



Vito S. Acosta

Crossroads Central Asia

**CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA:
WHO MAKES IT AND WHAT MATTERS?**

CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA: WHO MAKES IT AND WHAT MATTERS?

Vito S. Acosta

This article contextualizes Chinese policy in Central Asia through a concise exploration of the “who, how, and why” of the engagement of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the region. First, it provides an overview of key actors and structures in the PRC governance system and their influences on policy-making. It then examines the centralization of foreign policy authority and heightened securitization under Xi Jinping. This focus on “comprehensive national security” is particularly acute in Central Asia, as underscored by a review of the trajectory of PRC relations in the region, where it has exported its vigilance against the specters of terrorism, extremism, and separatism in its overall mission for a stable western frontier.

OVERVIEW OF PRC FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING STRUCTURES

In the formal political system of the PRC, while the power of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is paramount and omnipresent, decisions are made along dual tracks: the Party and the government systems. The State Council, led by the Premier, is the “cabinet” of the government, responsible for the various ministries, commissions, and administrative organizations of lower rank within the government system. Parallel and above the government system are the coordination bodies of the CPC. The CPC is led by the General Secretary, Xi Jinping, in whom power and authority have become increasingly concentrated, particularly in the realm of foreign affairs. The Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) endorses major decisions, including those pertaining to foreign and security policy, and provides strategic guidance for external affairs. These policies, however, are prepared elsewhere, in commissions, leading small groups, ministries, and lower levels of government.

Vito S. Acosta is a non-resident research fellow at Crossroads Central Asia.

The hierarchy of authority in the PRC is outlined in a system of ranks. The highest Party ranks are higher than the highest governmental ranks, and nearly all individuals charged with policy are first and foremost members of the CPC. The authority of an order is determined by the rank of the individual or institution which issued it. Following the General Secretary of the CPC, members of the PSC outrank general members of the Politburo; within governmental ranks, following the Premier, vice-premiers and directors of commissions outrank state councilors. When Xi Jinping travels abroad, PSC members who act as his advisors rank higher and are treated according to protocol with more seniority than the top foreign affairs official, the Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission, who, in turn, ranks higher than the Minister of Foreign Affairs.[3] As of January 2024, Wang Yi holds both of the latter offices since the departure of Qin Gang from the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. The officials with the greatest direct authority for national-level foreign policy are thus:

1. Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC
2. Li Qiang, Premier of the State Council, and other PSC members who act as advisors to Xi Jinping, such as Cai Qi (whose role as Director of the Central Committee General Office is influential in policy-making), Ding Xuexiang, and Wang Huning.
3. Wang Yi, Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission and Minister of Foreign Affairs

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is a wing of the Party and answers to the Central Military Commission (CMC), headed by the CPC General Secretary, Xi Jinping.[2] The People's Armed Police (PAP), which has taken the primary role in security and counterterrorism efforts in Central Asia, is subordinated directly to the CMC and the Central Committee. The CMC serves as an advisory body on key military-related foreign policy subjects. Due to the departmental compartmentalization of the PLA, however, "no authority within the PLA has the authority and responsibility to routinely demand and receive notice of PLA activities that might impact China's foreign policy,"[3] and the PLA often has neglected to notify other ministries when its activities may affect foreign relations.

Diplomacy is conducted primarily through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Within senior decision-making bodies, however, foreign affairs professionals from the MFA appear to be principally used to provide information and manage policy implementation after a decision.[4] Chinese diplomats are known to be "out-of-the-loop" in policy formation, serving instead primarily to advocate and implement existing policy and advise on their areas of expertise. The MFA is "often not informed by other

agencies about incidents or decisions pertaining to China's international relations despite the fact that the MFA is the agency tasked with responding to queries by foreign diplomats and the international media,"[5] and this lack of communication is especially prevalent with regard to the PLA.

