

Strategies for Development and Food Security in Mountainous Areas of Central Asia

PAPER 2: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GEOPOLITICAL ISSUES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAINOUS AREAS OF CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract

This 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 Central Asia, the 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. 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 understand the development gap with which we are confronted in this high mountainous and remote region of Central 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 formerly were established for a larger union but 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 having affected Afghan-Pakistan relations until today. Pakistan in itself devotes bitterly needed funds for rural development in 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, bi- and multi-lateral cooperation is underpinned by this scrutiny and investigation in past developments. The foundation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) might be a first step that might lead 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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	ECOLOGICAL STRUCTURE AND SPATIAL UTILIZATION PATTERNS IN CENTRAL ASIA	1
III.	THE "GREAT GAME" IN CENTRAL ASIA.....	4
IV.	DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL ASIAN TRADE AND ATTENUATED EXCHANGE RELATIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE "GREAT GAME"	7
V.	BOUNDARY-MAKING AND ITS LONG-LASTING EFFECTS.....	9
VI.	THE KASHMIR STALEMATE: ORIGIN AND PERSISTENCE	17
VII.	CONCLUSIONS.....	21
VIII.	REFERENCES	24

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Traditional trade routes and lines of communication in the Silk Road network.	2
Figure 2a: Imperial expansion in Central Asia in the early phase of the Great Game.....	3
Figure 3: Demarcation of Afghanistan's boundaries and the partition of the Pashtun settlement region. ..	10
Figure 4: Disputed territories and constitutional peculiarities in Western High Asia	10
Figure 5: Concepts and realisation of the division of Wakhan.....	12
Figure 6: The spatial outline of Pashtunistan irredentism	13
Figure 7: Chinese territorial claims towards Tajikistan.....	14
Figure 8: Isolated exclaves in the borderlands of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.....	16
Figure 9: Conflicting demands and realities in the dispute over Kashmir.....	19
Figure 10: Transformation of landownership and property rights in Tajikistan.....	22

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AK	Azad Kashmir
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
CPC	Communist Party Committee
GBAO	Gorno Badakhshanskaja Avtonomnaja Oblast
FATA	Federally Administrated Tribal Areas
ICG	International Crisis Group
IOL	India Office Library
IOR	India Office Records
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
PATA	Provincially Administrated Tribal Areas
PR	Peoples Republic
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SSR	Socialist Soviet Republic
USSR	Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GEOPOLITICAL ISSUES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAINOUS AREAS OF CENTRAL ASIA

Hermann Kreutzmann¹

I. INTRODUCTION

In the Central Asian context geopolitics have played a major role for socioeconomic development in the arena between different spheres of influence. The specific interests of superpowers of their time had long-reaching effects into the spatial and economic periphery. Exogeneously stimulated developments resulted often in transforming 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. Tajik and Dari symbolize the difference in script, lexemes and loan words which symbolize the socio-political backgrounds in two languages which originate from Persian. 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 towards Latin and back. In each instance a political move was involved. Presently in some countries the changes of scripts are discussed again as a symbol for independence, traditional values and breaking with colonial and geopolitical legacies.

