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GEOGRAPHY, GEOPOLITICS, AND THE RELATED TERMS

REGIONAL SECURITY

"CENTRAL CAUCASASIA" INSTEAD OF "CENTRAL EURASIA"

Vladimer PAPAVA

D.Sc. (Econ.), professor,
Senior fellow at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies,
Corresponding Member of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences
(Tbilisi, Georgia)

The Soviet Union's disintegration not only gave rise to new independent states, a process of historic importance, it also began their integration into new geopolitical areas. Their geographic outlines visible under Soviet power were confirmed by the Soviet Union's economic structure. Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia together were called "Pribaltika;" Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia were known as the Trans-Caucasus while Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan together formed "Sredniaia Azia" (Middle Asia). There were also corresponding economic regions of the U.S.S.R. In some cases, Kazakhstan was viewed as part of "Sredniaia Azia," but it was normal practice to discuss the Kazakh economic region separately because of its relatively large size.

It comes as no surprise that the independence and sovereignty of these states raised the question of finding new names for these geopolitical areas to emphasize their newly acquired independence from Moscow. In fact, certain publications (mainly by Russian authors) are still using the names inherited from imperial times.[1] Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have deemed it necessary to drop the term "Pribaltika" as a "Soviet holdover" in favor of the current "Baltic countries." Today, the terms "Southern Caucasus" and "Central Asia" (which includes Kazakhstan) have essentially ousted the old terms "Trans-Caucasus" and "Sredniaia Azia" (Middle Asia).

Recently the relatively new geopolitical term "Central Eurasia" had been gaining currency. It is normally applied to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which are treated as a single geopolitical area. I am convinced that this is not completely correct from the geopolitical viewpoint since it still reflects the Russian idea of this geopolitical expanse.

Here I have posed myself the task of revising some of the issues related to the region's geopolitical content from the position of a descriptive approach, that is, irrespective of the aims the world or regional powers are pursuing there.

[1] The best example of this is the Russian translation of Z. Brzezinski's *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997 in which the term "Central Asia" (pp. 46-47, 93, 95, 113, 121, 129-130, 131, 145, 150) is nearly everywhere translated into Russian not as "Tsentral'naia Azia" (as it should be) but as "Sredniaia Azia" (Middle Asia) (Z. Brzezinski, *Velikaia shakhmatnaia doska. Gospodstvo Ameriki i ego strategicheskie imperativy*, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia Publishers, Moscow, 2005, pp. 61-62, 116-117, 137, 146, 155-158, 175, 180); in the same vein "the three Caucasian countries" and "the three states of the Caucasus" (Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, pp. 122, 125) are translated, correspondingly, as "tri zakavkazskie (trans-Caucasian) strany" and "tri zakavkazskikh gosudarstva" (Z. Brzezinski, *Velikaia shakhmatnaia doska*, pp. 148, 152).

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Eurasia and Central Eurasia: Geographic and Geopolitical Approaches

The Eurasian continent consists of two parts of the world—Europe and Asia; for obvious reasons its geographic dimension can be used (and is used) in geopolitical contexts as well. The books by prominent American political scholar Zbigniew Brzezinski are the best example of this.[2]

There is another, no less popular, geopolitical idea about Eurasia created by the fact that in the post-Soviet period Russia has been looking for its national and territorial identity. Indeed, for the first time in the last 200 years, Russia has found itself on a much smaller territory. This prompted the search for a conception that would justify its special role at least across the post-Soviet expanse.[3] No wonder the questions—what is Russia? and where is Russia?—remain topical.[4] It should be said that the so-called myths[5] and narratives[6] about the homeland were largely encouraged by the talks about revising the RF state borders, which are much more popular in the intellectual and political communities of Russia and among the Russian public than is believed in Western academic writings.[7] According to the latest public opinion polls, an ever growing number of people in the Russian Federation favor the idea of a restored Soviet Union.[8]

In their search for a solution to the problem outlined above, the RF political leaders can rely on the ideas of Eurasianism that acquired their second wind in the post-Soviet period.[9] Based mainly on geography,[10] they still presuppose a geopolitical revision of the Eurasian continent as a geographical unit.[11]

In fact, late in the 19th century Russian Professor V. Pomanskiy suggested that there were three, rather than two, continents within the Old World.[12] Later, prominent Russian geopolitician Petr Savitskiy called it Eurasia (the limits of which essentially coincided with Russia or, rather, the Russian Empire).[13] He argued that this Eurasia was different from the geographic description of Eurasia of-

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[2] See, for example: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard;* Z. Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, Basic Books, New York, 2004.

[3] See: J. O'Loughlin, P.F. Talbot, "Where in the World is Russia: Geopolitical Perceptions and Preferences of Ordinary Russians," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2005, available at [http://www.colorado.edu/IBS/PEC/johno/pub/Wheres-Russia.pdf].

[4] See, for example: Z. Brzezinski, *The Geostrategic Triad: Living with China, Europe, and Russia*, The CSIS Press, Washington, 2007, pp. 56, 64.

[5] See: V. Tolz, "Conflicting 'Homeland Myths' and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 1998.

[6] See: Ş. Aktürk, "Reflections on Central Eurasian Model: A Foundation Reply to Barfield on the Historiography of Ethno-Nationalisms," *Central Eurasian Studies Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2006, p. 23.

[7] See: V. Tolz, op. cit., p. 294.

[8] See: V. Petukhov, "Vneshnepoliticheskie prioritety rossian: 'novy izoliatsionizm' ili pragmatizatsia soznania," in: *Integratsia v Evrazii. Narod i elity stran EEP*, ed. by I. Zadorin, Evropa, Moscow, 2006, p. 107.

[9] See: L. Tchantouridze, "After Marxism-Leninism: Eurasianism and Geopolitics in Russia," in: *Geopolitics: Global Problems and Regional Concerns*, ed. by L. Tchantouridze, Winnipeg, Centre for Defense and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, 2004.

