

**GEOGRAPHY, GEOPOLITICS,  
AND THE RELATED TERMS****CENTRAL EURASIA:  
ITS GEOPOLITICAL FUNCTION  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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*In Lieu of an Introduction:*  
**Transformation of  
the Eurasian Geopolitical Expanse**

Today, when we are concentrating on the problems of regional studies and regional cooperation, it has become especially important to look at the processes going on within what was once a single military-political and socio-economic expanse (the Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation—COMECON and the Warsaw Treaty Organization—WTO) formed by the Soviet Union and which fell apart late in the 20th century into:

**The post-COMECON regions:**(1) *Central (Eastern) Europe:*

- *post-COMECON countries:* Poland, Czechoslovakia,<sup>1</sup> Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, the GDR,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1993, the country divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

<sup>2</sup> In 1990, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) became part of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

and the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia<sup>3</sup>;

- *post-Soviet countries*: Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia;

(2) *Central Caucasus (Trans-Caucasus)*:

- *post-Soviet countries*: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia;

(3) *Central Asian Region (known as Sredniaia Azia [Middle Asia] in Soviet times)*:

- *post-COMECON countries*: Afghanistan, Mongolia;
- *post-Soviet countries*: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

**The U.S.S.R./COMECON Initiating Core:**

*East European-North Asian Region:*

- *post-Soviet country*: Russia.<sup>4</sup>

Evidently the interest in the three post-COMECON regions that detached themselves from the initiating core (Russia) can be explained by the special place they retained in the world political expanse. This becomes especially obvious when viewed as a single, independent, and isolated geopolitical object of the globalizing world.

The geopolitical conceptual apparatus typical of the bipolar world lost its relevance when the Cold War ended; the world was no longer divided into socialist and capitalist camps, therefore these conceptions and related terms, such as “the non-capitalist way of development,” the non-alignment movement, etc. were gradually replaced with more adequate categories. Despite the changes that have taken place in the last few decades, academic publications and educational and reference literature persist in discrepancies when it

<sup>3</sup> Early in the 1990s, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) fell apart into Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

<sup>4</sup> Cuba and Vietnam were two other COMECON members; Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Laos, Mozambique, and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen were observers.

comes to relating the post-COMECON countries to various regions of the *Eurasian continent* and their names.

Today, the academic and political communities are using old (czarist or Soviet, European and Asian), along with new, not totally accepted, definitions.<sup>5</sup> The post-Soviet republics on the *Baltic coast* (the Russian term is “Pribaltiiskie”) are called the Baltic republics and are related to either Northern or Northeastern Europe; the republics that were called “*Sredneaziatskie*” in Soviet times are now known as the Central Asian (“*Tsentral’noaziatskie*”) republics,<sup>6</sup> the *Trans-Caucasian* republics are now known as the South Caucasian or Central Caucasian republics<sup>7</sup> and are seen as part of Eastern or Southeastern Europe, Central or Northwestern Asia.<sup>8</sup>

States were related to regions depending on geopolitical contexts: the changed balance among the main geopolitical actors in Eurasia was behind the shift in countries from one sphere of influence to another, which, in turn, drew new dividing lines between the regions.<sup>9</sup> These

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: V. Papava, “*Tsentral’naia Kavkazia: osnovy geopoliticheskoy ekonomii*,” *Analiticheskie zapiski Gruzinskogo fonda strategicheskikh i mezhdunarodnykh issledovaniy*, No. 1, 2007, p. 8, available at [[http://www.gfsis.org/publications/VPapava\\_Ru\\_1.pdf](http://www.gfsis.org/publications/VPapava_Ru_1.pdf)].

<sup>6</sup> N.N. Alekseeva, I.S. Ivanova, “*Sredniaia ili Tsentral’naia Azia?*,” available at [<http://geo.1september.ru/articlef.php?ID=200302804>].

<sup>7</sup> See: E. Ismailov, Z. Kengerli, “*O kategorii Kavkaz*,” *Doklady Natsional’noy Akademii Nauk Azerbaidzhana*, Vol. LVIII, No. 5, 2002, pp. 290-295; E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *Tsentral’ny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 2007, 208 pp.

<sup>8</sup> For more detail about the Northwestern Asia conception see: A. Ramezanzadeh, “*Iran’s Role as Mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis*,” in: *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. by B. Coppieters, VUB Press, Brussels, 1996, available at [<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0701.htm>].

<sup>9</sup> The way the borders of the Caucasian region were changing, depending on the dynamics of Russia’s penetration, is highly illustrative. The Caucasus ended where the sphere of Russia’s influence ended. Hence the 19th-century term *Trans-Caucasus* related to the areas beyond Russia’s reach. In fact, geographically these areas belonged to the Caucasian region. This trend survived: in the latter half of the 19th century, the Caucasus was extended to the southwest to include Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin, parts of the Ottoman Empire captured by Russia. After World War I, Turkey restored its possessions, which led to a narrowing down of the region; the regional borders were thus registered as commonly accepted definitions.

changes took place in the European and Asian parts of Eurasia. The conventional nature of the regions' new spatial descriptions, assumed to correspond to the geopolitical situation, allows us to identify new trends of development in intra- and extra-regional contacts and relations on the Eurasian continent.

Today, the geopolitical transformations of the 1990s have called for fresh approaches to the regional division of the political expanse of Europe and Asia that would reflect as fully as possible the continent's internal political, socio-economic, and cultural relations in keeping with the current geopolitical situation.

Today, Europe's political expanse should be regarded as the sum total of its main regions:

- Western Europe—EU and NATO members (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, U.K., Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Bulgaria, and Rumania) and candidate countries (Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and still neutral Switzerland).
- Central Europe—Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.
- Eastern Europe—the European part of the Russian Federation.

Some might object to counting post-COMECON and post-Soviet (Baltic) states as part of Western Europe for socioeconomic and cultural reasons: their fairly long existence within the socialist system (COMECON/U.S.S.R.) affected their development level and is responsible for their current specifics. It should be said that the level of their socioeconomic development was much lower than that of the old members (even though they joined the EU in 2004). In other words, in view of the greater socioeconomic compatibility of the "new EU members" with, say, Ukraine rather than France or the Netherlands, they could all be included in *Greater Central Europe* (Hunga-

ry, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova).

It is much more complicated to restructure the political expanse of Eurasia's other part (Asia): its vast spatial-political scale and the current political and economic relations among the states with very different axiological systems, political regimes, geopolitical orientations, and development levels do not permit the countries to be grouped into strictly delineated regional segments. As distinct from Europe, the region's political borders in Asia are much more conventional. The current geopolitical situation suggests five regional parts:

- Western Asia—Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the other states of the Arabian Peninsular, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Iran;
- Eastern Asia—China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Mongolia, and the states of Indochina and the Malay Archipelago;
- Northern Asia—the Asian part of the Russian Federation;
- Southern Asia—India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives;
- Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Just as in Europe, the central part of Asia can also be described as Greater Central Asia,<sup>10</sup> which would include Mongolia of Eastern Asia and Afghanistan of Southern Asia.

<sup>10</sup> The Greater Central Asia conception has been formulated. According Frederick Starr, it consists of five newly independent states of Central Asia and Afghanistan (see: S.F. Starr, "A 'Greater Central Asia Partnership' for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," *Silk Road Paper*, March 2005, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2005. p. 16, available at [<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/CACI/Strategy.pdf>]; idem, "A Partnership for Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, 2005. Some authors also count Mongolia as part of the Greater Central Asia).

The Central Caucasian countries can be included both in the Asian (for geographical reasons) and in the European continent (because of their political and institutional involvement in European affairs). This region is a geopolitical “special zone” of Eurasia, an area where the continents meet.

The conception of the post-COMECON expanse has become completely outdated; its key segments—the European, Caucasian, and Asian—are now described as “central,” which means that any discussion of them as a totality should be based on Central Eurasia as an integral conception.

In any case, it is impossible to revive the Russian (either czarist or Soviet), European, or Asian (of the Cold War period) terms: the world

has changed, therefore the conceptual approaches and the categorial-conceptual apparatus have changed accordingly.

It is necessary, therefore, to clarify the definitions relating to this expanse: profound understanding of the objective development regularities of the Eurasian continent and, in the final analysis, its effective integration call for clearly systematized geopolitical conceptions.

This means that we should concentrate on identifying the spatial-functional parameters of Central Eurasia as the post-COMECON area. Should we study the region as a single whole? To what extent does this approach correspond to the historical and geopolitical development specifics of the Eurasian continent?

## 1. The Planet's Pivot as Discussed by Halford Mackinder

The geopolitical situation of the early 21st century gave a new boost to the studies of the principles of regional structuralization of the geopolitical and geo-economic expanse of the entire Eurasian continent.<sup>11</sup> This revives the conceptions formulated by Halford Mackinder in the early 20th century and, somewhat later, by N. Spykman, his opponent. They offered very original approaches to the regional geopolitical structuralization of the Eurasian continent and to identifying the functional value of its spatial segments.

