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CENTRAL ASIA AS A REGION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS²

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ABSTRACT: ‘Central Asia’ is a unique and diverse region of the world that landmass distinct from other regions and sedentary civilisation is one of the characteristics. The geography of this region is considered a controversial discourse among scholars in international relations and, Europeans prefer to call them ‘Central Eurasia’, but Asian scholars frequently used the term ‘Central Asia’. However, the history of Asia was not stable and similar in the past. In this regard, this article tries to find the status of the Central Asia in international relations from a historical to empirical discussion in academia. Through the discourse analysis applied here to trace scholars, historians, institutions, governments, and sociologists’ perspective how they treat ‘Central Asia’, whether it is a deeply profound ‘region’ or precise existence. The initial argument says that Central Asia is more significant due to the geostrategic point of view and attracts superpowers in the ground of diplomacy play.

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INTRODUCTION

There are no such hard and fast rules to define the region as well as determine what regions are if we accept the geographical factor. But in the argument in international relations, regions are often constituted by countries that share common affinities of race, institutions, and political interests. The aftermath of all these characteristics, when these states come together and form an organizational association at the regional level to attain specific objectives, then it gives birth to a regional arrangement. In the 1945 San Francisco Conference, the Egyptian delegation introduced an amendment to the draft of the United Nations charter, where they limited the term 'regional arrangements' by definition to "organization of a permanent nature, grouping in a given geographical area, several countries that, due to their proximity, a community of interests or cultural, linguistic, historical or spiritual affinities, jointly are responsible for the peaceful settlement of any disputes that may arise between them and for the maintenance of peace and security in their regions, as well as the safeguarding of their national interests and the development of their economic and cultural relations" (United Nations, 1945; Seabury, 1949, p. 663).

In empirical study, there are several arguments that define real boundaries of Central Asia and relationship trace within historical timeline. However, the existence of this area always itself according to historical linkage. It has also been impacted by culture other than history when both are combined; the relationship exists between civilised and barbarian. The profound analysis says civilised history of Central Asia cantered around sedentary and barbarian, which is different from each other, but nomad culture made understanding more interesting, and generally this is a confusion point (Sinor, 2021). These uniqueness of Central when joining discussion in international relations and question arises about categorisation with methodological framework as a region. Under the framework for the comparison of a region in international relations, which is divided into five subordinate systems, but an argument of Cantori and Spiegel, it is a critique where under the international system there are more than five. Therefore, this article defines how Central Asia is the region in interna-

tional relations and why treat Central Asia as a region in international relations? Moreover, the subject of the research also includes definition, civilisation, history of study about central in the United States (US), and concept of Central Asia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Discourse analysis is chosen here as an application of the qualitative method in the context of Central Asia to explore the meanings, use of language, and communication. Contextual understanding and process of these are meanings help to analyse practical meaning-making and discipline-specific application. There is a comprehensive diversity of Central Asia and there is a need of coherent and strict analysis of language, as well as debate across the academia. Discourse analysis has the flexibility to analyse relationship in a broader and social situation. It has been applied here to understand the phenomenon with several kinds of data: literature text, media text, videos, map, pictures, practice, and other combination of knowledge. Theory of international like constructivism allows us to understand social and linguistic phenomenon (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249–252, 2001, p. 352–363).

Another is a case study method that provides an analysis of a particular case such Central Asia and its regional validity in international relations. Methods helps from historical to current political understanding of situation: 1) specific case and issues and 2) investigation of entire political system (Korey, 2005). Qualitative content analysis helps to understand the meaning of the literature and data both primary and secondary to draw of the realistic conclusion of the study (Bengtsson, 2016). To generate an argument, the article includes primary data, e.g., institutions report, official press brief and reports, statement of government official and official websites. Secondary data contains articles, magazines, books, book chapters, reports, newspaper clippings, and Think Tanks' publications, as well as seminar, conference, and lecture by the scholars.

UNDERSTANDING OF CENTRAL ASIA

In English literature very few occasions Central Asia appeared before the 1990s even after there are less books and articles. Mainly, there is literature based on individual country and scholar in social did the same (Rossabi, 2021). The republics of Central Asia re-emerged as independent actors in the global interstate system in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Central Asia's varied histories and geographies offer many different possible opportunities and courses of action. These are located between Russia, China, India, and Iran and share borders with these regional power countries. There are five states in Central Asia, named Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These countries have struggled to fulfil their sovereignty from the Soviet Union and their potential as a crossroads for trade and transit (Balci & Kassimova, 2015). However, Central Asia is derived as a region of Asia from the Caspian Sea in the West to Central China in the East and from Southern Russia in the North to the northern Indian sub-continent in the South. These five former Soviet republics have historically been very close to their nomadic peoples for the movement of the Silk Road, with crossroads of people, goods and ideas between Europe and Asia. Central Asia became popular through the American Universities program which focused on area studies and which was followed by India.

