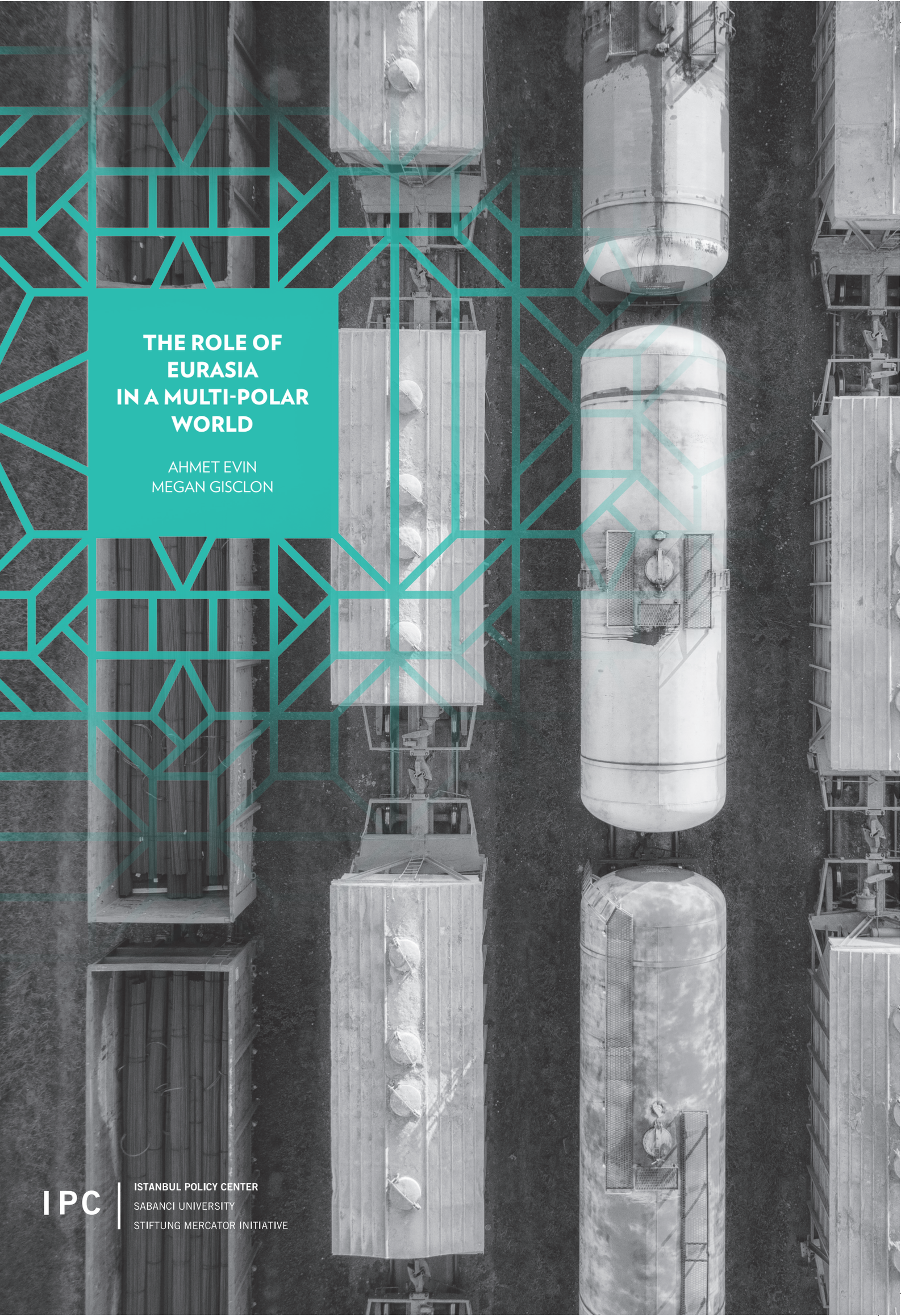


THE ROLE OF EURASIA IN A MULTI-POLAR WORLD

AHMET EVIN
MEGAN GISCLON

IPC | ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

THE ROLE OF EURASIA IN A MULTI-POLAR WORLD

AHMET EVIN
MEGAN GISCLON

March 2019

Ahmet Evin is a senior scholar at Istanbul Policy Center and professor emeritus at Sabanci University.

Megan Gisclon is managing editor and researcher at Istanbul Policy Center.

About Istanbul Policy Center

Istanbul Policy Center is an independent policy research institute with global outreach. Our mission is to foster academic research in social sciences and its application to policy making. We are firmly committed to providing decision makers, opinion leaders, academics, and the general public with innovative and objective analyses in key domestic and foreign policy issues. IPC has expertise in a wide range of areas, including—but not exhaustive to—Turkey-EU-U.S. relations, conflict resolution, education, climate change, current trends of political and social transformation in Turkey, as well as the impact of civil society and local governance on this metamorphosis.

DGAP Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.

