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The significance of geopolitical issues
for internal development and intervention in
mountainous areas of Crossroads Asia

Hermann Kreutzmann

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The significance of geopolitical issues for internal development and intervention in mountainous areas of Crossroads Asia

Hermann Kreutzmann[1]

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Abstract

This working paper illustrates the process of territorial transformation in time and space. From the period of Silk Road networks to imperial designs for spatial control in Crossroads Asia, external interests for local and regional resources were the driving forces for superpower confrontation. The Great Game is the 19th century highpoint of confrontation leading to boundary-making and restricted trade relations. Decisions taken in far away locations – capitals of superpowers of their time – had significant effects on the most remote corners of Crossroads Asia, from participation excluded communities and populations that were forced to adapt to changing circumstances, political affiliation, contested loyalties and power relations. The border regimes – in terms of communication, mobility and trade – highlight the effects of diplomatic negotiations, forceful encounters and manoeuvring in niches and spaces of neglect. Exchange across boundaries came to a stand-still with the commencement of the Cold War. In this paper constraining factors from geopolitics and internal developments within and between nation-states are presented in order to discuss the development gap with which we are confronted in this high mountainous and remote region of Crossroads Asia.

Taking the establishment of ethnonymous Central Asian republics within the Soviet Union as a starting point, the long-lasting consequences for the now independent states of Central Asia are discussed. The concepts of autonomy and national segregation led to the configuration of republics without historical antecedents. The independent nation-states of Middle Asia are now faced with numerous border disputes, severe communication and exchange constraints and insufficient traffic infrastructures, which were originally established for a larger union and do not comply with the needs of sovereign states of smaller size. Tajikistan's border impasse with the People's Republic of China represents a case of communication and trade gaps. Afghanistan is a case in point for external interests and shaping of a nation-state regardless of ethnic and historical considerations. The factors leading to buffer state development and the consequences resulting from imperial domination are discussed on different levels and illustrated with examples from Badakhshan. The Pashtunistan dispute led to a form of irredentism that has affected Afghan-Pakistan relations until today. Pakistan in itself devotes bitterly needed funds for rural development to border disputes, of which the Kashmir stalemate with India is the most costly.

The importance of reconciliation for future mutual understanding, improved exchange relations, infrastructure development, and bi- and multi-lateral cooperation is underpinned by this scrutiny and investigation in past developments. The foundation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) might be a first step leading to more reconciliation in border disputes and enhanced trust and exchange among neighbouring states. Physically feasible and recognizable is the extension of the road network linking and bridging neighbours and the region.

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1. Introduction - routes and roads

In the Central Asian context geopolitics have played a major role in socio-economic development in the arena between different spheres of influence. The specific interests of superpowers of their time had far-reaching as well as long-lasting effects into the spatial and economic periphery. Exogenously stimulated developments resulted often in transformed local living conditions. When discussing the significance of colonial intervention and geopolitical interference we have to keep in mind external strategies and their implementation versus regional and local responses. The present-day perception of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan as nation-states is strongly linked to their political affiliation in the 20th century in general and during the Cold War in particular. Kirghiz as a Turkic language and Tajik, an Iranian language, are written in Cyrillic script, while the Tajik of Afghanistan, Dari, is written in the Arabo-Persian script, in a similar manner as Urdu in Pakistan (Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001; Rzehak and Weinreich 2003). The differences in the scripts, lexemes and loan words in Tajik and Dari reflect the distinct socio-political backgrounds of the two languages, both originating from Persian (Fragner 1999). The same applies for a number of minority languages spoken in the Pamirs and the Hindukush mountains. The Turkic idiom of Uigur experienced a shift from a Persian script to Latin and back. In each instance a political move was involved. Presently script changes are again being discussed in some countries – as a way to symbolize independence, traditional values and a break with colonial and geopolitical legacies.

A second case in point is the role of communication across borders. Mountain regions can be perceived as corridors enabling exchange between communities and partners. At the same time mountain ranges have been interpreted as barriers to the same. Boundaries and roads can be taken as symbols representing both forms of interaction. Two developments seem to be counteracting when communication across borders is concerned. On the one hand, international boundaries clearly demarcate spaces of nation-states and indicate that borders are meant to exclude others from interference. On the other hand, modern communication in the shape of railways and roads has improved at a fast pace since the mid-19th century and is crossing the Himalayan Arc, which was perceived by Kenneth Mason (1936) as a 'barrier to modern communication'. But even his contemporaries were dreaming of a time when the physical, orographic obstacle of a mountain mass could be traversed by heavy railroads. The imperial mountaineer Martin Conway was a pioneering and daring visionary when he predicted a substantial impact of rail traffic crossing the Karakoram mountains at the end of the 19th century: "Gilgit must grow to be an important trade centre, and possibly [...] a railway junction on the line from India to Kashgar, where the Samarkand branch will turn off!" (Conway 1894: 144). At present Pakistan and the PR of China have agreed to cooperate in establishing a trans-Karakoram railway line, bringing Conway's vision forward. Kashgar was linked to the Chinese railway network in 2000, while in Pakistan the railheads are still located at the foot of the Hindukush, Himalaya and Karakoram. The renaissance of rail traffic as a modern means of communication has not stopped at the foot of the Asian mountain arc. Geopolitical considerations have to be taken into account when present-day developments are grounded in an historical context.

In the twentieth century motorised transport developed at a fast pace to become the appropriate technology and it revolutionised communication. The advent of motor vehicles and the construction of roads in the mountain belt begin in a singular mode and require different planning than railways. Some regions were already connected to motor traffic during colonial times.

The first motor vehicle reached Pamirski Post (nowadays Murghab in the Eastern Pamirs) in 1928. The Soviet regime had given the task to a contractor from Tashkent who achieved a pioneering feat that was greatly admired by competitors and stimulated enhanced activities of their own. The initiative to establish links between mountain regions and plains areas in South and Central Asia has been unceasing since. The modernisation project and the incorporation of far-flung areas were mediated through infrastructure development with a high symbolic significance. In other parts of the high mountain arc, 'explorers' ventured to cross those extremely high ranges. The Citroen expedition of 1931 aimed at crossing the Karakoram on pristine ground on its route from Beirut to Beijing via the 4765 m high Kilik Pass (Audouin-Dubreuil 2002). Two years after Pakistan's independence, the first motor vehicle made its journey into Gilgit, connecting lower lying supply stations with the Karakoram (Kreutzmann 2006, 2009). At the same time camel caravans reached Gilgit Bazaar from Kashgar; four years later the Mintaka and Kilik passes were closed to the exchange of goods and people. The political change terminated the age-old caravan traffic between Central and South Asia. Political interference and revolutions in combination with technological advances are driving forces for the integration of remote mountain regions into mainstream societies. The October Revolution provided an impetus for the construction of the 'highest roads on earth' which began in the Pamirs.

The Pamir Highway as an artery of communication and goods exchange was completed in 1932 linking Osh in Kyrgyzstan with Khorog, the central place of Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan via the 4655m high Akbaytal pass. British spies enviously observed Soviet engineers tackling one of the most difficult high mountain passages across the Pamirs. William Strang reported to the Foreign Office in the summer of 1932 on developments described in the 'Pravda':

"A new air line has been operating regularly since the middle of July between Stalinabad (Dynshambe), the captal of Tajikistan, and Khorog, in the Badakshan Autonomous Area. The route is said to be one of the most difficult in the world. […] The journey, which by road takes about a month, is completed by air in from 3 ½ to 4 hours. […]

[S]uccessful progress is being made in the construction of a road from Osh in the Eastern part of the Fergansk valley, via Pamirski village, to Khorog, across the Kyzyl-Art (Zaalaisky Range). The road is 702 kilometres long and will cross four mountain ranges. It is stated to be the first metalled road to be constructed in the Badakshan area. As soon as traffic is working over the Kyzyl-Art, work will be begun on the pass over Ak-Baital leading to Pamirski vilage." [2]

About one year later Strang gives an update on road construction, based on reports in the 'Izvestiya' of June 5, 1933:

 "One of the most difficult sections of the Pamir mountain road has been opened […] between Osh and Sarytash and […] 185 km in length. The Murghab-Khorog section is said to be now well under way and on the 1st September it should be possible to travel by car from Osh to Khorog. This road is said to be the highest of any length road in the world, its average altitude being some 11,500 feet [3505m] above sea level." [3]

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[2] The quote is taken from a report by the British Embassy Moscow to Sir John Simon in the Foreign Office in London dated 2.8.1932 (IOL/P&S/12/2276).

[3] William Strang again reported for the Foreign Office 5.6.1933 (IOL/P&S/12/2276).

By October 1933 the 'Izvestiya' confirmed:

"In the construction in the Pamir of the high mountain motor road Osh-Khorog, all the work on the two most difficult passes Ak Baital (4,700 metres) and Kyzyl-Art (4,200 metres) has been accomplished at a wonderfully quick speed, and the whole road, the highest in the world, will soon be ready."[4]

Finally, with the beginning of the travelling season in 1935, the Pamir Highway commenced its regular operation:

"Automobile traffic in the Pamirs over the Osh-Murghab road started on May 10th. The heights of Taldyk, Kyzylat [Kzyl Art] and Abaital [Akbaital] – 3,500 to 4,650 metres above sea level – have been cleared of snow. From May 20th a regular motor service will commence between Khorog … and the villages in the Alichur valley. By the end of May through communication from Khorog to Osh will open."[5]

The British observers were quite disturbed by the speed at which Soviet engineers mobilised, accessing formerly remote mountain regions. Military strategists realised that the military headquarters in the Eastern Pamirs – Murghab – and the administrative centre of Badakhshan – Khorog – were now connected to the important supply lines in Kyrgyzstan through the most modern technology. Their concerns grew when they learned that the Sary Tash–Irkeshtam road was connected with the traffic system at the same time. From Khorog a road was planned to the north where two new motor roads were to be reached in the near future: Stalinabad–Kurgan Tyube and Stalinabad–Garm.[6] The Soviet Union had definitely taken the lead and shown to the world by constructing the Pamir Highway that high mountain regions could be accessed by motor traffic and air links. The Irkeshtam road was unique compared to those connecting remote corners with the Soviet Union, in that it represented an opening towards China and the Kashgar oasis at a time when the internal political situation in Xinjiang deteriorated and led to the subsequent closure of borders.[7]

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[4] Translation from Izvestiya 3.10.1932 (IOL/P&S/12/2276).

