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**Shifting Role of the US foreign policy in Central Asia: Greater Central Asia
Partnership Doctrine**

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Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought internal political, economic and social crisis in the states of Central Asia. The state boundaries within the former USSR overnight became International borders. Previously operating system of center-periphery relationships between Moscow and other republics where the principle of the prevailing Soviet systematic interdependence appeared inadequate to maintain the economic relationships between the newly independent sovereign states. Moreover, the absence of a readily available alternative political and economic frame, which might have filled the power vacuum and fostered Central Asia's regional cooperation hampered with the fragile economic and political order at the national and regional levels. However, despite the unfulfilled vacuum of regional economic interdependence, attempts to foster Central Asia's regional cooperation through the offices of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Central Asian Common Market since the early 1990s without a regional economic order did not succeed.

The immediate US foreign policy towards the region was unclear, since the fall of USSR came unexpectedly. Accustomed to perceive entire USSR as a single unit, many

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American foreign policy analysts found it difficult to understand the political and economic independence of newly independent post Soviet Central Asian states, while others continued to perceive Central Asian states as the old Soviet Union, just as the Central Asian leadership itself was trying to understand the new geopolitical realities and find its role in the International Community.

Initially the U.S. Department of State did not seem to have formulated policy towards the region, as indicated by the policy initiatives of early 1990s outlined under the Silk Road Act I passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, which did not clarify various policy aspects relevant to the regional political culture and only called for a fast overnight like economic and political transformation of post-Soviet Central Asian states. Moreover, U.S. also engaged Central Asia into the Partnership for Peace Program, a NATO initiative created in 1994. However, the romanticism about the revival of ancient Silk Routes as a policy initiative to possibly incorporate Asia and Europe without the necessary foreign direct investments in the region seems to have misled the U.S. foreign policy community during this early phase. Energy oriented investments in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan appeared a different matter beyond the scope of the Silk Road Act I policies. The early phase of U.S. policy in Central Asia involved smaller grants in various areas, besides some assistance the training of customs and border patrol troops, as well as limited assistance for economic and political transitions.

The September 11th, 2001, besides the war on terrorism and subsequent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan became a turning point in changing the U.S. foreign policy course in the region bringing out additional realities and leading United States to lease two major military bases, one in Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan and another at the Manas Airport of Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. Longevity of the Afghan conflict and some newly emerging geopolitical alliances within the region, such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization,

however, appear to have started new the policy debate both in the United States as well as the Central Asian governments.

However, publication of the article on “A Partnership for Central Asia” in *Foreign Affairs* in July 2005 by Professor S. Frederick Starr, Chairman, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute about the Greater Central Asia Partnership (GCAP) doctrine, followed by the re-organization of the U.S. Department of State, merging Central and South Asia to create the new Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs into a single operational entity reflects a new vision on possible Central and South Asian cooperation under the new GCAP doctrine. Dr. Starr’s efforts were further complimented by the organization of a high-level International Conference in Kabul, Afghanistan (April 1-2, 2006), which discussed prospects and problems of trade and development within the GCAP doctrine that includes Afghanistan.

Thus, the GCAP doctrine has played an important role in shifting the U.S. Central Asia foreign policy aimed at providing the landlocked Central Asian states an access to the Arabian sea ports of Pakistan, hence alternative routes of transportation to facilitate regional and cross-continental trade in order to incorporate Central Asia into the world economy. The promotion of regional integration of Central Asian states under the GCAP scheme indicates a major change in U.S. foreign policy towards this region aimed at replacing the military presence with long-term economic links within and outside the proposed region.

Research Questions

Considering the major thesis of this study that the alternative routes of transportation for Central Asia through its traditional southern historical land and sea routes in South Asia indicates the beginnings of a new regional economic order under the

GCAP doctrine, new American foreign policy initiative in the region, this study attempts to explore and analyze the following three research questions:

1. What is Greater Central Asia Partnership (GCAP)?
2. How does the GCAP scheme differ from the perceptual policy base of major power players, such as United States, Russia and China?
3. What is geopolitics inherent to GCAP and how do the Central Asian states view it?

Present study consists of three chapters. First chapter discusses historical context of Greater Central Asia Partnership, briefly looking at the history of the region in the twentieth century and the development of US-Central Asia relations prior to the introduction of GCAP. Second chapter looks at the concept of GCAP in depth, a point of the major shift of the US foreign policy toward the region. This chapter analyzes how geopolitics is inherent to the concept of GCAP, thus answering the third question. Finally, third chapter looks at the interplay of GCAP with other regional powers, such as Russia, China, Iran and the EU.

Analytical Framework

The discipline of geography and its geopolitical impact on foreign policy that had allegedly lost its importance after the World War II appears to have regained its significance after the major international geopolitical changes of early 1990s. Geopolitics once again has become an important parameter in the foreign policies of most world powers, including the United States, albeit under some very different circumstances of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. However, as Demko and Wood point out, “the magnitude and extent of global economic change renders the old field of geopolitics obsolete”². Indeed, new economic realities of the globalizing world require broader outlook upon the

² George J. Demko and William B. Wood, *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the Twenty-First Century* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999) 14.

range of interactions that take place, particularly in Central Asia. The complexity of economic relations and its interconnectedness with foreign policies of the states cannot be easily described by traditional theories of political realism, thus the old frames of geopolitics alone, as geoeconomics appears to have an equally important partnership role. The concept of geopolinomics introduced by George Demko and William Wood “is perhaps a more appropriate term for analysis of spatial, political, and economic systems among states and their region”³ in the 21st century. Geopolinomics focuses upon the “interactions between and among governments and how foreign policies are influenced by regional and global economic prowess, and in turn, how economic linkages and flows are affected by political relations.”⁴ The substance of many economic and political realities in the former Soviet Union seems to have changed to the extent that previous analytical frameworks derived from the post-independence economic and political transitions and experiences of Asian, African and Latin American states appear inadequate to explain the existing levels of political cultures and the psychology of landlocked states, as well as the emerging political attitudes in post-Soviet Central Asia. The story of Caucasus and Baltic states is qualitatively different in spatial terms. Traditional frameworks cannot explain the origins of nationalism without ethnic routes⁵ or politics of environment, water, space and technological issues in spatial terms. Moreover, neither political science or political geography alone nor economics or geoeconomics alone can explain the modern day world problems. Interdisciplinary studies also fail to explain modern day world issues spatially. Geopolinomics is such a vast term that broadly encompasses the interdisciplinary contours in both specific and spatial terms. Since the term is new, it is necessary to provide a functional general definition of the term. According to Kazi,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

“ ‘Geopolinomics’ combines the influences of political geography, economic geography, globalization and geopolinomics over geopolitical arena in order to explain issues, hitherto unknown in pre and post-Cold War eras, such as, the transit-route politics, energy security, emergence of the comparatively different forms of nationalism, particularly in some parts of the former Soviet Union, environment and water, the global impact of information technology and the geostationary issues involving space and satellites and their role in international business management transactions, hence their broader implications over foreign policies, as compared to other analytical frames related to political realism. Old geopolitics has thus ended. Geopolinomics therefore has a comparative advantage over the traditional frames and a particular appeal to issues of the 21st century from prioritized spatial perspectives. The term itself is a self-explanatory, which capsulates in depth the interdisciplinary nature of modern day issues in both individual and spatial terms.”⁶

Literature Review

The concept of Greater Central Asia Partnership is comparatively new and has not been thoroughly studied and analyzed yet. Very few academic studies have been devoted to the study of GCAP as a foreign policy initiative. However, GCAP came as a result of preceding fifteen-year experience of US-Central Asia relations and therefore needs to be looked upon in the light of the developments of overall strategy of American foreign policy in the region. The latter subject has been substantially investigated and every new event in US-Central Asia relations received due attention of researchers and foreign policy analysts from both sides. The amount of published books on the subject matter is numerous and

⁶ Aftab A. Kazi, *End of Geopolitics and the Beginning of Geopolinomics: United States and Central Asia*. (Washington, D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, SAIS, John Hopkins University, 2007 (a book at hand)).

several separate periodicals are devoted exclusively to the study of this subject.⁷ The present study utilizes both primary (which will be wholly examined in the course of the paper) and secondary sources of information. Primary sources include the paper “A ‘Greater Central Asia Partnership’ for Afghanistan and its Neighbors”⁸ written by Dr. S. Frederick Starr, the Chairman of Central Asia and Caucasus Institute, as well as his article in *Foreign Affairs*⁹ magazine, both of which present the concept of Greater Central Asia Partnership. The analytical framework of this study derives from primary source as well. The book of George J. Demko and William B. Wood *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the Twenty-First Century*¹⁰ introduces and explains the concept of ‘geopolinomics’ as a new state of the art theory and framework of analysis that may serve as analytical tool for researchers in their future studies, since it takes into account all four factors that are closely interlinked in the modern globalized world, namely politics, economics and spatial considerations of the geographic area. Additionally, Dr. Aftab A. Kazi’s paper “Pivotal Pakistan: GCAP and the Geopolinomics of Central Asia’s Traditional Indus Basin Corridor”¹¹ is among the first studies that employs geopolinomics in the conceptual justification of the Greater Central Asia Partnership Doctrine. Sir Halford J. Mackinder’s work “The Geographic Pivot of History”¹² will be employed in the paper as a primary source for the analysis of Heartland Theory of International Relations.