Mackinder, who interpreted the world historical processes on the basis of the idea of the world's primordial division into isolated areas each of which had a special function to perform, asserted that European civilization was the product of outside pressure. He proceeded from the same idea when he looked at Europe and European history as the result of many centuries of struggle against invasions from Asia.<sup>12</sup> He believed that Europe's advance and expansion was stimulated by the need to respond

<sup>11</sup> See: P. Darabadi, “Central Eurasia: Globalization and Geopolitical Evolution,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (39), 2006; Ch. Klover, “Mechty o evraziiskom Heartland. Vozrozhdenie geopolitiki,” *Zavtra*, 7 April, 1999; A.G. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii. Myslit prostranstvom*, Arktogeia-tsentr, Moscow, 2000; idem, “Preodolenie Zapada (esse o N.S. Trubetskoy),” in: N.S. Trubetskoy, *Nasledie Chingizhana*, Agraf, Moscow, 2000; idem, *Kontinent Rossia*, Znanie, Moscow, 1990; E. Ismailov, M. Esenov, “Central Eurasia in the New Geopolitical and Geo-Economic Dimensions,” *Central Eurasia 2005. Analytical Annual*, CA&CC® Press, Sweden, 2006; A. Zinoviev, *Novy etap globalizatsii. Voyna za gospodstvo v mire pereshla v stadiu goriachey*, *Doklad na Mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii po global'nym problemam vsemirnoy istorii (26-27 January 2002)*, available at [<http://www.pravda.ru/politics/2002/01/31/36396.html>]; S.G. Kara-Murza, “Evraziiskaia tsivilizatsia—ili etnicheskiy tigel?,” available at [<http://www.tuad.nsk.ru/~history/index.html>]; M. Laruelle, “Pereosmyslenie imperii v postsovetskom prostranstve: novaia evraziiskaia ideologia,” *Vestnik Evrazii*, No. 1, 2000; V.I. Maksimenko, “Bitva protiv Evrazii: sto let amerikanskoy geostrategii v Starom Svete,” available at [<http://www.kisi.kz/Parts/Monitoring/04-11-01mon3.html>]; A.A. Panarin, “Evraziiskiy proekt v mirosistemnom kontekste,” *Vostok*, No. 2, 1995; S.E. Cornell, “Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia Perceptions,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. IV, No. 2, June-August 1999; A.P. Tsygankov, *Pathways after Empire: National Identity and Foreign Economic Policy in the Post-Soviet World*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, New York, 2001; Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> See: H. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, April 1904.

to the pressure coming from the center of Asia. According to Halford Mackinder, it was the Heartland (where the continental masses of Eurasia were concentrated) that served as the pivot of all the geopolitical transformations of the historical dimensions within the World Island.

He pointed out that the Heartland was in the most advantageous geopolitical location. Aware of the relative nature of the conception "central location," Mackinder pointed out that in the context of the global geopolitical processes, the Eurasian continent is found in the world's center, with the Heartland occupying the center of the Eurasian continent. This doctrine suggests that the geopolitical subject (actor) that dominated the Heartland would possess the necessary geopolitical and economic potential to ultimately control the World Island and the planet.

According to Mackinder, a retrospective analysis of military-political and socioeconomic processes in the Heartland reveals its obvious objective geopolitical and geo-economic unity.<sup>13</sup> He pointed to the pivotal nature of the vast Eurasian region inaccessible for sea-going vessels, but in antiquity an easy target for the nomads. Mackinder was convinced that Eurasia possessed sustainable conditions for the development of military and industrial powers.

When structuring the geopolitical expanse in the form of a system of concentric circles, Halford Mackinder conventionally placed the Pivot in the planet's center, which included river basins of the Volga, Yenisey, Amu Darya, and Syr Darya and two seas (the Caspian and the Aral).<sup>14</sup> "This Pivot was thus all but impregnable to attacks by sea powers, yet was able to sustain large populations itself. The nations that arose from within it depended on horse and camel to negotiate its vast expanses, which gave them the mobility to mount raids on Europe, which could not emulate in return."<sup>15</sup>

For historical and geopolitical reasons, the Pivot became the natural center of force. Halford Mackinder identified the "inner crescent," which coincided with the Eurasian coastal areas. He described it as the area of the most intensive civilizational development which included Europe, Southern, Southwestern, and Eastern Asia. There was also the "outer crescent" which included Britain, South and North America, Southern Africa, Australasia and Japan, zones geographically and culturally alien to inner Eurasia. He believed that the historical processes were concentrated on the Heartland, the homeland of all the nomadic empires of the past,<sup>16</sup> territory populated by Turkic tribes whose inroads forced Europe to unite.

Proceeding from the above, Mackinder insisted on preventive measures to remain in control of the situation in the Pivot by various means, including control of the "inner crescent." He put in a nutshell his idea of Eastern Europe as the key to the Heartland by saying: "Whoever rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Whoever rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Whoever rules the World-Island commands the World."<sup>17</sup>

The history of the Pivot, the conception of which will be assessed below, suggests the conclusion that its spatial-functional parameters were in constant change. Even though the process that took place within the area confirms what Mackinder said about the functional unity of Eastern Europe and the Heartland, the real meaning of the latter does not stem from the imperative nature of Eastern Europe when it comes to control over the Heartland, but from their structural unity. In other words, at all stages (especially today) of the Heartland's development, Eastern Europe remains a spatial element of its structure, the geopolitical unity of which is the sine qua non of the Pivot's functional validity on a Eurasian scale.

<sup>13</sup> See: H.J. Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1943.

<sup>14</sup> See: H. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History."

<sup>15</sup> N. Megoran, S. Sharapova, "Mackinder's 'Heartland': A Help Or Hindrance in Understanding Central Asia's International Relations?" *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (34), 2005, p. 12.

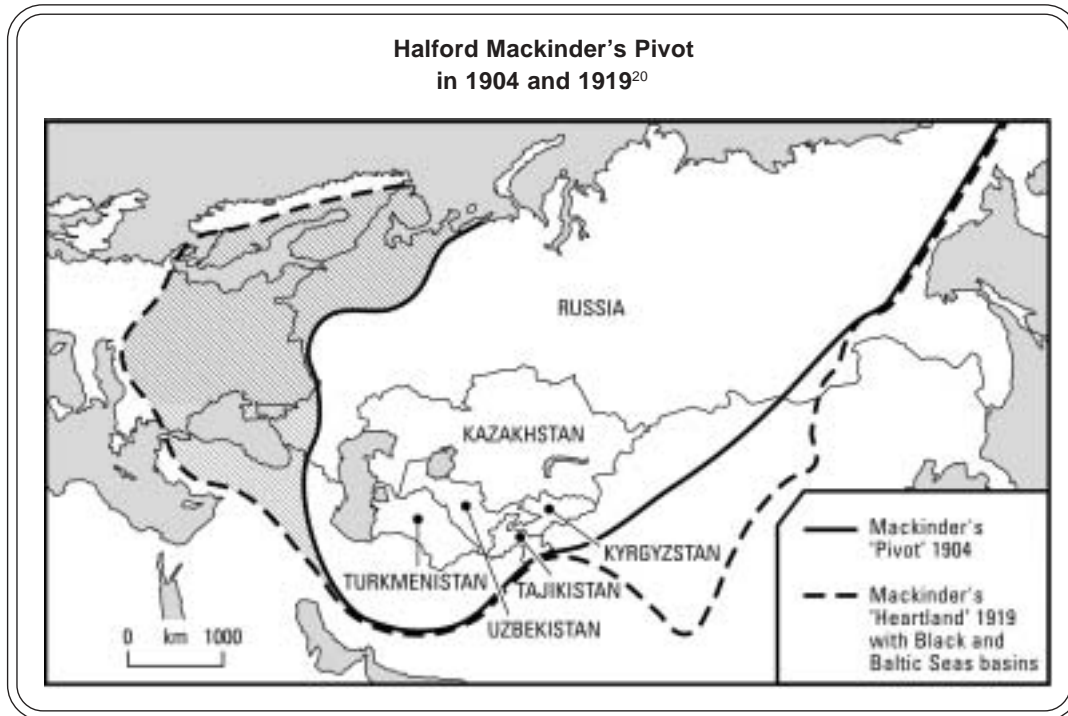
<sup>16</sup> See: S.A. Pletneva, *Kochevniki srednevekov'ia: Poiski istoricheskikh zakonomernostey*, Moscow, 1982.

<sup>17</sup> H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, New York, 1944, p. 113.



Mackinder's later works support the thesis of Eastern Europe as part of the Heartland.<sup>18</sup> Within a very short period of time he revised his theory twice in an effort to adapt it to the changing geopolitical realities. He readjusted the Pivot (see Fig. 1) in particular and included the Black and Baltic Seas basins (Eastern Europe) in the Heartland.<sup>19</sup> This means that his famous formula should be rephrased as: Whoever rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Whoever rules the World-Island commands the World.

Figure 1



This was confirmed in the mid-20th century when, after World War II, the Soviet Union expanded its domination zone westwards; COMECON/WTO, the expansion fruits, meant that the classical Heartland merged with Eastern Europe. They disintegrated along with the Soviet Union at the turn of the 1990s giving rise to new geopolitical and geo-economic conditions in the World-Island. This did not, however, set Eastern Europe apart from the Heartland. The geopolitical transformations of the late 20th century isolated Russia as a Eurasian geopolitical subject in the northeastern part of the continent and narrowed down the Pivot in its central part, that is, in three relatively independent regional segments of the latter—Central (Eastern according to Mackinder) Europe, the Central Caucasus, and Central Asia. To be more precise, the main relatively altered functions of the Heartland were

<sup>18</sup> See: H.J. Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace"; idem, *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*.

