

Euro-Atlasian Security: Globalization, Networking and Hybrid Geopolitics

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Abstract

After the collapse of the Soviet Union it has been argued that classical geopolitics has been on the agenda again and that Mackinder's concepts, like World Island and Heartland will dominate geostrategic thinking. Although it is our contention that Mackinder's concepts can be used fruitfully for an analysis in the framework of classical geopolitics it will not be enough to understand today's system of international relations and security challenges. The system of international relations is heavily depending on the processes of globalization. Globalization generates networks and in those networks relevant for international relations the most important actors are (nation)-states, although it is true that the nation-states are not the only actors in the field of international relations anymore. Supranational organizations and coalitions also play a fundamental role. In this paper, it will be hypothesized that the theory of scale-free networks in the sense of Barabási offers insight into the system of the networks of states. This implies that the most highly connected node, i.e. state functions as a hub. It will be argued that network of states and hubs can affect security challenges. This will be illustrated concretely with a case study of Kazakhstan.

Key words: security, globalization, hybrid geopolitics, networking of states, hub, Kazakhstan

Avro-Atlantik-Avrasya Güvenliđi: Küreselleşme, Ağ Teorisi ve Hibrid Jeopolitika

Özet

Sovyetler Birliđi'nin dağılmasından sonra klasik jeopolitikanın tekrar gündeme geldiđi ve Mackinder'in dünya adası ve kalpgah kavramlarına dayanan yaklaşımının jeostratejik düşüncüyü şekillendirdiđi iddia edildi. Mackinder'in bu yaklaşımı her ne kadar klasik jeopolitika çerçevesinde verimli bir şekilde kullanılsa da günümüz uluslararası ilişkilerinin ve güvenlik alanındaki meydan okumaların anlaşılmasına yardımcı olamaz. Uluslararası ilişkiler sistemi küreselleşme sürecine sıkı sıkıya bađlıdır. Küreselleşme içinde halen temel aktörlerin ulus devletler olduđu ağlar meydana getirmektedir. Ancak uluslararası ilişkilerde ulus devletlerin tek aktör olduklarını söylemek te pek doğru olmaz. Uluslaraüstü kuruluşlar ve koalisyonlar bu bağlamda önemli rol oynarlar. Bu çalışmanın hipotezi Barabási'nin ortaya attıđı hiyerarşik ve dayanıklı ağ teorisinin (scale-free network) devletlerarası ağ sisteminin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunduđu yolundadır. Bu bağlamda devletlerin meydana getirdiđi ağ güvenlik alanındaki meydan okumaları etkilemektedir. Bu hipotez Kazakistan örnek olayı üzerinde gerekelelendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: güvenlik, küreselleşme, melez jeopolitika, devletlerin oluşturduđu ağlar, merkez, Kazakistan

After the collapse of the Soviet Union it has been argued that classical geopolitics in the sense of Mackinder (1919) will be on the agenda of international politics and that a New Great Game will be played in the twenty-first century as a continuation of the Great Game of the 19th century, the struggle between Great Britain and the Russian Empire over influence in Central Asia and a similar Great Game of the 20th century, the clash between

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the US and the Soviet Union for global power.¹ The latter is also known in the literature as the Cold War. It is our contention that the concepts of the earlier Great Games, like that of Mackinder can be used insightfully to understand present-day's drives for global power, hegemony, dominance and influence by today's great powers, including the US, Russia and China with their allies and spheres of influence. The present global power relations however cannot be analyzed in the framework of classical geopolitics.

Though geographical entities relevant for geopolitics that have been defined in the work of Mackinder, like World Island, Heartland, and so on can be useful for getting more insight into nowadays power relations and agendas for global dominance. Let us consider Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security in this perspective. Firstly, it must be noted that the territory of Euro-Atlanticism is much strictly defined than the one for Eurasia. The first one is actually covering the European Union (EU) and North-America²; Eurasia can be understood as the World Island in Mackinder's sense but commentators who use the term actually define it as covering Russia and Central Asia.³ Central Asia consists in the post-Soviet era of five neighbouring states, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.⁴

