The “Strategic Regions” – Managing the global interdependencies (case of Central Asia)

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The International System

- History shows six dimensions of International System:
  - The geometrical arrangement of the units;
  - The scale of the system relative to the geographical environment;
  - The nature of the dominant unit or units;
  - The type of interaction;
  - The intensity of interaction;
  - The time-span over which the system is observed.
“The multiordinate or omnidimensional model of the international system presupposes a cluster of units all in direct contact with each other.

Today we might be witnessing a process of system transformation which rests primarily on the sectoral shift in dominant process, and secondarily on the increasing capacity of mass communication, and their unfolding effect on dominant units and structure (Buzan and Little).
The International System

Source: Attinà, 1999
What does mean the restructuring of international system?

- The Globalization process = a permanent re-contextualization of International System.

- “La logique de structuration du système international est le produit de l’intègration entre la structure et les unités englobées” (Dussouy).

- The world needs well-functioning international institutions for coordinating global strategic thinking on a set of specific practical changes (Armitage and Nye).

- Redistribution of power at the global level and increasing interdependence (Grevi).
The Restructuring of the IS

Source: Attinà, 1999
The IS Transformation

Source: Dussouy, 2001
Restructuring the International System (I)

- After the end of Cold War and of bipolar international system => the transition period towards a new international system.

- 1989/1991-2008 - the slow pace of change/transformation of the old international system.

- 2007-2010 - the financial-economic global crisis pressed for changes within international system.

- Today - high expectations both for economic and political restructuring of international system.
Restructuring the International System (II)

- Restructuring International System = multidimensional approach (economical, political, strategic, societal).

- L’infrastructure géopolitique de la configuration du système international = la configuration spatio-temporelle centré sur l’existence des États => territoires, réseaux, espace (Dussouy).
Restructuring the International System (III)

- L’arrangement spatial du system international (Dussouy):
  - L’espace naturel ou physique;
  - L’espace diplomatico-strategique;
  - L’espace demographique;
  - L’espace economique.

- La configuration systemique apparait avant tout comme un ensemble de tensions entre des acteurs de nature differentes. (Dussouy).
The Origins of the Multi-States Political System

Source: Attinà, 1999
Regions and International System

- A distinctive aspect of the emerging world order is the creation or consolidation of regionalist projects (EU, NAFTA, ASEAN etc.).
- Region building as a political project rather than one driven simply by gravity models of economic integration.
- The regionalism can be simultaneously a response to, and a dynamic behind globalization.
- Inter-regionalism - a recent phenomenon in international relations => a formalized relation in a more general sense: trans-regionalism.
- A global network of trans-regional and inter-regional links ultimately implies a regional world order (Hethne).
- Effort has been applied to the management of trans-territorial, or multi-territorial collective action problem solving.
Four approaches to regionalism (Higgott)

1.) De facto Regionalism = informal, market-led (rationalist economic)
2.) De Jure Regionalism = formal, rule-governed, state-led (legal-political)
3.) Instrumental Regionalism = initially informal and interested-led (realist)
4.) Cognitive Regionalism = initially informal, built on shared cultural, historical and emotional affiliations (socio-cultural)
Regionalisation and Globalisation

Source: Dussouy, 2001
Regions and restructuring International System

- Dussouy: “l’équilibration du monde passé par une integration regionalisée”

- Santoro:
  - “la realtà geopolitica dei diversi sistemi regionali”
  - “la formazione di aggrezioni geopolitiche regionali […] sorta dell’integrazione oggettatива fra potenza e valori di base, fra geografie e storia etc.”
Dynamics of post-1989 IS

**Phase 1**
- Sistema globale, regimi internazionali
- Crisi dello SPI, destrutturazione geopolitica, delegittimazione

**Phase 2**
- Sistemi complessi multinazionali, regimi regionali o settoriali, enti internazionali
- Crisi degli imperi, federazioni, istruzioni

**Phase 3**
- Attori nazionali o etnico-territoriali
- Crisi dello spazio-nazione, guerra regolata o possibile

**Phase 4**
- Nuovi attori, frammentazione, nazionalismi, aggregazioni-dislocazioni
- Crisi dei sistemi politici interni, delegittimazione statuale, Blut und Boden

