and China support this Iranian stand. It was on Iran's initiative that an Economic Cooperation Organization was set up which includes all the Central Asian republics, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Pakistan, and the Cooperation Organization of the Caspian States.

Turkey hoped that the new independent countries would emulate its model of state structure, thus helping it establish its political and ideological control over the region. The West looks at Ankara as a shield against Islamic fundamentalism. It was not without the influence of Europe (where millions of Turks now work on a permanent basis) that Turkey opted for the secular development pattern, which proved viable. The ethnic, linguistic, and cultural affinity between Turkey and the Central Asian republics provides good opportunities for consolidating Turkey's geopolitical interests in the region. Its hopes, however, of becoming the leader of the Turkic-speaking world failed; today it is guided by purely pragmatic considerations.

Turkey is infiltrating into the region via the light (textile and tailoring) industry with its numerous JVs, transport, and tourism. The Great Silk Road leads to Southern Europe via Turkey (the TRACECA project). Turkey and Iran, with their opposite state models, are locked in bitter rivalry in Central Asia. Since the latter half of the 20th century, Turkey has been serving as a pillar of American influence in the Near and Middle East. In 1992, Turkish TV started broadcasting in Central Asia; thousands of students from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan are studying in Turkish higher educational establishments. Ankara's technical and humanitarian aid to the Central Asian republics has already topped \$1.2 billion.

Pakistan's Central Asian policy is directly affected by its confrontation with India due to the still unresolved territorial disputes, which regularly develop into armed conflicts. Both are de facto nuclear powers. The Central Asian republics would naturally prefer to resolve this conflict peacefully so that the Indian sub-continent might finally become an area of peace and cooperation. The religious and cultural affinity between Pakistan and its Central Asian neighbors, however, did not make them natural allies in the border conflict. The Central Asian states are interested in India's resumed land traffic to Europe across Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia (today the route lies across Iran, the Caspian, and Russia).

In its contacts with Central Asia, Pakistan is paying particular attention to the transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, and JVs. In its dealings with Central Asia, Islamabad is growing increasingly aware of the need for trans-Afghan highways and a railway. They should be built as quickly as possible. To be effective, transport needs stability. As an ally of the U.S.-led counterterrorist coalition, Pakistan is exerting immense efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan, yet in Pakistan there are still camps that train fighters for Iraq and Chechnia using the funds of international terrorism. Pakistan itself was a target of their attacks. Its army is trying to uproot this evil to little avail.

India regards the Central Asian countries as natural political and economic partners and is doing its best to prevent their pro-Pakistani bias. In 1995, when the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, Moscow, Delhi, and Tehran brought their viewpoints on the Afghan issue closer. They were against the Pakistan-sponsored Taliban. India, which preferred the Central Asian countries using Iranian rather than Pakistani ports, achieved this in 1996. In fact, its cooperation with the Central Asian states is varied; it wants these countries to be its allies in the Kashmir issue. This means that Central Asia is the place where the geopolitical interests of the great powers, as well as neighboring states (Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and India), clash.

The world's second industrial power, Japan, which exports high tech finished goods and technologies, is enlarging its presence in the region steadily, but not too obviously. It specializes in science- and labor-intensive commodities (electronics, communications and telecommunications, machine tools, and cars). It needs political and social stability in the region and fast economic development of its mining branches in the first place (Japan is the world's largest raw material importer) in order to include the republics in the global commodity circulation along the revived Great Silk Road, as well as via the newly acquired access to the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean ports. It has already extended considerable credits to Uzbekistan (\$1.6 billion), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. Japan also allotted consid-

erable state credits on easy terms: between 1995 and 2001, Uzbekistan received \$312 million-worth of such aid; Kyrgyzstan, \$214 million; and Kazakhstan, \$222 million. Japan is equally interested in retooling the Trans-Siberian Mainline, which offers the shortest route to Europe. The Japanese business community is toying with the idea of building a railway across Sakhalin to the mainland. Japan would like to see Central Asia as an economically developed region, very much along the lines of the East Asian pattern. So far, the trade volume is not large; the number of JVs is equally small (as of 2003 there were only 10 of them in Uzbekistan). It is very expensive to transport Japanese goods via China to Europe, therefore Tokyo is reluctant to use the Central Asian transportation corridors.

The EU is working on its Central Asian policy, which would take account of the American, Russian, Chinese, Indian, and Japanese policies in order to avoid confrontation there. It has already entered into partnership and cooperation agreements with all the Central Asian countries. In 1999, the European Parliament passed a resolution On the EU Strategy for Developing Relations with the Independent Central Asian States, which stressed in particular that the EU was especially concerned with the development of democracy in these countries. At the same time, the EU members are fully aware that Western-style democracy cannot be imposed on Central Asia and it will take some time to create conditions conducive to democratic development. The EU is rendering practical assistance in fighting drug trafficking, overcoming the ecological crisis in the Aral Sea, and eliminating the drinking water shortage. It is interested in promoting Central Asian integration. The TRACECA project, a EU brainchild, is constantly supported by lavish investments in the local railways and highways along the Great Silk Road of antiquity.

The independence the Central Asian countries acquired in 1991 is bearing fruit; each of them is acquiring traits of its own, and its own domestic and international image. The world community is doing all it can to help them reform their economies and join the world market. The restored Great Silk Road will serve the same aim. In fact, it has become another guarantor of their sovereignty by opening up the world to them.