Note that the US is connected to the World Island, although not a geographical part of it; and China although on the eastern edge of the World Island is excluded from the concepts of Euro-Atlanticism and Euro-Asianism. It could only be included if Euro-Atlanticism and/or Eurasianism will be redefined as expanding concepts including China as well; for example as the Euro-Atlanticizing of Eurasia.⁵ It has been argued that the expansion of NATO to Eurasia is actually an attempt of Euro-Atlanticizing Eurasia. However, with the refusal of Georgia's joining in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) at its Bucharest summit in 2008 this process has come to a standstill. In this paper, the concept that includes China into the political processes connected to the World Island will be referred to as 'Euro-Atlasia'. Euro-Atlasian security henceforth means to prevent armed conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian controlled territories including China and to canalize the struggle for global hegemony, dominance and influence between the great powers in these areas into the direction of a peaceful cooperation and co-existence such that the sovereignty of individual states is respected.

In the literature the term 'security' covers a number of different dangers and threats, like classical war between two or more states and also new security threats like cyber attacks, terrorism, and so on.⁶ However, in this paper the architecture of a system of security that affects state actors and supranational organizations of states only will be discussed.

¹ Brian W. Blouet, *Geopolitics and Globalization in the Twentieth Century*, Second revised and expanded edition (Reaktion Books: London, 2010), pp. 133-159.

² Andrew Cottey, *Security in Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2007), p. 11. See also: Christopher Hill and Michael Smith, *International Relations and the European Union* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2011), pp. 404-435.

³ Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Washington, 2002), p. 2.

⁴ Ertan Efeğil, *Geopolitics of Central Asia in the Post-Cold War Era. A Systematic Analysis* (Sota: Haarlem, 2002), pp. 83-97.

⁵ Comparable to the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe. See Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cornell University Press: Cornell, 2005), pp. 1-29.

⁶ Shannon D. Beebe and Mary Kaldor, *The Ultimate Weapon is No Weapon. Human Security and the Rules of War and Peace* (Public Affairs: New York, 2010), pp. 107-139. See also: Ozolina, Zaneta (ed.), *Rethinking Security* (Zinatne: Riga, 2010), pp. 9-39.

After the collapse of communism it was expected that the former communist world would embrace Western liberalism yielding an eternal peaceful co-existence between the West and especially the Eastern European world. This idea was based on the theoretical premise that states sharing the same liberal values will not go to war with each other. Whatever the precise definition of liberalism is it is extremely unlikely that the West will be able to accommodate Eurasia and beyond, as has become clear by the stand still of NATO's further expansion to the East and at the same time it is also extremely unlikely that Eurasian states will absorb the West. The border between Belorussia, Ukraine and Moldova on the one side and the EU on the other side seems to get rigid. This means that in the decades to come there will be at least three antagonizing power blocks in Euro-Atlasia, i.e. the US, Russia and China. At the moment it is unclear whether these states will be nuclei of larger power blocks, how far their territory of dominance will stretch and where the precise borders between these blocks will be. In any case, at present there is a lot of space to maneuver for smaller states between the three great powers and that is precisely the space that will be employed to build a security architecture for Euro-Atlasia. Hereby I start from the realistic approach that the great powers can be restricted in their political maneuvering but cannot really be contained.⁷ The United States attacked former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq; Russia waged war against Georgia and occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia and China occupied Tibet. In none of these cases the international community, nor any judicial system or institute was able to sanction the illegal acts.

The collapse of the Soviet-Union has left us with one real global power, the US. However, the present-day global international relations are much more complicated than during the Great Game or the Cold War. Not only are more than two players involved in the strive for power but due to linking up of transnational relations in the era of globalization international relations are more complicated than in earlier ages. So I will first discuss the concept of globalization and those aspects of globalizations that are relevant in the context of international relations. At the core of 'globalization' is a set of social processes transforming human life into tight global political, social, economic, and cultural interconnections, interdependencies and flows.⁸ These interconnections, interdependencies and flows result into mixing, intertwining, intermingling of cultural and social forms, styles and structures.⁹

It will be argued that one of the most important properties of political globalization relevant for the theory of international relations is 'connectivity'. Manfred Steger defines political globalization referring to the intensification and expansion of political interrelations across the globe.¹⁰ Global connectivity can be reached along the axes of politics, economy, trade, culture, religion in which state actors can build networks of states. The fact that connectivity is executed along different axes makes that state actors will not be able to circumvent the joining of the system of networking. I will adopt the thesis that networks with state actors can be interpreted as scale-free networks in the sense of Barabási (2003). Although this thesis will have to be explored further and will have to be proved in a formal sense, it is my contention that it will offer non-trivial insight for today's global international relations. In this theory of networks, the most highly connected node is

⁷ Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *Principles of International Relations* (Pearson: New York, 2009), pp. 24-28.