[10] See: M. Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geopolitical Space," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 1991, p. 14.

[11] See, for example: M.W. Lewis, K.E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, p. 222.

[12] See: N.A. Nartov, V.N. Nartov, *Geopolitika*, UNITI-DANA, Moscow, 2007, p. 129.

[13] See: P.N. Savitskiy, *Kontinent Evrazia*, Agraf Publishers, Moscow, 1997. As Savitskiy put it "Russia-Eurasia is the center of the Old World" (P.N. Savitskiy, "Geograficheskie i geopoliticheskie osnovy Evraziystva," in: *Osnovy Evraziystva*, Arktogeia-Tsentr, Moscow, 2002, p. 298).

fered by Alexander von Humboldt.[14] This gave rise to *Eurasianism*, one of the strongest trends of the Russian geopolitical school that asserted Russia's special historical and cultural role in geographic Eurasia.[15]

Lev Gumilev, a prominent Russian historian, ethnographer, and geographer, who studied the geographic limits of the geopolitical continent of Eurasia, concluded that it consisted of three regions: High Asia (Mongolia, Djungaria, Tuva, and the trans-Baikal area), the Southern region (Central Asia), and the Western region (Eastern Europe).[16]

We all know that geographically the Old World consists of several parts of the world—Europe, Asia (the so-called Eurasian continent) and Africa—while the term "Eurasia" as applied by the Russian geopolitical school narrows down the territorial limits of Eurasia as a geographical continent.

Those academics who embrace the entire geographical continent in their geopolitical studies fell into the trap, mostly inadvertently, of the Russian geopolitical school. In *The Grand Chessboard,* the author calls the region made up of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the adjacent areas "the Eurasian Balkans" because of its conflict-prone nature.[17] There is an obvious contradiction: if "Eurasian" is applied to the geographical Eurasian continent (as suggested by the book's content), then the author has wrongly placed the Balkans outside this continent: the "Eurasian Balkans" is nothing other than the Balkans. This contradiction can be removed if we specify that the term "Eurasian" in this context is related to Eurasia as seen by the corresponding Russian geopolitical school. In other words, Zbigniew Brzezinski was "taken captive" by this school unawares.

According to the Eurasists,[18] Russia is a special continent.[19] To resolve the terminological conflict between the geographic and geopolitical interpretations of Eurasia, the geopolitical context uses the terms "Eurasia-Russia,"[20] "Russia-Eurasia,"[21] or "Eurasian Rus."[22] The problem became topical again in the post-Soviet period: before that geographers used the term "Eurasia" in its geographical meaning.[23] Here it should be said that the discussion of a possible compromise between the correct geographical term for Eurasia and the territory of Russia's domination is still going on.[24]

Since the Russian geopolitical school relies on its own interpretation of Eurasia to justify Russia's imperial ambitions, the term "Central Eurasia" needs specification: to what extent do its geographic and geopolitical interpretations coincide and what problems do they entail?

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[14] See: P.N. Savitskiy, "Geograficheskie i geopoliticheskie osnovy Evraziystva," p. 300. According to other authors, it was the Viennese geologist Eduard Suess who coined the term Eurasia in the late 20th century to apply it to Europe and Asia (see: M. Bassin, op. cit., p. 10).

[15] Russia's claims on the Eurasian continent are so strong that even where there is no need to mention Eurasia authors of certain fundamental publications prove unable to leave the cliché alone. For example, when discussing economic reforms within the CIS and addressing the Eurasian problems neither in a geographic nor in a geopolitical context, the book by E. Stroev, L. Bliakhman and M. Krotov used the term indiscriminately (see: E.S. Stroev, L.S. Bliakhman, M.I. Krotov, *Russia and Eurasia at the Crossroads. Experience and Problems of Economic Reforms in the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Springer, Berlin-Heidelberg, 1999). The same can be said about some non-Russian academics from the FSU republics.

[16] See: L.N. Gumilev, *Ritmy Evrazii*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1993.

[17] See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, p. 123.

[18] It should be said that the proponents of Eurasianism call themselves Eurasians, which is not totally correct: Eurasians are people living in Eurasia, while those who preach Eurasianism should be called Eurasists. This term is used here precisely in this context.

[19] See, for example: A. Dugin, "Evraziiskiy triumph," in: *Osnovy Evraziystva*, Arktogeia-Tsentr, Moscow, 2000 (see also [http://www.evrazia.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=102]).

[20] See, for example: N.A. Nartov, V.N. Nartov, op. cit., pp. 133-135, 137.

[21] See: A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii*, Arktogeia-Tsentr, Moscow, 1997, pp. 83-84.

[22] See: I. Panarin, *Informatsionnaia voyna i geopolitika*, Pokolenie Publishers, Moscow, 2006, pp. 312-364, 539-543.

[23] See: M.L. Hauner, "The Disintegration of the Soviet Eurasian Empire: An Ongoing Debate," in: *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union*, ed. by M. Mesbahi, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 1994, p. 222.

[24] Ibid., p. 221.