⁷ *Central Asia and Caucasus, Times of Central Asia, IPRI Factfile, Himalayan and Central Asian Studies, etc.*

⁸ S. Frederick Starr, “A ‘Greater Central Asia Partnership’ for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors,” *Silk Road Paper* (Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2005).

⁹ S. Frederick Starr, “Making Eurasia Stable,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 1(1996): 80-92.

¹⁰ George J. Demko and William B. Wood, *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the Twenty-First Century* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 14.

¹¹ Aftab A. Kazi, “Pivotal Pakistan: GCAP and the Geopolinomics of Central Asia’s Traditional Indus Basin Corridor.” Paper presented during the International Conference on “Partnership, Trade and Development in Greater Central Asia,” Kabul, Afghanistan, 1-2 April 2006.

¹² Halford J. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History.” *Questia Online Library*, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst;jsessionid=G7ZCshFW47tQCbgdQZ221T7bCzpZsg80P1Dy2HY568hNKB2dpt8F!496220831?a=o&d=5008824529> (accessed 27 October 2006).

*Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia*¹³ published by Atlantic Council of the United States and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute in 2001 provides explanation for the active involvement of the US in the region as well as indicating its strategic interests. Ultimately, the Silk Road Strategy Act of 2006¹⁴ is the last primary source. This legal document reflects the changes to the previous Silk Roads Strategy Act of 1999 and recommendations for the foreign policy implementation in Central Asia. Secondary sources include various scholarly articles found in the published as well as electronic sources. The review of the afore-mentioned literature suggested two main areas, namely problem/topic and theoretical fields present below.

First, the subject of the study is Greater Central Asia Partnership, new foreign policy initiative of the US toward Central Asia. Due to the novelty of the subject the literature written about it merely touches upon its very nature and the reactions of some regional powers to its introduction. Specifically, Dr. Starr's paper outlines the main features of the doctrine, while Dr. Kazi's article presents the conceptual justification, historical context as well as possible outcomes and impediments to the implementation of the GCAP scheme in the region. Further analysis of Silk Road Strategy Act of 2006 reveals the implications of the proposal of GCAP on the major shift of American foreign policy in the region. However, in order to understand the nature of the shift it is necessary to look at preceding development of the US foreign policy toward Central Asia and the causes for such a shift to be made. For this purpose various articles from *Central Asia-Caucasus* (Journal of Central Asia-Caucasus Institute), *IPRI Fact file* (Independent Pakistani Journal), *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, *Times of Central Asia* as well as 1990s issues of *Foreign Affairs* have been analyzed.

¹³ Charles Fairbanks, et al, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia* (Washington D.C.: Atlantic Council of the United States and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2001).

¹⁴ Congress of the United States of America. (2006). *Silk Road Strategy Act of 2006* (S. 2749). Courtesy of Dr. Aftab A.Kazi.

The demise of the Soviet Union and consequently the planned economies of the Socialist/Communist bloc as well as the rise of free markets throughout the globe in the early 1990s were seen as a new opportunity for active exercise of American foreign policy. Robert E. Hunter's article "Starting at Zero: US Foreign Policy for the 1990s"¹⁵ has been especially insightful in providing analysis of the US foreign policy tasks and challenges in the post Cold War era. Particularly, the author argues that the fall of the USSR and the victory in Persian Gulf War forced the US to withdraw from its active participation in the world arena. Nevertheless, the aftermath of the Cold War was far more different and profound than the aftermath of the two world wars. The environment of International Relations of that period asked for the clear strategy for the foreign policy conduct. Hunter argues, national resources were to be readjusted and new patterns of engagement with other international actors worked out in order to avoid zero-sum foreign policy, which was practiced during the Cold War. The author proposes that the US needs to prepare at home and it should "mesh geo-economics with geopolitics."¹⁶

Another noted work in this subject matter is Zbigniew Brzezinski's "A Geostrategy for Eurasia,"¹⁷ which stresses upon the importance of Eurasian continent not merely in strategic consideration, but also in the issues of geopolitics and even national interests of U.S. to a certain degree. The author underlines economic and political value of Eurasia, especially when it comes to prediction that it could become a rival to the U.S. in the world hegemony, since Russia, China and the EU are situated in the continent. Therefore, as Brzezinski suggests, the main purpose of American foreign policy in this region should aim at the presence and maintenance of geopolitical pluralism. To support his idea, the author provides numerous examples of actors' behavior in the Eurasia. For instance, it is

¹⁵ Rober E. Hunter, "Starting at Zero: U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1990s." *American Foreign Policy Reader* (Bishkek: American University-Central Asia, 2005).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski. "A Geostrategy for Eurasia." *American Foreign Policy Reader ICP-314* (Bishkek: American University Central Asia, 2005).

suggested that Russia would need some time to redefine its role. European Union's role is important as well, since it would guarantee security in Eurasia and serve as a partner of the US, albeit of its supranational entity with extensive bureaucracy and so-called "democratic deficit", it shares many common priorities with US. In Asia, as Brzezinski implies, Iran is still in the interest of the U.S. India's democracy is another motivation for the foreign policy analysts worldwide. As long as it exists the hope for implementing democratic ideals in Asian continent will maintain. Although Japan is one of the U.S. partners and is one of the world's largest economies, its influence in the region is not as tangible as that of China. Finally, the author calls for the creation of so-called 'transcontinental security' organization, which would be similar to NATO, initially including America, Japan and China. Later on, as author predicts, it might expand its membership to India, Russia and eventually to Europe, thus "relieving Americans of some of its burdens"¹⁸. Realization of this plan, if achieved, would make the U.S. "the first and only global superpower."¹⁹

The work of Rodney W. Jones²⁰ is additional input for the analysis of the Greater Central Asia Partnership and its interplay with regional powers, since it discusses the region of South Asia and its significance in the area and in American foreign policy at large. Southern Asia is an important area for the U.S. foreign policy because of the presence of two regional actors. Pakistan and India are essential to look when discussing security issues in particular. Jones gives a detailed overview of foreign policy reassessment of both actor states in the period after the fall of USSR. Shift of the balance of power in the global arena in the end of the Cold War forced many states to adopt their foreign policy priorities according to the new emerging world order. Jones presents analysis of internal conditions of each state that fostered reevaluation of the worldview,

¹⁸ Ibid., 318.

¹⁹ Ibid., 318.

²⁰ Rodney W. Jones, "American Foreign Policy Old Quarrels and New Realities: Security in Southern Asia After the Cold War." *American Foreign Policy Reader ICP-314* (Bishkek: American University-Central Asia, 2005).

strategic consideration and the national interest. The author analyzes military capabilities of Pakistan and India, their relationships with one another over the disputed areas of Sind, Punjab and Kashmir and how this debate together with military and economic potential of both actors influences security order in the region. Jones states that both states faced economic crisis immediately after the end of the Cold War, however, “fresh thinking and rational economic policy”²¹ was present in their new politics. Pakistan is one of the major non-NATO allies of the United States. Perhaps, the reason for it not being a NATO member is its geographic location. Jones implies that any changes taking place in Afghanistan and in Central Asia are closely related to Pakistan’s politics. He also emphasizes on Pakistan’s efforts to remove USSR forces in Afghanistan during 1970s. However, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Pakistan adopted somewhat isolationist policy.

Jones writes that India’s economy, which is weaker in comparison to that of Pakistan, can be characterized with its tendency to socialism and protectionism, which results from “oligopolistic practices of India’s oldest and largest private business houses.”²² At the same time, it is important to note that according to Jones, India directed its economy to more free-market oriented practices. However, the main challenge of the state lies in its internal situation with autonomies. When compared to the foreign policy reassessment of Pakistan, it seems that India had to go through enduring process of reconsideration of its national interest since the fall of USSR. India, particularly during the rule of Indira Gandhi, had close cooperation with ex-Soviet Union, which was especially evident in the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by USSR, where Pakistan was supporting the Afghan resistance and India collaborated with the Soviet Union. Nowadays India is part of Non-Alignment

²¹ Ibid., 110.

²² Ibid., 115.

Movement and attempts to build up close relations with United States, European Union and China. Jones concludes that two states are essential for the U.S. in terms of defense issues, while the East-West competition plays an important role in shaping of Pakistani and Indian politics and their potential to influence the region in which they are situated.

