

THE CIS AND GUAM

Andrey GROZIN

*Political scientist,
department head at the Institute of the CIS Countries
(Moscow, Russia)*

From almost the very beginning of the post-Soviet era, the territory the Soviet Union left behind became an arena of tough rivalry and confrontation among several world centers of power. The United States, Russia, China, the European Union, and the Muslim world can be described as the most active players. The latter is represented by individual countries and official organizations, as well as illegal radical structures. Nearly all of the actors mentioned above (with the exception of China, because of its special position) are more or less interested in trimming Russia's influence across the post-Soviet expanse, thus strengthening their own position in the region.

America is especially active in this respect; to achieve its aims it is using both governmental structures and all sorts of NGOs and nonprofit organizations operating in the post-Soviet states. Washington has already spent a lot of money to entice the ruling circles of several of them to its side.

The Commonwealth of Independent States is obviously losing its importance as an interstate integration structure. Today, we can even say that it is falling apart into individual structures, each with foreign policy orientations of its own. The first signs of this were apparent at the very early stage: Ukraine, for example, refused to sign the CIS Charter.

Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan remain Russia-oriented, partly because of their membership in several regional structures of economic or military-political orientation: the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC).

On the other hand, several countries pooled their efforts to squeeze Russia at least out of the most important spheres of interstate relations. Supported by the United States, they set up a regional

organization of their own called GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) as a counterweight to the pro-Russian structures. In the last few years, the pro-Russian political forces in these countries have lost much of their former influence, not only in the foreign policy sphere, but also on the domestic scene. The Georgian leaders, for example, make no secret of their anti-Russian position, which gives Moscow reason to look at them as American puppets.

Despite the fact that GUAM was set up back in 1997, its international status is fairly recent: it dates to 2006 when the members gathered together in Kiev for their first summit.¹ It acquired a new name—the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM, a Charter, and headquarters in Kiev.

It should be said that all analyses of GUAM, the CIS, EurAsEC, and CSTO are based on analysts' political biases. If an analyst believes that American and EU influence in the post-Soviet expanse is obviously beneficial, he will spare no compliments when talking about the "post-Soviet democracies." More likely than not, such people tend to ignore the undemocratic developments in these countries. Typically enough, Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Grigory Karasin offered the following comment on the eve of the Vilnius GUAM summit, which marked the Organization's first decade: "So far it is hard to offer positive comments about an organization that has been working for ten years now. Time will show. It is much more interesting to discuss another aspect: the correlation between the United States (itself not a member) and the GUAM countries."² President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev was even more straightforward. In his interview to *El Pais* he said: "GUAM is a purely political structure and I don't believe that its horizons are vast."³

Any analyst who wants Russia to preserve its leading role in the post-Soviet expanse will go out of his way to present all Russia-dominated structures as peaks of political and economic efficiency, even if some of Moscow's not totally constructive steps do not fit the "black-and-white" picture.

The media seem to be fascinated with the question of whether the CIS and GUAM are partners or rivals. The shared opinion is that they are the latter rather than the former.

It was for many objective reasons that Central Asia moved to the center of attention of the pro-Russian and anti-Russian structures operating across the post-Soviet territory. Today, it is the scene of permanent and active geopolitical transformations of a revolutionary nature.

It should be said that in the early post-Soviet period Moscow was taking its time (a fairly long time to say the least) to formulate coherent "Central Asian" policies; what was more, the Russian Federation's ideas about what should be done in the region and how were pretty vague. No serious and systemic work was carried out with the elites of the newly independent states. Between 1991 and 1996 the Russian political leaders were mesmerized with their Euro-Atlantic orientation, which seriously crippled Russia's interests in Central Asia. Other forces moved in to pull the region to their side.

Today, Russia has not yet completely formulated its policies in this region of huge geopolitical and geo-economic importance, however, new trends can be discerned.

Recently, the situation has been gradually improving: Russia is acquiring its Central Asian tactics and the skeleton of its strategy, but sometimes Moscow acts impulsively as though trying to keep abreast of the United States and China.

Despite the frantic Western efforts, the region's rich natural resources are still "tied" to Russia by the region's limited access to the world market and the weakly developed communication networks of all kinds. The newly independent states regard Russia as their main trade partner, a transit

¹ See: I. Alekperova, A. Dubnov, "SShA otkazalis' voyti v GUAM. I budut tol'ko nabliudat' za nim," *Vremia novostey*, 19 June, 2007.