<sup>19</sup> He included in Eastern Europe some of the East European states that formed part of the Ottoman Empire (the south-eastern European states—the Kingdom of Bulgaria, the Hungarian Kingdom, the Rumanian Principdom, the Principdom of Montenegro, the Kingdom of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia) and of the Russian Empire (the Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Principdom of Finland, the Central (Ukrainian) Rada, the Byelorussian Rada and the governorships of Bessarabia, Lifland, Kourland, and Estland.)

<sup>20</sup> The map is borrowed from N. Megoran, S. Sharapova, op. cit., p. 9.

concentrated in the newly emergent spaces of its system-forming segments. This launched another cycle of their integration and revival as a whole entity.<sup>21</sup>

Early in the 20th century (during World War I) and in the latter half of the same century (during the Cold War), the geopolitical logic created by the domination first of the Ottoman and Russian empires and later by Soviet domination in Eastern Europe (COMECON) suggested division into Western Europe (the countries outside the Ottoman and Russian/Soviet domination zones) and Eastern Europe (the countries completely dominated by the Ottoman and Russian/Soviet empires). The geopolitical logic created by the disintegration of the empires and Russia's isolation in the northeastern part of Eurasia excluded the former COMECON countries and post-Soviet republics from the East European expanse (with the exception of Russia's European part). The isolation of the last Eurasian geopolitical subject and its domination sphere in the northeast of the European continent, first, shifted the Pivot from the continent's north to the center; and second, called for conceptual changes. Indeed, that part of Europe's political expanse controlled by the last empire (the Soviet Union) should be identified as Central Europe and then included in the contemporary Pivot (Central Eurasia), while Russia, as part of the World-Island that occupies Eastern Europe and Northern Asia, should be described as a Northern Eurasian Power. In this context, Turkey becomes the Southern Eurasian Power.

N. Spykman also paid much attention to the role of the Pivot of the Eurasian continent in world history.<sup>22</sup> He relied on what Mackinder wrote before him to produce his own version of the basic geopolitical model which differed greatly from that of his predecessor. He was convinced that Halford Mackinder had overestimated the geopolitical significance of the Heartland: the dynamics of the geopolitical history of the "inner crescent"—the Rimland—the coastal zones, he argued, was the product of its inner development impetus rather than emerging under pressure of the "nomads of the Land," as Mackinder asserted. Spykman was convinced that the Heartland was nothing more than a geographic expanse open to cultural and civilizational impulses coming from the Rimland. Mackinder's Pivot had no independent historical role to play, said he, the Rimland was the key to world domination, hence his formula: whoever rules the Rimland commands Eurasia; whoever rules Eurasia commands the world.

In both geopolitical conceptions, the world's spatial-functional structure includes three main levels—the *Heartland-Eurasia-the Planet* (Mackinder) and the *Rimland-Eurasia-the Planet* (Spykman)—the former insisted on the primordial and decisive role of the Heartland in the geopolitical expanse of the World-Island, while the latter said the same about the Rimland.

At different times, the state structures of both the Heartland and Rimland were either objects or subjects of the geopolitical relations in Eurasia. Their functional value in the global geopolitical processes changed accordingly. It is very hard, therefore, and hardly correct in the present context, to describe either the Heartland or the Rimland as primordial and all important. Both theories have one, and a serious, shortcoming: they were not intended to explain objective global geopolitical processes. They were formulated to serve the strategic interests of two Western powers (the U.K. and the U.S.). This accounts for the inevitable one-sidedness of their approaches to the question discussed above: what is primordial/more important—the Heartland or the Rimland? Their arguments confirm their obvious biases, therefore I will not merely reproduce Mackinder's and Spykman's theories about the place and role of the Heartland/Rimland on the Eurasian continent and worldwide. I will use their approaches to offer my own geopolitical idea about the Pivot of the 21st century and possible scenarios of the future.

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<sup>21</sup> The discussion about the Heartland's new expanses is still underway; there is the opinion that it has shrunk to cover the territory of Central Asia: E. Ahrari, "The Strategic Future of Central Asia: A View from Washington," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 2003; G. Sloan, "Sir Halford J. Mackinder: The Heart-land Theory Then and Now," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2/3, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> See: N.J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1942; idem, *The Geography of the Peace*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1944.

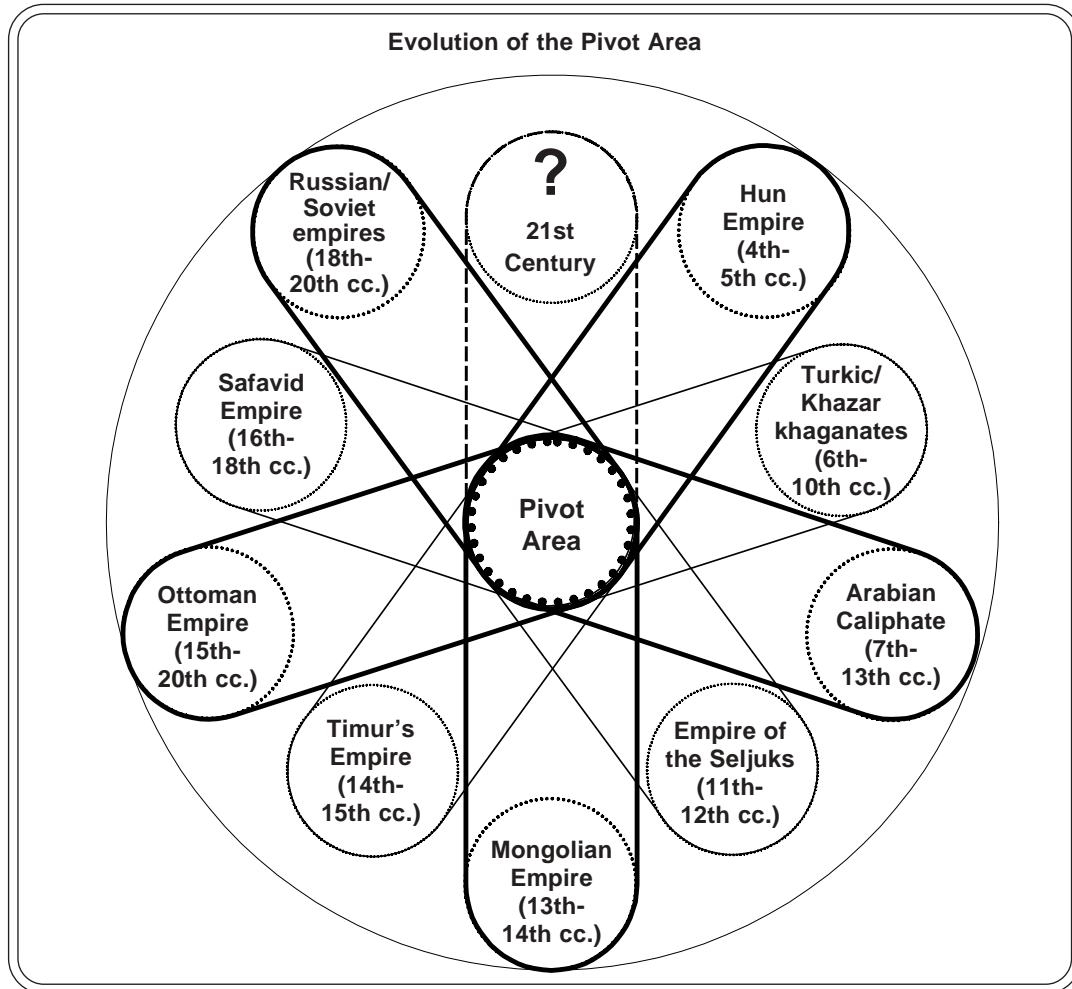
To achieve a much more profound idea about what is going on in the Pivot area, we should revise our old ideas to supply them with new scientifically substantiated content. We should:

- First, analyze the historic evolution of the Pivot expande, that is, the regularities and stages of the development of its geopolitical structure;
- Second, identify the main features, functions, and principles of its emergence and functioning, as well as its parameters and structure under present-day conditions.

## 2. Evolution of the Pivot Area— Central Eurasia

The history of the Heartland as a single and integral region began with the Hun Empire and unfolded through the consecutive changes of geopolitical actors: the Turkic and Khazar khaganates,

*Figure 2*





the Arabic Caliphate, the empires of the Seljuks and Mongols, Timur's Empire, the Ottoman and Safavid empires, and the Russian and Soviet empires (see Fig. 2).

At different times, the Pivot expanded or contracted within the empires which for several centuries replaced each other in its expanses. As a rule, each of them left behind stable administrative-territorial units within which the historical evolution of the Pivot area unfolded (see Table 1).

1. *The Hun Empire* (4th-5th cc.)<sup>23</sup>—stretched from the Caucasus to the Rhine and from the right bank of the Danube to the Danish Islands. In the latter half of the 5th century, it fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central European (latter half of the 5th-early 6th cc.)—possessions of the Balkan dynasts and of the dynasts of the Northern Black Sea coast;
- North Caucasian (latter half of the 5th-early 6th cc.)—possessions of the local dynasts.

