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Abstract

The topic of regional organisations in Central Asia is one of the most hotly debated in the policy and scholarly community, and the conclusions are often greatly contrasting. This paper describes the main organisations and programmes at work in the region, their membership, status and objectives. It discusses the criteria used to judge their efficiency and analyses several cases of actual 'success' and 'failure'. It also focuses on the economic and geopolitical patterns, both internal and external to the region, that impede the activities of such organisations in Central Asia.

Keywords

Central Asia, Russia, China, regional organisations, regionalism, multilateralism
JEL Codes: F53

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Contents

Main Acronyms

ACD	Asia Cooperation Dialogue
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BOMCA	Border Management in Central Asia
CA	Central Asian
CADAP	Central Asia Drug Action Programme
CANWFZ	Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone
CAREC	Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation
CES	Common Economic Space
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
CU	Customs Union
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organisation
EuRAsEC	Eurasia Economic Community
EU	European Union
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IFAS	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INOGATE	Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe
NDN	Northern Distribution Network
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PfP	NATO Partnership for Peace
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SPECA	Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Introduction[1]

The topic of regional organisations in Central Asia is one of the most hotly debated in the policy and scholarly community, and the conclusions are greatly contrasting; some underscore the total failure of Central Asia's 'regionalisation', others highlight the success of new patterns of integration in the region.[2] However, these works are often confused in their terminological usage: regional cooperation or regional integration, regional organisations or regionalism, multilateralism or a push towards a multipolar world?

Regional organisations are established to foster mechanisms of cooperation among states willing to develop their common belonging to a geographical space, a geopolitical entity, or an economic bloc. As such they deal with very different realities depending upon whether the unifying factor is based on a criterion that is geographical (African Union), cultural (Islamic Cooperation Organisation), geopolitical (North Alliance Treaty Organisation) or economic (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). The development of regional organisations has been one of the main trends of international affairs since the end of the Second World War and underwent a revival with the post-Cold War 'new order', the European Union being emblematic of such. Mechanisms of globalisation have also revitalised economically based regional organisations, or trade blocs (South Asia Free Trade Area), as well as institutions aimed at promoting a so-called multipolar order (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation).

Regional organisations are greatly diversified in their objectives: some of them strive to be platforms for dialogue between countries with a long tradition of animosity; others have clearly stipulated objectives of economic and political integration. The success of regional organisations cannot thus be measured solely by the success of integration processes, but also, in a more limited way, by that of dialogue building. Regional organisations do not have any systematic links with global trends towards regionalism, which promotes concerted actions within a region and shapes a common regional identity on the international scene. The development of regional organisations is still less of a synonym for multipolarity, defined as promoting a world with multiple superpowers and their regional allies, and sometimes regarded as a way to counter alleged American hegemony.

Among the Central Asian (CA) states, Turkmenistan has since independence been a fervent partisan in support of unilateralism or bilateralism, and has limited as much as possible attempts at both regionalism and multilateralism. For its part, Uzbekistan has conducted more contrasting policies, endorsing regionalism when it thinks it is in a leadership posi-

1 We thank the three anonymous reviewers for their comments. We remain solely responsible for the contents.

2 Johannes Linn, 'Central Asian Regional Integration and Cooperation: Reality or Mirage?' EDB Eurasian Integration Yearbook 2012, 96–117; Werner Hermann and Johannes Linn, eds., Central Asia and the Caucasus: At the Crossroads of Eurasia in the 21st Century (New Delhi: Sage, 2011); Johannes Linn, David Tiomkin, 'The New Impetus towards Economic Integration between Europe and Asia', Asia Europe Journal. Vol. 4, no. 1 (2006): 31–41; Farkhod Tolipov, 'Geopolitical Stipulation of Central Asian Integration,' Strategic Analysis, vol. 34, no. 1 (2010): 104–113; Farrukh Irnazarov, Zafar Salmanov, Regional Integration in Central Asia: Measuring the Perceptions of Economic Actors in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 2012; Ikboljon Qoraboyev, 'From Central Asian Regional Integration to Eurasian Integration Space? The Changing Dynamics of Post-Soviet Regionalism', EDB Eurasian Integration Yearbook 2010, Almaty, 206–232.

tion and unilateralism when it views its sovereign rights as not being respected. Tashkent has shown little interest for multilateralism, instead giving priority to pursuing bilateral relations. Kazakhstan has aimed at being a staunch defender of regionalism above all, and of multilateralism to a lesser extent. Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, played the card of multilateralism very early on, as symbolised by its accession to membership of the World Trade Organisation in 1998. Tajikistan pursues and combines various strategies in accordance with the domain and the actors involved.

The above diversified international positionings of each CA state impact the role and the development of regional organisations in the region. Some are conceived as the embodiment of a bilateral relationship with a powerful external actor (mainly Russia or China), others as institutionalising a strong regional or cultural identity that each state can lay claim to or reject (Eurasian identity, Islamic identity); and others still as aiding integration into the world economy (CAREC), or merely as sites of dialogue (CICA). Calls for a multipolar world are only repeated by the CA states when they borrow on their own account discourses issuing from Russia or China, or to express their displeasure at Western critiques concerning the nature of their political regimes.

The desire of the international community to foster regional integration and to project a joint identity onto the five countries explain the interest accorded to the role of regional organisations, based on the idea that:

- The five states are seen to share the same political and serve to economic trends resulting from the collapse of the Soviet system;
- Along with Northeast Asia, Central Asia has the lowest number of regional organisations out of any region in the world, with the countries of the region comparatively the least integrated in economic and strategic terms;
- A common strategic identity is projected onto the region – that of being a 'crossroads', a 'buffer zone' or a 'balance' between the main world and regional powers;
- The CA states are all small landlocked economies facing significant problems of development that would be better dealt with via regional integration;
- Some of their problems are transboundary in nature (water, energy, transport, and potential Islamic insurgency), and therefore necessitate regional cooperation.

These five presuppositions are actually of a different nature and confound regionalism, regional integration and coordination on some specific issues. This confusion is maintained by all the major actors involved in the region. Several neighbouring external actors, namely Russia, China and Iran, are interested in developing regional institutions that reinforce their legitimacy as regional powers and project their own foreign policy culture abroad. Their narrative of regionalism in fact sometimes corresponds more to a hidden bilateralism and a strategy for an anti-American multipolarity. As for international organisations and non-contiguous external powers, such as the United States, the European Union or Japan, they tend to consider regional integration to be a kind of first step towards more multilateralism. CA states, for their part, deny the existence of any regional identity, which they confound

with a regionalism that is endowed with a supranational driver, and view nation-building and region-building as largely contradictory pursuits.[3]

In this context, regional organisations have become viewed as objects of greed and even repulsion, and are often instrumentalised as the pawns of geopolitical games or of domestic strategies remote from their original goals. Section 2 below describes the main organisations and programmes at work in the region, their membership, status and objectives. Section 3 discusses the criteria used to judge success and failure of regional organisations and analyses several cases of actual 'success' and 'failure'. Section 4 focuses on the economic and geopolitical patterns impeding the activities of such organisations in the region.

2. Regional Organisations and Programmes in Central Asia[4]

Regional initiatives in Central Asia and Afghanistan currently vary in nature. As such, organisations and programmes diverge in their focus, legal form, status, scope of action and membership, operational modalities and the degree to which they are legally binding. Some have a founding charter, membership procedures, regular summits as well as implementation mechanisms. Others exhibit less formal mechanisms. In some, CA states play a leading role, while in others they are recipients of projects drawn up by external actors. Regional organisations and programmes can be classified according to very different criteria. This section describes the work of key organisations, first those specific to the CA region, second post-Soviet, Russia-led initiatives, before then examining organisations and programmes that are variously China-led, pan-European, Islamic, West Asian or Asian, or involving the United Nations and international financial institutions.

2.1. Central Asian Organisations and Treaties

First, it should be noted that there are very few organizations and treaties that link, one way or another, exclusively the five CA states, and none of them include Afghanistan.

A first Central Asian Economic Cooperation (CAEC) was created in 1994, with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan signing the Treaty on the Formation of an Integrated Economic Space (IES), which was joined in 1998 by post-civil war Tajikistan. CAEC's achievements were largely lower than anticipated as ties between former Soviet republics became more distant with each country unwilling to develop joint strategies. In 2002, with a change in the regional geopolitical situation, the four members tried to redynamise the organisation by transforming it into the **Central Asian Cooperation Organisation** (CACO), with the goal of forming an integrative economic space and coordinating foreign policy, especially in relation to Afghanistan. Here also, success has not been forthcoming.[5] In 2005, CACO merged

3 Roy Allison, 'Virtual regionalism, regional structures and regime security in Central Asia', Central Asian Survey, vol. 27, no. 2 (2008): 185–202.

4 For the purposes of this paper, Central Asia is regarded as including Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Afghanistan is considered separately but mentioned when it is part of the same integration processes.

5 Natalia Ushakova, 'Central Asian Cooperation: Toward Transformation', Central Asia and the Caucasus, no. 6 (2003): 120–128.

into EurAsEC and was *de facto* dissolved with Russia's accession. In 2007, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev made a proposal for a new Central Asian Union, but it was rejected by Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, leaving only the presidents of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to sign an agreement establishing an International Supreme Council between their two states.

The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) was created in 1993 by the heads of state of the five CA countries, to attract funds for Aral Sea-related projects and to foster the rational use, protection and control of transboundary waters.[6] It was the first post-Soviet, intra-Central Asia regional institution. It is divided into three main bodies: the Executive Committee which groups each member state filial; the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), which instituted two River Basin Organisations (BVOs) for the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, and whose rules of operation did not receive approval until 2008; and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD), created in 1994, which supported the UN Economic Commission for Europe's initiative on sustainable development in Central Asia.

Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (CANWFZ), signed in 2006 by the heads of state of all five CA countries, and which came into force in 2009, requires that member states commit to not producing, acquiring, testing, stocking or possessing nuclear arms. CANWFZ also includes an environmental component: each country has to resolve the ecological consequences of nuclear infrastructure installed on its territory under the Soviet regime. CANWFZ is the first denuclearised zone in the northern hemisphere, bordering the atomic powers of Russia and China as well as Iran, which is on the verge of acquiring nuclear capacity. CANWFZ is therefore the only such *stricto sensu* Central Asian treaty, but its success must be qualified. Public opinion in Central Asia is largely anti-nuclear, which can be traced to the legacy of the perestroika years. With the exception of Kazakhstan, no CA country is in favor of, or returning to, civil nuclear energy. Nuclear energy is seen as a negative inheritance of the Soviet Union in ecological terms, and the risk of proliferation in a complex geopolitical environment is alarming. In addition, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have received significant subsidies from the international community to dismantle infrastructure linked to the Soviet military complex; the other three countries never possessed such infrastructure. The symbolic signing of CANWFZ therefore came at no political cost and as a recognition of a *de facto* reality.

2.2. Post-Soviet organisations

Organisations created to manage the so-called civilised divorce between former Soviet republics are the most numerous. Initiated by Russia, in other instances Kazakhstan, post-Soviet regional integration has been a zigzagging process, as some CA states sought to distance themselves from the Soviet framework following independence in 1991 while others promoted their common legacy. Russia's strategy to develop more integrative organisations, but with fewer members, has been altering regional dynamics of integration. Afghanistan is absent from this set of organisations as it does not share the same Soviet legacy.

6 http://www.ec-ifas.org/

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)[7]

The CIS was created by the Minsk Agreement (8 December, 1991) and that of Alma-Ata (21 December, 1991), and aims to maintain economic and security integration between the majority of the former Soviet republics.[8] The five CA states joined it following the Alma-Ata agreement. Turkmenistan never ratified the CIS charter but considered itself a member until 2005, after which, in order to be consistent with its UN-recognised status of 'perpetual neutrality', it received associate observer status.

The CIS is made up of the following bodies: *The Council of Heads of State (CHS)* oversees the organisation of CIS structures. It is led by a one-year rotating presidency and deals with any questions of importance. Decisions are made on a consensus basis, and are accelerated by a process in which states lacking interest in an issue leave the decision to those members with more of a vested interest. *The Council of Heads of Government (CHG)* deals with social and economic matters and functions according to similar principles as the CHS. The CHS and CHG are the only CIS bodies authorised to adopt binding decisions for members who ratify the decisions. Other CIS institutions work in an advisory capacity, although, according to a 1994 CHG decision, they have the power to make final decisions within their area of remit.

The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) is the CIS's main executive body. It implements decisions made by the CHS and CHG, facilitates information exchange between members and coordinates CIS decisions in relation to third parties and international institutions. *The Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)* has similar duties at a lower level, involving technical duties, and coordinates military cooperation between the countries. *The Council of Ministries of Defence* supervises inter-governmental structures such as the CIS Committee of Chiefs of Staff, the Military-Technical Committee, the Engineering Education Coordination Committee, the Military Communication Coordination Committee and the Meteorology Communication Committee.

Other institutions, represented by member state deputy prime ministers, work in domains in which post-Soviet cooperation is judged crucial and members are willing to collaborate. *The Council of Border Guard Commanders* is devoted to external border protection. *The Economic Council* manages problems of regional economic integration, such as the common market, customs and agricultural markets. There are over 70 *Industrial Councils*, of varying efficiency, which adopt recommendations on the basis of a two-thirds' majority or a simple majority, and whose decisions do not apply to states who reject them. *The Executive Committee* created in 1999 by merging several independent agencies with the *Intergovernmental Economic Committee* provides technical assistance and legal consultancy services and analyses the implementation of joint decisions. Finally, the *Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (IPA)* contributes to the dissemination of CIS best practices and functions on a consensus basis.

The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)[9]

The CSTO was originally founded in 1992 as part of the CIS Security Treaty or Tashkent Agreement, involving six states (Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan).

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7 http://www.cisstat.com/eng/cis.htm

8 The three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and Georgia are not members.

9 www.odkb-csto.org/

Azerbaijan and Georgia joined it reluctantly in 1994 (they withdrew in 1999, with Uzbekistan), while Ukraine, Moldova and Turkmenistan refused to join it because of tensions with Moscow. The Treaty was transformed into an Organisation and reformed in 2002 under a charter signed by the five founding states. Uzbekistan became a member in 2006 (ratified by its Parliament in 2008) but suspended its membership in June 2012. The CSTO aims to guarantee the collective security and territorial integrity of its member states, to provide military aid in the case of aggression towards one of its members, and to fight against terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and cross-border criminality. Its mandate does not include military involvement in instances of internal instability, a legal argument that has been used by Moscow to justify its refusal to intervene in the Osh riots in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010.[10] The presidency of the organisation is rotated annually.

The CSTO has a *Permanent Council of Collective Security*, comprised of heads of state and represented by a general secretary, that is responsible for making decisions and assuring coordination among member states. Three bodies are in charge of implementing decisions in their areas of competency: *the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs*, the *Council of Ministers of Defence and Techno-Military Cooperation* and the *Committee of Secretaries of Councils of Security* for questions of national security. CSTO *United Staff* is the permanent body of the organisation and of the Council of Ministers of Defence. The CSTO also makes provision for the sale of military material to member countries at Russian domestic market prices, which is of great interest to CA states.

CSTO joint military exercises are carried out annually in one of the member states. They simulate terrorist attacks (*Rubezh*) or anti-narcotics operations (*Kanal*), and permit interaction between border guards and other police and military units. New operations include *Arsenal* to fight against arms trafficking, *Nelegal* against illegal immigration, and *Proxi* against cybercriminality. In 2009, within the CSTO framework, the 20,000-strong *Collective Rapid Deployment Force (CRDF) for Central Asia*, made up of Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian and Tajik units, was created, constituting the only collective armed forces capable of intervening in real time in the region. The CRDF focuses primarily on border securitisation, in the case of violations by terrorist groups.[11] Each participating state establishes its own permanent CRDF battalion stationed on its home territory, but is ready to deploy for joint operations in any one of the member states.

The Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc)[12]

EurAsEc was created in 2000 at the initiative of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and inspired by the model of the European Union (EU).[13] EurAsEc aims to promote the creation of a joint economic space between member states. It includes five founding states, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan joined in 2006 and then suspended its participation in November 2008. Three states have observer status: Moldova and Ukraine

10 Miriam Elder, 'Kyrgyzstan tests Russia's regional commitments', Global Post, 15 June 2010, http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/russia/100614/kyrgyzstan-ethnic-violence.

11 Roger McDermott, 'CSTO Exercises Rapid Reaction Forces in Armenia', Eurasia Daily Monitor, vol. 9, no. 169 (18 September 2012).

12 www.evrazes.com/

13 Shalva Dzidziguri, 'The Race for Eastern Europe: Russia vs. the EU', Atlantic Community.org, http://www.atlantic-community.org/index/articles/view/The_Race_for_Eastern_Europe%3A_Russia_vs._the_EU/print.

since 2002, and Armenia since 2003. EurAsEc is the legatee of the first Customs Union signed between Russia and Belarus in 1995, to which Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan adhered later, and of the second Customs Union and Common Space agreements signed in 1999, both of which are dead letters.

Key objectives of EurAsEc include the following: attaining a free trade regime; creating a unified customs tariff and a unified system of non-tariff regulation measures; forming a common financial market; coordinating the principles and conditions for transition to a common currency; opening a common market for transportation services and a unified transport system; and shaping a common energy market. EurAsEc is also supposed to ensure free movement for its citizens, and to coordinate social policy with the aim of providing a common labor market, a common educational space and coordinated approaches to healthcare and labour migration.

The *Interstate Council* is EurAsEc's main body, comprised of heads of state and government. It meets at least annually at the level of heads of state, and twice at the level of heads of government. Council decisions are consensual and binding for member states. The presidency of the Interstate Council is rotated annually with countries serving according to Russian alphabetical order. The Council issues assignments for the *Integration Committee*, and submits questions and recommendations to the *Interparliamentary Assembly* and the *Court of Justice of the Community*. The EurAsEc *Secretariat*, appointed by the Council, has two headquarters, one in Almaty, the other in Moscow.

The Integration Committee forms the EurAsEc permanent body, made up of the deputy heads of governments who meet at least four times a year. Decisions are reached with a two-thirds majority; Russia has 40 votes, Belarus and Kazakhstan each have 15, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan each have 7.5. The Committee analyses trends in integration processes within the Community, submits draft resolutions to the Interstate Council, elaborates and implements interstate investment projects, economic, social and other programmes and plans, maintains contact with executive bodies of other international organisations and performs depository functions pertaining to treaties signed within the EurAsEC framework and resolutions issued by the Interstate Council.

Between the Integration Committee's meetings, the *EurAsEc Commission of Permanent Representatives*, appointed by heads of state, looks after Community management. The *Integration Committee Secretariat* implements the work schedule, providing information and technical support to the Interstate Council and Integration Committee. The Secretariat is headed by the Secretary General, who is appointed by the EurAsEC Interstate Council and acts as the supreme administrative functionary of the Community. EurAsEC includes several subsidiary bodies, including the *Council on Border Issues*, the *Financial and Economic Policy Council*, the *Council of Ministers of Justice* and the *Council of Heads of Central (National) Banks*. There are 20 other commissions in various domains of cooperation, ranging from energy to education, and from health to insurance, all of which display variable degrees of efficiency.

The *Interparliamentary EurAsEc Assembly,* which sits in Saint Petersburg, is made up of 42 deputies from Russia, 16 each from Belarus and Kazakhstan, and 8 each from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It provides the legal groundwork for the functioning of the Community and works

towards harmonizing the national legislation of member states. Lastly, the EurAsEc *Court of Justice* is charged with settling economic disputes between parties, as well as disputes resulting from the implementation of resolutions by EurAsEC bodies.

Created by the Integration Committee, the Association of Financial and Industrial Groups of Russia, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs and the Trade and Industry Chamber of the Russian Federation, the *Eurasian Business Council* assists with the progressive development of mutually advantageous trade and economic collaboration and cooperation; establishes direct ties between EurAsEC member state enterprises and companies; and brings together groups of businessmen and experts to discuss customs tariffs and other unified measures for the regulation of commodity trade with third countries.

In June 2009, EurAsEC established an Anti-Crisis Fund to the tune of US$8.513 billion. Russia and Kazakhstan contributed $7.5 and 1 billion respectively, Belarus $10 million, while Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia provided one million dollars each.[14] The Fund assists member countries in overcoming consequences of the global financial crisis, allocates stabilization credits to participating countries with low income levels and ensures their long-term economic and financial stability. It has two main instruments: financial credits granted to finance budget deficits as well as to support balance of payments or national currencies, and investment loans.[15]

The Customs Union (CU) and the Common Economic Space (CES)

Under Russia's leadership, some EurAsEc members pushed for a new phase of integration. The first phase of the project, the Customs Union (CU), involving three states – Belarus, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan – began in July 2010. These states have adopted unified rules and procedures regulating mutual trade and established a single customs tariff (SCT) and unified customs area. They also agreed to establish unified non-tariff protection measures, anti-dumping legislation and compensatory tariffs in their trade with other countries. In July 2011, they abolished customs controls at their common borders.

The supreme body of the Custom Unions continues to be the EurAsEc Interstate Council, but a unified regulatory standing body, the *Customs Union Commission (CUC)*, was established, whose resolutions are obligatory. The CUC comprises a representative from each member state who is either a deputy head of government or a government member vested with the necessary authority. Votes are distributed between the parties as follows: Belarus, 21.5 percent; Kazakhstan, 21.5 percent and the Russian Federation, 57 percent.[16] The *Customs Union Commission Secretariat*, based in Moscow, is the working body of the CUC.

The second phase of the integration project began in January 2012 with the creation of the Common Economic Space (CES). Its mission is to develop an effectively functioning common market in goods, services, capital and manpower; to conduct coordinated tax, monetary and credit, currency and finance, trade, customs and tariff policies; to develop unified transport, energy and information systems; and to create a unified system of measures for state support

14 Economic Community Integration Committee Secretariat, Eurasec Today (Moscow, 2011), 40.
15 http://www.eabr.org/e/acf/
16 Eurasian Economic Community Integration Committee Secretariat, Eurasec Today (Moscow, 2011), 33.

in developing priority branches of the economy and cooperation in production, science and technology. Since 2009, Russia has adopted the ruble in its trading with Kazakhstan and Belarus, and debates about the possible creation of a monetary union have been recently revived.

For the first time in post-Soviet history, an integration project is endowed with a supranational executive body, the *Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC)*, which replaced the CUC in July 2012, and comprises all the deputy prime ministers and a board of experts. Its functions have been substantially expanded, since it is also tasked with implementing a coordinated macro-economic policy between member states, setting up a trade regime with other countries and developing a unified policy to support industrial and agricultural production. EEC decisions are obligatory as far as implementation is concerned, but should the body fail to reach agreement on any given issue, the final decision is taken by the *Higher Eurasian Economic Council*, which operates on a consensus basis.

The Eurasian Development Bank (EDB)[17]
The EDB was created in 2006 as a joint initiative by Russia and Kazakhstan, and is a sign of their commitment to deeper economic and investment integration in Eurasia. The EDB includes other members such as Armenia, Belarus, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and its charter capital exceeds US$1.5 billion, comprising contributions by its member states (Russia provides two-thirds of the amount). It finances investment projects aimed at promoting integration, provides technical assistance through the Technical Assistance Fund, mainly in transport, power, and telecommunications, and conducts research on economic integration through the Centre for Integration Studies.

2.3. China-led regional organisation

As a newcomer that has dramatically changed the geopolitical and economic given in Central Asia, and a measuring stick for all other external actors, China has rapidly become a key actor on the regional scene, and even if Beijing traditionally promotes bilateral relations, it is now experimenting with new regional platforms. The CA region is today understood as a driver of China's ensuring its 'peaceful rise' (*heping jueqi*) in order to allay international concerns.[18] Afghanistan remains a second-tier actor in the main China-led regional organization, more an object of concern than a full fledged actor, but its status could potentially be upgraded to that of full membership.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)[19]
Created in 2001, the SCO was the successor to the Shanghai Group established in 1996 to settle border disputes inherited from Soviet times between China and four post-Soviet states – Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The status change from the Shanghai Group to the SCO, and the new shift in focus from border delimitation to regional security, was typified by Uzbekistan's membership in 2001. The SCO's goals are to strengthen mutual confidence and good relations among members; to make joint efforts to maintain and ensure

17 http://www.eabr.org/e/
18 Avery Goldstein, Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).
19 www.sectsco.org

peace, security and stability in the region; and to promote effective cooperation in politics, trade and economy, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transportation, tourism and environmental protection. The SCO granted observer status to Mongolia in 2004; to Iran, India, and Pakistan in 2005; and to Afghanistan in 2012. Belarus, Sri Lanka and Turkey are classified as Dialogue Partners. Turkmenistan participates in some meetings, but has no specific status.

The supreme body of the SCO is the *Head of State Council (HSC)*, which convenes annually to adopt decisions and give instructions on organizational issues. The *Head of Government Council (HGC)* meets annually to discuss the SCO's strategy, adopt its annual budget and address key issues on economic and security cooperation. Several annual meetings are organised at the level of Speakers of Parliament; Secretaries of Security Councils; Foreign Ministers; Ministers of Defence, Emergency Relief, Economy, Transportation, Culture, Education and Healthcare; Heads of Law Enforcement Agencies, Supreme Courts and Courts of Arbitration; and Prosecutors General. The *Council of National Coordinators of SCO Member States (CNC)* is in charge of coordinating interactions within the SCO framework. The organisation has two permanent bodies – the *Secretariat*, based in Beijing, and the *Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure*, located in Tashkent.

2.4. European and Transatlantic organisations and programmes

As former Soviet republics, the CA states are actively involved in several pan-European regional organisations and transatlantic institutions. Afghanistan is absent from all of them, however, as it is not considered as belonging to the extended European continent.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)[20]
With 56 member states from Europe, Central Asia and North America, OSCE is the world's largest regional security organisation. It offers a forum for political negotiations and decision-making in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Its comprehensive purview covers the politico-military, economic, environmental and human dimensions of security. OSCE addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratisation, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities. Decisions are made by consensus on a politically but not legally binding basis. The five CA states joined OSCE in 1992.

NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) Programme[21]
In 1992, the five CA states joined NATO's Council of North Atlantic Cooperation, which was renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997. In 1994, the Council created a specific structure – the Partnership for Peace (PfP) – to promote dialogue between NATO nations and former Soviet republics. The PfP enables partner countries to build individual relationships with NATO, choosing priorities for cooperation in accordance with their own ambitions and abilities. PfP activities touch on virtually every field of NATO activity, including defence reform, defence policy and planning, civil-military relations, education and train-

20 www.osce.org
21 www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50349.htm

ing, military-to-military cooperation and exercises, civil emergency planning and disaster-response, and cooperation on scientific and environmental issues. Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have been members since 1994, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since 1995, and Tajikistan since 2002. Out of the CA states, Kazakhstan is the only country that has deepened its cooperation with NATO by developing its Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAP), designed to sharpen various cooperation mechanisms with NATO nations and help Kazakhstan's armed forces attain Western standards. The Kazakh peacekeeping force, the Kazbat battalion, elevated to a brigade, Kazbrig, sent to Iraq from 2003 to 2008 under the UN mandate, embodies Astana's hope for interoperability status with NATO.[22] At the 2010 Lisbon Summit, Allied leaders decided to take steps to streamline NATO's partnership tools and opened all the cooperative activities and exercises offered to PfP partners to other partners from the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.[23]

The Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA)[24]

Created in 1993, TRACECA is an international transport programme financed by EU member states that involves the European Union and 13 states from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Originally TRACECA involved the five CA countries and the three Caucasus countries, but it has since been joined by Moldova, Ukraine, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria. The programme's goal is to support the political and economic independence of these states by facilitating their access to world markets, in particular European markets. It aims to open up Central Asia and the Caucasus by creating a vast transport and communication corridor along an east-west axis, from China's borders to the Black Sea region, ensuring the region's access to the world market of road, rail transport and commercial navigation, as well as harmonizing transport policy and legal structures in the domain of transport. TRACECA is now increasingly connected with pan-European road projects planned in the framework of the EU Neighbourhood Policy. TRACECA's permanent secretariat, created in 2000, is located in Baku, and it also has a regional office in Odessa. TRACECA includes five working groups: maritime transport, aviation, road and rail, transport security and transport infrastructure.

Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe (INOGATE)[25]

The INOGATE Programme is an international energy co-operation programme between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Its main objectives are converging energy markets based on the principles of the EU internal energy market; enhancing energy security by addressing the issues of energy exports/imports, supply diversification, energy transit and energy demand; supporting sustainable energy development; and attracting investment in energy projects of common and regional interest. INOGATE is represented on behalf of the EU by the Directorate-General Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid (DEVCO), the Directorate-General for Energy and the EU External Action Service. The INOGATE coordinating mechanism is the Technical Secretariat, located in Kiev.

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22 Jos Boonstra, 'NATO's Role in Democratic Reform', FRIDE Working Paper, May 2007; and Roger McDermott, Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine: Reassessing Regional and International Security (Fort Leavenworth: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2012).

23 The Partnership for Peace programme, NATO, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50349.htm

24 www.traceca-org.org/en/home/

25 www.inogate.org/

Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA)[26] and Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP)[27]

The EU finances two programmes run by the regional United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices: BOMCA and CADAP.

BOMCA's purpose is to improve the capacity of border services, customs and immigration services, and control centres and mobile units, in order to enable them to fight more effectively against cross-border criminality and trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans. BOMCA enables CA states to acquire modern equipment for border posts, build new infrastructure and access training programmes for specialised officers.[28] BOMCA now focuses on securing borders, thus partly leaving aside its original mission to promote the legal movement of persons and goods.

CADAP attempts to reproduce the model of the EU Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), which campaigns against drug trafficking by concentrating on border securitisation, information and intelligence sharing, and prevention. CADAP has supplied airports and CA border posts with resources and services such as detection equipment, dog brigades, legal assistance and training designed for anti-drug agencies. CADAP is based in Bishkek and was endowed with a 2001–2010 budget for Central Asia of more than US$20 million. Since 2010 CADAP has been implemented by a consortium of EU member states led by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

2.5. Islamic organisations

Islam is the majority religion in the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, CA countries sought to reinforce their membership in the *Ummah* or Islamic world community, and joined its key institution, membership of which is based on full or partial identification with Islam. Afghanistan is also part of this set of Islamic regional institutions.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)[29]

Created in 1969, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, renamed the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in 2011, is tasked with protecting the vital interests of Muslims, settling conflicts and disputes involving member states, developing economic and commercial cooperation, and working towards economic integration for the establishment of a Common Islamic Market. The OIC has 57 members, including the five countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan, and has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other intergovernmental organisations.

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26 http://www.bomca.eu/

27 http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/border-management-fight-against-drugs/cadap_en.htm

28 George Gavrilis, Beyond Border Management Programme for Central Asia (BOMCA), Eucam Policy Brief, no. 11 (December 2009); and Border Management Programme in Central Asia, Integrated Border Management Book for Central Asia (2010).