² A. Matveev, "'Ostrov' GUAM pod protektsiei NATO," *Voенно-promyshlennyi kur'er*, No. 40 (206), 17-23 October, 2007.

³ P. Bonet, "Occidente tiene un interés malsano en la energía kazaja," *El Pais*, 2 April, 2007.

territory for their hydrocarbon and other raw materials, the main supplier of weapons and military equipment, and a training base that produces highly skilled personnel.

Many of Russia's rivals can hardly reconcile themselves to this, which allows the absolute majority of Russian experts to quite rightly regard GUAM as a tool for undermining the Kremlin's influence in Central Asia.

The West is convinced that Moscow's continued domination in the transportation of energy fuels from Central Asia might make Russia the prevailing force there. The local countries will not be able to independently choose transportation routes. At worst, the Russia-Central Asia axis might develop into a "gas OPEC" and an energy club within the SCO. After that, Moscow's monopoly will become practically invincible.

There is no agreement in Europe about what could be described as energy security. This explains why the EU's position is fairly ambiguous: there are too many opinions about the right strategy inside the European Union itself.⁴ The EU members, in groups or individually, are looking for an acceptable solution to the problem called "diversification of supplies."

Seen from Vilnius and Warsaw, the Russian-German agreement on the Baltic pipeline looks like the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Poland joined forces with the Baltic countries to obtain fuel resources from Central Asia. For a long time now Warsaw has been trying, single-handedly, to convince Kazakhstan to send its oil via the Odessa-Brody oil pipeline.

This can hardly be done through GUAM: the volume of fuel produced in Azerbaijan is not growing fast enough, while its hydrocarbon reserves are much smaller than those of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

It should be said that many in the Russian expert community are convinced that GUAM counts on Caspian, or rather Azeri, oil. Some analysts tend to describe the Odessa-Brody-Gdansk project as the economic foundation of the "Baltic-Black Sea belt."

Meanwhile, Baku is barely coping with filling the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) to capacity. At first it moved about 10 million tons of oil every year, whereas to achieve its earning capacity the line should move five times more oil. This explains why the West spares no effort to convince Kazakhstan to send more oil to BTC. Back in the summer of 2006, Kazakhstan signed an agreement under which up to 25 million tons of oil from the Kashagan oil fields in the northern Caspian were to be sent to BTC.⁵ Very soon, however, it became known that the field would not start operating before 2011-2012.

Even if the West succeeds in attracting Kazakh oil into pipelines alternative to the Russian routes, the BTC will be loaded to only 75-80 percent of its capacity,⁶ which means that Azerbaijan will hardly agree to support the Odessa-Brody-Gdansk project at the expense of BTC.

It should be said that if Kazakh oil reaches Ukrainian territory through the Trans-Caspian pipeline and across Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the Black Sea bed, the final cost will be short of prohibitive.

The GUAM members repeated time and again that the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines will keep the bloc well supplied and will ensure Europe's energy security. For the same reason GUAM supported the American Nabucco project, which was expected to bring Caspian gas to Turkey and to Europe to compete with the Russian routes from Central Asia. Today, however, Nabucco's future looks uncertain.

Western political blunders and faux pas in Central Asia are obvious to all. In 2005, the White House's course in Uzbekistan aimed at the "regime democratization" failed ignominiously and forced

⁴ See: E. Bakyt, "Evropeyskiy Soiuz i Tsentral'naya Azia: energetika ili demokratiya?" *24 kg Information Agency*, 20 October, 2007.

⁵ See: M. Kalishevskiy, "Partner deystvuet iz podpol'ia," *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 21 March, 2007.

⁶ See: Z. Karazhanov, "Energeticheskoe GUAMtanamo," *Liter*, 11 May, 2007.

Tashkent to move away from Washington. In Kyrgyzstan, the events that followed the so-called Tulip Revolution demonstrated that the “revolutionary government” that replaced Askar Akaev preferred to follow the old foreign policy course. It is ready to serve anyone who has money and is willing to pay. Polish President Lech Kaczyński’s visit to Kazakhstan in the summer of 2007 failed to accomplish two main aims: he could not convince President Nazarbaev to attend the energy summit in Poland or to join the Odessa-Brody project. More than that: Kazakhstan’s oil fields remained closed to Poland’s top oil refinery, PKN Orlen.⁷