Three previous works provide general overview of the American foreign policy in the aftermath of USSR demise. They also outline foreign policy goals in Eurasia and therefore Central Asia, which are essential to look at in order to understand the circumstances, which required the shift of US foreign policy in the region. Analysis provided by Jones of South Asia's relations with Central Asia is key in understanding the nature of Greater Central Asia Partnership. Besides the works of Hunter, Brzezinski and Jones there is an extensive amount of recently published literature devoted to the priorities of US in Central Asia, which receives detailed examination in the present paper. However, let us look at the theoretical part of the issue in order to understand the choice of the frame of analysis.

The theory area of the study of American foreign policy in general and in Central Asia in particular is vast encompassing different theories of International Relations. It is needless to mention that the field of International Relations has experienced uneasy period of reexamination and reevaluation in the years after the fall of the USSR. For more than forty years bipolarity was central in International Relations realm and all events were seen from the lenses of such bipolarity. The end of the super-power confrontation left many International Relations theoreticians and foreign policy analysis uncertain about the emerging world structure. The opinions greatly diverged predicting unipolar world with leading position of hegemonic US and the contrary vision of multipolar world system with the emergence of the European Union and Japan as economic giants. As Joseph S. Nye

noted in 1994, “the structure of power is like a three-dimensional chess game,”²³ the top of which is occupied by the US with its military might and ability to project global military force. The middle economic dimension is where US, EU, Japan and possibly China are on the board, while the bottom “consists of diverse transnational relationships outside the control of governments, including financial flows, drug trafficking, terrorism and degradation of ozone layer,”²⁴ where there are no poles. Modern day multiplicity of international actors, including International and Intergovernmental organizations, and merely the environment of the post Cold War period fostered some new shifts in the understanding and analysis of the events in International Relations. It is believed that two main perspectives of Neorealism and Neoliberalism are dominating the realm of International Relations nowadays and Geopolitics is often used as tool for foreign policy analysis.

The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations defines Geopolitics as a method, ‘which seeks to understand, explain and predict international political behavior primarily in terms of geographical variables, such as location, size, climate, topography, demography, natural resources and technological development and potential.’²⁵ Found by Sir Halford Mackinder, this approach is still dominant in foreign policy analysis. Majority of academics and researchers employ the concept in their examination of US foreign policy toward Central Asia. For instance, Parvin Darabadi scrutinizes the significance of the Caspian oil reservoirs in the world geopolitics.²⁶ Svante E. Cornell looks at possible alignment of Central Asian states as well as their strategic potential.²⁷ Michael Hess and Christopher G. Fettweis go further by employing Heartland theory model of interplay of

²³ Joseph S. Nye, “Peering into the Future.” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 4 (January 1994): 87.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham (Eds), *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998) 197.

²⁶ Parvin Darabadi, “The Caspian Region in Contemporary Geopolitics,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3, no. 21(2003): 66-71.

²⁷ Svante E. Cornell, “Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in Caucasus and Central Asia,” *Perceptions* 4, no. 2(1999): 120-124.

sea-based and land-based powers. Fettweis writes, “The Heartland of the Eurasian landmass may well play an important role in the next century, and the policy of today's lone superpower toward that region will have a tremendous influence upon the character of the entire international system.”²⁸ Michael Hess develops the same idea by declaring that Central Asia “will become once again entangled in a new Great Game between powers struggling to gain a foothold and resources in the heartland, much along the same lines as during the times of tsarist Russia and colonial Britain.”²⁹ Farkhod Tolipov additionally investigates the applicability of Heartland theory in the light of the situation in Afghanistan.³⁰ Evidently, Geopolitics is pre-dominant in the foreign policy analysis in general, however, as mentioned in Analytical Framework of this paper, Geopolinomics offers much broader and more accurate analysis of the US foreign policy in Central Asia and Greater Central Asia Partnership Doctrine as a policy construct. The afore mentioned authors have mainly utilized foreign policy variables such as the national interest of the US, priorities, motivation, worldview, geopolitical and strategic importance. Therefore, in the paper the following foreign policy related variables would be used: the regional and strategic importance, political culture, geopolitical significance and, most importantly, the perception, which will become the main variable for the explanation of foreign policy shift. Referring once again to the Penguin Dictionary of International Relations, perceptions in world politics are seen as “conditional assumptions or inferences about person or persons” and as a tool it is essential since “the investigation of decision-making and how key ‘players’ perceive their situation will form a large part of analysis.”³¹ The content analysis

²⁸ Christopher G. Fettweis, “Sir Halford Mackinder, Geopolitics and Policy Making in the 21st Century,” *U.S. Army War College Quarterly* 30, no 2 (2000); <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/parameters/00summer/fettweis.htm> (accessed 21 October 2006).

²⁹ Michel Hess, “Central Asia: Mackinder Revisited?” *Columbia International Affairs Online* 3, no 1(2004): 95-105; www.ciaonet.org/olj/co/co_mar04/co_mar04h.pdf (accessed 26 October 2006).

³⁰Farkhod Tolipov, “Are the Heartland and Rimland Changing in the Wake of the Operation in Afghanistan?” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 5, no 23(2004): 99-107.

³¹Evans, Graham and Jeffrey Newnham (Eds), *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 431.

related to the perceptions of the US and other regional and non-regional actors like Russia, China, Turkey, EU as well as Central Asian states will help investigate the shift of American foreign policy in Central Asia.

Chapter I. Historical Context of GCAP

The present chapter looks at the historical context of the Greater Central Asia Partnership Doctrine, which includes a brief glance at the role of Central Asia in the history of the region, the changes it underwent in the twentieth century as well as the development of US-Central Asia relationships prior to the introduction of the GCAP as a new phase of American foreign policy toward the region.

Central Asia is a landlocked region situated in the center of Eurasian continent bordering Russia, China, Afghanistan, Iran and Azerbaijan through the Caspian Sea. The region is comprised of five states, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The brief historical overview of the region would suggest that this part of Eurasia has been mainly associated with Silk Roads and various Muslim and Arab empires, emirates and khanates.

Achaemenids (500-350 BC) ruled over the territories stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the parts of modern Pakistan. Later, Parthia has emerged in the region becoming one of the major resistance forces to Roman Empire. On the ruins of it Sasanid Empire experienced its golden age until the Arab invasion of the late 600s. Later the region witnessed Seljuk and Safavid rules as well as the disastrous conquest of Genghis Khan, which at the same time re-established Silk Roads, the channel for trade that helped pave the way for the region's status as a crossroads and bridge-point between Europe and

Asia. Marco Polo's journey along the Silk Road is particularly famous as one of the first accounts about people and cultures of Central Asia. Along this route many medieval empires flourished, notably that of Timurid, which has influenced Central Asia in its cultural and political life reviving Persian culture and later establishing the Mughal dynasty in Hindustan, which has controlled the different Hordes that have existed in the aftermath of the Genghis Khan's empire. Muslim Khivan Khanate, Bukharan Emirate and Khanate of Kokand have taken shape until the Tsarist Russia started its conquest of Central Asia.

In the late 19th, amid the Russian conquest of Turkestan, Central Asia witnessed the confrontation between the Tsarist Russia and the British Empire as part of their imperialistic policies popularly known as the Great Game. This struggle for the domination of the region comprising modern-day Central Asia was concluded by establishing Afghanistan as a buffer zone, thus dividing the area into British and Russian spheres of influence. The importance of the region in world politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was further complimented by Heartland theory of Sir Halford Mackinder, a British geographer and the founder of modern geopolitics. According to Mackinder, the Heartland "formed by Central Asia, the Caucasus, and parts of present-day Russia" was key to the domination of the World Island (continents of Asia, Europe and Africa) and therefore the world at large.³²

However, the Bolshevik Revolution of the 1917 in Russia brought dramatic political, economic and social changes to Central Asia making it part of the newly formed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Besides drawing new borderlines between five states of the region, the Communist government in Moscow had launched the nation-delimitation policy dividing Turkestan into various nations that was completed under Stalin in 1934. Large-scale industrialization and modernization of the region initiated by Bolsheviks often

³² Michael Hess, "Central Asia: Mackinder Revisited?" *Columbia International Affairs Online* 3, no 1(2004): 95; www.ciaonet.org/olj/co/co_mar04/co_mar04h.pdf; (accessed 26 October 2006).

faced resistance in the form of Basmachi movements. However, persistence of Soviet leaders backed by large population of peasants and workers has made many aims of the Communist Revolution possible. Economies of the newly created states in Central Asia just as other Soviet republics in Eastern Europe, Baltic Sea region and the Caucasus were established in such a manner, where core-periphery relations were exercised making Moscow a political, social and economic center of the USSR.

Central Asia being a part of the Soviet Union was principally agricultural and energy producing region. Only after the fall of the USSR in 1991, Central Asian republics gained their independence and began initiating new foreign relations with the outside world. The task was complicated since the fall of the Soviet Union was unexpected and Central Asian leadership was very soon forced to define its role in the world arena. Simultaneously, other regional and non-regional powers have taken advantage of open borders and began involving themselves in the region, establishing embassies and businesses, opening educational institutions and exchanges as well as investing in the economies of Central Asian republics.