Traditionally, Central Eurasia as a geographic concept is related to the territory between the Bosporus in the west and the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region in the east and from the Kazakh steppes in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south.[25] This means that geographic Central Eurasia almost completely covers geographic Central Asia, but not Central Europe because Asia is much larger than Europe. For this reason Central Europe is left outside the conventional center (Central Eurasia) of the single continent called Eurasia. If, however, the physical dimensions of the continent's parts are put aside, logic suggests that *geographic Eurasia as a continent consists of two parts of the world (Europe and Asia). This means that geographically Central Eurasia should consist of both Central Europe and Central Asia and the Southeast Europe and the Caucasian region as two links that connect them.*[26] It seems that the geographic interpretation of the Central Eurasian concept is still dominated by its geopolitical interpretation, which equates Russia and Eurasia even in the post-Soviet era.[27]

Those who limit Central Eurasia to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are still under the spell of Soviet approaches[28] which leave vast territories, in particular Afghanistan, Northern Iran, the Northern Caucasus, Northwestern China, Cashmere, and the Tibetan Plateau, which share historical, ethnic, and cultural roots with the above countries beyond the region.[29]

While the Russian Eurasian school narrows down the scale of Eurasia as a geographic continent, the differences are less important in the case of Central Eurasia since the Russian geopolitical school is in control of geography: look at the way the contemporary Russian geographers describe Northern and Central Eurasia as the territory that covers the former Soviet Union, western part of European Artic region, and some regions of Central Asia.[30]

Central Asia and Greater Central Asia

Alexander von Humboldt identified Central Asia as a geographic region in the mid-19th century. According to UNESCO, it comprises five former Soviet republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

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[25] See, for example: K. Weisbrode, *Central Eurasia: Prize or Quicksand? Contenting Views of Instability in Karabakh, Ferghana and Afghanistan,* The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper 338, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001, p. 11.

[26] V. Papava, "Tsentral'naia Kavkazia: osnovy geopoliticheskoy ekonomii," *Analiticheskie zapiski Gruzinskogo fonda strategicheskikh i mezdunarodnykh issledovaniy,* No. 1, 2007, p. 8, available at [http://www.gfsis.org/publications/VPapava_Ru_1.pdf]. Eldar Islamilov in his article "O kategorii Tsentral'naia Evrazia," in: *Doklady Natsional'noy akademii nauk Azerbaidzhana,* Vol. LXIII, No. 1, 2007, approached the problem from the geopolitical positions and arrived at a similar conclusion.

[27] See: M.L. Hauner, op. cit., p. 217. Those of the authors who favor cleared definitions Russia is described as a northern part of Eurasia (see, for example: N.N. Moiseev, "Geopoliticheskoe polozhenie Rossii: perspektivy razvitia," *Evolutsia teorii i factor ATP. Diskussionny Klub. Krugly stol No. 3,* available at [http://www.amani.ru/moiseev/geopolit.htm].

[28] Today this idea of Central Eurasia has gained wide currency (see, for example: M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, "Introduction: The Crisis in IR-Theory: Towards a Critical Geopolitics Approach," in: *Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflict, Security and Development,* ed. by M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, Brill, Leiden, 2005, pp. 2-3; Ch. Fairbanks, C.R. Nelson, S.F. Starr, K. Weisbrode, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia,* The Atlantic Council of the United States, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., 2001, p. vii; K. Meyer, *The Dust of Empire: The Race for Supremacy in the Asian Heartland,* Abacus, London, 2004, p. 206.

[29] See: K. Weisbrode, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

[30] See: *Oledenenie Severnoy i Tsentral'noy Evrazii v sovremennuiu epokhu,* ed. by V.M. Kotliakov, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 2006, p. 13.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), Mongolia, Afghanistan, Western China, and several parts of India, Pakistan and Iran.[31]

Geopolitical studies of Central Asia became particularly topical in the post-Soviet period when the region acquired five new independent states (previously parts of the Soviet Union).[32] Despite their more than 15-year-long history, the related system of knowledge—Centralasianism—still demands not only a vaster body of knowledge but also, to a certain extent, renovation.[33]

Some geopolitical studies are still following the Soviet tradition and interpret Central Asia as limited to five former Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.[34] This is not quite correct geographically (and not only geographically) because it leaves out Afghanistan, Mongolia, and the adjacent areas of the countries enumerated above.[35]

Some authors include Azerbaijan in Central Asia,[36] which can be hardly accepted because it is obviously part of another region, the Caucasus.

In October 2004, Russia joined the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO)[37] set up by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in 2002. Its CACO membership does not make it part of Central Asia; by the same logic, Turkmenistan should be excluded from the Central Asian countries because it does not belong to CACO. In other words, membership in any regional organization cannot be used as the only criterion of regional affiliation.

I have written above that in Soviet times the region was called Sredniaia Azia (Middle Asia); it included Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan and left out Kazakhstan.[38] Western economists mostly use the term "Central Asia," while some Russian authors have not yet dropped the old term "Middle Asia,"[39] which as distinct from the past also includes Kazakhstan. It seems that the latter prefers to get rid of the alien term "Central Asia" because of the threats from the south—it obviously prefers the Soviet formula "Sredniaia Azia and Kazakhstan."[40] This is all very sad indeed.

Another term, Greater Central Asia, is of a more or less recent coinage: in the early 1990s, it described Central and Southwestern Asia and South Asia[41]; later the term was given a more exact geopolitical specification and applied to the five former Soviet republics and Afghanistan.[42]

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[31] See: "Description of the Project," in: *UNESCO History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, available at [http://www.unesco.org/culture/asia/html_eng/projet.htm].

[32] See, for example: G.E. Fuller, "The Emergence of Central Asia," *Foreign Policy*, No. 78, Spring 1990; *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union*; *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and Its Borderlands*, ed. by A. Banuazizi, M. Weiner, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994; *The New States of Central Asia and Their Neighbours*, ed. by P. Ferdinand, Council of Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1994.

[33] See: F. Tolipov, "Central Asia as a Space, Polity, Peoples, and Fate," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (32), 2005, p. 112.

[34] See, for example: R. Menon, "Introduction: Central Asia in the Twenty-First Century," in: E. Rumer, D. Trenin, Zhao Huasheng, *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 2007, p. 3.

[35] See, for example: E. Naby, "The Emerging Central Asia: Ethnic and Religious Factions," in: *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union*, pp. 35-36.

[36] See: M. Dowling, G. Wignaraja, "Central Asia's Economy: Mapping Future Prospects to 2015," *Silk Road Paper, July 2006*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2006, p. 10, available at [http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0607Wignaraja.pdf

[37] See: F. Tolipov, "Russia in Central Asia: Retreat, Retention, Or Return?" *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (47), 2007, p. 19.