In the wake of his meeting with the Polish president, Nursultan Nazarbaev made an interesting statement to the effect that Moscow should be invited to join the Odessa-Brody-Gdansk project: “We should by all means involve the corresponding Russian structures in the process.” To load the pipeline, said the president of Kazakhstan, we should move the oil across Russia. In the absence of railways, the amount of hydrocarbons will depend on the throughput flow capacity of the North Caspian CPC oil pipeline. “We should treat the issue seriously,” said President Nazarbaev. “If we approach the matter in this way, we shall definitely start moving oil through the pipeline by 2011-2012.”⁸

Compared with the fairly useless trip of the Polish president, President Putin’s visit to Astana was much more productive. In May 2007, the Russian president toured Central Asia in an effort to bury the Trans-Caspian pipeline project (TCP), which could have left Russia out in the cold, and set up a single energy system with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In fact, it was an effort to set up an energy alliance in which Russia could control the routes via which Central Asian resources would reach the world’s markets.

President Putin’s visit showed that Russia was resolved to fight stubbornly and as long as it would take to ensure its continued monopoly on Central Asian fuel transportation routes and scored the first victory. The Agreement was signed on the Caspian Pipeline with a planned capacity of 30 billion cu m; construction works are scheduled for the latter half of 2008. Together with the new project, the sides discussed the task of increasing the carrying capacity of the old gas pipeline Central Asia-Center (CAC).⁹ A corresponding agreement was signed by Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

In June 2001, GUUAM acquired the status of an international regional organization, registered by the Yalta Charter signed by the GUUAM heads of state. Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova met in Yalta to lay a new Silk Road from Ukraine to Central Asia across the Black Sea and the Caucasus. ... The five states challenged time—and Putin—to realize the Silk Road idea before Russia, which is rapidly gaining confidence, interfered with this.¹⁰

In July 2002, the GUUAM presidents met for their regular summit and signed an agreement on a free trade area (which Kiev was actively lobbying) within their organization. This means that another attempt was made on post-Soviet territory to set up a single economic space. However, it remained purely declarative.

GUAM, a regional economic organization set up to strengthen integration ties between Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova, is one of the Great Game instruments. The absence of a Central Asian component is one of the instrument’s most obvious faults. This became even more obvious when Uzbekistan left the structure. It should be said that it joined the organization called GUAM, which was set up in 1997, two years later—in 1999.

For a long time the leaders of Uzbekistan expected that its economic and military-strategic cooperation with the U.S. and the leading supra-national financial and economic institutions would help

⁷ See: A. Asrorov, “Tsentral’noaziatskiy pasians. Khitry khod ES,” *Gazeta.kz*, 11 July, 2007.

⁸ V. Iakubian, “GUAM protiv Rossii—bakinskiy round,” *Regnum.ru*, 23 June, 2007.

⁹ See: S. Smirnov, “Tri kaspiskie trubyy,” *Ekspert-Kazakhstan*, 3 October, 2007.

¹⁰ See: G. Whittell, “Old Soviet States Defy Russia with Plan to Rebuild Silk Road,” *The Times*, 8 June, 2001.

Tashkent deal with its economic problems without insisting on painful economic and political reforms.

In 1995-1998 Tashkent started moving away from Russia: it was sure of itself. Foreign companies interested in its cotton, gold, and uranium opened their offices in the republic and started joint ventures. The European Union treated Uzbekistan and all the other Central Asian republics benevolently and increased the quotas on their products on its territory. This was done mainly for geopolitical considerations: the West did not want the “younger brothers” to return to the “older brother.”

The Uzbek leaders no longer looked at Russia as the leader or driving force, even though it was still vaguely described as a “strategic partner.” President Karimov pinned his hopes on the United States in the expectation of integrating his country into the world economy while preserving its political system intact, postponing radical changes, and offering no real protection to private property.

After the economic crisis that shook Russia in 1998, Uzbekistan chose to ignore political agreements and rejected the earlier military obligations. It concentrated on bilateral contacts in international relations.

In 1999, Uzbekistan left the Collective Security Treaty, and in April of the same year, it joined GUAM at the meeting of GUAM presidents in Washington, where they all came to celebrate NATO’s 50th anniversary.¹¹ GUAM became GUUAM, but the practical results of the name change were negligible: from the very beginning Tashkent had its doubts about the Organization’s economic value, even though the latter posed itself as an economic structure. Because of Washington’s support, the prospects looked mainly political.

