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Sommario/riassunto	"Whoever controls Central Asia controls the world" said Halford Mackinder, the English father of geopolitics. He was looking at the world at the beginning of the 20th century, when the British Empire reached its apogee. It is ironic then that, only a few decades after he developed his ideas, great powers would almost forget about Central Asia and turn their attention back to the Middle East. The reasons? History, geography, and the discovery of vast hydrocarbon resources. Over the past century, it has been an almost constant refrain: as great

and middle powers rise, they will almost invariably look at the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It was therefore to be expected that, with the world's economic and political centre of gravity moving increasingly towards East and South Asia, a number of countries in these regions would devote more attention to the MENA region. China and India, in particular, have been at the forefront of an astonishing rise, as their GDP has grown respectively fourteen-fold and six-fold, at a constant rate, between 1990 and 2019, with China climbing from the eleventh to the second largest economy in the world, and India from the thirteenth to the fifth. With the unfolding of this monumental change, MENA countries have started to "look East" more and more and with a keener interest, also with an eye to rebalancing the influence and interference of "classical" non-regional actors such as the United States, Russia and a number of European countries (especially former colonial powers).