29 www.oic-oci.org/

The supreme authority of the OIC, the *Islamic Summit*, is made up of heads of state and government. It convenes every three years to decide key political issues, to define future goals and to tackle issues of concern to the Islamic *Ummah*. The *Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs* meets annually to work out implementation procedures for OIC general policy and monitor the implementation of adopted decisions and resolutions. The *General Secretariat*, the OIC's executive body, implements the decisions of these bodies. Numerous thematic committees exist at the heads of state or ministerial level: the *Al-Quds Committee*, the *Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC)*, the *Standing Committee for Economic and Trade Cooperation (COMCEC)* and the *Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH)*.

Member states automatically belong to certain subsidiary bodies. The countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan are therefore also members of the Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC); the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA); the Islamic University of Technology (IUT); the Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT); the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA); and the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) and its *waqf*. The Organisation also includes several institutions whose membership is optional: the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), the Islamic Broadcasting Union (IBU), the International Islamic News Agency (IINA) and the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent (ICIC).

2.6. West Asian and South Asian organisations

To escape Russian domination and the post-Soviet framework the CA states promote their geographical location in Asia, cultivating their proximity to both West Asia and even more the Asia-Pacific region. Afghanistan is also following suit in this regard.

The Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO)[30]

ECO was created by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in 1985 to promote economic, technological and cultural cooperation between member states.[31] After the fall of the Soviet Union, the five republics of Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan joined ECO. Its goals include the sustainable economic development of member states; the progressive removal of trade barriers and promotion of intra-regional trade; increasing the ECO region's role in the growth of world trade; promoting the region's material resources; advancing regional cooperation for drug abuse control; promoting ecological and environmental protection; and strengthening historic and cultural ties among the peoples of the region.[32] The ECO supreme authority is the *Council of Ministers*, made up of Foreign Affairs ministers and ministerial representatives named by their respective governments. The *Council of Permanent Representatives* is made up of permanent representatives and ambassadors of member states, as well as the General Director of ECO Affairs from each Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

30 www.ecosecretariat.org/

31 ECO is the successor of the Organization of Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) established in 1964, by the same three countries.

32 Richard Pomfret, 'The Economic Cooperation Organization: Current Status and Future Prospects', Europe-Asia Studies, vol. 49, no. 4 (1997): 657–667

The *General Secretariat* includes specialised agencies as well as *Regional Planning Councils*. ECO is financed through contributions from its members.

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA)[33]

CICA was initiated by President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, during the 47th session of the UN General Assembly in 1992, to create a body similar to the OSCE for the Asian continent. Foreign Affairs ministers convened for the first time within the CICA framework in 1999 and adopted a Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between CICA Member States. The first actual meeting was held in 2002, at which the CICA charter, the Almaty Act, was adopted. CICA's activities are based on the principle of sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs and economic, social and cultural cooperation. All economic decisions are consensual. CICA has 20 member states, including Afghanistan and four states of Central Asia, with the exception of Turkmenistan.

CICA is an intergovernmental forum that aims to promote cooperation for peace, security and stability in Asia, and to develop an environment of confidence among member states. The organisation pursues the following aims: enhancing co-operation through elaborating multilateral approaches to promoting peace, security and stability in Asia; eradicating the threat of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; combating illicit drug production and trafficking; promoting trade and economic cooperation, as well as cooperation on environment-related issues; preventing the proliferation and ensuring the eventual elimination of weapons of mass destruction; developing measures to address humanitarian issues; and promoting mutual respect, understanding and tolerance in relations among civilisations.

The supreme decision-making body is the *Summit of CICA Heads of State and Government*, which gathers every four years to monitor the evolution of the organisation and define new priorities. The CICA Chairman is responsible for the coordination of, and communication on, current activities. A *Summit of Foreign Affairs Ministers* is held every two years for consultations and discussions on various issues. A *Committee of Senior Officials* meets at least once annually, to follow up on the progress of implementation, conduct consultations on current issues and oversee special working groups. The *Secretariat*, located in Almaty, is CICA's permanent administrative body, providing administrative, organisational and technical support.

The Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)[34]

Created in 2002, the ACD fosters Asian cooperation across the continent and aids the integration of regional organisations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are members. Afghanistan acceded to it in 2012. The organisation aims to promote interdependence among Asian countries in all areas of cooperation; expand trade and financial exchanges within Asia; and enhance Asian countries' economic competitiveness on the global market. Nineteen sectors of cooperation have been defined, notably in energy, agriculture, biotechnology, tourism, poverty

33 www.s-cica.org/
34 www.acddialogue.com/

alleviation, IT development, e-education and financial cooperation. Three of these involve Kazakhstan: energy, transport infrastructures and agriculture.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)[35]
Created in 1985, SAARC fosters economic, technological and social progress as well as cultural development in South Asia and includes seven founding states: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SAARC is headquartered in Kathmandu, holding annual general meetings and twice-yearly meetings for foreign ministries. Afghanistan has been a member since 2007. Since Kabul joined, the organisation has been trying to point up its relation to the CA region; the US-initiated 'new Silk Road' narrative launched by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has reinforced debate about the possible inclusion of the CA states. However, no formal invitation or decisions to join have thus far been made.

2.7. United Nations institutions and programmes

The five CA states participate in the main United Nations (UN) agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). They are not all members of all specialised agencies, however. Turkmenistan, for instance, is not a member of the International Development Association, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are not members of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

Outside the UN system, Kyrgyzstan is a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) since 1998; Tajikistan joined in December 2012; Kazakhstan should be granted membership status in the near future. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are members of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and Turkmenistan is an associate member.[36] The five countries are all members of the World Customs Organisation (WCO).[37]

The CA region is also a beneficiary of some special UN programmes.

The Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)[38]
SPECA, created in 1998, is a special UN programme promoting regional cooperation between Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and the five CA states. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) jointly provide overall support for its activities. In 2004, the UN General Secretary gave both commissions the task of revitalising and bolstering SPECA through the creation of a *Governing Council*. Participants in this council include deputy prime ministers and the coordination committees of each member state. It has defined six Project Working Groups: Transport, Water and Energy, Trade, Statistics, ICT for Development, Gender and Economy, with a total of 28 projects. SPECA economic forums are organised on an annual basis.

35 http:/www.saarc-sec.org/
36 www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/About-IOM/docs/members_observers_fr.pdf
37 http://www.wcoomd.org/home.htm
38 www.unece.org/speca/welcome.html

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) [39]

The five CA states work with UNODC. Endowed with a budget for the region of about US$70 million, it coordinates projects in Afghanistan and Central Asia, including the monitoring of borders, support for joint operations on regional projects, information exchanges and the monitoring of precursors. UNODC cooperates with national bodies responsible for the fight against drugs, working to ensure that legislation is compatible with international norms. A 'Rainbow Strategy' was created to reduce the health, social and security consequences of opium crops in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.[40] The framework of this strategy defines several axes: assisting Afghan provinces to achieve opium-free status; reinforcing cooperation for anti-drug operations at borders; securing borders through intelligence cooperation and border management; the fight against the trafficking of precursor chemicals; and enhancing security on the Caspian Sea. UNODC finances the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC) in Almaty, which provides a platform for information sharing and coordinating the activities of member states against transborder criminality related to drug trafficking.[41] Officially launched in 2005, CARICC relies on interaction with regional security organisations also involved in the struggle against drugs, such as the SCO and CSTO.

2.8. Regional financial institutions

The CA states are members of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group, which includes the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Fund Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). They also enjoy access to several regional financial institutions and are the only countries to have joined both the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)[42]

The EBRD is an international financial institution that supports projects in Central Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean Basin. Its capital is owned by 61 countries, the World Investment Bank and the EU. Fostering transition towards open and democratic market economies, the EBRD supports private sector clients whose needs cannot be fully met by the market. Since its creation in 1991, the EBRD has become the main investor in the former socialist economies. The five CA states joined in 1992.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB)[43]

Established in 1966, the ADB aims to fight against poverty in Asia by facilitating loans, grants, policy dialogue, technical assistance and equity investments. The main decision-making body,

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39 www.unodc.org/

40 '"Rainbow Strategy" for Afghanistan', http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/rainbow-strategy-for-afghanistan-.html (accessed 8 December 2011).

41 www.caricc.org/

42 www.ebrd.com

43 www.adb.org

the *Board of Governors*, convenes annually and has 12 members, eight of which are elected by member countries of the Asia-Pacific region, and four of which are elected by member countries outside that region. The ADB has many different departments and offices, one of which specialises in Central and West Asia. All the CA states, including Afghanistan, are members.

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB)[44]

The IDB, created during the OPEC oil boom in 1973, is a specialised institution subsumed under the OIC. It operates independently but its activities reflect the OIC's development priorities. It has 56 member states, including the five CA countries and Afghanistan. Its goals include the promotion of 'a South-South multilateral development financing institution' whose official purpose is to 'foster the economic development and social progress of member countries and Muslim communities individually as well as jointly, in keeping with the principles of Shari'a or Islamic law'.[45] The IDB participates in equity capital and grant loans for productive projects and enterprises, and provides other forms of financial assistance to member states for economic and social development. It is charged with the responsibility of assisting the promotion of foreign trade, especially in capital goods, among member countries; of providing technical assistance to member countries; and of extending training facilities for personnel engaged in development activities in Muslim countries to conform with Shari'a.

Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC)[46]

CAREC is financed by six international institutions: the ADB, EBRD, IMF, IDB, UNDP, and the World Bank. It brings together ten countries, including the five states of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and China. Although it is financed by multiple international multilateral institutions, CAREC should be considered a primarily Asian institution, due to its principal sources of financing (ADB and China) and its geographical scope. CAREC finances infrastructure development in participant countries and facilitates coordination between multilateral institutions which have traditionally not cooperated with one other. CAREC aims to expand trade and improve competitiveness through a focused, results-driven programme of regional projects and initiatives in transport, trade facilitation, energy, trade policy and economic corridor development. It supports the whole set of transport projects, both east-west and north-south, which are grouped under six large corridors that comprise two or three routes in some places, and combine maximum rail and road capacities. Over a third of the 8,640 kilometres of axial roads included in CAREC corridors require substantial renovation.[47] The organisation has identified a medium-term (2011–2015) rolling list of priority investments and technical assistance projects with over 70 transport projects amounting to over US$20 billion.[48] A *CAREC Institute* was created in 2006 to serve as a virtual information hub. It supplies training and web-based information in transport, trade and energy as well as tools to analyse the programme's strategic and sectoral projects.

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44 www.isdb.org/

45 Islamic Development Bank, The Islamic Development Bank Group in Brief, IDB Economic Research and Policy Department, 1433, (2012), 1.

46 www.carecprogram.org/

47 Central Asia Regional Economic Community, Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy (Dushanbe: CAREC, 2007).

48 'CAREC 2020 Strategic Framework', CAREC, www.carecprogram.org/index.php?page=carec2020-strategic-framework.

3. Assessing Successes and Failures of Regional Organisations

It is very difficult to assess the 'success' or 'failure' of regional organisations. The majority of them have barely any clearly defined benchmarks that can be monitored; their audits are rarely made public and are often carried out internally. For those with an economic mission, distortion effects and corruption among other causes limit their effectiveness, since they have to operate in an environment of weak governance. According to which sorts of measurement or evaluation performances can their results thus be judged? Two may be taken into consideration, namely the level of outputs (the extent to which the official mandates and specific goals have been fulfilled), and the level of official and unofficial expectations of member states.[49]

3.1. Socialisation Mechanisms and Informal Channels

The majority of Central Asia's regional organisations are essentially fora for discussion. The final documents adopted at summits or meetings are usually declarations of intention, bereft of any mechanisms of implementation. They therefore play a role of socialisation, defined in international relations as the transmission of the rules and guidelines to states and their leaders concerning how they are supposed to behave in the international system. This socialisation effect has been the object of multiple debates in regard to the merits of engaging authoritarian rulers as a way of influencing domestic change. Keeping channels of communication open is important for advancing democratic values, but authoritarian leaders also learn quickly how to navigate in the world of international and regional organisations' normative values and how to use them to shore up their own legitimacy.[50] This is particularly applicable to the CA case, where most regional organisations' agendas have not impacted the local normative culture.

Regional organisations are also platforms for meetings where CA leaders socialise in the more classic sense of the term, and can be used as informal channels of debate. Regularly decried, CIS structures have nevertheless made it possible to keep open channels for dialogue among the former Soviet states, and their effectiveness most often plays out behind the scenes, where presidents are able to discuss, in an informal manner, the tensions between them. Several sources have confirmed, for example, that the Uzbek and Tajik presidents are often encouraged, under Russian pressure, to discuss issues behind the scenes at CIS summits.[51] The socialisation role is even more important for regional organisations that have internationalised Central Asia apart from its post-Soviet context; OSCE or OCI meetings permit leaders to meet counterparts whom they would not otherwise get to know, and to hear a political narrative that differs from their own.

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49 Johannes F. Linn and Oksana Pidufala, Lessons for Central Asia. Experience with Regional Economic Cooperation (Manila: ADB, 2009).

50 Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

51 Anonymous interviews in Astana (May 2012) and Dushanbe (May 2012).

The SCO's role in socialising CA states with their Chinese counterparts is probably one of the organisation's greatest successes. It has made it possible to lower, at least in part, the historical distrust between the regions and create a more constructive working atmosphere. The proliferation of SCO commissions, fora and working groups has given rise to an intense diplomatic ballet throughout all sectors, from the political to cultural. In addition to official summits at which heads of state and ministers gather, and military exercises where officers come together, thousands of CA state employees, experts and academics have had the opportunity to visit China, where they are welcomed with full honors, and to reciprocate by hosting their Chinese counterparts. With numerous partnerships signed under SCO auspices, CA institutional and personal familiarity with the Chinese world has grown exponentially within the space of a few years.[52] It can therefore be said that a positive outcome of SCO includes an increase of knowledge about the 'Other' on all sides, increased interpersonal relations and the forming of, at least in part, relations of confidence.

3.2. The nuances of 'success' and 'failure'

If the evaluation of 'success' or 'failure' focuses on the stated goals in official documents, whose rhetoric is often very ambitious, then most organisations have failed to promote the coordinated economic and security strategies they set out to. On the other hand, if the evaluation focuses on more limited goals or informal expectations, some organisations can be said to have enjoyed a degree of success.

3.2.1. Some regional organisations have been a political success, even without any implementation of their stated goals

The above statement is the case of the SCO. The organisation has reinforced the political legitimacy of the CA regimes, officialised Russian and Chinese support, developed a common narrative concerning the 'three evils' (*san gu shili*) of separatism, extremism and fundamentalism,[53] and denounced pro-Western interference and forces. It therefore provides the established regimes with an ideological framework by which to shore up their legitimacy on both the domestic and international fronts. It has also had success in setting up mechanisms for the surveillance and extradition of alleged Uyghur separatists and Islamic terrorists, including a black list of about one thousand individuals.[54] However, in terms of developing joint security mechanisms, the SCO appears to be no more than a 'paper tiger'.[55] The gap between the organisation's narrative about the fight against non-traditional threats and its mechanisms to enable collective, or at least concerted, action is immense. The SCO does not provide military guarantees in cases of domestic crisis, but neither does it offer struc-

52 Marlene Laruelle and Sebastien Peyrouse, The 'Chinese Question' in Central Asia. Domestic Order, Social Changes, and the Chinese Factor (London/New York: Columbia University Press and Hurst, 2012), 33–43.

53 Also called the three extremisms (*sange jiduanzhuyi*). This ideological drive is sometimes called the 'Shanghai spirit'. See, for example, M. Oresman, 'Catching the Shanghai Spirit', Journal of Social Sciences (Shanghai), no. 12, December 2003, republished on http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2004/05/01/catching_ the_shanghai_spirit (accessed 25 November 2012).

