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PRESIDENT**

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**THE GEOPOLITICAL EVOLUTION OF  
CENTRAL ASIA: REGION DURING THE  
WORLD CRISIS**

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Настоящее издание является продолжением предыдущих (англоязычных) книг автора, посвященных геополитике и международным отношениям вокруг и в Центральной Азии, а также проблемам международной и региональной безопасности.

В первой части монографии рассматриваются основные теории и концепции зарубежных (преимущественно западных) экспертов. Вторая часть книги изучает геополитические проблемы региона, стратегию и политику великих держав (России, США, Европейского Союза, КНР) в Центральной Азии. Данные стратегии рассматриваются как в отношении всего региона в целом, так и на примере политики геополитических акторов в отношении отдельных центральноазиатских государств.

Третья часть книги посвящена проблемам безопасности в Центральной Азии и включает в себя сюжеты, связанные с влиянием ситуации в Афганистане на безопасность региона. Отдельное место занимает такая проблема как радикальный ислам и его влияние на Центральную Азию. Специальный раздел посвящен роли Ирана в региональной политике и его стратегии по формированию «Пакс Ираника». События в Киргизии, которые имели сильный резонанс с точки зрения сохранения стабильности и безопасности в регионе, также нашли отражение в работе. И наконец, специальная глава посвящена внешней политике Казахстана, председательству РК в ОБСЕ и усилиям Астаны по укреплению евразийской безопасности.

Монография рассчитана на специалистов-международников, востоковедов и политологов. Книга может использоваться в качестве учебного пособия на факультетах международных отношений и политологии.

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About the Author

## **Introduction: Central Asia on the Eve of the World Crisis**

This book is a logic continuation of our previous editions published in English and issued the geopolitics of Central Asia.<sup>1</sup>

On the eve of the world crisis, the years 2007-08 was a time of geopolitical changes for the region, some of which remained latent but completely analyzable. The geoeconomic factors and the worldwide financial crisis (a crisis of liquidity and defaults as well as instability in the international financial markets), the rising prices for basic commodities such as energy resources and foodstuffs, the economic growth in Russia, China, and India, and the rising importance of the energy security issue, etc. inevitably affected the situation in Central Asia.<sup>2</sup>

The 2007-2008 crisis began in the mortgage system of the United States and spread like wildfire to the global banking and financial systems. It caused an economic decline in the United States and, by the end of 2007, reached the euro zone. Depreciation of the world's main currency has hit the global economy; the value of dollar savings is steadily decreasing while export incomes converted into national currencies are losing their value. Transborder investment projects are at risk.

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<sup>1</sup> Laumulin M. The Foreign Policy and Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan". – Almaty: Eurasia Foundation and MacArthur Foundation, 1997. - 169 p. idem. The Security, Foreign Policy and International Relationship of Kazakhstan after Independence: 1991-2001. Almaty: KazISS and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2002. – 212 p. Laumulin M., Ashimbaev M. New Challenges and New Geopolitics in Central Asia: after September 11". Almaty: KazISS, 2003. – 198 p. idem. Central Asia and the West: the Geopolitical Impact on the Regional Security. – Almaty: KazISS/KazNU, 2004. – 219 p. idem. The Geopolitics of Central Asia in 21st Century. – Almaty: KazISS, 2007. - 281 p. idem. The Kazakhs: Children of the Steppes. (in cooperation with Chokan Laumulin). – Kent (UK): Global Oriental, 2009. – XI+150 pp.

<sup>2</sup> See: Laumulin M. Geopolitical Landmarks: Central Asia Today // Central Asia and the Caucasus (Lulea, Sweden). No 5 (2008), pp. 19-35. idem. New Geopolitical Framework of Central Asia // Central Asia's Affairs (Almaty, KazISS). 2009. No 1, pp. 6-13.

Strange as it may seem the states with currencies that could run the risk of gaining value have the largest dollar reserves. This fully applies to the tenge of Kazakhstan. At this time, there was the danger of an uncontrollable and highly uncertain situation developing in the global economy that could continue for a long time to come. Countries and regions are exposed to considerable cumulative effects in the political or even military-political spheres. What is going on in the world today may hit the Kazakhstani economy either in the financial or the real sector: a financial shock spreads faster than a shock in the consumer sphere, which politicians should also take into account.

The United States was steadily losing control over its own national currency; it is no longer able to keep down inflation without raising the interest rate. The latter invites liquidity but interferes with economic growth. Translated into terms of the global financial order, this means that the dollar is on the verge of losing its anchor currency status. This may happen much earlier than expected. The rest of the world will be hit: the universal currency served all and helped maintain international stability.

Deprived of a peg currency, the global financial system might slide into a crisis. It is commonly believed that the euro may serve as an adequate alternative to the dollar, but its survival is not guaranteed: even the lowest global inflation might cause serious problems. This has already created geopolitical tension, which, along with U.S. protectionism, might undermine the world economy and provoke a global recession.

In the changing global economic context the list of major geopolitical actors involved in Central Asia remained the same, even though they readjusted their preferences and involvement. They are the West (represented by the United States, the European Union, and Japan), Russia, China, and the Islamic world. India has been demonstrating its mounting interest in the region for some time. The West (America and the EU) is changing its strategies in Central Asia because of the growing importance of the energy issue heated up by the rising oil and gas prices, its rapidly increasing shortage of fuel, and just as rapidly unfolding competition over resources and transportation routes. The West is working toward making Central Asia and the Caucasus part of its system of diversified fuel transportation. Japan's interest in the uranium industry of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian republics is mounting by the hour.

In the security sphere NATO was developing into an important factor in Central Asia. The Bucharest NATO Summit clearly demonstrated that the North Atlantic Alliance has never let Eurasia out of its sight despite the temporary setback experienced by Georgia and Ukraine. While Moscow and the others were watching Kiev and Tbilisi, few noticed that Kazakhstan had moved closer to NATO, which means that it is not far behind these two republics. In the near future the opposing sides will clash over Kazakhstan in an effort to push it toward or away from NATO. On the whole NATO will remain highly visible in the region's geopolitical destiny and in ensuring its security.

The NATO Summit of April 2008 in Budapest convincingly demonstrated that security in the Atlantic Alliance and in Eurasia is interconnected. Even though

Georgia and Ukraine were not invited to join the line it became abundantly clear that NATO affects, to the strongest extent, the security system in Central Eurasia. In view of the Afghan factor this role looks even more important, especially in Central Asia. Sooner or later the consistent penetration of the Western security structures into the continent's interior will raise the question of cooperation between the Alliance and two regional structures (the CSTO and SCO).

Western strategists have not yet sorted the SCO out: it remains to be seen whether it is an economic alliance, a military-political bloc, or something else. The extent to which its aims are realizable is still unclear. The West is even more concerned about whether the SCO (or, rather, the Russia-China tandem) threatens the sovereignty and independence of the Central Asian states. Translated into clear terms this reads: To what extent do the Central Asian countries make independent decisions within the SCO? Evan Feigenbaum, Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, was much more direct: "What exactly is the relationship between two huge continental powers — Russia and China — and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's smaller, but nonetheless fiercely proud and independent, Central Asian members?"<sup>3</sup>

Recently, the West has hinted that it knows the SCO is not an anti-NATO structure. This is explained not only by concern over the future of the Central Asian countries but also by a clear understanding that being involved in the SCO the Central Asian members cannot accept either Russian or Chinese domination and will never agree to part with even a few of their sovereignties. Seen from Central Asia the West and its institutions look like an alternative. This is how the Western strategists argue. Washington does not want the SCO to acquire an anti-American element: America is fighting in Afghanistan, the SCO's backyard.

Washington has been aware for some time that each of the SCO members is pursuing a balanced and friendly, or at least not hostile, policy on the bilateral level. This is true of Moscow and Beijing and means that Washington can expect similar behavior from the organization as a whole. It argues that since the United States is requested to give certain guarantees related to its policies in the region, the U.S., in turn, can expect similar guarantees for itself.

It should be said, however, that the United States looked at the region through the prism of its presence in Afghanistan and has to pattern its policies on it. At the same time certain developments around the SCO cannot but cause concern; this is true, first and foremost, of Iran's efforts to join the organization as a full-fledged member. The West does not like the attempts to present the SCO as an energy club of sorts, which hints at the structure's cartel future.

At that time, new overtones could be detected in how the American strategists assess the regional situation: China is gaining weight in the region and in Kazakhstan, which cannot but breed concern that could rapidly develop into

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<sup>3</sup> E. Feigenbaum, *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Future of Central Asia*, The Nixon Center, Washington, D.C., 6 September, 2007. 2 For more detail, see: A. Cohen, "After the G-8 Summit: China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3, February 2006, pp. 51-64.

strategic apprehension.<sup>4</sup> If this concern moved even higher, to the conceptual level, the United States might revise its attitude toward China's role in Central Asia. This will affect, in the most radical way, the entire range of American policies in the region (Russia, the SCO, and in other respects). We cannot exclude the so far vague ideas about America's SCO membership.

The American analytical community said the following about the relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan: since the republics regard balanced relations with all large powers as their strategic aim they should be interested in America's success in Afghanistan. In turn, the United States, which is trying to stabilize Afghanistan and push it toward economic revival, needs the region's states and their businesses as economic partners and sponsors of Afghanistan. The United States is placing its stakes on wider regional cooperation in which Kabul should also be involved.

So far, Afghanistan remained one of the key factors of Central Asia's military-political security. Today relative stabilization is alternating with intensified hostilities; Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of hard drugs, the bulk of which is moved across the Central Asian states.

This was forcing NATO to build up its military presence, widen the zone of fighting, and cooperate with Russia and the CIS in transportation of its cargoes to Afghanistan, which takes the problem outside the region and affects security and the strategic situation inside the CIS as well as relations among its members.

The April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest and public statements of Western leaders attracted attention to the current situation in Afghanistan. The NATO members and particularly the United States know that radical changes are overdue. America is probably getting ready to launch a new offensive at the Taliban; much is being done to strengthen the Afghan army to use it as the pillar of the state's political system. In the next five or six months Washington will launch a wide-scale operation in the southern and eastern provinces and in the Southern Waziristan Province of Pakistan. This is what the new strategy of the Western coalition in Afghanistan suggests. It has been underway since late 2007 and was officially approved by the latest NATO summit.

Nobody expected Hamid Karzai to tighten his grip on the country and put an end to the political instability, therefore Kabul has to increase its armed forces many times over within the shortest time possible to turn the army into the state-forming element. In the future, however, the newly acquired might of a country that has no hydro- and energy resources to speak of might develop into a regional threat.

Washington was helping Afghanistan to build up its army in every way possible. The U.S. and the other Western states that failed to live up to their promises to reconstruct post-Taliban Afghanistan are trying to fill the gap by encouraging integration with the region's north; they have already offered several

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<sup>4</sup> For more detail, see: A. Cohen, "After the G-8 Summit: China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3, February 2006, pp. 51-64.



projects in the expectation that the Central Asian republics will help Afghanistan or even integrate with it. In view of the already obvious factors and trends this might have been dangerous for the Central Asian states. At the same time, they would like NATO to stay in Afghanistan to serve as the key factor of military security.

There were two opposite opinions about how the conflict in Afghanistan should be resolved: either all foreign forces should be removed to let the local people sort things out in order to achieve peace or the Taliban should be completely routed to achieve peace and stabilization. The Pentagon intends to make its military bases in Afghanistan a permanent feature in order to secure the officially declared aims (democracy and liquidation of international terrorism and drug production). Political analysts point to other, less visible aims: opposition to the influence of Russia, China, and India, bringing more pressure to bear on Iran, and creating a foothold to expand access to the Caspian energy sources.

It should be said that the interests of the major world actors (America, China, and Russia), which have little in common on the global level, completely coincide when it comes to the situation in Afghanistan: they need stability at all costs. Kazakhstan and the Central Asian republics would like to see NATO in Afghanistan for a long time to come in order to stabilize the situation. In the future, however, the West will inevitably invite the Central Asian countries to take part in reconstruction, which will develop into a difficult political and economic dilemma for them.

The Central Asian republics want the territory of the former Northern Alliance turned into a security belt to which they and Russia should particularly extend their assistance. A large-scale U.S. military operation will not be limited to Afghanistan - it will spread to Pakistan and tip the military-strategic balance in Southern and Central Asia. These developments will inevitably affect the interests of India, China, and Russia. In fact, the present intention of the Pentagon to set up a large and strong National Army of Afghanistan might produce unexpected results. The regional balance of forces will be tipped in favor of Kabul, which might use its newly acquired force to impose its conditions on its neighbors, including the Central Asian states.

The American analyst community was convinced that the time has come for the Central Asian states and their elites to independently formulate their national interests, new initiatives in the sphere of regional integration and, on the whole, show much more boldness when it comes to defending their sovereignty and ambitions on the international arena (this relates first and foremost to their relations with Russia and China). In this case American support is guaranteed.

The European Union had radically revised its Central Asian policy and the way it cooperates with the regional structures (including the SCO). A recent document—The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership for the Years 2007-2013 — dated 31 May, 2007 identified the following aims (1) stability and security of the regional countries; (2) lower poverty level and higher standard of living within the Millennium Development Goals; and (3) stronger regional cooperation among the local states and between them and the EU, especially in the

energy, transportation, higher education, and environmental protection spheres.<sup>5</sup> The document points out that Central Asia, which serves as the link that keeps Europe and Asia together, belongs to the OSCE (that is, to the European political expanse). The European Union and the Central Asian countries have the common aims—maintaining stability and enjoying prosperity. It says that the member states will support a regular regional political dialog at the foreign minister level; start a European Education Initiative; start an EU Rule of Law Initiative; establish a regular, result-oriented human rights dialog with each of the Central Asian states; and conduct a regular energy dialog with Central Asian states. The EU's intention to enter into an open and constructive dialog with regional organizations and to establish regular ad hoc contacts with the EURASEC, SCO, CICA, CSTO, and CAREC is equally important.<sup>6</sup>

In its relations with the European Union Kazakhstan should take into account that the EU might lose its position as the main economic center of Eurasia; the EU countries are developing into magnets of migration that brings about deep-cutting changes in their social makeup and their industrial structure. At the same time the European Union will depend on Eurasian energy resources for a long time to come.

The European neighborhood policy and the EU strategy in relation to the Central Asian republics should be treated as an independent issue. Just like Russia and the United States, Brussels is sparing no effort to strengthen its position in Central Asia. Its strategy in the region is related to the energy sphere, oil and gas production and transportation, and energy security for the European Union. It feels free, at the same time, to discuss democracy and human rights issues; this means that the new strategy follows the old line which was expected to give the West certain advantages over the post-Soviet states and arm it with instruments of pressure.

The EU's stronger regional positions might help the Central Asian republics to shed some of America's and Russia's political influence and establish much stronger economic relations. Outside the CIS the European Union is the largest importer of Central Asian energy products; unification of the energy systems will permit the regional energy exporters to reach, in the mid-term perspective, a stable energy market.

Some Western analysts argued that the EU has secured none of its strategic aims of the 1990s: poverty is still the region's outstanding feature; there is still a lot of resistance to the reforms in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan; the human rights issue and the inadequate level of democracy remain on the agenda while the EU's energy interests are still vulnerable. No progress was registered in the security sphere either. The inference is obvious: to regain the "region's confidence," the EU should change its strategy. In the security sphere it should assume the role of a strong force rather than of a "toothless paper tiger"; in the energy sphere Europe

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<sup>5</sup> For more detail, see: The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership, PRC, Brussels, 2007, 20 pp.

<sup>6</sup> For more detail, see: A.J.K. Bailes, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Europe," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2007, pp. 13-18.

should demonstrate more confidence, while in the sphere of democracy it should exercise realist approaches. The European Union is advised to coordinate its strategy with other international actors, meaning NATO and the OSCE. On the whole, the EU's foreign policy, strategy, and methods are failing in Central Asia and elsewhere for the simple reason that this complicated geopolitical and geoeconomic mechanism lacks a single decision-making center.<sup>7</sup>

All sorts of geoeconomic projects, related mostly to the transportation routes of energy resources, figured prominently in the geopolitical maneuvering around Central Asia. Today American policy and strategy in this sphere are habitually demonized, yet impartial consideration of the geoeconomic and geopolitical realities accepts them as the demand of the times. If the Soviet Union had survived it would have been pushing similar projects and would not have been shy to use force. It would have been especially active in gaining control over the markets and transit routes in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan (if it still retained its grip on the country), and South Asia.

The Caspian pipeline project was stalling mainly because there is another pipeline project on the table, the so-called Trans-Caspian pipeline, going across the Caspian via the South Caucasian states to Turkey and Europe. Ashghabad is using it for haggling over gas prices for Russia and lower transportation tariffs across its potential partners for itself.

It has become abundantly clear that the importance of hydrocarbon fuel will rise and Kazakhstan can profit from this. The republic, however, should start producing its own nuclear energy in cooperation with the Russian Federation and its Central Asian neighbors, encourage hydropower in the region, and introduce energy-saving technologies.

Very much as usual, S.F. Starr of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (the John Hopkins University) has offered bold ideas about the role the United States can play to change, in the most radical way, the configuration of Eurasian cooperation and its nature. He admits that the new transportation projects promise local and transnational partners new and tempting financial advantages. It is not surprising that the project head insistently suggests that the U.S. State Department institute the post of ambassador for trade with Greater Central Asia. S.F. Starr asks the logical question: If the idea of inner-continental trade is good why does it remain unrealized? And answers: first, the project depends on too many disjointed elements (by this he means legal, tax, organizational, banking, managerial, technological, and human-personnel-problems as well as security and communication issues). There are too many participants (by this he means transit countries) with varied, if not contradicting, state, trade, and economic policies that have very little in common with the accepted standards and rules. In this context

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<sup>7</sup> For more detail, see: A. Warkotsch, *Die Zentralasiatische Politik der Europäischen Union: Interessen, Strukturen und Reformoptionen*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a.M., 2006, 253 pp

China has already demonstrated its much greater flexibility and readiness to accept the required norms than highly centralized Russia.<sup>8</sup>

The American author does not question his country's responsibility for the Eurasian system of transportation corridors and believes it should be involved in it by all means. He is convinced that Washington should support such projects mainly because they contribute to the Greater Central Asian countries' independence in the interests of the United States. Stronger trade contacts within the continent will help resolve the old conflicts (the one in Kashmir, for example) and stabilize Afghanistan.

Russia, as the key geopolitical actor in Central Asia, deserves closer attention. So far it has not been easy to analyze its politics because of its political diarchy. It should be said, however, that Dmitry Medvedev demonstrated to one and all that his policy in relation to Kazakhstan follows the course laid by Putin. This is true in many other respects. It can be said that on the whole Vladimir Putin's descendant is continuing his line on the international arena and Central Asia as its part: a balancing trick on the brink of another Cold War (the Kosovo issues, ABM system, and the non-recognized states); bitter rivalry over pipeline transportation routes; and fierce resistance to NATO expansion.

In Eurasia the Russian Federation still attracts at least some of the states: Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and, to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan. The core that consists of these states and Russia creates a field of attraction for smaller European (Moldova) and Central Asian states (Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan). In an effort to integrate within the existing trade structure with other countries (former Soviet republics), Russia is pushing the energy sector to the forefront. So far, it cannot be transformed into a driving force behind interstate cooperation for several reasons, primarily because of the gap between domestic prices and prices beyond the Russian borders.

Moscow has abandoned its efforts to reintegrate the post-Soviet expanse on the basis of universal principles as having no future. While cementing bilateral relations Russia tried to pool corrective efforts in order to address the most urgent of tasks. Such are the CIS Antiterrorist Center and the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces, as well as triple cooperation among Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan on the Caspian issue.

The expert community believes that Russia's agenda in Central Asia consisted of three points: "soft power" (cultural influence and the continued presence of the Russian language); the Russian and Russian-speaking Diaspora, and migration. On the whole the Russian political elite, which is disunited on many other issues, tends to regard Russia's presence (domination) in Central Asia as a positive and

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<sup>8</sup> For more detail, see: *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*, ed. by S.F. Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies, Washington, D.C., 2007, 510 pp.

indispensable factor: each of the political groups has reasons of its own to support it.<sup>9</sup>

In Central Asia Russia has concentrated its efforts on Kazakhstan, which was fully confirmed by the fact that Dmitry Medvedev, as the newly elected president, paid his first visit to Astana. It seems that under the pressure of domestic and foreign political factors Russia will shift the weight of its geopolitical efforts to the West (the European part of the CIS and Europe) for the simple reason that it has close economic contacts with it and its security and modernization depend on it to a great extent. Subjectively, this bias might be promoted by the personality of the new Russian president. We should expect, therefore, that Moscow will pay relatively less geopolitical attention to its eastern policies (which include China, the APR, the SCO, Southern and Central Asia).

The response from the other key geopolitical player was easy to predict: Beijing would move in to fill the gaps left by Moscow, however the process will not be smooth. China has its own problems which will not remain long on the back burner. Mounting difficulties will affect everything, including China's Central Asian policies. They will be affected by many factors, including China's relations with Russia and the West (with the future U.S. administration in particular), the balance of forces in the SCO, the situation on the energy markets, etc.

So far experts have identified several stumbling blocks in trade and economic relations between China and Central Asia: (1) from the very beginning they have been far from equal, with China's obvious predomination; (2) the border points and their role in promoting trans-border trade are a main problem; and (3) Chinese investments in the regional economy are a cause for worry. China is interested in ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, hydropower, the transportation infrastructure, and telecommunications. There is another, fourth problem—relations in the sphere of hydrocarbons. Experts believe this to be one of China's key regional strategies, which suggests several alternatives. There is a commonly shared opinion that China will play the decisive role in the future of Central Asia, a landlocked region. In fact, in the 21st century China will play the role Russia played in the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>10</sup>

Beijing was steadily building up its economic presence in Central Asia by carrying out all sorts of projects (pipeline, transport and communication, trade, economic, construction, and investment) with each of the Central Asian states. Its involvement is clashing, to an increasing extent, with the interests of Russia and the United States in the context of rivalry over resources and the main pipelines.

The Chinese economy was rapidly acquiring global dimensions, the results of which are still hard to predict. In fact, an economic superpower is being born before our eyes. In its relations with China as a future economic superpower

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<sup>9</sup> For more detail, see: M. Laruelle, *Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism*, A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2008, 79 pp.

<sup>10</sup> For more detail, see: S. Peyrouse, *The Economic Aspects of the Chinese-Central Asia Rapprochement*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies, Washington, D.C., 2008, 73 pp.

Kazakhstan has to take into account the fact that China is not merely the largest exporter but also a market for Kazakhstani commodities and investments. This means that in the future, when Kazakhstan accumulates enough money, China might become for Kazakhstan what the United States is for Canada, the EU countries, and Australia: an attractive investment market.

What was going on inside the region? The accumulating changes will gradually cause qualitative shifts. Kazakhstan will remain the leader even though the current financial storms make this harder. Uzbekistan is openly (and other republics latently) opposed to Astana's efforts to resume regional integration (cooperation) processes.

Kazakhstan, as one of the driving forces behind the integration processes across the post-Soviet expanse and because of its geostrategic importance, is Russia's key strategic partner in Central Asia. Its energy, transport, transit, and military potential, as well as potential in other spheres, has not yet been fully tapped in the interests of both countries. It should be borne in mind that in the present geopolitical situation in Central Asia Russia will have to work harder than before to maintain and develop its allied and partner relations with Kazakhstan.

The relations between Kazakhstan and Russia are different from Russia's relations with the other Central Asian and CIS countries. On the one hand, Kazakhstan is one of the most loyal and reliable Russia's partners in the post-Soviet expanse; it is involved in all the integration processes. On the other hand, Astana's policies demonstrate that it has its own national interests, its own ideas about the international developments, and its own foreign policy priorities.<sup>11</sup>

The Russian Federation has been and will remain the main partner and ally of Kazakhstan for a long time to come, although a real mechanism for their integration has not yet been set up. It is needed to set up effective customs, trade, and economic unions, common financial institutions, vertical economic ties, etc. The political element of the two countries' integration remains vague.

In previous years Uzbekistan's political and economic situation has changed radically even though Islam Karimov remains its president. The country's leaders have started the very much needed financial and economic reforms; the national currency has reached the convertibility stage; and market mechanisms are operating in the countryside. Industry and agriculture have rid themselves of the extremes, and the government has moved further away from interfering in economic processes.

At home President Karimov has finally reduced the pressure of the clans and regional and departmental groups on central power. The main elite groups have reached a consensus and achieved a balance, albeit shaky. Social unrest was partly quenched and the threat of destabilization removed, while the Islamist movement was driven underground.

Likewise, the republic's international situation has changed to a great extent: Tashkent abandoned its one-sided orientation toward the West to move back to

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<sup>11</sup> For more detail, see: R. Weitz, *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies, Washington, D.C., 2008, 189 pp.

post-Soviet integration. This improved relations with Russia: today Tashkent depends much more on Moscow and Beijing. Its foreign policy revision took Tashkent farther than intended: its relations with the West are worse than at any other period, while the country has found itself in what can be described as international semi-isolation. At the same time the rapport between Russia and Uzbekistan that goes back to 2004 cannot be described as completely reliable: Uzbek foreign policy is known for its instability.

Tashkent was slowly but steadily erecting obstacles in the path of Russian businesses wishing to operate in Uzbekistan - at the early stages of the newly found cooperation these intentions were hailed. Uzbekistan's relations with its neighbors (especially with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) cannot be described as simple. At the same time Tashkent and post-Niyazov Ashgabad seem to have found common interests: the former is interested in large-scale oil and gas as well as transport and communication projects.

In the context of bad, or very bad, relations with the West Tashkent is actively developing multi-sided (mainly economic) cooperation with China. The republic, in fact, is developing into China's key Central Asian trade, economic, and political partner. It, however, still depends on Kazakhstan in the trade and labor market spheres. Its non-existent relations with the West are forcing Uzbekistan to adjust its foreign policy to Russia and the regional structures it patronizes. The country is very much interested in the planned gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China.

The European Union, meanwhile, changed its tactics: it abandoned confrontation for the sake of cooperation expected to improve Uzbekistan's domestic climate even though it ignored the demand of the EU to start an international investigation of the Andijan events. Tashkent's firm stand, its determination to defend its sovereignty, and its opposition to an open diktat of others brought fruit.

Since 2004, Tashkent has been developing its relations with the Soviet successor-states in line with its orientation toward Russia. The importance of its contacts with China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and especially Turkmenistan (from which gas will be moved across Uzbekistan) cannot be overestimated; on top of this Uzbekistan is campaigning to become the transit state for the main railways and highways that will connect China and the Middle East.

The Andijan riot (2005), which Tashkent accused Bishkek of indirectly instigating, caused a lot of strain in the relations between the two countries; later, in 2006, many of the former contradictions were removed. Relations with Tajikistan, on the other hand, remained the same throughout 2006 and 2007: Tashkent is convinced that the Republic of Tajikistan is unable or unwilling to take adequate measures to suppress radical Islamism, which has remained a very obvious threat since the late 1990s. Uzbekistan is jealous of Tajikistan, which is moving toward domestic hydropower and increased aluminum production. In the fall of 2006 this put a strain on their bilateral relations; the border guard services of both countries accused each other of violating the principles of good neighborly relations.

Islamist extremism keeps Uzbekistan on the alert: the republic is forced to tighten its border, customs, and migration regimes - measures that badly hit the Ferghana population. It should be said that recently Uzbekistan chose to stay away from the summits of the Turkic-speaking states: it not merely ignored the kindred Turkic states, it also ignored the important foreign policy resource for the sake of demonstrating its independence.

For this reason Tashkent and Ashghabad pooled their pragmatic interests for the sake of ambitious regional fuel and energy projects: the Caspian gas pipeline is expected to hug the Caspian eastern coast across Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to double Central Asian (including Uzbek) gas supplies to Russia.

This was the context in which Uzbekistan's post-Western foreign policy is taking shape determined, first and foremost, by the shortage of domestic resources and limited maneuverability on the international scene. Hence the main principles: orientation toward Russia and China and confrontation with the West; a wait-and-see policy when dealing with the West, which (Tashkent is convinced) needs Uzbekistan more than Uzbekistan needs the West; avoidance of too close relations with and overdependence on Moscow; wider cooperation with China in pursuance its own interests in the trade, economic, and investment spheres; preventing Tajikistan's too close relations either with the West or with Russia while helping Dushanbe fight the Islamist extremism, and flexible relations with Kazakhstan by formally accepting its leadership.

Kazakhstan, in turn, wanted domestic stability in Uzbekistan more than anything else; much depends on whether the regime change in Uzbekistan will be smooth. On the whole, sober assessment of the situation and the now obvious trends demand that we should be prepared to see Uzbekistan a poor but ambitious and influential state. By that time Kazakhstan should have already acquired the levers needed to guide Central Asian development, manipulate the local processes and relations with the great powers and prevent Uzbekistan's diktat for the sake of geopolitical stability in the region.

Uzbekistan, in turn, was looking for new foreign trade and foreign policy partners in the East: South Korea, Pakistan, Japan, Iran, and even Afghanistan. President Karimov placed the stakes on contacts with China to balance out Russia's influence. This means that in recent years President Karimov has achieved a metamorphosis: Uzbekistan has Russia on its side as an influential patron on the international arena while Russia, by the same token, confirmed its regional status in Central Asia. In short, Uzbekistan has found its niche in Vladimir Putin's strategy.

There was the opinion in the West that the local regimes, naturally unwilling to risk their stability in the face of double pressure (from the Islamists and the West and its democratization thesis), opted for regional cooperation, the SCO being the most graphic example of this.<sup>12</sup> The local regimes are regarded as semi-autocratic, or "sultanic." Three of the local states—Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and

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<sup>12</sup> For more detail, see: *Machtmosaik Zentralasien. Traditionen, Restriktionen, Aspirationen*, M. Sapper, V. Weichsel, A. Huterer (Hrsg.), BPB, Bonn, 2007, 648 pp.



Turkmenistan—are seen as more autocratic than the others. They have, indeed, to maintain stability at any price as the bedrock of their legitimacy. Western authors are convinced that fear of any domestic changes or reforms able to erode or even bring down the regime is the local rulers' main problem.

Kyrgyzstan is present in practically all the Central Asian integration projects - CSTO, EurAsEC, CAEC, and SCO. In recent years its leaders, who in the past few years have been preserving strategic cooperation and partnership with Russia, China, and the U.S. as their priorities, have been concentrating on strengthening relations within the SCO and CSTO. Relations with the United States, the third strategic partner, are clouded by the clash of financial advantages with respect to the continued presence of American troops in the republic and Washington's mounting desire to export democracy and support the opposition.

On the whole, its relations with the West follow the pattern obvious in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and most of the other Soviet successor-states. On the one hand, the expectations of Western financial and economic assistance are very much inflated; on the other, this and investments should be repaid by military-strategic cooperation while the West indulges itself in criticism of the human rights and democratization records. When the negative aspects reach a certain level these countries turn to Russia to resume their habitual political flirting. Under any scenario the West will try to preserve its influence and military-strategic presence in Kyrgyzstan, at least at the present level.

In previous years Bishkek has displayed an interest in all sorts of transportation and communication projects designed to connect Central Asia with the outside world; Kyrgyzstan wants to be included in all of them as a transit country. It would also like to see Central Asia as a single economic expanse.

While looking at Russia for foreign policy guidance Bishkek counts on its economic assistance; it is placing its stakes on luring Russian business into expensive projects with which the republic cannot cope single-handedly. Its foreign policy confirms that no country with a weak and shaky leadership, stagnating economy, and domestic instability is capable of conducting a strong foreign policy course. Kurmanbek Bakiev (before his retry in 2010) tried to maneuver in the steadily narrowing field of political options when seeking the support of Russia and China (in particular) and close neighbors to strengthen his position as the second legal president and to heal the domestic economy.

The new leaders of Turkmenistan with their ideas about the country's foreign policies boldly moved onto the international arena. President Berdymukhammedov has accepted the rules of the game and feels at home on the geopolitical scene, especially where the Caspian issue is concerned: so far he has been successfully balancing among Russia, the West, China, and Iran. He is lavishing promises right and left and seems to be ready to join any of the gas pipeline projects even though this is very much at variance with the republic's gas reserves.

The dramatic events triggered by the sudden death of Saparmurad Niyazov and G. Berdymukhammedov's advent to power stirred up intrigues around Ashgabad: the West is luring Turkmenistan into alternative gas projects while

Russia is fighting for its continued monopoly on the transportation of Turkmen gas to the foreign markets.

Meanwhile Turkmenistan was steadily opening up to the world. This is true, first and foremost, of its contacts with the West through which it hopes to prevent destabilization of the new regime by means of an outside force; neutralize the negative impact on the region of the U.S.-IRI confrontation; maintain acceptable prices for exported Turkmen gas; and achieve division of the Caspian in full accordance with its interests and better relations with its neighbors, Uzbekistan in particular.

The West, in turn, was trying to elbow Russia out of Turkmenistan, potentially the best chance of delivering Europe and pro-Western CIS republics from their dependence on Russian gas. Turkmenistan has been working in two directions: first, it is selling its gas to its usual customers (Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia) and settling the payment issues. Second, it is looking for new markets and new transportation routes.

Its relations with China and within large pipeline projects will never leave the republic isolated. The latest moves of President Berdymukhammedov testified that he is following in the footsteps of his predecessor: he is maneuvering between Russia and the West on the main gas pipeline issue. Having sided with Russia and Kazakhstan on the Caspian project, the president of Turkmenistan later publicly supported the Trans-Caspian pipeline actively lobbied by the European Union, America, and Turkey. Recently there was progress on the division of the Caspian. It looks as if Ashghabad has finally accepted the fact that Niyazov's uncompromising stand had no future and is prepared to meet other CIS countries halfway.

At that time, Russia's policy in relation to Turkmenistan was free from the desire to invite the country into the SCO or any other CIS structures. Moscow wanted to remain in control over its gas policies: the agreements of Turkmenbashi's time should remain in force while Gazprom should retain its monopoly on the export of Turkmenian energy resources. This makes China, which wants Turkmen gas for itself, Russia's rival, which threatens its gas interests. In these conditions China could have used the SCO to bring pressure on Turkmenistan by trying to impose SCO membership on it. This would leave Russia with no choice but to support the country's present neutrality.

The expert community was of the opinion that Ashghabad's chances within Nabucco are preferable. The project expected to move gas from Iran and other Caspian states to Southern, Central, and Western Europe and North Africa has been discussed for some years now. The U.S. and EU both want to detach Turkmenistan from its dependence on the Russian Central Asia-Center gas pipeline to encourage Ashghabad to look at new export and transit projects. Turkmenistan's intention to diversify the gas export routes might be undermined by Gazprom, Russia's gas monopolist, and the lack of transparency in the Turkmen gas sector. In June 2007 President Berdymukhammedov began establishing relations with Iran.

The new pipeline routes would be determined not only by international competition over the oil and gas resources of Turkmenistan but also by the domestic balance of forces. The new export routes will depend on the place and influence of the clans in the new structures of power. The Turkmen leaders selected Kazakhstan as their Central Asian priority: they are very interested in the second oil pipeline to China Kazakhstan is building, in the fact that it gave Japanese companies access to its uranium mines, and in its talks with China and Japan, as well as with France, on building the first atomic power station in Kazakhstan.

The new president and his closest circle have identified their foreign policy priorities as preserving the republic's neutrality, continuing the course of the previous leader in the export of fuel, settling the Caspian's status, and lowering the risks of being involved in the American-Iranian conflict. Legitimization of the post-Niyazov regime in the eyes of the world community is the most urgent of the foreign policy tasks.

The weak economy, which suffered a lot in the civil war, the undeveloped production forces, and the geographic location, which can hardly be described as favorable, did not prevent Tajikistan from being involved in nearly all the integration structures (CSTO, EurAsEC, CACE and SCO). Recently the country has been seeking new foreign policy partners more actively than before (while strengthening its traditional relations with Russia). The new foreign policy trends were born through a great deal of dissatisfaction with the far from successful experience of cooperation with Russia's big business.

There were objective reasons behind this as well: in recent years foreign investors have been showing more interest in the republic for geopolitical rather than economic reasons. The West is very much concerned with the frequent visits of top political figures and businessmen from Russia, Iran, and China to Tajikistan and the ever widening flow of investments into its economy. The West, particularly the United States, cannot allow Iran to strengthen its position in the region and gain access to its strategic resources (particularly Tajikistan's uranium, aluminum, and cotton).

At that time, Iran was building up its influence in the republic without much ado and is involved in all sorts of economic projects; India and China were also presented. Russia's much advertised intention to regain control over the Soviet aluminum giant felt through or, at best, was postponed. The situation in the republic where economic and political problems are intertwined was far from simple, however Dushanbe and Tehran have moved closer in many respects. Iran was gradually moving to the fore as one of the key foreign investors and a potential user of local raw materials. In the near future Tajikistan would still need energy, transport, and communication projects; and it will have to curb the large-scale migration of manpower.

In Uzbekistan the old problems persisted. In view of Tashkent's widely advertised position, it should be said that integration in Central Asia failed - today it is very much in vogue to speak of regional cooperation. Contrary to the widespread skepticism, it should be said that integration is going on in latent forms

very much different from those in Europe: illegal migration, grey labor market, latent movement of capital, development of the shadow economy, etc.

What factors affected Central Asian security? For this moment, they have not changed much: Afghanistan and the military-political situation in it; Iran and its nuclear program; the relations between Russia and China; the activity of the West, etc. What will happen next? Central Asia will obviously be drawn into the global processes, but much will depend on integration within the CIS and within the structures Russia has initiated and is promoting. The main actors will remain active; the dynamics of geopolitical processes in the region will depend, to a great extent, on external factors. Inside the region, dynamics will depend on regional factors and domestic policies.

Turkmenistan was the best example of the above: having acquired a new regime and geopolitical landmarks, the country is readjusting its policies and has already joined the geopolitical games. Tajikistan is going along the same road; Kazakhstan has reached a crossroads while Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are following the same paradigm by inertia and for certain objective and subjective reasons. The rapidly changing geopolitical situation in the world and around the region will put an end to the stagnation.

Kazakhstan's future was closely connected with the fact that the world economy is growing more dependent on energy sources. Some time ago China, with its rapidly developing economy, commodities expansion, import of energy fuels and its impact on the environment, demography, and consumption, became a factor to be reckoned with in Kazakhstan. In fact China's proximity is both an advantage and a challenge.

An Alliance of the Central Asian States under the political and economic leadership of Astana was one of the key goals of its Central Asian policy. Today it is becoming increasingly clear that Uzbekistan's opposition is forcing Kazakhstan to draw closer to Kyrgyzstan, the closest Central Asian country in the geographic, cultural, and historical respects. Despite its relatively small political and economic scale Kyrgyzstan is one of the key states as far as Kazakhstan's security is concerned.

The Road to Europe, the republic's strategic course, revealed its geopolitical preferences to the European Union. On the other hand, its relations with the United States are positive; America still regards Kazakhstan as its key regional partner.

In October 2007 the OSCE unanimously confirmed OSCE chairmanship for the Republic of Kazakhstan starting in 2010, which can be described as an important political and diplomatic victory. The future chairmanship, however, is fraught with numerous problems that might complicate the republic's foreign policy context. The OSCE might go beyond its present responsibility areas (security and humanitarian cooperation); its involvement in what is going on in the Soviet successor-states goes further than domestic issues, namely, to relations with the West as a whole and the EU and European institutions, NATO, and the U.S. in particular. Recently, the organization became involved in what is called energy security for Europe. This places the relations between Kazakhstan and the Central and East European countries in a new context.

OSCE chairmanship was a test for geopolitical maturity since it is related to the fundamental issues of the country's relations with the West, security, geopolitics, and geo-economics. During its chairmanship Kazakhstan would probably try to formulate, along with Russia, the Central Asian republics, and the CIS integration partners, a course to be pursued in relation to the West and OSCE.

The dividing lines inside the organization might be overcome; at the same time Kazakhstan would concentrate on the countries "to the east of Vienna" and their interests, which will give the CIS members a chance to implement their projects. The stress should be probably shifted from democratization on the humanitarian agenda to cultural cooperation, confessional harmony, and inter-civilizational cooperation.

The issues of prime importance for the region (terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal migration) should probably receive more attention. At the same time the organization should distance itself from the problems of regional conflicts and unrecognized states. Contacts between the European and Asian security systems — the OSCE and CICA — look like a promising perspective. As the OSCE chairman, Kazakhstan would acquire the tools needed to organize a dialog between OSCE and NATO, on the one hand, and the SCO, CSTO and CICA, on the other. It was unlikely that the problem of the adapted CFE Treaty will be resolved by 2010, which means that Astana, as one of the sides, will have a chance to initiate a dialog within the OSCE.

In 2010 Astana should use its OSCE chairmanship to add weight to its international and foreign policy standing for the sake of Central Asian security. In August 2008 the conflict in South Ossetia complicated the situation and greatly affected Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security. The SCO summit that met late in August 2008 unanimously supported Russia and its actions in the Caucasus. Central Asian security was undoubtedly be affected by the worsening relations between Russia and the West. The geopolitical game around the region has reached a new phase. The year 2009, when America receives a new administration, would probably dissipate the fog.

## **Part I. Central Asia in Modern Politology**

### **1. Classification of Scholarly Writings on Central Asia**

Throughout the two decades of independent development of the Central Asian states, world political science has formulated its own specific approaches to the region and acquired certain conceptions. Elaborated by the members of different schools and, particularly, of diverse political affiliations, the methods, ideas, and approaches, likewise, differ widely. From the very beginning, everything written about Central Asia abroad was stamped with ideological and geopolitical approaches, which means that all of them were politicized, albeit to different degrees. More likely than not, the roots should be sought in Sovietology:

contemporary Central Asian studies (particularly in the West) have inherited too many birthmarks from it.

How should we classify the varied and numerous scholarly writings on Central Asia? Classification by national schools was most effective at the early stages of contemporary Central Asian studies. In the early 1990s, the British, French, (West) German, and American national schools predominated. Later, Turkey, China, India, Poland, Iran, Pakistan, and others joined in the intensive studies of the political processes in the region and around it. Political literature of Russia and the other CIS countries (including those of Central Asia) is a special phenomenon.

This suggests a different classification method; everything that has been written about Central Asia can be divided into several groups:

- (1) works dealing with the regional processes, relations, and political developments of individual republics;
- (2) works dealing with the region's international status, the geopolitical processes around it, and the relations between the Central Asian states, on the one side, and the world and regional players, on the other;
- (3) works devoted to individual states of the region.

There is any number of definitive works dealing with the region as a whole and authored by G.E. Fuller, R. Dannreuther, M.B. Olcott, O. Roy, G. Gleason, F.E. Starr, and others. Collective works, which bring together experts on a wide range of subjects who represent Western and Asian scientific schools and, not infrequently, post-Soviet academic science, are the most popular form of regional studies.

This can be described as globalization in science; in any case, this is a sure sign that the academic traditions are losing their national features, while the academic world in the West is becoming more democratic than before. Political interests and geopolitical engagement, however, are evident in latent or even open form in many works not necessarily written in the West.

## **2. Central Asia in Contemporary Political Science: Problems and Approaches to Them**

In the West, studies of Central Asian politics knew several development stages, each of which, intimately connected with the regional processes, reflected what was going on in the region and around it.

The first stage (approximately 1991-1995) was dominated by geopolitics for the simple reason that Central Asia had been pushed onto the world political scene by the Soviet Union's disintegration, a geopolitical shift of grandiose dimensions. Martha Brill Olcott described this as a "catapult to independence,"<sup>13</sup> a happy term willingly accepted by the political analyst community. Western experts tried to identify the direction in which the newly independent Central Asian states were moving; whether they had completely ruptured their ties with the Soviet Union/Russia; whether the destabilization threat was great; and whether the

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<sup>13</sup> M.B. Olcott, "Central Asia's Catapult to Independence," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1992, pp. 108-130.

attraction of the Islamic world was strong. In fact, these were recommendations rather than analytical works in the true sense of the word.

The very first works dealing with Central Asia (by G.E. Fuller, R. Dannreuther, G. Crichlow, M.B. Olcott, and others) clearly pointed to the threats and challenges with which the West would be confronted and which it should overcome: Moscow's restored control; Islamic fundamentalism; ethnic and religious disturbances; proliferation of WMD, etc. At this early stage, some of the authors offered the conclusion that the region had paid dearly for its stability (albeit highly relative): it had exchanged it for the road of democracy. This meant that the Western politicians accepted that the region would embrace the authoritarian development model, which had nothing to do with the West's ideas of good governance for the simple reason that the alternative — militant Islamism — was even less acceptable, as the experience of Tajikistan had amply demonstrated.

These works contained an easily recognizable geopolitical message to Western strategists: the West should go to all lengths to support the post-Soviet Central Asian republics as independent states and channel their development in the desired direction. All instruments would suffice: democratic, institutional, political, economic, energy, transportation, etc. By the mid-1990s, the most far-sighted analysts guessed that Russia (the zigzags of Yeltsin's policies notwithstanding) would not leave the region. By that time the Western political scientists had become even clearer about the desired Western regional strategies: the West should be even more involved in the struggle for the region's resources, the Caspian pipelines in particular.

At the second stage (1995-2000), many of the Western analysts were bitterly disappointed with the region's development and its results. The West had failed to detach it from Russia and the CIS; it likewise had failed to plant the West's "normative values" (democracy, market economy, human rights) there. The sporadic efforts to integrate the post-Soviet expanse inevitably alarmed the West.

At the same time, some of the Western authors pointed out that the cultural, historical, economic, etc. unity of Central Asia was nothing more than a myth. The region was acquiring two models related to the two key republics—Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. On the whole, it had become clear that national states, each with their own specific features and their own domestic and foreign policies, were taking shape.

At that time, Kazakhstan was regarded as the region's weakest link; Martha Olcott was the most eloquent on this score: she predicted an ethnic split in Kazakhstan; engulfment by Russia was offered as another possible threat. This meant that the West should come to the rescue. Shirin Akiner was the first to provide the details of the process for transforming Kazakhstan into a nation-state and conclude that the republic was moving toward a pluralist model of state identity<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> See: Sh. Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity from Tribe to Nation-State*, RIIA, London, 1995, 83 pp.

In the latter half of the 1990s, European, particularly German, authors developed a greater interest in the region. They tried to formulate the European Union's geopolitical interests in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Caspian as regions of exceptional strategic importance and as a source of raw materials, particularly hydrocarbons. Specialists knew at this early stage that the European Union would find it hard to pursue a coordinated strategy in these regions in view of the presence of other active centers of geopolitical power.

Much of what was written at that time revised the roles of Iran and Turkey in Central Asia<sup>15</sup>; it was more or less unanimously concluded that the West had overestimated the danger of Iran's expansion and export of the Islamic revolution. There was more or less unanimous disappointment with Turkey, which early in the 1990s had been seen as a leader, driving force, and "elder brother," a moderate and secular pattern to be followed.

At that stage, the Western authors still kept Russia and its Central Asian policies in the focus of their attention. Much was written about Moscow's stabilizing role and the fact that it could block Western influence in Central Asia<sup>16</sup>. China and its Central Asian policies came to the fore: the Western authors realized that Beijing was quick on the uptake: it found a common language with the local regimes and, unlike the West, fully accepted them. By the end of the 1990s, some authors were disturbed by the fact that the Chinese had developed into another Great Game player in Central Asia<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> See: G.E. Fuller, O.E. Lesser, P.D. Henze, J.F. Brown, *Turkey's New Geopolitics from the Balkans to Western China*, Westview Press, Boulder, Oxford, 1993; G. Winrow, *Turkey in Post-Soviet Central Asia*, RIIA, London, 1995; B. Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position*, Foreword by B. Rubin, Frank Cass, London, Portland, OR, 2002; A. Rubinstein, O. Smolansky, *Regional Powers in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey and Iran*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> See: R.D. Blackwill, R. Braithwaite, A. Tanaka, *Engaging Russia, A Report to the Trilateral Commission*, The Trilateral Commission, New York, Paris, Tokyo, 1995, 183 pp.; *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. by V. Tismaneanu, NY, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 1995; *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. by A. Dawisha, K. Dawisha, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, 1995, XIII+360 pp.; W.E. Odom, R. Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire? Russia, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus*, Hudson Institute, Indianapolis, 1995, 290 pp.; *State Building and Military Power in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1995, XVI+319 pp.; *Russian Foreign Policy since 1990*. Ed. by P. Sherman, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, XII+324 pp.; *Challenges for the Former Soviet South, Russia and Eurasia Programme*, ed. by R. Allison, Brookings Institution Press, London, Washington, DC, 1996, XIV+366 pp.; H. Malik, *The Roles of the United States, Russia and China in the New World Order*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> See: L.C. Harris, "Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World," *China Quarterly*, March 1993, pp. 115-125; J.R. Walsh, "China and the New Geopolitics of Central Asia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1993; R. Munro, "Central Asia and China," in: *Central Asia and the World*, ed. by M. Mandelbaum, Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1994, pp. 225-236; G. Wacker, "China's Interests in Central Asia," in: *The Development of the Soviet Successor States in Central Asia. Its Implications for Regional and Global Security*, Hrsg. von U. Halbach, BIOIS, Koln, 1995, pp.105-110; R. Gotz, "Geopolitische Rivalen oder Partner? Russland und China in der Region des Kaspischen Meers," *Blatter fur*



There was the opinion that the states had achieved so-called authoritarian stabilization. On the whole, the regimes were described as “presidential,” which relied on strong personal power (“strong presidentialism”)<sup>18</sup>. Some authors preferred to describe authoritarianism as “sultanistic regimes”<sup>19</sup>. Typically enough, some authors had predicted velvet revolutions in Central Asia even before the Color Revolutions took place. They favored stability: the “iron fist” was expected to prevent social and political upheavals.

At this stage, Catherine Poujol wrote about Kazakhstan’s duality or, rather, about the duality of its domestic and foreign policies which combined several principles, models, cultures, civilizations, and priorities<sup>20</sup> described as its strength and weakness at one and the same time. The author disagreed with the opinion that the republic had completed the post-Soviet development stage. In the future the republic might restore its former role of the Eurasian axis, a geopolitical mission of sorts, its pro-European development vector remaining all-important. Other authors, Sally Cummings among them, were convinced that Kazakhstan brought together the unitary state model and the authoritarian regime, which made it possible to neutralize the center/periphery contradiction as the main threat to its state-hood<sup>21</sup>.

Some of the authors were evidently disappointed with Western policies in Central Asia in the 1990s; they were convinced that the Western strategy had failed because of the glaring gap between the Western normative values and the Western strategic interests when the former was sacrificed to the latter.

The third stage of foreign political studies of the region coincided with a new geopolitical up-heaval—9/11 and the arrival of the United States and its allies in the center of Eurasia. The political analysis and geopolitical studies which appeared in 2002-2005 were concerned, for obvious reasons, with the geopolitical shifts and their regional impact. The regional policies of the United States and the West (the so-called Talbott Doctrine) of the 1990s were severely criticized from all sides. In the 21st century, Western political thought (it was Uwe Halbach who set the ball rolling) tried to convince the public that Central Asia was no longer a post-Soviet expanse and that the region had moved far enough from its Soviet past to make the process irreversible<sup>22</sup>.

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deutsche und internationale Politik, 43, Nr. 10, 1998, pp. 1200-1209; R. Stobdan, “China’s Central Asia Dilemma,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, June 1998, pp. 399-408; *Rapprochement or Rivalry? Russia-China Relations in a Changing Asia*, ed. by Sh. Garnett, The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> U. Halbach, “Das Regime der Präsidenten,” *Enzwicklung und Zusammenarbeit*, 40, Nr. 2, 1999, pp. 39-41.

<sup>19</sup> See: *Sultanistic Regimes*, ed. by H.E. Chelabi, J.J. Linz, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998, X+284 pp.

<sup>20</sup> See: C. Poujol, *Le Kazakhstan*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2000, 128 p.

<sup>21</sup> See: S. Cummings, *Nursultan Nazarbaev and Presidential Power in Kazakhstan*, Columbia University, New York, 1999; Idem, *Kazakhstan. Centre-Periphery Relations*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 2000, VIII+55 pp.

<sup>22</sup> See: U. Halbach, “Das nachsowjetische Zentralasien. Eine Region mit politischer prengkraft,” in: *Jahrbuch In ternationale Politik 1999-2000*, Oldenburg Verlag, München, 2001, pp. 277-289; Idem, *Der “nicht mehr postsowjetische” Raum? Russland in der Wahrnehmung*

Those Western experts, however, who took the trouble to scrutinize the regional processes discovered that the Central Asian states remained closely connected with their Soviet past. There was the opinion that by the mid-2000s they had completed the transit, something which not all academics were prepared to accept. Martha Olcott, for example, came forward with the “second chance” conception: the West should give the Central Asian countries a new chance and support the coming political changes<sup>23</sup>. Strangely enough, these recommendations coincided with the so-called Color Revolutions in the CIS. In fact, everything published shortly before Martha Olcott’s book spoke of the same.

As distinct from Boris Rumer, Marie-Carin Gumpfenberg does not believe that Kazakhstan has completed the period of transformations; she described the republic’s political system as “formal pres-identship”<sup>24</sup>. The “European statehood” conception which Kazakhstan embraced as its normative and civilizational development trend was another important factor. M.B. Olcott insisted on its “missed opportunities” theory; she looked at Kazakhstan as the best illustration of “missed opportunities, unfulfilled promises, and the road that was never covered.” the most contradictory and ambiguous interpretation of the republic’s post-Soviet development<sup>25</sup>.

Andrea Schmitz described Kazakhstan’s political system as “cooptational:” part of the ruling elite was continuously “coopted” into the opposition, which preserved the stability very much needed for the economic and political reforms underway in the country. She described prevention of big political, ethnic, and social conflicts as the basic philosophy of the Kazakhstan state<sup>26</sup>.

Boris Rumer has formulated the “end of transition” conception, which says that the Central Asian countries have completed the transit stage and acquired stable systems of economic and sociopolitical ties. Domestic and foreign factors, or even a regime change, will hardly affect them in a radical or even more or less noticeable way, which he describes as a source of the region’s future troubles. Together with most of the American analytical community he believes that the United States alone can pull the republic out of the stagnating “post-transit phase”<sup>27</sup>.

Islam and the related problems figure prominently in Western analytical conceptions; in fact, none of the analysts has ignored it; the question is: How deep is the Islamic influence in the developing Central Asian nation-states? The most

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*kaukasischer und zentralasiatischer Staaten vor und nach dem 11. September*, SWP/ DIIPS, Berlin, 2002 (SWP-Studie. S-24), 39 pp.

<sup>23</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance*, Carnegie Endowment, Washington, DC, 2005, XIII+389 pp.

<sup>24</sup> M.-C. von Gumpfenberg, *Staats- und Nationsbildung in Kasachstan*, Leske und Budrich, Opladen, 2002, 231 S.

<sup>25</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, Carnegie Endowment, Washington, 2002, XII+321 pp.

<sup>26</sup> See: A. Schmitz, *Elitenwandel und Politische Dynamik in Kasachstan*, SWP, Berlin, 2003, 36 S.

<sup>27</sup> See: B. Rumer, “Central Asia: 15 Years After,” *Central Asia’s Affairs* (KazISS, Almaty), No. 1, 2005, pp. 2-12; *Central Asia. At the End of Transition*, ed. by B. Rumer, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, 2005, XIII+449 pp.

competent of the authors describe Islam as one of the main elements of the Central Asian peoples' new national identities that are taking shape before our eyes. This factor has a foreign policy dimension as well<sup>28</sup>. Sooner or later all authors dealing with the regional role of Islam inevitably arrive at the Islamic fundamentalism or radical Islam issue. According to Ahmed Rashid, the regimes which suppressed secular democratic parties and repressed practically all forms of Islam were responsible for the appearance of armed Islam in the region. His conception of the "Central Asian front of the West" describes the region as a new front of the struggle against militant Islamism, the victory of which will shatter the region and echo on the global scale. In fact, the author calls on the West to interfere in the regional developments under the pretext of fighting the Islamists and supporting the democratic reforms to establish its direct control there<sup>29</sup>. Some of the most far-sighted authors who have the region's cultural and political future close at heart are concerned about the obvious threat of ideological Islamization of the future generations. They insist that the regional governments should develop their nation-states in the spirit of state patriotism. Some of the authors look at the domestic developments of the Central Asian states from the point of view of ethnopolitics: these states aim at creating a nation-state as their final aim together with national unity on the titular nation basis.

Geopolitical works figure prominently in the contemporary political studies of Central Asia, the pride of place belonging to the New Central Asia conception coined by the Trilateral Commission. Its authors concluded that, at the dawn of the new century, the region confronted the world with qualitatively new conditions: today, the West has a much narrower leeway when it comes to interference in the region's developments. In fact, the Central Asian states have mastered the art of maneuvering on the international arena and have learned to exploit geopolitical contradictions in their foreign policy interests. Since Europe and Japan, along with the U.S., were likewise the Commission's members, it deemed it necessary to assess the geopolitical presence of both Brussels and Tokyo. The conclusions were far from flattering: the European Union's Central Asian strategy was described as

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<sup>28</sup> See: Afghanistan and Post-Soviet Central Asia: Prospects for Political Evolution and the Role of Islam, USIP, Washington, D.C., 1992, 42 pp.; Sh. Akiner, "Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia," Harvard International Review, Vol. XV, No. 3, 1993, pp. 18-21; R. Altoma, "The Influence of Islam in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," in: Central Asia in Historical Perspective, ed. by B.F. Mainz, Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1994, pp. 164-181; Islam in Central Asia, Ithaca Press, Reading, 1994, VI+176 pp.; A. Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia. Islam or Nationalism? Oxford University Press, London, Karachi, 1994, 278 pp.; M. Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, Macmillan Press, London, 1995, 264 pp.; Islam in the Political Culture of the Former Soviet Union: Central Asia and Azerbaijan, Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, Hamburg, 1995, 65 pp.; M. Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996; Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia, ed. by L. Jonson, M. Esenov, Conference Paper No. 24, SIIA, Stockholm, 1999, VI+139 pp.; Islam Outside the Arab World, ed. by D. Westerlund, I. Svanberg, Curzon Press, Richmond, 1999, XII+488 pp.

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Rashid, *Jihad. The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 2003, XXIX+282 pp.

“proto-strategy,” while Tokyo’s “Eurasian diplomacy” scored no success to speak of<sup>30</sup>.

The events of 9/11 produced the “security manager”<sup>31</sup> conception in the American analytical community; put in a nutshell, it said that since the Central Asian states could not protect themselves against “international terrorism” and since the neighboring great powers, likewise, proved unable to protect them, the United States should shoulder the task. In fact, this justified, antedate, America’s military presence in the region flawed in the summer of 2005.

This is complemented by the “strategic barrier” conception<sup>32</sup> which suggests that the United States should erect a strategic barrier of sorts on the CIS and Central Asian territories to cut Russia off from the post-Soviet expanse. The wave of the Color Revolutions of 2003-2005 suggests that Washington embraced it.

Some of the authors (R. Allison and L. Jonson) formulate the “security sub-complex” conception which treated Central Asia as a periphery of the effective security systems rather than an independent security system (CSTO and SCO). They argued that the United States, Russia, and China look at the region as a mere periphery of their geopolitical and strategic interests<sup>33</sup>.

Asian experts, Iranian analysts in particular, prefer the “geopolitical balancing” theory; the term describes the role of the regional powers, which being unable to compete with the great powers, are involved in geopolitical games of their own. Tehran itself is involved in these games to a much greater extent than any of the regional powers: it poses itself as the “natural patron” of the Central Asian states intended to protect them against the encroachments of the United States and Russia and, possibly, China and Turkey.

Most analysts were forced to revise, very much to their displeasure, Turkey’s role in Central Asia. The new “elder brother” conception fell through; in 1991, Turkey was expected to set the pattern for its “Turkic brothers” in Central Asia. In the new century, the illusion dissipated: first, the Central Asian states declined the role of junior partners; second, Turkey’s resources were too limited for any important geopolitical role in the region. Finally, Moscow let Turkey know that the region was a sphere of Russia’s interests—it seems that Ankara had to obey.

Recently, Indian strategists seem to have embraced the Big Asian Triangle (Moscow-Delhi-Beijing) conception when dealing with Central Asia. This means that India will have to operate there together with Russia and China; its strategic aims being the region’s strategic resources and defense against the Islamic world (as represented by Pakistan).

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<sup>30</sup> See: Sh. Garnett, A. Rahr, K. Watanabe, *The New Central Asia. A Report to the Trilateral Commission: 54 (October)*, The Trilateral Commission, New York, Paris, Tokyo, 2000, 79 pp.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example: E. Rumer, “Flashman’s Revenge: Central Asia after September 11,” *Strategic Forum* (Washington, DC), No. 195, December 2002, pp. 1-8.

<sup>32</sup> *Thinking Strategically. The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, ed. by R. Legvold, The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), London, 2003, XII+243 pp.

<sup>33</sup> See: *Central Asian Security. The New International Context*, ed. by R. Allison, L. Jonson, RIIA/Brooking Institution Press, London, Washington, 2001, XV+279 pp.

The SCO abbreviation puts in a nutshell all the theories, conceptions, and doctrines that the Chinese strategic institutes have produced so far. Beijing's interests in Central Asia are focused on this regional structure. China intends to preserve and strengthen the SCO, which can be described as its central strategic and geopolitical aim. Beijing is striving to extend its influence; it is determined to add an economic dimension to the SCO (particularly in the energy sphere), cement its regional position, and achieve regional dominance. On the whole, China aims to develop into a "soft hegemon" within, or even beyond, the SCO. This has never been openly admitted, yet we are obviously dealing with the "soft hegemony" or "soft leadership" doctrine<sup>34</sup>. Everything said in the 1990s about the geopolitical situation in the Caspian stemmed from the Great Game conception for the simple reason that the rivalry among the great powers was especially obvious in this part of the world. In the new century, the Caspian and everything related to it came to the fore: we have in mind the so-called Caspian Alternative. From the geopolitical point of view, the Caspian-Central Asian region (or, broader still, Central Eurasia) should be transformed into a hydrocarbon alternative to OPEC: the United States and Europe are seeking less dependence on Arab oil. This explains America's resolution to lay the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline; the aborted petroleum-related love affair between America and Russia; Washington's obvious determination to control the region at any cost; Western fears of China's presence; the attempts to isolate Iran (and Russia for that matter) from Caspian oil, etc.

The Chinese dimension revived the problem of Europe's involvement in the big geopolitical game in the region. This sheds new light on the Stability Pact for Central Asia, an idea formulated by European (or German to be more exact) strategists. It was expected that the EU would be able to play a stabilizing and all-important role, similar to that it had earlier played in the Balkans. The European analysts proceeded from the region's highly promising energy-related future. The project, however, failed because the European Union, for want of convincing political arguments and instruments of power, has no important role to play in the Great Game. The failure of the European Constitution in 2005 (which meant failure of the idea of a single European state with a common strategy and foreign policy) merely confirmed this<sup>35</sup>. Several conceptual works appeared after 2005, in

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<sup>34</sup> Ph. Andrews-Speed, Liao Xuanli, R. Dannreuther, "The Strategic Implications of China's Energy Needs," in: *Adephi Paper 346*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2002, 115 pp.; T.G. Carpenter, "Managing the US-China-Russia Triangle," *Heartland. The Italian Geopolitical Review (Rome)*, 2002, No. 2, *The Chinese Way*, pp. 141-148; E.W. Merry, *Russia and China in Asia: Changing Great Power Roles*, American Foreign Policy Council, Washington, DC, 2002, IX+61 pp.; B. Gill, M. Oresman, *China's New Journey to the West. China's Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests*, A Report of the CSIS Freeman Chair in China Studies, Foreword by Z. Brzezinski, The CSIS, Washington, D.C., 2003, XI+51 pp.

<sup>35</sup> See: The Caucasus and Caspian Region: Understanding U.S. Interests and Policy: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Seventh Congress, First Session, 10 October, 2001, Washington DC, 2001, III+58 pp.; The Security of the Caspian Sea Region, ed. by G. Chufrin, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2001 (SIPRI), XVI+375 pp.; The Politics of

particular a highly interesting work by Shah-ram Akbarzadeh called *Uzbekistan and the United States. Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda*,<sup>36</sup> which described the worsening relations and contradictions between the United States and Uzbekistan as stemming from Washington's attempts to democratize its partner in the counter-terrorist war in Afghanistan; this ran against the grain of Karimov's determination to oppose liberalization which, he was convinced, created fertile soil for militant Islamism.

In 2005, French author Gael Raballand issued the book *L'Asie Centrale ou la fatalité de l'enclavement?*<sup>37</sup> in which he discussed the problems and geographic specifics of the region wedged between two large geopolitical forces in the Eurasian center. He points to the region's land-locked position, which deprives it of free access to the world supply routes and is, therefore, responsible for its geopolitical problems. A new work by Robert Legvold called *New US Strategy in Central Asia*<sup>38</sup> revises the old and formulates Washington's new approaches to the region. The book was connected, in a very logical way, with the Greater Central Asia conception coined by Frederick Starr at approximately the same time (it caused quite a storm in the academic circles) and with the suggestions of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy to the effect that the United States should revise its tactics and strategy in some of the Central Asian states.

Germany's political science is represented by Joern Graeveningholt's work *Schlechte Regierungsfuehrung, Krisenpraevention und das Dilemma der Entwicklungspolitik am Beispiel Zentralasiens* written in line with the European idea about the region as a conglomerate of authoritarian regimes which should be accepted for the sake of stability and security of the European Union in particular<sup>39</sup>.

Kathleen Collins' *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, which appeared in 2006, describes the so-called clan system as the key informal public institution of Central Asia. The author, however, has failed to clarify her own ideas

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Caspian Oil, ed. by B. Gokay, Palgrave, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York, 2001, IX+232 pp.; Peimani, *The Caspian Pipeline Dilemma: Political Games and Economic Losses*, Praeger, Westport (Conn.), 2001, 134 pp.; A.M. Jaffe, Y. Kalyuzhnova, D. Lynch, R. Sickles, *Energy in the Caspian region: Present and Future*, Foreword by James A. Baker, Palgrave, New York, 2002, XXIV+266 pp.; "Caspian Oil Windfalls: Who Will Benefit?" in: *Caspian Revenue Watch*, Open Society Institute, New York, 2003, 146 pp.; R.H. Dekmejian, H. Simonian, *Troubled Waters. The Geopolitics of the Caspian Region*, Tauris, London, 2003, 281 pp.; M. Menzel, *Doomed to Cooperate? American Foreign Policy in the Caspian Region*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 2003; *The Caspian: Politics, Energy, Security*, ed. by Sh. Akiner, A. Aldis, Taylor and Francis, London, 2004; *The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West*, The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, ed. by F.E. Starr, S.E. Cornell, Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Washington, DC, 2005, 150 pp.

<sup>36</sup> See: Sh. Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States. Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda*, Zed Books, London, 2005, 166 pp.

<sup>37</sup> See: G. Raballand, *L'Asie Centrale ou la fatalité de l'enclavement?* L'Harmattan, Paris, 2005, 360 pp.

<sup>38</sup> See: R. Legvold, *New US Strategy in Central Asia*, New York, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> See: J. Graeveningholt, *Schlechte Regierungsfuehrung, Krisenpraevention und das Dilemma der Entwicklungspolitik am Beispiel Zentralasiens*, Nomos Verlag, Baden-Baden, 2005, 410 S.

about the local regimes and their nature. She is close to Max Weber's formula of the clan system as "patrimonial domination," yet fails to agree with the commonly accepted idea that the system is drifting toward "political clientelism."<sup>40</sup>

Adrienne Lynn Edgar published her *Tribal Nation. The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* in 2006 as part of Princeton University's research program<sup>41</sup>. The book can be described as an effort to go back into the past to seek the roots of the clan and tribal system of Niyazov's Turkmenistan, the cornerstone of the notorious regime in the recently Soviet republic. Much of what is said drew objections from experts on Turkmenistan. R. Charles Weller's *Rethinking Kazakh and Central Asian Statehood* is best described as an attempt to move away from the traditional ideas and clichés about Central Asian societies (very popular in the West) using Kazakhstan as an example. Indeed, the author presented Kazakhstan society as much more dynamic, much more modern, and much more Western than it was depicted by the Western media and public opinion<sup>42</sup>. Two books were of an obvious economic bias. We have in mind Kelly M. McMann's *Economic Autonomy and Democracy* and Richard Pomfret's *The Central Asian Economies since Independence*<sup>43</sup>. The former contains a comparative analysis of the economic policy of Russia and Kyrgyzstan, two extremely different countries. The author associates the level of economic reforms in the two countries with the degree and speed of democratic transformations. Both economies and the corresponding regimes are described as "hybrid," as a combination of political authoritarianism and economic liberalism and vice versa: democratic institutions in the political system and sporadic state interference in the economic processes. Richard Pomfret is well known for his works of the 1990s which dealt with the post-Soviet economies of Kazakhstan and its Central Asian neighbors. This fundamental work covers 15 post-Soviet years.

In 2006, Prof. Starr of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and his academic group dominated Central Asian studies. Their publications dealt with all aspects of the region's economy and politics. Suffice it to mention *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia* by F. Starr; *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus* by Z. Baran, F. Starr, and S. Cornell; *Anatomy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations* by J. Daly, K. Meppen, V. Socor and F. Starr; *Central Asia's Economy* by M. Dowling and G. Wignaraja,<sup>44</sup> and others.

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<sup>40</sup> See: K. Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006. 376 pp.

<sup>41</sup> See: A.L. Edgar, *Tribal Nation. The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ), 2006, XVI+296 pp.

<sup>42</sup> See: R. Ch. Weller, *Rethinking Kazakh and Central Asian Nationhood. A Challenge to Prevailing Western Views*, Asia Research Associates, Los Angeles, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> See: K.M. McMann, *Economic Autonomy and Democracy. Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, 278 pp.; R. Pomfret, *The Central Asian Economies since Independence*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ), 2006, 256 pp.

<sup>44</sup> See: S.F. Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington D.C., 2006, 27 pp.; Z. Baran, S.F. Starr, S.E. Cornell, *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road

In 2006, the German academic community published several highly interesting definitive works, such as *Die Zentralasiatische Politik der Europäischen Union: Interessen, Strukturen und Reformoptionen* by Alexander Warkotsch<sup>45</sup>. His studies of the local regimes suggested several new terms such as “Demokratur” (democracy + dictatorship) for the regime in Kyrgyzstan and “neo-totalitarianism” as applied to Turkmenistan. The author has pointed out that the European Union failed to achieve any of its strategic goals of the 1990s: poverty is as obvious as ever; the resistance to the reforms in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is as strong as ever; the human rights record and democracy level are basically the same, while the energy-related interests of the EU are as vulnerable as before. The same applies to the security sphere. Alexander Warkotsch suggests that the EU should revise its Central Asian strategy and tactics in order to “regain the faith in the EU.” He writes that in the security sphere Brussels should demonstrate determination and power rather than look like a “toothless paper tiger;” Brussels should look more confident when it comes to its energy interests and more realistic when invading the sphere of democracy. The author is convinced that the European Union should achieve closer strategic coordination with other international actors (NATO and OSCE in particular).

Dörthe List’s *Regionale Kooperation in Zentralasien. Hindernisse und Möglichkeiten* has very much in common with what German economists wrote in the mid-1990s; the author confirms that the EU is still placing the stakes on regional integration (cooperation in the 2000s) of Central Asia as a means of the region’s self-identification and self-determination despite the past negative experience<sup>46</sup>. In his *Rechtsreformen entlang der Seidenstraße. Aufsätze und Vorträge während der beobachtenden Teilnahme an einem gewaltigen Transformationsprozess*, Rolf Knipper looks at the way some of the CIS countries addressed legal reforms<sup>47</sup>. In 2006, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation introduced a very good practice of publishing books by local authors on Central Asia in German and Russian. The first of the books was called *Tsentral’naia Azia: vzgliad iznutri*<sup>48</sup> (Central Asia as Seen from the Inside). In 2007, the Fund published a work by Kyrgyz academics *Istoria i identichnost: Kirgizskaia Respublika* (History and Identity: The Kirghyz

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Studies Program, Washington DC, 2006, 57 pp.; J.C.K. Daly, K.H. Meppen, V. Socor, S.F. Starr, *Anatomy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations: 2001-2005*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2006, 110 pp.; M. Dowling, G. Wignaraja, *Central Asia’s Economy: Mapping Future Prospects to 2015*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2006, 114 pp.

<sup>45</sup> See: A. Warkotsch, *Die Zentralasiatische Politik der Europäischen Union: Interessen, Strukturen und Reformoptionen*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a.M., 2006, 253 S.

<sup>46</sup> See: D. List, *Regionale Kooperation in Zentralasien. Hindernisse und Möglichkeiten*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a.M., 2006, XII+237 S.

<sup>47</sup> See: R. Knipper, *Rechtsreformen entlang der Seidenstraße. Aufsätze und Vorträge während der beobachtenden Teilnahme an einem gewaltigen Transformationsprozess*, Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, Berlin, 2006, 353 S.

<sup>48</sup> See: *Zentralasien: eine Innenansicht*, FES, Berlin, 2006. 498 S. (in German and Russian).



Republic)<sup>49</sup>. Another publication dealt with the Central Asian countries' extra-regional contacts<sup>50</sup>. This is an obviously useful practice which brings to the German-speaking audience ideas about the region that are alternatives to those imposed, wittingly or unwittingly, by Western authors.

In 2007, Frederick Starr of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute coordinated a large-scale project which produced an internationally authored volume entitled *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*<sup>51</sup>. The international collective included authors from Central Asia, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, China, Turkey, and Russia. This continues, in a conceptual way, Prof. Starr's idea of Greater Central Asia, which caused quite a stir in its time. In the Introduction, he drew parallels between the Great Silk Road of the past and the present transport capabilities of Eurasia. He is convinced that today Western Europe, China, the Near and Middle East, and Hindustan can be reliably connected by transportation routes and that America is responsible for this and should contribute to the Eurasian system of transportation corridors.

In 2007, David Lewis published a book under the fairly pretentious title of *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia*<sup>52</sup> as part of the Columbia University security series. The author proceeds from the assumption that the military and economic aid of the West, which allied with the local countries for the counterterrorist campaign in Afghanistan (they became America's key allies in the struggle), should have encouraged democratic changes and stability in the region. The author has concluded: Washington was tempted to enter into allied relations with the local "tyrannies" to achieve the strategic aims of its antiterrorist struggle yet failed to change the nature of the local regimes.

Th. Gomart and T. Kastueva-Jean issued a monograph called *Understanding Russia and the New Independent States*,<sup>53</sup> in which they summarized what had been done by the group of authors of the Russia and the CIS department of the Institut français des relations internationales (l'IFRI). They gathered between the two covers the analytical efforts of the institute's fellows and their colleagues from the CIS dealing with security-related geopolitical problems and the CIS (and Central Asia) international situation.

Central Asia attracts scholars outside the West and China. In 2007, for example, Indian and Kazakhstani academics published their joint work called *India-Kazakhstan Perspectives. Regional and International Interactions*. Prof. K.

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<sup>49</sup> See: *Geschichte und Identität: Kirgisische Republik*, FES, Bishkek, 2007, 273 S. (in German and Russian).

<sup>50</sup> See: *Zentralasien: der Blick nach Aussen. Internationale Politik aus zentralasiatischer Sicht*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Berlin, 2008, 615 S.

<sup>51</sup> See: *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*, ed. by S.F. Starr. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2007, 510 pp.

<sup>52</sup> See: D. Lewis, *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, 224 pp.

<sup>53</sup> See: *Understanding Russia and the New Independent States*, Travaux et recherches de l'Ifri, ed. by Th. Gomart, T. Kastueva-Jean, IFRI, Paris, 2007, 204 pp.

Santhanam and R. Dwivedi supervised the progress from the Indian side. The monograph deals with practically all aspects of bilateral relations, including international and the geopolitical factors<sup>54</sup>. In 2007, the regular publication *Central Asia and South Caucasus Affairs*, supervised by Prof. B. Rumer and Lau Sim Yee, which had been appearing under the aegis of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Davis Center at Harvard University since 2002, was published for the last time<sup>55</sup>. Unfortunately, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation discontinued its funding of 15 year-standing.

In 2007, the German Federal Center of Political Education undertook a grandiose attempt to cover the past and present of Central Asia in one publication. Edited by M. Sapper, V. Weichchel, and A. Huterer, it appeared with the support of the legendary Osteuropa publication under the title *Machtmosaik Zentralasian. Traditionen, Restriktionen, Aspirationen*<sup>56</sup>. From the very beginning, it was a grandious project which provided the widest coverage of the problems and a matching 52-strong author group. The book presents the best of the best of German political science, yet it can be described as an international project with Anglo-Saxon (M.B. Olcott, E. Rumer and R. Allison) and French (S. Peyrouse and M. Laruelle) participation. The book, however, is dominated by German political scientists, which left its imprint on the selection of material and the nature of the problems discussed<sup>57</sup>.

The Central Asia-Caucasian Institute published Erica Marat's work entitled *National Ideology and State-building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*<sup>58</sup>. The author traced how national ideologies developed in Soviet times in both countries and how new ideologies based on new national identities were built in the post-Soviet period. The author has rightly noted that the multinational nature of the Central Asian post-Soviet states created problems for the regional leaders busy building new identities. First, this limited the efficiency of the ethno-centric instruments; second, having been recognized by the international community, the local elites could not completely ignore the citizenship principle, whereby Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan progressed further than their neighbors; and third, all regional elites had to cope with the role and place of Islam in the new ideology.

In his *The Economic Aspects of the Chinese-Central Asia Rapprochement*, Sebastien Peyrouse discusses China's Central Asian policy<sup>59</sup>. He has identified

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<sup>54</sup> See: India-Kazakhstan Perspectives. Regional and International Interactions, ed. by K. Santhanam, K. Baizakova, R. Dwivedi, ICAF, New Delhi, 2007, XXII+270 pp. (Russian translation: Kazakhstan i India. Perspektivy mezhdunarodnogo i regionalnogo vzaimodeystvia, Almaty/Delhi, KazNU, 2007, 283 pp.).

<sup>55</sup> See: *Central Asia and South Caucasus Affairs: 2006*, ed. by B. Rumer, Lau Sim Yee, The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Tokyo, 2007, 283 pp.

<sup>56</sup> See: *Machtmosaik Zentralasian. Traditionen, Restriktionen, Aspirationen*, Hrsg. M. Sapper, V. Weichchel, A. Huterer, BPB, Bonn, 2007, 648 S.

<sup>57</sup> For more detail, see our review in *Kazakhstan v globalnykh protsessakh*, No. 2, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> See: E. Marat, *National Ideology and State-building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 103 pp.

<sup>59</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, *The Economic Aspects of the Chinese-Central Asia Rapprochement*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 73 pp.

four major problems in the sides' trade and economic relations. The first chapter deals with the history and nature of these relations; the author points to the fact that from the very beginning China was the dominant side. The role of checkpoints in transborder trade is another problem. Chapter three deals with Chinese investments in the region's economy and infrastructure. The Chinese are interested in four investment fields: ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, hydropower production; transport infrastructure; and telecommunications. The last chapter deals with relations in the hydrocarbon sphere, the key one in China's multi-sided regional strategies. He has also presupposed that the land-locked nature of Central Asia will be responsible for China's role in the region's future. In fact, in the 21st century China will play the same role as Russia in the 19th and 20th centuries<sup>60</sup>. Marlene Laruelle studied Russia's policies in Central Asia from the point of view of the impact of Russian nationalism on Moscow's tactics and strategy. Her work entitled *Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism* deals not so much with the region proper as with the domestic political processes and the struggle inside the Russian elite over Russia's policy in the region<sup>61</sup>. She has described Russia's return to the region in the 21st century and the related political and economic repercussions and has written that the Russia-Central Asia agenda consists of three main points: so-called soft power (cultural influence and the tongue); the problem of the Russian and Russian-speaking diaspora; and migration. On the whole, she has concluded that all groups, trends, and circles of the Russian political elite (their disagreements notwithstanding) tend to look at Russia's presence (domination) in Central Asia as good and inevitable, each of the political forces operating with arguments of its own.

Two studies produced by the same Central Asia-Caucasus Institute deal with Kazakhstan.

The first of them, *Parliament and Political Parties in Kazakhstan*, was written by Anthony Bowyer<sup>62</sup>. The author introduced the text with a concise overview of the party and political system of Kazakhstan and its evolution; he acquaints the reader with the contemporary political landscape and concentrates on the so-called pro-presidential parties, Otan in particular, and on the "soft" and "hard" opposition. He has supplied two groups of recommendations:

- the first is for the country's leaders, while the second is addressed to the American government with a request for assistance in developing a civil society.
- The second, *Kazakhstan's Emerging Middle Class*<sup>63</sup> by John Daly, asks:

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<sup>60</sup> See also: M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2009, 201 pp.

<sup>61</sup> See: M. Laruelle, *Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism*, A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2008, 79 pp.

<sup>62</sup> See: A.C. Bowyer, *Parliament and Political Parties in Kazakhstan*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 71 pp.

<sup>63</sup> See: J.C.K. Daly, *Kazakhstan's Emerging Middle Class*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute

What is Kazakhstan's middle class? The author has concluded that the middle class is the aim of the republic's economic policy. The government sees its task as protecting the middle class against numerous challenges and problems such as corruption and overcoming the wide gap between the rural and urban lifestyles, inflation, and the destructive effects of the global financial-economic upheavals. The vast hard currency reserves accumulated in Kazakhstan suggest the optimistic conclusion that the state will have enough money to support the middle class in the future.

Central Asia's avid interest in Poland is a recent phenomenon. In the past, the Polish People's Republic and the Soviet Central Asian republics belonged to the same geopolitical expanse, Pax So-vietica, a socialist universum of sorts. The stormy events of the late 1980s and the 1990s pushed Poland and Central Asia into different cultural-civilizational and geopolitical contexts. An analysis of Polish publications on Central Asian subjects shows that there is still a lot of academic interest in the region.

The Polish Central Asian studies are of an obviously political nature even though some of them touch on ethnographic or, rather, social anthropologic issues.

Polish studies of Central Asia are developing in keeping with several trends:

1. the region's history;
2. the theory and practice of systemic transformations;
3. political and social systems of the regional countries and development of the political elites and the opposition, the media and NGOs;
4. modernization of social structures, clashes between tradition and contemporary development; clan structures; cultural and linguistic policies, religion, etc.;
5. and history and the present day of the region's cultures. Over time, an interest in the economy and foreign policy of the local countries also grew.

Between 2000 and 2005, the Institute of Political Sciences published five collective monographs, each dealing with one of the republics; its history and social and political processes<sup>64</sup> [54]. Twelve monographs appeared in the Contemporary Central Asia series published by the IPS WU series; the best of them being *"Walczący islam" w Azji Centralnej. Problem społecznej genezy zjawiska* by S. Zapas-nik (2006); *Azja Centralna—problemy historii i współczesności*, edited by T. Bodio and others (2007); S. Redo's *Zwalczanie przestępczości zorganizowanej w Azji Centralnej* (2007); *Konstytucje państw Azji Centralnej* by T. Bodio and T. Moldawa (2007); *Region Azji Centralnej jako obszar wpływów międzynarodowych*,

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& Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 100 pp.

<sup>64</sup> See: Kazakhstan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka, ed. by T. Bodio, R.A. Wojtaszczyk, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2000, 500 s.; Uzbekistan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka, ed. by T. Bodio, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2001, 536 s.; Tadżykistan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka, ed. by T. Bodio, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2002, 649 s.; Kirgistan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka, ed. by T. Bodio, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2004, 897 s.; Turkmenistan. Historia—społeczeństwo—polityka, ed. by T. Bodio, Elipsa, Warszawa, 2005, 840 s.

edited by B. Bojarczyk and A. Zietek (2008) and *Elites of Power in Central Asia* by T. Bodio and P. Zalenski<sup>65</sup>.

The following Polish works deal with the problems of contemporary Kazakhstan: P. Zalenski's *Elity władzy politycznej Kazachstanu* (2006); P. Grochmalski's *Kazachstan. Studium politologiczne* (2006); A. Zamarajewa's *Kazachstan-Uzbekistan: rywalizacja o przywództwo w Azji Centralnej* (2007); A. Wierzbicki's *Ethno-politics in Kazakhstan and Other Countries of Turkic Community in Central Asia* (2008), and others<sup>66</sup>. Interest in Turkmenistan is a more or less recent phenomenon. In his *Turkménistan. Un destin au carrefour des empires*, Sebastien Peyrouse of France has pointed out that the first decade and a half of the country's independence were closely associated with the ambitious personality of its president Saparmurat Niyazov<sup>67</sup>. The author is convinced that the clans and their role in the country's politics are an important element in the political life of Turkmenistan and that once independent the republic could not embrace the "European development" model the West presents as the only one conducive to democratic institutions and market relations. On the other hand, President Niyazov's responsibility for the allegedly special Turkmen development pattern should be clearly recognized. What looked comical or even pathological from the outside was a real drama for the republic's population.