Time and again the Uzbek president described the Organization as “half-baked,” while its political biases, he argued, reduced its economic development potential.¹²

The year 2003 ushered in a new development stage in Uzbekistan’s relations with Russia. Tashkent, disappointed with the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and other supra-national structures, received aid from other sources. Russian companies, among others, promised investments in the processing of agricultural products and oil production. In 2004, Russia and Uzbekistan signed not only an agreement on strategic partnership, but also a treaty on the joint use of the Air Force and air defense units.¹³

The rupture between Uzbekistan and GUAM appeared long before the Andijan events and the foreign policy U-turn that followed them. When leaving, Uzbekistan created as much noise as it could: its president refused to attend another regular summit, being occupied, according to his own statement, elsewhere.

On 13 June, 2002, the then Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov informed everyone that his country had left GUUAM and pointed out that its previous involvement had been prompted by the country’s desire to become part of multilateral economic cooperation; no positive results, though, had been registered after four years of membership, the minister concluded.

He summed up that his country left the Organization because of “the lack of progress.” A week later Uzbekistan corrected its previous statement, obviously under Washington’s pressure, by saying that it had merely “suspended its membership.” Indeed, on 16 June, the U.S. State Department issued a statement to the effect that America was convinced that continued GUUAM membership would strengthen Uzbekistan’s status as the regional leader and that Washington hoped that the Uzbek leaders would reconsider their decision.¹⁴ This could not be ignored—Uzbekistan left the Organization only after the Andijan events.

¹¹ See: E. Kurilenko, “‘Shehe ne vmerla’ GUUAM,” *GazetaSNG*, 27 January, 2005.

¹² See: A. Taksanov, “Tsirk uekhal, klouny ostalis’. Komu nuzhno Sodruzhestvo?” *Tribune-uz*, 9 February, 2005.

¹³ See: E. Liubarskaia, “Karimov luchshe grazhdanskoy voyny,” *Lenta.Ru*, 28 April, 2005.

¹⁴ See: V. Sergienko, “Nasledniki Timura,” *Kontinent* (Almaty), No. 20 (82), 16-29 October, 2002.

Today, Tashkent's position has de facto developed into a stumbling block on the road toward the aims the GUAM identified as its priorities in Central Asia. Uzbekistan is an important regional player, therefore all the more or less important joint projects require its involvement.

So far the West has failed to regulate its relations with Uzbekistan, a country against which sanctions were instituted. It should be said that its negative experience of cooperation with the United States taught the other Central Asian leaders to seek real investments in their economies rather than counting on statements.

Kazakhstan is another regional economic leader with its own ideas about regional strategies. Even when Astana signed the Caspian Declaration in Tehran in October 2007, or the Agreement on the Caspian Pipeline, it left a certain leeway to be able to deal with the infrastructural aspects of its national energy projects.

After losing Uzbekistan, the West concentrated on Kazakhstan as the regional heavyweight. Russia, in turn, has always regarded this country as its key regional partner.

Their partnership is not free from contradictions, mainly related to the development of the national energy complexes and transport infrastructure on which the fuel and energy complexes of both countries depend.

President Nazarbaev's response to the agreement between Russia, Bulgaria, and Greece on the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline illustrated the above: in his interview to Russian TV in March 2007, he said that without Kazakh oil the project is unlikely to be economically viable.¹⁵ So far the Russian companies, the project's main shareholders, have shown no haste in inviting their Kazakh colleagues to join the "Balkan pipeline consortium."

The Russian and Kazakh sides have not yet agreed on the conditions on which gas from the Karachaganak gas-condensate field in Kazakhstan would be supplied to the Orenburg Gas Refinery. The problem of increasing the carrying capacity of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) to the planned annual capacity of 67 million tons is pending. The CPC is used to move oil from the Tengiz oilfield in Kazakhstan to Novorossiisk, from where it is brought by tankers through the Black Sea straits to the world markets. In 2005, Moscow promised Astana that it would finally resolve the problem. Later, when Russian managers came to the CPC helm, the problem was pushed aside once more. So far the foreign oil companies have been deriving their oil export profits from the minimal transit payments to Russia. To acquire at least minimum profit, the Russian side was prepared to bankrupt the CPC.¹⁶

Moscow too has its own reasons for being displeased with Astana, which is rapidly increasing its energy potential: its position on the project to extend the Odessa-Brody pipeline to Plock in Poland remains uncertain; the same can be said about the Trans-Caspian project lobbied by the United States and the European Union, about which Astana has already stated that it intends to study the project further. What is more, Kazakhstan is involved in the BTC pipeline, which brings Caspian oil (albeit relatively small amounts of it) to the European market, bypassing Russia.

