

## Two continents, one area: Eurasia

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## **Working Paper N° 328**

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# Two Continents, One Area: Eurasia<sup>1</sup>

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## 1 Two Continents, one Area

Europe and Asia: two continents, two civilisations, two vibrant economic zones, but one land mass, stretching from Madrid to Merauke, from Stockholm to Singapore, from Moscow to Madras, from Bonn to Beijing. You can buy a train ticket in Bielefeld to board a train for Beijing via Moscow or you can drive your car from Rome to Shanghai via Tashkent. The division of this vast area into two continents is a pure fiction of the imagination of the human mind, a social and cultural construction of geographical space. The history of this division can be traced and historically explained, but still it is an imaginary, but powerful concept that draws boundaries and maintains distinctions. When Turkey applied for membership in the European Union it was at first rejected

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at the Asia-Europe Linkages Conference, University of Birmingham, 2-3 July 1999. The material was collected within the frame of the self-conceived project "Development of a Eurasia Concept for Bilateral Cooperation between the Federal Republic of Germany and Central Asia" carried out by Markus Kaiser and

officially on political (human rights) and economic grounds, but the Turkish government alleged, perhaps rightly so, that some European politicians saw Europe as culturally distinct from an "Asian" Turkey and therefore non-compatible.

The orientalist construction of an "Asian" culture as distinct from a European civilisation, that reached its peak during the colonial period, where it served to legitimise imperialist expansion has by no means subsided. Good "Asian values" as distinct from deteriorated "Western values" are more recent inventions, based on similar strings of argumentation - only pointing into the opposite direction. For the past two decades Malaysia, as indeed most other ASEAN countries, has "looked East" in search of Asian values, production techniques, styles of governance and economic prosperity. Eventually another forceful image of a region or continent has been constructed more recently, namely the so called "Asia-Pacific". The term has been used to describe an area encompassing North America and East Asia with some later extensions on both sides of the Pacific Ocean into Latin America and Southeast Asia. Since then it has become a powerful instrument to promote free trade, economic liberalisation and the furthering of US American interests. The vast streams of speculative capital flowing into the East and Southeast Asian part of the Asia Pacific area has brought boom and bust to the region. The devastating forces of speculative casino capitalism are felt by Asian governments, corporations and in a most severe manner by the lower-income strata of East and Southeast Asian societies. "Looking East", a policy prescribed by PM Mahathir of Malaysia, has come to an abrupt end. Perhaps it is timely to turn and look towards the long neglected North and West, to the vast tract of land, of which Southeast Asia is, after all, an appendix.

There have been basically two major routes connecting Asia and Europe: the ancient Silk Road and the sea route across the Indian Ocean. The latter is still used by modern shipping, but the old Silk Road has long lain dormant. Could it be revived?

## **2 Eurasian Trans-realities: Reopening of the Silk Road**

### **2.1 The Legacy of the Silk Road**

The Silk Road from China to Europe could be analysed as being a geoculturally and geopolitically constructed corridor. Historically, long distance trade (for example the Silk Road) was one mode of early globalisation linking up different cultures, belief systems and networks of knowledge. The trading routes connecting Europe and East Asia have fascinated scholars, traders and adventurers throughout the centuries. It is the story of one of the world's oldest and historically most important intercontinental trade routes and its influences on the cultures of Asia and Europe, the East and the West. From its emergence before Christ, through the golden age of the Tang dynasty in China, until its slow demise six to seven hundred years ago, the Silk Road (Haussig 1983, Hedin 1938/1994) has played a unique role in foreign trade and political relations, stretching far beyond the bounds of Asia itself. It has left its mark on the development of civilisations on both sides of the continent. Recent archaeological research in the steppes of Russia and Kazakhstan has shed new light on the domestication of the horse, the beginning of horseback riding, and the introduction of the chariot. These innovations in transportation were linked to the spread of ancient Indo-European languages, and to the opening of transcontinental trade and communication across the Eurasian steppes (Anthony 1995) establishing a Eurasian geocultural space. On the eastern and western sides of the continent, the civilisations of China and the West developed. The Silk Road was, for at least 4,000 years, the main avenue of communication between the Mediterranean and China (Franck/Brownstone 1986: 1) linking two growth poles.

It is only with the hindsight provided by modern archaeological techniques, and access to historical documents from various Eurasian cultures, that we can form a picture of the vigour and constant motion of this trade system.

The fragile threads of the Silk Road were always changing, waxing, and waning at the mercy of history. Roles changed as well as routes, as traders were joined by a motley crew of diplomats, invaders, refugees, pilgrims and proselytisers en route to outrageous new lands (MacLeod/Mayhew 1997: 201).

According to Shimizu and Yakushik (1998: 22) in a geographical sense a route is a particular direction, a link. The historical Silk Road carries the notion of such a line on a map as the existing or planned infrastructure of pipelines, roads, air links, railway tracks, communication links etc. do. Today internal links within the Caspian Sea region inherited from the Soviet past and external links with other regions are poorly developed leading to the conclusion that the Caspian sea region in the 20th century was cut off from the global economic and political systems in an unnatural manner (Shimizu and Yakushik 1998: 22). Reconnecting Asia and Europe and the natural neighbours of the former border zone of the once longest and most closed border of the world is a result of the breakdown of the former Soviet Union.

The old and newly emerging system of transport for goods, persons and ideas suggests an interlinkage between and an overlap of Asia and Europe, facilitating a continual flow of money, goods, ideas, perceptions, discourses and persons. The circulating intermediaries allow networks to come into being by giving social links shape and consistency and therefore some degree of longevity and size. But they are not passive tools. For example, texts and technical artefacts can clearly define the role played by others in the network - both humans and non-humans. In other words, the "material" and the "social" intertwine and interact in all manners of promiscuous combinations (Thrift 1996: 24) including the development of spatial conceptions. The "material" might be loaded with different meanings, reflecting the transformation caused by market expansion on different levels. Goods might carry attached "attitudes of consumerism" from the global economy which are recontextualised by the actors (Chua 1992, 2000), thus integrating areas through a similarity of procedures. In short, localities are maintained while globalisation takes place.

In the following paragraphs we will attempt to follow up the process of Eurasian integration, the construction of a region, along several dimensions. We shall not differentiate between physical and epistemological aspects of this process but rather combine the world of things with the world of meaning.

## **2.2 Transnational Trade**

For some four millennia trade connected Europe and East Asia, stimulating cultural creativity and economic growth. The recent opening of the borders of the former Soviet

Union allows to use the continental bridge of the Eurasian land mass, to re-connect the two economic growth poles Europe and Southeast Asia for the potential benefit of Central Asia as the following table on Population and the GNP per capita of respective countries shows.