Turkey began its involvement in the region by establishing educational institutions and engaging Central Asia into economic and trade relations. However, "Turkey was too weak economically, while Central Asian republics did not want its strong influence in the region: they wanted contacts with the West and did not need intermediaries."³³ Other regional powers like Iran and China saw the potential for expanding their markets to their closest neighbors.

At the same time, the end of Cold War had a strong influence on the foreign relations of the United States as well. Foreign policy analysts were faced with the dilemma of how to best utilize the national resources and formulate the new foreign policy agenda

³³Zakir Chotoev, "On Turkey's Possible Involvement in Strengthening Central Asian Security," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 4, no 28(2004), 136.

under new realities of the post Cold War world structure. Accustomed to three main paradigms of the American foreign policy during the Cold War, such as containing the territorial expansion of the USSR, restraining its ideological spread and encouraging the development of the global economy along the leadership of the US together with the promotion of the principles of democracy and free market,³⁴ foreign policy analysts could not formulate new agenda immediately. With the fall of the USSR two previous patterns of action were dismissed, while the latter one remained significant requiring along US leadership an active involvement of other economically and politically powerful international actors, such as Japan and the European Union. It was predicted “America’s future approach to the world will be far more decentralized and disaggregated than it has been true for half a century.”³⁵ Moreover, it was also suggested that the US needed to change its focus from military issues to other aspects, such as education, research, and infrastructure, so it would provide the US with “margins for employing capital in support of foreign policy.”³⁶

The administrations of George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton had attempted to cope with the reality of post Cold War world structure employing “new world order” and “neo-dollar diplomacy” tools respectively.³⁷ Unexpected fall of the former rival power necessitated quick redirection, however, there was some delay in the immediate foreign policy action toward Central Asian republics, which could have been explained given the fact that initially the US did not see any of its particular national interests involved in the region. On the other hand, foreign policy analysts in Washington D.C. “continued using the old Sovietological patterns that insisted on regional balance of forces...and using the

³⁴Robert E. Hunter, “Starting at Zero: U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1990s,” *American Foreign Policy Reader* (Bishkek: American University-Central Asia, 2005), 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁷ Aftab A. Kazi, *End of Geopolitics and the Beginning of Geopolitics: United States and Central Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, SAIS, John Hopkins University, 2007 (a book at hand)).

old “human rights” lever.”³⁸ Furthermore, the region was seen as mainly Russian sphere of influence and US did not want to intervene with Russia on what was considered its ‘backyard.’

Emergence of the Caspian Sea energy resources in the international scene in mid 1990s has transformed Central Asia into the region of “vital U.S. interests.”³⁹ According to *New York Times* estimates in 1998, “Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan together own over 100 billion barrels of oil, which makes the Caspian the world’s third (after the Persian Gulf and Siberia) oil reservoir and one of the key world centers of geopolitical and geo-economic importance.”⁴⁰

While two previous administrations viewed Central Asia through “Moscow’s eyes,” the foreign policy analysts of the administration of George W. Bush, Jr. have brought “Central Asia into focus for its own sake.”⁴¹ In addition to engaging Central Asia into NATO “Partnership for Peace” Program and later creation of Central Asia Peace-keeping Battalion, there was a need for stabilizer-balancer state for the successful policy implementation and development in the region. Uzbekistan seemingly possessed all necessary potential to become such ‘anchor state’ that by achieving “equilibrium and coherence from within” the region would “create a healthy balance that would best serve the interests of regional security, Europe and NATO.”⁴² Additionally, geographic location of Uzbekistan in the heart of Central Asia with considerable Uzbek minorities in all bordering states and the largest population among other states together with evident enthusiasm of Uzbek side to cooperate appeared to attract many foreign policy experts in Washington D.C.

³⁸ Dmitry Trofimov, “Russia and the United States in Central Asia: Problems, Prospects, and Interests,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 1, no. 19(2003), 80.

³⁹ Svante E. Cornell, “Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in Caucasus and Central Asia,” *Perceptions* 4, no. 2(1999): 123.

⁴⁰ Parvin Darabadi, “The Caspian Region in Contemporary Geopolitics,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3, no. 21(2003), 67.

⁴¹ S. Frederick Starr, “The United States, Afghanistan, and Central Asia,” *NIASnytt* 3(2002): 9.

⁴² S. Frederick Starr, “Making Eurasia Stable,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 1(1996): 81.

Terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. in September 11th, 2001 marked the change of American foreign policy globally and Central Asia was not an exception. Geopolitical importance of the region has increasingly altered due to the close proximity of Afghanistan. The War on Terror required closer strategic points from where to wage war for which two military bases in Manas Airport in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and in Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan were established (though the latter one was removed in November 2005). Nevertheless, this military presence of the US in Central Asia was seen in two different dimensions. First, the foreign policy analysts outside the US assumed that America had only short-term military interests in Central Asia. The other group believed in the revival of the Great Game of the nineteenth century, calling it the “New Great Game,” where US aspired to control the region.⁴³

The significance of Central Asia in geopolitical and geostrategic terms was evaluated in the *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia* published by Atlantic Council of the United States and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute in 2001. This document has clearly defined Afghanistan as a primary security concern of the entire region. By declaring that three types of interests, i.e. vital, strategic and important, guide the US foreign policy in general this study indicated how Central Asia fell under afore-mentioned interests in particular. While no vital interests present, strategic interests included four areas: peace and stability, containment of intra-regional disputes, prevention of inter-regional conflicts and prevention of the production of weapons of mass destruction.⁴⁴ Important interests of the US in the region included energy resources, human rights issues, environment concerns, democratic reforms, religious freedom, fighting of corruption and drug trafficking. It was widely expected that as a consequence of active US presence in the region and successful implementation of policies connected to important interests of the

⁴³ S. Frederick Starr, “The United States, Afghanistan, and Central Asia,” *NIA Snytt* 3(2002): 10.

⁴⁴ Charles Fairbanks, et al, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia* (Washington D.C.: Atlantic Council of the United States and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2001), 98.

US will altogether speed up the long anticipated transformation of Central Asian states into the stable democracies. US Ambassador Pascoe wrote in this regard that America's "enhanced engagement is helping to break the habit of repression and stagnation " in the region,⁴⁵ while Professor Spelcher argued that when war in Afghanistan is over "Central Asia will revert to relative obscurity from a geopolitical point of view, the outskirts of the world economy."⁴⁶

The issue of misperceptions in American foreign policy might explain such contrasting views about Central Asia in general. There was a complex of ideas that appeared to be misleading the US foreign policy analysts. For instance, Olivier Roy in his book *The New Central Asia: the Creation of Nations* has described two myths of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in Central Asia, which seemed to blur the image of Central Asia in the world arena. Moreover, Charles Fairbanks in his article in *The National Interest* issue of 2000 has remarked, "we [Americans] are woefully ignorant about the area and, worse, our ignorance tends to be filled by wishful thinking."⁴⁷ Revival of the classic Heartland theory has also contributed to the growing significance of Central Asia in the light of events, however, as Michael Hess has argued Mackinder's idea when "heartland bestows a geopolitical advantage to the power that controls it"⁴⁸ can not be so easily applied to modern day Central Asia with its security concerns and the advanced technological military buildup in general.

Central Asia has also been referred to as an unstable region, vulnerable to Islamization. The countries of the region have been quite often called as 'failed states,' although in reality they are far from failing. In the very recent annual review of the global

⁴⁵ Lynn B. Pascoe, "U.S. Policy in Central Asia and the War on Terrorism," *IRPI Fact File* 7, no 6(2005): 34.

⁴⁶ Martin C. Spelcher, "Economy and Security in Central Asia since 9/11: A Skeptical Look," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 1, no.19 (2003): 44.

⁴⁷ Charles Faribanks, "Bases of Debate: American in Central Asia. Being There," *The National Interest* 68(2002):42.

⁴⁸ ⁴⁸ Michael Hess, "Central Asia: Mackinder Revisited?" *Columbia International Affairs Online* 3, no 1(2004): 97; www.ciaonet.org/olj/co/co_mar04/co_mar04h.pdf (accessed 26 October 2006).

threats John Negroponte, National Intelligence Director, has warned of instability in Central Asia,

“In the worst, but not implausible, case, central authority in one or more of these states could evaporate as rival political factions, clans or regions vie for power, opening the door to dramatic expansion of terrorist and criminal activities along the lines of a failed state.”⁴⁹

Lack of clear strategy of the US toward Central Asia in the early independence period has also contributed to somehow distorted image of the region, when several governmental agencies of the United States government responsible for the foreign policy formulation have had different sets of priorities toward the region. Later developments of US foreign policy in the region have supported the opinion that “Central Asia is very likely to become a strategically important area, not overlaid’ by the Heartland or the Rimland as a subordinate entity, but represented in them as an independent entity.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ “US Warns of Instability in Central Asia,” *Times of Central Asia*, 17 January 2007, p.5.

