CENTRAL ASIA IN THE SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS.

Abstract. The Central Asia as geopolitical region is in the system of international relations located at the crossroads of civilizations. As the concept of "Central Asia" is not fully and systematically studied in the scientific literature yet, there are conflicting discourses in the scientific community. From this point of view, the scientific analysis of the concept of "Central Asia" in the modern system of international relations is very important. In recent years, the Central Asian region (according to the concept of five states "Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan") has become not only a region of common interests of the international community, but also of growing geopolitical importance. In our opinion, it depends on two main reasons. First, the region has a strong natural material base and a strategic location. Secondly, it is a continuation of the fact that the emerging state institution in Central Asia is rapidly adapting to the realities of the new millennium and successfully integrating into world politics and economics. Keywords: Central Asia, regional integration, geopolitics, multi vector foreign policy.

The concept of "Central Asia" was first introduced in 1843 in the work of the German geographer Alexander Humboldt. According to A. Humboldt, this region included "the territories from Altai to the south to the northern slopes of the Himalayas" [1]. During the Soviet era, there was no "Central Asia" region on the political map of the world, on the contrary, the term "Central Asia and Kazakhstan" or "Central Asia (Central Asia)" was used within the southern borders of a Soviet state. After the collapse of the USSR as a political institution, an important stage in the study of the newly independent states in terms of political science began to define new boundaries and terminology. In January 1993, the leaders of five countries of the region - the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan - met in
Tashkent. During the official meeting, at the initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, it was decided to abandon the concept of "Central Asia and Kazakhstan" used in the Soviet period and to introduce the term "Central Asia".

Central Asia plays an important role in the current system of international relations, is a crossroads of interests of the world's largest political participants (Russia, USA, China, EU), as well as a crossroads of values of the world's largest civilizations (Christianity, Confucius and Islam). Not only the main geopolitical region on the Central Asia-world map, but also its control will allow large developing economies (primarily China) to manage the global transit of logistics and other strategic raw materials and, consequently, affect their economic growth, aggregate capacity and expansion. The full withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021, poses a certain threat to the growing influence of the Taliban movement in the region and the security of Central Asia as a whole [2]. The region is studied in the system of international relations on the basis of several scientific discourses. Research in Central Asia by Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation is usually very similar, referring to the "periphery", the post-Soviet states, the former "colonies". However, for the last thirty years, the countries of Central Asia have been studied with great interest by the Western scientific community. As part of the Soviet Union for decades, Central Asia was not a separate entity in international relations. The fact that the Central Asian states became independent subjects of international relations after the collapse of the USSR has increased the interest of researchers in their foreign policy and foreign relations [3]. The Central Asian region is already a hotbed of potential conflicts of interest for global players. The largest of them are the United States and China, Russia, Japan and South Korea. For example, today the United States is losing out to its main rival, China, in terms of economic development, and is dependent on its rapidly growing economic and political power. Therefore, there is reason to believe that the United States and the "West" in general are so interested in Central Asia.

The countries of Central Asia have become one of the most important frontiers of the world community's response to threats to international security, highlighting
the growing international importance of the region and the need to study the nature of security threats that could change from regional to international at any time. These countries, whose foreign policy had only just begun to take shape before the beginning of the 21st century, were largely on the fringes of world politics and economics. Significant changes in the field of international security, new threats in the form of international terrorism, Islamic extremism, drug trafficking and other cross-border crimes have in fact coincided with the sharp rise in world energy prices. Accordingly, the interest of researchers in Central Asia. Currently, there are several scientific names in the scientific community, which are defined by several states, representing five neighboring countries [4]. Central Asia, Central Asia and Kazakhstan, post-Soviet Asia, Greater Central Asia. However, there are some differences and similarities between these concepts. In the course of this article, we will discuss the above concepts and determine the place of Central Asian countries in the system of international relations.

The process of formation of the "Central Asia" region. Central Asia is at the crossroads of civilizations.

The only obstacle to a mutually beneficial policy in Central Asia is the existing problems between the states. A number of internal problems in the Central Asian region, especially poverty, need to be addressed quickly and effectively. Delays in their resolution are the basis for many ethno-political conflicts.