[5] The opening was reported by the 'Moscow Daily News' on 12.5.1935 (IOL/P&S/12/2276).

[6] Cf. IOL/P&S/12/2276. It took another five years until in 1940 Khorog was connected with the Dushanbe–Garm road via Tawildara and Khaburabot (Sagirdasht Pass 3252m). Due to snowfall the road is seasonal, closed in winter.

[7] Cf. Bovingdon 2010; Forbes 1986; Millward 2007 who provide the context for the crucial developments in Eastern Turkestan/Xinjiang by the mid-1930s.
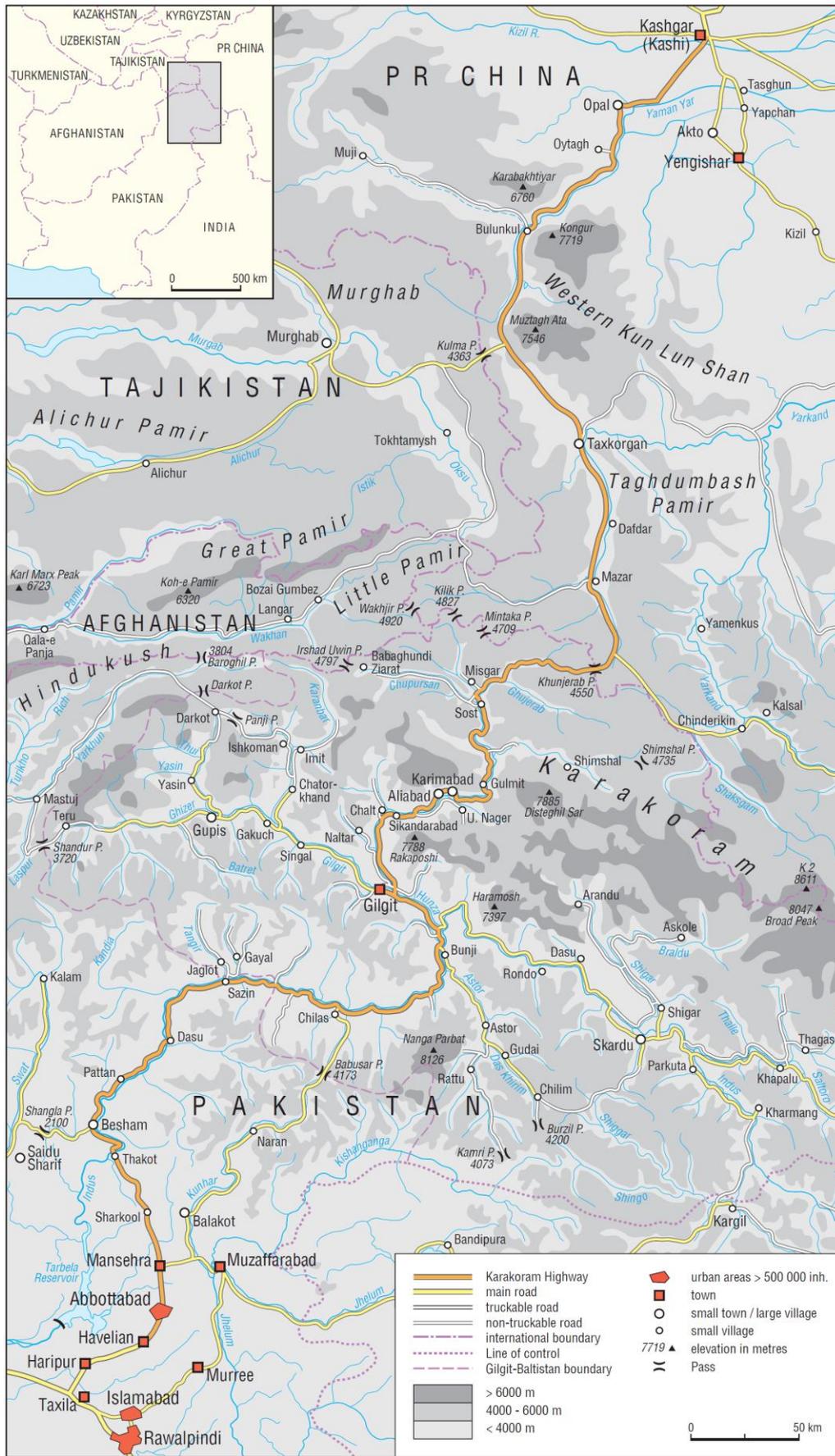
Figure 1: Karakoram Highway as main road link between the Indian subcontinent and the Tarim Basin

The planning of monumental roads did not stop during World War II. In contrast, the significance of road connections for territorial control, defence of established spheres of influence, and backing and rescue of affiliated and loyal allies dramatically increased. British blueprints existed for connecting Kashmir and Xinjiang in order to support the armed units of the Guomindang and their leader General Chiang Kai-shek. This primarily strategic enterprise aimed to provide military support against Japanese occupation forces in China and Mao Zedong's Red Army. In addition, Soviet influences in Xinjiang were to be controlled; thus a giant project involving 70,000 labourers and army staff was planned on the basis of nine million man-days within a span of one year for the section between Gilgit and Kilik Pass alone.[8] Coinciding with the end of the war, this project did not materialize. After the lapse of half a century, this was the first serious attempt to relize what Captain Medley predicted in 1896: "The road [Punjab-Gilgit-Yarkand] will in fact become the Grand Trunk road from Central Asia to India."[9] But for implementation further changes in the structure of regional politics were needed. The major road link between the Grand Trunk Road of South Asia and the Central Asian highways was only realized after Pakistan's independence and the Chinese Revolution. Connecting the Grand Trunk road with the Southern Silk Road, its course was based on common strategic interests of friendly neighbours. The outstanding achievement of constructing the trans-Karakoram axis is all the more remarkable considering the lack of appropriate road infrastructure in Pakistan as a whole. Thus, the Karakoram Highway (KKH) has become not the link between two historical road networks and a symbol of the connectivity between two major regions of sub-continental dimension, but also an effective tool for growth- and exchange-related regional mountain development (Figure 1). The importance of the mountain passage will grow in the future rather than diminish. The vital role of the Karakoram Highway as a North-South transfer corridor is an expression of changed routes of goods transport and mobility of people.

Boundaries and roads, exclusion and inclusion, and closure and permeability constitute a web of signifiers that supports an analytical approach to interpreting factors that affect development in mountainous areas of Crossroads Asia. Their sheer existence needs to be embedded in socio-historical constellations and conflicting interests in an environment that poses significant challenges for human survival, infrastructure development and all modes of communication and exchange.

2. Ecological structure and spatial utilisation patterns

On the macro scale Central Asia has been the sparsely settled periphery between Europe and Asia. Environmentally the region is characterised by steppe, desert and mountains with arid conditions in the lowlands, and with precipitation and humidity increasing with altitude – resulting in snow-covered mountains, glaciation, high mountain pastures and scanty forests. Given these assets, common utilisation patterns of ecological resources are related to a bi-polar approach: extensive pastoralism in the vast desert and steppe regions covering substantial areas with sparse vegetation cover. Animal husbandry as a prime strategy is enhanced by certain forms of mountain pastoralism in the Hindukush, Pamirs and Tien Shan. The specific utilisation patterns of high mountain pastures – such as that observed in the 'pamirs' (cf. Kreutzmann 2003, 2012a) – is characteristic for Central Asia and

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[8] IOL/P&S/12/4609: India Office Library & Records: Departmental Papers: Political & Secret Internal Files & Collections 1931-1947: Memorandum on the proposed motor road from North West India to Sinkiang via Gilgit, Chungking, 8.6.1944: pp. 6-15; Anonymous 1951: 81.

[9] IOR/2/1064/45: India Office Records: Crown Representative's Records - Indian State Residencies: Kashmir Residency Files: Indo-Chinese Turkistan trade. Report by S. H. Godfrey, Political Agent Gilgit, to A. C. Talbot, Resident Kashmir, Gilgit 17.12.1896: quotation from Captain E. T. Medley, commanding the troops at Gilgit.

