

A b s t r a c t s

Flow Chart Politics and Society in Central Asia

Bert G. Fragner **Advanced Civilizations and Steppe Empires** **The Cultural Area of Central Asia**

Central Asia has been an area of structured multiculturalism since time immemorial. The tension - sometimes even symbiosis - between highly specialized, cattle-breeding equestrian nomads and sedentary advanced civilizations shaped the physiognomy of Central Asia well into the modern era. Violent conflicts led to the large-scale migration of peoples. The symbiosis produced the legendary Silk Road, a high point of transcultural coexistence. However, the specific characteristics of the region have been reshaped since the 18th century, when first the eastern part of Central Asia came under Chinese rule and then the western part under Russian rule in the 19th century. The borders of today's nation states are thus the product of imperial competition and Soviet nationality policy.

Shairbek Dzhuraev **Central Asia – Global South?** **Localizing a Region**

Spatial concepts reflect power relations and shape them. Central Asia is usually assigned to the post-Soviet space. In Central Asia research, the region is rarely seen as part of the Global South and postcolonial studies rarely consider the five states. Instead, analytical concepts that tend to obscure an understanding of politics and society in Central Asia are applied to the region. In addition, the region has often been seen as a mere hub for the great powers, while the five states have rarely been seen as actors in international politics. However, there are signs that this is changing - in politics and academia.

Vladimir Ryzhkov **Increased Interest** **Russia and the States of Central Asia**

Russia has activated its Central Asia policy since the attack on Ukraine. Ideologically, this is part of its "turn to the East". The states in the area, which Moscow sees as its sphere of interest, are to be integrated into an anti-Western

coalition. In the five countries, concern about Moscow's imperial expansion has grown. At the same time, however, they are benefiting from the increased interest. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can simultaneously deepen their relations with Russia and expand those to the West. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan remain heavily dependent on Moscow. Turkmenistan is not giving up its isolationist course.

Nurseit Niyazbekov

Balancing Act

Kazakhstan between Russia, China, and Europe

Kazakhstan is in a difficult situation. The country is striving for self-determination in foreign policy, and this also raises the question of democracy and autocracy. In January 2022, President Kasym-Jomart Toqaev summoned troops from the Russian-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization into his country. They crushed protests against the government and kept Toqaev in power. The price was 230 dead and 4,300 injured. Moscow expects loyalty, but Astana refuses to provide it unconditionally. To build up a countervailing power, the government is seeking additional partners. The EU is interested in expanding energy and trade relations. As in the case of Ukraine, Russia is reacting irritably and is trying to prevent any western orientation. China is an important trade partner for Kazakhstan, but politically, however, it also has an interest in the stabilization of the authoritarian order.

Nargis Kassenova

Precarious Balance

Kazakhstan's Security in Times of War

Since Russia's attack on Ukraine, Kazakhstan has been trying to distance itself from Russia. Since both countries are closely intertwined politically, economically, and militarily, Astana is proceeding very cautiously. On the one hand, the strategic partnership with Russia is emphasized, on the other hand, relations with Kyiv are maintained. Kazakhstan rejects interference in internal affairs, but cooperation with Russia is not called into question. In order to increase its room for manoeuvre, Kazakhstan also continues to diversify its foreign relations. Turkey and Azerbaijan in particular have gained in importance. But improving relations with the other Central Asian states has also become more important.

Temur Umarov

Uzbekistan's New China Policy

Opportunities and Limits of Cooperation

Under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has taken on a cautious reform course. The economy in particular has opened up. Cooperation with China is benefiting from this. Trade volume and Chinese direct investment are growing. Chinese high-tech companies have gotten involved in the country's education sector. In the fight against poverty, Tashkent has oriented itself toward the

Chinese model. Close cooperation has even developed in the sensitive areas of internal and external security. But the political elites are strangers to one another. The Uzbek leadership is trying to avoid becoming too dependent on China.

Eleonora Tafuro Ambrosetti
Turkey in Central Asia
Actors, Interests, Policy Fields

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey tried to use pan-Turkish ideas and a strong sense of mission to make a name for itself as the big brother of the Central Asian states. This concept failed. Since then, Ankara has taken a pragmatic course and pursued its economic and political interests in a targeted manner. Turkey benefits from the fact that, unlike Russia and China, it is not perceived as a threat in Central Asian societies, where repression of the Crimean Tatars and the Uyghurs is closely followed. Ankara's position in Central Asia is also strengthened by the increased efficiency of the Turkish economy, for example, in the field of armaments technology.

Andrea Schmitz
Islam and the Secular State in Uzbekistan
From Religion to State Doctrine

Uzbekistan's political leadership has upgraded the country's Islamic heritage under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. It uses this legacy to represent the state and has granted religious organisations greater access to educational and research institutions. Islam is being secularized, scientised, and musealised. At the same time, an Islamization of society is taking place from below. The state has little influence on this. Should Islamic milieus seriously challenge the secular state, however, the latter will react with repression, as in previous years.