Among the challenges facing these states, there are also mutual mistrust, poor governance, and corruption, fear of extremism, both indigenous and imported, and the geopolitical maneuvers of their larger neighbours. In many ways, Central Asia is likely to benefit from the progressive integration of the Eurasian landmass, but only if the region's governments can work more and effectively together, reducing barriers to trade and investment and "de-securitizing" their relations with one another. The Centre for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) Russia and Eurasia Program keeps a close eye on economic, political, and security developments in this strategically important region and helps to ensure that discussions of Central Asia in the United States and around the world are informed by rigorous research and analysis (CSIS, 2021).

The above argument is exactly defining how Central Asia is a region in international relations. Central Asia's history is largely determined by its geography, meagre natural resources, lack of biodiversity, and location along trade routes. How were human populations affected by the various geographic and climate-related features of Central Asia? How did the existence of various religious and ethical systems in the region affect the political and cultural organization of Central Asian societies? These are important questions among scholars. Describe the role that trade played in the economic development of cultures of Central Asia and the Middle East. These are the main questions and topics of research in international relations.

The UNESCO has recognised the region by the book titled the History of the Civilizations of Central Asia, published in 1992. This literature defines the region as 'Afghanistan, northern Iran, Pakistan, northern India, Western China, Mongolia and the former Soviet Central Republics'. The main region of five countries is currently recognised as Central Asia, e.g., former Soviet Central Republics (Dani & Masson, 1992). The region shares a religion similar religion as Islam and, despite its local linguistic diversity, the Russian language is united for greater communication between them. The countries of Central Asia believe in a peaceful environment and that is mainly dependent on the agricultural-based society that is comprised of many tribes. The region is invaded and conquered by lighter-skinned people from all over the Muslim characterized by more warlike people, nomadic, and horsemen.

HISTORY OF CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES IN THE US AND EUROPE

During the last 200 years, Central Asian culture and civilization have become an important part of the American experience. From the earliest shipping ventures to current developments in international cooperation and trade; from the 19th century fascination with "Orientalism," to the broad-spectrum university programs of the present day Most of the

researchers involved with the cultural and socio-economic life of the subcontinent. The recent growth of the Central Asian diaspora community in the United States and its participation in higher education create a new dimension to Central Asian studies, the discovery of a good part of diverse American heritage (Universities.com, 2021).

Central Asian Studies in the USA:

1. Department of Central Eurasian Studies (Indiana University)
2. The Central Asia Program (CAP), George Washington University, Washington, DC
3. Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) research group, Syracuse University
4. Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC), Harvard University,
5. Center for Languages of the Central Asian Regions (CeLCAR), Indiana University
6. Faculty Committee on Central Eurasian Studies – University of Chicago
7. Central Asian Studies – Harriman Institute – Columbia University
8. Central Asian Studies in the UK and Other European Countries
9. Cambridge Central Asia Forum
10. Central Asia – Newcastle University
11. European Society for Central Asian Studies (ESCAS)
12. Central Asian Studies | The Institute of Ismaili Studies
13. Centre for Contemporary Central Asia and the Caucasus CCCAC
14. Central Asian Studies Institute (CASI), American University of Central Asia
15. Central Asia and Afghanistan Studies – University of Copenhagen
16. Special Program for Central Asian Countries, DAAD

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

CENTRAL ASIA AS A REGION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Väyrynen (2003) redefines regions based on the 'structural and agentive relationships between the globe, regional and national context'. He proposed a new methodological approach such as the relationship between regional

and multilateral trading arrangements. His theoretical grounds are 1) political-military regions: externalities, domestic coalitions, identity regions, complex security, and community, and 2) functional regionalism: social spaces and economic regions (Väyrynen, 2003, p. 25–51). Central Asia as a region is diverse and part of the religious studies of the region, from the ancient period to contemporary times with newly invigorated depth of Islam, has been the dominant religion in Central Asia for nearly 1,300 years. It is a dedication to the unique approaches of an investigation into the history of medieval and early modern Central Asia. But new global geographies, alternative academic curricula, and innovative interdisciplinary inquiries that bridge media studies, the humanities, and the social sciences are also part of regional studies. The ‘Central Asian Social Studies’ with concentrated expertise in anthropology, sociology, economics, and political science are particularly interested in how the social sciences might directly impact sustainable development practices, human rights, and policy formation.