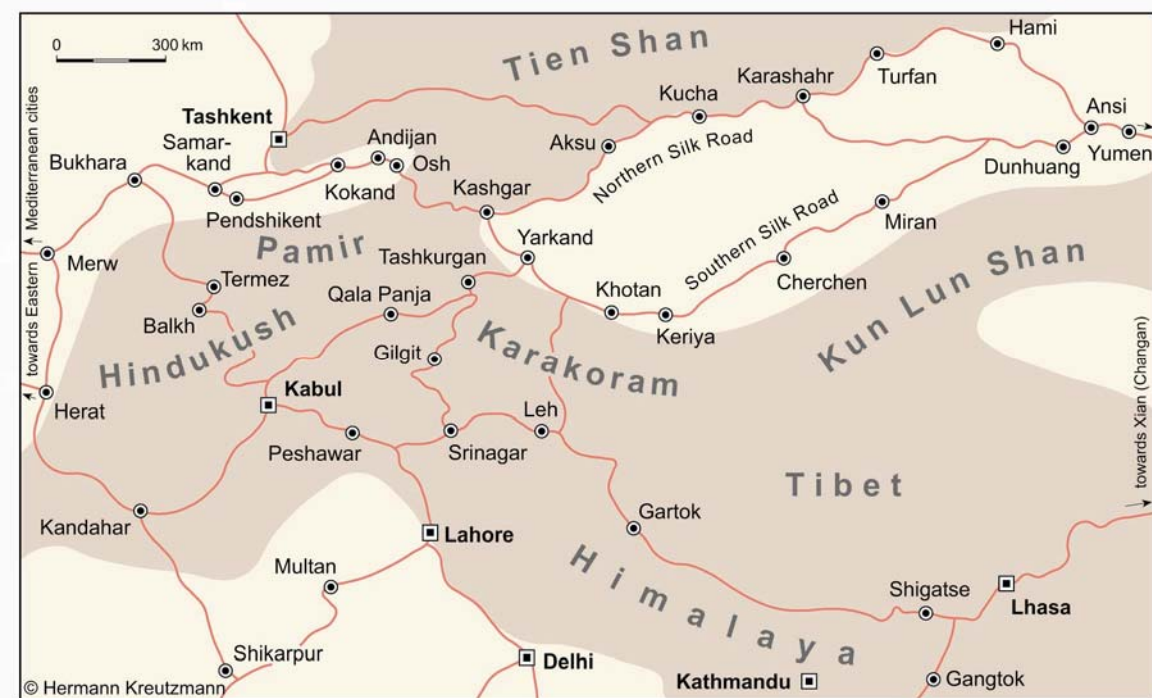
II. ECOLOGICAL STRUCTURE AND SPATIAL UTILIZATION PATTERNS IN CENTRAL ASIA

On the macro scale Central Asia has been the sparsely settled periphery between Europe and Asia. Environmentally the region is characterized by steppe, desert and mountains with arid conditions in the lowlands and increasing precipitation and humidity with altitude resulting in snow-covered mountains, glaciation, high mountain pastures and scanty forests. Given these assets, common utilization patterns of ecological resources are related to a bi-polar approach: extensive nomadism 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

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mountain nomadism in the Hindukush, Pamirs and Tien Shan.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 1). 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 issuing from the high mountain ranges within the desert-steppe environment. In the remoter mountain regions we find different forms of combined mountain agriculture (Ehlers & 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 augmented the general pattern of grain crop cultivation for basic sustenance.

Figure 1: Traditional trade routes and lines of communication in the Silk Road network.



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.³ These historical events

² The specific utilization patterns of high mountain pastures - such as observed in the "pamirs" (cf. Kreutzmann 2003) - is characteristic for Central Asia and has repeatedly given scope for speculation about the economic potential of animal husbandry since Marco Polo's travels.

³ Cf. Bregel 2003, Christian 2000, Kreutzmann 1997, 2002a, 2004.

left their marks on the transforming Central Asian socio-economic landscape and prove the existence of an Eurasian exchange system over long periods of time.⁴

In the 19th century its role changed significantly and the "Great Game" identified a polarisation that was stimulated by the prime interests of the two superpowers at that time (Figure 2a, 2b). Direct influence in the form of boundary-making and economic exploitation removed 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 2a: Imperial expansion in Central Asia in the early phase of the Great Game
(app. 1865).



⁴ 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 (Gills & Frank 1991). Consequently both authors observed an early emergence of a "world system" in Central Asia.

Figure 2b: Consolidation of British and Russian spheres of influence at the time of the Anglo Russian Convention (1907)



III. THE "GREAT GAME" IN CENTRAL ASIA

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 2). But this battle was not solely about regional control, it was a contest about the world domination of imperial powers. Great Britain had achieved already maritime supremacy, now 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 was a consequential endeavour ever since Peter the Great had 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 contemporary 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 authorization, 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 civilization. Dostojevsky compared the colonial expansion into Central Asia with the European conquest of North America (cf. Hauner 1989, 1992). 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 2a). 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 were the protagonists and reported to their respective governments in detailed reports which give us historical evidence on the socio-economic conditions in Central Asia besides 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 2b). Instrumental for the accord was the "heartland theory" which drew geopolitical significance towards Central Asia. The geographer Halford Mackinder formulated his "heartland theory" in 1904 which became one of the most influential texts of the geopolitical debate until today. Mackinder drew prime attention towards Central Asia as he stated that the 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 the European civilization 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, 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).⁵