Sh. Eraliev, R. Urinboyev, D. Kaldiyarov, A. Mukhtarov, D. Nurmukhankyzy
Legal, Illegal, Digital
Uzbek Migrants in Russia and Turkey

Around one in ten Central Asians work abroad. Most migrant workers are Uzbeks, followed by Tajiks and Kyrgyz. They leave their homeland because of poverty and a lack of prospects. Many go to Russia. Their remittances from there to their home country are an important economic factor. In Russia, migrants live under difficult conditions. Many end up living illegally. So-called "digital neighbourhoods" offer solidarity. Due to the increasingly restrictive migration policy, growing xenophobia, and the risk of being drawn into Russia's war against Ukraine, migrant workers are looking for other destinations. More and more people from Uzbekistan, especially women, are going to Turkey. In Istanbul, they live in ethnic enclaves. But these alone no longer guarantee protection

and cohesion. Uzbekistan's government is trying to win over South Korea, Japan, and Germany as new destination countries for Uzbek migrant workers.

Asel Doolotkeldieva
The “People” and the “Strong State”
Repoliticization in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan President Sadyr Japarov came to power in 2020 on a wave of populist mobilisation. This was a democratic moment of popular resistance against corrupt elites. Once in office, he established a developmental dictatorship. The organs of repression act in the same way against corrupt oligarchs as they do against any kind of political opponent. So far, the belief that the confiscated assets and the profits from the nationalized Kumtor gold mine will be used for the benefit of the poor segments of the population that carried Japarov into office. However, there is a great danger that this regime will also channel public funds into its own accounts. There is hardly any criticism from Western states, as they are primarily interested in getting the Central Asian states on their side in the conflict with Russia.

Otto Luchterhandt
Nagorno-Badakhshan and Karakalpakstan
National Autonomies in Geographical Problem Zones

Two of the five Central Asian states have a national autonomous region: Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan and Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan. They take up almost half of the territory of the two states, but are mostly located in inhospitable mountain or desert areas and are extremely sparsely populated. Great distances and difficult geographical conditions for transportation lead to economic backwardness. In Karakalpakstan, the Aral Sea catastrophe is an additional problem. Since the civil war in the 1990s, the Pamiri in Nagorno-Badakhshan have had de facto autonomy that the Rakhmon regime in Dushanbe is trying to abolish by military force. Karakalpakstan's autonomous status is purely symbolic. The Karakalpaks now make up only half of the republic's population. They can only tackle the serious ecological and economic problems in cooperation with Tashkent.

Bruce Pannier
Repression against Pamiri
Tajikistan and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region

The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is a remote and underdeveloped high mountain region in eastern Tajikistan. The Pamiri living there are Ismailis, unlike the Tajik majority population. After the civil war in the 1990s, the central government in Dushanbe tried several times to take control of Gorno-Badakhshan. But the local population supported the local authorities, and the precarious

balance was always restored after violent escalations. Since May 2022, however, state forces have been cracking down on the Pamiri. The regime in Dushanbe is in the process of making the Pamiri people disappear.

Grazvydas Jasutis, Elizaveta Chmykh
Pillars of the Regime
Turkmenistan's Enforcement Apparatus

Turkmenistan's enforcement apparatus is a central pillar of the autocratic regime. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the tasks and methods employed by the state security service and the police remained largely unchanged. Following the death of the Turkmenistan's first president, Saparmyrat Nyýazow, his successor, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, saw to a purge of the institutions' personnel. But they remained a repressive apparatus where corruption and abuse of power are the order of the day. It has been no different under his successor, son Serdar Berdimuhamedow. The regime pays significantly less attention to the army. This is related to the state doctrine of "eternal neutrality".

Energy and Economics

Roland Götz
Indispensable for Now
Fossil Fuels in Central Asia

While the EU sees the countries of Central Asia as potential suppliers of "green" energy, they themselves rely on fossil fuels to secure their own energy supply. With the exception of Turkmenistan, they are seeking to expand coal-fired power generation. And all of them want to generate higher revenues from the export of oil, gas, and coal and are looking for new markets and transportation routes. Having lost its Western European market for pipeline gas, Russia is also looking at Central Asia and its neighbours for opportunities to sell its natural gas. Moscow could get in Turkmenistan's way, especially with a pipeline project through the Caspian Sea.

Jenniver Sehring, Timur Dadabaev
Water Policy in Central Asia
Competition for Use and Neighbourly Solidarity

In Central Asia, water is a strategic resource due to its importance to the agricultural and energy sectors. There are competing interests for its use. Water policy moves between conflict and cooperation. The idea of cross-border neighbourhoods is of great importance within the region. Even in times of interstate conflict, it turned out that local water managers continue to cooperate. This has

a conflict-mitigating effect. Competing interests can be reconciled. But one fundamental problem remains unresolved. Central Asia consumes too much water. Water use is not sustainable, and water resources are not adequately protected.