2. *The Turkic Khaganate* (6th-8th cc.)<sup>24</sup>—occupied the central strip stretching from Manchuria to the Black Sea steppes and the Crimea. In the latter half of the 6th century, it fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central European (latter half of the 6th-first half of the 8th cc.)—possessions of the dynasts of the Northern Black Sea coast;
- North Caucasian (latter half of the 6th-first half of the 8th cc.)—possessions of the local dynasts;
- Central Asian (latter half of the 6th-8th cc.):
  - The Eastern Turkic Khaganate (609), which occupied the territory to the east of the Syr Darya and stretched to Manchuria. When it fell apart in 745, the Uighur Khaganate appeared on its territory (the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region of contemporary China);
  - The Western Turkic Khaganate (603), which occupied the territory to the west of Syr Darya (stretching to the Caspian Sea) and the steppes of the Northern Black Sea coast and the Northern Caspian steppes. When it fell apart in 659, the Khazar Khaganate appeared on its territory.

3. *The Khazar Khaganate* (mid-7th-mid-10th cc.)<sup>25</sup>—owned the Northern Caucasus, the Azov area, the steppes and forest steppes of Eastern Europe up to the Dnieper, as well as a large part of the Crimea it had wrenched away from Byzantium. Between the latter half of the 8th and 10th centuries, it fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central European (latter half of the 8th-late 9th cc.)—possessions of the dynasts of the Northern Black Sea coast;
- North Caucasian (latter half of the 8th-late 9th cc.)—possessions of the local dynasts.

The Turkic tribal unions that appeared in Central Asia created, over the span of four centuries, three powerful states (the Hun Empire and the Turkic and Khazar khaganates) which laid the foundation of the Pivot Area for the first time and strove to extend it.<sup>26</sup> They never achieved this, however, and the empires fell apart. At the same time, none of the titular ethnoses managed to strike root in any of the segments and set up states of their own. As a result history “dissolved” them.

<sup>23</sup> See: A.N. Bernstam, *Ocherk istorii gunnov*, Leningrad, 1951; L.N. Gumilev, *Hunnu. Sredimaia Azia v dr. vremena*, Moscow, 1960.

<sup>24</sup> See: L.N. Gumilev, *Drevnie Tiurki*, Moscow, 1967.

<sup>25</sup> See: M.I. Artamonov, *Istoria Khazar*, Leningrad, 1962.

<sup>26</sup> The Huns and the Khazars dominated the European and Caucasian segments, while the Turkic khagans ruled mainly in the Asian, Caucasian, and partly European segments.

Table 1

Heartland Territory  
within Different Empires

Segments of Empires  Empires/ Contemporary States	Periods  Centuries	Total Area  Thous sq km    %%		Including Post-Imperial Sizes of Segments													
				Size of the State formed by the Titular Ethnos—subject  Thous sq km    %%		Size of the Heartland—object										Size of the Rimland—object  Thous sq km    %%	
						Total  Thous sq km    %%		Including Segments of the Heartland									
								European  Thous sq km    %%		Caucasian  Thous sq km    %%		Asian  Thous sq km    %%					
Hun Empire	4th-5th	3,237	100	—	—	3,237	100	2,882	89	355	11	—	—	—	—		
Turkic Khaganate	6th-8th	5,701	100	—	—	5,701	100	550	10	355	6	4,796	84	—	—		
Khazar Khaganate	7th-10th	791	100	—	—	791	100	436	55	355	45	—	—	—	—		
Arabian Caliphate	7th-13th	13,848	100	2,606	19	1,917	14	—	—	187	1	1,730	13	9,325	67		
Saudi Arabia	21st	—	—	2,150	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Empire of the Seljuks	11th-12th	3,801	100	200	5	2,171	57	—	—	993	26	1,178	31	1,430	38		
Turkmenistan	21st	—	—	488	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Mongolian Empire	13th-14th	22,484	100	1,565	7	14,144	63	2,145	10	653	3	11,346	50	6,775	30		
Mongolia	21st	—	—	1,565	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Timur's Empire	14th-15th	5,929	100	244	4	4,248	72	—	—	298	5	3,950	67	1,437	24		

Table 1 (continued)

Segments of Empires  Empires/ Contemporary States	Periods  Centuries	Total Area  Thous sq km    %%		Including Post-Imperial Sizes of Segments													
				Size of the State formed by the Titular Ethnos—subject  Thous sq km    %%		Size of the Heartland—object										Size of the Rimland—object  Thous sq km    %%	
						Total  Thous sq km    %%		Including Segments of the Heartland									
								European  Thous sq km    %%		Caucasian  Thous sq km    %%		Asian  Thous sq km    %%					
Uzbekistan	21st	—	—	447	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Ottoman Empire	15th-20th	8,182	100	779	9	1,114	14	1,079	13	35	1	—	—	6,289	77		
Turkey	21st	—	—	779	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Safavid Empire	16th-18th	2,000	100	228	11	335	17	—	—	35	2	300	15	1,437	72		
Azerbaijan	21st	—	—	87	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Russian Empire	18th-20th	22,430	100	—	73	6,073	27	1,480	6	599	3	3,994	18	—	—		
R.S.F.S.R.	20th	—	—	16,357	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
U.S.S.R.	20th	22,402	100	—	77	5,202	23	1,021	4	187	1	3,994	18	—	—		
RF	21st	—	—	17,200	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
COMECON	20th	26,334	100	17,200	65	8,693	33	2,295	9	187	1	6,211	23	441	2		
RF	20th	—	—	17,200	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Central Eurasia	21st	—	—	—	—	8,585	100	2,187	26	187	2	6,211	72	—	—		

4. *The Arabian Caliphate* (first half of the 7th-mid-13th cc.)<sup>27</sup>—occupied the territory between the Atlantic and Indian oceans and between the Caucasus and Central Asia to North Africa. Between the mid-8th and the mid-13th century, it fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central Caucasian (mid-10th-mid-12th cc.)—the Kakheti (late 8th c.), Ereti (late 8th c.), Tao-Klarjet princedoms (early 9th c.), the Abkhazian Kingdom (early 9th c.), the Tiflis Emirate (the Jafarid dynasty—early 9th c.)—contemporary Georgia; the Ganja Emirate (the Shaddadid dynasty—971) and the Shirvan State (861)—contemporary Azerbaijan;
- North Caucasian (mid-10th c.)—the Derbent Emirate (the Khashimid dynasty—mid-10th c.)—the southern part of contemporary Russia;
- Southeastern Caucasus (latter half of the 9th-10th cc.)—the states of the Sajids (879), Sallarids (941), Rawadids (979)—the northwestern part of contemporary Iran;
- Central Asian (latter half of the 9th c.)—the state of the Samanids (875)—contemporary Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan;

*segments of the Rimland:*

- West European (mid-8th-first half of the 10th cc.)—the Córdoba Emirate (756) and the Córdoba Caliphate (929)—contemporary Spain and Portugal;
- Western Asian (first half of the 9th-first half of the 10th cc.)—the states of the Taharids (821), Safavids (861), Alids (864), Buids (935)—contemporary Iran;
- North African (latter half of the 8th-10th cc.)—the Fatimid Caliphate (909) which included the state of the Rutamids (776), Idrisids (788), Aghlabids (800), Tulunids (868), Ihshidids (935)—contemporary Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt;

*a geopolitical subject*

*that detached itself from the Rimland:*

- West Asian (mid-10th c.)—the Baghdad Caliphate (945-1258) with *the Arabs as the titular ethnoses*. Over the span of eight centuries, it gradually developed into contemporary Saudi Arabia.
5. *The Empire of the Seljuks* (first half of the 11th-first half of the 12th cc.)<sup>28</sup>—stretched from Central Asia to Asia Minor and from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf. Between the mid-11th and first half of the 12th centuries, it fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central Caucasian (12th c.)—the Azerbaijanian Ildenizid atabeg sultanate<sup>29</sup> (1136)—parts of contemporary Azerbaijan, Iraq and Iran; the Shirvan State—contemporary Azerbaijan and the Georgian Kingdom—contemporary Georgia;

<sup>27</sup> See: E.A. Beliaev, *Araby, islam i arabskiy khalifat v rannee srednevekov'e*, Moscow, 1966. In the first half of the 10th century the Arabian Caliphate fell apart into the Córdoba Caliphate of the Umayyads (929-1031), the Fatimid Caliphate (909-1171), and the Caliphate of the Abbasids (750-945). When the latter fell apart, the Baghdad Caliphate appeared in turn, the rulers of which wielded merely religious power. When the Mongols under Hulagu Khan captured Baghdad in 1258, the caliphate disappeared.

<sup>28</sup> See: V.A. Gorlevskiy, *Gosudarstvo Seldzhukidov Maloi Azii. Izbrannye sochinenia*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1960; T. Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, London, 1961; S.G. Agadzhanov, *Gosudarstvo Sel'dzhukidov i Sredniata Azia v XI-XII vv.*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1991. 303 pp.

<sup>29</sup> In 1136, the Iraqi Sultanate was transformed into the Azerbaijanian Ildenizid atabeg sultanate (see: Z.M. Buniitov, *Gosudarstvo Atabekov Azerbaidzhana 1136-1225*, Vol. 2, Baku, 1999).