Similar ideas of a Central Asian "heartland" or a pivotal role stimulated Owen Lattimore's perceptions in his book "Pivot of Asia" (1950). Keeping the experiences of World War II in mind 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, 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 Irak 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.⁶ 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. 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, economic and political participation severely influenced socio-economic developments in the mountainous areas of Central Asia. Some cases in point need to be introduced for the understanding of the far-reaching consequences of

⁵ With the passage of time Mackinder modified his theory under the impression of events during the First and Second World Wars and influenced the thoughts of Karl Haushofer and other geopoliticians of his time.

⁶ Cf. Kreutzmann 1997, 2002a, 2004, Roy 2000,

imperial border delineations. First of all, the practical impact on trade relations and economic exchange need to be investigated.

IV. 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 2b). 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 & 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 some 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.

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 became 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.

At the end of the 19th century George Macartney the British Consul-General in Kashgar had summarized 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."⁷

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, 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 under the pretext 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 kolchoz shops led to the termination of trade in this sector. Similar developments took effect on the Soviet border with Afghanistan during the 1930s: "During the past few years, the effect of Soviet policy has been

⁷ 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.

to restrict, in an increasing degree, traffic, excepting state-controlled trade, from Soviet Central Asia across the Afghan frontier on the River Oxus. ... more 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 which 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 reanimated at a slow pace.

V. 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 epitomizes 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 (Figure 3). 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 Hindukush 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 characterized 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 4) 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 3: Demarcation of Afghanistan's boundaries and the partition of the Pashtun settlement region.



Figure 4: Disputed territories and constitutional peculiarities in Western High Asia

