



SINOLOGY SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL ASIA

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Bishkek-Dushanbe, 2019





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The opinions expressed in this document do not reflect the position of the analytical platform CABAR. asia.

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EXPERT MEETINGS



Expert meeting in Almaty



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INTRODUCTION

The regional analytical platform CABAR.asia pays close attention not only to highlighting pressing events in the region but also to large-scale processes that affect and influence the course of development of trends in the Central Asian region for a long period. So, in early 2019, on the basis of IWPR representative offices in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and partner organizations in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, expert discussions were held on a topic that is rarely covered in the press - the state of Sinology schools in the countries of the region.

The expert discussions were also due to the ambiguous position of the authors of CABAR. asia regarding the status and forecasts of the development of Sinology in the countries of Central Asia. One of the most significant paradoxes in the field on the status of schools of Sinology in the region was extensively formulated by a Tajik political scientist Parviz Mullodzhanov in his article "When will Tajikistan begin to study China?": "... the greater the economic dependence on China, the fewer publications on the Chinese presence can be found in the local academic press and the media".1

With the goal of resolving this paradox, giving an accurate assessment of the status of Sinology schools in Central Asia and offering options for decision-makers in the development of relations with China, the editorial board of the analytical platform CABAR. asia organized fruitful discussions with competent experts in the field of studying relations between China and countries of the region. The meetings were held in the cities of Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and Tashkent (Uzbekistan) from February to April 2019.

¹ Mullodzhanov, P. (2019). When will Tajikistan begin to study China?. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://analytics.cabar.asia/ru/kogdatadzhikistan-nachnyot-izuchat-kitaj/ [available since June 9, 2019].



Article of Parviz Mullodzhanov

The events were held in an open format, where all interested persons in the discussion topic could take part in them. In addition to the main speakers – who were competent experts in the field of Sinology, the events were also attended by employees of scientific and research centers, teachers, representatives of diplomatic corps and media representatives.

Based on the results of each event, information and analytical materials were published on the website of the analytical platform CABAR.asia in Russian and English languages.²

This publication logically completes the work done on the status discussion and prospects of the development for schools of Chinese studies in the Central Asian region.

Analysts of the CABAR.asia platform, participants of all the events and the IWPR team contributed to the creation of this publication.



2 CABAR (2019). IWPR: in Kazakhstan, experts discussed issues of China. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/iwpr-v-kazahstane-eksperty-obsudili-problemy-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].

CABAR (2019). Experts: Kyrgyzstan must form a strong school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/eksperty-kyrgyzstan-dolzhen-sformirovat-silnuyu-shkolu-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].

CABAR (2019). In Dushanbe, experts discussed the prospects of the Tajik school of Sinology. CABAR asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/v-dushanbe-eksperty-obsudili-perspektivy-tadzhikskoj-shkoly-sinologii/[available since June 5, 2019].

CABAR (2019). In Tashkent, experts and scientists discussed the status and prospects of the school of sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/v-tashkente-eksperty-i-uchenye-obsudili-sostoyanie-i-perspektivy-shkoly-sinologii/ [available since June 5, 2019].

Muratbek Imanaliev

WHERE IS CENTRAL ASIAN SINOLOGY HEADING TO?

Relations between China and the Central Asian republics are rapidly developing in all directions. Surely, the growth of economic cooperation is most noticeable, but it invariably tightens the strengthening of political contacts as well. The last factor already entails the growth of military and humanitarian cooperation and other types of interstate relations.

The same increase in relations with the Celestial Empire raises a logical question: how adequate is the scientific and expert support of political decisions in the Chinese direction to the turbulent Renaissance of relations between Central Asia and its eastern neighbor?

The IWPR representative office in Central Asia and the analytical platform CABAR.asia published a series of materials from February to April 2019 and held a number of events dedicated to the problems and prospects of the development of Sinology in Central Asia.

During the round tables in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan with the participation of leading oriental experts, political scientists and specialists in international relations, it was possible to identify the conditions of Sinology in each country separately and to clarify what the picture is like for the region as a whole.

Due to the lack of access to the academic and expert circles of Turkmenistan, a similar event could not be held in neutral Turkmenistan, which, of course, somewhat blurred the picture against the backdrop of active cooperation between Ashgabat and Beijing in the field of economy, defense, etc. However, events



that were held in the other four Central Asian countries became a major breakthrough in terms of compiling and generalizing the picture of the development of Sinology in the region. Note that this study is unique to Central Asia and was conducted for the first time.

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP...

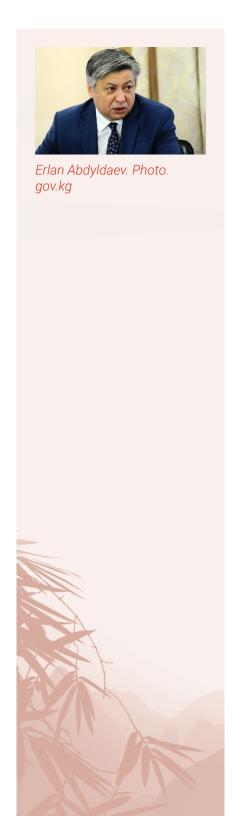
A number of experts in Central Asia agree with the thesis that countries of the region are poorly acquainted with their eastern neighbor. This can be seen even from the very definition of the "Sinologist" profession, where it is assumed that the expert should know literally everything about China: from the backstage of party struggle to the nuances of shopping in furniture markets, as well as treatment with Chinese medicine and all aspects of history.