has repeatedly given scope for speculation about the economic potential of animal husbandry ever since Marco Polo's travels (Figure 2). In contrast, agriculture is limited to oases in which intensive crop cultivation is linked to the demands of the bazaar towns and their surroundings along the traditional trade routes of the Silk Road network (Figure 3). More important than silk has been cotton cultivation in major irrigated oases. Hydraulic resources for irrigation originate mainly from the glacier-fed rivers such as the Amu and Syr Darya, which issue from the high mountain ranges within the desert-steppe environment. In the remoter mountain regions we find different forms of combined mountain agriculture (Ehlers and Kreutzmann 2000: 15) in scattered mountain oases mainly supplied by gravity-fed irrigation schemes tapped from the tributary valleys of the main rivers. Niche production of valuable and marketable crops augments the general pattern of grain crop cultivation for basic sustenance.
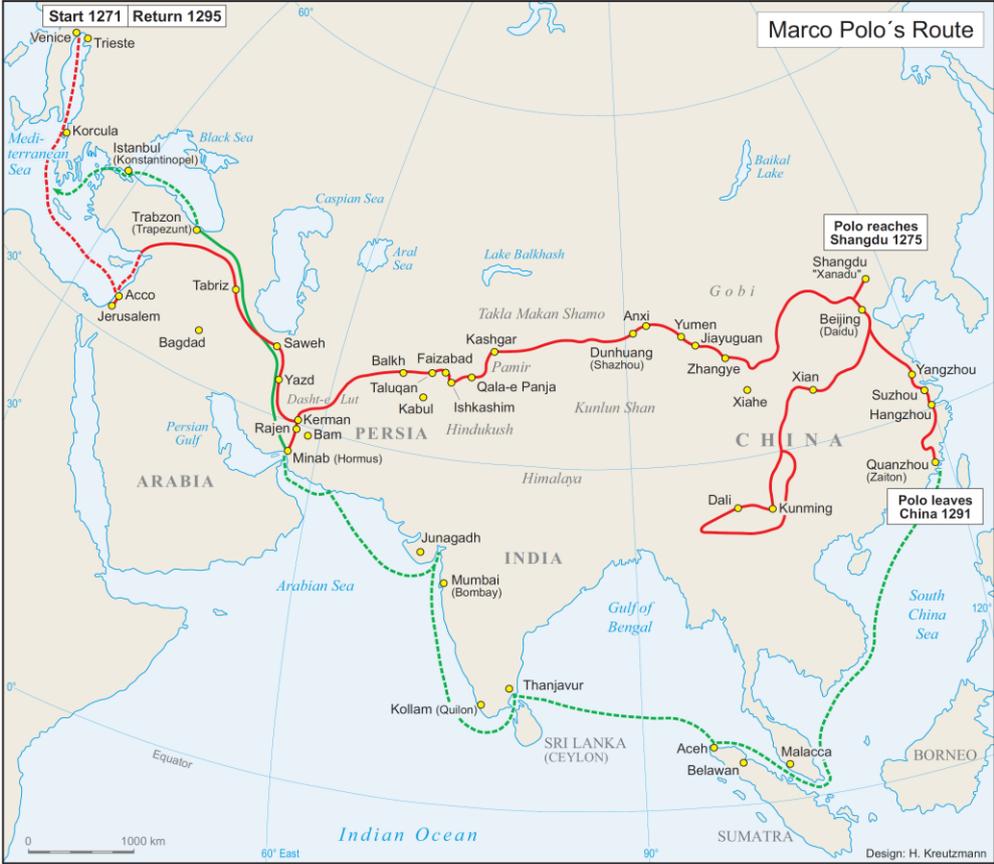
Figure 2: Marco Polo's route of travels

Economically and politically there existed competition between nomads and farmers over natural resources during long periods. While they competed in the production sector, political influence was mainly felt and contested in the urban centres of the oases towns. They were the prime target of all kinds of conquerors from Iran, Mongolia and China (cf. Bregel 2003, Christian 2000, Kreutzmann 1997, 2004). These historical events left their marks on the transforming Central Asian socio-economic landscape and prove the existence of a Eurasian exchange system over long periods of time. This led Andre Gunder Frank and Barry Gills to postulate a 5000 year-old Eurasian exchange network which in their opinion was instrumental for the development of China and Europe (Frank 1992, 1998; Gills and Frank 1991). Consequently both authors observed an early emergence of a 'world system' in Central Asia.

Figure 3: Traditional trade routes and lines of communication in the Silk Road network

In the 19th century the nature of external influence changed significantly and the 'Great Game' emerged, characterized by a polarisation that was stimulated by the prime interests of the two superpowers at that time (Figure 4). Direct influence in the form of boundary-making and economic exploitation replaced the former pattern of indirect control and tax-taking in a feudal system. For the understanding of the present transformation process in Central Asia and the performance of independent states, the geopolitical dimension of the 'Great Game' and subsequent territorial demarcations needs to be discussed in greater detail.

Figure 4: Upper section: Imperial expansion in Central Asia in the early phase of the Great Game (app. 1865); lower section: Consolidation of British and Russian spheres of influence at the time of the Anglo Russian Convention (1907)

3. The 'Great Game' in Crossroads Asia

A marking point for changing tides in Central Asian affairs was the year 1877, when Queen Victoria appropriated the title of Empress of India. Consequently, Russian diplomats and military strategists engaged in a debate about the importance of Central Asia from a Russian perspective. Colonel Michail Ivanovich Veniukoff vindicated "the gradual movement of Russia in Central Asia" as "the re-establishment of extension of the sway of the Aryan race over countries which for a long period were

subject to peoples of Turk and Mongol extraction".[10] Veniukoff advocates a diffusion theory in which he identifies "the mountainous countries at the sources of the Indus and the Oxus to be the cradle of the Aryan or Indo-European race." He adds: "From this birthplace our ancestors spread far and wide"[11] After some deliberations about the spread of people, Veniukoff concludes that the Russian advances in Central Asia can be interpreted as "this 'return' of part of the Slavs to the neighbourhood of their prehistoric home." He continues:

"We are not Englishmen, who in India do their utmost to avoid mingling with the natives, and who moreover, sooner or later, may pay for it by the loss of that country, where they have no ties of race […] It is desirable that this historical result should not be forgotten also in the future, especially on our arrival at the sources of the Oxus, where we must create an entirely Russian border-country as the sole guarantee of stability of our position in Turkestan."[12]

The interests and justifications for the advance of the two dominating powers were distinct. Strategies for 'remigration' into an ancestral homeland typified the Russian approach, while the British demonstrated exploitative interest in the wealth of Asia. Consequently, two types of colonies were created: Russian settlement colonies and British colonies of extraction. Nevertheless, the commonalities of both powers were discussed as well:

"Possibly time will produce a radical change in the sentiments of the English, and then both great European nations will advance to meet the other in Asia, not with bitter suspicions and reproaches, but with confidence and benevolence as workers in the same historical mission – the civilization of the Far East. But will that time come soon? Russia, in any case, without awaiting it, must complete her mission: the occupation of the whole of Turkestan. This, unquestionably, will prove not disadvantageous in that respect as well, that it will force England to be more on her guard in other lines of universal policy, in which she is ever antagonistic to the views of Russia."[13]

At the turn from the 19th to the 20th century the British Viceroy in India, Lord Curzon, identified the Central Asian countries and territories in his famous statement as "pawns on a chessboard". British India and Russia were the players who gambled about their influence in Transcaspia, Transoxania, Persia, and Afghanistan (cf. Figure 4). But this battle was not solely about regional control; it was a contest about the world domination of imperial powers. Great Britain had already achieved maritime supremacy, and thereafter the last land-locked area – Central Asia – came into focus. From a British viewpoint Central Asia posed the 'buffer region' to protect more than pawns: the 'jewel of the crown', a synonym for their possessions in India. From a Russian perspective expansion towards the east and the south had been a consequential endeavour ever since Peter the Great mentioned in his testimony that Russia's future was linked to Asia (cf. Hauner 1989). Both superpowers expected sufficient wealth to be exploited from Central Asia to pay for their exploring adventures and military expenditure.

During the 19th century both superpowers reached a state of confrontation over contested supremacy in Central Asia. Both had literary celebrities justifying their cause and in both countries contem-

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[10] Political and Secret Department Memoranda: The Progress of Russia in Central Asia by Colonel M. J. Veniukoff (translated from the ‚Sbornik Gosudarstvennikh Zuanyi' 1877 (= IOL/P&S/18/C 17: 1).
[11] Political and Secret Department Memoranda (= IOL/P&S/18/C 17: 1).
[12] Political and Secret Department Memoranda (= IOL/P&S/18/C 17: 2).
[13] Political and Secret Department Memoranda (= IOL/P&S/18/C 17: 22).

porary bourgeois debate highlighted the civilizing mission to be accomplished. Great Britain had Rudyard Kipling who was one of the foremost advocates of the 'Great Game' and had coined the term of a 'white man's burden' (cf. Kreutzmann 1997). With missionary zeal and state authorisation, civil society measures were to be promoted in Asia grounded in European standards. His Russian counterpart was Fjodor M. Dostojevsky who published an essay on the importance of Asia for Russia's future in which he justified the Asian conquest as a mission for the promotion of civilisation. Dostojevsky compared the colonial expansion into Central Asia with the European conquest of North America (cf. Hauner 1989, 1992; Sahni 1997). The second half of the 19th century experienced a heated debate in political and academic circles about the effects of the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia.

In Russia the Gorchakov Memorandum of 1865 marks the beginning of the animated phase of the 'Great Game' (cf. Figure 4, upper section). The British Premier Disraeli responded in his famous speech at Crystal Palace 1872 in which he announced the imperial policies for further expansionism. Immediate results were the 'forward policy' in the Afghan borderlands and the subsequent crowning of Queen Victoria as Empress of India (1877). Russia and Great Britain fought this 'game' in the remote mountains of the Hindukush, Karakoram and Pamirs where their spies-cum-explorers met in unexpected locations. At the same time there was competition among the diplomatic staff posted in Central Asian centres. Notably Kashgar became one of the hotspots of confrontation where a weak Chinese administration personified by a Taotai fell prey to the powerful representatives of the superpowers: the Russian Consul M. Petrovsky and his British counterpart George Macartney. These protagonists reported to their respective governments in detailed reports which give us historical evidence on the socio-economic conditions in Central Asia in addition to strategic and military intelligence during their rivalry. The 'Great Game' in its narrow definition came to an end in 1907 without any military encounter and no loss of lives. Russia and Great Britain came to terms and consented to the text of the so-called Anglo-Russian Convention in which respective spheres of influence, buffer states and regions of non-interference were agreed upon (cf. Figure 4, lower section). The accord was highly influenced by the 'heartland theory' which drew geopolitical significance towards Central Asia.