The Ministry of Commerce (MOCOM) influences geoeconomics policy through the Ministry of Commerce Foreign Economic Offices present in Chinese embassies and missions.[6] It is also at the forefront of trade disputes. The MFA and MOCOM have been the source of bureaucratic rivalry, with the MOCOM generally preferring to promote business on behalf of Chinese SOEs, whereas the MFA generally emphasizes strengthening bilateral ties or Chinese influence in multilateral organizations.[7] In 2018, the MOFCOM's Department of Foreign Aid, responsible for aligning aid with strategic objectives, was turned into a new agency, the China International Development Cooperation Administration (CIDCA).

The fact that the BRI is coordinated as part of economic policy, not foreign policy, is significant and offers a clue pointing to its origins in domestic economic stimulus.

The Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) is overseen by a BRI leading group housed under the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), which is responsible for the nation's general economic development. The fact that the BRI is coordinated as part of economic policy, not foreign policy, is significant and offers a clue pointing to its origins in domestic economic stimulus. The persistent attention drawn to BRI and the "New Silk Road" rhetoric has not been matched with a centralized allocation scheme to create projects for a Chinese grand strategy. If it were, one would expect that the framework would be run through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Commerce, as well as the CFAC, but this is not the case.

The role of the BRI leading group and the NDRC, moreover, is not to initiate strategic moves but, rather, mostly to approve and oversee projects submitted for consideration and promote them as part of the larger BRI framework. Consequently, the proposals for BRI projects which are submitted to the NDRC have already been formulated by various actors – SOEs, provincial and municipal government officials, BRI host country officials, and policy banks – who craft them to fit their own goals, a bottom-up answer to a top-down call for action.

At the provincial level, the Party Secretary is the most senior official and the top representative to conduct relationships abroad. In March 2023, the Xinjiang Party Secretary, Ma Xingrui, traveled to Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, where, in a meeting with Kazakh President Tokayev, he emphasized that 40% of Chinese-Kazakh trade is through Xinjiang and stressed Xinjiang's responsibility for China's ties to the west: "In general, China's cooperation with Kazakhstan is carried out through Xinjiang." [8]

CENTRALIZATION & SECURITIZATION

Since ministries hold the same bureaucratic rank, they cannot issue orders to each other and consequently compete for favor of higher-ranking bodies or individuals; in foreign affairs, this often implies competing for the favor of Xi Jinping. The PRC system utilizes a unique structure for coordination across agencies on specific tasks or areas of policy: "leading small groups", or LSGs, (lingdao xiaozu), whose decisions supersede those of individual departments, bring together individuals from throughout the Party and government governing structures and often also experts from outside institutes. Each LSG, as with commissions, is supported by an office (bangongshi), tasked with preparing dossiers, filtering policy proposals, planning meetings, and supervising the implementation of decisions. The office of an LSG or commission is thus highly influential in the policy-making process.

Xi Jinping has initiated several reforms in the decision-making processes, which have had the combined effect of centralizing command in himself, increasing the Party's power over the state apparatus, and involving more people and institutions in the consultative stages of policy-making. In 2013, a new National Security Commission (NSC), was created, charged with coordination of all matters broadly pertaining to national security and headed by Xi Jinping.

In 2018, another stage of reforms included the promotion of the LSG for Foreign Affairs to the rank of a commission, renamed the Central Foreign Affairs Commission (CFAC). Also headed by Xi Jinping, the CFAC is the paramount institution on matters of foreign affairs.[9] The power to filter proposals before they are passed on to the top decision-makers is now held by the offices of the CFAC and NSC, a function previously performed by the MFA.[10] Therefore, the principal consultative loci for foreign affairs are the respective offices of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission and National Security Commission, both of which report directly to Xi Jinping, though it is unclear how frequently these bodies formally meet.