Slavomir Horák and Jan Šír from the Czech Republic published their book *Dismantling Totalitarianism? Turkmenistan under Berdimuhamedow* two years after S. Peyrouse published his book<sup>68</sup>. They have pointed out that the realities of the last days of the Niyazov regime differ greatly from the post-Niyazov context. Today, it is a much more open and liberal society; the odious bans and the worst of

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<sup>65</sup> See: S. Zapasnik, "Walczący islam" w Azji Centralnej. Problem społecznej genezy zjawiska, Wrocław, 2006, 215 s.; *Azja Centralna—problemy historii i współczesności*, ed. by T. Bodio, W. Jakubowski, P. Zalenski. Pismo Edukacyjne, Pultusk, 2007, 376 s.; S. Redo, *Zwalczanie przestępczości zorganizowanej w Azji Centralnej*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2007, 314 s.; T. Bodio, T. Moldawa, *Konstytucje państw Azji Centralnej. Tradycje i współczesność*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2007, 607 s.; Idem, *Constitutional Reforms in Central Asian States*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2008, 350 s.; *Region Azji Centralnej jako obszar wpływu międzynarodowych*, ed. by B. Bojarczyk, A. Zietek, UMCS, Lublin, 2008, 286 s.; T. Bodio, P. Zalenski, *Elites of Power in Central Asia*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2008.

<sup>66</sup> See: P. Zalenski, *Elity władzy politycznej Kazachstanu*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2006, 310 s.; P. Grochmalski, *Kazachstan. Studium politologiczne*, WUMK, Toruń, 2006, 765 s.; A. Zamarajewa, *Kazachstan-Uzbekistan: rywalizacja o przywództwo w Azji Centralnej*, Akademia Humanistyczna, Pultusk, 2007, 167 s.; A. Wierzbicki, *Ethno-politics in Kazakhstan and Other Countries of Turkic Community in Central Asia*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2008; "Problemy transformacji, integracji bezpieczeństwa państw Azji Centralnej," *Studia politologiczne* (IPS UW, Warszawa), Vol. 12, 2008, 422 s.; *Transformation, Integration and Security Problems in the States of Central Asia*, IPS UW, Warszawa, 2008, 422 s.

<sup>67</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, *Turkménistan. Un destin au carrefour des empires*, Edition Belin, Paris, 2007, 184 pp.

<sup>68</sup> See: S. Horák, J. Šír, *Dismantling Totalitarianism? Turkmenistan under Berdimuhamedow*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2009, 97 pp.

the excesses of Niyazov's time were removed, while the republic is gradually opening to the world. The authors proceed from the assumption that Berdymukhammedov's regime is qualitatively new and stable and that the country's foreign policy has changed a lot. First, the republic has abandoned the isolationist policy of the past; the young president has inevitably been drawn into the great powers' struggle for hydrocarbon resources and their geopolitical maneuvering. The world, the West in particular, is interested in Turkmenistan's strategic importance as Afghanistan's close neighbor. President Berdymukhammedov promptly mastered the art of maneuvering among the interested sides—Russia, Europe, America, and China. The seemingly unexpected opening up to the world bred excessive and, according to the authors, unjustified expectations in the West of the new regime's liberalism. Outside interference for the sake of liberalization and improvement of the social climate is fraught with domestic instability.

The book by prominent American political scientist Ariel Cohen entitled *Kazakhstan: The Road to Independence*<sup>69</sup> is another important publication. The author writes that Kazakhstan could have never become an independent and successful state had it not been what is known in the Western political science as a petro-state. Normally, this is a negative definition, but in his work Ariel Cohen uses it in a positive sense. He has pointed to the fact that the builders of contemporary Kazakhstan concentrated not only on domestic (first the economy, then politics) and foreign policy (multivectoral policies and Eurasianism): they were guided by a detailed and profound energy strategy. They are determined to avoid the traps many of the oil-rich countries fall into either by nationalizing their oil industries or squandering their natural riches by distributing them left and right among transnational companies. A. Cohen is convinced that Kazakhstan has achieved a balance between the geopolitical forces and their interests, on the one hand, and a balance between the outside players and the country's national interests, on the other. The same applied to the relationships between the elites and the majority of the country's population which have acquired their shares of national wealth.

In her *Kazakhstan—Ethnicity, Language and Power*, Bhavna Dave from Britain describes the evolution and historical experience of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods as unique: the republic survived a series of experiments in its identity, while it managed to preserve its ethnicity thanks to its system of power<sup>70</sup>. She compares the experience of nation-building in Kazakhstan with a similar process in India and Malaya and concludes that in Kazakhstan this process was mainly limited to consolidation of the power of the local elite. The strengthening patron-client system transformed Kazakhstan into a patrimonial state. The Kazakhs became “the first among equals,” a status not formally registered either by the Constitution or by law. On the whole, the Kazakhs as an ethnic group enjoy no

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<sup>69</sup> See: A. Cohen, *Kazakhstan: The Road to Independence. Energy Policy and the Birth of a Nation*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 287 pp.

<sup>70</sup> See: B. Dave, *Kazakhstan—Ethnicity, Language and Power (SOAS)*, Routledge, London, New York, 2008, XIV+256 pp.

special economic advantages over other nationalities (if we take the average statistical rather than the Kazakh elite's standard of living). In their own country, the Kazakhs enjoy mainly psychological (rather than real) advantages, such as the state status of the Kazakh language, from which, however, the bulk of the population derives no profit.

The book *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing* brings to mind a similar publication of the Tripartite Commission<sup>71</sup>; here, however, Russia replaced Europe, while China took the place of Japan. America is facing three strategic alternatives:

1. to continue the same course;
2. to abandon the idea of reforms in Central Asia and concentrate on the security issues and America's Realpolitik interests;
3. to devise a new strategy which will take into account the region's specific features and the new geopolitical realities.

Russia is obviously trailing behind the U.S. and China when it comes to preserving its political and economic influence. According to one of the authors, the Russian politicians who refused to abandon the old imperial style and paternalist rhetoric (in relation to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, two of the region's leaders, in particular) are to blame for the fact that the local states are leaving Russia's orbit. On the whole, Russia's influence in the region is limited in time; the situation may change if Russia manages to modernize the economy and the political-social systems in the region. The Chinese author believes that Central Asia is and will remain a unique region in which America, Russia, and China will cooperate for the sake of their common security.

The collective monograph called *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy. Paving the Road Ahead*<sup>72</sup> testifies to the interest displayed by the Japanese academic community in Central Asia. The authors believe that their country should move away from its former policies of concerted actions with the West and economic aid to the region coupled with Tokyo's unwillingness to pay more attention to the democracy issues (something which the United States and Europe believe to be most important). At no time did the Japanese ruling circles regard Central Asia as critically important for the country's diplomacy and foreign trade. There is the conviction that in Central Asia Japan should not compete with Russia and China in any form whatsoever. The authors write that the rising economic influence of China and South Korea in Central Asia should no longer be ignored. As a North Asian power, Japan can offer its neighbors a joint Central Asian strategy which will amount to a united front in the region. The authors invite the ruling circles to formulate their geopolitical approaches in the form of Greater Eastern Asia

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<sup>71</sup> See: E. Rumer, D. Trenin, Huasheng Zhao, *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing*, With an Introduction by R. Menon, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, 2007, VII+224 pp.

<sup>72</sup> See: *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy. Paving the Road Ahead*, ed. by C. Len, U. Tomohiko, H. Tetsuya, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2009, 206 pp.

(together with China and South Korea) or Eastern Eurasia (with the same powers and Russia).

Richard Weitz's *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia* is essentially the first Western work dealing mainly with Kazakhstan's international ties and foreign policy<sup>73</sup> prompted by the fact that the republic has moved to the fore in regional economic and political integration. He has identified several factors on which the republic's ability to achieve its regional integration aims depend: transition to the "post-Nazarbaev" generation of political leaders; Kazakhstan's successful OSCE presidency; and the Eurasian countries' economic status. The author is convinced that the great powers — Russia, China, and particularly the United States—will strongly affect the process. Kazakhstan's Eurasian strategies and their realization are limited in many ways by factors outside its power: the continued threat of Islamic extremism and the future use of its hydrocarbon resources. Indeed, it is hard to realize its own strategy while Russia and China are working on theirs. Kazakhstan's growing economic and political might scares its Central Asian neighbors. In the future, Kazakhstan diplomacy will spare no effort to prevent a Chinese-Russian condominium in the region.

The Russian and Russian-language historiography of Central Asia is beyond the scope of this article. We deem it necessary, however, to mention at least one work: a monograph by Andrei Kazantsev, a fellow at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of Russia's Foreign Ministry, entitled "*Bolshaia Igra*" s neizvestnymi pravilami: mirovaia politika i Tsentral'naia Azia<sup>74</sup> (The "Great Game" with the Rules Unknown: World Politics and Central Asia), in which he has analyzed the structure of international cooperation which took shape in the region in 1991-2008 and its impact on the regional policies of the world's largest state. He has concentrated on the problem of whether Central Asia, as part of the world, is a "temporary and short-lived factor" or a long-term constant of world politics. The author is convinced that the regional states are pursuing multivectoral policies and are seeking cooperation with the largest possible number of partners. The "responsibility" or "the freedom of action" dilemma proved to be the central one for the actors involved in the region. The author proceeds from his conviction that the Central Asian states observe no generally accepted standards, values, or principles in their policies. The region has no mechanisms to impose such principles; for this reason the possibility of regional identity remains vague.

The corpus of recent writings about Central Asia is highly varied: none of the more or less outstanding issues remains outside the attention of foreign authors; nor have individual republics escaped scrutiny. Western political thought, on the whole, has not abandoned its former ideas, approaches, and stereotypes either at the methodological or at the ideological level. On the other hand, it offers new methods and abandons some of the clichés and old ideas. Very much as before,

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<sup>73</sup> See: R. Weitz, *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, DC, 2008, 189 pp.

<sup>74</sup> See: A.A. Kazantsev, "*Bolshaia igra*" s neizvestnymi pravilami: mirovaia politika i Tsentralnaia Azia, Nasledie Evrazii, Moscow, 2008, 251 pp.



Central Asian studies are concentrated in Europe, the U.S., Turkey (albeit to a lesser extent than before), India, and China (the efforts of Chinese academics are worth special attention). There is another positive trend: more and more frequently foreign and post-Soviet authors are joining forces to produce collective monographs and joint projects which offer them a chance to share opinions, even if not always successfully <sup>75</sup>.

### 3. Europe and Central Asia: Identical Interests

This is the third section of the historiography on latest 2000-s literature about Central Asia<sup>76</sup>. After a long interval, Romanic-speaking Southern Europe (Italy and Spain) revived its interest in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, while France, the U.K., and Germany never lost theirs. In 2008, the Cassa di Risparmio Fund of Bologna published a fundamental work<sup>77</sup>, which gathered between its two covers everything historians, ethnographers, and political scientists had to say about Kazakhstan.

Five of the thirteen chapters were written by Kazakhstan historians, archeologists, ethnographers, and sociologists. Those who devised this definitive publication and identified its ideology intended to trace the cultural and civilizational developments in contemporary Kazakhstan based on rich archeological material and historical sources related to the country's nomadic past. The problems of our day and modernization of Kazakh (Kazakhstan) society have been covered in just as much detail. It seems that Italian social anthropologists will find the book especially interesting and useful.

The Spanish academic community devoted its works entirely to Kazakhstan's current developments. *Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: A Local Perspective* was prepared with the active involvement of Kazakhstan experts and published in English by the Opex Fund operated by the Foreign Ministry of Spain<sup>78</sup>. The joint effort was coordinated by M. Esteban and N. de Pedro, the two ideologists of this collective work. This relatively small book deals with geopolitics and the international status of Central Asia; each of its structural units looks at the regional policy of the key international actors who have their own interests in the region (Russia, China, the U.S., Turkey, Japan, and the European Union). As expected, the Spanish authors concentrated on the relations between the

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<sup>75</sup> For lack of space we have covered here less than one-tenth of what has been written abroad about Central Asia and concentrated on the most important conceptual efforts. For more detail, please see: M.T. Laumulin, M.E. Shaykhutdinov, *Bibliograficheskiy ukazatel po Tsentralnoi Aziii, mezhdunarodnym otnosheniam i geopolitike*, IMEP, Alamy, 2008, 320 pp.

<sup>76</sup> See: M. Laumulin, A. Malik, "Central Asia as Viewed by Contemporary Political Analysts," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 11, Issue 1, 2010.

<sup>77</sup> See: F. Facchini (a cura di), *Popoli della Yurta. Kazakhstan tra le origini e la modernita*, Jaca Book, Milan, 2008, 320 pp.

<sup>78</sup> See: *Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: A Local Perspective*, ed. by M. Esteban, N. de Pedro, Exlibris Ediciones, Madrid, 2009, 140 pp.

European Union and Central Asia, while their colleagues from Kazakhstan were given the opportunity to express their opinion about the policy of other powers.

Mario Esteban is convinced that Russia, the influence of which is shrinking, is relying on regional cooperation exercised through the EurAsEC and CSTO as an instrument to reinforce its presence in the region. The Spanish expert believes that China is rapidly building up its regional influence and is the driving force in the SCO. The United States, writes Mario Esteban, is concentrating on the Greater Central Asia (GCA) project designed to “reintegrate” the region with South Asia (particularly with Afghanistan and Pakistan). The Turkish geopolitical project is based on the idea of Turkic unity. The Spanish author regards Japan as the largest donor, which is not entirely correct; he has rightly written, however, that in Central Asia Tokyo is mainly driven by its intention to form a counterbalance to China. The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership adopted in 2007, which serves as the basis of the EU’s geopolitical activities in the region, fails to fully take account of Central Asia’s geopolitical specifics. The Spanish analysts intend this publication to be a geopolitical appendix of sorts to the strategic document.

Nicolás de Pedro proceeds from the assumption that Central Asia is becoming increasingly important to Europe for four reasons:

- (1) it is a source of threats which might affect Europe;
- (2) it is rich in energy resources;
- (3) it is a place where the interests of Russia, China, and America clash;
- (4) it borders on Afghanistan.

The ruling regimes and the opposition are satisfied with the EU’s presence in the region, which cannot be said for other geopolitical actors. This is especially obvious in Kazakhstan, which tends to identify itself with Europe to a much greater extent than its regional neighbors and which is chairing the OSCE in 2010. The European Union does its best to avoid geopolitical intrigues—it concentrates on economic and education issues, which, the Spanish author hopes, will bear fruit sometime in the future when the present generation of regional leaders retires.

The European Union supports regional integration in principle, which can be described as a weakness rather than a strong point of its Central Asian policy: the disagreements among the republics are too obvious to be ignored. On the whole, concludes the author, the European Union is pursuing a simple, pragmatic, and absolutely clear policy: it is encouraging economic development and integration in the region, a lower level of political dependence on outside forces, and prevention of confrontation in the Cold War style.

The Casa Asia of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, which has pooled the efforts of French, Central Asian and Spanish experts, published the work *La situation de la gouvernanza en Asia Central*<sup>79</sup> dealing with the nature of the region’s political regimes and socioeconomic relations in the context of its historical and structural specifics; economic and social evolution of post-Soviet Kazakhstan; the problem of effective governance in Uzbekistan; and

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<sup>79</sup> See: *La situation de la gouvernanza en Asia Central*, Coordinada pro G.M. Tabener, E. Soms Bach, Casa Asia, Madrid, 2009, 101 pp.

the economic and political relations between Spain and Central Asia. The book contains political and economic statistics for each of the region's republics.

Sebastien Peyrouse, likewise, has written a lot about the EU's strategy and policy in the region<sup>80</sup>.

The report ordered by the Foreign Ministry of Finland and compiled by an expert group headed by Frederick Starr takes a look at the relations between Finland and the Central Asian and Caucasian countries<sup>81</sup> and evaluates the level of cooperation, methods, and key trends of Helsinki's policy in the regions. According to the authors, Finland's policy is developing within the common European strategy (economic cooperation, fighting threats, etc.); however Helsinki has its own preferences: support of NGOs, promotion of gender equality, prevention of conflicts, migration, and the banking sector.

The report, which offers clear recommendations to the Finnish government on its further regional policy, stands apart from other similar publications. It should be said that the presence of Prof. Frederick Starr, American political expert and author of the GCA doctrine, is very much felt in this publication<sup>82</sup>.

#### **4. Japan, China, and Central Asia: From Eurasian to Pan-Asian Strategy**

Prof. Starr, who is frequently criticized from all sides (Central Asia, Russia, and the West) for his GCA concept<sup>83</sup>, had to disavow the concept<sup>84</sup> by saying that his ideas had been misinterpreted and misunderstood. The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the Johns Hopkins University (SAIS), where Frederick Starr and his colleagues are based, has remained the pioneer of Central Asian studies. We have already written about some of them<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, "Facing the Challenges of Separatism: The EU, Central Asia and the Uyghur Issue," EUCAM Policy Brief, No. 4, January 2009, EUCAM, Brussels, 2009, 16 pp.; idem, "Business and Trade Relationships between the EU and Central Asia," EUCAM Working Paper, No. 1, June 2009, EUCAM, Brussels, 2009.

<sup>81</sup> See: S.F. Starr, S. Cornell, S.M. Oksajärvi, Finland's Development Cooperation in Central Asia and South Caucasus (Evaluation Report 2009:1), The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Helsinki, 2009, VI+70 pp.

<sup>82</sup> The EU strategies in its relations with Kazakhstan can be found in "Le Kazakhstan: Partenaire Stratégique de l'Europe," in: *Diplomatie. Affaires Stratégiques et Relations Internationales*, AREION, Paris, 2009, 16 pp.

<sup>83</sup> See: G. Tulepbergenova, "The Greater Central Asia Project: Present State and Evolution," *Central Asia's Affairs* (KazISS, Almaty), No. 2, 2009, pp. 5-10.

<sup>84</sup> See: S.F. Starr, "Rediscovering Central Asia," *The Wilson Quarterly* (The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), Summer 2009; idem, *In Defense of Greater Central Asia*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2008, 18 pp.

<sup>85</sup> See: A. Cohen, *Kazakhstan: The Road to Independence. Energy Policy and the Birth of a Nation*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, D.C., 2008, 287 pp.; S. Horák, J. Šír, *Dismantling Totalitarianism? Turkmenistan under Berdimuhamedow*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, D.C., 2009, 97 pp.

A collective monograph called *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy*<sup>86</sup> deserves special mention. Edited by U. Tomohiko and H. Tetsuya in cooperation with C. Len, the book takes a look at what predated Tokyo's current Central Asian policy and covers practically all aspects of Japan's cooperation with the region. The authors believe that Japan should move away from its regional policy and its concentration on economic assistance. While acting formally with the West, it preferred to ignore the democracy related issues very much in the center of American and European attention. Tokyo should join the democratization process, write the authors. They also suggest that Tokyo should shift its attention from geopolitical to economic issues in its relations with the region. It should be said in all justice that at no time has Japan demonstrated a bias toward geopolitics.

Experts admit that the Japanese leaders have never looked at Central Asia as a critically important aspect of their diplomatic and foreign economic strategy. It seems that this trend will continue, even if the authors would have preferred the opposite; they believe that Tokyo should abandon all forms of rivalry with Russia and China to be able to continue its policy in Central Asia. In fact, they say that Japan could have found a more constructive form of cooperation with these two countries.

The authors stress that the mounting economic influence of China and South Korea in Central Asia can no longer be ignored. As a North Asian power, Japan could have invited its neighbors to pursue a common strategy and close ranks in a united front. The authors make no secret of the fact that energy resources are today and will remain in the future the main (or even the only) driving force behind Japan's strategic activities.

The monograph dwells on another important issue: Japan's Central Asian policy in the context of its pan-Asian strategy and its strategic relations with the United States. The pan-Asian factor clearly underlies Tokyo's new conception with respect to Central Asia. Built at first on the Central Asia plus Japan formula and then on the so-called Eurasian strategy, today it rests on the so-called Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, a concept currently being elaborated in the corridors of power. The very name speaks volumes: it brings to mind the geopolitical projects Japan applied to Asia in the first half of the 20th century. Tokyo has obviously remained loyal to its pan-Asian policy in Central Asia.

The authors, however, agree that Japan should formulate its own geopolitical approach in the form of the Expanded East Asia (together with China and South Korea) or Eastern Eurasia (the same partners and Russia) projects. The Eurasian countries could have become, at least theoretically, a platform for Japan and Central Asia, as well as for all interested players.

This means that in its Central Asian policy, Japan once more runs across the dilemma (which also exists in many other foreign policy trends) of whether it should follow its interests (which will make its policy purely Asian) or continue

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<sup>86</sup> See: *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy. Paving the Road Ahead.*, ed. by C. Len, U. Tomohiko, H. Tetsuya, Central Asia Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, D.C., 2009, 206 pp.



following American strategies (to remain a hostage of American geopolitics with ensuing consequences).

A highly creative tandem formed by M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse has authored a definitive work within the SAIS program called *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies* <sup>87</sup>] based on the thesis that since 2000 China has been playing an increasingly greater role in Central Asia. Today, it can threaten Russia's traditional domination in the region.

For a long time, China remained devoted to its traditional “wait-and-see” policy in Central Asia. Beijing looked at it as a buffer zone, however, its geographical proximity and the new economic reality are pushing China toward more active involvement. The local states have not missed the U-turn either: Beijing has moved away from flexible diplomacy and “soft power” to demonstrate to some of them that they are not “equal partners,” Kazakhstan with its “strategic partner” status — a title Beijing is not lavish with — being the only exception.

The authors have dwelt in detail on the so-called Chinese Question and its numerous dimensions, the main being international policy and geopolitics. The domestic dimensions of the Chinese Question vary from country to country and depend on their domestic contexts. The ideas about the Chinese Question are different in different republics, but none of the states (with the exception of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) treats it as an important and contradictory civilizational and geopolitical issue. It should be said, however, that Beijing unwittingly pushed academic Sinology into the practical sphere of politics and international relations.

China's strategy is aimed at filling the economic vacuum the Soviet Union left behind in the region, and elsewhere as a matter of fact. Its regional strategy is part and parcel of the Xinjiang factor, the Uighur problem, etc. Chinese investments should be treated as the means and methods used to hook the Central Asian republics; the authors, however, are very skeptical about the strategy's longterm success.

So far, China is pushing ahead in the financial and banking spheres from which Russia is absent; Moscow is trying for all it is worth to keep fuel exports, the nuclear industry, and energy production under its control. Moscow and Beijing share common approaches at the geopolitical level: they need stability and shrinking Western influence. Their economic interests, especially in subsurface resources, are developing into economic rivalry.

A separate chapter deals with the way the Central Asian countries treat the Chinese factor from the political, political scientific, and social points of view; much space is given to the struggle between the anti-Chinese and pro-Chinese groups in Kazakhstan. Their disputes are discussed in detail in the academic, political, and economic contexts. It should be said that the book contains a profound and vast survey of history, as well as an assessment of the development

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<sup>87</sup> See: M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies*, Central Asia Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, D.C., 2009, 201 pp.

and state of the political “think-tanks” in the local countries, their interpretation of Chinese policy, and the attitude toward China in each of them.

The authors concluded that throughout the last decade China has developed into the main focus of attention of regional politicians, political scientists, the media, and society; the so-called Chinese Question has become a topic of intense political debates. Despite their continued prejudices against China, the regional elites and political communities refrain from open anti-Chinese statements. In the economy, where the interests of various groups directly depend on external investors and partners, the anti-Chinese and pro-Chinese confrontation is much more open, even though it is actively pushed into the shadows. The defense and security structures, as well as the secret services are still in two minds about China, which probably fits the mood at the top.

M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse have pointed out that the possibility of closer relations with China evokes different feelings in different countries. Anti-Chinese feelings predominate, on the whole, in Kazakhstan, while pro-Chinese sentiments are much more strongly felt in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (reference to the latter is open to doubt).

The authors have paid particular attention to the efforts of Central Asian strategists and politicians to find certain “third way:” either an alliance with the West or an independent and relatively strong regional alliance to dispel with the need to choose between Beijing and Moscow. The region, however, has not yet arrived at a united opinion about its relations with China.

The French academics are convinced that the region — mainly Kazakhstan — criticizes Russia and does not like the West. China is hated: the authors are amazed at the regional level of Sinophobia which stems from widespread ignorance about this country. They have concluded that the further the Central Asian country from China, the higher the tolerance level. In countries where China is present at the everyday level (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), Sinophobia is much more pronounced.

Chinese regional policy is shrewd, write the authors: satisfied with the fact that Moscow has shouldered the financial burden of the strategic balance in the region, Beijing has no intention of pushing the Russians out. Any attempt to move to the fore will arouse Moscow’s stiff opposition. To avoid any confrontation with a united front of Russia and the Central Asian states (China got a taste of this when dealing with the Border Rivers), it relies on bilateral relations within the region.

An alliance between Russia and China will infringe on the interests of the United States and the EU (not of the Central Asian states) and deprive them of the chance to promote democracy and liberalize the local regimes. As part of the local economic landscape, China leaves Western businesses no chance (potential or real) of becoming entrenched in the region; Beijing demonstrates no mean skill in camouflaging its anti-Western policy to leave Moscow with the far from attractive role of an anti-Western force. The authors conclude that it is in the interests of the Central Asian countries to keep the Chinese-Russian alliance in check by counterbalancing it with a “third force.”

There is any number of articles and other publications dealing with the Chinese presence in Central Asia, the SCO, and many other issues (mainly the special 2009 issue of *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*)<sup>88</sup>.

Another issue of the same publication deals with the relations between India and Central Asia<sup>89</sup>. Western authors devote much attention to the regional security issues (drug trafficking, the SCO, and other international structures)<sup>90</sup>, as well as the situation in Afghanistan<sup>91</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> See: M. Clarke, "China's Integration of Xinjiang with Central Asia: Securing a 'Silk Road' to Great Power Status," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm), Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 89-111; M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, "Editors' Note: Central Asian Perceptions of China," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1-8; idem, "Cross-border Minorities as Cultural and Economic Mediators between China and Central Asia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2009, pp. 93-119; M. Oresman, "Reassessing the Fleeting Potential for U.S.- China Cooperation in Central Asia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 5-14; S. Peyrouse, "La présence chinoise en Asie centrale. Portée géopolitique, enjeux économiques et impact culturel," *Etudes de CERI*, No. 148, 2008; idem, "Chinese Economic Presence in Kazakhstan. China's Resolve and Central Asia's Apprehension," *Chinese Perspectives*, No. 3, 2008, pp. 34-49; idem, "Central Asia's Growing Partnership with China," *EUCAM Working Paper*, No. 4, October 2009, EUCAM, Brussels, 15 pp.; Y. Schicor, "China's Central Asian Strategy and the Xinjiang Connection: Predicaments and Medicaments in a Contemporary Perspective," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 55-74; J. Šír, S. Horák, "China as an Emerging Superpower in Central Asia: The View from Ashkhabad," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 75-88; M.C. Spechler, "Why Does China Have No Business in Central Asia?" *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2009, pp. 3-15; R. Sutter, "Durability in China's Strategy toward Central Asia—Reasons for Optimism," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 3-10.

<sup>89</sup> See: M. Balooch, "Iran and India's Cooperation toward Central Asia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 25-30; M.A. Kaw, "Restoring India's Silk Route Links with South and Central Asia across Kashmir: Challenges and Opportunities," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2009, pp. 59-74; J.P. Panda, "India's Approach to Central Asia: Strategic Intents and Geopolitical Calculus," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 103-114.

<sup>90</sup> See: G. Germanovich, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Threat to American Interests in Central Asia?" *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 19-38; S. Peyrouse, M. Laruelle, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Successes and Challenges," *The Journal of Central Asian Studies* (Kashmir University), Vol. 28, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1-14; N. Swanström, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Aftermath of the Russian Invasion of Georgia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2008, pp. 3-8; Yang Shu, "Reassessing the SCO's Internal Difficulties: A Chinese Point of View," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 17-24; S. Hanova, "Perspectives on the SCO: Images and Discourses," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 63-82; S. Peyrouse, "Drug-trafficking in Central Asia," *Policy Brief. Institute for Security and Development Policy* (Stockholm), No. 8, September 2009, pp. 1-4.

<sup>91</sup> See: G. Gleason, R.R. Hanks, Y. Bosin, "Afghanistan Reconstruction in Regional Perspective," *Central Asian Survey* (Oxford), Vol. 28, Issue 3, 2009, pp. 275-287; S.F. Starr, "A Regional Approach to Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," in: *Strategic Asia 2008-2009*, National Bureau of Asian Affairs, Seattle, 2008, pp. 333-362; S. Chan, "Breaking the Impasse in Afghanistan: Problems with Neighbours, Brothers and Guests," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2008, pp. 103-128; S. Khan, "Stabilization of Afghanistan: U.S./NATO

## 5. Regional Problems

Erica Marat, a research fellow with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, has already published two works, one of them dealing with the impact of the world crisis on labor migration in Central Asia<sup>92</sup>, which says the following. Three of the Central Asian republics — Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — can be described as donors which supply Russia and Kazakhstan with workforce. The author describes Putin's Russia as a xenophobic expanse that is very hostile toward Central Asian labor migrants, while Kazakhstan is a "new home" for them.

She has also pointed out that there is practically no interstate cooperation or coordination with respect to migration policy and draws attention to numerous social and economic problems, such as extremely low wages, appalling labor and living conditions, legalized slavery, lack of rights, illegal migration, etc. The guest workers market has remained almost intact: most guest workers have retained their pre-crisis jobs, however the inflow of new workers has noticeably dwindled.

To decrease the region's dependence on workforce export and to minimize its negative effects, Erica Marat suggests the following: developing local small and medium businesses; encouraging stronger interstate cooperation in the sphere of migration (especially between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan); rendering support of international (obviously Western) structures in the field of professional training; launching wider information campaigns against illegal workforce traffic; making investments in secondary specialized education; promoting education for women; fighting corruption, etc. Another, and bigger, work by the same author called *The Military and the State in Central Asia*<sup>93</sup> and subtitled "From Red Army to Independence" shows the author's desire to create a wide historical panorama. As far as we know, this subject has been avoided by Western political commentators, which makes her choice very interesting indeed.

The author deals not so much with military history and the Soviet traditions still alive in Central Asian society. She looks into the army's Bonapartist and political potential in the post-Soviet expanse as a whole and Central Asia in particular and concentrates on the Central Asian military's situation in Soviet times; the contradictory assessments of the Afghan campaign ("we won the war"); military institutions as part of the post-Soviet development of the national states; rivalry among regional security structures; NATO's and America's presence in the region; and transformation of the "internationalist" armed forces into nationalist. The result is a mixture of historical, social, political, organizational, technical, and geopolitical problems.

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Regional Strategy and the Role of SCO," The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 11-16.

<sup>92</sup> See: E. Marat, Labor Migration in Central Asia: Implications of the Global Economic Crisis, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2009, 48 pp.

<sup>93</sup> See: E. Marat, *The Military and the State in Central Asia. From Red Army to Independence*, Routledge, London, 2009, 176 pp.



The author proceeds from the assumption that from the early 20th century to the present time, the military remains a political factor with the main role to play in politics, state development, foreign policy, and everyday life. The author's obvious competence would hardly have made this thesis palatable for the Soviet leaders (starting with Trotsky and Stalin); the presidents of the newly independent states, likewise, will never accept it: the army should remain an instrument rather than an independent political force. Certain debatable issues nevertheless, the book's highly specific subject makes it an important and interesting contribution to Central Asian studies.

Another no less interesting book familiarizes the Western reading audience with the architect of the most successful Central Asian state. I have in mind the book by Jonathan Aitken *Nazarbaev and the Making of Kazakhstan* <sup>94</sup> which summarized the long talks between the President of Kazakhstan and the author, with whom Nazarbaev shared his reminiscences and ideas. The work is full of information previously unknown to the wide public and specialists; it is highly unlikely that the President could have permitted such a confidential and open conversation with any other foreign journalist.

The author not only described the path covered by the main character of his book, but also revealed what circumstances and personal qualities made him the "father of the nation" and the architect of modern Kazakhstan. Jonathan Aitken describes the Kazakh President as having the iron core of a steelmaker and the foresight of a reformer. He writes that Nazarbaev remains untainted by the scandals, even though they inevitably and indirectly affect his reputation. He points out: "On progress toward religious freedom, press freedom, human rights and fair elections Kazakhstan has done more than Russia, China and other states of the region put together" (p. 4). The author describes the gist of the policies of the republic's leader as slow progress from autocracy to democracy. He readily agrees with President Nazarbaev's slogan: "The economy first, political restructuring next" (p. 4).

In the foreign policy sphere, the President is skillfully maintaining good relations with Moscow, Beijing, and Washington, a no mean achievement and guarantee of the republic's stable position on the international arena; the middle class ensures domestic stability. The author explains his self-appointed task of telling the Western audience about Nazarbaev's role in contemporary Kazakhstan without which establishment of the young state would have been impossible by the fact that the West rarely or never identifies the republic's achievements with the name of its first president.

The book is divided into 14 chapters: the first half deal with the Soviet period and the second with the post-Soviet period of his life. For obvious reasons, the story of the post-Soviet period is highly dramatic: it was at that time that Nazarbaev shouldered his historic mission of building a modern Kazakhstan.

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<sup>94</sup> See: J. Aitken, *Nazarbaev and the Making of Kazakhstan*, Continuum, London, New York, 2009, IX+256 pp.

Chapter Eight, aptly called “The Birth Pains of Independence,” describes the problems the young state had to grapple with. The key chapter entitled “Entering the 21st Century,” a story about the current stage of the country’s development, is divided into two parts: “Part I—The Domestic President” and “Part II—The International President,” which are dealing with domestic and foreign policy issues, respectively. In an effort to explain to the Western reader why no Western-style democracy is possible within a relatively short time in a country with a decade or even centuries-long authoritarian tradition, the author asks himself, “Does this mean that Nazarbaev’s glass is half empty or half full?” He seems to understand and justify his protagonist.

The book is not limited to the problem of democracy; the author touches upon the far from simple relations inside the president’s family and the not entirely legal activities of his former son-in-law Rakhat Aliev. Education is one of the central domestic issues because, the author argues, the President is shaping the elite, the leaders destined to continue his cause. The President is a past master of balancing all foreign policy issues and an ardent supporter of active involvement in every possible international organization.

The author appreciates the President’s sense of humor, which helped him get out of a fairly sensitive situation created by the film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* and its author Sasha Baron Cohen.

As an international personality, says the author, Nazarbaev is neither an “ex-communist leader” nor a “Moscow style autocrat,” tags popular late in the 20th century. He is a much more sophisticated international politician. Jonathan Aitken has written that the president’s complicated and contradictory foreign policy course, a so-called multivectoral policy, and its fairly hazardous balancing between Moscow and Washington in particular, were justified by the republic’s OSCE chairmanship, a strategic goal realized despite the U.S. Department of State and the fairly cool relations with Dmitry Medvedev at the start of his presidency.

The author ends the book with a chapter about Astana, the country’s new capital, which the President treats as his favorite child: it is much more than a capital, a successful project, or a symbol. It should be said that the decision to move away from Almaty, the republic’s capital, was not an easy one: the President appreciated its elegance, international culture, dynamic lifestyle and the picturesque mountains that surround the city. But it was these mountains that limited the further development of Almaty (in the past this happened to Manhattan and Hong Kong). The author refers to other reasons: ecological problems, potentially destructive earthquakes, dangerous proximity of the Chinese border, and the rarely mentioned excessively Soviet (or Russified) context. Nazarbaev, who followed in the footsteps of Peter the Great, George Washington, and Kemal Atatürk, was not guided by what Aitken described in French as “*folie de grandeur*” and not because he wanted to distance himself from the opposition based in the southern capital. It was a well-justified and strategically correct decision which confirmed the President’s foresightedness and wisdom, as well as his willpower and determination as a truly national leader.

The “Epilogue” does not offer fundamental conclusions about Nazarbaev’s role in history; the author points to the emotional nature of the story based on 23 hours of personal interviews. The author, who writes that President Nazarbaev knows that his mission is far from complete, deems it necessary to ask: “What is his legacy to his people, his region and the international community?” (p. 245). “Kazakhstan’s glass deserves to be described as half full rather than half empty” (p. 246) which constitutes a positive (with reservations) assessment of what has been done. When writing about a certain ambiguity in the President’s personality, Jonathan Aitken quotes former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev: “Never forget that Nazarbaev is a man of two cultures. He is both Russian and Asian in his roots and outlook” (p. 247). The author adds: biculturalism explains Nursultan Nazarbaev’s political achievements and the historic scope of his personality. The book, which brims with hitherto unknown facts derived from confidential talks with the President and his personal archive, is of potentially great importance for Kazakhstan experts.

A revised and extended edition of D. Schreiber’s book about Kazakhstan <sup>95</sup> should be also mentioned. It is a classical travel guide for German speakers with a lot of useful information; none of the locally published guides can rival it.

The Friedrich Ebert Fund published the book *Zentralasien: der Blick nach Aussen* (in Russian and German) dealing with the foreign policies of the region’s countries as assessed by corresponding expert communities. The book, the third one dealing with this subject, is intended for wide readership <sup>96</sup>.

The joint Indian-Kazakhstan publication *Contemporary Kazakhstan: The Way Ahead* deals with the republic’s foreign policy status <sup>97</sup>. A group of French academics (P. Chuvín, R. Létolle, and S. Peyrouse) produced *Histoire de l’Asie centrale contemporaine* <sup>98</sup>. René Létolle in his *La mer d’Aral* <sup>99</sup> looked at the region’s ecological plight. A short essay by Sebastien Peyrouse deals with local agriculture and its problems <sup>100</sup>.

## 6. India and Central Asia: Geopolitical Reconnection

The collective work *Reconnecting India and Central Asia: Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions* prepared under Prof. N. Joshi’s overall guidance and

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<sup>95</sup> See: D. Schreiber, *Kasachstan. Nomadenwege zwischen Kaspischem Meer und Altaj*, Trescher Verlag, Berlin, 2009, 430 S.

<sup>96</sup> See: *Zentralasien: der Blick nach Aussen*. Internationale Politik aus zentralasiatischer Sicht, Fridrich Ebert Stiftung, Berlin, 2008, 615 S.

<sup>97</sup> See: *Contemporary Kazakhstan: The Way Ahead*, ed. by A. Mohanty, S. Swain, Axis Publications, New Delhi, 2009, XV+314 pp.

<sup>98</sup> See: P. Chuvín, R. Létolle, S. Peyrouse, *Histoire de l’Asie centrale contemporaine*, Fazard, Paris, 2008, 375 pp.

<sup>99</sup> See: R. Létolle, *La mer d’Aral*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2009, 318 pp. (J. MacKay discusses similar problems in his “Running Dry: International Law and the Management of Aral Sea Depletion,” *Central Asian Survey* (Oxford), Vol. 28, Issue 1, 2009, pp. 17-27).

<sup>100</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, “The Multiple Paradoxes of the Agriculture Issue in Central Asia,” EUCAM Working Paper, No. 6, 2009, 14 pp.

editorship has revived the rather neglected issue of Indian and Central Asian contacts. The very fact that the work appeared in the United States rather than in India or any of the Central Asian republics speaks volumes about India's greatly increased geopolitical importance and, hence, its influence in Central Asia. The book, which was published within the SAIS program at the Johns Hopkins University headed for many years by Prof. Starr, testifies to American and Western attention to India and its role in Central Asia<sup>101</sup>. Strictly speaking, the monograph deals with two key problems which found their way into the book's title: security and economics. It raises another, no less consequential question: the status of each of the partners in the context of the new geopolitical developments.

In general, the authors look at India and Central Asia as parts of GCA, which also includes South Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey. They have not limited themselves to geopolitics and security, but have moved on to discuss economic contacts, which supplies them with the clout and importance they have not yet acquired.

The above fits into the notorious GCA concept Frederick Starr put into circulation; his foreword sets the tone, while his ideas dominate the book. What do the authors think about the community of Indian and Central Asian interests in the context of their identical interpretation of the threats and challenges?

They proceed from the assumption that at all times India has been and is aware of Central Asia's geopolitical importance as part of a vast and strategically pivotal area. There is a strong conviction in the Indian corridors of power that the changing geopolitical and strategic situation in Eurasia calls for India's restored (allegedly) regional role. Today the country, along with the global players, is trying to join the geopolitical struggle for the region's resources.

Seen from New Delhi, the Big Game around the region looks like a cooperation/competition between two pairs of geopolitical actors: the U.S. and the EU, on the one side, and Russia and China, on the other. So far, carried by inertia, India is still cooperating with Russia, while China's increasing presence is pushing it toward the United States. Delhi is convinced that the Central Asian countries share its belief that no single power should dominate the region. At the same time, the Indian expert community believes that the Russian and Indian perceptions about China's future role in Central Asia are likely to coincide and can be described as immediate concerns.

Central Asia might become part of the strategically hazardous neighborhood dominated by expanded Af-Pak, which Delhi fears more than anything else. India and the Central Asian countries should pool forces to address the problem of Afghanistan. The authors even criticize the Obama Administration, which is prepared to flirt with the so-called Taliban moderates and is even encouraging the forces responsible for the 2008 heinous terrorist act in Mumbai.

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<sup>101</sup> See: *Reconnecting India and Central Asia: Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions*, ed. by N. Joshi, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program- A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2010, IX+182 pp.



The authors are quite open about the fact that India is focusing on Central Asia's energy resources, Kazakhstan being the attraction; the two countries are already tied by the Strategic Partnership Agreement; this and Afghanistan's possible membership in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will allow India to knock together a regional bloc of sorts as part of the "Look West Policy" it has been working on since the early 1990s. If realized, Delhi would become the leader of the GCA project recognized by the West and other actors. Successfully completed, the project would allow India to establish the trade and transport contacts with Central Asia it badly needs.

The authors supply relevant figures to clarify the geopolitical interests of some countries. By 2015, India's trade with the EU, CIS, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan could reach \$500-600 billion annually. Even if 20 percent of the trade were to pass by overland routes through Afghanistan and Central Asia, it would be worth \$100-120 billion (in transit revenues? What about the cost of the goods themselves?). Some of the northern Indian states prefer the transit route across Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is geographically much more expedient. India still needs a pipeline to bring fuel from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The authors are fully aware of the GCA project's mainly hypothetical nature: instability in Afghanistan and the acrimonious relations between India and Pakistan, etc. being too high political obstacles to be easily negotiated. In view of the above and bearing in mind that the country's strategic establishment is prepared to study it, they put a new geopolitical agenda on the table. For strategic reasons and to gain access to the region's energy resources through direct supply lines with Central Asia, India should work toward stabilization in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

India can count on the United States as a partner in this geopolitical project (we have in mind unification of Central and South Asia); at the practical level, America can also help to stabilize Pakistan.

The authors are convinced that the strategic partnership between New Delhi and Washington could be extended to Central Asia as well. This will create a geopolitical U.S.-India-Russia triangle. Tajikistan (which is very close to Afghanistan and Pakistan topographically, religiously, socially, and economically) can be described as one of the closest targets of cooperation. For the sake of the country's future, experts suggest that India should pay more attention to the youth and the new elite that is gradually emerging in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

On the whole, write the authors, India's Central Asian policy should be correlated to a much greater extent with its Asian strategy. Some time later India will probably find it possible to invite some of the local countries (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) into the SAARC, of which it is the leader. Experts warn India against becoming dependent on integration or stabilization in Afghanistan and Pakistan; Iranian ports and railways offer an excellent alternative for its contacts with Central Asia.

The authors describe India as a "latecomer to the region," which accounts for their inflated attention to geopolitical issues. At the same time, they are obviously

out to present India as a global player to account for its regional interests and to link it to certain strategic triangles (which involve America, Russia, or China). India's real interests are much more modest—they are regional rather than global, on a par with Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey.

The book, which traces the progress of global thinking in India in search for a worthy place in the world, makes for interesting reading. It is even more interesting because it concentrates on Central Asia, a geopolitical target of long standing (prize No. 1 in the Great Game on the Eurasian chessboard). India does not want, and cannot afford, to be left in the cold.

## **7. Russia: More Than a Neighbor**

Russia's never flagging interest in Central Asia is amply confirmed by a large number of publications, many of them worth closer attention. One is the collective effort *Gody, kotorye izmenili Tsentral'nuiu Aziu* (The Years which Changed Central Asia) published in 2009 under the joint leadership of V. Naumkin, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, and German expert P. Linke<sup>102</sup>.

Russian academics have identified five groups of key problems still present in the region.

- First, has transformation of Central Asia been completed? A positive answer suggests another question: What state models have been created? The authors concluded that the Central Asian political systems and models are moving toward consolidated national states.

- The second problem deals with the ideology and research instruments individually or collectively employed in Central Asian studies. This chapter is openly critical of the West and its ideologists who, the authors insist, demonstrate abstract (at best) or even malicious approaches designed to tear the region away from Russia, which treats Central Asia not as a geopolitical abstraction but as a very real extension of its territory.
- The third, longest, chapter deals with the states, their political evolution and socioeconomic transformation. The authors concluded that Kazakhstan has not yet achieved the main goal of transformation. The republic has failed to transform the relations of ownership to means of production to create a class of free personified owners as the main driving force behind economic development and the cornerstone of civil society. They describe the republic's political reality as a symbiosis of power and property which serves as an impressive façade far removed from genuine democracy.

The situation in Kyrgyzstan is tagged as “retreat to authoritarianism”: in an effort to build up his own vertical of power, Bakiev curtailed many of the democratic achievements. The events of April- June 2010, however, indicate that the republic has been drawn into another period of turbulence. If they continue,

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<sup>102</sup> See: *Gody, kotorye izmenili Tsentral'nuiu Aziu*, TsSPI-IV RAN, Moscow, 2009, 331 pp.

these trends, the authors warn, might split the country and make it easy prey for its stronger neighbors. Today, it is moving in this direction.

When writing about Tajikistan, the authors concentrate on the negative factors such as the clan nature of the republic's politics and economy, the low economic development level, the widespread poverty, and strong outside influence. Turkmenistan stands apart from the other Soviet-successor states, however the progress of its transformation can easily be analyzed within the context common for all the Central Asian countries. Its totalitarian political regime can be described as one of the dominant factors underpinned by the hydrocarbon factor greatly responsible for the country's economic and foreign policies.

The section dealing with Uzbekistan is of a descriptive rather than analytical nature: it is defined as the region's pivotal state, which inevitably affects its development and international status. A thesis which is at least ten years old is still alive: the republic has not realized its vast socioeconomic, political and international potential.

External actors and recommendations received a lot of attention. Uzbekistan, for example, is advised to address the following priorities: fighting poverty; supporting the Russian language; and carrying out an in-depth analysis of the local specifics and political culture. It should also drop the double standard practice. The republic's leaders should pay particular attention to NGOs and all sorts of funds in order to prevent them from turning into the opposition's purse. The powers that be should create a more competitive milieu for the local elites and pay less attention to the fairly formalized opinions of foreign experts who know next to nothing about the local reality.

The authors have pointed out the obvious differentiation among the local states brought about by their transformation pace: Kazakhstan is moving toward a regional status, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan remain "poverty poles." There is another, no less important, observation: despite their numerous failings and errors, none of the local countries has degenerated into a "failed state" (so far the events in Kyrgyzstan have not yet suggested this conclusion). As distinct from the post-Soviet Caucasian states, the Central Asian republics have proven stable enough even though they have their share of troubles: Will they remain secular or will they become Islamic states? The answer is not clear. The widespread poverty and pressure from the West are playing into the hands of the Islamists. There is another problem rooted in the region's past: none of the states has been able to separate the government from the economy.

The authors have admitted that the West has successfully destroyed all the elements of socialism — a dubious victory to say the least. The West, determined to prevent the revival of the Soviet system and socialism as well as what it calls the Soviet Empire in any form, played in the hands of large corporations and the local regimes. The results left the designers openmouthed.

Several chapters deal with the close contacts between Europe and Central Asia; seen from both sides, they do not look like peripheries, and this not only because of the local states' membership in the OSCE. Europe has much closer relations with Central Asia than any other Western country or region.

Radical Islam and its role in the region are discussed in the fourth chapter. Political Islam sprang into life while Soviet power was dying. Today, there are three possible approaches to this phenomenon: total suppression (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan); neutralization of the radical groups and a cautious dialog with the moderates (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan); and cooperation up to and including involvement in the power structures (Tajikistan).

Chapter Five looks at the external factors that have a role to play in the political transformations and regional security. Russia, China, the U.S., and the EU are described as the principal actors, while the others (Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, and Japan) are left outside the scope of the analysis.

The authors do not beat about the bush: Russia is the key regional actor, the relations of which with the Central Asian countries go far beyond interstate limits: the historical, cultural, socioeconomic, civilizational, and geographic ties between the former metropolitan state and the regional states are too strong to be ignored. The human (humanitarian) factor is also very important. Russia is mostly concerned with stability; it seeks to rely on the region's geopolitical potential to upgrade its own status among the other key actors and to achieve international recognition of its regional role.

Russia and the United States are locked in latent rivalry. Washington, which is firmly determined to squeeze the pragmatically minded RF out of the region (and the post-Soviet expanse, for that matter), is guided by ideological considerations (this was true, at least, of George W. Bush's policy).

As distinct from the United States and the European Union, Moscow does not indulge in moralizing, avoids double standards, and never flirts with antigovernment forces. Free from unpleasant surprises, its open and predictable political course does much to uphold its current advantageous position. Moscow rejects the Islamic alternative for Central Asia as incompatible with Russia's strategies; this explains its strong opposition to the forces backed by certain circles in Pakistan and the Arab countries.

China, which has armed itself with the American "soft power" doctrine, is demonstrating a lot of caution in the region. In its effort to slow down or even halt China's discreet progress, Washington is fanning the "Chinese threat" theory welcomed by certain forces in Russia and the Central Asian states. In the event of dramatic negative developments in the region potentially detrimental to its interests, the authors write, Beijing will hardly remain neutral.

This chapter offers even more scything criticism of America's regional policy. In 2005, the Bush Administration armed itself with the GCA project now being used as a battering ram to achieve undivided political and economic domination and drive out potential rivals (Russia and China).

The European Union stands a better chance of gaining more ground in Central Asia: there are no negative connotations; as distinct from the United States, which is exporting democracy far and wide, the EU looks at democracy as a cultural value to be grown at home. Its presence in the region will add to stability and give democracy a better chance.



The EU Central Asian policy is best described as cautious; according to lavishly quoted European experts, more active involvement of the European Union would trim down the excessive vigor of America, Russia, and China to create a more balanced context.

On the whole, the authors describe Western policy as “democratic messianism” geared at what the West and the loyal elite can use to their advantage and ignoring alternatives. Tested in Latin America, this model was found wanting: the resultant gap between the very poor majority and the filthy rich minority proved unacceptably wide.

Put in a nutshell, the following sums up the above:

- First, economic liberalization should outstrip political, not vice versa;
- Second, the Central Asian countries failed to transform the nature of ownership; the state acts instead of civil society, which is split along the “rights-privileges” line;
- Third, the set of democratic institutions in all countries is mistakenly taken for democracy.

The main conclusion is that none of the political regimes of the new type which sprang into existence in post-Soviet Central Asia has anything in common with any of the known political scientific models of transit from authoritarianism to consolidated democracy of the liberal type. This means, write the authors, that each of the states will have to come up with its own transformation model.

Prof. I. Zviagelskaia of the Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, has chosen a different approach in her recent book *Stanovlenie gosudarstv Tsentral'noy Azii: politicheskie protsessy* (Development of Central Asian States: Political Processes)<sup>103</sup>: it is neither a political scientific nor an analytical work. The first three chapters look at the history of the Russian Empire's conquests, colonization of Turkestan, and the development of Central Asia and Kazakhstan as parts of the Soviet Union to reveal the paradigm of Central Asia's historical movement toward Russia.

When dealing with post-Soviet independent development, the author pays particular attention to nation-building, political culture, the Islamic factor, ethnic and labor migration, outside influences, and potential and real threats and conflicts. A member of the group involved in establishing a dialog between the sides in the Tajik civil war, which was very conducive in settling the conflict, Irina Zviagelskaia dwells on the civil war of the early 1990s in greater detail. The holidays and rites of the Central Asian peoples were not forgotten either.

The 200-odd pages of her monograph come to the conclusion that the region's future is still vague. It will obviously diversify its contacts for the simple reason that Russia neither has the desire nor the ability to monitor them. “The natural and mutually needed ties should not be broken when the Soviet generation leaves the stage. We cannot afford this.” Very true.

China in Central Asia is a subject that cannot be ignored: its increasing relevance has become too obvious. A monograph coauthored by S. Zhukov and O.

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<sup>103</sup> See: I. Zviagelskaia, *Stanovlenie gosudarstv Tsentral'noy Azii: politicheskie protsessy*, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2009, 208 pp.

Reznikova of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, RAS entitled *Tsentral'naia Azia i Kitai: ekonomicheskoe vzaimodeystvie v usloviakh globalizatsii* (Central Asia and China: Economic Cooperation in the Globalized World)<sup>104</sup> says that globalization alone provides the relevant framework within which the content and direction of accelerating China-Central Asia cooperation can be adequately analyzed. This rising world power is involved to a much greater extent than the others in transforming the Central Asian economic expanse. To channel the Central Asian economic processes in the desired direction, China is relying on its market and non-market competitive advantages and skillfully using global and regional mechanisms of cooperation (the WTO and, to an ever increasing degree, the SCO).

Neither the Central Asian nor the Eurasian countries can compete with China in the non-raw material branches; this means that the future and the structure of their economic growth is fairly limited. The authors have found enough arguments to describe the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) as a rapidly developing center and a leader of GCA economic activities. Today, the growing macroregion includes Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia's neighboring regions and, to a certain extent, Tajikistan. Turkmenistan, and probably Uzbekistan will be drawn in later.

The microregion is building economic structures designed to complement what Central Asia has at its disposal; it serves as a transit route leading to Greater China. The volume of industrial production and investments and the scope of construction of the transborder transport infrastructure testify to XUAR's fast progress toward a leading economic role in GCA. Xinjiang owes its impressive achievements to its new role as a bridge between Central Asia and the developed central and southern Chinese provinces, write the authors, as well as to the fact that Beijing still redistributes considerable economic resources in favor of the XUAR.

The Russian authors have pointed out that China regards its economic cooperation with Central Asia as a byproduct of the main task: accelerated development of the country's western fringes. Beijing treats Kazakhstan as a strategically important partner because of its transit capacities, which are very much needed for obtaining energy resources from its Central Asian neighbors. Experts believe that Astana deliberately invited Beijing to discuss the regional gas projects in order to prompt Moscow to make concessions.

After carefully analyzing the subject and summarizing the results, the authors arrived at the following conclusions.

- First, in the coming decade economic cooperation between China and Central Asia will develop by leaps and bounds; this fits the global trends, while China is gradually becoming a powerful economic center.
- Second, despite the growing flow of goods, services, investments, and technology between

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<sup>104</sup> See: S.V. Zhukov, O.B. Reznikova, *Tsentral'naia Azia i Kitai: ekonomicheskoe vzaimodeystvie v usloviakh globalizatsii*, IMEMO RAN, Moscow, 2009, 179 pp.

China and Central Asia, the importance of these contacts for the sides involved will remain lopsided because of their incommensurable economies.

- Third, for objective reasons, China's economic interests in the region are concentrated in Kazakhstan, the region's economic leader.
- Fourth, very much like the other centers of global economic might, China needs the region's natural resources, particularly Kazakh oil and Turkmenian natural gas.
- Fifth, China agreed to set up the SCO to promote its economic interests in Central Asia (there were other reasons as well); it relied on all forms of multisided diplomacy and rhetoric to win over Central Asia in a non-confrontational manner.
- Sixth, slowly but surely the Central Asian countries are developing into a raw-material appendage not only of the European, but also of the Chinese economy.

The main conclusion is that Central Asia is confronted with the need to adapt to China's economic upsurge. The authors have not missed another aspect: Russia's interests are affected by the mounting economic cooperation between China and Central Asia, and they suggest that the Kremlin should take into account Chinese experience when drafting Russia's long-term national strategy.

Dr. Chufrin's recent monograph <sup>105</sup> can be described as a continuation of the previous publication (in 2008 he headed the collective of authors of a monograph dealing with Russia's regional policy) <sup>106</sup>.

The monograph comprises three parts.

- The first part looks at regional security; it investigates the non-traditional security threats, what is being done to fight them, and the points on which the region's states disagree or even conflict. One of the chapters deals with Washington's regional policy, which the author puts in a nutshell as another frontier of its foreign policy or, to be more exact, military political strategy. The author investigates the regional role of the CSTO and Russian-American relations in the regional security sphere. The first part ends in a chapter dealing with the Afghan (or rather Af-Pak) impact on Central Asian security: it censures America's Central Asian policy and what has come of it.
- The second part looks at trade and economic cooperation, as well as other aspects of the relations between the Russian Federation and the Central Asian republics, the most important issues being migration, financial cooperation, transport and communication, and joint use of hydropower. A detailed analysis of the relations between Russia and Kazakhstan described as the linchpin of the integration processes conducive to closer economic ties in the eastern part of the CIS is offered in one of the chapters.

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<sup>105</sup> See: G.I. Chufrin, *Rossia v Tsentral'noy Azii*, KISI, Almaty, 2010, 220 pp.

<sup>106</sup> See: *Novye tendentsii vo vneshney politike Rossii v Tsentral'noy Azii i na Kavkaze.*, ed. by G.I. Chufrin, IMEMO, Moscow, 2008, 181 pp.

- The third part looks into the past and present of the SCO, the evolution of its tasks, and the forms and methods employed to respond to the security threats, as well as economic cooperation within SCO and the prospects for its expansion. Its further expansion (in the form of fully-fledged membership) is hardly expedient, yet partnership looks promising and potentially attractive: the United States and Japan might be tempted, to say nothing of Afghanistan.

Dr. Chufrin points out the recent serious political and economic contradictions between Russia and Central Asia which should be carefully analyzed and smoothed out. He offers four reasons for what is going on:

1. The objective political and socioeconomic complications in the local countries.
2. The negative impact of regional and global developments.
3. The inconsistent and contradictory policy of the Central Asian leaders with respect to the scope and aims of cooperation with Russia.
4. The rapidly developing competitive potential of third countries: the local states are willing to cooperate with the West and the East.

Russia should pursue a pragmatic policy in the political sphere, says the author, and rely on the CSTO and SCO to promote regional and its own security. In the economic sphere, Russia should work toward as favorable a cooperation climate as possible for the sake of its continued economic influence. Dr. Chufrin is convinced that Russia should and can present itself not only as an attractive economic partner, but also as an effective guarantor of the local states' economic independence. The bold and far-sighted recommendations of the Russian academic refute the clichés, myths, and sentiments current in the West and among certain Central Asian elites about Russia's determination to regain control in the colonial-imperial style. Dr. Chufrin has proved the opposite.

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This far from complete survey of the literature on Central Asia shows that the academic and political scientific communities have not lost their interest in the region. The past few years have abounded in collective and personal monographs about Central Asia; Kazakhstan is treated as a topic in its own right. The authors are obviously interested in long-standing issues, such as geopolitics, international relations, domestic policy, and the economy, as well as in recent ones (the military as a regional factor). Political science and auxiliary disciplines are as interested in Central Asia as ever, their interest going beyond purely academic boundaries.

Those who wonder whether foreign writings about the region are worth reading should understand that wittingly or unwittingly our foreign colleagues help us to understand ourselves better and take a detached view of our problems. The experience of foreign countries may be invaluable in helping us to correct our errors and improve our situation.

## **Part II. The Major Powers and Central Asia**

### **1. Russian Policy toward Central Asia under Putin**

Russia's policy in Central Asia has arrived upto 2008 at a new stage in its development. This is confirmed both by the transformation of the situation in the region and by the changes in Russia's international position.<sup>107</sup>

At the previous stage in its Central Asian policy, Moscow was busy trying to implement the so-called Putin Doctrine. This basically consisted of attempts to integrate the post-Soviet expanse (encompassing as much territory as possible) by primarily economic means. However, political means were also implied along with the economic levers. This policy was manifested in the various integration formations that sprang up in the CIS, such as the EurAsEC-Customs Union, the SES, the CSTO, and the Belarus-Russia Union State, as well as the multitude of bilateral and multilateral agreements with Russia's participation in economic trade cooperation, the energy industry, and transportation and communications.

This approach was most intensively implemented between 2003 and 2006, when Moscow was able to greatly fortify its position in Central Asia, enter long-term contracts in the production and transportation of energy resources, take partial or complete control over the strategic branches of several regional countries, and achieve advantageous conditions for building pipelines. In addition, the economic penetration of Russian companies into the region was accompanied by intensification of military-technical and military-strategic cooperation between the Russian Federation and the regional states, the setting up of Russian military bases, and the ousting of rivals (with the exception of China).

However, after 2006 Russia's international position began to change, which could not help but have an effect on its Central Asian policy. Another spiral of the confrontation with the West began, pulling Moscow along with it and turning the region into an area where their interests clash.

There can be no doubt that the Color Revolutions in the post-Soviet expanse were one of the main reasons for the crisis in Russian-Western relations. And Central Asia was no exception— Russia (along with Kazakhstan) did not permit escalation of this kind of revolution in Kyrgyzstan and also supported Uzbekistan in its determination not to allow a full-fledged civil war in the country as a result of the rebellion in Andijan, which was inspired from the outside.

In 2007-2008, NATO's enlargement and the U.S.'s deployment of ABM systems in Eastern Europe posed a direct threat to Russia's national security. The relations between the Kremlin and the White House became aggravated during the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008. In this difficult situation, Moscow was counting on political support from its CSTO and SCO allies. The Kremlin made its military choice (as the U.S. did earlier) in favor of unilateral acts—it carried out unilateral operations in the CIS without taking into account the opinion of its allies

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<sup>107</sup> See: Laumulin M. Russia and Central Asia: Mutual Strategic Interests // Central Asia's Affairs (Almaty, KazISS). 2009. No 3, pp. 9-17.

in the integration unions. Moscow retained this approach in its policy and it was to have quite a significant impact on security in the Central Asian countries (including negative).<sup>108</sup>

Since 2008, the world financial and economic crisis, deterioration of the economic situation, and drop in Russia's economic growth rates will have the greatest influence on Russia's policy on the international arena as a whole and in Central Asia in particular. Nor can we exclude the fact that it will encounter extreme economic difficulties in the near future due to the incomplete structural reforms and modernization process.

This cannot help but have an effect on Russia's activity in Central Asia. It is very likely that Russian policy will become even tougher: it will need more new raw material sources in order to retain its position as the largest exporter of energy resources to Europe and competition among Russia, the West, and possibly China will intensify for control over raw material sources and major pipelines.

In addition, the nature of economic trade relations and development dynamics of the labor market both in Russia and in the Central Asian countries will change. It is also possible that the Russian government will begin to curtail integration measures and the movement of goods and the workforce in order to protect its own internal market. At the same time, there will most likely be attempts to expand its own market further to encompass the Central Asian markets.

In 2008, significant changes occurred in the mechanisms for forming Russia's domestic and foreign policy. Vladimir Putin's semi-autocratic (that is, essentially one-man) rule was replaced by so-called tandem democracy, that is, the Putin-Medvedev political tandem and the various groups of the Russian establishment that stand behind it. This factor could also have a certain influence on the formation of Russia's Central Asian policy.

In May 2008, new President came to power in Kremlin, which has been Dmitriy Medvedev. So, the new phase in Russian Foreign Policy has started. This factor is concerned Central Asia as well. The first external Medvedev's visit was targeted on Kazakhstan. Astana and Moscow have confirmed their "special relations". But the fundament of this very specific and important relationship was created in Putin's era. This article regards Russia's policy and strategy towards Central Asia and Kazakhstan under Vladimir Putin's presidency.

In 2006 and 2007, the geopolitical situation around Central Asia underwent changes, some of which were quite substantial. The great powers shifted their political accents and readjusted cooperation formats. Energy moved to the forefront to become one of the new issues and centerpiece of the EU strategy. The rapidly worsening relations between Russia and the West are another geopolitically important factor. Russia had a strong, though not always obvious, impact on the region's geopolitical context. In fact, the entire range of relations (transport,

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<sup>108</sup> See: V. Amirnov, "Novaia Rossiia na mirovoi arene: modernizatsiia kursa," in: *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 12, 2008, pp. 113-116; A. Lukin, "Vneshniaia politika: ot postsovetsskoi k rossiiskoi. Uroki konflikta s Gruziei," in: *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, No. 6, Vol. 6, 2008, pp. 78-90.



economy, energy, and the humanitarian issues) between the EU and Central Asia cannot be correctly assessed without taking into account the Russian Federation. Russia's presence in the region (either obvious or hidden from the eye) and the vector of its relations with Europe have put an energy alliance between Moscow, other important energy producers, and transit countries on the agenda.

The worsening relations between Russia and the West (particularly with the United States, the EU, NATO, and OSCE) were a fact, the nature and repercussions of which look long-term and varied. It has already spread to cooperation in the economic and energy spheres, military-strategic stability, the counterterrorist struggle, and geopolitical and geo-economic cooperation between Russia and the West in Asia, Latin America, the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East and, most important, in the CIS.

The wave of Color Revolutions that swept the post-Soviet expanse in 2003-2005 was in fact the first (still latent) clash of Russian and Western interests. To keep up appearances, the sides refrained for a while from openly discussing their contradictions and problems. The West interpreted the strengthening of the SCO as one of the first signs that its relations with Russia were going downhill: in 2005 this regional organization raised the question of the time limits of America's military presence in Central Asia. Since 2006 (Vice-President Cheney's speech in Lithuania), Washington has been criticizing Moscow quite openly.

Planned transportation routes and pipelines for the Central Asian and Caspian hydrocarbons have become a field of open clashes and geopolitical and geo-economic rivalry. The EU, with the United States by its side, is talking about "the diversification of energy deliveries" to its markets, an undisguised anti-Russian position. This and other factors, as well as the U.S. and NATO presence in the region, suggest that the rapidly worsening relations between Russia and the West will affect the Central Asian states' international and geopolitical situation.

On the whole, Russia's elites were fully aware of the fact that the relations with the CIS members are their country's absolute foreign policy priority. It is in this sphere that Russia's main economic interests and security concerns are concentrated and it is this sphere that creates the most serious threats. Russian political analysts and politicians agree that the country should retain its main role on the post-Soviet expanse and should prevent its "erosion" caused by the gradually increasing involvement of the West and its institutions. It is commonly believed that in Central Asia Russia should fully tap the possibilities offered by the CSTO, EurAsEC, and SCO. To achieve this, Russia should offer attractive, competitive, and realistic prospects for both the political elites and the public at large.

In July 2008, President Dmitry Medvedev approved the draft of a new conception of Russia's foreign policy. This completed the almost two years of work on a document that was called upon to formulate the foreign policy ideology of contemporary Russia.

Russia's armed action in support of South Ossetia in August 2008 undermined the model of Russia's relations with the West that had formed in the 1990s and created a new situation. Moscow refused to follow the game rules

offered by the West and resolved to oppose it in practice in certain areas affecting Russia's vital interests, whereby a serious confrontation would do nothing to stop it.

Russian strategists are making no bones about the fact that the new course is aimed at restoring Russia's foreign policy appeal, something which is called "soft power." For Russia, the transition to a new foreign policy presumes carrying out the following measures: forming its own basic national interests; understanding which of them also correlate with the interests of the other players in world politics; making areas where these interests coincide the vectors of its foreign policy appeal; persuading its main partners, by means of cooperation in these vectors, to make concessions in those areas where their interests do not coincide with Russia's.

An important place in Russia's foreign policy is occupied by participation in the activity of international organizations. In this respect, Russian political circles have recently been discussing the expediency of Moscow participating further in the OSCE. The activity of this organization affects the security and political position of the Central Asian states to one extent or another. Moscow thinks the OSCE should be reformed, as a result of which its main structures, which act autonomously on the basis of their own mandates (the ODIHR, Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the field missions, which are quite independent in their work), would be placed under the strict control of the Organization's Permanent Council in Vienna. Decisions are made in it on the basis of consensus and all the partner states have the right of veto.

This innovation would mean that the main decisions, which are made independently today by the Organization's individual institutions, would require unanimous approval. In addition, Russia is insisting on increasing the Permanent Council's political supervision and control over the activity of the missions. Moscow is also proposing giving the OSCE the status of a legal entity, adopting the organization's Charter, and unifying the standard procedures for managing its operations and institutions.

That is, Moscow is essentially suggesting that the OSCE's autonomous institutions be clamped in the iron grips of political consensus, which makes its competence dependent on how successful the political bargaining is between Russia and its partners in the Organization. This reform is designed to stop enlargement of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures in the post-Soviet expanse and hinder transfer to the region of political mechanisms launched in the West (i.e., the Color Revolutions).

### *Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy under Vladimir Putin*

President Putin's foreign policy strategy (2000-2008) has become clear enough and can be discussed in detail. On the whole pragmatic (though there are



exceptions), it takes into account Russia's geopolitical and economic resources and its real possibilities.<sup>109</sup>

There is the opinion that the Russian leadership is divided into two blocs conventionally described as military and economic (or those who favor the use of force and the pragmatists) and that the former is much more influential than the latter. This inevitably affects the country's foreign policy course. On the other hand, Russia's foreign policy is also affected by all sorts of ministries and departments with inevitably different, or at least specific, approaches and interests. Today, the Presidential Administration, as well as the Foreign Ministry of Russia, the Defense Ministry, and Gazprom (the structures which are able to directly influence the process) have their own ideas about Russia's policy in the CIS. As distinct from Yeltsin's times, under Vladimir Putin Russia's foreign policy became much more consolidated, which means that all the departments and ministries are obliged to promote national interests.

From the very beginning, President Putin concentrated on establishing pragmatic relations with the West and succeeded: Russia became a nearly fully-fledged G-8 member; it improved its relations with the U.S. and the EU, intensified its relations with NATO on an equal basis and, on the whole, balanced between the United States and the European Union while maintaining predominantly political relations with the former and predominantly economic cooperation with the latter.

Moscow has managed to turn the economy, or rather cooperation in the energy sphere, into a powerful foreign policy tool. This was true of its contacts with the West and with China and Japan in the East. The newly found energy strategy loomed prominently in Russia's relations with the CIS countries; it became a geopolitical tool, a fact that directly affects the Republic of Kazakhstan's national, economic, and energy interests. On the other hand, Russia displayed a lot of ingenuity in using its relations with the Asian countries, particularly China, as a counterweight to the West. Recently, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China have become unprecedentedly close, especially in the military-political and military-strategic spheres; the SCO is helping them realize their shared geopolitical ambitions.

While maintaining close relations with China, Russia is working toward a higher level of relations with Japan by playing on its contradictions with China, among other things; Russia wants to remain the mediator on the Korean Peninsula; it is rebuilding its strategic cooperation with India; and it is making advances to Southeastern Asia and the Muslim world through the OIC.

The post-Soviet expanse remains the main target of Moscow's geopolitical efforts. President Putin's doctrine rests on his firm conviction that to regain its place among the leading geopolitical actors Russia should restore its influence in

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<sup>109</sup> See: S. Morozov, *Diplomatia V.V. Putina. Vneshniaia politika Rossii. 1999-2004*, ID Izmaylovskiy Publishers, St. Petersburg, 2004, 256 pp; A. Rahr, "Kholodny mir. Putinskaia Rossia i Zapad," *Internationale Politik* (Berlin, Russian language edition), No. 2, 2004, pp. 5-16; *Strategicheskii otvet Rossii na vyzovy novogo veka*, ed. by L.I. Abalkin, Ekzamen Publishers, Moscow, 2004, 608 pp.

the traditional spheres of its domination: the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the CIS as a whole.

To achieve this remote goal, Russia put forward, in 2006-07, an economic (geopolitical in its essence) project of the Single Economic Space (SES). The Ukrainian events forced Moscow to shelve the project and revive the EurAsEC, the project's earlier version. Both projects are intended to establish extensive economic integration as the cornerstone of political integration, that is, to rebuild in Eurasia a certain geopolitical unit with imperial hues under Russia's aegis (a Liberal Empire).

The nuances and interpretations may vary (a Eurasian alliance, a confederation, etc.), but President Putin's main idea remained the same: if the post-Soviet expanse (or its part) remains disunited, neither Russia nor other CIS countries would be able to set up an effective political and economic union able to compete on the world scene. The geographic and geopolitical factors confirm this in the same way as it is suggested by the shared economic, transportation, and communication systems inherited from the past, historical and cultural associations, etc. Moscow is convinced that Russia's restored economic and political might will help its integration allies (Kazakhstan being one of them) to surge forward.

Large oil and gas companies either controlled by the state or closely connected with it have become the main vehicles of Russia's strategy. The 2005 events around the North European gas pipeline and the gas-related disagreements with Ukraine threw into bolder relief the fact that "gas" politics and Gazprom have become foreign policy tools.

Since 2000, when he became president, Vladimir Putin has been demonstrating pragmatic approaches to foreign policy: being aware of Russia's limited resources, he dropped the Great Power rhetoric and intentions and concentrated on pooling forces to achieve modernization at home. High-flown deliberations about the multipolar world were replaced with the thesis of a multi-vector foreign policy of a country seeking closer relations with Europe, more effective counterterrorist cooperation with the United States, strategic partnership with China and India, and a single economic space with the CIS countries (with the emphasis on Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine).

At all times President Putin demonstrated that his country was prepared to cooperate and work together with the West. At the early stages of his presidency he readjusted the previous course; in actual fact he not only stemmed mounting disagreements between his country and the West (particularly the United States), but also increased confidence in Russia in the West. This greatly improved the external context for the reforms and modernization.

From the very beginning, however, President Putin demonstrated firmness and unwillingness to accept compromises his country did not need; and he was prepared to defend the most important national interests. By the beginning of his second term, his foreign policy resource began melting away.

During Putin's first years the two different ideas about Russia's strategies and its national interests inherited from the previous period were still competing,

neither of them gaining priority. I have in mind the so-called Westerners and Realists. The former were convinced that Russia should replace China as Washington's most important strategic ally; it should stop flirting with Europe exploiting anti-American sentiments; act together with the United States in the world's key strategic regions; cooperate with it in modernizing the backward regions (the post-Soviet expanse); coordinate efforts in the sphere of strategic weapons, etc. By 2006-2007, this group lost nearly all of its former influence.

The Realists argue that in the last two years the external threat became even greater: they are convinced that Russia could be attacked by the United States from Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus; destabilization on the Korean Peninsula and deployment of American armed forces there also cause concern. The Russian strategists do not exclude the fact that America could attack Iran and increase geopolitical tension in the Middle East and elsewhere, including in Xinjiang. They also expect that in the near future American actions in Afghanistan and Iraq will not defuse the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and that this threat will increase. The Russian strategists see radical Islam as the greatest threat to Russia's continued existence.

Russia postponed its decision to build up its military presence in Central Asia until the U.S. made an attempt to expand its military presence in the region. Meanwhile, the Russian generals were determined to push the president toward even more active rivalry with Washington in the region. The Realists were convinced that a multipolar world could be created if the Russian Federation cooperated more closely with the EU and Germany, if it worked together with France and China in the U.N. Security Council, strengthened the SCO, and remained firm in the face of America's efforts to infringe on its interests.

The Westerners and the Realists agreed that Russia should preserve its nuclear potential as the cornerstone of its security. As for China, the Realists believe that the strategic partnership with this country enforced by circumstances should be preserved for the simple reason that both countries are objectively the subjects of the United States' so-called containment strategy. Late in April 2002, Russia made a strategically important step by setting up the Collective Security Treaty Organization; it was obviously resolved to stay in the zone of its traditional domination in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Russia did not intend to limit its military cooperation within the CSTO; it was building up its cooperation within the EurAsEC to bring its allies closer through economic instruments. This means that the Kremlin had finally formulated a complete strategy in the CIS; part of it envisaged coordinated WTO membership for the EurAsEC members. The weakest point in this strategy was the fact that Russia, a former great power, failed to grasp the full extent of its economic, demographic, and domestic weakness.

Russia's present geopolitical situation, therefore, can be described as very difficult, while its possibilities for expanding its geopolitical influence are very limited. Russia has been pursuing a moderate and cautious policy in Afghanistan. The West and the Northern Alliance regularly invited Russia to join the international coalition, but never succeeded. Russia was determined to stay

outside. At the same time, it is interested in the Afghan issue for several reasons: it needed stabilization and guarantees that in future the country would not become a source of terrorism; it wants to stem the flow of drugs, and it intends to support the Northern Alliance, its military-political client. To a certain extent, the Central Asian states have similar interests in Afghanistan. On the whole, Russia's interests in Afghanistan can be divided into political, military-strategic, and economic.<sup>110</sup> In December 2004, Moscow confirmed its position on the Afghan issue at an informal meeting of the defense ministers of Russia and NATO in Poiana Brasov, Rumania.

Drugs remain the worst problem created by Afghanistan. The Russian Federation intends to invite the EU and NATO to coordinate anti-drug efforts. The Russian side is convinced that this cooperation can proceed through CSTO-NATO and NATO-SCO. This means that Russia and the Central Asian states have a common Afghanistan-related agenda based on their natural desire to preserve regional security and stability and prevent another wave of militant Islam.

### *Russia's Policy in the CIS*

The Russian Federation regards its relations with Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan as a priority; and it is closely monitoring the South Caucasian developments too. Russia and the West find themselves on opposite sides in Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Moscow regards the West's political favorites in these republics as anti-Russian politicians.

Several years ago the Russian leaders showed concern over the future of the Commonwealth of Independent States: the Russian side wondered why integration in the CIS was moving ahead with such difficulty; it tried to find ways and means to accelerate it and impart it with positive dynamics.<sup>111</sup> Moscow posed itself the following tasks: the CIS should become a clear priority of Russia's foreign policy; Russia should treat its national security as another priority; it should exercise a pragmatic and differentiated approach to its partners depending on their willingness to take Russia's interests into account; it should add life to economic cooperation, promote Russian business, add vigor to bilateral cooperation, and readjust integration priorities to shift the accent from the multisided CIS to specialized units: the Belarus-Russia Union, EurAsEC, and CSTO.

Russia hoped to regain the position it had lost in the post-Soviet expanse through the gradually developing SES. The Kremlin retreated on many points, which allowed its partners to exploit the still non-existent integration project in their interests. Some Russian strategists believed that the Caucasus, particularly Georgia and its policy, was still a factor that could undermine Russia's authority and the authority of the CIS as a whole. Moscow was apprehensive about a

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<sup>110</sup> See: V. Korgun, "Rossia i Afghanistan," *Internationale Politik*, No. 3, 2002, pp. 76-85; idem, "Rossia-Afghanistan: na puti k vosstanovleniu sotrudnichestva," *Azia i Afrika segodnia*, No. 8, 2006, pp. 59-60.

<sup>111</sup> See: V.I. Alesin, "Sodruzhestvo Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv: integratsia ili vzaimodeystvie?" *Kazakhstan-Spektr* (Almaty, KISI), No. 3, 2006, pp. 24-31.

possible aggravation of the military situation around South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which might force Russia to distance itself from it and cause Georgia's obvious progress in at least one of the two seats of conflict. Such developments might jolt Baku into using force in Karabakh. Moscow was openly negative about the planned Democratic Choice Community project. In 2005, the crisis in the CIS made itself felt: Turkmenistan left the CIS to become its associate member, while Russia tried to squeeze Georgia out of the structure. Ukraine and Moldova announced that they would either leave the CIS altogether or freeze their membership in it.

In 2006 and 2007, Moscow faced a hard choice: either continue integration across the CIS (SES, EurAsEC, and the union with Belarus), or go on with its integration into the world economy through WTO membership. The SES and Russia's membership in the WTO would be compatible if other SES members (Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan) joined the WTO in turn.

Early in October 2005, St. Petersburg hosted a meeting of heads of state of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization, which Kazakhstan also attended. It was decided to unite this structure with the Eurasian Economic Community. In view of the shared strategic aims and tasks of the two organizations and taking into consideration that the practical tasks of creating an integrated market, water and energy programs, as well as programs in transport, foodstuffs, and other spheres the CACO is dealing with are being successfully carried out within the EurAsEC, the heads of the CACO members decided to accept the Republic of Uzbekistan as another member of EurAsEC at its request; Russia's position proved to be the key one.

Russia's political elite is concentrated on integration of the Four (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine), expecting that the other CIS countries will also be attracted. Turkmenistan is left outside the integration project, however, it may join the Eurasian Gas Consortium now being built. Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan may be tempted to join the integration process later. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, two EurAsEC members, will also join the SES; Moldova and Armenia are still pondering on the subject.

So far, however, Russia has not yet formulated an integrated and strategically substantiated policy in relation to the CIS countries for several serious reasons. First, the centrifugal trends are too strong; it is impossible to apply the same pattern to states that have already moved away from one another during the independence years. This explains the RF's intention to concentrate on bilateral relations. The Russian political elite is disunited over Moscow's CIS policy: while the military establishment is resolved to restore the country's position based on force by resorting to all sorts of legal means and methods (from military-technical cooperation to artificially fanning these countries' concerns over the threat of international terrorism, extremism, and drug-related crime), other political forces are convinced that Russia should get rid of its so-called Central Asian underbelly.

On the whole, Russia's national interests in the CIS can be reduced to the following key positions: stability across the post-Soviet expanse; unhampered use of the CIS members' transit potential; preservation of a single economic space;

Moscow's greater role in the use of hydropower and mineral resources (particularly in Central Asia); and international recognition (by the West, China, etc.) of Russia's special role in the CIS, which should take the form of consultations on all important decisions that might affect conflict settlement and the geopolitical context.

Russia was determined to increase the effectiveness of the already functioning mechanisms: the CIS, the Union of Belarus and Russia, CSTO, EurAsEC, and SCO, and to set up new structures: the SES (which was frozen because of the Ukrainian developments). The union with Belarus was suspended because of the crisis in the two countries bilateral relations in the late 2006 and early 2007.

## **2. Russia's Strategic Interests and Their Influence on Central Asia**

The new conception of Russia's foreign policy notes that Russia will work toward further realization of the CIS's potential as a regional organization, a forum for a multilateral political dialogue, and a mechanism of multilateral cooperation with the focus on the economy, humanitarian cooperation, and fighting traditional and new challenges and threats. It will also work actively within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) with Belarus and Kazakhstan to create a Customs Union and Single Economic Space; assist in involving other EurAsEC member states in this work; and take measures to further strengthen the EurAsEC as the nucleus of economic integration and a mechanism for carrying out large hydropower, infrastructure, industrial, and other joint projects. Its approaches to developing comprehensive interaction in the Black Sea and Caspian regions will be built along the same lines – on the basis of preserving the individuality of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and strengthening the cooperative mechanisms of the Caspian states.

But there is a noticeable difference in terms of goals, tasks, and ways to achieve them between the Russian Federation's official conception and its actual strategy for realizing its national interests.

Moscow believes that the main threat to security in most of the CIS countries, particularly in Central Asia, is terrorism related to Islamic radicalism and drug trafficking. If Russia becomes a world leader in fighting these phenomena, this would significantly raise its appeal in this part of the world. In addition to force, Moscow is offered using economic levers as well. Russia's friendly neighbors should enjoy a real economic return. The matter does not concern subsidies, but mutually advantageous economic factors: preferential access to markets, priority granting of contracts, and so on.

At the current stage, Moscow is proceeding from the fact that there is a systemic crisis in the CIS and in most of the integration structures in the post-Soviet expanse as a whole. On the other hand, it is obvious to Russia that the West, and such regional actors as the PRC, IRI, and Turkey, do not welcome the CIS as an entity of international relations. So preserving the Commonwealth is a strategically important task for Russia.

Moscow understands that the quality of the national ruling elites is extremely important for the future of the CIS. This means that in many countries of the Commonwealth it is largely corporative and clan interests that are practiced under the semblance of national ideas. Understanding this affects Russian policy with respect to particular member states of this organization.

Russia has come to the conclusion that its CIS partners should reject the multi-vector principle. Russian strategists were brought to this conclusion by the events in the Caucasus in August 2008. According to the Kremlin, during the first days of the conflict, the post-Soviet leaders essentially adopted a stance of non-interference, which was replaced by verbal balancing acts with formal curtsies to Russia. Moscow mainly found fault with the fact that its closest allies did not want to reject the multi-vector principle and support Russia's actions. It voiced its main complaints against Bishkek and Minsk, and to a lesser extent against Astana.<sup>112</sup>

Moscow is proceeding in its evaluation of the prospects for conducting a multi-vector policy from the fact that playing on the contradictions of the big players is only beneficial if all of the participants follow the general rules. Any aggravation will inevitably lead to chaos and to the refusal to follow clear cooperation principles, which is having a negative effect on the position of Astana, Baku, and Tashkent.

Georgia's withdrawal from the CIS could force Russia to consolidate its ranks and enter more binding cooperation agreements within such organizations as the CSTO and EurAsEC. Georgia's withdrawal meant that there are now fewer countries whose aims are "proportionally opposite" to Moscow's interests. Consequently, there is a greater chance for the CIS to turn into a pragmatic and efficient structure.

So Moscow is still not able to offer a coherent development strategy for the post-Soviet space. Instead it is setting up a space in which its partners have a certain amount of room to move back and forth, but which also has boundaries, the overstepping of which is fraught with conflict (primarily in energy and security).

