



## French Historiography of Central Asia

*Historiografía francesa de Asia Central*

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This paper is filed in Zenodo:

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1495786>

### ABSTRACT

Article presents the analysis of historiography of French scientists concerning Central Asia in common and each of its republics separately. We have studied the works of leading French researches from 1991 to the present. The study has revealed, that region of Central Asia has lost its homogeneity: each state in the region is developing in its own way, according to its own model and has only its own international guidelines. A careful analysis leads to the need for a more accurate study of the system of analytical structures and their functioning within the framework of geostrategic and foreign policy discourse.

**Keywords:** Central Asia; cultural and civilizational transformation; French historiography; post-soviet republics.

### RESUMEN

El artículo presenta el análisis de la historiografía de los científicos franceses sobre Asia Central en común y cada una de sus repúblicas por separado. Se han estudiado las obras de las principales investigaciones francesas desde 1991 hasta el presente. El estudio ha revelado que la región de Asia Central ha perdido su homogeneidad: cada estado de la región se está desarrollando a su manera, según su propio modelo y tiene sus propias directrices internacionales. Un análisis cuidadoso conduce a la necesidad de un estudio más preciso del sistema de estructuras analíticas y su funcionamiento en el marco del discurso geoestratégico y de política exterior.

**Palabras Clave:** Asia central; transformación cultural y civilizational; historiografía francesa; repúblicas postsoviéticas.

Recibido: 26-08-2018 • Aceptado: 22-09-2018



## **INTRODUCTION**

The first half of the 90s of the XX century was marked by serious changes in the geopolitical position and composition of the most important and largest countries on the world map due to the very important political and economic transformations in the world economy. The self-dissolution of the USSR and the formation of new independent states in the post-Soviet space determined qualitative transformations in the external perception of the regions that once belonged to it. In turn, it caused the emergence of new spatial and political concepts and theories designed to provide in an integral system form the foreign policy approaches of specific states to the changes (Kuzio, 2002).

Historically formed in the Russian-speaking Soviet tradition, the name of the region "Central Asia and Kazakhstan" was used in the USSR during the period of the 30s – early 90s of the XX century for a specific functional reason. It was the fact that most of the republics located in Asia and were part of the USSR (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) were considered as constituting the so-called "Central Asian economic region", while Kazakhstan stood out in a separate economic region as the Kazakh SSR. The independence of these republics contributed to the expansion of the Central Asian region and its renaming as Central Asia. In fact, this happened at the meeting of the CIS heads of state in 1993 (Allison, 2008; Roy, 2000).

The debate on the geographical definition of Central Asia was active during the last third of the XIX and early XX centuries in both Russian and foreign scientific literature. This was largely due to several factors. The main ones were:

- foreign penetration into the region and competition among the Great powers for influence in it;
- strengthening the transit and resource importance of Central Asia in military and economic terms (Ulunjan, 2008).

The cultural and geographical space of Central Asia has been given a rather broad interpretation by UNESCO in the six-volume edition of the History of Civilizations of Central Asia, the decision on which was made at its XIX session, held in November 1976 in Nairobi (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1976). The project started in 1981. Geospatial information according to UNESCO, Central Asia included Mongolia, Western China, Tibet, northeastern Iran, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Eastern Russia, South of the taiga zone, Soviet republics of Central Asia, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Pakistan.

After 1991, the problem of the spatial interpretation of regional boundaries had already acquired a special significance geographically. The importance of the States included in the Central Asian region for the changed system of international relations, their fate as sovereign States in political, economic and military-strategic relations – all this has attracted the attention of political and expert circles in Europe, the United States and, of course, in the countries neighboring the region.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The appeal to geospatial theories in the system of international relations is due to several factors, the main ones are:

- necessity to determine the foreign policy vector of specific states;
- subjective need for spatial positioning of individual countries or groups of countries on a regional or global scale;

- requirement to synchronize changes in the global distribution of power centers with the needs of the foreign policy in the context of the existing political, military-strategic and economic opportunities of the respective States or their associations (Ulunjan, 2008).

In this article, we will use the first classification of the Central Asian republics, i.e., within this region we consider Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. As the title of the article suggests, we will analyze the historiography of French scientists about these republics as a region as a whole, in the period of modern history – from 1991 to the present. The article do not paying attention to analysis of historiography of French scientists regarding Kyrgyzstan – we do not see it possible, because we have not found a reliable historiographical description of these studies.

A careful analysis of the work of the mechanism of political decision-making in the West, geopolitical and strategic approaches leads to the need for a more careful study of the system of analytical structures and their functioning within the framework of geostrategic and foreign policy discourse, including in those areas that affect the security and geopolitical position of Central Asia.

The main topics of interest to the French authors are:

- formation of new independent States in the region;
- building of statehood;
- their international situation, geopolitical environment, relations with Russia and among themselves;
- policy of the leading powers in the region;
- influence of Islam, security problems, etc., i.e. foreign experts are interested in virtually all aspects of political and socio-economic life of post-Soviet Central Asia (Laumulin, 2016).

Even with a cursory acquaintance with the literature about Central Asia, it is evident that Kazakhstan is undoubtedly the leader among all Central Asian States as objects of study by Western political science. This applies both to the quantitative parameters of the literature published abroad about the country and the degree of development.

