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Beyond post-Soviet transition: the political economy of Central Asia

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The study of Central Asian political economy is undergoing a profound transformation. Long framed through the lenses of post-Soviet transition, rentierism, and great-power dependency, the region's growing integration into global production networks, particularly through emerging South-South partnerships, demands a rethinking of established paradigms. From automotive and energy joint ventures to textile, logistics, and digital infrastructure projects, Central Asia has become crucial testing grounds for the reconfiguration of global capitalism in a multipolar world. These changes raise new questions about how states, firms, and communities in the region navigate, negotiate, and contest external economic power while articulating their own models of development and modernity.

This panel asks whether current frameworks in International Political Economy (IPE) adequately capture Central Asia's transformations by focusing on three interrelated questions:

- 1) How do global production and finance reshape the political economies of Central Asia, beyond extractivism and dependency?
- 2) What forms of agency, resistance, and adaptation emerge among local firms, workers, and communities engaging with the increasing presence of foreign capital from China, Western Asia, Russia and the West?
- 3) How can Central Asia's experiences contribute to broader IPE debates on globalisation, green industrialisation, and the political economy of development?

By bringing together scholars of development, global production networks, and critical IPE, the panel situates the regions at the forefront of contemporary transformations in the global economy. It seeks to challenge Eurocentric and resource-centred readings of Central Asia, instead foregrounding its role as a laboratory of new industrial, social, and ecological experiments. The discussion contributes to BISA's ongoing debates on the reconfiguration of global capitalism and the politics of production, offering "new directions" for International Studies to understand agency and innovation in the Global Majority.

Track Classification: East Europe and Eurasian Security Working Group