⁸ Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson, *Geschichte der Globalisierung. Dimensionen, Prozesse, Epochen* (Verlag C.H. Beck: München, 2006), p. 7.

⁹ Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009), p. 71.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.16.

a hub. This means that the hub can affect the rest of the network. This thesis has a number of interesting consequences for international relations and the role state actors can play in such networks.

In our case study I will look more closely at the position of Kazakhstan in Central Asia. Classical geopolitics presupposes the control of a territory that is a key asset in the struggle for world power by enemies that exclude or contain each other. In geopolitics that is depending on globalization processes, the territory—in this case the Central Asian or Transcaspian space—is not in itself the target of struggle for world power but it is to be incorporated in a US dominated system of world hegemony. Rivalries in the Central Asian and Transcaspian space like Russia and China are integrated in networks in order to “contain” them. Following Mazen Labban, such geopolitics will be referred to as ‘hybrid’ because rival powers are not contained by exclusion and confrontation but by integration.¹¹ This leads to complex, and sometimes quickly changing alliances that also affect the pattern of the foreign policy of states in the Central Asian or Transcaspian spaces itself and the great powers operating on these structures resulting in a proliferation of hybrid structures. This interpretation of geopolitics is clearly in line with globalization. In the next section, the focus will be on the term ‘globalization’.

Globalization

Let us first discuss the definition of globalization. Hereby I will heavily rely on the work of Manfred Steger, a scholar in global studies. Steger discusses five definitions of globalization and formulates on the basis of their interpretations his own definition which compromises aspects of the definitions presented in the literature.¹²

The definitions that are commented upon by Steger have been formulated by scholars operating in different academic disciplines, including economy, literature, political science, sociology, and international relations. It is to be expected that Giddens, Jamesson, Held, Robertson and Mittelman stress different qualities and characteristics of globalization in their definitions respectively:

1. ‘Globalization can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.’ (Anthony Giddens, Former Director of the London School of Economics)

2. ‘The concept of globalization reflects the sense of an immense enlargement of world communication, as well as of the horizon of a world market, both of which seem far more tangible and immediate than in earlier stages of modernity.’ (Frederic Jamesson, Professor of Literature, Duke University)

3. ‘Globalization may be thought of as a process (or a set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions - assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact—generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power.’ (David Held, Professor of Political Science, London School of Economics)

4. ‘Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole.’ (Roland Robertson, Professor of Sociology, University of Aberdeen, Scotland)

¹¹ Mazen Labban, “The Struggle for the Heartland: Hybrid Geopolitics in the Transcaspian”, *Geopolitics*, 14:1-25, 2009.

¹² Steger, op. cit., p. 13.

5. ‘Globalization compresses the time and space aspects of social relations.’ (James Mittelman, Professor of International Relations, American University, Washington)

I agree with Steger in distinguishing four additional qualities at the core of the phenomena that are expressed in these definitions.¹³ First, globalization involves the creation of new, and the multiplication of existing, social networks and activities that cut across traditional political, economic, cultural, and geographical boundaries. The second quality of globalization is reflected in the expansion and the stretching of social relations, activities, and interdependencies. This process of social stretching also applies to the EU, NATO, and other networks of states.¹⁴ Third, globalization involves the intensification and acceleration of social exchanges and activities. Fourth, globalization processes do not occur merely on an objective, material level but also involve the subjective plane of human consciousness. On the basis of these five definitions Steger proposes his own definition of globalization:¹⁵

6. ‘Globalization refers to the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space.’ (Manfred Steger, Professor of Global Studies, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). I will take Steger’s intersecting definition as a point of departure in this paper.