The geographer Halford Mackinder formulated his 'heartland theory' in 1904 which ever since has been one of the most significant texts of the geopolitical debate. Mackinder drew prime attention towards Central Asia as he stated that Tsarist regional dominance was linked to their equestrian tradition from nomadic Asian backgrounds. From the safe retreat of the Inner Asian steppe regions, conquests had taken off towards Europe, Persia, India and China. He described European civilisation as the result of a secular battle against Asian invasions (Mackinder 1904: 423). The naval predominance of Great Britain and imperial control of world trade had been modified through a shift in terrestrial traffic structures. The Russian railways were perceived as the successors of the equestrian mobile forces. Central Asia had become the arena of contest, all the more as a Russian-German and/or a Sino-Japanese alliance could contribute to a shift of world affairs to the 'heartland' of the Eurasian continent which he perceived as a 'geographical pivot of history' (Mackinder 1904: 436). He predicted the transformation of Central Asia from a steppe region with little economic power into a region of prime geostrategic importance. Culture and geography would contribute to the key region. Mackinder identified four adjacent regions encompassing the heartland of 'pagan' Turan in the shape of a crescent and denominated by religious affiliations: Buddhism, Brahmanism, Islam and Christianity (Mackinder 1904: 431). With the passage of time Mackinder modified his theory under the im-

pression of events during the First and Second World Wars and influenced the thoughts of Karl Haushofer and other geo-politicians of his time.

Figure 5: Urumchi and Kabul represent centres of political instability in Lattimore's and Hauner's models respectively (adapted from Kreutzmann 2013: 162)

Similar ideas of a Central Asian 'heartland' or a pivotal role stimulated Owen Lattimore's perceptions in his book 'Pivot of Asia' (1950). Bearing in mind the experiences of World War II, Lattimore drew a circle with a diameter of 1000 miles around Urumchi and identified Central Asia as a 'whirlpool' stirred-up by "political currents flowing from China, Russia, India and the Middle East" (Lattimore 1950: 3). By following the same Central Asian-centred approach, Milan Hauner shifted the centre in the 1980s to Kabul (Figure 5), drew a similar circle and identified a world of "even greater contrasts" which "touches upon the volatile and oil-rich region of the Middle East" (Hauner 1989: 7). The last statement has remained valid through the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Taliban rule in Afghanistan and in the aftermath of 9/11 and the Iraq crisis. The fact that Ahmed Rashid (2000) subtitled his book on the Taliban as 'Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia' is only one case in point for the reference to the 'Great Game' connotation of contemporary geopolitical problems in the region (cf. Kreutzmann 1997, 2004, 2013; Roy 2000). The presence of American and Russian troops on airports and along borders in Central Asia proves the continuing geopolitical significance of the region and its linkage to contemporary crises zones. The epicentres seem to be shifting. The eccentric geopolitical analyst Robert Kaplan promoted in his recent book an 'Iranian Pivot' (Kaplan 2012: 269) which he identified centred on the Iranian Plateau.

What are the effects of certain lines of thought and resulting political actions on Central Asia and why do we still refer to the metaphor of a 'Great Game' when discussing contemporary strategic interference and socio-economic transformations in geopolitical contexts? Boundary-making and its impact on nation-building and economic and political participation severely influenced socio-economic de-

velopments in the mountainous areas of Central Asia. Some cases in point need to be introduced for the understanding of the far-reaching consequences of imperial border delineations. First of all, the practical impact on trade relations and economic exchange need to be investigated.

Figure 6: Important trade routes in Crossroads Asia around 1935

4. Development of Central Asian trade and attenuated exchange relations in the aftermath of the 'Great Game'

In Central Asia, the 'Great Game' resulted in the demarcation of international boundaries separating the spheres of influence of the super powers of the time. Besides executing direct control and domination in the core areas of their empires, Great Britain and Russia had created buffer states at the periphery such as Persia and Afghanistan (Figure 4, lower section). In their negotiations they had excluded Kashgaria or Eastern Turkestan which nominally was under Chinese administration. Trade between South and Central Asia was affected by this constellation and a rivalry had developed since British commercial interests entered this sector in 1874 (cf. Davis and Huttenback 1987; Kreutzmann 1998). Both superpowers competed for dominance on the valuable markets in the urban oases of the Silk Road such as Kashgar and Yarkand. According to the theory of imperialism, the merchants of the industrializing countries tried to purchase raw materials such as cotton, *pashmina* wool, and hashish while, in exchange, textiles and manufactured products were offered in the bazaars (cf. Kreutzmann 1998). Russia had an advantage as access was easier. From the railhead at Andijan in the Ferghana Valley, which was linked to the Middle Asian Railway in 1899, the distance to Kashgar (554 km) could be covered in twelve marches via Osh, Irkeshtam, and Ulugchat by crossing only one major pass, Terek Dawan (3870 m). On the other hand trade caravans from British India had to follow either of

three trans-montane passages – the Leh, Gilgit, and Chitral routes – which were much longer and more difficult (Figure 6).


Indo - Xinjiang Trade 1895-1934
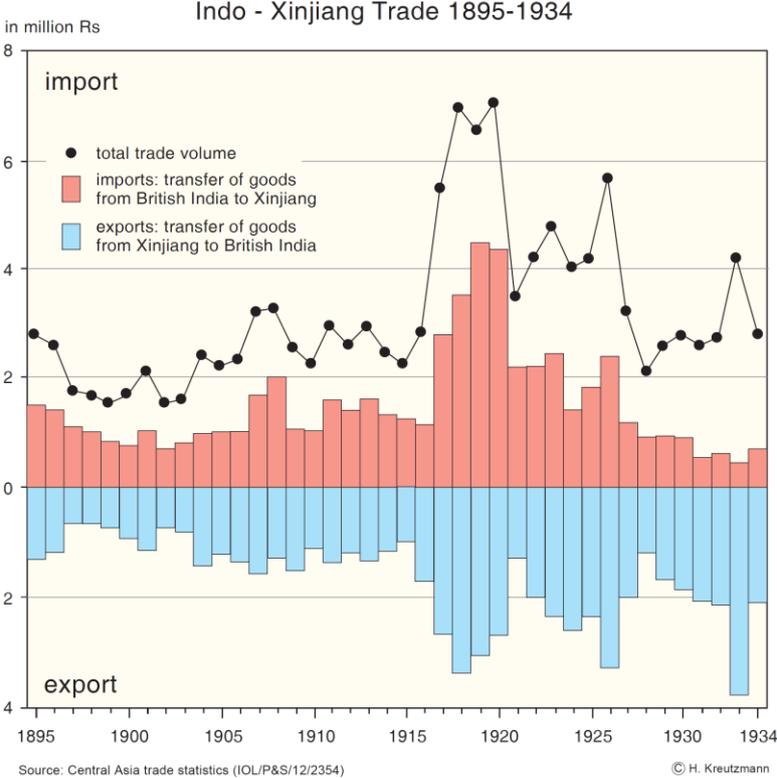
Figure 7: Indo-Xinjiang trade 1895-1934

The competition for the Central Asian markets continued after the October Revolution, which caused the closure of the Russian/Soviet Consulate in Kashgar from 1920-1925. This event affected the Soviet commerce with Kashgaria detrimentally while the British share soared. Overall trade significantly declined due to the disturbances in Chinese Turkestan after 1935 and later due to World War II and the Chinese Revolution. Central Asian trade was an important factor in cross-boundary relations affecting the economies in the regions traversed for a period of forty years. The total annual volume of Indo-Xinjiang commercial exchange surpassed the two million rupees level for most of the era between 1895 and 1934 (Figure 7).

At the end of the 19th century George Macartney,, the British Consul-General in Kashgar, summarised the situation:

"The demand for Russian goods is without doubt ever increasing. Cotton prints of Moscow manufacture, as cheap as they are varied and pretty, are very largely imported. The bazaars of every town are overstocked with them, as well as with a multitude of other articles, amongst the most important of which may be mentioned lamps, candles, soap, petroleum, honey, sugar, sweetmeats, porcelain cups, tumblers, enameled iron plates, matches, knives and silks. These articles, with few exceptions, could, but for the competition, be supplied from India. But we have gradually had to relinquish our position in favour of Russia, until at last our trade has to confine itself chiefly to articles of which we

are the sole producers and in which there is no competition."[14]

British interests in securing a substantial share in this commercial exchange governed their imperial designs and had an impact on the mountain societies involved. At the turn of the century, Ladakh and Baltistan were dominated by the Maharaja of Kashmir and Gilgit had become an agency (re-established in 1889) under the joint administration of a British Political Agent and a Kashmiri *Wazir-i-Wazarat*. Principalities such as Hunza and Nager were affiliated after their defeat in the 1891 encounters, which were fought in the interest of opening the Gilgit route for commercial purposes. At the same time the Mehtar of Chitral transferred his sovereignty in external affairs to a British Agent and was remunerated with an annual subsidy and a supply of arms.

This part of the region under study was controlled and *de facto* commercially incorporated in the British Indian exchange system. Trade with Afghanistan followed its own rules and became part of the special arrangements with the ruling Amir in Kabul. The major hiatus occurred in the aftermath of the October Revolution when a process of separation and isolation began. The economic relations of the Soviet-dominated Central Asian regions were re-directed and amplified towards Russia while at the same time international borders were sealed and became effective barriers for trade. This process took time and lasted until the mid-1930s. With growing alienation between the Soviet Empire and the Chinese-dominated part of Eastern Turkestan, a nearly complete interruption of exchange relations between Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan and Kashgaria came to a halt by 1930 (Kreutzmann 1996: 179). The undercutting of bazaar prices through the provision of cheaper commodities of the same quality in *kolkhoz* shops led to the termination of trade in this sector. Similar developments affected the Soviet border with Afghanistan during the 1930s:

"During the past few years, the effect of Soviet policy has been to restrict, in an increasing degree, traffic, excepting state-controlled trade, from Soviet Central Asia across the Afghan frontier on the River Oxus. [... M]ore European Russian officers have been appointed to ensure that the frontier is effectively closed." (IOL/P&S/12/2275, dated 13.10.1939)

The result was that border delineation and the establishment of different socio-political regimes effected a collapse of trade and exchange in this Central Asian region that lasted for nearly 60 years until the end of the Cold War. With few exceptions traditional trade links and exchange routes were interrupted for two generations and are only being reanimated at a slow pace.