⁵⁰ Farkhod Tolipov, “Are the Heartland and Rimland Changing in the Wake of the Operation in Afghanistan?” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 5, no. 23(2004): 107.

Chapter II. Greater Central Asia Partnership Doctrine

While previous chapter briefly discussed the development and the challenges of the US foreign policy toward Central Asia, such as misperceptions and the lack of clearly defined strategy towards the region, which has impeded US from successful policy implementation in the region, the present one will look at the GCAP in depth. The Greater Central Asia Partnership doctrine proposed by Dr. S. Frederick Starr, the Chairman of Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, has marked the change of the perception about the region in the foreign policy formulating circles of the US. Indeed, perception and worldview of the US has evolved since the fall of the Soviet Union. New realities of the post Cold War world structure and specifically post September 11th, 2001 world together with the experience of military presence in the region have required the US to examine its priorities, motivation, national interest and strategic/geopolitical considerations in Central Asia, since the US needed to preserve the results achieved by the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan for which it needed new more appropriate and timely strategy toward the region.

Greater Central Asia concept introduced and developed by Dr. Starr opened up new phase of the US foreign policy toward the region. Greater Central Asia as a geographic notion includes all five former Soviet republics of Central Asia and Afghanistan plus South Asia. Dr. Starr has argued that structural problem of viewing the region when Central Asia was viewed under Eurasia and Afghanistan under South Asia was not quite appropriate. The following re-organization of the Department of State and Defense when a new entity, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, was established shows the implications of the Greater Central Asia Partnership doctrine in regards to the shift of perception, hence as a consequence the overall strategy of American foreign policy in Central Asia.

According to Greater Central Asia Partnership scheme transport routes and consequent improvement of trade relations are key tools for the success in this region. Construction of new alternative routes of transportation, oil/gas pipelines and lifting of tariffs to ease the movement of goods in the region will provide new interdependence for the states of Central Asia, which lost it after the fall of USSR and will help both Central Asia and Afghanistan to integrate into the world economy by providing landlocked Central Asian states an access to the Arabian Sea. This will in turn benefit Russia's Siberia with alternative routes and an access to the sea thus benefiting Russia's farthest and less-developed area. New trade patterns would also "benefit China's "Develop the West" program."⁵¹ As a result, "Central Asians will be able to choose whether to export their cotton, oil, gas, and manufactured goods through Russia or through South, and will choose the cheapest alternative or mix of alternatives."⁵² This new strategy toward Central Asia appears to change the role of US in the region as mainly military power to a more economic one. In his paper the author proposes:

"Trade and economic development must be the centerpiece of any pro-active US strategy for Afghanistan and its neighbors, but other components must be equally important. Security, institutional development, the expansion of elections, and cultural/educational programs must all be transformed from issues pursued on a purely national basis to region-wide concerns."⁵³

Simply put the Greater Central Asia Partnership for Cooperation and Development is intended to become a forum for participating states to discuss the possible ways of implementing different US programs in the region. Furthermore, the author states that no other organization or state has a program which "embraces both security and multi-sided

⁵¹ S. Frederick Starr, "A 'Greater Central Asia Partnership' for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," *Silk Road Paper* (Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2005), 14.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 15.

development” together with viewing “Afghanistan and the five former Soviet states as a single unit”⁵⁴ that is expanded towards Southwest Asia as a transit- route corridor for land and sea based communication infrastructure to connect Central Asia with the Pakistani seaports on the Arabian Sea, which have historically served Central Asia in regional and cross-continental trade.

Re-structuring of the US Department of State and Defense was further complimented by the Conference on “Partnership, Trade, and Development in Greater Central Asia” in Kabul, Afghanistan in April of 2006. The Conference was attended by foreign ministers and the representatives of all Central Asian states as well as those of Afghanistan, Pakistan, US, Russia, China, Japan and EU. Two keynote speakers at the conference, Richard A. Boucher, U.S. Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs and Kassymzhomart Tokaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, have remarked on the new U.S. initiative presenting their views on the concept of Greater Central Asia.

Boucher in his speech has mentioned that for the time after the fall of USSR the region of Central Asia was placed in different bureaus,

“We had had offices called, you know, FSU, Former Soviet Union, we have had the CIS, Office of Commonwealth of Independent States, and then we had for a while the NIS, Newly Independent States, which was a separate entity and we moved it back into the European Bureau.”⁵⁵

This statement clearly evinces that the worldview of the US has changed and its perception of the Central Asian region has as well altered. Frequent visits of the top US officials, such as the trips of President Bush, Jr. to Afghanistan, Pakistan and

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Richard A. Boucher, Remarks at the International Conference on “Partnership, Trade, and Development in Greater Central Asia,” Kabul, Afghanistan, April 1-2, 2006, available from http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/forum/trade_kabul_boucher.html (accessed 2 March 2006).

India, Secretary of State Rice's visits to Central Asia and earlier visits of former Secretary of Defense Ramsfeld to Kyrgyzstan within the last few years indicate the growing importance of the region in the US foreign policy. Certainly, this is not simply dictated by the wish to launch the GCAP scheme. Rather the closeness of Iraq and immediate neighborhood of Iran bring additional incentives for considering Central Asia as one of the strategically attractive regions, if not as a pivot region as a whole. Boucher mentioned

“United States has a very serious and long-term interests in this region...The regional integration that we are talking about and that has come up today has been transport, it is energy, it is trade, it is communication, it is cooperation, it is free trade, and we are looking really to maximize the movement of energy, people, goods, of information, from the Kazakh steppes to the Indian Ocean.”⁵⁶

The hub of the new transit routes, energy pipelines and the political will to cooperate in lifting barriers for trade is meant to attract international investors and help Central Asia together with Afghanistan to integrate into the world economy. According to Kasymzhomart Tokaev Central Asia already “boasts significant human, natural and industrial resources. Approximately 84 million people live here and aggregate whole of the region's gross domestic product totals more than 100 billion US dollars annually.”⁵⁷ Indeed such numbers make Central Asia an attractive member of the world community, however existing trade barriers and various customs' restrictions and the mere lack of institutionalized structure impede Central Asia from successfully importing and exporting goods.

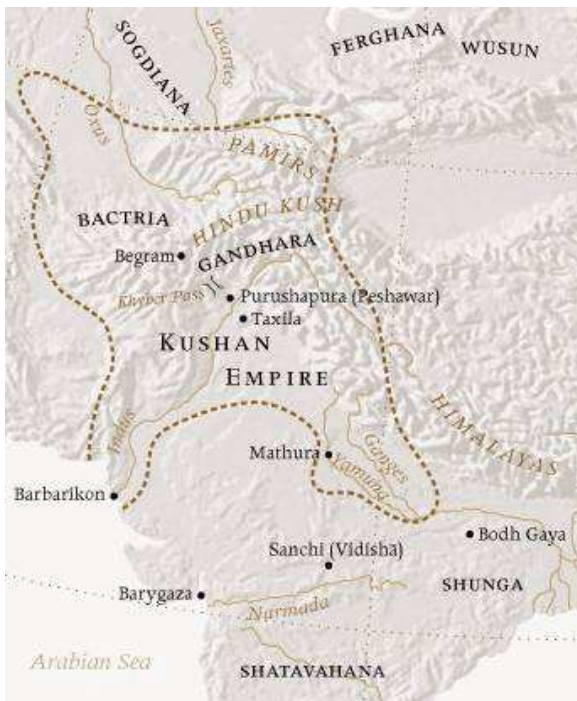
⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Kasymzhomart Tokaev, Remarks at the conference “Partnership, Trade, and Development in Greater Central Asia” Kabul, Afghanistan, April 1-2 2006, available from http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/forum/trade_kabul_tokayev.html (accessed 26 February 2006).

Merging Central Asia with Afghanistan into the Greater Central Asia also poses a question as to why post-Soviet Central Asia should be joined with Afghanistan and South Asia and what historical bases are present to make such a reshuffling in the perceptual base of the US foreign policy analysts toward the region.

Aftab A. Kazi, Senior Fellow of the Johns Hopkins University SAIS and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute appears to have answered this question by presenting the example of Kushan Empire (A.D. 100-500) as a model to best explain the historical context of Greater Central Asia Partnership scheme. Kazi writes, “the Kushan Empire encompassed more or less the regions of modern day Central Asia, including Afghanistan and Pakistan that are considered essential as a regional trade hub in the GCAP scheme.”⁵⁸ The author argues that the partnership and cooperation schemes under the GCAP parallels those structures that have existed under the Kushan Empire.