Due to the fact globalization refers to processes, activities, networks, phenomena, and so on that go across aspects of world-time and world-space transnational phenomena are included into globalization phenomena. Transnational processes are in fact a subset of globalization phenomena. Steve Vertovec who studied transnationalism in detail presents the following definition: ‘Transnationalism or sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states.’¹⁶ Crossing state borders should not be taken to narrow referring to neighbouring states but Vertovec points out that ‘sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders—business, non-governmental organizations, and individuals sharing the same interests we can differentiate these as transnational.’¹⁷ So also in the case of transnational phenomena a virtual connection can be made. Hence from this it follows that transnationalism covers a subset of globalization and in the rest of this paper ‘transnational’ and ‘global’ can be used interchangeably.¹⁸

In the preceding section the core qualities of globalization and a definition have been discussed. Associated with globalization phenomena is the notion of ‘connectivity’ as could be observed in all the approaches to globalization where ‘interconnections’ in space play a crucial role. In the following section, I will argue that connectivity phenomena that appear in the context of globalization are highly relevant for the theory of international relations and geopolitics.

¹³ Ibid., p. 14-15.

¹⁴ See Zyrawski, Przemyslaw, “Why Kiviv and Tbilisi Matter. The Reasons for Poland’s Support of NATO Enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia”, Bram Boxhoorn and David den Dunnen (eds.), *NATO’s New Strategic Concept. Moving beyond the Status Quo?* Netherlands Atlantic Association, 110-119, The Hague 2009 for arguments supporting the eastwards expansion of NATO.

¹⁵ Steger, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁶ Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (Routledge: New York, 2010), p.2.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁸ Robert O. Koehane and Joseph S. Nye Jr. (eds.), *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1973), p.1.

Networks of States

In the era of globalization the intensification and expansion of political interrelations across the globe can be observed.¹⁹ The late 1960s has been marked by a radical ‘deterritorialization’ of politics, rule, and governance. Multilateral organization have replaced nation-states as the basic unit of governance. A pregnant example of a network of states is the European Union. The EU has also created a supranational level, i.e. the institutions in Brussels.²⁰

Networks of states can have several functions however. Here networks will be distinguished that share the same values and networks that are resource and interest driven. Networks that share the same values are politically more coherent than resource or interest driven networks. The EU is a value-oriented network of states requiring its members to share the same basic values. Interest driven networks are established with reference to one single issue only. This can be for example a political, economic, military or energy dominated topic. NATO is an organization that is involved with defense issues only.

States can take two positions on their participation in a network of states. A state can remain outside a network. In this case, states will isolate themselves from the international circulation of goods, resources and information that is inherent to globalization. North Korea and Iran are examples of this strategy. These states are a security risk for states not joining a network are unpredictable. There is not much information available on these states. This implies that their military or economic plans are vague or unknown.

In the era of globalization states however cannot really remain outside the networks for several reasons. Networks make connectivity possible that is important for commercial trade and getting resources.²¹ A network can make a physical connection as in the case of the EU where the states in the network are also territorially connected to each other or the states in the network can be virtually connected to each other. NATO is an example of a military network where not all the member-states of the network are connected territorially.²²

Furthermore, network of states have a contender effect. Once you are in a network you can optimally profit of the advantages of the network, namely get access to the values or interests that drive the network but networks also restrict power. Great powers as it has been spelled out above are not really contained by whatever network but they are restricted in maneuvering in a network and the other members of the network can influence, lobby to change their attitude, plans, intentions, foreign policies, and so on. Even great powers, like the US could not afford to stay outside of the networks the US traditionally used to be a part of. After the American ‘*Einzelgang*’ under the Bush Jr. administration especially in the case of the intervention in Iraq that was only supported militarily by its junior partners Great-Britain and Poland and with the aftermath of the Afghanistan war with illegal detention camps in Cuba and Eastern Europe for the rebels of the Taliban it turned out that even the US could not remain for long out of the network of states. The Obama administration had to use all charms to win back especially its European networks.

¹⁹ Steger, op. cit. p. 16.

²⁰ Karen Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, 2nd edition (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2010), pp. 3-23.

²¹ Thomas P.M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map. Blueprint for Action. A Future Worth Creating* (Penguin Group: New York, 2005), p. 193.

²² Magriet Drent, Arjan van der Assem and Jaap de Wilde (eds.), *NATO's Retirement? Essays in Honour of Peter Volton* (The Centre of European Security Studies: Groningen, 2011), pp. 61-75.

However, it is quite unlikely that the European allies of the US will support another intervention of the US in Iran.