The study of the role of the Central Asian region in the system of international relations has studied a number of publications by various authors: political scientists, sociologists, conflictologists, international jurists and scholars studying the formation of international relations at various levels, including regional. At present, domestic sources studying the role and place of the Central Asian region in the system of international relations can be divided into several main groups [5]. These works analyze the problems of political relations in Central Asia and their interaction with world and regional leaders. At the same time, this work presents a comprehensive picture of the interdependence and contradictions of the interests of the United States, Russia and China in Central Asia. Many of the most important issues facing Central Asia (terrorism, cross-border crime, transboundary rivers,
unresolved border disputes) are transnational in nature. The analysis of the role of Central Asia in the system of international relations is very important. Central Asia differs geostrategically from other regions in several ways. The region is located in a zone of military and political turbulence with Russia, China, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. India, Persian Gulf Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the region's role in international counter-terrorism and counter-extremism efforts and in drug trafficking has significantly increased since the start of the counterterrorism operation in Afghanistan.

Halford Mackinder's "pivot" and "Hartland", the Central Asian republics

According to the British geopolitical thinker Mackinder, Central Asia is the most important region in Roman rule. Halford Mackinder, in turn, noted that the person who rules Central Asia will have great power in the world. According to Mackinder's theory, "Central Asia is the key to the security of the whole of Eurasia. Mackinder's scheme shows that there are two main points defined in relation to the" axis of the world. " and America, Great Britain, South Africa, Australia, and Japan. "Heartland" Central Asia. According to Edwards, based on theoretical principles, the geopolitical conclusions made without taking into account the actions of other "players" usually remain only in the form of ideas. , Supports the viability of Mackinder's Hartland idea However, it is very inappropriate to apply Mackinder's ideas to modern Central Asia, because these theories consider the Central Asian countries as separate states, not as a single political region. However, most of the problems in Central Asia are interstate. It is true that Mackin's theories offer an
alternative approach to determining the role of Central Asia in the system of international relations [6]. According to McKinsey, Central Asia is the heart of the entire Eurasian basin, with direct access to rivers such as the Volga, Yenisei, ASU and Syrdarya. This is because these rivers are not connected to the wider world, on the contrary, they are not accessible to large inland lakes and do not have access to the vast ocean. Thus, this "anchor" was virtually inaccessible to naval attacks, but at the same time able to support a large population.

The second approach, which evaluates the countries of Central Asia only from the point of view of the twentieth century, is the interrelated concepts of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, post-Soviet Central Asia. After the collapse of the USSR, the post-colonial approach was considered by the Russian Federation. In the 19th century, the Russian Empire conquered most of Central Asia, except for the northern part of modern Kazakhstan, which was colonized by the Siberian and Orenburg Cossacks in the 17th and 18th centuries. Under Russian rule, Central Asia was divided into the Governor-General of Turkestan (capital Tashkent) and the Governor-General of the Steppe (capital Omsk). The Emir of Bukhara and the Khiva Khanate remained autonomous under Russian protectorate until the Bolshevik victory in 1920. During the Soviet era, the territorial division of Central Asia changed several times during the Soviet era. appeared. Until the 1920s, the economy of Central Asia retained its traditional agrarian-pastoral profile, which reflected the predominantly nomadic and rural nature of the region's population. Industrialization began in the 1930s under Stalin, and intensified during World War II when many industrial enterprises were evacuated from the European part of the Soviet Union to Central Asia. In addition, large irrigation projects have been implemented, such as the Grand Fergana Canal. As in other parts of the Soviet Union, agriculture was forcibly collectivized in the early 1930s.

Accordingly, the territory of Central Asia lost its importance as an independent region and was formed only as a peripheral, agrarian part of the Soviet Union. The human cost of modernizing Soviet Central Asia was enormous. They were exposed to several periods of famine in the 1920s and 1930s, repression and terror in the 1930s, the construction of a large network of labor camps (known as the Gulag
system) in which political opponents from all over the Soviet Union were imprisoned and killed, and people from the European part of the Soviet Union. These processes have not only destroyed the uniqueness of the region, but also changed the ability to self-determination in the system of international relations. Unlike the Baltic and Caucasus regions, the Central Asian republics were not at the forefront of national liberation movements at the end of the Soviet era. Until November 1991, regional leaders negotiated a "renewed" agreement with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the local political elite (former leaders of the republican structures of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) seized the opportunity to create a new authoritarian regime based on national rather than communist ideology. In our view, the arrival of former communist leaders at the time of independence has allowed the Central Asian region to present itself in the system of international relations not as an independent participant in the system of international relations, but as a "post-Soviet" country and region. After the collapse of the USSR, the term "Central Asia" gained political significance, reflecting in part the uniqueness of the geographical, ethnic, religious and historical communities of local peoples [7]. As a result, in January 1993, during a meeting of the leaders of the five Central Asian republics in the Tajik capital, it was decided to abandon the use of the term "Middle Asia" and to use the name "Central Asia". Thus, the first step was taken by the countries of the region to become an important political player in the Eurasian space, not only geographically but also politically. Of course, the heads of state took into account the process of regionalization of Central Asia, ie the process of building interstate relations on the basis of the forms and rules of global, universal standards. Unfortunately, over the past 30 years, the region has not formed a zone of a unique "European Union" or "Union of Southeast Asian Nations."