SINOLOGIST SHOULD KNOW LITERALLY EVERYTHING ABOUT CHINA: FROM THE BACKSTAGE OF PARTY STRUGGLE TO THE NUANCES OF SHOPPING IN FURNITURE



It is understood that serious scientific activity in the framework of such an approach is impossible, it is enough to turn to the closest Russian or highly developed American and European experience in studying China. In these countries, experts on China are clearly divided into historians, economists, political scientists, lawyers, marketers, etc. Moreover, in historical science, there is a specialization in eras and directions, without which serious scientific study of issues is practically impossible.

To date, the situation appears to be dispiriting in all countries of Central Asia. Sinology is represented by literally single persons who work within the framework of their own scientific interests. Moreover, if works and opinions on political science, culture, and history are at least somehow presented in the expert and



media fields, it is extremely difficult to find theoretical works and famous names in jurisprudence, business activity, logistics, etc.

As a well-known Kyrgyz Sinologist, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs and ex-secretary of the SCO Muratbek Imanaliev noted at an expert meeting in Bishkek: "The paradox is that we have a thousand-kilometer border with China, but [unfortunately] we have no idea what China is all about.³

He was supported by another expert on China from Kyrgyzstan, former Foreign Minister, Erlan Abdyldaev: «Despite the relevance and obviousness of the issue, the process of forming a school of Sinology in Central Asia has been delayed unreasonably».

Experts from Tajikistan fully agreed with the findings of their Kyrgyz colleagues. For example, Khurshed Dodikhudoev, head of the Regional Security Studies Directorate for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, said that there are very few well-written scientific papers on the topic of relations between Tajikistan and China.⁵

³ CABAR (2019). Experts: Kyrgyzstan must form a strong school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/eksperty-kyrgyzstan-dolzhen-sformirovat-silnuyu-shkolu-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].

⁴ CABAR (2019). Experts: Kyrgyzstan must form a strong school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/eksperty-kyrgyzstan-dolzhen-sformirovat-silnuyu-shkolu-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].

⁵ CABAR (2019). In Dushanbe, experts discussed the prospects of the Tajik school of sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/v-dushanbe-eksperty-obsudili-perspektivy-tadzhikskoj-shkoly-sinologii/ [available since June 5, 2019].



Khurshed Dodikhudoev



Erkin Baidarov



Moreover, Tajik political analyst Parviz Mullodzhanov noted a strange trend: the stronger the economic dependence on China, the fewer publications on the Chinese presence can be found in the local academic press and mass media.⁶

At the Kazakhstan round table, experts came to similar conclusions. Moreover, the hottest and longest part of the discussion took place on this issue. In particular, Erkin Baidarov, an oriental scientist, candidate of philosophical sciences, a leading researcher at the Kazakhstan Institute of Oriental Studies named after R.B Suleimenov, said: «The current state of Sinology is in a deplorable state, there are several well-known specialists in the country, however, it is hard to recognize it as Kazakhstan's school of Sinology».⁷

Almost all participants agreed with this point of view. Askar Nursha, candidate of historical sciences, Dean of the School of State and Public Policy and Law of Almaty University of Management (ALMA) said that Sinology in Kazakhstan is experiencing a crisis in the format of think tanks.⁸ But an important point in the expert's opinion was the addition that other areas (Russian, American, etc.) are experiencing an even greater crisis.⁹

⁶ Mullodzhanov, P. (2019). When will Tajikistan begin to study China?. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://analytics.cabar.asia/ru/kogdatadzhikistan-nachnyot-izuchat-kitaj/ [available since June 9, 2019].

⁷ CABAR (2019). IWPR: in Kazakhstan, experts discussed issues of China. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/iwpr-v-kazahstane-eksperty-obsudili-problemy-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].

⁸ CABAR (2019). IWPR: in Kazakhstan, experts discussed issues of China. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/iwpr-v-kazahstane-eksperty-obsudili-problemy-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].

⁹ IWPR Kyrgyzstan (2019). [Live on Facebook] Expert meeting: Sinology Development in Kyrgyzstan. Access via the link: https://www.facebook.com/IWPR.Kyrgyz/videos/404770503618077/ [available since June 5, 2019]..



Eduard Poletaev, a political scientist and head of the Eurasia World Public Foundation, said that there are very few conflict resolution specialists among the experts on China. Because the Chinese agenda is largely related to conflicts and indignation of a certain part of the population, in his opinion, Sinologists with a focus on conflict resolution measures are highly needed.¹⁰

Adil Kaukenov, moderator of the event and a specialist on China, expressed himself quite distinctly: "There is no Sinology School in the Republic of Kazakhstan, there are separate names. In Kyrgyzstan, this is only Imanaliev, in Uzbekistan, there are only Soviet Sinologists. Everything must be taken from English and Chinese sources".¹¹

The director of the Institute for International and Regional Cooperation of the Kazakh-German University, the chairman of the board of the expert club "Belt and Road", Doctor of Historical Sciences Bulat Sultanov literally put an end to this discussion: "We have experts on China, but no schools yet".¹²

In Tashkent, the round table discourse was held under the banner of alarmism and fears of the increasing influence of China, which in fact is also quite semeiotic. However, in indirect terms, it is also obvious that knowledge of China here is even less than in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

¹⁰ CABAR (2019). IWPR: in Kazakhstan, experts discussed issues of China. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/iwpr-v-kazahstane-eksperty-obsudili-problemy-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].

¹¹ IWPR Kyrgyzstan (2019). [Live on Facebook] Expert meeting: Sinology Development in Kyrgyzstan. Access via the link: https://www.facebook.com/IWPR.Kyrgyz/videos/404770503618077/ [available since June 5, 2019].