For most of the Central Asian countries Russia remains a key extra-regional partner capable of at least partly satisfying their military-political, economic, social, and cultural-educational requirements. All the Central Asian countries have historically close and multilateral ties with Russia. In turn, the Central Asian region occupies an extremely important place in Russia's foreign policy strategy. It represents an extensive territory that borders on Russia from the south, countries that are traditional economic trade partners for Russia, rich in natural resources, and that export most of the raw hydrocarbons they produce through Russian

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<sup>112</sup> See: A. Orlov, "Ekho Tskhinvala," *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, No. 10, 2008, pp. 18-25; E. Piadysheva, "Piat dnei, kotorye izmenili mir," *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, No. 11, 2008, pp. 20-32; V. Sizov, "Piatidnevka protivostoianiia," *Mezhdunarodnye protsessy*, No. 2, 2008, pp. 116-122; K. Syroezhkin, "Gruzino-osetinskiy konflikt i ego vliianie na bezopasnost v Kaspiisko-Tsentrarnoaziatskom regione," in: *Kaspiiskiy dialog-3*, papers of the international conference, IMEP, Almaty, 2008, pp. 38-44.

territory, and states, most of the population of which, comprises Russian-speaking citizens.<sup>113</sup>

- creating a collective security system (under the aegis or with the active participation of the Russian Federation);

- operating and preserving the transportation communication infrastructure, particularly in the energy sector; retaining Russia's control (or at least its role of active participant) over the energy resource transportation routes;

- supporting the Russian culture and the Russian language, as well as the Russian-speaking population.

On the whole, essentially all the vectors of Russian foreign policy affect the interests of the Central Asian countries to one degree or another. They include security issues, economic development, political cooperation, energy, transport and communications, humanitarian and cultural cooperation, the environment, water resources management, and migration.

The latter is acquiring great significance for Russia precisely in the context of its relations with Central Asia. The problem has become extremely serious. Approximately 10 million illegal migrants work in Russia every year, whereby 1/3 (approximately 3.5 million) live in Moscow. Only 145,000 of the 500,000 guest workers who arrived legally in 2007 were registered at their jobs. Today Moscow has entered agreements with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on the organized hiring of foreign workforce.

As of the end of 2007, money transfers from Russia to other CIS states amounted to more than 5 billion dollars. The income of Tajik migrants is equal to two of Tajikistan's national budgets. According to the Russian Federal Migration Service, migrants manage to export more than 10 billion dollars from Russia every year bypassing customs control. The economic damage inflicted by illegal workers from unpaid taxes amounts to more than 8 billion dollars a year. The money transfers are mainly sent to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Until recently, the Russian Federal Migration Service gathered up labor migrants, including through community and diaspora structures, primarily Central Asian and Caucasian, which gradually replaced the state in the formation and implementation of immigration policy. So the problem of transfers in Russia's relations with the former Soviet republics is just as urgent as that of the European states with the developing world. In this respect, the migration factor is acquiring strategic importance for Russia and its Central Asian partners. Russia is encountering the need to draw up an efficient, well-thought-out, and effective migration policy as part of its interaction with the Central Asian states.

According to Russian experts, in the context of the activity of NATO, the EU, and the OSCE, the Russian Federation should also take into account the practical actions of all these three international structures when drawing up its strategy in Central Asia, as well as of the large countries in this strategically important region,

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<sup>113</sup> See: R.A. Gumerov, "Geoekonomicheskie interesy Rossii v Tsentralnoi Azii," *Rossia i sovremennyi mir* (INION, Moscow), No. 4, 2008, pp. 194-201.



and allot adequate funds and highly qualified personnel for its own undertakings in the region.

Russia's strategic interests in Central Asia should include the following:

- preserving security and stability in the region; whereby Russia is the country that should guarantee stability;

- creating a collective security system (under the aegis or with the active participation of the Russian Federation);

- operating and preserving the transportation communication infrastructure, particularly in the energy sector; retaining Russia's control (or at least its role of active participant) over the energy resource transportation routes;

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### *Russia's Interests in Kazakhstan*

Russia's interests regarding Kazakhstan are long-term and stable. They were formed as early as the 1990s and have not undergone any major changes. Nevertheless, during the transformation of international relations and the geopolitical situation in Central Asia, as well as due to the change in Russia's and Kazakhstan's position on the international arena, these interests could fluctuate.

From the perspective of the development of Kazakhstan's oil industry and its interrelations with Russia, Moscow notes that Kazakhstan's oil sector is still not performing the role of the driving force behind the country's economy, despite the increase in black gold production volumes. Eighty percent of the oil-production equipment market is represented by the goods of foreign producers, and attempts to change this situation are not yielding the desired results. So it is hoped that contacts will be intensified with Russia's oil corporations for outsourcing.

However, the innovation (by the Russian authorities) of giving the Russian (Russian-speaking) population in several areas of Kazakhstan a so-called Russian ticket can arouse concern. This document, conceived to encourage promulgation of the Russian language and culture in the Near Abroad (initially aimed mainly at Ukraine), could turn into a kind of substitution for dual citizenship, since it grants its holders broad rights comparable to those of a permanent resident or even Russian citizen.

During the past decade and a half, relations between the two countries have been generally good and friendly despite certain unsettled issues. Spurred on by Russia's recent increased attention toward Central Asia, relations between Kazakhstan and Russia became more dynamic. As a geopolitical neighbor with considerable international weight, and because of its economic potential and several other factors, Russia moved high up the list of Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities.

In the far from simple conditions of 2004 and 2005 when the threat of interference in the republic's domestic affairs became very real, Moscow stood staunchly by Astana's side. Their active concerted efforts defused the threat of another Color Revolution, this time in Kazakhstan. In turn, Kazakhstan fully supported Russia's integration efforts and remained a loyal ally in the CIS, SCO, CSTO, EurAsEC, and SES even though this might have damaged Kazakhstan's bilateral relations with some of the countries both in Near and Far abroad and even its own economic interests.

At the new stage of their bilateral relations, Astana has to decide for itself how close it is prepared to approach Russia and how deep their integration should be in order not to impair Kazakhstan's national sovereignty. The following questions had to be answered: What did President Putin have in mind? And might Moscow subject Kazakhstan to the pressure it had already used elsewhere?

Kazakhstani-Russian relations are commonly divided into four stages: (1) 1991-1992, when the legal basis of inter-state relations was formed; (2) 1992-1994, when the main trends and forms of bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, and military spheres became obvious; (3) 1995-2000, when bilateral cooperation was extended and deepened within the integration processes in the CIS; and (4) 2001 to the present, when the two countries have been cooperating in the bilateral rather than multilateral format.<sup>114</sup>

Early 2000-s, foreign experts concluded that Moscow was acting much faster on the Caspian thanks to the already existing long-term agreements between Russia and Kazakhstan and between Russia and Turkmenistan on gas and oil transit, as well as to the highly attractive Baltic pipelines which would move gas condensate from the Karachaganak gas field.

Moscow and the West could not agree on how the Kashagan oil should reach the markets. Russia tried to block the use of oil tankers and the intention to build an underwater pipeline across the Caspian. Many in the West were convinced that Moscow wanted to move Russian and Caspian oil in a single flow under its own control in order to gain economic advantages and acquire new levers of pressure on the European customers. Russia's pipelines, however, are depleted, while their load-carrying capacities are relatively small.

On the whole, under Putin, Moscow expected that Astana would remain a loyal ally on all strategic issues of their bilateral relations. Indeed, had Kazakhstan chosen to remove itself from the sphere of the Kremlin's strategic interests, Central Asia would have been lost; Russia's economic interests and geopolitical status would have been damaged beyond repair, while its military security would have been threatened.

Kazakhstan's relations with the West on many issues aroused concern in Moscow; the republic's dependence on Russia in the military-technical sphere could no longer be taken for granted. Astana was actively developing its relations with the West (within NATO and on a bilateral basis). Moscow and Beijing (Kazakhstan's SCO partners) did not like the fact that several countries (the U.S., Germany, and the U.K.) were invited to modernize Kazakhstan's air defense system.

Russia, which in the past had been more or less indifferent to Kazakhstan's (so far abstract) statements about its potential involvement in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, displayed much more concern as the intention began gradually developing into a firm decision. The Kremlin is sometimes puzzled by Astana's stand on certain international issues, the Iraqi issue among them, in which it apparently counted on Astana's support. The Caspian problem can be described as a far from simple challenge to Kazakhstan's future. It will affect its relations with all the geopolitical actors (Russia, the U.S., China, Iran, and the European Union).

We can say that, on the whole, relations between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation remained stable throughout the entire period of independence when

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<sup>114</sup> See: K.K. Tokaev, *Vneshniaia politika Kazakhstana v usloviakh globalizatsii*, Almaty, 2000, p. 248.

both countries demonstrated their readiness to cooperate. A solid legal, economic, political, and cultural basis has formed under this cooperation. When shaping its relations with Russia, Kazakhstan proceeded from the fact that Russia was one of the key partners in all spheres of possible cooperation. At the same time, Russia never betrayed its intention to influence Kazakhstan's foreign policy or interfere in its relations with third countries. There is every reason to believe that in the 21st century the two countries will remain good neighbors and will maintain stable relations on the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, the situation in the CIS developed under the strong influence of the Georgian, Ukrainian, and partly Moldavian events: rapid regime changes, the new regimes' Western orientation, and the West's obvious intention to export Color Revolutions to other CIS countries. Throughout 2005 and 2006, Russia and Kazakhstan found it much harder to pursue their joint policies in the CIS and other integration structures. The crisis in the CIS forced Kazakhstan to step up its involvement in the post-Soviet expanse and, at the same time, shift its interests to smaller integration units (the EurAsEC and SES). Strange as it may seem, in 2005 Kazakhstan intensified its contacts with the "revolutionary" republics—Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan – even though Astana remained firmly pro-Russian and condemned the "revolutionary" practices. These republics, in turn, wanted cooperation, particularly in the energy sphere.

In the very complex situation of 2004-2006, Kazakhstan sided with Russia, which wanted to preserve, at least formally, the CIS in the near future as a guarantee of a certain amount of political stability across the post-Soviet expanse. On the other hand, in 2006 Astana and Moscow launched unofficial and hardly publicized consultations on setting up a new integration organization as an alternative to the CIS. It was to be more compact and more effective in the military-strategic and economic fields. In the fall of 2006, Kazakhstan submitted its suggestions.

It proceeded from the conviction that the ideology and conception of the CIS should be changed rather than merely transformed to develop the CIS into an effective structure of economic integration. An analysis of the key aspects of the new independent states' development patterns suggests that the post-Soviet expanse lacks an adequate basis for synchronized multisided integration for the simple reason that the social, economic, political and general development levels of its states are very different.

Russia's interests in Kazakhstan are not limited to close economic ties and humanitarian cooperation. They also extend to the national security sphere for the simple reason that part of its strategic infrastructure is located in Kazakhstan; the two countries are tied together by all sorts of agreements in the security sphere within the CSTO and on a bilateral basis; military industries and the armies of the two states are closely connected; Russia has geopolitical interests in the part of the Republic of Kazakhstan that borders on Russia (the Caspian being one such place). And, what is even more important, the bulk of Russia's nuclear and strategic potential is deployed very close to Kazakhstan's border.

This means that Russia will never permit any unfriendly or even inadequately loyal regime in Kazakhstan. In 2004 and 2005 Russia threw its political weight into stabilization of the situation around Kazakhstan at the far from simple time of the parliamentary and presidential elections. By demonstrating his support of the president of Kazakhstan on the eve of elections, President Putin attracted the votes of the Russian-speaking population. Moscow used its own channels to inform the most active geopolitical actors in Central Asia that Russia would never permit a repetition of the Ukrainian alternative.

Astana cherished its cooperation with Moscow as its main partner in the military-technical sphere. Kazakhstan and Russia share a normative-legal base of military-technical cooperation, which includes bilateral agreements and involvement in multisided structures (the CSTO and SCO).

In 2005-2006, military-technical cooperation was marred by Astana's vague stance on the air defense complexes. Russia expected Kazakhstan to buy its modified S-300 complex in accordance with the corresponding documents on military-technical cooperation and the 2003 agreement. For several reasons, primarily financial reasons, Kazakhstan decided to buy air defense systems from NATO countries and entered into negotiations with some of them, thus creating tension between the two countries in the military-technical sphere. Early in 2006, however, strategic cooperation between them was crowned with the launching of KazSat, Kazakhstan's first satellite. Russia and Kazakhstan worked together on the Bayterek carrier rocket. Related to peaceful space activities, these achievements objectively strengthen both countries' strategic potential.

In the strained security situation, the CSTO will prove its usefulness for Kazakhstan. Russia, the structure's centerpiece, makes it even stronger, which explains why Astana was willing to specify the points that guaranteed the members' security (patterned on similar NATO clauses, the central points of the Alliance's constituent documents). This was done when the CST was transformed into the CSTO in 2002.

The geopolitical collisions of the latter half of the 1990s created a fairly unexpected structure — the Shanghai Cooperation Organization - with two heavyweights (Russia and China) and Kazakhstan as an active member. For ten years now this organization has been an important factor of Kazakhstan's international status and of the regional geopolitical situation. Today, this is one of the world's most contradictory structures: it is neither a military-strategic alliance, nor a fully-fledged economic union, nor a political structure in the traditional (geographic, culture, civilizational, etc.) respect. Still, it holds an important place in Astana's foreign policy merely because Russia and China (two powers that Kazakhstan cannot ignore for geographic and geopolitical reasons) are SCO members. On the other hand, the SCO plays on the Central Asian field, which means that Astana cannot stay away from it either.

The SCO has created certain foreign policy advantages for Kazakhstan, as well as certain risks. The country is firmly resolved to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy; as a SCO member it acquires better chances to balance its relations with the West. But every time Kazakhstan has to shoulder new excessive

responsibilities suggested or imposed either by China or Russia within the SCO, it creates new problems for itself. Its involvement in the SCO makes it harder to balance between Moscow and China; it is very possible that in the future it will be forced to take sides.

SCO membership is part, but not the most important part, of Kazakhstani-Russian relations. The Kremlin is much less jealous of Astana's contacts with Beijing than of its Washington connections. There is no doubt, however, that relations between Kazakhstan and China do affect Kazakhstan's relations with Russia. Neither the RF nor China has so far formulated the SCO's final goals and its immediate tasks—this is the organization's greatest mystery. SCO membership poses an element of uncertainty: neither Kazakhstan nor the other Central Asian members know how any of the SCO countries will respond to each other's unilateral steps; and whether they are prepared to jointly respond to certain steps of the Central Asian countries in relation to one of them or in relation to the geopolitical forces outside the SCO.

In 2005, the Chinese suggested that the political structure should become an economic one. Moscow and Astana's response was cool: if realized the SCO would have to run the risk of turning into a Chinese "economic protectorate." This threat is very real with respect to Moscow and Astana, which are seen from China as potential raw material suppliers and China's energy-rich rear. This means that its strategic interests in Central Asia and its SCO involvement deserve close scrutiny.

Russia's strategic community is in two minds about the growing energy cooperation between Kazakhstan and China. The new actor (Kazakhstan) added certain new dimensions to the energy-related contexts, but experts refuse to describe the developments as negative.<sup>115</sup> Russian specialists believe that China's willingness to pay for the pipeline to bring fuel from Kazakhstan should be interpreted as a demonstration of alternatives and a response to those in Russia who obviously bided for time before coming to a final decision about the route.

Russian analysts came to the conclusion that, political ambitions apart, Kazakhstan had no economic potential to compete with Russia when it came to energy-related contacts with China. What is more, it does not need this rivalry. In fact, Russia might shift energy cooperation with Astana to the strategic level: the pipeline to China will make it possible to move oil along the idling Omsk-Pavlodar-Chimkent pipeline and then along the Kazakhstan-China pipeline.

Russian companies find Kazakhstan, a country rich in mineral resources that needs foreign investments and is one of the Kremlin's important partners in the post-Soviet expanse, a most attractive target of investments. Gazprom plans to buy shares of its gas transportation system if and when it is put on the market.

Russia is resolved to help preserve Kazakhstan's domestic and foreign policy stability, its social and economic health, and its freedom to pursue an independent policy while remaining Russia's good neighbor. Kazakhstan is Russia's most

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<sup>115</sup> See: N. Khrenkov, "Kreml, 'Gazprom' i Sredniaia Azia," *Azia i Afrika segodnia*, No. 6, 2005, pp. 12-18.

important partner in its system of geopolitical and geostrategic priorities in Central Asia. In the future, Moscow will preserve its active position in its relations with Astana.

So, Russia was interested in the following: keeping Kazakhstan as its closest partner and ally in Central Asia and the post-Soviet expanse; carrying out large-scale integration projects with Kazakhstan; maximum integration of the Russian and Kazakh economies; creating an energy pool with Astana: joint production and transportation of hydrocarbons, development of nuclear energy; creating a food cartel with Astana (primarily in grain production); limiting Kazakhstan's possibility of carrying out an independent, multi-vector policy in areas that are of vital importance to Moscow (energy and transportation); limiting cooperation between Kazakhstan and the West; monitoring Kazakhstan's relations with China; creating jointly with RK a monetary, customs, and commerce union.

Russia's long-term goals regarding Kazakhstan include the following: ensuring the fullest possible integration between the two states, which presumes re-integration of their national economic complexes, creating a single defense expanse, and introducing a single currency.

In 2007, we watched a unique political situation take shape: Astana was concerned with who would replace Putin as Russia's president, while Moscow was following the Astana developments with the same feelings. This created a field of uncertainty and made outside interference probable. 2008 might produce unexpected risks.

### *Russia's Interests in other Central Asian States*

Kyrgyzstan does not occupy a particularly high place among the Central Asian states in Russia's foreign policy strategy. But it cannot be said that Bishkek is on the periphery of Moscow's interests. Security issues are particularly important in Russia's interests. It is interested in a stable situation in Kyrgyzstan for preserving stability in the region's heartland. Kyrgyzstan's geographical proximity to China and China's interest in having transport corridors through Kyrgyzstan are also important factors, as well as the presence of the American military base in Manas. All of this raises Kyrgyzstan's importance in Russia's Central Asian strategy.

Today Kyrgyzstan's energy sector (along with other branches) is attracting Russian investors. The country's hydropower complex is of interest to Russia. Russia's participation in developing Kyrgyzstan's energy resources is helping to settle the regional water-and-energy problems and accelerate the republic's economic development. But there are problems here that are difficult to resolve. One of these is completion of the Kambarata-2 hydropower plant; the Kyrgyz government and RAO UES Russia have signed several agreements on this account, but have still not begun implementing the project.

Gazprom is reviewing the possibility of participating in this work, as well as in reconstructing and creating new Kyrgyz gas transportation capacities under a long-term agreement on cooperation in the oil and gas sphere. This also envisages

joint restoration of compressor stations in the Mailu-Suu underground gas reservoir and deliveries of equipment for Kyrgyzstan's gas complex.

Russia's interests in Kyrgyzstan were focused on the following: keeping Kyrgyzstan in the zone of Russia's cultural and information influence; supporting Kyrgyzstan's democratic institutions in counterbalance and as an alternative to developing the clan-nepotic system, as well as an obstacle to radical Islamism; not permitting the country's destabilization and collapse; supporting Kazakhstan's efforts to draw Kyrgyzstan into regional integration projects, but with Russia's active participation; establishing the control of Russian business over Kyrgyzstan's production branches, primarily, uranium; resolving the water-and-energy problems among Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan with the participation of Moscow as a mediator and guarantor; preventing the development of military-technical cooperation between Bishkek and Beijing; developing Russian-American cooperation in the strategic sphere in Kyrgyzstan, or if this does not work, curtailing America's military presence in the country.<sup>116</sup>

Tajikistan has specific relations with Russia. For many years, this republic was de facto under Russia's protection, since the latter ensured its military security and domestic stability and was responsible for its economic and political development. The situation began to change after 2001 when Dushanbe began pursuing a more independent foreign policy, established cooperation with the West, and allowed its territory to be used for the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. In addition, between 2003 and 2006, Tajikistan successfully resisted Russia's attempts to take control over the strategic facilities and most important sectors of its economy located on its territory.

Russian direct investments in Tajikistan top 0.5 billion dollars, which is more than half of all the foreign investments in the country. In the next few years, Russian investment capital could increase to 2.5-3 billion dollars. Around 100 joint Russian-Tajik enterprises operate in the republic.

But despite the mutual interest of the two countries in developing energy partnership, there are several problems hindering this. The main internal problem is evidently related to the Tajik leadership's misunderstanding of market mechanisms of cooperation with Russia's economic entities, which is particularly evident with respect to construction of the Rogun hydropower plant. External problems are mainly situational in nature. They are related to the competition of other countries in the Tajik market.

Russia's participation in developing Tajikistan's energy resources is enhancing the republic's sociopolitical stability and its economic development. Russia is interested in Tajikistan's hydropower complex, on the efficient operation of which stability in the region largely depends. Moscow's interests in energy cooperation with Dushanbe are determined, first, by the sharp rise in energy resource prices, which makes hydropower projects attractive; and second, by

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<sup>116</sup> See: A. Jekshenkulov, "Rossiia-Kyrgyzstan: etapy razvitiia mezhdunarstvennykh otnosheniy i ikh perspektivy," in: Tsentralnaia Aziia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentralnoaziatskoi tochki zreniia, F. Ebert Fund, Berlin, 2008, pp. 277-293.



Russia's desire to fortify its geopolitical position in the Central Asian countries. Dushanbe's reciprocal interest in cooperation with Moscow is associated with the favorable prospects for increasing electric power export to Russia, which presumes the modernization of power transmission lines, including construction of the South-North line.

Russia's interests in Tajikistan were focused on the following: retaining Tajikistan as an important outpost between Central Asia and Afghanistan; retaining Russia's control over the republic's border and strategic facilities; interacting in military, law-enforcement, and anti-drug spheres; enforcing Tajikistan's role as a source of cheap labor for the Russian economy; establishing Russia's control over the republic's energy sector, investment in and raising of Tajikistan's water-and-energy potential as a basis for expanding Russia's industrial groups; limiting China's penetration into the Tajik economy, as well as the influence of Iran, the West, and India.<sup>117</sup>

Uzbekistan was not a very easy partner for Moscow. For a long time Tashkent either sabotaged or avoided participation in integration projects. Only after relations with the West became aggravated in 2004-2005 did its policy take on a more or less pro-Russian bent. Tashkent joined the SCO and EurAsEC and returned to the CSTO. But in 2008 Uzbekistan made another sharp turn and began withdrawing from Russia's integration field.

So Uzbekistan is Moscow's most problematical partner in Central Asia. On the one hand, this state retains its significance due to its size, strategic position, and so on, while on the other, Tashkent is objectively a potential counterbalance to Russia's influence in the region.

There are plans to orient the investments of Russian companies toward significantly increasing the export of Uzbek gas. Gazprom and LUKoil will invest in the survey, production, and transportation of Uzbek energy resources. The main problem is exhaustion of the current fields, due to which production and the loading of refining capacities is decreasing (the Ferghana and Bukhara refineries). Natural gas fields are also gradually reaching the limits of their productivity. According to the forecast, at the current production level, the proven reserves of this raw material will last in Uzbekistan for approximately 33 years, and of oil for eleven years.

The Russian side has recently been showing an interest in the ore-mining, primarily the gold-producing, industry of Uzbekistan (where American and transnational companies used to dominate). In turn, the Russian industrial trade holding, Alfa-Eko, which belongs to Alfa Group Consortium, stated its intention to become the co-owner of the Almalyk Mining and Metallurgical Combine (AMMC). The offer of the Russian investor is still being reviewed.

Moscow's main strategic goals with respect to Uzbekistan included the following: preventing Uzbekistan from returning to the West's sphere of influence

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<sup>117</sup> See: V. Dubovitskiy, "Tadzhiksko-rossiiskie otnosheniia: istoriia, nyneshnee sostoiianie, perspektivy," in: Tsentralnaia Aziia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentralnoaziatskoi tochki zreniia, pp. 390-415.

in the format that existed in 2001-2005; supporting Tashkent's efforts to retain social stability in the republic, preventing destabilization of the situation or an increase in the influence of radical Islamism and international terrorism; retaining Uzbekistan's dependence on military-technical cooperation with Russia; supporting the current format of military-operative cooperation; assisting Uzbekistan in the Afghan vector; retaining Uzbekistan's technological dependence on Russia, preserving Russia's influence in the main branches of Uzbek industry; fortifying the position of Gazprom and other energy companies in Uzbekistan's fuel and energy and gas pipeline sector; helping Russian companies to participate in the privatization and modernization of the Uzbek mining complex; restoring relations between Uzbekistan's cotton-growing sector and the Russian textile industry; carrying out a balanced migration policy; preserving Russia's influence at the regional level (Karakalpakstan, large metropolises).<sup>118</sup>

For a long time Russia's relations with Turkmenistan were limited and mainly associated with the gas sphere. Moscow deliberately closed its eyes to Ashgabad's cooperation with the Taliban, its de facto open border with Afghanistan, and persecution by the Turkmenbashi regime of the republic's Russian-speaking population. In exchange for Russia's decision not to apply political pressure, President Niyazov granted Gazprom a privileged position in the export of Turkmen gas to the external markets.

After G. Berdymukhammedov came to power, these relations did not undergo any major changes, although Ashgabad was able to ensure itself more advantageous conditions and prices on the gas it produced than before. Ashgabad, along with Kazakhstan, supported the Russian Caspian pipeline project, but evidently did not adopt a final decision on this. In addition to gas, Turkmenistan is important to Moscow with respect to resolving the Caspian problem.

So Russia does not have many strategic interests regarding Turkmenistan, whereby they boil down to the following: retaining Russia's decisive role in the transportation of Turkmen hydrocarbons to the external markets; imposing a collective (Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan) position on Ashgabad with respect to delimitation of the Caspian Sea; pushing Turkmenistan cautiously toward greater integration into the CIS structures; ensuring the investment and technological participation of Russian business in the survey and development of new oil and gas fields.

### *Russian Strategy on the Caspian Issue*

The Caspian is one of the important factors determining Russia's policy in Central Asia. However the importance of this factor goes beyond the framework of Russian-Central Asian relations and affects a wider range of international relations.

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<sup>118</sup> See: R. Saifulin, "Uzbekistan-Rossii: sostoianie i perspektivy razvitiia otnosheniy v postsovetitskiy period," in: Tsentralnaia Aziia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentralnoaziatskoi tochki zreniia, pp. 519-546.

Right up until the mid-1990s, Russia insisted only on further improvement and development of the provisions enforced in the 1921 and 1940 treaties. But over time it became clear that this position would not suit any of the partners in the talks. In the end, the arguments of the Kazakh side were considered entirely convincing and Moscow joined Astana's side.

Since 1997, Kazakhstan and Russia have been acting as a united front with respect to the main problems. First, the surface and water column should be in general use (exceptions are the littoral zone of the corresponding states), which, if the sides agree, would ensure preservation and reproduction of the Caspian's fish resources (primarily sturgeon). Second, division of the seabed into national sectors should be carried out down a median line that is equidistance from the opposite shores, and not in equal proportions as Iran has been insisting and continues to insist on. Russia acquired its share of the Caspian Sea, which was divided with its immediate neighbors according to the principle it has upheld since the second half of the 1990s: "dividing up the seabed along sectoral lines, while the water column is commonly shared."

The Russian-Kazakh-Azeri agreements were extremely important in terms of regional security. They essentially prevented any destructive interference from extra-regional nations. The main stumbling block to drawing up a universal approach to resolving the Caspian problem was the irreconcilable position of Iran, which stubbornly insisted on dividing the sea into five equal parts.

At the 2007 summit in Teheran, serious contradictions were designated regarding military activity in the Caspian. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan were in favor of demilitarization. Neither Moscow nor Teheran found this proposal acceptable. By the same token, the principle of dividing up the Caspian seabed into equal national sections was only supported by Iran, as already mentioned, the other sides, including Russia, were against this approach. At the same time, both Moscow and Teheran acted as a united front as opponents to demilitarization, that is, equalizing the navies of all the Caspian states, which Kazakhstan is insisting on with the support of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

The Russian side suggests defining a 15-mile national jurisdiction zone for each state. Within its limits, the corresponding country may carry out border, customs, sanitary, and other types of control and have exclusive fishing rights (but Kazakhstan is upholding a different scheme).

Russian policy in the Caspian may be built in keeping with the following scheme. If Iran backs down from its demand that the sea be divided into equal parts, Kazakhstan, which is most interested in Iran doing this, might withdraw its proposals regarding demilitarization and join Moscow and Teheran in establishing freer shipping and fishing regulations. Acting according to the "exchange" scheme and making concessions to Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan (for example, in redistributing fishing quotas), Moscow might achieve their consent in mutually acceptable solutions to other problems.

Russia, which is the main supplier of raw hydrocarbons among the post-Soviet states, to the export markets, would like to retain and fortify its position in this respect. Moscow is sticking to its guns in its conviction that projects for laying

pipelines along the bed of the Caspian must be approved by all five states. Backing down from this position would help Russia to resolve other problems which are extremely important to its interests. It is obvious that Moscow wants to occupy a monopoly position in forming trans-Caspian transportation corridors. It is precisely this, and not environmental risks (which actually exist), that explains Russia's proposal voiced by Vladimir Putin in Teheran that pipeline projects on the bed of the Caspian be coordinated with all five Caspian states. If this proposal were adopted, any country not interested in implementing such a project would have the right to block it (essentially the right to veto).

In the current conditions, the Kremlin's refusal to introduce articles that envisage the need to coordinate trans-Caspian pipeline projects with all five participants into the convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea essentially could not change anything.

In so doing, Russia is in favor of strengthening security through the efforts of the Caspian states themselves and not permitting military interference by extra-regional states in the region's affairs. This also explains Moscow's and Teheran's extremely negative attitude toward Astana's proposals to demilitarize the Caspian. It seems that questions regarding the laying of pipelines along the seabed with mandatory approval of all the littoral states and the Caspian's demilitarization are inseparable. Russia's and Iran's consent to resolve the first in favor of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan could be equal to the latter's rejection of the idea of demilitarization.<sup>119</sup>

### *Russia and Security Problems in Central Asia*

There are no longer any doubts that the CSTO members, including the Central Asian states, will be affected by the growing tension between Russia and the West, both in the economic and in the military-political respect. It is obvious that Moscow will do everything possible in the growing military confrontation with NATO to consolidate the CSTO member states.

Russia will also continue to promote the CSTO's consolidation as a military-political alliance, strengthen the Organization's peacekeeping potential, improve military-technical cooperation among the member states, and enhance coordination of their actions on the international arena. Further improvement of the CSTO's international prestige and development of its contacts with other similar regional organizations, including the SCO, are urgent tasks. Intensifying coordination between the CSTO and EurAsEC is acquiring increasing practical significance.<sup>120</sup>

According to Russian politicians (Nikolai Bordiuzha), the Afghan knot has been posing the greatest and most realistic danger for the CSTO. The activity of

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<sup>119</sup> See: K. Landa, "Sovremennaya geopoliticheskaya situatsiya v Kaspiiskom regione," *Rossiya i musulmanskii mir*, No. 1, 2009, pp. 62-73; M. Shaikhutdinov, "Kaspiy v sisteme sovremennykh geopoliticheskikh koordinat: voprosy bezopasnosti i sotrudnichestva," in: *Kaspiiskii dialog-3*, papers of the international conference, pp. 11-16.

<sup>120</sup> Z.A. Dadabaeva, "Rossiya i problemy bezopasnosti v Tsentralnoi Azii," *Rossiya i sovremennii mir*, No. 4, 2008, pp. 183-193.

other international organizations, projected onto the CSTO's zone of action, cannot help but have an effect on the military-political situation in the post-Soviet expanse. The military activity of the U.S. and NATO is primarily being stepped up on the external borders of all of the CSTO's collective security regions, while the U.S. and NATO are restoring or creating anew the military infrastructure in Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus, and Central Asia.

The CSTO leadership is becoming increasingly concerned about other, including hidden, methods of external pressure bordering on interference in the internal affairs of its member states. Well-coordinated acts and campaigns designed to apply political, economic, and information pressure from the outside are being organized and carried out.

Russian specialists believe that the CSTO participants should adapt the Organization to the changing geopolitical situation and adopt practical measures to create a comprehensive system of auxiliary structures and corresponding collective forces and means, including multilateral mechanisms for coordinating antiterrorist and anti-drug activity, as well as for jointly opposing illegal migration.

Moscow sees another new area in the fight against international terrorism to be forming CSTO collective regional antiterrorist rapid response forces for counteracting any terrorist and extremist manifestations. Efforts are being made in the military sphere to form a Joint (Coalition) Force Group in the Central Asian region.

Russia's primary interests in Kazakhstan consist of the following: maintaining close bilateral military cooperation at the strategic level (keeping in mind possible threats from the south and east); ensuring joint operation and maintenance of the proper readiness of the space-launch complex, testing grounds, and strategic bases; and retaining Kazakhstan in the air defense collective force system.

The threats to Kazakhstan's and Russia's security from Central Asia can be assumed to be largely identical, and the mutual interests of the two states in fighting terrorism and extremism will be the same. On the whole, in recent years, military cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia has been one of the most successful vectors in the regional security system that has been taking shape.

But there are objective difficulties. For example, at the moment Astana and Moscow still prefer departments engaged in traditional aspects of security and are not encouraging de-centralization of the struggle against cross-border threats. Many regions (primarily border) of both countries have neither the means nor the authority to repel non-traditional threats—international terrorism, drug trafficking, cross-border crime and smuggling, and illegal migration.

In 2006, Tashkent essentially completed its foreign policy turn toward Moscow. Uzbekistan joined the EurAsEC (which is in essence the pro-Russian nucleus of the CIS) and also returned to the CSTO. These events were evaluated as breakthroughs, as the opening up of new possibilities for reintegrating the post-Soviet states.

Relations between Uzbekistan and the post-Soviet countries are developing along the trajectory created after 2004, which made a turn toward Russia. Two factors predominate in Russian-Uzbek relations: military and energy. Russia's

decision adopted at the last CSTO summit to sell arms and special technology to its closest partners at internal prices in fact means that the Russian military-industrial complex is taking responsibility for further equipping the Uzbek army and special services.

Uzbekistan is still in the difficult situation it found itself in after the crisis in its relations with the West, although the pressure on Tashkent has been gradually easing off. There are signals that the sides are ready to partially restore the former level of partnership. But (apart from the factor of Islam Karimov's personality) there are obligations Tashkent has assumed to Moscow and Beijing.

So there has been a rapid transformation in the past few years: Uzbekistan has acquired an influential defender on the international arena in the form of Russia, while Russia, by means of its assistance, confirmed its status as a regional power in Central Asia. In so doing, Uzbekistan successfully blended in with the implementation of Vladimir Putin's strategy.

It is obvious that participation in the CSTO is burdensome for Uzbekistan. Tashkent may support Russia regarding withdrawal of the American base at Manas from Kyrgyzstan. In turn, if the tension between Russia and the European NATO members escalates, closing the Alliance's base in Uzbekistan may also come up for discussion.

Uzbekistan's armed forces are also in need of re-equipping. Armored vehicles, aircraft, and air defense assets require modernization. Although Uzbekistan already occupies first place among the Central Asian countries in purchases of Russian arms (totaling several tens of millions of dollars), this amount should rise manifold in the near future.

Since 2000, Uzbekistan has been stocking up to 250,000 tons of cotton fiber every year (approximately one quarter of the total cotton produced in the country) to offer in exchange for military-technical hardware from Russia. The transit of Turkmen gas through Uzbek territory is also being carried out in exchange for arms deliveries.

For several years the sides have been drawing up a joint helicopter program. According to the U.N., in 2005, Russia delivered 10 unnamed missiles to Uzbekistan. Small batches of spare parts for airplanes and armored vehicles and artillery ammunition are bought regularly. Today the main orders are for small arms and ammunition, special equipment for the National Security Service and Interior Ministry, police munitions and means of control over public gatherings: tear gas and truncheons. In 2007, Uzbekistan spent approximately 1 billion dollars on military needs.

Kyrgyzstan is a member of essentially every integration union that encompasses Central Asia – the CSTO, EurAsEC, CAEC, and SCO. In recent years, official Bishkek, which has declared strategic cooperation and partnership with Russia, China, and the U.S. to be its priorities, has concentrated its main efforts in foreign policy activity on strengthening relations with its SCO and CSTO partners. The contradictions between the financial interest related to the presence of the American military contingent in Kyrgyzstan, on the one hand, and its discontent with Washington's increased "export of democracy" and support of the

opposition, on the other, have had a significant effect on its relations with the United States, its third strategic partner.

Later, Bishkek was transferring from a multi-vector policy to domination of primarily one vector, the northern. Despite the insistent efforts made by the republic's leadership to draw closer to Russia, Kyrgyz-Russian relations have not been given an active boost. The syndrome of Bishkek failing to fulfill its promises, particularly the Astana SCO statement (July 2005) on deployment of U.S. army contingents at the Manas air base, has had a negative impact on them. Kyrgyzstan is one of Russia's important partners in the CSTO. A Russian air base is located at the Kant airport, the task of which is to support the actions of the Collective Rapid Response Forces military contingents from the air.

Despite its underdeveloped war-racked economy, weak production forces, and unfavorable geographical location, Tajikistan is participating in most of the integration projects—the CSTO, EurAsEC, CAEC, and SCO. In recent years it has begun actively establishing contacts with new foreign policy partners (along with further strengthening its relations with Russia).

Tajikistan's armed forces are the weakest in Central Asia. The country has no money for military purchases and no defense industry. In this situation, military-technical cooperation with Russia is acquiring great importance for Dushanbe. Tajikistan does not occupy the last place in Russia's military plans: the Russian-owned Nurek optical electronic unit of the space control system is located in the republic.

In this context, Russia is willing to undertake unprecedented acts: in 2008, military hardware and weaponry belonging to Russia's 201st base were transferred to the Tajik authorities. The list of Russian weapons transferred has not yet been published, but military analysts estimate it at approximately 1 billion dollars, which is equal to almost half of Tajikistan's GDP. Keeping in mind the intense refurbishing of the 201st base, Tajikistan could catch up with its neighbors in terms of combat potential of the military contingents located on its territory.

In addition to this, an apparatus of the Principal Military Advisor has been formed under the Tajik Ministry of Defense on the basis of Russian-Tajik intergovernmental agreements. Russian advisors, as well as graduates from Russian military academies (as many as 300 students from Tajikistan study in Russia every year), are shaping the image of the Tajik armed forces. Russia is carrying out repair, delivery of spare parts, modernization of weaponry, and training of future officers almost free of charge. The greatest expenses are related to repair and modernization of Tajikistan's air defense.

There is also the SCO factor. The zones of responsibility of the SCO and CSTO significantly intercept both functionally and geographically. Of the seven countries that belong to the CSTO, five are represented in the SCO, and of the six SCO member countries, five belong to the CSTO. This does nothing to alleviate the relations among them. Rather it can be said that the two structures are becoming increasingly drawn into tacit and dangerous competition.

Such rivalry is not advantageous primarily to the CSTO. There can be almost no doubt that the SCO is able to resolve many security issues more efficiently,

particularly from among the so-called new threats. Whereby the CSTO is reduced to an element in the common air defense system, training military personnel, and delivering Russian weapons to member states. It could essentially turn into a military organization with a very limited zone of responsibility.

It is no secret that the relations between the CSTO and SCO are very dicey. For several years now there has been tension between the secretariats of these organizations. In their Memorandum, the CSTO and SCO (October 2007) agreed to hold consultations and exchange information, invite each other to their corresponding functions, and draw up joint programs and measures. Whereby these forms of cooperation essentially apply to all spheres of the organizations' activity.

Some of the countries that are members of both organizations want a certain amount of rivalry between them. They want to counterbalance Russia's influence in the CSTO against its participation in the SCO, while others want to level out China's influence in the SCO by means of its participation in the CSTO. Russia is interested in the CSTO dominating in Central Asia's security sphere, where it, in contrast to the SCO, occupies a leading position.

All the same, the SCO is one of the most important areas in Russia's foreign policy. It is essentially one of the levers for raising Moscow's role and geopolitical influence on the world arena. At the same time, the SCO is very regional in nature and is focused on Central Asia. But due to the Chinese factor, the SCO could turn into a problem, provoke an increase in Russian-Chinese contradictions, and become a challenge to Russia's strategy in Central Asia.

On the whole, the Russian-Chinese contradictions in the SCO, and with respect to Central Asia, boil down to the following: differences in vision of the SCO's future; Russia's fear of the PRC's economic domination in Central Asia and Beijing's dissatisfaction with Moscow's political domination; differences of opinion regarding the creation of a free trade zone; competition over energy resources and control over their transportation; reducing the CSTO's and correspondingly Russia's influence by increasing the SCO's and China's influence; China's attempts to establish its military presence in the region under the cover of the SCO; Russia's fear of finding itself in the role of China's junior partner; rivalry between Russia and China for influence on Kazakhstan as the backbone in the region; differences among Russia, China, and the Central Asian countries in their positions on accepting new members into the organization.

So in the mid term it is possible that Russia's policy in the SCO will be determined by its fear of losing Central Asia to China.

### **3. Russia and Central Asia: Limits for Strategic Partnership**

Russian policy towards Central Asia cannot be considered apart from the entire foreign-policy strategy of Russia in the CIS and its bilateral relations with other major players. So far, Russia has achieved a lot in its foreign policy, however, it faces a number of old and new challenges. 2008-2010 global economic and financial crises made a negative impact on international position of Russia as it



resulted in strengthening of Chinese and Western influence on a number of the CIS states against Russian investments projects. Moreover the crisis affected negatively the Russian defence industry.

Integration initiatives made by Russia were met enthusiastically by some of post-Soviet states, as the same time the number of others were more reluctant or even obstructive. The Customs Union started in 2010 is a genuine core of the CIS integration process led by Russia. In its policy in Central Asia, Russia is more frequently faces the Chinese presence which is often equally strong or even prevailing over its own in terms of economy and politics. Under these circumstances, Russia inevitably turns to the West seeking for a geopolitical balance against growing ambitions of Beijing.

The policy of Russia in central Asia shall be still regarded as independent of the West and other factors, however, there are two of them Russia cannot ignore: these are situation in Afghanistan and Chinese influence. Kazakhstan is still considered to be the closest ally and strategic partner.

The interests of Russia in Central Asia in terms of security are the following: military and strategic stability as it; bilateral military cooperation of political and technical nature; concern about influence and interference of the third parties in the region; stability within the regions meaning the relations among Central Asian states; internal stability in individual Central Asian states; interdependence of the state of the region and the situation in Afghanistan.<sup>121</sup>

### *Relations with Uzbekistan*

The relation of Russia and Uzbekistan are still ambiguous. Uzbekistan is suspicious about Russia's neo-imperial policy on the post-Soviet space. Uzbek president I. Karimov has repeatedly stated that the contemporary Russia is trying to impose its security strategy through the CSTO which is factually sustains its imperial ambitions.

Tashkent strongly opposed expansion of military-operation and strategic competence of the CSTO based on the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces. Uzbekistan believes that all integration initiatives of Russia are aimed at reconstruction of the USSR. This is a very fortunate opportunity for Russia to "collect lands" which is a traditional method to build an empire. The fact of EurAsEC (Euro-Asian Economic Community) existence means that the CIS countries are inseparable from Russia.

Tashkent also believes that Russia and Central Asian must independently solve the problematic issues of their security. Russia is a strong power but, despite of being strong, shall facilitate consolidation of the sovereignty of the neighboring countries by regional integration without growing them into its orbit via the EurAsEC or CSTO.

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<sup>121</sup> See: Laumulin M. Russia and Central Asia // Central Asia's Affairs (Almaty, KazISS). 2011. № 3, pp.

Tashkent compensates the lack of trust to Moscow by enhancing the relations with the USA. Uzbekistan also seeks to terminate its dependency from Russia as all trade and energy corridors from Central Asia are through the territory of Russia.

Tashkent decided to attract American business as an additional effort to balance Russian policy to have the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces within the CSTO and another military base in neighboring Kyrgyzstan.

I Karimov signed the Cooperation Plan with the USA for 2010. The document resulted from the first round of consultations between Uzbekistan and the USA. Washington relies on cooperation with Uzbekistan in security, political, economic, and social spheres. I Karimov visited Moscow in April 2010 with the intention to smooth the tensions occurred after Uzbekistan shifted its foreign policy course towards the West. Besides the issues of bilateral relations, the two sides considered the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

Trade volume of Uzbekistan and Russia in 2009, comprising \$4,5 billion, decreased to 25%. Over 800 Russian companies are currently operating in Uzbekistan. Russia invests mainly in gas sector. In 2009 “Gazprom” bought more than 15,4 billion cubic meters of gas. It has already signed the contracts for 2010 on 15,5 billion cubic meters of Uzbek gas including 6,5 billion from the “Lukoil” which is ramping up its production in accordance to the two joint ventures projects and is to increase its production to 12 billion cubic meters 2013.

One of the problematic issues in the relations of Russia with Uzbekistan is that the latter is still refusing to admit its state debt to Russia which has reached so far \$700 billion. This stops Russia from providing investments and credits to Uzbekistan. The other issue is the conversion of revenues of Russian business in Uzbekistan as the local banks do not convert these moneys in the national currency either into dollars or Euro. In the result from \$60 to \$150 billion earned by Russian businessmen are still frozen. Finally, there are a number of issues of geopolitical nature: resumption of Tashkent membership in the EurAsEC and its joining the CRDF. Moscow is increasingly concerned about rapprochement of Tashkent and Beijing. President I. Karimov and Leader of the People’s Republic of China Hu Jintao agreed in June 2010 that Uzbekistan would export 10 billion cubic meters of gas to China. This is a framework document; the terms of delivery are not fixed as well as the scale of investments. It seemed that Tashkent was pressuring on ‘Gazprom’ which was very reluctant in terms of modernization of the “Central Asia – Center” gas pipeline in spite of the willingness of Uzbekistan to double its gas export.<sup>122</sup>

The ambitions of Uzbekistan are hampered by low traffic capacity of the “Central Asia – Center” gas pipeline, the only rout of export of Uzbek gas to Russia. The Uzbek section of the pipeline decreased its capacity from 56 billion to

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<sup>122</sup> Uzbekistan, alongside with Turkmenistan is the biggest producer of natural gas in Central Asia. (annual production is 65 billion cubic meters of gas). According to the 2009 Annual Report of “Gazprom”, the “Gazprom Export” considerably increased gas purchase in Uzbekistan to 15,4 billion cubic meters, which made the biggest exporter of gas to Russia from Central Asia. In 2010 the “Gazprom Export” will buy 15,5 billion cubic meters of gas from Uzbekistan according to the current contracts.

45 billion cubic meters of gas. In the meanwhile, there are the projects to increase the capacity to 90 billion, however the Russian companies are not planning any modernization of gas production industry of Uzbekistan because I. Karimov does not sign any long-terms contracts and the investments according to the current contracts on gas purchasing is considered very risky.

The document signed by I Karimov and Hu Jintao was obviously addressed to Russia. Tashkent demonstrated to Russia that it was little concerned about the current conjuncture on the European gas markets. Further delays in increase of gas purchase of Uzbek gas by Russia and its continuous reluctance to modernize the gas industry of this country will mean that Tashkent will turn to China instead, given its ambition to dominate on energy markets of Central Asia. This was the line pursued by president I. Karimov in the course of his visit to China in April 2011.

Thus, the strategy of Tashkent in its relations with Moscow may be considered as balancing between Washington (in terms of strategic issues) and Beijing (in terms of economy) aimed at making Russia accept the terms and conditions beneficial for Uzbekistan.

Policy of Russia is more responsive and based on the confidence that Uzbekistan will eventually have to return to the structures under Russian control due to internal and external political reasons.

### *Relations with Turkmenistan*

The relations of Turkmenistan and Russia are quite complicated. The reaction of Turkmen leadership to the conflict of Russia and Georgia in 2008 was rather algesic. The statement made by the Turkmen Foreign Ministry after the developments in South Ossetia was deliberately neutral. Ashgabat did not support Moscow's position in the conflict, and this may be understood as a clear disapproval according to the Oriental style of diplomacy.<sup>123</sup>

In spite of the 22 agreements concluded by Turkmenistan and Russia stipulating a wide range of issues for military cooperation, the priority of Moscow is still in bilateral cooperation in energy sphere. The Treaty on Security Cooperation is about intelligence exchange for joint efforts to combat terrorism. Interestingly, all new appointments made by G. Berdymukhammedov occurred after his meetings with V. Putin.

Moscow is seeking to prevent Ashgabat from military and political cooperation with Washington and NATO as well as Turkey. It also tries not to let Turkmenistan enter independently to the European gas markets. Russian diplomacy takes advantage of instinctive distrust of Turkmenistan elites to the West.

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<sup>123</sup> Russia and Central Asia after Georgia. - //Central Asia Seminars. 1st GCSP-OSCE Academy Seminar: "Central Asia 2008". Geneva Papers 7. – Bishkek, Geneva: OSCE Academy, 2009, pp. 39-42.

Interaction in gas sphere and personal contacts so far were quite a successful mechanism to prevent Ashgabat from rapprochement with Washington, although the latter is trying to increase its presence in military sector of Turkmenistan.

The controversy on the energy cooperation of Russia and Turkmenistan has also aggravated. Russia is trying to burke the construction of the “Nabucco” pipeline and pushing the project on building the “Caspian” pipeline and modernization of the “Central Asia – Center” so that Turkmenistan would remain maximum dependant on Russia in terms of gas transportation. This policy triggered increasing resentment of Turkmen elites. Inappropriately harsh reaction to the accident on the “Central Asia – Center” pipeline in April 2009, when Ashgabat called that a subversive action perpetrated deliberately, proves that<sup>124</sup>; not to mention unsuccessful negotiation of Moscow in March 2009 on construction of the “Caspian” pipeline and subsequent refusal of G. Berdymukhammedov to tap the section of the local Turkmen pipeline “West – East” and his decision to open an international tender for its construction.<sup>125</sup>

Before the visit of Russian president D. Medvedev to Turkmenistan in September 2009, G. Berdymukhammedov once again stated that Turkmenistan was determined to diversify the transport routes to export Turkmen gas to the internal markets.

Russian share in exploration and developing of the oil and gas sites on the Caspian shelf is considerably smaller then of the Western companies: the “Lukoil” has some minor exploration and is interested in a number of the smaller offshore hydrocarbon blocks 19, 20 и 21.

Russia is still pushing Turkmenistan into military engagements, for instance the common CIS air defense system, where it had been formally a member since 1995 as well as exchange of information about replacement of the portable air defense systems (MANPADS). Ashgabat is increasingly aware of the threat posed by Afghanistan. As Turkmen leadership is also seeking to strengthen the authoritarian form of government, it has to maintain strong armed forces. This is where the interests of Russia are based as it is ready to secure if not the regime but the pipelines contracts.

The relations of Russia and Turkmenistan were consolidated by the decision of Moscow in 2008 to withdraw the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church located in Turkmenistan from the Tashkent and Central Asian Diocese (with the center in Tashkent) and establish an independent Turkmen Deanery.

Russian Defense Ministry is willing to continue its support rendered to Turkmenistan in reforms and modernization of its armed forces. To this end, the main points of the cooperation agenda have been already outlined.

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<sup>124</sup> Ashgabat accused Russian “Gazprom” for the explosion at the “Central Asia – Center” pipeline connecting Turkmenistan with Russia. The explosion was caused by a drastic reduction of traffic by “Gazprom”.

<sup>125</sup> Ashgabat opened the international tender for construction of “East – West” pipeline which will connect the Yoloten field (the biggest in the CIS) and the Caspian shore. The move was unexpected by Russia as it was believed that “Gazprom” would build the pipeline.

Turkmenistan sees the pipeline projects, namely the “Nabucco” to the West and to eastwards to China as the major instruments of pressure in its relations with Russia. Additionally, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan signed a framework document on building the “Trans-Afghan” pipeline through Pakistan to India.<sup>126</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov visited Turkmenistan in March 2011. The visit was primarily to persuade Turkmenistan that the “Nabucco” project of the EU was not as beneficial as those pushed by Russia. However, Russia is not ready to purchase all Turkmen gas and, therefore, does not have solid grounds to pressure Ashgabat. Russia is very unlikely to succeed in stopping Turkmenistan from engagement in the “Nabucco” when it has refused to build the “Caspian” pipeline.

After “Gazprom” reduced the import of Turkmen gas four times, Ashgabat had to make a number of principle choices; to become independent from Moscow in terms of gas transportation and establish direct contacts with the consumers overpassing “Gazprom”.

Thus, although, after the new Turkmen president took the office, the relations with Russia intensified, G. Berdymukhammedov keeps the policy of equidistance. Currently, Russia is able to influence Turkmenistan in two spheres: gas issues (to rather limited extent) and military. However, Ashgabat is determined to reduce its dependency from Moscow in terms of gas export.

Summing up, the policy of Russia (“Gazprom”) in Turkmenistan has a systematic drawback: given the current conjuncture on international markets and the price increase on Turkmen gas, it has become non cost-efficient long ago and Russia is literally paying for its Asian gas hegemony, which is the basis of Russian strategy.

### *Policy towards Kyrgyzstan*

The character of the relations of Kyrgyzstan and Russia in the second half of the 2000s was determined by the two major factors: 1) future of the US military base at Manas; 2) stability in the republic and political strength of the regimes succeeded to A. Akaev. Moreover, the dynamics and character of Russian policy to Kyrgyzstan was affected by the extent of Kyrgyz involvement in integration processes within the CIS and perspective entering of Kyrgyzstan into the Customs Union as well as increasing dependence of Kyrgyzstan on China and its relations with the neighboring countries, particularly in terms of hydro-energy.

All this factors were supplemented later by a number of others: dept of Kyrgyzstan to Russia and its remission, Russian investments in Kyrgyzstan, military sites of Russia in the republic giving strategic significance and changed attitude to the Russian within Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>126</sup> Ashgabat and Kabul are planning to have the 1680-kilometer pipeline connecting the Dovletabad field located in Turkmenistan and Fazilk on Indian-Pakistan border via the territory of Afghanistan. Traffic capacity of the pipeline will be about 33 billion cubic meters of gas at the inlet and 17-18 billion cubic meter output in India. The construction works are to be started this year and the first gas traffic must begin in 2015.

Violent regime change in Kyrgyzstan and bloody events occurred in April 2010 make us question the efficiency of Russian policy in the region in terms of its ability to maintain regional stability. Not surprisingly, the developments in Kyrgyzstan were immediately discussed by the presidents of the USA, Russia and Kazakhstan.

In general, the consensus was easily reached by the USA, Russia and Kazakhstan over their position on Kyrgyzstan: to recognize the removal of K. Bakiev and maintain relations with the transitional government on moderate level, to render humanitarian assistance and avoid direct interference.

Political experts, in their turn, after the developments in Kyrgyzstan proposed the following: 1) maintenance of political stability; 2) continuous special relations of Bishkek and Moscow; 3) prevention of anti-Russian moves.

The Russian experts believed that the key problems for Kyrgyzstan were sustaining of financial capacity and public order. The primal assistance might be provided via material aid and facilitating of proper functioning of law-enforcement agencies.

The role of Russia in the developments resulted in removal of K. Bakiev from power raises some suspicions. It is generally known that before the events in the spring 2010 Moscow had had a number of issues against Kyrgyz leader. In June 2008 K. Bakiev decided to remain the US military base in Kyrgyzstan which Moscow had been trying to get rid of. Eventually, in the results of the series of diplomatic maneuvering it only changed the name and was then called the Transit Center at Manas.

Later Bishkek took a number of steps which were inevitably opposed by Russia. In 2010 the Kyrgyz government was reported to open another US military site, this time it was a training center in the Batken region. Russia was also unhappy with the delays to open its own military training center in Southern Kyrgyzstan according to the agreements reached by D. Mevedev and K. Bakiev at the CSTO Summit in Cholpon-Ata in July 2009. This center could have become the second Russian military site in the country besides the Knat air base and was regarded by a number of experts as a compensation for failure to make the Americans leave Kyrgyzstan. According to the memorandum signed by the Russian and Kyrgyz presidents in Cholpon-Ata, the agreement on the terms and status of the military site would have been concluded by November 1, 2009. However, it never happened.

K. Bakiev is known to have made some other promises to Moscow, for instance, to give the JSC «Dastan» to Russia. This is the only defense industry plant in Kyrgyzstan producing the equipment for Marine torpedoes, VA-111 «Squall». K. Bakiev discussed the matter with Russian president D. Medvedev in February 2009 when they agreed that Kyrgyzstan would give the controlling stake in the JSC «Dastan» and the testing site at the Issyk-Kul Lake to Russia in exchange for the remission of \$180-million debt of Kyrgyzstan. The debt was written off but the Kyrgyz government announced that it held only 37% stake and the others were possessed by the private individuals. Later Moscow to its utter

surprise learnt that the stakes of the JSC «Dastan» had been sold to the companies of Maxim Bakiev, the youngest son of Kyrgyz president.

Besides, Kyrgyz government has recently become much harsher towards the Russian-language web sites by limiting or even closing the access in the republic. The Embassy of the Russian Federation had to express the “concern” but without any visible effect.

Additionally, Russian business operating in Kyrgyzstan was increasingly prevented from purchasing new assets. According to the Kyrgyz opposition, this could be explained by the anti-Russian sentiment typical for the closest circles around the son of the president M. Bakiev who is the head of the Central Agency for Development, Investments and Innovation which may be considered as a “shadow cabinet” of Kyrgyzstan.

Former Prime-minister D. Usenov participated in the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission of Economic, Trade, Technical and Humanitarian Cooperation established by Russia and Kyrgyzstan. The negotiations resulted in signing the program of economic cooperation stipulating about 60 events relating to the cooperation in trade, economy, science and technology as well as in humanitarian sphere. However he failed to reach the major objective that Russia would provide a loan to build the Kambarata HES-1.

Although that officially Russian President D. Medvedev and Prime Minister V. Putin as well as Security Council Secretary N. Bordyuzha denied Moscow’s involvement into the developments in Kyrgyzstan, the Kremlin was openly enthusiastic about regime change in Kyrgyzstan. The secret talks of Russia with Kyrgyz opposition were quite probable. Interestingly, the most demonstrative support to the transitional government was rendered by Russia.

The negotiation of Kyrgyzstan with Turkey about 49% stake in the “Dastan” Plant may be considered as a hostile move against Moscow as it had been promised earlier to Moscow in exchange for cancellation of Kyrgyz debt to Russia. This asset had become the reason for serious aggravation of the relations of President K. Bakiev with Moscow.

CSTO Secretary General N. Bordyuzha paid a three-day visit to Bishkek in February 2011. Moscow attached special importance to the trip; CSTO Secretary General discussed the future of the Organization, but more importantly, the visit was an opportunity to convey a serious concern of Moscow about the fact Bishkek tended to ignore Russian interests in Kyrgyzstan. N. Bordyuzha proposed Bishkek to conduct the CSTO military exercises of peacekeeping and anti-terrorist character in Kyrgyzstan in the framework of the planned establishment of large military forces on the basis of the units of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces of the CSTO in Central Asia. There has been no any concrete respond from Kyrgyzstan so far.

In March 2011, President R. Otunbayeva visited Brussels and confirmed that Kyrgyzstan would remain westwards oriented and was willing to promote cooperation with NATO. The European tour of Kyrgyz president was met with suspicion in Moscow as R. Otunbayeva after being elected in 2010 referendum had not officially visited Russia.

The Kyrgyz government was forced to make a number of concessions under Moscow's pressure. The agreement on fuel supply to the US air base was eventually signed. The situation over the "Dastan" deal was resolved but the relations were still tense. In order to ease the tensions Kyrgyz Prime Minister A. Atambayev visited Moscow in March 2011. Russia was determined to prevent the ruling coalition in Kyrgyzstan from splitting up; the taxes on fuels and lubricants (POL) imposed in February were canceled as POL shortage amidst the panting season might have resulted in another revolution in Kyrgyzstan. In exchange, A. Atambayev confirmed that Kyrgyzstan was to adhere the commitments that had been taken earlier by K. Bakiev including "Manas" air base issue.

The only issue whereon there is openly admitted disagreement, is the project to establish a Joint Russian military base Kyrgyzstan.<sup>127</sup> Bishkek gives up its claims to raise rents but the issue will remain unresolved until there are other disagreements between Kyrgyzstan and Russia. The thing is that Russia's suggestion is to apply a standard world practice to conclude the contract for 49-years term of rent with an automatic renewal after 25 years. However, Bishkek has been pushing the idea to include the clause stipulating its right to terminate the contract at any time. We shall mention that in strategic terms Russia was planning to unite all military installations in Kyrgyzstan into one Joint Russian military base.

A. Atambayev stated that the "Manas" Transit center will have to become genuinely international by 2014 with mandatory inclusion of Russia. This point was made in the course of the negotiations with Russian Prime Minister V. Putin and was not rejected. Russian-Kyrgyz Intergovernmental Commission meeting in April 2011 was headed by Kyrgyz Prime Minister A. Atambayev who was going to run for presidency in the 2011 elections and, therefore, being dependant on Russian support, demonstrated his willingness for rapprochement with Moscow.

The same motivation is probably behind the claimed willingness of Kyrgyzstan to join the Customs Union by September 2011. There is a certain belief in Bishkek that Russia will invest in mining industry, help solve the transportation problem, provide additional arms supply for the Kyrgyz army, assist in the fight against terrorism and enhance of border security, and create favorable conditions for export of Kyrgyz goods. The important issue is the supply of humanitarian goods, particularly grain, seeds and diesel fuel. Instead, Bishkek promises to create the better conditions for Russian business in Kyrgyzstan.

Attempts taken by Bishkek aimed at rapprochement with Russia are constantly complicated by the foreign policy moves of Bishkek in other directions. For instance, A. Atambaev, during his visit to Ankara in April 2011, said that his country intended to establish a joint economic space with Turkey. But

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<sup>127</sup> There are five military installations of Russia: 999th air base in Kant, 338-th node distance communication of the Russian Navy in the village of Kara-Balta (Spartacus, Chaldovar) Chui, 954-I test base antisubmarine weapons "Koysary" in Karakol on the Issyk-Kul Lake, as well as automatic seismic station N 1 Ichke-Suu (Issyk-Kul region) and radio systemic laboratory № 17 in Maili-Suu (Jalal-Abad region) belonging to the single automated system of the Russian Defense Ministry.



Atambayev's visit to Turkey was not at all ignored by Moscow: Russian Prime Minister V. Putin said that Russia would no longer tolerate Bishkek's failure to keep its promises. At the same time, Russia is increasingly concerned that Kyrgyzstan will not fulfill the earlier promises. Under these circumstances, Moscow has two principle solutions. First, Russia will do everything to avoid destabilization of the situation in Kyrgyzstan; above all, it will not raise tariffs on petroleum products. Second, it will not hurry with the implementation of multi-billion dollar project, which Moscow and Bishkek had agreed to in 2009, including the \$ 1.7 billion loan for the construction of Kambarata-1, as well as the establishment of the Joint Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan. Moscow decided that Russia would not do any large-scale investments in Kyrgyzstan, before the presidential elections, which should make the political situation somehow more definite.

### *Russian Relations with Tajikistan*

In recent years, relations of Moscow with Dushanbe (in addition to traditional security concerns about the Afghan-Tajik border, strategic tracking station «Nurek», drug trafficking, etc.) have been based on the interests of major Russian investors in large hydropower and mining resource in this republic.

The intensity of military cooperation in 2001-2004 between Tajikistan and Russia declined. The US military presence in the region and the fact of financial benefits from the US military bases for Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, made Dushanbe pressure more on Moscow. Tajikistan demanded some preferences and deliberately delayed negotiations on the status and conditions of the Russian military base, signed back in 1999. There was «investing in exchange for a base» bargaining.

In the meanwhile, Dushanbe wants Russia to provide full funding of the base and allow the subordination of military emergency forces to the Tajik Defense Ministry, it also pushes for cancellation of Tajik \$ 300 million debt to Russia. The issue of electron-optical center of the space monitoring system «Nurek», a division of the missile Defense Forces was also included into the agenda of the negotiation process. This facility, built during the Soviet era, is of strategic importance to the security of the CIS.

After the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, the station was modernized. Tajikistan tried to sell the «Nurek» station to Russia (its status had not been defined), in exchange for \$ 50 million.

In June 2004, Russia and Tajikistan agreed to establish a permanent base, in August, the two presidents signed an agreement stipulating the establishment of the 201st Military Base instead of the 201st Division. The «Nurek» station became the property of Russia in exchange for cancelation of the debt of Tajikistan. The land was leased for 49 years with a nominal fee 30 US cents per a year. Russia wrote off \$ 242 million of Tajik debt. By signing these agreements, Tajikistan was able to have \$ 2 billion Russian investments in exchange for its military presence in

Tajikistan. Additionally, Russia committed itself to modernize the military forces of Tajikistan.

As Russia was concerned about having a balanced position with the USA, Dushanbe was able to reach Moscow's consent to participate in the reconstruction of the «Roghun» HES, the key hydroelectric power plant of the republic. It will cost more than \$ 2.5 billion to complete the reconstruction. The land remains of the base's property, the machinery and equipment is also owned by the Russian Federation, there is no charge for the rent and electricity.

Since 2005, the Tajik officers have been trained in Russian military academies on concessional terms; each year more than 80 people are trained free of charge and over 20 on a preferential basis. Tajikistan regularly participates in military exercises of the CSTO and SCO, and with Russia on bilateral basis. The interactions within the process of military-technical assistance reinforce the importance of the 201st Base as well as the role of Russia as the guarantor of security and stability in Tajikistan and Central Asia. Russia, in its turn, will continue to make the Tajik military forces more dependant on its weapons, and, therefore, to secure the agreements about military training of Tajik officers in Russia as it is important for quality maintenance and operation of weapons and equipment made in Russia and sold to Tajikistan.

Russia is obviously seeking to take control over the defense industry of Tajikistan and Dushanbe is eager to pay off the debts for military training and be able to conclude the contracts for the modernization of its armaments. The Americans wonder at the deployment of Russian air defense forces in Tajikistan, as the main threat to the republic's security is from Afghanistan, which is clearly incapable to launch the missiles. Clearly, Moscow is seeking not only to increase its influence in the republic, which is already quite strong, but to prevent other players from penetrating in Tajikistan with their bases as this kind of developments is possible in case of deterioration of the Russian-Tajik relations.

In 2007, Russia began redeploying from the airport in Dushanbe to Aini, in accordance with the basic agreements between the two countries on the status and conditions of the Russian military base in Tajikistan. Under those agreements, the Tajik air force must be placed at Aini along with the Russian aircraft. At the same time, Moscow tried to insist on its sole presence at Aini.

Being unable to gain enough funding from foreign countries and international agencies, Tajikistan has decided in favor of the other means, it reaffirmed the strategic vector for Russia and dispelled US hopes for its presence on Tajik territory. However, Moscow did not insist on its terms, yet at the end of August 2008 the agreement on expansion of military and military-technical cooperation was signed, stipulating joint use of the Hissar airport by Russia and Tajikistan.

Having rejected Russian claims for its sole proprietorship of the base, Dushanbe, perhaps, is leaving the room to maneuver, so that it could put pressure on Moscow in case of problems implicating that it could invite the others and their military to use the Hissar facilities.

Since 2009, the issue of construction of the Rogun HES gained regional and international dimension. Uzbekistan was utterly against the construction;

Kyrgyzstan supported the project while Russia and Kazakhstan repeatedly changed their official positions. Earlier, in late 2008, Russia had signed the agreement with Tajikistan to build three hydropower stations of average capacities on the rivers Hingob, Zarafshan and Kafernigan; the feasibility study should have been made during 2010.

In the meanwhile, Dushanbe, trying to play the anti-Russian card, is ready to offer US investors to participate in various sectors of the national economy, particularly in the energy industry. Dushanbe is aware that the foreign partners are primarily interested in the projects related to the neighboring Afghanistan. According to experts, Tajikistan foreign policy course is increasingly oriented towards the USA.

Labor migration remains an important factor in Russian-Tajik relations occasionally used by Moscow as a political lever to pressure Tajikistan. It is known that over a million Tajik work in Russia. Remittances of Tajik labor migrants to their homeland decreased by 31.3% to \$ 1.8 billion in 2009 (for comparison, in 2008 the inflow of remittances to Tajikistan amounted to \$ 2.2 billion; 43% of GDP).

Russia, in its policy toward Tajikistan, is no longer able to ignore the Chinese and Iranian factors: China and Iran are the biggest investors and donors for the Tajik economy. Iran is to complete the construction of the second Sangtuda HES and intends to participate in the projects of the construction of the Shurob and Dashtidjum stations and to build the joint power grid jointly with Pakistan. The Iranian companies are also involved in construction of regional railway and road systems and establishment of free economic zones, as well as in investment and trade projects. This rapprochement of Iran and Tajikistan has become possible due to the fact that Moscow's influence on Dushanbe has been notably reduced, whereas Russia increased its pressure on the republic.

Russian President D. Medvedev issued a list of claims to Dushanbe meeting with Tajik President E. Rakhmon in Sochi in August 2010: these were the constant failure of Dushanbe to adhere its numerous commitments, including the return of debts to Russia for electricity, the deployment of Russian military pilots at the Hissar airport and resumption of «RTR-Planet» channel broadcasting in Tajikistan. Dushanbe is asking the «Inter RAO UES» to build a number of medium-sized hydroelectric power stations on the mountain rivers and to cancel raised tariffs on petroleum products imported from Russia. In the course of unofficial negotiations with Tajik President E. Rahmon, Moscow made it clear that these issues would be discussed only after he fulfilled the promises made earlier.

The most long-standing issue complicating Russian-Tajik relations is that of deployment of the Russian aircraft at the Hissar airport (Aini airbase) near Dushanbe. The airport, built during Soviet times, was restored by the Indians.<sup>128</sup> Russia is interested in the Hissar airport because Moscow and Dushanbe have the

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<sup>128</sup> Reconstruction of the "Aini" air base cost \$70 million. All participation in this project made equity contribution; India invested \$19.5 million. Russia hopes that the "Aini" will be included into the military installations of its 201<sup>st</sup> Division in Tajikistan.

agreement stipulating that Russian military aircraft must be serviced free on military airfields in Tajikistan. Therefore, Tajikistan will not receive any money for providing its airfields for Russia.

In the course of his visit to Dushanbe, NATO Secretary General's Special Representative on South Caucasus and Central Asia R. Simmons stated that NATO might open an anti-terrorism center in Tajikistan. NATO presence at Aini airfield near Hissar in 25 km distance from Dushanbe, the site Russia is very much interested in, may result into a conflict between the alliance and Moscow. US Assistant Secretary of State R. Blake, who visited Dushanbe after R. Simmons, disavowed his remarks, arguing that the US had no plans to establish a military base in Tajikistan.

The USA is currently concerned about the security of the northern route supplying troops deployed in Afghanistan, which runs through the territory of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Earlier, the USA announced the intention to gradually withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. If this is a serious intent, the White House will probe the ground for the establishment of closer contacts in Central Asia, including Tajikistan, to base its troops being withdrawn from Afghanistan.

The Americans plans to create a temporary bases and training centers discussed with Dushanbe can not make anything by a negative effect on the relations of Dushanbe with Moscow,. Apparently, the aggravation of the political situation in the country in early September 2010 (the escape of a large group of oppositionists and terrorist attacks) revealed the fact that certain external forces had been involved.

A number of internal political factors affected positively Russian-Tajik relations. Currently, the popularity rating of Tajik President E. Rahmon is decreasing; the establishment of the second Russian military base in Tajikistan means the support from Moscow to strengthen his position.

Thus, if Dushanbe will not be able to cope with the threat of destabilization - and the developments in late August and early September 2010 prove that it is very likely - the three troubled countries in the region, namely Afghanistan, Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan may merge into a single conflict zone. Moscow is very well aware of this. Therefore, Russia is to find a compromise solution in order to preserve the Rahmon's regime and stability in the republic.

### *Policy of Russia towards Kazakhstan*

The logic of development of Kazakh-Russian relations shows that in the near future Russia will be interested in the following:

- having Kazakhstan as the closest partner and ally in Central Asia and the former Soviet Union;
- realization large-scale integration projects jointly with Kazakhstan;
- maximum integration of Russian and Kazakh economies;
- establishment of a common energy pool of with Astana, meaning joint production and transportation of hydrocarbons as well as nuclear energy development;

- establishment of a food cartel together with Astana (especially in grain production);
- leaving limited opportunities for Astana to pursue an independent, multi-vector policy on the areas of Moscow's vital concern, particularly energy and transportation;
- prevent Kazakhstan from promotion of further cooperation with the West;
- monitoring the relations of Kazakhstan with China;
- full-fledged customs, currency and trade union with Kazakhstan.

As for the long-term goals, Russia is interested in the closest integration of the two countries; reintegration of the national economies, common defense area, introduction of the single currency.

In terms of Kazakh-Russian bilateral relations, the most urgent question is how far Moscow will go in the integration process, and how deep the rapprochement with Moscow shall be so that it would not damage the national sovereignty of Kazakhstan. According to numerous Kazakhstan experts, one of the most serious challenges to further development of Kazakhstan may come, paradoxically, from Russia, its closest ally.

Accession of Russia to the WTO separately from the other participants in the EurAsEC could be a serious problem, especially considering the fairly extensive common border between Kazakhstan and Russia. Therefore, it is crucial for Kazakhstan to achieve synchronization of these processes.

Several problematic issues may arise in security sphere; Kazakhstan's participation in the CSTO with the simultaneous enhancement of its relations with NATO. Strengthening of military-technical cooperation of Kazakhstan with the West is obviously necessary, but we can not ignore the pressure from Moscow regarding the limits of such cooperation. Therefore, Kazakhstan should continue the course to preserve the Kazakh-Russian military-political alliance as this is the primal condition to maintain national security when the limits for interaction with the West shall be clearly defined jointly with Moscow.

Baikonur, which is an important strategic site of global importance, may become a problematic issue in the relations of Kazakhstan and Russia. The cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia in this area is limited to the rent of Baikonur, the space rocket complex «Baiterek» and satellite KazSat-2 projects. It is very unlikely we will see any new projects in the near future. According to Russia, the cooperation in space industry with Kazakhstan becomes increasingly difficult because of the position of Astana. In fact, Moscow is gradually leaving Baikonur, but the launch pad there is compatible with delivery vehicles made in Russia and Ukraine.

According to experts' opinion, in 10 years Baikonur will reach a critical level of physical and moral deterioration. As a result, Kazakhstan will have an abandoned spaceport and lose millions of dollars as well as its status of a space power. As for Russia, losing Baikonur will mean the crisis of the entire federal space exploration program. Therefore, the Baikonur issue must be resolved by Russia and Kazakhstan as soon as possible.

The transcontinental transit may become another problematic issue in the bilateral relations of Kazakhstan and Russia. Lack of coordination in the construction of the transport corridor Western Europe - Western China may make the multinational transport companies less interested in the project. While Kazakhstan has already started the reconstruction of roads in some areas, and the tempo of the works is only increasing, Russia has just started doing feasibility study on the subject. If there are no any positive changes, only Kazakh and Chinese parts of the corridor will be built by 2013 when the European section will remain unfinished, and the entire project will lose its economic and geopolitical sense.

Russia made a number of achievements in implementing of its strategy in 2010: the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus is a perfect example. The hope for political change in Ukraine occurred in the same year; Kiev might join the Common Economic Space which is being formed.

The Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan could and should have a historical perspective. In our opinion, it is necessary that Russia and Kazakhstan speed up independent negotiations on WTO accession, especially when there is a real chance to join the organization together.

National interests of Kazakhstan require a clear understanding of the outcomes of the policy Russia has been pursuing to (re)integrate the former Soviet Union and maintain its dominance and leadership in the CIS. According to a number of the statements made by the Russian leaders in the first half and in the mid-2000s, the first aim of Russia (the "Putin Doctrine") is economic integration, and then some form of a political union.

This strategy has certain similarities to the EU integration; however, the difference of political and economic weight of Russia and the other CIS countries makes its further implementation quite questionable. Moreover, the case of the Customs Union has shown that this is a complicated process which will take time and effort.

A number of factors of subjective and objective nature complicate and impede the implementation of Russian strategy in the post-Soviet space. These factors include weakening Russian influence in the former Soviet Union for historically objective reasons: it is clearly seen in many spheres such as cultural, linguistic, demographic, economic, military, and political. Generation shift in all the former Soviet republics, including Russia itself, alienates the people of these countries, undermining the main basis for reintegration which is the nostalgia for the lost unity.

Moreover, Russia lacks financial, informational, and other resources necessary for an active, offensive policy comparable to that of the West as well as so-called "soft power" meaning cultural attractiveness of the proposed model. Nevertheless, Russian strategists and economists are still making far-reaching integration plans.

Kazakhstan remains the major strategic partner of Russia in Central Asia. However, it should be noted that the interests of Kazakhstan are not always taken into account by Moscow. There are plenty of examples: the Customs Union

implementation methods, developments in Kyrgyzstan, Russian relations with Uzbekistan, joint investment in large-scale projects in other Central Asian republics, etc.

But currently, the multi-dimensional and growing influence of China is the main challenge to Russia in Central Asia, which has long been focused on the task to confront Western influence. With its inconsistent policy, Russia risks losing influence on Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Astana must develop a sound and effective course of action in case the relations of Russia, being its closest ally, with the West aggravate one again. These relations may even turn to confrontation, since all the participants in this confrontation, namely Russia, the USA and the EU are strategically interested in the CIS, Central Asia and Kazakhstan.<sup>129</sup> Possible confrontation and competition of Russia with the USA and the EU will inevitably affect the national security, external relations, and international status of Kazakhstan. The strategic interests of Kazakhstan, are no longer fully identical with those of Russia, but, on the contrary, often similar to those of the West.

In this regard, Kazakhstan shall insist that the integration processes and decisions of a political nature between the two countries in the short term were made on equal basis. Kazakhstan should be aware that various issues of social, economic, regional, demographic character, as well as transportation and customs problems may appear in the result of integration process.

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As noted above, Russia is actively restructuring its former and possibly creating a new strategy in Central Asia. The goals of this strategy are to retain Russia's influence and protect its interests in this region. Full integration of the region's countries is being transferred to the mid or even long term. At present, Moscow is mainly concerned with preventing its geopolitical rivals from fortifying their positions in the region.

Russia's Central Asian policy touches on many aspects. To one extent or another they affect all the vectors of Moscow's foreign policy. This emphasizes Central Asia's strategic importance for Russia. At the same time, Russia itself is encountering significant difficulties, which, in one way or another, are reflecting on its Central Asian policy. Russia considers energy resources to be its main trump card in the next two decades, and since the geopolitical mentality of the Russian elite is based on ensuring a balance of forces, the idea of redistributing world resources in the name of global management and resolving the world's problems is entirely alien to Moscow.

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<sup>129</sup> Kuzmin N. Central Asia: the Sphere of Russia's Privileged Interests. - //Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: a local Perspective. Eds. By M. Esteban and N. de Pedro. - Madrid: Exlibris Ediciones, 2009, pp. 15-33; or *Central Asia's Affairs* (Almaty, KazISS). - 2009. - № 1. - P.14-19. Laumulin M.T. Russia and Central Asia: Mutual Strategic Interests. - //Central Asia's Affairs. - 2009. - № 3. - P.9-17.

The Kremlin's international policy will naturally be determined by the distribution of forces in the security sphere. The size of its territory presumes that Russia will be present on several regional stages in Europe and Asia at the same time, and it cannot change this no matter how much it would like. This also means that it has to be diplomatically active on the world (by means of international institutions and primarily taking advantage of its status as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council), regional (by means of such forums as the SCO), and bilateral level (where the balance of forces plays a key role, particularly in the post-Soviet expanse and in relations with European countries).

Consequently, under Dmitry Medvedev, there are clearly no signs of there being any cutback in foreign policy activity. In reverence to Putin's inheritance, he will use every opportunity to exert influence in different regions. Moscow has not actually managed to carry out regional integration. It is presumed that the Kremlin's foreign policy under Dmitry Medvedev (or Putin-Medvedev) will be of a more pronounced pragmatic nature.

The power structures, most of the population, and the political leadership of Russia believe the country's great power status to be a fundamental element of its self-determination. As people believe in the West, Moscow is continuing to pursue a foreign policy primarily based on the great power idea: "either Russia is a great power or it is absolutely nothing."

In so doing, Moscow's foreign policy is increasingly aimed at restoring Russia as a world class power. Its foreign policy is being drawn up keeping in mind the multipolar world order. But Russia is encountering an obvious paradox: geopolitical ubiquity as a result of returning to active international policy and economic revival is going hand in hand with strategic isolation.

Russia's pursuance of its set goals is accompanied by many contradictions. It wants to use its economic might and economic development to fortify its position in the world, but the absence of restructuring and investments has led to its economy depending on hydrocarbons and other raw materials.

It is presumed that when implementing its strategy in Central Asia Russia will combine the multilateral with the bilateral approach. That is, it will give preference to a particular method depending on the degree of benefit and interest in achieving the set goals and depending on the situation.

Sooner or later Russia will recognize the need for building a rational system of water use in Central Asia and will push the region's republics toward unifying the water-and-energy exchange mechanism. In turn, the growing agrarian and industrial needs, as well as the demographic, environmental, and climatic problems, will force the Central Asian states to cooperate with Russia in the joint exploitation of Siberia's hydro resources.

Proceeding from its international obligations and its own security interests, Russia will increase its control over the export of arms and technology, in so doing continuing to cooperate with its partners and allies in the CSTO. But in critical situations, as the experience of 2008 shows, it will act independently, relying on its own resources.



The mounting world financial and economic crisis could make serious adjustments to Moscow's policy, including in its relations with Central Asia. In any case, the crisis will affect the labor market and competition will increase in the raw material markets and other sensitive points of interception between the interests of the Russian Federation and the Central Asian countries.

In so doing, the main question in Russia's integration activity remains open: what is Moscow's true objective: to create an economic union (along the lines of the EU) or, metaphorically speaking, "to restore the Soviet State Planning system?" It is obvious that Central Asia will continue to be further drawn into the global processes. But much will depend on the fate of integration within the CIS and the processes initiated and advanced by Russia.

Strange as it may seem, Russia, Kazakhstan's closest ally, is also a potential source of very serious challenges to its future development. Moscow might try to bring integration to its logical end and shift it from the economic to the political sphere, while Astana cannot cut its full-fledged cooperation with the West, which is very much needed for the country's future advance. This calls for maximum flexibility and inordinate diplomatic skills. Political independence and close military-technical cooperation and economic integration are two main conditions of continued allied relations between the two countries and of the entire range of their development for that matter.

The Republic of Kazakhstan needs real — military-strategic-security guarantees; allied relations with Russia are undoubtedly the weightiest of such guarantees. Throughout the post-Soviet period Kazakhstan's CSTO membership and its bilateral agreements with Russia in the defense sphere have remained the most reliable guarantee of the country's military-strategic and political security.

It should be said that Astana would like to see Putin as Russia's leader after 2012. On the whole, seen from Astana, his two terms as the president can be described as positive: he always took Kazakhstan's justified interests into account, he was always prepared to seek compromises, and he valued strategic partnership and allied relations with Kazakhstan. There is only one thing that causes concern in Astana: it is unclear how far Moscow is prepared to go in its efforts to integrate the post-Soviet expanse around itself.

In the long run, a Eurasian Confederation of five to ten states might appear on the CIS's territory with Russia and Kazakhstan as the main centripetal force, of which the EurAsEC/SES/CSTO chain may serve as a prototype. If realized, the Confederation will be able to claim the role of a geopolitical force of the first order.

Any changes, to the best or worst, in Moscow's relations with Washington and Brussels will inevitably affect, to one degree or another, the situation in Central Asia and Kazakhstan's international status and security. The main actors (Russia, the U.S., and the EU) never lose sight of the region as a sphere of their strategic interests.

Kazakhstan and its close ally Kyrgyzstan are two Central Asian countries with which Russia can establish closer integration based on the already accomplished economic reforms. A single energy market within the EurAsEC is

one of Russia's foremost aims; it perfectly fits what is known as Putin's Doctrine and is, in fact, its starting point. Russia is working hard to restore its former influence in the region. Alarmed by China's growing political and economic presence in the region, it is stepping up its involvement in the SCO.

At the same time, it is fraught with conflicts: today Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan sell their gas under bilateral agreements each of them has with Russia and lose part of potential incomes on Russia's transit. Fully aware of this, Russia's Central Asian partners are looking for alternative routes bypassing Russian territory.

Realizing this, the West has stepped up its contacts with the Caspian-Central Asian countries in the sphere of hydrocarbon production and transportation. Undaunted by Russia's potentially sharp responses (Moscow regards the region as its natural monopoly), the West has moved forward in the conviction that the time has come to lay new pipelines (particularly gas pipelines) to leave Russia out in the cold. This move is expected to kill two birds with one stone: Europe will be relieved of its excessive energy dependence on Russia, while the West will widen its sphere of influence in the region. The Western capitals are pursuing an even more ambitious aim: to undermine Putin's Doctrine designed to reintegrate the post-Soviet expanse.