**Phase 5**
- Nuovi attori, consolidamento dello spazio, confini, conflitto, sviluppo politico
- Guerra civile, spartizione del territorio, risorse, crisi etnopolitica, riconoscimento, subsistemi di guerra
Escalation, conflitti a intensità medio bassa, nuova diplomazia, alleanze, peace-enforcing, realignment

Fase 6

Geopolitica globale, regionale, economica, strategica

Fase 7

Nuova geopolitica, quattro modelli, egemonia, asimmetria, acentricità, stellarità

I quattro modelli: egemonico, autoritario, istituzione-feudale, virtuale

Fase 8

Forme di SPI:
   a) equilibrio
   b) bipolare (guerra)
   c) imperiale regionale
   d) regole collettive

Nuovo SPI, regole, guerra, rappresentanza, crisis management, global issues

Nuovi modelli di sistema politico interno/esterno, interdipendente, integrato, transnazionale

Source: Santoro, 1994
J. B. Duroselle:

- “les communautés pluri-nationales” et
- “les regroupements regionales”

“le nouvel ordre, correspondant reposera alors sur des formes spatiales d’une échelle plus large que les territoire nationales” (Dussouy)
Réseaux de la mondialisation
Intégration territoriale régionale

Territoire national

Segmanetation territoriale identitaire
Réseaux transfrontaliers d’unités sous-nationales

Niveau macro

Niveau méso

Niveau micro

Source: Dussouy, 2001

Regions and the IS restructuring
E. H. Carr analyzed the trend towards “regional blocs”, in terms of power politics.

Larsons and al. (2004) speaks about “building blocs” and “the access game”, for assuring access in key Strategic Regions.

Brzezinski described the political and military outcome of the three “central strategic fronts”, during the World War II, in relations by who gains or retains control over several key countries that have become the geopolitical linchpins in their respective regions.
Strategic Regions (II)

Such “central strategic regions” came from their “geopolitical positions radiating regional political and/or economic influence or a geostrategic location that makes it militarily significant”:

- Central Europe
- Central Asia
- South Eastern Asia.
Brzezinski presents also “peripheral zones” which are important to national and regional security of power “centres”:
- Central America
- Central/Eastern Europe
- Middle East

According with realist approach a Big Power or/and an Alliance is labeling the region as one of strategic importance (Great Game). See:
- Monroe Doctrine – Western Hemisphere
- Eisenhower Doctrine – Mediterranean Area and Middle East
- Brezhnev Doctrine – Central/Eastern Europe
Strategic Regions (IV)

- “The land between” concept defines the transit area between two or several “Power Centres”:
  - Central Asia
  - Central Europe
  - Mediterranean Basin.

- “Strategic Regions” of the globe which feel the pressure of the revived strategic jostling between the US and Russia, and the New World’s Power Centers (Kapila):
  - Central Asia
  - Middle East
  - Central/Eastern Europe
  - East Asia.
Central Asia (I)

- **Beginning of 1990’s**: “No region is more important to American’s future than Asia, and the issues that determine that future will be first and foremost economic” (“Essays on Strategy”, vol. XII)

- **Kissinger (1994)**: “Central Asia threatened by Islamic fundamentalism – the US national interest probably parallels Russia’s, at least as it applies to resistance to Iranian fundamentalism. Cooperation there would be quiet possible so long as it does not write a script for a return to traditional Russian imperialism”
Central Asia (II)

Saunders (2010): “Today, the region we currently refer to as Central Asia – the geopolitical space comprised of the five post-Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kurdistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan – is anything but a core in the contemporary network of globalized flows of information, people, goods, ideas, and money.

Due to a host of factors, the lands between the Caspian Sea and the Gobi Desert represent somewhat of a global backwater”.
Since the 1990s, Central Asia has been steadily moving into the limelight of world geopolitics because of its geostrategic and geo-economic potential.

- Political influence, economic interests, access to its considerable resource potential, promotion of religions and national ideas, as well as all aspects of regional security can be described as priorities.
Central Asia – Strategic Region (II)

The region’s geographic location is certainly advantageous: it is found, first, between two influential geopolitical forces and, second, between powerful industrial centres and large consumer markets of Europe and Asia.