PREFACE

As part of its Observatory Program, Istanbul Policy Center (IPC), in cooperation with the German Council on Foreign Relations (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik*, DGAP), organized a conference on "The Role of Eurasia in a Multi-Polar World." This one-day roundtable took place on December 6, 2017 at DGAP's Berlin office. The purpose of this roundtable was to develop new ideas and gain fresh insights from a small group of international participants with a view toward contributing to the ongoing debates on the role of Eurasia amidst the shaping of the post-Western world. The conference has drawn upon the work done by IPC in cooperation with the Transatlantic Academy over the past five years on the future of the post-war liberal international order.[1]

For the past five years, the observatory has concluded that the West's "material and ideological hegemony" has come to an end as the "rising rest" have taken a greater role on the world stage.[2] While the observatory's past reports have focused on the West's ability to remain a significant player in promoting liberal values and practices and contributing to the shaping of a rules-based world in future, the rise of populism and nationalism across Europe and the United States have diminished the liberal order's global influence and led scholars to seek out a new world order within a broader geography outside of the "sliding West."

Following these series of examinations on the state of the liberal order, the observatory turned its attention to an examination of the current transition to the post-Western world, the emergence of the "next world," as Charles Kupchan phrases it.[3] Taking into consideration the rise of China, the eastward shift of the center of gravity of global trade, and more recently, of the centrifugal forces acting upon the Western world, the present conference was organized to address the increasing number of questions regarding Eurasia: the vast landmass between Europe and China, dominated since the middle of the nineteenth century by Russia, whose influence is now being challenged by China. There is a general lack of familiarity with this land-locked region surrounded by major powers, because it has been often viewed as no more than an ancient transit area or crossroads.

The following is not a conference report but an interpretation of the recent developments in Eurasia based on the discussions held in Berlin under Chatham House Rules. In addition, it suggests an agenda for further discussion and debate on the basis of the needs articulated there.

1 The series of reports on this topic published by the Translatlantic Academy and Istanbul Policy Center are as follows: Transatlantic Academy, *Transatlantic Disconnect: Citizenship and Accountability in the Transatlantic Community* (Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2013); Ahmet O. Evin, Onur Sazak, and Lisa J. Repell, *Considering the Future of the Liberal Order: Hope, Despair and Anticipation* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2013); Transatlantic Academy, *Liberal Order in a Post-Western World* (Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2014); Ahmet Evin and Megan Gisclon, *The Liberal Order in Peril: The Future of the World Order with the West against the Rising Rest* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2015); Transatlantic Academy, *Faith, Freedom, and Foreign Policy: Challenges for the Transatlantic Community* (Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2015); Ahmet Evin and Megan Gisclon, *The Sliding West: Populism and Religion as Challenges to the Liberal Order* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2016).

2 Transatlantic Academy, *Liberal Order in a Post-Western World* (Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2014), 13.

3 Charles Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 186–187.

EURASIA: THE HEARTLAND OR SUPERCONTINENT?

Eurasia is an elusive term, one that lacks a clear geographical definition. It is almost never used in its literal sense to refer to the entire landmass of the two adjacent continents, except perhaps only in titles of maps. Instead, it is commonly used to refer to a part of that landmass. For some, Eurasia is merely a synonym for Central Asia; for others it includes a much broader area, such as the vast stretch of steppes from Hungary to Mongolia and beyond to Manchuria. The term, Eurasia, however, is not commonly associated with the whole of China nor does it bring to mind Southeast Asia or the subcontinent.

In calling attention to the crucial strategic importance of Eurasia, Sir Halford John Mackinder, the renowned geographer known as the father of geopolitics, defined, "the core of Euro-Asia" as "on the whole a steppe-land."[4] He described that core as a "pivot area" that held vast continental resources[5] and argued that whoever gained access to those resources might be able to achieve world domination. After World War I, he named the "pivot area" the "Heartland," the geopolitical importance of which he would drive home by stating:

> *Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland*
> *Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island*
> *Who rules the World-Island commands the world*[6]

MacKinder's geopolitics, based on the rivalry between land and sea powers, drew more on historical competition for resources than taking into account technological advances in power projection such as aircraft. Nevertheless, his "Heartland" theory was said to have influenced the strategic thinking by the West, particularly its containment policy during the Cold War. His work, moreover, brought into sharp relief, the Great Game of the nineteenth century and its later ramifications beyond the Cold War to the present conflicts in the region, notably in Afghanistan. The Heartland, he described, however a distant expanse, remained somewhat obscured from the outsiders' view.