Table 1: Eurasia: Surface Area, Population and GNP per capita in selected areas, 1998

Region	Country	Surface Area Thousands of sq. Km	Population (millions in 1998)	GNP (Billions of US\$ in 1998)	GNP per capita (US\$ in 1998)
<b>EU</b>	15 member countries	<b>3,244</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>8,261.9</b>	<b>n. a.</b>
<b>Central Asia</b>	Kazakhstan	2,717	16	20.6	1,310
	Kyrgyz Rep.	199	5	1.6	350
	Tajikistan	143	6	2.1	350
	Turkmenistan	488	5	n. a.	640 (GDP)
	Uzbekistan	447	24	20.9	870
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,994</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>45.2</b>	<b>n. a.</b>
<b>Southeast Asia</b>	Cambodia	181	11	3.0	280
	Indonesia	1,950	204	138.5	680
	Lao PDR	237	5	1.6	330
	Malaysia	330	22	79.8	3,600
	Myanmar	677	44	n. a.	n. a. (760 or less)
	Philippines	300	75	78.9	1,050
	Singapore	1	3	95.1	30,060
	Thailand	513	61	134.4	2,200
	Vietnam	332	78	25.6	330
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,521</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>556.9</b>	<b>n. a.</b>
<b>East Asia</b>	China (incl. Taiwan)	9,597	1,239	928.9	750
	Japan	378	126	4,089.9	32,380
	Korea, RP	99	46	369.9	7,970
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,074</b>	<b>1,411</b>	<b>5,388.7</b>	<b>n. a.</b>
<b>NAFTA</b>	Three member countries	<b>21,293</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>8,914.4</b>	<b>n. a.</b>

Source: World Bank: World Development Report (2000)

The above table shows that the continental plateau of the Central Asian states has a comparatively small population with a low GNP per capita constituting a development gap on a huge land mass. A development of this Eurasian corridor would most probably lead to a fast rise in economic performances along this Eurasian axis. This process has already begun.

There is already some tentative empirical evidence on how the newly emerging economic linkages facilitate Eurasian integration. Very recent macroeconomic data show the establishment of an area as an alternative to "Asia-Pacific". Looking at the top ten countries and donors listed according to the amount of investments in Uzbekistan in 1997 one sees Europe and Asia meeting in Central Asia.

Table 2: Foreign Direct Investment, Uzbekistan 1997 (the top ten countries and donors listed according to the amount of investments - including foreign direct investments, loans and financial liabilities under governmental warranty - in Uzbekistan at the end of 1997)

Country	Percentage
United Kingdom	22.0 %
Malaysia	16.0 %
Turkey	12.6 %
USA	10.0 %
Japan	9.7 %
Korea	8.9 %
Germany	6.7 %
EBRD <sup>2</sup>	3.9 %
Indonesia	3.0%
France	1.6 %

Source: Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1998: 74)

Empirical research<sup>3</sup> in other regions of the world shows that prior to a more formal regional integration much more subtle and informal processes of integration foreshadow

<sup>2</sup> EBRD is the abbreviation for European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

<sup>3</sup> We refer mainly to studies carried out at the *Sociology of Development Research Centre*, University of Bielefeld as well as other research on related topics.



future trends<sup>4</sup>. In Central Asia transborder petty trade has increased considerably after the demise of the Soviet Union. In Uzbekistan our recent study showed that 83 % of goods imported by petty traders into Uzbekistan from outside the CIS originated from Asia. This might be taken as an indicator of the potential of a Transasian and Eurasian economic integration.

Central Asia's borders to China, Russia and the Near East are an important element in the development of trading there, as are the extensive informal networks and clan-style organisations which have developed new microstructures in the context of the present postcommunist conditions (Evers and Schrader 1994, Kaiser 1998a). Nevertheless, there are many factors in common with other postcommunist markets and trading arrangements, including the opening of borders leading to increasing day-to-day travel for the purposes of trade, the changing morality associated with trading and the embeddedness of market relations in distinctive social and cultural milieus which are on the one hand inherited from the Soviet times and on the other hand are in the course of dynamic transformation (Kaiser 1998a).

Existing parallels between current trading patterns and the "Great Silk Road" strengthen the idea of its revival further. Earlier, hardship, banditry, time scales and common sense would obviously have made it unlikely to conduct transcontinental trading on a single track or network. It is reported that even today there are bandits operating on highways, while mafia groups are trying to get their slice of trading profits as well. Goods move in a stop-start fashion, and are exchanged from market place to market place. Similar to those old days, we see the emergence of trading posts and border markets on every major intersection of transnational roads and at national borders. In border towns, special container markets appear. In *Chardjou*, a town in Turkmenistan at the border with Uzbekistan, such a container bazaar came into existence as the Uzbek government allowed only smaller quantities to be imported.

Located in the countries of the CIS are major hubs for global merchandise. In Uzbekistan, it is the *Ippodrom* market in Tashkent, in the Ukraine it is Odessa, as a result of being located on the Black Sea coast. In the international markets, the inter-ethnic language is Russian. In *Seoul*, a centre for international shuttle traders from all

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<sup>4</sup> To cite one example: Increasing small-scale crossborder trade within Southeast Asia indicated trends towards the economic integration of ASEAN.

over the world, the Pusan (market place) is the centre for the Russian and/or CIS shuttle traders and the Inchon (market place) is the centre for the traders from China (Shim 1997: 198). In *Istanbul* ships are guided through its harbour by Russian traffic signs. A globalised Russianised infrastructure of hotels, restaurants, tourist agencies, and so forth in places like Bangkok, Istanbul, New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul, Singapore etc. emerged serving the demand of the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In markets of a more regional importance, Russian is not that prominent anymore. In *Mazar-i-Sharif*, Afghanistan, for example, shop-owners announce products with placards in Russian, but they had to ask someone else to write for them since they do not speak Russian. The Cyrillic alphabet is just a symbol for trade in goods with a broader demand that attract people from the newly independent Central Asian states. Bargaining between shop-owners and shuttle traders, however, is done in *Tajik, Farzi, Uzbek* or *Turkmen*. Using one of these languages would exclude the speakers from the others, since these languages are even written in different alphabets. Nevertheless, the Russian language is the lingua franca of cross-border trade to which all adjust as did the merchants to the language of the *Sogdian* middlemen in the days of the Silk Road (Kaiser 1998a).