¹² Yuritsyn, V. (2019). Sinology in Kazakhstan: there are specialists, but there is no school. Zonakz.net. Access via the link: https://zonakz.net/2019/02/28/kitaevedenie-v-kazaxstane-specialisty-est-no-shkoly-net/[available since June 5, 2019].



Expert meeting in Tashkent

Accordingly, the historian Abdulakhat Khodjaev said: "For the proper construction of relations with China, it is necessary to know the mentality of the Chinese people, especially the upper echelon, the ways of their policy implementation and their attitude towards various non-Chinese nations". This implies a lack of knowledge of the mentality, domestic and national policies of China.

It is very curious that in the framework of these events, while experts from different countries of the region were actively discussing the Sinology of their own countries, they did not know about the findings of their colleagues from other Central Asian countries and only discussed the development of Sinology in their country, comparing them with schools, but not referring to the experience of neighbors in the region. Nevertheless, all experts came to almost identical conclusions, which shows the complete similarity of the problem: the lack of a methodology and school of systematic study on China in all countries of Central Asia.





PAST...NO MORE

Another key point identified during the round tables on China studies in Central Asia was the realization that there are not even single systemic structures in the region that study China. Although in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan there were divisions of All-Union Sinology, today they are vestigial remnants and several scientists of retirement age.

At first glance, this is a rather paradoxical phenomenon, because the interest in China, and most importantly - in its finances, technologies and investment opportunities, is simply huge. Milestone documents are signed daily, joint ventures are growing, the construction of transport infrastructure connecting Central Asia and the PRC is being established, joint organizations such as the SCO and global initiatives such as "Road and Belt" are being promoted, but the structures responsible for Sinology do not exist.

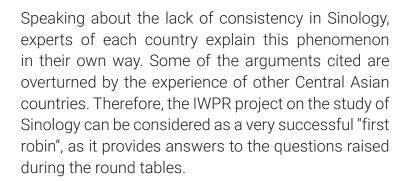
INTEREST IN CHINA, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY IN ITS FINANCES, TECHNOLOGIES AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES, IS SIMPLY HUGE.



Let us note that, there are no systematic structures responsible for the development of relations, such as, for example, the Russian-Chinese Friendship Society, however, this phenomenon has also its rational explanation, but more on that later.



Parviz Mullodzhanov



In particular, Kyrgyz and Tajik experts saw one of the main causes of the systemic crisis in Sinology as a lack of funding and even a fundamental lack of funds for science in these countries, especially in such a specific direction as sinology.

Thus, one of the conclusions from the round table in Dushanbe was that at present Sinology is not sufficiently funded, and for the further development of the school of Sinology, it is necessary to find new sources of financing.¹⁴

The Tajik political scientist Parviz Mullodzhanov writes in his article: "The experts with whom I talked also noted the absence of state order for the development of Sinology and for conducting deeper and more comprehensive research in this area". 15 In general, in Parviz Mullodzhanov's article "When will Tajikistan begin to study China?", the absence of funds in the country for serious financing of Tajik Sinology passes through the so-called red line.

¹⁴ CABAR (2019). In Dushanbe, experts discussed the prospects of the Tajik school of sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/v-dushanbe-eksperty-obsudili-perspektivy-tadzhikskoj-shkoly-sinologii/ [available on June 5, 2019].

¹⁵ Mullodzhanov, P. (2019). When will Tajikistan begin to study China?. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://analytics.cabar.asia/ru/kogdatadzhikistan-nachnyot-izuchat-kitaj/ [available since June 9, 2019].



However, despite the undoubted importance of the availability of internal funds for research projects, the Kazakhstani experience casts serious doubt on this thesis. Kazakhstan, due to the sale of energy resources, has always been in a winning position against its Central Asian neighbors, and easily found "extra money" for a variety of expensive projects - from EXPO to a number of failed factories.

Moreover, Kazakhstan is the undoubted leader in the dynamics and volume of relations with China, which implements the largest projects. The president of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Zhomart Tokaev, can be regarded as the most successful Sinologist in Central Asia. Nevertheless, all Kazakhstani experts noted the absence of a systemic school and a genuine organization supported at the highest state level.

Despite the fact that large funds were allocated from various sources for research, the number of students from Kazakhstan studying in China exceeds 11 thousand people. And despite repeated attempts to create the "Institute for Chinese Studies", the school as such did not work out as a separate structure, neither within the framework of fundamental science supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan nor through university research.

Although, Kazakhstan has experience in Sinology. As Kazakhstani professor Klara Hafizova recalled, Sinology in Kazakhstan originated in the second half of the 1980s: "At that time the first oriental centers in the country appeared. Until that moment, Soviet specialists in Sinology were trained in several cities of Russia and neighboring Tashkent".¹⁷

¹⁶ Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2019). Statistical report on international students in China for 2018. Accessed at: http://en.moe.gov.cn/documents/reports/201904/t20190418_378692. html [available since June 9, 2019.].

¹⁷ CABAR (2019). IWPR: in Kazakhstan, experts discussed issues of China. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/iwpr-v-kazahstane-eksperty-obsudili-problemy-kitaevedeniya/ [available on June 5, 2019].



Rapid degradation is associated primarily with the decline in the general culture of decision-making. In Kazakhstan, as, indeed, in other Central Asian countries, such a system of political relations has lined up strictly in a vertical position, and firmly from top to bottom. Except for Kyrgyzstan, in other countries of the Central Asian region, the highest official (president) and his entourage acquire the status of infallible celestial beings who supposedly can solve all problems "wisely".