For the West, Eurasia has been enshrouded in an atmosphere of mystery throughout most of history. Our notions of Eurasia have in no small measure been shaped by stories of the westward migrations of different peoples coming from the depths of Asia and eventually settling in Europe and by the legends about the nomadic Turco-Mongol hordes who would invade Europe, but then suddenly turn back and disappear in the eastern part of the steppes from where they had come in the first place. Because the Turco-Mongol groups of medieval Eurasia did not produce written documents, our knowledge of the Huns or the Golden Horde is based largely on records "written from the perspective of hostile, sedentary societies" that at best imperfectly reflect the structure and governance of nomadic societies.[7]

With the rise of Russian imperialism from the late medieval period to the nineteenth century, Eurasia receded in Europe's eastern frontier; by the nineteenth century Moscow had succeeded in making the nomadic populations of the Heartland dependent on Russia for their livelihoods.[8] Russia's dominance continued to obscure from Europeans the socio-economic and political dynamics of inner Asia.

The post-Second World War order also prevented the West from gaining a clear picture of Eurasia as a continuous landmass inhabited by a large spectrum of people belonging to different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds and separated by political borders of varied permeability, allowing more interaction among some groups and preventing interaction among others. Cold War priorities required vigilant pursuit of containment policy. The Atlanticist perspective, exemplified by the NATO Alliance, focused on countering the Soviet threat to Western Europe and the Warsaw Pact countries, especially Russia, but anything beyond Russia remained distant, impenetrable, and unfamiliar. After the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia remained the major adversary to the east, perpetuating the Atlanticist perspective and preventing a clear vision of the lands beyond.

4 H.J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (Apr. 1904): 429.

5 Ibid., 436.

6 H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Henry Holt, 1919), 106.

7 Peter Golden, *An Introduction to the History of Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 6.

8 Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

Similarly, in the east, it was China that dominated the Pacific arena as the major adversary of the U.S. and deflected attention from its Eurasian neighbors. China loomed large as a formidable Communist threat to the entire arena after the 1949 revolution, when Communist Chairman Mao Zedong proclaimed the creation of the People's Republic of China. Inner Asia, far from the Pacific coast, seemed even more distant than it appeared from the Western perspective due to its physical as well as cultural and linguistic distance behind China. The fact that the communist threat in the Pacific theater attracted all the attention kept the West from looking further into the continent, beyond China.

Today, China dominates the global geopolitical agenda because of the size of its economy, increasing need for resources, continuous expansion into new markets, and its ambition to achieve greater influence on global affairs. It thus also continues to deflect attention from inner Asia and its relationship in the broader Eurasian area on which it borders.

In short, the mystery of Eurasia has not been lifted. It is not surprising that the policy community in the West has been unable to gain a level of familiarity with the people, culture, economic realities, and geopolitical dynamics of the region. Scholars typically define Eurasia in terms of relations between and among global powers. For example, observers of Eurasia from the West often look at the region through a transatlantic lens and observers from Russia often adopt a Soviet lens. Therefore, it should thus be asked how else can observers look at Eurasia. Is it like, as Brzezinski says, "the world's axial supercontinent?"[9] Or, shall it be observed piece by piece as part of a strategic chessboard? Is it a great game, or is it a great gap?

9 Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Geography for Eurasia," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (Sep.–Oct. 1997): 50.

DEFINING EURASIA: CENTRAL ASIA AND ITS GEOPOLITICS

In the course of this discussion, the term "Eurasia" is often used as a pseudonym for discussion of Central Asia and the Caucasus. In effort to demonstrate the difference between Eurasia the super continent (quite literally taking Eurasia as Eur[ope] + Asia) and what is commonly referred to as Eurasia the region, one can deconstruct the various regions of the supercontinent. While there are clear borders for Europe (44 states), East Asia (eight states), ASEAN (10 states), and South Asia (eight states), the regional groupings of post-Soviet countries, as well as the Middle East, are not as clearly defined. The post-Soviet countries have largely inherited European status in international organizations, although they carry a distinct identity and are geographically and politically distant from continental Europe. Thus, in an effort to identity and group these remaining states, the term Eurasia emerges as a catchall phrase.

What is similar between these countries is often emphasized over their differences; however, how similar the countries in this region are is an open question. An internal analysis of Central Asia points to an uncertain future for domestic and intra-regional politics. Central Asia is one of the most fluid regions in the northern hemisphere that defies an easy characterization either as a bloc or a market. There is very little trade between the Newly Independent States (NIS) of Central Asia, each of which has been dependent on Moscow from the Tsarist period through to the present. Because it is not diversified, the region's economy remains underdeveloped and dependent on external loans. The economic challenges have increased as a result of stagnating oil prices. Moreover, there is a heightened sense of crisis due to financial shortcomings.