France is another good example of a state operating for a long time outside of a network, in this case the military alliance of NATO. Under the French president De Gaulle France opposed a further Americanization of Western Europe and decided in the 1960s to withdraw from the military command of NATO, although France would remain a member of the political command. Nicolas Sarkozy announced in 2009 that France would again join the military arm of NATO. Only shortly after the rejoining of France in NATO in 2011 the country made optimal use of the NATO network, not only to liberate Arabs under dictatorship of North African rulers in the Mediterranean region which is considered a region that has a special interest of France. Not less important was however the fact that French president Sarkozy could win a “small victory” over Tunisia and especially Libya in order to support his campaign for the re-election of the French presidency. Thanks to the military network of NATO the French president could play a role in the international political arena.

These examples show that it is in fact disadvantageous in the era of globalization to stay out of networks of states. Rather it is advantageous to be active in the networking of states, as will be argued for in the case study on Kazakhstan below. The active networking of states, that is states trying to become members of transnational networks, either on the basis of common values or on the basis of common interests or states establishing new networks demonstrate that classical geopolitics is not relevant anymore. Two states can be simultaneously members of different networks with opposing interests or values. This state of affairs is analyzed by Mazen Labban in a highly interesting article.

According to Labban, the concept of hybrid geopolitics overrules the classical geopolitical theory of Mackinder’s Heartland, including the Transcaspian space.²³ Here Transcaspian space is defined as Central Asia and the Caucasus. According to Labban, it is not the formation of enemy alliances competing for the definite control over the Transcaspian territory that is the key asset in the struggle for world power but rather it is global hegemony that is at stake in this struggle. In order to analyze the subtle formation and the quickly changing formation of alliances involved, he set up a framework that he refers to as ‘hybrid geopolitics’.

Labban sets up the following argumentation in order to make his point of hybrid geopolitics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the struggle for the Heartland of which the Transcaspian space is part started afresh. The US direct expansion in Central Asia in combination with expanding US influence in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe looked like a continuation of the Great Game, as was noted above. However, Labban argues that the Heartland is not the ultimate object of competition but rather global hegemony that is the driving force for the struggle of influence in the Transcaspian space. This thesis is supported by the fact that energy reserves, i.e. the hydrocarbon riches of the Caspian themselves are not sufficient reason to explain contemporary geopolitical rivalry in Eurasia. Most of Caspian oil is concentrated in Kazakhstan, whose reserves at the end of 2006 amounted to 40 billion bbl approximately, compared to Russia’s 80 billion bbl. The significance of Kazakhstan is, however not in the size of its reserves but in the difference between its share of world reserves (3.3 percent) and share of world production (1.7 percent), compared to Russia’s 6.6 percent and 12.3 percent, respectively. These figures are compared to the total share of oil reserves in a global perspective rather marginal. Hence, it is not the control of oil reserves what is at stake but there is a much greater prize to win,

²³ Labban, op. cit., pp. 1-25.

i.e. the integration of the economies of the former Soviet region, including the one of Russia itself into world economies.

In the struggle for influence in the Transcaspian space Russia is not treated as a classical enemy that should be contained a priori as during the Cold War or during the confrontational US foreign policy under the Bush Jr. administration but rather there is an effort of the West in order to integrate Russia into Western structures, although the opposite processes of containment accompany this type of integration. Instead of 'containment via confrontation' a more subtle policy of containment is being applied towards Russia and other states in the Transcaspian space, as Labban observes:

Instead, it is a space structured by the fusion of sets of seemingly opposite processes - processes of exclusion or containment, through economic, militarily, ideological expansion overlaid by processes of integration through the same processes of expansion. This hybrid geopolitical space is riddled with tensions and contradictions, some of which are resolved through shifts from one process to another²⁴.