#### **4. The US Geopolitical Experience in Central Asia**

It goes without saying that American geopolitics and geostrategy are of a genuinely global nature and affect practically every region and every country. And Central Asia is no exception in this respect. America's influence there is of a multi-factoral and multi-level nature in every aspect - the political, military-strategic, economic, and ideological. From the very first days of independence, the Central Asian countries have been aware of America's influence (and pressure) in essentially every sphere.

In Central Asia, America is confronted with other world centers of power (Russia, China, the EU, Iran, and other Islamic states), which explains the fairly frequent contradictions. American policy in Central Asia depends to a certain extent on Washington's relations with these states, but it is not determined by them. On the whole, Central Asia's policy is part of the U.S.'s broader Eurasian strategy, which covers the Caspian, the Caucasus, Russia, Afghanistan, the Middle East, South Asia, and China.

It should also be said that America's Eurasian policy is part of Washington's much broader global strategy designed to perpetuate America's domination in the world economic and financial system and its military-strategic superiority. America is seeking greater geopolitical influence (in Eurasia among other places) and containment of potential rivals (China, the EU, and Russia), as well as struggling against so-called international terrorism (for control over the Islamic world).

Central Asia is an important, but not the only, element of the U. S. 's global strategy. At the same time, it is critically important for the U. S.' s Eurasian

geopolitics to establish control over Eurasia. For this reason, Central Asia's role and importance for Washington will become even greater.

America's foreign policy is full of contradictions: its rational and well-balanced elements are combined with ideological approaches; presumptuous and even aggressive actions irritate the allies and provide the enemies with the chance to accuse the United States of Great Power arrogance and a unilateral approach to the world. This stems from the split in the American political establishment, which cannot be described as a group of like-minded people. Ideally, the administration should act as a closely-knit political and ideological team. The split in America's strategic community (and society) over the country's foreign policy affects U.S. conduct on the international arena to a certain extent.

This contradiction has an institutional aspect as well: together with the State Department and the National Security Council, the structures directly responsible for America's foreign policy, the Congress, the media, and public opinion (through the lobbying system and NGOs) largely shape U.S. conduct abroad. In addition, from 2001, the Department of Defense acquired much more weight in foreign policy decision-making. This is only natural since the country has been *de facto* in a state of war since the end of 2001.<sup>130</sup>

### *The Evolution of American Strategy in Central Asia*

Washington's Central Asian policy can be divided into several stages. At the initial stage (1991-1996), it was guided by several factors: first, the U.S. unofficially accepted Russia's geopolitical responsibility for the region and its interests; second, Washington was more concerned over the future of the Soviet nuclear potential deployed in Kazakhstan; third, America was uneasy about the potentially stronger position of Islamism, since Iran was one of the closest neighbors.

At the second stage (1996-2001), American strategy acquired new priorities: the Caspian's hydrocarbon reserves; and the pipeline later known as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, which bypassed Russia and Iran. In 1997, Central Asia and the Caspian were declared a zone of «U.S. vital interests» and were included in the sphere of responsibility of the U.S. CENTCOM. These changes were molded into the so-called Talbott Doctrine. The United States made it clear that it was not seeking monopolist strategic domination in the region, but demonstrated that it would not tolerate the attempts of other great powers to seek such domination. At this stage, Washington was no longer concerned about taking Russia's interests into account.

It was at this point that America revised its attitude to Turkey's and China's role in the region, which was previously considered a positive factor that might bridle Moscow (at least theoretically). It looked as if Washington had decided to unilaterally shoulder responsibility for the region. At that stage, the United States

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<sup>130</sup> See: Laumulin M. The US Geopolitical Experience in Central Asia: Success or Failure? // Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: a local Perspective. Eds. By M. Esteban and N. de Pedro. – Madrid: Exlibris Ediciones, 2009, pp. 53-77.

was actively promoting the BTC pipeline, as its key geopolitical project, to move Caspian energy reserves bypassing Russia and Iran. By the end of the 20th century, America began demonstrating a growing concern over the threat to the Central Asian countries posed by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The 9/11 drama ushered in the third stage (2001-2005). The United States plunged into a wide-scale struggle against international terrorism represented by the militant Islamic radicals; it launched a military operation in Afghanistan and deployed its military bases in some of the Central Asian republics to carry out the counterterrorist campaign. It should be said that from the very start, George W. Bush's Republican Administration practiced new approaches to Central Asia, which became part and parcel of the general counterterrorist struggle in the wake of the stormy events of 2001.

In fact, the U.S.'s new Central Asian strategy became part of the National Security Strategy formulated at approximately the same time. The United States discovered that the region was indispensable with respect to its united antiterrorist front and energy security. It was at this stage that the United States tried to formulate its Eurasian strategy, which presupposed drawing closer to Russia and India for strategic purposes, more consistent relations with China, using Eurasian hydrocarbon reserves (of Siberia, the Caspian, and Central Asia) as an alternative to OPEC, enlarging NATO further to the East, and changing the nature of America's relations with its West European allies. This strategy inevitably affected Central Asia.

At that stage the U. S. first consolidated its military-strategic presence in the region and set about expanding it together with NATO. Washington stepped up its military-political cooperation with the Central Asian countries. It built up its pressure on the local states within the «support of democracy» strategy; its biting criticism of the human rights violations by some of the Central Asian regimes could not but have a negative effect on the nature of the relations between the local states and the U.S. Washington was very vexed by the more active involvement of the other interested powers (Russia and China), which tried on a bilateral basis and within multilateral cooperation in the form of the SCO to limit America's influence in the region.

The concern of the Central Asian governments as well as of Moscow and Beijing over the results of America's involvement mounted along with the wave of so-called Color Revolutions that swept the CIS in 2003-2005, which the United States peremptorily supported. The events in Kyrgyzstan, which removed President Akaev, and Uzbekistan, which had to quench the riot in Andijan in the spring of 2005, produced a negative response to the American strategy both in the local countries and in their «elder» SCO partners. In the summer of 2005, the SCO unanimously demanded that the United States specify the deadlines for withdrawing its military bases from the region. In the fall of the same year, the United States began its withdrawal from Uzbekistan.

Since 2005, the U.S.'s strategic circles have been discussing a new geopolitical project for a Greater Central Asia under America's aegis. Washington

intends to tie Central Asia and Afghanistan and possibly other neighboring regions into a single military-strategic and geopolitical whole.

The United States is putting its new strategic approaches into practice, including with respect to Greater Central Asia. The novelty was part of Washington's strategy of global readjustment to the vast geopolitical Eurasian expanses, of which the Greater Middle East was a part. By 2006, American strategy and policy in Central Asia entered a new, fourth stage.

So far, America's future strategy has not acquired a clear form. It looks as if it will include the following elements: creation of Greater Central Asia to incorporate the region into America's strategic designs in Afghanistan, South Asia, and the Middle East; revival of the «containment» policy in relation to Russia (and probably China) in Central Asia; much more intensive confrontation with Iran; more active American involvement in the Caspian; NATO's greater role in Central Asia, etc.

The strategy was launched at a time when the region was living through serious geostrategic and political changes. The events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the spring of 2005 revealed that the Color Revolution strategies carried out in Central Asia had their limits. It became absolutely clear that it was dangerous from the military-political and geopolitical viewpoint to artificially accelerate the regime change process using the methods that had proven relatively successful in Georgia and Ukraine.

America's relations with Uzbekistan took a drastic turn for the worse; the process that began in 2004 was brought to its peak by the Andijan events of May 2005. By evacuating the base in Khanabad America cut down its military presence in the region. At the Astana summit in early July 2005, the SCO members unanimously demanded that the U.S. and NATO make it clear how long they intended to remain in Central Asia. This was a serious geopolitical challenge engineered by Beijing and Tashkent in particular.

The United States preserved its military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is obviously resolved to fortify its presence in the so-called Greater Central Asian region. The new American strategy is designed to change the situation in its favor under the rapidly changing military-strategic and geopolitical conditions.

### *Methods and Tools of America's Central Asian Policy*

At the early stage, Washington was guided by two priorities and several issues of lesser importance when dealing with the newly independent Central Asian states. The United States recognized the five new Central Asian states immediately after the Soviet Union ceased to exist and established diplomatic relations with them. In 1992, the Congress passed the Freedom Support Act, under which American legislation was adjusted to the new geopolitical reality, in which there were fifteen newly independent states. The act helped to develop open markets, democracy, and civil society; it set up mechanisms conducive to trade, economic cooperation, and contacts in the sphere of education and ensured

financial support of non-proliferation of weapons and demilitarization. The law was intended to strengthen the U.S.'s national security by preventing the restoration of communism and the emergence of religious extremism in Central Asia.

In July 1997, speaking at the Johns Hopkins University, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott described the U.S.'s foreign policy aims in Central Asia. He pointed out that successful economic and political reforms would promote stability and meet the interests not only of the regional states, but also of all the countries outside the region. Failure would encourage terror and religious and political extremism; more than that - it might end in war. He also pointed out that his country was very much interested in gaining access to the local oil reserves.

The United States was definitely determined to prevent a repeat of the 19th-century Big Game, in which the smaller countries would have been used as small change in the battle for energy resources initiated by Russia or any other country driven by neo-imperialist ambitions. In March 1999, when speaking at the Congress, Stephen Sestanovich, Ambassador-at-Large to the states of the former Soviet Union, confirmed the United States' continued adherence to these principles. He also pointed out that despite the rather shaky advance toward certain aims (such as democratic and economic reforms), Washington was determined to develop its relations with the Central Asian states.

The George W. Bush Administration that came to power in 2001 was very critical of the foreign policy course of its Democrat predecessor and formulated its own, typically Republican, priorities. However, prior to 9/11, the administration was not very concerned with the potential threat of Islamist terrorism; the «arc of instability,» with Central Asia as its core, was not a top priority either. In Central Asia, America merely followed the course charted by the previous administration. During the 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush criticized those who said that the United States might have helped other countries develop their national and state structures and that it should have kept a lower profile on the international scene.

In Central Asia, Washington could effectively use two tools of political pressure: (1) the local regimes could be accused of human rights violations, criticized as authoritarian, accused of corruption, and urged to become more democratic; (2) financial economic, military, technical, and humanitarian aid could be cut down. During the election campaign, America's Central Asian policy became part of the domestic political struggle between the Republicans and the Democrats, which acquired even more vehemence as the 2004 presidential election drew closer.

Early in 2003, the American legislature was presented with bills that offered much harsher wording than before. They expressed «Congress' opinion,» which meant that they were not binding. These documents spoke of the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan as «dictatorships and tyrannies.» Early in 2004, President George W. Bush announced that the budget of the National Endowment for Democracy would be doubled to pay for even stronger interference in the domestic affairs of the Middle

Eastern and post-Soviet countries. The NGOs are openly integrated into Washington's general strategy aimed at America's global domination.

In 2005, at the beginning of its second term, the administration announced that it would carry out another «charge for democracy.» On 18 May, 2005, when talking at a congress of the International Republican Institute (IRI), the U.S. president made no secret of his country's intention to actively encourage the Color Revolutions that, he asserted, would take place in the future.<sup>1</sup> In August 2005, the United States announced that it had opened «democratic information centers» and that it was engaged in projects designed to keep independent media afloat in Kazakhstan and five independent radio stations in Tajikistan.

During 2004 and 2005, the situation in the CIS was developing under the strong impact of the events in Georgia, Ukraine, and partly Moldova, in the course of which the local regimes were replaced with pro-Western cabinets, while the new rulers demonstrated a strong desire to export Color Revolutions to other CIS regions. They did their best to support the opposition in some of the CIS members; the West, in turn, extended its direct political support to the opposition in Kazakhstan and Russia in particular.

The revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the events that followed it played a special role in America's Central Asian policy. At first the West and its epigones across the post-Soviet expanse hailed the regime change; the mounting political crisis in Kyrgyzstan, which caused destabilization, reduced to naught the efforts of the country's leaders to maintain any semblance of order, and the resultant political chaos forced the West to revise its regime change strategy in the CIS. It was obvious that the scripts written for the CIS European members were ill-suited to Central Asia. What was more, they were fraught with grave destabilization of individual countries and the region's geopolitical situation. Under these conditions, the West once more became aware of Russia's stabilizing role as a regional factor of great importance and was forced to take it into account.

By 2005, Washington's regime changing strategy hit stalemate; America shifted its interests, either deliberately or due to the circumstances, to Kazakhstan. While the 2004 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan were accompanied by the «change of the elite» scenario actively promoted by NGOs and funds of all sorts living on Western money, the presidential campaign of 2005 was unfolding in a very different context: the tactics and methods of interference had been readjusted. Two factors were responsible for this:

(1) apprehension of excessive destabilization as the result of a regime change (this had already happened in Kyrgyzstan) and

(2) Russia's possible interference or its vehement response.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, the threat of a U.S. initiated Color Revolution in Kazakhstan remained real. In his report of 18 May, 2005, the U.S. president predicted inevitable changes in Central Asia. When talking about the region, he never mentioned Uzbekistan, which suggested that Kazakhstan had been selected for «democratization.» Together with «Kazakhgate» - type maneuvers, the Americans badly needed more tools to put pressure on Astana to protect themselves from any actions that might damage U.S. interests in the region.

The threat of another Color Revolution was averted by Astana's unambiguous response to the events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, a well oiled mechanism of consultations with Moscow and Beijing, the delayed decision about the presidential election, as well as the unanimous position of the SCO members at the SCO summit in July 2005. As the date of the presidential election in Kazakhstan drew nearer, the danger of Washington's interference did not abate. The events of the end of the summer of 2005 confirmed that certain political forces of the United States had not abandoned their plans to stage a Color Revolution. The situation in Kazakhstan changed radically in the summer and fall of 2005.

### *America's Changed Strategy in Central Asia*

The tactics and strategy of America's Central Asian policy changed and acquired certain new elements. American experts suggested that US policy in Central Asia should be restructured together with US public diplomacy because of the mounting anti-American sentiments. The trend toward a reassessment of America's policy and much more desired military strategic cooperation with Tashkent was further consolidated by a series of terrorist acts in April and July 2004.

It was recommended that Washington increase pressure behind the scene on its Central Asian partners to promote political and economic changes. In the process, it should be guided by two geopolitical imperatives. First, it should go on detaching Central Asia from the Caucasus in the geopolitical context. American experts were convinced that the region was typologically closer to the Middle East and Southeastern Asia, while the Caucasus was much closer to Europe.

American analysts pointed out that Washington would get bad headaches if the Islamists acting in Central Asia grew more radical and more belligerent: if forced to deal with shady regimes for the sake of its continued military presence, America would run the risk of tarnishing its image as a liberal and benevolent force. If the United States, they argued, became resolved to wage the «battle of ideas» on all fronts, it would need a much more coordinated and public diplomatic campaign to achieve positive results. It was recommended that Central Asia be included in the public statements on the need to observe democracy in the Muslim world.

Second, the United States was working toward developing a nationally oriented civil society in the Central Asian republics. Most of the expert community was convinced that the United States should support the idea of human rights and other aspects to which public opinion was especially sensitive. After a while, this would create a foundation for political movements able to act as a functional opposition to the ruling regimes, which was especially important in such states as Uzbekistan.

To put pressure on it, American analysts suggested that the U.S.'s military presence in the region should be diversified to make American policy there more flexible operationally and diplomatically. In this context, Kazakhstan was regarded



as an alternative partner because of its highly promising economic and political potential.

Prior to the terrorist acts of 2004 in Uzbekistan, Washington planned to put pressure on Tashkent to force it onto the road of liberalization. If the Uzbek side refused to cooperate, the U.S. should be ready to re-deploy its military from Khanabad and Karshi to Kazakhstan or other Central Asian bases. The events allowed Islam Karimov to go on with the old policy or even to intensify it. The West, in turn, increased its pressure.

The United States could safely ignore the interests of Russia and China in the region as long as they did not counter the global antiterrorist struggle. The airbase in Kant (within the CSTO framework) and the SCO antiterrorist center in Tashkent did not add tension to the relations between Washington, on the one hand, and Moscow and Beijing, on the other, merely because the American side never looked at them as threatening to its interests. Moreover, NATO may even conduct joint military exercises with Russian troops in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, while the SCO antiterrorist center in Tashkent might become a starting point for cooperation between the United States and the SCO.

America's strategy in Central Asia is determined, first and foremost, by geopolitical factors. This is the main thing about it. The United States has concentrated on its broader military-political contacts with the Central Asian and Transcaucasian states. This is the main aim of cooperation between America and these two regions. Washington obviously has no intention of encouraging agrarian reform and high technologies; it demonstrated no intention of increasing its humanitarian aid.

American analysts believed that the White House was not always aware that some of the Central Asian republics were unable to resolve their economic, political, and social problems, mainly because their democratic institutions were completely impotent and there was no elementary political culture indispensable to every contemporary state. If Washington insists on the present course, NATO, under U.S. leadership, will turn into the «region's gendarme» with a leading position in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia; this will allow America to outline the limits of Russia's influence in the region.

Washington has often indulged in headstrong policies that bordered on bluffing. In 2001, American politicians acquired the habit of making thunderous statements designed to convince Russia, Iran, China, and the Central Asian countries that the United States intends to keep its military in the region for a long time to come. As a result, these countries could not demand that the U.S. withdraw from the region in 2002 when the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan was over.

The American expert community believes that what they call «bureaucratic pluralism», or rather rivalry between the State Department and the Pentagon is the weakest point in America's policy in Central Asia. The State Department insists that today, when the Central Asian republics have found themselves on the frontline of the antiterrorist struggle, it is critically important to promote ideas of human rights and democracy. To achieve this, the State Department is pouring

money into the independent media and journalism; it is helping to develop political parties, strengthen the freedom of religious convictions and the rule of law, and carry out local government reform and reform of the health system. Its annual reports habitually criticize all the Central Asian countries for their human rights violations.

The Department of Defense, in turn, concentrated on the security-related advantages created by cooperation with the region's states. In February 2004, when paying visits to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld did his best to play down the criticism hurled at the Karimov regime for human rights violations. America's interests in Central Asia are connected with the defense secretary's plans to modernize the American army and redistribute the American military bases on a global scale: they should be placed closer to the potential seats of conflict.

In 2005, the State Department, with Congress behind it, finally predominated: since that time on Tashkent's domestic policy has been criticized. On the other hand, the Department of Defense prevailed in its pragmatic approach to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan demonstrated late in July 2005 during Donald Rumsfeld's visit to the region.

In 2006, Washington shifted its accents. The official assessments of the situation in Central Asia changed. They were formulated by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried at a Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. On 27 October, 2005, he said that America's strategy in Central Asia presupposed balanced regional cooperation in security, energy, and regional economic cooperation, as well as freedom through reforms. He noted that «Kazakhstan does have the potential to merge as a regional model,» and described Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan «as possible emerging reformers,» while Turkmenistan «remains unfortunately an autocratic state... We are nevertheless pursuing a policy of engagement with the government, seeking cooperation where we can, and where there are clear benefits to our interests», he said. In Uzbekistan, «the United States will continue to speak privately and publicly about our concerns,» he added.

Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs E. Anthony Wayne was much more specific when addressing the American Chamber of Commerce at approximately the same time: «As Kazakhstan's economy continues to develop», said he, «it will be an engine for growth within Central Asia.» When talking about State Secretary Rice's recent visit to Central Asia, American analysts agreed that it was intended to specify America's interests in the region and to demonstrate them to the local ruling elites. America wanted Moscow to act in a similar way: to outline its interests, to coordinate them with those who rule the Central Asian countries, and to harmonize them, openly and unambiguously, with America's interests in the region.

When on a visit to Astana in mid-October 2005, Henry Kissinger made more or less similar statements. He said that Kazakhstan, as a country at the crossroads of the largest civilizations, played an important role in the region and the world. In

fact, in 2005, the U. S. had to decide whether to fan another Orange Revolution or to follow the laissez faire principle. Washington opted for the latter.

The National Committee for American Foreign Policy (NCAFP), a public organization of several influential businessmen and politicians concerned with America's image abroad and the country's genuine national interests all over the world, has good contacts in the cabinet and the strategic establishment. In 2005, it made its contribution to the changed position of the White House with respect to Kazakhstan.

In the spring of 2005, it dispatched a sort of mini think-tank to Kazakhstan; eyewitness accounts, meetings, and consultations enabled NCAFP members to draw up an analytical paper that offered a balanced and objective assessment of the situation. The document left no chances for the opposition, while the White House was asked to support the current state of affairs in politics. The committee sent the paper to the U. S. State Department and probably played an important role in Washington's assessment of the situation in Kazakhstan on the eve of the presidential election and the prospect of a Color Revolution. In 2006, the NCAFP confirmed its recommendations.

In 2005, the American strategic circles presented a new geopolitical project: a so-called Greater Central Asia created with Washington's help. It presupposed that Central Asia and Afghanistan might be united into a military-strategic and geopolitical whole later connected to the so-called Greater Middle East controlled by the West (paper by the American Institute of Central Asia and the Caucasus dated March 2005).

It was intended to detach the extended region from the monopoly influence of the other great powers (Russia and China), to protect Afghanistan against the destabilizing influence of its neighbors (Pakistan and Iran), and to attach it to a much more stable and West-oriented Central Asia.

The new strategy was also expected to alleviate the fears that the Central Asian states might start thinking of American policy as a sporadic rather than systematic phenomenon. In other words, the local leaders might start doubting the United States' opportunity and resolution to insist on its regional presence in the face of Moscow and Beijing.

On the whole, the Greater Central Asian project completed and extended the earlier geopolitical project designed to set up a Greater Middle East and was supposed to pursue the same strategic aims, namely, diversification of strategic interests and stability in the region under American domination.

Under this plan, Washington should maintain an illusion of «geopolitical pluralism» to keep Russia and China happy by letting them indulge in self-importance. Together with the West, they should have been granted the status of the guarantors and donors of the modernization process. The American strategists, however, would have been much happier if the Russian Federation and China remained «benevolent observers,» which means that they should be removed from the active geopolitical game. It was suggested that for the same purpose India and Turkey should be invited as unofficial guarantors.

The Andijan events and the radical changes in Tashkent's foreign policy endangered the part of the project related to Uzbekistan. Initially the country was intended as an integration engine for Greater Central Asia through agreements with Pakistan, building a railway to Afghanistan in cooperation with Japan, creating a transport corridor to the Indian Ocean, and forming a free trade zone in the Ferghana Valley, in which other Central Asian countries were expected to be involved.

The economic section of the Greater Central Asian project presupposed that the local states would be incorporated as promptly as possible into the world financial and economic structures in which the West dominated; the region was expected to gain access to trade and transport routes to become an important center of international transportation of raw materials and commodities under American control. The agrarian sector was to be treated as a priority compared to industrial growth; agrarian policy was to be used to fight drug trafficking (here Kazakhstan's experience infighting drug money laundering could be used, at least in part).

The project outlines several organizational-technical and diplomatic means to successfully implement America's strategy aimed at boosting the roles of the Pentagon and the State Department to make America's presence in the region even more effective. It was deemed necessary to increase NATO's role and importance as one of the key instruments of Washington's strategy. There were plans to set up a Greater Central Asian Council to allow the United States to coordinate regional policy on a permanent basis and even shape it; annual visits by the U.S. State Secretary to the Central Asian countries were intended as a regular feature of America's policy.

In 2005-2006, the U.S.'s policy in Central Asia entered a new stage. In the short-term perspective, the Greater Central Asian project looked like a folly. It was too difficult to implement in the conditions emerging at that time and in view of America's headaches in other parts of the world. In the mid-term perspective, however, we can expect that the present administration (or the one that replaces it) will arm itself with the project. After all, it contains all of America's main priorities and foreign policy aims, as well as the mechanisms needed to succeed.

Despite the cooling off, the American strategic community (the National Defense University under the U.S. Department of Defense and the National War College) warned that Washington made a grave mistake by withdrawing its military bases from Uzbekistan and stepping up its criticism of the Kari-mov regime, which had proven its viability and determination to use force to squelch the opposition. On the other hand, experts added that the threats to the regime were real and not an invention of the regime's propaganda machine. This group of experts, which worked for the Pentagon, suggested that America should pay more attention to Kazakhstan, which could offer an example of successful economic reforms carried out with U.S. support.

It was highly unlikely that Washington would perform another US-turn in its relations with Tashkent under the pressure of the American strategic establishment's pragmatic wing. This could have affected the interests of Russia and China in Central Asia. There was evidence that the United States had decided

to wait until the political regime changed in Uzbekistan. In the summer of 2006, it became more or less obvious that Washington was adjusting its policy toward Tashkent; the contacts between the two countries resumed in August after Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher's visit.

### *The Results of the US experience in Central Asia*

The US policy in Central Asia in general is part of the broader Eurasian strategy that touches upon the Caspian and the Caucasian regions, Russia, Afghanistan, the Middle East, South Asia and China along with our region.

The US Eurasian strategy in turn is part of Washington's global strategy aimed at retaining US domination in the world economy and financial system, consolidation of its military-strategic superiority, expansion of its geopolitical influence in Eurasia, containment of its potential rivals (China, the European Union, Russia), combating so-called international terrorism that can be understood as establishment of control over the Islamic world.

The main conclusion from the analysis of prospects of possible developments and changing of the character of relations between the Kazakhstan and the US is that the field for political maneuver of Kazakhstan between the US and Russia abruptly converges compared to the previous period. Further there can appear another real threat that Kazakhstan may get in a geopolitical snare; absence of possibilities for political maneuvering and inevitability of choosing in favor of only one geopolitical force would lead to worsening of relations with another side with all the ensuing consequences for its security.

In an effort to realize its strategic and geopolitical purposes the United States use a number of methods and instruments that are not new, but still considered efficient by the White House. They include economic assistance, ideological pressure, and even, applied to special cases, special operations, political provocations and sabotage: artificial organization of political crises, support and funding of oppositional or even if necessary of radical forces, open interference in internal affairs, exaggeration of accusations for corruption, and etc. The sharp criticism in many Western publications of is expanded towards previous US policies, provided in 1990s toward the Central Asia region (so-called Talbot's doctrine).

The positive results of American geological influence on central Asia are doubtless. They are following: actually, having carried out the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan in 2001-2002 years and having placed the bases in Central Asian countries, the USA have undertaken a role of the main military arbitrator in the center of Eurasia; a role which all other conducting powers of region have refused. It is became obvious that only American military power could eliminate Taliban regime and remove the direct threat to Central Asia. The Central Asian countries expected that the United States will move toward closer regional cooperation to confirm that it is serious about its plans in the region. Such moves should include additional investments, broader bilateral cooperation in the energy sector, search for a new security model and for possibilities of the US strategic

presence in the region that would take the interests of all states into account. It is expected that Washington will tone down its criticism of the situation in the sphere of human rights and democracy.

Military political presence of the US in Central Asia produced both positive and negative consequences. First of all, we have to admit that the US do not intend to leave the region in the short-run or in the medium-run, and probably in the long run. The main positive effect of the US presence here is that the US will in no case allow repeated threat to Central Asia from radical Islam, considering it as a threat to its national interests.

However negative potential of US influence on security and stability in the region can exceed the positive effect in prospects. First of all this concerns involvement of Central Asia in the track of the United States' policy that would inevitably occur in case of Washington's confrontation with neighbors of the region, including Russia, China, and Iran.

Another direction of the US strategy that contains clearly destabilizing potential for the region can be opposition between the US and China on the geopolitical level, which would inevitably touch upon Central Asia that represents a convenient base for the creation of threat to China's strategic rear by the United States. Beijing's reciprocal actions can lead to direct military threat to the region. The most dangerous could be purposeful actions of Washington directed on destabilization of disagreeable regimes and their replacement.

However, according to evaluations of US strategic planning experts, the US long military presence in the region brings in an element of strategic uncertainty. They in particular suggest that American military forces would play important role in the regional affairs in future, and this makes it the regional military-political force that nobody would be able to ignore. US analysts offer to change the US strategy in the Central Asian region proceeding from the fact that growing anti-American spirits appear as some of reasons for reconsideration of the US current public diplomacy in regard of Central Asia.

Another positive result of the US foreign policy in the region, as considered, is development of nationally oriented civil societies in Central Asia. Majority of analysts believe that the US has to support protection of human rights and other aspects that may resound with the public opinion. This in turn would allow creating a foundation for political movements that would be able to appear as functional opposition to the ruling regime after some time.

The main conclusion related to the US strategy in Central Asia is that it is determined first of all by geopolitical factors. There is some negative elements: instead of providing support in agrarian reforms, high-tech development, expansion of humanitarian aid, the US government focused on the expansion of military political contacts with the Central Asian states; and this forms a core of cooperation between Washington and countries of this region. The concept of "security manager" became popular within the American political circles after the

events of September 11, 2001.<sup>131</sup> Its essence comes to that under conditions, when Central Asian states can not protect themselves against the “international terrorism”, and the neighboring great powers are not able to do that, the United States are to take care of security in the region.

The issue of nuclear nonproliferation was extremely important for American policy. That’s why we can estimate the US position toward the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as the extremely positive one for the region.

The other positive impact of the US security strategy is that, it has made the integration of the new independent states into Western economic, political and military institutions and practices the fundamental regional policy aim. The US foreign assistance to Kazakhstan and the other newly independent states has focused on helping them to reform their economic, political, and social welfare systems so they can become sustainable market-oriented democracies.

The US policy toward the Caspian issue is complicated. It includes both – the positive and negative elements. So, US interests and policies are easy to analyze. The United States views three aspects of the Trans-Caspian equation as crucial: increasing the supply of energy to consumers; excluding Iran from influencing the exploration, shipment, development and marketing of energy products; and preventing any one state from monopolizing the local energy supply. Certain fundamental corollaries flow from these objectives. Officially US policy aims to enhance local states’ capability to produce and ship oil abroad; to obtain equal (that is, competitive) access for US energy firms and other firms that want to invest in these republics; to negotiate settlements to local wars; and to create stable, democratic governments as an ultimate outcome of these processes. The United States strongly opposes Russian efforts to obtain a monopoly and an exclusive sphere of influence over conflict resolution, economies, politics, military agendas and energy supplies in Central Asia.

The US focused on several key points. 1. Both Central Asia and the Caucasus have unique problems and concerns and should not be an adjunct to US policy towards Russia. 2. Conflict resolution is an important element in drafting a successful US policy towards the region. 3. Energy assets are not large enough on their own to justify giving the region a vital status in the analysis of the USA’s broad strategic interests.

The US national interests in Central Asia and the Caspian Basin are more derivative than fundamental. The region will be strategically tangential as long as its resources are accessible to competing interests. Apart from oil and gas which may not be plentiful enough to justify a major US commitment to the region, US interests should be viewed as case-specific and part of a wider focus on stability.

The serious mistake of American policy in Central Asia was US relationship with Uzbekistan. The United States also identified Uzbekistan strategically as a key state for stability in Central Asia. The United States’ interest in security cooperation in the region took on new importance after the September 11, 2001,

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<sup>131</sup> See for example: Rumer E. Flashman’s Revenge: Central Asia after September 11 // Strategic Forum (Washington, DC). December 2002. No 195, pp. 1-8.

when the United States was able to transform the previous limited level of military cooperation to a much expanded US military presence in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

There were some positive elements in American regional policy. The United States chose not to become directly involved in Central Asia and instead opted for an attentive, wait-and-see policy. From Washington's perspective, it made little sense to become actively embroiled in so explosive a situation, one fraught with rising tensions between Russia and China and further compounded by the threats posed by Islamic extremism. That cautious approach reflected Washington's view that the region was not a priority in terms of fundamental American interests.

What is the region for the Bush administration? It needs to think clearly about the advantages and disadvantages of U.S. predominance in Central Asia. The advantages include short-term stability, access to energy resources, and proximity to Afghanistan. But there are many disadvantages too. U.S. support for existing regimes will help ensure short-term stability, but the real, systemic causes of instability will be swept under the rug. The United States does not need to become Central Asia's 'hegemon': that is, to assume responsibility for its economic development and its stability. The USA faced three options: to be security manager, hegemon or limited partner. In new geo-strategic and international framework the US has chose a strategic manager role. Certainly, it was a positive decision for the regional security and stability.

From the year 2005 the strategic circles of USA are engaged in debating a new geopolitical project – creation of a Greater Central Asia under the aegis of Washington. . The essence of this plan is to bind Central Asia and Afghanistan into a single military-strategic and geopolitical whole which may also include some other neighbouring regions. But this project had negatively impacted on Central Asian attitude towards the USA and its goals in the region. The new American strategy (as voiced by the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during her visit to the region in October 2005) simultaneously takes into account several geopolitical, military-strategic and regional factors. The project also presupposes realization of a number of organizational-technical and diplomatic measures for the implementation of the American strategy.

So there are no doubts that the American presence and interests in Central Asia have a long-term strategy character. Global integration is yet another trend of American Caspian and Central Asian strategy: the local countries should be involved in world economy and the system of global political, economic, technological, information, and financial relations. The US energy interests and their protection are the main object of American strategy in the region throughout the entire period of its independent development. To pursue this major aim the United States opted for two basic lines: direct investments in oil and gas production and control over the pipelines and construction projects.

Military and political presence of the US in Central Asia produced both positive and negative consequences. First of all, we have to admit that the US do not intend to leave the region in the short-run or in the medium-run, and probably in the long run. The main positive effect of the US presence here is that the US will



in no case allow repeated threat to Central Asia from radical Islam, considering it as a threat to its national interests. However, the US long military presence in the region brings in an element of strategic uncertainty.

As regards the US influence and expectations toward Kazakhstan, they may conclude in positive sense: the United States were engaged in encouraging the development of a middle class, as well as democratic forces in the country. Kazakhstan's armed forces, though small in number, are the best trained in the region. They receive assistance from the United States. The army is becoming professional, has a qualified officer corps, maintains close contacts with the U.S. armed forces, and participates in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. US assistance to the Kazakh military is significant and Kazakhstan has benefited from other U.S. foreign aid funding.

More over, the United States actively supported Kazakh candidacy to assume the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010. The United States and Kazakhstan share a vital interest in the continuation and ultimate success of Kazakhstan's political and economic transition to a mature, functioning, secular, democratic state. U.S. interests in Kazakhstan transcend oil and Kazakh support for the war on terrorism. They include Kazakhstan's strategic importance as a moderate, pro-Western, secular state. US policy should assist and not undermine the basic great power equilibrium that Kazakhstan is attempting to sustain in order to maintain its independence and pursue economic development and modernization. The United States must continue to emphasize that American interests in Kazakhstan are not limited to oil, security, and counterterrorism.

Kazakhstani-American relations developed due to the implementation of various agreements in the areas of nuclear safety, trade, capital investments, science and technology, legal relations, environment and natural resources conservation, activities of nongovernmental organizations, etc. Kazakhstan's most important Western partner is the United States. The U.S. is the biggest investor in the national oil industry and directly influences the geopolitics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan's security, respectively.

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Since 2001, America's policy in Central Asia has been defined by several geopolitical factors: the 9/11 events and the declared «war against international terrorism,» America's policy in Eurasia and in the Middle East, relations with Russia, China, and the European Union, as well as the energy and oil factors. At the doctrine level, U.S. foreign policy was confirmed by the 2002 Strategy of National Security, which was partially revised and updated in 2006.

In recent times, four American analytic centers - the Harriman Institute at Columbia University, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis in Washington, the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University, and the Center for Technology and National Security Policy at the National Defense University - made an attempt to define U.S. policy in Central Asia. Details vary from one

conception to another, but they all agree that America should preserve its geopolitical domination in Central Asia and through it in Eurasia too.

How we can estimate the American geopolitical experience in Central Asia? Is it success or failure?

On one hand, the Central Asian states remained within the orbit of Russia, including several integrative organizations (EurEC, CSTO). Moscow is continuing to control the oil and gas export routes from the region. The local regimes save their authoritarian characters. The civil societies in these states are underdeveloped. The US military and strategic presence in the region is reduced, Uzbekistan, for example, has evacuated the American military bases. In general, Western impact on Central Asia was limited by Russian and China.

From the other hand, Central Asian countries are independent, what is the strategic goal of the West. The threat of Islamic radicalism was demolished, as well as the danger of weapons of mass destruction proliferation.

What are the perspectives of US policy towards the region? Certainly, the new administration in the White House, coming in January 2009, should formulate a new strategy, new objectives; find new methods and new agenda for Central Asia, in any way. Presently United States in its regional strategy is working out changes and additions at tactical and strategic level.

To guarantee the region's sustainable development, the geopolitical actors and parties involved should take the interests of all those involved into account. This particularly applies to Russia and the United States. Washington should take into account Moscow's interests in the region and its concerns about its strategic security. Under no circumstances should the United States undertake a regime change unilaterally, otherwise Russia will regard this as a «game without rules» and will respond accordingly.

The Central Asian states emerged onto the political scene as subjects of international politics more or less in their own right. This is probably the main change that occurred in the geopolitical situation in the region in the 21st century. This could not happen if any one power, the United States included, dominated there. If the process of transformation of the Central Asian states into «normal» states from the viewpoint of international politics goes on unabated for several more decades, it may trigger a consistent political and economic sustainable advance.

## **5. U.S. Central Asian Policy under President Barack Obama**

There can be no doubt that during the eighteen months it has been in power, the Obama Administration has in due course defined the main vectors and priorities of U.S. foreign policy, determined the country's key geopolitical interests, drawn up and adopted a National Security Strategy, and compiled a Nuclear Policy Review.

The following factors are having an impact on U.S. policy in the post-Soviet expanse, which includes Central Asia (CA): relations with Russia, the PRC, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), Turkey, Pakistan, and India; the military operation

in Afghanistan; NATO's enlargement; the energy factor; the coordination strategy between the West and the European Union (EU); and the problem of radical Islam.

Since the beginning of his presidency, Barack Obama has designated intensification of the U.S.'s influence in the Asia Pacific Region (APR) and further development of relations with China as the priority vectors of his foreign policy. In order to help the American economy recover from its severe crisis, the U.S. tried to create a geopolitical alliance with the PRC (a duumvirate of world administration), but Beijing rejected this proposal.

Another main issue (apart from recovery from the crisis) for the Obama Administration is bringing the war on so-called international terrorism (meaning the military operation in Afghanistan in particular) to its successful conclusion. This means that the foreign policy strategy of the present-day American Democrats hinges on the geopolitical situation in Central Asia, while also keeping in mind Russia's interests.

The current U.S. administration is keeping a close strategic eye on the Central Asian region, particularly after the events in Kyrgyzstan. This is posing both new threats and new opportunities for the CA countries in the context of reinforcing the geopolitical balance in the region.

A decision was adopted recently to reduce the level of the U.S.'s military presence in Afghanistan with subsequent withdrawal from this country (presumably between 2011 and 2014). If this happens, the security situation in CA, Afghanistan, and Pakistan could drastically change for the worse. It appears that the U.S. is no longer making democratization the fundamental principle of its foreign policy. The Obama Administration realizes that establishing democracy does not boil down to perfunctorily introducing election procedures into a country, but depends on the conditions within the country itself being ripe for such changes and on creating a socioeconomic and political infrastructure, which requires many years of effort. The U.S. intends to make use of "intelligent" power (which presumes a combination of "hard" and "soft" power). Today preference is being given not to combat action, but to political and economic methods, as well as to diplomacy and cultural ties.

On the whole, experts characterize the foreign policy of the Obama Administration as contradictory and inconsistent. The main reasons for this, in their opinion, are the current president's lack of experience in international affairs and, more importantly, the very unfavorable situation in the U.S. with respect to the national and global economy.<sup>132</sup>

### *Principles, Methods, and Tasks of Barack Obama's Central Asian Policy*

According to the Central Asian policymakers in the Obama Administration, the U.S. must overcome the internal structural contradiction in its policy in the new circumstances, as well as resolve three vitally important problems:

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<sup>132</sup> See: Laumulin M. U.S. Central Asian Policy under President Barack Obama // Central Asia's Affairs (Almaty, KazISS). 2011. No 1, pp. 5-16.

- Mistrust of the CA states regarding the U.S.'s efforts to establish democracy in the region's republics. Before launching its Central Asian policy, the White House, in order to improve its image, would do well to strengthen its contacts with the governments of the region's countries.

- Russia's opposition, which does not suit U.S. policy.

- The situation in Afghanistan.

On the whole, American experts are very skeptical about the prospects for implementing the Greater Central Asia (GCA) concept Barack Obama inherited from the George Bush Administration. Washington has determined the objectives and tasks that form the foundation of GCA for the mid and long term. So, although implementation of the project is encountering all kinds of problems, this does not mean that this vital geopolitical matter should be removed from the agenda.

The U.S.'s interests in the region go beyond the framework of GCA, and in the foreseeable future they will be implemented on the basis of existing projects and bilateral agreements with the CA states.

On the whole, the GCA project is only part of Washington's strategic plans aimed at transforming the whole of Eurasia into an extensive U.S.-controlled geo-economic expanse that includes the Caspian region, CA, the Middle East, and South Asia (SA). So, in theory, a "sanitary cordon" could be created along Russia's and China's borders. This scenario would enlarge the geopolitical field of the region's rivals, which fully meets the White House's interests.

The main adjustments in U.S. policy amount to restoring several posts and subdivisions in the administration and creating an SA and CA department, strengthening Afghanistan's role in integration of the Asian countries and formation of GCA, using the North-South transportation corridor to diversify export of energy resources from CA, applying different strategic approaches, and turning Kazakhstan into a regional leader and so-called corridor of reform. In addition, there are also plans to focus greater attention on the role of education and nongovernmental organizations in promoting democracy in CA (this process is still arousing a certain amount of concern in the region).

The U.S. is adjusting its Central Asian policy in light of the mistakes made by the former White House administration. American experts point to three serious mistakes of the U.S.'s CA policy in the past:

- When resolving various problems of the region's states, the U.S. did not even attempt to coordinate the positions of different government departments.

- The specifics of the CA countries and people, as well as of the region as a whole were not taken into account.

- The U.S. did not coordinate its actions with the activity of other external actors.

After the Democrats headed by Barack Obama came to power, it was expected that Washington would begin actively revising its strategy in CA and, in particular, reject the GCA concept.

In order to continue the war and equip the American contingent in Afghanistan, Washington needs a reliable route through the territory of the CIS countries (including the CA states), otherwise the transit of cargo will be

impossible from the security point of view (due to the political instability in Pakistan and aggravation of its relations with India). So we are talking about further enlargement of the American military presence in the Central Asian countries, which, it is hoped, will play a vitally important role in supporting the U.S.'s military operation in Afghanistan.

The U.S.'s plans for Afghanistan have led several CA countries to hope for a significant increase in American aid and investments. But they were also worried that Washington would use the antiterrorist operation to provide a more permanent base for its military contingents in the region (a similar situation existed in 2001-2002).

Another vector of American policy in need of adjustment in the region is the U.S.'s attitude toward the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The White House believes that this organization is controlled by Russia and establishing relations with it will mean recognizing the CSTO as a legitimate member of the international community.

So Washington needs to maintain at least minimum contact with the Russian Federation and PRC regarding the most important problems arising in the CA countries, since this will help to promote the development of relations with the region's countries, as well as eliminate the possibility of criticism from Moscow and Beijing about the U.S. exclusively pursuing its own interests.

It stands to reason that Barack Obama's policy in the Central Asian region should correct the mistakes of the White House's former administration. First of all, there must be stronger coordination among the U.S.'s various government departments (the State Department and Pentagon in particular).

On the whole, however, the Obama Administration has inherited sufficiently powerful levers from its predecessors that ensure its strong and regular impact on the CA countries from the position of so-called soft power. This implies the many different funds and their branches, information and cultural centers, American "corners" and councils, and so on that have appeared in the region. There are 22 of them in Kazakhstan, 15 in Kyrgyzstan, 9 in Tajikistan, 5 in Turkmenistan, and 1 in Uzbekistan (not to mention the programs broadcast by Voice of America in Uzbek).

But as it transpired, the Obama Administration does not have a clear conception of its policy in CA. U.S. interests in the region are primarily related to ensuring the transit of military cargo for the U.S. and NATO coalition troops in Afghanistan.

Barack Obama's attention was drawn once more to the Central Asian region when the turmoil broke out in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010. The White House assumed a position that implied that such countries as Russia (the CSTO leader) and Kazakhstan (chairman of the OSCE) should take responsibility for stability in this republic (and in the region as a whole).

The new landlord of the White House is still placing top priority on strengthening cooperation between the U.S. (along with the EU) and the CA states in the energy industry. The stakes are being placed on further Americanization of the Caspian and on reorienting the flows of Caspian oil and gas resources toward

Europe. The U.S. and its partners in the EU will continue to exert efforts to ensure that the main oil and gas pipelines link the Central Asian region and the European markets without passing through Russia.

The global financial crisis and drop in world energy prices could lead to the curtailment of several energy projects lobbied by Washington in the Caspian. Despite this, however, the Central Asian region will remain an arena for playing out the intense competitive struggle between the U.S. and Russia.

### *The U.S. and Kazakhstan*

At present, the U.S. is developing contacts most successfully with Kazakhstan (largely because the republic is the chairman of the OSCE). The U.S. regards Kazakhstan as an ambitious, influential, and predictable political player (in contrast to some of the other CA countries) not only in the Central Asian region, but also throughout the post-Soviet expanse.

On the basis of the industrial-innovative strategy being implemented in the republic, U.S. investment companies and banks that regard Kazakhstan as a promising developing market have stepped up their activity. Washington also thinks that Kazakhstan's membership in the Customs Union should not prevent its possible future membership in the WTO.

At present, American agroindustrial companies and enterprises engaged in the delivery of medical equipment and educational institutions that would like to invest in projects being implemented in the republic are actively developing cooperation with Kazakhstan. But it should be presumed that the current share of funds going into the oil industry and that being allotted to other branches of Kazakhstan's economy will not change; oil, gas, and affiliated transport routes will continue to account, as before, for 65% of American investments.

During the years bilateral economic relations have been developing (since 1993), the U.S. has invested \$14.3 billion in the Kazakhstan economy (mainly in the oil and gas industry and affiliated services). But at present, export from the U.S. to Kazakhstan has fallen to the 2005 level; in 2009 it amounted to \$600 million, although there was a time when it reached \$1 billion. Equipment for the oil industry accounts for 40% of this sum, transport technology for 25%, and computers, telecommunications, electronics, and the chemical industry for the rest.

American analysts regard Kazakhstan as the most influential state in the region, but its territory (the largest among the CA countries) is too extensive for the small population to control. Moreover, Kazakhstan borders on Russia and depends on it for oil and natural gas transit to the West. Perhaps over time, when the infrastructure projects begin working, the situation will change.

On the eve of the Russian-Georgian war, Kazakhstan tried to find export alternatives for its rich energy resources, including pipelines via the Caspian Sea and to China. However, the construction of these routes is not complete, and this means that any agreements between Kazakhstan and the U.S. must be approved by Russia. As American analysts believe, the republic will not take the risk and act on its own.

When the U.S. and NATO leadership succeeded in coming to terms with essentially all the main states that border on Afghanistan about the transit of non-military cargo for the coalition forces mission, the question was raised of inviting new countries and military contingents to participate in this operation. Kazakhstan's candidacy was examined as early as the beginning of 2008 (during the term of the George Bush administration), before the decision to enlarge the coalition military operation in Afghanistan had been made.

American representatives regularly used diplomatic channels to explore the possibility of Kazakhstan's participation in such an operation, highly evaluating the part the republic's servicemen played in the Iraqi mission. It was tentatively suggested that similar cooperation might also be pursued in Afghanistan. This cooperation implied recruiting Kazakh servicemen as staff officers, army medics, and field engineers for training Afghans to demine their own territory (just as the Kazakh servicemen had done in Iraq).

This makes us wonder why Astana in particular was offered this opportunity. NATO correctly presumed that the armed forces of other CA states would not be able to interact efficiently with NATO structures in Afghanistan, since not one of them, apart from Kazakhstan, has had experience with working jointly with the alliance. In addition, it is Kazakhstan of all the region's countries that is carrying out an active pro-Western policy. Astana is participating much more actively in NATO's Partnership for Peace program than its closest regional neighbors.

Some Russian experts think that the possible participation of Kazakhstan's armed forces in the Afghan operation is a prerequisite for closer cooperation between this country and NATO. By conducting an independent military policy, Astana is considered to be departing from its pro-Russian course.

The question of an independent state participating in military operations lies entirely within the competence of its parliament and president; there is nothing extraordinary in the possibility of sending Kazakh servicemen to Afghanistan (particularly since the presence of the coalition forces there is legalized by U.N. mandate). Moreover, this development of events would make Kazakh diplomacy even more multivectoral. Nevertheless, Russia and the CSTO structures might react very negatively to Kazakhstan's participation in the Afghan operation being implemented under NATO's leadership.

It is very likely that by following its foreign political interests to strengthen cooperation with the West and raise its international prestige, Kazakhstan will join the operation in Afghanistan. But the possible negative consequences of such a step must also be kept in mind: loss of personnel, the Afghan population's displeasure at the direct presence of Kazakh servicemen in the country's territory, and a negative public opinion being formed with respect to Astana's military policy.

So Kazakhstan signing an agreement on transit to Afghanistan will raise Moscow's role. This also applies to the CA countries. By activating its policy with respect to Afghanistan, Kazakhstan should be ready for changes in Russia's position. There is no doubt that relations with the U.S. traditionally occupy an important place among Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities. Despite all the

changes in the world balance of forces, America will long remain the most powerful global power.

The U.S.'s active policy in energy security directly affects the interests of CA and the Caspian region. Washington is insistently pushing through the idea of diversifying export routes and opposing the appearance of monopolies in this sphere.

Further development of the CA countries, including Kazakhstan, greatly depends on how the problem of Iran's nuclear program is resolved. Astana recognizes Tehran's right to the peaceful atom and is in favor of a diplomatic solution to all problems. In this respect, the Obama Administration was quite positive about the idea of creating a nuclear fuel bank in Kazakhstan.

The U.S. is also an important partner of Kazakhstan in the investment sphere (the total amount of American investments in the republic's economy, as well as in the fuel and energy complex and high technology has already topped \$15 billion). In this respect, the Kazakh-American initiative on state-private partnership could play an important role.

Kazakhstan, as the U.S.'s key partner in Central Asia, should continue to maintain friendly and constructive relations with Washington, developing a strategic dialog with respect to all the main vectors of cooperation (political, economic, and military), as well as regarding security and the development of democracy.

On the whole, Kazakhstan is a predictable and understandable partner for Washington, cooperation with which can be characterized as an important and key link in U.S. foreign policy on the Central Asian region. A confidential and constructive dialog has long been established between the two states. At present, Kazakhstan's main goal is to ensure the U.S.'s participation in the OSCE summit to be held in December 2010, which will make it possible to promote Kazakh-American relations to a new level.

### *The U.S. and Kyrgyzstan*

The Kyrgyz authorities' decision to close the American airbase at Manas came as a surprise to the Obama Administration. Washington regarded this airbase as a key transit point through which additional contingents of troops could be sent to Afghanistan. Moreover, Manas was to be used to compensate for the decrease in shipments via the Pakistani route.

The U.S. expert community was the first to react to the situation that developed around the Manas base, seeing Moscow's hand in Bishkek's actions. This conclusion was drawn on the basis of the fact that Kurmanbek Bakiyev's statement on closing the base came at the same time as Kyrgyzstan entered an unprecedented agreement on Russian financial and economic aid to the republic.

Head of the Pentagon Robert Gates was more reticent about this. He noted in particular that Russia was trying to take advantage of everything associated with closing the American airbase in Kyrgyzstan, the base being of immense



importance for sending troops and cargo to Afghanistan, particularly since there are plans to double the U.S. military presence in this country next year.

In the context of the Great Game, the decision to close the Manas base was not at all accidental. In the context of the rivalry between the U.S. and Russia in the post-Soviet expanse and other regions of Eurasia, measures to curtail America's permanent presence in Kyrgyzstan are quite logical; they reveal the depth of the contradictions between the sides that were manifested with particular clarity during George Bush's second presidential term.

As we know, at that time, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev confirmed that Bishkek was willing to discuss with Washington ways to further use the Manas airbase, for example, for transporting non-military freight for the needs of the antiterrorist coalition in Afghanistan. In principle, this decision suited both the new U.S. administration (since it made it possible for it to "save face" and not look like the losing side) and Russia, which, in the final analysis, is not interested in undermining the position of the Western coalition in Afghanistan.

And finally, the version proposed by Kurmanbek Bakiyev was also very acceptable for Kyrgyzstan itself; it means that the republic was maintaining its relations with the U.S. and not losing money by foregoing the base in Manas. China has also been showing an interest in this kind of compromise, which, keeping in mind the vulnerability of the U.S.'s position in CA, could put a certain amount of pressure on it.

The question of opening a U.S. military facility in the republic was considered even before the events in April 2010 that led to the overthrow of President Bakiyev. A center for training Kyrgyz special forces costing \$5.5 million was to be established in the Batken Region. The American side had previously allotted several million dollars to build similar training centers.

In May 2010, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs George Krol visited the region. He held consultations in which representatives of the new Kyrgyz leadership and Russian officials participated. This visit demonstrated Washington's visible concern about the development of the situation in Kyrgyzstan, since it threatened U.S. interests in the region.

The U.S. intends to cooperate with international organizations—the U.N., OSCE, IMF, and World Bank—with respect to rendering economic aid to Bishkek. At the same time, the U.S. is continuing to implement programs that were launched before the revolution; they are aimed at supporting the development of democracy, the economy, as well as the free and independent media. Moreover, the U.S. rendered technical support to holding the referendum and latest elections, including via American nongovernmental organizations.

It is worth noting that in June of 2010 the Pentagon temporarily stopped its refueling planes, which support the military operation in Afghanistan, from filling up at the Manas airport. At that time, NATO Special Representative for Central Asia and the Caucasus Robert Simmons also visited the country. It appears that the American command is concerned about the development of the situation in Kyrgyzstan and does not exclude the possibility of closing the Transit Center at Manas.

A slightly different situation is developing in relations between the U.S. and Uzbekistan, which is still theoretically an important link in the entire Central Asian security system. Despite the fact that Uzbekistan's officials have been making loud statements about the joint fight against international terrorism and assistance to the coalition forces in carrying out the operation in Afghanistan, Washington has long lost confidence in Tashkent's policy.

Washington regards Uzbekistan as the central and most significant player in the region. This state has regional hegemonic ambitions and has more opportunity than other states to stand up to Moscow. There are large Uzbek diasporas in all the neighboring states, which makes it possible for Tashkent to intervene in their policy. In contrast to other post-Soviet states of the region (apart from Kazakhstan), Uzbekistan is self-sufficient in terms of food and energy.

Uzbekistan is the most important potential partner for the U.S.; in contrast to Kazakhstan, it borders not on Russia, but on Afghanistan, with which it has road and railway connections. There is also a Soviet military base in the republic, which the Americans have already used. The events of recent months have shown that, despite the Russian-Georgian war, Uzbekistan is not worried about Russia making any abrupt moves. American analysts are taking particular note of this fact.

At present, Uzbekistan is potentially growing in importance for the U.S. It provides the shortest and most reliable routes for shipping cargo. But here too the U.S. is showing a certain amount of caution, not convinced that the Uzbek side will act as predicted in any given situation. In principle, the Uzbek and U.S. presidents have still not managed to establish a stable and reliable dialog and personal contacts, but they intend to develop their relations further to the extent possible.

Washington is very well aware that Islam Karimov is unpredictable not only for the U.S., but also for the other leading world players in this region, Russia, China, and the EU countries. Since the Americans have decided to lay their Afghan route in the direction of the so-called Northern Corridor (through the territory of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan), Uzbekistan has become a key link in carrying out NATO's military operation.

In addition, the Americans have made the tactical decision to replace the Manas airbase with the Navoi aerodrome (with Tashkent's consent), the necessary reconstruction of which will be done by South Korean specialists. At present, the U.S. is using its runways for carrying out non-military shipments. In principle, the Uzbek leadership has also given the go-ahead to NATO's more intensive use of this route, even if the latter continues to take advantage of the Manas airbase.

It appears that Uzbek President Islam Karimov has recently been considering withdrawing from alliances with Russia—the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and CSTO. Uzbekistan's orientation toward the U.S. and the West might have an impact on the geopolitical balance of forces existing in the region (primarily undermining Russia's position) and launch the republic into the next round of the struggle for regional leadership.

In 2009, a warming trend was felt in the relations between the two states. In 2010, the U.S. offered to cooperate with Uzbekistan in programs to support the American troops in Afghanistan, and Tashkent offered Washington the services of the Navoi airport for supplying its troops. But experts believe that these moves cannot be classified as an ultimate change in Tashkent's geopolitical orientation. The matter more likely concerns a tactical move by Islam Karimov, who finds it more beneficial to engage in closer cooperation with the EU and U.S.

At the end of January 2010, after the first round of Uzbek-American political consultations (they were initiated by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake, who visited Tashkent in October 2009), Islam Karimov signed a Cooperation Plan with the U.S. for 2010 that envisages interaction in the political, social, and economic spheres, as well as in security matters.

The paragraph that concerns cooperation in security calls for organizing training and retraining of Uzbekistan's officers (study courses and training sessions) at the U.S.'s leading military education institutions, including within the framework of the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET).

In addition to ensuring security of borders and combating the spread of terrorism, the sides will cooperate within the Foreign Military Financing and Excess Defense Articles Transfer programs. Moreover, Uzbekistan and the U.S. will exchange information and undertake corresponding measures to prevent threats associated with the transit of non-military shipments through the Northern Distribution Network (NDN). There are also plans to join forces to build the Khairaton–Mazari-Sharif railroad.

Uzbek companies have already built 11 bridges along the Mazari-Sharif–Kabul route and are finishing the construction of a 275-mile high-voltage transmission line capable of transmitting 150 MW of electricity from Termez to Kabul. During the second half of the year, there were plans to carry out a special undertaking with the Atlantic Council to implement Uzbekistan's regional security initiatives and create a "6+3" Contact Group for Afghanistan under the auspices of the U.N. Implementing various projects in agriculture, industry, and power engineering have also been included in the cooperation plan.

In the economic sphere, the U.S. has plans to increase assistance to Uzbekistan to modernize its irrigation systems, restore degraded land, and use new technology to raise the harvest yield of farm crops. It should be noted that the main reason for the foreign policy rapprochement between Islam Karimov's government and the Obama Administration is the Trans-Afghan Transport Corridor project, which will give Uzbekistan access to the ports of the Indian Ocean.

At present, Uzbekistan is emphasizing its key role in peaceful settlement of the situation in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the republic has no intentions of becoming a U.S. vassal. The Uzbeks are pragmatically prompting American representatives to cooperate, while keeping a reasonable distance.

It should also be noted that Washington is worried about Tashkent becoming too involved in the ongoing ethnic conflict in South Kyrgyzstan with the aim of helping its fellow countrymen and preventing export of the revolution to Uzbekistan. At the same time, in the event of large-scale destabilization of the

region, the U.S. is not excluding Tashkent's more active role as the most influence military force in the Ferghana Valley.

### *The U.S. and Turkmenistan*

As Western observers note, Turkmenistan has recently become a new arena of rivalry between Russia and the U.S. in the CA region. The matter primarily concerns the fight over the direction of the main gas pipeline (meaning the competition between Nabucco and the Caspian pipeline). Moreover, there is competition over the training of servicemen and delivery of hardware. Russia is still trying to draw Turkmenistan into military relations by means of its participation in the Joint CIS Air Defense System, for example.

In turn, the U.S. is continuing to show an interest in establishing its air bases in Turkmenistan, the territory of which, being a transportation-transit corridor, is important for continuing the coalition operation in Afghanistan.

By increasing its cooperation with Turkmenistan, the U.S. is guided not only by its own interests, but is primarily trying to ensure Europe's energy security. For this purpose, American companies intend to increase their participation in developing Turkmen fields. In March of this year, an International Business Forum on the problems of hydrocarbon production in Turkmenistan was held in Ashgabad, which promoted further strengthening of economic contacts between the two countries.

American analysts believe (drawing a parallel with Georgia) that Turkmenistan's geographic location makes it possible for it to break away from Russia owing to the following circumstances:

- Turkmenistan does not border on Russia (moreover, most of its population is concentrated in the far south of the country, that is, as far away as possible from Russia).
- The country has a border with one of the major regional powers - Iran.
- The infrastructure that joins Turkmenistan with Russia passes through two states.
- Russia depends on the export of Turkmen gas (and not vice versa), which greatly complicates its attempts to strengthen its influence in the republic.

Turkmenistan will be able to play one of the main roles in implementing America's plans, which envisage building new routes for making deliveries to Afghanistan without passing through Russia. But it will be very difficult to ship cargo and personnel by rail from Turkey through Georgia and Azerbaijan and then send them across the Caspian Sea to a Turkmen port and on by land to Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, Turkmenistan is not showing any particular desire to establish closer ties with the U.S. The situation may change only if personal contact can be established between the presidents of the two countries. In this respect, it should be noted that Turkmenistan's new president, Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov, has shown himself to be quite active in foreign policy, visiting NATO headquarters in

Brussels for the first time, where the sides agreed to intensify relations in several key spheres.

The Pentagon continues to hope that cooperation will develop with Ashgabad. In June 2008, Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Vice Admiral Kevin J. Cosgriff and Rear Admiral William Gortney visited Ashgabad where they met with the republic's Defense Minister and Head of the State Border Service. But Turkmenistan's leadership has never taken any decisive steps toward establishing military cooperation with the U.S., since it is still probably worried about preserving its power.

Turkmenistan is of interest to the U.S. not only because it has a common border with Afghanistan, but also because there are abandoned military facilities in its territory not far from the Afghan border which could be a potential replacement for the Manas base. However, Ashgabad still does not fully trust the West and is not entering any transactions with it (in 2008, some voiced the opinion that the West might have been involved in the attempted coup). The U.S. and EU hope that under the current leader Ashgabad will become much more pro-Western oriented and will develop the European vector in its foreign policy.

As before, the West has its sights set on reorienting the gas flows from Turkmenistan to Europe and making this republic less dependent on the pipelines that pass through Russian territory. Special U.S. State Department Envoy Richard Morningstar, who regularly visits Ashgabad, has repeatedly tried to convince the Turkmen president of the importance of partnership with Washington, primarily in the energy sphere (he cites energy cooperation between the U.S. and Kazakhstan as an example).

The American side repeatedly emphasizes that the more actively the Turkmen leadership permits U.S. companies to enter the republic, the more intensively the political and military ties between the two states will develop. The Afghan coalition operation and Turkmenistan's indirect participation in it (meaning rendering the NATO troops all kinds of transit and supply services) will make it possible for the republic to count on increasing business and investment partnership with the U.S.

The Turkmen leadership asked the EU to examine the possibility of gas delivery from Turkmenistan to Europe through Iran (using the recently built gas pipeline from Dovletabad, which has a throughput capacity of 12 bcm of gas a year), bypassing Azerbaijan, but the U.S. was categorically against such an alternative.

### *The U.S. and Tajikistan*

A new round in the U.S.'s political activity in Tajikistan began after former ambassador to the U.S. Khamrokhon Zarifi was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the republic in December 2006. This showed Dushanbe's willingness to step up bilateral cooperation.

In May 2007, NATO made a decision to increase the transit of shipments through Tajikistan (for the ongoing military campaign of the coalition forces in

Afghanistan). In so doing, Russia was assured that there was no intention of increasing the actual size of the North Atlantic Alliance's contingent in Tajikistan. NATO representative Robert Simmons, who visited Dushanbe in May 2007, took part in this discussion.

With respect to enlargement of the Afghan operation, Tajikistan could essentially become the U.S.'s main partner and ally in CA. It should be noted that cooperation between Washington and Dushanbe has become much more active recently, although the Tajik side has still not made any specific statements that make it possible for the U.S. to regard Emomali Rakhmon as a reliable and predictable partner.

By the time the Americans made it understood that they were open to talks with all interested CA countries on matters of transit of military and non-military shipments, as well as creating temporary bases, the Tajik leadership had expressed its clear dissatisfaction with Russia's policy regarding the already long planned building of the Rogun Hydropower Plant.

The U.S. has long stopped criticizing Emomali Rakhmon's domestic policy; it prefers to wait until it becomes clear how events will further develop around the coalition forces' Afghan mission. Nor should we forget that at the current stage Tajikistan is important for the U.S. not as a target of beneficial economic investments, but as a strategic springboard against the Taliban in Afghanistan. And whether Tajikistan becomes one of the U.S.'s new partners in CA (including the possible deployment of military bases in the republic) will depend on how cooperation between Washington and Dushanbe develops in the future.

The U.S. has already been rendering Tajikistan significant economic aid; for example, two bridges were built across the border river Panj, as well as two other bridges linking the republic with Afghanistan. For Tajikistan, which has long been in the grips of a transportation blockade imposed by Uzbekistan, direct access to the shores of the Indian ocean (via Afghanistan) is of immense importance.

The situation currently developing in cooperation between the U.S. and Tajikistan is radically changing, since bringing the Afghan operation to its logical conclusion is one of the foreign policy priorities of the Obama Administration. As of today, the Americans can offer this kind of expanded cooperation (including the creation of U.S. military bases) to any of the CA states. Dushanbe has the opportunity to make its support of the Afghan campaign of the coalition forces hinge on economic projects that are beneficial to it.

The U.S. has been offering the Tajik leadership the most diverse assistance, and Dushanbe, which has very scanty financial resources, has been unable to refuse it. At the present stage, the total amount of money America has allotted to Tajikistan already tops \$1 billion, and this figure could essentially increase in the future. Tajikistan has quite a good opportunity for suggesting that the U.S. deploy stations in its territory for servicing the troops participating in the operation in Afghanistan (at least), which means striking while the iron is hot.

In addition to building new bridges and rendering financial support in implementing aid programs in various spheres, it might be possible to interest the U.S. in issuing a loan for building the Rogun Hydropower Plant already

mentioned, as well as other hydropower facilities. It goes without saying that in this case the Americans will try not to simply allot certain funds, but to invest them in the form of technology and equipment.

In order to safeguard itself against Afghan instability and implement projects to build energy facilities, Tajikistan will have to make non-standard political decisions. After intensification of the financial crisis and change in the administration in the White House, the U.S. tried to probe the possibility of further increasing its influence in the CA region. This was related to enlargement of the military operation in Afghanistan.

In mid-November 2008, U.S. State Department Representative George Krol visited Dushanbe. At a meeting with the President of Tajikistan, he said that the change in the American administration would in no way influence Washington's policy regarding CA, which was extremely important for stability throughout the whole of the Asian continent. George Krol assured Emomali Rakhmon that the world crisis would not have an effect on the amount of financial aid to the region's countries.

The U.S. positively evaluates the measures undertaken by President Emomali Rakhmon to ensure stability in the republic. They include endowing the security service with special authorities for opposing Islamic fundamentalists and applying repressive measures against instructors of underground madrasahs suspected of proselytism.

It should be noted that the republic considers itself to be one of Russia's most devoted allies. Tajikistan has never had American military bases in its territory and has not advanced military cooperation with NATO, while all proposals regarding cooperation are primarily aimed at Moscow. Moreover, Russia has a good chance of winning in the military rivalry for influence in Tajikistan. It has two military bases in the republic, and also arms and trains Tajik servicemen. At the same time, according to several experts, Tajikistan is regarded as the most pro-Western state in the region, despite Moscow's attempts to put pressure on Emomali Rakhmon.

Relations with Russia are still one of Tajikistan's foreign policy priorities. But both sides are well aware that Russia far from always shows an economic interest in implementing a given joint project and frequently does not have enough financial resources to carry it out. This situation could tip the scales in favor of the U.S. and China (with its multi-billion investments) and turn Russia into just another regional player.

At the beginning of February 2010, bilateral political consultations were held in Washington between Tajikistan and the U.S., during which the sides intended to examine issues concerning the political-economic situation in the region, implementation of hydropower and transportation projects, as well as the situation in Afghanistan.

The Tajik authorities are willing to ask the U.S. to invest in various branches of the country's economy, primarily in power engineering. Dushanbe is perfectly aware that its overseas partners might be interested in those projects that are in one way or another related to Afghanistan. According to experts, tired of waiting for

Moscow to provide the assistance it needs, Tajikistan is turning its sights to Washington.

According to some analysts, in the context of the difficult economic situation in Tajikistan, President Rakhmon is left with increasingly fewer opportunities for retaining control over the country. Dushanbe is worried about only one thing—where to get money from. Today, the U.S. and China (in contrast to the U.S., it is interested only in obtaining its own economic gain, without the political component) are the main sources of funding the republic needs; Russia has removed itself from the picture, while the EU is issuing small loans and grants that cannot have a significant influence on the domestic political and economic situation in the country.

The U.S. is working in Tajikistan in keeping with the traditional pattern: it is issuing grants to develop civil society institutions, carry out reforms of the self-government structure, and support the public activity of politicians. In addition, the republic is receiving funds for protecting and equipping the border, as well as for fighting drug trafficking. However, the amounts allotted show that this is nothing more than a surreptitious way to line the bureaucrats' pockets.

The cooling off in relations between Tajikistan and Russia suits Washington to a tee, although the U.S. is not ready to render large-scale aid to Dushanbe. On the other hand, the American administration, which values the republic strategically for its proximity to Afghanistan, is worried about the rapprochement between Dushanbe and Iran, as well as China's growing influence and economic presence in Tajikistan.

Development of Tajikistan's military cooperation with the U.S. consists of several aspects, one of which is creating a camp not far from Dushanbe for training Tajik servicemen, who until now have been undergoing training at Russian military centers.

Since denunciation of the contract between Kyrgyzstan and the U.S. on the Manas air base, Washington has been looking at the Aini aerodrome (it was modernized with the participation of specialists from the Indian Defense Ministry) as an alternative base for using Tajikistan's air and land transit corridors. In addition, the White House administration is still considering the possibility of a U.S. military operation against Iran.

So the U.S. will continue asking Tajikistan to provide it with exclusive rental rights to the Aini aerodrome or its joint use. At the same time, efforts will be made to resolve questions regarding the financing of a whole series of economic projects (in power engineering and transportation) in the republic, including those in which China is currently investing. It should be noted that the Tajik leadership is counting precisely on this aspect of possible aid from the U.S. So until the Afghan campaign of the coalition forces is over, the Americans will continue to intensify their presence in Tajikistan too.



The Obama Administration is largely pursuing the Central Asian policy begun by its predecessors, any adjustments, as a rule, being related to abrupt changes in the current situation. The main components of this strategy are intensifying the U.S.'s influence on the CA countries (from the point of view of the Afghanistan problem), moderate support of nongovernmental organizations, use of symbolic rhetoric on human rights, support of pipeline projects that bypass Russia and Iran, activation of cooperation in the military sphere, and emphasis on cooperation with Kazakhstan beyond the bilateral framework.

Today, Barack Obama's policy in CA focuses on caution and taking Russia's interests into account. In the future, we should expect an increase in Washington's concern about the strengthening of China's and Iran's positions in the region. It is entirely possible that this factor in particular will bring the U.S. and Russia closer together.

Barack Obama's election as U.S. president was accompanied by loud statements on foreign policy issues, including the future of American policy in Afghanistan; the Great Game entered another qualitatively new round in its development. It was announced that Washington's foreign policy would focus on stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan. This envisaged reversing the negative trends existing in this country and completing the building of a democratic society there. But no new real proposals for resolving the Afghan question were made.

So the U.S.'s "new" Afghan policy is based on the traditional strong-arm approach that consists of increasing the military contingent and intensifying combat action to deal the final blow that will defeat the Taliban movement.

One of the unpleasant surprises for the White House was the shift in accent in the Taliban's military strategy, which began to pay more attention to targeted action that interfered with the delivery of military shipments, food, and fuel and lubricants for the coalition forces in Afghanistan. The main roads that link Kabul with other regions of the country and Pakistan were slowly but surely blocked. The Pakistani route took the main brunt of the Taliban strike.

The fact that the Manas military base will probably be closed is in full keeping with Russia's interests. This event would help it to increase its influence in the CA region and resolve several problems existing in relations with the U.S. in its favor.

It can be presumed that one of the objectives for stepping up the decision to close the Manas military base immediately after Barack Obama's election as president was the desire to deprive the new head of the White House with the opportunity of continuing George Bush's policy regarding Russia.

From the viewpoint of long-term security and geopolitical leadership, closing the Manas base has both its pluses and minuses for Russia; this event will perceptibly increase its geopolitical opportunities, but will nevertheless create a direct threat to its security from Afghanistan. The thing is that the Taliban's stronger position openly challenges CA's stability, and the problems with delivering supplies to the Western forces may have a negative effect on their

security, which will have negative consequences for the territories bordering on Afghanistan, including Russia.

With this in mind, Moscow offered its alternative for supplying the American troops in Afghanistan, which envisaged transit of strategic cargo. This will allow Russia to solve two strategic tasks. On the one hand, the American troops in Afghanistan will be provided with uninterrupted deliveries of supplies, while on the other (against the background of the unreliable routes through Pakistan), the Kremlin is essentially monopolizing the delivery of shipments to the NATO forces, which makes it possible for it to put pressure on the Americans.

The White House was unlikely to bargain with the Kremlin until Barack Obama reinforced his negotiating position. It appears that several alternatives exist at present for fortifying the U.S.'s position, whereby each of them presents quite a complicated task:

- Scaling down the military confrontation in Afghanistan as soon as possible (which will make deploying large contingents in this country unnecessary);
- Returning the Manas air base;
- Finding an alternative route through Russia as quickly as possible.

All of Afghanistan's neighbors (apart from Turkmenistan) have the status of member or observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO); therefore use of this format for discussing not only the Afghan problem, but also developing the organization's independent position and policy is very acceptable.

But keeping in mind the events in XUAR in 2009, it is very likely that China, which is pursuing an anti-American policy, will put pressure on the SCO participants. Russia may steer a course toward increasing its influence in China (by strengthening economic cooperation and increasing aid to this country). This development of the situation could lead to greater cooperation between the U.S. and the Central Asian countries on international security, stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, joint protection of the borders, holding regular military exercises under the NATO aegis, and combating various global threats.

## **6. The EU and Central Asia: *Préhistoire***

We have issued quite a few articles on European Union's strategy in Central Asia.<sup>133</sup> My colleagues have also written a lot about European policy in Central

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<sup>133</sup> See, e.g., Laumulin, M. *Die EU als Modell für die zentralasiatische Integration?* Discussion Paper C-29. - Bonn: ZEI, 1999. - 57 S. *Id. Strategic Interests of the European Union and Central Asia, the Kazakhstan-Spectrum*. No 4 (1999), pp. 66-96. *Id. Kazakhstan and the West: Relations during the 1990s in Retrospect. Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). No 2 (2000), pp. 38-63. *Id. The EU as New Geopolitical Force: the Problems of European and International Security, the Kazakhstan-Spectrum*. (Almaty). No 1, pp. 63-69; No 2 (2001), pp. 46-55. *Id. Central Asia and the European Union. Central Asia: the Gathering Storm*. Ed. by Boris Rumer. Armonk, New York, London: M.E.Scharpe, 2002, pp. 208-245. *Id. The EU Strategy in Central Asia: Geopolitics and Security. European Dialogue* (Almaty, Kazakh State University). No 3. 2002, pp.17-26; No 4. 2002, pp. 17-24. *Id. Central Asia and the West: the*

Asia. The Kazakh National University, named after Al-Farabi (in Almaty), has set up a group of dedicated researchers who study the European Union and its policy in Central Asia.<sup>134</sup> It should be also mentioned that these researchers have quite a positive attitude towards the EU. The majority of Kazakhstan's political analysts (similar to representatives of other Central Asian nations) traditionally view the EU as a positive geopolitical factor, and an example of economic success and effective regional integration. Attitudes towards the EU were unbiased: the EU did not have a burden of imperial history (as Russia), did not act aggressively and arrogantly (as the USA), and was not a source of potential threats (as China) or actual threats (as the Islamic world) threats. In short, regional activists had a very high opinion of the EU, in particular in the 1990s.

These feelings were encouraged by the EU's actions, including abundant economic assistance, and various large-scale programs like TACIS, and also by the geopolitical statements, announced by Brussels that claimed that Europe considered Central Asia and the Caspian region as areas of its strategic interests. This was taken to mean: "Europe will never leave us". Since the summits in Maastricht and Nice, the Central Asian observers have regarded the EU as a new and benevolent geopolitical force. However in the new century, negative attitudes towards Brussels and disappointment over the EU policy and its efficiency started to simmer. In 2005, when Eastern European countries—who provided active support to the "color revolutions"—joined the EU, the negative attitude grew to annoyance. In addition, the EU got involved in geopolitical games concerning pipeline routes from the Caspian region, an action which was strongly disapproved by local observers.

Consequently, the EU was considered an adversary of former Soviet nations' reintegration due to its policy aimed at post Soviet area segregation in 2000<sup>135</sup> (paradoxically, the EU always advocated intensification of regional integration within Central Asia). "Double standards" in EU's policy (though they are much milder compared to those of US' policy) and other signs of "western solidarity" were also strongly criticized. It should be mentioned that Central Asia always recognized the difference between the motives of the West European nations and

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*Geopolitical Impact on the Regional Security*. – Almaty: KazISS, 2004. – 219 p. *Id. The Geopolitics of the 21st Century in Central Asia*. – Almaty: KazISS, 2007. – 281 p.

<sup>134</sup> See, e.g., Ibrashev, Zh., Yensebayeva, E. *The European Union in Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy*. – Almaty: Domino, 2001. – 369 p. *Central Asia in EU's Foreign Policy*. – Almaty: Domino, 2004. – 248 p.

<sup>135</sup> Reintegration of the former USSR is the most complicated, painful and concealed problem in the CIS. According to opinion polls conducted in all former Soviet states (except the Baltic states) in the 1990s and the 2000s, a considerable part (from 40% to 80%) of population admits reestablishment of the union let it be in other forms (confederation or federation) and in a more democratic way, i.e. returning to the *status quo* of 1990. However, there is a huge gap between this mood and local elite's intentions, who publicly stand for integration but in reality fear of losing their regained privileges, and political and economic powers. Besides, Russia's policy sometimes is not very attractive in terms of joining. Under these circumstances, the EU was taken as an example of successful historic experiment where political independence was preserved in a strong economic union.

so called New Europe. This is our own understanding of the Central Asian response to EU policy. Nevertheless, we will shortly describe some major problems related to the evolution of the EU strategy in the region.<sup>136</sup>

### *EU Strategic Interests in Central Asia*

During the 1990s, the EU policy in Central Asia was mostly formed during a new geopolitical situation, that followed the Warsaw Pact disestablishment and the USSR collapse in 1991. The EU was the largest economic and geopolitical centre proximate to this unstable eastern region. In these new circumstances, the EU and the West undertook expedient measures to extend their influence over the former Soviet states. First of all, these measures included the extension of NATO and the EU eastwards.

The EU also implemented extraordinary measures to stabilize the CIS: large-scale economic assistance (TACIS) and increasing OSCE influence in the region. At the same time, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a unique situation, which allowed the EU to play a new geopolitical role. On the other hand, the extension of European influence over Central Asia was limited by a range of the following factors: providing substantial assistance to Central and Eastern European nations consumed the bulk of EU funds; conflicts in South East Europe; NATO's extension; US' active expansion in the Caspian region; and the struggle between the USA, Russia, China and the Islamic world for influence in Central Asia.

In fact, Europe did not have a definite strategy in Central Asia during the 2000s. At the same time, the EU goals related to Central Asia were clear from the very beginning, but the Union did not have instruments to reach them.

Russia holds a special place in the development of European strategy in Central Asia. Unlike the USA, Brussels clearly understood the legitimacy of Moscow's interests in the region and was ready to acknowledge Russia's specific role in security, economy and energy. Europe was much more concerned about China's strategy, which could provoke Russian-Chinese rivalry in the region. The EU had doubts regarding economic aspects of the project for a pipeline construction from West Kazakhstan to China. On the whole, the EU claimed that Kazakhstan would benefit from pipeline diversification as this would largely increase its independence.

Between 2007 and 2008, the EU developed a strategy towards Eurasia (Eastern Europe, Russia, the CIS and Central Asia), which mainly focused on environmental and energy issues. However, this strategy requires the USA to provide geopolitical support.

The consequences of climatic change are expected to severely hit the Arctic region, Africa, the Near East, and South and Central Asia. Resolving problems

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<sup>136</sup> Laumulin M.T. The EU and Central Asia: the View from Central Asia // Central Asia's Affairs (Almaty, KazISS). 2009. No 4., pp.20-24. idem. Central Asia in the foreign Policy Strategy of the European Union // New Europe (Brussels). Special Report: Kazakhstan. 2010. No 878, pp. 20-21.

related to joint use of water and energy resources would be the key factor of stability in Central Asia and would have a strong economic, environmental and political effect both in the region and worldwide.

According to a paper named *the EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership* adopted on 31st May 2007 which covers the period from 2007 to 2013, the EU set forth the following goals for the region:

- 1) To ensure stability and security;
- 2) To maintain poverty reduction and to increase the standards of living within the Millennium Development Goals; and
- 3) To promote cooperation both among the Central Asian states, and between these nations and the EU, especially in energy supply, transport, higher education and environmental protection.

Primarily, the paper states that Central Asia traditionally brings Europe and Asia together and that Central Asian states adhere to the OSCE (i.e. become close to the European political space). The EU and Central Asia have common goals such as maintaining stability and achieving prosperity. It is also important that the EU intends to hold constructive dialogue with regional organizations, in particular with the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Conference on Interaction and the Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC).

Russia continued providing its political support to the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and SPECA as non-local nations kept on strengthening their positions in the region, *inter alia* via the ECE. Russia fears that international participation (mainly of European countries, who would not be unbiased) in settlement of water and energy issues would mean an intervention into the most painful sphere of relations among the Central Asian states, closely related to the strategic economic and political development of the region and its stability. Participation by moderators with their political and economic influence in the Central Asian region can threaten Russia's investments in the development of water resources in upstream countries.

According to European experts, the vague framework of Brussels' interest in regional energy resources is the major drawback to the EU strategy in Central Asia. It is likely that the EU will abandon its policy of a passive player in favor of taking anticipatory measures. This move will inevitably influence the OSCE policy during Kazakhstan's chairmanship. In terms of security issues, the EU regards Central Asia as a part of a large geostrategic object, which includes Russia and South Asia, and some global problems, for example terrorism, proliferation of mass destruction weapons, international crime and drug trafficking.

Therefore, the European policy is expected to become more active in the Caucasus and in Central Asia. The EU aims to diversify its oil and gas sources using energy from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea. The EU also aim to cut drug trafficking routes from Afghanistan via the Central Asian states, and to fight against organized crime and international terrorism.

Still, it is not clear to what extent the EU will exert its geopolitical influence on Kazakhstan and Central Asia given growing Chinese influence, Russia's attempts to regain control and the possibility of the USA suspending its activities in the region.

### *New EU Strategy: the German Project*

The European policy (the European policy in general, not only in Central Asia) is mainly defined by Europe's Big Three (the United Kingdom, France and Germany) as opposed to the EU institutions in Brussels.

The United Kingdom has significant interests in Central Asia. These interests stand apart from European common interests and are oriented towards the USA in terms of geopolitical strategy. First of all they revolve around the oil and gas sector and are influenced by some economic and political factors. These factors include European strategic interests in the region, the presence of European military forces in Afghanistan, the joint strategy of the USA and Great Britain in the Caspian Sea, NATO's strategy towards the former Soviet states, UK policy on Russia, etc. Relations between the UK and Kazakhstan are based on three aspects: oil, security and education. Obviously, the UK has particular interests in Central Asia and can follow its own policy in the region independently. However, London would hardly contradict the European common policy regarding the USA, NATO or EU.

The French policy towards Central Asia is closely related to the European common policy. Its major tasks include promoting economic and democratic reforms, supporting the construction of East-West transportation infrastructure (in particular, an oil and gas pipeline network heading European markets), and the coordination of EU nations' interests within the framework of the EU common foreign policy. Paris also strives to promote French culture. Economic relations between France and Central Asia remain undeveloped, so a huge potential is yet to be uncovered. Initially, France did not have any specific strategy regarding the region. It was only 30 years after the region gained independence that French experts and diplomats developed a more precise strategy.

It is a common belief among French experts that Europe should extend its influence in Central Asia. France highlights three key factors that would influence Central Asian development: openness to the Muslim world, openness to the Asian world, and pursuing access to the global market of natural resources.

German policy towards Central Asia appears different for its so-called regional approach. Berlin takes Kazakhstan and other Central Asian nations together, as if they have common geographic and market conditions. It is possible to draw a parallel between German policy and the EU common policy. German interests in the region include the German ethnic group (dwelling mainly in Kazakhstan), reforms aimed at implanting the German model of social and market development, the expansion of German business, and regional resources.

Berlin influenced the EU common strategy towards Central Asia on several occasions. In 2000, the German experts developed the Caspian Sea Stability Pact. In May of 2001, the German Foreign Ministry prepared the Schmilgen's

Memorandum introducing a conceptual understanding of EU strategy in Central Asia.

In 2007, Germany took over the EU presidency chair on a rotation basis. One of its priority tasks was reconsidering the EU policy in Central Asia. In June 2007, a new strategy--mainly developed by Germany--was offered for consideration by the EU Council. Experts from various parties, including Europe, the USA and Kazakhstan, believe that the EU must abandon its policy of a passive player in favor of taking anticipatory measures. Up to the present moment, the EU policy was a mere response to ongoing events. However, all anticipatory measures must be taken within a particular strategic plan.

