

## THE WAYS OF RECONNECTING EURASIA

The second decade of the twenty-first century has brought a renewed interest in the Eurasian integration. For most of the twentieth century, renowned scholars of geopolitics (like Mackinder, Spykman or Brzeziński) have painted a picture of an integrated landmass acting as a central stage of the international politics. The geopolitical and geoeconomic reality, however, lagged behind these sweeping ideas. From the standpoint of regional integration or trade flows, the Eurasian supercontinent remained divided into several distinct regions, affairs of which seemed only to cross each other, not flow like a one, united stream. Many factors contributed to this state of affairs. One of the most important was the Cold War and concurrent global influence (and post-1989 hegemony) of the United States. Privileged position and influence of the extra-Eurasian superpower meant that the geopolitical and geoeconomic mental map of this supercontinent remained divided between separate trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific areas.

The second decade of the current century, however, has brought a new (or renewed) interest in the Eurasian integration. The biggest manifestation of this trend is, naturally, the Chinese initiative of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “Maritime Silk Road” (currently known as the Belt and Road Initiative - BRI) officially launched by President Xi Jinping in 2013. Although, by far, the most ambitious, it is not the only scheme meant to encourage the Eurasian integration. The Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) lacks the scale and financial clout of the Chinese proposal; nevertheless, it offers an alternative template of regional integration grounded in Eurasian geopolitical vision. The current decade has also seen the expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to include two South Asian powers – India and Pakistan. Moreover, on several occasions, Turkish leaders suggested that their state might also join this club. Although no concrete steps followed these

statements, they are indicative of a broader shift in the Turkish foreign policy. In the broadest terms possible, it can be viewed as a turn from identification with the transatlantic community towards a more independent and neighborhood-focused activity. All these elements might be viewed separately, as various moves (small and large) on the great global political chessboard. However, they might also be treated as symptoms of a broader trend amounting to Eurasia's emergence as a viable geopolitical and geoeconomic megaregion and as a focal point for many power's foreign and security policy.

This publication is the outcome of the research project entitled *The European Union and Central Asia: regional and international conditions*, carried out by the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, from 2015 to 2019 with Professor Tadeusz Wallas as the Coordinator. The project investigated the issue of the European Union's relations with the Central Asian countries. The fundamental goal of studies presented in this publication was to analyze the policy of the European Union toward Central Asia. The intention of the project team was to emphasize the advancements of the process shaping mutual relations and its different determinants. The papers were presented and discussed at the international conference: *Beyond Europe – Reconnecting Eurasia*, organized by Adam Mickiewicz University in 2018.

The research team prepared following monographs in English : *European Union and Central Asia: Policies and Reality*. Tadeusz Wallas, Radosław Fiedler, Przemysław Osiewicz (eds), Berlin: Logos-Verlag, 2018 and *European Union and Central Asia: Cooperation in Transition* ed. Tadeusz Wallas, Radosław Fiedler, Beata Przybylska-Maszner, Logos-Verlag 2018.

The newest volume is divided into three parts corresponding to three research problems. The first one deals with strategies of great and regional powers towards the megaregion in question. Great powers' role in shaping the evolution of international order is well recognized in the study of international relations. It is, thus, doubtless that policies of key states will play disproportionate role in determining shape and outcomes of the Eurasian integration. Besides the major global players (like the USA, China, and Russia), the Eurasian chessboard also accommodates some important regional powers (such as, for example, Turkey, Iran, India or leading EU states). The first section of this book is devoted to the analysis of their strategies in Eurasian geopolitics.

Special attention has been given to the region of Central Asia. In the geopolitical setting characterized by the Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Pacific inter-

actions, this region had been relegated to the role of a perennial periphery. However, with the rise of Eurasian connectivity, it has become a space of significant geopolitical and geoeconomic value. We propose to call it a potential “crossroads of integrating Eurasia,” mainly due to its central location in proposed transcontinental infrastructure and trade corridors. It has also become a scene of competition between various cooperation and integration schemes promoted by the major players (like the EU, China, and Russia). For these reasons, we have identified it as a promising subject of research amounting to a kind of a “laboratory of Eurasian integration.” Finally, the authors analyzed and discussed various topics covering the broad area of numerous patterns shaping the politics of Eurasia and tools used by regional states. This includes, for example, the characteristics of Eurasian states’ political regimes or policies they pursue to secure themselves for asymmetric (or hybrid) threats.