The political science literature presented in the article is of interest to us first of all from the point of view of ascertaining changes in traditional society, demographic and cultural-civilizational transformation, Islamic problems, i.e. in the context of topics that affect traditional Oriental studies.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Historiography of French scientists concerning republics of Central Asia in common**

Central Asia was undoubtedly part of the geopolitical confrontation. For centuries, even millennia, its geopolitical fate was connected with Eurasia, i.e. with continental forces. Moreover, Central Asia itself produced continental impulses in the geopolitical sense. However, after the collapse of the USSR, the geopolitical future of the region becomes unclear. After being acquainted with the theory of geopolitics, it is obvious that Central Asia after 1991 acquired significant geopolitical importance for the major world players. A number of concepts of global and geopolitical nature have caused a wide resonance not only among scientists, but also among public over the past decade. These concepts, or theories, directly affect the subject of this article – geopolitics in Central Asia. Western geopolitical thought had to respond appropriately to the new challenge of the time, which was the decline or transformation of States based on a planned economic system and managed rigidly built state-totalitarian vertical. As a natural alternative to this as it seemed then not viable, the model had to be a market economy based on democratic state institutions (Laumulin *et al.*, 2008).

Thus, we can state that during the 1990s, before Western scientists had two objectives: the first was practical; they had to give clear and unambiguous recommendations to the political leadership of their countries, how to build policy towards the newly independent States of Central Asia; the second is theoretical (it can be called also "practical geopolitics"); for their solution predictions are made, are created concepts and modeled the different options political evolution of the region.

The evolution of views on the geopolitical role of Central Asia and its strategic importance for the West can be observed on the example of publications of Western political scientists. The assessments depended on the nature and state of international relations at one time or another. But the common feature of all concepts is the understanding by all Western authors without exception of the fact that the region should not be left without the attention of the West. At the same time, various reasons are cited as reasons for the West's concern:

- threat from Islamic fundamentalism;
- return to the Russian region;
- fate of democratization;
- threat of ethnic clashes;
- importance of resources, etc.

All of this indicates that Central Asia is considered in the eyes of Western strategists as a sphere of geopolitical and strategic interests of the West.

In France, in 1995, V. Fourniau, who for a long time headed the French Institute for Central Asian studies (IFEAC), published a book "The History of Central Asia", in which he devoted the last Chapter to the modern development of the region. The French scientist assumed that the disappearance of the USSR influenced the international balance, as well as the regional interests of the various border areas of the former USSR. The situation was complicated by differences related to history. For example, there was a risk to see the construction of Great Uzbekistan or Great Tajikistan. The differences between the republics are becoming more apparent. The differences between the republics are becoming more apparent. V. Fourniau came to the conclusion that the states most represented in the international arena, and this is Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan, would like to break the regional logic through which Central Asia is seen as a world policy, in particular, to avoid the fate of becoming a place of duel of regional powers, such as Turkey, Pakistan or Iran. V. Fourniau identifies three main factors that will further develop the situation in Central Asia: openness to the Islamic world, openness to the Asian world and the desire to enter the world markets for its products, mainly minerals. Regional powers, such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, compete with each other, as well as with Russia and the United States for the spread of its influence in the region. There is also the rivalry between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for regional leadership, and, according to French researchers, win the one who best adapt to the new geopolitical realities (Laumulin, 1999).

Another well-known French specialist on Central Asia fellow, National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), O. Roy in his book (Roy, 2000) believes that the emergence of five new states marked the formation of a new geopolitical space between Russia, China, the Middle East and South Asia. However, to call the Central Asian region is homogeneous is quite difficult because of the existing antagonism between the two countries and the attempts of major powers and regional power centers to strengthen and expand its influence in the region.

French author G. Raballan published in 2005 the book "Central Asia or the fatality of enclave?" The work is devoted to the problems and specifics of the geographical position of the region, sandwiched between major geopolitical forces in the center of Eurasia, paying special attention to the so-called problem of "closure" (land-locked). The author sees the main reason of all geopolitical problems of the region, deprived of access to free

access to world communications. R. Legvold dedicated his regular work "New us strategy in Central Asia" to the revision and development of new approaches to Washington's policy in the region (Laumulin, 2000).

The book by M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse is called "Globalizing Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Challenges of Economic Development". This time, the authors consider the region in terms of the impact of globalization processes on it. Thus, geopolitics in the book is considered from the point of view of geo-Economics. The region's rich natural resources attract global geopolitical players, among which Russia and China dominate. Against this background, local regimes face a dilemma: on the one hand, they need to sell their resources in international markets; on the other hand, to keep control over them in order to preserve the sovereignty of their States in the face of the aggressive behavior of global economic players. Thus, according to the authors, the internal needs for the development of the Central Asian countries become a key factor in the process of attracting and emerging external players and form the mechanism that provides them a place in the globalized world (Laruelle and Peyrouse, 2015).

In the first part of the book, the authors consider the "Big game" and the so-called "small games" in terms of strategy and methods of external players, respectively, large and small. The list of such players involved in Central Asian policy is quite extensive. Each major player is devoted in the book a separate chapter.

The second part of the monograph is devoted exclusively to the problems of economic development of Central Asian countries in the context of their involvement in globalized relations. Let us pay attention to the value of this publication. The book's undoubted advantages include a rich factual and statistical material on many, and especially the economic aspects of the development of the Central Asian countries. The appearance of this monograph is evidence of the departure of foreign (primarily Western) political science from the traditional study of the region in terms of geopolitics, which dominated in the 1990-2000-ies., to the approach of the study of the real place of the region in world politics and economy from geo-economic positions. At the same time, it considers both the impact of the global economy and the processes of globalization on Central Asia, and, conversely, the transformation of international economic relations due to the emergence of Central Asia.