Number of international students studying in China by countries (2018)

Position	Country		Quantity
1	South Korea	(•)	50,600
2	Thailand		28,608
3	Pakistan	C	28,023
4	India	•	23,198
5	USA		20,996
6	Russia		19,239
7	Indonesia		15,050
8	Laos		14,645
9	Japan	•	14,230
10	Kazakhstan		11,784
11	Vietnam	*	11,299
12	Bangladesh		10,735
13	France		10,695
14	Mongolia		10,158
15	Malaysia	<u>(</u>	9,479

Source: Ministry of Education (China)

This ideology permeates all sectors of society, especially in the state apparatus, with the prevailing principle of «The boss is always right.» In this context, science and examination are perceived by the bureaucratic apparatus only as a propaganda tool, or as an annoying misunderstanding. Accordingly, no one is going to accept any "recommendations" or to finance such studies. Moreover, in contrast to the speedy writing of all kinds of "country strategies",



where there is the possibility of corruption schemes and illegal enrichment for officials, Sinology requires painstaking, methodical and many years of work, which makes the possibility of easy enrichment on a popular topic at the expense of the state.

Fun fact: the absence of a culture of analytical information consumption among the Central Asian elites sometimes gives rise to different misunderstandings. When the analytical structure is created, the "big bosses" have irrationally high expectations from the analytical materials, the expectation to see in them, instead of different points of view, analysis, forecast variations, something like the mystical revelation of the divine messiah or oracle that literally envelops the reader's eyes, which is something similar to the «Tablets of Moses» or the «prophecies of Vanga.»

That is why in the Central Asian higher circles there is an irresistible desire when creating analytical centers to make them certainly "closed". At the same time, there are vague hopes that the mysterious «Danila Masters», as from the «Mistress of the Copper Mountain», will create masterpieces in them. In reality, the situation is completely opposite: such a "master", deprived of communication and the ability to create behind-the-scenes sources of information, and even with a restriction on travel to the country of study, is forced to build all his work only on open sources, that is, journalistic articles that themselves are often ordered or censored. In addition, even more often, a journalist, due to the fact that he is not an expert or a scientist, searches for hot topics and conclusions, putting the reader's pleasure above academic accuracy. Thus, a closed researcher, even in the absence of bringing his materials to the court of the general public, easily slips into plagiarism or banality, even less justifying the expectations of his customers for «manna from heaven.»



In this situation, it becomes obvious: no matter how much money elites spend, the consciousness of temporary workers, the de-professionalization of state administration, nepotism, bribery, clannishness, the inability to discuss, accept other people's opinions and other delights of authoritarian governance serve as a reliable wall on the development of Sinology, and a striking example of which was the almost thirty-year history of Kazakhstan Sinology.

Uzbekistan during the Soviet period had the oldest Sinology school in Central Asia. However, the goals of its creation had a very specific focus, namely, the study of the PRC as a state hostile at that time to the USSR. Accordingly, the tasks of Sinology primarily included the struggle on the ideological front, refutation and discussion on the historical field, etc. The discussion at the round table showed this clearly since representatives and followers of this school dominated the discussion process. As a result, the round table was marked by fears of threats from China.

Thus, the doctor of historical sciences Abdulakhat Khodjaev noted: "Back in Soviet times, a department for studying relations between China and Central Asia was created at the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. After 1962, relations between the USSR and China deteriorated due to border disputes. Back in 1954, the border issue was included in the 30-year bilateral treaty". 18

¹⁸ CABAR (2019). In Tashkent, experts and scientists discussed the status and prospects of the school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/v-tashkente-eksperty-i-uchenye-obsudili-sostoy-anie-i-perspektivy-shkoly-sinologii/ [available since June 5, 2019].



Professor of the Tashkent Institute of Oriental Studies Natalya Karimova openly expresses her fears: «Confucius Institutes, Sinology classes are being created in Central Asia, and such dynamics are menacing». ¹⁹ In general, 13 Confucius Institutes function in the region; their number by country is shown in the illustration below. ²⁰

Number of Confucius Institutes in Central Asia



Source: Confucius Institute (2019), http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm

¹⁹ CABAR (2019). In Tashkent, experts and scientists discussed the status and prospects of the school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/v-tashkente-eksperty-i-uchenye-obsudili-sostoyanie-i-perspektivy-shkoly-sinologii/ [available since June 5, 2019].

²⁰ Confucius Institute (2019). About Confucius Institute/Classroom. English.hanban.org. Access via the link: http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm [available since June 5, 2019 г.]..



Despite the fact that the realities of the current day dictate different conditions, Uzbek Sinology did not find an answer to the question of how to perceive China today, for the general Central Asian reasons outlined above. Plus, the generation gap, where the older generation nurtured to study China as a potential adversary, and modernity requires the search for economic models of interaction. All this led to the fact that the young names of Uzbek Sinology are practically inaudible. This was facilitated, among other things, by the lack of common borders and the relative closeness of the Uzbek economy, which reduced the opportunity for economic interaction between Uzbekistan and China.

Anri Sharapov, a senior lecturer at the Tashkent Institute of Oriental Studies, noted that the development of the "Belt and Road Initiative" project is also important for Uzbekistan, as "... we also need infrastructure, investments, and cooperation in various industries", 21 thereby demonstrating different approaches to cooperation with China.

In Kyrgyzstan, with its most democratic organization in the open spaces of Central Asia, Sinologists have achieved the greatest success in terms of reaching high posts. Three times, Sinologists were foreign ministers (M. Imanaliev, K. Sarbaev and E. Abdyldaev) and had a theoretical opportunity to support Sinology in the country. It should be noted that all of them can be considered graduates of «Soviet Sinology», but the next generation should have become the very fruit of independent Kyrgyzstan.