The section concerning great and regional powers’ strategies in Eurasia opens with **Claude Zanardi’s** chapter *The Rise of China and Connecting Eurasia & Asia-Pacific*. In the article, the author places the current Chinese foreign policy strategy, and the BRI specifically, in the context of classical geopolitical theories. In her reading, the current reorientation of international politics towards the Asia-Pacific corresponds with the visions of Mackinder, Mahan, and Spykman. Thus, the chapter opens the great power themed section of the volume by presenting a wide picture of the geopolitical arena of Eurasia and the strategy of one of its most prominent players. The issue of Beijing’s ambitious foreign economic policy is explored in more detail by **Filip Kaczmarek** in the chapter under the title: *African dimension of the Belt and Road Initiative*. It contains a comprehensive description and analysis of BRI-related projects realized in Africa. Besides its intrinsic value for the study of China-Africa relations, it highlights many trends and issues characteristic for the initiative as a whole – all this while providing a balanced view of opportunities and challenges which the BRI presents for Africa. In the following chapter, **Sang-Chul Park** looks at two Eurasian powers which don’t carry as much diplomatic and military weight as America, China, and Russia but are primary global economic players – the European Union and Japan. The chapter provides a detailed analysis of the newly introduced EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement. Drawing on International Political Economy’s theoretical background and rich statistical data, the author provides a detailed picture of costs and benefits stemming from this new arrangement for the two big economies. The text also takes into account the wider political

# THE RISE OF CHINA, AND CONNECTING EURASIA & ASIA-PACIFIC

C. Zanardi

## **The Changing Geographic Categories of Asia, Asia-Pacific, Eurasia & Europe**

In 1904, Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) noted that it took only four centuries to almost accurately map the world, even the Polar Regions, thus sealing “the end of a great historic epoch” (Mackinder, 1904, p. 421). This finding better describes what happens a century later; in fact, Mackinder asserted that for the first time in humanity’s history, the 20<sup>th</sup> century had revealed the “correlation between the larger geographical, and the larger historical generalisations” (Mackinder, 1904, p. 422). Conscious of the global dimension of the events of his time, and considering Eurocentrism a limitation, he urged to “look upon Europe and European history as subordinate to Asia and Asiatic history, for European civilization is [...] the outcome of the secular struggle against Asiatic invasion” (Mackinder, 1904, pp. 422, 432).

The current rise of China is certainly not a threat, as was the case when nomadic Asian tribes invaded Central Asia and reached Europe (Mackinder, 1904, p. 427). This space is now organised around the Central Asian Republics, and Europe has been undergoing an integration process that has resulted in the European Union (EU). From an undefined homogenous and distant *Orientalism* (Said, 1978), a new categorisation of space had already emerged in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, to mirror the paradigm change from Eurocentrism to Americano-centrism. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new

Sino-centrism reflects a new reorganisation of space around China as a re-emerging power.

Although the concepts of Europe and Asia are generally taken for granted, they can be difficult to define. Scholars contend that the term “Asia” probably comes from the Assyrian words “sunrise, east” (Asu), opposed to “sunset, west” (Ereb), and was imported into Asia by Arab and European traders (Maull Hans, 1998, p. x). In the West, the distinction between Europe and Asia goes back to ancient Greece, where Asia referred to the Persian Empire (or Asia Minor). Over time, the idea of Asia developed to the point of losing its original meaning; at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it included, “two-thirds of the world’s total population and 80 per cent of the world’s production [and] was nothing less than the entire Old World minus Europe” (Holcombe, 2017, p. 3). Nevertheless, it remained crucial to identify more coherent geographic subregions, such as South-East Asia or East Asia. The last refers to the region that has adopted the Chinese writing system, which conveys ideas and values such as “Confucianism, a large part of the legal and political structure of a government and some forms of Buddhism” (Holcombe, 2017, p. 3). Therefore, Holcombe defines East Asia as including China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, the two Koreas, as well as Vietnam and Singapore (Holcombe, 2017, p. 5).