The CFAC, NSC, and relevant departments receive proposals and reports from both governmental and semi-governmental bodies. These include the MFA's Office of Policy Studies and its subordinate think tanks, the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) and the China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU), the China Institutes for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) under the Ministry of State Security (MSS), and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) directly affiliated with the State Council. Government bodies can also commission studies on subjects of interest.

Links to academia are strong, and both the CIIS and CASS have sponsored conferences on Central Asia. Within CASS, the Institute of Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian Studies submits reports on the region. Recent scholarship on the field of Central Asian studies in China note that the field remains strongly influenced by its roots in Soviet studies, with most scholars writing on Central Asia either specialists on the former USSR or specialists in disciplines such as economics. Furthermore, work on international relations in Central Asia is generally focused on the role of the “great powers”[11] and narratives such as “color revolutions,” while more region-focused scholarship often privileges “areas of potential cooperation respective Central Asian countries can offer to China, without a realistic consideration of the choices open to each Central Asian country as independent agents.”[12] In this context, as an “individualistic understanding of each Central Asian country”[13] has been found wanting, deficiency in local knowledge has led to misjudgment regarding local politics and backlash to Chinese activities in the region.

Recent scholarship on the field of Central Asian studies in China note that the field remains strongly influenced by its roots in Soviet studies, with most scholars writing on Central Asia either specialists on the former USSR or specialists in disciplines such as economics.

The institutional reforms under Xi Jinping can be understood not only as a reaction to bureaucratic fragmentation and factionalism, but also “as the result of China’s awareness of both the growing security risks it is facing and the need to better address the new international tasks and responsibilities it needs to fulfil as a great power.”[14] As foreign policy is an extension of domestic concerns, the NSC naturally overlaps with the CFAC in many areas of foreign policy. Since the NSC involves a greater number of high-ranking officials and owes its creation to Xi Jinping himself, however, it likely takes precedence.[15] The all-encompassing and binary nature of “national security” – given *carte blanche* by Xi’s concept of “comprehensive national security” (*zongti guojia anquan*)[16] – means, therefore, that there will continue to be a drive towards the

the “securitization of everything”, including foreign policy. Increased securitization is especially prevalent in the region already most institutionally tied to national security interests: Central Asia.

This heightened attention to securitization and the intertwinement of domestic and foreign security management is institutionally apparent by the appointment of Chen Wenqing, formerly head of the Ministry of State Security (MSS; the PRC’s main intelligence agency), to lead the Central Political & Legal Affairs Commission (CPLC). The CPLC, moreover, also plays a major role in managing Central Asian affairs through the Ministry of Public Security (MPS).

CENTRAL ASIA VIEWED FROM BEIJING

The securitization of Central Asia is a natural consequence of a logic that links security and development to the legitimacy of the Party. It is a fundamental axiom that Chinese foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy and “stability” and “security” in the context of the PRC refer to the unchallenged “leading role” of the Party, tasked with maintaining order as it guides society along the path of progress and development. Economic growth and domestic peace thus legitimate the CPC’s claim to power, and without either of these, its position is threatened.

The lack of development of Xinjiang compared to the wealthier Eastern provinces and its low level of integration with state and economic structures, therefore, constituted a security risk that was to be rectified with the “double-opening strategy” to open Xinjiang eastwards, to the rest of the country, and westwards, to its natural and historical economic partners in Central Asia. As Abdulahat Abdurixit, Chairman of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region from 1993-2003, explained, “on the one hand, we must use economic development to maintain political stability, and on the other hand, we must use political stability to guarantee economic development.”[17] Finding the Central Asian heartland itself both underdeveloped and a source of instability that could potentially spread into Xinjiang, PRC leadership resolved to prioritize, simultaneously, this same security-development nexus in Central Asia, for the existential prerogative of its domestic securitization efforts in Xinjiang.

Central Asia’s strategic significance for the diversification of China’s trade routes and energy corridors is also fundamentally rooted in security concerns, as over-reliance on sea lanes to its Eastern provinces could be a liability in case of action by the U.S. Navy or other maritime powers to block shipments through chokepoints, known as the “Malacca dilemma.”