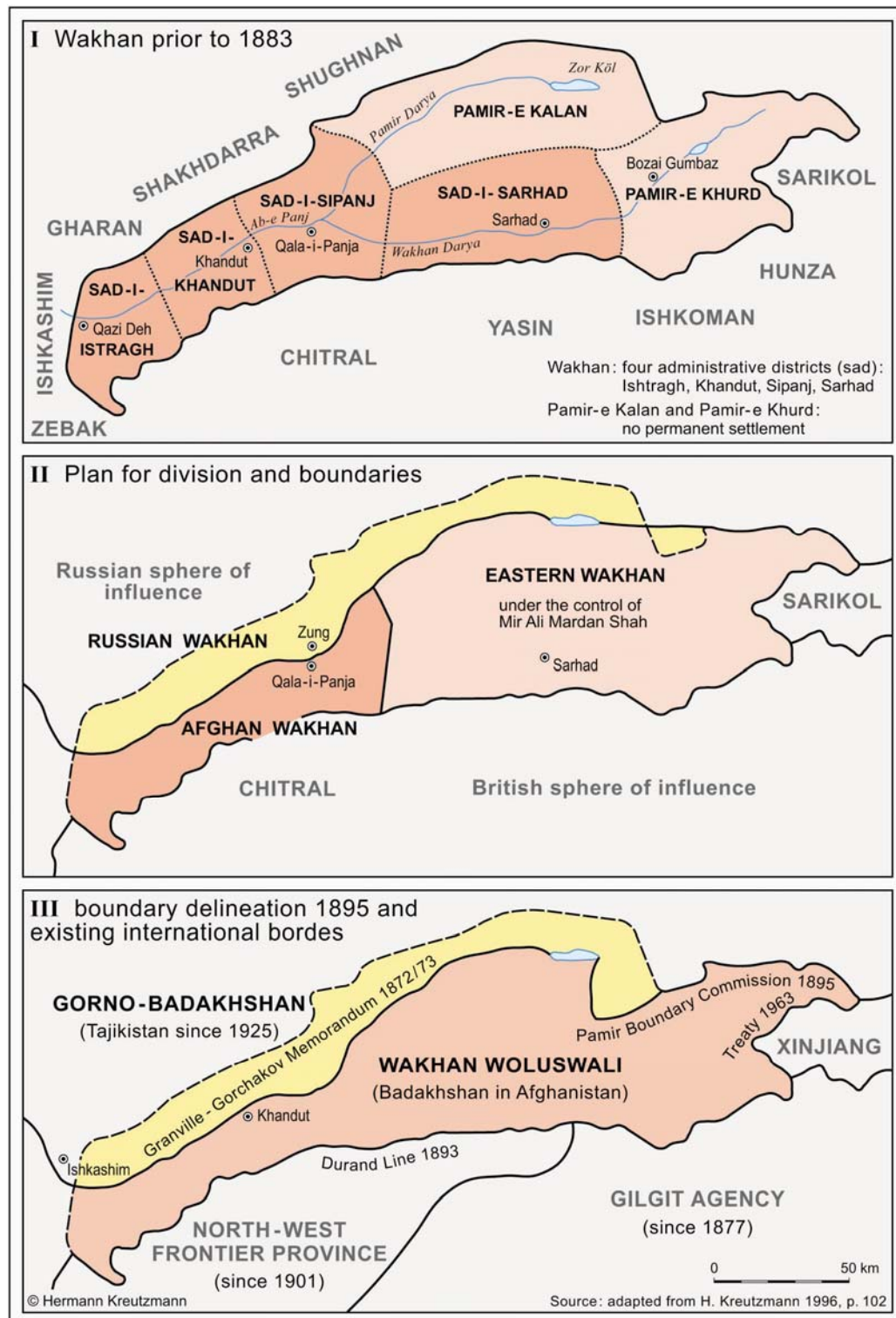


(i) Wakhan as the symbol of division

The Wakhan Corridor of Northeastern Afghanistan symbolizes 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 (Figure 5). 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 a century-old borders have re-established their relationship and the bridges across the Pjandsh river in Langar, Ishkashim and Khorog symbolize those endeavours.⁸ Nevertheless, the effect of partition is felt in all areas, especially when international borders are closed and strictly controlled as it happened since the Cold War. Afghan Wakhan is suffering substantially from its dead-end location with missing through trade and exchange with neighbours (Felmy & Kreutzmann 2004). Similar observations are valid for Shughnan and Roshan.

⁸ 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 a market access. More bridge projects are planned in Darwaz and along the course of the Amu Darya.

Figure 5: Concepts and realisation of the division of Wakhan



(ii) Irredentism about Pashtunistan

Continuing border disputes and conflicts like the irredentist movement for "Pashtunistan" (Figure 6) are still alive and one of the main squares in Kabul has continued to be named after

this Pak-Afghan dispute during all winds of change since the 1960s. The Afghan demand for a territory named Pashtunistan and 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 for their mobilization of people for the cause of Pashtunistan. Imperial legacies and losses function as a measure of identity and supply the ideological platforms for charismatic leaders who mobilize their followership in order 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.