Those findings coincide with the acknowledged increase of pilgrimage to Mecca by Muslims of Central Asia and China (Gladney 1992: 6; Kaiser 1998a; Eickelman/Piscatori 1990). Nagata (1994: 83) provides a modern account of the interrelation of economic activity and religious matters. In Islam, economic activity is not negatively viewed and mobility is encouraged through the idea of transborder pilgrimage. To cite just one example from our field study, where a pilgrim and small-scale trader stated,

"A pilgrimage to Mecca goes hand in hand with my business". (Ahmed, 42, Uzbek)

Generally the pilgrims are more wealthy and engaged in new economic activities. Many small-scale cross border traders use the subsidised air fare on Uzbekistan Airways to join the *hadsch* to Mecca, and to stop over in Dubai, buying high-tech electronics along the way. Economic, cultural and spiritual integration is simultaneously taking place constituting a Eurasian microstructure of integration. Moreover, there is a flow of trans-Islam border-crossing movements constituting a religious dimension of a Central Eurasian societal integration. Mobility in economic activities is a definite advantage,

and religious mobility (e. g. trips to Mecca) also implies social and economic prestige. The emergence of transnational Islamic connections is one effect of new religious movements (Beller-Hann 1998b, Gladney 1992).

In this world on the move, distance becomes a category of social analysis. Distance, as well as borders, are at the same time obstacles and resources. Traders for example take risks and, therefore, are subject to exploitation by various kinds of people and different types of personalities. One resource for possible profit is the different prices in the various markets making up the market system. To the North of Tashkent, in Moscow, the prices are very high, becoming lower as one goes south. When flying from Almaty to Tashkent, prices are, on this axis, lower in Tashkent. In the producer countries in Southeast and South Asia commodity prices are even lower. National boundaries and economies are thus a resource for cross-border trading and travelling. National diversity, thus, leads to the strengthening of integration.

Another question is whether there are developing transnational identities in relation to trade or kinship networks among neighbouring countries. Our own studies give several examples for a tendency of transnational linkages and family networks. The Chinese revitalised their old networks when they were allowed to travel to Kazakhstan again in 1986. As many goods are not produced in Xinjiang, there is an external influence in the north-western Chinese province, anyway, e. g. the fashionwear for women is Shanghai or Singapore-dominated. Traders who have a base outside their home region, command female relatives to live at the trading post or contract local marriages. This strategy used to avoid the reliance of other ethnic groups seems to be a wider-spread pattern as our field studies on Arab traders in Indonesia and Chettiar moneylenders in Malaysia have shown (Evers and Schrader 1994, Evers 1988). Additionally, it offers the opportunity for a longer stay in foreign places for business reasons giving further evidence for translocalities emerging through economic reasoning.

Other examples of transnational identities are the typically hybrid joint ventures. UzDaewoo Bank, for example, was founded by a group of financial institutions with several individuals; 55 % were held by Daewoo Securities, 10 % by Koram Bank, 25 % by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, 10 % by the National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity of Uzbekistan and Joint-Stock Bank of Consolidation

Turon (Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan 1998: 74). We regard this as an example of a newly emerged Eurasian banking institution.

In a way the rise of new independent states in Central Asia and the increasing importance of private trade and exchange of goods led to a revival of the Silk-Road trade in the form of long-distance petty trade across the newly established borders of the new states of the former Soviet Union as well as into other neighbouring countries including Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, The Arab Emirates, Kuwait and China, but also India, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia. Turkish sources reported that the estimated annual turnover of the Turkish economy supplying trader-tourism from the former Soviet Bloc was in the region of US dollars 10 billion for 1996.

### **2.3 Commodities: Asian Goods with a Western Accent**

Transnational petty trade links different worlds and produces Eurasian products, markets and shops. It also promotes "consumer attitudes" and a kind of consumerism that integrates Asia and Europe (Chua 1992, 2000). Supermarkets on *the Broadway*, the main street for leisure activities in the city centre of *Tashkent*, are "Eurasian Shops" in the real sense of the word, where you will find all these famous "western products": *Schwartau's* jam, *Granini* juice, *Kellogg's Cornflakes* and *Bahlsen* cookies, *Langnese* honey, Bavarian beer, *CocaCola's* soft drinks and *Levis* jeans often being produced in Asian countries. Competitors are the Uzbek-Turkish *Mir-Burger* supermarket, opened in January 1996, offering only Turkish products.

A Eurasian Shop of another kind opened in association with a Turkish supermarket: this shop sells baby clothing and toys, as well as *Moulinex* electric appliances, jars and pots and table-ware. All items in this shop have well-known brand-names and are more expensive than the pots and glasses - usually made in China or Southeast Asian countries - offered in other shops in the vicinity of *Tashkent*. The cheaper items seem to be familiar to us from shops of Muslim owners in Bielefeld or other European cities.

Moreover, the interior décor in those shops differs profoundly from the other far more simple Soviet-era stores. Generally speaking, the products as well as the interior appeal to a different clientele: they attract the "New Russians" as well as the members of the

*nomenklatura* who now have the means to shop in these supermarkets. Women and men, expensively dressed, in fashionable Western outfits as well as modern Uzbek style or Muslim-like clothes, come to shop at the stores offering more than locally produced items. They buy and hurry away in their expensive cars, speeding at 60 - 80 km per hour through the inner cities of the Central Asian capitals, turning the Soviet roads into dangerous highways. The BMW car, the nice suit and the attaché case are the insignia of the new businessmen.

As Fierman (1988) asserts, the former aspirations of the Soviet youth in the Muslim republics can be lived out in the newly emerged westernised youth culture in *Tashkent* which is breaking with pre-Soviet and Soviet concepts and the rules of the older generation and older society like in other Asian societies. Music, discotheques (*Asia*), *Lucky Strike* bars and the *Mir-Burger* were the main medium of this emerging youth culture. The Turkish amusement park (*Aqua Park*) is another site.

Music is very much a communal experience at in-house birthday parties and similar events. Cassettes and music videos spread as illegal copies. Mass concerts were shared events, such as when *Boney M.* came. They offered the chance for the audience to see the role model in person, in the flesh. Shared thoughts and feeling and the relaxation experienced create a feeling of belonging to a Eurasian youth culture. The media play a key role in spreading Western culture and life-style. Indian soap operas are perceived as presenting the Western concepts of love and life-style. Television serials are shared experiences, and youngsters would meet to have dinner and drink vodka whilst watching them.

To conclude Asian goods with a Western accent can be seen as another dimension of a Eurasian integration. The specific links with Asia combined with the attempted Westernisation creates a very specific and transnational Eurasian space. Generally market traders would omit to reveal the Asian origin of Western style goods. They would laugh at anyone's stupidity if he or she were fooled by the French origin of a perfume or the Italian origin of dresses. Such knowledge may be termed a public secret on the markets. None of the customers claimed to be fooled by the labels and such labels were generally considered unimportant by both customers and traders.