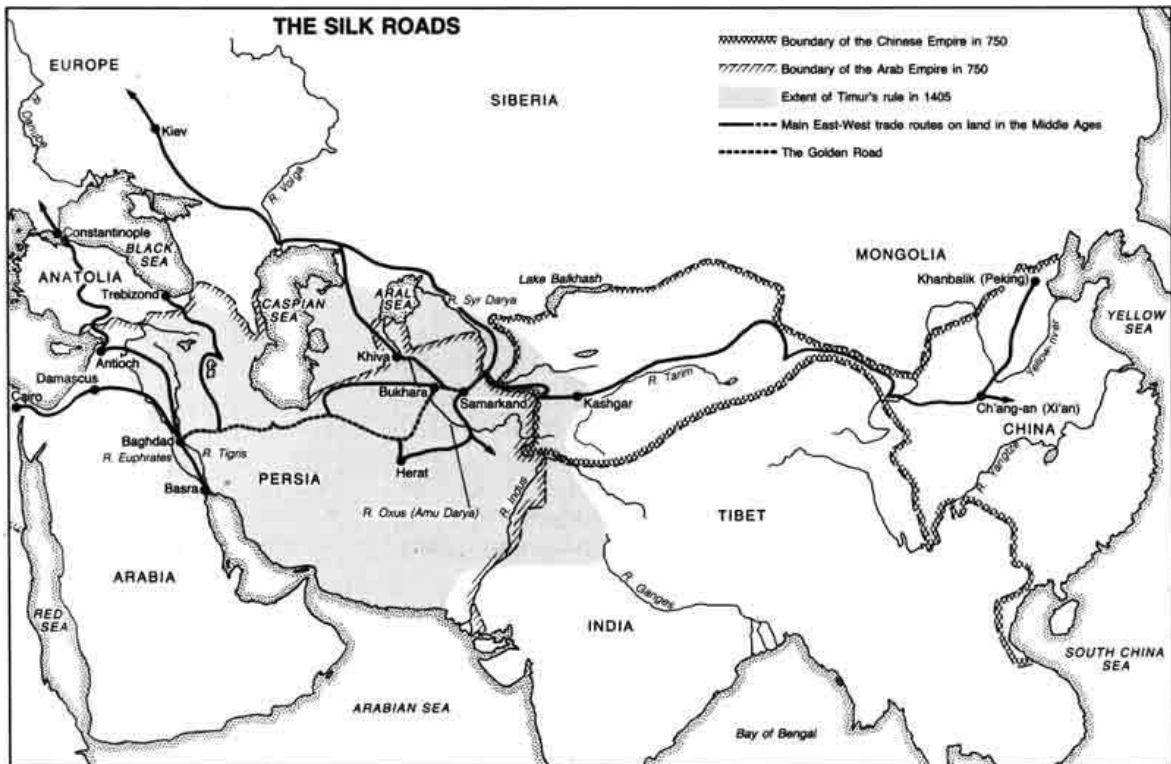
MAP A: Kushan Empire at its greatest extent, c. 150 CE.



Source: www.columbia.edu/~early/kushan/kushan.html (accessed 21 March 2007).

⁵⁸ Aftab A. Kazi, “Pivotal Pakistan: GCAP and the Geopolitics of Central Asia’s Traditional Indus Basin Corridor.” Paper presented during the International Conference on “Partnership, Trade and Development in Greater Central Asia,” Kabul, Afghanistan, 1-2 April 2006, p. 8.

MAP B: The Silk Roads.



Source: www.historyonmaps.com/BWSamples/SilkRoads.html (accessed 26 February 2006).

In his paper “Pivotal Pakistan: GCAP and Geopolinomics of Central Asia’s Traditional Indus Basin Corridors” presented at the Kabul Conference, Kazi as well discusses the geopolinomics present in the concept of GCAP,

“GCAP as a geopolinomic concept is another major development in the evolution of geopolitics, which proposes a simultaneous cooperation between Heartlands and Rimlands by intersecting geopolitics with economics aiming at spurring a new geopolinomic regime in Central and South Asia and surrounding regions as a mechanism for regional economic integration and cross-continental trade.”⁵⁹

The author mentions of Heartland and Rimland theories of International Relations in his justification of applicability of geopolinomics to GCAP. Indeed, as argued above, Heartland theory of Sir Halford Mackinder envisioned the whole Central Asia with parts of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.

Caucasus and Russia as a Heartland, which was key to the domination of the world, while Nicholas Spykman's Rimland theory argued that by controlling the Rimland roughly comprised of Western Europe, the Middle East, and South and East Asia⁶⁰ one is able to control the world.

As we have entered the age of globalization it becomes the axiom that economics is essential in the analysis of the events taking place in International Arena. Both Heartland and Rimland theories are important, however, there is an economic element that needs to be attached to better explain the reality of the technologically advanced world, taking into account the spatial attributes of the region under analysis. Geography and thus geopolitics is nevertheless still sine qua non of International Relations, although alone it cannot explain the complex nature of the economic and political interdependence, as it was mentioned in before. Therefore, GCAP can be best justified through geopolitics, as interplay of spatial, economic and political structures of the present-day world. It focuses on how politics influences economics and how in turn economics affects politics in the given region with its own geographic attributes.

In the simplest terms, Greater Central Asia Partnership scheme, if successfully implemented, would create a new region of the world with its diversified transit routes and pipelines with an access to the sea and other major trade routes. Thus the economic reality of the Greater Central Asia would foster new interdependence for all of the states involved in the region with the will and active participation of the respective governments to cooperate and work on the policies that could facilitate trade. Overt convergence of political, economic and spatial factors in the geographic region of Greater Central Asia makes it subject to solely geopolitics analysis.

⁶⁰ Michael Hess, "Central Asia: Mackinder Revisited?" *Columbia International Affairs Online* 3, no 1(2004): 96; www.ciaonet.org/olj/co/co_mar04/co_mar04h.pdf (accessed 26 October 2006).

Aside from the analytical basis of the given strategy let us look once more at the legislative changes introduced after the proposal of GCAP in 2005. “Silk Road Strategy Act of 2006” passed in US Congress in May 4th, 2006 shows the extent to which GCAP proposal has influenced US foreign policy in Central Asia. The bill contains changes to the previously adopted Silk Roads Strategy Act of 1999. Specifically, the document outlines several events in the global arena as well as in Central Asia alone that have led to the change. Particularly the aftermath of September 11th, 2001 required more enhanced security cooperation of the US in the region and the liberation of Afghanistan necessitated the country’s re-integration to Central Asia. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have become key energy partners of the US and, moreover, Kazakhstan has become of high importance to the US. ‘Color revolutions’ that have taken place in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan once more re-affirmed the necessity for the states in Central Asia to move towards democracy and the rule of law. Relations with Kyrgyzstan have become important in light of the presence of Gansu military base in Manas Airport of Bishkek, while Turkmenistan’s and Uzbekistan’s domestic political issues required a closer look at the transformation processes of these states. Andijan events in May of 2005 in Uzbekistan and world’s reaction to it as well as the erosion of US-Uzbek relations and the removal of the American military base from Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan as well as asked for revision of the American foreign policy in the region. Persistent need for the diversification of transportation routes and energy pipelines to grant Central Asia an access to world trade routes was seen as necessary for its transformation. Finally, radical actions of Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the International Arena altogether favored the change of American foreign policy toward Central Asia.

Evidently, any change in the foreign policy raises question about the costs of such a change. Dr. Starr writes in this matter:

“Assuming the eventual (but definitely not immediate) reduction of US military assistance to Afghanistan by a third and the maintenance of present levels of non-military support to Kabul, one could double non-military assistance to all the other countries of the region and still garner a total cost reduction of 30%.”⁶¹

The durability of military operations in Afghanistan and the War on Iraq require massive military funding, while the cost of human losses is even more valuable. Economic presence of the United States in region is seen as the most beneficial to secure its long-term interests in the region.

Certainly the idea of the transit routes is not new, since the discussion about alternative routes of transportation started as early as states in Central Asia have gained independence. Economic Cooperation Organization attempted at constructing new roads from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to Karachi and Islamabad. Asia Development Bank (ADB) initiated the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC) in 1997, which later enlarged to include the International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank and European Bank of Reconstruction and Development. United Nations Development Programme as well as World Bank also joined the alliance.

As a matter of fact, ADB has been quite active in assisting countries of Central Asia in the attempts to diversify their transit routes and thus reducing poverty. Working within the areas of transport, water/energy and trade ADB has already concluded some projects, such as Almaty-Bishkek Regional Road Rehabilitation. Numerous projects on Dushanbe-Kyrgyz Border Road Rehabilitation, Regional Power Transmission Modernization as well as Regional Trade Facilitation and Customs Cooperation Programs are on their way.⁶²

⁶¹ S. Frederick Starr, “A ‘Greater Central Asia Partnership’ for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors,” *Silk Road Paper* (Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2005), 24.

⁶² “Central Asia: The Way Forward,” Special Advertising Supplement (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004).