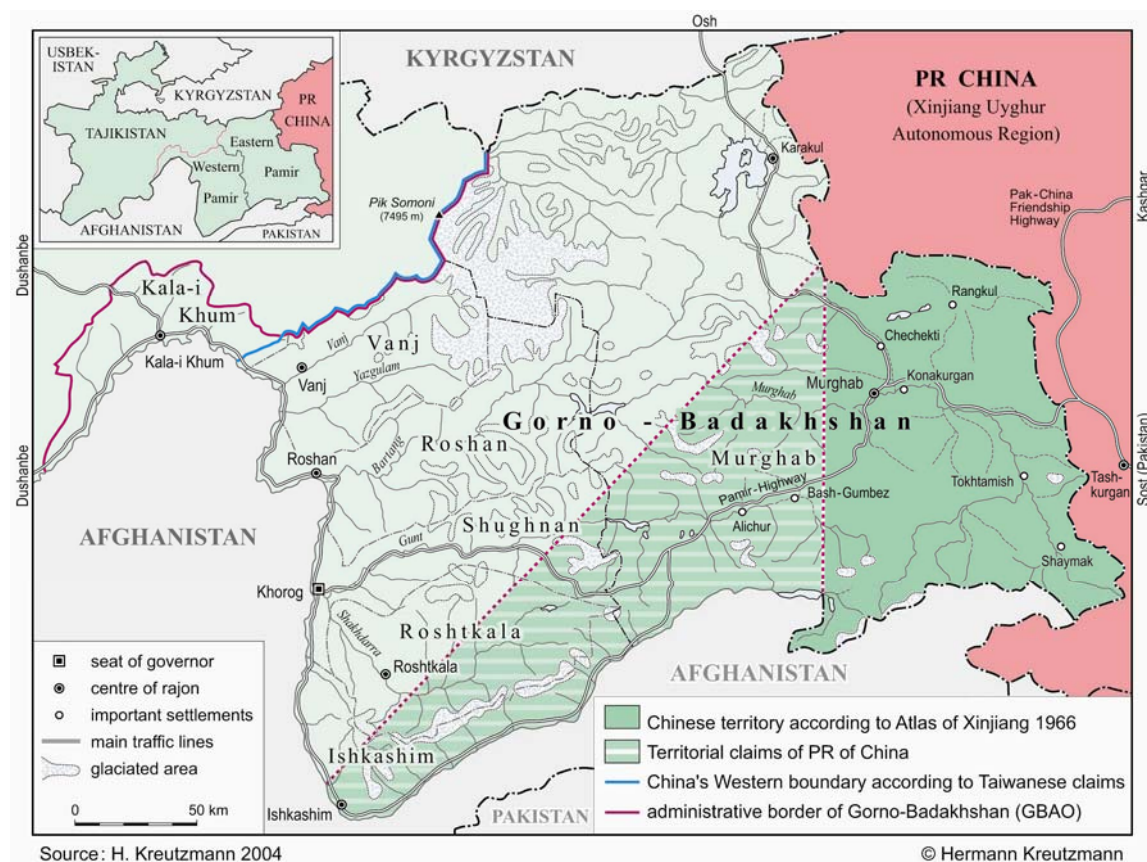
Figure 6: The spatial outline of Pashtunistan irredentism



(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, their border with Afghanistan and Tajikistan extends much further west while the factual contemporary boundary is agreed on by China's neighbours (Figure 7). All these borders formed an integral part of the major global divide after World War II. The frontlines of the Cold War followed their historical predecessors. Western and Eastern alliances, as well as neutral states like Afghanistan (up to 1978) and the independent anti-Soviet path of Chinese communism (since 1958), met in the Pamirian knot. Thus, a remote mountain region became a meeting-point of competing political systems. The alleviation of this confrontation did not terminate any military action in the region. The Pamir Boundary presently separates the newly independent state of Tajikistan (since 1991) from Afghanistan. The previous global confrontation has been replaced by regional conflicts. Nevertheless these examples are not singular cases. Nearly all borders of the Hindukush-Himalayan arc are under dispute by one or the other side.

Figure 7: 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 ethnonyms 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 8). While this phenomenon did not pose grave differences during the period of the Soviet Union - 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 8). 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 measures of visa regulation of travel have been introduced. Some of these measures have been justified in the aftermath of attacks from Afghanistan-trained rebels, which 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 discuss options for forced evacuation and migration to initiate population exchange.

Figure 8: Isolated exclaves in the borderlands of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan



(iv) 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 there is some hope since the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which was founded in 1996 as the Shanghai-5 (Russia, PR of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) and became a fully-fledged organization under the name of SCO in 2001 when Uzbekistan joined.⁹ The mandate is to improve mutual relations and to improve Central Asia's economic competitiveness in a globalized world. Therefore 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 - cooperate with the European Union to link the Central Asian republics through a road network (TRACEA route) with Europe via the Caucasus. The participation in regional and international trade may be one of the prime stimulants to overcome the legacies of previous geopolitical interference and reflect 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 as well from regional problems, which remain to be 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

⁹ The SCO became an internationally acknowledged organization in 2004 and operates a secretariat from Beijing.

keeps the mountain regions of the Karakoram and Western Himalaya in a state of dispute and uncertainty.