The following statement derives from an interview in a marketplace in Tashkent, Uzbekistan:

People who buy *Reebok* shoes in the *Ippodrom*-Market know that they are not *R* and for them it does not matter whether it says *Reebok* or *Raabok* or *Ruubok*. It makes no difference to the seller or to the buyer. They do not think about these things. For them it is not a reason... If somebody finds a new article and it is labelled *Reebok*, and he thinks it will be a good article to sell, he will buy a batch and sell it, but not because of the name. It does not mean anything. I do not know why factories in China copy these names, because everybody knows that they are not true. I really do not know why those manufactures have these names sewn in (Marat, 42, Tatar, a trader in Tashkent, Uzbekistan).

Falsifications were legitimised by suggesting that there was no real distinction between their copied product and the Western equivalent, or that their product was of an even better quality. Other discourses of legitimisation exist.

First it is necessary to ask what you mean by the term "original". For example *Adidas* shoes are produced in Korea and sold in America, so are they original or not? All these companies like Nike and Puma manufacture goods in Korea and other Far Eastern countries because labour is cheaper there. Sometimes when I buy something that says "Made in Japan", I think I am buying the original article, but there are a lot of pirates producing very similar products. Sometimes they are very difficult to distinguish from the originals. Even the Japanese do not always distinguish between them (Oleg, 44, Russian, trader in Almaty, Kazakhstan).

In this case Oleg is clearly connotating "original" with "Western". The prestige of a given product derives, however, from its "Westernness". The high status enjoyed by Western clothes was apparently already prevalent in Soviet times. According to Shlapentokh (1989) the West and Western items were not only very popular in the Soviet Union during the 1980s but were also copied by Soviet factories and sold as imported goods:

The devotion to Western attire is so great that Soviet factories have begun to produce shirts, blouses and sweaters bearing various commercial logos printed

in England, such as *Marlboro*, *Mercedes Benz*, or *Levi-Strauss*. The manufacturers attempt to pass them off as Western products. Given the ideological climate in the country in the 1980s this action by factory directors is truly remarkable (Shlapentokh 1989: 151).

In addition, it is reported that in the second economy during Soviet times the illicit production of "fake labels of origin" took place. Such goods were evaluated in terms of their ability to communicate a certain Western style.

On the other hand, especially in the recent years of economic transformation, transnational corporations have discovered the new local Central Asian markets among them *Mercedes Benz* and *DAWOO* representing Europe and Asia; and in fact everything is purchasable - due to partly liberalised import regulations, but not affordable for everybody, however, offering ways of distinction and life-styling recreating and representing imagined Europeanise and Asianess.

## 2.4 The New Rich and the New Middle Classes

In ordinary language nowadays, the concept "New Russians", is applied all over the former Soviet Union to those who have quickly come into money and/or are in possession of the ascribed status through owning Western objects of prestige (for example, Western cars, a large apartment or house, buying in real stores, and so forth). "New Russians" is a cliché referring to a non-Soviet and alien mentality, which is according to Humphrey (1997, 1998)

rapacious, materialist and shockingly economically successful (Humphrey 1997: 87).

The "New Russians" represent a different cultural group with new perceptions. They are different from the old Soviet nomenclatura, since they are more Western-oriented and found throughout the new states formed after the demise of the Soviet Union. They prefer a range of English-derived terms for themselves that express their cosmopolitanism. They refer to themselves as *professionaly* (professionals), *businessmeny* or *delovyye lyudy* (business people), *dilery* (dealers) and *menadzhery* (managers). This reveals unintended aspects of identity creation.

[...] these new people are understood not to be intrinsically other but indeed to have derived and spun away from "us", the unmarked mainstream, and furthermore it is felt that they may represent Russia's future (Humphrey 1997: 86).

The "New Russians", the business elites, are rarely engaged in production, as many of them do export-import business, work as consultants, bankers, managers and in related professions. Consumption is assumed to be very important in the life-styling of the "New Russians", not only in regard to the businessmen themselves, but also for the women surrounding them. The New Soviet Man is accompanied by the New Soviet Woman.

The New Russian [...] is pictured as man, with glamorous female dependants (Humphrey 1997: 87).

According to Humphrey, the identity of the "New Russians" is increasingly constructed in a contradictory discourse. They do not have a shared history, or only a very short one. One kind of cultural work seems to be the new housing: the suburban villas or residential areas close to economically important places. Across the *Ippodrom*-market in *Tashkent* such a residential area has developed recently. It is a place to show off one's own economic potential and position. To have well-equipped security staff is one sign. The newly emerged forms of housing construct their own world and a security guard controls the demarcations of middle-class living space.

The notion of "New Russians" hints towards a comparison of the recent work describing the New Rich (Robison/Goodmann 1996, Chua 2000) or New Middle Class (Gerke 2000) in East and Southeast Asia and the development in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. This body of research provides important illustration of the rapid growth of the middle class, with attention to its ambivalence about the social consequences of economic change and about democracy. Asian and the former socialist societies share an emphasis on collective rather than individualistic cultural values making them different from the Euro-Atlantic experience. Balzer (1997: 19) consequently asks if Asian values are Eurasian values now or has Azioppe replaced Eurasia. For Russia he argues that

An issue that emerges clearly from comparison with Asian cases pertains to Russian intolerance for income inequality enshrined in folktales, anecdotes and "national character" (Balzer 1997: 19).



Unsurprisingly, dislike of growing social disparities is a common theme in virtually all transition societies, including China. Robison and Goodman (1996) state for the Chinese what could be equally true for Russians, Eastern Europeans and Central Asians.

Many Chinese remain equivocal about the existence of the new rich, who are simultaneously admired and despised for their wealth ... Often an instinctive reaction is to attribute individual economic wealth solely to official corruption, or other illegal arrangements, rather than simply emphasising economic growth (Robison/Goodman 1996: 227).

These social and cultural consequences are part of global transformation processes (Evers 1996) characterising both continents making them one area.

## **2.5 Transport: Roads, Railways, Airways and Pipelines**

### **2.5.1 Roads and Rails**

Beside the historical Silk Road cross-cutting ties, the Eurasian transportation system being a mapable net of tracks and roads are used as metaphor or example in discourses of an Eurasia in the making. Eurasia is re-established by connecting the separated transport systems of the postsocialist countries with the Asian and European transport system. Thus, the extension of the railway connecting *Lanzhou* to *Urumchi* to the border with Kazakhstan, where, on 12th September 1990, it was finally joined to the former Soviet railway system, providing an important route to the new republics and beyond is such an example. Gladney states in regard to the emerging Eurasian transport system that

The Trans-Eurasian railway was completed in the autumn of 1990, far ahead of the 1992 schedule, and has already led to a jump in Sino-Soviet trade. While the 1988 trade was reported at 100 million Swiss Francs (an increase from 21 million in 1987), contracts for 200 million signed in 1988 have already largely been met (Gladney 1992: 5).