- Central Asian (late 10th-first half of the 12th cc.)—the state of the Khwarezmshahs (1127)—contemporary Uzbekistan;

*segments of the Rimland:*

- Western Asian (11th c.)—the Sultanate of Kerman (1041), the state of the Ismailites (1090)—contemporary Iran; the Iraqi Sultanate (1118)—contemporary Iraq;
- Asia Minor (latter half of the 11th c.)—the Emirate of the Danishmendids (1071), the Konya Sultanate (1077)—Central and Eastern parts of contemporary Turkey;

*a geopolitical subject*

*that detached itself from the Heartland:*

- Central Asian (12th c.)—the Sultanate of the Seljuks (1118-1157) in Horosan—the hereditary possession of the Great Seljuk Sultans where *the Turkmen settled as the titular ethnos*, but failed to unite and create a geopolitical subject. During the following eight centuries, it developed into contemporary Turkmenistan.

6. *The Mongolian Empire* (13th-14th cc.)<sup>30</sup>—stretched from China to Asia Minor and from the steppes of the Northern Black Sea and Caspian coasts to the Persian Gulf. In the first half of the 13th century, Genghis Khan divided his empire into 4 uluses (1224) headed by his sons Jochi, Chagatai, Ögedei, and Tolui. In 1256, Genghis Khan's grandson Hulagu conquered Iran and Iraq and set up the fifth ulus.<sup>31</sup> During the 14th-15th centuries the uluses fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- East European (15th c.)—the Great Principdom of Muscovy—Western part of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jochi)—the European part of contemporary Russia;
- North Caucasian (13th-14th cc.)—the possessions of the Avar Nutsal (late 13th c.), the Derbent possessions (mid-14th c.), the Nogai Horde (late 14th c.)—the southern part of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jochi)—the southern part of contemporary Russia;
- Central Caucasian (first half of the 14th c.)—the Georgian Kingdom, the Shirvan State—the northwestern part of Ulus Hulagu—contemporary Georgia and Azerbaijan;
- Central Asian (14th c.):
  - the White Horde (14th c.)—the eastern part of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jochi)—contemporary Kazakhstan;
  - the Mogolistan Khanate (1347)—Ulus Chagatai—contemporary Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan;

*segments of the Rimland:*

- Western Asian (first half of the 14th c.)—the states of Jalairids (1336), Sarbadars (1337), Mozafferids (1340), Saids (1350)—the southwestern part of Ulus Hulagu—contemporary Iran;
- East Asian (latter half of the 14th c.)—the Ming dynasty (1368)—the southeastern part of Ulus Tolui—contemporary China;

<sup>30</sup> See: E.D. Phillips, *The Mongols*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1969.

<sup>31</sup> See: A.A. Ali-zade, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskaja i politicheskaja istoria Azerbaidzhana XIII-XIV vv.*, Baku, 1956; N.V. Pigulevskaia, A.Iu. Iakubovskaia, *et al.*, *Istoria Irana s drevneyshikh vremen to kontsa XVIII v.*, Leningrad, 1958.

*a geopolitical subject**that detached itself from the Heartland:*

- Central Asian (early 15th c.)—the Khanate of Oyrat (1418-1455)—the northern part of Ulus Tolui—the possession of the Great Kaans, where *the Mongols settled as the titular ethnos*; they failed to unite and create a geopolitical subject. Over the span of six centuries, it developed into contemporary Mongolia.

7. Timur's Empire (latter half of the 14th-first half of the 15th cc.)<sup>32</sup>—included the territory that stretched from Central Asia to Asia Minor and from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf: Transoxiana (Ma Wara'un-Nahr), Khorezm, Horasan, the Central Caucasus, Iran, Punjab. Early in the 15th century it disintegrated into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central Caucasian (early 15th c.)—the Shirvan State—contemporary Azerbaijan and the Georgian Kingdom—contemporary Georgia;

*segments of the Rimland:*

- West Asian (early 15th c.) (the state of Kara Koyunlu (1410)—contemporary Iran.

*a geopolitical subject**that detached itself from the Heartland:*

- Central Asian (early 15th c.)—Herat (1409-1447) and Samarkand (1409-1449)—the emirates where *the Uzbeks settled as the titular ethnos*, but failed to unite and create a geopolitical subject. Over the span of five centuries, it developed into contemporary Uzbekistan.

8. *The Ottoman Empire* (mid-15th-early 20th cc.)<sup>33</sup>—covered the territory from the Caucasus to the Balkans and from the Northern Black Sea coast to North Africa.<sup>34</sup> Between the late 17th and the early 20th centuries, it fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central European (late 17th-early 20th cc.)—the Albanian Princedom, the Bulgarian Princedom, Hungarian Kingdom, Greek Kingdom, Rumanian Princedom, the Princedom of Montenegro, the Serbian Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia—contemporary Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Rumania, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Southern Ukraine;
- Central Caucasian (first half of the 19th c.)—the Imeretian Kingdom (1804); Megrelian (1803), Abkhazian (1810), Gurian (1811), Svanetian (1833) princedoms—contemporary Georgia;

*segments of the Rimland:*

- North African (early 18th-latter half of the 19th cc.)—Algerian (1711), Libyan (1711), Egyptian (1805), Tunisia (1881) pashalyks—contemporary Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia;
- Western Asian (19th-early 20th cc.)—Iraq (1918), Syria (1918), Lebanon (1918), Palestine (1832), Hijaz (1916)—contemporary Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia;

<sup>32</sup> See: J.-P. Roux, *Tamerlan*, Fayard Publishers, 1991. 380 pp; I.M. Muminov, *Rol i mesto Amira Timura v istorii Sredney Azii*, Tashkent, 1968.

<sup>33</sup> See: *Istoria Osmanskogo gosudarstva, obshchestva i tsivilizatsii*, in 2 vols. Vol. 1, *Istoria Osmanskogo gosudarstva i obshchestva*, Transl. from the Turkish, Moscow, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23 (map.)



*a geopolitical subject  
that detached itself from the Rimland:*

- Asia Minor (1923)—the Turkish Republic (1923—to the present day), where *the Turks settled as the titular ethnos*.
9. *The Safavid Empire* (early 16th-first half of the 18th cc.)<sup>35</sup>—covered the territory from the North-eastern Caucasus to the Persian Gulf and from Central Asia to Asia Minor. In the first half of the 18th century, the Safavid Empire fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- North Caucasian (first half of the 18th c.)—Derbent Khanate (1747)—the southern part of contemporary Russia;
- Central Caucasian (first half of the 18th c.)—the kingdoms of Kakheti (1747) and Kartli (1747)—eastern part of contemporary Georgia; Kuba (1726), Sheka (1743), Ganja (1747), Talysh (1747), Nakhchyvan (1747), Erivan (1747), Baku (1747), Javad (1747), Karabakh (1748), and Shirvan (1748) khanates where *the Azeri settled as the titular ethnos*—contemporary Azerbaijan;
- Southeastern Caucasus (first half of the 18th c.)—Tabriz (1745), Maragi (1747), Khoi (1747), Maki (1747), Sarab (1747), Urmia (1747), Ardabil (1747), Gilyan (1747), and Garadag (1748) khanates where *the Azeris settled as the titular ethnos*—the northwestern part of contemporary Iran;

*segments of the Rimland:*

- West Asian (latter half of the 18th c.)—the Zend State (1760)—contemporary Iran<sup>36</sup>;

*a geopolitical subject  
that detached itself from the Heartland:*

- Central Caucasian (first half of the 18th c.)—twenty Azeri khanates with *an Azeri population as the titular ethnos* which failed to unite and create a geopolitical subject. Over the span of two centuries, the Azeri khanates of the Central Caucasus developed into contemporary Azerbaijan.
10. *The Russian Empire* (1721-1917)<sup>37</sup>—covered the territory between the Far East and Central Europe and from the Arctic Ocean to the Caucasus and Central Asia. In 1917, it fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central European (first half of the 20th c.)—the Polish Kingdom, the Grand Duchy of Finland, Central (Ukrainian) Rada, Byelorussian Rada, and governorships: Bessarabia, Lifland, Kourland, and Estland—contemporary Poland, Finland, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia;

<sup>35</sup> See: O. Efendiev, *Obrazovanie azerbaidzhanskogo gosudarstva Sefevidov v nachale XVI v.*, Baku, 1961; L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, Transl. from the English, Baku, 2004; A.A. Rakhmani, *Azerbaidzhan v kontse XVI i v XVII veke*, Elm Publishers, Baku, 1991, 238 pp.

<sup>36</sup> See: M.S. Ivanov, *Ocherki istorii Irana*, Moscow, 1952.

<sup>37</sup> See: H. Carrere d'Encausse, *Nezavershennaia Rossia*, Transl. from the French, Rosspen Publishers, Moscow, 2005, 192 pp.; Iu.N. Gladkiy, *Rossia v labirintakh geograficheskoy sud'by*, Iuridicheskiy tsentr Press Publishers, St. Petersburg, 2006, 846 pp.; A.B. Shirokorad, *Uteriannye zemli Rossii. Otkolovshiesia respubliki*, Veche Publishers, Moscow, 2007, 497 pp.