5. Boundary-making and its long-lasting effects

A few cases in point from the turn of the century may illustrate how mountain regions have been involved in the demarcation of spheres of influence. The contenders of the 'Great Game' in High Asia agreed to lay down boundaries in the comparatively sparsely populated regions of the Hindukush and Pamir. Sometimes these borders were described as natural frontiers, scientific boundaries and dialect borders. The Durand Line of 1893 separating Afghanistan from British India/Pakistan epitomises such an effort and has continued to function as the symbol of colonial border delineation referred to as the 'dividing line' (Felmy 1993). In order to safeguard the physical separation of two imperial opponents, international borders were outlined and Afghanistan was created as a buffer state

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[14] Report of George Macartney of 1st October 1898, quoted from Captain K. C. Packman, Consul-General at Kashgar 1937: Trade Report. In: India Office Library & Records: Departmental Papers: Political & Secret Internal Files & Collections 1931-1947: IOL/P&S/12/2354, p. 1.

(Figure 8). Local livelihoods and regional interests were neglected and of secondary importance. The Pashtun settlement region was divided into two parts following an arbitrary line through the Hindu-kush ranges. The traditional migratory paths of seasonal nomads between the Central Afghanistan highlands and the Indus lowlands were intersected along the Hindukush passes. Numerous clashes between tribal groups and imperial troops in the borderlands characterised the political relations in the frontier that served as a buffer belt on the fringe of the empire (Fraser-Tytler 1953). Now a special legal status has been assigned to these regions (Figure 9) as they are administrated as Federally or Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (FATA or PATA). The movement of nomads (*powindah*) and their herds now depends on bilateral political relations and has been restricted, but has not ceased.

Figure 8: Demarcation of Afghanistan's boundaries and the partition of the Pashtun settlement region

(i) Wakhan as the symbol of division

The Wakhan Corridor of northeastern Afghanistan symbolises colonial border delineation. The southern limit is formed by the Durand Line (south) while the northern part came into existence as a result of the Pamir Boundary Commission of 1895 in which Russian and British officers negotiated the alignment, and Afghan officials assisted in the demarcation. This narrow 300 km-long and only 15-75

km wide strip was created to separate Russian and British spheres of influences and fulfilled the function to avoid direct military action between the two superpowers of that period and region. Part of the boundary follows the course of the Pjandsh (Amu Darya River), which was in accordance with the fashion of the time. The 'stromstrich' boundary followed a role model tested in other regions of the world previously. The price for this colonial endeavour was the spatial partition of regional semi-autonomous principalities like Badakhshan, Darwaz, Wakhan, Shughnan, and Roshan. Subsequently both parts of each former principality experienced quite diverse socio-economic developments as part of greater political entities. Today we find regional units of the mentioned toponyms in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The creation of these boundaries resulted in immediate refugee movements by ethnic minorities. In recent years relatives separated by century-old borders have re-established their relationship and the bridges across the Pjandsh River in Langar, Ishkashim and Khorog symbolise those endeavours. The Langar and Ishkashim bridges were built to enable the Soviet army to invade Afghanistan (1979) and to safeguard their supplies from the Soviet Union for the control of Badakhshan. Meanwhile the function of the Ishkashim bridge has changed. For years during the war in Afghanistan, support for the Northern Alliance and humanitarian aid for the suffering civilians were transported across this bridge. The island in the river near Ishkashim became a storehouse for humanitarian aid such as wheat flour, milk powder and vegetable oil. The Khorog bridge was built by AKDN in order to link the cut-off Shughnan region of Afghanistan with Tajik Shughnan and to establish market access. More bridge projects are planned in Darwaz and along the Amu Darya. Nevertheless, the effect of partition is felt in all areas, especially when international borders are closed and strictly controlled as has happened since the Cold War. Afghan Wakhan is suffering substantially from its dead-end location, which causes a lack of through trade and exchange with neighbours (Felmy and Kreutzmann 2004). Similar observations are valid for Shughnan and Roshan.

Source: own design according to fieldwork 2001, Kreutzmann 1995; Tajikistan`s topography based on Narzikulov & Stanjukovic 1968; border claims according to Atlas of Xinjiang 1966, p. 149-150

Figure 9: Disputed territories and constitutional peculiarities in Western High Asia

(ii) Irredentism about Pashtunistan

Continuing border disputes and conflicts like the irredentist movement for 'Pashtunistan' (Figure 10) are still alive, and one of the main squares in Kabul has continued to be named after this Pak-Afghan dispute despite the many winds of change since the 1960s. The Afghan demand for a territory named Pashtunistan – consisting of the Pakistan North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan (including the tribal areas) – is the result of the imperial design that led to the creation of the Durand Line and the referendum at the end of British Rule in India. Pashtun representatives have taken these incidents as a basis to mobilise a followership for the cause of Pashtunistan. Imperial legacies and losses function as a measure of identity and supply the ideological platforms of charismatic leaders who aspire to re-write history. The Durand Line as an acknowledged international boundary has been a cause for discontent and political crises between the neighbours Afghanistan and Pakistan, and will remain so in the future.

Figure 10: The spatial outline of Pashtunistan irredentism

(iii) China's boundary with Afghanistan and Tajikistan

The missing link between both borders is the short Sino-Afghan boundary, which in itself is part of a disputed frontier. According to Chinese opinion, the country's border with Afghanistan and Tajikistan extends much further west. The ambiguity concerning Chinese claims to the Pamirs did not escape the scrutiny of the Pamir Boundary Commission and of the British Consul-General in Kashgar, George Macartney, who went on an inspection mission to the Little Pamir in 1895 and reported from Kizil Robat:

"From enquiries made by myself, it appears that, previous to that period, the Chinese jurisdiction extended westwards on the Alichur Pamir to Sumatsh and on the Great Pamir to the eastern end of Victoria Lake. The Khirgiz living in the Upper Oxus Basin within these limits and about Rangkul and Murghabi, owned a sort of loose allegiance to China not however as Chinese subjects, but rather as inhabitants of a State tributary to China. The Chinese appear to have never had much to do with the Small Pamir, that country having in times past been a dependency of Kanjut living in it subjected to Kanjuti taxation."[15]

George Macartney's observation highlights the fact that in remote areas of the Pamirs territorial

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[15] India Office Library & Records: Files relating to Indian states extracted from the Political and Secret Letters from India 1881-1911: Pamir Delimitation Commission 9. Oct. 1895 No. 195 (Reg. No. 451): IOL/P&S/7/82.

control was less important than tributary relationships which could well be kept with more than one mighty neighbour. To claim territory based on these changing loyalties is as futile as is the notion of clear-cut boundaries at the time. Over time the boundaries have become visible and changed the fate of the abutters. The dispute about the delineation of the international boundaries between China and Tajikistan has been carried into recent times (Figure 11). The factual contemporary boundary has been agreed to by China's neighbours since 2004. The price paid for the agreement – which enabled the reopening of trans-border exchange in the Eastern Pamirs via Kulma Pass – was the transfer of about 980 km^2 from Tajikistan to China in the Rangkul area (cf. Kraudzun 2011: 176; Kreutzmann 2013).
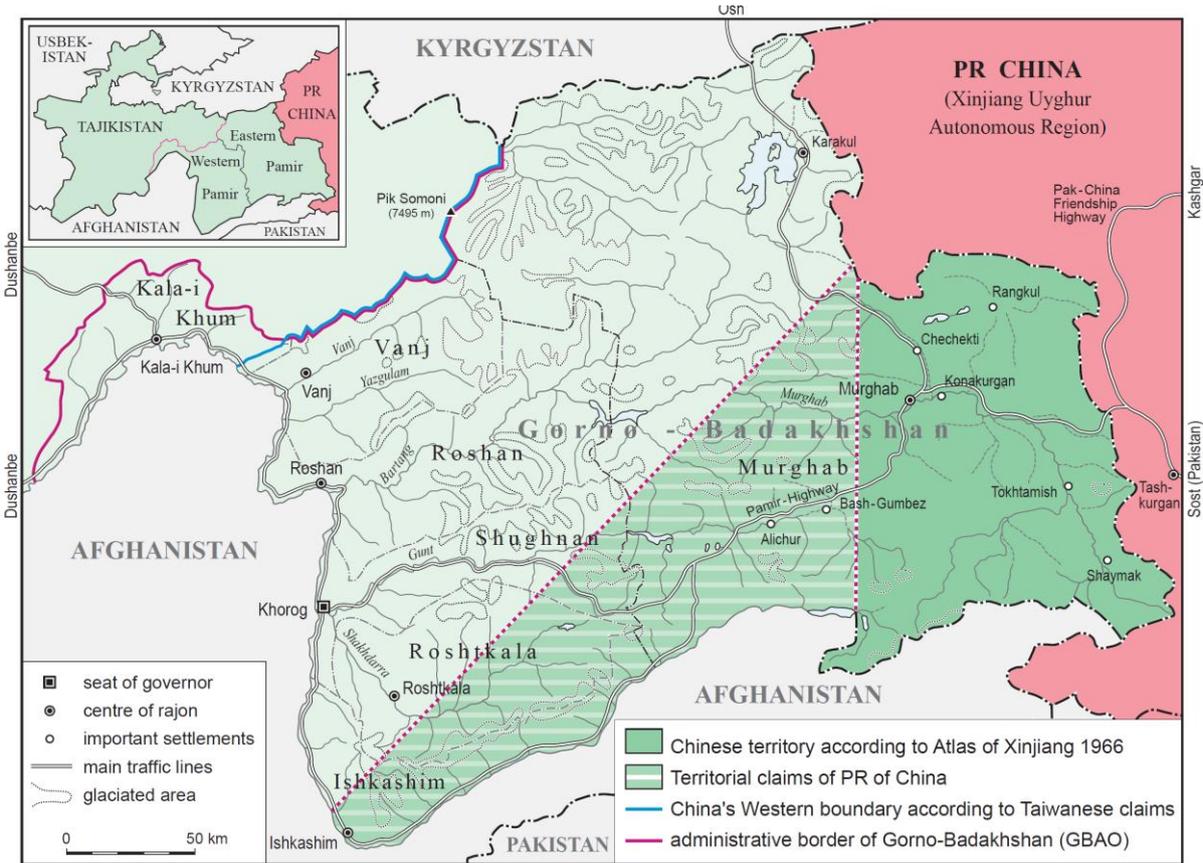