In another paper, M. Laruel concludes that foreign policy choice is often determined by internal reasons, especially in young States that need to gain legitimacy both internationally and domestically. She draws attention to the following points of principle. So, the author notes that today it is impossible to talk about the unity of Central Asia in international affairs: Ashgabat and Bishkek or Astana and Tashkent look at the world differently. At the same time, discussions about the role of Central Asia in international affairs often suffer from two shortcomings:

- first, the main focus is directed at external actors, near or far, and the Central Asian countries themselves are considered as passive, as victims of a geopolitical game, on the course of which they cannot influence in any way;
- secondly, all attention is focused on how the Central Asian States behave with regard to the main international problems, while their position is not associated with what is happening within the countries themselves (Laruelle and Peyrouse, 2015).

M. Laruelle concludes that national identity is one of the main elements of foreign policy and it is at least as important for domestic policy. Central Asian States have to deal with several multidirectional processes. The government attaches great importance to the sovereignty. Central Asian countries want to be open to the world, but at the same time to be isolated from neighbors (Laruelle and Peyrouse, 2015).

An important component of political research in Central Asia is the direction that deals with the internal political problems of the region, the development and evolution of local regimes, their political genesis. It is impossible to consider domestic political and sociological problems without studying the historical, ethnographic and Oriental context, as some authors do. In one way or another, this problem was touched

upon in the works of R. Pomfret "The Economies of Central Asia" (Pomfret, 1995). M. Laruelle in her section covers the issues of national identity in the conditions of the requirement of building a nation-state. Conceptually, she did not add anything fundamentally new, which was not in her previous brilliant monographs on ethnicity and statehood.

O. Roy, in his work "The New Central Asia" notes, that the key to understanding the region's problems lies in understanding its own historical and political culture, which he formulates as a cult of strong power (as a consequence, authoritarian presidentialism), based on regionalism and political clans. The legacy of Soviet political culture has a serious impact on the behavior of modern Central Asian elites and causes rejection of opposition and criticism in the media, psychological unavailability to implement deep transformations in the economy, imitation of the Soviet system of power, the cult of personality, sometimes taking caricature forms (as, for example, in Turkmenistan). According to O. Roy, another important feature of the political development of the Central Asian countries is the institutionalization of regional and clan relations. Regional groups can be ethnic in nature (genera, tribes, zhuzes), and come from administrative units of the Soviet system (collective and state farms) (Roy, 2000).

Among the works devoted to the cultural development and civilizational orientation of the Central Asian states, one should also mention the book of the Turkish scientist B. Balci, made within the French Institute of Anatolian Studies "Missionaries of Islam in Central Asia". The author has done a great deal of work to study the long-term consequences of the missionary activity of Turkish and Muslim educational institutions in the region and the education of children and youth in schools and madrasas of the Middle East.

The conclusions reached by B. Balci are shocking: the Turkish and Arab Islamists are working purposefully with the elite of the region and, in addition, conduct a wide educational coverage of other segments of the population. Young people charged with Islamist ideology, with well-developed stereotypes and with a certain way of worldview come out of the walls of such schools. And it's not always outdoor Islamism; most such schools, particularly Turkish, are disguised as secular. Given the long-term perspective, there is a purposeful activity on education in the future generations with a new cultural and civilizational orientation, which is aimed at the Islamic Middle East. At the same time, Turkish missionaries, willingly or unwittingly, play along with Arab Islamism. The only way to avoid the fatal path of development when in the future will come to power people for whom will be relatives or friends of the Arabic language, and the texts of the Quran will replace ideological orientation, is a:

- further construction of the national-oriented States;
- education of the young generation in a patriotic spirit;
- completion of the construction of nation-States in Central Asia (Laumulin, 2008).

A. Heinemann-Gruder and H. Habershtok believe that local regimes can be considered as semi-autocratic, or "sultanist". The authors focus on three states in the region in their analysis: Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, whose regimes are forced at any cost to maintain stability, which, in turn, is the key to their legitimacy. The authors believe that main dilemma of such regimes is a fear of any political changes or steps towards reform, which can cause erosion and even collapse of the regime (Laumulin, 2015).

### **The Republic of Kazakhstan in the works of French historiographers and political scientists**

During the years of independence in the West was published a number of books about modern Kazakhstan (with a rich historical context). In addition, over the years, saw the light of a large number of works of smaller format. Kazakhstan also appears in almost all collective and monographic publications devoted to Central Asia as a whole.

The book by the famous French orientalist, the head of the permanent seminar on Central Asia at the national Institute of Oriental languages and civilizations, Dr. C. Poujol "Kazakhstan" (Laumulin, 2000) has

filled an unfortunate gap in modern French political science, dedicated to independent Kazakhstan. C. Poujol is a carrier of the traditions established in the French historiography of Central Asian studies such as A. Bennigsen, C. Lemerrier-Quellejey and H.C. d'Encausse (Bennigsen, 1980; Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quellejey, 1967; d'Encausse, 1979). She had a good opportunity to apply the methods developed by her predecessors in the 1960-1980s in relation to the Central Asian States, in the conditions of getting those real independence, which predicted the meters of Sovietology in the late 1970s – early 1980s. If the Anglo-Saxon authors paid more attention to geopolitical problems, the French authors focused mainly on the problems of national and cultural identity, as well as Islam (Laumulin, 2000). However, the beginning of C. Poujol's book allows us to think that she decided to write it more in the Anglo-Saxon style with an emphasis on geopolitics. She writes that "Kazakhstan has entered the international arena thanks to its President Nursultan Nazarbayev, as well as its extraordinary energy and strategic potential, which immediately attracted the attention of many partners who sought to overtake each other."