1) Argument of Cantori and Spiegel:

Cantori & Spiegel (1969) presented ‘a framework for the comparison of regional international relations’ and described international politics in the following arenas: 1) the globe, 2) the region, and 3) the nation-state. This is represented as the dominant, subordinate, and ‘internal political system’. There are fifteen subordinates’ system in international politics and article defined only five out of them. They only presented five famous subordinate systems: Middle East, West Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and West Africa. From their perspective, Central Asia could surely be treated as a region in international relations because next Cantori and Spiegel explains “the subordinate system is defined as consisting of one state or two or more geographically proximate and interacting states which share in some degree common ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social, and historical bonds and whose sense of identity is sometimes increased by the actions and attitudes of states external to the system” (Cantori and Spiegel, 1969, p. 361–362). Central Asia as a core sector of a given region consists of a shared social, political, economic, or organizational background or activity among a group of states that produces a central focus of international politics in that region.

Cantori & Spiegel mentioned the core sector of the five-subordinate based on 'cohesiveness and greater degree of balance between intersectors which applied in diplomatic relations in intrasector and extrasubordinate system. These are based on subdivisions are four subordinate system pattern variables: 1) nature and level of cohesion, 2) nature of communications, 3) level of power, and 4) structure of relations. Central is consisting of the four parameters of variables 1) cohesion, 2) communications, 3) power, and 4) structure of relations (Ibid., p. 363–371). Both scholars give us freedom to define other regions based on these approaches to apply regional international relations that could be comparative politics and discussion could 'illustrate the relevance of cultural-geographical areas'. Because Central Asia is sharing a common religion and cultural cohesion that is agreed on, if we talked about social cohesion it would consist of such elements as ethnicity, language, religion, culture, history and a consciousness of a common heritage. Therefore, geography is very important, as is in regional international politics.

2) *Michael Brecher's argument:*

Brecher (1963) defines the 'region' in his article *International Relations and Asian Studies* and defined an international system based on economy. He presented the following basic features of contemporary system: 1) universality, 2) absence of law and order, 3) unique pyramid of power, 4) the presence of new types of actors, 5) the decline of Europe as core periphery, and 6) massive technological change (development of nuclear weapons and missiles). So, there are no classical balances of power (Brecher, 1963, p. 213–2016). The Central Asian state system consists of fourteen units, most of which are weak and under severe internal stress. After their winning status as newly won status from the Soviet Union, asserts the primacy of national interests over group interests that could induce organizational integration. The process is rudimentary and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. In fact, Central Asia is the most underdeveloped of all contemporary subordinate state systems.

Brecher explained that the line that divides 'Dominant from Subordinate System' could be disappear, and place would be taken by the rigidity of the regional bloc. In the case of the disintegration of Central Asia, there

was nothing to prevent the rapid assertion of Sino-Soviet domination in the international system (Ibid., p. 234). But according to the classification of the subordinate system, Central Asia is one of them as definable as a subordinate system. In the broadest sense, it will enrich both area study and international relations. The concept of a system gives the Asian specialist in one country an Asian specialist a region-wide perspective that can deepen his understanding of the foreign relations of his particular state. This is defined as a study of inter-state relations in the region as a whole. The second factor is that states operate at different levels and usually have various associations. Apart from being part of the 'Global System', non-nay be members of the 'Dominant System' and one or more subordinate systems. But according to the third factor, an exclusive 'Dominant System' focused to "distorts all inter-state relations except those within the bipolar bloc system-and most exist outside that framework". So, the study of subordinate systems helps to understand and "resolve a sterile debate on the merits of deductive and inductive approaches to a more rigorous discipline of international relations" (Ibid., p. 217–219).

Brecher presented the concept of 'Subordinate State System' which is more rigorous and requires the following conditions: 1) its scope is delimited, with primary stress on a geographic region, 2) there are at least three actors, 3) taken together, they are objectively recognized by other actors as constituting a distinctive community, region, or segment of the Global System, 4) the members identify themselves as such; 5) the units of power are relatively inferior to units in the Dominant System, using a sliding scale of power in both and 6) changes in the Dominant System have a greater effect on the Subordinate System than the reverse (Ibid., p. 220). The political system in Central Asia is defined as a nation-state, geographical location (diversity), foreign policy (diplomatic relations with the neighbourhoods and with another world), and cultural similarities (religion) are defined as the subordinate system. The Central Asia system is similarly endowed with an integrated communications network (the Russian language is a common communications network within countries), and a common language is an asset, though the hegemonial power. A developed air transport service assists the process not only the way, but

they also have common rail transport as well as road transport. And radio, press, and television knit the actors together in an information sense. All states in Central Asia share the goals of economic development, social progress, and a viable political order. Most have a common experience of foreign, white, rule, including a common reaction to many international issues involving the ills of communism and racialism.