54 Alexander Cooley, Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

55 Alexander Cooley, 'The Stagnation of the SCO. Competing Agendas and Divergent Interests in Central Asia', PONARS Memo no. 85 (September 2009).

tures such as a 'rapid intervention force' or a collective troop force like that of the Ministry of Emergency Situations in Russia, able to intervene in situations such as natural and ecological catastrophes, sudden population displacements and refugee crises. The focus on consensus and maintaining the status quo has hampered the effectiveness of the SCO, and may delegitimise it in the future. Indeed, since 2008 the organisation seems to have entered a growth crisis, failing as it has to define positive long-term goals, lacking well-defined priorities and refusing to discuss the divergences in member priorities.[56]

3.2.2. Some organisations have created concerted mechanisms that hamper potential regional cooperation

This is the case with most of the regional structures linked to the Soviet past, which failed in maintaining or modernizing a post-Soviet or Eurasian regional identity, and whose most recent progress has impacted negatively on Central Asia by jeopardizing any common economic strategies.

The CIS operates on the basis of consensus and the lowest common denominator, which greatly limit its effectiveness. Its legitimacy has been undermined by tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the last two decades, as well as by upheavals in the Russia-Ukraine relationship. Few CIS documents have been signed by all member states, and reluctant states have no obligation to adopt decisions. A strategy to reform decision-making within the CIS was adopted in 2007, granting slightly increased powers to the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, but it was not accepted by several member countries, contributing to the institution's paralysis.[57] Within CIS structures, only some specific domains have been successful, for instance the Industrial Councils in the sectors of electricity and railway transport, and the Intergovernmental Aviation Committee.[58] The same applies to EurAsEc: since its creation, it has adopted over 120 treaties, but in reality, half were signed within the framework of the CU.[59] Moreover, Uzbekistan has an economic and trade policy that runs counter to the very principle of EurAsEc, yet remained a member for years. The CSTO has also met a similar fate – whilst a member Uzbekistan singularly failed to implement any of its decisions.

Notwithstanding the above, the CSTO, in spite of Uzbekistan's recalcitrance which culminated in it leaving the organisation in 2012, has had some success in developing a common armaments market. CA states continue to buy the majority of their military equipment and weapons from Russia, even if they are trying to develop alternative partnerships. The military industrial complexes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have also been revived – several Russian-Kazakh and Russian-Kyrgyz joint ventures now work in various military sectors, from anti-defence systems to torpedo construction and manufacturing cartridge cases for in-

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56 See the chapter 'The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Successes and Challenges', in Marlene Laruelle and Sebastien Peyrouse (2012), 27–43.

57 Alexander Libman, 'Commonwealth of Independent States and Eurasian Economic Community', in The Democratization of International Organizations. First International Democracy Report 2011, eds., G. Finizio, L. Levi and N. Vallinoto, 16 (International Democracy Watch/Centre for Studies on Federalism, 2011).

58 Alexander Libman (2011): 15.

59 Eurasian Economic Community Integration Committee Secretariat, 4.

fantry weapons.[60] Without the participation of Tashkent, the CSTO hopes to become a more efficient organization. Both Russia and Kazakhstan do not hide their desire to reinforce the coherence and powers of the CSTO through enhancing collective air defence, Collective Rapid Reaction Forces, and cyber-security. Uzbekistan's defection promotes Kazakhstan's role in the organisation and makes Russia's willingness to build a more cohesive organisation with fewer members more realistic.[61]

The new institutions like the CU and CES and the revised CSTO have partly changed the given (see 4.4). Insofar as they have succeeded in creating some joint mechanisms, they have also contributed to deconstructing any possible CA regional unity: the CU dissociates Kazakhstan from its southern neighbours, and penalises Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

3.2.3. Some regional organisations have succeeded in creating a regional 'trompe l'oeil'

The above statement applies to the SCO, which often serves to ratify bilateral decisions made upon Beijing's initiative. For instance nearly all the 130 projects that the SCO Business Council oversees already existed before receiving their stamp of origin.[62] They actually arose out of bilateralism – some even from unilateral proposals made by the Chinese authorities – and not from any concerted collective action as such.

The situation is similar with all post-Soviet organisations, in fact, which are marked by Russian predominance and can be considered as a cover for unilateral decisions taken by Moscow. When voting shares are apportioned equally (one country, one vote), and decisions are made by consensus, the decision-making process is easily blocked by unwilling states. The Kremlin is now becoming less interested in backing such regional mechanisms, however, with the CIS being a case in point. Russia instead accords its preference to organisations where the share of votes is distributed according to a ratio depending on the size of population or GDP. This is the case of the CU, in which Moscow has roughly two-thirds of the voting share which, in turn, means it can shape collective decisions. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the CU serves mostly Russian political and economic goals: Russian customs officers can monitor the Kazakhstan border, for instance, but there is little scope for seeing Kazakhstani customs officers controlling the Kaliningrad border.

The disdain harboured towards regional organisations is evidenced in the feeble financial means that member states make available to them. CIS structures have always endured the disinterest of the majority of members, whose interest in maintaining them through paying dues is weak (Russia pays the largest share). Even the SCO has a modest budget of US$4

60 Sebastien Peyrouse, 'Russia-Central Asia: Advances and Shortcomings of the Military Partnership', in Central Asian Security Trends. Views from Europe and Russia, ed., S. Blank, 1-34 (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011).

61 Marlene Laruelle, 'Factoring the Regional Impact of Uzbekistan's Withdrawal from the CSTO', Wider Europe, 24 August 2012.

62 A. Cooley (2012), 88.

million,[63] and a small Secretariat staff,[64] compared to its declared ambitions. None of the existing regional structures, with the exception of the CES, have plans to endow themselves with a real multilateral bureaucratic structure that, without attaining the level of EU structures, could actually generate supranational integrative dynamics.

3.2.4. Regional organisations may have experienced success on some issues but have failed on others

The SCO's main success was in the border delimitation treaties signed by China with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (in 1994, 1996 and 2002, respectively) and the demilitarization of the former Sino-Soviet border. However, as the treaties have not been made public, local public opinion is concerned about possible secret clauses that could reopen China's right to lay claim to new territories in coming decades.[65] Moreover, existing border tensions among the CA states themselves are yet to be resolved (particularly between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), as well as the issue of cross-border rivers between China and Kazakhstan. Furthermore, tensions between Uzbekistan, on the one hand, and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, on the other, regarding the water/energy nexus, have also penalised the SCO. Chinese companies constructing the Penjikent hydroelectric station and upgrading the Khujand-Chanak road have, for example, had to stop or reduce their work due to the blockade imposed by Tashkent.[66] Despite this unilateral action, the SCO has not functioned as a platform upon which intra-CA border issues and water-related tensions have been debated.

The situation is similar within post-Soviet structures: cross-border and water-related tensions have not been put on the agenda and are discreetly put aside to avoid any public recognition of failure at summits. EurAsEc's goal to tackle labour migration, a high-stake issue in Russia-CA relations today, has also failed.[67] With the exception of Turkmenistan, citizens from Central Asia still have a free-visa system with Russia, a legacy of the Soviet Union. Several bilateral treaties, such as those between Russia and Tajikistan and Russia and Kyrgyzstan, have been signed in the area of regulating work for migrants. However, the establishment of a common labour market that would positively shape migrants' working conditions (including travel, work contracts, insurance and pension payments) between recipient and sending countries has yet to materialise.[68]

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63 Dmitri Trenin and Aleksei Malashenko cited by S. Aris, 'The search for a cross-regional security framework', Security Cooperation between Afghanistan, its Neighbours and Regional Powers, Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich.

64 In 2010, the Beijing-based Secretariat had only 30 staff members sent from the six member states. See 'An Advancing Alliance', Beijing Review 7, 18 February 2010, http://www.bjreview.com.cn/world/txt/2010-02/11/content_246609_2.htm (accessed 25 November 2012).

65 Marlene Laruelle, Sebastien Peyrouse (2012), 24.

66 Marlene Laruelle, Sebastien Peyrouse (2012), 81–94.

67 About five million labour migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan work in the Russian Federation on a regular basis. The remittances sent home have become drivers for the Tajik and Kyrgyz economies. The World Bank estimates that remittances account for 31.5 percent of Tajik gross domestic product (GDP), more than any other country, and ahead of Central American and African states. Labour migrants, poorly paid and badly exploited, are also essential drivers of the Russian economy in sectors such as construction, infrastructure, markets and services.

68 Alua Ibraeva, Saltanat Yessetova, Nadezhda Lapteva and Roza Umerbaeva, About the legal regulation of migration processes in the CIS countries, International Conference on Management, Humanity and Economics (ICMHE 2012), Phuket, Thailand (11–12 August 2012).

3.2.5. Some regional organisations have succeeded in their hard infrastructure goals, but failed in their soft infrastructures aims

This is the case of CAREC, which is often presented as the most successful organisation in terms of developing regional infrastructure. Whereas it has succeeded in hard infrastructure – that is, renovating roads and railways – and in creating new land links with member states large parts of its programme to improve soft infrastructure – for instance, customs systems and legal frameworks –, and to fight bureaucratic blockages and corruption at borders have failed. Similarly, its ambitious goals of securing 5 percent of Asia-Europe trade transiting continental routes before the end of the decade[69] and generating enormous revenues for transit states are unrealistic; transcontinental trade is stagnating at about 1 percent of Asia-Europe trade, most of which goes by sea. CAREC is probably a good example of the difficulty involved in evaluating 'success' or 'failure': it has failed compared to its overly ambitious goals, but it has been the most effective in terms of developing new hard infrastructure networks.

3.3. Cases of failure in the economic realm

The absence of implementation mechanisms is particularly critical in the case of regional organisations with an economic raison d'être. Most regional trade agreements exist only on paper and their impact on trade regimes has been limited.[70] In 1994, the CIS Agreement on the Establishment of a Free Trade Area was signed but never implemented. By 1999, a list of common exemptions from the free trade regime was established but never applied.[71] In 2000, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan agreed to adopt a Common External Tariff Schedule (CETS), but the objective was never achieved. At the end of 2005, only Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan had managed to agree to the CETS, which involves only 63 percent of the lines of EurAsEc's commodity classification. In 2002, when Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan agreed to adopt Moscow's position in negotiations over membership of the World Trade Organisation, the coordination mechanism's operation was far from smooth.[72]

For most of the regional organisations outside of either Russian or Chinese leverage, the glass would appear more empty than full with agreements barely implemented. Most of these regional organisations lack mechanisms for implementation, as these are left to member states. Rather, they are supposed to give a certain impetus that members then translate into binding agreements according to their own legislation. However, the absence of common jurisdiction in most areas, as well as the lack of bureaucratic relay on important and related matters and of systems to settle disputes, considerably weaken the scope for potential collective action.[73] Several treaties have been signed by the heads of state or government that have not been

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69 'CAREC Transport and Trade Facilitation: Partnership for Prosperity', Asian Development Bank/CAREC Report, Manila, 2009, 12.

70 L. Freinkman, E. Polyakov and C. Revenco, Trade Performance and Regional Integration of the CIS Countries (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004).

71 Alexander Libman, Studies of Regional Integration in the CIS and in Central Asia: A Literature Survey (Saint Petersburg: Centre for Integration Studies, 2012).

72 Mikhail Golovnin, 'Opportunities and Obstacles to EurAsEC Integration', in EDB Eurasian Integration Yearbook 2008, ed., Evgeny Vinokurov, 38–53 (Almaty: Eurasian Development Bank, 2008).

73 Asian Development Bank, 'Regionalism and Multilateralism in Central Asia', in Central Asia: Increasing Gains from Trade through Regional Cooperation in Trade Policy, Transport, and Customs Transit, 38 (Manila: ADB, 2006).

ratified by national parliaments, or have been ratified but not translated into decrees. This is the case with SPECA, which did not succeed in any of its stated goals or in implementing a viable economic project; and also, albeit to a lesser extent, with ECO and TRACECA.

In 2003, under the auspices of ECO, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey all signed an ECO trade agreement (ECOAT) which, within a stipulated time period of eight years, foresaw a reduction in tariffs of a maximum of 15 percent for at least 80 percent of traded goods; this process never came to fruition, however.[74] In 1996, ECO countries announced, with great pomp, the opening of the first railway line linking Tejen and Serakhs in Turkmenistan to Mashhad in Iran.[62] Officially, the line was designed to transport half a million people, but in practice it was never opened to passenger transport. Products can now travel, at least in theory, from Dashoguz in northern Turkmenistan to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, but over the course of one decade (1996–2006), the railway transported only about 14 million tons of goods, providing Ashgabat with associated revenues, but which were far lower than those that had been expected. [75] After two decades of summits and joint declarations, ECO has been unable to convert its potential into a useful framework for regional trade and infrastructure, the latter for the most part remaining framed in bilateral relationships.

TRACECA also failed in creating trade flows between Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Endowed with a budget of US$150 million between 1993 and 2002, it has financed the modernisation of the ports of Ilyichevsk, Poti, Batumi, Turkmenbashi, Baku and Aktau, the Kungrad-Beineu-Aktau railway, and has organised the boat-railway link between Varna-Batumi and Baku-Aktau.[76] Since its creation, TRACECA has officially financed some 62 projects involving technical assistance and 14 investment projects;[77] but it has also been accused of promoting lofty goals that do not reflect the reduced budgets of about three million dollars per project, proposed by the EU. More importantly, the relevance of TRACECA's rationale is disputed, and the economic profitability of the route is contested; not only does transport through Russia save time, but the numerous taxes demanded by the many transit states reduce profit margins. According to the EDB, Russian railway company tariffs are 1.7 times less than those of TRACECA for cereals and cotton, and 1.2 times less for oil and non-ferrous metals.[78] Presently, corridors subsidised by TRACECA mainly transport oil products from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and cotton from Uzbekistan, but no goods from China. The current infrastructure in place is far from operating at maximum capacity; the Batumi-Poti-Ilyichevsk ferry line transports only one million tons per year, the Baku-Turkmenbashi line only two million tons (although they were designed to carry between 15 and 20 million tons), while the Kungrad-Aktau line is still very marginal.[79]

74 ADB (2006).

75 A. Maleki, 'Iran', in The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia, ed., S. F. Starr (Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, 2007), 182.

76 TRACECA Co-ordination Team, Progress Report II, (TACIS, 1 December 2002), Annexes 3, 2.

77 http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/transport/traceca_en.htm (accessed 25 November 2012).

78 Evgeny Vinokurov, Murat Zhadraliyev and Yury Shcherbanin, The EurAsEC Transport Corridors, 23 (Almaty: Eurasian Development Bank, 2009).

79 Ibid.

3.4. Cases of failure in the security realm

In the area of security, two events confirmed the difficulties regional organisations face in making the transition to any kind of collective action: post-2001 Afghanistan for the SCO and the events of 2010 in Kyrgyzstan for the CSTO, as well as more generally the fight against drug-trafficking.

Afghanistan became a symbol of one of the SCO's first public relation failures. In 2001, the American intervention, launched only a few weeks after the attack of September 11, demonstrated the capacity of the world's premier superpower and its European allies to engage rapidly and massively in a new war theatre that the SCO defined as part of its 'sphere of influence'. Instead of an organizational response, SCO members reacted unilaterally. Moscow's rapprochement with Washington and the opening of two US military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan displeased Chinese authorities and weakened political confidence among member states.[80] In the mid-2000s, the SCO tried to become a more visible stakeholder on the Afghan issue and created a first contact group with Afghanistan.[81]

Despite this new media visibility and even though Afghanistan became an observer member in 2012, the SCO remains an absent actor on the Afghan scene, and has few means to influence Afghan realities in the coming years. While the SCO has criticised the International Security Assistance Force's lack of success, none of its members are willing to send troops to Afghanistan. All conduct bilateral political relations with Kabul: Russia due to its Soviet past,[82] China due to its massive investments in the exploitation of resources,[83] Kazakhstan due to its humanitarian aid and cereal sales to Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan due to energy exports and common ethnic groups in northern Afghan provinces. However, there has been no attempt to unify these individual approaches into any kind of collective action. Creating a collective military force is not among members' objectives, and even collective action in civilian reconstruction is not discussed in the SCO framework.