VI. THE KASHMIR STALEMATE: ORIGIN AND PERSISTENCE

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/Zaskar 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 an UN-negotiated peace treaty have repeatedly been dealt with.¹⁰ 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 Pakistan 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 under mediation from the Soviet Prime Minister

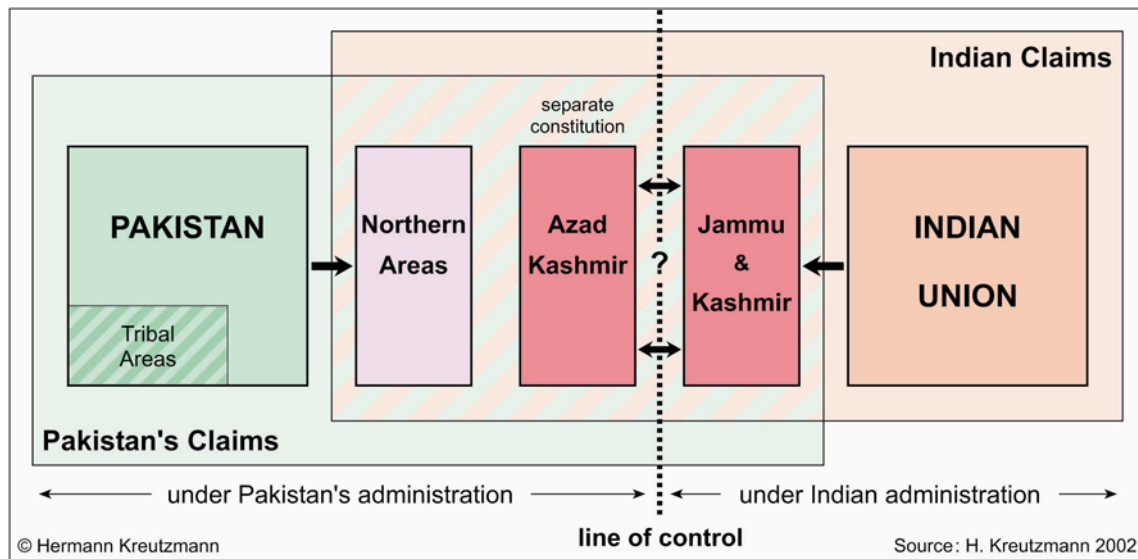
¹⁰ Cf. Kreutzmann 1995, 2002b, Lamb 1991 for further references.

Aleksei Kosygin, 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 of the shortcomings of land surveyors' and diplomats' 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 was nearly due 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.

A second point should be emphasized 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 9). On Indian maps up to the present day the whole of the Northern Areas - 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 4). 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 km² of disputed territory of which Pakistan controls 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 Aksai Chin is within its national boundaries.

Figure 9: 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 (Northern Areas) on the other (cf. Figure 9). 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 summarized 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 for a negotiated solution. The Government of Pakistan has treated the Northern Areas and Kashmir as separate entities, which is reflected in different constitutional configurations. Azad Kashmir (AK) is governed by an own President elected from an assembly composed of the AK Parliament and the AK Council. In contrast, the Northern Areas are granted neither provincial status within Pakistan nor a similar semi-autonomous parliamentary setup like Azad Kashmir (cf. Figure 9). In recent years there have been attempts by Azad Kashmir politicians to link the Northern Areas 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 - in case a referendum about the aspired affiliation to either side is ever held - the representatives of the Northern Areas 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 ranges around three million, the inhabitants of the Northern Areas (app. 0.87 million according to the latest population census of 1998) fear domination again by Kashmiri bureaucrats. Therefore they advocate an independent province with similar civil rights and representation than 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 was initiated by President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In contrast to earlier attempts it seems that presently negotiations are under way 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 least economic permeability. The legal framework in the case of Azad Kashmir applies to other high mountain regions of Pakistan as well (cf. Figure 4). The Northern Areas are 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 is the Chief Executive, the highest representative of the Northern Areas and an un-elected member of the Northern Areas Council. The inhabitants are still disenfranchised and have no representation in the National Assembly symbolizing continuing regional disparities in the legal status of peripheral regions.

The so-called *Tribal Areas* are distinguished in federally (FATA) and provincially (PATA) administered entities (cf. Figure 4) 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. In recent months the special status of the tribal areas was highlighted when President Pervez Musharraf started military operations in Waziristan and other tribal areas in search for Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar and their supporters. In Pakistan's domestic policies the special status of the tribal areas was continued over long periods as the so-called "Frontier Crimes Regulations" originating from 1872 were 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 characterized 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 Northern Areas 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.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The starting point of our deliberations was the exogeneous 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.