However, there are challenges that may impede the US from implementing its Greater Central Asia Partnership Doctrine in the region. Especially the problem that lies in the historical reality of the post-Soviet Central Asia deserves particular attention. The region has been integrated within the USSR for seventy years and after gaining independence the states in the region still wish to experience independence in decision-making both in domestic and foreign affairs. Although, fifteen years have resulted in various economic and political development of the states in the region the lure of independence seems to be strong and this in turn may challenge their re-integration. Besides, the number of external influenced on the region with often varying agenda, whether they come from the US, Russia, China or Iran, Turkey and EU, complicates the task even further.

Chapter III: Interplay of GCAP with Regional Powers.

This chapter aims at presenting the role of regional and non-regional powers present in the region and their possible interaction with the Greater Central Asia Partnership. Central Asia as such had constantly experienced external influences throughout its history. The very recent long-term experience has been during the seventy-year of the Soviet rule. A brief glance at the long history of the region presented in the first chapter indicates the fact that various empires, khanates and emirates would often replace each other consequently creating a whole new array of identities. The emergence of the nationalism in the seventeenth-eighteenth century had practically no impact on this region. Such modern creations as state and nation came comparatively late to Central Asia and were rather forcefully implemented in the first part of the twentieth century by Bolsheviks. Perhaps in this regard Central Asia can be compared to Central and Eastern European states, which had also experienced external influences of different European states as well as the Ottoman rule. Nevertheless, after the fall of the Iron Curtain most of the states in Central and Eastern Europe were able to join the European Union and are currently attempting to fully integrate into the structure of this supra-national and intergovernmental organization. Central Asia in this respect did not join any union, except for various attempts to form its own union and the membership in the loose Commonwealth of Independent States.

The bait of Heartland still remains tangible and Mackinder's thesis about Heartland granting power to its ruler appears valid even a century later. Obviously, Heartland alone is not the only answer to the question about the reasons for the multiplicity of actors involved in the region. Natural resources, such as energy (oil and gas), raw materials and water resources in turn attract external attention. Besides, cultural and historic links of the ancient and recent past stimulate the cooperation of the states in the region with outside powers. Present chapter presents the most important regional actors and their perceptions

of Central Asia in their foreign policies, thus showing various scenarios of possible interplay of GCAP with each country respectively.

When discussing ex-Soviet Union states and their relations with the outside world the role of Russian Federation's influence becomes unavoidable. This is especially true when it comes to Central Asia, as the region that has often been characterized as a 'backyard' or 'underbelly' of Russia. Indeed, many energy pipelines and transportation routs built during the Soviet Union go through Russia, which means that it still has a greater say in region's economic relations.

MAP D: Oil and Gas Field and Pipelines.



Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/guides/456900/456938/html/nn5page1.stm> (accessed 21 March 2007).

The presidency of Vladimir Putin brought Central Asia into the spotlight as Russia emerged from 1998 crisis and particularly after it saw the military moves of US in the region.

Sergey Lavrov, the minister of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, commenting on Secretary of State Rice's visit to Central Asia in 2005 said that Russia has common aims with Americans in Central Asia, a region where there are very active displays of terrorist and extremist groupings, which seek to shatter stability. At the same time, as Lavrov pointed out, Russia understands that besides those aims the US is also interested in gaining access to Central Asia's energy resources.⁶³ However, two years later Lavrov takes a firmer position at the meeting of Duma declaring that in later years the presence of non-regional actors in CIS territory has dramatically increased and someone is trying to impose malleable competition on Russia, whereas Russia itself is not going to fall under those provocations.⁶⁴

Another important event that is still in the media attention is Russia's unwillingness to accept US missile bases in Eastern Europe, which as some analysts note is a sign of Cold-War-like attitude of both Russia and the US.

In Russia-Central Asia relations it is essential to mention the new labor laws that were passed in State Duma according to which foreigners will be barred from trading in markets starting from April 2007. This move is partly stimulated by the unprecedented rise of racist/fascist riots in Russia in 2006. Kremlin appears to share this right-wing tendency. However, it might as well plant some seeds of disagreement between Russia and some Central Asian states, namely Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan as they together with Chinese, Georgians and Armenians constitute roughly ten million of illegal migrants to Russia. Furthermore, the World Bank study estimate shows, "remittances sent back by those workers contribute more than 10% of Tajikistan's gross domestic product."⁶⁵

⁶³ Sergei Brilleev, "Asian Tour of Condoleeza Rice," *Vesti7*, October 16, 2005, <http://www.vesti7.ru/news?id=7143> (accessed January 26 2007).

⁶⁴ "State Duma discussed the future of Commonwealth of Independent States," *Ity*, March 21, 2007, <http://www.1tv.ru/> (accessed March 24, 2007).

⁶⁵ "Russia's New Labor Laws Already Causing Waves Across Central Asia and Beyond," *Times of Central Asia*, 31 January 2007, Vol. 9, no. 8, p. 7.

Nevertheless, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in particular seem to be very inclined toward Russia lately. Significance of two organizations of Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well as Collective Security Treaty Organization, where Russia plays notable role, is increasing in the region.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), it should be noted, is an intergovernmental international organization founded in Shanghai on 15 June 2001 by six countries: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. On 17 June 2004, the SCO held its annual Summit in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, which was attended by Chinese President Hu Jintao, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev, Tajikistan's President Emomali Rakhmonov, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov. Much of the pre-summit media attention included what Russian President Putin and Chinese President Hu hoped would facilitate the development of economic relations between the SCO countries. This appeared to have been successful. At the conclusion of the summit, the leaders signed a document titled the Tashkent Declaration, which summarized the outcome of the SCO's work since it was set up, evaluated the activities of the organization's agencies and set new goals. Additionally, agreements on cooperation in fighting drug trafficking and on the protection of secret information in the framework of the SCO anti-terrorist agency were signed, establishing the main headquarters in Tashkent.

China being one of the potent members of the SCO is the crucial regional power whose influence on Central Asia is quite notable since 1991. China-Central Asia relations in general do not go against Russia's position in the region, since both Beijing and Moscow know that China needs Russia to be successful in its relations with Central Asia. China, just as other regional and non-regional powers perceives Central Asia as a source for raw materials and energy and alternative market option for constantly increasing Chinese

production. Beijing is especially active in cooperation with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and its multilateral approach in dealing with Russia and Central Asia assists China in negotiating and setting new projects. One of its most ambitious projects is the South-West corridor, a transportation link that would connect China with Europe through Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and parts of Middle East. Besides, the agreements were signed to construct Turkmenistan-China and Kazakhstan-China pipelines as well as highways from and through Kyrgyzstan as well as trans-Pamir transportation corridor for Uzbekistan to link it to China. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region is actively involved in trade with Central Asia and estimates show that the trade volume between China and Central Asia Regional Cooperation (CAREC) member has increased from “\$1 billion in 1997 to \$9.8 billion in 2005.”⁶⁶ Construction of pipelines and transit routes from and through Central Asia by Chinese companies does in fact serve Central Asia for its benefit in diversifying its transportation links, however Russia’s and China’s membership in SCO is often seen as a counterbalance for the US presence.

In fact, many foreign policy analysts both in Central Asia and outside it speak of the revival of the Great Game. Terms like New Great Game or Greater Great Game are often used to characterize the geopolitical situation in Central Asia with a number of different regional and non-regional actors involved. SCO calls for the reduction of the US military presence in Central Asia in 2006 and earlier divergence of opinions over Iran’s membership in SCO seems to indicate some lines of disagreement. It was often observed, “The year 2006 has thus made it clear that the US is unlikely to become a single dominant power in Central Asia. Simply put, Russia and China have together put up the SCO dikes delimiting the US influence in the region, which will be difficult for Washington to breach

⁶⁶ Anastasiya Levchenko, “China Embracing Ties with Central Asian Countries,” *Times of Central Asia*, 17 January 2007, Vol. 9, no. 4, p. 5.

for the foreseeable future.”⁶⁷ Energy resources of Central Asia attract other non-regional actors such as Japan, EU and Turkey. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in August of 2006 to discuss energy deals and thus decrease Japan’s reliance on energy resource of the Middle East. This visit can also be interpreted as a move to counter growing Russian and Chinese influences in the region. In addition, Japan is attempting to establish educational programs for university students of Central Asia.

Turkey is also important in the region. Early active phase of Turkish involvement has given way to tranquility in relations with Central Asia. Just as other power players in the region Turkey is trying to get its hold of energy resources of the Caspian Sea Basin. Baku-Ceyhan-Tbilisi project has already come into reality. The construction of trans-Afghanistan pipeline from Turkmenistan supported by ADB does not appear to suit Turkey’s interests. For these reasons it may ally with Iran to encourage it to fight for its share in the rich Caspian Sea. Turkey is still committed to its Pan-Turkic ideas, although some Central Asian leadership is no longer willing to agree with Turkey on this issue. For instance, relations with Uzbekistan have become cooler since the early 1990s. It is very likely that Turkey will remain in the region as long as there is support from the US. Alone without any support from the outside powers Turkey will less likely exercise palpable influence on the region.