The CSTO was confronted with a quite similar dilemma in 2010. The interethnic riots in Osh in South Kyrgyzstan made clear the dearth of adequate regional mechanisms for cases of internal crisis. Despite requests from interim Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbayeva for Russia to intervene in the name of the CSTO agreement, no external involvement occurred. Moscow refused to intervene, rightly citing the lack of a juridical framework for action, since the CSTO only provides for solidarity between member states in the case of an attack from third states or forces identifiable as foreign, not in domestic conflicts. Uzbekistan was strongly opposed

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80 Elizabeth Wishnik, Russia, China, and the United States in Central Asia: Prospects for Great Power Competition and Cooperation in the Shadow of the Georgian Crisis (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College, 2009).

81 A. Tarzi, 'Afghan Leader Talks About China Ties', RFE/RL (14 June 2006), http://www.russian-news.com/msg04848.html (accessed 25 November 2012). See also Meena Singh Roy, 'Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Afghanistan: Scope and Limitation', Strategic Analysis, vol. 34, no. 4 (2010): 545–561.

82 Marlene Laruelle, 'Beyond the Afghan Trauma: Russia's Return to Afghanistan', Jamestown Occasional Paper, August 2009.

83 Kenneth Katzman, 'Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy', CRS Report for Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 20 April 2010); and Anthony Kuhn, China Becomes a Player in Afghanistan's Future, National Public Radio (21 October 2009), http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113967842 (accessed 25 November 2012).

to any CSTO intervention for fear that Russian forces would then settle permanently on its southern borders.[84]

Based on that failure, Russia led an attempt to amend the CSTO charter to include points on the ability to 'react to crisis situations threatening security, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty of member states', which was adopted in December 2010.[85] The Institute for Contemporary Development (*Institut sovremennogo razvitiia - INSOR*), a think tank which was close to Medvedev's presidential administration, proposed that CSTO decisions be made on a majority, not a consensus, basis, which is now possible in the light of Uzbekistan's departure.[86] However, it is highly improbable that Russia, even if it does have the legal capacity to do so, will want to see its soldiers intervene directly in the political or social crises of CA countries.

The SCO, and Beijing in particular, also remained silent during the Kyrgyz crisis, calling merely for the avoidance of a bloodbath.[87] The conflict weakened the organisation's legitimacy as an instrument of regional security. For the SCO and the CSTO, the worsening situation in two of their member states, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, is not only disquieting at the level of security, but also reveals the ineffectiveness of their mechanisms and their inability to react collectively to large-scale crises within member states.

The fight against drug trafficking is another example of failure in the security realm. Despite the proliferation of agencies and programmes like UNODC, CARICC and the Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI) of BOMCA, there is a lack of political will to coordinate collective actions beyond rhetorical declarations of intent. The relevant national agencies are very political, directly linked with security services and thus the ruling circles, and are often opaque in their functioning. The hidden revenues drawn from drug trafficking feed networks with close connections with the very bodies supposed to be fighting against them. In Tajikistan, law enforcement agencies supervise their own drug policy by favouring 'their' dealers against competitors.[88] Presidential families have also been suspected of involvement in trafficking. In Kyrgyzstan, the Drug Control Agency was abolished in October 2009 by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev after the agency conducted an operation which directly implicated the presidential family – it was reinstated after the toppling of the regime in April 2010.[89] The fear that international or regional organisations will gain the right to oversee the internal inefficiencies of national agencies and their corruption schemes is a powerful driver limiting the interaction between external (both international and regional) and domestic bodies. In-

84 Evgeny Troitskiy, 'Kyrgyzstan Turmoil. A Challenge to Russian Foreign Policy', Swedish Institute for International Affairs, no. 8, (2012): 31.

85 Ibid.

86 'ODKB razvorachivaiut litsom k NATO', Kommersant (6 September 2011): 6.

87 Stephen Aris, 'The Response of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to the Crisis in Kyrgyzstan', Civil Wars, vol. 14, no. 3 (2012): 451–476.

88 Alisher Latypov, Drug Dealers, Drug Lords and Drug Warriors-cum-Traffickers. Drug Crime and the Narcotics Market in Tajikistan (Vilnius: Eurasian Harm Reduction Network, 2011).

89 Erica Marat and Den Isa, 'Kyrgyzstan Relaxes Control Over Drug Trafficking', The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasian Daily Monitor vol. 7, no. 24 (4 February 2010), http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36013 (accessed 18 December 2010).

ternational cooperation is thus confronted with the principle of national sovereignty, which governments cite to weaken the right of international donors to monitor local trafficking.[90]

Other regional security frameworks are nothing more than declarations of intent. This is for instance the case of CICA, which is above all a platform for meetings between Asian leaders under the leadership of Kazakhstan, which views it as an instrument to enhance its international prestige. A similar parallel can be drawn with the ACD, which has yielded practically no results.[91]

4. Obstacles Impeding Regional Organisations

Central Asia has to deal with a 'spaghetti bowl effect', which includes the overlapping goals and logics of regional organisations. The growing number of non-coordinated multilateral agreements negatively impacts regional integration by creating geopolitical tensions between the main external actors and, economically, 'potentially distortive trading incentives'.[92] As a result, some economists like Johannes Linn have been campaigning for the progressive elimination of a number of agreements, notably those that will probably lose all meaning if the majority of CA states become members of the WTO.[93] At the geopolitical level, contradictions also abound within the region and in broader agendas of external actors. This section includes a discussion of the divergent economic and geostrategic patterns that hamper the efficacy and cooperation of regional organisations.

4.1. Central Asia's lack of will to form a region

To understand the failures of many regional organisations in Central Asia, it is appropriate to look into the goals of CA states. Their conceptions of regional integration, foreign policy objectives and political cultures are not necessarily favourable to collective agendas, even being directly contradictory to such. Indeed, their stance could be summed up in one sentence: to be as autonomous as possible from outside pressures while obtaining as much recognition as possible, achieving more international integration, seeking greater assurances of their territorial unity and avoiding more regionalism. As young states recently arrived on the international scene after the great waves of decolonization had come to an end, they yearn for symbolic recognition. At the same time, the ruling elites are concerned about autonomy in the management of their domestic affairs, thus wanting to avoid dealing with any potential new 'big brothers' that may hunger after the role formerly played by Moscow. Depending on the domain of activity and the geopolitical conjuncture of the moment, this duality creates tensions and contradictions in the definitions of their adopted strategies.[94]

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90 Roy Allison (2008).

91 Anna Matveeva, 'The Regionalist Project in Central Asia: Unwilling Playmates', Crisis States Research Centre Working Paper no. 13, (2007); and Johannes Linn and Oksana Pidufala (2009).

92 Johannes F. Linn and Oksana Pidufala (2009): 9.

93 Ibid.

94 Marlene Laruelle, 'Factoring The Foreign Policy Goals of the Central Asian States', in David Denoon, ed., The U.S., China and the Future of Central Asia (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

Moreover, foreign policy is not disconnected from domestic realities: in many cases, the choices made in this domain are closely dependent on internal questions, all the more so in young states which have to forge a twofold legitimacy, both domestic and international. The pre-eminence of domestic policy directly impacts the potential efficiency of regional organisations in Central Asia. Although some diplomatic postings (Moscow, Beijing, Washington and Brussels) are considered important, nominations of senior officials as country representatives to regional institutions are perceived as an 'exile of honour' for politicians who have suddenly fallen from grace. Not only is distance from the capital a distance from power, but the management of a multilateral organ is judged to be without impact, compared to the ability to exert control within bilateral relations. This may be explained by the fact that CA policies are presidential-driven. Decisions are exclusively the realm of the president and his immediate entourage, while senior officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have only symbolic functions of representation and managing current affairs.

All attempts to create regional institutions in which only the five CA countries are members have therefore failed, due to a lack of political will. Intraregional cooperation is impeded by multiple tensions between political leaders, unresolved border issues, contradictory geopolitical orientations and an inability to find a consensual resolution to the regional water/energy nexus.[95] Tensions are also of an economic nature. Kazakhstan, for instance, has been trying for many years to suffocate Kyrgyzstan economically so as to have trade flows from China redirected; it harbours ambitions of the large Bishkek-based Dordoy market being located in Kazakhstan instead. For its part, Tashkent has been engaged in a systematic policy of obstructing continental trade to weaken Dushanbe, and has aimed to block Tajikistan's strategy to become an electricity exporter to Afghanistan. Each CA country has such divergent economic strategies that integration projects are complex, and legal intra-CA trade is minimal.

Table 1. Central Asia's Internal Trade in 2010 in Millions of US$

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Kazakhstan	-	583.9	277	214.1	919.3
Kyrgyzstan	583.9	-	20.7	7	420.5
Tajikistan	277	20.7	-	81.5	77.3
Turkmenistan	214.1	7	81.5	-	150.5
Uzbekistan	919.3	420.5	77.3	150.5	-

Source: 2011 European Commission statistics, http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries-and-regions/.

Border relations between CA countries are tense, with only Kazakhstan having signed border treaties with all its neighbours. The border between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, despite slight improvements in 2008, remains difficult to cross even for those populations residing in proximity to the border, who, in theory, are granted special permits. Border relations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, have only continued to deteriorate. In the Andijan-Osh-Khodjent-Batken area, crossing the bor-

95 Victor A. Dukhovny and Joop de Schutter, Water in Central Asia. Past, Present, Future (London: CRC Press, 2011).

der remains a daily headache for local populations.[96] For a decade, moreover, the Uzbek-Tajik border has been mined due to Tashkent's stance and, despite the fact that the casualties number in the tens each year, no solution is in sight. Between Tashkent and Bishkek, meanwhile, and quite apart from the Uzbek exclaves on Kyrgyz territory which are a permanent bone of contention, over 400 kilometres of border remain in dispute.[97] At the Tajik-Kyrgyz border, clashes between the populations concerning the sharing of land and water are frequent and relations between border posts are tense.[98] The border between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was the only one that was relatively simple for the population to cross – a 'one window' system (both customs working together in one procedure) was even experimented.[99] But the 2010 change of regime in Kyrgyzstan and the CU that has come into force has dramatically changed this situation. Border relations are now more difficult as Kazakhstan attempts to stop flows from Kyrgyzstan, in the name of both its state security and its CU with Russia.

Competition between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan for regional leadership, and the personal rivalry between the Uzbek and Kazakh presidents, which stems back to the years of perestroika, has been a major issue affecting the whole of Central Asia. Even if Uzbekistan has given up on its ambitions to lead the region and has been overtaken by Kazakhstan in terms of economic development – as shown by the growing number of Uzbek migrants working in Kazakhstan – the external posturing of both states and their strategies of economic development continue to be somewhat contradictory.[100] On the one hand, in portraying itself as the region's faithful ally of the US, Uzbekistan criticises the pro-Russian stance of neighbouring Kazakhstan; but, on the other hand, when it seeks to resist Western influence, it condemns Kazakhstan's economic liberalism, rapprochement with NATO and its greater freedom of the press. Bilateral tensions were particularly acute at the turn of the millennium, when Kazakhstan harboured a number of Uzbek dissidents whom it refused to extradite.[101] Since then, the two countries have sought to defuse tensions and cooperate more. In this regard, the joint struggle against the 'terrorist threat' has helped develop a common security narrative. Nazarbayev supported Karimov during the Andijan events in 2005, agreeing to extradite several opponents of the Uzbek regime to Tashkent.[102] The growing instability in Kyrgyzstan led to both presidents denouncing the Kyrgyz 'chaos', which they contrasted with the 'stability' of their own countries. However, trade between the two countries is still very limited, and en-

96 On the Ferghana Valley, see S. Frederick Starr, ed., Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2011).

97 A. Beshimov et al., Prigranichnaia torgovlia: Otsenka perecheniia granits mezhdu Kyrgyzstanom i Uzbekistanom (Bishkek: OSCE-Central Asian Free Market Institute, 2011).

98 On localized tensions at the borders and in the Ferghana enclaves, see the Foundation for International Tolerance Reports, http://fti.org.kg/en/.

99 George Gavrilis, 'Central Asia's Border Woes & the Impact of International Assistance', Central Eurasia Project Occasional Paper Series, no. 6, May 2012, 29.

100 Martha Brill Olcott, 'Rivalry and Competition in Central Asia', in Werner Hermann and Johannes F. Linn, eds., Central Asia and the Caucasus. At the Crossroads of Eurasia in the 21st Century (Washington, DC: SAGE and Emerging Market Forum, 2011), 17–42.

101 Richard Weitz, 'Karimov-Nazarbayev Rivalry Pervades Bilateral Summit', Diplomatic Traffic, http://www.diplomatictraffic.com/debate_archives.asp?ID=672 (accessed 25 November 2012).

102 See chapter 7, 'The Regional Market: Economic Weaknesses and Political Blockades', in Marlene Laruelle and Sebastien Peyrouse, Globalizing Central Asia. Geopolitics and the Challenges of Economic Development (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe 2013).

ergy exchanges are falling. Geopolitical competition has revived since 2009 with the implementation of the Northern Distribution Network, which accords Tashkent priority, and the two states' divergent preparations for the post-2014 scenario, with the drawdown of troops from Afghanistan.

Today, it is the question of water management that most clearly jeopardises relations between CA states. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the rupture in relations between the republics, electricity production in Central Asia fell dramatically. Energy exchanges between them halved between 1990 and 2000 failing to regain their Soviet levels. According to the ADB, regional electricity trade declined from 25 GWh (gigawatt hours) in 1990 to 4 GWh in 2008.[103] Although they are theoretically very compatible (with three gas and oil producing states and two hydroelectric power producing states), cooperation on energy issues has proved exceptionally difficult. Negotiations over the exchange of water for oil and gas regularly break down, with participants questioning the contractual terms. Moreover, the stakes are not exclusively economic; there is also a geopolitical dimension. Countries downstream of the large rivers, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, have been in a position of strength relative to the two water-rich countries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.[104] However, by transforming water into a geopolitical weapon, both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan hope to strengthen their position vis-à-vis Tashkent. Bishkek's decision to build two power stations at Kambarata angered the Uzbek authorities, but it is the Rogun project in Tajikistan that is most controversial. In order to block its progress, Uzbekistan has set up a railway blockade, aggravating the socio-economic situation in Tajikistan, and hampering all industrial projects that Dushanbe has launched.[105] Tajikistan's prospects of selling electricity on the Afghan market at a lower price than Uzbek electricity gives the Tajik-Uzbek competition a truly regional dimension, with Kabul at the core of their competing ambitions.

Two countries in particular hamper regional cooperation – Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan occupies a unique position since it is the only CA country to have declared its reluctance to engage in any multilateral or regional cooperation and refuses to envisage, even symbolically, any loss of sovereignty.[106] Since independence, it has indicated its desire to leave the Eurasian and CA space. In the 1990s, it oriented itself towards Iran and Turkey in terms of economic and energy cooperation, for instance in the electricity sector, and in the 2000s it built a new partnership with China structured around gas exports. In practice,

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103 Michael Cain, 'Dilemmas for International Donors and Autocrats: Obstacles to Energy Reform in Central Asia' (unpublished paper, April 2011), 6.