Felix Eick
Central Asia Hub
Where the Trail of German Exports Is Lost

Exports from Germany to Central Asia have increased massively since 2022. In many product groups, the increase is several hundred percent. It can be ruled out that this is meeting demand in the region itself. The suspicion is that many goods reach Russia via Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, thus circumventing EU sanctions. Machines, cars, and optical devices worth several hundred million US dollars are disappearing from the statistics in Central Asia. The analysis here makes it possible to grasp the full extent of sanctions evasion by product group.

Rafael Aguirre-Unceta
Resource Curse
The Impact of Mining in Kyrgyzstan

Mining is of great economic importance in Kyrgyzstan. However, the country suffers from a “resource curse”. Weak institutions enable the political leadership and its favourites to appropriate proceeds from the sale of raw materials. In order to preserve their lucrative prebends and protect themselves from prosecution, the rulers try to prevent a democratic change of government. In this way, institutions are further weakened. The economic damage is also considerable. Mining contributes little to Kyrgyzstan’s socio-economic development, hinders the development of democracy and the rule of law, and causes massive environmental destruction.

Tatiana Lanshina, Yana Zabanova
Energy Transition in Kazakhstan
The Long Road to Carbon Neutrality

Kazakhstan’s economy is one of the most carbon-intensive in the world. State subsidies for fossil fuels lead to low energy prices and weaken incentives for energy efficiency and the use of green technologies. Energy-intensive sectors such as the metal, mining, and chemical industries are favoured. Overcoming dependence on fossil fuels requires a comprehensive structural transformation of the entire economy. This also includes state support for the transition to green energy.

Farkhod Aminjonov
Energy Transition versus Energy Crisis
The Central Asian Countries' Strategies

The energy crises in the winter of 2022-2023 once again underlined the vulnerabilities of Central Asian energy systems, which have been exacerbated by climate change. To meet these challenges, Central Asian countries are increasingly seeking to transition to sustainable and modern energy technologies and, in particular, renewable energy. To this end, they should pursue six strategies: development of renewable energy, use of nuclear energy, mitigation of climate change, decentralization of energy systems, use of fossil fuels with lower-carbon and lower-emission technologies, and reinforcement of multilateral cooperation. While the states of Central Asia previously preferred partnerships with European countries and companies for the energy transition, they are increasingly becoming heavily dependent on investors from China and the Gulf states.

Henryk Alff
Soviet Legacy instead of Sustainability
Reform Backlog in Kazakhstan's Agriculture

Kazakhstan is pursuing an agricultural policy rooted in Soviet tradition. Large farms are seen as the engines of modernisation. They enjoy more state support than family farms. Agriculture is primarily practised in those areas of cultivation that were established in the 1930s and are marked by monocultures. Despite declining productivity, soil degradation, and the negative social and ecological consequences of monocultures, the diversification of agriculture is making little progress. There are no signs that the country is structurally adapting to climate change, neither in methods of wheat cultivation in the north, nor in irrigation management in the south, nor in livestock farming. Innovations in the field of sustainable irrigation or the promotion of extensive long-distance grazing livestock farming are still in their infancy.

At Home and Abroad

Robert Kindler
Remembrance and Taboos
Soviet History and the Aşarşylyq in Kazakhstan

For decades, remembering the famine of 1931–1933 was a taboo in Kazakhstan. Now the catastrophe, known in Kazakhstan as the Aşarşylyq, is slowly finding its way into official remembrance policy. However, assessment of the event is still controversial, particularly with regard to the question whether the Aşarşylyq should be classified a genocide. This is because the famine is linked

to passing judgement on Soviet Kazakhstan's entire history, which also influences the country's current relations with Russia. It is not yet clear whether a new common view of the past is emerging or whether the debates about remembrance are dividing society.

Rustam Burnashev, Irina Chernykh
Self-Determination
Kazakh Society and the War in Ukraine

Russia's war against Ukraine has also deepened the lines of social conflict in Kazakhstan. However, neither Ukraine's supporters, nor those who support Moscow's view of the war are homogeneous groups. Public debate about the war is forcing people to think about national identity. This has fostered a new sense of community, particularly among Ukraine's supporters. The state is trying to contain social tension with threats of punishment. At the same time, it lends support to social initiatives whose goals include "harmony" and "stability".

Gemma Pörzgen
A Blank Spot
Central Asia in German Reporting

Central Asia's economic and political importance is growing. Yet the region remains in the shadows of German public awareness. None of Germany's radio and television stations and quality newspapers maintain bureaus in the region. The German media are negligent in reporting on developments in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. There is a lack of basic information, to say nothing of background reports and analyses.

Andrei Kazantsev
Scientists, Agitators, Careerists
Central Asia Expertise in Russia

Russia's aggressive anti-Western policy is also having an impact on Central Asia. The result is a shift in political priorities: the courting of the "Global South" has been accompanied by a downgrading of the "near abroad". The state also expects scientists in its service to comply with and support these political changes. Since the start of the large-scale war against Ukraine at the latest, there can hardly be any talk of independent public expertise in Russia. Some of the Central Asia specialists have complied with this turn of events and are actively involved in political consulting and propaganda, while others have retreated into exile or have fallen silent.