Most likely here, the poverty factor of the country, which has faced and still faces many problems of banal survival, played its role. Accordingly, it is physically impossible and inexpedient to create a full-fledged school of Sinology on the country's own funds. It is much more important to achieve an increase in the living standards of the population to an acceptable level.

²¹ CABAR (2019). In Tashkent, experts and scientists discussed the status and prospects of the school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/v-tashkente-eksperty-i-uchenye-obsudili-sostoy-anie-i-perspektivy-shkoly-sinologii/ [available since June 5, 2019].



INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

It can be assumed that the school of Sinology could be formed within the framework of existing analytical centers that advise their governments in Central Asia. For example, the leading Chinese "thought factories" have long established integrated schools for the study of the post-Soviet space and Central Asia, in particular.

In the Central Asian states, under the apparatus of governments, naturally, there are also analytical centers (think tanks) that put their information at the very "top". These are institutes and centers of strategic research under the president's office, such as, for example, the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies or the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, or the corresponding units of the Academy of Sciences, such as the Institute of Oriental Studies, History, Philosophy, etc.

However, unlike their Chinese counterparts, these structures have limited potential for the development of country studies. Structures under the presidential apparatus are loaded with daily routine, which still imposes low wages on budgetary organizations, which in turn provokes a constant outflow of personnel.

Academic structures suffer from a chronic lack of any finances and the need to prove their right to exist with pain and gain; as a result, the situation with personnel and capabilities is even more complicated. The most painful moment is the lack of young cadres seeking to engage in scientific research.

Various other near-state "think tanks", by having a good financial base, are immersed in solving immediate problems and are not able to cherish personnel. Moreover, they tend to fall apart easily when the powerful "patron" hand disappears, directing finances to the treasury of the structure.

ACADEMIC STRUCTURES SUFFER FROM A CHRONIC LACK OF ANY FINANCES AND THE NEED TO PROVE THEIR RIGHT TO EXIST WITH "PAIN AND GAIN"

Naturally, under such conditions, even Chinese researchers are sometimes puzzled by the kaleidoscope of rapidly changing individuals in the research structures of Central Asia. Representatives of research organizations appear from nowhere and disappear to nowhere, with the rare exception of a few dozen well-known names, and those working mostly in an independent format.

The expectations of developing Sinology based on foreign funding, for example, through Western grants, are hardly consistent. There are several considerations in this regard.

Firstly, the grant life is very unstable, and upon completion of a couple of major studies, the structure may fall into a "cash gap" situation, which will be fatal for it. But most importantly, Western grants will require harsh and impartial criticism of China, which for researchers in a few years will put an end to the possibilities of normal communication with Chinese colleagues and research trips to China. Again, work on this will stop.

Secondly, the instability of grant structures will never allow them to broadcast their thoughts and studies at a high level since trust will be low. Accordingly, to achieve credibility, prestige and success, which is so important for attracting young cadres and new generations, will be extremely problematic.





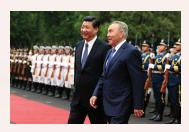
The reliance on Chinese funding is even less well-founded, since, firstly, it is completely unclear why Beijing should subsidize the science about China in a foreign country.

Secondly, researchers will quickly face allegations of bias, which in the conditions of Sinophobia is the most likely scenario with the most unpredictable consequences.

In this context, it will be appropriate to recall that in February of this year (2019), the Kazakhstani special services detained the famous Kazakh Sinologist, Konstantin Syroezhkin on charges of high treason.²² An article by Thomas Grove in the well-known edition of the Wall Street Journal suggests that this detention is one of the signals for Beijing from the Kazakh elite, showing the "red flags" of what is allowed.²³

²² Adilbekov, D. (2019). National Security Agency: Sinologist Konstantin Syroezhkin detained on suspicion of treason. Informburo.kz. Access via the link: https://informburo.kz/novosti/knb-uchyonyy-kitaeved-konstantin-syroezhkin-zaderzhan-po-podozreniyu-v-gosudarstvennoy-izmene. html [available since June 5, 2019].

²³ Grove, T. (2019). A Spy Case Exposes China's Power Play in Central Asia. The Wall Street Journal. Access via the link: [available since July 11, 2019 Γ .].



Xi Jinping and Nursultan Nazarbayev. Photo: elbasy.kz

LINES OF SINOPHOBIA

One of the important factors influencing the development of Sinology remains Sinophobia, which was very clearly demonstrated during the discussion in the framework of this study. It can be noted that the moment of the gap in awareness of the past and the present have even greater influence. This refers to the lack of a clearly formulated question: "Who is China for the countries of Central Asia?" And a concrete answer to it.

NURSULTAN NAZARBAYEV: «CHINA IS NOT ONLY A NEIGHBOR AND ECONOMIC PARTNER, BUT ALSO A CLOSE FRIEND OF KAZAKHSTAN»



What does it mean? At the highest level, constant declarations are being made about friendship with China, about the importance of Chinese investment, that «a neighbor is given by God,» and therefore, sometimes more important than a relative, etc. rhetoric. Thus, the ex-president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev noted that «China is not only a neighbor and economic partner but also a close friend of Kazakhstan, whom we trust and rely on».²⁴

²⁴ Zakon.kz (2019). Nazarbayev: China is not only a neighbor but also a close friend of Kazakhstan. Access via the link: https://www.zakon.kz/4967740-nazarbaev-kitay-eto-ne-tolko-sosed-no-i.html [available since June 5, 2019].