This means that the regions security and sustainable development are on indispensable condition for realizing all sorts of interests”. (Shaymergenov, 2008)
International actors involved in Central Asia

- US, Russia, China = competitors in Central Asia’s Great Game
- EU, NATO, OSCE, SCO, CSTO = regional players in Central Asia’s Global Game
- UN, TNCs, INGOs – global players mapping the globality of Central Asia.
- **Central Asia** = possesses the attributes which guarantee its relevance to the globalized world of the 21st Century
The Obama Administration defines Central Asia as an "alarmingly fragile" region vulnerable to corruption, drug trafficking, and terrorism (Nichol, 2009).

- US seeks expanded ties with Central Asia in bringing stability to Afghanistan, regional security, energy diversification, and human rights.

- US encourages the states of Central Asia to develop ties and synergies with countries to the South (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan), and to link the region with Asia, including "the Asia security structure".

- US has also called for greater inter-regional cooperation on trade and transport ties with Afghanistan and South Asia.
US has supported EU efforts to reduce its overall reliance on Russian oil and gas by increasing the member of possible alternative suppliers.

US pay a high financial price to secure access;

Much of US involvement in the Central Asia post - 9/11 has bee focused on securing and managing military base agreements,

Security in Central Asia has most readily fallen under the rubric of geopolitics, territorially used as a stage upon which external actors could engage in games of power politics.
Medvedev Doctrine or Russia’s New Foreign Policy Doctrine with specific relevance to reclaiming its “spheres of influence”; claiming “privileged interest” in a number of regions – Central Asia, East Asia, the Northern Tier of the Middle East and Russia’s western peripheries.

The former Bush Administration (2000-2008) emphasized that Russia’s counter-terrorism efforts in Central Asia broadly supported US interests; more recently, Russia has appeared to step up efforts to counter US influence in Central Asia;
Russia – Central Asia (II)

- Russia’s more activist role in Central Asia, in 2000s, is proved by creation of rapid reaction forces to control terrorism and to launch pre-emptive strikes in Afghan terrorist bases;

- Lastly, Russia has claimed that it can ensure regional security in the face of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan;

- Russia reasserted, also, its economic interest in Central Asia, and gain substantial influence over energy resources;
Russia – Central Asia (III)

- Russian officials urged the Central Asian states to rely on Russian-controlled export routes;

- Russia’s economic position in the region has been weakened because of the global economic crisis – in contrast, China has appeared to be stepping up its aid and trade activities in the region.
EU and Central Asia (I)

- EU is a normative – soft power;
- EU Strategy for Central Asia under the German Presidency (2007);
- Many scholars said that another “great game” (US, Russia, China) is being played for influence;
  - The EU is an economic community and its interests in Central Asia does not appear as a “security threat” to the players in this new “great game”;
  - The EU could provide a valuable counter-balance to these influencing Powers (Merritt, 2007).
EU and Central Asia (II)

Since 2007, the EU assistance to Central Asia includes Food Security Programme, Local Authorities/Non-State Actor Programmes, Business; Energy; Education, and Security-oriented programmes.

For the 2011-2013 period, the Commission proposes to focus on three regional priorities (energy, water and economic networks) and the bilateral assistance on areas such as strengthening the judiciary and rule of law; public administration reform; social protection; education; health; rural development; private sector or trade developments.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Priority Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Administrative capacity-building</td>
<td>Rule of law and judiciary</td>
<td>Regional development and local governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Education reform</td>
<td>Social protection</td>
<td>Judicial reform and fight against corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>Social protection</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Private sector Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>Rural development and socio-economic reforms</td>
<td>Long-term sustainable energy development</td>
<td>Support to the improvement of human capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Raising living standards through rural and local development</td>
<td>Support to rule of law reform</td>
<td>Assistance in enhancing trade, business and SME development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
China – Central Asia (I)

- China has become an active promoter of regional multilateralism in Asia = SCO, ASEAN +1, ASEAN +3;

- New thinking in China’s diplomacy emphasizes the China’s role in three regions of Central, North and South – East Asia = the task of managing a neighborhood without conflict, a new security order region by region;

- The strategy of a great power cooperation: China, US, Russia, Japan, EU;