C. Poujol sees the geopolitical framework within which Kazakhstan got from the first days of its independence, as follows. With the loss of the Soviet Union in the winter of 1991, the Republic of Kazakhstan woke up, becoming the fourth world nuclear power, in a new political, economic and social environment, where everything changed dramatically, maintaining a strange way familiar appearance. This was only the first step in a new era of history, which had to link pragmatic social balance policies with controlled economic change in order to consolidate the fragile rule of law. What previously seemed natural-to lean accordingly to the traditional ties with Russia, its culture and diverse population, had to be revised (Laumulin, 2000).

Kazakhstan is actually located in the force field, restrained by the surrounding sedentary States. As a transition zone in human, cultural terms, as well as in geographical terms, Kazakhstan today is a product of extraordinary synthesis between different ways of economic management, subordinating nomadic cattle nomads, settled agriculture and industrial development of rich raw materials. Finally, it combines various cosmogonic and religious beliefs (shamanism, Islam and Christianity) with some political and social structures that include or exclude tradition and modernity.

One of the main contradictions laid in the Foundation of independent Kazakhstan, C. Poujol guesses in the problem of a new interpretation of Kazakh-Russian relations: "Thus, the question is put in reducing the gap that exists between the exogenous writing of history and modern endogenous rewritten history in the form of information accounts. The difficulty is that you need to get to the point with the "privileged nation": to relate the Kazakh nation to the territory that existed before it and that it lives as a titular nation in an appropriate way, which is not completely identical to the one used by the Russians" (Laumulin, 2000).

The task and purpose of her book C. Poujol sees that from the structural misunderstanding between the forced culture, which criticizes the government today and is looking for ways to retrospectively prevail over the past, which should be shared with many other ethnic groups, and exdominant culture, which should get along with the new political reality, should still appear the necessary consensus to maintain civil peace. Structurally, the book consists of three parts: "Kazakh space and Eurasia" covers the history of the territory of Kazakhstan from ancient times to the early twentieth century, "Soviet Kazakhstan" – respectively, the period from 1917 to 1991 and, finally, "the Fragile giant"-is devoted to modern Kazakhstan.

From the political, legal and psychological points of view, Kazakhstan is a diverse society, which is the legacy of the Soviet era. The next inevitable challenge facing the new Kazakh political class is the consolidation of society. The younger generation of the Republic demonstrates a successful ability to adapt modern political and technological innovations, and this, in turn, allows us to hope that the remaining path of Kazakhstan will be faster than it has been so far.

Also in the book, the author groups the problems in three main areas, which, in her opinion, deserve attention in the study of modern Kazakhstan:

- political life of the Republic, political and legal changes, ensuring the security of the Republic, the government and the opposition;
- Kazakhstan's foreign policy, participation in international and regional organizations, relations with Russia, "privileged partnership" with the United States, "attentive neighborhood" with China;
- problems of culture and deep mutations in society, the restructuring of the education system and youth policy, religious Renaissance, the shock of health care.

C. Poujol believes that Kazakhstan in the international arena is experiencing the so-called cross, "restrained" influence from various sides. The new partners of Kazakhstan began to engage in a specific dialogue in which their perception of the young state varies according to their own cultural, economic and political needs.

In the internal structure of Kazakhstan fully reflected its original state, resulting from the synthesis of the European model, transplanted from Russia, and the internal Turkic-Muslim core, preserved in the traditional sphere. The multi-ethnic, multi-confessional nature of Kazakhstan's society, according to the author, was seriously injured by forced subsidence and secularization.

C. Poujol is not original, considering that the system of power in Kazakhstan operates on the basis of the system of enema, which, in turn, is the result of the system of regional governance, going back to the old zhuz system. These factors, the author believes, provide social relations and bear a clear imprint of the agricultural mentality, subjugating the social relations in the urban layers. In the late 1990s in the policy of Kazakhstan, the author notes, the priorities of its development were clearly distinguished:

- creation of a national (Kazakh) state;
- harmoniously existing in the conditions of globalization of international relations;
- leading in the region as a "snow leopard";
- remaining faithful to its Eurasian environment.

All these assumptions for the further development of Kazakhstan, draws the attention of Poujol, are fixed in the program of its development until 2030.

Studying the cultural policy in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, the author raises questions that she cannot answer: the authorities carry out such a General education policy, which is experiencing a double dependence: discarding the Soviet model, accused of totalitarianism and the strangulation of cultures, it is in search of a new *modus vivendi* (state), trying not to ignite ethnic tensions.

But how do you accomplish this difficult mission with a bloodless state budget in a multi-ethnic social continuum vulnerable to social inequality? How to curb the trend towards retraining of personnel, which is very low-paid, how to contain the wave of departure of Russian personnel, suffering from new political and cultural orientations of the Republic, mainly national, which significantly worsened their status? How to avoid the process of cultural decomposition, which has already deeply penetrated into the environment of the young generation?

As the only medicine, the author offers Kazakhstan time and expectation: only now the society, and posteriori assesses the impact of European culture caused by Sovietization. This explains the increase in calls for the return of traditional morality, which is seen in the official messages and media of Kazakhstan. And only after the exit from the present transition stage, where the euphoria of some and the nostalgia of others give way gradually to the aspirations of all, Kazakhstan will wake up from injuries caused by the collapse of the structure of its lifestyle, thoughts and actions.