Additionally, authoritarian governments pose a major obstacle to the region's economic development. The status quo mirrors an essentially stagnant political situation, which could be challenged by internal or regional developments. Moreover, the factors that may reinforce or detract from political stability differ significantly in each of the NIS. While Uzbekistan has become the new regional leader through building a constructive role in addressing regional security threats, there are ongoing political transitions in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, making those countries vulnerable to external influences. As the reign of Soviet-era leaders comes to an end one by one, the political landscape of the region can dramatically change—for better or for worse. While the current leaders depend on the old Soviet apparatus, new leaders are increasingly likely to embrace nationalism as a strategy for legitimizing their rule. Although decreasing ethnic diversity in the region is leading to a corresponding decrease in the potential for ethnic conflict, increasing social diversity, and the corresponding disparity in incomes in the region, has created a new conflict potential. Central Asia's conflict potential is rising due to growing inequality, declining social mobility, access to public goods, and fragmented identities and ideology. Society is becoming increasingly divided along two axes: a North/South, religious, anti-Western axis versus the East/West, secular, pro-Western axis. Islamic organizations have taken over the role of providing some of these social services. This volatile political picture, in turn, leaves observers with many questions: What will be the role of Islam in Central Asia and in each of the NIS? To what extent will the region be exposed to Islamist influences originating in the Middle East? If the future role of Islam is likely to be varied in each of the NIS, will this development result in cultural and ideological differentiation among those states in the region? Which powers will gain influence in the region as it undergoes such dynamic political and economic changes?

Within Central Asia there has never been a dichotomy of conflict versus cooperation: there is never serious cooperation or serious conflict. Cooperation has always been initiated from outside, and there is a common understanding that each country has to listen to larger powers in the region. This has been considered as one of the region's possible strengths. However, one certain weakness, in contrast, is that each country also needs to develop greater independence. The potential for individual countries to take their economic destiny in their own hands is constrained because of the lack of intraregional trade. The region, as noted, is a so-called "prisoner of geography," with no direct access to international markets except through the territory of their more powerful neighbors. Geopolitics thus perpetuates the region's economic dependence on the neighboring powers, a situation that also prevents the diversification of each state's economy and trade.

Not only Central Asia but also the broader Eurasia is again being regarded as a crossroads with the recent rejuvenation of land-based trade. On the one side, Russia, still regarded as the patron of Central Asia, has reigned on the principles of dependence and fear as the primary security provider since the Soviet era. Despite the fact that Tsarist Russia domesticated the entire

region, Russia has made few investments in Central Asia, with the exception of Kazakh oil and gas, and used the region mainly for agricultural produce in the Soviet era with disastrous ecological results due to irresponsible irrigation practices. On the other side is China which, although more attractive as a potential hegemon due to its economic and technological success, is also feared. While China has been a generous creditor to the region—funding economic and infrastructure programs such as the Belt and Road Initiative—Central Asia's overwhelming debt as well as growing dependency on China has left the region anxious. The West, particularly the United States, is said to be partially retreating from the region, while the European Union (EU) is preoccupied with its own issues, chiefly with the growing dissonance among its member states.

If the Eurasian crossroads is to be viewed as a great game of geopolitics, then Russia and China are by far the leading players, with the power shifting toward China. With decreasing Russian influence and might—as well as decreasing U.S. stake in the region, in part because of a potential U.S. exit in Afghanistan and in part because of shifts in its foreign policy toward retrenchment—the Chinese are likely to emerge as the most influential power in the long term. This trend, however, should not fully detract attention from the power and influence exercised by Russia and the West, particularly by the EU. A comprehensive analysis of this region must take into consideration the fact that Russia is likely to remain a strong geopolitical force in the region, and the EU, the world's largest trading bloc, is likely to remain the final destination of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

RUSSIA AND EURASIA

Russia's role in Eurasia has been a complicated one. Up until the 18th century, Russia was a part of the nomadic Golden Horde's political system, while it gradually built strongholds from the Don to the Volga to limit nomads' mobility and increasing their economic dependence on Russian cities. Russia has thus continued to be a Eurasian power from the Tsarist times through the Soviet era up to the present. However, considering the fact that the Russian hegemon exercises influence *over* the member states as a whole rather than *among* them, its global role as a Great Power and former empire distinguishes it from its former satellite states across Asia.

Yet, Russia has been gradually losing influence in Central Asia for a variety of reasons, but mainly because of the rise of China. Much of the discussion on Russia's role in Eurasia has not been to do with Russia's interactions with the region but rather with the competition between Russia and China for reign over it. China's increasing influence across Eurasia seems to attract far more attention today than Russia's diminishing influence in Central Asia. Russia's policy toward its former satellite states takes a second place to its relations with China and the means of their partnership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. As Russians purportedly say themselves, the future of Russia is in China. The fact is that Russia's political influence has already diminished, and it cannot be expected to do much about its withering role there. As Bruno Maçaes aptly puts it in his book, *The Dawn of Eurasia*, Russia's greatest geopolitical struggle is "to avoid becoming what ... Brzezinski called a 'black hole' between Europe and China."[10]

For years, Russia has been too focused on the West and has overlooked what is happening in Asia. Although Russia still has an interest in its former Soviet states, Russia's overloaded international agenda has done more to damage its might than broaden its reach. Simply put, the Russian shopping list is too long, and it is not focused on Central Asia or China. In a move that harkens back to the old days of the Soviet Union, the Russians think they can bring every party to the negotiation table by force, which is drastically different from China's more cooperative economic role in the region. But, with the intent to expand and protect its former territory—the likes of which have been seen first in Georgia and then in Ukraine—is Russia's loss to China in the region case closed?