104 There is an abundant literature on water and the conflicts linked to hydraulic questions in Central Asia. Worth mentioning are: V. A. Dukhovnyi and J. de Schutter, Water in Central Asia: Past, Present, Future (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2011); M. Spoor and A. Krutov, 'The "Power of Water" in a Divided Central Asia', Perspectives on Global Development and Technology, vol. 2, nos. 3–4 (2003): 593–614; K. Wegerich, 'Water Resources in Central Asia: Regional Stability or Patchy Make-Up?' Central Asian Survey, vol. 30, no. 2 (2011): 275–290.

105 R. Kozhevnikov, 'Tadzhikistan obvinil Uzbekistan v blokade radi davleniia na Rahmona', Reuters, (3 April 2012), http://ru.reuters.com/article/topNews/idRURXE8320Z020120403; 'Uzbekistan-Tajikistan: When is a Blockade a Blockade?' Eurasianet.org (5 April 2012), http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65230 (accessed 25 November 2012).

106 Luca Anceschi, Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy. Positive Neutrality and the Consolidation of the Turkmen Regime (London: Routledge, 2008); Sebastien Peyrouse, Turkmenistan: Strategies of Power, Dilemmas of Development (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2011).

Turkmenistan is still obliged to cooperate with Uzbekistan over the collective management of border dams. It also tries to sell electricity to Tajikistan, and since 2007, it has been cooperating more closely with Kazakhstan. However, Turkmenistan's absence from any regional dynamic does not constitute an impossible challenge to bypass: with only a small population and located on the western margins of Central Asia, the region can 'function' even in the latter's absence. This is not the case for Uzbekistan, however, which is much more pivotal in Central Asia.

4.2. Uzbekistan's relation to the region: An à la carte strategy

Uzbekistan's position is more capricious and has undergone multiple realignments in terms of regional strategy. Tashkent only favoured intra-CA cooperation when it viewed itself as the undisputed leader at the beginning of the 1990s. At that time President Islam Karimov referred to the need for regional unity by reviving the historical name Turkestan, and promoted an identity based on Turkic and Muslim values, which he dubbed Turanism.[107] He competed with the Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev who, in contrast, put forward the concept of Eurasia, which situates Central Asia at the crossroads between Europe and Asia.[108] This Eurasian identity would be distinctly less Turkic and Muslim, more open to Russian heritage and more oriented towards the Asia-Pacific region. Both of these narratives served as ideological frameworks for foreign policy strategies. Whereas Uzbekistan sought to distance itself from Russian influence, Kazakhstan preferred to become one of the pillars of post-Soviet regional integration mechanisms.

Unsuccessful in its bid to be the region's leader, Uzbekistan stopped presenting itself as a possible core of regional unity. It implemented a policy of accentuated control over its borders, engaged only reluctantly in relations with its neighbours and pursued isolationist strategies in terms of regional economic exchanges – all of which have had negative consequences, especially where the volatile Ferghana Valley borders with Kyrgyzstan.[109] In fact, the Uzbek position on the question of regional unity is paradoxical. Tashkent affirms its desire to play a larger coordinating role between the states of the region on key issues like security and water management,[110] but often ends up playing an 'empty chair' policy because its positions are at odds with most of its neighbours.[111]

Since independence, the Uzbek foreign policy has been unambiguously pro-American, not for reasons of political or ideological sympathy, but for strategic motives. Tashkent sees itself as a major historical regional power and desires symbolic recognition of this status through

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107 Islam Karimov, Turkistan, nash obshchii dom (Tashkent: Uzbekiston, 1995).

108 Marlene Laruelle, Russian Eurasianism. An Ideology of Empire (Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University and Woodrow Wilson Press, 2008), 171–188.

109 Nick Megoran, 'The critical geopolitics of the Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley boundary dispute, 1999–2000,' Political Geography, vol. 23 (2004): 731–764.

110 J. Azam and G. Makhmejanov, 'Isolationism in Uzbek Economic Policy as an Obstacle for Water-Energy Consortium', Working Paper of the Toulouse School of Economics, May 2010.

111 Farhad Tolipov, 'The Foreign Policy Orientations of Central Asian States: Positive and Negative Diversification', in Iwashita Akihiro, ed., Eager Eyes Fixed on Eurasia (Sapporo: 21st Century COE Program Slavic Eurasian Studies, 2007), 23–40.

a privileged partnership with Washington.[112] However, the country has switched its position in accordance with changing geopolitical interests. In the 1990s, its foreign policy seemed well established and stable. The pro-American strategy culminated after 9/11 with the opening of the American base of Karshi-Khanabad, a symbol of the Uzbek-American honeymoon, but abruptly drew to a close in 2004–2005.[113] After an interlude of a few years (2005–2008) that saw it briefly seek favour with Russia, Tashkent turned once again to the United States, a partnership that has been strengthened thanks to Uzbekistan's key role in the Northern Distribution Network.[114] Although the country became more clearly isolated from the international community in the 2000s, its status as a regional demographic and strategic power, growing economic weaknesses notwithstanding, has granted it international visibility and meant that all external actors have sought to engage with it, despite the difficulties involved in negotiating with Islam Karimov's regime.

Relations with Russia at the bilateral level are not publicised but remain important. However, at the multilateral level, Tashkent clearly rejects any role for Russia in the region, and it has become a specialist in pursuing an empty-chair policy at CIS and EurAsEc summits,[115] failing moreover to implement any of the documents, even binding ones, signed in the post-Soviet framework. It left the CIS Treaty on Collective Security in 1999, condemning it for its inefficiency during the incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan into the southern part of the Ferghana Valley during the summer of 1999, and again in 2000. Tashkent was officially reinstated in 2006, but it never implemented any of the organisation's mandates and participated as little as possible in its joint activities. Since 2009 it has vehemently rejected all Russian proposals to upgrade the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces to a force of 20,000 soldiers, opposing also the Russian proposal to require that new foreign military bases on CSTO territory receive the validation of all member states.[116] It left the CSTO a second time in June 2012. However, despite being anti-Russian, Uzbek foreign policy has not sought to cultivate partnership with Turkey or Iran, with whom relations have always been far from smooth. More recently, Uzbekistan has increasingly turned towards China.

Uzbekistan's stance towards the SCO is not without its ebbs and flows either. Islam Karimov's regime regularly refuses to participate in SCO joint military exercises, often only sending observers or a few participants from the security services instead of the regular army. Tashkent does not conceal its discontent at what it perceives to be the SCO's cautiousness; Moscow and Beijing are criticised for refusing to tackle basic problems, such as the question of water management, and for not sufficiently favouring Uzbekistan's position. Only the activities of RATS, as they are based in the Uzbek capital city and focus on questions of anti-terrorism, seem to meet with Tashkent's approval. Uzbekistan's strategy is therefore to use the SCO as a multilateral platform upon which to request the reinforcement of those actions which

112 Jim Nichol, 'Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests', CRS Report for Congress. (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 27 August 2008).

113 Gregory Gleason, 'The Uzbek Expulsion of U.S. Forces and Realignment in Central Asia', Problems of Post-Communism, vol. 53, no. 2 (March/April 2006): 49–60.

114 Jim Nichol, 'Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests', CRS Report for Congress (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 3 August 2012).

115 Alexander Libman (2011).

116 'Uzbekistan: Tashkent Issues Critique of CSTO Rapid Reaction Force', Eurasianet.org, 23 June 2009, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/news/articles/eav062409d.shtml (accessed 25 November 2012).

it perceives to be to its advantage – specifically the anti-terrorist struggle and the settling of tensions related to hydroelectricity. Other SCO components, such as economic integration, are instead conveniently put aside, as they go directly against Uzbekistan's isolationist policies.[117] Finally, the Uzbek regime interprets SCO declarations in accordance with its geopolitical strategy of the moment; such pronouncements are either deemed to be in line with its own anti-Western stance, or they are denounced as Russian interference with Tashkent seeking to garner American support.

In August 2012, Tashkent adopted a law not only banning foreign military bases on its territory, but also its membership in military alliances. The law also reserves the right of the government to exit any interstate group, a narrative which furnishes Uzbekistan with a legal status for its geopolitical 'capriciousness' and à la carte strategy.[118]

4.3. Regional organisations and regime security

The CA states perceive some regional organisations primarily as instruments that enable them to consolidate their regime security and promote their national interests. Belonging to them enables elites to forge solidarity in the name of domestic regime security, a strategy aptly named by Roy Allison as 'protective integration'.[119] Russia- and China-backed regional organisations are privileged, as they make it possible to resist the normative agendas of pan-European or transatlantic organisations on questions of democracy, human rights and good governance. The regional organisations promoted by Beijing and Moscow share the same policy of supporting established regimes, based on the principle that any change to the ruling elites entails political risk and that stability is preferable to what they interpret as democratic 'chaos'.[120] They also share the view of the dangers faced in Central Asia, a potentially unstable area beset with risks of Islamism, state failure and drug trafficking. The post-Soviet organisations backed by Russia have always supported the CA regimes, despite Moscow's tensions with Ashgabat or Tashkent. When the Kremlin criticised Kurmanbek Bakiyev's regime in Kyrgyzstan some months before his fall in April 2010, or that of Roza Otunbayeva the following year, for being too pro-Western, it did so in a bilateral framework, not through regional organisations.

SCO policy is similarly based on political consensus in which incumbent regimes are favoured. All member states adopted similar interpretations of the Chechen question in Russia, the Tibetan and Uyghur issues in China and the Islamist risk in Central Asia.[121] The organisation has, however, had to deal on several occasions with the emergence of divergences in policy.

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117 Marlene Laruelle, Sebastien Peyrouse (2012), 37–43.

118 'Zakonodatel'naia palata odobrila Kontseptsiiu vneshnepoliticheskoi deiatel'nosti', Uzdaily, 1 August 2012, http://www.uzdaily.uz/articles-id-12052.htm (accessed 25 November 2012).

119 Roy Allison (2008).

120 Nicole Jackson, 'The role of external factors in advancing non-liberal democratic forms of political rule: a case study of Russia's influence on Central Asian regimes', Contemporary Politics vol. 16, no. 1 (2010):101–118; Jacob Tolstrup, 'Studying a negative external actor: Russia's management of stability and instability in the "Near Abroad"', Democratization vol. 16, no. 5 (2009): 922–944; Thomas Ambrosio, Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

121 Thomas Ambrosio, 'Catching the "Shanghai Spirit": How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia', Europe-Asia Studies, vol. 60, no. 8 (2008): 1321–1344.

After the events of September 11, China was offended by Moscow's and the CA regimes' co-operation with the United States in Afghanistan. Since 2003, the atmosphere once deemed conducive to cooperation with the West has ended, and this has strengthened the Chinese position. The shock waves sent forth by the 'colour revolutions' throughout the post-Soviet space and the Andijan events in May 2005[122] helped to revive political ties between SCO member states. Moscow's recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in August 2008 once again caused consternation in China, also angering CA authorities, who called for the preservation of former Soviet borders and the limiting of secessionist movements. China and Central Asia's refusal to recognise the new states disappointed Moscow, which had sought the unwavering support of its SCO allies.[123] Beijing, however, had no difficulty obtaining the full support of the CA states when it condemned the Tibetan and Uyghur revolts of 2009, 2010 and 2011, thus confirming that political solidarity between the established regimes is one of the drivers of the SCO.

Only regional organisations that support the political status quo are considered legitimate by the CA regimes. Those who have, or are suspected of having, hidden political goals of regime change or supporting an alternative legitimacy based on Islamic values are rejected. Within the OSCE, the post-Soviet states have increasingly and overtly objected to human rights initiatives, which they claim are part of a Western ideological construct.[124] This post-Soviet common position was first formulated by the Moscow Declaration and Astana Appeal in 2004[125] and was particularly evident in 2010 when Kazakhstan took up the presidency, with Russia's support.[126] The CA states also demonstrate reluctance in the Islamic organisations they join, such as the OIC and more economic-oriented organisations comprised mostly of Muslim states like the ECO. All the CA regimes make a show of their secularism and have good relations with Israel. They have thus found themselves to be at odds with the anti-Israeli declarations of both organisations, especially when Iran held the presidency of both in the 1990s, and have refused to be criticised for their secularism.[127]

Even within the SCO, divergent interests largely based on regime security have taken shape, notwithstanding discourses about the equality of member states. On one level, Russia and China dominate the SCO's international visibility and negotiate their relationship to Central Asia, their international position in favour of a multi-polar world and the organisation's rela-

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122 Nick Megoran, 'Framing Andijon, Narrating the Nation: Islam Karimov's Account of the events of 13 May 2005', Central Asian Survey, vol. 27, no. 1, (2008): 15–31.

123 Mark N. Katz, 'Russia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Moscow's Lonely Road from Bishkek to Dushanbe', Asian Perspective, vol. 32, no. 3, (2008): 183–187; and Sebastien Peyrouse, 'Facing the Challenge of Separatism: The EU, Central Asia and the Uyghur Issue', EUCAM Brief Paper, no. 4 (January 2009), http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/Policy-Brief-4.Peyrouse.pdf (accessed 25 November 2012).

124 Alexander Warkotsch, 'The OSCE as an Agent of Socialisation? International Norm Dynamics and Political Change in Central Asia', Europe-Asia Studies, vol. 59, no. 5 (2007): 829–846.

125 Common Purpose – Towards a More Effective OSCE. Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons On Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, 27 June 2005, http://www.core-hamburg.de/documents/yearbook/english/05/1EminentPersons.pdf accessed 25 November 2012).

126 Joanna Lillis, 'Kazakhstan: Nazarbayev Bashes OSCE amid Domestic Tension', Eurasianet.org (7 March 2012), http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65101 (accessed 25 November 2012).

127 Marlene Laruelle, 'Israel and Central Asia: Opportunities and Limits for Partnership in a Post-Arab Spring World', Wider Europe (July 2012).

tions with other regional and international institutions. On a second level, Kazakhstan joins this duo to form a dominant Moscow-Astana-Beijing trio. The trio is in charge of promoting the organisation among observer states and elsewhere in the post-Soviet space through their overlapping membership in several regional organizations, such as CSTO and EurAsEC. Astana is pushing the SCO to adopt a more economic focus for the reason that Kazakhstan is one of the region's energy leaders and constitutes the territorial link between Russia and China. Astana is also at an advantage whenever the SCO seeks to promote a world free of nuclear weapons.[128] Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan find themselves among the third tier of actors in the organisation – Tashkent on account of its being a rebellious member against any collective action, the latter two because of their internal weaknesses. The leaders of these three countries participate much less in SCO activities that attract international visibility or in large-scale energy projects, appealing to the organisation to instead return to its initial goals of regional stability and combating terrorist threats. During official meetings, Bishkek and Dushanbe complain of the SCO's growing disinterest in security questions, a complaint borne of the centrality of such questions given their domestic instability. The Tajik and Kyrgyz governments, for instance, could barely hide their disappointment during their wrestling with Tashkent over the issue of water management, since neither Moscow nor Beijing openly took their side.[129]

4.4. Real and projected external competitions

Many regional organisations are hampered by geopolitical competition between their members. This is the case of SAARC, in which the adversarial nature of India-Pakistan relations impedes its ability to become a real platform for the integration of Afghanistan, and potentially the states of Central Asia, into South Asian dynamics.[130] Geopolitical rivalries also undermine economic integration projects. TRACECA has failed to redirect trade flows on the east-west axis mostly because of the conflicts that rocked the South Caucasus in the 1990s, as well as the suspicions harboured by CA states against each other. The main competition, real or imagined, today occurs between the West and Russia/China, between Russia and China, and between Russia-backed institutions and the world economy.