The only reason why the regional structures in Central Asia do not work effectively, as the world experience shows, is the result of colonial policy. In the Central Asian region, despite three decades of independence, there are still a number of large-scale regional and interstate issues that remain a "symbol" of Soviet power. One of them is the unresolved territorial issues between the post-Soviet Central
Asian states. At present, the main problem in Central Asia is the non-demarcation of state borders between countries, in addition to transboundary rivers and electricity transmission [8]. In particular, the issue of the "Fergana Valley" is a source of contention between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In the region, the Republics of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are the main countries with fully demarcated state borders. However, the unresolved Ferghana Valley issue in Central Asia poses a direct geopolitical threat not only to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, but to the region as a whole. The origin and formation of intra-regional border disputes in Central Asia In the 20s and 30s of the twentieth century, the Soviet system of government did not take into account the political and ethnic specifics of the region, but only in terms of transport and logistics of imperial political interests.

Since gaining independence, the countries of the region have resorted to "interstate agreements" to resolve border demarcation issues. There are two main reasons for the unresolved border demarcation issue in Central Asia. First, the imperial-colonial policy of the Soviet government, and secondly, the inability of weak national leaders to solve the problem. In comparison, Kazakhstan was the most rational country in the region in terms of border demarcation compared to other Central Asian states. Over the past 30 years, Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have had a number of political negotiations, including large-scale, territorial negotiations, political and economic pressures, and political demands on each other [9]. A peaceful and transparent resolution of border issues would have a positive impact on regional security, economic cooperation, ethnic relations and the fight against drug trafficking and religious extremism. made as neutral as possible from the principles of borders and ethnic division. This is because the new administrative-territorial division is considered to be a threat of regional separatism if it is formed only in the national-ethnic nature. The highly centralized nature of Soviet planning was based on the free circulation of economic and transport links across the borders of the republic. This is because the interstate border between the countries consisted only of a "board" or a small police outpost. Over time, all these factors will form the basis of "interstate border issues" when the Central Asian republics become independent states.
After the collapse of the USSR, the state borders of the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, the nominal administrative lines that divided the republics, became the most important attribute of state sovereignty. The emergence of a new statehood required an official territorial framework for sovereignty and regimes from the republics and ensured a sufficient level of security throughout the territory, caused regional conflicts. Thus, the Ferghana Valley, which is spread between the Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik republics, has become an enclave or semi-enclave, supplemented by the number of enclaves and districts that have emerged, especially due to the landscape features and communication links that clearly depict the official lines; In particular, the Tajik side is interested in the Vorukh valley in Kyrgyzstan, while the Uzbek authorities are interested in the Sokh and Shahimardan enclaves in Kyrgyzstan. The process of demarcation of the borders in the valley is not yet complete. It should be noted that from the very beginning, due to the difficult situation between the countries sharing the Fergana Valley, the two Central Asian states, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, have largely avoided problems related to territorial disputes and resolved the issue of demarcation. Turkmenistan has signed agreements with Uzbekistan (September 2000) and Kazakhstan (July 2001), and Kazakhstan has agreements with Uzbekistan (September 2002), Kyrgyzstan (December 2001) and Turkmenistan (July 2001). decided by creating (Baumgartner 2017). An agreement on the demarcation of the borders of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan was signed on November 10, 2017 at a meeting of Central Asian foreign ministers in Samarkand. Thus, according to the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov, this document will put an end to the process of legal registration of the borders of these three countries [10].