- China is steadily increasing its regional presence through the acquisition of stakes in energy and infrastructure assets.
China – Central Asia (II)

- Shanghai Cooperation Organization = to strengthen its control over its own Central Asian territory of Xinjiang.
  - China’s fears have been that the US would seek to consolidate its strategic interests in Central Asia.
  - as well as prevent the Afghan conflict from spilling over into neighboring states.
  - a regional approach to tackling separation and terrorism = towards the formation of a region-wide peacekeeping force and a regional conflict prevention mechanism.
Today NATO is claiming a key role in the international security architecture; can be explained by the upsurge of transnational security threats - “the globalization of NATO”.

NATO’s policy in the Central Asia = “spreading stability” – the regions stabilizing force.

NATO is in charge of the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan => Central Asia is a crucial region to the campaign in Afghanistan (the access region).

NATO programmes serve to transform, over time, the overall regional security picture - with or without membership.
Both Russia and China see their countries as being constrained by NATO → SCO membership becomes a means of ensuring their presence and representation in regional affairs, while generating a counterweight to forces (such as the US or NATO) that might seek to limit their exercises of power.

NATO is not only pursuing military – strategic interests in the oil and gas-rich region; it is indirectly promoting the realization of US – EU energy – related interests.

NATO’s presence may split the Central Asia countries into pro – and anti – NATO groups with Great Powers behind them.
The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (I)

- SCO seeks to create a substitute security framework under the UN to replace NATO’s activities in Central Asia.

- Providing a means for Russia and China to manage their tensions, the SCO embodies an unprecedented model of international relations, one of peaceful coexistence between major powers.

- There are opinions that the SCO is used one-sidedly by either Russia or China as a means to extend their control and military influence over Central Asia (Clegg, 2009).
Although the Central Asia states face a highly asymmetric position in relation to both Russia and China, arguably the SCO helps these smaller states in their policies of balancing.

The SCO started to make progress on development of economic cooperation at its 2006 Summit and since 2007 (admission of Iran and India as SCO observers) the organization widened opportunities.

The SCO effort in uniting states with considerably diverging agendas in a matter of just a few years is a rare case in the history of international relations, a turning point for the Central Asia region.
Central Asia location between Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan make the region a magnet for foreign powers and potential conflict between them.

The collapse of the USSR created a political vacuum in the former Soviet Central Asian republics that external powers have ever since competed to fill.

With the current American presence in Central Asia, Russian and Chinese influence has been temporarily diluted.

Since 2001, the Washington operations in Afghanistan destroyed the tacitly accepted balance of forces in Central Asia between Russia, the US and China.
How Asians perceive the Central Asia?

- The SCO was a way to seal the strategic Sino-Russian dominance over Central Asia while engaging in friendly relations with their Central Asia neighbours (Hsueh).
Regionalism and Central Asia

- Regionalism besides its strategic, geo-political and foreign dimensions -> a major plank of development cooperation and integration in many parts of the world.

- The “New Regionalism” forms part of a global structural transformation of the international system.

- Region building = as a political project rather than one driven simply by gravity models of economic integration.

- As interdependence deepens – the states can cooperate either through competition or through intergovernmental negotiations.

- Central Asia is not home to a regional integration project with a well developed institutional structure (Kimmage, 2007).
Strategic factors of the regional integration

Economic determinants:
- Level of economic development;
- Level of existing economic and other interdependence;
- The optimization of newly formed economic area;
- Complementarity of resources and factors of production;
- The nature of economic relations with third countries
- The suitability of the selected model and types of integration policy.
Strategic factors of the regional integration

- Political determinants:
  - The degree of political homogeneity in the region.
  - Level and stability of political will favouring integration.
  - The pattern of foreign political relations.
  - Efficiency of common institutes.
## Old vs. New Regionalism

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<tr>
<th>Old Regionalism</th>
<th>New Regionalism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was formed in and shaped by a bipolar cold-war context</td>
<td>Taking place in a multi-polar world order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was created ‘from above’</td>
<td>Is a more spontaneous process from within the region and also “from below” in the sense that the constituent states themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic integration was inward-oriented and protectionist</td>
<td>Increasingly also other actors are the main proponents for regional integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was specific with regard to objectives, some organization being security oriented and other being economically oriented</td>
<td>Often described as ‘open’: and thus compatible with an interdependent world economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only concerned relations between formally sovereign states</td>
<td>More comprehensive multi-dimensional process which includes trade and economic integration, environment, social policy, security and democracy</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Issue of accountability and legitimacy</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Lama, 2007
Old-New “Great Game”? (I)