Recently, Kazakhstan has become involved in all sorts of economic projects without Russia's participation; Astana is working hard to use the CIS countries in which Moscow is losing its influence in its interests. It seems that the Kazakhstan leaders hope that the Kremlin has, on the whole, reconciled itself to the fact that its ally is stepping up its efforts to move to the forefront in the post-Soviet expanse, even when dealing with alternative export routes.¹⁷

¹⁵ See: A. Dubnov, "Rossiisko-kazakhstanskaia prokhlada. Nazarbaev peredelaet GUAM v GUAK," *Vremia novostey*, 20 March, 2007.

¹⁶ See: A. Sobianin, M. Shibutov, "Dozhdiomsia li rossiisko-kazakhstanskoy global'noy ekspansii?," *Respublika*, 25 May, 2007.

¹⁷ See: V. Vasil'eva, N. Pulina, "Luchshiy drug Rossii," *Moskovskie novosti*, 19 March, 2007.

For objective reasons Kazakhstan needs less dependence on the Russian transportation routes, particularly the Russian pipelines, even though Astana never fails to assure Russia of its friendship. In any case, Kazakhstan needs diversified fuel transportation routes.

It seems that Russia's "gas war" with Ukraine and Belarus, as well as Russia's sanctions against Georgia and Moldova spurred on Kazakhstan's diversification efforts.

On the one hand, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan want trans-Caspian pipelines to diversify fuel supplies to Europe, while on the other, neither Astana nor Ashgabad are prepared to pour money into the project: they are permitting the Western partners to move ahead.

Against this background, GUAM is hardly discernible; as distinct from the EU, which is working on its Central Asian strategy, GUAM has produced no documents related to the region so far.

In 2006, the second, after the CIS, geopolitical bloc on the post-Soviet expanse made a more or less important step by transforming itself from "simply GUAM" into the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM. So far, it has failed to address any of the outstanding problems.

Its practical activities are limited to regular annual summits and the usual practice of producing heaps of documents.

The decisions of the five summits were never executed, they were mere declarations designed to scare Moscow with alternative fuel transportation routes (primarily from Central Asia). The GUAM leaders expected the "pipelines" laid beyond Russian territory to play a dual role.

First, imperial-minded Moscow was to come forward with more concessions, preferences, written off debts, cheap fuel, etc.

Second, this policy was to attract the attention of the West and its political and financial institutions.

As soon as the Kremlin made its policy on the post-Soviet expanse more pragmatic, the situation changed radically. President of Uzbekistan Karimov seems to be the first to register this.¹⁸

At first GUAM was planned as an economic structure; its founders announced that their aim was the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transportation corridor laid outside Russia. "Years passed and GUUAM continued its sedate existence—the presidents met once a year and the joint commissions continued working and producing mountains of documents with no tangible results. The same can be said about the CIS for that matter. There was no corridor."¹⁹

GUAM, like the CIS, is not united. Here is an example: President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili refused to buy Russian gas at a "politically motivated price" in the hopes that Georgia's friends, Azerbaijan and Turkey, would help. No "diversification" followed, and Georgia continued buying the bulk of the gas it used from Gazprom.

The Georgian leaders pinned great hopes on the 2007 Krakow summit attended by Poland, Lithuania, and Rumania. The president of Kazakhstan engaged elsewhere (he was busy signing the Agreement on the Caspian Pipeline together with President Putin) missed the summit. This made it clear that the Southern (Balkan) and Northern (BTC) routes would catch the GUAM countries in a pincer movement. Georgian experts admitted that the West had lost this battle to Russia and that their country, which wanted to pose as America's reliable ally in the struggle for Caspian and Central Asian energy resources, had failed its patron.²⁰ Using energy sources as a political instrument, Moscow delivered a heavy blow to the West-East energy corridor on which Georgia had carved itself the role of a transit country.

¹⁸ See: "Sud'ba postsovetskogo prostranstva ostaetsia neizvestnoy," *Rossiyskie vesti*, 10 November, 2004.

¹⁹ A. Dmitriev, "SNG i GUUAM: peredel postsovetskogo prostranstva," APN, 30 September, 2004.

²⁰ See: "Est' li v Gruzii ekonomika?" *Eurasia*, No. 65, October 2007.

Georgy Khukhashvili, an expert in economic problems, has written that Moscow is tightening its energy control over Europe. Russia's strategy proved successful; it closed the energy circle, thus making the BTC and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines redundant. The expert is convinced that "Russia has grasped the initiative and nobody can do anything about this."²¹

It seems that this and other similar statements smack of overstatement: the struggle for control over the Caspian and Central Asian resources is just unfurling and the end is nowhere in sight.