Central Asian policy has been inextricably tied to security in Xinjiang from the beginning of Chinese diplomacy in the region. Since Xinjiang is home to a Uyghur population that shares ethnolinguistic, religious, and historical ties to the peoples of Central Asia, including a sizable Uyghur diaspora in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Beijing worried that the example set by the independence of the Central Asian states would raise the specter of separatism in Xinjiang. Signs indicated in the early 1990s that Uyghur nationalism found support in the Central Asian states, and this only began to wane following Premier Li Peng's Central Asia tour in 1994,[18] as Chinese diplomacy made cooperation against groups it branded as “separatist” a priority from the start of their relationships. The silence of Central Asian governments regarding the PRC's internal policies in Xinjiang has become more difficult in recent years as both the level of repression against non-Han ethnic groups has increased and public awareness has grown, but this lack of criticism – along with affirmation of the “one-China principle” – remains a *sine qua non* for positive relations with the PRC.

Through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China has urged collaboration with Central Asian states against the “three evils” of terrorism, extremism, and separatism, i.e., the three general security issues it sees as its great threats in Xinjiang. It thereby successfully exports China's primary security concerns to become the common interest of its neighbors, who face their own terrorists, extremists, and separatists. China's “internal affairs” on these matters are kept separate and thus tacitly legitimated by the group.

The SCO's very existence is a “marketing win” for China to legitimate both its security policies and overall leadership position, and Central Asia is the core setting where this leadership projection is most viable

The SCO's consultative format, moreover, serves as a showcase for Chinese leadership as a great power that offers an alternative to the condescending attitudes often felt from the West and Russia. Emphasizing its “neighborhood diplomacy” as it views the U.S. as an “external force” stepping into its historical neighborhood, China's message at the SCO and elsewhere has been consistent: “All parties should firmly support each other in safeguarding sovereignty, security and development interests, and oppose the attempts of external forces to interfere in regional affairs and plot ‘color revolutions’.”[19] In all, therefore, the SCO's very existence is a “marketing win” for China to legitimate both its security policies and overall leadership position, and Central Asia is the core setting where this leadership projection is most viable.

China's increasing leadership in Central Asian multilateral initiatives indicates its growing sense of responsibility for the region and its importance for the PRC. In 2020, it introduced the China-Central Asian Foreign Ministers Mechanism (C+C5) and in January 2022, Xi Jinping chaired a virtual summit with the heads of the five Central Asian countries to mark the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations. The first China-Central Asia Summit was held in May 2023 in Xi'an, China and the third Belt and Road Forum was held in China in October 2023. The second China-Central Asia Summit is planned for 2025 in Kazakhstan. Since 2021, meetings have also been held with Afghanistan's neighboring countries to discuss the security situation, as well as prospects for economic development.[20]

With respect to the Sino-Russian relationship in Central Asia, while there has been understood to be a "division of labor" involving Russian military-security assistance and Chinese investment & infrastructure assistance, China is exploring various options and increasingly taking matters of security into its own hands. This is most evident in Tajikistan, where Chinese units have patrolled near the Afghan border and established a continued presence, but is also occurring in various ways across Central Asia.[21]

Chinese leadership in the security sphere is a natural development as Beijing has seen U.S. interest in Central Asian security matters dwindle, culminating in the chaotic final withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, while both U.S. and Russian attention have decidedly turned towards the Ukrainian conflict. This increasing emphasis on security management in its own "near abroad" on both a bilateral and multilateral basis is driven not only by traditional concerns for stability in Xinjiang but also issues emanating from China's more prominent presence in the region, such as investment security and growing anti-China sentiment.