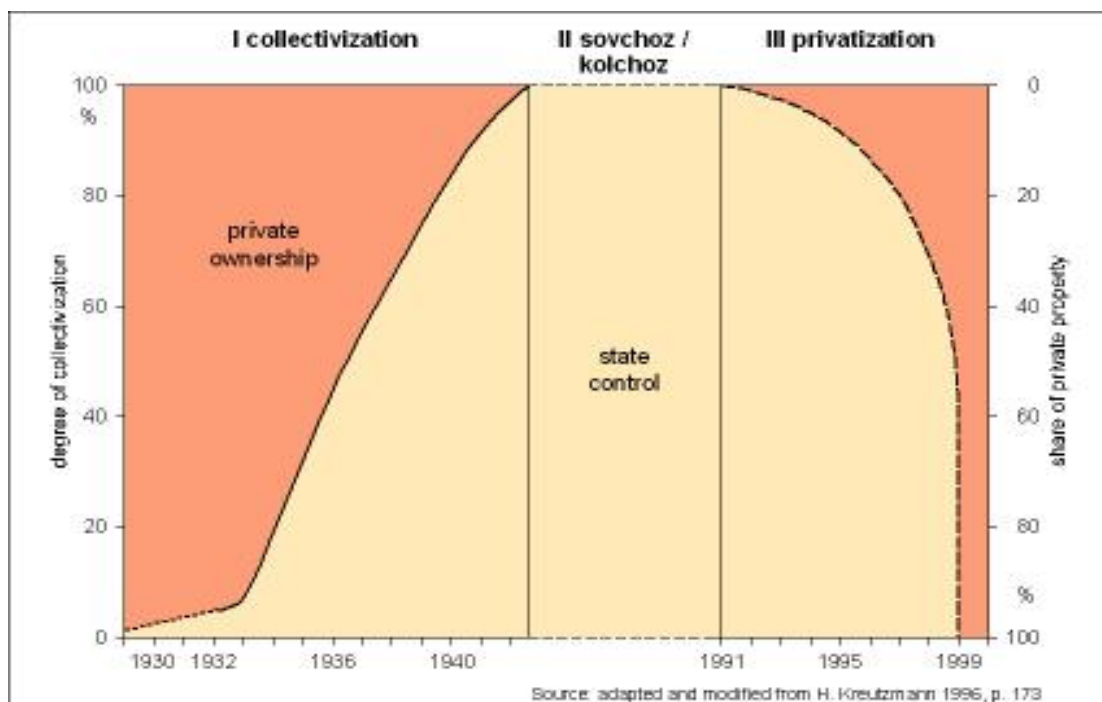
The second exogeneous intervention had even greater impact especially on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. About 70 years ago the major transformation of socio-economic conditions took place. The Soviet modernization project changed lifestyles and civil rights. To quote contemporary sources on the contents 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" (Pravda 7.5.1934, quoted after IOL/P&S/12/2273). The "Pravda" told the truth: modernization meant the sedentarisation of nomads which 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.

Similar developments could be observed in people's organization, education and agriculture. To quote again a 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], Bakhani [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" (Izvestia 29. 11.1934, quoted after IOL/P&S/12/2273).

It is the irony of history that now a transformation process has started which attempts to revert these reforms and to privatize collectivized property (Figure 10) again, in which households return to the farming practices of their grandfathers, and in which the traditional knowledge of neighbouring countries is adapted as a measure to overcome food crisis situations and to minimize risks. In that respect the external interference in Central Asia is a failed attempt to implement modernization theory while in many other aspects it succeeded. The transition beginning with the independence of sovereign nation states in Central Asia has failed so far to continue the path of modernization.

Figure 10: Transformation of landownership and property rights in Tajikistan



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 led to the creation of an arena of confrontation in the Pamirs, Hindukush and Himalaya during the Cold War 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, entrepreneurs might profit from trans-border exchanges in a way which was impossible for more than two generations.

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