Despite its paltry economic role in Central Asia, there are many factors supporting Russian influence in the region such as history and language. Russia is still the security power to which Central Asian states would turn for help in the midst of a security crisis. Furthermore, even against the goliath of China and its economic expansion, Russia does have a traditional economic role to play in Central Asia as many projects have been ongoing in the region since the Soviet Union. Russia still makes investments in the region, particularly in projects that are not financially or economically feasible or favorable for China. Such a role, in turn, creates a functional division of power between Russia and China in the region.

China, meanwhile, has become a far more important economic partner for Russia, and this development has diminished the geopolitical and economic significance for Russia of its former satellites in Central Asia. A major pipeline project with an initial capacity of 38 BCM per annum, the Power of Siberia, is underway to carry Russian gas directly to China, which will allow Russian gas to bypass Central Asia. The project will enable Russia to produce natural gas from new sources in Eastern Siberia. However, the Chinese investments in this project remain a cause for concern for Russia, especially in light of the fact that this sparsely populated area is of strategic importance for an economically growing China of 1.4 million inhabitants.

10 Bruno Maçaes, *The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New Word Order* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), 55.

Some influential Chinese scholars maintain that China's view of the world is an amalgam of maritime and multi-connected land routes in trade and a zero-sum game in politics, as exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative. They claim that the West does not understand China well, giving rise to misconceptions in the West of the nature of this rising power and the extent of its influence. They argue that while Chinese scholars may have read all the books of Western scholars such as Brzezinski, for example, it is not likely that Brzezinski or other Western scholars have read those of Chinese scholars. Contrary to the West's relative lack of familiarity with China, China, they claim, is watching the West and Russia closely so that it will not repeat the same mistakes that other powers made in their relations with Central Asia or fall into the same trap. From the Chinese viewpoint as well as many others, China is undoubtedly the most influential global power in Central Asia.

Central Asia is the key initial link for the Belt and Road Initiative, the hallmark of Chinese economic power, which aims to alter global trade routes as well as value chains. The New Silk Road, the overland component of the Belt and Road Initiative that is conceived with the view to connecting China with the European market, embodies an enormous amount of infrastructure that will have to be built in Central Asia. The initiative is envisaged to establish "trade and investment links between China and some 65 other countries that account collectively for over 30 percent of global GDP, 62 percent of population, and 75 percent of known energy reserves."[11] In Central Asia, the Chinese present the initiative as a vehicle for development, benefitting a wide range of countries, particularly the landlocked Central Asian states where China's influence will commensurately increase.

Meanwhile, China has developed a narrative of itself as a benign economic donor and developer, building a more economy-focused role for itself in the region based on building roads and trade connections rather than political networks. Chinese expertise in Central Asia is rising, and it has been sending endless delegations to countries in the region, trying to gain a deeper understanding of the people and the area. China knows that poor countries (like Mongolia, for instance) are not attractive for Western investment because they are too poor to turn a profit. So, China jumps in and builds infrastructure in those countries, providing economic corridors and connections that are crucial for China's strategy. It expands its trade routes through connecting countries in Central Asia and East Africa with routes to the sea. Between the global powers, Russia is ignoring this Chinese strategy, and now the Russians are dependent on China.

While it is true that the Belt and Road Initiative offers a range of economic and developmental opportunities, it also presents serious challenges not only to the recipient countries of Chinese assistance but also for China itself. As found in a report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "the BRI's opaque and unaccountable mode of operation when financing and investing in regional infrastructure projects through loans risks exposing already vulnerable economies to potentially unsustainable debt levels and to fiscal instability."[12] Malaysia, for example, has already cancelled two major BRI projects out of fear of bankrupting the country. Pakistan has also voiced doubts about the rising costs and potential debt trap owed to the Chinese as an enormous negative consequence of the BRI. India's objection to the project is of particular importance: having objected to China's lack of sensitivity over the BRI's proposed economic corridor through Gilgit and Baltistan in disputed Kashmir.

However, while the extent of Chinese power in the region is inestimable—especially against the declining power of the West and Russia—its ambitions in the region are ambiguous. Whether or not China will be content with achieving near absolute economic power and move on to seek increased political power in the region is thus an open question and a primary subject of debate. Indeed, China's political influence is tied to its finances and geographical proximity. Given the importance of Central Asia for Russia's security concerns, China may well avoid political rivalry in Central Asia in order not to cast a shadow on its political and security cooperation with Moscow. It is said that China was rather sensitive to Russian pride; therefore, China never got involved militarily in Central Asia after the Cold War. Probably closer to the truth, neither Moscow nor Central Asia want Chinese soldiers in the region—a preference taken seriously by Beijing.

11 World Bank, "Belt and Road Initiative," March 29, 2018, https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative.