Bit by bit, GUAM acquired a military-political component; this is a relatively recent development. Back at the 2003 GUUAM summit, Foreign Minister of Georgia Irakli Menagarisvili announced that the GUUAM members did not intend to set up a military bloc similar to the CSTO, since "it did nothing to ensure their security." At that time, GUUAM declared: "Many of our projects are related to the counterterrorist rather than the military sphere."²² On the eve of the 2003 Tbilisi summit there was a lot of talk among the Georgian military that GUUAM should strengthen its military component since Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan had just set up CSTO.²³

The GUAM documents say a lot about the member states joint counterterrorist activities, but so far the Organization is able to pool forces merely on paper: there is no information about practical steps.

The Organization has no consolidated military or any other program either. The GUAM members and the West, however, have one aim in common: many of the GUAM politicians want to bring their countries to NATO. This has been already decided in Georgia; Azerbaijan also has the chance to develop good partner relations with NATO; the idea is also lobbied in Moldova, even though this country time and again has talked about its neutrality. The political process in Ukraine is too vague to speak about NATO membership at the official level. We all know, however, that President Yushchenko and his team, as well as the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko that came second at the recent parliamentary elections, are actively lobbying the idea. It was announced that the country is ready to switch to NATO standards, while the Ukrainian Defense Ministry has entered into active contacts with NATO about military and military-technical cooperation.

The conflicts in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and the Transnistria may serve as another unifying factor: the countries may pool forces to fight the "unrecognized states" and to minimize Russia's influence in the post-Soviet expanse. Earlier, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Nino Burdjanadze openly said this at a presentation of the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly in Kiev. She pointed out that three out of the four GUAM countries faced a common problem called separatism, therefore each of them could help the others and also pool forces to repel the dual standards practiced "by certain countries which are fighting separatism on their own territories yet encouraging separatism in other countries."²⁴

So far this idea can hardly be realized. According to Russian political scientist Alexander Krylov, "the idea of a peacekeeping unit within GUAM has been discussed for many years now. Today, the political situation in Ukraine is not conducive to setting up a GUAM peacekeeping battalion. This can be done only if approved by the Supreme Rada, which is at daggers drawn with the president. Most of the deputies would not like to see Ukraine involved in the burning Caucasian developments and dispatch its troops to fight under command of others."²⁵

²¹ See: "Est' li v Gruzii ekonomika?" *Eurasia*, No. 65, October 2007.

²² E. Buzulukova, "Prioritet: nepochetnoe chlenstvo v klubakh po interesam," *Gazeta SNG*, 16 February, 2004.

²³ See: M. Vignanskiy, "Virtual'noe sopernichestvo. Deiatel'nost' GUUAM ozhivil strakh," *Vremia MN*, 26 May, 2003.

²⁴ Quoted from: A. Dmitriev, op. cit.

²⁵ Quoted from: S. Markedonov, "'Postsovetskie demokratii' vs SNG-2," *Politkom.Ru*, 22 June, 2007.

America will support the idea, but it will not be realized in practice. Moscow's position is not as important as the opposition of the people and the elites of the unrecognized republics.

Today Russia is actively seeking a formula to change the institutions on the post-Soviet expanse that will take into account the geopolitical split inside the CIS and the effectiveness of regional organizations (such as EurAsEC, CSTO and SCO). Today, however, the integration processes in the post-Soviet expanse depend, to a great extent, on the nature of mounting geopolitical rivalry between Russia and America. Success will depend on the balance of forces between the two centers of power. There are too many factors opposing the West's intention to gain access to Central Asia's resources via the Southern Caucasus and the Caspian. In fact, Russia's territory cannot be physically excluded from the oil and gas routes between Asia and Europe, particularly in view of Russia's wider oil and gas interests in Central Asia of the last decade.²⁶ While China and the European Union are competing over influence in Central Asia, Russia remains the only supplier of Central Asian fuels to Europe.

Central Asia has become one of the key points in this rivalry. This suggests that GUAM's biased approach to Central Asia (oriented toward energy resources and the routes for their transportation alone) should be revised in the near future to become a conception. If this does not happen, we can expect the post-Soviet Asian republics and GUAM to limit their cooperation even more.

²⁶ See: S. Samoylova, "Postsovetskie instituty: formula reformy," *Polikom.Ru*, 8 October, 2007.