[38] For example: M.W. Lewis, K.E. Wigen, op. cit., p. 179.

[39] See: A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii*, pp. 353-359.

[40] S. Akimbekov, "Tupik liberalizma. Kakuiu strategiiu izbrat Kazakhstanu?" *TsentrAzia*, 4 November, 2005, available at [http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1131088440]

[41] See: R.L. Canfield, "Restructuring in Greater Central Asia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, No. 10, 1992, p. 874.

[42] S.F. Starr, "A 'Greater Central Asia Partnership' for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," *Silk Road Paper, March 2005*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2005, p. 16, available at [http://www.silkroadstudies.org/CACI/Strategy.pdf]; idem, "A Partnership for Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, 2005.

The above (sometimes contradictory) interpretations of the term "Central Asia" demonstrate that there is no agreement on this issue.[43]

The Kazakh Eurasists match their Russian colleagues: they insist that Kazakhstan is a Eurasian state which has nothing to do with Central Asia except for bordering on it.[44] It should be said in all justice that a small part of Kazakhstan (Western Kazakhstan) geographically belongs to Eastern Europe[45]; however, Kazakhstan's historical roots are intertwined with the roots of its Central Asian neighbors.[46] Its regime, which is based on the incumbent president remaining in office as long as possible, does not differ much from the regimes of the other Central Asian republics.[47] This means that Kazakhstan belongs to Central Asia. If detached from Central Asia as a Eurasian state, Kazakhstan will lose its independence and will be swallowed by Russia.[48]

I am convinced that so far not all the Central Asian countries (at least most of them) have grasped the meaning of their independence and have pondered on their future. These are problems that have not yet been resolved.

The Central Caucasus

The region is found between the Black, Caspian, and Azov seas, that is, on the border between Europe and Asia. It is also believed that the territory is wedged between Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Russian sphere.[49]

The contemporary geopolitical interpretation of the term "the Caucasus" appeared when Russia conquered the region.[50] Its presence coined the terms "the Trans-Caucasus"[51] (part of the region found beyond the Main Caucasian Range if viewed from Russia) and "the Northern Caucasus" (the territory to the north of the Trans-Caucasus and the mountain range). Despite the obvious geographical fact that when viewed from Tehran, the Trans-Caucasus is located not beyond, but rather in front of the mountain range, it is still called *maveran-e kafkas* in Persian.[52] At the same time, it should be said that Russian tradition dominated over the international practice of identifying the region.

The entire territory of the Northern Caucasus (which consists of the piedmont and mountain areas) comprises part of the Russian Federation. The piedmont area comprises the following RF subjects: the Krasnodar and Stavropol territories, the Astrakhan and Rostov regions, and the Republic of Kalmykia. The mountain area is made up of the republics of Adigey, Daghestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania, and Chechnia.

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[43] See: M.W. Lewis, K.E. Wigen, op. cit.

[44] See: D. Nazarbaeva, "Spetsifika i perspektivy politicheskogo razvitia Kazakhstana," *Mezhdunarodny institut sovremennoy politiki*, 3 December, 2003, available at [http://www.iimp.kz/Lists/articles/DispForm.aspx?ID=766].

[45] See: R.N. Zhanguzhin, *Novye nezavisimye gosudarstva Tsentral'noy Azii v sisteme mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, Institut mirovoy ekonomiki i mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy NAN Ukrainy, Kiev, 2005, p. 18; G. Khachiev, "Central Asia: Portrait against the Background of the World Economy," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (38), 2006, p. 117.

[46] See: F. Tolipov, "Central Asia is a Region of Five *Stans*. Dispute with Kazakh Eurasianists," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (38), 2006, p. 22.

[47] Ibid., p. 23.

[48] Ibid., p. 18.

[49] See: M.W. Lewis, K.E. Wigen, op. cit., p. 203.

[50] See: N.S. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2005.

[51] See: T.V. Gamkrelidze, "'TransCaucasia' or 'South Caucasus'? Towards a More Exact Geopolitical Nomenclature, *Marco Polo Magazine*, No. 4/5, 1999, available at [http://www.traceca-org.org/rep/marco/mp40.pdf].

[52] See: R. Gachechiladze, *The Middle East: Space, People and Politics*, Diogene, Tbilisi, 2003, p. 17 (in Georgian).

The southern limits of the Caucasus were always identified by the Russian Empire's southern state border in the Caucasus.[53] The border change was amply illustrated by the case of Kars of the late 19th century: when the Russian Empire detached it by force from the Ottoman Empire it came to be known as part of the Caucasus. Later, when Russia lost Kars, Ardahan, and Bayazet, the Russian political and historical documents stopped referring to them as parts of the Caucasus. At the same time, when in November 1918 these regions proclaimed their independence and formed the Southwestern Caucasian (Kars) Democratic Republic,[54] the name clearly indicated its Caucasian affiliation.

This tradition of identifying the southern borders of the Caucasus survived in Soviet times when three Union republics (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) were described as Trans-Caucasian.

Early in the 1990s, when the Soviet Union disappeared and the three republics regained their independence, the term "Trans-Caucasus" was replaced by the more correct term "the Southern Caucasus." Russia alone continued using the old term.[55]

Significantly, few academics stop to ponder on the fact that the term "the Southern Caucasus" (as well as "the Trans-Caucasus") reflects the purely Russian geopolitical approach to the region.[56] The terms "the Northern Caucasus" and "the Southern Caucasus" perpetuate the new and old Russian borders in the region.