- North Caucasian (first half of the 20th c.)—the Republic of Daghestan, the Mountain Republic, the Kuban Rada—the southern part of contemporary Russia;
- Central Caucasian (1918)—the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ararat Republic, the Democratic Republic of Georgia—contemporary Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.
- Southwestern Caucasus (1918)—the Araz-Turkic Republic and the Southwestern Caucasian (Kars) Democratic Republic—contemporary northeastern iles of Turkey;
- Central Asian (first half of the 20th c.)—the “government” of Alash Ordy, “Kokand Autonomy,” Bukhara and Khiva khanates<sup>38</sup>—contemporary Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan;

***a geopolitical subject***

***that detached itself from the Heartland:***

East European-North Asian (1917)—the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (1917-1991) where *the Russians settled as the titular ethnos*.

11. *The U.S.S.R. (1922-1991)*<sup>39</sup>—existed on the territory inherited from the Russian Empire. In 1949, the Soviet Union set up COMECON which included the Soviet Union and also other parts of Central Europe and Central Asia, as well as certain states in other parts of the globe. In 1991, the U.S.S.R./COMECON fell apart into:

*segments of the Heartland:*

- Central European (1991)—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, the GDR, Yugoslavia; Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia;
- Central Caucasian (1991)—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia;
- Central Asian (1991)—Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Afghanistan;

***a geopolitical subject***

***that detached itself from the Heartland:***

- East European-North Asian (1991)—the Russian Federation (1991 until the present) where *the Russians form the titular ethnos*.

A concise overview of the Pivot’s evolution reveals that the Huns, squeezed out by the Chinese Empire (a geopolitical subject of the Rimland’s eastern part) from the Central Asian segment of the Heartland in the 4th century, first began shaping the European and Caucasian segments of the Pivot Area into a functionally united geopolitical and economic expanse. Bugged down by their struggle for domination in Europe with the Roman (and Byzantine) empire, which controlled mainly the Western part of the Rimland, they failed to stabilize and develop the emerging integration trends among the still developing Heartland segments. The Huns shattered the empire with devastating blows, however, were defeated themselves in 451 in the battle of nations at Chalons in France. This ended the period of their passionarity<sup>40</sup> and buried the Empire of the Huns as well. For many centuries after that, neither the Heartland nor the Rimland could completely revive to perform their geopolitical and geo-economic functions in Eurasia.

<sup>38</sup> The Turkestanian A.S.S.R. with its capital in Tashkent was set up in Central Asia as part of the R.S.F.S.R.

<sup>39</sup> See: N. Werth, *Histoire de l’Union Soviétique. De l’Empire russe à la CEI, 1900-1991*, PUF, Paris, nouvelle édition refondue et complétée, 2001; *SSSR posle raspada*, ed. by O. Margania, Ekonomicheskaja shkola Publishers, St. Petersburg, 2007; *Istoria SSSR. S drevneyshikh vremen do nashikh dney*, in 12 volumes, Moscow, 1966-1968.

<sup>40</sup> On the passionarity theory, see: L. Gumilev, *Etmozhen i biosfera zemli*, Rolf Publishers, Moscow, 2001.

One hundred years later, the second cycle of shaping the Pivot Area began. A new state, the Turkic Khaganate, sprang into existence in the Huns' original homeland; having established its domination over Central Asia, it spread eastward (Manchuria, Xinjiang, Altai, and Mongolia) and westward where it reached the Northern Caucasus and the Northern Black Sea coast (Bosporus/Kerch), which belonged to the Byzantine Empire. In this way, the Turkic khagans gained control over the main routes of the Great Silk Road—the most important segments of the Pivot Area, which allowed them to perform a geopolitical and geo-economic function on the Eurasian continent. They failed, however, to tighten their grip on the Pivot: in 588 the Turkic state fell apart into the Eastern and Western khaganates.

A century later (in the 7th c.), the Khazar Khaganate came into being on the basis of the Western Turkic Khaganate, which covered the North Caucasian and Northern Black Sea coast areas. Like the Empire of the Huns before it, this state also tended to spread to the Caucasian and the European segments of the Pivot. The Asian segment of the Heartland was dominated by the Eastern Turkic Khaganate, the rulers of which were involved in protracted wars with China, a geopolitical actor in the Eastern part of the Rimland, which destroyed their state.

At the same time, in the 7th century, a new geopolitical subject, the Arabian Caliphate, emerged on the Arabian Peninsula. Having conquered the vast territories between the Atlantic and the Indian oceans (the Western stretch of the coastal area of the World-Island) from the very beginning, the Arabs established their domination over individual segments of the Pivot Area. Throughout the 8th century, the Caliphate was engaged in wars against the Khazar Khaganate in the Caucasian segment of the Heartland; while in Central Asia, it was fighting the Eastern Turkic Khaganate (712-713).

The resumed clashes between the new key actors operating in the Rimland (the Arabian Caliphate and the Chinese Empire) and the Heartland (the Khazar Khaganate and Eastern Turkic Khaganate) pushed the latter off the geopolitical scene.

In this way, the Arabian Caliphate established its domination over two segments of the Pivot Area (Central Asia and the Central Caucasus) and cut short the emerging integration trends in the Pivot Area. Its domination in the key segments of both the Rimland and the Heartland (nearly the entire World-Island) lasted for nearly two centuries.

In the first quarter of the 9th century, the Caliphate started crumbling: it lost some of the Rimland segments (Southwestern Europe, North Africa, Western Asia, and part of Asia Minor) and its Heartland segments (Central Asia and the Central Caucasus).

In the 11th century, another Eurasian power, the Empire of the Seljuks, appeared in the Central Asian segment of the Pivot Area, thus bringing in a new phase of the revival of the Heartland. Having conquered Central Asia, the Seljuks captured the Central Caucasus, the second segment of the Pivot Area, as well as individual segments of the Rimland (Western Asia and part of Asia Minor, and the Arabian (Baghdad) Caliphate proper). The decline of the Arabian Rimland revived the Seljuk Heartland which, in the guise of other geopolitical actors of the Pivot Area, dominated the World-Island throughout the 20th century.

In the 13th century, the Seljuks were replaced with the Mongols, who retained their domination not only in all segments of the Heartland (Central Europe, the Central Caucasus, and Central Asia), but also across the Eurasian continent.

In the 15th century, the Mongols were replaced with the Ottoman Turks who, having moved to Asia Minor from Central Asia mainly in the 12th and 13th centuries, set up their own state in 1299—the Ottoman Beylik. After defeating the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and capturing its territory, the Ottoman Empire, beginning in the 16th century, gradually moved into the Central European and Central Caucasian segments of the Heartland and the North African segments of the Rimland.

In the 16th century, the Safavid Empire, which was pressing forward in Central Asia and the Central Caucasus (segments of the Pivot Area), clashed with the Ottoman Empire. The many centu-

ries of their confrontation ultimately destroyed the Safavid state. As a result, the ethnopolitical and state units of the Central Caucasian (its eastern part) and Central Asian segments restored their independence. This also relieved the impact of the Ottoman Empire on the Central European and Central Caucasian (its western part) segments.

In the mid-18th century, the Russian Empire began moving into all segments of the Pivot Area; by the 19th century it had conquered the entire Central Caucasian region and began looking westward at Central Europe and eastward at Central Asia.

This means that the period of the Turkic empires' uninterrupted domination (the Hun Empire, the Turkic and Khazar khaganates, the empires of the Seljuks and Mongols, Timur's Empire, the Ottoman and Safavid empires) in the Heartland came to an end in the 19th century; Slavs (represented by the Russian Empire) moved in.

The Russian ethnos lived mainly in the East European segment of the Heartland; in the 19th century, in the form of the Russian Empire, it gained domination over all the key segments of the Pivot Area (Central European, Central Caucasian, and Central Asian) and conquered the strategically important littoral strips in the west (the Baltic states, Finland), in the east (Kamchatka, Sakhalin, the Maritime Area, and Alaska), and in the north (the littoral part of the Arctic Ocean). The Russians thus gained access to three oceans and became a land-and-sea power able to function as a geopolitical actor in the Heartland and Rimland simultaneously.

Early in the 20th century, the Russian Empire was transformed into the Soviet Union, which inherited its territory and geopolitical potential. In 1949, it set up COMECON and expanded the Pivot Area by including the Central European countries of the socialist camp (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, the GDR, and Yugoslavia) as well as Mongolia and Afghanistan in Central Asia in the new structure. This means that it was only during the Soviet Empire's lifetime that the Pivot Area acquired its most complete territory and functioned accordingly.

An analysis of the concluding stage of the last evolution cycle of the Pivot, disintegration of the Soviet Union, the last Eurasian power, and the beginning of the first stage of the new cycle of the revival of the Heartland clearly reveals that, very much as before, *Central European*, *Central Caucasian*, and *Central Asian* segments appeared, as well as the area of the dominant nation that detached itself from the Pivot and became an independent subject of geopolitics, the Russian Federation.

It should be noted that each of the Eurasian powers that emerged in the Pivot Area as a rule developed into an independent geopolitical subject that dominated the Heartland, its "mother lode." In other words, this part of the entity as a system-forming element of the Heartland gradually develops into an entity that is functionally different from the other elements of the same entity, the Pivot Area. This means that the new geopolitical subject leaves the place of its birth, that is, the mother lode, the Heartland, which shrinks as much as the titular nation expands its area.