Social and economic changes in Kazakhstan were brutal and differed, on the one hand, de-Sovietization, restructuring of the education system, and on the other-the unification and creation of "transnational" ideology, which was hiding the desire of the ruling elite to maintain political control. In education, the author believes that a significant role to play foreign high schools, such as the Turkish – secular and religious, which provide the possibility of obtaining alternative, derusification education. Poujol assesses the efforts to support the Kazakh language as a state language in Kazakhstan as unprecedented.

The most obvious ideological changes can be seen in the Humanities. The place of "Soviet" disciplines – scientific atheism, Marxist theory, the history of the CPSU, socialist realism – came new: the history of religion, the history of the Kazakh state, market economy and cultural studies. The author considers the religious Renaissance to be an integral part of the changes of social character taking place in Kazakhstan. At the same time, traditional religions – Islam and Orthodoxy – are fighting in cooperation between themselves and the authorities against the sharply increased popularity of various sects.

According to the French scientist, the territory of Kazakhstan after independence has become a testing ground for various paramedical, anti-scientific and irrational exercises, luring a variety of sorcerers, shamans, hypnotists, charlatans and propagandists "Herbal life". Another area where the de-Sovietization of public consciousness, is a rapid development alternative to the official press, the emergence of various criminal, scandalous and erotic publications.

Thus, all these phenomena destroy the conservative and moralizing character of the Soviet society, of which Kazakhstan was a part. According to C. Poujol, the failure of traditional religions is planetary in nature, and in this case Kazakhstan is no exception. Thus, the passage of Kazakhstan's transit phase is accompanied by the inevitable injury of public consciousness and the fall of the standard of living. It must necessarily end with the release of both euphoria and excessive illusions, and nostalgia for the past, which is an indispensable consequence of the destruction and restructuring of the usual way of life, thoughts and actions taking place in this Republic.

In conclusion, C. Poujol notes that the history of Kazakhstan is paradoxical. Over the centuries its territory was the field of the rule specifically nomadic way of life and linguistic monopoly Turchinov. In the XVIII-XIX centuries it was integrated into the sphere of Russian politics, which was accompanied by the beginning of the process of settlement, the emergence of the administration, health, Russification of school education, the construction of canals, the birth of capitalist relations, the appearance of the Slavic element and the Orthodox religion (Laumulin, 2000).

The post-Soviet transition period is not over, C. Poujol believes. The reconstruction of Kazakhstan, which should be completed, requires more time than it would take to "catapult into independence". In order to engage a society that suddenly lost its orientation, the new relationship had to be clearly determined, which is allowed and not allowed.

Political figures of post-Soviet Kazakhstan should use their imagination to create a code of laws that is understandable to the whole society, especially carefully highlighting the "original community" of the dominant nation to which they belong. This ambitious project allows for a selective revision of history, based on the exaltation of Kazakh nationalism, in particular to the right to land. But it is not workable without social splash (Dave, 2007).

However, the conclusions of the French scientist are generally optimistic. Kazakhstan has advantages from which it should benefit if the combination of internal and external circumstances gives it the opportunity. Rich in rare minerals, with a skilled workforce and a population accustomed to hardship, enterprising youth able to adapt to political and technological innovation, Kazakhstan can hope for a future as long as its past.

From a global point of view, C. Poujol writes, Kazakhstan is called upon to play its role in transcontinental economic relations and return to its historical mission of the axis of the Eurasian continent. Having experienced a series of cultural shocks in its time, Kazakhstan is actually a successful synthesis between the Asian East

and the European West, between the Kazakh and Russian origins, between atheism and Orthodoxy, Islam and shamanism.

The future of Kazakhstan, the author concludes, will undoubtedly be connected with the West. However, the Asian heritage, of course, will still have an impact on the Kazakh society, which demonstrates from time to time attempts to revive its nomadic roots. These attempts – to return to the defeated nomadic identity or artificially reconstruct it – are, without a doubt, illusory, the author concludes.

According to C. Poujol's book, she pays more attention to internal, cultural and socio-psychological factors that influence the evolution of Kazakhstan. This is the main difference of her book from the works of her Anglo-Saxon colleagues, who are more focused on geopolitical issues, referring to the current development of Kazakhstan or the situation in Central Asia.

It is also surprising that the author pays little attention to Islam, given the rich tradition of Islam in the French school of historiography. In our opinion, the striving for C. Poujol to circumvent Islamic perspective reflects its real policy relevance for Kazakhstan. At the same time, the author warns against excessive attempts to cultivate the nomadic cultural tradition of the Kazakh society, considering that the future of Kazakhstan is associated with the evolution of the Kazakh society in the direction of modern society and the completion of modernization in the Western model.

### **Situation in the Republic of Uzbekistan according to the ideas of French historiographers and political scientists**

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a unique country in the Central Asian region. It is the only republic bordering all other Central Asian states. Large communities of ethnic Uzbeks live in all our neighbors, including Afghanistan, without exception. These factors could not but affect the nature of Tashkent's foreign policy and its relations with its neighbors, which are, of course, specific.

The attitude of the outside world to Uzbekistan immediately after the collapse of the USSR was formed in favorable conditions. For the West, Uzbekistan seemed to be a kind of "Central Asian Ukraine" – a country with relatively large demographic and economic potential to resist the restoration of Russia's positions in Central Asia. For the (Muslim) East, Uzbekistan was the heir and guardian of the millennial traditions associated with the brilliant Islamic past of the region, the owner of Muslim shrines such as Bukhara and Samarkand. Uzbekistan was also seen as the second largest Turkic country in the world.