According to Dr. Ismailov,[57] the Caucasus consists not only of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and the RF entities enumerated above. It also covers the northeastern Turkish areas (the ils of Agri, Ardahan, Artvin, Van, Igdyr, and Kars) and the northwestern parts of Iran (the ostanha of eastern Azerbaijan—Ardabil, Gilyan, Zanjan, Qazvin, Hamadan, and Western Azerbaijan). This division is based on the fact that the Turkish and Iranian regions have been populated by Caucasian peoples from time immemorial; for many centuries prior to the Russian conquests they belonged, together with the other Caucasian peoples, to the same ethnocultural and socioeconomic area. This means that these areas can be described as Caucasian on the same grounds as the Northern Caucasus of Russia.

Geographically, the above regions of Turkey and Iran (as well as Armenia, which is described as a Caucasian state) are found at the same distance from the Greater Caucasus and partly fill the space of the Smaller Caucasus.

The above suggests that the Caucasian region consists not of two (the Northern and Southern Caucasus) parts, as the international academic community that relies on Russian geopolitical thought commonly believes, but of three parts: the Central Caucasus (made up of three independent states—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia); the Northern Caucasus (made up of the RF autonomous units bordering on the Caucasus), and the Southern Caucasus, which covers the ils of Turkey bordering on

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[53] See: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy*, CA&CC Press®, Stockholm, 2006, p. 10; idem, *Tsentral'ny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 2007, pp. 17-18.

[54] See: A. Gajiev, *Iz istorii obrazovania i padenia lugo-Zapadnoi Kavkazskoy (Karskoy) demokraticheskoy respubliki*, Elm Publishers, Baku, 1992; idem, *Demokraticheskie respubliki lugo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza (Karskaia i Araz-Turkskaia respubliki)*, Nurlan Publishers, Baku, 2004; Sh. Tagieva, *Demokraticheskie respubliki lugo-Vostochnogo Kavkaza (Azadistan i Gilianskaia Sovetskaia Respublika)*, Kavkaz Publishers, Baku, 2005.

[55] See, for example: K.S. Gajiev, *Geopolitika Kavkaza*, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia Publishers, Moscow, 2003; *Geopolitika*, ed. by V.A. Mikhailov, RAGS Press, Moscow, 2007, pp. 205-213; *Regional'naia bezopasnost*, ed. by A.V. Vozzhenikov, RAGS Press, Moscow, 2006, pp. 158-160.

[56] See: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy*, p. 11; idem, *Tsentral'ny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, p. 19.

[57] E. Ismailov, "O geopoliticheskikh predposylkakh ekonomicheskoy integratsii Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza," *Izvestia AN Gruzii—seria ekonomicheskaia*, Vol. 10, No. 3-4, 2002; E. Ismailov, Z. Kengerli, "Integratsia Kavkaza i sovremennye geoekonomicheskie protsessy," *Izvestia Natsional'noy Akademii Nauk Azerbaidzhana*, Seria gumanitarnykh i obshchestvennykh nauk (ekonomika), No. 1, 2002; E. Ismailov, Z. Kengerli, "The Caucasus in the Globalizing World: A New Integration Model," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (20), 2003; E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy*, pp. 5-19; idem, *Tsentral'ny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, pp. 11-28.

Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia (the Southwestern Caucasus), and northwestern ostanha of Iran (the Southeastern Caucasus).

If we proceed from the specific features of the region's history, Ismailov's conception fully reflects the Caucasian current geopolitical realities.

The region has developed into a meeting place for all sorts of geopolitical and economic interests,[58] while the Central Caucasus accumulates the entire range of regional problems.[59]

On the "Central Caucasasia" Concept: Moving Away from Eurasianism

Today academic circles (and not only them) are showing a great interest in studying the problems of the three Central Caucasian countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) and the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) within the same context.[60] The vast region represented by these eight states is now called Central Eurasia.[61] The same term is also applied to the same eight countries and Afghanistan.[62] I have already written above that, together with the five Central Asian states, it belongs to Greater Central Asia.

There is an even wider interpretation of Central Eurasia, which also includes the Black Sea, Caucasian, Caspian, and Central Asian regions.[63] This means that this approach to the term "Central Eurasia" can hardly be described as constructive—not only because it is rather vague, but also because the regions mentioned above overlap.

The current use of the term "Central Eurasia" not merely fails to describe the region geographically—it is a vehicle of the Russian imperial tradition based on the idea that Russia is Eurasia. If we proceed from this interpretation, we should ask ourselves what geographic name should be given to the region that unites the eight states and what do they have in common? It seems that a geopolitical approach may answer these questions.

Today these eight states (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) are seen as parts of much wider regions that include other countries as well. These are the Eurasian Balkans[64] and the Greater Middle East.[65] The eight countries are CIS members, therefore they are discussed in the context of this organization which, according to

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[58] See: K.S. Yalowitz, S. Cornell, "The Critical but Perilous Caucasus," *Orbis, A Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 2004.

[59] See, for example, E. Nuriyev, *The South Caucasus at the Crossroads: Conflicts, Caspian Oil and Great Power Politics*, LIT, Berlin, 2007.

[60] See: *Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, ed. by G.K. Bertsch, C. Craft, S.A. Jones, M. Beck, Routledge, New York, 2000; *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, ed. by O. Oliker, Th.S. Szayna, RAND, Santa Monica, 2003; *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment*, ed. by R. Menon, Yu.E. Fedorov, Gh. Nodia, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 1999; *The OSCE and the Multiple Challenges of Transition. The Caucasus and Central Asia*, ed. by F. Sabahi, D. Warner, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004.

[61] See: M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, op. cit., pp. 2-3; Ch. Fairbanks, C.R. Nelson, S.F. Starr, K. Weisbrode, op. cit.; K. Meyer, op. cit., p. 206; Xuetang Guo, "The Energy Security in Central Eurasia: The Geopolitical Implications to China's Energy Strategy," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2006, p. 117, available at [http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/November_2006/Guo.pdf

[62] See: E. Ismailov, M. Esenov, "Central Eurasia in the New Geopolitical and Geo-Economic Dimensions," *Central Eurasia 2005. Analytical Annual*, CA&CC Press®, Sweden, 2006.