12 Erik Brattberg and Etienne Soula, "Europe's Emerging Approach to China's Belt and Road Initiative," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 19, 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/10/19/europe-s-emerging-approach-to-china-s-belt-and-road-initiative-pub-77536.

For the governments and people of Central Asia, China has embarked on a path to build a regional community with a shared future, but it is also perceived as a threat within this shared community. Although China is seen as a more attractive potential hegemon in the region because it represents the picture of a "successful" country both in economic and technological terms, China's influence has also created fear of its power and growing anxiety of its indebtedness. Some countries in Central Asia are especially enthusiastic about the fact that China has spent a great deal of money on economic and infrastructure programs as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. China is seen as a big opportunity to fix the region's economy and infrastructure problems. However, the question of how Central Asian countries can handle the rising levels of debt to China is popping up more and more as a cause for concern.

Central Asian elites try not to push too hard for their independence in terms of regional politics. In the 1990s, Central Asian states were left with only remnants of the Soviet armed forces. While there was much fear that the Chinese would overtake these countries, China instead began a benign engagement with the region. Despite its limited engagements, except finance and investment, Central Asia is not likely to become a strategically high priority area for China, which chiefly considers Central Asia as a transit region on the way to Europe and even Southeast Asia. Both China's instrumental perspective on Central Asia and Russia's concern to keep it within its own sphere of influence provide the region's political leadership with a comfortable option of reaping the benefits of their own authoritarian rule while towing the line simultaneously with Moscow and Beijing.[13]

13 Alexander A. Cooley and John Heathershaw, *Dictators Without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2017).

EUROPE AND EURASIA

The question of how long or to what extent the West, particularly Europe, will seek influence and interest in Eurasia has been a recurring question. Some analysts see that the current status quo between Russia and China is in place to balance the West; and thus, in light of the West's declining power in Central Asia, this status quo will unlikely hold in the future. Because of this, the balance of power in Eurasia is also bound to change. Concerning the EU, there are many doubts about the EU-Russia relationship and how the relationship between the EU and China will unfold. Will Europe's relations with Russia and China foster more connections through the Central Asian region? Or will Europe's engagement in the region antagonize Russia and possibly China? A further question is that if the EU increases its engagement with Central Asia, would China, as the regional hegemon, attempt to put constraints on Europe's involvement in the region.

According to many observers, European influence in Central Asia will continue to grow, in contrast to the United States. In recent years, individual member states as well as the EU have been trying to reach out to Central Asia. The EU has held a consistent strategy for the region over the past ten years and established a modest program of financial support. In June 2017, the European Council announced that it will be formulating a new concrete strategy on the region, reaffirming the "EU's commitment to develop stronger relations and highlight the need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on human rights, education, sustainability as well as tackling security challenges faced by Central Asian countries."[14] While certainly Russia and China will maintain their own stake in Eurasian security, the EU is the only international actor that is willing to promote democratic values. This strategy is reflective of Europe's changing priorities: between its changing needs in energy to the security risks presented in Afghanistan over the past two decades. Under this new strategy, there is a common focus on Kazakhstan, whereas many other countries are left out (which is also a common scenario among associations formed by other actors). However, while the EU's commitment to Central Asian society and security is clear, the economic side of the plan was more abstract. Should the new strategy be something like a vision of a new Silk Road? Or, should it be an economic development plan like China?

Although Eurasia is geographically far away from the economic hub of Europe, the region garners a high level of interest for Europe because of its resources. Chief among these resources is energy. Because of the decline of gas production in the Netherlands and, more importantly, the expected decline of Norwegian production, Europe is likely to import increasing volumes of Russian gas, in addition to new sources of supply that will reach the EU in the form of LNG. Russian energy has become equally important for China to meet its increasing demand as well as for implementing Beijing's policy of switching away from coal. In order to respond to China's increasing demand, Russia is extracting increasing volumes of gas from its Eastern Siberian resources and connecting those resources directly to China via the major Pride of Siberia pipeline.

In terms of economics, Europe's relationship with China will be a determining factor for Europe's role in Eurasia. The EU has set upon a plan for economic expansion in relation to China; however, how or if this plan will be able to counter losses incurred from the rise of Chinese trade over the past few decades remains an open question. In turn, diverse agreements between Europe and China such as the 16+1 (11 EU member states and five Balkan countries) show that Europe is ready to meet China without referring back to the existing framework. Initiated by China, the initiative emphasizes increased cooperation in investments, transport, finance, science, education, and culture.[15] In relation to this, how important is 16+1 to China? How important is this to Europe? The EU is split on China. Most European countries see China's rise as a threat to their national economic policies. Since 16+1 is driven by China, the problem for the EU is that China can operate over its head. While member states see some advantage in common action, asking to step up together, or to run toward big business opportunities, there are also many issues that divide them. China sees this internal division, and this weakness could lead to division on how to deal with China. China is further expanding while connecting to the Trans-European transport network, the 10-T, which has planned the development of multi-European networks, including road, rail, and sea.

