

REGIONAL SECURITY

**ORGANIZATIONS AND
ALLIANCES IN CENTRAL ASIA:
COOPERATION PROSPECTS
AS SEEN FROM
MOSCOW AND LONDON**

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

Between 29 April and 1 May, 2008 we attended an international conference that discussed Central Asian security issues. Political scientists and politicians from 17 countries and several international structures gathered in Tashkent for this highly representative forum to assess the already obvious threats to Central Asian security; discuss the new and less obvious threats

and challenges; and outline potential cooperation trends aimed at ensuring regional security in the 21st century.

The authors, who by citizenship belong to the member states of “organizations and alliances that follow different vectors,” have taken the trouble of showing the road toward their countries’ potential partnership in the key regional

stability spheres. They deliberately avoided agitation and propaganda either of the “pro-Russian” or “pro-Western” security vectors in Central Asia to insist that cooperation rather than rivalry among the main actors present in the region can finally

produce a security system that will meet the national interests of the regional states and of the world community as a whole. This is an economically justified and civilized pattern of international relations.

Central Asia as a Target of Application of Diverse Forces: Does This Stimulate Cooperation or Fan Rivalry?

Everything going on in the 21st century is gradually transforming the Central Asian Region (CAR)¹ into a source of natural resources alternative to the volatile Middle East and the far from stable Caspian. The great powers and organizations/alliances whose interests clash in Central Asia have already appreciated the region’s newly acquired importance. They are the Soviet successor states (Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and other CIS members) and states of the Far Abroad (the U.S., India, Iran, Pakistan, Japan, and other members of the OSCE, EU, NATO, OIC, etc.). Their widening presence in the region is complicating the already intricate and fairly close relations. Cooperation and rivalry will intensify.

The Region under the Pressure of Global Trends

The new actors are not the only factor: the region is open to pressure of a global nature that might affect, in the mid-term perspective and to a certain extent, regional security.

They are:

- Depletion of sources of exported raw materials the world over accompanied by the growing prices for energy resources and the fiercer struggle over their supplies that not only affects the regional commodity, capital, and labor markets but also the national governance systems;
- Further polarization of international relations within interstate structures: the SCO and CSTO on the one hand, of which Russia is a member, and the Western structures (NATO and EU), on the other, which are involved more actively than before in regional developments;
- The possibility of the U.S. and NATO’s continued presence in the Central Asian sub-region, which has changed the strategic balance in the region previously seen as the Russian and Chinese rear;
- The transformation of China and India into new driving forces of world economic growth and their much more obvious influence in CAR where Russia still retains its domination;
- The factors responsible for limited economic growth in CAR created by traditional problems and the recent regional challenges (environmental issues, fresh water deficit, climate changes, etc.), which have moved to the fore;

¹ By the Central Asian Region the authors mean the part of Asia occupied by land-locked countries: the Central Asian sub-region (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) as well as their neighbors: Kazakhstan in the north, Mongolia in the east, and Afghanistan in the south.

- The persistent and probably stronger trade and capital movement disbalances that will cause fluctuation of exchange rates and make restructuring of national economies inevitable;
- The mounting outflow of the workforce from CAR caused by the gap between the region's employment capacity and population growth that burdens to an ever greater extent social securities of other countries, including Europe and Russia;
- The CAR states have found themselves in a zone where the great powers' interests clash (this is especially true of Russian-American, Chinese-American, and Russian-Chinese relations);
- The conflict in Afghanistan, which is still going on; its easily detected negative impact can be described as the main factor that is rocking not only the regional stability and security of Afghanistan's neighbors but also affecting the world community as a whole.

The above suggests that in the mid-term perspective no clear strategy of international relations in the region can be expected. In the first quarter of the 21st century stronger political and cultural diffusion against the background of economic integration will move to the fore as the dominating paradigm of regional developments.

The local states acting on their own are unlikely to preserve stability in the region; at the same time the economic and political interests of the outside actors are matched by their very different ideas about the region's future. There is a tendency to deny the Asian states the status of equal partners: they are rather seen as targets of all sorts of efforts and as a "disposable pawn in the geopolitical games of others." The Russian and Western, and the Eastern and Islamic security vectors are now competing in the region. There is the Russian Eurasian Expanse project, the U.S. Larger Middle East and Larger Central Asia projects, as well as the Chinese Assimilation project and the EU Integration project. Their current competition, however, looks fairly optimistic in contrast to the prospect of Central Asia being drawn into the Universal Islamic Caliphate, which would bury the local peoples' hopes for future stability.