[63] See: P. Darabadi, "Central Eurasia: Globalization and Geopolitical Evolution," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (39), 2006, p. 9.

[64] See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*.

[65] See: G. Kemp, R.E. Harkavy, *Strategic Geography and the Changing Middle East*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1997.

many experts, is currently facing certain integration problems.[66] They are the result of the efforts to limit integration to the CIS framework similar to the closer industrial cooperation within the Soviet Union.[67]

The academic community is freely using the term "the Caspian region," by which different combinations of sub-regions are meant in different publications. This term can hardly be used to denote the region composed of the eight republics enumerated above. Logic suggests that the term should be applied to the five coastal states—Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan.[68] The interpretations of the term, however, are numerous. One of them, for example, implies the western part of Central Asia, southern Russia, the Northern and Central Caucasus, as well as Northern Iran.[69] Other authors apply the term to the five Caspian states and to Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and partly Afghanistan, Pakistan, and even the Middle East.[70] According to the previous interpretation, the region covers a small part of Central Asia and stretches beyond the territories of the eight republics. According to the latter interpretation, the region comprises the above eight states and also many other states, to say nothing of regions, which is not completely justified. The term "the Caspian region" can obviously not be used to describe the region comprising the eight states enumerated above, that is, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The term "the Caucasian-Caspian Region" can likewise not be accepted as a definition of the eight republics; those who use it imply that it covers the entire Caucasus[71] yet fail to specify the degree to which the Central Asian region is included in it. What is more, they tend to write the Caucasian-Caspian and Central Asian regions,[72] which seems to emphasize that Central Asia is outside the Caucasian-Caspian region.

It seems that the term "the Caucasian-Central Asian geopolitical region"[73] is much more precise, even though it covers certain territories outside the eight countries, because as we all know the Caucasus is not limited to Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.

If we proceed from the fact that the eight republics discussed here form two sub-regions—the Central Caucasus and Central Asia—the larger region, which includes both sub-regions, can be called the *Central Caucasasia*[74]*: this preserves the term "Central" as the key one for both regions, while the*

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[66] See: R.S. Grinberg, L.Z. Zevin, *et al., 10 let Sodruzhestva nezavisimykh gosudarstv: illiuzii, razocharovania, nadezhdy*, IMEPI RAN, Moscow, 2001; L.P. Kozik, P.A. Kokhno, *SNG: Realii i perspektivy*, Iuridicheskiy mir VK Publishers, Moscow, 2001; V.A. Shul'ga (head of the group of authors), *Ekonomika SNG: 10 let reformirovania i integratsionnogo razvitia*, Finstatinform, Moscow, 2001; N.N. Shumskiy, *Sotrudnichestvo nezavisimykh gosudarstv: problemy i perspektivy razvitia*, Tekhnoprint, Minsk, 2001; idem, "Ekonomicheskaia integratsia gosudarstv Sodruzhestva: vozmozhnosti i perspektivy," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, No. 6, 2003; idem, "Obshchee ekonomicheskoe prostranstvo gosudarstv Sodruzhestva: optimal'ny format," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia*, No. 2, 2004.

[67] See, for example: B. Coppieters, "The Failure of Regionalism in Eurasia and the Western Ascendancy over Russia's Near Abroad," in: *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, ed. by B. Coppieters, A. Zverev, D. Trenin, FRANK CASS PUBLISHERS, London, 1998, pp. 194-197; M.B. Olcott, A. Åslund, Sh.W. Garnett, *Getting it Wrong: Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1999.

[68] See, for example: V.I. Salygin, A.V. Safarian, *Sovremennye mezhdunarodnye ekonomicheskie otnoshenia v Kaspiyskom regione*, MGIMO-Universitet Press, Moscow, 2005.

[69] See: P. Darabadi, *Geoistoria Kaspiiskogo regiona i geopolitika sovremennosti*, Elm Publishers, Baku, 2002, p. 6; idem, "The Caspian Region in Contemporary Geopolitics," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (21), 2003, p. 66.

[70] See: B. Sasley, "The Intersection of Geography and Resources: Geopolitics in the Caspian Sea Basin," in: *Geopolitics: Global Problems and Regional Concerns*, ed. by L. Tchantouridze, Center for Defense and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 2004, p. 194.

[71] See: I. Dobaev, A. Dugin, "Geopolitical Transformations in the Caucasian-Caspian Region," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (35), 2005, p. 75.

[72] Ibid., p. 77.

[73] V. Maksimenko, "Central Asia and the Caucasus: Geopolitical Entity Explained," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3, 2000, p. 56.

[74] See: V. Papava, *Tsentral'naia Kavkazia: osnovy geopoliticheskoy ekonomii*, p. 47.

new term "Caucasasia" is derived from two related terms "Caucasus" and "Asia." Formation of this word in English is rather problematic, since "Caucasia" is a synonym for the word "Caucasus." So we suggest using the term "*Caucasasia*" or "*Caucaso-Asia*" in English. The region can be either called *Central Caucasasia* or *Central Caucaso-Asia*. If the term is applied to nine countries (the original eight and Afghanistan), the region should be called *Greater Central Caucasasia* or *Greater Central Caucaso-Asia*.