Relations of Central Asian states with European Union are growing in significance as well. German presidency in the Council of Ministers has brought Central Asia into light and currently European foreign policy analysts are working on the EU Strategy towards Central Asia. According to Dr. Klaus Grewlich, Ambassador of Germany in Kyrgyzstan, there are three interlinked components: security/stability, the rule of law and development,

⁶⁷M.K. Bhadrakumar, “The Great Game on a Razor’s Edge. The Stakes go up in Central Asia,” *Global Research*. December 26, 2006, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/PrintArticle.php?articleId=4264> (accessed January 30, 2007).

which will be outlined in the new EU Strategy.⁶⁸ European Union does not have any geopolitical interest and thus acts mainly as a soft power. Ambassador Grewlich noted that EU would likely concentrate on educational projects. Recently proposed project of establishing Water Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, a center for excellence where professionals would receive training in water management, which persists to be one of the troublesome issues for many Central Asian states is one of the examples of such programs. Energy security is also one of the main aspects for the involvement into the region, since it is interested in the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (TCP) project that is aimed at delivering Turkmen and Kazakh gas to international markets through Azerbaijan and Iran. European Union is frequently referred to as ‘a community of values’ and one of those values is regional cooperation. According to Adrian Van Der Meer, Head of European Commission in Kyrgyzstan, European Union can offer Central Asia its own experience of integration and especially the transition experience of Central and Eastern European countries, which have been successful to liberalize its planned economy and transform its political structures.⁶⁹ Eric Miller, Charge d’Affairs of French Embassy in Bishkek, states the integration in Central Asia can begin with technical issues, such as ‘Community of Water’ or ‘Community of Energy’ just as the EU has started off in 1947 with European Coal and Steel Community. However, for Central Asia to successfully integrate there is a need to implement political reforms in order to foster democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Klaus Grewlich, “The European Union Strategy for Central Asia,” Lecture delivered at American University-Central Asia, 7 March 2007.

⁶⁹ Adrian Van Der Meer, “What to Learn from EU?” Lecture delivered at American University-Central Asia, 22 March 2007.

⁷⁰ Eric Miller, “Is EU a Model for Central Asia?” Lecture delivered at American University-Central Asia, 22 March 2007.

Pakistan and India engage with Central Asian states in trade, pharmacy and textiles industries. Pakistan is especially interested in the membership in SCO as well as enhanced trade with Central Asia.

Central Asian states themselves react differently to the introduction of Greater Central Asian Partnership Doctrine by the US. While Kazakhstan appeared an ardent supporter of this idea other states have been resistant to this new policy initiative of Washington, D.C. According to Kazakh Foreign Minister Tokaev,

“Kazakhstan is strongly committed to regional cooperation...being a regional leader, Kazakhstan can and is willing to bring meaningful contributions to restoration of Afghanistan and creation of a Greater Central Asia, which we view as a civilizing and economic entity aimed at ensuring security and development of the region.”⁷¹

Indeed, Kazakhstan has already become a major economic power in the region. Earlier mutual visits of Kazakh President to the US show Kazakhstan's importance as a power that can lead change in the course of Central Asia's development at large, “this change would be a shift from a military scenario with a democratic and humanitarian face to the development of economic infrastructure with adequate long-term financial help.”⁷²

Many other critics of GCAP, mainly Russian foreign policy experts see Messianic zeal of the US in the proposed project.⁷³ Greater Central Asia Partnership is often called the neo-Marshall plan of the US aimed at containing Russian and Chinese influences. Moreover, there is a fear among Central Asians that open borders and better infrastructure will stimulate even bigger flow of narcotics from Afghanistan. Bhadrakumar writes,

⁷¹ Kasymzhomart Tokaev, Remarks at the conference “Partnership, Trade, and Development in Greater Central Asia” Kabul, Afghanistan, April 1-2 2006, available from http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/forum/trade_kabul_tokayev.html (accessed 26 February 2006).

⁷² Giorgio Fiacconi, “Will Kazakhstan Effect Regional Change?” *Times of Central Asia*, 4 January 2007, Vol. 9, no. 1, p.8.

⁷³See Омаров М.Н. (ed.), *Новая Большая Игра в Большой Центральной Азии*, (Бишкек: Салам, 2005). (M.N. Omarov (ed.), *The New Great Game in Greater Central Asia*, (Bishkek: Salam, 2005).

“No wonder there are no taker in Central Asia for Washington’s policy construct. Central Asia’s states are aware of the Taliban’s resurgences in Afghanistan, and reckon that peace is a distant goal. Even New Delhi seems embarrassed. Islamabad keeps quiet. The only capital to evince enthusiasm for Washington’s Paradigm of steering Central Asian states toward South Asian allies has been Kabul.”⁷⁴

The same author points out two reasons, which make US foreign policy toward Central Asia less effective. First, the US lost of influences over Uzbekistan after the Andijan events of May 2005. Uzbekistan is still geopolitically essential state in Central Asia, which later seems to be more inclined towards Russia and China. Second reason, as Bhadrakumar writes, is the issue of Iran. The author refers to Zbigniew Brzezinski’s article written in 1990s, in which he argued that in order “for the US regional diplomacy to be anywhere near optimal in the Caucasus, in the Caspian region and in Central Asia, it must befriend Tehran.”⁷⁵ However, today’s reality with Iran’s nuclear issue and the reaction of the US and other international actors make the probability of ‘befriending Iran’ quite distant.

⁷⁴ M.K. Bhadrakumar, “The Great Game on a Razor’s Edge. The Stakes go up in Central Asia,” *Global Research*. December 26, 2006, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/PrintArticle.php?articleId=4264> (accessed January 30, 2007).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

Seventeen years of US-Central Asia relations has taught both sides many lessons. The new generation of political elite has emerged in the Independence years and post Cold War world has fostered every state in Central Asia to develop its own unique political culture with mixed identities and attitudes towards their governments and foreign relations of states.

Multiplicity of regional and non-regional powers involved in Central Asia brought back the discussion of the Great Game and this concept appears to be the most alluring in the literature devoted to the analysis of the place of Central Asia in world affairs. However, it is essential to remember Central Asia's long historic path in order to understand its complex reality. Greater Central Asia Partnership Doctrine in this regard refers to its past experiences as a crossroads for cultural exchange with its famous Silk Roads. Heartland theory utilized in the paper once more emphasizes region's significance in the world politics, while geopolinomics calls for the implementation of GCAP and thus new interdependence without which the region will not be able to easily integrate into the world economy. Globalization with its enhanced competition necessitates regional groupings for the survival and development of states in global arena.

Greater Central Asia Partnership Doctrine of the US, which marked the eventual shift of the US foreign policy in Central Asia, as a policy construct is expected to restore historical relationship between Central and South Asia through the alternative routes of transportation. Links constructed during Kushan and later Ghaznavid empires, which have existed on the territory of Central Asia, had had transportation links with the outer world as well as ports and access to sea. One of those ports is Barbarikon, ruins of which are still in Pakistan and popularly known as Bhambhor. Dr. Kazi writes,

“communication through Barbarikon on the Arabian Sea and via lands of modern day Pakistan was one of the then Silk routes. The cross-continental

trade of the Kushan and the Chinese Empire in gold, silver, silk and spices with the Roman Empire was carried out through this route by the time Sassanid rule over Persia. Ships sailed from the Arabian Sea to Red Sea and entered Mediterranean via the Red Sea Niles canal in Egypt, from where the goods were exported to Greece and Rome.”⁷⁶

Indeed, the trade routes of those epochs have been very beneficial for Central Asia, consolidating its status as a crossroad for the exchange of cultures, people and ideas.

Applicability of GCAP will likely depend on the situation of Afghanistan, although there might be a wave of new Taliban threats in the region. Robert Gates, the US Secretary of Defense, during his meeting with Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO Secretary-General, stated that there are “indicators that the Taliban want to increase the level of violence in 2007.”⁷⁷

Whether history would repeat itself in Central Asia remains a grand question, the answer to which can determine the fate of US foreign policy in Central Asia and the success of Greater Central Asia Partnership Doctrine. Political life of Central Asia appears to be shifting, producing various alliances with the outside regional and non-regional actors. Only time will show how GCAP will be implemented, meanwhile one can merely discuss possible alternatives for the application of the GCAP doctrine as well as its interaction with power players involved in the region.

⁷⁶ Aftab A. Kazi, “Pivotal Pakistan: GCAP and the Geopolitics of Central Asia’s Traditional Indus Basin Corridor.” Paper presented during the International Conference on “Partnership, Trade and Development in Greater Central Asia,” Kabul, Afghanistan, 1-2 April 2006.

⁷⁷ “US warns of Instability in Central Asia,” *Times of Central Asia*, 17 January 2007, Vol. 9, no. 4, p. 5.

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