Overall, experts claim that EU strategic tasks require the following measures to be taken:

- 1) The threat of Islamic radicalism should be taken seriously; therefore, support should be provided to Central Asian nations, Uzbekistan in particular, in order to fortify their law enforcement bodies and support reforms in their security systems;
- 2) More attention should be paid to Afghanistan and its role in regional economic development and security; transcontinental trade must develop more evenly in all nations, not only in Russia and Europe;
- 3) Turkey should be considered a link, which would allow Europe to exert influence on processes in Central Asia; cooperation with Ankara on these issues should be encouraged significantly;
- 4) Cooperation with reform advocates with local governments should be promoted; the EU program for inter-parliament co-operation must be developed further.

According to European politicians, stable democratic secular governments in Central Asia and the South Caucasus would form a security barrier protecting Europe from unstable Islamic regions. All in all, experts have different opinions about the importance of Central Asia to the EU. Nevertheless, European nations provide active support to their energy producing companies to ensure the stable supply of oil and gas from Central Asia.

### *Kazakhstan's Way to Europe and the OSCE*

In March 2008, Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev proposed the *Way to Europe* conceptual program during his annual Message. The message covered important issues in regards to Kazakhstan's position in the international arena and an outlook for its foreign policy. First, Kazakhstan was considered to be an important and powerful participant in the global energy security system. The President emphasized that this time investments would be attracted mainly from domestic sources. Second, Kazakhstan actively began taking measures to integrate into the world transport system, including the North-South and West-East directions.

As a result of these projects, Kazakhstan was expected to become an important participant in the future Eurasian continental transport network, which

would compete with transportations by sea that have dominated for five centuries. In addition, the President talked about the restoration of the Great Silk Road under new conditions. Kazakhstan continued accepting *oralmans*, ethnic Kazakhs from neighboring countries. This process implies further development of relations with nations housing large Kazakh ethnic groups. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan's priorities remained the same: to develop relations with Russia, China and the Central Asian states. Astana would continue its support to regional and international security organizations, including the CICA, SCO and CSTO.

Kazakhstan will not avoid cooperation with the USA, the EU and NATO, which are important players in terms of stability in Central Asia. In 2009, Kazakhstan will become an OSCE co-chair and in 2010 the nation will take over the OSCE chairmanship. The President's message differed from previous ones with the addition of a new proposal to develop the *Way to Europe* program. As before, Kazakhstan stayed among the members of the international coalition fighting against international terrorism and religious extremism. Mr Nazarbayev also mentioned that Kazakhstan's foreign policy was developing simultaneously with economic growth and consolidation of defense forces.

The President announced that within the next three years, Kazakhstan is expected to house the 3rd Congress of World Religions, the 3rd Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, to work closely with another two countries as the OSCE management for three years, and to hold chairmanship in the OSCE. The forthcoming chairmanship was regarded as an important issue in the national foreign policy.

Relations with the EU are a major priority in the foreign policy of Kazakhstan and the other former Soviet states.

The *Way to Europe* strategy has revealed Kazakhstan's geopolitical aspirations. Today, the EU is undergoing a profound transformation. The changes were brought about by the EU extension and the rotation of political leaders in the EU major nations.

The new strategic goals require the EU to reconsider relations with its eastern neighbors: Russia and the CIS. The new policy has not always been successful, as a new agreement on partnership with Russia has failed and the problems concerning the EU policy in respect of Ukraine, Byelorussia, some nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia remain unresolved.

Nevertheless, Russia is taken as the EU strategic partner, Ukraine (or 'second Turkey') as its potential partner in the far future, and Byelorussia as an arena for another color revolution. In terms of the European outskirts of Moldavia, Georgia and Armenia, the policy has not been defined clearly yet. The EU considers Azerbaijan and other nations of the Caspian region as its rear area for energy supplies. The EU strategic goal is to integrate the Russian and Eurasian raw materials into the EU economy.

The above factors have a significant influence on the methods used by the EU to achieve its strategic goals, and on the EU relations with other nations and regions, *inter alia* Central Asia.



The European neighborhood policy and the EU strategy towards Central Asia deserve careful attention. It is a well-known fact that Brussels, as well as Russia and the USA, takes active measures to consolidate its positions in Central Asia. The European strategy in Central Asia sets forth particular requirements regarding energy resources, their production, transportation, and the energy security of the EU. At the same time, this strategy provides the EU with opportunities to support democratization and protect human rights in the region. The new EU strategy for Central Asia perfectly secures the instruments necessary to exert influence over the former Soviet states.

It is obvious that Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the OSCE will be influenced by the EU factor. This problem has another aspect. The majority of the OSCE nations are members to the European Council, which focuses on the development of democratic institutions and the protection of human rights. The EC's standards are sometimes even more demanding than those of the OSCE. However, its activity concerning the above issues is not yet effective and poorly organized. Brussels preferred to implement its plans via the OSCE, allocating some 70% of its expenses for the projects related to the former Soviet nations.

In terms of Russia, Kazakhstan will have two tasks during its chairmanship. On one hand, Astana must restrain Moscow's destructive initiatives aimed to provoke confrontation inside the OSCE. On the other hand, considering the expediency of Russian policy and the obvious bias in OSCE activities, Kazakhstan could support the CIS initiatives aimed at sovereignty protection and preservation of solidarity among the former Soviet nations.

Kazakhstan had two years to get ready for the chairmanship, prepare proper background for implementing reforms in the OSCE and create conditions for confidence building measures between the European institutions and the CIS nations. Kazakhstan began exerting influence on the OSCE in 2008 during the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Kazakhstan's chairmanship can significantly contribute to building positive OSCE image in East Europe and the CIS countries.

In the near future, Kazakhstan's chairmanship will impede its foreign policy as a result of the following:

- The OSCE current problems can grow beyond the scope of common functions, goals and tasks of this organization;
- OSCE's programs in the former Soviet nations are connected (apart from domestic problems) with a wide range of relations with the EC, other European institutions, NATO and the USA; and
- Over recent years, European energy safety issues have become more acute; therefore they can be quite possibly included into the OSCE agenda.

The agenda for Kazakhstan's chairmanship could include the following issues:

- In terms of humanitarian issues, shifting OSCE's focus from democratization issues to the problems of cultural cooperation, interreligious concord and dialogue between civilizations seems to be expedient. Kazakhstan has some ideas to offer for OSCE's consideration;
- In terms of security, more attention should be paid to regional stability and related aspects, including terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal immigration.

At the same time, it is necessary to show diligence in issues related to regional conflicts and states with limited recognition;

- Linking the European and Asian security organizations (the OSCE and the CICA) can become a very promising measure. However, Kazakhstan should expect the EU to be either indifferent or giving a negative response to this idea. Nevertheless, the idea could resonate with some European politicians and it will show whether Europe is ready to develop co-operation in security issues; and
- By 2010, Kazakhstan, as the OSCE chair, will acquire the necessary instruments to develop dialogue between the OSCE and NATO on one hand, and the SCO, CSTO and CICA on the other. Astana could also initiate a new policy concerning the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) having held preliminary negotiations with Moscow.

Kazakhstan should also consider that Russia and the West are about to burst into confrontation over the OSCE. Russia has never put up with its defeat in the dispute about reforming the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

It will be particularly difficult for Astana holding chairmanship to voice OSCE criticism against Kazakhstan's allies and its CIS partners. In this case, Kazakhstan will have to tone down the wording and shift accents. Kazakhstan's main goal during its chairmanship would be increasing national power and improving its image in the international arena.

### *Unanimous Opinion on the EU Role in Central Asia*

In conclusion it would be useful to see how European experts estimate the EU experience in Central Asia. First of all we should mention *the EU Policy in Central Asia: Interests, Structure and Reform Options* by Alexander Warkotsch.<sup>137</sup> The author's conclusions are not optimistic in general. According to Mr Warkotsch, the EU hadn't achieved its strategic tasks put forth as early as in the 1990s: poverty was not liquidated, resistance to reforms was not broken down in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the situation concerning human rights and democracy remained unchanged, and the EU energy interests had not been secured. As for security issues, the EU went around in circles as well. Mr Warkotsch advises the EU to change its tactics in Central Asia in order to «regain trust.» In terms of security, the EU should act as a serious force holder rather than «a toothless tiger made of paper;» in terms of energy policy, Europe must build up more confidence; and in terms of democracy, a more realistic approach should be taken. Besides he believes that the EU should coordinate its strategy with other international participants in greater detail, in particular with NATO and the OSCE. Mr Warkotsch has unexpectedly gone beyond the Central Asian subject in his book. Obviously, the EU foreign policy, strategy and methods of their implementation are ineffective

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<sup>137</sup> Warkotsch, A. *Die Zentralasiatische Politik der Europäischen Union: Interessen, Strukturen und Reformoptionen*. – Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2006. – 253 S.

not only in Central Asia but in other regions as well. This is caused by the EU's structure, represented by a complicated geopolitical and geoeconomic mechanism deprived of a joint decision making center. Andrea Schmitz who used to specialize in the problems of opposition and the evolution of Central Asian domestic policies this time had published her opinion on relations between the EU and Central Asia. She believes that despite immense Russian and Chinese influence on Central Asia, the EU has sufficient space to counterbalance both regional superpowers.<sup>138</sup>

Therefore we can see that opinions of two different researchers coincide. Among US' experts, Frederick Starr, a professor at the Johns Hopkins University and founder of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, has similar opinion.<sup>139</sup> Some Russian specialists are also in the same mind.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, politicians of different countries tend to consider a new three-lateral approach of the US, Russia and China, which excludes Europe.<sup>141</sup> The above factor should trigger alarm bells among European politicians because it means that the EU loses its position as a strong geopolitical participant in Central Asia.

What are the reasons for such unanimity of views about the EU role in the region? The European, American, Russian and Kazakhstan's critics agree that the EU activity in Central Asia was insufficient at least during the last decade. They claim that the EU can--and must--play a more active role in the region. Nevertheless, everybody wants to see the EU influence expanding in the region for different reasons. Washington regards Europe as an additional and powerful source of investments in regional stability. Russia expects the EU to take a lead in the economic and technical modernization of the region in conjunction with Russia. In the beginning of this article, we mentioned that Kazakhstan's and Central Asian society had a mostly intuitive, but generally positive, attitude towards the EU and its policy.

While the issue of Central Asia's institutional statute becomes even more pressing, the Chinese experts have yet to express their opinion. It is still unclear whether Central Asia should be regarded as a part of the CIS, SCO or OSCE. However, European politicians should take the final decision. I agree with these critics who claim that lack of coordination among the policies of the EU nations is the major drawback that affects the common EU policy in Central Asia. We see Berlin's occasional efforts in formulating the EU's strategic interests, that are mainly based on the goals of Germany but served as the common interest of

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<sup>138</sup> Sapper, M., Weichhsel, V., Huterer, A. (Hrsg.) *Machtmosaik Zentralasien. Traditionen, Restriktionen, Aspirationen.* – Bonn: BPB, 2007. S. 327-338.

<sup>139</sup> See: Baran, Z., Starr, S.F., Cornell, S.E. *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU.* – Washington DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2006. - 57 p.

<sup>140</sup> Dalimov, R. *The EU and Central Asia: Outlook for Cooperation* // World Economy and International Relations (Moscow). 2007. No 11. pp. 81-84.

<sup>141</sup> Rumer, E., Trenin, D., Zhao Huasheng. *Central Asia. Views from Washington, Moscow and Beijing.* With an Introduction of Menon, R. – Armonk, New York, London: M.E.Sharp, 2007. – pp. VII+224.

Europe. Central Asia started to read the word «European» as «German» for a long time.

It is obvious that geopolitical and geoeconomic factors will have a crucial influence on the EU-Central Asia relations in the near future. These factors include the rotation of administration in the USA, an unclear outlook for the situation in Afghanistan, a cool down in relations between Russia and the West, the global economic recession, and the increased significance of energy resources and food security. These factors can produce either positive or negative influences on relations between Europe and Central Asia. The future of this complicated geopolitical situation will depend on the political will of its participants. Europe and Central Asia are obviously interested in each other. The project under consideration is another evidence of this interest.

The EU activity in Central Asia is expected to have a long-term effect due to the reasons stated below. The USA will provide the EU with geopolitical support because they regard the latter as an effective instrument for enforcing their common interests. China will have to suspend its large-scale communication and energy projects in the region due to new conditions and domestic problems. Russia, with its strong links with the EU, will not impede relations between Central Asia and Europe. Therefore, the EU is considered a main geopolitical force, which can make a significant contribution in Central Asian development and regional security.

## **7. The European Union is Readjusting Its Central Asian Strategy**

As soon as the Soviet Union fell apart, Central Asia, together with the rest of the post-Soviet expanse, became part of so-called political Europe, that is, it was drawn into the EU's sphere of interests on the strength of the OSCE membership of all the post-Soviet states.

The European Union's strategy and policy in Central Asia are not directly related to the region's military-strategic security, although they can indirectly affect it through European institutions such as the OSCE, the European Commission, the European Parliament, etc.; the policy of the European powers (the U.K., Germany, and France in particular); and NATO, the military-political institution that unites most of the EU countries.<sup>142</sup>

The EU is guided in its Central Asian policy by two very important considerations.

- First, as distinct from the U.S., China, and even Russia (which have no conceptual documents related to the region), the European Union is the only geopolitical actor that has a strategy outlined in detail in a document entitled The EU's Central Asia Strategy adopted in 2007, even though it has not yet shown its efficiency or produced any impressive results.

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<sup>142</sup> See: Laumulin M. The European Union is Readjusting Its Central Asian Strategy // Central Asia and Caucasus (Lulea, Sweden). 2011. № 4, pp. 30-45.

- Second, the European Union demonstrates its preference for “soft power” at the conceptual and practical levels as opposed to the use of force as a traditional geopolitical instrument. This is true of Brussels’ foreign policy in Central Asia and elsewhere.

The European political community is convinced that sustainable democratic and secular regimes in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus will create a security belt of sorts to protect Europe from the unstable regions of the Muslim world. On the whole, however, European political analysts have not yet decided whether the EU needs Central Asia and to what extent. The EU members, however, never hesitate to support their companies functioning in Central Asia (particularly in the energy sector) to ensure a steady flow of oil and gas from this fuel-rich region.<sup>143</sup>

### *EU Strategy in Central Asia: A Security Factor*

In the first half of 2007, when Germany assumed rotating chairmanship in the Council of Europe, Berlin was convinced that the EU’s strategy in Central Asia should be revised. In June 2007, the Council of Europe adopted a new EU Central Asian Strategy (drafted mainly by the Germans) which revealed with unprecedented clarity the pluses and minuses of European Central Asian policy.

The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership was drafted on 31 May, 2007 for 2007-2013 and specified the aims the European Union was prepared to pursue in the region:

- stability and prosperity for all countries;
- poverty reduction and higher living standards in the Millennium Development Goals context;
- regional cooperation among the Central Asian states and with the EU for the sake of interstate energy, transport, environment, and education initiatives.<sup>144</sup>

The European Union specified its strategic aims and practical tasks as follows:

- The threat of Islamic radicalism should be given serious attention while the region’s countries (Uzbekistan in particular) should receive assistance for strengthening their law-enforcement structures and radically reforming their security system.

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<sup>143</sup> I.V. Bolgova, *Politika ES v Zakavkazye i Tsen-tralnoy Azii. Istoki i stanovlenie*, Navona, Moscow, 2008, 184 pp; M.T. Laumulin, “Strategiia Evropeyskogo soiuza v Tsentralnoy Azii: osnovnye etapy i tseli,” *Kazakhstan v glo-balnykh protsessakh* (IMEP, Almaty), No. 2, 2009, pp. 72-85; D. Malysheva, “Tsentralnaia Azia i Evropeyskiy soyuz,” *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii* (IMEMO), No. 11, 2010, pp. 24-34; L.A. Salvagni, “Quel role pour l’Union européenne en Asie centrale?” *Le Courrier des Pays de l’Est*, No. 1057, 2006, pp. 17-29; S. Peyrouse, “Business and Trade Relationships between the EU and Central Asia,” EUCAM Working Paper, No. 1, June 2009, 16 pp.

<sup>144</sup> On the prehistory of the question see: B. Eshment, “Regionalnaia integratsia v Tsentralnoy Azii: vzgliad iz Evropy,” in: *Materialy 6-y Almatinskoy mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii po bezopasnosti*, KISI, Almaty, 2008, pp. 19-24.

Afghanistan and its role in the Central Asian economies and security should be carefully studied, while transcontinental trade should develop in all vectors (not only in the Russian and European vectors).

- Turkey should become a critically important connecting link to help Europe affect the processes underway in Central Asia, which means that cooperation with Ankara should be upgraded.

- Cooperation with the reformers in the Central Asian governments and parliaments should be strengthened.

European experts have come to the conclusion that the EU's Central Asian strategy might fall through; there is a more or less commonly shared opinion in Brussels that it is too early to assess its results: progress and mutual trust call for patience and time.<sup>145</sup>

In fact, the EU has reached none of the strategic aims it formulated back in the 1990s: it did not reduce poverty or overcome the opposition to the reforms, nor did it accomplish anything in the sphere of human rights and democracy. Its energy interests remain as vulnerable as ever.

No progress has been detected in the security sphere. European analysts are convinced that the time has come for the European Union to abandon its image of a "toothless paper tiger" and come forward as a serious force to be reckoned with. Europe should demonstrate more confidence in the energy sphere and more realism with respect to democracy.<sup>146</sup> It is more or less commonly believed that the EU should coordinate its strategy with the other international actors, such as NATO and the OSCE.<sup>147</sup>

This is happening because there is no coordinated conceptual approach to the EU's Central Asian strategy, at least at the level of the largest powers. With its own interests in mind (which Berlin presents as common European), Germany has tried more than once to formulate the EU's strategic aims and arrive at what looks like a coordinated policy.

In 2010, the leading EU experts in Central Asia supplied two types of recommendations: general strategic and more specific technical.<sup>148</sup>

The strategic aspects of EU-Central Asia cooperation included the following:

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<sup>145</sup> See: Strategiiia Evropeyskogo soiuza dlia Tsentralnoy Azii. Tri goda spustia, FFE, Almaty, 2010, 243 pp. (see also this publication in German: EU-Strategie für Zentralasien. Drei Jahre danach, FES, Almaty, 2010. 243 S.).

<sup>146</sup> See: Sh. Akiner, "Partnership Not Mentorship: Re-appraising the Relationship between the EU and the Central Asian States," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm), Vol. 8, No. 4, 2010, pp. 17-40; N. de Pedro, "The EU in Central Asia: Incentives and Constraints for Greater Engagement," in: *Great Powers and Regional Integration in Central Asia: A Local Perspective*, ed. by M. Esteban, N. de Pedro, Exlibris Ediciones, Madrid, 2009, pp. 113-135.

<sup>147</sup> See: K. Isaev, "Current Issues of Interaction between the EU and Central Asian Countries in the Context of Kazakhstan's Chairing of the OSCE," *Central Asia's Affairs* (KazISS, Almaty), No. 2, 2009, pp. 3-4.

<sup>148</sup> See: M. Emerson, J. Boonstra, N. Hasanova, M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, *Into Eurasia: Monitoring the EU's Central Asia Strategy*. Report of the EUCAM Project, CEPS, Brussels; FRIDE, Madrid, 2010, III+143 pp.

- A possible re-vamping of the strategy would be more appropriate in 2011 when the new External Action Service is in place.

- The EU has some clear security concerns with respect to Central Asia: energy supply security through diversification of sources and linkages with Afghanistan. Contrary to the opinion of some experts, this does not look like a conflict of interests vs. values as long as legitimate interests are pursued in a principled manner. However, Central Asia presents a real challenge in this regard, since the present state of governance in the region is far removed from these principles. This presents the EU with a choice: either to pass over its preferred principles in this case or to make a special effort to apply its principled approach in ways that are realistically operational in this difficult political environment.

- The case of Kazakhstan deserves special mention as a key country in the region that has chosen to respond to the EU's strategy by adopting its own "Path to Europe." Coupled with Kazakhstan's new chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010, this European orientation as part of a multivectoral foreign policy presents an important opportunity for political and economic convergence with Europe, including deepening relations with the Council of Europe. These strategic directions have been announced, and the EU has also responded by agreeing to work toward a new treaty-level agreement with Kazakhstan. If this succeeds, it could have a positive effect throughout Central Asia, which would be an achievement of strategic importance. In particular, it would promote a breakthrough in the EU's relations with Uzbekistan.

- The EU's concept of regional cooperation in Central Asia needs revision. However, it should not be overemphasized with respect to the opportunities for regional cooperation with neighbors external to the region (Eastern Europe, Russia, China, and South Asia) or in those areas where the EU has several major interests (e.g. in energy, transport, and security). The EU is working on this wider regionalism with projects to link Central Asia to its Eastern Partnership initiative. Such elements of wider regional cooperation could help disenclave the landlocked Central Asia, and for the EU contribute to a wider "EurAsia strategy" overarching and going beyond the several regional dimensions of the EU's present neighborhood policy. This wider Eurasian dimension, involving all the major powers of the Eurasian land-mass, would fit in with the increasingly evident need to channel the new global multipolar dynamics into an ordered world system. These considerations go well beyond concern for Central Asia alone, but the region is inevitably going to be at the crossroads of many issues of political and economic significance.

The technical aspects are as follows:

- The EU intends to increase its diplomatic presence in the region, and with the impetus of the new Lisbon Treaty provisions this needs to be done decisively, with adequately staffed EU delegations in all five states.

- A structured process has been set up in the human rights field at both the official and the civil society levels. But this needs to be carefully upgraded, without which it risks becoming little more than a token routine of political convenience for both sides. The interaction between the official dialog and civil

society seminars could be strengthened, with the civil society seminars invited to undertake regular year-to-year monitoring of progress in the human rights field.

- The full development of the rule of law initiative is important, especially given the absence of an explicit democratization agenda with respect to Central Asia.

- The sanctions on Uzbekistan after the Andijan events in 2005 did not yield substantial change and have now been lifted for the sake of engaging with the regime. If the EU should resort to such measures in Central Asia (or elsewhere) in the future, it needs to be disciplined and unified. And when the decision is made it should be loyally backed by all, otherwise the operation and the EU itself will be discredited.

However, the Commission should now evaluate the first results of the Erasmus Mundus program in the region, which does not seem to be adequately adapted to Central Asian realities, and undertake a broader education strategy review for Central Asia. Consideration should be given to other projects with a view to a clearer branding of the EU as promoter of a cluster of high-quality and independent education and research institutions, as well as a supporter of reform of the basic education systems.

- In the area of water management and hydroelectric power, there is a robust case for major investment in upstream states that could also bring huge benefits for downstream states, and avert the real risks of interstate conflict over water. The European Union, which has failed to clearly outline its position in relation to water conflicts and the methods of their settlement, should be more explicit about the desirability of big investments in the projects from which the local countries will profit to the greatest extent.<sup>149</sup>

- The EU could help to establish a technical-economic case for investment in increased hydroelectric capacity that could offer benefits to both upstream and downstream states, outline the mechanisms for regional cooperation that would assure equitable implementation, and raise these issues at the top political level in alliance with major multilateral organizations.

- The EU should make available a special trust fund of grant resources for this purpose to enable the World Bank to draw up scenarios and cost-benefit calculations in collaboration with the U.N. Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Asian Development Bank. In any case there is also a large agenda for 'no regrets' investments in improved water management, modest-sized hydroelectric facilities, and solar and wind renewable energies.

In the field of energy policy, the EU is conducting wide-ranging energy dialogs with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The EU has a nonbinding memorandum of understanding with Turkmenistan that envisages the purchase of gas, and this would fit into its Southern Corridor concept of diversifying gas supplies with a trans-Caspian link. While the EU has been debating various pipeline options for years, China has acted with great speed in constructing oil and

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<sup>149</sup> See: M. Kramer, *Integrirovannoe i orientirovannoe na ustoychivost upravlenie vodnymi resursami. Potentsial sotrudnichestva mezhdru Germaniyei i Tsentralnoy Aziei*, Idan, Almaty, 2010, 332 pp.



gas pipelines across Central Asia. This is a classic example of how the EU and its member states have to negotiate and decide faster on elements of a common energy policy, or see the world leave it behind.<sup>150</sup>

- In the field of transport, the EU's present corridors and axes that extend east through or around Central Asia have become in part obsolete and need to connect with the new trans-continental Eurasian realities, East-West and North-South. The EU, and in particular the Commission's transport department and the European Investment Bank, should communicate to the CAREC program of the Asian Development Bank their willingness to enter into discussions to optimize the coherence of EU and CAREC transport corridors that do or could link Central and Eastern Asia with Europe. In addition there is a new U.S. initiative (Northern Distribution Network) to develop supply routes from Baltic and Caspian Sea ports to Afghanistan via Central Asia. Since China, Russia, and the U.S. all have major stakes in these transport corridors, the case for explicit coordination is evident.

So far, the EU remains indifferent to the steadily growing flow of Chinese commodities and the increasing Chinese investments in Central Asian infrastructure, which obviously calls for revised transportation policies in the region. Rationalized, the routes can be united into a Central Trans-Eurasian Corridor which will cross Russia and Ukraine in the south and meet the North-South corridor in the strategically important point in Western Kazakhstan. The European Commission and the European Investment Bank should start consultations with the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program and the corresponding international institutions. Cooperation with the U.S.-developed Northern Distribution Network also looks promising.

Security and stability in Central Asia can be described as one of the main concerns of the European Union, yet most of the projects are unrelated to them. The main contribution to combating common security threats has been regional programs for border management (BOMCA) and hard drugs (CADAP). They are fairly effective and mostly approved; until recently they were managed by UNDP offices. CADAP is being transferred to the European Aid Agency, which is expected to improve the EU's image as a partner. The BOMCA model might be applied to other parts of the security sectors in Central Asia to enhance effectiveness and good governance of police and security forces, at least in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; cooperation with similar programs in Afghanistan should be extended.

Cooperation with the OSCE and through the active involvement of key EU member states is also possible; both sides should maximally coordinate their actions. Europe should also readjust its governance structure.

As for EU assistance, Brussels should consider focusing on fewer priority areas, given the impossibility of having a real impact on all seven priorities of EU strategy with the 719 million Euros available over seven years under the

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<sup>150</sup> See: L. Azarch, "Central Asia and the European Union: Prospects of an Energy Partnership," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm), Vol. 7, No. 4, 2009, pp. 55-72.

Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). The EU does make differentiated priorities by country, but still there are difficult issues of assuring real effectiveness, going beyond “ticking the boxes.” The expert community supports the present move toward according higher priority to education programs.

Assistance is most needed in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The EU has some leverage on the dire conditions in these countries through its sectoral budget support programs. The impact of the economic crisis might, in combination with other security-related factors, even destabilize Tajikistan, which justifies the new social-policy-orientated program of the EU.

The EU has every interest in fostering donor coordination on the spot. Assistance allocated to energy-rich and fast developing Kazakhstan should be mainly confined to education and support to civil society, while Astana is in a position to buy into European expertise for many policy advice needs. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are only marginally receptive to EU assistance initiatives, where the EU would do well to focus on education for the time being.

In the near future the EU will double the size of its assistance to the Central Asian countries; this means that the efficiency of the recent European programs in the region should be assessed. The grants to oil-rich Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan should be cut down; educational programs should receive more attention. Larger volumes of aid to Uzbekistan should not be contemplated before the country has demonstrated more interest in its cooperation with the European Union.

The EU should create a database for monitoring reports to be made available on the Commission’s website in the interests of transparency and accountability. There is also a case for administrative separation of project evaluation from project operations to further guarantee objective analyses. The European Parliament should strengthen its oversight role in scrutinizing EU Commission assistance to Central Asia.

The administration of funds for civil society should be simplified. European analysts agree that the EU’s failure is due to the strategic interests being expressed in such general terms that they lack vivid meaning. The EU relies on a varied and vast set of regulatory acts and technical mechanisms as so-called instruments of action. The experts insist that the EU is not sufficiently equipped to be a hard security actor and so frames its foreign policy as seeking to contribute to the development of a regulatory, rules-based world order with strong reliance on human rights, international law, regional cooperation, and multilateral institutions.

It is commonly believed that Central Asia is in fact the only place in the world that sees the interests of all the major powers — Russia, China, South Asia, and Europe, together with the ubiquitous presence of the United States.

### *Differentiated Approach to the Central Asian Countries*

#### The EU and Kazakhstan

Brussels is convinced that Kazakhstan and the EU have major opportunities to deepen their bilateral relationship with the objective of bringing the rapid

economic development of this rich country into harmony with political and social progress, and its participation in an enlightened conception of international relations.<sup>151</sup>

European experts think that the workings of the state power system are complex and see different factions acting in different directions. However, the leadership is pursuing a staunch modernization strategy; its multivectoral foreign policy includes a European vector and the clear wish not to be overly dependent on its two big neighbors, Russia and China.<sup>152</sup>

The markers of the European dimensions of Kazakhstan's foreign policy are the "Path to Europe" white paper adopted early in 2009 and its OSCE presidency for the year 2010. The "Path to Europe" is an action plan reminiscent of those produced by the European Union.<sup>153</sup>

The EU and Kazakhstan envisage the negotiation of a new Agreement that would replace the existing PCA. The content of the new Agreement could be much more developed than the PCA and take as a reference the structure of the new model, Advanced Agreements of the European Neighborhood Policy/Eastern Partnership, which has been completed in the case of Morocco and is well advanced in the case of Ukraine.<sup>154</sup>

The main feature of these new agreements is that they can cover the whole range of EU competences, combining those stipulated at the time the PCAs were negotiated with those in the spheres of justice, home affairs, and foreign and security policy. However, the trade policy content will be limited by the fact that Kazakhstan is now joining the Customs Union with Russia and Belarus, which excludes the possibility of a free trade agreement with the EU unless done by all three together.

The EU can also consider how close Kazakhstan could be brought toward or into the Eastern Partnership. There are two options. The first, which could already be activated, would be to invite Kazakhstan to join in the work of the region-multilateral working groups of the Eastern Partnership. The second more ambitious option would be to invite Kazakhstan to fully join the Eastern Partnership.

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<sup>151</sup> On the prehistory of the question, see: Kazakhstan i Evropeysky soiuz: rezultaty i gorizonty sotrudnichestva, Brussels, 2007, 315 pp; Kazakhstan, Rossia, Evropeyskiy soiuz: perspektivy strategicheskogo partnerstva. Materialy mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii, KISI, Almaty, 2009, 200 pp.; M. Laumulin, "EU-Strategie in Zentralasien und die Interessen Kasachstans," in: EU-Strategie für Zentralasien. Drei Jahre danach, pp. 164-178.; R.S. Serik, "Kazakhstan i strategii ES v Tsentralnoy Azii: problemy i perspektivy," in: Tsentralnaia Azia v usloviakh geopoliticheskoy transformatsii i mirovogo ekonomicheskogo krizisa. 7-ia ezhegodnaia Almatinskaia konferentsia, KISI, Almaty, 2009, pp. 224-233.

<sup>152</sup> See: "Le Kazakhstan: Partenaire Stratégique de l'Europe," in: Diplomatie. Affaires Stratégiques et Relations Internationales, AREION, Paris, 2009. 16 pp.

<sup>153</sup> See: Politicheskie i ekonomicheskie interesy Germanii v Kazakhstane i Tsentralnoy Azii, KISI, Almaty, 2010, 132 pp.; Put v Evropu: model sotrudnichestva ES i Tsentralnoy Azii, KNU, Almaty, 2010, 176 pp.

<sup>154</sup> See: K. Isaev, "Cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European Union," Central Asia's Affairs, No. 1, 2010, pp. 8-11; M. Laumulin, "EU-Strategie in Zentralasien und die Interessen Kasachstans," pp. 164-178.

Overall, the EU intends to encourage Kazakhstan “to aim as high as it wants to in terms even ultimately of Council of Europe membership” based on serious political freedoms and greater adherence to human rights requirements, and also to get observer status at the Parliamentary Assembly. The education sector deserves priority support from the EU in ways that go beyond existing programs such as Tempus, which however is well placed to help Kazakhstan’s move to align higher education based on the regulations of the Bologna process. The European Commission should promote the European institutions’ greater involvement (going far beyond the granting of scholarships) in the educational process at the newly opened technical university in Astana.

In its human rights dialog with Kazakhstan, the European Union is determined to insist on strengthening judicial authorization of arrest (approval of arrest warrant); non-interference of the state in legal professions; protection of rights during pre-trial stages of prosecution; de-criminalization of slander and insult; further development of the legislation on freedom of assembly; legislation on freedom of association in line with international standards; promotion of the freedom of expression; liberalization of legislation on the media; and strengthening of the Ombudsman office.<sup>155</sup>

### The EU and Kyrgyzstan

It is commonly believed in the European expert community that the economy of Kyrgyzstan is fairly weak, the situation in the capital being the only exception. When Kazakhstan and Russia joined the Customs Union, commodity export from Kyrgyzstan dropped; and large investments in the hydro-power sector have not improved the situation. The revolution of 2005, which replaced one clan at the top with another, narrowed down political freedom.<sup>156</sup>

Within its human rights dialog with Kyrgyzstan, the EU insists on cessation of harassment and persecution of opposition members; liberalization of law restricting the freedom of assembly; cessation of government harassment of human rights groups and activists; independent investigation of allegations of deaths and injuries from torture in police custody; cessation of violence against journalists and guarantees of their safety; and cessation of government intimidation of NGOs.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> See: M. Emerson, J. Boonstra, N. Hasanova, M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

<sup>156</sup> See: N. Omarov, “Kyrgyzstan-Evropeysky soiuz: osnovnye napravleniia sotrudnichestva i perspektivy ego razvitiia,” in: Tsentralnaia Azia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentralnoaziatskoy tochki zreniia, Friedrich Ebert Fund, Berlin, 2008, pp. 222-253; idem, “Vneshniaia politika Kirgizstana posle 24 marta 2005 g.: osnovnye tendentsii i perspektivy,” in: Vneshnopoliticheskie orientatsii stran Tsentralnoy Azii v svete globalnoy transformatsii mirovoy sistemy i mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy, ed. by A.A. Knyazev, A.A. Migranyan, OFAK, Bishkek, 2009, pp. 155-161.

<sup>157</sup> See: M. Emerson, J. Boonstra, N. Hasanova, M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, op. cit., p. 106.

## The EU and Tajikistan

Tajikistan may be regarded as a fragile but not a failed state. This very poor country suffers grave hardships through extreme poverty compounded by breakdowns in electricity supplies in the winter, despite its endowment with huge hydropower potential. Tajikistan is also highly sensitive to the risks of spillover of the war and chaos in Afghanistan, where the ethnic Tajik population accounts for 35% of the total.<sup>158</sup>

The Commission and Germany together represent the bulk of aid from Europe. The EU's aid aims at poverty reduction and avoiding state collapse, with sustained budget support for social welfare programs. This is a controversial program with diverging views between its supporters and opponents; the latter argue that at the present level of corruption all efforts will be in vain.

There are some opportunities for civil society, and this makes the EU's human rights dialog potentially meaningful, even if there are signs that these existing civil liberties are under threat. One of the EU's projects could be to support a political dialog with the Islamists.

The government's major economic priority is completion of the Rogun dam, for which it would welcome a consortium of international investors. This could be linked to investment in high voltage power lines into South Asia, through Afghanistan into Pakistan and India. While this project is extremely ambitious, it deserves support by the EU since it offers both some chance of advance for the economy and regional links to South Asia.

The EU agenda for the human rights dialog with Tajikistan includes open access to prisons for civil society organizations and the Red Cross; ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention against Torture and the Convention on Discrimination against Women; de-criminalization of punishment for defamation; discontinuation of the use of child labor on cotton fields; an article on torture added to the Criminal Code; reforms of the system of free legal aid to the low-income population; and compensation for forced displacement of people due to state needs.<sup>159</sup>

## The EU and Turkmenistan

European experts have pointed out that the second president has made some positive moves, but only very limited ones, compared to the record of his notorious predecessor.<sup>160</sup> The population now has freedom of movement within Turkmenistan; the former president's idiosyncratic education policy of reducing schooling from 11 to 9 years and university from 3 to 2 years were reversed.

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<sup>158</sup> See: R. Khaydarov, "Tadzhikistan-ES: problemy i vozmozhnosti sotrudnichestva," in: *Tsentrálnaia Azia: vneshniy vzgliad*, pp. 360-367.

<sup>159</sup> See: M. Emerson, J. Boonstra, N. Hasanova, M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>160</sup> See: S. Horák, J. Šír, *Dismantling Totalitarianism? Turkmenistan under Berdimuhamedow*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Washington, D.C., 2009, 97 pp.

Turkmenistan remains an authoritarian state with zero opportunities for political opposition, media freedom, or NGOs concerned with political and human rights issues. The only NGOs are for family problems and citizen advice bureaus. Experienced observers say that the people know full well what the rules are and what can and cannot be done, which narrows down the field for manifestations of political debate or opposition, or excludes them altogether.

Overall, Turkmenistan entered the 21st century still largely cut off from the rest of the world and having wasted huge amounts of its natural resource wealth on grandiose construction in the capital city. In these circumstances, the room for the EU to develop its relations with Turkmenistan is severely limited, even though an interim agreement on trade policy has now entered into force and a human rights dialog has been set in motion.<sup>161</sup>

A first step to establish the EU's credibility has to be a fully accredited delegation. The present "Europa House" exercises some functions of a diplomatic mission on a small scale, without diplomatic accreditation.

As for aid activities, the most plausible at this stage is to support scholarships for students to study in universities outside the country. However, in 2009 the Turkmen authorities denied the exit of Turkmen students heading abroad for the beginning of the new academic year. Those who left earlier were forced to return to Ashgabad due to the security services putting pressure on their families and have been black-listed.

The main strategic question open at this stage is whether the EU will become a large-scale buyer of Turkmen gas, which would be transported across the Caspian Sea to Baku. The moment to make such a proposal is relatively propitious (since the explosion of the gas pipeline to Russia in April 2009) due to the sudden reduction in Russian demand. While the pipeline has now been repaired and a new commercial agreement was signed with Moscow in January 2010, the incident has made Turkmenistan increasingly interested in a multivectoral gas export policy.<sup>162</sup>

China built and inaugurated its gas pipeline link from Turkmenistan, with transit across Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which could carry 40-50 bcm of gas per

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<sup>161</sup> See: E. Ionova, "Mnogovektornost vneshney politiki Ashkhabada," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir* (INION, IV RAN), No. 9, 2009, pp. 98-105; M.T. Laumulin, "Mezhdunarodnoe i vnutripoliticheskoe polozhenie postniyazovskogo Turkmenistana," *Kazakhstan v globalnykh protsessakh*, No. 2, 2010, pp. 111-123; No. 3, pp. 26-39; L. Anceschi, "Analiz ing Turkmen Foreign Policy in the Berdymukhammedov Era," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2008, pp. 35-48; R. Pomfret, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2008, pp. 9-34; L. Anceschi, "External Conditionality, Domestic Insulation and Energy Security: The International Politics of Post-Niyazov Turkmenistan," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2010 (Special Issue: Turkmenistan), pp. 93-114.

<sup>162</sup> See: L. Timofeenko, "Problema eksporta energoresursov Turkmenistana," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii* (IMEMO), No. 11, 2010, pp. 93-100; idem, "Turkmenistan: diversifikatsiia marshrutov eksporta energoresursov," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 9, 2010, pp. 85-91; Yu. Fedorov, "Turkmenskiiye gazovye igry," *Indeks bezopasnosti* (PIR-Tsentr, Moscow), No. 2, 2010, pp. 73-86.

year when fully operational. Supplies through a pipeline to Iran are now likely to go up from 8 to 14 bcm.

An internal West-East pipeline has been put up for tender, which would take gas west to the Caspian coast, and thence either go north up the Caspian coast to connect with the Russian network, or cross the Caspian to connect with the Nabucco. The gas fields to be developed are deep down and will need foreign technology, and Turkmenistan may be obliged to change its restrictive policy on foreign investment.

The agenda for the human rights dialog with Turkmenistan includes discontinuation of the practice of collective punishment (family members of prisoners should be released); discontinuation of the practice of recruiting prisoners to coercive labor that is hazardous to their health; creation of harmonious conditions for culture and tradition of national minorities; creation of conditions for independent mass media (state censorship should be outlawed); guaranteed possibilities for independent public organizations; revision of the NGO law; discontinuation of persecution of dissidents and civic activists; free entrance into and exit from the country (notably for students); and establishment of standards of economic transparency for the use of energy revenues.<sup>163</sup>

### The EU and Uzbekistan

It is commonly believed in the European Union that the lifting in October 2009 by EU foreign ministers of the remaining arms embargo sanction imposed after the 2005 Andijan events was a controversial decision. The EU hopes that this will be taken as encouragement for progressive reforms, whereas independent human rights NGOs protest that this will give a wrong message to the country's rulers. However, a decision has been made to end the sanctions, and this logically marks the switch to a mode of engagement and the need to work out how to make this effective.

The next step already envisaged will be to open a full EU delegation in Tashkent, which should incorporate a strong public information unit to make the EU better known and understood.

Brussels is still convinced that Uzbekistan remains an extremely difficult environment to work in, given the omnipresent security services exemplified by internal checkpoints on the borders of every region. However Uzbekistan has the ambition of being a leading player in the region and of regaining international prestige as the most populous and geographically central state. This can only come with a greater openness for the movement of people and commerce across its borders, and after profound reforms designed to liberalize internal commerce and agriculture. The EU can advocate this in its political dialog and also try to persuade Uzbekistan to adopt a more constructive and modern attitude toward regional cooperation, particularly in water issues. The EU has several technical assistance

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<sup>163</sup> See: M. Emerson, J. Boonstra, N. Hasanova, M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, op. cit., p. 109.

cross-border or regional projects in the field of water management, which Uzbekistan is currently blocking or excludes itself from.

The state is investing heavily in infrastructure and education. Its industry depends on protectionist measures (car manufacturers are protected by 200 percent import tariffs) except for free trade within the CIS, from which it has evidently profited. There is a new rail link inside Uzbekistan that extends to Termez on the border with Afghanistan and then links up to the routes to Iran (down to the port of Bandar Abbas). Uzbekistan is concerned with disenclaving its economy to the South Asia, and this fits well with the revision of the transcontinental transport corridor strategies.

European analysts have pointed out that there are almost no functioning EU projects in Uzbekistan at present. An exception is an EU funded (UNDP-executed) rural living standards project, which received favorable evaluation for getting to the grass roots of poverty reduction. Given the extreme difficulties with respect to active operations within Uzbekistan, the education sector provides a plausible area for concentrated effort. For example, the British Council's offices in Tashkent are a beehive of learning activity for Uzbek students, with a German cultural center next door doing the same. In spite of the regime's repression, there is a private Westminster University flourishing in Tashkent.<sup>164</sup>

In the human rights sphere, the EU demands release of human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience; liberalization of accreditation and operation of NGOs; guarantee of freedom of speech and of independent media; implementation of conventions against child labor; alignment of election processes with OSCE commitments; cooperation with U.N. special rapporteurs on human rights issues; abolition of restrictions on free entrance and exit of the country; cessation of fabricated "terrorist threats" for imprisoning religious leaders; independent investigation of allegations of torture in prisons and punishment for offenders; adoption of a law to permit independent journalism in all areas (economic, political, cultural); liberalization of international cooperation of civic activists and organizations; and legislation to regulate law-enforcement bodies (police).<sup>165</sup>

### *From Central Asia to Eurasia*

The EU has based its approaches to Central Asia on the idea of placing it in the Eurasian context. It seeks to foster regional cooperation among the five states and is allocating 30 percent of its budget to regional projects. It comes to Central Asia with a presumption in favor of regional cooperation, the prospects of which look vague. But has the regional dimension of the EU Central Asia strategy been

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<sup>164</sup> See: Kh. Inomjonov, "Otnosheniia Uzbekistana s Evropeyskim soiuzom," *Tsentralnaia Azia: vneshniy vzgliad*, pp. 464-486; M. Laumilin, "Vneshniaia politika Uzbekistana na sovremnnom etape," *Kazakhstan v globalnykh protsessakh*, No. 1, 2010, pp. 56-72.

<sup>165</sup> See: M. Emerson, J. Boonstra, N. Hasanova, M. Laruelle, S. Peyrouse, op. cit., p. 111.



adequately conceived for the 21st century? This question is suggested by the great and growing regional role of China and India.

The EU Central Asia Strategy has already seen significant development of the regional dimension to the political dialogs between the EU and all five Central Asian states. Foreign minister meetings are being held to discuss broad political and security issues, sector-specific dialog circuits for education, water and the environment, and the rule of law, even though they were sporadic and took place within a very short period between 2008 and 2010. No specific results of these activities are visible so far; there are some sharp contrary developments happening outside these meetings (e.g. the current breakdown of the regional electricity grid). The EU, however, seeks to promote a gradual movement of ideas among the Central Asian participants in favor of regional cooperation.

The objective limits to Central Asian regionalism are evident, and this is reflected in a shift in EU spending, reducing the weight of regional programs and increasing that of bilateral ones.

At the same time, there is also a case for a second concept of regional cooperation, which we can call “external” rather than “internal” regionalism. External regionalism would involve cooperative activity with neighbors external to the region, whereas internal regionalism is restricted to the five Central Asian states. With its modest population size, Central Asian regional cooperation does not have much potential if it is not part of wider economic openness. While there are some activities which intrinsically have a cross-border regional cooperative dimension, such as border management itself, transport corridors and, above all, water management, it is nonetheless the case that these three examples have vital cross-border dimensions linking to neighbors external to the region with transcontinental dimensions. Thus, border management largely concerns drug trafficking, where Central Asia is just a transit passage between Afghanistan and Europe, Russia and China.

The European Commission is seeking to develop links between the Eastern Partnership and Central Asia through regional projects joining the two regions, especially in the energy, transport, and environment sectors. However, what is lacking is a framework for wider Eurasian cooperative projects in which the EU’s activities in Central Asia would also link to Russia, or China, or South Asia, or combinations thereof.

The political priorities of the states of the region can also be viewed in this light. Kazakhstan looks west to Europe with its “Path to Europe” program as a strategic move to avoid exclusive dependence on Russia and China, and as part of its modernization drive. Turkmenistan, while remaining a closed and repressive political system, nonetheless frames its development priority in the opening of gas pipeline connections toward all points of the compass: Russia, China, Iran, and potentially across the Caspian Sea to Europe, if the EU were to make a credible and major offer.

Kyrgyzstan’s economy is now substantially dependent on a transit trade function for Chinese goods to flow to Kazakhstan and Russia. Tajikistan and

Uzbekistan are concerned with disenclaving themselves to the south with transport corridors through Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan to the Gulf and Indian Ocean.

There are important long-term implications for the EU's relations with Russia, China, and India, as well as the shorter-term priority of finding some kind of political resolution of the Afghanistan imbroglio. The EU has already moved in this direction; it has regrouped Central Asia with South Asia, rather than in a former Soviet Union group. The EU has moved partly in this direction by grouping Central Asia with South Asia for the purpose of its aid administration.

Some think that a Eurasian frame is more suitable for the EU than just a link to South Asia. In this context, Central Asia is unique as a landlocked region sitting amidst the Big Four of Eurasia: Russia, China, India, and the EU. Today, the EU has to concentrate on a new picture of the multipolar world: there are new geopolitical players (or old players with new images), such as Russia, China, India, and the European Union itself. The new picture calls for new approaches and creates new strategic challenges - preserving order and the spirit of cooperation.

The EU has reason to take further steps in its conception of the multiple regional dimensions of its foreign policy, which already has the Eastern Partnership, Northern Dimension, Union for the Mediterranean, Black Sea Synergy, and now the Central Asia Strategy. Each of these initiatives has its rationale.

What is missing, however, is an overarching Eurasian dimension, looking for ways to devise cooperative ventures reaching across these several regions into the wider Eurasian landmass, adapted to the needs of the emerging multipolar world. Such an initiative would, inter alia, be a constructive move toward Russia after the awkward period in which the launching of the Eastern Partnership has been seen as deepening the segmentation of the post-Soviet space in EU policies.

European analysts are convinced that the present "internal" regionalism of the Central Asian strategy should continue its role of facilitating a dialog with and among the five states. But major issues should find their place in "external" regionalism that could be framed as part of a wider Eurasian strategy.

### *Central Asia and the Security Problems of the European Union*

The European Union is exploring how the Central Asia strategy might fit into a global concept of EU foreign policy. The EU already has relations with most of the world's regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, as well as the European neighborhood, and bilaterally through strategic partnerships with China, India, and Russia.

Brussels is looking for ways and methods to unite the trends and contacts into a single vector in which Central Asia should be given a niche.

The European strategists are aware that the region is sparsely populated. However, due to its geographic location, it is an important special case, given that it sees the presence of virtually all the world's global actors at a time when a new world order is in the making. The new assembly of major case, since they will be

faced with far more dramatic challenges elsewhere. In this respect, Central Asia could be of some exemplary importance for the future world order.

European analysts have concluded that the world is entering a new multipolar epoch, with emerging or re-emerging major powers — China, India, Russia, and Brazil, to which the EU may also be added. Europe intends to contribute to a stable regulatory world order; recently this has become an inalienable part of EU policy as declared by the Lisbon Treaty.

Other actors are inclined to use force to a much greater extent than the EU. This is certainly the case in Central Asia where the actual political environment is so distant from the European values of human rights and democracy, and where Russia and China are now the most prominent external actors, with Russia pursuing an ultra-realist policy, and China, very present economically, but abstaining from any kind of regulatory influence beyond a general doctrine of political non-interference.

Brussels proceeds in its Central Asian policy from the assumption that the region does not threaten the European Union; there are three indirect factors, however, which might affect the European Union as well as other actors.

First, insecurity of energy supplies. Central Asia can contribute to the expansion and diversification of supplies of oil, especially from Kazakhstan, and gas, especially from Turkmenistan. The exploitation of energy resources can be framed by regulations of environmental sustainability, corporate governance, and income distribution. Diversification of oil and gas supplies dilutes the monopolistic concentration of energy power, which is in principle desirable both as a matter of economic policy and in order to lessen the hazard of energy supplies as a method of geopolitical manipulation, which is typical of Russia's current policies.

Second, al-Qae'da and Talibanization. Central Asia is adjacent to the war in Afghanistan, which is being fought to protect Europe and the world from the terrorist threat of al-Qae'da, with logistical routing of supplies for NATO forces through Central Asia. These routes have to be maintained and can hardly be criticized as an unprincipled pursuit of interests. Central Asia is not, at least for the time being, seeing a spillover of Talibanization as in Pakistan, but there are dangers of spreading Islamic radicalization in Central Asia, with Europe inclined to advocate a dialog with moderate Islamist movements, and their inclusion in the political processes.

Third, drug trafficking. Central Asia is also part of the route for drug supplies from Afghanistan to Europe, which is a matter of vital concern for the public health of Europe and its society. The EU supports a sustained effort to combat drug trade and addiction in Central Asia and should explore ways to extend this into effective cooperation with Russia and Eastern Europe.<sup>166</sup>

The values-based agenda, as can be extracted from official documents, is long and complex. Political values can be discussed, but for countries faced with huge

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<sup>166</sup> For more detail, see: G.K. Kydyrkhanova, *Borba s narkotrafikom i mezhdunarodnym terrorizmom v sotrudnichestve stran Tsentralnoy Azii i Evropeyskogo soiюза*, KazNU, Almaty, 2009, 121 pp.

economic development challenges, the priorities most often begin with basic issues of poverty reduction, food security, economic development, and environmental security. The EU has aid instruments aimed at several points on this agenda, but the scale is modest compared to the massive investments now being made by China, particularly in economic infrastructures.

This means that the EU's efforts have to be profiled very distinctly, the grants for social and educational programs being cases in point. Expansion of the education program could prove the most effective and durable way to introduce European civil, professional, and cultural values and standards into Central Asia.

It is evident that the EU is making a substantial effort to help Central Asian states improve their highly problematic human rights situations. The legitimacy of this activity is based on the common regulatory principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, to which all Central Asian and EU states have subscribed, coupled with the voluntary willingness of the Central Asian states to enter into a human rights dialog with the EU.

The EU is well placed to do this, since the human rights Conventions of the Council of Europe, to which all the EU member states adhere, are based on the Universal Declaration and are further developed through the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights. It is notable that no one else among the major external partners of Central Asia is willing or able to engage in a human rights dialog with Central Asian states, certainly not Russia or China, or even the United States at present.

In contrast to human rights, democracy is not internationally codified legally. There are open questions concerning the length of the time horizon—from medium to long-term—over which major progress might be expected in Central Asia. The EU is cautious in pushing for Western-style democracy in the political and cultural contexts of Central Asia. The major contribution of the EU at this stage would be in helping to create a rules-bound context in Central Asia conducive to political change. Beyond domestic legal systems this should also mean the entrenchment of European and international law in the bilateral relations the EU establishes with the Central Asian republics. The EU is well placed to do this, given that its foreign policies are typically carried out through contractual relations with third states. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with the Central Asian states are the vehicle for this, and these agreements can be progressively renewed and deepened, as is planned with Kazakhstan in the first instance.

European analysts believe that Central Asian regional cooperation should be supported where it can clearly deliver benefits, but the EU should not imagine some transplant of its own experience of regional integration in Central Asian soil. The Central Asian region is too small, heterogeneous, and enclaved between very big neighbors for intra-regional cooperation to become a main driver of progress, as has been the case in Europe. The quest for a modern Central Asian regional identity is something that should be viewed sympathetically, with the chance that this would naturally lead to some authentic regulatory foundations. The development of several regional policy dialogs between the EU and the five states together could help to foster this.

On the other hand, the concept of regionalism advocated by the EU for Central Asia could be supplied in a more outward looking or “extroverted” direction, in addition to the quest for intra-regional cooperation. This links to the issue of transcontinental cooperation around Central Asia or a Eurasian dimension to EU policies, and the quest for cooperative multi-polarity.

This is the new challenge, given the passing of the unipolar U.S.-dominated epoch and the rise of the new or renewed major powers, almost all of which are present in Central Asia. The challenge is extremely difficult, given the different foreign policy philosophies currently on display between non-democratic Russia and China, which joined the SCO club, on the one hand, and the Central Asia states agreeing on a strong doctrine of political non-interference versus the democratic EU, U.S., Turkey, and India, which are all inclined to perhaps different degrees to advocate a different regulatory foreign policy concept, on the other.

According to European analysts, there are at least three spheres of policy where the EU, Central Asian countries, and other powers (Russia, China, the U.S., India, etc.) can work together.

First, cooperation to combat the common security threats coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan, in particular in the form of drugs and radical Islamic terrorism.

Second, the regional water-hydropower nexus, where major solutions could best rely on international consortia with all major players present.

Third, optimization of transcontinental transport routes for trade.

As for organizational initiatives, the EU might, if invited, become an observer member of the SCO. Or, alternatively, the EU meetings with the five Central Asian states could for some purposes be extended to include Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.

Moreover, since the EU has decided to have a Central Asia strategy, it is obliged as a matter of strategic consistency to articulate this in its world view.

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For obvious reasons, the EU needs Central Asia as a sustainable source of natural resources. This is not all, however: Brussels is convinced that it should expand its regulatory values to the region.

On the other hand, the European states (NATO members in particular) play an important role in combating the threats emanating from Afghanistan. The European Union does not hail the steadily increasing involvement of the United States in Eurasia and has to take Russia’s interests into account. Recently, European experts have come to the conclusion that the EU will balance out China’s increasing influence in the region, since Russia has stepped aside. These factors should be taken into account when formulating Central Asia’s position in relation to the European Union.

In the near future, the relations between Central Asia and the EU will be affected by the geo-economic situation and geopolitical factors, such as

Washington's new strategy in Central Asia; the vague military-strategic prospects in Afghanistan; the relations between Russia and the West; the world economic crisis; and the much greater importance of energy sources and food safety.

This can either positively or negatively affect the relations between Europe and Central Asia. Much will depend on the political will of the actors involved in the geopolitical intricacies. One thing is clear: Europe and Central Asia need each other for objective reasons.

## **8. The Discussions on the Role of China in the Region**

In the mid-1990s, China displayed the first flickers of interest in the Central Asian fuel and energy complex, which has been steadily growing since that time along with Beijing's interest in other spheres of the region's economy. In the latter half of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the project activities of China and Chinese companies in the Central Asian energy segment were concentrated in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector. In the early 21st century, however, this interest began gradually spreading to the rest of the region to become diversified by the industry's branches. Today, China is showing a lot of interest in the oil and gas of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and in the nuclear power production of the former. China is paying enough attention to the fuel and energy complexes of the rest of the region to promote its economic and political interests in each of the states and the region as a whole.

Being one of the four poles, China made a powerful entry onto Brzezinski's "grand chessboard"<sup>167</sup>, together with other world majors in oil and gas business since the early 1990s'. The heartland of the keenly-contested chessboard is Central Asia. Chinese government first saw opportunities in the geopolitical vacuum left over by Kremlin, but soon realized that it had to confront the resurgence of competing interests of regional actors: such as Turkey and Iran, - and growing American presence. However, US involvement in the region has not been viewed entirely skeptically. For example, in the eyes of Beijing and Moscow "war on terror" launched by Bush-junior after 9/11 coincides with one of the expressed aims of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) co-chaired by the two, in particular to fight "extremism, separatism, and terrorism" in Eurasia, but that is perhaps the only common ground they share with Washington. For the rest, principally the US "monopoly in world affairs"<sup>168</sup>, continued intrigue in toppling the Central Asian rulers, in establishing permanent US-military presence in the region<sup>169</sup>, in usurping Tbilisi as the frontline anti-Russia platform in South Caucasus, etc.

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<sup>167</sup> Brzezinski, Z.. *Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. – New York: Collins, 1997. – XIV+223 pp.

<sup>168</sup> De Haas, M. (2008, November 27). Russia-China Security Cooperation. *Power and Interest News Report*.

<sup>169</sup> US-Russia relations are strained over more issues including the deployment of an American missile-defense system in Central Europe and NATO-supported military and political penetration in the South Caucasus.

China's interests in Central Asia are energy, anti-terrorism and regional alliance. Compared with Russia and the US, China's quest for Central Asian energy is more urgent<sup>170</sup>. While China's import dependency of hydrocarbons has been on the rise, Central Asian hydrocarbons enable China to diversify further its oil and gas imports, to reduce dependence on Middle East and marine imports. Moreover, China wants to combat the region's terrorist activities, especially East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which is, partly or fully, responsible for Xinjiang's separatism. One of the recent achievements is that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Chinese police can now investigate terrorist activities within the territory of Kyrgyzstan. While it is in China's strategic interest to build alliance with neighboring countries, China's need to secure energy assess and combat terrorism makes regional alliance even more valuable.

The Soviet Union's disintegration and the appearance of new independent states along China's borders radically changed its geopolitical role in Central Asia. The deep political and economic crisis in which Russia and the new Soviet successor states in Central Asia found themselves removed the «threat from the north» and allowed Beijing to concentrate on «strengthening China.» On the one hand, it addressed the domestic economic problems in order to revive Greater China. On the other, it used specific mechanisms of its own to influence the world and regional processes.

The Chinese leaders knew that the regional rivalry between Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the United States would aggravate instability in the Central Asian states and the still unresolved problems among them. Beijing preferred to avoid direct involvement in the unfolding confrontation<sup>171</sup>.

The most urgent political goals of China's Central Asian policy in the early 1990s were described as follows:

- achieving border settlement;
- limiting the influence of pan-Turkism, political Islam, and ethnic separatism on the fairly unstable Muslim Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region of China, which borders on Central Asia;
- establishing wider bilateral trade and economic contacts with the Central Asian countries to preserve China's limited political presence and to extend its economic presence as much as possible in order to set up «outposts» on the vast Central Asian market;
- ensuring political balance in Central Asia in an effort to maintain the current political regimes, on the one hand, and to preserve the current disagreements among them, on the other.<sup>7</sup>

From the very beginning, China has been and continues to practice a differentiated approach to the new states proceeding from the following factors:

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<sup>170</sup> Cohen A. *Kazakhstan: the Road to Independence. Energy Policy and the Birth of a Nation*. – Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2008. - 287 p.

<sup>171</sup> Babayan D. "Some of China's Geopolitical Vectors in Central Asia". *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 11. 2010. № 4, pp. 53-65.

- The state's geopolitical situation and its role in post-Soviet Central Asia; its socioeconomic potential; the degree of its activity; and the prospects of using it in the interests of China's border areas;

- Political balance, the leaders' ability to control the economic and political situation at home, as well as the degree of social and ethnic stability, which would exclude the negative impact of Central Asia's social, political, and ethnic processes on China's border regions;

- The activities of religious organizations and the degree to which religion (Islam in particular) affects the country's foreign and domestic policies;

- The nature of relations with the Russian Federation, the Muslim world, China, and other subjects of international law;

- Compatibility of specific countries' type of socioeconomic and political development with the «Chinese model» and «China's foreign policy goals».<sup>172</sup>

The above explains China's heightened interest in Kazakhstan. The former has the longest land border of its neighbors with China with 11 contested stretches; Kazakhstan has considerable economic and resource potential; there are no immutable religious traditions inside the country, while some of the Uighur separatist organizations are based on its territory. The latter deserved China's attention because some of the border stretches needed specification; the country has attractive resource potential; Islamic influence inside the country was fairly limited, while some of the separatist Uighur organizations favoring Xinjiang's independence were stationed on its territory.

This differentiation can be easily detected in the volume and nature of trade and economic contacts with the region's countries in the early 1990s: Kazakhstan was the leader, while the shares of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan remained negligible.

In the latter half of the 1990s, China readjusted its approaches to include geostrategic considerations in its economic interests. This explains the rapid growth of trade and economic contacts with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, as well as the qualitatively new level of relations with Kazakhstan. This also explains the closer attention to the collective security issues and the «struggle against Islamic fundamentalism» in China's relations with the Central Asian countries.

In April 1996, China initiated the Agreement on Military Confidence-Building Measures in the Border Regions, signed in Shanghai, and the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Armed Forces in the Border Regions, signed in Moscow in April 1997. They served as the foundation for the Shanghai Five, which was transformed into the Shanghai Forum late in the 1990s and into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in June 2001. Significantly, as early as the mid-1990s, Beijing realized that the organization it had set up could serve as the vehicle of its interests in Central Asia. In any case, it was the Shanghai Five which, starting in April 1997, altered the bilateral format - China and four post-Soviet republics - to a

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<sup>172</sup> Syroezhkin R. "China in Central Asia: from Trade to Strategic Partnership". *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 13. 2007. № 3, pp. 40-51.



five-sided format, within which each of the five members played an independent role. It was through this structure that China settled one of its major problems - the controversial border stretches. Other border issues remain shelved.

Many important geopolitical problems were likewise settled through this structure; it was in Shanghai that the strategic alliance between Russia and China took shape.

The Chinese government has sought to increase its economic ties with Kazakhstan and other countries in Greater Central Asia because they see this region as an important source of raw materials, especially oil and natural gas. Chinese policy makers are uneasy about relying so heavily on vulnerable Persian Gulf energy sources. Gulf oil shipments traverse sea lanes susceptible to interception by the U.S. or other navies. Aforementioned, the Chinese government recognizes that terrorism, military conflicts, and other sources of instability in the Middle East could abruptly disrupt Gulf energy exports.

In 1997 China and Kazakhstan concluded a pact forming the Sino-Kazakh Oil Pipeline Co. Ltd. (KCP), a joint venture between CNPC and KazMunaiGas which had, as its declared goal, a pipeline running from the Caspian Sea to Xinjiang<sup>173</sup>. The eastern section first started pumping oil in May 2005 from the Kumkol field of the Aktobe region, making it the first pipeline to transmit crude directly into China. On October 27, 2005, China made its first major foray into the Central Asian oil industry when the CNPC purchased the Canadian-based PetroKazakhstan Inc., owner of the Kumkol field, but China paid well over market value and was forced to sell a third of its holdings in the Kazakh state oil company KazMunaiGaz back to the government as part of the deal (Pala, 2006).

Since Chinese efforts to import much additional oil and gas from Russia have proven problematic, Beijing has strongly pushed for the development of land-based oil and gas pipelines that would direct Central Asian energy resources eastwards towards China. The new inland routes would provide more secure energy supplies to China than existing seaborne links. These burgeoning energy ties have also made avoiding political instability in these countries a concern of Chinese policy makers.

Beijing's cultivation of energy ties with Kazakhstan has been making steady progress. While retaining a strong presence in Pakistan, Chinese firms have been increasing their investments in new South and Central Asian markets, especially in India and Kazakhstan. The Chinese government has been helping to finance the development of roads, ports, and energy pipelines linking South and Central Asia to China, because significantly increasing Chinese economic intercourse with these regions will require major improvements in the capacity and security of east-west transportation links. Over the past decade, the two countries have been establishing the core infrastructure required by their expanding economic ties—creating border posts, energy pipelines, and roads and railways that have converted the informal shuttle trade that arose in the 1980s to a large-scale, professional economic relationship.

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<sup>173</sup> Xinhua, December 15, 2005.

China has imported Kazakh oil via railroad for a decade. In addition, hydropower plants in China supply about 20% of Kazakhstan's electricity consumption. Western firms were initially able to block the efforts by Chinese energy companies to join Kazakhstan's largest oil and gas projects. But energy cooperation has accelerated in recent years after the Kazakh government fully committed to directing a share of its energy exports eastward to China.

This period should be summed up as follows: China fully exploited the opportunity presented by the Soviet Union's disintegration and the geopolitical vacuum in Central Asia to, first, settle its border issues. It profited from the settlement, while the Central Asian states lost a trump card that could be potentially used in their later talks with Beijing over pressing issues. Second, China not only gained a strong economic position in all the Central Asian republics, but also developed its Greater North-West with the help of the republics' economic potential. Third, by signing agreements with the local countries, China enlisted them as allies in the struggle against ethnic separatism. More than that: by the same token, it split the «Muslim unity» of the Xinjiang peoples and the autochthonous Central Asian nationalities to a certain extent. As a Shanghai Five member, it became immune to the interference of third countries in the «Uighur factor.» Fourth, Russia and the newly independent Soviet successor Central Asian states, badly hit by the political and economic crisis, were no longer a «threat from the north.» China used this historic chance to concentrate on its domestic problems, economic development, and reestablishment of Greater China. Finally, China fortified its position in all the Central Asian countries, mainly through its economic presence and as a key member of the emerging regional security system, of which the Shanghai Five was one of the links.

At that time, China was concerned not only about preserving its economic position in the region; it also had to address two no less important tasks: limit America's political presence and its influence on the local political elites and preserve Central Asia's political regimes and relative local political stability. For obvious reasons, the PRC did not need a seat of tension fanned by the Islamic factor on its borders. The problems were resolved thanks in particular to the SCO collective security mechanism (part of the SCO Agreement and accompanying documents), with the help of which Beijing was closely monitoring developments to prevent anti-Chinese alliances. The same document transformed the CIS-China borders into a zone of multilateral economic cooperation. The SCO member states, China in particular, the common antiterrorist and antiseparatist efforts, and the economic prospects were attractive enough for new members, including those that had no common borders with China. Being aware of its competitive advantages over Russia, China hoped, with good reason, to become the SCO's first fiddle, if the organization's economic component came to the fore.

The policy and relationship between China and Kazakhstan (as well other Central Asian republics) is an object of strong attention and analyze from Western, Asian and post-Soviet experts, including the local ones.

As R.Weitz thinks, excluding Russia, Kazakhstan has now become China's most important strategic and economic partner in Central Asia. In 2002, the

Kazakh and Chinese governments signed a “Good Neighbor Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation,” an “Agreement on Cooperation Against Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism” and an “Agreement Between the Chinese Government and the Kazakhstani Government on Preventing Dangerous Military Activities.” In May 2004, the two countries established a China-Kazakhstan Cooperation Committee, which has served as a major governmental mechanism for developing their bilateral relationship. It includes ten specialized sub-committees consisting of policy makers and technical experts from both governments. For example, the Economic and Trade Cooperation Sub-Committee seeks both to increase the overall volume of trade between the two countries and rebalance the exchange to counter Kazakhstan’s growing trade deficit. The bilateral Cooperation Committee also supervises the work of the Cross-Border Rivers Joint Committee, an important group given the tensions that have arisen over water rights and water management between both countries. The Kazakh and Chinese presidents typically meet several times a year in bilateral and multilateral gatherings; other senior government officials often meet more frequently<sup>174</sup>.

In accordance with Dr. Weitz, a major Chinese concern in relations with Kazakhstan is securing Astana’s support for Beijing’s efforts to curb “separatism” among China’s Uighur population. The Chinese government has employed primarily diplomatic initiatives and direct security assistance to bolster Central Asian governments against domestic threats as well as induce them to crack down on East Turkestan activists. Chinese pressure forced the dissolution of the independent associations of Uighurs that had existed in Kazakhstan as well as the closure of the Institute of Uighur Studies that had been based at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Almaty.

Kazakhs and other Central Asians often sympathize with the Uighurs’ separatist aspirations, especially since Uighur activists may have been inspired by the Central Asians’ own successful drives for independence and share the same Muslim faith as do many Central Asians. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan and other Central Asian governments, while allowing Uighurs to practice limited degrees of political activity, do not permit Uighurs to engage in unauthorized activities in China and have deported Uighurs accused of terrorism by the Chinese.

The Chinese expert Guy C.K. Leung thinks, that the Sino-Kazakh cooperation in oil sphere is a part of the global China’s policy for securing its own energy supply system. He calls that as “Chinese NOCs’ global expansion”. All pipelines (including the the lines from Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia) share a common strategic goal: avoid the so called “Malacca Dilemma”<sup>175</sup>. China’s energy security is largely oil-biased and is currently focused more on reliable and adequate supplies than volatilities of prices. Beijing did not pay much attention to energy security

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<sup>174</sup> Weitz R. *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia*. – Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies, 2008, p.103.

<sup>175</sup> Leung Guy C.K. China’s energy security: Perception and reality. *Energy Policy* 39 (2011), pp. 1–8.

until the turn of the century; hence, China's energy security policy is still evolving, far from coordinated and with contradictions.

In the future, China could beef up its energy security efforts in two ways. Firstly, China should pay more attention to energy conservation and efficiency. Given that the transport sector is the largest contributor to China's oil demand and vehicle stock is still small, much work should and could be done in improving average energy efficiency of the sector. This opportunity window is, however, closing quickly; once the vehicle stock has been formed, a new status quo will lock up the sector's energy intensity for a long time. Secondly, China should take a larger role in protecting international energy security, for it underpins domestic energy security.

Debate continues among specialists of Chinese foreign relations as to whether or not Chinese foreign policy and behavior in the post-Cold War period reflect a coherent strategy that is likely to continue, or reflect sometimes contradictory goals and circumstances that could change and in turn change the direction of Chinese foreign policy and behavior. This assessment shows that contradictions and intruding circumstances that could change Chinese foreign policy and behavior seem less salient in China's approach to Central Asia than in other areas of Chinese foreign relations. As a result, it argues that continuity in China's strategy toward the region seems likely for some time to come<sup>176</sup>.

In general, Chinese leaders are seen to be focused on promoting China's economic development while maintaining political and social stability in China. These efforts undergird a fundamental determination of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) administration to reinvigorate and sustain its one-party rule in China. Foreign policy is made to serve these objectives by sustaining an international environment that supports economic growth and stability in China. This is done partly through active and generally moderate Chinese diplomacy designed to reassure neighboring countries and other concerned powers.

Though the course of China's strategy toward Central Asia seems more stable than in other areas of Chinese foreign relations, there remain significant uncertainties clouding the longer term outlook. For one thing, specialists are divided on China's long term goals in the region and how these goals could lead to a major change in China's approach to the region. Some emphasize strongly that the prevailing Chinese interest in regional stability and energy trade will remain core determinants of Chinese policy and will reinforce continuity in the Chinese policy and behavior we see today.

If China were to be seen to seek regional dominance in Central Asia, Russia might adopt more competitive and perhaps confrontational policies that would have a major impact on China's existing approach to the region. At the same time, if Russia successfully pursues a more assertive leadership role in the region, China's leaders presumably would be forced to choose between accommodating

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<sup>176</sup> Sutter R. "Durability in China's Strategy toward Central Asia – Reasons for Optimism". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm). 2008. Vol. 6. No. 1, pp. 3-10.

rising Russian power and possibly losing Chinese equities and influence, or resisting the Russian advances.

The US analyst A.Cohen prepossess that the rise of China also remains a concern. While today China seems to be satisfied with the level of Kazakhstan's energy and natural resources cooperation, in the future, its appetites are likely to increase as its economy surpasses that of the United States by 2030-2050. Kazakhstan's energy strategy aims at maximum diversification of export channels. With this in mind, China's greater assertiveness in pursuing oil reserves enabled Kazakhstan to balance the interests of other global powers represented in the Caspian basin. Moreover, cooperation with China provides additional benefits, such as direct hydrocarbon export without additional tariffs and taxes on transit through third countries. Chinese oil companies have demonstrated that they have more financing, more nimble management, and a greater need than Russian ones to acquire hydrocarbon resources in the Caspian area. It is clear that China has become a global player in the energy market, while Russia, despite its high oil and gas output, is playing catch up<sup>177</sup>.

As Cohen notes, however, the Kazakhstanis are somewhat wary of letting China expand too much in their country. Regional analysts observe "mounting Sinophobia" in Kazakhstan as the country increasingly assumes the role of a cheap raw materials supplier for China and a market for low-priced Chinese goods.<sup>18</sup> Regional primacy, which China may find difficult to achieve in Central Asia through traditional political means, may be sought through economic domination. Wariness and fear of China may become a significant factor in shaping future Kazakh-Chinese relations.

Partnership with Beijing is an important vector for Astana, while China utilizes Kazakhstan's established role in Central Asia to promote its long-term regional agenda, including energy infrastructure projects. Beijing has a clear strategy for Central Asia. With no internal political strings attached to infrastructure loans and investments, some Central Asian states find it easier working with China than with the West, the expert concluded.

Some specialists (mostly Indian) compare the Chinese and Indian Politics toward Kazakhstan and Central Asian states. So, while China is beginning to dominate the region economically, India still perceives Central Asia from a security perspective, primarily related to stability in Afghanistan. Though there have been some recent changes in this approach due to India's energy security needs and a more active foreign policy, Central Asia has yet to acquire the same level of priority in India that China accords to this region<sup>178</sup>.

Patnaik regards, while India remains worried about the Af-Pak situation and is committed to preserve the present dispensation in Kabul which includes the former Northern Alliance elements that are strongly opposed to the Taliban, China is not

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<sup>177</sup> Cohen A. *Kazakhstan: the Road to Independence. Energy Policy and the Birth of a Nation*. – Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2008, pp.91-94.

<sup>178</sup> Patnaik A. "Comparing India's and China's Approaches in Central Asia". *Central Asia Security Policy Brief No 2*. - Bishkek: OSCE Academy, 2010 - 11 p.

greatly worried about the nature of the regime in Afghanistan. Even India's Afghanistan-Central Asia strategy is handicapped by its problematic relations with Pakistan and US antipathy towards Iran. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline cannot go ahead because of India's reluctance to depend on Pakistan for supply of gas. Beijing views Central Asian states as a critical buffer for stabilizing and developing its Xinjiang region, while India views Central Asia as a region to contain terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan. If India had delinked Central Asia from its South Asian strategy, there was a possibility that India's growing influence in Central Asia would have complemented its Af-Pak strategy.

Federico Bordonaro, a Rome-based analyst with the "Power and Interest News Report", argues that the existing Sino-Russian axis is nothing more than a tactical alignment against some US moves. In the medium term it is the Sino-Russian competition that is set to take a more important place in the relations between the two countries, due to the fact that Beijing's search for energy in the region directly affects Russia's strategic energy interests. Though for the time being, shared strategic interests of Russia and China have taken precedence over the emerging economic tension, it is not clear how long it will last.<sup>179</sup>

According to Alexander Cooley, a political scientist at Columbia University, China is taking advantage of the Afghan war and Russia's financial woes to secure its own position in Central Asia. In 2009, as a result, for the first time, China's net trade with Central Asia exceeded that of Russia and the trend is likely to persist in the future. Thus, China is slowly but steadily encroaching upon the Russian sphere of influence. It is prepared to initiate steps that would minimize the influence of other powers like Russia and the US in Central Asia.

The French experts Marlène Laruelle Sébastien Peyrouse in their book "China as a Neighbor" write that since 2000, China has gained significantly in importance in Central Asia and is now in a position to pose a threat to traditional Russian domination in the region. Exactly how China will intensify its presence in Central Asia and how this alliance/competition with Russia will play itself out is going to depend partly on the approaches and attitudes of the Central Asian states themselves. For this reason, it is essential to comprehend not only Chinese and Russian objectives in the region, but also to look at the indigenous viewpoints of Central Asian governments, their visions of the world, and their room for initiative on political and geopolitical issues<sup>180</sup>.

The authors believe that Central Asia has found it difficult to gain recognition as Beijing's equal partner rather than as one element among others in a more global Chinese strategy. Beijing does not actually consider Central Asia to be a fundamental zone of interest comparable to its relations with the West and the Asian world. Only Kazakhstan enjoys a particular status: the China-Kazakhstan partnership is termed "strategic" – the highest of diplomatic epithets – confirming

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<sup>179</sup> Cited in Brian Whitmore, "Central Asia: Behind The Hype, Russia And China Vie For Region's Energy Resources". 2008.

<sup>180</sup> Laruelle M., Peyrouse S. *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies*. – Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2009, p.7.

that Astana is one of Beijing's major political allies in the post-Soviet space. The main idea of these experts consists in that, in Kazakhstan (and Kyrgyzstan), the so called "Chinese question" has already become an indirect motor of social and political debate. China has also become an object of scientific examination throughout the region, as can be seen in the evolution of academic Sinology and the expertise on foreign relations generated by think tanks.

They mean that in the space of a decade, China has become a key, even if indirect, object of analysis in Kazakh and Central Asian policy debates to the extent that they can be openly expressed. In the framework of the "Chinese question" public opinion in Central Asia has found a way to formulate its legitimate anxieties over the threats to national territorial integrity that emerged shortly after independence. It has also influenced the desire to develop their countries without undue external pressure, especially in relation to issues such as cross-border rivers. Moreover, public opinion has also come, if discretely, to evoke its opposition to the selling of natural resources at bargain prices by rent-seeking elites suspected of promoting their personal rather than national interests. The China question provides a way to express social anxieties related to the market economy, such as the development of the labor market, the deterioration of working conditions, and the difficulties faced by the classes of small entrepreneurs who made their fortunes in unregulated commercial sectors. Their fears of possibly massive migratory flows from China are part of the broader context: immigration is a new phenomenon in Central Asian societies, which, lacking an understanding of its underlying economic mechanisms, generally find it brutally confronting.

Within political circles, the "China question" is also an object of virulent polemics. The ruling circles actively promote friendly relations with Beijing, whereas their opponents try to undermine the legitimacy of the former by accusing them of betrayal in the name of Chinese interests. However, in the event that they succeed in attaining governmental powers they will also be constrained to promulgating the same Sinophile discourse as their predecessors. The situation in the other elite circles of Central Asia is more complex. It is probable that in economic groups more distinctly pro- and anti-Chinese lobbies will form in the coming years. Some social groups, such as employees, workers' unions, independent small businessmen, and directors of medium-size companies, tend to concentrate on criticizing competition from the Chinese, while big national groups, both public and private, generally stand to gain from pursuing closer relations.

But Kazakh and Central Asian nations, that China's presence will cause huge problems in the long term. They tend to believe that after centuries of near invisibility, China's rapid rise over recent years has once again made it into a valuable – if cumbersome – neighbor, one which Central Asian states will have to reckon with regardless of future regime changes and geopolitical developments vis-à-vis Russia and the West. The authors conclude, that the real losers of the Russo-Chinese alliance in Central Asia at present seem to be the United States and the European Union. Not only does this alliance limit their capacity for action in the region, but it complicates political relations with local governments over

questions of good governance and democratization, and slows down the setting-up of western companies in the Central Asian economies.

Previously, Peyrouse noted that Kazakh concerns domination over Chinese energy China's presence in the Kazakh energy market is welcome: it reduces Russia's predominance and will enable the collection of transit rights on Uzbek and Turkmen gas, and even on Russian petroleum. In addition, the Chinese companies, supported by the political powers and their "good neighbour" policies, often grant contracts that are more favourable to KazMunayGaz than those of the large international consortiums. China's huge presence gives rise to concern, however, in some Kazakh political and economic circles<sup>181</sup>.

Additionally, environmental risk is also mentioned regularly. Furthermore, China's refusal to take account of expert archaeological assessments carried out along the route of the pipeline has resulted in the destruction of valuable prehistoric and ancient sites. The Kazakh government has kept a certain number of other fundamental questions shrouded in mystery, such as which country will be responsible for repair and security of the pipeline.

J.Bosbotinis (Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies, King's College London) writes that in assessing the role and importance of Central Asia in Chinese national strategy, there are three questions of particular importance. First, why does Central Asia matter to China? Second, how does Central Asia serve Chinese strategic interests? And he responds, Central Asia's position on China's western flank effectively means it can serve as either a "back-door" to China via the province of Xinjiang, or it can serve as a bridge linking China to South Asia, the Middle East and potentially, Europe, bypassing the vulnerable maritime routes of Southeast Asia. This enables China to utilize Central Asia as a supporting pillar of its national strategy, in particular with respect to efforts to improve energy security and national security<sup>182</sup>.

The region also provides an area where Russia and China through a commonality of interests, have successfully developed a positive cooperative relationship, albeit with competitive elements, but nonetheless enhancing Chinese security, and influence in Central Asia. Cooperation with Russia especially via the SCO has enabled China to raise its military-security profile in Central Asia and in the longer-term perhaps more broadly, whilst staying for the most part, within the bounds of its "peaceful rise". In addition, China has prioritized economic relations in its policies toward Central Asia, partly so as not to antagonize Russia, but also to develop the confidence of its Central Asian neighbors. Central Asia provides China with an enhanced room-for-manoeuvre.

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<sup>181</sup> Peyrouse S. *The Economic Aspects of the Chinese-Central Asia Rapprochement* Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies, 2008. - 73 p. idem. "Sino-Kazakh Relations: A Nascent Strategic Partnership". *China-Brief*. 2008. Vol. VIII. Issue 21, pp. 11-15. idem. "Chinese Economic Presence in Kazakhstan". *China Perspective*. 2008. No 3, pp. 34-49.

<sup>182</sup> Bosbotinis J. "Sustaining the Dragon, Dodging the Eagle and Barring the Bear? Assessing the Role and Importance of Central Asia in Chinese National Strategy". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm) 2010. Vol. 8. No. 1, pp. 73-94.



China's engagement with the regional states and Russia, has contributed to improving security on China's western flank. The latter point highlights a potential challenge to Chinese interests in Central Asia, that is, should the current Sino-Russian cooperative relationship switch to a competitive dynamic, or in the longer-term, renewed rivalry. The above-mentioned advantages Central Asia confers upon Chinese strategic planners are contingent upon the Central Asian regional system being permissive. If the regional system were to be contested or hostile, it would significantly complicate China's wider national strategy and raise the level of risk to Chinese national security. The benefits of a stable, permissive Central Asia will thus ensure it remains a major priority for China in the mid-to-long term.

The Turkish expert Zeki Furkan Küçük means, China completed its economic development and, just like the Central Powers before World War I, began looking for more energy in every part of the world. In this context, we need to know whether China will follow an aggressive policy like the Central Powers or whether it will feed its economy by compromising with other powers. In this context, China's western neighbor, Kazakhstan, is of great importance to it in terms of energy. Its geographical proximity, the safety of the transportation routes, and the absence of any hostile rivals in the region are the main advantages of Kazakh energy for China. On the other hand, improving energy ties with China is also beneficial for Kazakhstan; it is dependent on Russia for sending its oil to the world markets because it does not have enough pipelines and transportation routes. This is why diversifying customers is crucial for Kazakhstan in order to continue its economic development. So China, with its increasing energy demand, presents a great opportunity for Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan can be a much more important energy actor if it manages to diversify its market and transportation routes.

Küçük regards the problem from both sides: as the beneficial for China and Kazakhstan. China is the fastest developing country today and it may become the largest economy in next couple of decades. Sustainability of economic development is the most important aim of the Chinese authorities. The economy is the key that opens the door for China to become a superpower. It is also using its economy as a diplomatic weapon against other countries in order to implement its policy. In this respect, Caspian energy sources, especially Kazakhstani, appear very propitious for China. China has made investments in Africa and South America in order to implement its source diversification policy and curtail its dependence on the U.S.-dominated Middle East. But Caspian sources are the most feasible and profitable for China. The geographic proximity, security of the transportation routes, and suitable political atmosphere of the region are the main elements that make these sources appealing to China as a substitution for Middle East oil.