4.4.1. Competition between the West and Russia/China

The 'Great Game' is probably the most popular geopolitical narrative used to describe the relationship between Russia and the United States in Central Asia. It recalls the geopolitical competition between the Russian and British empires during the second half of the nineteenth century. But the Great Game formula causes confusion on multiple levels.[131] The con-

128 'Nazarbayev calls on countries to adopt universal declaration on nuclear-free world', Interfax (26 August 2010), http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?id=185218; and 'Kazakhstan calls on OSCE states to adopt declaration on nuclear-free world', RIA Novosti (1 December 2010), en.rian.ru/world/20101201/161573340.html (accessed 25 November 2012).

129 See the chapter 'Security and Economic Concerns as the Matrix of Central Asian Expertise', in Marlene Laruelle, Sebastien Peyrouse (2012), 159–173.

130 Raghav Thapar, 'SAARC. Ineffective in Promoting Economic Cooperation in South Asia', Stanford Journal of International Relations 7, no. 1 (2006), http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjir/7.1.03_thapar.html (accessed 25 November 2012).

131 Marlene Laruelle, 'Foreign Policy and Myth-making: Great Game, Heartland, and Silk Roads', in M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse, eds., Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 7–20.

temporary CA states are independent, legitimate international actors and recognised members of major organizations, which the nineteenth century khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand were not. They cannot be reduced to simple objects of rivalry between great powers, and they have not been merely passive recipients of external influence, either under colonial domination in the nineteenth century, Soviet control in the twentieth century or post-Cold War geopolitical contests in the twenty-first century. They are actors in their own right, with their own subjectivity and projection of identity on the international stage. Most importantly, despite a power differential that is not in their favour, they are able to deploy strategies to force regional actors and global powers to compete with one another, and have the capacity to limit the impact of outsiders. Neither Russia nor China nor the United States can impose their rules of the game on Central Asia in a unilateral manner, and any of them may experience sudden losses of influence.

The notion of the Great Game also presupposes a set of binary oppositions whose relevance has not been demonstrated. While Russia and the United States appeared to dominate the arena of Central Asia in the 1990s, China has now positioned itself as a new matrix for the region and potentially as a competitor to Russia. US-Russia/China competition in the region exists, mostly in the form of political leverage over CA regimes. The US and the EU champion democratisation and good governance, which Moscow and Beijing reject as Western interference. Yet a number of other powers, such as the EU, Japan, South Korea, Turkey, Iran and India, have also entered the regional stage. Each seeks to project itself as a model for CA development and to frame the legitimacy narratives of the CA states. The same goes for commercial competition over hydrocarbons and strategic resources: Russia and the United States are no longer the sole actors in this domain; in fact far from it. Turkmen gas is coveted by China, Russia, Europe and South Asia; Kazakh uranium by Russia, China, Japan and South Korea; Kazakh oil by Russia and China; and in the coming years, rare earth metals will probably be sought after by Europe, Russia and China; and Kazakhstan's space potential by Russia, India and China.[132]

Strategic competition, often more potential than real, is probably the most visible trend among patterns of Russian and US involvement in the region. Russia and China for instance negatively reacted to the Central Asian Counter-narcotics Initiative (CACI), launched in 2011 by the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs with a budget of US$4.1 million. CACI is designed to fight against trafficking, aid coordination between countries of the region and minimise the consequences of the drawdown of Western forces.[133] Russia has clearly expressed its opposition to the US State Department's initiative to establish a network of antidrug centres in each country of Central Asia, which it and China views as a way to maintain a concealed American paramilitary presence in the region.[134]

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132 More in the first part of '"Great Games" and "Small Games": The Strategies and Outcomes of External Actors', in Marlene Laruelle, Sebastien Peyrouse, Globalizing Central Asia.

133 R. Solash, 'U.S. Promotes New Plan To Battle Drug Trade In Afghanistan, Central Asia', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, (19 July 2011), http://www.rferl.org/content/us_promotes_new_plan_to_battle_drug_trade_in_afghanistan_central_asia_and_russia/24270127.html (accessed 8 December 2011).

134 Richard Weitz, 'Moscow, Central Asia perceive Afghan drugs as security threat', The Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst (30 November 2011), http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5674 (accessed 8 December 2011).

The EU and the US would like to have more powerful mechanisms for security cooperation with CA governments, and tend to view the CSTO and SCO as competitors. However, the West does not offer Central Asia anything in the way of a comprehensive regional security architecture. It must be content instead with multiple uncoordinated initiatives, which are often scarcely effective, and devoid of any grand design through a specific regional organization.[135] NATO's PfP remains relatively inactive save for limited activities in Kazakhstan. The region is integrated into the Western strategy for Afghanistan thanks to the stationing of Western bases (the Americans in Manas, Kyrgyzstan; the Germans in Termez, Uzbekistan; and the French in Dushanbe, Tajikistan), and since 2009, the establishment of the Northern Distribution Network. However, the future of this Afghanistan-related strategic presence is unclear. In 2011, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promoted a vision for a New Silk Road, designed to direct public and private investment to transform Afghanistan into a regional hub and to link South and Central Asia.[136] The US-led Silk Road narrative was presented as a 'strategic vision' and 'mindset', but lacked policy guidance or specific budget allocations.[137] This has brought criticism from those who argue that the vision must be accompanied by real diplomatic and financial commitment in order to turn it into reality.[138]

Despite the difficulties the West has had in implementing a regional framework equal to that implemented by Russia and China, there exists a strategic triangle in Central Asia between Russia, China and the US. However, it is one based on power projections considered key for world balance rather than real competition. Each power wants a privileged relationship with the other two, as any alliance between two of the three weakens the position of the third. As such, Washington does not want to see the emergence of any deep strategic alliance between Moscow and Beijing, which would thwart its advances into the Eurasian space and its progress on important international issues such as Iran and North Korea. Russia is concerned by Sino-American rapprochement and the growing economic and financial interdependency between the two countries, a development that could shape a Sino-American 21st Century in which Moscow is merely a second-rate actor. China, for its part, is hardly welcoming of any improvement in Russo-American relations and views unfavourably any harmonious development in how the US-Europe-Russia trio functions.

The US tends to perceive Russia as its main rival in terms of influence in Central Asia. China remains largely absent from Washington's CA policy; its energy stakes are not formulated in terms of a West-China axis of competition but instead as a West-Russia or Russia-China axis of competition. As such, many US experts are delighted at the loss of Russia's monopoly over CA hydrocarbons thanks to Chinese pipelines, and only raise the issue of competition for

135 'NATO and Central Asia', EUCAM Watch, no. 11, 2012, http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Newsletters/EUCAMWatch-11.pdf (accessed 25 November 2012).

136 Andrew C. Kuchins, 'Laying the Groundwork for Afghanistan's New Silk Road. How Washington and Kabul Can Turn a Vision Into a Plan', Foreign Affairs (5 December 2011), http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136714/andrew-c-kuchins/laying-the-groundwork-for-afghanistans-new-silk-road?page=show (accessed 25 November 2012).

137 Robert O. Blake, China's Evolving Role in Central Asia (Washington, DC: Foreign Service Institute and State Department Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 9 December 2011).

138 Central Asia Policy Forum, 'The US Military Involvement in Central Asia and its Impact on US-Central Asia Relations. Featuring Stephen Blank, Alexander Cooley, Joshua Kucera, and Andrew Kuchins', Central-Asia Policy Forum, no. 1 (April 2012).

resources between Western and Chinese interests in an adjunct manner. Strategically, the US has not really reacted to Chinese objections to its influence, such as its clamouring for the US military base in Kyrgyzstan to be closed.[139] Russia has also retained Cold War schemas and focuses on American strategies of containment, without measuring the rhythm of China's advance. Beijing, for its part, clearly prefers Russian control over Central Asia to US domination, and can only be happy to see mutual Russo-American neutralisation, which leaves the field open for its trade and investment policy.

4.4.2. Competition between Russia and China

Russia and China, as the main external actors in CA, face ambivalent patterns of both cooperation and competition. The SCO embodies their good relationship and is understood by both countries as a useful mechanism of discussion. Seen from the Russian perspective, the SCO obliges China to play the card of multilateralism, and allows Moscow to curb Beijing's ambitions without directly confronting its growing influence in Central Asia. From China's perspective, the SCO has made it possible to institutionalise its legitimacy in the region and it can now go about playing on the contradictions between member states and lobbying groups without being accused of expansionism. The SCO meanwhile serves as a buffer for the CA states – it can mediate disagreements peacefully and channel competition between the two dominant powers for more advantageous solutions.

However, the Sino-Russian partnership in Central Asia remains ambivalent. It is essentially a default alliance that emerged based on mutual support for established regimes in the name of stability and containment of Western influence. In the security realm China has positioned itself as a faithful second to Russia and tacitly recognises Central Asia as being within Russia's sphere of influence. Russia's military presence in the region does not pose any problems for China, which actually needs the Kremlin's support both to nip its own separatist movements in the bud and to act as a check on Western influence and growing competition with Washington. Beijing thus wishes to preserve Russian strategic domination, preferring to let Moscow pay the heavy costs of military security and guaranteeing the survival of unstable regimes, while it focuses on economic involvement.[140] In strategic terms, Russia has emerged out of the competition with China as the clear winner. After all, the Chinese bilateral military presence in Central Asia is limited, unable to rival Russia's preeminent role. For Russia, however, the situation is more complex and ambivalent.[141] Russian policymakers are concerned at the speed with which China is narrowing the strategic gap, and China's rise awakens old identity fears, which have been referred to as the 'Mongol syndrome'.[142] Any change in the balance between Moscow and Beijing may cause consternation in the Kremlin, which is unprepared to accept China as the main political or cultural power in the region.

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139 In a cable released at the beginning of December 2010 by Wikileaks, the US is allegedly able to prove that China offered the Kyrgyz authorities US$3 billion to close down the American base at Manas. See David Trilling, 'China Gives U.S. Base Advice', Eurasianet.org (29 November 2010), http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62454 (accessed 25 November 2012).

140 Interviews conducted at the main Chinese think tanks and research centres working on the former Soviet Union in Shanghai, Beijing, Lanzhou and Xi'an (September–December 2008).

141 Vladimir Paramonov and Aleksey Strokov, Russian-Chinese Relations: Past, Present, Future (Swindon: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Russian series, September 2006); and Bobo Lo, 'China and Russia. Common interests, Contrasting Perceptions', CLSA Asian Geopolitics (London: Chatham House, May 2006).

142 Bobo Lo (2006): 4.

Since 2002, Beijing has proposed making the SCO the largest free trade zone, encompassing more than 1.5 billion people. For China, a free trade zone would lend an institutional and multilateral character to its rapid economic penetration in the region.[143] However, the common market that China envisioned the SCO to become does not meet with acceptance from other states. Moscow as well as the CA states fear that they will come under a Chinese economic protectorate given the development and growth differential. They privilege the energy sector and Chinese investment capacities, which they see as an alternative to their more demanding Western partners. Setting up a transport corridor between China and Europe via Russia and Central Asia, export agreements for electricity and the transit of hydrocarbons elicit the interest of all member states.[144] Other China-backed proposals are vehemently refused, however, with Russia attempting to block Chinese attempts to create Business Councils and interbank associations to coordinate regional investments; it also refused China's proposals, made after the global economic crisis in 2008, to set up an anti-crisis fund, create a SCO fund of US$10 billion and to found a SCO Regional Development Bank.[145] The CU and CES are, at least partly, Russia's response to the growing penetration of CA markets by China. Transport, electricity, communications, agriculture and agribusiness are deemed to be integrating factors that may slow down the economic dissociation between Russia and Central Asia as a result of Chinese pressure. The CU does not actually slow China's progress; nevertheless the political message of Russian-led regional reintegration has been clearly relayed.

Competition between the CSTO and SCO has become more visible since 2005, when Moscow hampered Chinese attempts to develop strategic cooperation – despite the official discourse from the Kremlin on the Russian-Chinese honeymoon – and requested that the SCO remain a framework only for superficial military cooperation.[146] The SCO has therefore failed hitherto in its competition with the CSTO for the reasons that it was not designed to be a supranational organisation, implying the reduced sovereignty of its members, it does not have a defined military structure like the CSTO, and that it does not seek to create multilateral military or police units. Moreover, neither Russia nor China is inclined to disclose sensitive information about new technologies and their respective military complexes. While the two capitals do not officially see themselves as potential enemies, a history of distrust and a sense of inevitable rivalry still dominate.[147]

4.4.3. Competition between Russian-led institutions and efforts to integrate into the world market

In the post-Soviet context, the emergence of growing competition between the economic strategy of reintegration advanced by Russia and the policies of integration into the globalised economy seems evident. The CU's unifying regulations have partially reshaped trade flows

143 Stephen Aris, Eurasian Regionalism. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

144 Vladimir Paramonov and Aleksey Strokov, Ekonomicheskoe prisutstvie Rossii i Kitaia v Tsentral'noi Azii (Swindon: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Central Asian Series, December 2007).

145 Alexander Cooley (2012): 88.

146 Marlene Laruelle, 'Moscow's China dilemma: Evolving perceptions of Russian security in Eurasia and Asia', in Eurasia's Ascent in Energy and Geopolitics. Rivalry or partnership for China, Russia, and Central Asia? eds., R.E. Bedeski and N. Swanström (London: Routledge, 2012): 76–91.

147 Ibid.

within Central Asia. In 2010, overall trade among the three CU member states increased by a quarter, and by two-thirds in 2011 when compared to 2009.[148] However, this can be attributed to being mainly an effect of the revival of the economy after the 2008 crisis than a positive effect of the CU as such.

One of the CU's main negative impacts has been to make the Kyrgyz economy, as well as the Tajik economy, albeit it to a lesser extent, more fragile as a result of the higher prices for Russian and Kazakh imports, especially fuel and food. Kyrgyzstan's role as a central platform for re-exporting Chinese products in the whole region has been drastically modified.[149] The CU protects economies with industrial or agricultural output such as Russia or Kazakhstan, but has no advantage for the Kyrgyz economy, which barely produces anything and benefits more from being open to global flows. Because of the CU, the Kyrgyz economy is gradually losing one of its main assets, as flows of Chinese products through Kyrgyzstan are now hampered not only by Uzbek border controls but also by new customs duties they incur upon entering Kazakhstan. In 2010–2011 accordingly, there was a reduction in the number of Kyrgyz wholesale traders by 70–80 percent and 30–40 percent in retail traders.[150]

The consequences of the CU on Kazakhstan's economy are more complex to assess, with contradictory statements on the matter.[151] The Eurasian Development Bank, which defends the benefits of the CU, states that it is a positive mechanism in terms of GDP growth, unification of industrial strategies and the higher efficiency of energy and transport. [152] On the contrary, however, World Bank experts insist on the negative effects.[153] The abolition of customs duties has enabled a few Kazakh agricultural and industrial products to more easily enter Russian and Belarussian markets. Several tens of Russian and Belarusian companies have relocated to Kazakhstan, which offers a lighter taxation system. However, Kazakhstan also has to contend with the arrival of more competitive Russian products, while Russia's various non-tariff barriers still block a large number of Kazakh products.[154] More importantly, the reduction in trade relations with countries outside of the CU will prove detrimental in the long term to the Kazakh economy, which requires foreign investment and technological and knowledge

148 'Trade within the Russia-Kazakhstan-Belarus Customs Union: Early evidence', EBRD blog (10 July 2012), http://www.ebrdblog.com/wordpress/2012/07/trade-within-the-russia-kazakhstan-belarus-customs-union-early-evidence/ (accessed 25 November 2012).