The Pivot Area and its segments can be likened to the pupil of the eye that dilates, contracts, and even shifts, in short, it is never the same. This is one of the reasons why the territory of the contemporary states and segments of Central Eurasia does not coincide with their original historical frontiers.

The principles according to which the Heartland and Rimland were formed were mainly ethnic (the Hun Empire, the Turkic and Khazar khaganates, the empires of the Seljuks and Mongols, Timur's Empire, the Ottoman and Safavid empires where the Turkic ethnos was titular, in Russia this role belonged to the Russians), religious (the Arabian Caliphate—Muslims), and political-ideological (the U.S.S.R.—the Soviet people). Its evolution proceeded according to the same algorithm:

- *Emergence—detachment* of the titular nation which strikes root in its Pivot expanse;
- *Flourishing—total control* over the main Pivot segments and the desire to conquer the entire world;

- *Disintegration—emergence* of new frontiers of the Pivot segments and detachment of the titular nation.

The above suggests that at the stage when the Heartland was taking shape as an integral object/subject of world politics, one of the numerous ethnoses moved apart as the passionarity ethnos that came to dominate the other ethnoses of the Eurasian continent. This ushered in the second stage, flourishing. During that period, the area of the passionarity ethnos as the most stable geopolitical unit of the Pivot Area transformed from the object of geopolitics into its subject (in the form of an empire) resolved to dominate over the adjacent territories of the Pivot and then the entire world. However, when domination was established over the Heartland and part of the Rimland, the Eurasian imperial system (and the single expanse of the Heartland) began to fall apart into separate, relatively isolated elements, one of which became the territory of the state of the titular ethnoses. This pattern repeated itself at every stage of the evolution of the Heartland.

### 3. Essence, Functions, and Principles of Forming the Pivot Area in the 21st Century

***The Essence of the Pivot Area.** The Heartland is the central part of the planet's largest World-Island with no access to the strategically important littoral strips, but full of inner ethno-demographic and sociopolitical potential (passionarity). The systemic nature, dynamism, and sustainability of the Eurasian continent depend on the degree to which the Heartland is orderly and manageable.*

***The Function of the Pivot Area.** The main function of the Heartland—Central Eurasia—can be described as ensuring sustainable land contacts along the parallels (West-East) and meridians (North-South). In other words, Central Eurasia should contribute to consistent geopolitical and economic integration of large and relatively isolated areas of the Eurasian continent.*

***The Principles of Forming the Pivot Area.** Today, to achieve balanced development of mankind on a global scale, it is necessary to predominantly use the principles of *social-economic expediency (compatibility and mutual complementarity) and self-organization*. Its functioning calls for the principles of *self-regulation and self-administration*. The centuries-long history of Central Eurasia has demonstrated that during the times when the Heartland was forming predominantly according to the ethno-confessional or political-ideological principle and, correspondingly, functioned according to the principle of domination of the titular nation over the conquered area, the Eurasian empires ultimately fell apart. The same can be said about the Heartland as a united and integral geopolitical expanse that disintegrated into segments. In this way, the objective ties between the main regions of the Eurasian continent were disrupted.*

### 4. New Geopolitical Structure for Central Eurasia

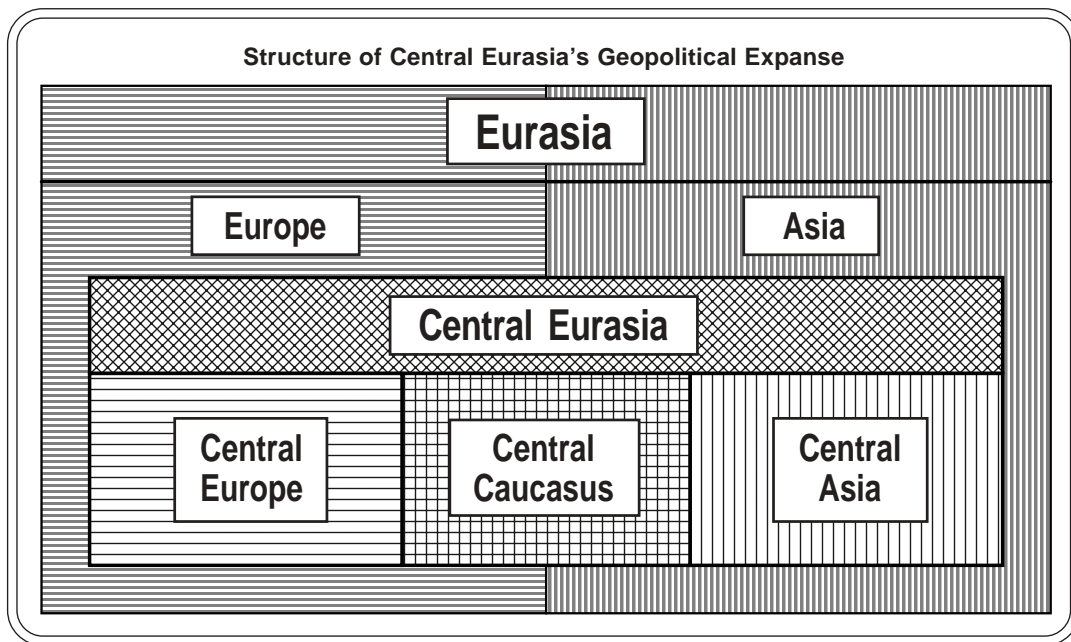
The evolution of the Pivot Area, the main stages of which have been discussed above, confirms the permanent functional mobility of its system-forming segments. This offers a clearer idea about how Central Eurasia is structured today. I have written above that from the spatial-functional point of

view Central Eurasia is much more than the *Central Caucasus* and *Central Asia*.<sup>41</sup> The spatial point of view also offers the same conclusion. Indeed, since Europe and Asia are two organic parts of the Eurasian continent, its central part should inevitably include the central segments of both (territories of the Central European and Central Asian countries), as well as a “special zone” where the both segments meet—the territories of the Central Caucasian states. This has been confirmed by the Pivot’s centuries-long socioeconomic history.

At the same time, the structuralization of Eurasia’s geopolitical expanse cannot rest on physical-geographical features (spatial-geographic parameters) alone.<sup>42</sup> It seems that regional structuralization of the geopolitical expanse should take into account not so much the criterion of physical geography, but also rely on the principle of the functional unity of the given expanse, compatibility and mutual complementarity of the independent neighboring states, and their social-cultural affinity rooted in their common past, as well as their joint functional importance for world politics and economics.

The above suggests that any discussion of the contemporary geopolitical structure of Central Eurasia should proceed from the fact that it consists of three segments—Central Europe, the Central Caucasus, and Central Asia (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3



<sup>41</sup> In the post-Soviet period, Central Eurasia included mainly two segments of the Pivot Area (see, for example: Ch. Fairbanks, C.R. Nelson, S.F. Starr, K. Weisbrode, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia*, The Atlantic Council of the United States, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., 2001, p. vii; E. Ismailov, M. Esenov, op. cit.; M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, “Introduction: The Crisis in IR-Theory: Towards a Critical Geopolitics Approach,” in: *Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflict, Security and Development*, ed. by M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, Brill, Leiden, 2005, pp. 2-3).

<sup>42</sup> On many occasions because of this approach, territories of sovereign states and parts of the neighboring states are included in individual regions. For example, the geopolitical concept of Central Asia is regarded as belonging to physical geography because part of Chinese territory (the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region) is also included in it together with the post-Soviet states.



I am convinced that this approach to the place and role of Central Eurasia allows us to complete the Pivot with its “missing element”—Central Europe.

As distinct from the currently accepted conceptions that embrace only two segments (Central Asia and the Central Caucasus) and presuppose that they are formed and function according to the principle of the “domination of the titular nation,” my approach to the parameters, structure, and principles of the formation and functioning of Central Eurasia as the Pivot Area presupposes:

- first, that the third segment (the territories of the Central European states) should be included in the Pivot together with Central Asia and the Central Caucasus;
- second, the Heartland should be built and function according to the principles of socio-economic expediency, self-organization, self-administration, and self-development.

History and the present geopolitical realities have demonstrated that precisely these principles ensure long-term and uninterrupted horizontal (West-East) and vertical North-South land contacts, that is, consistent socioeconomic integration of Western Europe-East Asia, Russia-South Asia.

It should be said that in the last decades, which are marked by accelerated globalization, geopolitical literature (works on regional and country studies) has exhibited a bias toward macro-categories. The term “Greater” has become more frequently used than before: Greater Europe,<sup>43</sup> the Greater Middle East,<sup>44</sup> Greater Central Asia,<sup>45</sup> Greater China,<sup>46</sup> etc. This approach is obviously rational and not so much because the positions and interests of the actors involved in the rivalry on the European geopolitical stage should be conceptualized. This approach is connected with the objective regularities of the regional political systems’ development and interaction in Eurasia in the globalization context.

The interests of dynamic and sustainable political, economic, and sociocultural development of the states that are parts of the regional subsystems cannot be realized without the necessary degree of functional openness and mutual involvement in the process underway in the area. The stake on autarchic development belongs to the times of classical geopolitics. Today, under the conditions of globalization, none of the states can achieve self-sufficiency, at least from the point of view of economic expediency. This is reflected in the processes underway in each of the segments of the Eurasian continent and among them.