A Eurasian Continental Bridge, built to rival the Trans-Siberian Railway, has additionally been constructed from *LianYunGang* city in *Jiangsu* province (on the East China coast)

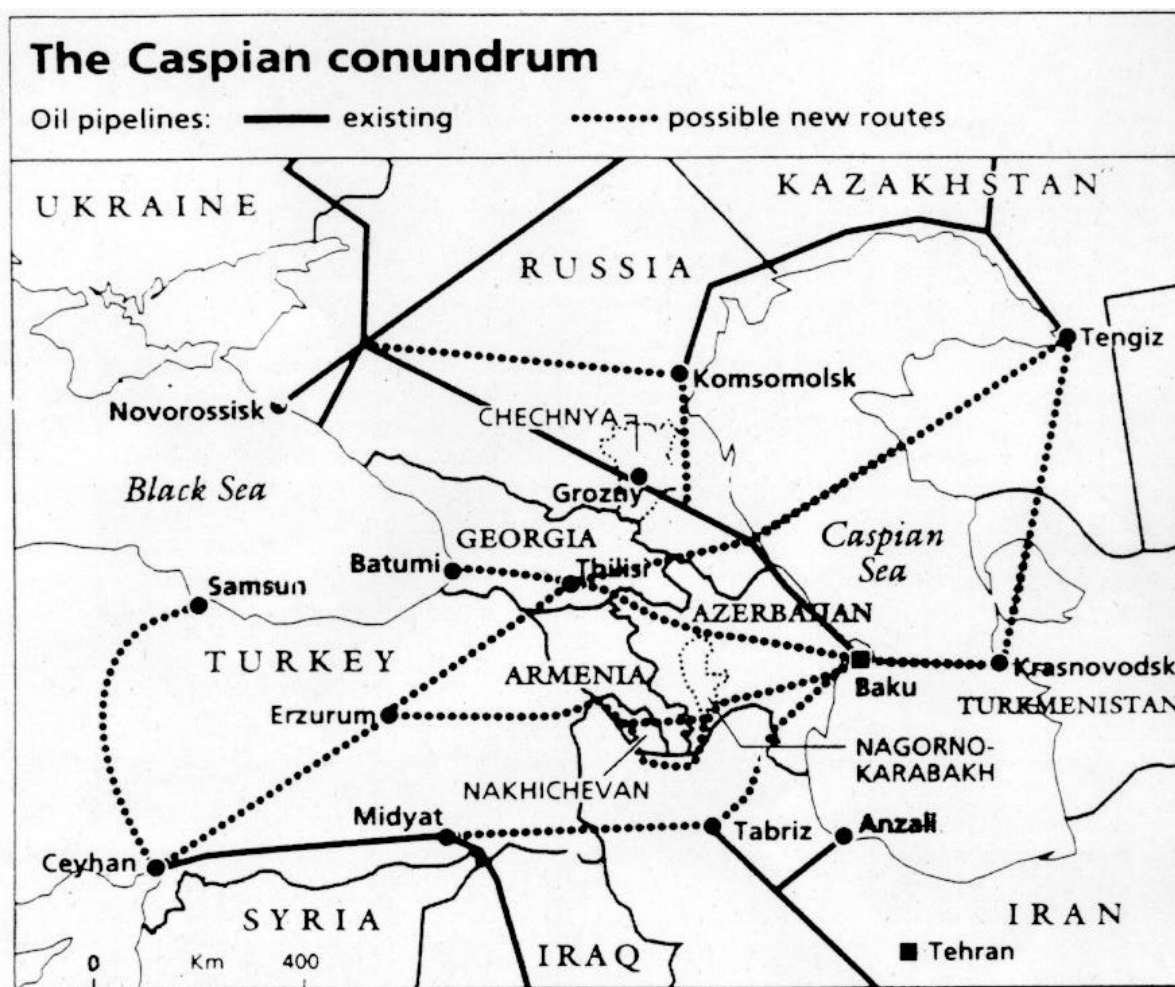
to Rotterdam (via Bielefeld). The first phase of this development has already been completed, and the official opening of the railway was held on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1992. It already promises to be at least 20 % cheaper than by the sea route, and, with its 11,000 kilometres, is significantly shorter. From China the route passes through Kazakhstan, Russia, Byelorussia and Poland, before reaching Germany and the Netherlands. The double tracking of the railway from *Lanzhou* to the border of the CIS has now been put high on the Chinese development priority list. According to Gladney (1992: 5) the new transport infrastructure has enormously facilitated transislamic travelling especially among Muslims as Uighurs, Hui, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in Central Asia and Xinjiang, China.

## **2.5.2 Pipelines**

Another very central issue of the emerging Eurasian infrastructure is the development of the Caspian oil resources raising the question of how the oil and natural gas should be transported to the consumption markets, especially to those in Europe and Asia.

The calculations show that one of the best places to send the forthcoming oil and gas from the Caspian would be through the Mediterranean to the European market, 'as oil demand over the next 10 - 15 years in Europe is expected to grow by little more than 1 million barrels per day'. However, there are even more promising regions - 'oil exports eastwards could serve Asian markets, where demand for oil is expected to grow by 10 million barrels per day over the next 10 - 15 years'. That's why one can mention two main possible directions of exports: to Western Europe and to East and Southeast Asia (Shimizu/Yakushik 1998: 23).

This provides another evident link between Europe and (Southeast) Asia. Turkey, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and China are seeking to ensure that these pipelines are constructed across their territories (Rubinstein/Smolansky 1995, Shimizu/Yakushik 1998).



**Source: *The Economist*, March 25, 1995.**

These states would benefit economically from the royalty fees, transportation costs and the possible consumption of some of the oil and gas while gaining political influence at the same time. On the other hand Kazakhstan's long-term goal is to secure multiple oil export routes to be more independent from Russia (Financial Times 1999: III). Short-term priority has a greater access to world markets via Russia to a terminal via Novorossiysk on the Black Sea coast. In addition to this Caspian Pipeline System the Kazakh Kashagan and Tengiz oil fields will be connected through Samara, Russia, with the Baltic Pipeline System. To build a pipeline to link up Kazakhstan and China by 2005 was agreed on already when two big Kazakh oil fields were sold to China. Pipelines linking up Iran and South Asia are also discussed (Financial Times 1999: III).

The scenario makes up a regional power rivalry in world politics making major global players involved. For the strategy of the United States Shimizu and Yakushik (1998) can be quoted as follows:

The United States is pursuing a new strategy in the region, and with ever-growing impacts. One important strategic goal of the United States is to safeguard the "independence" of the newly independent countries of the region, replacing Russia. Another strategic goal is to exclude Iran from participation in the production of Caspian oil and gas, and to prevent the development of transportation routes or pipelines that would lead from the Caspian region to either the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean via Iran. This second objective is not based on short-term economic considerations, but rather is closely linked to the United States' world strategy, especially its Middle East strategy. It is related to the ongoing dual containment policy of the United States against Iran and Iraq, and the fact that Iran is to some extent opposed to the American-led Middle East peace process, but it is also anchored more deeply in the fundamental U. S. strategy in the Middle East, namely, the strategy of not permitting the emergence of any dominant regional power capable of influencing the oil market in the Persian Gulf (Shimizu/Yakushik 1998: 30).