The highly varied and far from even marginally unified interests of the outside actors in CAR, as well as the wide range of internal and external factors that objectively promote/interfere with cooperation explain why its real results are still far from concerted cooperation efforts in the security sphere.

These factors and the relatively short history of the local countries' independence account for the national leaders' far from stable ideas about national security and foreign policy priorities in political, economic and military spheres. The official ideas about security strategy are developing together with continued restructuring. This is best illustrated by Uzbekistan with its constantly changing foreign policy priorities: it started as a CIS member; then it went over to the pro-American GU-UAM, only to abandon it to develop relations with the CSTO, SCO and EurAsEC. In the future Tashkent may turn back: it is rebuilding its contacts with the West destroyed by the Andijan events. President Karimov confirmed this at the NATO Bucharest Summit in April 2008.

The Problems of Regional Stability and Security

Earlier we wrote in this journal² that unlike Europe, which has a consistent regional security NATO/EU system, the Caucasus and Central Asia are still building up their regional security

² See: R.N. McDermott, Yu. Morozov, "GUAM-NATO Cooperation: Russian Perspectives on the Strategic Balance in the Central Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3-4 (51-52), 2008, pp. 242-262.

structures. Today, the Central Asian structure can be described as multi-level, contradictory, and shapeless.

Today, regional stability hinges on the military-political agreements between the U.S./NATO and Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and other countries that do not completely trust each other. The West European structures prefer to develop military cooperation with them on the bilateral basis. The military representatives of the Central Asian countries are involved in peace-keeping partnership; linguistic cooperation; training of border guards, police and counterterrorist units as well as in reforming armed forces.

On the other hand, the regional countries are involved in bilateral cooperation with Russia and within CSTO. Their cooperation profits from the absence of a language barrier, the fact that the CSTO members receive military equipment and armaments at Russia's domestic prices; and the high professional level of the Russian instructors who train the troops for fighting in the mountains (the Russians' fighting experience was acquired in Afghanistan and the Caucasus).

In turn, China, one of the key actors in CAR, prefers to steer clear of military-political cooperation either with the West or CSTO despite the obvious threats to its national security and identical military security interests with at least some of the actors.

It should be said that so far, the counterterrorist coalition has not yet suppressed the sources of terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking on Afghan territory. The CSTO members are not involved in the military side of the ISAF peace-keeping mission—they mainly let it use their transit air space. Because of this and other miscalculations of the counterterrorist coalition, the threat of terror, extremism, and drug trafficking spreading to the neighboring states remains and has intensified. If the ISAF pulls out of Afghanistan, the Karzai government will be doomed; the Taliban will regain power and might move into Central Asia with the help of its strongly motivated "fifth column," the radical Islamist groups. This will destabilize the domestic situation. To avoid this all the international organizations present in the region (the SCO and CSTO, on the one hand, and NATO and the EU, on the other) should close ranks to address the current problems in the most effective way. This might push them toward a new model of interstate cooperation in the region, which presupposes similar or identical strategic interests of the CAR countries and the outside states (Russia, America, and China in particular).

In should be added that CAR is gradually turning into an arena of struggle between the values of the technogenic (Western) and traditionalist (Eastern) civilizations.³ The modernization now underway in the region has no local roots and no self-development inertia. It, in fact, contradicts the values of traditional Central Asian society. The ever-increasing pressure of the developed powers and their ideologies on the less developed Central Asian states has already revived in the latter traditionalist attitudes, which, in turn, intensify the mutual repulsion of cultures. The region's national, mostly conservative and East-oriented, communities inevitably add to the conflicting potential as their countries are gradually drawn into the sphere of Western interests. This potential is further strengthened by other internal factors: the relative weakness of democracy in Central Asia that coexists with the "clan" nature of state governance and the very real internal social and economic problems that might lead to conflicts resolvable solely by force. Its external factor includes the wave of Islamic radicalism and separatism as well as the spread of terror: this is how the destitute groups of the local nations respond to global challenges.

On the whole, the present situation suggests the first conclusion related to regional security: *in the military-political sphere the leading actors, who are often indifferently moving along parallel lines, are merely duplicating their efforts and acting at random. This can hardly promote a common cause.*

³ For more detail, see: N. Omarov, "The Century of Global Alternative: A New Security Expanse in Post-Soviet Eurasia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (26), 2004, p. 37.