Figure 11: Chinese territorial claims towards Tajikistan

(iv) Border disputes within the Soviet Union and thereafter

The attempt of Soviet nationalities' policies was to create new republics, which should represent the ethnic groups of Central Asia in adequate spatial and administrative settings. Consequently by 1929 ethnonymous republics were created to represent Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Tajiks, Usbeks and Turkmens. The new republics did not have any boundaries in common with their predecessors, the Khanate of Khiva, the Khanate of Bukhara and the Turkestan Governorate-General. If the term 'artificial boundaries' could be appropriate in any context, it would be here. The newly defined republics consisted of a spatial nucleus, but very often they had in addition satellite territories of enclaves and exclaves within the territory of neighbouring republics (Figure 12). While this phenomenon did not pose grave differences during the period of the Soviet Union, (given that basically all territories were under the central command of the Kremlin and only international boundaries with neighbouring countries such

as China and Afghanistan were of any importance and hermetically sealed), another cause of germinated dissent erupted after independence in the early 1990s. Republican boundaries within the Soviet Union became international borders of sovereign states such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In a survey two years after independence, the Moscow Institute of Political Geography recorded 180 border and territorial disputes in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Halbach 1992: 5). Central Asia was no exception in this regard and these conflicts have increased since. According to a recent report of the International Crisis Group (ICG 2002), there is no Central Asian country without border disputes with its neighbours. To illustrate the scope of conditions and demands a few cases are listed: Irredentist movements in Turkmenistan expect Uzbekistan to 'return' the territory of the Khanates of Khiva and Khorezm. Tajik nationalists demand the 'return' of Samarkand and Bukhara. Uzbekistan lays claim on the Eastern part of the Ferghana Valley, i.e. the Osh Oblast, the present-day economic and commercial centre of Southern Kyrgyzstan. The Uzbekistan government does not permit colleagues from neighbouring republics to consult the archival material in Tashkent, which documents the boundary decisions from the 1920s. Rental arrangements and the production of natural resources in exclaves from Soviet times are under dispute such as the Uzbek exploitation of oil and gas fields in Southern Kyrgyzstan and the deviation of irrigation water from the Andijan reservoir towards the Ferghana Valley (Figure 12). The Ferghana Valley alone contains seven enclaves through which major traffic routes are leading. The freedom of travel is more restricted than before as new visa regulations for travel have been introduced. Some of these measures have been justified in the aftermath of attacks from Afghanistan-trained rebels, who plundered Tajik and Kirghiz villages on their way to the Ferghana Valley in 1999 and 2000. The future of rented lands and exclaves that were created for the protection of ethnic minorities is at stake, and neighbouring governments are discussing options for forced evacuation and migration to initiate population exchange.

Figure 12: Isolated exclaves in the borderlands of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Usbekistan

(v) Future prospects and conflict resolution

The hope for friendly relations and mutual understanding has suffered several setbacks in recent years. All negotiating partners are interested in most favourable results from their national perspective. On a regional scale hope emerged with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 1996. Originally named the Shanghai-5 (Russia, PR of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan), the SCO became a fully-fledged organisation in 2001 when Usbekistan joined. Its mandate is to improve mutual relations and to improve Central Asia's economic competitiveness in a globalised world. There-

fore the SCO has supported the opening of new trade corridors between the PR of China and Kyrgyzstan (Irkeshtam Road) and Tajikistan (Khulma Road) respectively. The two major regional players – Russia and PR of China – are cooperating with the European Union to link the Central Asian republics with Europe through a road network (TRACEA route) via the Caucasus. The participation in regional and international trade may be one of the prime stimulants to overcoming the legacies of previous geopolitical interference and reflects the economic interests of the big economic players of today in the future of Central Asia.

Nevertheless, the region under study suffered not only directly from Cold War confrontation but from regional problems as well, which remain a colonial legacy, but have developed into a conflict between neighbours. After more than 50 years of independence, India and Pakistan are still engaged in military confrontation that is affecting economic exchange tremendously and keeps the mountain regions of the Karakoram and Western Himalaya in a state of dispute and uncertainty.

6. The Kashmir stalemate - origin and perspectives

The continuing dispute between India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir about the constitutional and territorial status of the formerly largest princely state of the Indian Empire originates from two perspectives.

First, the implementation of the so-called 'two-nation theory' has failed in Kashmir. The Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh who belonged to the Hindu Dogra dynasty, ruled over a population the majority of which followed the Muslim faith. Exceptions to this rule occurred in Buddhist-dominated Ladakh/Zanskar and Hindu-dominated Jammu. According to the last census before partition (1941), which was taken as the data reference for the 'two-nation theory', the population of Jammu and Kashmir was calculated at 4.02 million inhabitants. The religious composition was given as 77.1 % Muslim, 20.1 % Hindu, 1.7 % Sikh, 1.0 Buddhist, 0.1 % Christians. Playing for independence from India and Pakistan, Maharaja Hari Singh deliberately postponed any decision about accession to either side. The story of the 1947-48 Kashmir war, interference of troops from Pakistan and India, and a UN-negotiated peace treaty have repeatedly been dealt with (cf. Kreutzmann 1995, 2012; Lamb 1991 for further references). The first Kashmir war broke out shortly after independence in 1947 and the Indian army as well as the Pakistan army were commanded by British high-ranking officers, which led to a paradoxical confrontation: in October 1947 Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck was the Commander-in-Chief of both the Indian and Pakistan Armies. Some authors suggest that this fact led to the early involvement of the United Nations in peace negotiations (Tariq Ali 1983: 65; Lamb 1994: 69). According to Lamb (1994: 71-72) "the opinion of most [contemporary] British observers [...] was that the best solution lay in a partition of the old state of Jammu & Kashmir, essentially with Ladakh and much of Jammu going to India and the rest to Pakistan." The concept of partition was reiterated by the British UN representative in 1950 but rejected by India and Pakistan in favour of a unitary plebiscite in all of Kashmir.

This confrontation resulted in a cease-fire line separating Indian and Pakistani spheres of influence. With minor deviations it survived the 1965 war, which saw Kashmir as the major military theatre. The Tashkent agreement of January 1966, negotiated between Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and President Ayub Khan with the Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin as a mediator, confirmed the status quo and the retreat of troops behind the actual line of control. During the third Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, Kashmir experienced a secondary role, and the 1972 Simla Conference extended the

status quo again. Since then all demands for an impartial and internationally supervised referendum/plebiscite on the future status of Kashmir have been postponed.

Since the mid-1980s fighting for the control of the Siachin glacier region between specially trained army units has taken place every summer. The barren tracks of the uninhabited Siachin region form a challenging and remote battle-ground where both sides are fighting because land surveyors and diplomats tend toward ambiguity in a commercially unproductive territory. Unfortunately servicemen from the mountain regions who are adapted to, and who are able to survive in altitudes above 5,000 m have become the victims of this senseless fight year after year. The Kashmir wars have bound huge amounts of armoury in the Northern regions for a battle between two independent states where local residents are pawns in a competition no side might ever totally win. In 1999 another war between the two contestants nearly arose when the 'Kargil Crisis' led to military encounters, territorial gains and losses, and to numerous victims among the soldiers who mainly originate from the mountain regions. Some denominate it as the 'third war over Kashmir' (cf. Kreutzmann 2012b; Mato Bouzas 2011).

A second point should be emphasised because of its importance in related disputes: the extent of the state ruled by the former Maharaja of Kashmir and its status under international law is incongruous in the demands of all concerned parties (Figure 13). On Indian maps up to the present day the whole of the Gilgit-Baltistan – the former Gilgit Agency including the then principalities of Hunza, Nager, and the governorships of Punial, Yasin, Kuh, Ghizer and Ishkoman, the Chilas and Baltistan Districts – are marked as part of Indian Kashmir (cf. Figure 9). According to that opinion, Kashmir borders in the west with Chitral (North-West-Frontier Province) and in the north with PR of China. But India depreciates the present frontier line with China as well. This delineation originates from the 1963 Pak-Chinese Treaty, which involved a settlement about 8,800 km^2 of disputed territory of which Pakistan has controlled forty percent since. In addition, the Chinese claims for Aksai Chin, which followed the construction of the Xinjiang-Tibet road through this uninhabited territory in 1956, are unacceptable for India. Consequently Indian maps indicate that Aksai Chin is within its national boundaries.
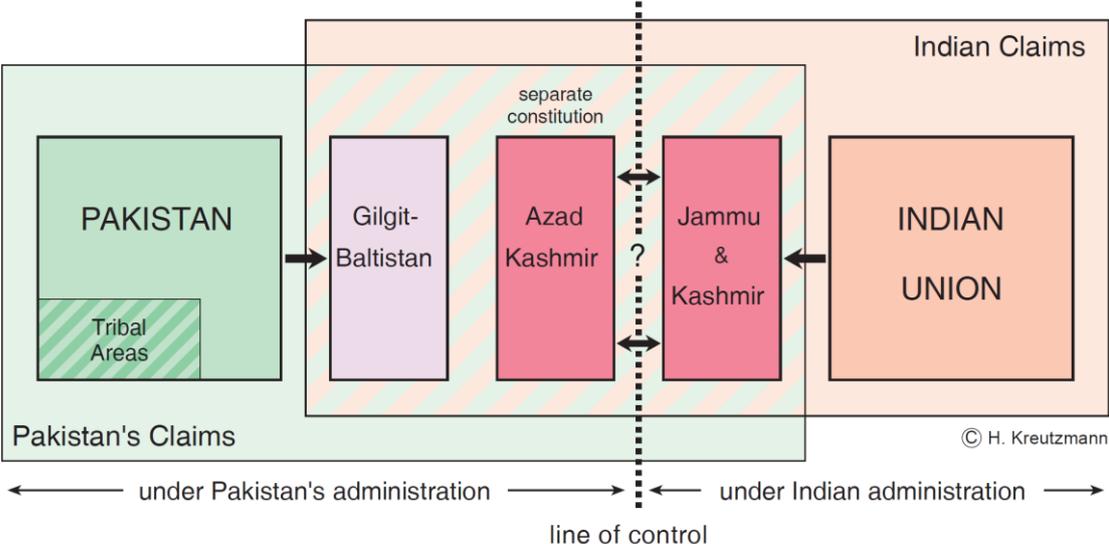