For the (Asian) East, Uzbekistan was a densely populated country with preserved traditions of culture and ethics of persistent and methodical work, i.e. a kind of Central Asian analogue of the East Asian "tigers" (new industrial states). It was assumed that when creating a favorable investment climate and importing appropriate technologies, Uzbekistan would follow the path of the APR and Southeast Asian countries (Dave, 2007).

It is important to note that the formation of Uzbek clan regional elite groups was influenced not only by regional affiliation. The Uzbek political and financial groups were more flexible than the strictly territorial clan, because, in addition to the regional community, there were other important factors, such as access to financial resources, family ties, friendly relations and other subjective and objective moments, as well as other circumstances. Based on this, the Tashkent and Samarkand political and financial groups could include representatives of different regions and nationalities, which greatly increased the resource capacity of each clan.

It should be noted that this alignment was for many reasons rather conditional. Uzbekistan is the most popular (after Kazakhstan) object for foreign political scientists, which is not surprising. This Republic has always been considered in the West as a key in the region due to its strong historical traditions, large population, relatively independent foreign policy within the CIS (and in relation to Russia), influence on neighboring countries, including Afghanistan, as well as in the context of its competition with Kazakhstan for leadership in Central Asia.

M. Laruelle published a collective study entitled "Migration and Social Upheaval as the Face of Globalization in Central Asia" (Laruelle, 2013). In order to solve the fundamental problems, M. Laruelle gathered a wide international group of authors, including Central Asian ones. In the preface to the publication, the expert notes that migration has long been a global social phenomenon. She adds that the territory of the former Soviet Union was no exception in the planetary picture of large migration flows. On the contrary, the population of the post-Soviet States is actively involved in the migration process. And within the CIS region of Central Asia, in her opinion, occupies a unique position (Laumulin, 2008).

Central Asia has not only become the largest "supplier" of the Slavic and Russian-speaking population to other regions, but also a source of powerful flows of labor migration. According to the author's estimates, about 5 million people from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are permanent and temporary migrant workers in Russia and about 1-2 million in Kazakhstan. Immigrants from Central Asia as migrant workers can also be found in the United States, Canada, Israel, Germany, South Korea and the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.

M. Laruelle draws attention to the fact that mass migration affects the relations between individuals, between them and the state, as well as affects the economic strategy of the state. The author quite rightly considers the main specificity of Central Asian migration to be the fact that it is primarily based on ethnic and tribal ties. But modernization inevitably penetrates into this environment and erodes it in line with the adaptation of new generations of migrants within the permanent diasporas to the environment. The book makes a number of conclusions. Thus, the economic crisis showed that migration is a powerful stabilizing factor for the economies of a number of republics in the region. This is reflected in the fact that migration compensates for the lack of jobs at home. In addition, the crisis has forced Russia as a recipient country to streamline the system of bilateral and multilateral agreements with countries – migration donors (Laruelle, 2013).

Based on the studied materials and sociological data, the authors are more or less inclined to see Uzbek and Tajik women involved against their will in migration processes, victims of the socio-economic shocks that hit the post-Soviet population in the 1990s and the economic model and economic relations that have formed on the ruins of the socialist system. Thus, we have before us a fundamental work designed to highlight the entire complex fabric of migration processes that affect the political, socio-economic and demographic aspects of the development of not only Central Asia, but also a larger geographical and geo-economic space.

### **Analysis of works on the French historiography regarding Tajikistan**

Tajikistan (RT) is the Republic with the most difficult fate among other Central Asian States. Back in Soviet times, it was a Union Republic with the lowest standard of living, high birth rate, insufficiently developed infrastructure and a high degree of preservation of traditional and archaic public institutions. In the period of perestroika in Tajikistan for the first time in the USSR there is the Islamic party "Islamic party of revival" (IPV). Here the collapse of the Soviet Union coincided with the change of power in the party elite, acute political and interregional struggle, which then grew into a bloody civil war (1992-1994).

The tragedy was compounded by the neighborhood with Afghanistan, which itself experienced a prolonged political conflict in the first half of the 1990s, Expelled from the Republic, the Islamists shifted their base to neighboring Afghanistan, where for three years continued to attack the secular regime of Dushanbe. In fact, the conflict has become dualistic and developed with the active intervention of external forces – Afghan Mujahideen, Russia and Iran. The situation was aggravated by the factor of drug trafficking.

It is difficult to overestimate the role of Russia, which has been one of the parties to the conflict since the beginning of the crisis. In relation to Tajikistan, it is quite natural that the works devoted to the dramatic events of the civil war of the early 1990s dominate. They include: "Ideology and Islamic resistance in Tajikistan" by H. Emadi, a collective monograph in French (ed. M. Jalili and F. Grar) "Tajikistan on the threshold of independence" (Cherkesov, 2001). After normalization of the situation and the creation of a coalition

government in the Republic of Tajikistan in the West and in the East, a number of works devoted to a qualitatively new situation in the Republic. This research of A. Seifert, P. Foroughi and S. Chatterjee (Seifert, 2002; Foroughi, 2002; Chatterjee, 2002). Thus, as we can see, the number of works devoted to Tajikistan is not numerous and it is not possible to draw any extensive conclusions.

### **Review of the French historiographers concerning of Turkmenistan**

The development of the situation in Turkmenistan has always been one of the most closed topics for any outside observer. Nevertheless, it is known that in this Central Asian Republic an exotic regime was created, headed by the former first Secretary of the Turkmen SSR, then the first President Saparmurad Niyazov. He himself, his personality and his domestic and foreign policy have repeatedly become the focus of world public opinion due to their unusual nature. Thus, S. Niyazov declared Turkmenistan a "neutral state".