The newly elected president of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Zhomart Tokaev, emphasized: "A close neighbor is better than distant relatives, good neighborly and friendly relations with China have always been one of the priority areas of Kazakhstan's foreign policy".²⁵

Shavkat Mirziyoyev called China a sincere friend of Uzbekistan and thanked the Chinese side for the assistance provided.²⁶

SINOPHOBIA PROSPERS AT THE LOW LEVEL, OF BOTH DOMESTIC AND FULLY POLITICAL-ECONOMIC IMPACT



President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Sooronbai Jeenbekov stated: "We are pleased with the achievements of our Chinese friends. China is our closest friend, reliable partner and a good neighbor. We greatly value our friendship and cooperation".²⁷

And there are thousands of such examples for each of the countries of Central Asia. Let's say more: it is normal and good that such a positive atmosphere of interaction reigns at the highest political level between our countries. And that the language of diplomacy between the Central Asian countries and China is literally saturated with friendship because when the diplomats are silent, the guns are talking.

²⁵ Xinhua (2019). Press release of the Chinese Embassy in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2019.5.13-5.19). Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Access is here: http://kz.china-embassy.org/eng/sgxx/sgdt/t1665864.htm [available since June 5, 2019].

²⁶ Xinhua (2019). Xi Jinping met with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Xinhua News. Access via the link: http://russian.news.cn/2019-04/25/c_138009397.htm [available since June 5, 2019].

²⁷ Sputnik.kg (2018). Jeenbekov called China "Kyrgyzstan's closest friend". Sputnik Kyrgyzstan. Access via the link: https://ru.sputnik.kg/politics/20180607/1039554099/zheenbekov-kitay-drug.html [available since June 5, 2019].



Any conflict is always grief and poverty for ordinary people, just look at countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, the Central African Republic, etc., to make sure: where violence and anger reign, there are only a handful of "warlords" (field commanders) live in pleasure amid the misery of millions.

The question, however, is not that, but rather more of the grassroots level terry Sinophobia that is flourishing, moreover, both domestic and quite under the political and economic influence. Chinese investments, business and even tourists are perceived as hostile, there are many materials displayed on social networks and even in the media. Every news is often interpreted in a harshly negative light.

And here one can notice the emerged gap. On the one hand, China seems to be definitely a friend, a strategic partner, and a long-term prospect of mutual economic projects. Based on the following logic, Sinology should provide scientific support for the comprehensive development of China.

On the other hand, the powerful anti-Chinese discourse puts on the ground a completely different agenda, evident by the events in recent years taking place in Kazakhstan and especially in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, superimposed on the Soviet tradition of Sinology as a study of a potential adversary, such a course of Sinology is perceived as hostile. At times even by the officials themselves, which leads to an unexpected paradox.

The highest powers of Central Asia, on one hand, requires the development of relations with China. Criticism of relations with China is perceived as opposition, for which ultimately there may be a certain penalty. On the other hand, particularly at certain places, exhibits fear of these relations and therefore expects criticism of Chinese projects, which the higher powers of Central Asia itself forbid. Thus, it is a very dead-end from which an obvious way out is not to be seen yet.

Hence the impossibility of creating a "friendly society in the Central Asian countries" based on the analogy of the "Russian-Chinese Friendship Society" or the "Sino-American Friendship Society".²⁸

HIGH AUTHORITIES IN CENTRAL ASIA
DEMANDS DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS
WITH CHINA. HOWEVER, THEY ARE AFRAID
OF THESE RELATIONS AND EXPECT
CRITICISM OF CHINESE PROJECTS



Central Asian elites recognizes the issues of Sinophobia and even sometimes are forced to respond to it. For example, the head of the Ministry of Information and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Dauren Abayev, once pointed out the factors behind the emergence of fake news about China: "The first is the presence of Sinophobia, which is, a "whalephobia". This factor is systematically used by fake manufacturers, applied on any related horror story with China. It is immediately picked up by Kazakhstani users of social networks. The second factor is that, unlike Russian or English languages, only a few of our citizens speak Chinese. Therefore, it is not always clear to us what is really happening on the video. The third factor is ignorance of China. The difference in perception of China between those who have been there at least once and those who have not been there is enormous. Therefore, most Kazakhstanis live by stereotypes. The fact that the Chinese are eager for Kazakhstan is a myth".29

²⁸ See The People's Daily (2019). Li Xiaolin: in the future development of Sino-US relations, we must rely on joint research and theoretical innovation. Russian.people.com.cn. Access is here: http://russian.people.com.cn/31521/8056932.html [available since June 5, 2019].

²⁹ Zakon.kz (2018). Abaev spoke out about whaling. Access via the link: https://www.zakon.kz/4924012-abaev-kitaytsy-ne-rvutsya-v-kazahstan. html [available since June 20, 2019].



Chinese anti-Soviet poster with the slogan "Away with Soviet revisionism!" 1967. Source: eastredgallery.com

It should be noted that the origins of Sinophobia are quite obvious and lie in the mainstream of the Sino-Soviet conflict during the Cold War. The Chinese side also sees primarily the historical causes of this phenomenon. Thus, the Chinese Consul General in Almaty Zhang Wei, speaking about China-phobia, noted: "This phenomenon was not a surprise for the dialogue between the PRC and the RK: it was caused by" very cold relations between China and the Soviet Union "in the 50-60s of the last century". 30

We shall remind that it all commenced after the death of I. Stalin, the era of the dawn of Soviet-Chinese friendship began to deteriorate rapidly after a report by N. Khrushchev at the 20th Congress criticizing the cult of personality. However, Nikita Sergeyevich criticized the policy of the Chinese Communist Party, saying that there are only slogans there, but really scientific Leninism is absent. Naturally, the Chinese side also reacted to these events, and in the future even came to «hot» clashes on the Daman Peninsula and the area of Zhalanashkol.