Figure 13: Conflicting demands and realities in the dispute over Kashmir

Pakistan's views have changed over time. In the aftermath of the local uprising causing the abolition of Dogra rule in Gilgit and Baltistan, a short-lived 'Independent Republic of Gilgit' was established on November 1, 1947, preparing the way for a unanimously accepted accession to Pakistan. Consequently, the official version of the Pakistan Government distinguishes between Kashmir on the one hand and the Gilgit Agency (Gilgit-Baltistan) on the other (cf. Figure 13). This viewpoint is supported by a lengthy historical investigation and legal interpretation within colonial files regarding the status of certain territories in the Gilgit Agency. In 1941 an internal decision binding for administrative purposes summarised the results of a previous discussion for two exemplar principalities in question, Hunza and Nagir: "Though these are under the suzerainty of the Kashmir State, they are not part of Kashmir but separate states." (IOR/2/1086/303).

This deliberate uncertainty in the formulation of the legal status is one of the obstacles to a negotiated solution. The Government of Pakistan has treated the Northern Areas or Gilgit-Baltistan space respectively and the Kashmir issue as separate entities, which is reflected in different constitutional configurations (Figure 14). Azad Kashmir (AK) is governed by an own President elected from an assembly composed of the AK Parliament and the AK Council. In contrast, Gilgit-Baltistan has been granted neither provincial status within Pakistan nor a similar semi-autonomous parliamentary setup like Azad Kashmir. In recent years there have been attempts by Azad Kashmir politicians to link Gilgit-Baltistan to their issue of pressing for a plebiscite to be held in all of Kashmir. Although this move seems to enhance their chances for a vote in favour of Pakistan – if a referendum about the aspired affiliation to either side were ever to be held – the representatives of Gilgit-Baltistan refuse to cooperate. In their opinion the struggle for independence succeeded in casting-off any relation to Kashmir. In recent times the federal government has moved to combine both regions. These plans have been rejected with the reasoning that there are no ethnic and regional similarities, no traffic links, and no economic exchanges. As the population of Azad Kashmir rises above three million, the inhabitants of Gilgit-Baltistan (app. 1.2 million according to latest estimates) fear domination again by Kashmiri bureaucrats. Therefore they advocate an independent province with similar civil rights and representation as in the other provinces and not a separate constitution like in the case of Azad Kashmir.

Both India and Pakistan claim to be the rightful representatives of the people of Kashmir but in recent years Kashmiri nationalists have promoted the creation of an independent Kashmir composed of Pakistan-controlled Azad Kashmir and Indian-held Jammu & Kashmir Province. This is strongly rejected by both India and Pakistan who have strategic interests in the region and demand their share in the economic wealth of Kashmir. The third option might be the driving force for the peace-talks and the reconciliation process, which were initiated by then President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In contrast to earlier attempts it seems that their initiative started negotiations that might lead to an agreement in the near future. Both countries are now in a position that they cannot afford a continuing interruption of economic exchange and communication. The line of control between India and Pakistan still remains one of the international boundaries with the least economic permeability.
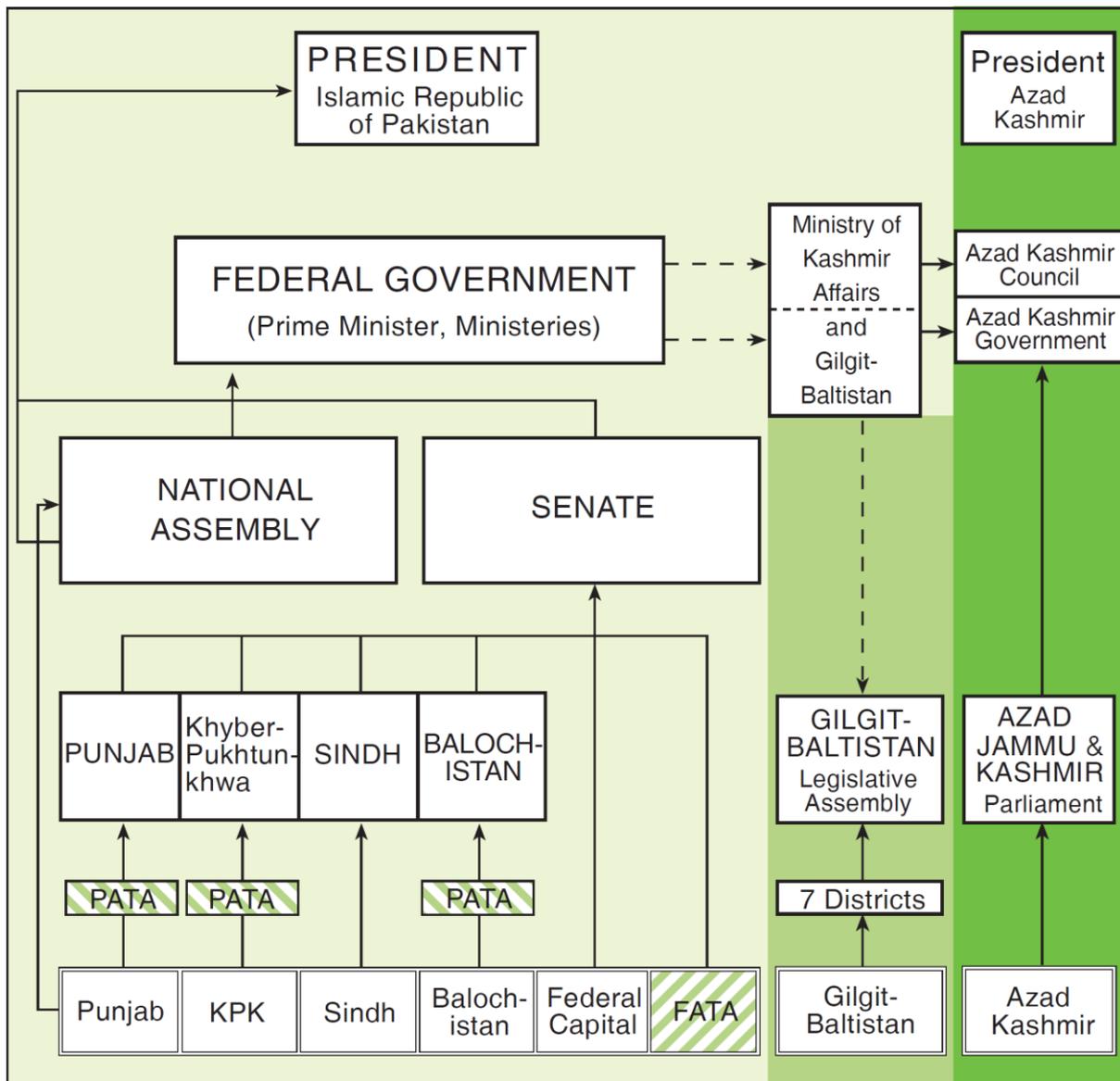
Figure 14: Constitutional setup of spaces and bodies in Pakistan

The legal framework in the case of Azad Kashmir applies to other high mountain regions of Pakistan as well (cf. Figure 9). The Northern Areas were governed directly from Islamabad under the auspices of the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Northern Areas and Frontier Regions. At the same time the Minister was the Chief Executive, the highest representative and an un-elected member of the Northern Areas Council. Although slight shifts occurred in the aftermath of the name change to Gilgit-Baltistan and some reforms in 2007, the inhabitants remain disenfranchised in general elections and have no representation in the National Assembly – symbolizing continuing regional disparities in the legal status of peripheral regions (Kreutzmann 2012).

The so-called *Tribal Areas* are differentiated into federally (FATA) and provincially (PATA) administered entities (cf. Figure 9) in which no federal or provincial legislation is enacted unless the President of Pakistan or under him the Provincial Governor directs through the appointed Political Agent. The special status of the tribal areas was highlighted when the central government started military operations in Waziristan and other tribal areas in search for insurgents and Taliban strongholds. In

Pakistan's domestic policies the special status of the tribal areas was maintained over long periods as the so-called 'Frontier Crimes Regulations' originating from 1872 continued to be applied until recent times and the Government left internal affairs to the tribal leaders (*malik*, *sardar*).

Summing up, the mountain regions of Pakistan in the Hindukush, Karakoram and Himalaya are characterised by a state of uncertainty comprising a special legal status, direct and indirect rule, and a limited validity of certain civil rights. All these peculiarities are linked to colonial and geopolitical legacies. On the other hand huge amounts of subsidies have been allocated for the uplift of these regions, which fare much worse than the rest of the country when average provincial incomes are compared. Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan have been allocated substantial funds for regional development. These aspects need to be highlighted when it comes to a discussion of participation, governance and civil society.