This new rivalry reminds of the Great Game when Britain and Russia competed „for the allegiances of the bejewelled satraps, khans and emirs who ruled the Central Asian steppes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century“ (Financial Times 1999: 1). In those days gone by the independence of Afghanistan was considered in the same way as today the independence of Kazakhstan: a matter of great importance for the welfare of the US, the European Union and the tranquillity of Asia.

Thus Robbins (1994: 43) rephrasing Mackinder stated, "who controls the silk pipelines controls the world". The analogy with the old Silk Road is used to express economic significance as well as to promote tourism (MacLeod/Mayhew 1997). In the end a "pipeline superhighway replaces the Silk Road" (Parrot 1997). The oil and natural gas production and transportation is only one, however important, aspect of economic integration.

## **2.6 Ethnicity and Religion**

Travelling by train from Bielefeld to Beijing one crosses different cultural zones. As one travels East, faces of fellow travellers as well as the food items sold on the platforms of

the railway stations are becoming more Asian. Eating pleasures with sweet cookies or beer, which will be followed by Vodka and Soviet type of sausages or dried fish, turning into Kumiz, melons and plov etc.

Eurasia as a whole, including Central Asia is a region of great ethnic diversity with far-flung migrant communities. The territories of ethnic coliving overlap national boundaries and "ethno-spaces" of other ethnic groups (like concentric circles) along this cross-continental axis Kazakhstan, located in the centre, shares not only a 7,000 km border with Russia, but is home of a close to 40 percent Slavic minority and an Uighur minority in the south-west. There China has been pressing territorial claims on Kazakhstan, as the territory used to be considered "Xi Yu" (Financial Times 1999: 1).

Recent works on migration suggest to view migrant communities as transnational and translocal communities as a social reality beyond the nation state (Gardner 1995, Glick Schiller/Basch/Blanc-Szanton 1992, Hannerz 1996, Hall 1991, Peleikis 1998, Pries 1996, 1997). All these approaches capture migration as new multilocal transnational social spaces developed between the region of departure and arrival (Pries 1997). In this context geographically separate places become effectively a single community through the continuous circulation of people, goods, money and information. Russians, Koreans and other ethnic groups in Central Asia maintain their relationships with coethnics in the "near abroad" (meaning in other Soviet successor states) and the "far abroad" (Kaiser 1998b, Kaiser 2000).

According to official statistical data 183,100 Koreans lived in Uzbekistan, and 103,300 in Kazakhstan in 1989. Most of them had been deported to Central Asia by Stalin (Shim 1997: 182). In the city of Tashkent Koreans make up 4.2 % of the population (source: Statistical Office of Uzbekistan). Another 107,100 Koreans lived in Russia in 1989 providing the ethnic base for a vivid Asian multilocal space bridging Asia, Central Asia and Europe. They are transmigrants in the definition of Glick Schiller et. al:

Transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations - familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously (Glick Schiller et. al. 1992: 2).

Russians, Koreans, Germans, Jews and others do not move between two bounded and separated worlds, but are present in different places in a single translocal community.

They themselves and their culture are no longer tied to just one geographical location, but their community is recreated transnationally. In this process the place of migration as well as the home community are not static. Instead, as over the years they are increasingly linked, both are transformed.

Taking this into consideration one can describe a new kind of emerging population constituting Eurasia, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. Their lives crosscut national boundaries and bring two societies - or more - into a single transnational social field (Glick Schiller et. al. 1992:4). Koreans in Uzbekistan call themselves Asian Russians as the young generation speaks only Russian and reads Russian literature looking Asian at the same time. Russians in Central Asia also refer to themselves as Asian Russians being Russians with Asian way of life and way of things to do.

Geocultural or macroethnic facts provide room for argumentation to maneuver in the broader economic field, too. Thus, the engagement of the German government in providing aid to Kazakhstan can partly be explained by the Kazakh-Germans or Central Asian Jews being integrated into the activities of development programmes within in the region or migrated to Germany and assisted by special integration programmes in Germany. In the same way as the German-speaking minority provides a link to the European Union, Koreans play a similar role in the relations between Central Asia and the Korean peninsula. According to Shim (1997: 203) the relations between Korea and Central Asian countries are changing now. During the Soviet era they had relations only with North Korea based on ideology. But now, as the Central Asian countries are much interested in the experiences of Korean economic development, South Korea consolidates relationship with Central Asian countries on economic interest. Shim speaks of the "bridge role" (1997: 203) of the Central Asian Koreans.

In 1993 South Korea was among the main donor countries of development aid. South Korea's share in foreign trade with Kazakhstan was 4.5 % in 1996 and was thus matching Switzerland (5.3 %) and Turkey (4.5 %).

Table 3: Foreign trade of Kazakhstan 1996

Country	share in %
Germany	13.8
Netherlands	10.5
China	8.0
USA	6.0
Italy	5.3
Switzerland	5.3
Turkey	4.5
South Korea	4.5
Hungary	3.7
Japan	3.6

Source: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan

The importance of South Korea is even more evident looking at imports through joint ventures in Kazakhstan in 1996.

Table 4: Imports of joint ventures with foreign participation in Kazakhstan in 1996

Country	volume, in thousand US \$
South Korea	47,307
USA	43,321
China	41,950
Germany	40,920
Poland	37,642
Singapore	34,079
Austria	22,070
Turkey	15,949
Hungary	15,948
England	14,515

Source: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan

Another ethnically based network exists among Russians that have become the economically most important minority in the Central Asian republics and the Russian language is still the lingua franca, supporting the flow of information between Europe and Central Asia (Kaiser 2000).

Ethnicity is only one resource for societal integration transgressing national borders. There is a flow of trans-Islam border-crossing movements constituting a religious dimension of a Eurasia in the making (Piscatori 1987, Ro'i 1995). The former Soviet Union had the fifth largest Muslim population of any country in the world. 500,000 Muslims out of 55 million live in Moscow alone. According to Eickelman and Pasha (1991: 632) most Muscovite Muslims have remained closely linked with their communities of origin.