As Renat Davletgildeev highlights, it is surprising that the Soviet-Chinese conflict was the only example when both the KGB chairman and dissidents merged in this creative impulse. Everyone sang and wrote about the Chinese threat - from Vysotsky and Okudzhava to Yevtushenko and Amalrik.³¹

THE ORIGINS OF SINOPHOBIA GO THROUGH THE SOVIET-CHINESE CONFLICT

³⁰ Minulin, R. (2018). What are the causes of anti-Chinese sentiments? The main from the conversation with the Consul General of China Zhang Wei. Informburo.kz. Access via the link https://informburo.kz/stati/v-chyom-prichiny-kitaefobii-rasshi-frovka-besedy-s-genkonsulom-knr-chzhanveem.html [available June 5, 2019].

³¹ Davletgildeev, R. (2017). From fraternity forever to armed conflict: how China and Russia were friends and quarreled. The Present Time. Access via the link: https://www.currenttime.tv/a/28803266.html [available June 5, 2019]

CURRENT CENTRAL ASIAN SINOLOGY HAS BEEN TRAPPED, SINCE HISTORICAL MEMO-RY AND CURRENT ECONOMIC NEEDS CON-TRADICT EACH OTHER



Map of the PRC border with the USSR from 1988. Source: Central Intelligence Agency via Library of Congress

Naturally, in all the Central Asian republics that were in close proximity to the PRC, a whole anti-Chinese campaign was launched, and generations grew upon them. This is reflected in historical novels, schoolbooks, and works of art, creating the image of an age-old irreconcilable enemy from a bordering country.

Current Central Asian Sinology (as well as the authorities) fell into this trap when historical memory and current economic needs contradicted each other. This was clearly evident at the round table of Republic of Uzbekistan, when representatives of the Soviet school spoke from the standpoint of alarmism, and representatives of the new generation spoke about the search for opportunities.

MANY CENTRAL ASIAN-CHINEESE ISSUES IN RELATIONSHIP REMAIN UNRESOLVED SINCE THE SOVIET-CHINA SPLIT

Klara Hafizova

WHAT TOMORROW HOLDS

Opinions among the Kazakhstani experts tend to split regarding prospects and future sinology in the Central Asian region. The greatest number of optimistic thoughts about the development of Central Asian Sinology was among Kazakhstani experts.

For example, Kazakhstani political scientist, the head of Transparency Kazakhstan, Marat Shibutov, mentioned that in the next few years, Kazakhstan will begin to enter the PRC market for certain goods, and this will create a need for knowledge of Chinese law, the economy, negotiation skills and concluding agreements with the Chinese. Then there will be a need and a possible «rise» in Kazakhstan's Sinology.³²

Klara Hafizova, a professor from Kazakhstan also shared very positive views on potential scenarios for the development of Kazakhstani Sinology, concluding that «the more Sinologists we have, the greater the chances that there will be a good specialist among them».³³ She draws such a conclusion on the basis of working with young people who are interested in China, although she demonstrates an extremely low level of knowledge in such key areas as geography, history, political structure, culture, etc.

According to T. Kaukenova, to become a specialist in the Middle Kingdom requires motivation ("it is not necessary to love China, but it is necessary to be interested"), research skills, Chinese (preferably also English, because it has a large layer of information), highly specialized knowledge and channels for going to work in academic or research circles.³⁴

³² CABAR (2019). IWPR: in Kazakhstan, experts discussed issues of China. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/iwpr-v-kazahstane-eksperty-obsudili-problemy-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Yuritsyn, V. (2019). Sinology in Kazakhstan: there are specialists, but there is no school. Zonakz.net. Access via the link: https://zonakz.



Azhar Serikkaliyeva



Tatyana Kaukenova



T. Kaukenova is convinced that the combination of these factors is a rarity for modern Central Asia, however, these components will help create a generation of promising Sinologists.

Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, KazNU Al-Farabi, a specialist in China, Azhar Serikkaliyeva, noted that the Department of Sinology is the most popular among other areas of the faculty for many years.³⁵

Some Kyrgyz colleagues agreed with Kazakhstani «optimists.» So, ex-Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldaev noted: "Kyrgyzstan needs an expert center with experts in understanding China, which will provide state bodies high-quality and in-depth expertise in various aspects of cooperation with China ... Investments that will be made to create an expert community in China and in foreign policy issues will fully pay for themselves in the future". 36

According to the deputy chairman of the Association of Sinologists of Kyrgyzstan, the former dean of the Kyrgyz - Chinese faculty of the Bishkek Humanitarian University (BHU), Vladimir Liu, the country has enough experts with knowledge of the Chinese language. It is now necessary to understand knowledge of specific specialties.³⁷

The Kyrgyz expert on public administration Sheradil Baktygulov however does not agree with them: «The school of synology cannot develop in four to five years, it has been laid down for decades.» Moreover,

net/2019/02/28/kitaevedenie-v-kazaxstane-specialisty-est-no-shkoly-net/[available since June 5, 2019].

35 Yuritsyn, V. (2019). Sinology in Kazakhstan: there are specialists, but there is no school. Zonakz.net. Access via the link: https://zonakz.net/2019/02/28/kitaevedenie-v-kazaxstane-specialisty-est-no-shkoly-net/[available since June 5, 2019].

37 Ibid.

³⁶ CABAR (2019). Experts: Kyrgyzstan must form a strong school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/eksperty-kyrgyzstan-dolzhen-sformirovat-silnuyu-shkolu-kitaevedeniya/ [available since June 5, 2019].