14 "EU strategy for Central Asia: Council adopts conclusions," European Council, Council of the European Union, June 19, 2016, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/19/conclusions-central-asia/.

15 "Meeting of China-CEEC Business Council and Business Support Organizations, Latvia, 2017," CEEC, http://ceec-china-latvia.org/.

A further complicating factor is the increasing divisions and disagreements among EU member states concerning security issues stemming from Central Asia and its neighborhood. In the Western imagination, there is a growing link between Central Asia and terrorism in Europe as the actors carrying out recent terror attacks have increasingly been of Central Asian heritage. Security concerns within Europe's borders, such as the migrant crisis stemming from the Syria conflict, have sowed many seeds of discord among member states. As the EU has attempted to create a uniform policy in dealing with these security concerns, anti-immigrant, anti-European-integration blocs within the Union have formed, for example, the Visegrad Group (V4), comprising the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Even among what was only a few years ago formed as a "like-minded" group of states, internal disagreements have become rampant. In addition to the threats posed by international terrorism, chief among Europe's security concerns is Russia and what appears to the EU as Russia's claim on Eastern European and Central Asian states that used to be an integral part of the Soviet sphere. Russia does not recognize the complete independence of the region, as reflected by its 2009 intervention in Georgia and 2014 intervention in Ukraine. Countering a united European front, post-Soviet EU member states, particularly Hungary, have been boasting of closer tries with the Kremlin—further demonstrating the divisions between European security objects.

PROSPECTS FOR EURASIA

Moving forward, a future agenda for academic and policy discussions on Eurasia in the emerging world order is still an open subject. Whether or not we can pinpoint Eurasia's precise geopolitical significance, or conclude how to position the region within the ubiquitous dichotomy of East versus West, will be telling of the region's destiny.

Although we may not have fully reached a new "Eurasian order," as Bruno Macaes claims, the twilight of the Western liberal international order undoubtedly sparks the need to reach for new terms and ideas to explain this brave new world. Moving to the aforementioned "next world" is not just a shift in global geography or geostrategy but it also harbingers a monumental shift from a rules-based order to a more authoritarian one. Economic, transactional cooperation spurred by China seems to be defining a new system in the making. Yet, the absence of a central regional ethos amongst Central Asian states is also likely to pave the way for new problems in future.

The bygone days of the United States' unipolar moment, the rise of China, and Russia's fading dominance in Central Asia have precipitated more questions than answers. How will each of these countries continue to shape the regional order, and how will Central Asian countries' bilateral cooperation grow or weaken from this? How will China's Belt and Road Initiative continue to shape the economic and political landscape of the Eurasian supercontinent?

Despite the West's political recession and disengagement in recent years, its political engagement in Central Asia will determine just how much of the new order will be shaped by the liberal order. If these countries are to look to Western institutions built on value-based principles, then the rules-based order will not have been altogether lost. But, if these states are to look at the current shortcomings of the West—its divisions, the rising populism in its political sphere threatening the integrity of its institutions, its lack of consensus on values—then they will have been at a loss to see any benefit of pursuing a rules-based democratic order, which they are likely to take as a feature of a bygone era in the West.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. "A Geography for Eurasia." *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (Sep.–Oct. 1997): 50–64.

Cooley, Alexander A., and John Heathershaw. *Dictators Without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2017.

Evin, Ahmet, and Megan Gisclon. *The Sliding West: Populism and Religion as Challenges to the Liberal Order*. Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2016.

Evin, Ahmet, and Megan Gisclon. *The Liberal Order in Peril: The Future of the World Order with the West against the Rising Rest*. Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2015.

Evin, Ahmet O., Onur Sazak, and Lisa J. Repell. *Considering the Future of the Liberal Order: Hope, Despair and Anticipation*. Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2013.

Golden, Peter. *An Introduction to the History of Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992.

Khodarkovsky, Michael. *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Kupchan, Charles. *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Maçaes, Bruno. *The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New Word Order*. London: Allen Lane, 2018.

Mackinder, H.J. *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. New York: Henry Holt, 1919.

Mackinder, H.J. "The Geographical Pivot of History." *Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (Apr. 1904): 421–437.

Transatlantic Academy. *Faith, Freedom, and Foreign Policy: Challenges for the Transatlantic Community*. Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2015.

Transatlantic Academy. *Liberal Order in a Post-Western World*. Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2014.

Transatlantic Academy. *Transatlantic Disconnect: Citizenship and Accountability in the Transatlantic Community*. Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2013.