Domination of Any of the Outside Actors is an Illusion

We have already written that a fairly large number of outside actors are operating in the region. An analysis of their approaches to the security issues at the level of states and international organizations and alliances reveals that their ideas of ensuring CAR security are fairly one-sided: they support either the officially accepted national ideas or the approaches accepted by those regional international organizations to which these states belong. The Russian experts, for example, prefer to ignore Western initiatives while the EU and NATO members are promoting the ideas and projects of bilateral cooperation with the CAR countries in the security sphere, choosing to ignore the initiatives of Russia and its SCO and CSTO colleagues. During international discussions the sides either ignore or belittle the efficacy of the suggestions offered by their opponents. There is an obvious desire to push opponents to the region's margins. This does nothing good for regional stability; the local states find it hard to choose a leader in the security sphere from among the outside forces. However, hopes that in the future one of the outside actors will gain a monopoly in the region are unfounded for several reasons.

- *First*, the Central Asian states are pursuing multi-vector foreign policies orientated toward cooperation with as many partners as possible. They have several key partners, the roles of whom are limited to one of the main spheres (economics, politics, and security); none of them, though, plays a decisive role in all spheres of national development, which balances out their influence on the country's domestic and foreign policies.

Different vectors of national interests allow the CAR states to take part in various integration structures that are developing simultaneously in four vectors: all of them (with the exception of Turkmenistan) are members of the EurAsEC, CSTO, and SCO—this is the pro-Russian vector; their membership in the OIC, the Islamic Bank of Development, and the OEC belongs to the Islamic vector; and their involvement with the OSCE, EAPC, Partnership for Peace NATO program, and the European Union Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights programs belongs to the European development vector.

- *Second*, Russia's diplomatic and economic resources in Central Asia inherited from the past should not be ignored either. The Russian Federation is more than merely a long-term neighbor of the Central Asian countries—it is a power that is rapidly regaining its former regional prestige and influence. The Central Asian states and Russia have many civilizational features in common supported by cultural and language affinity, educational systems, personal relations and family ties, and the fairly large Russian-speaking Central Asian diaspora. These can be described as Russia's geopolitical advantages: it is a natural and constantly present factor involved in the region's developments. Economic, political, and military cooperation with the Central Asian states is developing along bilateral and multilateral lines. No matter what might happen in the region, Moscow, tied to it by allied and other contacts, will never leave it and will always remain a factor of influence. Moscow's multi-vector economic cooperation with the region within the EurAsEC, military cooperation within the CSTO, cooperation with NATO within the Partnership for Peace program, and cooperation with China within the SCO leaves it free to maneuver in the military-political and economic context under all the changing circumstances.
- *Third*, it would have been naïve to ignore the Central Asian republics' active involvement in the regional structures of security and economic development (the CSTO, EurAsEC, and SCO).

These organizations, which are recognized at the international level, differ from similar structures (the CIS being one of them) by their “relatively limited” pragmatism—they are orientated toward either economic or military-political cooperation, as well as realistic aims and tasks. The CSTO, for example, has a regional collective security subsystem—The Collective Rapid Deployment Forces—able to deal with military threats in Central Asia. In addition, there is the Customs Union, which is being consistently built up within the EurAsEC. It is expected to create institutional prerequisites for a better business climate for foreign locally operating companies. Decision-making in these organizations is based, very much as in the European structures, on the democratic principle of consensus: one state—one vote, irrespective of the states’ “weights.” In this way the Central Asian SCO members maintain the balance of interests with Russia and China.

- *Fourth*, the United States and the EU and NATO members will continue building up their presence in Central Asia by developing partnership relations with the local countries in the economic, military, and other spheres. They have enough money to pay for the region’s energy projects, which would otherwise remain unrealized. No matter how closely Russia and China cooperate with the local states, they do not have the kind of money Washington and Brussels are prepared to pour into the energy projects. More than that, Western energy companies use the latest absolutely indispensable technologies. Those holding forth about Asia’s geographic distance from the United States and Western Europe are not taken seriously. Indeed, American companies are engaged in oil production in Kazakhstan; they could just as easily invest their money in energy projects in the other republics.
- *Fifth*, it is highly unlikely for several reasons that Moscow and Beijing, on the one side, and Washington and Brussels, on the other, will stir up confrontation in the near future that could inevitably damage their relations. China and Russia believe it vitally important to preserve positive relations with the West and are carefully avoiding potential complications. China, for one, cherishes its unprecedented financial and economic relations with the United States. The local countries themselves are very positive about America’s presence in the region for economic and security reasons. A revived Cold War would cost Central Asia its stability, something that none of the entities of international relations involved in international projects on a bilateral and multilateral basis want.