149 Allan M. Shinn, Askar Beshimov and Azamat Usubaliev, Economic Consequences of the Customs Union for the Kyrgyz Republic (USAID, 2010); Alexander Pavlov, 'Assessing the Economic Effect of Kyrgyzstan's Accession to the Customs Union', in E. Vinokurov, ed., EDB Eurasian Integration Yearbook (Almaty: EDB, 2012), 62–75.

150 Erica Marat, 'Kyrgyzstan Joins Russian-backed Customs Union', Akipress (April 2011), http://kabar.kg/eng/analytics/full/810; and 'CAFMI: The consequences of Kyrgyzstan entering the Customs Union', Central Asia Free Market Institute (26 December 2011), http://www.freemarket.kg/en/news/cafmi-consequences-kyrgyzstan-entering-customs-union (accessed 25 November 2012).

151 For a negative reading see Nargis Kassenova, 'Kazakhstan and Eurasian Economic Integration: Quick Start, Mixed Results and Uncertain Future', IFRI, Russie-Nei Reports no. 14, November 2012.

152 For a positive reading see Viktor Ivanter, Valery Geets, Vladimir Yasinskiy, Alexander Shirov and Andrey Anisimov, 'The Economic Effects of the Creation of the Single Economic Space and Potential Accession of Ukraine', in E. Vinokurov, ed., EDB Eurasian Integration Yearbook, 19–41.

153 Assessment of Costs and Benefits of the Customs Union for Kazakhstan. First Report under the Study of International Practice of Integration/Customs Union (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2012).

154 More details in Nargis Kassenova, 'Kazakhstan and Eurasian Economic Integration: Quick Start, Mixed Results and Uncertain Future', Paris: IFRI, Series Russie. NEI. Vision No. 14, November 2012.

transfers from outside Russia.[155] The price of importing Western equipment and materials has increased drastically, therefore reducing Kazakhstan's competitiveness and affecting its most innovative sectors.

The debate about the formation of a unified currency system or maintaining constant exchange rates for the CES national currencies is also very controversial and, with the exception of customs unification, the long-term efficiency of the CU is still unclear. The fact that the complete implementation of the CES has been postponed until 2016 is a sign both of the difficulties in implementing supranational mechanisms and a growing reluctance on the part of Kazakhstan. The CU is largely interpreted by Kazakh public opinion as a political decision taken by President Nazarbayev with the aim of protecting his regime under the Russian umbrella, the economic motivation of which, furthermore, is shaped by the influence of powerful oil and gas oligarchs with vested interests.[156]

This situation might change with Kazakhstan's membership of the WTO, even if negotiations remain hampered by several technical and legal issues.[157] The potential benefits of Kazakhstan joining the WTO would be considerable. It would enable it to liberalise its trade policies at a relatively low cost and to take advantage of easy commercial access to a large number of member states. It would see a number of signed but suspended agreements come into force. It would also help the CA states reduce their vulnerability to protectionist measures taken by their main trading partners. Membership would prevent frequent and sudden changes in tariffs, and provide a solid framework for the resolution of disputes. Faced with Chinese economic domination, integration into the WTO could also help CA states better regulate Chinese trade flows and product quality. Whereas Kyrgyzstan was long the only country in the region to be a member of the WTO, it has barely enjoyed any of these advantages because of its weak governance.[158]

5. Conclusions

5.1. Summary

There are many reasons why the CA region is reluctant to engage in regionalism:

- A cult of state sovereignty, which, obtained in 1991, the foreign policy agendas of the CA states staunchly defend;
- An identification of regional integration with the Soviet experience and consequent distrust towards delegating any power to supranational bodies;
- The sentiment that contemporary state-building is linked to a process of dissociation from one's neighbours;
- Personal animosities between presidents in a general context of presidentialist regimes.

155 World Bank, Assessment of Costs and Benefits of the Customs Union for Kazakhstan, Report No. 65977-KZ. (Washington, DC: World Bank, 3 January 2012).

156 Authors' interviews with several Kazakh experts, Almaty and Astana, December 2012.

157 Evgeny Vinokurov, Murat Zhadraliyev and Yury Shcherbanin, (2009): 44.

158 Eli Keene, Kyrgyzstan and the Customs Union, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1 May 2012), http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/01/kyrgyzstan-and-customs-union/aleg (accessed 25 November 2012).

Another, less explicit factor is the fact that the local patronage systems, based on the collusion of political and economic interests among incumbent elites, and forming in some instances a state/crime nexus even,[159] are not amenable to any kind of regional integration.

Others factors are related to intra-CA realities and dynamics. The five countries have very different geopolitical outlooks. From the Turkmen decision to leave the CA sphere at the beginning of the 1990s, to the Uzbek logic of asserting its strategic autonomy (with a nod in the direction of the US) and the Kazakh policy of Eurasian integration – there is little in common to be found in such stances. Moreover, the growing economic dissociation between the region's countries makes the coordinating of strategies all the more complex. Kyrgyzstan does not have the same relation to trading Chinese products as Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan does not have the same drivers for integration with the Russian market as Kazakhstan.

Geopolitical rivalries between external actors also shape regional projects in which the economy is placed at the service of strategic concerns. Four broad axes are taking shape: the Eurasian or post-Soviet axis, in which Russia plays a major role, with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan at its core; the Chinese axis, which is turning the region towards Asia-Pacific; the Western axis, which is pushing for the development of pan-European or transatlantic cooperation; and the Islamic axis, which is encouraging Central Asia's integration into the *Ummah* in general, and into the Turkish-Iranian-Afghan world in particular. Opportunities towards South Asia have not yet materialised in the form of regional organisations.

These complexities have two major consequences for regional organisations in Central Asia:

- They operate on the basis of the lowest common denominator, and minimal consensus, which often works to foster the status quo rather than build any sort of regional architecture.
- They operate in an essentially declaratory mode, granting little interest to implementation mechanisms, with limited impact on realities on the ground. That many regional organisations are short on efficacy is not necessarily considered a failure by the CA states. Indeed, they consider, without openly admitting it, that their decision-making autonomy can best be preserved by developing a rhetoric of common interest with external actors and by pointing to these actors' projections of power onto the region. Efficiency on the ground is therefore seen as secondary.

Regional organisations face many similar difficulties in other regions of the world. In this regard, the elements discussed here are not unique to Central Asia. Regional cooperation is never easy and implementation is traditionally weak. Effective governments are needed to ensure productive cooperation, which is not the case in Central Asia where governance is low and decision-making inconsistent.[160] Moreover, the general failure of regional organisations in Central Asia does not mean bilateral agreements have been the only successful solution.

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159 Alessandra Ceccarelli, 'Clans, politics and organized crime in Central Asia', Trends in Organized Crime, vol. 10, no. 3 (2007): 19–36; Saltanat Berdikeeva, 'Organized Crime in Central Asia: A Threat Assessment', The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, vol. 7, no. 2 (2009): 75–100; Erica Marat, 'State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan', Silk Road Paper (Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, 2006).

160 Johannes F. Linn, 'Central Asian Regional Integration and Cooperation: Reality or Mirage?', in E. Vinokurov, ed., EDB Eurasian Integration Yearbook (Almaty: EDB, 2012) 96–117.

Many preferential bilateral economic agreements have been signed only to have never been implemented or ratified.

5.2. Key conclusions

- **Lack of intra-Central Asia leadership for integration**: The states of Central Asia have been unable to create regional organisations within which they alone would decide collective strategies. Either they have lacked the political will (as in the case of Turkmenistan since independence, and Uzbekistan since the second half of the 1990s), or they have not reached agreement on which country would lead integration efforts (based on competition between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and that between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan).[161] This situation has weakened each state by rendering a group dynamic impossible. Such a dynamic would have enabled them to negotiate on equal terms with more powerful external actors, especially Russia and China.

- **External leadership for integration and its limits:** The only organisations visibly working on local political, economic and social realities are those impelled by Russia or China. However, even if Moscow and Beijing seem to be in a position of strength in their respective organisations, CA governments have managed to impose their own agendas, in particular through empty-chair or obstructionist policies. Many Russian- or Chinese-backed projects have failed, and despite the large power differentials, neither Moscow nor Beijing has wanted to force the hand of reluctant CA states. The main function of Russian- or Chinese-backed regional organisations is to manage the maintenance of Russian influence and/or China's rise to power in the region, not to resolve intra-CA tensions. The multilateralism of these organisations is most often a façade. In practice, decisions are made in a bilateral framework between the external power and the respective CA national governments. These regional organisations thus legitimise a series of parallel bilateral relations.

- **Regional organisations 'à la carte':** Other organisations present in the region are often more declaratory than effective. They play an important role of socialising CA states in the international arena, but have not achieved their own objectives, which are often overblown. Central Asia has not become a continental trade and transport hub, as per the goals of ECO, TRACECA, INOGATE, and ACD; nor has it become a space in which security is addressed in a coordinated fashion, as desired by CICA, PfP, BOMCA and OSCE. It is not that these regional organisations do not undertake and complete projects, but that their projects are more limited in scope than their objectives, and their sustainability, once external actors cease to apply pressure, is not guaranteed.

- **Regional organisations are not agenda-setters**: Agreements by regional organisations are not considered binding. Fundamental stakes remain part of domestic agendas, which are dependent on the evolution of established elites and their conception of regime security. Security objectives have top priority over economic development, and propositions advanced by external actors and international organisations are only retained insofar

[161] This was an idea developed by Johannes Linn under the auspices of CAREC.

as they are of interest to domestic agendas. Moreover, many organisations are seen as advancing principles that are dangerous to the established order in Central Asia. Islamic organisations are viewed with repugnance as they tend to promote a type of Islam which is interpreted as a potential political rival to the legitimacy of the secular regimes, and pan-European organisations promote democratic principles that are seen as dangerous to regime security.

- **Lack of credibility of regional organisations:** Questions can be asked about the impact of the long-term gulf between the declarations of regional organisations and their realisation on the ground. This gap probably devalues the organisations in the eyes of CA citizens, and consolidates the ruling elite idea that signed agreements are not binding. The lack of transparency of funds that the region receives from regional organisations is problematic in an area with endemic corruption, especially now that main donor countries are in budgetary crisis. Finally, in order to operate, some international and regional organisations are obliged to support the patronage practices of incumbent elites, and are therefore perceived by part of the population as supporting maligned regimes. This is the case, for example, with Islamic organisations like the IDB, which are viewed with mistrust by local Muslim populations;[162] or with some UN institutions, which often finance the personal projects of members of presidential families.[163]

5.3. Prospects for evolution

Russia seems to have assessed the failure of post-Soviet organisations, whose decisions are based on consensus and the lowest common denominator. Since 2010, and more clearly since Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in May 2012, Moscow has decided to implement a new strategy to privilege regional structures with fewer members but higher degrees of cohesion. Uzbekistan's defection from the CSTO, and potentially from other Moscow-led organisations, will help build more cohesive organisations with fewer members, and also confirms Kazakhstan in its role as a second to Moscow and the leader of Eurasian integration in Central Asia. However, Moscow's ability to offer effective regional mechanisms to Central Asia remains unproven – whether economically through the CES or in terms of security through the CSTO – and even detrimental – with its current strategies in the CU framework dissociating Kazakhstan from Kyrgyzstan and weakening any prospect for regional unity.

It is in China's interest to continue to promote the SCO as its main multilateral and multipolar forum for engaging with Central Asia, while also fostering bilateral relations with each country of the region. Chinese economic penetration in trade and investments does not need supervision by a regional organisation to be successful, and even if the CES with Moscow develops, China will remain Central Asia's key trading partner and investor. On security, the SCO's failure to develop into a real tool is merely relative, as Beijing supports Russia's domi-

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162 Bruno De Cordier, 'The Development Space(s) of Non-OECD Aid Donors in Southern Eurasia: A Look at the Islamic Development Bank', Central Asia Economic Papers, no. 3, September 2012.

163 The second daughter of the Uzbek president, Lola Karimova has been appointed UNESCO Ambassador, with her charity foundation having received important funding from the European Commission. See 'European Commission qualifies its funding of Lola Karimova's charity', Uznews.net, 9 June 2011, http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&cid=31&sub=hot&nid=17341 (accessed 25 November 2012).

nant role in this domain and is not seeking greater involvement in what it considers a quagmire. The SCO's capacity to develop into a security platform in the years to come will depend mostly on Afghanistan's evolution, domestic instability in Central Asia and possible changes to the China-Pakistan strategic partnership.

Western countries in general, and the US in particular, do not have specific regional bodies to coordinate their multiple involvements in the region and/or to operate on equal terms with Russia- and China-led regional institutions. The mostly declarative Silk Road post-2014 mindset promoted by Washington does not possess a truly regional strategy. On the contrary, since the implementation of the NDN, tensions between CA states, especially Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, have worsened and the US has continued to negotiate bilaterally. It is also unlikely that Europe will implement regional instruments of a broad scope, given its own difficulties developing a common foreign policy and defence policy and the fact that member states are increasing their autonomy in foreign policy decisions.

Other regional organisations will find it difficult to change patterns of operation that have been in place for two decades. Organisations with an economic focus struggle to go beyond making budget allocations to renovate transport infrastructure, thus failing to address the real impediments to regional trade such as the lack of political will, endemic corruption, non-sustainability of infrastructure and the limited impact of management training programmes. Those with a security mandate have found it hard to go beyond what is largely an empty narrative on the need to fight collectively against instability – whether international terrorism, localised insurgency or drug-trafficking – and so to develop real mechanisms of collective management and action. Such mechanisms presuppose sufficient political will to share sensitive information, reform security services and the army, and improve transparency and civilian control over them.

5.4. Is Central Asia a 'region'?

As the case of Europe shows, regional integration is a long process – one that spans several generations and is not without its fits and starts. It can be supposed, then, that once the phases of state-building and nationhood are complete, generational change among CA elites will give rise to new leaders more amenable to some level of regional integration. It can also be assumed that the need for more regional cooperation will become increasingly clear in years to come, due to the need to better address home-grown and external security risks that destabilise some areas of Central Asia. Not only this, but there is also a need for CA economies to be more competitive to attract new investments and technology transfers.

However, it can also be maintained that the countries of the region will remain opposed or reluctant to engage in regional integration due to the growing divergence of domestic political cultures, economic development strategies and geopolitical orientations. With generational changes and leadership successions, it is also possible to picture a more divided Central Asia, one in which nationalist agendas and symbolic and economic competition become accentuated. In this case, it would be appropriate to question and rethink the legitimacy of keeping all five countries in one framework. What are the premises of CA unity? Why should Kazakhstan maintain links with Tajikistan rather than with Russia? Why should Tajikistan

align itself with Kyrgyzstan rather than Afghanistan? And what draws Turkmenistan to Uzbekistan rather than Iran or Turkey?

At the same time, however, there are many factors pushing the region's countries to work together, including mutual interests in solving border tensions, regulating labour migration, sharing water and improving customs regulations. Without coordinated management of these issues, each country will suffer in its economic development and decision-making autonomy. If they are to become real agenda-setters in Central Asia, regional organisations must address the critical issue of separating issue-based dialogue from the grand narrative on integration. External actors have their share of responsibility in this. So far they have insisted on integration as a miracle solution for all the region's ills, creating an unbridgeable gap between objectives and their fulfilment. Moreover, they have used integration as an argument to advance their own geopolitical agendas. They have thus indirectly consolidated the idea among the CA establishments that satisfying the power projections of external actors is enough, and that implementation of agreements is auxiliary. To be effective, regional organisations must move away from a narrative of grand design and instead promote coordinated projects that are more modest, focused, controlled, transparent, sustainable and issue-based.

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