Turkmen neutrality was officially recognized within the UN, CIS and a number of other international organizations. Very quickly, Turkmenistan's neutrality turned into an almost complete isolation of the country. S. Niyazov's policy towards Islam was characterized by the same reasons as in other spheres of political, social, cultural and spiritual life: to prevent the transformation of religious institutions into an opposition regime, to take them under control and to reduce their influence on society as much as possible. The political historiography devoted to Turkmenistan is relatively modest, but a number of works can be called here.

S. Peyrouse's book "Turkmenistan: a Destiny at the Crossroads of Empires" (Peyrouse, 2007) written in 2007, but after the change of government in Ashgabat, so its relevance from the point of view of historical analysis of the regime of President Niyazov's has no doubt. In an effort to attract the reader's attention, he writes that this country is the most unexplored in Central Asia. Its ancient culture was nurtured by the great empires on the famous roads of the great silk road. After more than a century of Russian-Soviet period, the country entered in 1991 on the path of independence, which she never thought. Populated by five million people, Turkmenistan has significant gas reserves and occupies a strategic position in the center of the continent.

S. Peyrouse reduces the concept of his book to a number of the following problems. He wonders if the future nation was the Creator of its own history. Does the Central geopolitical position of the country automatically mean its political and cultural significance? For him, there is no doubt that the belated formation of the Turkmen nation under the influence of radical social and political processes introduced by the Soviet regime makes it difficult to reflect on the identity of the people, thus implemented (Peyrouse, 2007).

How to divide and distribute the historical moments and great personalities, equally related to the whole region, and how to enter them into the national heritage of each country? What is the place to take away the Russian-Soviet heritage, which, although worn, however, nevertheless, is still visibly present? What role is destined to play Islam, the division of clan and regional affiliation, national minorities?

The Turkmen Republic was already one of the most backward in the Soviet Union, but two decades of independence brought the population to complete impoverishment: the prevalence of cotton culture, the lack of private sector, environmental disasters, the elimination of public services. As for the political system, it gained the most caricatured form of Stalinism: the cult of personality, an almost complete cultural autarky, isolation in the international arena and nationalist megalomania in public rhetoric, the megalomania of state projects in the architectural field, the massive corruption of state structures, the insatiable desire of the transformation of nature. But the author points out that, for all its caricature, the Turkmenbashi regime was considered in the international arena, since all of the above does not detract from the strategic role of Turkmenistan in the international plan: the Caspian sea is doomed to be a growing energy pole, Russia continues to dominate economically over the region and there are new neighbors that have remained in the shadow and now declare themselves.

Therefore, according to S. Peyrouse, modern Turkmen society is at a crossroads. Rightly proud of its ancient and glorious history, but remaining a young political nation, Turkmenistan, which has acquired its

borders, created its literary language and developed its national feeling in the XX century, violently denounces Russian colonialism, which formed this country. The official historiography criticizes the Soviet regime as an alien phenomenon, while the Turkmen elite allegedly managed to curb the system and bind it to its own needs and prospects. Remaining deeply marked by Russification and Sovietization, Turkmen society is still based on hierarchical traditions and clan relations (Peyrouse, 2007).

Then the French researcher moves to the most interesting part of the history of post – Soviet Turkmenistan-the personality of Turkmenbashi. He notes that the first 15 years of Turkmenistan's independence are inextricably linked with the ambitious personality of President Niyazov. It was he who modeled both the political institutions of the country and cultural life and left a negative trace, the long-term consequences of which are still difficult to measure. Then S. Peyrouse goes to the analysis of the political system created by Turkmenbashi. During Niyazov's reign, no one could pose a threat to his power. The omnipresent state was extinguished by the slightest attempt at public protest. The scattered opposition could only act in exile, and the clans could not organize against the President. There was no civil society, and every individual was under the watchful control of the police and the judicial self-government eye. And yet, with the death of the dictator, the first phase of the history of independent Turkmenistan has ended and new prospects for political and social restructuring are opening up.

Further S. Peyrouse makes a small digression into the history of post-Soviet Turkmenistan. After the collapse of the USSR, declared by three Slavic republics on December 8, 1991 near Minsk, Turkmenistan officially enters the Commonwealth of Independent States, proclaimed in Alma-ATA on December 21 of the same year. This Union allowed the former Soviet republics to maintain at least temporarily a single military command and to ensure a minimum common market between the new States. But soon Ashgabat demonstrates its isolationism and abandonment of any regional structure, preaching bilateral relations instead of multilateral ones.

S. Niyazov categorically does not accept the General integration, "imposed", in his opinion, by Moscow, and prefers to see the CIS limited only by Advisory functions. Turkmenistan also refuses to join the collective security Treaty of 1992. It does not participate in the collective forces of the Central Asian republics to prevent civil war in Tajikistan. The country is practicing a "policy of the empty chair" at most of the meetings of the CIS.

In 1996, he refused to join the Customs Union established by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Belarus. In June 1999, he emerges from the Agreement on visa-free passage for citizens of CIS countries, signed on 9 July 1992. In August 2005, during the meeting of heads of CIS States in Kazan, the President solemnly declares that Turkmenistan is leaving its status as a member of CIS and is limited to the role of associate member. It is quite obvious that after independence the Republic could not develop according to the "European model", which is constantly presented by the West as the only one for the evolutionary development of democratic institutions and market relations. However, on the other hand, it is impossible to remove responsibility from President Niyazov for the policy of the allegedly special Turkmen way of development, which sometimes took anecdotal and even pathological nature and was a drama for those who suffered all this.