The political, economic, and military realities in the region suggest that *none of the leading powers will gain regional domination based on their national interests and possibilities; none of the outside countries and organizations on their own can effectively oppose the traditional and non-traditional threats and challenges in the region and the adjacent areas.*

Identical Interests as the Starting Point of Cooperation and Security

Extremism, national separatism, international terrorism, and other challenges, including non-traditional “soft ones,” which are all equally dangerous for the internal and external actors, provide the most powerful integration impetus for ensuring Central Asian stability and security. An analysis of what has been done in the last decade to keep these threats in check has convincingly demonstrated that reliance on military force, the law-enforcement structures, and special services is hardly enough.

A coordinated and balanced international policy aimed at neutralizing the regional threats and challenges has become an objective necessity. We are convinced that in practical terms this approach can take the form of a *joint anti-crisis development strategy for CAR which will bring together local actors, world powers, and organizations and alliances that need stability. The appalling conditions of a large part of the local population and the mounting threat of international terrorism mean that these strategies should be based on social and economic measures.*

Economic Cooperation: Possible Trends

Economic cooperation among the international actors is the cornerstone of Central Asian integration. Indeed, sustainable free trade areas and common markets are based on cooperation. Economic integration in CAR, however, cannot be achieved merely through free trade since more likely than not the interests of the exporters and importers might be opposite. Integration should be based on harmonized economic interests of individual states and international corporations in the context of international production and scientific-technical integration programs and JVs.

Multisided economic cooperation provides a suitable context within which experts or international corporations could suggest competitive programs for at least a couple of large-scale projects equally attractive to the limited number of main actors within the region and countries outside the region. We have in mind the Asia-Europe transportation routes, water arteries to Central Asia's arid zones, and power supplies from Asian states to neighboring countries. The countries of the region would welcome the competitive basis of such projects. The projects could bring together Western and Russian-Chinese energy, money, technologies, and services, as well as the Central Asian workforce.

Transportation of energy resources to the world markets, for example, cannot be organized outside an agreement between the producers and the consumers, the states that supply transportation infrastructure and the countries prepared to pay for its extension. It should be borne in mind that the European Union, one of the largest (along with India and China) consumers of regional energy resources, has wide interests in Central Asia. In the future either the SCO or the EU could shoulder the burden of sorting out the conflicting interests and balancing the identical interests of energy resource producers and consumers and those prepared to invest in the energy sphere.

Afghanistan is another potential sphere of cooperation. To restore peace and order the country badly needs a more ramified highway network: for example, Afghanistan and India might pool forces to build the Zaranj-Delaram highway that will join the Garland road in Afghanistan, thus creating access to the Iranian port of Chah Bahar and, later, to the ports in the west of India. It will connect India with Central Asia via Iran and Afghanistan; the Chah Bahar-Termez (Uzbekistan) stretch will shorten the route to the seacoast by 1,000 km.

Water resources, badly needed to restore and develop agriculture in Afghanistan, are another stabilization component. There are several solutions, one of which includes the Amu Darya. Afghanistan's water infrastructure needs money for its development, which means that not only Uzbekistan and Tajikistan but also international organizations should regard it as a priority.

Power supply is another important stabilization factor for Afghanistan and the region. Kabul and the adjacent areas can use the electric power supplied from Puli via the Salang Pass. The power stations in Termez (Uzbekistan) now under construction will also be able to supply Afghanistan with electricity. For obvious reasons only international organizations and transnational corporations willing to help restore the destroyed infrastructures and bring stability to Afghanistan have enough money to fund the power line project.

Military-Political Cooperation: Possible Trends

A more intensive dialog between the security structures that follow different vectors and their cooperation in the military-political sphere, in the joint use of political, military, and other methods being used against the sources of threats is one of the components leading to stability and security in CAR.