In sum, the Transcaspian space is relevant for a further expansion of US led globalization.²⁵ In order to push this further advancement the US has employed ideological, political, and economic means and, if necessary, means favoring direct territorial and military control to reach this goal. Foremost the US has tried to integrate the former Soviet republics, including Russia, into Western structures economically and militarily. In the Central Asian space the US has attempted to contain influence by the establishment of military bases and arms sales in and with the Central Asian states. Indeed, as the case of NATO shows, the integration of Russia in "the West" premises its containment. Russia has been being accepted as a consultative partner of NATO without being an actual member of the Western alliance. The establishment of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002 was partly intended to relieve the West from anxieties about potential Russian expansion and the restoration of "Greater Russia" as an alternative to the West. Hence, integration and containment of Russia is reflected in its truncated participation in NATO. In September 2001, the "War on Terror" brought Russia full circle to align itself (again) with the US, as a partner in a US-centered hegemonic alliance. Russia at its turn was also interested in a "pragmatic alliance" with the US in the common "War on Terror". The US-Russian rivalry in Transcaspian and Eastern Europe did however not subside with the NATO and the "War on Terror" alliances but seems to have intensified afterwards. It has worried the West that Russia is militarily much stronger than other parts of the former Soviet Union; the "great pipeline race" in which Russia controls oil and gas production for Europe and the transportation infrastructure to Europe is also a point of concern for the West; the conflict on the "North-South" axis, i.e. the Caucasus as a major source of insecurity and rivalry, where Georgia is on the Western side, Armenia clearly on the side of Russia and Azerbaijan is balancing between the great powers US, Russia, Iran and Turkey. This North-South axis has replaced the West-East confrontation of the Cold War. Russia at its turn perceives the eastward expansion of NATO as a threat for its security. In conclusion, Russia and the US occupy a prominent place in each other's strategies in the Transcaspian—each is the other's ultimate object in what Labban has framed as hybrid geopolitics.

In sum, the hybrid alliances between Russia and the US have triggered involvement of Russia in the Transcaspian region in order to counter-balance US influence and forged

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

²⁵ We do not agree with the claim put forward by Neil Smith who argues that globalization is in its end phase. Compare: Smith, Neil, *The Endgame of Globalization* (Routledge: New York, 2005).

strategic and military alliances in Asia to counter US hegemony. The alliances with other great powers being active in the Transcaspian space has also led to new hybrid geopolitical alliances. Russia and China have elaborated on a strategic partnership to counterbalance US influence in Central Asia, the so-called Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The Transcaspian states themselves have cultivated closer ties with the US and NATO in order to develop a balancing of their relations between US and Russia. The complicated patterns in case of hybrid geopolitics clearly demonstrate the quickly changing and opposing forces in the process of networking of states.

One effect of the networking of states, even though in hybrid geopolitical terms is that the Euro-Asian space has become more secure. State actors are involved in all sorts of networks, sometimes in concurring ones or “integrating because of containing networks”. A welcome concomitant of this is the reduction of confrontations in the classical geopolitical sense.

There is another effect of networking of states that will be discussed in the next section when the foreign policy of Kazakhstan will be treated in more detail. The theory will be adopted that international relations, i.e. networks of states in the era of globalization can be interpreted as a scale-free network in the sense of Barabási (2003). Networks of states are held together by the most highly connected node (state), i.e. the hub. Let us elaborate on the scale-free network and hub theory in the context of international relations in the next section.

Kazakhstan in a system of transnational networks of states

Kazakhstan is geographically one of the central countries of Euro-Asia and is actually neighbouring to two of the three great powers in the New Great Game. Russia in the West and North and China in the East. But in the era of globalization being in the geographically centre is not enough to be the pivot of a system of network of states. Above we have argued that states can maneuver virtually into the centre of a network of states. Actually Kazakhstan has been trying to take up both roles since declaring independence on December 16, 1991. It has used its geographical position to move into the centre of an energy network of states and it has maneuvered to be in a virtual centre of a system of networks of states.

Kazakhstan has allowed Russia’s Gazprom energy company to control its system of energy pipelines to the West; it has started to pump oil via a pipeline to China and Kazakhstan supports the plans to transport gas and oil from the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan circumventing the pipeline routes over Russian territories. In fact, Kazakhstan has tried to “share” its energy resources with the great powers seeking influence in the Central Asian and Transcaspian areas.

Apart from using its geographical center position as an energy distributor Kazakhstan has been active in networking and attempting to become one of the virtual centers of a system of network of states. The Kazakh strategy of foreign policy, which is clearly to be defined as a soft power strategy developed by the Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev has been to become a member of networks of states as many as possible. This policy has also been labeled as a multivector foreign policy and Kazakhstan geopolitical maneuvering offers a good example of hybrid geopolitics discussed above. Interestingly, Kazakhstan has become a member of opposing defense networks. Kazakhstan is an active member of ‘NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program’ but at the same time it is also a founding-member of the SCO allying itself with Russia and China. The establishment of SCO has been a reaction to NATO’s attempt of eastward expansion. Even though the country is not threatened militarily Kazakhstan remains vulnerable. The biggest problem is

the low demographic record of the country compared to Russia and China. Kazakhstan only counts 16 million inhabitants compared to Russia's 140 million and demographic giant China's 1.4 billion population.