Muslims in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Tashkent and Kuala Lumpur listen to Koran recitations or sermons in circles of friends or family members. Young Muslims acquire audiotapes of Koran and Sunna recitations by famous sheikhs. They originate from Saudi-Arabia, the Middle East and Malaysia. Those audiotapes are crucial for the nourishment of a religious milieu in Muslim Eurasia. The latest exercise in religious politics for Malaysia has been in the new Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and especially Uzbekistan, where it perceives a tempting vacuum according to Nagata (1994: 83). Before the Asian crisis Malay officials negotiated to set up an institution of higher education in Tashkent. Nagata accounts the following:

Political and trading overtures, followed by a prime ministerial visit to Uzbekistan mark this new alignment for the region's Muslim population and re-incorporation as members of the wider Muslim community. Also, in the name of the *ummah*, but outside the purview of the State, other Muslims, such as Dural Arqam, are forging their own independent connections with Central Asia, with emphasis on Uzbekistan. Whereas the Malaysian government treads carefully in religious matters, Arqam is the centre of a lively religious revitalisation in Uzbekistan, active in the restoration of mosques and resocializing of the youth, especially those in the university in *Tashkent*, in their ancestral faith. Arqam sweetens its overtures with offers of small-scale trade and investments, fruits of its own economic enterprises, and has already opened a Malay restaurant and invested in property in *Tashkent* (Nagata 1994: 83).

Turkish-speaking Muslim activists based in Germany, for example, have also entered Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics as teachers of language and religion from the European side. They fund mosques, create religious study groups, and select promising Central Asian youth for further study and training in Germany (Eickelman 1997: 33).

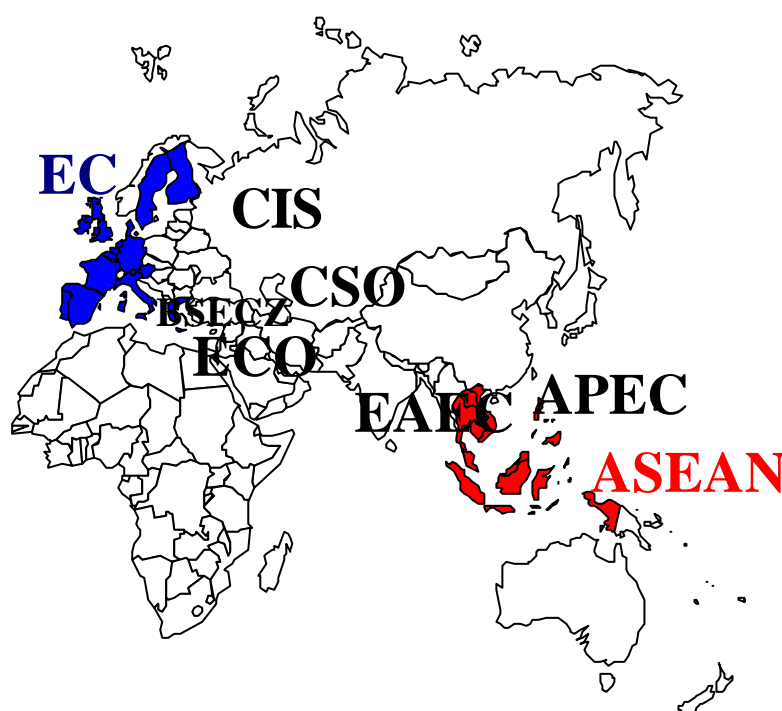
Krämer (1998) depicted four women in *Tashkent* as being influential as "cultural builders", as they offer religious advice in female circles based on their experiences in



Mecca. She therefore acknowledges a change in Islamic practice and religious knowledge provided by such religious sojourners (see also Poliakov 1992, Polonskaya 1994). In the age of globalisation, the media provide an additional source of ideas, concepts and messages.

## 2.7 Multilateral Associations

Six years after the independence of the Central Asian states a slight change from bilateral agreements towards multilateral arrangements is observable as neighbouring countries are included in efforts of cooperation in the frame of ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation), CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) or the cooperation among the Central Asian states themselves. Similar associations of economic integration can be found in the West with the European Union and in the East with organisations in Southeast Asia as ASEAN, APEC, NIT and EAEC.



Russian foreign policy is a good example. After an initial concentration on internal issues and bilateral treaties it is now aimed at a new multilaterality within the CIS. However, in military cooperation there is a tendency towards bilateral agreements as in

the treaties on military aid and between Russia and the Central Asian states envisage the stationing of border troops in the region. Mongolia, for example, distanced itself initially from Russia after its independence to sign later on bilateral agreements on security issues with Russia. In addition, Mongolia holds bilateral agreements with the USA hoping for a warranty of security despite existing tensions.

Economic associations, however, are agreed on multilaterally. Only Turkmenistan denies multilateral agreements despite the membership in the ECO and its participation in the Turk summits. Thus, Turkmenistan rejected to sign a follow-up agreement of the CIS-charta at the Minsk summit in 1993 emphasizing its sovereignty. Turkey especially seeks multilateral cooperation within the frame of the Turk summits. Also Iran had many hopes in the cooperation within the frame of the ECO which, however, did not materialise so far. According to Puri (1995) India also enforced its pragmatic ties to the Central Asian states. All this gives evidence to argue for the economic and even political importance of the intercontinental axis being visible in trade statistics as well as along the line of established economic regimes.

We have considered six dimensions of the integration process of Eurasia:

Trade, commodities, middle class, ethnicity, transport and international associations. They are all contributing towards a further integration of Eurasia. What is lacking so far is the epistemological construction of the concept. Eurasia has not yet become a powerful vision like Asia-Pacific. We shall therefore briefly look at the conceptualising of Eurasia as it has been developed by various authors and politicians without gaining global acceptance so far.

### **3 EURASIA: the Contested Space of Asia-Europe**

The British geographer Sir Halford John Mackinder viewed geography as the science of distributions and he began to campaign for the study of regions. In his lecture delivered in 1904 Mackinder argued that Central Asia as the „Heartland of Eurasia“ formed a geographical "pivot of world politics" (Mackinder 1904: 421). He noted a geopolitical antagonism between the Eurasian land power (that was, Russia) and the leading sea

power (then Great Britain, subsequently the United States). His message was recently summarised by Robbins (1994) as follows:

Whoever fully commanded and developed Eurasia's vast wealth would inevitably dominate the world (Robbins 1994: 34).

In a short but significant monograph André Gunder Frank (1992) agreed on the "centrality of Central Asia" noting simultaneously the unclear approaches by politicians and the scientific community towards the region, which has been cut off from the global economic and international political system by an artificial cross-continental border and a Soviet understanding of the role of the region (see Olcott 1982).