THOMPSON'S ARGUMENT ON THE REGIONAL SUBSYSTEM: A DEFINED CENTRAL ASIA

Thompson (1973) mentioned Michael Banks (1969, p. 351–352) five themes that applied on the various systems perspectives to regional studies: 1) the macro approach to the identification of regions using aggregate data, 2) the neo-functional approach, 3) the social communication approach, 4) the comparison of existing integration theories with other theories of international processes, and (5) the application of broad categories of systems theory to regional studies (Banks, 1969, p. 351–352; Thompson, 1973, p. 89).

Then, he emphasised on regional subsystem that analysis: 1) it allows 'some reduction in the complexity of world politics'. Despite a more limited focus, there is a possibility of comprehensive examination that allows one to define a region with relevant variables. 2) there are analytical boundaries for the area but ultimately arbitrary. If there are regional subsystems in the world politics that differentiate 'theatres of operation'. In this situation, any national elites they especially care regional environments for larger protection and it would be primary concern. 3) The regional subsystems study provides 'an opportunity to integrate the findings of area experts and scholars of international relations'. This argument by Thompson presents an analytical opportunity to define 'empirical understanding' of world political behaviour'. And 4) Comparative analysis is an excellent opportunity to define the behaviour of 'universally' about a regional through further insight (Thompson, 1973, p. 91). According to Thompson, these four analytical rationale approaches could be applied on specific types of regions.

Based on his argument, there are the following 21 lists of Regional Subsystem Attribute, and we can treat Central Asia as a region in International Relations: 1) Proximity or primary stress in a geographic region, 2) The actors' pattern of relations or interactions exhibits a particular degree of regularity and intensity. 3) Interrelatedness-a condition wherein a change at one point in the system affects other points, 4) Internal recognition as a distinctive area. 5) External recognition as a distinctive area, 6) One or more actors, 7) At least two actors, 8) At least three actors, 9) Small powers only, 10) Units of power are relatively inferior to units in the dominant system, 11) Subordination in the sense that a change in the dominant system will have a greater effect on the subsystem than the reverse, and there is more intensive and influential penetration of the subsystem by the dominant system than the reverse. 12) Geographical-historical zone. 13) Some degree of shared ethnic, linguistic, cultural, wit! And historical bonds. 14) A relatively integrated and unified area. 15) Some evidence of integration or a claimed policy of achieving further economic, political, and social integration. 16) Functionally diffuse. 17) Explicit institutional relations or organization of the subsystem. 18) The actions and responses of the autonomous system in the system predominate over external influences. 19) A distinctive configuration of military forces, 20) A regional equilibrium of local forces, and 21) Common developmental status (Thompson, 1973, p. 93).

According to Thompson's explanation of the regional subsystem, a two-objective system is giving: 1) to construct a synthesized and standardized definition of the regional subsystem, and 2) to make available an unprocessed inventory of propositions regarding the behavior of the regional subsystem behaviour. Central Asia re-emerged again as independent actors in the global interstate system after the collapse of the Soviet Union, their varied histories and geographies offering many different possible opportunities and courses of action. Regarding international relations, it is clear that the Chinese influence on the Central Asian region has grown dramatically. China established the Shanghai Five (Summit meeting except for the Uzbek leader). This was replaced by the multilateral cooperation organization called 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization' (SCO) in 2001, which includes the five Central Asian states, China and Russia.

CONCLUSION

The political and economic interests generally unite the neighbourhood of a state when they share similar culture, norms, value and identity in an international system. But a condition is there if they aside their conflict and mutually resolve. Based on the argument, for validity of region we only need certain framework and approach then we can define a region in international relation. The states of Central Asia share a great history and first emerged as Scythians, as well as established as nomadic tribal. The region had seen the great Central Asian empire of Xiongnu later overtaken by Uyghurs. Then the region came under the Mongols later under the rules of China and Russia. The Central Asia region has always been great significant for the entire international community. The driving factors are the new stage of relationship and cooperation with culture and humanitarian. The varied geography is unique in Central Asia and covers a wide range of mountains: Tian Shan, Hindu Kush, and Pamirs as well as large Kara Kum and Kyzyl Kum deserts provides extensive value.

The geostrategic location is one of main factors in defining an area as a region in international relations, so Central Asia meets those criteria. Central Asia earned the position of region in the United Nations and after that became a special study centre in American and European universities. Due to geographical proximity, Central Asia became a significant political ground for the international actor like China, India, Russia, and the US. Attractiveness of the region makes regional interest for the great power in the context of international economic and security. Central Asia influences the foreign policy of key actors in international relations.

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