Central Asia was seen by foreign policy participants as a logistics corridor on the one hand, as a new Silk Road by China, and as a buffer geopolitical region in terms of the European Union and the United States. There is reason to believe that there is a positive trend in the development of Central Asian countries as a whole. It is strengthening politically, there are positive changes in the economy, including the oil and gas industry and hydropower, and their foreign trade and investment ties are expanding. Central Asian countries (excluding countries with a neutral status of
Turkmenistan) are members of such powerful regional associations as the EurAsEC (Uzbekistan suspended its membership in October 2008, renegotiated in 2021), the CSTO and the SCO. Representing the region, Kazakhstan was elected the current chairman of the OSCE in 2010, a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2017-2018, and the region as a whole is recognized not only in Kazakhstan but also in international politics. Thus, Central Asia is gradually becoming an independent and important factor in international politics.

Among the geopolitical conceptual models proposed by American experts on the Central Asian republics, the concept of Greater Central Asia (CCA) is very important in understanding the political position of the United States in the Central Asian region and maintaining the influence and control of the Eurasian center. In addition, the authors of the concept analyze the concept of Greater Central Asia, combining Central Asia and Afghanistan and the XUAR of China. That is, for the "western" society, the Central Asian region is considered not as a post-Soviet region, but as a Eurasian corridor. The formation of the concept of NCA (recently changed to C5 + 1) was due to the shift in the balance of power in the region in favor of Russia and partly in China, and the need for an adequate strategic response to geopolitical challenges of the two powers. However, according to the Kazakh expert Y. Buluktaev, despite the common objective basis in the form of common territory, history, culture, ethnic roots, linguistic proximity, belonging to the Muslim world, the regional identity of Central Asia is still far from its full integration.

Kazakh scholar M. Laumulin, in his monograph on US foreign policy and foreign policy in Central Asia, elaborates on the concept of "Greater Central Asia". Describing this concept, M. Laumulin puts forward the thesis that the capabilities of the West in the security of the region are limited. In other words, the Central Asian countries can prevent geopolitical conflicts in the region on the basis of the concept of the NCA. " For example, the Central Asian countries shown in Table I were able to unite to a certain extent around common interests, to form a significant geopolitical player in the system of regional international relations [11]. The history of Asia's development and new developments in the post-Soviet period have predicted the intensification of external threats and challenges, and the conceptual
provisions to some extent reflect the importance of the geostrategic interests of the leading powers in Central Asia. The struggle for influence in the region between Russia and China within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been going on since its inception. If China's economic advantage in the region becomes apparent, Russia will want to maintain its influence in the region, arguing that it has political influence, historical ties, traditions and a certain share of the Russian-speaking population in the region. The goal of the region as a tool for achieving geopolitical goals by the "big players" will not be lost until the Central Asian countries first come to a common position in solving regional problems.

Thus, the regional, socio-economic, interethnic, interstate situation at the current stage of development of the Central Asian republics creates equal opportunities for Russia, China and the United States in terms of regional dominance. However, the existing "balance of payments" between the geopolitical partners will continue to be implemented in parallel in the form of "individual ties with each country" in the form of temporary cooperation between Russia and China within the SCO. A sharp change in the activity of external players automatically leads to an escalation of competition and covert conflict. The existing local and, in many cases, alternative security systems (on the one hand, the CSTO-SCO, on the other hand, NATO projects) actually increase the overall instability and mistrust.

Second, the regionalization of Central Asia may be a response to processes that may conflict with the national interests of its member states. In this case, the question of which geopolitical participants in Central Asia should create a single economic space and how appropriate it is remains open. Although Central Asia has been recognized by the world community as an independent state and a member of international institutions for only 30 years, the region has been a center of civilization, international trade and logistics for thousands of years [12]. Despite all the unresolved issues between the countries of the region, the conceptual, institutional and technological aspects of the formation of the configuration of international relations in the region in some way regarding the role and place of Central Asia in the system of international relations have not yet been fully explored in domestic and foreign political science. Summing up the analysis of the role of the
Central Asian states in the world political system, we conclude with the following important conditions:

– The formation of the geopolitical landscape of Central Asia is currently at an active stage;
– Due to its resource and strategic attractiveness to the region, the interest of many leading countries in the world (Russia, China, USA, India, Pakistan, South Korea, etc.) is growing;
– The ultimate goal of each state in the Central Asian region is to ensure the transition of society from one type of public relations - from state planning to another - to free market relations;
– One of the most important tools for the protection of national interests and national security of each state is the development of cooperation with the world community, implemented through cooperation with neighboring countries in the region and international organizations;
– In order to maintain effective foreign policy, it is important for all Central Asian states to abandon the policy of intra-regional competition and try to find common regional development directions. Only then can the countries of Central Asia become independent participants in the system of international relations and become the object of world politics.

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