Eurasia or “Euro-Asia” as Mackinder calls it, is “the total continental land mass of Europe and Asia combined” (Dictionaries, s.d.). At its centre is the Heartland, difficult to access and surrounded by four geographical sub-areas or marginal areas, located in a vast crescent and accessible from the sea. They are two monsoon lands (one on the Pacific Ocean, and one on the Indian Ocean), the Middle East, and Europe; which correspond to the four main religions (Mackinder, 1904, p. 431). The use of the Eurocentric term “Far East” for East Asia dominated until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Europe being the centre of the world, referred to a homogenous region very far from Europe, and designating the countries of the Pacific coast of Asia. In contrast, in China people historically referred to the “Great West” (大西, dàxī), to identify the territories beyond the Arab World or the Western countries.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even if East Asia and the American coast of the Pacific Ocean were too distant and poorly integrated, it was already impossible to divide them (Wanandi Jusuf, 1998, p. 116). The use of the term “Asia-Pacific region” is relatively recent; it reflects the post-World War 2 powershift from Europe to the US. By linking Asia to the Pacific Ocean, where the US dominates, it extends the geographical space to take into ac-

count all countries of the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, at the heart of this region is the ocean space; This allows the US, as a Pacific state, to extend its influence to the West. As Karl Haushofer (1869-1946) explained, “a giant space is expanding before our eyes [...] with forces pouring into it which, in cool matter-of-factness, await the dawn of the Pacific age, the successor of the aging Atlantic, the over-age Mediterranean and the European era” (Haushofer, 1925, p. 63). At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a Japanese diplomat, Inagaki Manjiro (1861-1908), had already written about what he thought would be the centre of European attention “the great Pacific question” (Inagaki, 1890). When studying British history in Cambridge, he had discovered the work of Carl Ritter (1779-1859). Inspired by Ritter’s book, *Europa: Ein geographisch Gemälde (1804-1807)*, Inagaki wrote of the great Pacific as a region. However, he did not coin the idea of a Pacific age, as some people argue (Korhonen, 1996, p. 41). It is more likely in 1924 that Haushofer publicised the idea of a new Pacific Age, a term resurrected numerous times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; for instance, in 1993 as the ‘New Pacific Community’, under the Clinton Administration (Liu, 1995).

Yahuda rightly stresses that Asia-Pacific is an evolving concept because it is: not clearly defined, not rooted in shared identity, culture, or common purpose, it varies with the deepening of globalisation, and rather “derives from geopolitical and geo-economic considerations” (Yahuda, 2011, p. 5). Without a common culture or political traditions it was the rise of the US, and its confrontation with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which contributed to identify such a vast and diverse area as a region in its own right. Indeed, the Asia-Pacific region can be defined in many ways, as concentric circles around the Pacific Ocean; in a broad sense, it includes the littoral states of the Pacific side of the Americas, the island states of the South Pacific, but also Australasia and the Asian states from Northeast, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. A common definition includes the states of North America, Australasia, and Northeast and Southeast Asia.

For the purpose of this research, the author considers that the Asia-Pacific region includes the US, Northeast Asia, and Southeast Asia. There are also alternative terms; for instance, Maul, Segal, and Wanandi, differentiate between Asia-Pacific and Pacific Asia. The last defined as that “part of Asia that is close to the waters of the Pacific Ocean” (Maull Hans, 1998, p. x). Therefore, it excludes Central Asia, South East Asia and South Asia. In contrast, they consider that the Asia Pacific region includes “the Americas, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific” (Maull Hans, 1998, p. xi).