We should not forget that Central Caucasasia as a single region is not integrated because it has no political or cultural homogeneity.[75] At the same time, its component parts have much in common, which makes it possible to regard them as a single region.[76]

All the countries of Central Caucasasia began their post-Soviet lives under more or less identical conditions, without the very much needed institutions of statehood, with a fairly low level of political culture, and a command-(read: communist-)type economy. These three conditions were not merely interconnected: the future of the reforms in these countries depended on their interconnection. Indeed, the absence of statehood institutions, for example, made it hard to develop a political culture which, in turn, prevented democratization; on the other hand, the absence of statehood institutions made it much harder to transfer to a market economy,[77] which slowed down the advance toward democracy. Meanwhile, no market reforms are possible in the absence of democracy.[78] These problems were reflected, to different extents, in the political and economic transformations in the Central Caucasasian countries. Significantly, all these countries, with the exception of Kazakhstan, demonstrated a reverse dependence between rich hydrocarbon reserves and the pace of market reforms: the reserves obviously failed to stimulate economic reform.[79]

Central Caucasasia, to say nothing of Greater Central Caucasasia, has several conflict sub-regions on its territory,[80] something that interferes, to various degrees, with economic progress in some of the countries; it also prevents the local countries from using local resources to move together in the desired direction.

The region's rich hydrocarbon resources attract investments[81] and tempt regional and world powers to politically dominate there. Today, when energy policy is blending with the foreign policy of these powers, this is not merely understandable, but also inevitable.[82] At the same time, the Russian

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[75] See: K. Weisbrode, op. cit., p. 13.

[76] See: E. Ismailov, M. Esenov, op. cit.

[77] See, for example: V.G. Papava, T.A. Beridze, *Ocherki politicheskoy ekonomii postkommunisticheskogo kapitalizma (opyt Gruzii)*, Delo i Service Publishers, Moscow, 2005, pp. 68-69; L. Balcerowicz, *Socialism, Capitalism, Transformation*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p. 146; V. Papava, "Georgian Economy: From 'Shock Therapy' to 'Social Promotion'," *Communist Economies & Economic Transformation*, Vol. 8, No. 8, 1996, p. 252; idem, "On the Theory of Post-Communist Economic Transition to Market International," *Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 32, No. 1/2, 2005, p. 78; idem, *Necroeconomics: The Political Economy of Post-Communist Capitalism*, iUniverse, New York, 2005, p. 13.

[78] See, for example: A. Pshevorskiy, *Demokratia i rynok. Politicheskie i ekonomicheskie reformy v Vostochnoy Evrope i Latinskoy Amerike*, ROSSPEN, Moscow, 2000; B. Greskovits, *The Political Economy of Protest and Patience: East European and Latin American Transformations Compared*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1998.

[79] See: A. Åslund, "Eventual Success of Market Reform," in: *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*, ed. by J.H. Kalicki, E.K. Lawson, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 2003.

[80] See, for example: S. Lounev, "Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus: Geopolitical Value for Russia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (39), 2006, pp. 14-15; K. Weisbrode, op. cit.

[81] See: S.F. Starr, "The Investment Climate in Central Asia and the Caucasus," in: *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*.

[82] See, for example: *Energy and Security: Toward a New Foreign Policy Strategy*, ed. by J. Kalicki, D.L. Goldwyn, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 2005; F. Hill, *Energy Empire: Oil, Gas and Russia's Revival*, The Foreign Policy Center, London, 2004, available at [http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/Fhill/20040930.pdf]; E. Rakel, "Paradigms of Iranian Policy in Central Eurasia and Beyond," in: *Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflict, Security and Development*; D. Sherman, "Caspian Oil and a New Energy Policy," *International Institute for Caspian Studies*, 25 May 2000, available at [http://www.caspianstudies.com/article/daniel%20sherman.htm].

factor[83] is still very strong in the Central Asian countries' energy policies: it seems that this part of the Soviet heritage cannot be eliminated soon.

The Central Caucasus and Central Asia are *mutually complimentary*, which means that they can use their resources together: the West is interested in Central Asian oil and gas, while the Central Caucasus not only wants to move its own oil and gas to the West, but also to use the energy (and not only) transportation corridor that connects the East and the West.[84] This means that the Central Caucasus can serve as a bridge between Central Asia, a geopolitically closed region, and the West.[85]

It should be said in this context that, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Azerbaijan is the most important geopolitical pivot among all the others across the geographic continent of Eurasia.[86] The "geopolitical pivot" status[87] is determined by the country's geographic location and its potential vulnerability to what the active geostrategic players might undertake in relation to it.[88] By "active geostrategic players" I mean the states strong and determined enough to spread their domination beyond their limits.

By describing Azerbaijan as the "cork in the bottle" filled with the riches of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, Mr. Brzezinski stresses: "The independence of the Central Asian states can be rendered nearly meaningless if Azerbaijan becomes fully subordinated to Moscow's control."[89] Kazakhstan is another of America's target countries in Central Caucasasia, which is amply illustrated by the Americans' intention to maximize their investments there.[90]

The idea of post-Soviet state independence and its strengthening as the linchpin of state interests of the Central Caucasasian states rule out their acceptance of not only Eurasianism, but also of the Heartland theory. They both assert their subordination to the imperial schemes of Russia and the West.

The leaders of those Central Caucasasian countries who are seeking a tighter grip on power rather than stronger and developed state sovereignty, to say nothing of democratization, human rights, and a market economy, are prepared to embrace any theory (or rather pseudo-theory) to camouflage their true intentions or justify them.

It would be naive to expect the world and regional powers to step aside and leave Central Caucasasia alone. Reality is much more complicated: these countries should carefully match their national interests and their choice of regional and world powers as partners.

Eurasianism clearly preaches Russia's revival as an empire, but the even more moderate ideas now current in Russia do not exclude the "soft" alternative of imposing its interests on at least some

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[83] See: I. Tomberg, "Energy Policy in the Countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (22), 2003.