However, the state of the art on the spatial and societal formation of newly emerged Eurasia makes evident, that a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of it is missing. The recent book publication "The Euro-Asian World" (Kalyuzhnova/Lynch 2000) establishes the concept of Euro-Asia as the means to discuss the European and Asian countries that are undergoing transformation dealing with the security and economic aspects of the postcommunist transition over the last decade. The authors cover crucial elements of the transitional changes: conflicts and peacekeeping, geopolitical issues, economic realities. All of these points are addressed from a macroperspective or from country studies limited in their perspective. Political advice and predictions are often only based on limited case or country studies or regionally concentrated ethnographies (Goody 1990, Haghayeghi 1995, Schoeberlein-Engel 1994) and are highly speculative. However, it seems to us a worthwhile undertaking to reflect about the heartland in the Soviet Unions aftermath and its impact on Europe and Asia<sup>5</sup>.

The core of the one area and the two continents is Central Asia, a region challenged by different corridorial claims. Mikhail Gorbachev referred to Eurasia in his book *Perestroika* depicting the Soviet Union as a Eurasian state bridging Europe and the "Asia-Pacific" region. His advisor, Igor Malashenko, argued that Russia was an ethnically and culturally unique country lying in Europe and Asia, a real Eurasian state,

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<sup>5</sup> Many experts in Europe and Asia analyse the Caspian Sea region and its land-locked states on the base of two notions: "a 'corridor' and a 'route'" (Shimizu/Yakushik 1998: 22). Following Shimizu and Yakushik (1998: 22) a corridor may be defined as a spatial system of geopolitical, geoeconomic, geocultural and other interests. Those are or claimed to be based on trading relations, historic, cultural or ethnic links on a global or regional level as the Trans-Atlantic (Western Europe - Northern America), Asia-Pacific (Northern America - Southeast Asia), Pan-American (Northern - Southern America), Ibero-American etc. corridors exemplify.

which was a source of attraction for other ethnic peoples around Russia (Hauner 1994: 229). Russia and the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) are seen by them as having a crucial role in shaping the region (Olcott 1992).

On the contrary, Huntington (1993) named Turkey a "*torn country*" in regard to an emerging geocultural Eurasia not knowing if it belongs to the Western Civilisation or not. He writes,

having rejected Mecca, and then being rejected by Brussels, where does Turkey look? Tashkent may be the answer (Huntington 1993: 42).

Overcoming national borders Huntington (1993) speculates about a revitalised Turk civilisation, covering a territory from Greece to China. Significantly, Suleyman Demirel, former Turkish Prime Minister, has often referred to the influential role Turkey is playing within Eurasia. It seems that often the expression "Turkic world" (Winrow 1995a) stretching from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China and Demirel's depiction of Eurasia are one and the same. The Istanbul-based British scholar Winrow (1995b) states:

Hence in a speech to the nationalist Turkish Clubs Association in Ankara in February 1993, Demirel declared that in Azerbaijan and in Central Asia a new community has evolved known as "Eurasia" which was inhabited by Turks. [...] The Turkish president noted that "Turkey lies at the very epicentre of the vast geography and the new geopolitics of Eurasia". This "Eurasian reality" was inhabited by 200 million people spread from the Adriatic to the China Sea who shared common roots, language, religion, and culture (Winrow 1995b: 15).

The spatial dimension of geocultural Eurasia, as shown, is not a very clear or agreed on concept based on empirical evidence. Further claims argue the Persian, Indian, or Chinese heritage and links. It therefore does not come as a surprise that the Punjab University in Chandigarh, India, hosts a Centre for the Study of the Geopolitics of Central Asia serving the Indian needs (see Puri 1995). The territorial notions of such conceptualisations of geographical space follow the line of argumentation put forward by Huntington (1993, 1996) of existing and clashing of more or less homogenous cultural circles or civilisations. This approach is based on the concept of cultural forms of

integration beyond economic integration or competition of nations or regions. According to Wallerstein (1990, 1991), a civilisation is

a particular concatenation of worldview, customs, structures and culture. [...] A civilisation refers to contemporary claim about the past in terms of its use, in the present to justify heritage, separateness, rights (Wallerstein 1991:187, 215, 235/36).

A deficit of such conceptualisations is that the division into relative homogenous culturally integrated spatial formations bares any empirical reality. Gladney (1992) provides in contrast empirical evidence on the Islamisation of Chinese geopolitics and Transislam as relevant factor in Eurasia.

The macroethnic picture as well as the distribution of believers in Eurasia do not provide clear-cut evidence for territorial segmented civilisations. The cultural mixture varies gradually along the cross-continental axis on the Eurasian land mass. The increase of geographical mobility, observed during recent years, has helped to strengthen regional integration despite greater emphasis on new national identities. By now it has become a commonplace to argue that globalisation and localisation are Janus-faced aspects of the same process, well expressed by Giddens in the following passage:

Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happening are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an observe direction from the very distanciated relations that shape them. Local transformation is as much part of globalisation as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space (Giddens 1990: 64).

Giddens' point that local transformations are part of the globalisation process helps to explain why local nationalism and "fundamentalisms" emerging in the 1980s and 1990s are not local counter-globalisation developments or signs for clashing civilisations but are essential aspects of the global.

Furthermore, members of any "we-group" are very likely to live in translocal, transnational or even transreligious neighbourhoods which are being in constant exchange with the absentees (Peleikis 1998; Appadurai 1995; Pries 1996, 1997;

Kaiser 1998b). The fact is that translocal or transnational projects are very fragile and sequentially lead us to view them as opportunity structures rather than as constant entities calling for deterritorialised conceptions. Indeed, it is the maintenance of such projects that has to be focused on; we propose to do this by using an actor-network approach which goes beyond national or other static formations.

## **4 Conclusion**

As Said (1995: 5) has rightly asserted "geographical and cultural entities... are man-made." Localities are not given, but socially constructed (Appadurai 1995). In contrast, one ought to focus on the processes of how locality is in fact produced (Appadurai 1995) or constructed (Berger/Luckmann 1969). The production of local and translocal networks, neighbourhoods or lifeworlds is increasingly a struggle (Peleikis 1998). Different social actors are continuously involved in ongoing negotiations in the construction and production of "locality" and "networking". In mastering space, discourse is more and more what counts (Agnew/ Corbridge 1995: 227).

The reopening of the Silk Road is a newly-emerged mode of globalisation by actor-networks conducting small-scale trade. The transition may be interpreted as a movement from a locality to several globalities, leaving out nationality. The conditions of transitional society are especially mirrored in the Asian trade routes, combined with an overall attempt to Westernise its merchandise. The economic activity of cross-border shuttle traders is linking Europe and Asia. People, goods and knowledge are the essence of a sociocultural integration of this geocultural space. The prevalence of US dollars in the market, as well as the existence of fake Western commodities, epitomise therefore a discrepancy between the imagined "Europe", the imagined "West", and the actual Asian influences. A Eurasia beyond national borders appears to be in the making.

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