CONCLUSION

This paper's examination of the institutional structures responsible for foreign policy in the PRC indicates that with centralization reforms, "comprehensive national security" has consistently led to further securitization of all aspects of policy. This is especially the case for foreign affairs in Central Asia, where vigilance against the specters of terrorism, extremism, and separatism on its western frontier will continue to take priority, as well as the stabilization of Afghanistan and the broader region.

NOTES

- [1] Jakobson and Manuel, “How are Foreign Policy Decisions Made in China?” 103. Note that China’s “top diplomat” is not the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as is common in many other countries.
- [2] The CPC General Secretary is the only civilian member of the CMC; there is no equivalent to a Secretary of Defense in the PRC system.
- [3] Swaine, “China’s Assertive Behavior, Part 3: The Role of the Military in Foreign Policy,” 9.
- [4] Jakobson and Knox, “New Foreign Policy Actors in China.” 8.
- [5] Jakobson, “Domestic Actors and the Fragmentation of China’s Foreign Policy,” 207.
- [6] Kenderdine, “Who Makes Foreign Policy in China?”, *The Diplomat*. February 04, 2022.
- [7] Jie and Ridout, “Who Decides China’s Foreign Policy?”, 7.
- [8] Zhou, Laura. “China’s provincial leaders take centre stage in Beijing’s diplomatic push to charm neighbours,” *South China Morning Post*, April 16, 2023; Kumenov, Almaz. “Kazakhstan keeps lid tight on Xinjiang activism in pursuit of trade boom.” *Eurasianet*, March 29, 2023.
- [9] For analysis of the significance of the NSC and CFAC and their respective compositions, see Sun, “Statement before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission,” Hearing on ‘CCP Decision-Making and the 20th Party Congress’ Panel on ‘Foreign Policy and National Security Decision-Making’, January 27, 2022.
- [10] Wang, “Xi Jinping’s Centralisation of Chinese Foreign Policy Decision-Making Power,” 40-41.
- [11] Zhu, et al., “Chinese Academia Marches West,” 11.
- [12] Yau, “The Context of China’s Pursuits in Central Asia,” 76.
- [13] Yau, “The Context of China’s Pursuits in Central Asia,” 65.
- [14] Cabestan, “China’s Foreign and Security Policy Institutions and Decision-making under Xi Jinping,” 321.
- [15] Sun, “Statement before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission,” 9.
- [16] See Drinhausen and Legarda, “‘Comprehensive National Security’ Unleashed: How Xi’s Approach Shapes China’s Policies at Home and Abroad.” *Mercator Institute for China Studies* (2021). Note in particular the graph, “Xi has ushered in an era of national security,” that shows the tremendous increase in laws, policies, and regulations that reference national security over the past decade.
- [17] Garcia, *China’s Western Frontier & Eurasia*, 91.
- [18] Garcia, *China’s Western Frontier & Eurasia*, 88.
- [19] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, “Qin Gang Attends the SCO Foreign Ministers’ Meeting,” May 5, 2023.
- [20] The most recent meeting, held in Samarkand in April 2023, was attended by the foreign ministers and senior officials of China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia (though it does not share a border with Afghanistan), Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. See the “Samarkand Declaration” produced at that meeting: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202304/t20230414_11059110.html.
- [21] Yau, “China’s Security Management Towards Central Asia” (2020). See also Yau, “Tajikistan: China’s Security Gatekeeper in Central Asia” (2021).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. "China's Foreign and Security Policy Institutions and Decision-making under Xi Jinping," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 2021, Vol. 23 (2), 319-336.
- Drinhausen, Katja, and Helena Legarda. "'Comprehensive National Security' Unleashed: How Xi's Approach Shapes China's Policies at Home and Abroad." Mercator Institute for China Studies (2021).
- Garcia, Zenel. *China's Western Frontier and Eurasia: The Politics of State and Region-Building*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Greer, Tanner. "The Belt and Road Strategy Has Backfired on Xi." *Palladium* (2020). <https://www.palladiummag.com/2020/10/24/the-belt-and-road-strategy-has-backfired-on-xi/>.
- Hall, Todd H., and Alanna Krolikowski. "Making Sense of China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Review Essay." *International Studies Review*, 2022.
- Jakobson, Linda. "Domestic Actors and the Fragmentation of China's Foreign Policy," in Robert S. Ross and Jo Inge Bekkevold (eds.), *China in the Era of Xi Jinping Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016.
- Jakobson, Linda, and Ryan Manuel. "How are Foreign Policy Decisions Made in China?" *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 101-110.
- Jakobson, Linda, and Dean Knox. "New Foreign Policy Actors in China." SIPRI Policy Paper, no. 26, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2010.
- Jie, Yu, and Lucy Ridout. "Who Decides China's Foreign Policy?", Chatham House (2021). <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/11/who-decides-chinas-foreign-policy>.
- Kenderdine, Tristan. "Who Makes Foreign Policy in China?" *The Diplomat*. February 04, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/who-makes-foreign-policy-in-china/>.
- Kumenov, Almaz. "Kazakhstan keeps lid tight on Xinjiang activism in pursuit of trade boom." *Eurasianet*, March 29, 2023. <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-keeps-lid-tight-on-xinjiang-activism-in-pursuit-of-trade-boom>.
- Manuel, Ryan. "Twists in the Belt and Road." *Washington International Trade Association* (2019). <https://www.wita.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Manuel-BRI.pdf>.
- Martin, Peter. *China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, "Qin Gang Attends the SCO Foreign Ministers' Meeting," May 5, 2023. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202305/t20230506_11071465.html.
- Rana, Kishan S. "China's 'Leading Small Groups': Instruments of Governance and Control," *Institute of Chinese Studies* 141 (2021): 1-11.