[84] See, for example: H. Chase, "Future Prospects of Caucasian Energy and Transportation Corridor. The Role of Caucasian Energy Corridor in European Energy Security," *Georgian Economic Trends*, No. 3, 2002; J.H. Kalicki, "Caspian Energy at the Crossroads," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 5, 2001; J.H. Kalicki, J. Elkind, "Eurasian Transportation Futures," in: *Energy and Security: Toward a New Foreign Policy Strategy*; R. Makhmudov, "The Problem of Exporting Energy Resources from Central Asia," in: *Central Asia and South Caucasus Affairs: 2002*, ed. by B. Rumer, L.S. Yee, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Tokyo, 2002; F. Müller, "Energy Development and Transport Network Cooperation in Central Asia and the South Caucasus," in: *Building Security in the New States of Eurasia. Subregional Cooperation in the Former Soviet Space*, ed. by R. Dwan, O. Pavliuk, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 2000; J. Roberts, "Energy Reserves, Pipeline Routs and the Legal Regime in the Caspian Sea," in: *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*, ed. by G. Chufrin, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001; S.F. Starr, S.E. Cornell, *The Politics of Pipelines: Bringing Caspian Energy to Markets*, SAISPHERE, 2005.

[85] See: J. Eyvazov, *Bezopasnost Kavkaza i stabil'nost razvitia Azerbaidzhanskoy Respubliki*, Nurlan Publishers, Baku, 2004, p. 132.

[86] See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, p. 41.

[87] Ibidem.

[88] Ibid., p. 40.

[89] Ibid., pp. 46-47, 129.

[90] See: A.I. Utkin, *Amerikanskaia strategia dlia XXI veka*, Logos Publishers, Moscow, p. 105.

of the local states, irrespective of their national interests. Today only Georgia is described as being lost for Russia.[91] The same author has said that "the economic importance of Armenia and Georgia for Russia is minimal,"[92] even though "Armenia is Russia's objective partner."[93] In Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Russia has economic interests in the production and transportation of hydrocarbons.[94] Stronger integration processes are contemplated in relation to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.[95] Regrettably, Russia's political elite, carried away by the ideas of Eurasianism, does not welcome this approach.

America, on the other hand, is guided by objective considerations[96]: far removed from the region, it cannot dominate over it and is strong enough not to become involved in unnecessary complications in this vast area.

From this it follows that America prefers a situation in which none of the countries dominates over Central Caucasasia to allow the world community free financial and economic access to the region.[97]

9/11 taught the United States how to prevent the threat of new terrorist acts in Central Caucasasia and make victory in the war on terror possible.[98] American interests in the region are not limited to energy issues,[99] which means that it will help the former Soviet republics overcome what remained of the Soviet economic system and promote the market economy and private sector as a solid foundation for economic growth and the rule of law. This will also help them to cope with social and ecological problems and profit from their energy resources and ramified export mainlines.[100]

Some Russian experts admit that Moscow is holding forth about its historical, psychological, and other ties with former Soviet republic, while the United States rejects in principle any theories along the lines of "soft" or "limited" sovereignty of these republics.[101] The Americans are convinced that Russia would profit from richer and more stable neighbors.[102]

Some Central Asian experts have offered interesting assessments, according to which "Moscow's orientation toward 'stagnation' and the unlimited support of the people in power is depriving it, and has already deprived it, of promising and potential allies among those who tend toward modernization and change." America's policy in the region promotes democracy.[103]

The above suggests that America is not seeking integration with any of the regional countries; its policy completely corresponds to the local countries' national interests rooted in strengthening and developing state sovereignty, deepening democratization, and enhancing the market economy.

The newly coined term "Central Caucasasia" does not merely specify the region's geographic identity: it is a conceptual idea of the interests of strengthening the local countries' state sovereignty, which, in principle, contradicts the spirit and idea of Eurasianism. All the Eurasian deliberations about so-called "Caucasasianism" as potentially a theoretical antipode of Eurasianism are absolutely wrong. This is explained by the political heterogeneity of Central Caucasasia, not all the members of which

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[91] See: S. Lounev, op. cit., p. 24.
[92] Ibidem.
[93] Ibidem.
[94] Ibid., pp. 23-24.
[95] Ibid., p. 23.
[96] See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, pp. 148-149.
[97] Ibidem.
[98] See, for example: T.T. Gati, T.L. Christiansen, "The Political Dynamic," in: *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*.
[99] See, for example: A. Jaffe, "US Policy Towards the Caspian Region: Can the Wish-List be Realized?" in: *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*.
[100] S.R. Mann, "Caspian Futures," in: *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*.
[101] See, for example: A.I. Utkin, op. cit., p. 108.
[102] Ibid., p. 105.
[103] F. Tolipov, "Russia in Central Asia: Retreat, Retention, Or Return?" p. 24.

have similar thoughts about state sovereignty and the road toward it. At the same time, developing and strengthening state sovereignty, deepening democratization, and confirming the principles of a market economy are not prerogatives of the Central Caucasasian countries alone.

Even though it is accepted that the Central Asian countries' "key strategic interests can be described as independence, democracy, and integration,"[104] they do not exclude possible reintegration into Eurasia (to which Central Asia belonged as part of the Soviet Union) after it realizes its geopolitical self-identity.[105] If we take into account that, as the Eurasists say, Moscow claims domination over this Eurasia, the above arguments do not exclude (even in the relatively distant future, after "completed geopolitical self-identification") the possibility that the Central Asian countries will join Eurasia-Russia. It is equally interesting that some experts from Central Asian states are not alien to nostalgic reminiscences about the Soviet Union; they openly regret its disintegration.[106]

Meanwhile, the pro-Western vector is much better suited to the interests of stronger sovereignty, deeper democratization, and promotion of the principles of a market economy, since they are commonly recognized Western principles.

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[104] F. Tolipov, "Russia in Central Asia: Retreat, Retention, Or Return?" p. 31.

[105] See, for example: F. Tolipov, "Central Asia is a Region of Five *Stans*. Dispute with Kazakh Eurasianists," p. 18.

[106] See, for example: A. Niiazi, "The South of the CIS: Fundamental problems of Development," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (24), 2003, p. 150; F. Tolipov, "Russia in Central Asia: Retreat, Retention, Or Return?" pp. 19-20.