7. Conclusion

The starting point of our deliberations was the exogenous interest in the Central Asian periphery with long-lasting implications for the livelihoods of people. The major impact seen until today is the delineation of international boundaries and internal borders. Most of the mountain region became an even greater periphery after border demarcation and lost its economic value as a transit region for traders. The deadlock situation has partly changed since the end of the Cold War, but not in a great style of regional cooperation.

The second exogenous intervention had even greater impact especially on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. About 70 years ago the major transformation of socio-economic conditions took place. The Soviet modernisation project changed lifestyles and civil rights. To quote contemporary sources on the contents of the project:

"The CPC of the Tajik S.S.R. is drawing up a plan for agriculture in the Pamirs, the idea being thereby to transform the migrant tribes into stationary inhabitants, and to encourage them to grow their own food instead of importing it. A biological station on the Pamirs, at a height of 4,000 metres above sea-level, is just being started".[16]

The 'Pravda' told the truth: modernisation meant the sedentarisation of nomads and was executed with great force and rigour. The effects of settlement and the introduction of 'modern' animal husbandry can be observed in all areas north of the Amu Darya while, on the Southern bank of the river, 'traditional' forms of livestock-keeping prevail.

[16] Pravda 7.5.1934, quoted after IOL/P&S/12/2273.
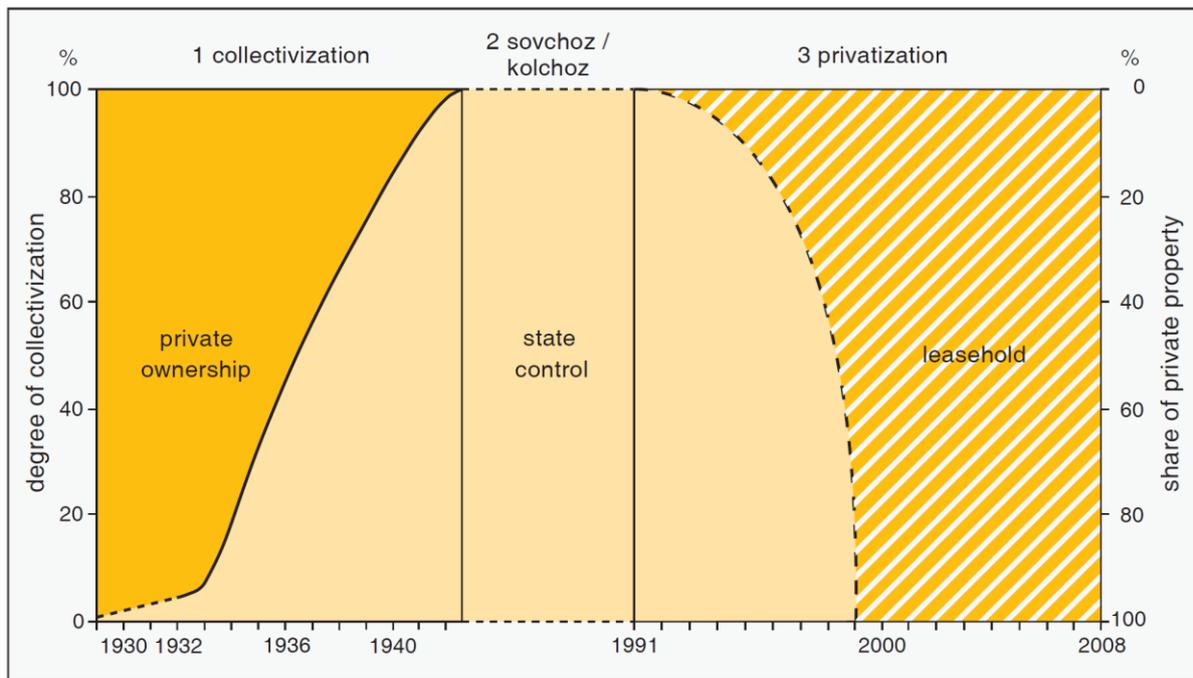
Figure 15: Transformation of landownership and property rights in Tajikistan

Similar developments could be observed in people's organisation, education and agriculture. To quote another source from 1934:

"Khorog is the capital town of the Soviet Pamir, and there has been held there the 5th congress of the Soviets of the mountainous Badakhshan region. On foot on horses, on yaks, on donkeys, along mountain tracks hanging over precipices, the delegates come from the distant Murghab, Borgang [Bartang], Bakhan [Wakhan], and other places in the S. and E. edges of the U.S.S.R. that border with Afghanistan, India and Western China. The 110 delegates elected were 78 Tajiks, 16 Kirghiz, and 16 Russians. In the conference hall were many women in their white garments of homespun silk. Khorog is now lit with electricity that was started and first seen by the Pamir people in the spring of this year. The president of the congress, Faisilbekov, spoke of the wonderful things that have taken place in the Soviet Pamir. Aeroplanes are flying over inaccessible mountain ranges, a splendid automobile road has been made from Khorog to Osh, 700 km long, that now links the Pamir with the rest of the U.S.S.R. formerly there was only 1 school in the whole of the Pamirs - now there are 140, and a training school for teachers: instead of dark smoky earth huts or skin tents, European houses are now being built: collective farms are established in the Pamirs, and they are growing and getting good crops of wheat, millet and beans; and now they know how to manure their fields and be sure of good crops."[17]

It is the irony of history that now a transformation process has started that is attempting to revert these reforms and to privatise collectivised property (Figure 15) again. Households are expected to return to the farming practices of their grandfathers, and the traditional knowledge of neighbouring countries is being adapted as a measure to overcome food crises and to minimise risks. In this respect external interference in Central Asia can be seen as a failed attempt to implement modernisation theory, although in many other aspects it has succeeded. The transition beginning with the in-

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[17] Izvestia 29. 11.1934, quoted after IOL/P&S/12/2273.

dependence of sovereign nation-states in Central Asia has failed so far to continue the path of modernisation.

The lesson to be learnt from geopolitical interventions in peripheral mountain areas could be that decisions made in the core of empires always affect the livelihoods of people who have not been involved in the decision-making process. Socio-political interference during the Cold War led to the creation of an arena of confrontation in the Pamirs, Hindukush and Himalaya, which was one of least permeable frontier regions in the world. Present developments might result in a convergence of living conditions, income patterns and indicators of human development. Especially mountain farmers and breeders can learn from the experiences of their counterparts, and entrepreneurs might profit from trans-border exchanges in a way which was impossible for more than two generations.

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Information on the competence network Crossroads Asia

The competence network Crossroads Asia derives its name from the geographical area extending from eastern Iran to western China and from the Aral Sea to northern India. The scholars collaborating in the competence network pursue a novel, 'post-area studies' approach, making thematic figurations and mobility the overarching perspectives of their research in Crossroads Asia. The concept of figuration implies that changes, minor or major, within one element of a constellation always affect the constellation as a whole; the network will test the value of this concept for understanding the complex structures framed by the cultural, political and socio-economic contexts in Crossroads Asia. Mobility is the other key concept for studying Crossroads Asia, which has always been a space of entangled interaction and communication, with human beings, ideas and commodities on the move across and beyond cultural, social and political borders. Figurations and mobility thus form the analytical frame of all three main thematic foci of our research: conflict, migration, and development.

- Five sub-projects in the working group **"Conflict"** will focus upon specific localized conflict-figurations and their relation to structural changes, from the interplay of global politics, the erosion of statehood, and globalization effects from above and below, to local struggles for autonomy, urban-rural dynamics and phenomena of diaspora. To gain a deeper understanding of the rationales and dynamics of conflict in Crossroads Asia, the sub-projects aim to analyze the logics of the genesis and transformation of conflictual figurations, and to investigate autochthonous conceptions of, and modes of dealing with conflicts. Particular attention will be given to the interdependence of conflict(s) and mobility.

- Six sub-projects in the working group **"Migration"** aim to map out trans-local figurations (networks and flows) within Crossroads Asia as well as figurations extending into both neighboring and distant areas (Arabian Peninsula, Russia, Europe, Australia, America). The main research question addresses how basic organizational and functional networks are structured, and how these structures affect what is on the move (people, commodities, ideas etc.). Conceptualizing empirical methods for mapping mobility and complex connectivities in trans-local spaces is a genuine desideratum. The aim of the working group is to refine the method of qualitative network analysis, which includes flows as well as their structures of operation, and to map mobility and explain mobility patterns.

- In the **"Development"**-working group four sub-projects are focusing on the effects of spatial movements (flows) and interwoven networks at the micro level with regard to processes of long-term social change, and with a special focus on locally perceived livelihood opportunities and their potential for implementation. The four sub-projects focus on two fundamental aspects: first, on structural changes in processes of transformation of patterns of allocation and distribution of resources, which are contested both at the household level and between individual and government agents; secondly, on forms of social mobility, which may create new opportunities, but may also cause the persistence of social inequality.

The competence network understands itself as a mediator between the academic study of Crossroads Asia and efforts to meet the high demand for information on this area in politics and the public. Findings of the project will feed back into academic teaching, research outside the limits of the competence network, and public relations efforts. Further information on Crossroads Asia is available at www.crossroads-asia.de.

Publications in the Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series

- Marsden, Magnus (2011): Mobile Life on the Frontiers of Crossroads Asia. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 1.
- Schetter, Conrad (2012): Translocal Lives. Patterns of Migration in Afghanistan. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 2.
- Ismailbekova, A. (2012): Coping Strategies: Public Avoidance, Migration, and Marriage in the Aftermath of the Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 3 (Upcoming)
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- Working Group Conflict (2012): Conflict Research on Crossroads Asia – A Conceptual Approach. In: Crossroads Asia Concept Paper Series, No. 1.
- Working Group Development (2012): Development at the Crossroads. Development Research on Crossroads Asia – a conceptual approach. In: Crossroads Asia Concept Paper Series, No. 2.
- Working Group Migration (2012): Crossroads Asia through the Lens of Mobility and Migration: A Conceptual Approach. In: Crossroads Asia Concept Paper Series, No. 3.