APPENDIX

Observatory Conferences

Florence, June 2001

Florence, April 2002

Siena, October 2003

Florence, May 2004

Barcelona, June 2004

Madrid, May 2005

Istanbul, May 2006

Barcelona, January 2007

Athens, March 2007

Istanbul, June 2007

Lisbon, November 2007

Berlin, December 2008

Istanbul, April 2009 (with IE Med)

Istanbul, June 2010 (with the Transatlantic Academy)

Istanbul, May 2012 (with IPC- Kronberg Talks)

Istanbul, May 2013 (with the Transatlantic Academy)

Paris, May 2014 (with the Transatlantic Academy and Columbia Global Centers)

Washington, DC, May 2015 (with the Transatlantic Academy)

Berlin, December 2017 (with DGAP)

Euro-Turkish Dialogue Conferences

Hamburg, November 1995

Venice, March 1996

Lyon, June 1998

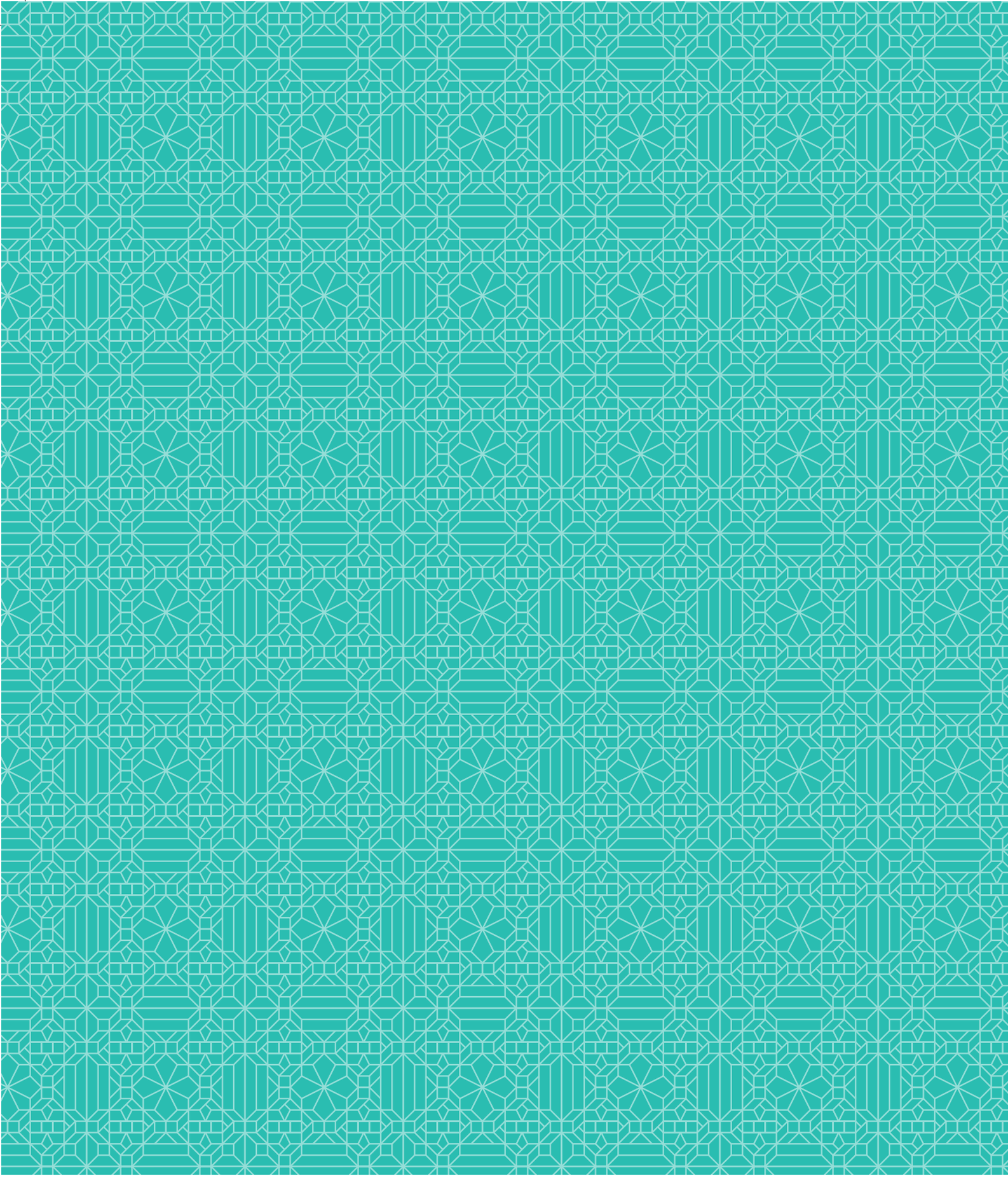
Edinburgh, May 1999

Brussels, October 1999

Stockholm, June 2001

Stockholm, November 2002

NOTES



IPC | ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

ISBN: 978-605-2095-47-8

Istanbul Policy Center
Bankalar Caddesi No: 2 Minerva Han 34420
Karaköy, İstanbul TURKEY
+90 212 292 49 39
+90 212 292 49 57
@ ipc@sabanciuniv.edu
w ipc.sabanciuniv.edu