Vladimir Liu



Rashid Gani Abdullo



in his opinion, "the low demand for expertise in China is also transmitted to the training of future generations of Sinists. Despite the popularity of the Chinese language and growing trade with China, many graduates (even top universities) are left without a job in their field".³⁸

Kyrgyz expert on China Salamat Dzhibykeev also urges not to hope for early success. In his opinion, one should expect that the creation of a school of Chinese studies in the Kyrgyz Republic will be a long process. In particular, he cited the example of a Russian school, which developed over 300 years.³⁹

His Tajik counterpart Rashid Gani Abdullo, in principle, doubts the prospects for further development of the school of sinology in Tajikistan.⁴⁰

According to the results of the round table, Tajik experts noted that acceleration in the development of Sinology in the countries of Central Asia will become possible only if the resources of all countries are combined. It is necessary to implement joint regional projects to study China on the basis of universities, state and independent think tanks. The culmination of such a development of regional cooperation could be a single "think tank" for the study of China.

Taking into account the fact that the creation of a common think tank immediately raises the question of who will finance it, and most importantly, who will have the right to exclusive information from it - it does not provide great prospects for the development of this very interesting idea.⁴¹

38 Ibid.

39 39 CABAR (2019). Experts: Kyrgyzstan must form a strong school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/eksperty-kyrgyzstan-dolzhen-sformirovat-silnuyu-shkolu-kitaevedeniya/[available on June 5, 2019].

40 CABAR (2019). In Dushanbe, experts discussed the prospects of the Tajik school of Sinology. CABAR.asia. Access via the link: https://cabar.asia/ru/v-dushanbe-eksperty-obsudili-perspektivy-tadzhikskoj-shkoly-sinologii/ [available since June 5, 2019].

41 Ibid.



CONCLUSION

Thus, Sinology in Central Asia is in its infancy, in some countries it has experienced serious degradation, failing to adapt to new conditions. The unanimous voice of all experts about the urgent need for a specialized structure for the study of China in the country or region is broken up by the harsh realities of the lack of interest on the part of elitists and the highest official class, who found their formula for making political decisions without regard to the scientific and expert basis.

Nevertheless, the emergence of new forms of economic cooperation between the Central Asian countries and China is of great interest to young people who rush to faculties that train specialists in various fields with knowledge of the Chinese language, culture, mentality and structure of the country. This gives hope for the emergence of a different form of scientific understanding and research of the Celestial Empire in Central Asia, aimed at meeting the needs of business, the broad masses of the population and, ultimately, political circles.

In general, the measures taken can be evaluated as useful and effective in a number of ways.

First of all, the round tables held under the auspices of the IWPR representative office in Central Asia and the analytical platform CABAR.asia brought the issue of Sinology in the states of the region into a public field and made it possible to openly and frankly describe the situation, identify key points and exchange views on quite acute problems. Such experience in relation to the status and prospects of Sinology in the countries of Central Asia is a very rare and, therefore, valuable phenomenon. The articulation of issues that seem obvious but at the same time have not been discussed before, is often the first step towards resolving accumulated problems.

Secondly, the measures taken made it possible to present the situation not only within the expert community but also at the level of a wider audience. So, for example, in Kazakhstan, quite a lot of media representatives came to the round table and actively participated in the discussion and asked rather urgent questions. Following the results of the round table, a number of publications were published describing the discussion. The Internet newspaper Zona.kz in the material "Sinology in Kazakhstan: there are experts, but no school" notes: "... there are very few established specialists who can be called Sinologists in the full sense of the word; the word «Sinology» is blurry from the point of view of the scientific-conceptual apparatus; the expert and scientific-analytical pool is considered by the bureaucratic corps, first of all, as a tool for servicing propaganda, but certainly not as an "adviser". 42

THE APPEARANCE OF NEW FORMS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES AND CHINA IS CAUSING THE HUGE INTEREST OF YOUNG PEOPLE



⁴² Yuritsyn, V. (2019). Sinology in Kazakhstan: there are specialists, but there is no school. Zonakz.net. Access via the link: https://zonakz.net/2019/02/28/kitaevedenie-v-kazaxstane-specialisty-est-no-shkoly-net/[available since June 5, 2019].

Another source - the Central Asia Monitor newspaper, based on the results of the round table, published an article, "Why is China preparing Sinologists for Kazakhstan?", where the author states: "In our neighborhood with one of the most powerful and densely populated countries in the world, we know almost nothing about it. Paradoxically, in Kazakhstan, only a few specialists are professionally engaged in the study of modern China, but even their works remain unclaimed. What can we say in general about Sinology – it died long ago. The chances of its revival are minimal ... Unless, of course, it will not be caused by extreme circumstances».⁴³

Thus, such publications made it possible to transfer the problem of Sinology to the category of discussed topical issues and conveyed information about its condition and, of course, the importance of its solution to the general public.

THERE IS HOPE FOR THE EMERGENCE
OF A DIFFERENT FORM OF SCIENTIFIC
UNDERSTANDING AND RESEARCH OF THE
CELESTIAL IN CENTRAL ASIA



⁴³ Isabaeva, S. (2019). Why are China preparing trainers for Kazakhstan?. Central Asia Monitor. Access via the link: https://camonitor.kz/32720-pochemu-sinologov-dlya-kazahstana-gotovit-kitay.html [available since June 7, 2019].

ROUND TABLES HELD BY IWPR
REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE IN CENTRAL
ASIA AND THE CABAR.ASIA ANALYTICAL
PLATFORM BROUGHT THE PROBLEM
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The CABAR.asia team would appreciate feedback and comments on this publication.





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