So far Kazakhstan has reacted to the New Great Game with intensifying networking. It has established the Eurasian Custom Union in cooperation with Russia and Belorussia. It has opened a line to Turkey by taking the initiative to establish the Turkic Council, including four of the Turkic states (Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan) in order to found a Turkic alliance for the first time in history. Kazakhstan also became a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) that counts 56 members especially Arab countries.

Kazakhstan has also taken the initiative to be more closely linked to the EU. It launched a program called 'Path to Europe' to establish tighter ties with the EU. Kazakhstan is negotiating at present with the EU on a separate bilateral treaty, although it would have been better for Kazakhstan, if the country becomes a member of the Union's Eastern Partnership. Geographically Kazakhstan is located in close proximity of the Eastern Partnership that includes six states of the former Soviet Union, namely Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Kazakhstan is only separated from Azerbaijan by the Caspian Sea.

To join the Eastern Partnership would not only have been better for Kazakhstan but also for Euro-Atlasian security. The more connectivity in the Euro-Atlasian space the more secure the continent will be. Kazakhstan has not only become a member of a number of network of states and has even initiated the establishment of new network of states and thereby contributing to the increase of security in the Euro-Atlasian space it also has maneuvered into the virtual position of a hub. It has to be explored in more details how many connections there are and what their weight is in the Euro-Atlasian space but it is reasonable to suppose that Kazakhstan will indeed be one of the countries that is occupying a hub position. This implies that it has the possibility to influence a number of other nodes, i.e. states in the system of networks it is member of.

Actually Kazakhstan has been delivering the message of peaceful co-existence in the Euro-Atlasian space. It has contributed to security in the Euro-Atlasian space by preventing the spread of ethnic clashes to its territory. Although the American specialist on geostrategy, Zbigniew Brzezinski expected in 1997 when he wrote in his book entitled *The Grand Chessboard* Kazakhstan to be one of the countries that could fall apart because of ethnic conflicts and clashes. According to him, Kazakhstan is a part of the 'Eurasian Balkans'.²⁶ Although in some countries of the region ethnic conflicts indeed took place, like in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan was not affected by ethnic violence. It is important to note that ethnic violence is quite often an outcome of the interference of kin-states. So it is clear that Kazakhstan's networking in the Central Asia and Transcaspian spaces has neutralized foreign states taking advantage of ethnic clashes in Kazakhstan.

Recently the US president Barack Obama praised Kazakhstan for dismantling its nuclear arsenal originating from the Soviet period. Obama called Kazakhstan the "world leader in nuclear security". As a hub in a system of network of states Kazakhstan will be able to influence directly nuclear security in the Euro-Atlasian space.

²⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (Basic Books: New York, 2005), pp. 123-135.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have argued that globalization is relevant for the field of international relations in terms of the establishment of transnational networks of states. The transnational networks of states yield a more complicated system of international relations and geopolitics than in the 19th and 20th centuries. This interpretation of geopolitics is called 'hybrid geopolitics'. Some states can be simultaneously members of opposing networks of states. The establishment of more networks in the Euro-Atlasian space which equals the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian spaces and China makes this region more secure. Even smaller states can contribute to the security of the Euro-Atlasian space by becoming a member of a network of states or by initiating the establishment of new networks of states, although it must be admitted that it will be almost impossible to contain today's great powers. It has been argued that Kazakhstan has been active in networking as a state actor contributing to the security of the Euro-Atlasian space. In fact, by being an intersecting point if we interpret the system of the network of states as a scale-free network in the sense of Barabási (2003) Kazakhstan is actually opting for a position of a hub. By being a hub in a system of network of states Kazakhstan has the possibility to influence other states by distributing a soft power concept like 'peaceful co-existence' to the other states of the networks. This is what this country has been attempting to do since its independence in 1991. In any case, it has prevented the outburst of ethnic conflicts on its territory and Kazakhstan has dismantled its nuclear arsenal from the Soviet period. In this paper, only the first step has been set to inventarise the possibility to apply the scale-free network theory to international relations. It is my contention that the insight offered by this theory is relevant for international relations, hybrid geopolitics and security in the Euro-Atlasian space.

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