The “narrow” definition of the Eurasian regions we inherited from the Cold War cannot fully reveal the new realities created by the widening and deepening ties and relations among the regions. This means that to achieve a full understanding of them we should exercise a wide, macro-regional approach to the structuralization of the Eurasian expanse. This means that the definition “Greater” should be applied to Central Eurasia and its components.

We should bear in mind that academic writings widely use the definition in the case of Central Asia (Greater Central Asia). Two other segments—Central Europe and the Central Caucasus<sup>47</sup>—have

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<sup>43</sup> See: I. Maksimychev, “Os mira kak nachalo Bol’shoy Evropy,” available at [[http://www.ng.ru/world/2003-02-28//6\\_europe.html](http://www.ng.ru/world/2003-02-28//6_europe.html)]; A. Arbatov, “Tsvetnye revoliutsii i Bol’shaia Evropa,” available at [<http://www.rian.ru/analytics/20050530/40439533.html>]; “Bol’shaia Evropa protiv Bol’shoy Rossii,” available at [<http://www.zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/05/609/41.html>]; “Razval Bol’shoy Evropy. Novy shans dlia SNG?” available at [<http://www.wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/1417.html>].

<sup>44</sup> See: A. Krylov, “Neft i novye igry na globuse,” available at [<http://www.fondsk.ru/article.php?id=269>]; “Bol’shoy Blizhniy Vostok,” available at [<http://www.charter97.org/rus/news/2004/06/29/vostok>]; “NATO i Bol’shoy Blizhniy Vostok,” available at [<http://www.svoboda.org/programs/ep/2003/ep.102903.asp>]; R.T. Erdoğan, “A Broad View of the ‘Broader Middle East’,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 4, 2004, available at [<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/8/587.html>].

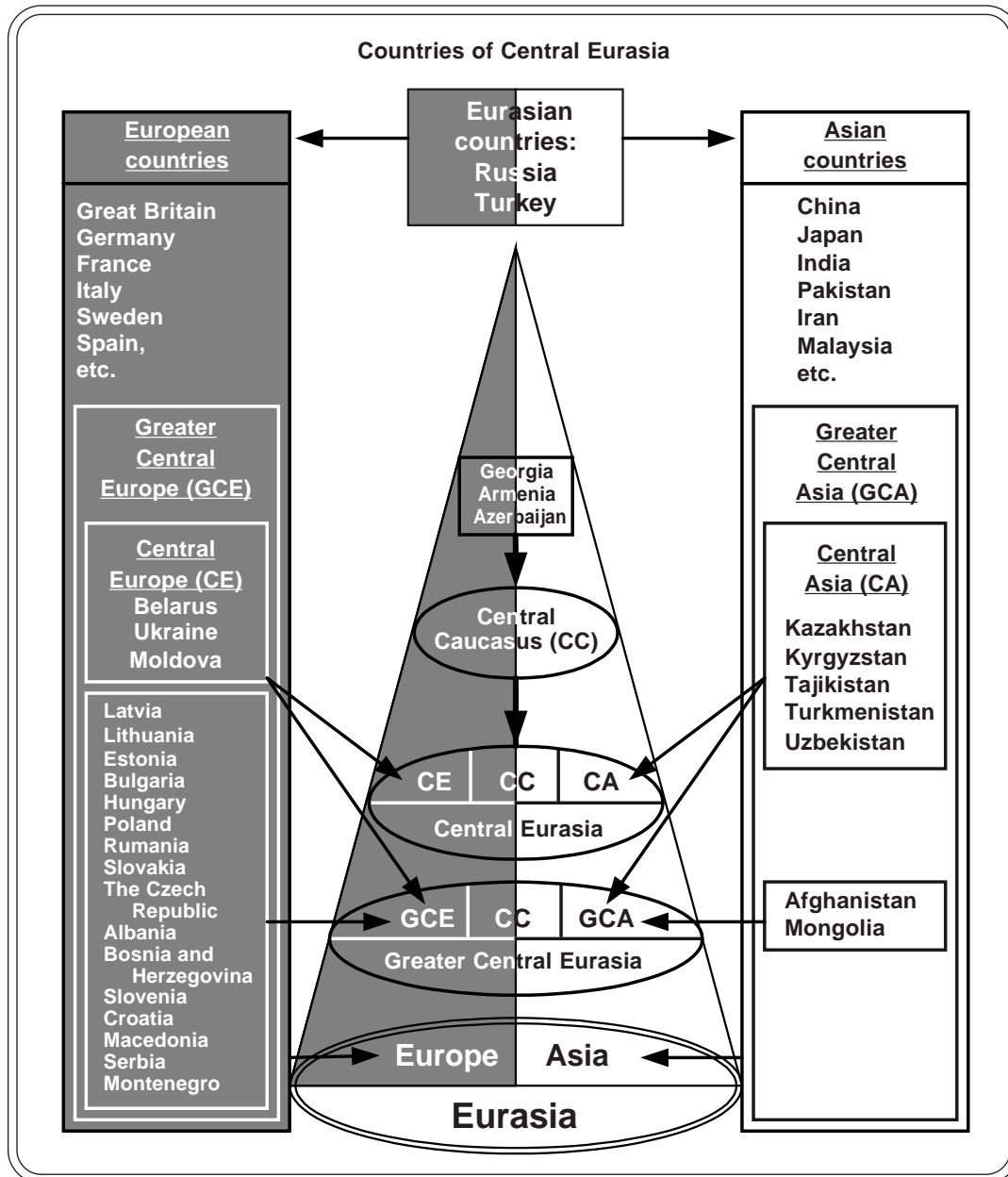
<sup>45</sup> See: M. Laumulin, “Bol’shaia Tsentral’naia Azia (BTsA)—novy mega-proekt SShA?” available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1132564860>]; “Bol’shaia Tsentral’naia Azia: ob’ediniay i vstavuy,” available at [[http://www.dumaem.ru/indexkz.php?iq=st\\_show&st\\_kztm\\_id=8&st\\_id=814](http://www.dumaem.ru/indexkz.php?iq=st_show&st_kztm_id=8&st_id=814)].

<sup>46</sup> See: K. Syroezhkin, “Byt li Bol’shomu Kitaiu?” available at [<http://continent.kz/2000/01/17.html>].

<sup>47</sup> This definition cannot be applied to the Central Caucasus because of its natural spatial limits.

not yet acquired this definition. The logic of the extended interpretation of the regions suggests that Greater Central Europe should be described, as I have pointed out above, as a geographic expanse filled by three post-Soviet republics (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova) and also by three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) and post-COMECON states (Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Rumania, Serbia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Montenegro) (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4



We can argue that the countries included in Central Eurasia have no common past, ideologies, ethnic affiliation, or axiological systems, which means that they would not be able to organize and administer themselves, or move toward the common development trends of the Eurasian continent and the entire planet. In fact, a certain amount of integration potential of the Pivot Area is rooted in the common historical past of the peoples of Central Eurasia (many of them lived side by side in nearly all the Eurasian empires, which inevitably caused ethnic mixing and cultural, linguistic, economic, and technological affinity). So far, however, the sociopolitical and historical writings have failed to provide objective descriptions of these historical periods and events which, in turn, greatly interfere with the speedy integration of the Pivot Area and the Eurasian continent as a whole.

Despite these and other complexities, it would be expedient to consistently promote integration of Central Eurasia simultaneously in several directions and in all segments. I am convinced that, taking into account the objective regularities of the joint development of the Central Eurasian states found in all segments, it is highly important to identify the contradictions among the states within one segment and among the segments themselves and find the shortest road to settlement.

It should be said here that in certain cases the volume and level of cooperation among the states in different segments of Central Eurasia is higher than among the states of one and the same segment. To illustrate: the level of cooperation between Central Asian Kazakhstan and Central Caucasian Azerbaijan is much higher than the level of its cooperation with Turkmenistan, its Central Asian neighbor, whereas Azerbaijan is engaged in strategic partnership with Central European Ukraine while being at war with Armenia, another Central Caucasian country.

I think that to realize the integration processes in Central Eurasia it is necessary to add activity to the “initiating core” in each of the segments, that is, a group of the most economically and politically developed countries which could serve as the cornerstone of integration within the segment with due account of the general integration trends in the Central Eurasian region. The following countries claim the role of the initiating core in Central Eurasia: Ukraine in the Central European segment; Azerbaijan and Georgia in the Central Caucasian segment; and Kazakhstan in the Central Asian segment. These countries have pushed aside inner- and inter-regional contradictions to look for the most effective ways of socioeconomic cooperation in the entire Central Eurasian region. Central Eurasia can create its own integrated and smoothly functioning economy no matter what the skeptics say.

This will probably not happen in the near future, yet integration in the region and the greater role of the “initiating cores” of the three segments testify that Heartland’s economic and political might is reviving.

### *In Lieu of a Conclusion*

I believe that one of the key tasks the world community will have to address in the first quarter of the 21st century is that of establishing systemic ties between the segments of Central Eurasia, or to be more exact, between the countries of Central Europe, the Central Caucasus, and Central Asia along the principles of socioeconomic expediency, self-organization, and self-administration. This will allow Central Eurasia to ensure long-term, sustainable, and effective fulfillment of its planetary (geopolitical and geo-economic) function of integration of the relatively isolated large areas of the Eurasian continent.