On the other hand, building energy relations is also beneficial for the Caspian countries. Kazakhstan is the most propitious in this respect since it borders directly on China. Kazakhstan is dependent on Russia economically and has to send its oil to Russia first in order to reach the world markets since it does not have enough pipelines. This situation makes Kazakhstan heavily dependent on Russia and causes great handicaps for Kazakhstan in its transition to an independent nation

state. In order to stand on its own feet and be an independent country in every respect on the political arena, Kazakhstan must diversify its customers. Oil income provides the main flow of revenue into the Kazakh economy which means that customer diversification will create competition under free market conditions and increase this revenue. Kazakhstan is in a very suitable geographical position for diversifying its customers; it has a long border with China and Russia, two of the main economic and political actors in the region, and is geographically close to other important economic actors, such as Japan, South Korea, and Turkey. China is the most suitable of these countries thanks to its giant economy, population, and energy hunger. China is also making large investments in Kazakhstan both in the energy and other sectors. Beijing does not have a colonial approach to Kazakhstan and the other Central Asia countries, it only has mutual interests at heart. This is why the Kazakh authorities prefer Chinese companies for their investments<sup>183</sup>.

Some experts tried to regard the Indian factor in the relationship between China and Central Asia. So, India is not yet among the top ten countries involved in the exploitation of oil and gas resources in Central Asia. It will have difficulties finding a place on this list considering the already established involvement of Russian and Western companies, and the Chinese stakes in this area. The Indian government has been experiencing difficulties in creating a secure environment for Indian companies to enter the Central Asian market. Meanwhile, India has been trying to improve connectivity between South and Central Asia. Local actors such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have managed to capitalize on the existing great power competition for their own benefit. These local leaders' pragmatic push to advance their own regime and national interests has certainly made Central Asian geopolitics more complex.

In the 2000s, the U.S., EU and India were the relatively weaker players in this "New Great Game". The bid by Washington and Brussels to promote democratic institutions in the region was interpreted as an attempt to undermine the current regimes; subsequently this has reduced their influence with the Central Asian leaders. As for India, it is thus far experiencing limited success in its attempt to promote its own geopolitical and economic interests in the region. However, this author expects India's presence and influence in Central Asia to grow as potentially local leaders would eventually seek to use India as an additional counterweight in the region<sup>184</sup>.

The Russian scientists Maksim Bratersky and Andrei Suzdaltsev believe, that China's second economic interest in the region is to turn it into a sales market for Chinese goods, particularly those produced in its western, relatively undeveloped, and impoverished region. As of today, China's trade turnover with the Central Asian countries comprises a small part of its foreign trade, but it is growing and includes not only raw material, but also products from the machine-building,

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<sup>183</sup> Küçük Zeki Furkan. "China's Energy Policy toward Central Asia and the Importance of Kazakhstan". *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 15. 2009. № 2, pp. 33-46.

<sup>184</sup> Jen-kun Fu. "Reassessing a "New Great Game" between India and China in Central Asia". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm) 2010. Vol. 8. No. 1, pp. 17-32.

electronics, and high-tech industries. Chinese investments in Central Asia (with the exception of the energy sphere) are relatively small and concentrated in the textile, mining, and food industry. They are hindered by local corruption and the backwardness of the regional transportation network. China is gradually resolving several of these problems by linking its railroad network with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. It is trying to influence the authorities of the regional states at the political level in order to create a safer and more attractive climate for its investments.

Martin C. Spechler (Professor of Economics at Indiana University, United States), regarding to China's activity in Central Asia, notes that most of its direct involvement is temporary and is intended to diversify its sources of fossil fuels. This can reduce world prices slightly, as long-term monopolization of energy is infeasible, and should bother Russia most of all<sup>185</sup>. The experts Jan Šír and Slavomír Horák (Institute of International Studies, Charles University, Prague) say about China as an emerging superpower in Central Asia, regarding its enormous and growing presence in regional oil and gas industry<sup>186</sup>.

Michael Clarke (Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, Australia) connects the China's Central Asian strategy with its policy towards Xinjiang. He says that China's position in Central Asia and Xinjiang is therefore clearly linked in Beijing's perception to its ability to successfully pursue its strategy of "peaceful rise" or "great enterprise of national resurgence". As the preceding overview of China's strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia suggests, Beijing is arguably in a stronger position in the region than at any time in the history of China-based state's attempts to control Xinjiang. Externally, Beijing has succeeded in leveraging its developing political and economic clout in Central Asia to enlist these states, both in a bilateral and multilateral sense, to resolve long-standing border disputes, develop security and military cooperation and undermine and control pro-separatist movements or organizations amongst the Uyghur diaspora in the region. For China's position in Xinjiang, and hence Central Asia, the 'key link', to appropriate a favorite phrase of the Maoist idiom, has proven to be the realization that the region's "geographic template" should not be perceived as an obstacle to integration but as an asset to be utilized in this enduring project<sup>187</sup>.

China's long-term economic goal in the region is to turn it into a free market - a source of raw material for the Chinese economy and a sales market for Chinese goods. China's economic interests are clashing in this area with the corresponding interests of Russia and the EU. The former is cautious about the idea of a free market in the region, while the latter, like China, is interested in gaining access to

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<sup>185</sup> Spechler M.C. "Why Does China Have No Business in Central Asia?". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm). 2009. Volume 7. No. 2, pp. 3-15.

<sup>186</sup> Šír J., Horák S. "China as an Emerging Superpower in Central Asia: The View from Ashkhabad". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm) 2008. Vol. 6. No. 2, pp. 75-88.

<sup>187</sup> Clarke M. "China's Integration of Xinjiang with Central Asia: Securing a "Silk Road" to Great Power Status". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm) 2008. Vol. 6. No. 2, pp. 89-111.

the energy resources of Central Asia and the Caspian. Development of the pipeline network connecting Central Asia with the western regions of China is transferring the rivalry between the PRC and EU to the sphere of geopolitical competition. Keeping in mind that more attractive prices have traditionally developed in the European energy resource market than in China's developing market, the hydrocarbon exporter countries have a choice. But China, which is less hampered by political problems when creating energy communications, clearly has an advantage over the EU<sup>188</sup>.

The other CIS-expert (from Azerbaijan) is sure that energy security is keeping China in Central Asia; in the future, its dependence on energy sources will draw Beijing deeper into regional security relations<sup>189</sup>. The newly independent states which appeared in Central Asia in the early 1990s supplied China with new security-related ideas about the region. The common geographical and ethnoconfessional factors it produced in the course of time made Central Asia the most functional space connecting China with Central Eurasia. China finds the region geopolitically important when it comes to its relations with the other powers, the United States in particular, while it is moving toward the status of a superpower of the 21st century. This makes Central Asia the stable strategic rear and source of energy China needs for its economic development.

To achieve this, Beijing has settled the most urgent issues with Russia and the Central Asian countries, set up a regional cooperative environment, of which the SCO is a part, and tried to prevent domination of any other power in the region. It is encouraging cooperation with Russia and the Central Asian states in the gas and oil and transportation-communication spheres. This process is not entirely smooth, the main obstacles being found in Russian-Chinese relations. Their competition might upturn the stability of China's "strategic rear" not only in the northern (Russian), but also in the northwestern (Central Asian) sectors. At the same time, on the road to world leadership China will become even more involved in Central Asia and the other Central Eurasian segments. Its newly found power will allow Beijing to bridge the relatively long distances between them and China.

The experts from Uzbekistan mean there are objective reasons for China's economic presence in CA, the main one being the absence of a single economic space (primarily industrial, as well as transportation, customs, and so on) and signs of economic integration in the region. Fragmentation of CA's economic space and the existing breakdown of the region's single industrial and transportation infrastructure into national segments are preventing, to a certain extent, Chinese companies from engaging in long-term project and investment activity (for

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<sup>188</sup> Bratersky Maksim, Suzdaltsev Andrei. "Central Asia: a region of economic rivalry among Russia, China, the U.S., and the EU". *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 15. 2009. № 2, pp. 78-89.

<sup>189</sup> Eyvazov J. "China in Central Eurasia: Security Interests and Geopolitical Activity" *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 11. 2010. № 1, pp. 8-18.

example, in the advanced processing of raw material); this is precisely why the region is regarded as a raw material appendage of the Chinese economy<sup>190</sup>.

As a result, the growing dimensions of China's economic presence in CA are giving the region's countries the status of raw material sources. China is evidently quite happy with this state of affairs, while the Central Asian countries, in turn, are not striving to change their status. This can only be done by accelerating regional economic integration, about which much is being said, but little done. It would seem that the format of economic relations developing is extremely undesirable from the viewpoint of China's, and particularly the CA countries', long-term interests since the orientation of China's economic activity in the region toward the production and export of industrial raw materials will promote resource depletion in the region's countries and regression of the processing branches of industry. In order for China's economic penetration into CA to be mutually advantageous and equally meet the long-term interests of the PRC and the region's countries, it would be wise for Beijing to put the main emphasis on building mechanisms of multidimensional and full-fledged economic cooperation within the SCO.

D.Babayan concludes that Central Asia's energy resources are among the most important factors prompting China's regional activity, since access to them is becoming increasingly urgent for China's rapidly growing economy. The PRC's hydro policy is an extremely effective lever of influence on the Central Asian countries. But it will only be applied as an extreme measure in the event that the geopolitical situation in the region takes an abrupt turn that is unfavorable to China<sup>191</sup>.

An Uzbek expert A.Khodzhaev thinks that China itself is at a stage of comprehensive development and might soon wield influence over the entire Eurasian continent. Its population grows along with its political credibility. The openness of Chinese society and the liberalization of its economy create the conditions for China to enter the world community. At the present stage of international relations, the development of China will have an increasingly significant political, economic, and cultural impact on Central Asia. China considers Central Asia to be a vital zone on which its own internal security in Xinjiang depends, but also as a source of income and of low-cost raw materials, a market for its goods, and a corridor to Europe and the Middle East. It invests its capital in energy exploration and in the development of transportation infrastructure to China, but refrains from investing large sums of capital for the development of local production, solving unemployment problems, and increasing local wealth. Beijing looks to the SCO as a mechanism of implementing its Central Asian policy and guaranteeing security in this region. Security, however, largely

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<sup>190</sup> Paramonov V., Stokov A. "China in Central Asia: Energy Interests and Energy Policy". *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 11. 2010. № 3, pp. 18-30. Paramonov V., Stokov A., Stolpovskiy O. "Stages of China's Economic Policy in Central Asia" *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 11. 2010. № 1, pp. 107-116. Paramonov V., Stokov A., Stolpovskiy O. "China in Central Asia". *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 11. 2010. № 4, pp. 66-78.

<sup>191</sup> Babayan D. Op.cit.

depends on peaceful coexistence of all great powers. The SCO can be a guarantor of a balance of interests in Central Asia only if its activities involve all countries interested in developing relations with the Central Asian region<sup>192</sup>.

The Kazakh expert (currently, vice-secretary of Kazakhstan's Security Council) Marat Shakhutdinov regarding bilateral relations says, that Central Asia and Kazakhstan cannot ignore the important facts, following China's currently moving up to a higher rung in the world hierarchy. Moreover, they simply have to make use of them in their own national interests. China's fortification is a sustainable and long-term trend, so cooperation with it can only be to Kazakhstan's advantage, particularly if we keep in mind the complementariness of the two countries' economies. Kazakhstan is acting very pragmatically. It is not losing sight of the general context of what is going on in the world. All the global and regional players are actively cooperating with China. Other countries, including Iran and the Russia, are also signing contracts for the delivery of energy resources to China<sup>193</sup>.

The Kazakh expert Zh.Saurbek concludes that the future Sino-Kazakh cooperation must be in the following formats. First of all, the creation of a sensible, regulatory, institutional framework governing cross-border energy flows across Caspian states and China, based on a consensus among the stakeholders, needs to be considered. A good example of such cooperation could be the Energy Charter Treaty, which created a balanced and efficient framework for international cooperation, and standards of international rules and principles between the net exporters of energy and importers. Second, the problems of cooperation can be tackled by specific multilateral organizations such as SCO and others. The SCO is a promising trans-regional organization which could act as a platform to mitigate rivalry and distrust by entrenching interdependent links between member states. Kazakhstan needs to pay special attention to all neighbors, including China which has a capacious and stable market.

Kazakh-Chinese energy relations and the construction of the Kazakh-Chinese pipeline in particular could provide a basis for further collaboration between all Central Asian countries, and between Russia and China. This collaboration should not be limited by energy interests but should rather be treated as a starting point for the transformation towards a complex partnership with the inclusion of substantive and sensitive issues in the region. Successful energy relations are evidence of economic effectiveness and political cooperation between them<sup>194</sup>.

The well-known Kazakhstan's sinologist Prof. K.Syroezhkin writes about the fears concerning Chinese presence in Kazakhstan, particularly in oil and gas sector. He wrote that Most debatable and sensitive issue is the Chinese presence in

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<sup>192</sup> Khodzhaev A. "The Central Asian Policy of the People's Republic of China". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm) 2009. Vol. 7. No. 1, pp. 9-28.

<sup>193</sup> Shaikhutdinov Marat. "Kazakhstan and the strategic Interests of the global Players in Central Asia". *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 15. 2009. № 2, pp. 134-142.

<sup>194</sup> Saurbek Zh. "Kazakh-Chinese Energy Relations: Economic Pragmatism or Political Cooperation?" *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm) 2008. Vol. 6. No. 1, pp. 79-94.

Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector. This issue gained particular urgency in the fall of 2006, when China, having purchased PetroKazakhstan assets in 2005, expressed its interest in the Nations Energy Company, another foreign company operating in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector. Deputies of the Mazhilis (parliament) expressed their concern, stressing that the issue directly affects national security. Later this subject was picked up by the press (not only the opposition press). The idea that "the presence of China's oil and gas sector in Kazakhstan threatens its national security" entered in the public consciousness and became a widespread topic of discussion<sup>195</sup>.

Indeed it is undisputable that the companies with Chinese capital control about 25 percent of the oil production in Kazakhstan. Given the growing shortage of energy sources in China, this figure is likely to grow. But this should not provoke any panic. This figure cannot be compared with the share of other foreign companies in the oil and gas sector. Contracts for royalties, signed with the Chinese, are much more advantageous than those signed with Western companies. Virtually all companies acquired by China currently give shares to KazMunayGas. All the oil produced by China in Kazakhstan will travel in the Sino-Kazakh pipeline, earning considerable transit income. Finally, China has bought registered offshore private companies at very favorable conditions for their owners, so the first question of those concerned about the Chinese presence in Kazakhstan oil and gas sector should be to address how, why, and under what conditions these assets were turned over to private hands.

The real concern is government officials' attempts to undermine the scope of the Chinese presence in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector. Nevertheless we cannot but take into account the trend of Chinese presence increase in Central Asia. Now more than ever China needs both new sources of raw materials, especially energy, as well as markets for its products. From this point of view, Central Asia and especially Kazakhstan are quite attractive. However, what is observed in trade and economic relations between China and the Central Asian states is a normal process that fits into the worldwide trend of economic globalization. Another issue is that China itself and Chinese specificities, as well as the nature of the relationship between interested players in the region, potentially contain threats to Kazakhstan's national security. This should always be kept in mind when the presence of China in Central Asia is assessed.

Despite the fact that their opinions are often widely divergent, Kazakh and Central Asian experts can be placed into two overarching categories, the optimists and the pessimists. In the geopolitical domain pragmatism prevails. In fact, with a few rare exceptions, the experts are careful not to put undue emphasis on the Chinese threat and are even critical of the SCO's inefficiency, which they see as limited to diplomatic exercises with little practical impact. From this multiplicity of attitudes and opinions a general sentiment emerges, namely that the future of

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<sup>195</sup> Syroezhkin K. "Social Perceptions of China and the Chinese: A View from Kazakhstan". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm) 2009. Vol. 7. No. 1, pp. 45-46.

Central Asia resides in its ability to maintain a balance between two, or even three, powers – Russia, China, and the West. It is alleged that exclusive domination by any one of them would inevitably create a source of tensions, while Chinese domination is perceived to be particularly dangerous.

The Kazakh and Central Asian experts express concern about the potential problems that their Chinese neighbor might cause and present skeptical viewpoints on the continuation of friendly relations between Russia and China.

In the energy sector, the unanimity is inverted. Central Asian states see their opening up to countries other than Russia as a way of guaranteeing autonomy from Moscow. Indeed, it is seen as beneficial to Central Asia to have Moscow lose its exclusive zone of influence. Experts as well as politicians are on the whole pleased that Russia is no longer simply able to act as though it were in “conquered territories”, and that just like the other players, it is obliged to develop strategies to conquer Central Asian markets, with all the compromises this entails. The fears conveyed by certain experts, who worry that China might take control of these sectors, are for the moment rather implausible, especially given how under-exploited the energy, electricity, and precious minerals markets are.

## **9. The Sino-Kazakh Relations and Energy Cooperation**

The Kazakhstan - China relations have passed in the formation a way from mainly trade and economic contacts to level of strategic partnership. And, Kazakhstan is the unique state in Central Asia, co-operating with China at the given level.<sup>196</sup>

Mutual interest of development of cooperation has arisen long before finding of independence by Kazakhstan. Still being in the status of socialist republic, Kazakhstan accepted active participation in adjustment of contacts with Xinjiang-Uigur autonomous area. During this period two-way communications were characterized by prevalence of a scientific and technical component in trade and economic relations. For Kazakhstan it was important to leave from under centre influence in foreign trade activities questions, and for China - to use material and scientific potential of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic for development of own territories.

After an establishment of official diplomatic relations between China and Kazakhstan, the purposes of two countries within the limits of interstate interaction were essentially modified. China aspired, «using an opportunity», to solve significant problems of its foreign policy: a problem of borders, and also restrictions of influence of ideology of pan-Turkism, political Islam and ethnic separatism on frontier with Central Asia region.

For Kazakhstan during this period in the foreground there was a decision of essential economic problems. From the beginning and to the middle of 90th years the Kazakhstan market in literal sense was filled with the Chinese goods, and many

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<sup>196</sup> Kaukenov A. “Kazakhstan-China Relations: Unity and Struggle of Interests”. *Central Asia's Affairs* (Almaty, KazISS). 2009. No 3, pp.19-21.



inhabitants of the young state have found themselves in new quality of «shops-tourists». The given processes have been so spontaneous and uncontrollable, that in 1994 at the initiative of the Kazakhstan authorities the visa regime have been brought and trade and economic relations gradually began to come to more ordered condition.

In second half of 1990th years the approaches of China concerning its policy in Central Asia in general and in Kazakhstan in particular have a little changed. Not only economic interests began to be put in the head of a corner, but also geostrategic. Priority position in relations of the Peoples Republic of China with all states of Central Asia is occupied with questions of collective security. China, always differing realness and pragmatism, did not aspire to take of a dominating position in foreign policy strategy of Kazakhstan, however has distinctly raised a claim to becoming here to one of leading forces<sup>197</sup>. Border questions have been besides, settled, campaign on «to struggle against Islamic fundamentalism» and «ethnic separatism» was actively conducted.

During this period the arrival on the Kazakhstan market of the large Chinese companies, in particular CNPC became not less important. In 1995 joint-stock company «CNPC-Aktobemunaigaz» has been created, which taking serious positions in power market of RK till now.

Since 2000 there is a new coil of the Kazakhstan - China relations, during this period questions on interstate border have been definitively solved, and the total of the signed agreements of different level has broken all records. China undertakes a number of active actions on escalating of the economic presence in RK and simultaneously solves significant for it geostrategic problems. Among them, strengthening of a competition to Russia and the USA for access to Kazakhstan resources and manufactures, and also struggle for influence on local elite. Use of mechanism of SCO for strengthening of own positions in system of regional security becomes the major tool of the Chinese policy.<sup>198</sup>

In 2005 Kazakhstan and China signed the agreement on an establishment of relations of strategic partnership. Since the same period China develops the vigorous activity for access to power resources of RK, commissioning of oil pipeline Atasu-Alashankou becomes the basic victory in the given field.

Thus, it is impossible to deny, that relations of two countries differ constant positive dynamics and can officially apply for a rank of the most exemplary and the most perspective in region. In these relations there are only few not resolved questions, also are observed full solidarity on key problems.

Spheres of coincidence of interests are scaled and perspective. At regional level, first of all, it is the interest in preservation of regional security. Actually, and the contract on an establishment of relations of strategic partnership has been signed in Astana by summer of 2005 after «tulip revolution» in Bishkek and May

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<sup>197</sup> Zhao Huasheng “Zhongguode zhongya waijiao” Beijing Shishi 2008 P. 149

<sup>198</sup> Matusov, Artyom. “Energy Cooperation in the SCO: Club or Gathering?” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*. 2007. Vol.5. №. 3, p.53.

disorders in Andizhan, and also the geopolitical perturbations which have followed that.

Secondly, desire to see region economically stable and secure. Interest of Astana, in this case, is quite obvious. And China, wishing to have near to own western provinces a stable source of raw and financial resources, and also a rich commodity market, more, than is logical. Within the limits of mutual relations on which unanimity is observed, a mainstream is power cooperation. Kazakhstan party is interested in extensive realization of raw materials, and also in diversification of ways of export of power resources. The Chinese party, accordingly, is interested in their acquisition and diversification of import.

The country in which China has recently reaffirmed its place as Central Asia's key energy partner is Kazakhstan. At the beginning of November 2008, CNPC and KazMunayGas signed an export agreement for 5 bcm of gas annually to China. This gas is extracted from the Aktobe sites being exploited by Chinese (AktobeMunaiGas) and to date has mainly exported gas to Europe via Russian gas pipelines. Both companies also confirmed the two-phase construction of a Sino-Kazakhstani gas pipeline, which will form part of the great Sino-Central Asia gas pipeline. It will travel over 1,300 km from the Uzbek border to the Khorgos border post and will include five compression stations along its path. Several sections are to be constructed: one between the Uzbek border and Shymkent, another between Almaty and Khorgos, and lastly above all a North-South section which will link the Beyneu-Akbulak deposits to Shymkent via Kzyl-Orda, with a first-phase capacity of 5 bcm by 2011 and full capacity of 10 bcm per year from 2014-2015. Half of the 10 bcm will go to China, while the other half will be reserved for domestic Kazakhstani consumption. The development of the Sino-Central Asian gas pipeline will therefore enable Astana to get significant transit rights for both Turkmen (Ashgabat is going to deliver 30 bcm to China) and Uzbek (probably 10 bcm) gas.

Lastly, some days later, China confirmed its nuclear partnership with Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstan National Atomic Energy Agency, Kazatomprom, has signed two agreements with the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) and China Guandun Nuclear Power. Kazatomprom's director Mukhtar Dzhakishev announced that from now the company aims to participate directly in the construction of Chinese nuclear power plants so it can gain experience in this sector and offer its services to countries other than China. There are also plans for the joint exploitation of uranium deposits in Kazakhstan: those of Irkol (Kzyl-Orda region) which has estimated reserves of 750 tons, and Semizbay (Akmolinsk region) with reserves of 500 tons for CGNPC, and Zhalpak (South-Kazakhstan region) whose reserves are put at 750 tons for CNNC.

The implications of this strengthening of China's presence are multiple. China is succeeding in making inroads into Central Asia at Russia's expense. In Kazakhstan, China, which has already produced a massive rise in Central Asian gas prices and ended the Moscow-imposed regime of low prices, is resolute about challenging Gazprom's monopoly. The prospect of China-Kazakhstan cooperation in gas is not limited to 10 bcm of the Beyneu-Shymkent section: the possibility of

extending the pipeline's capacity enabling it to carry a share of production from the immense Karachaganak site is also mentioned regularly, causing concern in Gazprom.

On the Kazakhstani side, one can notice the transformation of Kazatomprom into a holding capable of managing the whole nuclear cycle from the mining of primary resources to the construction of reactors including the enrichment of uranium. In fact, since 2006 Kazakhstan has had a 10 percent stake in the shares of the American maker of nuclear reactors, Westinghouse Electric Co., via Toshiba. The Ulbinsk metallurgy factory, which currently only operates at 30 percent of its capacity, could then become a key piece of Kazakhstani strategy, which is to respond to the ever growing demand of China and Japan for nuclear energy. Kazakhstan's considerable uranium resources (almost 20 percent of known world resources, estimated at between one and one-and-a-half million tons) justifies its global ambitions since it could produce, according to official figures, 15,000 tons of uranium by 2010, 27,000 tons by 2020, and maintain this level until 2050.

KazMunayGas' rapprochement with China has a triple effect in the energy domain: Kazakhstan will win the rights to transit Turkmen and Uzbek gas, accentuate Gazprom's feeling of no longer being the master of the game, and put an end, at least in part, to the gas shortages in the southern regions of the country. Indeed, the Beyneu-Shymkent-Almaty section will enable a three- or fourfold increase in the quantity of gas available in the Zhambul and Alma-Ata regions as well as in the city of Almaty itself. The Kazakhstani authorities will therewith be rid of a related problem, that of the difficult partnership with Tashkent concerning the delivery of gas. Uzbekistan in effect tends not to provide regular deliveries or to play at gas blackmail in its relations with Kazakhstan.

Astana also hopes to avoid the critiques issuing from a section of the political class, which is concerned about Beijing's grip over the Kazakhstani energy sector and denounces the sale of national resources to the Chinese neighbor. This is the case, for example, with the project for the Ekibastuz electricity plant in the Pavlodar region and the high-voltage line Ekibastuz-Xinjiang, which have no provision for connection to neighboring Kazakh consumers. The power stations will thus increase Kazakhstan's export potential but not remedy domestic consumption shortages. The Sino-Kazakhstani gas pipeline will avoid this criticism as it will also service the local population.

Spheres of disagreements are more ordinary. More often at official level it is preferred not to notice them at all. Nevertheless, these moments give the fullest picture of a real condition of Kazakhstan -China relations.

It is not necessary to argue that traditionally settlement of boundary questions is considered as the main achievement of bilateral interaction. Undoubtedly, signing of corresponding agreements between Kazakhstan and China has huge value for both countries. However a painful detail in this question throughout many years there is a problem of the trans-boundary rivers. Largest of them - Irtysh, Ili and Tekes. On each of these rivers the Chinese party develops the corresponding irrigational projects which part is already started in operation. As a

result on territory of Kazakhstan every year comes ever less water and its ecological indicators all are worse.

Now these problems dare within the limits of the joint commissions, however Chinese party in every possible way tightens and brakes the process of the decision of the given question. Data on work of the bilateral commission are practically closed for researchers, and prospects of the decision of a question are foggiest. It is not excluded also, that China uses the factor of the trans-boundary rivers for rendering of constant influence on Kazakhstan for the purpose of its deduction in sphere of the political-economical interests.

In general, the problem of the decision of the question on the trans-boundary rivers is indirectly connected with one of base problems of the Kazakhstan - China relations - domination of China during negotiating process practically on all an interaction direction. There are a lot of reasons for it. Kazakhstan diplomacy has gathered necessary force and experience for conducting the international negotiations at so high level not so long ago. Chinese, with their accurately worked foreign policy and economic strategy, confidently suppressed Kazakhstan colleagues. Having thus considerable financial possibilities as an additional trump of influence.

Economic cooperation of Kazakhstan and China was characterized by constant growth of goods turnover though last months of crisis have broken given dynamics. Nevertheless, according to Kazakhstan sources, goods turnover of Kazakhstan and China in 2008 has made 12,24 bln US dollars, having increased in comparison with 2007 on a quarter. Thus, the trading balance of Kazakhstan with China remains positive and export of goods from Kazakhstan to China has exceeded volume of import to 1,7 times. (Export of goods from Kazakhstan in the Peoples Republic of China having made \$7,7 bln US dollar, growth of 37 %).

At the same time, it is necessary to note high imbalance of the given turn - both geographically, and structurally. 75 % of goods turnover between the Peoples Republic of China and RK are necessary on Xinjian-Uigur autonomous area. It is quite obvious to involve purposefully aspiration of official bodies of China necessary resources from neighboring countries in certain region, having limited activity of Kazakhstan businessmen by raw materials deliveries. It strengthens raw character of Kazakhstan economy and limits possibilities of development of processing manufactures, formations of modern competitive branches.

The positive balance in trade and economic cooperation also demands additional comments. First ten positions of Kazakhstan export to China occupy mineral oil, various kinds of metals - first of all copper. According to data of Kazakhstan customs, in 2008 the raw materials share in Kazakhstan export to the Peoples Republic of China has made 91 %. Import consists of mainly finished goods, on the first place of a pipe for oil-and gas pipelines, boring and tunneling cars, metal ware, truck cranes and etc. And the goods imported from China, are non-comparable to export from RK and on such indicator, as a variety of production. The quantity of names of imported production makes about 5420 units while the quantity of names of exported production makes only 167 units.

Other destructive factor in development of the Kazakhstan - China relations is activity of the Chinese enterprises on the territory of RK. Number of the registered Chinese companies several times more than number really operating, and among the last - the great bulk is focused on trading-purchasing activity, that also reflects the general character of the Kazakhstan - China economic cooperation, that is unprofitable for development of Kazakhstan economy.

Speaking about problems of Kazakhstan - China relations it is necessary to mention a problem of the Chinese migration in RK. While data of migratory services, and also the general stability of situation say that the situation is in this sphere under the control. Nevertheless, in case of mass attraction of the Chinese labor within the limits of those or other projects, and also increase in number of the Chinese enterprises - that also occurs recently – make a great risk, that the Chinese Diaspora in RK can appear.

For existence of the Chinese communities very fast forming of own infrastructure, adjustment of communications with local authorities, formation practically closed and uncontrollable from the outside of the associations formed by a principle clannishnesses and differing accurate hierarchy all over the world is characteristic. Thereupon, it is necessary to mention potential of influence of the decision on introduction of RK into the WTO. It is not necessary to forget, that for members of the Organization the requirement of «labor market liberalization» operates, and it will open to the Chinese citizens additional possibilities to make to people of Kazakhstan a serious competition on the labor market.

Taking into account that on conditions of the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of China undertakes to observe accurately interests of Chinese including abroad, attempts of power influence on such communities will by all means cause serious complication of relations with China.

Current crisis would undoubtedly affect development of the Kazakhstan - China relations. It is connected by that the steady mechanism of economic cooperation effectively working throughout many years, gives serious failures that causes necessity of search of new forms of interaction.

As a whole, the arrangement of Kazakhstan in the neighborhood with such political and economic giant does priority the Chinese vector of the Kazakhstan foreign policy. We will make bold to declare, that maintenance originally civilized world order of the XXI-st century leaning on will of the majority of members of the world community, its real and potential centers of influence, will depend, including, and from success of developing confidential partnership of strategic character between Kazakhstan and China, stable Kazakhstan - China relations on the basis of the general understanding of new architecture of the international relations aimed at construction of the fair, nonviolent and world equal in rights formed today.

Sino-Kazakh gas negotiations began in 2002 between Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Karim Masimov and Chinese National Oil and Gas Corporation President Mi Fucai. The first feasibility studies examined the possibility of a connection with Turkmen gas via the Central Asia-Center gas pipeline, although the latter could then enter into competition with Kazakh gas.

In 2006, the Kazakh authorities signed an initial construction agreement with the CNPC and its PetroChina subsidiary. A new feasibility study will take place during 2007 and construction will begin in 2008. The gas pipeline will have a capacity of 10 bcm in 2009, and then expand to 30 bcm in 2012. Two routes are currently being studied, one southern (Chelkar, Kzyl-Orda, Chymkent, Almaty) and one through the center (Astana-Karaganda). The southernmost route appears to be the most profitable because it would also fulfill the need for gas delivery to energy-poor southern Kazakhstan. The new layout could join with the already-existing Bukhara-Tashkent-Bishkek-Almaty gas pipeline. The gas would come from the Kazakh Karachaganak, Tengiz, and Kashagan fields, and maybe from Turkmenistan. In 2010, Kazakhstan hopes to produce nearly 50 bcm annually, of which half would be intended for the domestic market and approximately 20 bcm for export.

These Central Asian gas pipeline projects have only made sense since China decided to build an intra-Chinese pipeline, the West-East Gas Pipeline. It goes from the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang (Lunnan gas field) to join Shanghai through Gansu, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, Anhui, and Jiangsu over a distance of more than 4,200 km. The first section was started in 2003, and it was put in operation at the end of 2004. Plans exist to upgrade its capacity from 12 bcm to 17 bcm by 2007. The West-East Gas Pipeline will thus have sufficient capacity to accommodate a portion of Central Asian gas and to transfer it to Shanghai.

China has the capacity to inspire fear in Central Asia as elsewhere. Its energy presence is often overestimated in Kazakhstan, where the international consortiums Agip KCO and Tengizchevroil still control more than 65 percent of total hydrocarbon reserves. In the absence of Chinese involvement in the Tengiz and Kashagan sites, Beijing's share in the extraction of Kazakh petroleum is likely to decrease in tandem with the exploitation of the richest deposits. The China-Kazakhstan oil pipeline, capable of transporting 20 million tonnes of petroleum from the Caspian Sea to Xinjiang, clearly represents an important means of bypassing Russia, but will not shift Kazakh petroleum from its Russian orbit to a Chinese one, just as the China-Central Asia gas pipeline will not supercede Russia's dominance in the export of gas to Europe for several decades to come. The fear of China gaining an energy monopoly in Kazakhstan is thus exaggerated, as long as Russia and the major international groups remain well established there. On the other hand, it is likely that Kazakhstan will have to manage the growing tensions between Moscow and Beijing for control of the key sectors of hydrocarbons, uranium, gold, and electricity.

For the Kazakhs, energy cooperation with China today, in comparison with other countries, has a number of advantages. First, many of the contracts with big Western international oil companies were concluded in the early 1990's, a time of post-Soviet collapse of Kazakhstan's economy, when the local government had neither a possibility nor time to carefully choose partners and insist on the contractual terms. As a result, some contracts that were signed contained unfavorable long-term conditions for Kazakhstan. These contracts, though disadvantageous for Kazakhstan, are still valid. Today, Astana does not face such

problems when signing contracts with Chinese companies. These contracts are more elaborated and profitable for Kazakhstan, envisioning no tax privileges. Furthermore, in most cases Chinese investors are engaged in the development of old fields with relatively low investment attractiveness and cost-effectiveness. Finally, in some cases, Chinese oil companies, unlike some western ones, accept social obligations to develop regions in which they operate<sup>199</sup>.

The basis for current Sino-Kazakh collaboration has been established and the possible involvement and participation of third countries can be expected. However, the mutual interstate collaboration cannot be limited only by the oil and gas projects, but with other various areas. Among those prospective issues should be international terrorism, trade, transboundary issues, regional integration, migration, environmental regulations, narcotrafficking, money laundering just to name a few. Ultimately, all coordinated actions between the two countries will contribute to economic prosperity and a balanced legal and political policy together with regional energy and political security.

This is obviously an overstatement. China's stronger economic position in Central Asia as a whole and in Kazakhstan in particular has become obvious. Today, China badly needs new sources of raw materials (energy resources in particular) and markets for its products. Central Asia (especially Kazakhstan) is highly attractive in both respects. The trade and economic relations between China and Central Asia are developing entirely within the worldwide economic globalization trends.

The West is worried about several issues: (1) A new strategic alliance is emerging in the heart of Asia that may potentially be aimed against the West; (2) Beijing, not Moscow, is its true leader, which means that in several years the Central Asian republics will turn away from Russia to China; (3) India, Pakistan, and Iran have already indirectly joined the alliance (at least they demand a reduction in the West's military presence in the region); (4) China is using the SCO not only as a toehold to fortify its presence in Central Asia, but also as a tool to oppose the U.S. -led alliance in the APR and to build up its own influence in Southwestern Asia, the Middle East, East Africa, and the Indian Ocean.<sup>200</sup>

Why did this happen in Central Asia where Russia had dominated for so long? The answer is easy: early in the 1990s when Russia vacated the region on its own free will, China merely seized the opportunity. In the middle and late 1990s, while Central Asia was busy identifying its geopolitical priorities, Russia was engaged elsewhere. First, it was building up contacts with the West and later it was engaged in sorting out its contradictions with it. Central Asia was obviously beyond the range of its attention. When it dawned on it that regional developments were threatening its security, Russia deemed it necessary to move into the region to fortify its position there. It became obvious that Russia's «imperial ambitions»

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<sup>199</sup> Dodonov V. "Kazakhstan and China: Trade and Economic Cooperation". *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm) 2010. Vol. 8. No. 4, pp. 11-16.

<sup>200</sup> See: Syroezhkin R. "China in Central Asia: from Trade to Strategic Partnership". *Central Asia and Caucasus* (Lulea, Sweden). Vol. 13. 2007. № 3, pp. 40-51.

were as strong as ever, which caused concern among the Central Asian republics. Second, China, which had already entrenched itself, was regarded as a welcome alternative to Russia; Russia would have to prepare itself for stiff competition with the PRC. Early in the 2000s, America and NATO, which incorporated Central Asia into the sphere of their strategic interests, established their military presence in the region, thus challenging both Russia and China. Russia-China rivalry developed into a partnership in which China played the first fiddle for obvious reasons.

The newly developed partnership is burdened with numerous problems caused by the objective difficulties in the two countries' bilateral relations, Russia's and China's vague relations with the West and the United States as its part and the potential conflict between China's ambitions and Russia's historical memory of its domination. So far, the sides have to pool forces to downplay America's influence in Central Asia. In this respect, the partnership and the SCO, as its main instrument, are effective enough. So far, no one knows what will happen to the partnership and the SCO when China becomes stronger, while the common aim has disappeared.

China's rise to power on the Kazakh energy market seems to elicit increasingly sharp reactions from official circles. By fall 2006, several members of the Kazakh parliament were worried about China's many purchases of Caspian fields. Deputy of the Parliament Valery Kotovich, member of the presidential party Otan, declared that the country was losing its energy independence. He presented distorted figures, according to which China will soon control 40 percent of Kazakh oil production. Faced with the reactions that the announcement of the purchase of Energy Nations caused, Energy Minister Bakhytkozha Izmukhambetov declared that he would do everything possible to block the project; which proved not be the case. The deputies also worried about the announcement made by Central Asia Petroleum (Jakarta), which seeks to sell its shares in the company MangistauMunaiGaz (115,000 b/d) to China. In spite of these reactions, the authorities in Astana have done little to diminish their favor for Chinese investment in the country. At all costs, Kazakhstan wants to distance itself from Russia, which dominates the two principal export routes, Atyrau-Samara and the CPC. In addition, Astana did not appreciate the Kremlin's recent rejection of support for its project to buy a refinery in Lithuania.

Russia also refused to increase the transport capacity of the CPC, which is likely to force Chevron Texaco to transport surplus production by rail instead of pipeline in the coming years. The clearly Sinophile choice of the Kazakh authorities thus confirms that China will become a privileged partner of Kazakhstan; however, in its current state, Beijing cannot compete with the large Western companies that dominate the Caspian basin. Indeed, the consortiums Agip KCO and Tengizchevroil possess 67 percent of the total hydrocarbon reserves in the country. In 2006, China managed approximately 24 percent of Kazakh production: Aktobemunaigaz (5.8 million tonnes, or ten percent), Turgai-Petroleum (three million tonnes, or five percent), Kumkol Resources (3.1 million tonnes, or five percent), and KarazhanbasMunai (2.2 million tonnes, or four percent.). Even if the production figures of Chinese companies in Kazakhstan



increases quickly, however, due to technical improvements, the exploration of still-undiscovered sites, and the strategic purchase of new fields, China's proportional share of total Kazakh oil production will decrease as the exploitation of Tengiz and Kashagan increases the size of the pie. For its part, Kazakhstan will play an increasingly important part in the supply of oil to China. In 2004, Astana represented less than one percent of Chinese supply, but it will reach five percent with the completion of the pipeline in 2011 (20 Mt out of the 400 that China will need to import). Still, in spite of this successful Sino-Kazakh cooperation, Central Asia will not be able to replace China's dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

Russia and China seem to have similar geopolitical and geostrategic objectives in Central Asia: both of them desire stability on their borders, are concerned about the ability of the Central Asian states to withstand destabilization (whether from civil war, Islamist insurrection, popular uprising, or palace revolution), and consider the region as the main transit zone for drug-trafficking from Afghanistan. In respect of their political objectives, both Moscow and Beijing are on the same wavelength, insofar as both reject the notion that the West ought to have any right to oversee Eurasian space. As a result, Chinese military aid to Central Asia remains limited and is mostly directed to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, although Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan have also benefited from occasional aid (e.g. in the donations of equipment and training of military personnel).

The economic question is the central issue in the debate over Russo-Chinese collaboration/competition in Central Asia. Although geopolitically speaking Russia's and China's interests are broadly in line with one another, their economic power differential is a potential source of great tension. Like Central Asia, Russia is a producer of primary resources. However, it cannot do without Central Asian reserves, because it gets part of its revenues from transit rights and resale of Central Asian production with a significant price mark-up on the European market. China, for its part, is in need of primary resources and is seeking to diversify imports by expanding its overland trade with landlocked Eurasia to mitigate the geopolitical vulnerabilities of relying one-sidedly on sea-borne imports. Both powers therefore have motives for collaborating in Central Asia, but also concerns that may create competition in the longer term.

China has thus unquestionably established itself as one of the leaders in the Central Asian energy game together with the United States and the European Union. But it is still behind Russia, which largely dominates the Central Asian market for hydrocarbon exports. Chinese presence is also important in the infrastructure sector, where Beijing is implementing a two-pronged strategy: first, improve the border-bound routes in order to increase cross-border transactions; and, second, open up the most isolated regions in order to facilitate internal communication. Thus, Chinese companies are having a noticeable impact in the road sector.

The benign relations between Russia and China in Central Asia are based on a certain number of economic and geopolitical realities, but also on several unstated issues. Moscow continues broadly to influence the authoritarian political logics of

the Central Asian regimes and to orient their economies toward specializing in the exportation of primary resources, which in the long-term will prove a detrimental strategy. Russia seems thus to have found a single solution for its multiple objectives: first, to maintain political influence over the Central Asian regimes through the control of resources; second, to continue to collect considerable transit revenues from these landlocked countries; third, to slow down the emergence of competing export routes to China, Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey; and finally, to meet the West's growing energy demands.

Beijing, for its part, is seeking to establish itself in as many sectors as possible with an eye to occupying the economic vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Chinese authorities have understood just what key elements poverty and the disappearance of basic infrastructure are for the potential destabilization of Central Asia, an eventuality that would have serious repercussions on China's economic development in general, and that of Xinjiang in particular. China is therefore counting on its investment funds in certain strategic sectors, according to a logic of economic consolidation that is highly appreciated by the Central Asian governments.

At the political level, one important factor that contributes to good relations is the absence of any relevant ideological differences between the Chinese and Central Asian political elites, but the same is true for the Russian elites. Central Asia has therefore to play a careful balancing game between Moscow and Beijing. As a result, many Central Asian experts argue for a third way to pull their countries out of what they see as the impasse of the Russo-Chinese partnership.

By contrast to Russia, which, for better or for worse, is one of Central Asia's long-standing partners, and to the West, which is often mythicized in public opinion, China still belongs to the domain of the unknown.

In economic terms, China outranks Russia only in the trade sector; the citizens of Kazakhstan find their daily living environment dominated by Chinese products, just as, in fact, citizens of the Russian Federation do. In the coming years, Kazakhstan will probably be forced to abandon industrial sectors that are becoming obsolete in the face of Chinese competition, and will see the disappearance of some sections of its economy, such as processing plants. This situation could prove problematic to social stability. Nevertheless, the development of Xinjiang and the likely formation of new free border trade zones confirms that the China-Kazakhstan trade dynamic brings more than it takes away from Kazakhstan.

Moreover, a whole generation of young Kazakh entrepreneurs has grasped the fact that the country's future lies in its role as a transit point for Chinese goods to Russia and Europe, offering future generations a broad spectrum of jobs in the services sector. This strategic position could help maintain the country's dynamism in the event of a drop in the world price for hydrocarbons, on which Kazakhstan, like Russia, has too heavily based its economic development. As for the social problems caused by China's entry into the Kazakh market (corruption of officials – customs officials in particular – drain of capital, loss of intellectual capital redeployed to small business with immediate profits, etc.), the blame can not be

placed on China when such problems have arisen in response to Astana's internal policies and the social change at work in Kazakhstan. The rise of China throughout Central Asia thus acts as a catalyst, revealing the dysfunction of local economies overly focused on raw materials and unattractive in other sectors, and exacerbating anxieties and phobias over the social changes experienced by these countries over the past two decades.

The U.S. is an important partner of Kazakhstan in investment cooperation (the total amount of American investments in the Kazakh economy has already topped 15 billion dollars), in the fuel and energy complex, and in high technology. In this respect, the Kazakh-American initiative to establish state-private partnership could play an important role. On the whole, Astana intends to continue pursuing friendly and constructive relations with Washington and develop a dialogue in all the main areas of cooperation — political, economic, and military—as well as in security and the advance of democracy. Kazakhstan will also strive to remain the U.S.'s key partner in Central Asia in the future. In this respect, it highly values the assistance Washington is rendering to the integration processes in the region.

The European Union has become more active in Central Asia in the past few years. The peak of the EU's relations with the region came during Germany's chairmanship, under which a document entitled "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership" for 2007-2013 was drawn up and adopted. According to this document, the EU's main goals in the region include ensuring stability and security of the Central Asian countries, helping to reduce poverty and raise the standard of living of its population, and developing cooperation between the European Union and the regional states. Kazakhstan was positively inclined toward this strategy. Its foreign policy departments in all of the Central Asian countries took part in preparing and coordinating this document. Kazakhstan is particularly interested in the sections of the strategy that deal with encouraging Central Asia's integration into the world economy, including by means of the WTO's mechanisms, supporting regional trade, helping to resolve environmental and water problems, and strengthening the energy and transport ties between the EU and the region.<sup>201</sup>

Within the framework of this program, Astana succeeded in greatly stepping up its relations both with Western and with Central and Eastern European states. In so doing, by upholding the multi-vector principle, Kazakhstan was able not only to raise its relations with the EU to a new level as a global player, but also retain a reasonable balance in relations with Russia, China, and the U.S. Kazakhstan is extremely interested in the EU remaining Central Asia's main partner since this will not only promote the region's development, but will also make it possible to retain a reasonable balance of forces there. In addition, cooperation with the EU was extremely important for Kazakhstan due to its chairmanship in the OSCE in 2010.

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<sup>201</sup> Kazakhstan reacted to the EU's Central Asian strategy by adopting the "Path to Europe" state program in 2008. This program envisages: developing and intensifying cooperation with the European countries in all vectors, including political, economic, and social; interaction in the sphere of security and humanitarian cooperation; improving Kazakhstan's institutional and legal base using positive European experience, and so on.

China's domestic dynamism now clearly extends to its international behavior. China is involved in places and on topics previously marginal to its interests, and it is effectively using tools previously out of its reach. China is a truly global actor, with interests and influence far beyond Asia. It is both shaping and being shaped by nations, institutions, and processes all over the world. China is not yet a global power but it will eventually get there, depending on one's standard of measurement. And by the time China gets there, the concept of being a "global power" will likely have a very different meaning from the predominant position of the United States in the international system since the end of the Cold War<sup>202</sup>.

China is using foreign policy to expand its access to markets, investment, technology, and resources — the key inputs to economic growth and modernization. China's international behavior is a deeply transitional phenomenon. China has clear and widely accepted foreign policy objectives, but they are also evolving as its economy, society, and polity change.

In the short-term, the prospects for Kazakh-Chinese trade and economic cooperation appear quite favorable. Post-crisis recovery of the global economy will increase demand and in turn, prices for goods exported from Kazakhstan. This will have a positive impact on Kazakhstan's trade, including that with China. The implementation of a number of agreements signed between the countries, as well as economic projects, will advance investment activities of enterprises of Kazakhstan and China. Finally, besides creating favorable conditions for the accelerated modernization of both economic systems, the growth of both the Chinese and Kazakh economies would further facilitate greater bilateral cooperation across a wide spectrum of industries. In the long term, this ever-growing bilateral relationship built on mutual respect and joint benefit would serve as a key building block for the stability of the Central Asian region.

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In the 1990s, Kazakhstan and Central Asia appeared to be the playing field of an emerging competition between Russia and the United States. But now China has gradually emerged as one of the region's main partners. This rapprochement raises questions about the geopolitical changes in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's demise and the consolidation of China's new power. The Central Asian states, politically adrift since the collapse of the Soviet Union, are now set to play a major part in energy policies and in the war on terror, but they are still largely under the influence of their two great neighbors, namely Russia and China.

At least three geopolitical considerations drive Chinese concerns about security of delivery. First, the Middle East (the region of China's greatest dependence on crude oil imports) is perceived as unstable, where the risks of supply disruptions are high. Second, importing oil from the Middle East and other regions requires long-distance ocean transportation for which China can provide

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<sup>202</sup> Medeiros E.S. China's International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification. - Santa Monica (CA): RAND, 2009. – XXIX+247 pp.

little independent protection. A third perceived Chinese vulnerability is that it relies on overseas tanker companies to ship about 90 percent of its oil imports. These three concerns are motivating China's efforts, via diplomacy, to gain access to energy resources that are closer to China, available for pipeline or ground transport, and thus not as subject to possible disruption.

Sustainable economic development is the most important aim of China's state authorities. This is why energy is vital for Beijing and energy resources and transportation security constitute one of the most important aspects of China's foreign policy. Examining Chinese policy in light of the important actors in the Caspian Region is very important for understanding the effect of energy on China's foreign policy.

The Chinese implication in Kazakhstan and Central Asia will have a major impact in the long term since it permits the reinforcement of Beijing's political influence on Central Asian regimes and the reinforcement of their geopolitical alliance. It will also provide a discreet counterbalance to traditional Russian domination, which neither Turkey nor Iran was able to achieve in the 1990s. If Sinophilia is reinforced in the Central Asian states, the Russian Federation could risk losing its perceived "right" to oversee this region and Moscow could enter into fierce competition with Beijing, an action which could have significant geopolitical consequences.

China's growing energy demand causes fluctuations in the world energy markets because of its 1.3 billion population and average 8% economic growth rate. China's increasing oil demand is one of the most important factors effecting the increase in oil prices. This is why China's energy policy is not just important for China but also for other oil producers and consumers in the market. China is aware of the fact that it is a key element in the world energy market; it wants to guarantee its position and energy security by making investments in oil-rich countries in addition to buying oil from them.

Therefore, the strategic gains for Central Asia with China's increased presence are important. Beijing is trying to check the trans-nationalization of arms and drug networks in the Xinjiang-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan area. The future of Central Asia will largely depend on the region's ability both to avoid the destabilization experienced in the neighboring Middle East and to use Chinese influence as a means of integration into the Asia-Pacific region, which is set to become one of the 21st century's main economic and political centers.

These geopolitical and economic objectives remain intrinsically linked. For many years, China militated for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to become a free-trade zone, which would transform Central Asia and Russia into new markets for Chinese products. This Chinese commercial domination over the region, which is predicted to eclipse Russia in only a few years, will also have a cultural impact that remains, for the time being, difficult to assess. Exchanges of people, the learning of the Chinese language, and the entrance of Central Asia into the sphere of Chinese cultural influence, will grow, creating a totally new situation in Central Asian history in a millennium. It is the global geopolitical equilibrium of

the region that will change the way Central Asia is perceived as one of the economic “provinces” of the Peoples’ Republic of China.

China’s economic presence does not only bear on the trade sector: beyond the consumer products that are now supplying Kazakh and Central Asian markets, China is likewise setting itself up in the domain of infrastructure.

China’s economic presence in Central Asia is very multi-faceted. Beijing seeks to establish itself in as many sectors as possible with an eye to occupying the many economic vacuums left by the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the sphere of hydrocarbons, it is improbable that China will completely make up for lost time. Despite its political purchases of fields, it cannot become one of the major players on the Kazakh oil market with neither Tengiz nor Kashagan under its control. It has succeeded, however, in several years, in implanting itself on numerous onshore sites. Today, more than twenty percent of Kazakh oil production is Chinese. It also demonstrated its tenacity in constructing the Atyrau-Alanshankou pipeline, which many observers dismissed as too costly and too complex to finish, and will benefit in a few years from a direct liaison with the Caspian Sea.

China’s increasing presence in the Central Asian energy market could gradually set the stage for an energy rivalry between Asia and Europe. The European Union, the United States, large Western oil companies, and China have increasingly conflicting interests in Central Asian hydrocarbons. Asia’s booming economy will likely pull energy flows from the center of the continent toward Asia, even if such a result remains, for the moment, still virtual and late in its arrival on the Western radar.

It is inevitably to touch the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) factor regarding Sino-Kazakh, Sino-Russian relationship, as well as relations between China and Central Asia. The SCO has been the organization that has raised the highest hopes to become the core of regional cooperation in the post-Soviet space with the involvement of Russia, China and four of the five Central Asian former Soviet republics. The nearly one decade that has passed since its inception has underlined the potential and the dangers it might carry.

The strategic interests of Russia and China are neither lasting, nor deep enough to exist irrespective of the change of external conditions. Second, beyond geostrategic considerations, geo-economics is also high on the SCO agenda. As the Central Asian market is tiny, for major external actors this can be narrowed down to the single most important economic matter: access to the natural resources of Central Asia, particularly gas and oil. Here one can see a clear rivalry between the two large regional players and external ones. Third, in a few other areas, such as the rivalry for water resources, the political atmosphere of some Central Asian states imposes itself upon the concrete matter. As a result, it is primarily some of the smaller member-states that pose a challenge to Central Asian cooperation, in close conjunction with Russia’s interests. Therefore, it remains to be seen if the

SCO will be able to meet the expectations of the member-states and observers of the region<sup>203</sup>.

Kazakhstan is enlarging its room for maneuver and continues to make a name for itself as a regional power in key domains such as the nuclear industry, which at present is enjoying more favor due to decreases in the price of hydrocarbons. China's growing presence in Central Asia is thus in direct competition with Moscow's plans for the region. Though for the time being both powers may have managed to fulfill their aims without coming head-to-head, this situation will in all likelihood change in the coming years: China is experiencing exponential growth and devouring primary resources, while Russia is using its economic revival to specialize in primary resources and heavy industry.

Recent developments, which are bound to increase in magnitude in the coming years, entail numerous changes for Central Asian societies. They will benefit from consumer products that are more fitting to the low standard of living of their populations, but which are also capable of satisfying the growing technological consumption needs of the middle classes, in particular in Kazakhstan. The massive influx of Chinese products will give the peoples of Central Asia the opportunity to reassume their traditional role as a transit culture by exporting goods as far away as Russia, as the Kyrgyz and Uzbek migrants situated in Russia are already starting to do.

In terms of geopolitics, China may also rapidly replace Russia in its role as the dominant regional power facing the West. Thus, pipeline projects running westward to Europe, like the Transcaspian, could be considered as a threat by Beijing, as they are today by Moscow. The increased presence of China in Central Asia would also probably undermine several goals that the United States and the European Union have set themselves concerning energy security (oil, gas, and uranium), international stability, and democratization. In addition, Russia's and China's refusal to liberalize civil society could have a fundamental impact in Central Asia, meaning a strengthening of Islamism. The spreading of Islamist messages in Muslim societies since the Iraq war and the chronic instability of neighboring Afghanistan make already weak and corrupt Central Asian states, which enjoy little support from their societies, particularly vulnerable. The absence of a strong Western presence in the region, which both Moscow and Beijing refuse, could thus contribute to the heightening of regional instability.

Furthermore, the development of Sino-Central Asian relations, such as it is now taking shape, also entails the possibility that the economies of Central Asia will be encouraged into restrictive specializations: by being nearly exclusively exporters of raw materials, the new states run the risk of having their last processing industries disappear. Such a limited specialization coupled with the continued de-industrialization of the area could be factors of social destabilization, since they may well accelerate the rapid pauperization of the lower strata of the population. It therefore remains to be studied how the Central Asian societies will

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<sup>203</sup> Dunay P. "Not Beyond Limits: The Prospects of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization". *GCSP Policy Paper n°5*. – Geneva: GCSP, 2010. – 6 p.

manage, in the years to come, the ever-increasing Chinese presence and evolutions in ways of life, economic development, and political and cultural influence that Beijing will exert over Central Asia. In all the cases, whatever the negative or positive consequences, with this massive economic presence of China in Central Asia, Beijing now represents the most credible economic alternative for the states of Central Asia to free themselves from Russian tutelage.

The U.S. has a systemic approach to defining its economic interests in Kazakhstan and Central Asia on the whole, tying them to European regional strategy and its economic goals in specific countries of the region. The U.S.'s policy is aimed at bringing the region closer to the world markets, which includes activating international economic relations between the regional states and Europe. The U.S.'s strategic goal consists in weakening the position of OPEC in the world energy markets, which should be promoted by additional independent supply of Central Asian energy resources in the world market.

Chinese policy is part of the "new great game" in Central Asia. In contrast to the historical great game, the number of players in this new great game has grown and the game rules have shifted from military and political aspects to the economy. China is trying to maximize its interests in this new great game and limit the opportunities of other players. In order to reach this goal it is creating alliances with other game players, such as Russia and Iran. There are two main blocs in new great game consisting of China, Russia, and Iran, on the one side, and the U.S. and Turkey, on the other.

China is moving toward becoming a superpower and its economy may either be its biggest advantage or its biggest weakness on this path. If it can continue its economic development and project this onto its military and political power, it will easily become a superpower. However energy is the most crucial element in shaping China's future. If it cannot establish its energy security and secure a continuous energy flow, its greatest weapon, the economy, may collapse and create a disaster for China.

Thus, regarding the cooperation between Republic of Kazakhstan and People's Republic of China in energy sphere during last two decades, it may be concluded that this cooperation was been impacted by two factors – the economic and political ones. However, this impact has been different on various periods. At the beginning, a political decision had prevailed from both sides – Peking and Alma-Ata. But on the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Beijing and Astana were granted thankful mutual economic and energetic benefits. And finally, the mutual interaction in energy, trade and transport has gained a geopolitical form. Certainly, the cooperation on such level can not be ignored by other geopolitical centers, first of all by Russia and the West.

The Kazakh-Chinese multiplication collaboration should impact on whole Central Asia, and this happens long time. The other republics of Central Asia are deeply involved into cooperation with China. Often, Kazakhstan takes part as a mediator and project participant in this process. However, time to time a dependence of some Central Asian countries from Kazakhstan and Kazakh-



Chinese tandem bothers a regional harmony and creates some tensions and the elements of international rivalry.

The main benefits for Kazakhstan following the intensive cooperation with China consist in direct economic and financial profits. But the numerous risks and challenges with geopolitical and demographic accents have the mid-term and long-term character. As regard China, it has not direct benefit from bilateral and multilateral cooperation. But Beijing accounts on the strategic profits (economic and political) in long-term perspective.

Probably, most successful Sino-Kazakh cooperation in future would be depended on multilateral character of regional relationship. This idea means an attraction of several actors, neighbors and interested investors. They are Russia, Europe, USA, India, Iran, and maybe Japan, Republic of Korea, Pakistan and other Muslim states and institutions. The cooperation in this framework would eliminate any geopolitical concurrence and international tensions, and could positively impact on the dynamic of economic development of Central Asia.

And from oppositional point of view, a monopole Chinese dominance over Kazakhstan, its international relations and Central Asia itself would be negatively estimated by the other geopolitical and regional actors. In any case, this perspective could have a strong negative effect on geopolitical position, economic development and international reputation of Kazakhstan. It means, already current Kazakh political leadership should begin to think about this challenge. But the next generation of Kazakh leaders will face with all, as well positive benefits and negative products, of current Sino-Kazakh rapprochement.

### **Part III. The Security Problems of Central Asia**

#### **1. The Situation over Afghanistan**

From Kazakh point of view, the political situation in this country has improved greatly over the last years.<sup>204</sup> The obscurantist and wayward Taliban regime ceased to exist. The international community helped organize an extraordinary Loya Jirga, or grand council, to appoint the interim administration and then the constitutional Loya Jirga convened to adopt a new constitution and form the Transitional Administration. Later, the Presidential election was held. Currently, the Afghan establishment prefers political rivalry and intrigues, which is evidently better than direct combat.

The drug issue is critical in both Afghanistan's internal and international context. Afghanistan ranks as the top producer of opium poppy and heroin (about three-fourths of the total worldwide production). Income from selling heroin

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<sup>204</sup> See: Laumulin M. The Afghan Factor in Central Asian Security Politics // Central Asia Seminars. 1st GCSP-OSCE Academy Seminar : "Central Asia 2008". Geneva Papers 7. – Bishkek, Geneva: OSCE Academy, 2009, pp. 19-24. idem. Unpicking the Afghan Knot // Intersec. The Journal of International security (UK) 2010. February, pp. 10-12.

amounts to billions of US dollars and is far above the U.S. investments in the country. Some two-thirds of farmers, or about one and a half million Afghans are involved in the production of drugs. To reduce the production of drugs, the Afghan police are trying to block the imports of heroin precursors. To date, these imports have been nearly stopped only on Tajikistan's border; precursors are still delivered from Europe through other countries. The UN states that Afghanistan produced 90% of all drugs traded worldwide. During his recent visit to the U.S., Karzai promised to reduce this figure to 30% in 2010.

The World Bank published a report in Kabul stating a 50% growth in Afghanistan's economy over the last two years. The situation in Afghanistan should also be considered in light of international factors. Afghanistan is a country under occupation, with limited national sovereignty. Its security, internal stability and further economic development depend on the U.S., NATO and global economic aid.

After the new US Administration in the White House has come, the U.S. remains the most influential military and political power in Afghanistan. The Pentagon persists in eliminating the terrorist infrastructure and pursuing al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. The U.S. strategy in Afghanistan is to solidify Karzai's regime and stabilize the internal political situation by moving its potential antagonists onto the periphery of politics. Regarding military objectives, the U.S. tends to limit its responsibility and increase NATO's participation in the peacekeeping process. In the recent past, Washington began a decisive anti-drug campaign.

The U.S. Special Forces and military have changed their focus from massive direct raids to targeted tactics. They send small raiding forces to probable locations of Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders to capture or kill them. These missions are implemented with the connivance of the Afghan government and controlled by the Pentagon, the CIA and the FBI. The U.S. soldiers come to villages under the guise of medical workers offering vaccinations.

Experts insist that losing bases in Central Asia would be a striking blow to the Pentagon. Washington has been granted access to an oil- and gas-bearing region that has been controlled by Russia for years. The military bases are of strategic importance and include outposts on the Chinese border. Besides, Washington is considering the possibility of locating its military in Mongolia. Moscow and Beijing were deeply disturbed by the U.S. attempts to put down roots nearby. Yet, Washington intimated that it was not going to abandon its military facilities in Central Asia.

The American analytical community says the following about the relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan: since the republics regard balanced relations with all large powers as their strategic aim they should be interested in America's success in Afghanistan. In turn, the United States, which is trying to stabilize Afghanistan and push it toward economic revival, needs the region's states and their businesses as economic partners and sponsors of Afghanistan. The United States is placing its stakes on wider regional cooperation in which Kabul should also be involved.

So far, Afghanistan remains one of the key factors of Central Asia's military-political security. Today relative stabilization is alternating with intensified hostilities; Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of hard drugs, the bulk of which is moved across the Central Asian states.

This is forcing NATO to build up its military presence, widen the zone of fighting, and cooperate with Russia and the CIS in transportation of its cargoes to Afghanistan, which takes the problem outside the region and affects security and the strategic situation inside the CIS as well as relations among its members.

The April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest and public statements of Western leaders attracted attention to the current situation in Afghanistan. The NATO members and particularly the United States know that radical changes are overdue. America is probably getting ready to launch a new offensive at the Taliban; much is being done to strengthen the Afghan army to use it as the pillar of the state's political system. In the next five or six months Washington will launch a wide-scale operation in the southern and eastern provinces and in the Southern Waziristan Province of Pakistan. This is what the new strategy of the Western coalition in Afghanistan suggests. It has been underway since late 2007 and was officially approved by the latest NATO summit.

Today nobody expects Hamid Karzai to tighten his grip on the country and put an end to the political instability, therefore Kabul has to increase its armed forces many times over within the shortest time possible to turn the army into the state-forming element. In the future, however, the newly acquired might of a country that has no hydro- and energy resources to speak of might develop into a regional threat.

The Central Asian republics want the territory of the former Northern Alliance turned into a security belt to which they and Russia should particularly extend their assistance. A large-scale U.S. military operation will not be limited to Afghanistan - it will spread to Pakistan and tip the military-strategic balance in Southern and Central Asia. These developments will inevitably affect the interests of India, China, and Russia. In fact, the present intention of the Pentagon to set up a large and strong National Army of Afghanistan might produce unexpected results. The regional balance of forces will be tipped in favor of Kabul, which might use its newly acquired force to impose its conditions on its neighbors, including the Central Asian states.

The relations between Central Asian states and Afghanistan is closely connected with so called Greater Central Asia project. The GCA project initiated in 2005 confirmed that the United States treated the region as a foreign policy and security priority. The project was primarily promoted by the changed balance of forces in favor of Russia and partly China, which called for an adequate strategic and geopolitical response. At the same time, the Greater Central Asia idea can be viewed as a conceptual and ideological substantiation of what the United States is trying to accomplish in the region. This is a fresh (and logical) approach to America's entire previous foreign policy theory and practical regional policy.

In a wider sense the project is a strategic matrix the United States is using in Central Asia, the Caspian, and Afghanistan to channel the local geopolitical,

military-political, and geo-economic developments in the desired direction. In fact, this is a mechanism for organizing the geopolitical expanse akin to the Greater Middle East. It is no coincidence that theoretically both projects are mutually complementary.

Today, when the largest world actors present in the region have officially accepted Kazakhstan as the region's leader and strategic partner with sufficient political weight, it has become extremely important to clarify its relations with the SCO and the Western security structures present in the region. Kazakhstan might promote the idea of a new mechanism of cooperation and/or dialog among the security structures (NATO, SCO, and CSTO). This has become especially important today: the world political and economic systems are no longer what they were and are still in the process of changing while the states are looking for new models, forms, and formats of international cooperation. This is happening at a pace that makes detailed comprehension impossible. Responses should be dynamic while thinking must be preventive. Kazakhstan's initiatives can, to a certain extent, return the geopolitical rivalry in the region to a constructive sphere for the sake of continued geopolitical balance. Indeed, sooner or later the regional security systems will have to identify the level and sphere of their cooperation.

In Kazakhstan's external policy, Afghanistan is not a priority. The direct threat of the Islamist radicals' invasion of Kazakhstan has been eliminated. Central Asia's security is maintained by the U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan and Russia in Tajikistan. In these circumstances, Kazakhstan's task is to support joint anti-terrorist efforts promoted by Russia and China within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Anti-drug measures remain an important focus of Kazakhstan's policy. Last years, Kazakhstan managed to stop fourteen times as many smuggled drugs as in the previous year, which was highly appreciated by the international community. These efforts should be built up further in cooperation with Russia, Central Asian and Western countries.

Kazakhstan can also benefit from the prospective Trans-Afghan pipeline - it is theoretically possible for Kazakhstan to join the gas supplies to South Asia. However, this project hardly seems feasible. It is most likely, that the pipeline's security will not be maintained if Karzai does not manage to enlist the guarantees of ethnic opposition in western and southwestern Afghanistan.

It seems that Kazakhstan should build up its Afghan policy in cooperation with Russia and the other Central Asian countries within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Central Asian Economic Community.

## **2. Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia**

Islamic Radicalism has become a serious problem in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Though these areas are bastions of moderate and traditional Islam and among the most secularized areas of the Muslim world, radicalism has made a forceful comeback in the past two decades. Beginning in the late 1980s, alien

Islamic proselytizing has gathered speed across the Muslim regions of the former Soviet Union, and has resulted in the spread of radical ideologies, militancy, and even terrorism. Worst hit have been the Russian North Caucasus and some parts of Central Asia, especially the Ferghana valley shared by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>205</sup>

Why do Islamist terrorist organizations emerge? This question was inspired by the appearance of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in Central Asia. Since the end of the 1980s, Central Asian states have faced the emergence of terrorist Islamist organizations. This trend has become particularly noticeable after the breakup of the Soviet Union and was equally important in all five Central Asian states of the former Soviet Union: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. However, the emergence of Islamist terrorist organizations only took place in Uzbekistan. The reasons for this lie in the country's social, economic and political trajectories. Militant Islam has not existed in Central Asia since the seventh century when Arabs brought their religion to the region. The radicalization of Islam and the emergence of terrorist organizations in Central Asia are modern trends.

For the last decade Central Asian states have undergone profound economic and political changes caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Central Asian societies experienced sharp declines in the living standards, social disintegrations, and deep ideological vacuums that led to the identity crises both, for the elite and society at large. The collapse of the Soviet Union exacerbated various social cleavages in each Central Asian country, revealing weak societal cohesion. Ethnic, clan and religious rivalries within each state undermined the legitimacy of the secular regimes and national security of the state. For that reason, Islam as a traditional religion of the Central Asian societies has become principally important. Many people turned to Islam as a source of a new identity that would unite them not only with their conationals but with the entire Muslim world. However, secular regimes that replaced communist government perceived Islam as a threat to their power. In particular, repression of religious organizations in Central Asia caused their radicalization and forced them to use previously forbidden forms of violence.

External factors were equally important in the radicalization of Islam in Central Asian region. Penetration of radical ideas, literature, and the rise of Islamist organizations became possible under Gorbachev's "perestroika" when more opportunities emerged for people to mobilize. The process deepened and accelerated in the beginning of the 90s after the fall of the Soviet Union. The war in Afghanistan and later in Tajikistan exacerbated the rise of militant Islam in Central Asia.

Patterns of radicalism differ among the regions. Central Asia, on the other hand, has seen stronger external link, as foreign radical groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Al Qaeda have established a presence directly, as in the former, or

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<sup>205</sup> See: Laumulin M. *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia // Religion and Security in South and Central Asia*. Ed. by K. Warikoo. – London, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp. 139-149.

through local allies, as in the latter. Adding to the problem, these groups in Central Asia have splintered into smaller entities difficult to identify let alone counteract. The causes of this radicalization are hotly debated. In the west, radicalization is often blamed on the socio-economic crisis, or political repression radicalizing oppositional forces. These explanations are only of limited validity, at best interacting with complex post-Soviet identity crises, personal vendettas, regional rivalries, relative deprivation, and most importantly foreign proselytizing, a factor widely underestimated in the West. To this should be added the criminalization of many of the most notorious militant armed groups, whose involvement in drug trafficking and other organized crime has been well-documented.

In Central Asia, where the West has had a considerable presence, the reaction has been different. In fact, the West has shown little understanding, let alone support, for the seriousness of the radical and militant challenge faced by Central Asian states. Instead, the west has focused on the governments' mismanagement of the situation, while refraining from responding to calls for assistance. This culminated in 2005 following the insurgency and crackdown in Andijan in Uzbekistan, which left several hundred people, mainly civilians, dead. The result of the episode and the mismanagement of the crisis by both the Uzbek and western governments was the loss of western influence and presence in Uzbekistan. It is apparent that radical groups now seek to emulate the 'color revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine, aware of the fact that popular rebellion against authoritarian governments attracts support and not condemnation from the West. Hence, several groups appear to have adapted to this environment and benefited from the breakdown in Uzbekistan's relations with the West.

In Central Asia, the focus of Islamic revival and of radical groups has been the Ferghana valley, a densely populated and ethnically mainly Uzbek territory divided politically between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The valley has traditionally been a center of Islamic fervor, and was the area where foreign radicals first established a presence. As we will see, though, there are other factors besides tradition at work here.

Aside from the Ferghana valley, the main other localities of radicalism have been Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan. The spread of radical Islamic political movement in Tajikistan in the 1980s was very much a result of the growing interaction between Afghanistan and Tajikistan during the Soviet occupation there. Islamic radicalism was the key force behind the resistance to the Soviet occupation, and spread to Tajikistan where important political movements on an Islamic basis emerged. South Kyrgyzstan is exposed to most of the same currents that prevail in neighboring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. By contrast, northern Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have seen considerably lower levels of Islamic activity. Radical Islamic groups active in the region and include groups across a political spectrum ranging from self-proclaimed peaceful groups, such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HB) and *Tabligh Jemaat*, to militant and terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

Since 2001, there has been a clear and consistent trend towards the radicalization of HT. In June 2001, the HT publication *Al-Waie* (Consciousness)

stated unequivocally that it is acceptable to carry out suicide attacks with explosive belts. In March 2002, HT argued that suicide bombs in Israel are a legitimate tactic of war. Over the next two years, HT leaflets and writings continuously emphasized that in the context of a clash of civilizations, offensive *jihad* against the Americans and the Jewish people is acceptable. It went as far as declaring, in a May 2003 leaflet, that jihad against unbelievers is the only type of jihad. At the time, an HT website displayed an image of American soldiers superimposed over the burning of the twin towers, carrying the legend “U.S. Troops: Die Hard.” It is yet to be established whether HT has already formed a militant wing or whether it is simply “inspiring” members independently to join terrorist groups or engage in terrorist acts.<sup>206</sup>

HT has made Central Asia its main battleground. The post-Communist identity crisis there implies a limited popular knowledge of the tenets of traditional Islam, which benefits a radical, unorthodox movement such as HT. Furthermore, poor economic performance by some Central Asian governments has denied them a high level of popular support among people who feel they lack opportunities for socio-economic improvement. HT’s public relations campaign has already succeeded in diverting the world community’s attention away from its activities in Uzbekistan. As a result of this propaganda effort, western observers are concerned more with the prison conditions of HT supporters than the possibility of a successful HT *coup d’état*. Also assisting HT’s campaign in Central Asia is the proximity of Afghanistan and Pakistan, two primary bases for terrorists and radical sympathizers.

The precise number of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* members in Central Asia today is difficult to estimate. HT is numerically strongest in Uzbekistan, with estimates there ranging from 7,000 up to 60,000 members. There are 3,000–5,000 members in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The number in Kazakhstan is no more than a few hundred. But numbers are not central to HT’s strategy which is based on penetrating political power centers as a method of obtaining power. Recent arrests indicate that support for HT is growing throughout the region, including among teachers, military officers, politicians (especially those whose relatives have been arrested), and other members of the elite.

Akramiya is named after its leader Akram Yuldashev, born in 1963 in Andijan. Yuldashev is believed to have been a member of HT for one year before founding a splinter group in 1992. He is believed to be profoundly influenced by al-Nabhani, and founded Akramiya in his native Andijan region, preaching widely among the youth of the area. He was first arrested in 1993 and later that year received amnesty and was released. Following the bomb attacks in February 1999, he was re-arrested and sentenced to over ten years in prison.

Akramiya seems to have been rather successful in developing a following by delivering on socio-economic promises that the Uzbek government has been

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<sup>206</sup> See: Baran Z., Starr S. F. Cornell S.E. Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU. – Washington DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2006.

unable to fulfill: jobs and money. Wealthier followers set up small businesses such as bakeries, cafeterias, or shoe factories, in which they employ young males who are then required to attend study groups after work – a practice also known from other Islamic movements across the world to recruit followers. The owners of these businesses contribute about a fifth of their profits to a fund, which then assists poorer members of the group. This is one of the most successful examples of the bottom-up approach of pro-Islamic social engineering.

Hizb un-Nusrat (the Party of Assistance) was founded by a group of HT members in Tashkent in 1999. Its current leader and founder is believed to be Sharipzhon Mirzazhanov. Like HT, this group is fundamentally clandestine in nature, and prospective members must undergo six months of training in *The System of Islam*, HT's guidebook. Members are also required to donate money to the party's communal fund. Unlike HT, however, this group does not spread propaganda among the general public. Instead, it only recruits those whose backgrounds are first investigated. The group is thus mainly comprised of former members of other Islamic fringe groups, and those accused by Uzbekistan's government of engagement in Islamic radical activities. Its supporters also include HT sympathizers who fear public exposure.

The IMU was formed in 1992 by Tahir Yuldashev, an underground Islamic cleric who operated out of the Otavaliyon mosque, in the Namangan region of Uzbekistan. Taliban, he established an IMU training camp. Militants from all over the Ferghana Valley began to flock to the camp to receive instruction in terrorist tactics, under the guidance of the Taliban. In the only interview he has ever given, Yuldashev declared, "The goal of IMU activities is the creation of an Islamic State. We declared a jihad in order to create a religious system and government. We want the model of Islam which is nothing like in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia."

In late 2001, the IMU joined forces with the Taliban and al-Qaeda against U.S.-led forces during the Afghanistan campaign. After suffering grave losses (including the death of Namangani in Afghanistan), some IMU fighters fled to South Waziristan (a Federally Administered Tribal Area in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province along the border with Afghanistan), along with other jihadists who also escaped U.S. entrapment at Tora Bora. On orders from Bin Laden, IMU militants have taken a leading role in South Waziristan, with Yuldashev in command of military activities. Since the conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU's infrastructure and manpower has been significantly weakened, but today there are at least 150 IMU militants who still have the capacity to fight.

HT and the IMU do not have a formal alliance, as it runs contrary to HT's interests to be directly associated with a terrorist group. The main difference between the two groups is one of focus: The IMU openly advocates and carries out militant operations, while HT concentrates on the ideological battle. The two nonetheless admit to the closeness of their goals, and both are propelled closer to the achievement of their ends by the weakness of Central Asian states.



Central Asian governments believe that in 2002 the region's Islamic radicals united in a framework of a new underground organization called the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA), which would bring together the IMU, Kyrgyz and Tajik radicals, and Uighur separatists from China, whose East Turkestan Islamic Movement had recently broadened to include Afghans, Chechens, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Kazakhs who share its new goal of forming an Islamic state in Central Asia.

Kyrgyz authorities believe that the IMCA was indeed formed in 2003, with the immediate goal of creating a Caliphate in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, while reserving expansion to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and northwest China for a second stage. The headquarters of IMCA, which is led by Yuldashev, are believed to be located in Afghanistan's northeastern Badakhshan province. This unified, militant Islamic force seeks to destabilize Central Asian governments by attacking American and Israeli targets. The main insurgent targets are the American bases in Uzbekistan (now closed) and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the embassies in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

While many other radical Islamist organizations have mushroomed in the region over the last two years, they can all be considered, in one way or another, to be under the IMCA umbrella. Radical Islamist and terrorist activity in Central Asia has increased markedly since early 2004. Having seen no major terrorist activity since 2000, Uzbekistan was hit by two waves of terrorist attacks between March 28 and March 31, including the region's first ever female suicide bombing. The attacks, which caused 47 fatalities in total, were aimed primarily at police and Uzbek private and commercial facilities. A second attack targeted the American and Israeli embassies as well as the prosecutor general's office. The scale and level of preparation for these attacks suggests strongly that they received support from outside Uzbekistan. The country's chief prosecutor alleged that all 85 individuals (including 17 women) arrested had been trained as suicide bombers.

Despite all this information, most of the attention in the West from the spring of 2004 onwards was on the Uzbek government's reaction and not on the terrorists – even though these attacks were the first major violence in Uzbekistan since the 2000 insurgency. And despite being in the midst of the 'war on terror', the U.S., a self-avowed strategic partner of Uzbekistan, highlighted the need to improve democracy and human rights while doing very little to help the Uzbek government in its investigation or its response to the attacks. Overall, the terrorists were greatly emboldened, concluding that western opinion would allow them literally to get away with murder.

In November 2004, in Jalal-Abad, where some of the strongest antigovernment protests took place in March 2005, HT reportedly collected some 20,000 signatures on a petition calling for more Islamic instruction in schools and segregation of sexes. In the February 2005 parliamentary elections, candidates who supported this view received backing from HT. While there was almost no overt Islamist activity during the revolution, the events began and gained momentum in the southern part of the country, which is where HT and other groups have, for

several years, been urging people to rise against poverty, corruption and injustice – all of which were blamed on the central government.

Following the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions, opposition forces in the Kyrgyz Republic overthrew their government in March 2005. Unlike the Georgians and the Ukrainians, however, the Kyrgyz opposition used violence, and in the post-revolutionary period failed to bring stability and order to the country. Indeed, the March 24 revolution ushered in a period of chaos, with the new government unable to control the country's borders or to bring about internal stability. This risks leading to ever deeper popular disappointment with secular politics in Kyrgyzstan. Unless the new government is brought to establish a democratic order and deliver on its promises, HT and others are certain to gain strength from this growing disillusionment.

The third significant event of lasting importance to the region took place in Andijan in May 2005. In fact, Andijan may prove to be a turning point in the West's loss of influence in Central Asia and the further strengthening of the radical groups. According to reports from the region, Akramiya organized the uprising in a carefully planned way: the accused businessmen promised to pay their staff a full day's salary if they attended the protests. Moreover, their relatives organized transport for others to come from more distant regions. The protesters were orderly and asking merely for "justice" for their relatives and friends. By May 12th, the presumed final week of the trial, there were already several thousand peaceful demonstrators.

That night, the Uzbek government arrested some demonstrators. This arrest marked the start of the uprising. On the morning of May 13, armed militants first seized a police station, then a military post, and then a high-security prison, collecting weaponry in each place and killing officials and others along the way. Over a year later, many in the West still do not have a sense of who the insurgents were. In fact, few have shown much interest in the insurgents, and instead blamed only the Karimov regime for conducting what was immediately labeled a massacre of peaceful protestors. As of June 2006, the number of people killed by both sides is still contested, although the Moscow Human Rights organization Memorial's estimate that the total was probably around 200 will probably prevail.

The end result of Andijan is that the U.S. military lost its base in Uzbekistan, a major setback for essential intelligence and counterterrorism work. No less significant, the West lost whatever possibility it previously had to influence the Uzbek government to reform or open up the system. Its precipitous condemnation of the government's actions, without corresponding attention to the insurgents, effectively discredited whatever reformist currents had existed earlier within the Uzbek government. Instead, Uzbekistan now leans on Russian and Chinese guidance, which gives *carte blanche* to the most repressive forces within the Uzbek government. Indeed, the pro-Western liberal forces that had slowly

strengthened their positions within the Uzbek elite over that past decade have now been almost completely purged and marginalized.<sup>207</sup>

It is also important to understand the growing role of women in Islamic radicalism. The first suicide killings in Central Asia took place in 2005, and were conducted by women who did not fit the traditional profile of poor, uneducated and repressed.

There have been numerous reports of Uzbek militants trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan going back to Uzbekistan. The militants are using networks of terrorists, criminals, as well as Islamist sympathizers to cross borders, traveling either via Tajikistan or Iran. Former IMU members have identified Mashhad, Iran's second largest city, as the transit center for Uzbek militants. In this context, the May 2006 incursion of militants from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan's Batken region is worrisome. Armed men attacked a border post killing several guards, before seizing a stockpile of weapons and killing additional people while crossing into the Kyrgyz Republic. It is surely not accidental that the site of these events lies astride an important and contested drug route. These events were reminiscent of a January 2006 incident, when militants raided a Tajik prison, killed the warden, and freed a prisoner with alleged IMU ties. It is clear that numbers of heavily armed people are operating in and around the borders of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It is less clear who these are, given the interaction of organized crime and radicalism, and whether they have any links with the Andijan uprising. Government officials in all three countries seem to be confused, variously blaming different radical groups, but in all likelihood simply do not know who they are.

The "Drugs-Crime-Radical Islamist Nexus" is specific element concerns links with drug traffickers and criminal groups in general. It is not clear the extent to which this is cause or effect but the close tie between the more violent Islamist groups and organized crime has been undeniable from the time the IMU emerged as a major drug dealing enterprise. Indeed, in this sense Central Asia and the Caucasus are examples of a worldwide trend, the increasing involvement of violent groups in organized crime, particularly the drug trade. In fact, the traditional division of non-state armed groups into mutually exclusive ideal types – the ideological and the criminal – is an increasingly misleading description of most armed groups today. A criminal element is increasingly visible in the financing of most groups, but also in the motivations of many. This fusion of crime and terrorism or insurgency can be most clearly seen as regards the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and certain formations in the North Caucasus. For some of these groups, it is unclear whether they are mainly driven by ideological zeal or by criminal pursuits.

Though the IMU incursions of 1999 and 2000 were ostensibly waged in the name of the creation of a Caliphate with a base in the Ferghana valley, a strong body of evidence suggests they are in fact best explained by more mundane

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<sup>207</sup> See: Akiner Sh. Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment. The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program. – Washington, DC: 2005.

motivations, especially the drug trade. The geographical areas targeted, the timing of the attacks, as well as the tactics used, all point in this direction.

The IMU's insurgencies into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were in the form of simultaneous but small-scale incursions by comparatively small groups of fighters. This makes little military sense as the IMU could neither hope to defeat government forces nor to trigger an uprising that way. However, considered as a diversionary measure intended to create instability, confuse law enforcement and military structures, and gain access to mountain passes for trafficking, the incursions make perfect sense.

There is a significant consensus that the IMU was strongly involved in drug trafficking from Afghanistan toward Osh in Kyrgyzstan, where opiates are handed to trafficking networks that ship them further north and west. Drug control experts concurred with the estimate that the IMU controlled up to two thirds of opiates entering the Kyrgyz Republic.<sup>21</sup> Interpol labeled the IMU "a hybrid organization in which criminal interests often take priority over 'political' goals", whose "leaders have a vested interest in ongoing unrest and instability in their area in order to secure the routes they use for the transportation of drugs." Kyrgyz government officials noted that the volume of drugs trafficked into Kyrgyzstan increased significantly after the 1999 incursion.