- Central Asia has developed into an important geo-strategic and geo-economic region in world politics.
- “The rivalry over the Caspian Basin’s energy resources, interacting with many regional conflicts surrounding the area and with international efforts to bring peace to these conflicts, elevates the region to one of unique geopolitical interest that harbors various threats to regional and wider international peace and stability” (Hsueh).
Old-New “Great Game”? (II)

- Remind the Mackinder words: “the one who control this region could control the whole world”
- Since September 11, 2001 and the consequent war in Afghanistan => Central Asia into the international limelight, highlighting its strategic importance
- => one again in a “Great Game” of geopolitics between major Powers.
Does Central Asia exist?

Central Asia area shares considerable historical, cultural and, at times, linguistic similarities against a backdrop of significant difference.

“Central Asia is not home to a regional integrationist project with a well developed institutional structure” (Kimmage).

“Region” of Central Asia is really composed of five distinct and disparate nations” (Kimmage), favoring the “New Great Game” Approach (Hsueh)

Central Asia is a “pre-regional” area (Telò) in which several Powers compete for influence and for international/regional organizations develop bilateral and regional programs.
“New Regionalism” Approach

- The top-down approach adopted by most of the regional groupings based on traditional paradigm.
- The “New Regionalism” is mainly triggered from below (Lama):
  - private market and business oriented forms of regionalism
  - society induced one – this is seen in growing interdependence and cooperation between a great diversity of civil society organizations and inter-personal, intergroup, transnational networks.
- Transforming the conventional approach of regional grouping into a more open, dynamic and wider system and practices of peaceful coexistence, collective responsibility, regional development, and win-win situation generated by regionalism and multilateralism (see the ASEAN case)
What can be done?

- To support the development of regional cohesiveness/identity (regionness), presence and actorness.
- To encourage the new approach of multi-level governance within the region, based on state, sub-state, and supra-state levels.
- To expect a different qualitative approach of Great Powers towards the region, not using the regionalism in their own interests by getting access or remaining in control of the region.
- To promote the best practices of regional integration, taking the case of other ‘strategic regions’ – Central Europe, South East Asia.
**What role for the US, EU, NATO?**

- EU, NATO, US – to work complementarily and cooperating for implementing efficient common programs, keeping a long term commitment towards a constructive involvement in this region.
- EU, NATO – emphasizing the quality of being “multidimensional actors” within the international system, in order to develop the bilateral, regional, and multilateral relations in this area.
- The cooperation of the EU, NATO, SCO, ASEAN and the states of Central Asia for implementing the appropriate strategy of regional integration (“new regionalism”).
- By entering into cooperation with the SCO and CSTO, NATO would have been able to increase its role in Central Asia geopolitics.
- The State of transatlantic relations will determine the effectiveness of NATO, also in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.
What role for Russia, China, SCO?

- Russia, China and SCO - to develop regional mechanisms devoted to bringing peace, stability and prosperity to the region, and playing a constructive role under a more multilateral framework.

- SCO - to reach a gradual economic integration, managing the regional, inter-regional and global interdependence; SCO may model itself upon the ASEAN Regional Forum, in which US and other regions' players can become the valuable dialogue partners.

- For as long as Russia and China, the US, NATO, EU, OSCE, SCO continue to play geo-economic, geo-politics and geo-strategic games in the region, there will remain a semblance of stability (one must question the longevity of this policy).
A New Approach

Replacing the “Great Game” and the “privileged interests” approach with the pragmatism, strategic vision, and policy transparency in fostering regional cooperation.

To bring the Central Asia in current global network of trans-regional and inter-regional links.

Economic cooperation and trade can be complemented with military-technical cooperation.

Creative Programs to build civil society and support political parties, strengthen independent media, and promote rule of low and good governance are necessary long-term investments in Central Asia.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!