Monography of S. Peyrouse "Turkmenistan: strategies of power, the development dilemma" is a sequel to his book "Turkmenistan: a destiny at the crossroads of empires" and in many respects it repeats, especially at the conceptual level (Peyrouse, 2015).

The French researcher proceeds from the fact that Turkmenistan belongs to those countries that are called upon by their history and location to occupy an appropriate niche in the XXI century, which causes them a keen interest.

The first 15 years of independence of the Republic were inextricably linked with the ambitious personality of the late President. It was he who modeled both the political institutions of the country and cultural life and left a negative trace, the long-term consequences of which are still difficult to measure. The French researcher

puts the question: was there a thaw? (about it is told in the previous book). As a result of reflection, the author comes to the conclusion that the beginning of the reign of Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov turned out to be only "an illusion thaw".

Here you can watch some of the paradoxes and the dramatic metamorphosis of the Turkmen politicians, in particular the emergence of a kind of gas of the triangle Russia – Ukraine – Turkmenistan, the use of Iran for the containment of Moscow, an increased interest in the TAPI project, the shift to China and the European Union.

S. Peyrouse does not avoid such acute and sensitive issues as, for example, the transformation of Turkmenistan into a transport hub for Afghan drugs, and notes the growing sinophilia in the policy of Ashgabat. S. Peyrouse said that the country's foreign policy is mainly determined by the possession of hydrocarbons and the place that Turkmenistan wishes to occupy in the international arena.

In view of the enclave nature of its position, Turkmenistan's economic development is particularly dependent on the ability to cooperate with its neighbours, regardless of their political regime. Yet the country has managed to establish some semblance of integration with immediate neighbors such as Iran, or more distant ones such as Turkey and China. Contacts with Russia remain difficult, as the Turkmen regime still harbors resentment at the "big brother" in terms of infringement of his independence, but at the same time leaves Moscow control over the export of its gas.

The change of regime in 2006 gave this country a new opportunity to maneuver: fulfilling its obligations, Turkmenistan, softening the policy of isolation, had an opportunity to find its place in the structures of regional integration and to resume contact with Western countries.

The author believes that during the five years of G. Berdymukhamedov's rule, relations with great powers – such as the US and the EU, as well as with international and post-Soviet organizations-have been almost completely restored. A purely pragmatic economic partnership, far from the problems of "democratization", was maintained by Ashgabat with large regional neighbors of Turkmenistan.

In his opinion, the new "energy game" confronts the interests of major international players, which include the United States, the European Union, Russia, China, Iran, India and Pakistan, i.e. Central Asia remains a strategic place where the powers "compete in force and relations". It is hoped, S. Peyrouse concludes, that in this difficult game Turkmenistan will use its favorable situation and will be able to solve its own strategic goals for the benefit of its long-suffering people (Peyrouse, 2007).

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, despite the diversity of opinions, and sometimes the polarity of points of view in the political literature of the 2010s, some conclusions about the political development of the region and the geopolitical drift of Central Asia can already be made. Right are those observers who say that Central Asia is not what it was at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Therefore, the first conclusion is the region has lost its homogeneity (if only it existed in reality). Today we can state that there is no single Central Asian identity. Each state in the region is developing in its own way, according to its own model and has only its own international guidelines. Paradoxically, this became possible only after the loss of the former Soviet identity, which at the very least consolidated the republics of Central Asia. The way the construction of nation-States have dissolved the republics of the region from each other.

The second conclusion is that Russia is hopelessly losing its once dominant position, which is agreed by both Western and Russian (sometimes with reservations) observers. This is a complex, multi-factor and painful process, which includes economic, strategic, socio-civilizational, demographic and linguistic aspects. But there is no doubt that this is happening. Discussions can only be conducted on the scale of Russia's

residual influence and the preservation of "special" relations with some of the States of the region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan).

Even a cursory acquaintance with the historiographical and source heritage associated with the history of the study of Central Eurasia, part of which are Central Asia and Kazakhstan, shows that at different times this space (the term "region" is too tiny) played a huge role in the history of mankind. To reflect this outstanding role of Central Eurasia was the purpose of this study. Another goal was to show a picture of Central Asian research in the world of science in all its diversity. I would like to express the hope that this goal has been achieved.

Unfortunately, to make a full review of the rich scientific heritage is almost impossible for any researcher. Therefore, we have limited ourselves to the main areas of the leading disciplines related to the subject of research. However, many questions remain unanswered. The main one is how, when, how, from where, on what routes and with what consequences ancient people moved in the Western and South-Western (mainly) direction from the depths of Central Eurasia for tens of thousands of years, not even thousands of years.

The main problem is to answer the questions: what is the fate of Kazakhs and their neighbors in Central Asia? What paradigm and vectors will they develop in, will they return to a new Eurasian education? How deep will go the processes of demodernization? What model of political and socio-economic structure will be chosen to preserve their cultural and ethnic identity and simply the physical survival of their population (alas, in some republics the question is in this plane), the new regimes are already knocking on the door of the political process.

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Unfortunately, Western political science, fixated on geopolitical issues, or cannot, or does not want (which, most likely, more like the truth) truthfully answer these difficult questions. Therefore, we will have to look for answers ourselves, i.e. local scientists and political scientists. In this regard, it is more important than ever to rely on the experience of previous academic science. We hope that even if an incomplete review of the achievements of French Orientalism will serve us all to help in determining the historical fate and place of the Kazakhs and other peoples on the planet – the disappeared and existing – Central Eurasia.

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