This does not mean, however, that the IMU completely jettisoned its religious ideology. In fact, the IMU was not a monolithic organization. Most studies of the movement indicate the coexistence of a more guerrilla-oriented and criminal faction and a more religious one within the group. As such, different actions attributed to the IMU were likely caused by different motivations. The IMU is best understood as an amalgam of personal vendetta, Islamism, drugs, geopolitics, and terrorism.

The regional scene is also far from positive. The insurgency in along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan has grown again, and Western countries have shown a disturbing inability to deal with the ideological element of the war on terror. Aside from the energy-rich countries such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the region's governments are failing to meet their citizens' basic socio-economic needs. All this fosters an environment in which Islamic radical groups can thrive. Islamist and terrorist organizations have also shown an ability to modify their tactics and increasingly cooperate with one other – based on the needs of local conditions. For example, HT distributed free meals and toys during the last Islamic holiday in Kyrgyzstan, in spite of never having done any social work before. It is therefore essential to regularly review assumptions and analyses as the radical groups are constantly adopting their tactics based on changing conditions on the ground.

Meanwhile, western influence in Central Asia has been decreasing rapidly, and is non-existent in the North Caucasus. Only Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan can be said to be increasingly linked with the western realm. With the West more or less out of the picture, and Russian and Chinese influence growing, the Central Asian governments are likely to become more repressive and less reformist. Thus, the regional environment is moving in a direction where the worst authoritarian

tendencies of the local governments will come out, while it will do little to improve the economic conditions. This will make the Islamist message of injustice increasingly appealing, and help the Islamists to grow stronger. In comparison, the carrots that the EU and the U.S. can offer the Central Asian governments will not be attractive enough, while the sticks that the West can use will not be painful enough to induce change. If this general situation is less than rosy, there are indeed areas where the West in general and the EU in particular can be effective.

The radical and externally sponsored Islamic movements and organizations existing in the region offer little hope for a meaningful dialogue. Even if they were prepared to engage in such dialogue with the West (for which there is no evidence), it would constitute a gross breach of normal diplomatic relations with countries of the region. The moderate majority is less organized and much weaker financially. However, it is quite possible to engage representatives of this majority, and also of the secular parts of the population, in dialogue. This could prove useful and should be pursued.

The link between drug trafficking and religious extremism is proven beyond doubt. While most drug traffickers may have no connection to religious extremism, those who do are sufficiently important to provide a steady income stream for Islamic militant and terrorist groups. The drug trade in Afghanistan and Central Asia is demand-driven, with the majority of the demand arising from EU member countries. The one action by the EU that would do most to address the problem of religious extremism in the region would be to lend major financial support to counter-narcotics efforts. Such support must be commensurate with the huge European demand that sustains the industry and, indirectly, much of the extremism.

As the above cited authors noted, on dealing with religious radicalism and government repression, the EU may find it useful to look at the Turkish example, which is relevant to understanding the tension between trying to create a modern and open democratic system and dealing with the threat of fundamentalist and militant Islamic political ideology. Eurasia's Muslim majority countries that want to maintain their secular regime, will not listen to naïve suggestions from Western countries that have never dealt with the holistic nature of Islam. They will, however, listen to advice on creating the right legal and constitutional safety nets so that radical groups, or " sleeper cells," cannot take over secular systems. To this end, the EU should engage Turkey as it addresses issues of radical Islam in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Besides underscoring a common interest between Turkey and the EU, this would bring benefit in the form of better focused initiatives on the EU's part, and even possibly to initiatives that are coordinated between the EU and Turkey.

The emergence of a terrorist organization "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan" can be best explained by Insecurity dilemma theory rather than Relative Deprivation and Repression theories. The latter two give only a partial explanation focusing on a limited set of factors. Relative Deprivation theory concentrates mainly on motivations of individuals ignoring processes and dynamics that might be important. Repression Theory is not adequate because it does not explain a

precise causal path when repression leads to the escalation or deterrence of violence. Some countries can have a very high level of repression, however they might lack terrorism and vice versa. Therefore, insecurity dilemma theory is better to addresses these problems. It gives a causal mechanism explaining why the emergence of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan became possible incorporating different variables.

According to Insecurity dilemma theory, the main internal factors that brought Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan into existence were lack of social cohesion within society and absence of domestic consensus. The existence of ethnic, subethnic, and supranational cleavages undermined the legitimacy of the regime. In addition, unpopular economic and political reforms of the government worsened the authority of Karimov. Lack of legitimacy in turn caused a high level of repression on the part of the state. Repression and prosecution led to the radicalization of the religious organizations. Uzbekistan possesses all these characteristics. It is divided over a number of identities, one of which is an Islamic identity. The Karimov regime does not provide the population of Uzbekistan with the basic well-being needs and as a result it faces a lack of legitimacy. The fear to loose power drives Islam Karimov to use coercion and repression toward religious groups. Excessive repression in turn causes the radicalization of the religious groups. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is a good example of it. Thus, insecurity for Uzbekistan emanates internally and further repression might worsen the situation within the country.

It is also important to note that the threat of terrorism in the region was not diminished. For that reason, a number of measures should be taken to solve the problem. First of all, Central Asian states have to accommodate and find a compromise with Islam as one of the main sources of new identity in the region.

The emergence of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan shows that religion plays a key role in the daily life of many people and that it can be a real threat to the security of the secular state. For this purpose, the leaders of the Central Asian states should work out certain policies toward religious organizations that would not discriminate against them. This is particular important for Uzbekistan that has a very high level of religiosity among the population and where religion will remain an important component of political and social life. The continuing repression of the religious organizations as well as people's political rights and freedoms will exacerbate the problem of radical Islam in the region and increase the threat of terrorist attacks in the future.

The next step for Uzbekistan would be to conduct extensive economic reforms to better the standards of living of the population. The command economy, which still exists in Uzbekistan, proved its insolvency and invalidity. It impedes the development of the country and makes Uzbekistan uncompetitive with other states of the region. Poverty serves as an additional factor that might contribute to the process of radicalization of social organizations whether religious or non-religious.

Another policy recommendation would be to increase the level of cooperation among the Central Asian States regarding religious extremism and terrorism, drug

trafficking, and organized crime. All those measure in combination might reduce the threat of militant Islam and terrorism in the region.

### **3. Central Asia, Iran and “Pax Iranica”**

For ten years now, Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan have been establishing a Persian-speaking community in Central Asia. The Turkic republics of Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey started moving toward a Turkic-speaking community as soon as the Soviet Union ceased to exist. The Persian-speaking countries acquired their chance in the early 2000s when the Taliban, an inveterate opponent of the IRI, was overthrown and Tajikistan ended its civil war. In fact, the entire region is more or less involved: Tajikistan is a Central Asian state, while the other two are its close neighbors with a long history of belonging to the region at one time or another.

Today, Central Asia, Iran, and Afghanistan have economic interests, security concerns, and geopolitical imperatives in common. Iran, which badly needs a wider Pax Iranica, is the natural driving force behind integration of the Persianspeaking countries, a far from easy mission in the present geopolitical and international context. In Afghanistan, the Persian-speaking communiti are dominated by the Pashtoons, the state-forming nation, who are dead set against all attempts to split the country into ethnic units. The U.S.-led occupation authorities, likewise, are firmly opposed to Iran’s stronger influence on the Tajik and Hazara minorities.

Tajikistan is a homogenous part of Central Asia; its ties with the region and the post-Soviet expanse are too strong to allow it to completely integrate with the Iranian world. To strengthen its position in both countries, Tehran is contributing to their large-scale economic, energy, transport, and humanitarian projects.

It should be said that, in the past, the Iranian culture extended to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, Iraq, and vast areas in the Middle East, which gives the IRI the opportunity to push its influence westward. With no chance of exploiting the ethnic and linguistic affinity there, Tehran relies on the Shi‘a minority, which is rapidly developing into an important political factor in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the Gulf countries.

#### *Iran — the Center of Pax Iranica*

In one way or another, Tehran’s foreign policy invariably involves Central Asia. This is true of its relations with Russia, China, Pakistan, India, Turkey, and the South Caucasian states; the Middle East being the only exception. Many of its problems are caused by its very specific international status and the foreign policies of its leaders, whose nuclear ambitions have isolated the country once more from the rest of the world. In the 1990s, Iran restored its relations with the outside world and, at the turn of the 21st century, more or less successfully reformed its economy. Today it is entering another period of economic stagnation.

In the last two decades, Iran has acquired the status of a regional power and is determined to confirm its regional and global ambitions by building up its military-strategic (missile and nuclear) potential to the detriment of its economic health. The international economic sanctions expected to trim its nuclear ambitions do nothing for its social and economic sphere. Its ethnic diversity (there are several large ethnic groups in the country, whereby Persians are no longer in the absolute majority) adds more problems. Ethnic Azeris, whose numbers have increased over recent years, regularly stir up ethnic discontent or even riots in Iranian Azerbaijan. For a long time now, Iran and its political regime have been and remain a target of numerous leftist and nationalist terrorist groups.

In 2004-2005, the United States became resolved to undermine the Iranian regime from the inside, the provocation of ethnic disagreements being one of the means to this end. The recent events which shook the country in the wake of the presidential election looked very much like the Color Revolutions in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet expanse stirred up by external forces. It seems that similar methods will be applied to Iran: its ruling regime should either be removed or at least weakened to push the country toward neutrality on the international scene and force it to drop its nuclear program. As the dominant religion and ideology, Islam is the key element of Tehran's foreign policy: Iran is the only Muslim state determined to export the Islamic revolution beyond its borders. Inside the country, the social sphere and economy are based on Islam.

In the last fifteen years, Iranian (Shi'a) nationalism and pragmatism have moved to the fore in Tehran's dealings with the outside world. While Islam remains an important element of the country's foreign policy rhetoric, the Iranian leaders proceed from the country's national interests and are not averse to exploiting the Islamic factor, particularly in the Middle East. This means that security and stability in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Caspian depend on what is going on around Iran; its destabilization or involvement in a large-scale conflict might upset the Central Asian region.

A large-scale military crisis around Iran, as well as its nuclear file, will draw the big geopolitical players (the U.S., Russia, China, Europe, and the Islamic world) into it. This will destabilize the central part of Eurasia and change the military-strategic situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. The external factor has been and remains an important or even decisive element of Iranian foreign policy. Its basic principles formulated at the dawn of the Iranian revolution - "neither West nor East but Islam," export of the Islamic revolution, and priority of the Muslim world on the foreign policy agenda—have somewhat changed. Its new constructive approach to foreign policy ended its international isolation of the first post-revolutionary years. Iran established contacts with the European Union, the Arab world, and Russia.

The Iranian leaders, however, were still worried about the Middle East settlement and destabilization in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf where American military forces are stationed. President Ahmadinejad is resolved to make his country a regional power and a leader of the Muslim world; he speaks about common Islamic values, interests, and global aims to smooth out the traditional



disagreements between the Sunni and the Shi'a; he has even moved closer to Saudi Arabia, which is not only America's key ally in the Gulf, but also Iran's traditional rival determined to limit its impact in the region.

China is another very important foreign policy partner: better relations with it mean another ally among the countries with a say in international relations and the opportunity to attract the investments badly needed for development of Iran's economy. In the 1990s, China, which for some time had been officially encouraging nuclear energy production in Iran, retreated under Washington's pressure. It had, however, helped Tehran at the initial stages of its nuclear program. Arms trade opened many doors to the Iranian market for China and greatly advanced bilateral relations. Oil-rich Iran was indispensable for China's dynamic economy and an important part of China's strategic interests.

The Chinese factor plays an important role in Iran's international status undermined by America's mounting pressure. The two countries have moved closer to oppose the United States: Iran needs China as a geopolitical ally, economic partner, and source of strategic technology, while China needs Iran's energy resources. Moreover, seen from Beijing, Iran looks like a strong anti-American outpost on the Central Asian borders. It could, at some point, become part of China's strategic salient—Xinjiang, Central Asia, the Middle East.

Today, both Iran and China insist that the U.N. should have a greater role to play in reviving Iraq. China has several reasons to be interested in Iran: Tehran can be used as both a diplomatic instrument in the geopolitical games in the Middle East and Central Asia and an important source of the energy resources needed to feed China's rapidly developing economy, while the country can also help to establish a new route for Chinese exports. Today, scores of Chinese companies are involved in all sorts of projects in Iran: they are building metros in Iranian cities, railways, and TV networks and are involved in oil and gas production.

Still wider contacts might create a new trade route commonly described as the North-South corridor to connect India, Iran, and Russia as an alternative to the Suez. Today, some people in Iran think that its Chinese agenda can be used to move closer to multilateral cooperation among Tehran, Beijing, Moscow, and Delhi. Both China and Iran are driven by their shared concerns about the United States' unilateral policy; Chinese and Iranian politicians are worried about the American military bases which have already appeared in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.

Iran plays one of the key roles in the Middle East, which means that none of the conflicts can be settled without it. Recently, Iran shifted its attention to Turkey and its Islamist leaders; the developments in the region suggest a much wider platform, which can be tentatively described as anti-Arabic.

There is information that Iran is not seeking a nuclear status: it merely wishes to obtain a "virtual nuclear weapon state" status similar to that of Canada and Germany; the three countries are part of the non-proliferation regime. The "virtual nuclear weapon state" status means that the country knows how to enrich uranium and agrees to use the results for peaceful purposes. If Washington and its allies agree to meet Iran halfway, Tehran will abide by the additional protocol which

stipulates IAEA control. This means that Tehran is striving to establish a multipolar world under the U.N. aegis, with Iran and other Muslim states being one of the poles; it considers Central Asia to be part of the Gulf area and a zone of its vital economic interests.

The Islamic Republic consistently insists on energy transportation routes from Central Asia across its territory as the cheapest and, therefore, economically most expedient. Iran's political and intellectual communities mistrust Russia; the so-called partnership between the two countries is a product of the hostility of the United States and its allies toward Iran. The country, which has an observer status in the SCO, sought full membership and was rejected by Russia and China to avoid America's negative response. Tehran is convinced that the SCO members treat it as their partner; it is involved in decision-making at all stages.

Iran will exploit Russia's contradictions with other countries to promote its own interests and is seeking a regional power status to communicate with the West. On the other hand, it seems that the Kremlin cannot come to any agreement about the Iranian file: sources in the top leadership claim that the Iranian file "is one of Putin's personal responsibilities" and that he has the final say on all issues of importance. Indeed, in the first months of 2010, President Medvedev repeated in public that sanctions were unavoidable, while Prime Minister Putin was much vaguer. Iran's claim to a regional status of any consequence moves the Caucasus and Central Asia into the sphere of its foreign policy interests, even though the northern sector of its interests depends much less on its domestic policy and ideology.

Today, Tehran's long-term interests in the Caspian boil down to involvement in economic, political, cultural, and other contacts in Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as in the regional system of interdependence, which cannot function without Iran. Iran is seeking greater involvement in energy resource production and transportation and, therefore, a stronger position in the Caspian; it wants to bring its gas to the European and Asian markets to become the region's transit hub and play a more active role in setting up and operating a united Mid-Eastern electric power system. Its international involvement is expected to remedy the systemic faults of the Iranian fuel and energy complex.

Iran is resolved to keep the extra-regional powers (the United States and Israel in particular) out of the Caucasus; it agrees with Russia, which believes that none of the extra-regional actors should be allowed to meddle in the domestic affairs of the Caucasus, the Caspian, and Central Asia. Recently, Tehran has been building up its military presence in the Caspian Basin in an effort to prevent the United States and Europe from developing strategic cooperation with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan; it is modernizing its Caspian forces and naval police as part of its Caspian navy. The country's leaders are acting under the pressure of a "foreign irritant" and do not conceal this. From the very beginning, Iran sided with Russia on the new legal status of the Caspian sea/lake; the sea and its resources should be used jointly by the five littoral states (condominium) with the help of interstate structures and companies entrusted with offshore oil and gas production.

As distinct from its Caspian neighbors, Iran has retained the share of the seabed and subsoil it had during Soviet times because it has never been engaged in offshore oil and gas production or survey. It is much less willing to be involved in squabbles over the Caspian resources than the other Caspian states. Its current situation does not depend on energy production in the Caspian, while in the future it might profit from this lucrative enterprise, a positive, yet not vitally important, factor. In 2007, Iran began trying to transform the Caspian Five into a new regional economic structure - an organization of the Caspian states in which Iran will play the first fiddle. All the Caspian states hail the idea of demilitarization of the sea. In the past, the United States tried to help Baku reorganize its naval forces, allegedly to protect the BTC oil pipeline, and invited Ashghabad and Astana to engage in military-technical cooperation in the Caspian.

Geography, which left Iran with a small sector in the southern part of the sea, and geology, which has so far revealed no considerable energy reserves, are two factors which determine Iran's position on Caspian delimitation. Formally, Tehran refused to recognize the northern agreements<sup>208</sup> by saying that "any changes in the legal regime related to the use of the Caspian Sea's mineral resources should be approved by the five littoral states," and suggested that each of the states receive an equal part (20 percent) of the seabed.

This infringes on the interests of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, with which Iran should negotiate first in order to arrive at a mutually acceptable decision. In July 2001, Iran demonstrated its resolution to rebuff all unilateral actions: an Iranian warship and two jets forced Azeri research vessels to leave the area of the Alov, Araz and Sharq oil fields in the Caspian. Recently, however, Tehran retreated from its implacable position: it is prepared to talk and forget the red lines; it has become interested in some of the Caspian projects. To add weight to its position and strengthen its presence in the Caspian, Iran has launched independent prospecting for gas and oil in the southern part of the sea, particularly in areas to which Azerbaijan might also have a claim.

It obviously intends to emulate its neighbors: first claim oil and gas fields and then invite others to the negotiation table; however, unlike its neighbors, it has not yet started this process. To find out the real volumes of its resources, it will have to move into the deep-water area of its sector, for which it has neither the expertise nor the technology. The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), which has two offshore platforms in the Caspian Sea, had to turn to foreign companies. So far, Iran has done nothing to explore and use its offshore oil and gas resources. As time goes on, it will find it much harder to deal with neighbors who have already divided the sea's northern part. The Iranian leaders have accepted the situation and want to cooperate with the other players. They just want to be one of the active participants in the sphere of energy production.

Iran also wants to be actively involved in the transportation of Caspian oil and to increase the amount moved across its territory; it wants to acquire more oil for

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<sup>208</sup> In 1998-2003 Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan divided the seabed in the northern Caspian and left the water area in common use.

its modernized and newly built oil refineries in the country's north. Iranian oil could be moved to China across Central Asia, but so far there are neither specific plans nor decisions regarding this. Swap deals are another, partly realized, alternative for transporting Caspian oil: oil from other littoral states is moved to the Iranian Caspian ports, while Iran sends out equivalent volumes of its oil through its Gulf ports. In the Caspian, it uses Neka as the main port and Noushahr and Anzali as subsidiaries.

In the Persian Gulf, it relies on Kharg Island. Iran has found it hard to attract the Russian and Azeri players in the Caspian market: with many other alternatives at their disposal, they have not shown any interest in the Iranian route up to now. Iran is still developing its infrastructure, which is expected to provide Iranian companies with a greater role in energy transportation in the Caspian. So far, like its Caspian neighbors, the country does not have enough state-of-the-art tankers, and Tehran is very well aware of the advantage it could gain here. By enhancing its tanker fleet and filling the vacant niche in the market, Iran could satisfy at least some of its energy-related ambitions in the region and also use this advantage as an additional argument for having raw hydrocarbons sent to its ports.

If and when Iran acquires enough state-of-the-art tankers, the NIOC will be able to act as a transit country and a broker for transit of large volumes of oil from the Caspian: so far the other littoral states do not intend to acquire large tanker fleets. This explains why Iran is insisting on the principle of free navigation in the Caspian. This coincides with what Moscow wants, which means that this principle stands a good chance of being approved when the sea's legal status is negotiated. Iran's position in the gas sphere in the Caspian is explained by its intention to increase its own gas exports and have as much gas as possible transited through its territory. In the past few years it has been concentrating on gas exports: its expanded export capabilities are fortifying its position at the talks on gas transit across third countries.

Today Iran is interested in two international projects that appear to have good prospects: the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (IPI) and the European Nabucco project. Unrelated to Tehran's interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus, they affect the IPI's aims and position in the region. Until recently Iran was interested in two other alternatives for transporting its gas to Europe — through Turkey, if the present infrastructure were extended, and through the Southern Caucasus to Ukraine, Poland, and on to Eastern Europe.

Iran's involvement in South Stream will unite the pipeline systems of Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia; Iran will not only diversify its export routes, it will also strengthen its position in the Caucasian gas market and gain access to the region's economic and political life. On the whole, Tehran's Central Asian policy is absolutely correct and balanced: the pragmatic wing of the Iranian political community knows that culture and revival of the cultural community are a much better vehicle of Iranian influence.

From the very beginning, Iran has been very interested in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as a way to consolidate the region. A project shared by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, it is designed to bring them closer together.

Iran, as one of the leaders, is actively participating in implementing the projects in order to raise the relations among the partners to a higher level of mutual trust, add to its political weight in the region, and eliminate some of the problems caused by political isolation. Tehran insists that the country's common culture and history, shared borders and economic foundations, and ancient trade contacts with the region all bode well for developing cooperation between Iran and the regional states; the pipeline issue is not only of economic but also of strategic importance for Iran.

Its interest in the energy transportation routes in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus consists of at least three components: first, Iran aspires to become the region's energy transportation hub, which can be described as the most ambitious of its political and economic aims. Its territory offers the shortest and, therefore, most profitable oil and gas export routes between the former Soviet Caspian republics and the world markets. Iranian experts have been talking about this for twenty years now. Second, Tehran is striving to gain access to new energy markets via new oil and gas export routes. Third, Iran wants to provide the oil refineries in the country's north with stable deliveries of oil, gas, and electric power; it aims to gasify some of its regions; and ensure uninterrupted power supply throughout the year. Closely intertwined, the three components should be regarded as a single whole.

Its geographic location makes its interest in energy transportation much more logical and the possibilities of its realization much more numerous than its claims to be involved in mining Caspian mineral resources. In the last 15 years, Iran has been supplying its northern provinces on a regular basis with oil and gas from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Its consistent interest in gas exports to the foreign markets is supported by another, no less important, interest to become a transportation hub for energy resources of the entire region. It expects to send oil from nearly all the Caspian countries and gas from Turkmenistan in particular across its territory (thus hoping to eliminate the need for this gas to be transported through the planned Trans-Caspian and Trans-Afghan gas pipelines).

The relations between Iran and Turkmenistan, which are prompted by economic and political expediency, stand apart from Tehran's relations with the other Central Asian capitals. Neither of the two is worried about domestic collisions on the other side of the border, while international isolation adds to their mutual attraction. As distinct from Iran's relations with the other Caspian neighbors, its relations with Turkmenistan stand on a much firmer foundation of close cooperation in the energy and other spheres. There is the Mashhad-Sarakhs railway which, in 1996, provided Iran with access to previously closed Central Asia. Over 90 percent of Turkmen oil is exported through Iran.

In the late 1990s, they jointly built the Balkanabat-Ali Abad power line to connect their energy systems; in March 2003, they signed a Memorandum on Cooperation in the Fuel and Energy Sector, under which they are performing a contract on electric power export from Turkmenistan for a period of 10 years; the completed project will allow Iran to import \$140 million-worth of electric power from Turkmenistan every year. Half of the payment will arrive in money form and

the other in the form of spare parts, commodities, products, equipment, and services for the industrial facilities and organizations of the Ministry of Power and Industry of Turkmenistan. One kWh of Turkmen electric power costs \$0.02.

Since 1997, Turkmenistan has been exporting up to 6 bcm of gas every year to the north-east of Iran along the Korpeje–Kurt-Kui gas pipeline, which covers 5 percent of the country's needs. The new Dauletabad-Sarakhs-Hangeran gas pipeline will double the volume, with some of the gas being sent to Turkey on a swap basis. At the same time, Iran obviously wants to decrease its dependence on Turkmen gas or rid itself of this dependence altogether.

In June 2009, the two capitals agreed to increase the volumes of annual gas supplies to 14 bcm and build another pipeline. Before that Russia imported between 30 and 42 bcm of gas from the Dauletabad fields every year. Iran moved in when, in April 2009, Russia reduced the amount of gas it transports from Turkmenistan. Today, Turkmenistan supplies Iran with 8 bcm of gas a year transported from the Korpeje gas fields in the country's west to Kurt-Kui. The additional branch of the Dauletabad-Sarakhs-Hangeran pipeline commissioned in December 2009 will gradually bring the volumes up to 20 bcm.

The failed Transcaspian gas pipeline project increased the chances of Iran's participation in Nabucco; the country will finally be able to realize its ideal scenario: selling its own gas and moving Turkmen gas across its territory. As an SCO member, Iran will be more actively involved in its energy sphere if it steps up cooperation in this field; this will greatly affect the position of Russia, China, and the Central Asian CIS countries. Involved in the less competitive (from Russia's point of view) Asian market, Iran will not be in a position to reduce the share of Russian gas in the European market. Russia and the other SCO countries will be able to influence Iran's energy policy and, in this way, its behavior in the security and non-proliferation spheres.

It seems that Iran's confrontation with the West (and the United States in particular) will remain at least at the present level, whereas the risk of an armed conflict will rise. Dauletabad-Sarakhs-Hangeran pipeline commissioned in December 2009 will gradually bring the volumes up to 20 bcm. The failed Transcaspian gas pipeline project increased the chances of Iran's participation in Nabucco; the country will finally be able to realize its ideal scenario: selling its own gas and moving Turkmen gas across its territory.

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## *Afghanistan – A Bridge in the Persian-Speaking Expanse*

In many respects Afghanistan is the key security factor for Central Asia because of its geographic location, complicated domestic policies, ethnic and confessional diversity, and deep involvement in the worldwide shadow economy. Today it is caught in the entangled web of interests of many states and non-state forces. The developments in this country cross the borders to cripple the security of its direct and even more distant neighbors. This fully explains the close and unflagging attention of Pakistan, India, Iran, the post-Soviet Central Asian states, China, and Russia to what is going on in Afghanistan.

The developments in this country and around it will greatly affect the geopolitical situation in Central Asia and its security. On the one hand, the Central Asian republics (and Russia for that matter) need the counterterrorist operation to succeed. On the other hand, the military-strategic presence of the United States and its NATO allies in Afghanistan and some other nearby states creates tension with Russia and China, which the Central Asian countries must take into account.

Since 2003, the ISAF (set up in 2001 on a decision of the U.N. Security Council) has been operating in Afghanistan under the NATO aegis. NATO's involvement not merely tests political solidarity between the United States and its European NATO allies, the Alliance is also looking for a new place in the world, as well as new functions and a wider responsibility zone. Nothing has changed under the Democratic Administration of President Obama, despite his talk about the need to revise the Afghan strategy and Washington's relations with its European NATO partners. And although the new strategy may have made noticeable changes to the old Republican patterns (related to an integral approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan or the so-called political amnesty for the Taliban), America is largely following the political course of previous Administration.

Security threats created by radical Islamism and drug trafficking, rather than the economy, constitute Russia's main interests in Afghanistan. In a wider geopolitical context, Russia is concerned about the military-strategic activities of the United States and its NATO allies in the region. At the regional level, Russia is returning to its support of the Northern Alliance in the form of the so-called security belt to respond to the country's increasing decentralization.

At the Sochi meeting with representatives of Pakistan, Iran, and Tajikistan, Russia presented its position on Afghanistan in very specific terms: Moscow expects that foreign troops will remain in the country for several more years before responsibility can be safely shifted to the Afghan army and the police. The transition period will create certain threats for Russia, which expects the revival of Taliban activities and increased drug trafficking.

The expert community is convinced that Russia should maintain balanced contacts with all of Afghanistan's ethnic groups (which will require closer contacts with Pakistan) while keeping in mind that the national minorities will be unable to establish law and order in the country. Russia can and should be involved in the country's economic reconstruction and promote economic cooperation at the regional level in particular. President Karzai managed to secure Moscow's promise

to continue rendering significant assistance to his country even after 2014 when the international coalition leaves Afghanistan.

Some time ago, Beijing was very worried about the security threats emanating from Afghanistan; the Operation Enduring Freedom caused concern about the military presence of America and NATO close to the Chinese borders. The new leadership headed by Chairman Hu Jintao, who concentrated on adequate supplies of mineral resources, changed the main policy tack in Afghanistan to economic expansion. Beijing decided in favor of business cooperation, rather than military involvement, which it presented as its aid to the world community.

The sum of \$150 million Beijing contributed to Afghanistan's reconstruction within the framework of the international program is fairly modest (compared to Japan's \$900 million). Beijing prefers to give money to small agricultural projects; late in March 2010, President Karzai visited China where the two leaders signed agreements which made China the greatest investor in the mining projects in Afghanistan. Beijing is mainly interested in the considerable mineral resources neglected because of the war; it is believed that China might become the only serious investor in Afghanistan with a special interest in the raw materials sector. So far its achievements in Afghanistan look impressive against the failures of the states involved in the conflict.

Recently, the top crust of Pakistan's political establishment concluded that what Islamabad wants for Afghanistan has little in common with what Washington wants in this country. Pakistani strategists have come up with a road map of their own, which they are trying to impose on Karzai. It is believed that Islamabad is tilling the soil for a new game in the Afghan geopolitical field if and when America pulls out of the country and the Taliban is invited to the negotiation table to talk about its involvement in the official power structures. Some experts are convinced that Islamabad is liquidating the Taliban leaders to resume its grip on the movement and encouraging the moderates ready to start talking with Kabul after 2011 while bearing in mind Pakistan's interests.

The fairly large Indian community in Afghanistan maintains traditional economic and cultural ties with India, which has already made large investments in road building in Afghanistan; it has an embassy in Kabul and four consulates; the Taliban never leaves India's facilities in peace. By the mid-2008, India had contributed \$1.15 billion to the country's reconstruction; it is the fifth largest donor. The money is spent on infrastructure, humanitarian aid, building modern institutions, and personnel training. Delhi is paying for the 217-km Zaranj-Dilaram highway between the southwestern border of Afghanistan and its ring road. At a cost of \$180 million, this highway will join the road which connects the Iranian port of Chah Behar with the Afghan border and will provide India with access (via the Iranian port and Afghan territory) to the Central Asian markets.

Indian projects include maintenance of roads and supply lines, energy-producing facilities, and hospitals; India will help to improve the education and training of diplomats and civil servants. India is using its satellites to bring television to Kabul and ten provinces of Afghanistan; it is also paying for new power lines for the country.



Iran is interested in its relations with Afghanistan not so much because of their common border as because of the strong American and NATO military groups stationed there. At the official level, Tehran supports the internationally recognized government of Afghanistan; it is one of its largest trade and economic partners with large investments in some of the projects in Western Afghanistan. The Iranian leaders are dead set against talks with the Taliban. In March 2010, President Ahmadinejad visited Afghanistan to feel out the situation and assess the moods prevailing among the country's political leaders and the limits of President Karzai's powers imposed by the U.S. military presence.

He had in mind another strategic task: the country should not become a military lever to be used as a security threat or a pressure instrument. Tehran's interest in what the White House is doing in Afghanistan is well-justified and quite understandable. Iran's economic aid is intended to consolidate its position in Afghanistan; it is seeking more stability in the country, a stronger central government, much more vigorous anti-drug efforts, return of the Afghan refugees, and intensified regional cooperation and trade.

Today, it is involved in all sorts of projects, while bilateral trade is developing by leaps and bounds. By late 2006, Iran was exporting consumer goods and foodstuffs totaling \$500 million to Afghanistan every year; the total turnover amounted to \$1 billion. Every day between 400 and 500 Iranian wagons crossed the Iranian-Afghan border. The first Iranian bank was opened in Kabul to encourage bilateral trade.

Tehran is active in reconstructing and extending the country's economic infrastructure; financial aid totaling \$560 million (promised in 2002) was spent during five years on expanding the power network; in 2005, a power line with a total capacity of 132 kWh which, at the first stage, brought electricity from the Iranian border to Herat was commissioned; potentially its capacity could be increased ten-fold to bring electric power to other cities. Iran built a 122 km-long highway costing \$65 million to connect its northeast with Herat; it is building a highway between Western Afghanistan and the Iranian port of Chah Behar on the Gulf, an alternative to the Pakistani route via Gwadar to provide Afghanistan with access to the sea. Iran is building dams, schools, polyclinics, and other social facilities; its financial aid has topped \$1 billion.

Iran built a road between Dogarun and Herat which will be extended to Maymana; it is also implementing a trans-Afghan corridor project (Iran-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan) of strategic importance for both countries and the Central Asian republics and is exerting immense efforts to train specialists in information technology for Afghanistan. Afghan refugees are a headache for both countries; since 1979 Iran has given shelter to over 3 million. Drug trafficking is another big problem which mars bilateral relations. Iran has already spent over \$800 million on fighting drugs and drug trafficking. On the whole, Kabul expects Tehran, its regional partner, to support its rehabilitation efforts on a large scale.

The Iranian regime uses financial levers to interfere in Kabul's domestic policy. In October 2010, it became known that Iran was supplying Kabul with considerable sums of money. The Iranians admitted the fact; it is believed that the

Afghan authorities spent the money on buying the loyalty of members of the country's parliament, elders, and the moderate Taliban. A pro-American government in Kabul brought to power to legalize the American and NATO military presence in the country as a result of national reconciliation or complete rout of the Taliban will deprive Iran of any more or less efficient political instruments to influence Afghan developments.

If American troops remain stationed in Iraq, Iran will find itself in geopolitical pincers. Iran will not gain much if the Americans pull out of Afghanistan before the crisis has been finally settled. Many regional integration projects will be buried if the Afghan conflict spreads far and wide and confrontation between Kabul and the Taliban develops into open hostility. In this case, Tehran will be forced to side with the official authorities in Kabul.

If the situation remains unchanged after 2011, that is, if confrontation between NATO and Kabul, on the one hand, and the Taliban, on the other, continues, Iran will preserve its present position in the region. Afghanistan is still potentially the most likely source of instability in Central Asia. The expert community is convinced that after regaining power the Taliban will move on. Islamabad looks like the most likely target: in more or less peaceful times, former President of Pakistan Musharraf and his special services could preserve relations with the United States while flirting with al-Qa'eda and the Taliban. A total crisis in Afghanistan, which might hit the country when the coalition has removed its forces, is fraught with all sorts of complications up to and including a coup in Pakistan with its nuclear weapons falling into the hands of extremists.

The experts, analysts, and special services disagree on what may happen. Some of them believe that the danger is exaggerated and Central Asia is absolutely safe. Better informed analysts, however, believe that clandestine activities of the Islamists and extremists should not be ignored and that they are closely connected with organized crime and the drug mafia.

For twenty years, Tashkent remained absolutely independent when dealing with Afghanistan, or rather with its northern Uzbek-populated enclave. American and NATO occupation left Uzbekistan two spheres of political involvement: creating and maintaining the so-called security belt and establishing intensive economic ties to integrate the enclave with Uzbekistan; it supplies the northern part of Afghanistan with electric power and oil products.

In practice, everything Tashkent is doing there encourages separatist trends among the Uzbeks (or Uzbeks and Tajiks). It actively supports Moscow's idea of a security belt in the north of Afghanistan. In April 2008, at a NATO/EAPC Summit in Bucharest, President of Uzbekistan Karimov was very open about his country's approach to the problem. Later, in August 2009 at the SCO summit in Dushanbe, he confirmed it. He pointed out that

(1) there is no military solution to the Afghan problem, an opinion that is gaining wider currency among an increasing number of states;

(2) the most acute social problems (poverty and unemployment) should be addressed without delay. Today, a great share of the able-bodied population, young

people in particular, are left without means of subsistence, the situation being actively exploited by extremist fighters and drug pushers;

(3) conflict settlement should take into account the Afghans' confessional and national specific (confirmed by the numerous wars in the past in which external forces were involved).

Tashkent believes that the 6 + 2 Contact Group for Afghanistan, which functioned under the U.N. aegis, should be restored; NATO, an active participant in the settlement process, should become one of its members. At the non-official level Tashkent is convinced that, first, no compromise with the Taliban on matters of fundamental importance is possible; second, the Afghans and the world community should know that what is going on in this country is spearheaded against the terrorists, not the Afghans; third, any concession will invite an offensive on all fronts — military, geopolitical, information, ideological, psychological, etc.

This means that everything possible should be done to deprive the terrorists of their sources of conscripts. On the whole, Tashkent believes that the international peacekeeping operation will go on for a long time. For geographic and historical reasons and because of its ethnic connections, Turkmenistan needs peace and stability in Afghanistan and wide economic cooperation with this country. The Turkmen leaders are concentrating on the gas pipeline expected to bring gas from Dauletabad to the Hindustani Peninsular via Afghanistan.

Astana's position on the Afghan issue can be described as active. At the 2006 London Conference on Afghanistan, it supported the Treaty on Afghanistan between the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community, which identified the time within which the country's economy should be restored and enumerated the related social and economic projects, as well as the most urgent regional security problems (including drugs).

In 2009-2011, Kazakhstan allocated \$1.5 million under the cooperation plan with Afghanistan. In 2008, Kazakhstan allocated \$2.4 million for school construction and \$50 million under the international educational support program to pay for training Afghan students in Kazakhstan. Between 2006 and 2010, the country acquired an economic agenda which included investments in railway construction, as well as prospecting and mining mineral resources (oil, gas, iron ore, coal, and copper) in Afghanistan. On the whole, Astana sides with all the peace initiatives and processes which bring conflict settlement closer: Kazakhstan is fully aware that Afghanistan is one of the key factors of regional security in Central Asia.

America's "new strategy" in Afghanistan boils down to "leave in order to stay." The United States cannot pull out of Afghanistan and leave Pakistan alone to deal with its Islamists without risking its own security and endangering its numerous allies and client states (particularly in the Middle East). America and NATO will gradually decrease their military presence at a much slower pace than in Iraq; it is expected that Washington will keep its 30- to 50-thousand-strong military contingent in the country to prevent its military and political destabilization. It should be said that the interests of the key players (America,

Russia, and China), which differ at the global level, are identical in Afghanistan and can be described in a nutshell as stability at any cost.

### *Tajikistan – Periphery of Pax Iranica?*

There is a more or less concerted opinion that Tajikistan is the region's weakest link in terms of its internal situation and external security. This mostly stereotypical opinion is confirmed by the Islamic opposition inside the country, the rivaling clans, the increasingly active militants, the impossibly low living standards, Afghanistan's negative impact, full-fledged drug trafficking, etc. Tajikistan has had the hardest lot: in Soviet times the living standards were low, the birthrate high, the infrastructure undeveloped, and the public institutions traditional and archaic to the highest degree. During perestroika, the republic was the first among the other Soviet republics to acquire an Islamic party—the Islamic Resurrection Party (IRP).

For several years now, its people have been living in the midst of serious changes at home and abroad. President Rakhmon is consistently building a so-called power vertical in an effort to consolidate his regime and state institutions; the republic aims at de-Russification and is trying to shed its excessive dependence on Moscow. It spares no effort to attract investors from Russia, Iran, China, the European Union, and America; China and Iran are showing a great interest in the republic's economy. Dushanbe has joined forces with Tehran and Kabul to establish a Persian-speaking community; India is another important partner.

Tajikistan belongs to the CIS and SCO; it is a member of the OIC, ECO, and OSCE and is actively cooperating with NATO. Through the EurAsEC and CSTO, Dushanbe is also involved in post-Soviet integration. The West sees Tajikistan as an important source of energy for Afghanistan. Dushanbe, in turn, is busy promoting its own ambitious plans of domestic and regional hydropower production countered by Uzbekistan and, to a lesser extent, by Kyrgyzstan. Russia is dead set against Tashkent's insistent desire to seek international assessment of Tajikistan's large-scale hydropower projects (the Rogun HPP) to keep the West away from regional affairs.

Iran treats Tajikistan as its main and close regional partner with their relations, particularly cultural, being rooted in ethnic communality. Tehran extends humanitarian aid to the Tajiks. In September 2004, President Hatami visited Dushanbe where the two presidents signed a memorandum under which Tehran was expected to acquire a controlling stake in the Sangtuda HPP-1 being built on the River Vakhsh, the largest of the joint projects. This caused a lot of irritation and opposition in Russia.

In 2006-2008, the two countries moved into new spheres, such as civil engineering, transport, agriculture, energy production, and machine-building. Tajikistan wants to see Iran among the SCO's full members; despite their contradictions, Moscow, Beijing, and Delhi have accepted the Tajik-Iranian tandem. Iran and Tajikistan cooperate in the military-technical sphere; Iran paid for

new uniforms for the Tajik army, communication means, small arms ammunition, and a JV for sewing military uniforms.

Tehran would not mind extending military cooperation to the three Persian-speaking countries (Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Iran) for the sake of regional security. If realized, this cooperation will add efficiency to anti-drug efforts and to fighting international terrorism. Some think, however, that Iran intends to use Tajikistan as a springboard for interfering in the international operation in Afghanistan. Recently, Iran has been consistently building up its presence in Tajikistan; there is a lot of talk about a visa-free regime between the two countries for the sake of closer economic cooperation. In 2010, Iran with \$65.5 million in direct investments in the Tajik economy outstripped many other countries (Russia among them) as one of the largest investors. The trade turnover between the Iran and Tajikistan reached \$201.7 million.

In the fall of 2011, the Iranian Sangob company intends to commission the Sangtuda HPP-2 on the River Vakhsh, after which it will immediately move on to three other hydropower projects: two Nurobod HPPs with a capacity of 350 megawatts each on the River Vakhsh and the Ayni HPP (170 megawatts) on the River Zaravshan. Iran will take part in the Shurob and Dashtijum hydropower projects and, together with Pakistan, will set up a united electric power grid in Tajikistan. The two countries have always considered energy production, transportation, water resources, road building, trade, and culture as priority spheres of cooperation. Tehran insists that Dushanbe abide by the 2008 agreement, which envisages a Persian-language educational and cultural TV channel.

Dushanbe is accused of deliberate delays, while the Tajik leaders are merely trying to avoid another round of Islamic propaganda directed at the younger generation. Tajikistan is pinning its hopes on cooperation in uranium mining: Iran, determined to go ahead with nuclear power production (despite international resolutions), needs access to the republic's uranium resources (about 13 percent of the world's total), which means that this sphere will come to the fore in the near future.

President Rakhmon visited Iran in March 2011 on an invitation from its president to stimulate closer cooperation between the two countries. Iran sees its relations with Tajikistan as cultural and religious cooperation between two nations with a common past. Iran's economic involvement has a political dimension as well: it is Tehran's response to America's military and economic presence in the region.

Between 2001 and 2004, military cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan subsided; Dushanbe was compelled to increase its pressure on Moscow in view of America's military presence and the money Washington paid Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan for use of its bases on their territory. The Tajik leaders demanded preferences; they postponed enactment of the Treaty on the Status of and Requirements for Deployment of a Russian Military Base in the Territory of Tajikistan signed back in 1999. For some time the sides discussed the possibility of "investments in exchange for the base."

Moscow was seeking control of Tajikistan's defense industry, while Dushanbe wanted to write off the debts for training its military and obtain contracts on modernizing its armaments for its military plants. American authors are puzzled by the air defense system Russia set up in Tajikistan since Afghanistan, the main source of threats and instability in the region, has no missiles. Moscow is seeking not so much its stronger influence in the republic (it is strong enough) as keeping other players and their bases away (after all, Tajikistan is free to invite other states and their bases if relations with Russia worsen).

In 2007, under the Treaty on the Status of and Requirements for the Deployment of a Russian Military Base, Russia started moving its troops from the airport of Dushanbe to Ayni, while Tajikistan (seeking and not receiving enough money from international structures and other countries) changed its approach. In the hope of obtaining larger investments, it confirmed its cooperation with Russia as its strategic vector, which buried America's hopes of moving into Tajikistan. Moscow, too, failed to obtain the best possible conditions and, late in August 2008, it signed a treaty on wider military and military-technical cooperation and accepted the terms under which it would share the Gissar airport with the Tajik military.

By declining Russia's claim to unilateral use of the airport, Dushanbe expected, if problems arose, to put pressure on Moscow by inviting other countries and their military forces to the airbase. For some time now, Russia and Tajikistan have been concentrating on large-scale hydropower and mining projects (in addition to their traditional security concerns about the situation along the Afghan border, the Nurek space-surveillance station, drug trafficking, etc.).

In 2004, during the visit of then President Putin to Dushanbe, it was agreed that Russia's Rusal Company would move in to take part in the last stages of the Rogun HPP with a capacity of 3.6 thousand megawatts. Russia left the project when Dushanbe refused to give it the controlling stake in the station. In 2009, the Rogun project acquired regional and international dimensions. Uzbekistan, objected to the project, while Kyrgyzstan accepted it; Russia and Kazakhstan changed their positions several times.

Tashkent, very concerned about the dam, which would inevitably change the stream-flow regime and create a water deficit for the millions of people living on the lower reaches of the transborder river, insisted on international assessment. In March 2010, Astana sided with it, while Moscow objected. Dushanbe, in turn, ignored Tashkent and its arguments; the resultant tension forced the EU to interfere. Dushanbe, meanwhile, is playing its anti-Russian card: the republican leaders are prepared to seek American investments in all sorts of projects (hydropower production in particular); they argue that the Americans will inevitably be attracted by projects related in one way or another to Afghanistan.

Experts believe that Tajikistan has performed a U-turn toward the United States. Uzbekistan is as determined as ever to prevent construction of the Rogun HPP; about one hundred and fifty trains of construction material for Tajikistan have piled up in its territory. Even if Tajikistan gathers enough money to start the project, it will never break the transport blockade. From time to time Moscow

makes use of the labor migrant issue, an important factor of bilateral relations between Russia and Tajikistan, to put political pressure on President Rakhmon.

Today, Russia has to take China and Iran into account as the potential largest investors and donors. Iran is involved in several hydropower projects in the republic, as well as in railway and road construction; it is creating free economic areas to facilitate investments and trade. These developments are eased by the fact that Moscow has lost much of its former influence in the republic and has to apply more pressure on it.

In August 2010, when talking to President Rakhmon in Sochi, President Medvedev told him that Moscow was displeased with Dushanbe, which had failed to fulfill its numerous promises: it has not paid for the electric power supplied by Russia; it has not stationed Russia's troops at the Gissar airbase, and it has failed to resume broadcasting of the RTR-Planet TV channel. Behind closed doors, Moscow explained to Dushanbe that it was prepared to discuss the involvement of Inter RAO UES in the project for building medium-sized HPPs on mountain rivers and to cancel the higher tariff on Russian oil products as soon as Dushanbe fulfilled its earlier promises.

An apple of discord between Russia and Tajikistan is the Gissar airfield (the Ayni airbase) not far from Dushanbe (a semi-rundown airdrome built in Soviet times and restored by Indian specialists),<sup>209</sup> where Russia was to deploy its aviation. Back in 2004 the sides agreed that Russia would move its planes and pilots stationed at the Dushanbe civilian airport there. When Tajikistan banned training flights for five Su-25 assault planes, they were moved to the Kant airbase in Kyrgyzstan. Russia is interested in Gissar mainly because under the agreement between the two countries Russian military planes would be serviced free of charge at Tajik military airdromes. However, this means that Tajikistan would gain nothing at all from Russia's military presence in its airfields.

With a 3,200-meter airstrip, the airbase is the largest in Tajikistan; it is suitable for all plane types; this means that America and NATO will not mind using it. The final decision on which country will use it has been postponed until 2014. Moscow is prepared to meet Tajikistan halfway on the issue of lower tariffs on oil products used inside the country. Earlier Tajikistan, very much like Belarus, earned money by selling them to third countries. Russia asked Dushanbe to present the balance sheets on supply and demand: the Russian budget would lose about \$170 million every year on the annulled tariffs.

During his visit to Dushanbe, Robert Simmons, NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, said the Alliance might set up its anti-terrorist center in Tajikistan. He described Kulob and the Ayni airbase in the city of Gissar not far from Dushanbe as the best possible bases. On the other hand, in 2010, when in Dushanbe, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Robert Blake said that the United States had no such plans. This does nothing for relations between Moscow and Dushanbe; in fact, the rise in

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<sup>209</sup> Reconstruction cost \$70 million which was shared by the sides. India invested \$19.9 million. Russia hopes to station military facilities of its 201st division there.

domestic tension in September 2010 due to the escape of a large group of opposition members, terrorist acts, and assaults, might have been instigated by external forces.

On the other hand, the situation inside the republic demands better relations with Russia. The second Russian military base being set up in the republic<sup>210</sup> will raise the popularity of the Tajik president, whose rating has been declining for some time now. Dushanbe is actively involved in security-related cooperation; in April 2010, Tajikistan hosted joint command-post exercises Rubezh-2010 of the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces with the participation of military units and task forces of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In September 2010, the republic provided use of its territory for the local anti-drug operation Kanal-Yug, which involved the anti-drug services of Kazakhstan, Russia, and Tajikistan, as well as security and customs services, structures of the ministries of internal affairs, border guards, and the financial intelligence services of these countries.<sup>211</sup>

In fact, if Tajikistan fails to stabilize the situation in the near future (the events of late August to early September 2010 show that the threat of destabilization is real), the region's three worst problems — Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and southern Kyrgyzstan—will merge into a vast seat of conflict. Moscow is aware of the threat, which means that it should look for and find ways to keep Rakhmon in power for the sake of stability in the republic. The counterterrorist Operation Enduring Freedom and Tajikistan's 1,200-km stretch of common border with Afghanistan made Tajikistan an indispensable part of the coalition's forces. Early in 2002, the republic opened an air corridor for the military-transport aviation of the NATO members.

In the context of the Afghan operation, the republic could become the U.S.'s main partner and ally in Central Asia. Recently, cooperation between the two countries has acquired more vigor, however the Tajiks have not made any important statements yet that might allow Washington to regard the republic as a reliable and predictable partner. Both NATO and the United States view Tajikistan as a key partner in light of the planned expansion of the counterterrorist operation. By the time the Americans hinted that they were willing to talk to any interested Central Asian country about the transit of military and non-military freights and about the so-called temporary military bases, the Tajik leaders were already openly displeased with Russia's position on the Rogun HPP project.

The United States prefers to “wait and see:” the Americans are no longer criticizing President Rakhmon's domestic policy record—they are waiting to see how things develop in Afghanistan. At the current stage, the United States sees Tajikistan as a strategic springboard rather than a target of lucrative investments.

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<sup>210</sup> On 10 November, 2010, Tajikistan and Russia agreed to guard the Tajik-Afghan border together. The Russian expert community believes that their country wants to return to the border in expectation of the fact that America might want to pull its forces out of Afghanistan and move them to Tajikistan.

<sup>211</sup> During the operation, the sides instituted 6 thousand criminal cases, 1,108 of which were related to drug trafficking; they confiscated over 1.3 tons of drugs (including 52 kg of heroin, 50 kg of hashish, 1 ton of marijuana, and over 400 kg of precursors).



The country's future as another "new partner" of the United States in Central Asia (and possible military NATO and U.S. bases in its territory) depends on Washington-Dushanbe cooperation.

The United States extends considerable economic assistance to the republic; it has already built two bridges across the Panj (and paid in part for another two bridges) to connect Tajik territory with Afghanistan. Direct transport outlets to the Indian Ocean via Afghanistan are all-important for a country cut off from the region by Uzbekistan. The Obama Administration, determined to bring the counterterrorist operation to its logical conclusion, moved cooperation with Tajikistan higher on its foreign policy agenda. Potentially, the Americans can offer much wider cooperation to any of the Central Asian states up to and including American military bases in their territory. Dushanbe stands a good chance of exchanging its involvement for several economically profitable projects.

In February 2009, President Rakhmon visited the NATO Brussels headquarters where he said that NATO, the key security element in Afghanistan, should actively cooperate with its neighbors, Iran, and particularly Tajikistan because of its long border with Afghanistan. He meant to say that Tajikistan was allowing the Alliance to use its railways and roads for non-military transit in exchange for investments in the republic, which has been badly hit by the world economic crisis. The Americans offered a variety of assistance which the republic (with practically empty coffers) could not refuse. Today, America has allocated over \$1 billion in loans and aid; this sum may increase.

Early in February 2010 in Washington, Tajikistan and the United States discussed four blocks of issues: the political and economic situation in the region; implementation of water and hydropower projects; transportation projects; and the situation in Afghanistan. The Tajik leaders are prepared to invite the Americans to participate in investments in their economy, particularly in power engineering. In the military sphere Dushanbe is willing to set up a training camp where the Tajik military (so far trained in Russian military centers) would be trained by Americans. The United States would like to move its troops stationed at Manas (in Kyrgyzstan) to the Ayni airfield to support the NATO forces in Afghanistan.

The United States has not abandoned its plans to carry out a military operation against Iran, which means that Washington will either insist on exclusive use of the Ayni airfield or its joint use with the Tajik military for a fixed rent and investments in several economic projects in the republic (including those financed by China: power engineering, transportation, roads, and tunnels). This is precisely what the Tajik leaders are counting on. In June 2010, Washington announced that it was prepared to allocate \$10 million to build a military training center for Tajikistan to be opened in 2011. This means that as long as the Americans remain in Afghanistan they will build up their military presence in Tajikistan.

According to Brussels, and contrary to what some experts say, Tajikistan is a weak rather than a "failed" state. It suffers from poverty and experiences electricity shortages in the winter despite its huge hydropower potential. The threat of destabilization is very real because of its direct proximity to Afghanistan with its ethnic Tajik population (35 percent of the country's total). Europe mainly extends

its help through the European Commission and the German government. The European Union aims at lowering the poverty level and helping to maintain functional civil services; it is also engaged in a wide-scale program of budget support in the social sector. The EU intends to use the human rights dialogs in Kazakhstan to demand that Dushanbe provides civil society members and the Red Cross with access to prison inmates; ratifies the optional protocols to the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Elimination of All Possible Forms of Discrimination against Women; decriminalizes libel and slander; bans child labor at cotton plantations; bans torture in national legislation; provides free access to legal services for the poorest population groups; and compensates for resettlement for state purposes.

From the very beginning, India has been and remains one of Tajikistan's priority Asian partners. India's interest in Tajikistan is largely explained by its proximity to the Afghan-Pakistani belt. Delhi is actively seeking a stronger military-political position in Tajikistan on its own and in cooperation with the other actors of world politics. It has already established its first outpost in Farkhor on the Tajik-Afghan border; it paid for a military hospital, which was later moved to Kabul, and an air strip to be used by the Northern Alliance. India was rather troubled at first when Tajikistan, mainly through the offices of Pakistan, joined the Islamic OEC and OIC.

In 2002, India joined the reconstruction project of the Ayni airfield, in which it invested about \$20 million; the project involved 150 Indian military specialists, mainly engineers and auxiliary units. It intended to station 12 MiG-29 fighter planes at the reconstructed airbase. It seems that by drawing India into the project Moscow intended to contain Beijing's increasing political impact in the region and, probably, add weight to the SCO military component (India has an observer status in the SCO).

Since that time the situation has changed radically: India has revived its formerly slack military relations with the United States, which has made Indian planes in Tajikistan an unwelcome prospect for Moscow. The Kremlin put pressure on the Tajik president demanding that he should annul the Indian contracts. Economic cooperation between the two countries is realized through the loans and grants India extends to Tajikistan (to buy Indian commodities and services) and free aid. India helps with small scale construction projects (like a fruit-processing plant in Dushanbe) and hotels; it transfers batches of pharmaceutical products and supports municipalities. With no common border with Tajikistan, India has to rely on Pakistan to import electric power from Tajikistan.

India, which has a lot of Soviet-made military equipment, is helping to modernize similar equipment for Tajikistan; India trains Tajik land and air forces; Indian students study medicine at the Tajik State Medical University. Recently, the share of Chinese businesses in the Tajik economy has risen; the two countries are engaged in a political dialog; they are working on various new economic projects; and the prospects for their economic cooperation have become much clearer. It should be said that China regularly extends free financial aid to the Tajik Defense Ministry; in the last ten years, China spent \$10 million on these purposes; the two

countries are actively cooperating within the SCO. On the whole, in the last few years, China has invested nearly \$1 billion in the form of loans in Tajikistan, as well as \$250 million in building new roads and modernizing old ones.

Afghanistan and Tajikistan maintain close cultural and economic relations in four spheres in particular:

- (1) transborder trade (up to \$20 million);
- (2) hydropower production;
- (3) joint struggle against drug trafficking and extremism;
- (4) development of cultural ties within the Persian-speaking world.

The two countries are moving ahead in energy production; when commissioned, the Sangtuda HPP (built jointly by Russian and Iranian companies) will generate extra electricity that can be exported to Afghanistan and on to Pakistan. Russia helped to build a power line from the Tajik border to Pul-i-Kumri, which will be extended to Kabul and Pakistan. Dushanbe and Kabul plan to build a HPP cascade on the Panj (13 stations with a total capacity of 17,720 megawatts and annual production of 86.3 billion kWh). The project inherited from Soviet times requires an international consortium with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan as its members.

Dushanbe is using the Afghan factor in its own foreign policy interests; the government of Tajikistan capitalizes on the Afghan factor to expand its military cooperation with the United States. From time to time bilateral relations are marred by conflicts: in September 2010, Tajik border guards had to use grenade launchers and machine-guns to stop Afghan militants.

As the only non-Turkic-speaking country in Central Asia, Tajikistan stands apart from its neighbors; it survived a cruel civil war which undermined its economy and the social sphere along with its international status. The echo of the civil war, the impossibly slow economic rehabilitation, and the extremely low standards of living negatively affect the republic's political context. Tajikistan's relatively modest economic and political weight at the regional level aside, the republic is critically important for the region's security and stability. Its stronger ties within the Persianspeaking community with Iran and Afghanistan are, on the whole, a positive regional factor. Its close ties with India and China's mounting economic impact on the republic's future should not be ignored.

Indeed, China's large-scale economic presence in Tajikistan will affect the region as a whole. Tajikistan is a small but a very much needed link in Central Asian integration within EurAsEC, the Customs Union and, in the future, the Common Economic Space.

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Today, we are seeing efforts to create a Persian-speaking world. Recently we saw the failed attempts to set up Pax Turcica as a vague alliance of Turkic states on a common Turkic basis with Ankara's leadership. The process ran into a dead end, although Turkey remained a welcome partner of the CA countries in many spheres and Azerbaijan's key ally. The Persian-speaking countries are looking for ways to

move closer, whereby their common language is clearly not the main motivation in this respect. Here, as elsewhere, economic and political factors carry more weight. All the Central Asian countries want, for different reasons, to enlarge their international spheres; a more or less consolidated bloc of Persian-speaking countries will help them to confront the West, the Islamic world, and the CIS (the latter is especially important for Dushanbe). It should be kept in mind that in the future Tehran plans to expand the bloc by adding the Shi'a world.

The Turkic states should respond in one way or another to these developments; each of the states can respond differently. Turkey cannot ignore Iran's stronger position even though in recent years they have essentially become allies. Much closer relations between Afghanistan and Iran (and moving further away from Pakistan) are in the interests of all the actors (particularly India) with the exception of the United States.

Tajikistan is in a much more difficult situation: the Central Asian states see it as part of the region, while for Russia it is an inalienable part of the CIS. Uzbekistan might react the most acutely; most of the large-scale transport and communication projects can only be realized across its territory. China's response is hard to predict: it is developing into the largest investor in Tajikistan (it would be negatively disposed to a Turkic alliance because of the Uighur factor).

In any case, Beijing has no reason to rejoice at the appearance of another group of states (even if headed by Iran, which is its ally). We can expect a political response to these developments in the near future — from Russia and China (with respect to Tajikistan), from the West and the U.S. (with respect to Afghanistan), and from Pakistan (with respect to any of the countries involved).

#### **4. The Crisis of 2010 in Kyrgyzstan and its Impact on the Regional Agenda**

In April 2010, the political crisis that has been simmering in Kyrgyzstan over the past few years developed into an armed confrontation between the government and the people, as well as among the various clan and regional groups at the very top of the republic's political pyramid<sup>212</sup>.

President Bakiev, deprived of his power (at first in part), legitimacy, and control over the country, tried to regain what he had lost by tapping the political resource of the country's South. The events that occurred in May made it abundantly clear that a large-scale political conflict, a civil war, and a split in the republic were only a step away.

The 2005 events, which toppled Akaev's regime, demonstrated that for its continued political development, the republic must acquire a strong vertical of power and move toward a strong presidential government, which alone could pull

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<sup>212</sup> See: N. Borisov, "Kyrgyzstan: k chemu privela evolutsia form prvalenia," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir* (Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS), No. 3, 2009, pp. 95-100. of sustainable development.<sup>2</sup> The compromise reached (which, albeit, proved incomplete) gave rise to the hope that the new president would be able to cope with this historic mission.

the country out of the crisis and set it on the path of sustainable development<sup>213</sup>. The compromise reached (which, albeit, proved incomplete) gave rise to the hope that the new president would be able to cope with this historic mission<sup>214</sup>.

The objective factors and subjective circumstances, however, complicated the republic's political, social, and economic context still more. Most of the political actors (the main parties, the parliament, the business community, and the regional leaders) were dead set against any real reforms of the country's political system.

President Bakiev's political and economic blunders (legitimized corruption and the never-ending property redistribution in favor of his close relatives and supporters) added a subjective dimension to the objective factor.

More than that: some of the regional, mainly northern, clans refused to accept Kurmanbek Bakiev as the head of state (the position he gained and fortified in 2005-2006); this and widespread disaffection with his economic policies impaired his legitimacy. Disagreements among the main political forces made the crisis a permanent feature of the republic's political landscape exacerbated by a crisis in the social and economic spheres.

Bakiev's downfall was brought about by his political rivals who disagreed with his policies; the discontent of the wide masses; the acute social and economic crisis; the president's failed attempt to strengthen his power; corruption and nepotism; regionalism and the clan nature of power; the low level of political culture of the ruling elite and the ruled masses; criminalization of political life; and the acute shortage of economic resources. Some of the external players, into the bargain, did not like Bakiev's foreign policies.

### *Kyrgyz Economy in 2005-2010*

The regime change in 2005 triggered property redistribution; a new political elite arrived from the republic's South to install itself in the republic, while the new government busied itself with looking for more resources.

In 2008, the republic hit another stretch of protracted economic and social crisis, the first signs of which were discernable in 2007; its social and economic

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<sup>213</sup> See: A. Esenbaev, "Revolutsia tiulpanov' v Kyrgyzstane: osobennosti transformatsii politicheskoy sistemy: popytka osmysleniya," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 7, 2009, pp. 78-84; S.N. Cummings, "Domestic and International Perspectives on Kyrgyzstan's 'Tulip Revolution': Motives, Mobilization and Meanings. Introduction: 'Revolution' not revolution," *Central Asian Survey* (Oxford), 2008, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, pp. 223-228; S.N. Cummings, M. Ryabkov, "Situating the 'Tulip Revolution'," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, 2008, pp. 241-252; Sh. Juraev, "Kyrgyz Democracy? The Tulip Revolution and Beyond," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, 2008, pp. 253-264; D. Lewis, "The Dynamics of Regime Change: Domestic and International Factors in the 'Tulip Revolution'," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, 2008, pp. 265- 277; E. Marat, "Criminalization of the Kyrgyz State Before and After the Tulip Revolution," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm), 2008, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 15-22; A. Temirkulov, "Informal Actors and Institutions in Mobilization: The Periphery in the 'Tulip Revolution'," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, 2008, pp. 317-335.

<sup>214</sup> R. Abduvalieva, "Kyrgyzstan's Security Problems Today," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (56), 2009, pp. 72-81.

future looked uncertain. The negative developments stemmed from property redistribution, which acquired gigantic dimensions, and the inconsistent economic policies of the rotating governments. In the last few years, customs duties and taxes (which increased three-to-four-fold) remained the only source of economic growth.

Between 2005 and 2007, the nominal GDP demonstrated relative growth, while its dynamics in comparable prices was much more modest. The inflation component of its growth was fairly large: annual inflation increased from 5 percent in 2006 to 20 percent in December 2007 and to 25 percent in March 2008. The fast economic growth of Russia and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan's main economic partners, had a positive effect at that time. Today, 37 percent of the assets of the republic's banking sector belong to Kazakhstan banks; they account for 50 percent of all loans.

Money which labor migrants (there are 330 thousand of them according to the official figures) send home is very important for the Kyrgyz economy. The EBRD has assessed the volume of these remittances at 25 percent of GDP, or over USD 1 billion a year<sup>215</sup>. This money is badly needed: nearly 11 percent of the economically active population (over 270 thousand) is unemployed<sup>216</sup>.

Gold prices can be described as another favorable factor: between October 2006 and March 2008, the world price of one Troy ounce climbed from USD 420 to USD 1,030; today the price has stabilized at the USD 1,100 level. Gold accounts for 8 percent of the republic's GDP (nearly 40 percent of its exports), however the future looks less optimistic. In 2010, the Kumtor goldmine, which produces the bulk of exported gold, will be closed, while the smaller mines will hardly fill in the gap.

The structure of the republic's GDP has registered the fact that Kyrgyzstan is no longer an agrarian industrial country; it sells services (which account for 44 percent of its GDP). Its trade volume is much larger than that of its production. In the past, agriculture accounted for 25.8 percent of its nominal GDP; industry for 14 percent; construction for 3.1 percent; transport and communication for 8.4 percent;

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<sup>215</sup> The republic's Ministry for Economic Development and the State Committee for Migration quote the figure of about \$1.2 billion of annual remittances and the share of the migrants' money in the republic's GDP at over 30 percent.

<sup>216</sup> See: A. Rasul, Z. Ergeshov, "Migratsionnye protsessy v Kyrgyzskoy Respublike: vyzovy i riski dlia strany," *Mezhdunarodnye issledovania. Obshchestvo, politika, ekonomika* (ISPI, Astana), No. 1, 2009, pp. 186-190; A. Esenbaev, "Sovremennye migratsionnye protsessy v Kyrgyzstane," in: *Postsovetskie migratsii: otrazhenie v migratsiakh*, ed. by Zh.A. Zayonchkovskiy, G.A. Zayonchkovskaia, Adamant Publishers, Moscow, pp. 377-403; A. Doolotkeldieva, "Kyrgyz Migrants in the City of Moscow," *Mezhdunarodnye issledovania. Obshchestvo, politika, ekonomika*, No. 1, 2009, pp. 80-93; V. Ruget, B. Usmanalieva, "Citizenship, Migration and Loyalty towards the State: A Case Study of the Kyrgyzstani Migrants Working in Russia and Kazakhstan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 129-141; M. Schmidt, L. Sagynbekova, "Migration Past and Present: Changing Patterns in Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 111-127; A. Zhaparov, "The Issue of Chinese Migrants in Kyrgyzstan," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2009, pp. 79-92.



trade and maintenance for 18.6 percent; and hotels and public catering for 8.4 percent. The growth of the trade sector increased the share of services by 1 percent.

Up to 88 percent of industrial products are supplied by five branches: metallurgy (42 percent); food processing (13 percent); textile and tailoring (7 percent); production of construction materials (10 percent); and electric power production (16 percent). Over 35 percent of taxes come from industry, while export accounts for up to 85 percent. Depleted basic assets and shortage of skilled manpower and specialists at the medium level coupled with the shortage of working capital are responsible for the industrial decline (with the exception of Kumtor's production volumes).

Under Bakiev, the people in power made skillful use of the shaky integration processes within the CIS. In 2009, Russia supplied Kyrgyzstan with a package of financial aid totaling nearly 40 percent of the republic's GDP, which consisted of a soft loan of USD 300 million (Bakiev used the money to promote political interests) and USD 1.7 billion to be spent on the construction of the Kambarata Hydropower Station.

The still very high share of the shadow sector (engaged, among other things, in drug trafficking) in the country's economy is one of the worst problems. According to the WB, the republic has developed into one of the places where Afghan heroin is stored and from which it is moved further to Russian territory. Today, Kyrgyzstan is Asia's second largest country in terms of trafficking and use of opiates (2.3 percent of the population over the age of 15 are drug users).

Bakiev's closest circle prefers to point to certain positive shifts in the country's economy: the budget has increased four-fold, which made it possible to lower the republic's external debt (it remains high at the level of 50 percent of GDP). Large sums have been moved from the shadow to the official sector. In 2009, the amended agreement with the company working at the Kumtor goldmine increased Kyrgyzstan's income several times over. Corruption, however, destroyed the positive effects of the above.

Today, the country is plagued by a shortage of agricultural land (acutely felt in the South) and the lowered efficiency and culture of local agriculture.

The acute economic crisis is accompanied by an energy crisis: the republic obtains electric power from hydropower stations, which accounted for about 76 percent of electric power in 1993 and for nearly 92 percent in 2007<sup>217</sup>.

In 2005, the Toktogul water reservoir contained 19 billion cubic meter of water to be used by its hydropower station, which generates 60 percent of the electricity used by the republic; in the fall of 2008, the available volume dropped to 6.5 billion cubic meter<sup>218</sup>. The expert community points to the possible causes: ineffective management and the high corruption level and lack of transparency in

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<sup>217</sup> See: L. Baum, "The Energy Industry in the Kyrgyz Republic: Current State, Problems, and Reforms," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (54), 2008, pp. 101-112.

<sup>218</sup> A volume of 5.5 billion cu m is the critical point at which the turbines will grind to a standstill.

the branch coupled with smuggling of electric power and even water during the irrigation season to neighboring countries.

The government, loyal as ever to its favorite tactics of overtaxing the republic's population, raised the tariffs on electricity and heating. A social outburst became inevitable. The cost of life in Kyrgyzstan directly depends on the interrelated prices for three basic products —bread, fuel and lubricants, and electricity—therefore, an increase in price for any one of them may detonate a social explosion.

In 1995-2009, the volume of the shadow economy in the republic increased almost 20-fold, which is explained by the greater role of the household economy sector (which accounted for 12 percent of GDP) and the shadow economy (including agriculture), which accounted for 30 percent of GDP. The shadow economy is mainly concentrated in trade and the maintenance of domestic appliances, cars, and personal appliances with an annual turnover of about 60 billion soms.

### *Domestic Politics: The Crisis is Mounting*

There is the opinion in the West that Kyrgyzstan has demonstrated to the world that Western style democracy (both as an ideology and a political practice), if planted in conditions very different from those in the democratic countries, does more harm than good. “Indirect democracy” might have produced a much better effect; I have in mind the civil rights and human rights standards common for all countries, irrespective of their forms of democracy.

Since 2008, the country's political situation has been exposed to a confrontation of two mutually exclusive and even antagonistic trends. On the one hand, the country obviously depends on its economy, which convinced the people that the republican form of government was unimportant. On the other, the social and economic problems piling up were the best confirmation of the acute disagreements between the government and the opposition over the country's political model. This was largely responsible for the dynamics of domestic politics<sup>219</sup>.

The North and the South are two different sociopolitical entities; the Kyrgyz as former nomads are divided into two large “wings” (*Ong* and *Sol*); there are about 40 tribes and clans at the lower level with the ties much stronger than among the Kazakhs. This adds instability to the highly variegated political scene.

In 2007-2008, several quasi-elite groups close to the president clashed in their attempts to have an even greater influence on the head of state. They can be described as

- (a) the president's family;
- (b) the so-called group of Southerners which brought Bakiev to power; and
- (c) the “Akaev” bureaucrats resolved to keep their posts.

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<sup>219</sup> See: B. Torogeldieva, “The Formation and Nature of Political Culture in Present-Day Kyrgyzstan,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (55), 2009, pp. 126-134.



The family group was far from united: the older and younger generations relied on supporters from the other two groups to monopolize the president. In the course of time, the conflict became even fiercer; the shuffling at the top gradually pushed the Southerners to the political outskirts, although the regional and clan factor did not lose its importance.

There is a more or less accepted opinion that the Southern clans, the richest in the republic (they have grown rich on drug trafficking supervised by Tashkent organized crime), demonstrate no mean skills in posing as impoverished outcasts.

The Southern protest was promoted, to a great extent, by an alliance of criminal groups in the country's South and the Uzbek part of the Ferghana valley which joined forces to squeeze the local criminal groups and those of Kazakhstan (based primarily in Shymkent) out of the economic expanse of northern Kyrgyzstan. The southern clans are more religious than the others, which explain why Hizb ut-Tahrir showed up first in the South and later in Bishkek.

The way the government responded to the opposition and its activities stirred up political tension even more. While formally acting within the law, the people at the top tried to scare the opposition and set up a police state. Their relentless persecution of individual members of the opposition was combined with a half-hearted struggle against the opposition as a whole. From time to time, the leaders, who, on the whole, tended to disregard the opposition's numerous actions, surprised the country with their violent responses.

The president's health did not add stability to state governance and consolidated the opposition. It was no secret that Bakiev spent much time in German hospitals. His absence added fire to the rivalry in the corridors of power and in the opposition. Unlike the president, the opposition remained active all year round: the contradictions were shelved for the sake of a consolidated stand on the situation in the country.

The domestic policy at that time can be described as contradictory and highly ambiguous. On the one hand, the government's attempts to preserve the authoritarian family-and-clan system of the first president gave rise to political stagnation. While on the other, the opposition and the civil sector were determined to rock the boat. Their highly different ideas about the country's future added a cutting edge to their contradictions.

The court cases against the most prominent opposition figures allowed Bakiev to carry the 2009 elections. Ismail Isakov, former Defense Minister, who had been active in the Tulip Revolution, and former Foreign Affairs Minister Jekshenkulov were brought to court on criminal charges and effectively removed from the political scene. The united opposition began crumbling once Jekshenkulov, its coordinator and "brains" who for many years kept the rivalry and squabbles under the lid, was pushed aside. Some believe that he alone could have tamed the highly wild political movement and channeled it in the right direction.

The parliament dominated by Bakiev's Ak Zhol Party set 23 July, 2009 as the date of the presidential elections. The Social-Democrats and the opposition miscalculated, while Bakiev and his team moved ahead toward victory ensured by several factors: the administrative resource, money, and the domestic political and

economic situation. The other candidates either could not or did not tap their own resources<sup>220</sup>.

The post-Akaev political landscape is highly patchy; there are 2.6 million voters in the republic with a total population of 5.8 million. The fairly small electorate has to choose from among 58 registered political parties and an equal number of movements and alliances; 30 structures out of the total 58 of these parties are in opposition to the government and in disagreement among themselves. The largest and most influential of them are The Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan and the rivaling Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan; there are three Social-Democratic parties, the most influential of them being Almaz Atambaev's party; there are three large parties — Ata-Meken, Erkin, and Felix Kulov's Ar-Namys.

During the same period, the republic acquired new religious organizations which moved into domestic politics: the Alliance of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan headed by former ombudsman T. Bakiruluu and N. Motuev being one of them. This means that a centralized religious opposition is taking shape in the country.

In the north, Islamic fundamentalism is not very popular; the Islamic parties cannot move across ethnic boundaries because of the ethnic minorities. The high level of literacy, fairly widespread Slavic and Western cultures, and the market economy keep the local Kyrgyz away from fundamentalist movements.

Some of the radical Islamist groups managed to register with the Ministry of Justice in the country's south, mainly in the cities (Osh, Dzhahal-Abad, and Batken); according to official information, there are over 1,000 mosques in Osh and around it; fundamentalist ideology supported by the local Uzbeks and spread by agitators from Tajikistan has a strong position in the area.

Hizb ut-Tahrir, an illegal religious and political movement, has moved away from ideological propaganda and agitation among the local people to practical action. Its polemics with the government have assumed new forms (audio- and video materials, leaflets, and books intended for the bureaucracy and statesmen of the medium and top levels) and become even more consistent. Its members have stepped up their activities in the capital and its environs; they look far beyond Central Asia. Its leaflets condemn what the United States, Israel, and some of the Western countries are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hizb ut-Tahrir has already tested its powers by mobilizing people for political actions under its banners. Tablighi Jamaat is another unofficial religious organization which has obviously come to stay.

The uncontrolled political squabbles the nation has been watching for a long time have convinced the people that democracy means impunity and

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<sup>220</sup> It was a weekday, something which the Social-Democrats had not expected. They would have preferred the fall when, they believed, public indignation would have become even fiercer. The opposition expected the world crisis to hit the guest workers from Kyrgyzstan who might have voted against Bakiev. Choosing a weekday as election day caused heated debates: the president's administrative resource allowed him to manipulate voters who work in the government service (doctors, teachers, bureaucrats) and students. They needed permission from their superiors to go to the polls. Permission followed.

permissiveness (which of course has nothing to do with classical democracy and is better described as “ochlocracy”). Disregard for the law coupled with the low political culture of the political class and society at large have fuelled a painful response to the use of force by the state. In these conditions, voluntaristic ideas and trends spread like wildfire far and wide<sup>221</sup>.

### *Bakiev's Regime*

The family and the clans as the cornerstones of Kurmanbek Bakiev's presidency were the most typical feature of his regime. The opposition which came to power in April 2010 insists that all his numerous brothers were involved in politics.

One of them headed the security service of the Administration and the government, which placed him in command of the National Guard; his elder son controlled state security; his second son had the executive structures under his control, while his younger son headed the newly formed Agency for Development, the de facto executive power in the republic. One of his brothers represented the country in Germany; another, appointed special envoy of the president, was a de facto deputy foreign minister. Business, trade, and the economy were brimming with the president's numerous relatives.

It is commonly believed that in 2007 Bakiev set about expanding his power and strengthening the vertical of power. Political technologists from Kazakhstan invited at the suggestion of Medet Sadyrkulov,<sup>222</sup> the then head of the presidential Administration, helped Bakiev set up the Ak Zhol People's Party.

Bakiev was presented to the nation as a “staunch etatist.” The team of political technologists suggested that the Constitution of 1993-2003, the most logical and balanced one in the republic's history, should be restored, albeit with wider presidential powers. They suggested that the ineffective Zhogorku Kenesh should be disbanded by the Constitutional Court followed by parliamentary elections. A nationwide referendum on presidential elections was deemed necessary. The old tradition of widespread nepotism should be buried, while professionals should be invited to the civil service in large numbers. The regions and the local administrations, which should be regularly reminded that the center is in control, were expected to concentrate on the social services; and rabid nationalism and religious extremism should be stemmed.

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<sup>221</sup> Social anthropologists describe the Kyrgyz' political culture as the command and-obey tradition; people are indifferent to the country's political culture, they never respond to what the political institutions do; they are not interested in central power and concentrate on local developments. A widespread disregard for law and order is one of the hallmarks of the nation's political culture: people know next to nothing about the laws and government mechanisms; they mistake the person who executes state power for the institutions of state power.

<sup>222</sup> In March 2009, Sadyrkulov and Director of the International Institute of Strategic Studies at the President of the RK S. Slepchenko met their deaths under mysterious circumstances. A top bureaucrat of the Akaev regime, Sadyrkulov kept his post after the 2005 revolution and remained friendly with A. Toyganbaev, Akaev's son-in-law.

Political discontent was spurred on by the president's widely publicized intention to radically reorganize state management. He shared his ideas about the country's future with the Kurultai of Consent convened in Bishkek on the eve of the fifth anniversary of the 2005 revolution<sup>223</sup> and announced that Western democracy was ill suited to Kyrgyzstan and that its traditions and reality were much better suited to "consultative democracy"<sup>224</sup>.

Under Bakiev, the Fundamental Law was amended three times: some of the versions limited presidential powers, others expanded them. The 2007 national referendum approved a version with much wider presidential prerogatives, which remained in effect until December 2009 when the president came forward with new amendments.

They were expected to register what had already been accomplished: the articles on the Presidential Administration, the secretary of state, and the Security Council should be removed; ranks for civil servants were abolished, while the president acquired the power to set up consultative structures, including one called the Presidential Conference.

Bakiev's most important amendment: "any other person" appointed by the Presidential Conference by a simple majority of those present changes the previous constitutional provision which named the Speaker or the Prime Minister as possible acting presidents in the event of the president's disability. The Constitutional Court accepted the amendment, albeit with a recommendation that it be further revised.

The opposition is convinced that this was devised to pass power on to Maxim, Bakiev's younger son and a recent political heavyweight, which would have started a dynasty. Bakiev's powers expired in 2013 with no third term (banned by the Constitution) in sight. The constitutional reform launched early in 2010 transferred the right of the parliament to name a successor, in the event the president could or would not serve out his term, to the Presidential Conference, a gathering of the local elites which replaced the presidential administration.

Maxim Bakiev, the key figure in the republic's most profitable economic projects, headed the Central Agency for Development, Investments, and Innovations (TsARII), a de facto shadow government. He controlled a vast financial and industrial empire of sorts ruled through fake offshore firms set up to win privatization tenders of almost all the republic's energy enterprises and Kirgiztelecom, a TV and Telecommunication Company that supervised the

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<sup>223</sup> It was expected that this nationwide consultative structure would have 750 members: the local kurultais were to elect one deputy from 441 ayyl districts and 18 settlement administrations; each of 23 district and regional towns and cities were to send 3 delegates; the capital had to elect 10 deputies, the city of Osh, seven. Labor migrants were granted the right to elect 35 members, while religious confessions received 20 seats. One-fifth (150) of the seats were to be appointed according to a quota at a national forum.

<sup>224</sup> The project promoted the idea that "consultative democracy" (Russia between the February and October revolutions of 1917 is one of the pertinent examples) was the best instrument to be applied at the transition stage. Indeed, it is much better than no democracy at all: consultations, that is, discussions, are the first step toward political pluralism.



Kyrgyzstan Development Foundation intended to “distribute” the USD 1.7 billion Russia had loaned for building the Kambarata Hydropower Station.

As the head of the newly created Foundation, Maxim Bakiev hastened to China to discuss bilateral relations and invite China to participate in the republic’s most lucrative economic projects, which Moscow had already been invited to join: the Kambarata Hydropower Station-2 and modernization of industrial polycrystalline silicon facilities used for solar energy production; this infringed on Russia’s interests. The president’s youngest son also spoke of deliveries of Chinese drones, electricity meters and turbines to Kyrgyzstan, as well as China’s involvement in a big railway project.

The suggested amendments gave the Presidential Conference — top bureaucrats and members of the president’s administration — the right to elect an interim president (if the head of state should be unable to perform his duties). The Constitutional Court, however, declined the amendment and pointed out that this prerogative belonged to the republic’s State Council (the members of which include the Prime Minister, Speaker, chairmen of the Constitutional and Supreme courts, Secretary of State, Head of the President’s Administration, Public Prosecutor, Defense Minister, Chairman of the National Security Service, and Mayor of Bishkek). It is headed by the president, while his administration functions as the Council’s working structure.

According to the expert community, the reform devised by Bakiev’s secretariat was discussed at length with the elites. On the eve of the Kurultai, the president traveled to Osh and Dzhalsal-Abad, his strongholds, to speak to the local elders. He promised to open TsARII branches in the region and move the Defense Ministry to Osh to bring more money to the south in the hope of winning the southern elite’s favor of his son, who is not entirely accepted by the traditionalist circles since he is half-Russian and does not speak Kyrgyz.

The opposition feared that the president was setting up a dynasty to bring one of his relatives to power if the worst came to the worst, as opposed to the previous alternative that would make either the Speaker or the Prime Minister acting president.

This means that Bakiev was consistently following his election promises to strengthen presidential power. The constitutional reform would have radically changed the vertical of power. Some time later he might even remove the prime minister to combine the functions of head of government and head of state<sup>225</sup>.

Obviously absolutely indifferent to what the nation and the opposition thought about his fairly inadequate policies, he continued pursuing his personal interests on the domestic and foreign scenes. By 2009, the Bakiev clan had tightened its grip on the country and its finances; corruption had escalated out of control.

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<sup>225</sup> See: E. Kabulov, “On the Results of the Presidential Election in Kyrgyzstan,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, o. 4-5 (58-59), 2009; A. Doolotkeldieva, “Presidential Elections in Kyrgyzstan: strategies, Context, and Implications,” *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, p. 5-9.

Foreign policy blunders aggravated the relations between Bishkek and Moscow; the Kremlin chose to “forget” about the previously promised loans. By violating its obligations, Bishkek deprived the budget of Russian money: Moscow hinted that it was refusing to deal with the Bakiev regime on principle.

### *The Crisis Escalates*

After the 2005 Tulip Revolution, Bakiev won the election mainly because former vice-president Felix Kulov, his potential and much more popular rival, dropped out of the race to ally with Bakiev. The tandem died soon thereafter, leaving Bakiev the only ruler. In 2009, Bakiev spent the larger part of Russia’s multimillion grant to win the next election.

Between the fall of 2006 and spring of 2010, the country was growing more and more anti- Bakiev and, to a lesser extent, pro-Akaev, the natural outcome of the course pursued by Bakiev and his cronies. By the spring of 2006, people whom the country knew as criminals had become part of the political landscape; the public was indignant, while those members of the Kyrgyz political proto- elite who had been left out in the cold while others snatched lucrative posts stepped up their political activities.

At this time, two protest rallies a day were customary; in April 2007, when Felix Kulov headed the opposition for a short time, the protests became even more frequent.

There is a common opinion that the situation was not very much different from the last months of the Akaev regime: corruption in the government had become absolute; the family had appropriated all the resources; the elite was split into warring groups; incomes were pocketed by the chosen few; people lived in dire poverty; tariffs were rising together with public discontent; the media operated under pressure, etc. De facto censorship was nothing out of the ordinary, while journalists were beaten up or even murdered.