- Rolland, Nadège. *China's Eurasian Century? Political and Strategic Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative*. Washington, D.C.: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2017.
- Swaine, Michael D. "China's Assertive Behavior, Part 3: The Role of the Military in Foreign Policy." *China Leadership Monitor* (2011). <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CLM36MS.pdf>.
- Sun, Yun. "Statement before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission," Hearing on 'CCP Decision-Making and the 20th Party Congress' Panel on 'Foreign Policy and National Security Decision-Making', January 27, 2022.
- Wang, Shichen. "Xi Jinping's Centralisation of Chinese Foreign Policy Decision-Making Power," *East Asian Policy* (2017): 34-42.
- Yau, Niva. "China's Security Management Towards Central Asia." *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (2020). <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/04/chinas-security-management-towards-central-asia/>.
- Yau, Niva. "The Context of China's Pursuits in Central Asia: The Role of Historical Memories in Chinese Policy-making," in Fabienne Bossuyt and Bart Dessein (eds.), *The European Union, China and Central Asia: Global and Regional Cooperation in a New Era*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Yau, Tsz Yan. "Tajikistan: China's Security Gatekeeper in Central Asia," in Joseph Chinyong Liow, Hong Liu, and Gong Xue (eds.), *Research Handbook on the Belt and Road Initiative*. Northampton, Mass: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc., 2022.
- Zhu, Anastasia, Bradley Jardine, and Frank Maracchione. "Chinese Academia Marches West: A Structural Topic Model of China's Knowledge-Production in Central Asian Studies." *The Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs* (2022). <https://oxussociety.org/chinese-academia-marches-west-a-structural-topic-model-of-chinas-knowledge-production-in-central-asian-studies/>.
- Zhou, Laura. "China's provincial leaders take centre stage in Beijing's diplomatic push to charm neighbours," *South China Morning Post*, April 16, 2023. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3217182/chinas-provincial-leaders-take-centre-stage-beijings-diplomatic-push-charm-neighbours>.

The paper was prepared for and presented at the workshop "Central Asia's international relations: unpacking actors and factors" at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek on 28 April 2023.

Series editor: Shairbek Dzhuraev, Crossroads Central Asia