The expert community points out that maneuvering and even a retreat, albeit with political sacrifices, was still possible: Bakiev could close the structures set up to feed Maxim’s financial and, later, political ambitions; he could abandon the latest reform of state management and the Constitutional amendments that reduced the revolutionary gains of 2005 to naught and which, to all intents and purposes, transformed power into autocratic and inherited, etc.

He probably realized that the activity Maxim and his circle were engaged in was rousing increasing discontent inside the country and doing nothing for his personal image. It was said that Maxim was strongly influenced by American Ambassador to Bishkek Tatiana Gfoeller, who was also his patron and advised him to stand firm when talking to Russia. It is rumored that the influential and most respected heads of the Kyrgyz clans demanded, in a letter to the president, that he should remove his son and his “foreign advisors” from power.

The opposition used privatization of strategic economic facilities conducive to even higher tariffs in the social sphere to start another political crisis.

Rosa Otunbaeva, leader of the parliamentary Social-Democratic faction, demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Daniar Usenov; she sent an official inquiry to the government, in which she insisted that the privatization of Sevelektro and Kirgiztelecom, two strategic giants, “contradicted the interests of the nation, undermined the very foundations of its wellbeing” and was, therefore, “plundering and criminal”<sup>226</sup>. She pointed to legal violations and to the fact that offshore groups had no legal right to participate in the tenders. On 17 March, the People’s Kurultai formulated its seven demands of the government and set up the Central Executive Committee to implement the Kurultai’s decisions with Rosa Otunbaeva as its head<sup>227</sup>. The newly established structure included: Otunbaeva, Sariev, Kaptagaev, Atambaev, Tekebaev, Sherniazov, Ibraimova, Chotonov, Erkebaev, Diushebaev, Beknazarov, Omurkulov, and Zheenbekov.

The opposition, however, miscalculated: the president’s clan turned out to be much closer knit than that of his predecessor; it was resolved to retain power. On 6-7 April, the events that began in Talas and Naryn (two impoverished regions which the new government disregarded to an even greater extent than its predecessors) reached their peak. The seeds of discontent fell on fertile soil: in Talas, the people resented the fact that the most popular figures had been removed from the local power structures.

In the small hours of 7 April, opposition members and civil activists were arrested to prevent them from appearing at the protest rallies scheduled for 7 April. In Talas, the arrest of one of the local opposition leaders ignited the crowd and developed further when the Minister of Internal Affairs arrived to try and pacify the insurgents. However, he was captured and beaten up.

The country’s leaders, who arrested Tekebaev, Atambaev, and others to extinguish the fiery protests, badly miscalculated. Left to its own devices, with no one to channel the protest sentiments (which could have been done by moderate opposition leaders), the crowd became unruly. The government was left to deal with a boiling mass of indignant and misguided people.

The events in Talas developed into a drama: once the people recovered from the onslaught of the riot police (they simply lulled them into a sense of false security by their feeble resistance), they reassembled on the square in even greater

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<sup>226</sup> Kirgiztelecom was sold for \$40 million, then, according to Otunbaeva, resold to Fintur, an international company, for \$400 million. Sevelektro, evaluated eighteen months previously by an international structure at \$137 million, was sold for \$3 million.

<sup>227</sup> Rosa Otunbaeva filled the post of Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Kirghiz S.S.R.; she was Soviet Ambassador and member of the Collegium of the U.S.S.R. Foreign Ministry. She was twice appointed as Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan; U.N. Special Representative to Georgia; and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Kyrgyzstan to the United States and the U.K. In 2005, she was among the leaders of the March revolution. In December 2007, elected to the parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, she joined the opposition Social Democratic faction. In October 2009, she became a leader of this faction. At the Kurultai in March 2010, she was elected leader of the opposition. In Europe, she is generally regarded as a good diplomat. Rosa Otunbaeva, a graduate of the Philosophy Department, Moscow State University, is fluent in four foreign languages.

numbers. Armed with stones, bludgeons, and Molotov cocktails, they attacked the police ranks, which they outnumbered by the dozen.

The riots reached the capital, where the rallies attended mainly by young radicals tried to capture government offices. This made the use of force inevitable, although no one knows who provoked the shooting that claimed 80 lives and left several hundreds wounded<sup>228</sup>. Snipers killed dozens of attackers, while the crowd used Molotov cocktails to disperse the police ranks; fallen policemen were killed by the mob.

Enraged and unruly crowds captured the president's palace; they plundered the parliament, the public prosecutor's office, and the Museum of Arts; the building of the State National Security Service was partly destroyed by fire. Later, the country learned that the president and his brother Zhanysh had flown to Osh in the country's south. The opposition announced that they had four out of the seven regions behind them.

With the opposition leaders either behind bars or out of the capital, the mob acted on its own; eyewitnesses described it as ungovernable. People stormed official buildings in ad hoc assault groups; in some places, however, enterprising people formed small groups for more organized action. The anti-Semitic slogans that sounded in front of the House of Government (which suggested close ties between Maxim and Jewish businessmen, especially notorious Evgeni Gurevich wanted in Italy for his contacts with the Italian mafia) added an ethnic dimension to the social turbulence. Alex Katz of Sohnut arrived to prevent Jewish pogroms.

An ethnic conflict in the town of Tokmak, 60 km from the capital, began as a conflict between Kyrgyz, on the one hand, and Koreans, Uighurs and Dungans, on the other; there were attempts to fan a similar conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the Jalal-Abad region.

Meanwhile, an Interim Government headed by Rosa Otunbaeva appeared in the capital. On 8 April, she announced that the new electricity and heat tariffs would be annulled and promised that new presidential elections would be held in six months, until which time the Interim Government would fulfill the functions of the parliament, the president, and the government. The people in power pledged to use the six months at their disposal to write a new constitution and a new code of election laws and organize presidential and parliamentary elections.

As head of the Interim Government, Ms. Otunbaeva has five deputies: Almaz Atambaev heads the economic bloc<sup>229</sup>; Timur Sariev, leader of the Ak-Shumkar Party, will look after finances; former Speaker Omurbek Tekebaev was responsible for constitutional reform; Ismail Isakov will be responsible for the defense and

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<sup>228</sup> The opposition blames the president's brother Zhanysh Bakiev, who headed the Protection of the State Service. According to unconfirmed information he ordered to open fire at those who, on 7 April, stormed the government building. This means that he should be held responsible for the casualties among the opposition's supporters.

<sup>229</sup> A. Atambaev (the President since 2011), one of the republic's first cooperators, was minister of industry and trade. After parting ways with Bakiev, he joined the opposition. A highly ambitious man, he cannot remain part of any team for any length of time.



security structures and act as Defense Minister; while the Public Prosecutor's Office and judicial reform were entrusted to Azimbek Beknazarov.

As soon as Prime Minister Usenov resigned, his deputies were dismissed by a decree of the Interim Government. The Ministry of Internal Affairs went to leader of the Talas protests Bolotbek Sherniazov; the National Security Service was entrusted to General of the Militia Keneshbek Duyshebaev; "people's governors" elected by the regional kurultais appeared in Bishkek and the northern regions (which went over to the side of the former opposition). People's Governor Karamat Orazova rules in Batken, in the south.

The Interim Government closed five banks, probably to prevent an outflow of the Bakiev family's capital, and promised to nationalize, as promptly as possible, Kirgiztelecom and Severelectro sold for a song. The new rulers went even further: they promised to nationalize two of the four mobile communication operators.

Significantly, the media and the public toyed with rumors that Askar Akaev might return to politics as a presidential candidate<sup>230</sup>.

The events of March 2005 and April 2010 are very different. In 2005, the opposition wanted stabilization as quickly as possible to be able to present the regime change as another velvet revolution. Today, first, the opposition is different; second, on 6-7 April the discontented people rather than the opposition were in charge. The opposition joined the spontaneous developments at the eleventh hour. This might negatively affect the course of events and the republic's stabilization.

Rosa Otunbaeva and Omurbek Tekebaev were two possible presidential candidates. So far, no details about the new Constitution and distribution of power between the president and the prime minister have become clear. Judging by what has been said about the powers of the parliament, the president will lose many of his present prerogatives, which will shift the center of power to the prime minister, a post which will attract both Otunbaeva and Tekebaev.

Rosa Otunbaeva is a Western "project," which appeals to the world community: indeed, a woman at the head of a conservative patriarchal country with authoritarian neighbors will create an inspiring precedent. The voters might be attracted by her fluent English, her record of twice foreign minister, and her image as a progressive and emancipated woman, as well as wise and purposeful individual. Her international prestige might make it easier to get loans and grants from international financial institutions and sponsors.

She is regarded as a person of probity. The same is said about her rival: two previous regimes tried and failed to compromise him. On the other hand, Ms.

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<sup>230</sup> Some of the political émigrés who fled the country to avoid persecutions are toying with the idea of coming back: Edil Baysalov, former head of the For Democracy and Civil Society Coalition, plans to return from Sweden; Bakyt Beshimov, former head of the Social-Democratic faction; former Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Malaysia Ravshan Jeenbekov, former deputy Kubatbek Baybolov, and Ruslan Isakov, son of Ismail Isakov, from the United States. Removed from his post in 2005, Askar Akaev has shown no intentions of returning to active politics.

Otunbaeva's Kyrgyz is not as fluent as might be desired, and traditional conservative voters will hardly want to see a woman at the helm<sup>231</sup>.

Omurbek Tekebaev, an "eternal presidential candidate" as some people call him, won the 2000 presidential election, the results of which were falsified in favor of Akaev. Nevertheless, he is one of the most vibrant leaders: a profound and well-educated lawyer with perfect knowledge of the Codes of Kyrgyzstan. He cuts a more favorable figure with the electorate because of his perfect knowledge of Kyrgyz; his inadequate Russian, on the other hand, is unlikely to win the hearts of city dwellers and Russian speakers.

The expert community predicts that Rosa Otunbaeva is unlikely to retain control; after the elections she will either be sent out of the country as an ambassador or will be given a post in the foreign ministry.

Some believe that only a strong-willed person of outstanding abilities will be equal to the task of dealing with the corrupt system and clan and regional nepotism. As a person of such dimensions, Felix Kulov stands apart from the crowd of other leaders. The problem is: neither the elites nor the public need a figure like this.

The above suggests that the republic needs "external management"<sup>232</sup>. This can be realized only if the situation gets out of control and political opposition escalates into uncompromising regional confrontation. The resultant "domino effect" is feared by one and all: destabilization of Central Asia should be avoided.

### *"Russian Factor"*

Both regime changes were accompanied by speculations about the external factors behind them<sup>233</sup>. Russia is suspected, with good reason, of being

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<sup>231</sup> Those experts who personally know Rosa Otunbaeva describe her as an "outstanding woman; a super activist, a fiery orator, and a very open and straightforward person who faithfully believes in the democratic demagogy of the early 1990s—free elections, the free press, human rights, etc. She is convinced that Western-style democracy can be established in her country, which will then look like Switzerland. She has absolutely nothing in common with the current realities of a developed tribal society. In short," these people say, "she is a female alter ego of Askar Akaev."

<sup>232</sup> Some experts suggest that "external management" should take the form of an international military-political-economic consortium of the interested sides—China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, the U.S., and Canada (which owns the goldmines). To avoid nepotism, managers should be invited from third countries (India is mentioned as one of them). Young ethnic Kyrgyz now living abroad (in Russia, the United States, and Europe) should be invited to fill, temporarily, the posts of secondary importance.

<sup>233</sup> Here was one of the explanations of the 2005 events. Some experts believed that Kurmanbek Bakiev, a figurehead of the southern clans, played the main role in the regime change. Removed from active politics by the Northerners, the Southerners nursed grudges against the regime. The Americans were even more interested in removing Akaev, generally regarded as a pro-Russian politician. Later, he said in so many words that he had lost his post because he refused to let the U.S. deploy AWACS-vectored weapons (allegedly needed for the Enduring Freedom operation) in his country, since they were absolutely useless against the

instrumental in removing Bakiev from power: recently, its grievances against Bishkek have been rapidly piling up<sup>234</sup>. In June 2009, President Bakiev decided that the American airbase in Manas (which the Kremlin has been trying to remove from the country) would remain as the Transit Center in Manas. The Kremlin was infuriated: earlier in Moscow, the Kyrgyz president had publicly promised to remove the base; Russia reciprocated with a grant of \$150 million, a soft loan of \$300 million, and wrote off the republic's debt of \$180 million.

It should be said that inside the country those who objected to America's military presence moved into action; the Aksakal Council, a public organization, demanded that the airbase should be pulled out on the strength, according to its member Academician O. Narbekov, of a statement earlier issued by Abdolmalek Rigi, leader of the Iranian terrorist structure Jundallah, who claimed that the Transit Center was being used as a training camp for those who would be launched into action to depose the Iranian regime<sup>235</sup>.

Bishkek went even further: in 2010, it became known that the U.S. would open another military facility in the republic, a training center in the Batken region<sup>236</sup>.

The irritants were piling up: construction of a military training center in the republic's south (on which the presidents of Russia and Kyrgyzstan had agreed at the CSTO summit in Cholpon-Ata in July 2009) was stalling. It was expected to

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Taliban, but very useful when it came to monitoring flights over Chinese and Russian territory. The opposition riots began two weeks later.

There are numerous facts pointing to the direct and active involvement not only of American NGOs (the Soros Foundation and the International Institute for Democracy), but also of American diplomats stationed in Bishkek. At the technical level, it was the Southern criminal community that toppled Akaev and his regime. The opposition used Western money to come to terms with criminal "bands;" the law-enforcement structures proved unable to stand up to the concerted actions of the organized crime and Western-backed opposition that poured out into the streets.

<sup>234</sup> See: A. Jekshenkulov, "Rossia-Kyrgyzstan: etapy razvitiia mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy i ikh perspektivy," in: *Tsentral'naia Azia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentral'noaziatskoy tochki zrenia*, F. Ebert Foundation, Berlin, 2008, pp. 277-293; N.M. Omarov, "Vneshniaia politika Kirgizstana posle 24 marta 2005 goda: osnovnye tendentsii i perspektivy," in: *Vneshnepoliticheskaia orientatsia stran Tsentral'noy Azii v svete global'noy transformatsii mirovoy sistemy mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, ed. by A.A. Kniazev, A.A. Migranian, OFAK, Bishkek, 2009, pp. 155-161; N.T. Muratalieva, "Voennoe prisutstvie SShA i Rossii kak faktor vliania v otnosheniakh mezdu Kitaem i Kirgizstanom," in: *Vneshnepoliticheskaia orientatsia stran Tsentral'noy Azii v svete global'noy transformatsii mirovoy sistemy mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, pp. 179-186; V. Sokolov, A. Sarygulov, "Sovremennai Kirgizia: mnogovektornost ili bezvektornost razvitiia?" *Voprosy ekonomiki*, No. 2, 2010, pp. 139-149; E. Huskey, "Foreign Policy in a Vulnerable State: Kyrgyzstan as Military Entrepot between the Great Powers," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2008, pp. 5-8.

<sup>235</sup> Tehran, in turn, stated that the arrested terrorist admitted that he had been doubling as an American, British and Israeli agent and that he had been sent to the Transit Center to meet a high American official.

<sup>236</sup> Its cost was quoted as \$5.5 million; earlier, Americans had already allocated several million to be spent on a training center for the Kyrgyz Special Forces.

become Russia's second military facility in the republic and, according to the expert community, a compensation for the eviction of the Americans. Under the Cholpon-Ata memorandum, the sides were to sign an agreement on the conditions and status of this future military facility before 1 November, 2009; no agreement, although all the documents had been drafted in advance, was signed.

Bakiev also promised Moscow other things: he said he would transfer the Dastan Joint Stock Company to Russia. The two presidents discussed the fate of the republic's only military-industrial facility for manufacturing BA-111 Shkval naval torpedoes in February 2009. It was decided that Moscow would write off Kyrgyzstan's debt of \$180 million if Bishkek gave it the controlling share in the enterprise and its testing ground at Issyk Kul Lake. Moscow kept its word, while the Kyrgyz leaders announced that the state owned only 37 percent of the shares, while the rest were privately owned. Later it turned out that Maxim Bakiev had been hastily buying up the shares, which infuriated Moscow still more.

Recently, the Kyrgyz authorities launched an offensive against Russian-language websites, access to which was either limited or blocked altogether. In March 2010, the RF embassy voiced its "concern" without much effect.

Russian businessmen with interests in the republic realized that someone was infringing on their business activity. According to the opposition, this was done by Maxim Bakiev's anti-Russian friends. In 2009, for example, Russian investors lost the controlling share in MegaCom, a mobile telephone operator.

On 27 February, Daniar Usenov, still at the head of the Kyrgyz Cabinet, took part in the 11th sitting of the Intergovernmental Russian-Kyrgyz Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, and Humanitarian Cooperation. It signed an agreement on economic cooperation for 2010-2013, which included about 60 points in the relevant spheres. The two countries agreed to develop their cooperation in the oil and gas sphere in the form of a JV set up by selling some of the shares of Kirgizgaz Joint Stock Company to Gazprom and to revive, before the end of 2011, a geological exploration program of the Kuhart and Vostochnoe Maylisu IV areas.

The meeting, however, failed to agree on the main point: a loan for building Kambarata Hydropower Station-1. Russia was prepared to fund the project on the strength of feasibility studies and an expert assessment carried out by the World Bank. This was the first time Russia made its funding of any large-scale hydropower projects in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan dependent on an international expert assessment.

Bishkek, which took Usenov's mission as a failure, intended (according to certain sources) to ask the Kremlin to pull out of Kant. On 1 March, however, the intention boiled down to changing the way the base was staffed: members of the officers' families had to leave, while the military were invited to rotate on an annual basis.

No matter how resolutely Russian officials (President Medvedev, Prime Minister Putin, and

Secretary of the RF Security Council Patrushev) denied Russia's involvement in the Kyrgyz developments, the Russian leaders were obviously satisfied. Nor can



we exclude secret contacts between Russia and the Kyrgyz opposition, at least in the months that predated the regime change. Russia was the only country to openly support the Interim Government—a fact that speaks for itself. In a phone conversation with Prime Minister Putin, Rosa Otunbaeva was promised material support.

Some think that Russia was hoping the Bakiev regime would be subjected to the adverse effects of a month-long information campaign timed to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the March revolution aimed to bring the president to his senses. The events, however, spiraled out of control.

Whatever the case, Moscow will never let Bakiev return to his post even as part of a political compromise with the opposition. The two paratrooper contingents hastily moved to the Kant airbase speak volumes about Russia's intentions.

The Kremlin is probably prepared to work with the new people in power in Kyrgyzstan. On the one hand, Putin was the first to whom Rosa Otunbaeva turned for support. On the other, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promised Washington's support in exchange for the Manas base. Rosa Otunbaeva assured the U.S. State Secretary that her Interim Government would adhere to the earlier agreements reached with the United States.

### *Could Kazakhstan Help?*

Kazakhstan as the rioting republic's closest neighbor and one that shares many of its cultural, historical and mental traits cannot remain indifferent to the current and future developments in this country. More than that: its geographic location, the very specific international position of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, as well as the national security interests of Kazakhstan and the close social and economic contacts between the two countries add urgency to the issue.

By early 2010, Kyrgyzstan found itself in an economic, social, and political trap, created, among other things, by the traditional North-South confrontation. A social upsurge was natural and inevitable.

The opposition convened the People's Kurultai as a lever of political struggle, while President Bakiev, who arrested three of its leaders, shifted it to the non-constitutional field. The drug barons (who appeared in the country when it became part of the route for moving drugs from Afghanistan to Russia) added fuel to the flames. This new clan possesses enormous amounts of money and vast organizational potential and has absolutely no need for a strong central government. In the mid-term perspective, state power will weaken even more; the social and economic crisis will deepen, while political instability will continue.

The inertia, the combined impact of objective and subjective factors, as well as the de facto political stalemate and social and economic crisis with no way out in view mean that the republic is unlikely to be able to pull out of the impasse on its own. The question is: How can Kazakhstan and its allies help stabilize its neighbor?

Today, Astana must answer the following questions: at what stage of the crisis, in what way, and how deeply should Kazakhstan interfere to stem the crisis? Should Kazakhstan extend its aid to Kyrgyzstan to prevent a repetition of the 2005-2010 developments? A positive answer suggests two other questions: how extensive should this aid be and what are the preferable directions?

An analysis of Kyrgyzstan's previous developments and the current trends in the political transformations suggest that Kazakhstan should be guided by the following: close coordination with Russia, which badly needs stability in Kyrgyzstan. Astana should employ all the foreign policy instruments at its disposal: it should probably rely on the OSCE and diplomatic and political channels to inform all those involved in the political struggle that Astana will not tolerate the use of force and repeated bloodshed in Kyrgyzstan.

Kazakhstan should support all the progressive and moderate forces in Kyrgyzstan to achieve prompt stabilization and normalization of the situation in the republic. It may be necessary to restrict border crossings between the two countries for the citizens of Kyrgyzstan and labor migrants for an indefinite length of time. Regular consultations (which have probably begun) with the Interim Government on immediate and mid-term issues (including holding legitimate parliamentary and presidential elections before the situation gets out of hand again) are badly needed.

Coordination between Kazakh and international law-enforcers should be treated as a priority for neutralizing the Kyrgyz criminal community and its impact on the country's political developments. Kurmanbek Bakiev should be gradually removed from politics; his personal immunity should be exchanged for his promise to refrain from political actions. Astana should insist on acquiring firm guarantees from the new Kyrgyz government for Kazakh businesses and for ensuring Kazakhstan's economic interests in exchange for economic aid.

In the future, a project tentatively called a Leader for Kyrgyzstan (Moscow looks like the most suitable partner) might be launched aimed at identifying and supporting the most suitable political figure for president. This person should be strong and charismatic enough to rally all the healthy political forces and continue the historic mission of building a strong political system and sustainable economic and social sphere in Kyrgyzstan.

At the regional level Kazakhstan should, together with Russia and other CSTO members, strengthen regional security, which has been temporarily weakened by the gap left by Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan's water and energy sphere should be monitored to avoid an infrastructural collapse.

At the height of the crisis, Kazakhstan, as the current OSCE chairman, did a lot to normalize the situation in the neighboring country. It should be said that these efforts relied on another important resource—the personal prestige of the president of Kazakhstan. He discussed the problem in detail with President Medvedev and President Obama during the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington.

The OSCE chaired by Kazakhstan is looking for a way out of the crisis. Astana insisted that the OSCE allocate 200 thousand Euros from its reserve fund to

help Kyrgyzstan maintain law and order, security, and the rule of law. Kazakhstan used its own funds to extend humanitarian and economic aid to the republic in distress. It was thanks to Kazakhstan's diplomatic efforts that the U.N. Secretary General, the leaders of the European Union, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly dispatched their representatives to the republic, which helped normalize, to some extent, the situation there.

## **5. Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship and Eurasian Security**

The Republic of Kazakhstan was unanimously approved of by the OSCE members to chair this organization in the year of 2010. It is doubtless that this fact affirms the complete and diplomatic triumphant accomplishments gained by Kazakhstan. There has been a dignified compromise identified (in due course of chairmanship) which enabled all the parties to 'retain their integrity'.

However, this chairmanship might be fraught with a number of problems in the future, which could complicate the external political status of the country in whole. The actual OSCE problematics might get out beyond the customary visualization of such concepts like security, humane cooperation with regard to the functionalities, objectives and targets that the organization is pursuing. In reality the OSCE partnership with the post-Soviet states to some degree affects (in addition to the internal problems) a whole range of relationships towards the West in general and to the European Community and European Institutions, the NATO and USA in particular. Moreover, in the past this range of issues incorporated the so-called European 'power security' issue. With this regard our relationships with the Central and Eastern European countries will acquire a new contextual connotation.

The chairmanship of Kazakhstan at the OSCE will turn out to be a peculiar geopolitical testing of the country's maturity, since it concerns the fundamental problems associated with the relations with the West, security, geo-political and geo-economical issues. Currently these relations are being developed in the following directions.<sup>237</sup>

Commencing 1992 one of the principal trends of the OSCE activities had been the preservation of inter-ethnic concord and observation of the national minorities' rights. It was in 1999 at the Istanbul Summit when the OSCE spokesmen for the first time ever expressed concernment about the situation in Central Asia, remarked upon the threat increase posed by the international terrorists, brought out the problems concerning the increase of aggressive extremism, organized delinquency, illegal weapons and drugs trafficking. The 1999 the Istanbul Summit resulted in the signing of the Charter for European Security and the adoption of the Istanbul Summit Declaration, in which a number

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<sup>237</sup> See: Laumulin M. The Challenging Path leading to the OSCE Chairmanship (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) // Central Asia's Affairs (Almaty, KazISS). 2010. No 1., pp. 3-5. idem. Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship: History and Challenges // OSCE Yearbook 2010. Vol. 16. Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (Centre for OSCE Research). – Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2011, pp. 317-326. idem.

of issues were directly dealing with the security problems emerging in Central Asia.

In 2000 the fundamental framework of the relations of Kazakhstan and OSCE acquired novel peculiarities and traits. At certain periods the Astana policy was subjected to intense criticism by the Organization or its affiliated institutions in the connection of human rights abidance, democracy observance, election campaign techniques, etc. These incidents of bilateral relationships generally concurred with the variations of the international climate and geopolitical situation created in the Eurasian continent. Along with Kazakhstan all the other post-Soviet states were exposed to criticism, among them there were Russia and all the other Central Asian republics. Under these circumstances Kazakhstan was lined up with the group of other states which had been criticized for adherence to the double standard policy and biased criticism. Particularly, Astana was participating in the collective demarche in relation to the OSCE at the summit held in Copenhagen.

In October 2003 the permanent representation of Kazakhstan at the OSCE announced a confidential memorandum entitled “Concerning the OSCE Activities Reformation in Regions”.<sup>238</sup> In that document the Organization was accused of the biased right protection. The regional missions were subjected to scathing criticism according to which they had been reproached of collaborating primarily with the non-government organizations and human rights protection agencies. It was suggested to set up missions in accordance with an agreement reached with a receiving party, to restrict their mandate for one year period and to grant a right to extend it in compliance with a solution reached by the OSCE Permanent Council. Therefore, the work of the mission’s employees was supposed to be based upon the activities of the government structures.

In July of 2004 at the session of the Permanent Council the joint statement of the CIS states—the OSCE members (except for Georgia), which had been initiated by Moscow was announced. The Organization was reproached of the inability to “get adjusted to the requirements of the changing world and ensure an efficient settlement of security issues and cooperation at the Euro Atlantic space” and for non-observance of the following Helsinki principles such as: non-interference into internal affairs and esteem of a country’s sovereignty.

But concurrently Kazakhstan has started building its policy in the way in order to consolidate the integration of the Organization and to lower the opposition between the Northern American and European countries, on the one side and Eurasian states, per contra. In this connection Astana nominated itself for the OSCE chairmanship for the year of 2009. This suggestion was approved of by the official Moscow and was supported by all the other post-Soviet states. Later they were joined by many Eastern European countries and a number of Western European states, who had also approved of this idea.

The further development of the relationships between the RK and the OSCE were significantly impacted by the 2005 events. During that period a conceptual

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<sup>238</sup> In the headline section of the Memorandum it was stipulated that it had been prepared in conjunction with the missions of Russia, Belarus and Kirgizstan.



agreement was reached on the political scale with respect to the future chairmanship of Kazakhstan. By 2006 almost a full consensus was achieved with regard to Kazakhstan's candidacy. Nevertheless the USA and the United Kingdom, two authoritative states questioned the democratization level in Kazakhstan and urged to adjourn the chairmanship for the year of 2012 or even later. In 2009 the consensus concerning Kazakhstan's chairmanship was not reached in Brussels despite the support rendered by Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and France.

The resolution was adjourned up to the Madrid session of the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers scheduled for November 2007. As a matter of fact two hours before the closure of the session of the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers there was a consensus attained: it was decided that Kazakhstan would be chairing at the OSCE but one year later, specifically in 2010. In Kazakhstan the triumph gained in Madrid was perceived as an acknowledgment of the country's accomplishments and mainly as the recognition of the contribution made by its president. When Kazakhstan's chairmanship was submitted for discussion the country had to decide between the two possible solutions: either to exacerbate the dispute with the OSCE which will be ended by the country's withdrawal from the organization or to attempt to use this chance for the enhancement of the national prestige and increasing of its influence. The second alternative was more preferable.

At the beginning 2009, Kazakhstan, along with Greece and Finland, joined the OSCE troika of chairmen. However, Kazakh representatives started working actively in the OSCE structures as early as in 2008, first joining the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the country then becoming deputy chairman of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, heading the OSCE contact group for the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation and the personal representative of the OSCE chairman-in-office on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims.

It is worth noting that both for Kazakhstan and the OSCE Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the Organization in 2010 is a remarkable event. For Kazakhstan it is not just international recognition of its achievements in domestic and foreign policy, but also the realization of its responsibility for their further development and readiness to share responsibility for security in the entire space of the OSCE.

OSCE member states had to face several precedents linked to Kazakhstan's chairmanship: the first time a CIS country undergoing political transformation has held this post; the country is largely located in Asia; and the country is predominantly Muslim. That is why it was not easy to find a consensus on Kazakhstan's chairmanship. Kazakhstan first put forward the idea in 2003 and set the initial aim of achieving it in 2009. This initiative was something unexpected by the OSCE member states.

The delay in passing decision on the chairmanship, announced in November 2009, uncovered institutional problems in the organization and the discrepancy between the legislative basis and practical aspects of its activities. It turned out that the legislative basis of the chairmanship did not have clear criteria for assessing a

hopeful country's correspondence to the right to chair the Organization. It became clear that the decision on Kazakhstan's chairmanship was to a greater extent linked to the overcoming of Western partners' bias towards CIS countries and to current NATO-Russia and EU-Russia relations rather than to the organization's legislative basis.

A compromise was the decision to suggest that Kazakhstan would chair the Organization in 2010 instead of the requested 2009. This delay was linked to the opportunity to conduct greater reforms in the political, judicial and social spheres and the need to prepare Kazakh officials for work in OSCE structures.

The then chairman Finland's invitation to Kazakhstan to take part in the OSCE troika of chairs from 2008 to draft OSCE long-term programmes was unprecedented. As a result, Kazakhstan, having entered OSCE structures two years ahead of its chairmanship, received the real possibility of not only acquiring work experience but also drawing the organization's attention to Central Asia's topical problems. Moreover, Kazakhstan joined the troika at a difficult time of its development. The global economic crisis damaged the entire system of international relations. The OSCE, despite being an influential organization, still cannot play a primary role in solving modern conflicts.

The OSCE managed to establish a dialogue in the era of the bipolar world and after the demise of the USSR it retained its significance, helping newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union establish themselves. The organization now needs to find new forms of cooperation and attach new understanding to the experience accumulated because adequate responses to modern challenges are possibly only if it changes radically.

From the very beginning the OSCE's activities evolved in three aspects - military and political, economic and humanitarian. The first two spheres developed relatively steadily, while the third started causing heated debate at the end of the 20th century, because it turned into a kind of political school of democratic transformations in post-Soviet countries.

The work of the OSCE showed a misbalance between functional and geographical factors. Economic and military dimensions were practically duplicated and overlapped by the activities of the EU and NATO, while the humanitarian aspect with the Council of Europe. These organizations adopted specific decisions in these spheres, whereas the OSCE held more advisory meetings of member states and its documents remained declarations. Geographically the OSCE, which has 56 members of North American, European and former Soviet countries, worked mainly in the countries of the former Soviet bloc through its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

The OSCE's capability was influenced by US domination, the expansion of the EU and NATO, colour revolutions in post Soviet countries, Russia's growing role and the energy crisis. The year 2008 was the most complicated for the OSCE because the recognition of Kosovo's independence, the war between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia and the declaration of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia took place outside a platform for dialogue.

The political reality is that in the global crisis with the principle of universal security within the OSCE not implemented, it is necessary to change the ideological approach to the entire security system. This idea is shared by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. The creation of a new European security system in which CIS and EU countries could use a new architecture of security and which will be adequate to new challenges and threats is logically grounded and responsive to the modern stage of global development. The OSCE's short-term task is to strengthen its role in the global system of international relations.

What is the uniqueness and potential of the OSCE and what can Kazakhstan propose during its chairmanship? Despite the current complications, the OSCE is an unusual organization that unites North American, European and former Soviet countries and all member states have equal rights, including the right to chair the organization.

The principle of consensus adopted by the OSCE allows Kazakhstan and CIS countries to influence the course of discussion and decision-making on key security issues. At a winter session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Speaker of the Kazakh parliament's Senate Kasymzhomart Tokayev stressed that in the modern world a system of security and cooperation should not be considered European or Asian.

That ensuring security is possible only to the detriment of one's interests is not acceptable now and this became the main leitmotif of the assembly's winter session in 2009. This view was also stressed by the Kazakh and Russian delegations and during discussions.

OSCE countries treat all initiatives proposed by Kazakhstan carefully. The Finnish chairman of the OSCE in 2008, Alexander Stubb, praised Kazakh representatives' work in the economic and environmental sphere and Kazakhstan's efforts in reforming the political system. The country's Path to Europe programme does not just aim to expand political and economic cooperation and attract investment and technologies, but also raises Kazakhstan's relations with EU countries to the level of strategic partnership.

It considers the security of OSCE comprehensively and it is capable of creating a single Eurasian security system, one which is adequate to global challenges and threats, inviting NATO, the CSTO, the CICA, the SCO and the ASEAN to cooperate. OSCE's cooperation partners are: in Asia - South Korea, Thailand and Japan; and in the Mediterranean - Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

The OSCE has the potential to prevent and solve interethnic and religious crises, which will help overcome a clash of civilizations. The Charter for European Security, adopted at the Istanbul summit in 1999, gave an impetus to close cooperation with partners and there is now the need to amend this charter and create a common Eurasian security system. From 2003 the main priorities of chairmanship were to reform the OSCE, solve regional conflicts, fight terrorism

and drug trafficking, help democratic processes, counter human trafficking and promote tolerance and freedom of religion.

At an OSCE meeting on cultural, religious and racial tolerance in 2006, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev set clear goals for Kazakhstan's chairmanship:

- taking into account the situation in Central Asia, Kazakhstan is ready to act as a regional guarantor, ensuring genuine and long-term security;
- Kazakhstan, with its positive experience of interethnic and religious accord, aims to democratize its political system and as an active member of the OSCE intends to strengthen the Organization, taking into account the interests of all member states.

On 30 April 2007 in Vienna the former foreign minister, Marat Tazhin, presented Kazakhstan's vision on the development of the OSCE. In the situation of global changes and fast global processes the priority objective of increasing the efficiency of the OSCE could be solved through the creation of a genuine platform for dialogue that will unite the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian spaces.

In 2007 Kazakhstan adopted political changes, amended its constitution to increase the role of political parties, held an election to parliament's Mazhilis, continued reforms in the judicial and local self-government spheres and started building an efficient model of cooperation between the government and civil society. In 2008 amendments were made to the Kazakh Laws On Political Parties, On Elections and On the Media.

At an OSCE Parliamentary Assembly winter session, Kazakh Senate Speaker Kasymzhomart Tokayev detailed Kazakhstan's priorities during its OSCE chairmanship in 2010, describing them as clear and irreversible:

- Kazakhstan aims to increase Central Asia's significance in the OSCE. The aim is to deepen common values in this part of the world. Kazakhstan aims to make its contribution to ensuring security and stability in Eurasia;
- Kazakhstan has strong experience in heading regional organizations, like the CIS, the SCO and the CICA. Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE opens up new possibilities for establishing constructive cooperation between various regional organizations;
- as OSCE chairman Kazakhstan intends to boost the role of the organization as a unique platform for a dialogue between Europe and Asia.

Thus, during its chairmanship Kazakhstan would intend to focus the organization's activities on maintaining stability in Central Asia and, as a consequence, strengthening stability in the entire space of the OSCE.

The country also plans to take urgent measures to fulfill socioeconomic programmes in Afghanistan; strengthen economic relations between Central Asian countries; develop transport and transit routes in Central Asia; and assist the rational use of water and energy resources in the region.

Kazakhstan was also ready to share its experience of interethnic and religious accord. It is precisely these spheres, that are at the core of the OSCE's activities, that need a new vision. Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE confirms the main

principle of the Organization - the equality of all its members and their interest in sustainable development.

It is quite apparent that the activities of the European Community would impact the chairmanship of Kazakhstan at the OSCE. On this basis one should take into consideration the principal targets and incentives that Brussels would be driven by specifically in the Central Asian area. It is beyond doubt that the Astana chairmanship at the OSCE would be impacted by the North American factor. In January of 2009 a new Democratic administration came to power at the White House, with Barack Obama, newly elected President at the head. It should be noted that the Eurasian policy, specifically at the OSCE, the new administration would be interconnected with the Russian-American relations, the CIS, NATO expansion, situation in Afghanistan, the situation in Iran and Pakistan and at any rate with the nature of the American-Chinese and America-Indian intercourse.

The North-Atlantic alliance alongside with the OSCE is the largest international organization operating in the sphere of security and which encompasses not only Europe and North America, but Eurasia as well. Consequently the NATO factor anyhow will influence the OSCE situation and behavior patterns of the alliance members within the framework of the activities of the organization.

The crucial role in supporting the chairmanship of Kazakhstan was played by Russia and other post-Soviet states. Thereby Astana received the cooperative mandate from the CIS states in favor of protection of their interests in front of that organization. Apart from that factor due to certain objective circumstances Kazakhstan should and presumably would intend to coordinate its moves with Moscow in the course of its Chairmanship. Kazakhstan is committed to the Central Asian republics as well. However, currently there exist a number of intricate circumstances that might complicate at times different comprehension of the purposes and objectives interpreted by Russia and Kazakhstan.

It is for sure that the OSCE chairmanship will become a milestone in the external policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which will be used also for announcement as the regional leader. But for Russia, in accordance with the Russian politicians, this factor most probably will be coupled with more problems rather than opportunities. They consider that unlike Russia Kazakhstan will not lay claims upon alteration of the OSCE operation pattern. For Astana based on its geopolitical status it will be enough to gain benefits from this function. While Moscow will be making efforts to reset the rules of the game which admittedly will be challenging. Besides Russia possesses a much wider range of levers at its disposal versus Kazakhstan.

There arises another question: what is the essence of the viewpoint and claims of the Russian Federation with respect to the OSCE goals? The Russian politicians point out the imbalances identified in the OSCE activities: more specifically – the geographical aspect (the activities of the organization are focused primarily in the direction «eastward from Vienna» - mainly in ex-Yugoslavian countries and the former USSR) and topical aspect (from the point of view of Russia there has been an unjustified shift observed in favor of the human rights protection which

harmfully impacted other aspects and directions, namely: the sphere of security, economy and ecology. Moscow is displeased with the autonomy of a number of the OSCE institutions first of all with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which is involved in monitoring over the election campaigns.

The Russian leadership is publicly accusing the independent OSCE institutions of the biased attitude, is imputing them for the double standard practice application, and virtually proclaims about them 'being privatized' by the Western countries, first and foremost by the United States. Time and again the Russian leaders make statements proclaiming that there is no sense of having the present type of the OSCE and call-outs pleading to withdraw from the organization are becoming more persistent.

Alongside with that the chairmanship of Kazakhstan at the OSCE might be fraught with lots of problems which can complicate the external political position of the RK in the foreseeable future. In order to act as the Chairperson of the organization Kazakhstan will have to implement the following scenario: to elaborate a clear-cut and precise scheme of democratic reorganization in the country in the immediate future; to act forward in advance and to ensure that these reforms are not viewed in the West as imposed measures, which have been assumed under constraint from the outside or have been taken under pressure of the internal political oppositional forces.

Along with the overpassing the 'separating strips' associated with Kazakhstan's chairmanship at the OSCE there will be more possibilities to take into account and bear in mind the interests and views of the countries in the direction «eastward from Vienna». Thereby the CIS countries will be ensured to have better opportunities for the implementation of the projects generated by these states. Kazakhstan is quite capable to consolidate this organization.

For long there has been an open issue related to the prioritization of the OSCE activities - whether it will be focused on a humanitarian sphere or the security issue during Kazakhstan's chairmanship period. At the moment more rational and advisable will be a shift of emphasis and practical measures undertaken by the OSEC aimed at democratization of the society and oriented for the cultural cooperation, inter-confessional concord, and civilized coordination.

Exactly in these spheres Kazakhstan is capable to contribute a lot to the OSCE operation. In the area of security enhancement it will be significant to accentuate such items which are essential for regional stability assurance like terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration. At the same time it is important to be cautious especially when dealing with the issues associated with the regional collisions and the so called unrecognized states;

The idea of reinforcement of the connection between the European and Asian security systems – the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and Community on Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building-Measures in Asia (CICA) seems to be prospective. The West after having bolstered Kazakhstan in the OSCE chairmanship in 2010 might make attempts and endeavor to have Kazakhstan engaged in different types of anti-Russian campaigns within the organization. The toughest cases will be the ones when Astana being the OSCE

chairperson will be obliged to face the challenges and criticize its allies and the CIS partners. In these cases Kazakhstan will have the only way-out just to try to tone down the statements and shift the accents.

Although with Kazakhstan's chairmanship the OSCE will somehow acquire the 'Eurasian countenance' and in order to avoid any irritation among the western partners it will be more reasonable to minimize the use of the term 'Eurasian' in the official documents, records and ceremonial rhetoric, and will be more rational to emphasize Kazakhstan's 'European selection'. This move will contribute to promoting the dialog between the parties in the comprehensible language. But the uppermost objective of Kazakhstan's chairmanship at the OSCE in the year of 2010 should be the enhancement of the country's significance and up-grade of its foreign political status.

But after the beginning of Kazakh Chairmanship, the stormy events of 2010 in Central Asia have changed a Kazakhstan's agenda. Actually, the situation in Kyrgyzstan became most radical challenge not only for security and stability in the region, but it challenged the Kazakhstan's chairmanship as a whole.

Since the OSCE's foreign ministers meeting in July 2010 at Almaty, the general goal of Kazakh agenda is to restore and to revive the OSCE summits. And the main question for Central Asian security is open: how to construct a dialogue between different organizations being responsible for regional (including Afghanistan) security and stability, those are NATO, OCST and ShCO? Perhaps, the future OSCE summit could answer all questions and solve these security problems.

During the OSCE Astana Summit in December of 2010, President N.Nazarbayev proposed to establish a unified and indivisible security and to define a "road map" to move to the concept of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security. It can be interpreted as the new level in the Eurasian security provision - to form a common security area within the four oceans shape - from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Arctic to the Indian.

In the context of globalization, growth of interdependence it is quite obvious that the time of changes is coming not only for the main dialogue platform in the of European Security (OSCE) sphere, but for the leading international integration structures. The logic of these changes is in the expansion of the boundaries and the content the «security» concept. Today, the European as well as the Central Asian security cannot be provided separately.

In his opinion, this reflects the changing paradigm of the European security. In the early XXI century, the sources of the most dangerous threats and challenges to the European continent stability happened to be outside its borders. The main sources of drug trafficking, illegal migration, human trafficking, and weapons of mass destruction proliferation danger are outside Europe. Many aspects of the European energy and economic security depend on the situation in other parts of the world. That was proven by the global financial crisis and current events in the Arabic world.

Thus, the Eurasian security is a geopolitical fact. The interaction of regional and international structures/organizations present in Eurasia is essential to enhance

the effectiveness of its security. The interaction presumes the need to overcome the negative logic of interdependence, based on the confrontation of interests, and the transition to the logic of positive interdependence.

That was promoted by the common security challenges, which require the recognition of the indivisibility of Eurasian and Euroatlantic security and development of a mechanism of interaction and cooperation.

In Kazakhstan's opinion, two main questions should be given answers to: 1. Why the proposal was motioned by Kazakhstan? 2. How in practice is expected to provide a unified and indivisible security, combining two vectors: Eurasian /Asian and Euroatlantic. Kazakhstan has been working hard to establish a Eurasian security belt. The Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, an analogue of the Asian OSCE, was established by the initiative of our country. In the long-term perspective, the CICA can be considered as a basis for the security organization creation in Asia.

The main objective of Kazakhstan is to strengthen the collective security system in Central Eurasia, and firstly by the settlement of the problem of Afghanistan. The ultimate goal - strengthening of cooperation between all institutions in the security sphere operating in Central Asia – NATO, CSTO, OSCE and the SCO (and possibly also CICA).

Kazakhstan is ready to become a linking chain of the Eurasian security. That is conditioned by its geopolitical position and the region as a whole.

On one hand, the Central Asia with its unstable political regimes, rich natural resources and the transit location (convenient area for illegal migration, drug trafficking, transit of criminal elements to other states, etc.) has turned into an instability factor.

The region also needs economic, ecological and human security. The organizations and forums (CSTO, SCO, NATO, CICA) functioning in the region can serve as a specific construct to maintenance of regional balance, stability and protection from various threats and challenges.

In the vicinity of the two largest nations Russia and China, a powerful cultural gravity of the Islamic world makes it impossible to create a system of security in Central Asia, only by a narrow regional circle. Therefore, the system of Central Asian security under construction acquires a multi-level character. If to take into account that at the Astana forum the most often voiced concerns were of Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, the Kazakhstani idea on creation of the common security system for Euro-Atlantic and Eurasia is quite topical. That was the paramount idea of the summit.

Afghanistan is, of course, the most destabilizing factor in the region. 43 OSCE member states are involved to the problematic knot in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan supports the development of integrated settlement strategy for Afghanistan, and the economic recovery for a peaceful life.

The destabilizing factor might become the so-called «Great Game» in the region.

By initiating the Euro-Asian security, Kazakhstan proposes to solve this problem by maintaining balance between East and West. The Eurasian idea of our President



can be considered as the ideological foundation for the strategy of Kazakhstan in ensuring security. The potential of the idea as a foundation for creating a security on the Eurasian continent has not yet been depleted.

In practice, the Kazakhstan grounded its initiatives on the experience of multi-vector policy that it has been following since the independence.

Thus, at the Astana summit, Kazakhstan invited all the countries to open dialogue. That is the essence of our initiative.

Suggestions:

1. Confidence building and integration within the framework of the existing interstate institutions:

- along the line «East - West» – establishment of the interaction between, the European Union and NATO on one hand, and the EurAsEC and the CSTO on the other;

- along the line «North – South» - establishment of close relationships of the OSCE with a number Asian integration structures.

Thus, the already existing transatlantic integration can be organically supplemented by the trans-Eurasian integration.

- The political will was needed to stimulate the major actors to gather around the negotiation's round-table and agree on the common "rules of the game", the principles of conduct in the security sphere, new instruments and mechanisms to combat the global risks.

- Kazakhstan considers that it is necessary to broadly exploit the OSCE potential on the development of interregional cooperation, building the transcontinental transport corridors linking Europe and Asia.

In this regard, the membership of the Central Asian countries in the OSCE plays very important role. And it is not about the creation in the region of some modified «sanitary corridor» between Europe and Asia, but about streamlining in Central Asia of clear-cut preventive work of the specialized OSCE structures to combat certain threats and security challenges.

Thus, the Central Asia would become one of the OSCE outposts to fight the global threats and challenges. At the same time, the OSCE would contribute to safeguarding peace and stability in Central Asia.

- N.Nazarbayev proposes the OSCE countries to develop a Comprehensive Treaty on the Eurasian security and set up a council to combat the transborder crime.

- Institute for the analysis of security problems to predict the security threats and challenges

The next question is the creation of an effective interaction between the regional and global integration institutions.

- In this context, can be very helpful the suggestions of Kazakhstan on the synchronization of the key regional organizations' agendas.

- Kazakhstan proposes to take steps on the consolidation of the world's leading integration structures' efforts based on the clear understanding of the necessity to converge the responsibilities' zones between the regional and global structures.

- If at the end of the last century the integration structures were divided into those that are located under the «Russian umbrella» and under «the auspices of the West», in the modern conditions, the new threats and risks dictate the need for new approaches, namely the interaction of international organizations in the region.

- The triangle of EU-Russia-Kazakhstan can be considered as the first stage in establishment of an interaction mechanism. Russia and Kazakhstan are the backbone of the CIS and act as «locomotives» of the strengthening the Eurasian integration project (EurAsEC, Customs Union, the EEA). (Last year more than 40% of Kazakhstan's foreign trade was with the EU and 17,4% - with Russia). Kazakhstan's cooperation with the European Union is complicated without Russian participation. Geopolitical factors and the similarity of the economic structures, as well as a large number of joint economic projects are playing a big role in this process.

- In its turn, the EU should stop looking at both Russia and Kazakhstan only as potential suppliers of raw materials. It is needed to move to the new format of cooperation in economy, foreign policy and security issues.

- The Eurasian triangle can be considered as a basis for the wider engagement of all key players in the world, including the U.S. and China to discuss new global integration formats, not just the World Common Market, but the architecture of common security and anticrisis measures.

#### Organizations and fora

- The central role in the Euro-Asian security will be performed by the CSTO. Its role is extremely high in the military-political dimension of the Eurasian integration. Today, the CSTO is entering a new phase in its development by the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces, Joint Air Defense System, Anti-Terrorist Center of the CIS.

- SCO and the CICA are important in the context of the Asian vector of pan-Eurasian security. Their development potential now only beginning to be understood being filled with the real content. It is promotion to the security and stability in the SCO and strengthening of the cooperation between the member states. The opposition of the Shanghai Organization to NATO is a profound delusion, in fact it is incorrect due to the fact that the SCO does not posit such aims for itself. The SCO is ready for broad cooperation with the international organizations on all aspects of its activities.

- The important aspect of the regional security in Central Asia is participation of its Member States in the NATO's Partnership for Peace Program.

Kazakhstan, whose position is extremely close to Russia, focused on the transformation of the Euro-Atlantic security system based on NATO into Eurasian. In this regard, Kazakhstan welcomes the breakthrough in the relations between Russia and NATO. Also, the suggestion of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on a new treaty of European security deserves attention.

Thus, Kazakhstan acts as an initiator of the Eurasian security concept. Taking into consideration the difficulties in the creation of the concrete action plan to establish such a system, our country offers a step by step strategy starting with the creation of an interactive platform for discussions.

## 6. Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy and International Security.

At the beginning of 2011, Kazakhstan's foreign policy entered a new stage. The country passed a serious political test — chairing the OSCE and hosting the Organization's summit meeting in Astana. This year, it faces two new tests: chairing the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and hosting the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the SCO summit.

The OSCE summit in December 2010 amply showed that such events are far from formalities requiring no more than paying official tribute to political obligations, this time Astana's. Such functions are often closely related to a specific problem in international relations. In this context, the present turning point in Kazakhstan's foreign policy is a clear sign of the demands of the times.

Recent experience is good way to gage the transformation in Kazakhstan's foreign policy and its international status. The year 2010 will be remembered in the history of Kazakhstan and its foreign policy for its many important events. The most vibrant of them was without a doubt the OSCE summit in Astana. However, in terms of strategic consequences, establishment of the Customs Union among Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belarus should be considered the most important.<sup>239</sup>

### *The Heritage of 2010*

It was Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the OSCE, however, that set the pace for the country's foreign policy as a whole in 2010. As one Kazakhstan observer noted, Kazakhstan's task was not to meet the OSCE standards, but to create new standards corresponding both to present reality and to the interests of the Organization's participating states, whereby with the help of those countries that view the OSCE as an effective mechanism for maintaining stability and ensuring security.

The Kazakhstan president's participation in the anti-nuclear summit in Washington in April can be singled out as one of the head of state's noteworthy foreign visits. This historical meeting of three presidents — America's Barack Obama, Russia's Dmitry Medvedev, and Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbaev—in Washington in April 2010 at the anti-nuclear summit brought attention once again to Kazakhstan's enormous contribution to nuclear non-proliferation. This was largely promoted by the initiatives the Kazakhstan president laid on the table before the leaders of the leading, primarily nuclear, nations and the world community as a whole. Nuclear security and non-proliferation is an area in which Kazakhstan recognizes its moral superiority. It is also the source and essence of Kazakhstan's foreign policy conception.

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<sup>239</sup> See: Laumulin M. Some Problems of Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy // Central Asia and Caucasus (Lulea, Sweden). 2011. № 1, pp. 114-123. idem. Priorities and Directions of Kazakhstan Foreign Policy Today // Central Asia's Affairs (Almaty, KazISS). 2011. № 2, pp. 6-13.

Kazakhstan essentially asked the old members of the nuclear club to forego their nuclear sovereignty (which they promised to do during the drawing up of the NPT at the end of the 1960s). The Kazakhstan president also proposed revising international law regarding nuclear non-proliferation. He suggested conducting an expert analysis of all the existing international acts on non-proliferation and the fight against nuclear terrorism and combine them into a single strategic policy document—a new universal agreement on comprehensive horizontal and vertical non-proliferation and destruction of nuclear weapons. This kind of document is called upon to guarantee that double standards are not used and envisages specific sanctions against its violators. This proposal was also revolutionary in nature.

The well-known events in Kyrgyzstan in April and June of 2010 were a serious test for Kazakhstan's foreign policy. In fact they were a test of Kazakhstan's strength not only as OSCE chairman, but also as a responsible regional leader. The political situation that developed as a result of the events in Kyrgyzstan was fraught with many ambiguous consequences for Kazakhstan's foreign policy, economy, and national security. Kyrgyzstan is Kazakhstan's closest neighbor and the closest country to it culturally, historically, and mentally. This factor, as well as Kyrgyzstan's direct geographic proximity, its specific international status, Kazakhstan's national security interests, and the close social and economic ties between the two republics make Kazakhstan far from indifferent to the further development of events in this country.

Kazakhstan's policy toward Kyrgyzstan was built on certain fundamental criteria. Astana's actions were closely coordinated with Russia's, which was also extremely interested in rapid stabilization of the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Astana notified all the participants in the political struggle in Kyrgyzstan through diplomatic and political channels (primarily via the OSCE) that it would not tolerate the use of armed forces or repetition of the bloodshed in the republic. Astana also supported all the progressive and moderate forces in the republic in order to bring about rapid stabilization and normalization of the situation. Regular consultations were held with the republic's temporary leadership on current and mid-term issues regarding further development, keeping in mind such objectives as holding full-fledged and legitimate parliamentary and presidential elections within time-limits conducive to retaining stability. The Kazakh and international law enforcement structures also coordinated their efforts to neutralize the Kyrgyz criminal environment and its influence on the republic's political life.

Nursultan Nazarbaev's visit to South Korea can be singled out as a key event in the Asian vector, which brought both countries to a qualitatively new level of cooperation. The sides agreed to declare 2010 the Year of Kazakhstan in South Korea and 2011 the Year of South Korea in Kazakhstan.

The third CICMA (the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia) summit should be named as one of the significant events in security. Kazakhstan passed on the CICMA chair to Turkey, but retained control over the Conference through the system of partner organizations. Kazakhstan attended the third CICMA summit held on 8 June, 2010 in Istanbul as the current chairman of two large regional structures on the continent—CICMA and the

OSCE. The mandate for chairmanship in the Conference was passed from Kazakhstan to Turkey. This demonstrated that CICMA is not a purely Kazakh project. Consensus blocking was applied at the Istanbul summit (the Conference members condemned Israel's actions regarding a caravan of ships taking humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, but Israel refused to support the inclusion of any provisions condemning its actions in the text of the final resolution).

The final document adopted in Istanbul was a corrected and updated version of the declaration of the second CICMA summit adopted on 17 June, 2006 in Almaty. The corrections were stylistic in nature, while the updates reflected the changed situation with its regional risks and threats. For example, an entire section in the Istanbul declaration is devoted to Afghanistan. In his message to the forum participants, Nursultan Nazarbaev noted that CICMA is adapting quickly to the changing world and consistently increasing its cooperation with the OSCE, so Kazakhstan does not exclude the possibility of creating "some joint platform regarding security and trust throughout the Eurasian expanse" in the future.

German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Astana in July 2010 was an important event in the European vector. Kazakhstan made it understood that it is ready to deliver its gas to Germany via the Nabucco pipeline. It stands to reason that Germany is interested in this project coming to fruition. But its resource base has not been ultimately determined. The improved project presumes transporting natural gas from the Caspian region to the European countries without passing through Russia—from Turkmenistan through Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, and Austria—whereby it will supplement the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, which is already in operation. President Nursultan Nazarbaev claims that it is the European Union's sluggishness that is causing Astana's hesitancy. The Kazakhstan leader named two conditions necessary for his country's participation in this project: the gas pipeline must be laid along the bottom of the Caspian Sea through the Caucasus to the Black Sea and further or LNG plants must be built on the Kazakhstan coast of the Caspian. This is Kazakhstan's way of testing the waters and seeing how the West and Moscow will react. Astana has changed its tactics and is taking Baku's cue by looking at several projects at once and choosing the most advantageous.

At the beginning of 2010, Uzbekistan and the U.S. expressed serious objections to holding the summit in Astana. The disagreement with Tashkent was settled in March during Nursultan Nazarbaev's meeting with Islam Karimov. And, later, Astana also managed to secure Washington's support.

In August 2010, Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Katsuya Okada visited the republic. Tokyo was intent on stepping up the activity of Japanese companies in developing energy resource fields in Kazakhstan and other republics of the region. Cooperation in the nuclear sphere was also a fundamental topic of discussion during Katsuya Okada's visit to Astana. President Nursultan Nazarbaev formulated a cooperation plan while he was in Tokyo in the summer of 2008: "We have the uranium and you have the high technology." This plan is still being implemented today. The problem is delivering Kazakhstan uranium to Japan. Almost all of the uranium intended for Japan is sent through St. Petersburg to the

U.S., Canada, and France for enrichment, and only then reaches the Land of the Rising Sun. Moreover, only a small part of nuclear fuel is enriched in Russia. The project of an eastern route for delivering Kazakhstan uranium to Japan is currently being drawn up. There are plans for it to pass through the Far East. In exchange, Japan wants to suggest that all the uranium imported from Kazakhstan be enriched in Russia.

Japan is also interested in the region's oil and gas industry. An example of this kind of cooperation in Kazakhstan is the activity of Japan's JOGMEC Corporation in the Caspian Sea, which is actively cooperating with KazMunaiGaz, Kazakhstan's national company.

An important event in the Russian vector was the meeting between the presidents of the two countries in Ust-Kamenogorsk in September 2010 where they signed 27 agreements that touched on almost every sphere of Kazakhstan's and Russia's economies.

And finally, the Astana summit was an impressive finale not only to last year, but also to an entire era in the history of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, and proved that the republic is a responsible member of the international community and capable of hosting such high-level meetings.

On the whole, 2010 was a time of renewal for Kazakhstan's foreign policy and its main vectors, goals, and objectives, which shows that Kazakhstan is transforming from a regional country into one of the main international players, that is, moving up to a higher and more important rung on the world's ranking ladder. Kazakhstan is essentially already leaving the boundaries of Central Asia. The world community regards it as a responsible Eurasian state with its own interests and healthy ambitions.

All the same, despite the successes and achievements of the past year, the problems relating to Central Asian security and Kazakhstan's international status, along with the constant geopolitical pressure it feels from different sides, are still very evident and have shifted to a new level.

### *Traditional Policy*

The Russian vector is still vitally important in Kazakhstan's foreign policy and is comprised of an extremely extensive agenda, ranging from security and the economy to social and humanitarian cooperation. There can be no doubt that 2010 was an outstanding year from the viewpoint of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia in all areas. The creation of the Customs Union, Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the OSCE, and the political interaction between Astana and Moscow, particularly at the presidential level, were determining factors in bilateral cooperation last year. Russia rendered Kazakhstan unconditional political support during its chairmanship in the OSCE.

Kazakhstan and Russia are strategic partners and close allies in the post-Soviet expanse. The cooperation between the two states encompasses almost every sphere of possible interaction: from the economy to cultural and humanitarian relations. At present, cooperation is actively developing in the political, military-

technical, economic, and humanitarian spheres, which is of particular significance for the internal development of the two states and their interaction on the international arena.

During 2010, Kazakh-Russian relations developed both at the bilateral level and within the framework of multilateral cooperation institutions, such as the CIS, EurAsEC, Customs Union, CSTO, SCO, and OSCE. The joint action plan for Kazakhstan and Russia in 2009-2010 played an important role in the development of bilateral relations, formed the backbone of the agreements reached between the two countries, and included 40 specific undertakings. They cover the entire range of Kazakh-Russian cooperation in the political, economic, scientific, and humanitarian spheres, whereby the scope of these undertakings is enormous. For example, a joint oil balance and oil transportation plan is being developed in the fuel and energy complex, and a comprehensive cooperation program with respect to peaceful use of the atom is being implemented.

Kazakhstan's share in bilateral trade turnover amounts to more than 18 percent of the total volume of the country's foreign trade. Industrial cooperation covers such spheres as energy, space exploration, and innovative technology. After the Customs Union was established, Kazakhstan became the closest country to Russia in the post-Soviet expanse. And after the Common Economic Space (CES) is launched in 2012, both countries, along with Belarus, might be quite capable of forming a structure similar to the EU.

The chronology of 2010 is a graphic illustration of the progress accomplished in Kazakh-Russian relations. The Customs Union of three states — Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia—has been functioning officially since 1 January and in practical terms since 1 July. This has become the main and determining factor in the relations among the three countries actively discussed in Kazakhstan throughout the year. Many have been noting the fact that the republic is supposedly losing large amounts of money (a figure of 75 billion tenge—\$500 million—was mentioned) due to the reduction in customs revenue into the budget. This gives reason to conclude that joining the Customs Union was a political rather than economic move. But it should be noted that similar viewpoints have been expressed at the level of public opinion in both Russia and Belarus. Many people in these countries also believe that significant losses have been incurred from creating the Customs Union. So who benefited from it?

In reality, creation of the Customs Union will attract investments in the non-raw-material sector of Kazakhstan's economy. Kazakhstan manufacturers can expand their opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry. Mutual recognition of all permits will make it possible for medication to circulate freely in the Customs Union. The barriers in Russia are too high at present for foreign manufacturers to gain access, however these restrictions no longer apply to Kazakhstan. On the whole, in the long term, the union should have a positive effect on Kazakhstan's economy. In particular, an increase in the competitiveness of Kazakhstan manufacturers and a decrease in smuggling can be expected.

In grain production, Kazakhstan and Russia provide up to 17 percent of the world's wheat export. There are currently around 3,000 companies with Russian

investments operating in Kazakhstan, and most of them are involved in border cooperation. The problem today is Kazakhstan's southern border, which is now the border of the Customs Union. Transfer of customs control to the external borders of the countries has only been partially accomplished: the Russian-Belarusian customs border has disappeared, while the Russian-Kazakh border will continue to exist until July 2011, by which time Kazakhstan must put a stop to smuggling and the re-export of Chinese goods by Kyrgyzstan.

At the beginning of December, the countries of the Customs Union agreed to introduce unified regulations and standards for oil and petroleum products within the framework of the Common Economic Space. Kazakhstan wants to increase the throughput of the pipeline to 67 million tons of oil a year. But this will require building new pumping stations and oil reservoirs at the terminal near Novorossiysk and installing another single mooring point. The hopes rest on Russia, which agreed to almost double Kazakhstan's quota in the CPC from 27.5 million to 52.5 million tons, thus saving the republic from having to look for other alternatives for delivering crude oil to Europe. As of today, Kazakhstan is pretty much satisfied with the pumping capacities through Russia.

Close cooperation between the two states has made it possible in recent years to soften the blows of the world financial and economic crisis. There has been a drop in demand for bank loans in both Kazakhstan and Russia. In the uranium industry, the national nuclear companies of both countries are acting as a united front in relations with foreign partners. In so doing, the Russian nuclear industry is still Kazakhstan's main partner, ensuring the complete processing and enrichment cycle of Kazakh uranium.

Russia and Kazakhstan are also closely cooperating in the space industry. Both states are about to launch a large-scale international program. Of particular significance is the fact that the launching pads at Baikonur are designed for Russian- and Ukrainian-made missile carriers.

In 2010, cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan actively continued in the transportation sphere. As early as 2008, a memorandum was signed between the transport ministries of Kazakhstan and Russia on cooperation and the development of roads linking Western Europe and Western China.

Kazakhstan has begun building the Western Europe-Western China highway and has already begun rebuilding the roads in certain sections of this major artery. Russia, in turn, is carrying out feasibility studies of this project. By 2013, it will be possible to put part of the highway, the Kazakh and Chinese sections, into operation. By this time, Russia is expected to have begun building its section of the highway.

But there are still unresolved problems in bilateral relations: one of them is related to increasing the amount of time the citizens of one country can stay in the other country without registration (for example, Ukrainian citizens can stay in Russia without registration for 90 days, while Kazakhstan citizens can stay for only three days).



There is a shortage of drinking water in Central Asia. So at a meeting in Ust-Kamenogorsk, President Nursultan Nazarbaev suggested returning to the idea of reversing the flow of Siberia's rivers.

The participation of Kazbrig in the peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan is still a bone of contention in the military-strategic sphere, which Moscow is against. Astana, in turn, does not want Moscow to squeeze Georgia out of the Commonwealth's orbit regardless of the fact that Georgia has already officially withdrawn from the CIS.

Work has begun on the joint action plan for 2011-2012, which is conducive to Kazakh-Russian relations, and a program that will extend to 2020 is being drafted. In the next ten years, Russia will evidently play an even greater role as Kazakhstan's main political and economic trade partner.

### *Security Problems and the European Vector*

Kazakhstan's main objective is to strengthen the collective security system in Central Eurasia; that is, settle the Afghan problem and eliminate the threat posed by radical Islamism in general, as well as increase cooperation among all the security institutions operating in Central Asia — NATO, the CSTO, OSCE, and SCO (possibly also the CICMA) — as a way to achieve this objective. The OSCE summit in Astana was a step toward this end.

The Afghan problem is a key element in many respects for Central Asian security and Kazakhstan's national security. And the summit in Astana graphically demonstrated this. It is extremely important to know and understand the West's strategy and plans regarding this country, which is a source of military-political, religious, and drug threats. In the geopolitical context, the situation in Afghanistan affects the security of a much broader region that includes South Asia, the Middle East, the CIS, and the PRC. From the very beginning, Astana has suggested including the states located along the perimeter of the Organization's geographic zone and on which the security of the participating states depends as OSCE partners in this process. Pakistan is a country that holds the keys to settling the Afghan problem and on which Central Asia's security to one extent or another depends.

In 2011, chairmanship in the Organization went to Lithuania. It stands to reason that Vilnius will shift the accent in the OSCE's activity toward its own region — Central and Eastern Europe. It is very likely that such issues as Eastern Partnership of the European Union, the Belarusian Question, relations between the European Union and Russia, supplying Europe with energy, and so on will be put on the agenda.

The EU countries will try to shift the OSCE's geopolitical activity toward Europe and European security. There are indeed many problems in this area: the fate of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, deployment of the U.S. AMD theater of operations, the fate of the European Security Treaty, and several others. It should be noted that Astana also addressed these topics during its chairmanship. Despite the future strong influence of the European factor,

Kazakhstan, like the Central Asian countries as a whole, can continue to use the OSCE Astana Declaration of 2010 as an effective political tool. It is to the historical credit of the Astana OSCE summit that it designated this problem within the Organization's framework and pointed out ways to resolve it.

Another set of problems is associated with relations between Kazakhstan (and the Central Asian countries as a whole) and the European Union. Kazakhstan's relations with the European Union are rather specific. Technically speaking, many foreign partners think Kazakhstan belongs to Asia; and from time to time Astana also emphasizes this aspect of its geopolitical identity. However, at the doctrine level, Kazakhstan is positioning itself as a Eurasian state (for which it has every objective reason).

When talking about the strategy and tactics of Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian countries with respect to the EU, we should proceed from an understanding of the nature of Europe's interest in cooperating with the region and the interests the EU and CA have in common. It stands to reason that the European Union is interested in Central Asia as a stable source of natural resources. At the same time, Brussels is interested in applying its standards to the region. On the other hand, as NATO members, the European countries play an important role in combating the threats coming from Afghanistan. Moreover, the EU does not welcome the U.S.'s dominating role in Eurasia and tends to reckon with Russia's role in the region. Experts have recently been saying that the European Union in particular can act as a counterbalance in the future (since Russia has removed itself from this role) to China's growing domination in Central Asia. All these factors should be kept in mind when forming the position of the Central Asian countries regarding the EU.

In these conditions, Kazakhstan's policy aimed at stabilizing Afghanistan and the situation in the region as a whole is objectively a policy that protects the European Union's direct interests, primarily in the security sphere.

In its relations with the European Union, Kazakhstan will have to keep in mind the fact that the EU is undergoing significant internal transformation at present, which affects essentially all areas of cooperation between this organization and the outside world. At present, the EU's activity in the external vectors is being hampered by the acute budget deficit crisis in the South European countries (Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy), since all of the European Union's available resources have been directed toward helping these countries.

During Germany's chairmanship in the EU, an attempt was made to re-examine the entire range of relations with the CIS countries. In so doing, the EU's new foreign policy was far from always successful. The EU was unable to enter a new agreement on partnership and cooperation with Russia or remove the contradictions in the Organization's policy toward the Ukraine, Belarus, and the Caucasian and Central Asian states. What is more, certain contradictions and even rivalry for control over the transportation of hydrocarbons from the CIS countries were designated between the old and new EU members. In addition, the EU's strategy aimed at establishing control over traditional and alternative sources of

resources is inevitably encountering (and this is an irreversible process) other foreign competitors—the U.S., Japan, China, and India.

Keeping in mind the EU's growing interest in the region, Kazakhstan should use different tools and methods for putting pressure on its powerful partner. The attention of European partners must be directed toward the shortcomings and weak spots in Europe's strategy toward Central Asia. For example, the EU is not taking the threats (religious radicalism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and so on) coming from Afghanistan and the vast region to the south of Central Asia seriously enough.

The partners' attention must be directed to the fact that a political, rather than economic, approach dominates in the EU's Central Asian strategy. The EU's priorities regarding building democracy in the region's countries often change and even contradict each other. The EU traditionally exaggerates the potential of civil society as a driving force behind democratic changes and underestimates the state's role in these issues.

The EU's relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are being established within the framework of the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument and its relations with Central Asia are regulated by the Document on Economic Cooperation and Cooperation in Development, which does not relate to a specific region. So an island is forming in the center of Asia that is regarded neither as "Asia" nor as part of the "European neighborhood," which is creating a basis for unjustified discrimination of the interests of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. In addition, Kazakhstan must ensure that the visa regime for its citizens is simplified as much as possible. In trade relations, Astana must promote favorable changes for Kazakhstan in the EU's tariff policy with respect to some of its export commodities (steel, uranium, and so on). This issue could be tied to specific steps and concessions in the energy dialog between Kazakhstan and the EU.

It appears that the EU will have a long-term impact and that it is here to stay in the post-Soviet expanse, including in Central Asia. So, the EU is still one of the most important geopolitical and geo-economic dimensions determining the future and security of Central Asia.

In its relations with the European Union, Kazakhstan must keep in mind that the EU may lose its dominating position as the main economic center in Eurasia. Moreover, the EU countries are becoming targets of external migration. Extensive transformation processes are occurring in the EU social structure and industry. At the same time, the EU will long remain dependent on Eurasian sources of energy.

Kazakhstan's program "Road to Europe"—that is, as much political and economic integration of the country into the European Union as possible—has little chance of being implemented in current conditions. This is due to the special features of the EU's political culture, its geopolitical and geographic imperatives, and, most important, its prejudiced attitude toward the post-Soviet states. This attitude is clearly shown by the EU's complicated relations with Russia and other CIS states. A key problem for Kazakhstan, Russia, and several other CIS countries is the systemic incompatibility between the states guided by principles of

sovereignty and the European Union's integration machinery with its "bureaucratic imperialism."

It is obvious that geopolitical factors and the geo-economic situation will have an impact on the relations between the European Union and Kazakhstan, as well as Central Asia as a whole, in the near future. Here we are referring to the U.S.'s new strategy in Central Asia, the unclear prospects of the development of the military-strategic situation in Afghanistan, the state of relations between Russia and the West, the world economic crisis, the growing significance of energy resources, and food safety. These factors could have both a dynamic and positive influence on relations between Europe and Central Asia, as well as a negative effect on their further development.

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In 2011, Kazakhstan completed its chairmanship in the SCO, which should be crowned by a summit this summer. In this respect, the importance of Kazakh-Chinese relations will abruptly grow. Much for Kazakhstan (and the other CA states) will depend on the dynamics of China's development and its ability to resolve the arising problems.

It must be recognized that neither the Central Asian countries nor Russia can do anything to prevent China's trade and economic penetration into the region. Moreover, at present China is a more important partner for Central Asia than Central Asia is for China. Today it is utterly clear that cooperation with the PRC is crucial for maintaining positive economic dynamics in the region's states. So China's presence should be made to work in favor of Kazakhstan's socioeconomic development.

This could be accomplished by expanding Kazakh-Chinese cooperation in the non-raw-material branches of the economy. A thorough expert analysis of all the contracts entered with China must be carried out and every effort made to ensure they are transparent. Unfortunately, Chinese labor migration is an objective reality that must be reckoned with. But we are capable of organizing strict registration of migrants and control over their activity.

The only thing that can realistically stop China's advance into the region is to step up the integration processes in Eurasia (the CIS). The establishment of the Customs Union among Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus is a significant step forward in limiting China's expansion in the post-Soviet expanse.

China has begun acting as a rival in the region, not only to the West, but also to Russia. China's presence in Central Asia, which is traditionally Russia's zone of influence, is becoming increasingly perceptible. It is very likely that in the near and mid term, China and Russia, either competing with each other or uniting to counteract the West, will become engaged in a fight for the geostrategic space and strategically important minerals of Central Asia and the Caspian region.

The prospects for further cooperation between Kazakhstan and the SCO should be viewed from the perspective of intensifying cooperation and achieving the following strategic objectives: stepping up regional integration processes as an

important factor in reducing the negative manifestations of globalization; assisting in ensuring regional security in CA; conducting a policy aimed at intensifying regional integration; attracting the monetary resources of other states of the Organization to implement economic projects in Kazakhstan; protecting the SCO countries from the impact of external economic crisis phenomena, as well as their consequences; further strengthening Kazakhstan's relations with the SCO states; and increasing its participation in regional structures. There is no doubt that an effective fight against terrorism and drug trafficking can be organized within the framework of the SCO.

In customs relations, the procedure for crossing the SCO's internal borders and registering transportation documents must be simplified as much as possible. Increasing access to foreign markets, including in the SCO countries, is extremely important for the country's further development. More rational use of the region's transportation and transit potential and formation of a transportation service market should become the main ways to solve this task. In order to raise the efficiency of freight and passenger traffic, a common tax system for transportation means and services should be drawn up.

The crisis processes going on in the financial markets of Europe and the U.S. are dictating the need to take countermeasures not only at the national, but also at the supranational level. In this respect, the SCO countries must be economically protected. For this, the Kazakh side suggests creating a Regional SCO Center for monitoring the state of the world financial markets and macroeconomic processes. Space research might be a qualitatively new and promising vector of Kazakhstan's activity in the SCO.

It is obvious that the only way to show how efficiently the Organization is operating and how important it is for the region is to strengthen economic cooperation in the SCO. The first step in this direction might be to create an SCO Investment Bank. There is also the question of how China might join the integration structures that already exist in the Central Asian region and within the CIS.

The Afghan problem is a key element in many areas for Central Asian security and Kazakhstan's national security. It is important to understand the West's strategy toward this country.

The U.S. has long been talking about the possibility of sending a Kazakh contingent to Afghanistan, particularly in the context of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the OSCE. It should be kept in mind that such a step could have certain political repercussions, both in domestic policy and in terms of its negative impact on Kazakhstan's international status. Moscow's extremely negative reaction to this development of events is already obvious. On the other hand, Kazakhstan, like the other Central Asian states, cannot stand impartially by and watch the situation in Afghanistan deteriorate should the destabilizing effect from the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops escalate.

Evidently the answer to this problem lies in intensifying Kazakhstan's and the CA countries' cooperation with the nations whose responsibility in Afghanistan will automatically rise after evacuation of the Western forces. These nations

include (in addition to Pakistan) China, India, Iran, and Russia. The Central Asian states only have the CSTO and SCO, which also need institutional fortification and strategic reformation, at their disposal as tools for strengthening their own security. Kazakhstan also has such a political tool as the OSCE Astana Declaration, which makes it possible to initiate measures in Eurasian security, including regarding the Afghan problem, which one way or another affects most of the OSCE members.

In 2011-12, the Republic of Kazakhstan is chairing (technically) the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC. The tempestuous events in several Arab countries at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011 will inevitably have an impact on the activity of the OIC and Kazakhstan's chairmanship.

Retaining stability in the direct geographical proximity and in the sphere of Kazakhstan's geopolitical interests — Central Asia, Afghanistan, XUAR, Iran, and the Caspian-Caucasian region—is the primary task for Kazakhstan's security. It is also important that, in addition to Kazakhstan, other CIS republics are also members of the OIC and the Russian Federation is an observer.

So Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC in 2011 is aimed at keeping the Organization of the Islamic Conference clear of conflict-prone political processes. At the same time, as chairman of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Astana can concentrate on stepping up activity in such vectors as economic cooperation, public health, cultural and humanitarian cooperation, and interconfessional and intercivilizational cooperation.

Chairmanship in the OIC will make it possible for Kazakhstan to actively assist in resolving the problems associated with Afghanistan, Iran's nuclear program, and the water shortage.

Kazakhstan must intensify cooperation in the oil and gas industry. In this respect, Qatar's experience in the gas sphere is interesting, since the production of liquefied natural gas will provide Kazakhstan with access to new markets and allow it to possess innovative technology that has still not been introduced into practice.

In trade and economic cooperation, it would be expedient to initiate talks on developing an open system of trade, investments, technological exchange, and economic cooperation for the OIC zone (possibly within the framework of a multilateral agreement). In the public health sphere, the session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC may (on Kazakhstan's initiative) intensify cooperation in children's health care and in combating polio and epidemic diseases (within the framework of OIC resolution No. 3/36).

In cultural-humanitarian, interconfessional, and intercivilizational cooperation, it would be expedient to adopt an OIC resolution (addressed to the U.N. and OSCE) on the Organization's support of the idea of creating an international institute (center) in Astana for developing a dialog among the world religions.

## **Instead of Conclusion: Looking in the future – Kazakhstan during XXI Century**

Since every part and chapter of this book has its own conclusion, we decided avoid a traditional summary for this edition and propose our vision of the perspectives of Kazakhstan (as well as Central Asia) in the current century.

Kazakhstan and its people have had a difficult history that was often too harsh on them. Geography and climate made people inhabiting this land fight for survival. In addition to the adverse natural conditions, there were also conflicts with numerous enemies.

Kazakhstan has experienced the collapse of several eras and civilizations. The most painful part was the parting with the traditional nomadic identity, although, many of its characteristics and symbols are still alive. The last collapse took place quite recently in 1991, and it still brings pain to the hearts of people who have been brought up on the ideas of equality, justice and brotherhood.

History, however, does not tolerate those who lag behind while time moves inexorably forward. Today, Kazakhstan is trying to solve several problems simultaneously, to modernise technically, ideologically and morally, to build a nation-state and become part of globalisation. These goals are closely linked and sometimes contradict each other.

Today as a transition zone in the humanitarian, cultural, and geographical spheres, Kazakhstan represents an extraordinary product of synthesis between different ways of organisation, including nomadic herding, settled agriculture and industrial development of mineral resources.

Finally, Kazakhstan connects various metaphysical and religious beliefs (shamanism, Islam, and Christianity) with some political and social structures, which include or exclude tradition and modernity. As a result, the internal structure of Kazakhstan fully reflects its original state, which originated from a synthesis of the European model transplanted from Russia, and the Turkic-Muslim foundation which was preserved in the traditional sphere. All this has shaped the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional nature of Kazakh society.

Modern Kazakhstan is a country which is successfully ridding itself of negative elements of the Soviet legacy and building an open and democratic society which is secular and liberal in spirit. We are already coming out of the transit phase, and currently economic reforms are ahead of political ones. Having faced many challenges and difficulties, Kazakhstan and its political elite have learned to solve them. This should be considered the greatest achievement of the post-Soviet era. The next inevitable challenge facing the new Kazakh political class is the consolidation of society.

The only way to strengthen the integrity of Kazakhstan and its political stability was the combination model of a unitary state with strong presidential power. The history of the Kazakh steppe is full of examples when an external threat to the nation pushed people together and led to national and state unity. A similar situation is present today. The political elite is united by common interests

of preserving national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Kazakh politicians are very pragmatic and avoid any ideological confrontation.

However, despite the positive mental attitude of the young Kazakh nation and its achievements in building its new statehood, there are many sources of concern. Kazakhstan, located in the heart of Eurasia, is still surrounded by complicated neighbours, and some of them are giants, and being a medium size country, Kazakhstan is forced to respond to all movements, even the slightest ones, of its neighbours.

What is next? We can assume that Kazakhstan will continue its old and proven policy: internally, aimed at maintaining stability at all costs and constant steady socio-economic development, and externally, directed at keeping a balanced course and continuing a multi-vector approach in the new geopolitical and geo-economic conditions.

In the next 10-15 years there will be no particular change. It is unlikely that a multi-party parliamentary system will develop in the country. The factors against that are historical traditions, mentality of the population and the elite, as well as the constant threat of political destabilisation. Hence, strong personalised power will remain at the foundation of the political system in the future, incorporating the executive and legislative foundation and embodying the principle of the state. Nevertheless, this does not exclude completely open and competitive presidential elections (perhaps, on a party basis).

The former close ties between Russia and Kazakhstan will gradually weaken, although both countries will remain close partners. Over time, Kazakhstan will move away from the Russian information space and from its cultural and linguistic dominance. Russia will simply turn into a friendly neighbouring country, relations with which will be supported by good memories. Close contacts will be maintained on the humanitarian level as well as in the economic sphere.

It will prove possible to create a sufficiently strong economic union on the basis of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and the Customs Union, the core of which will be Russia and Kazakhstan, although, the move to political union will not succeed. A new generation of politicians will come to power in Moscow and Astana. For them the Soviet era and Soviet unity will remain only a distant memory.

In Central Asia, Kazakhstan will be able to establish some sort of a Central Asian Union, but it will be extremely fragile, because our neighbours will constantly face economic, technological, demographic, and environmental challenges. For this reason, Astana will choose a strategy of selective cooperation, meaning to collaborate actively and integrate only in those areas that are of interest to Kazakhstan, such as energy, water management, transport, etc.

Fears that the economic power of China may absorb Kazakhstan and the region will not materialise. By 2020 the eastern neighbour's progressive economic development will start to slip, economic growth will slow down, and social and political issues may arise. As in previous eras, China is likely to become protectionist and reduce its international cooperation and external relations.



Mankind's growing hunger for energy and the lack of natural resources in the second quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will lead to an increasing regionalisation of the world, and, in fact, to the end of the process of globalisation. On the other hand, regular technological advances will allow mankind to avoid serious crises and conflicts. In this situation, Kazakhstan will find itself in a relatively favourable position, having rich natural resources, a large territory, complete ecosystems and a relatively small population. The country will be able to provide its population with a high standard of living, fully comparable with the average European level.

Kazakhstan will receive the key technologies from the West, mainly from the European Union (EU), with which Astana will develop a specific relationship. Together with Russia, Kazakhstan will receive the status of strategic partner of the EU, implying a privileged partnership. The European Union and the Russian-Kazakh tandem will closely cooperate in such areas as energy (including nuclear), transport and communications, development of agricultural and environmental technologies, and in a number of areas in the field of information and high technology.

The Americans will gradually withdraw from Eurasia, together with the end of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. After the establishment of a strategic consensus between the USA, EU, and NATO, on one hand, and Russia and CIS countries (possibly with the participation of China, the SCO, and India), on the other, America's geopolitical influence in Eurasia will be reduced to a minimum level. However, the USA will maintain a close relationship with several countries including Kazakhstan.

The post-Soviet space will never return to its original single state. At the same time, it will not break into fragments drawn by different geopolitical poles. External pressure (as in the case of the underdeveloped south), CIS neighbours' interest in natural resources, mutual dependence in transport and communication, social and cultural ties, and many more aspects will not allow it to collapse completely, but the political distancing will continue.

By 2050 Kazakhstan will retain its Eurasian identity, although the image of the country will have changed noticeably. The uneven development in different regions will remain a key problem. Due to a favourable economic situation some cities and regions will be positively transformed, while others may fall into decline. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan will be able to maintain its main strengths: educated population, engineering and construction technologies, efficient extractive industries, and highly developed ecological agriculture.

Politics will be dominated by people born in the relatively benign first decade of this century, trends in business and civil society will be defined by people born from 2010 to 2030. They will gratefully remember the generation which created an independent Kazakhstan, which was able to maintain political and social stability and ethnic tolerance. In turn it was these factors that ensured steady economic development.

Great importance will be attached to the formation of new social ethics and economic thinking, which implies prudent use of resources, respect for nature and people. The fact that Kazakhstan has managed to preserve the secular nature of

state and society and ensure a high level of health and education will play a crucial role in the formation of the 2050 generation.

With such a foundation formed in previous decades, this generation will lead Kazakhstan in to the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which our country will face new threats and challenges as well as new opportunities and possibilities.

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