The hope for a more intensive dialog is based on NATO's official statement made at the Istanbul Summit to the effect that it was prepared to share the burden of preserving stability and security in Central Asia with the CSTO. This makes a dialog indispensable: the zones of interests and influence of both structures are superimposed. The CSTO has already taken the first step toward cooperation with the Alliance in the main spheres of their relations.⁴ The SCO has already set up a contact SCO-Afghanistan group.

Real cooperation in the stability and security spheres will not be achieved soon, which means that from the practical point of view it is advisable to start cooperation in the promising spheres of equal interest for Russia, the Central Asian countries, the U.S., and the NATO/EU members. They are fighting against international terrorism, drug trafficking, proliferation of WMD and their technologies, and other new threats. These are common tasks, which call for cooperation rather than rivalry.

At the initial stage of military-political cooperation between the security structures of different vectors the sides should build confidence. The armies of all the states involved can act together along the following lines: modification of military exchanges, into which young officers should also be drawn; extended cooperation in military training; discussion of a wider range of issues—from counterterrorist actions to peace keeping in all its forms—to extend efficient cooperation in the future; further development of the operational compatibility of troops and forces as well as of compatible means of communication and information; overcoming the language barrier; and exchange of experience in training contingents in mountain conditions (this is especially important for the personnel of the NATO and CSTO airbases in Tajikistan).

Further cooperation in the security sphere should advance in the following directions: drawing closer on issues of international, regional, and national security; containment, on a priority basis, of the threats and challenges to the vital interests of states and international organizations; reliance on political and diplomatic methods when dealing with disagreements between states and for conflict prevention; and interaction between transnational organizations and security structures on problems of mutual interest.

This would help to strengthen the position of organizations and alliances in the security sphere in all countries, including Afghanistan. In order to check the spread of terror, extremism, and drugs from Afghanistan it is absolutely indispensable to close the frontiers and use the latest technology for this purpose. The Central Asian member states of the SCO and CSTO and NATO/EU members will equally profit from this. In fact, the members of the European Union and the Alliance may extend very much needed aid to the regional countries. It will be useful to discuss the advisability of creating a joint unit based on special CSTO and NATO forces to stop the flow of drugs from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan will never become a peaceful country without wide international support. For this reason the initiative President Karimov of Uzbekistan laid on the table at the NATO/EAPC summit in

⁴ On 8 July, 2004 CSTO Secretary-General N. Bordiuzha sent a letter to NATO Secretary General Jaap Hoop Scheffer in which he outlined the main spheres of a dialogue and cooperation between the two organizations.

Bucharest in 2008 looks highly adequate. He suggested that talks concerning Afghanistan should be resumed and the 6 + 2 format (China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran and Pakistan + the RF and U.S.), which was in effect until 2001, should be extended to the 6 + 3 format to include NATO. It is expedient to discuss possible cooperation between the contact SCO-Afghanistan group and the 6 + 3 project to identify the fields of common SCO and NATO interests in the security sphere and lay a cornerstone of future regional cooperation. This will allow all the sides involved to identify the acceptable cooperation fields with respect to Afghanistan.

The 6 + 3 format allows the sides to move away from discussions at the SCO and NATO forums within EAPC⁵ toward meetings and consultations of the heads of secretariats of both structures to identify the fields, aims, tasks, and vectors of future cooperation and proceed later to specific projects and programs. On the whole this will facilitate the progress toward better contacts between the SCO and NATO members to promote partnership between them.

The military-political resource of a dialog and bilateral partnership accumulated by some of the CSTO and NATO members within Partnership for Peace program should be taken into account in the context of possibly combining individual cooperation with the collective CSTO-NATO dialog. This means that the experience of bilateral contacts between CSTO and NATO members in the Partnership for Peace format should be tapped to the full in order to establish a dialog on the cooperation initiative. To pave the road toward the suggested forms of a dialog and cooperation it is advisable to assess, in a constructive way, the method of autonomous individual relations that has already taken shape within the Partnership for Peace program.

It is equally useful to take a closer look at the experience of those states that have acquired the status of special partnership with NATO; Russia's positive experience of advanced cooperation with NATO with the Russia-NATO Council deserves more attention. Systematization and exchange of experience could help the sides to find their bearings in the developing system of bilateral partnerships. An analytical survey would assist each of the CSTO members to correlate its bilateral cooperation with NATO and the dynamics of other CSTO partners within the Partnership for Peace program.

The level of Russia-NATO partnership should serve the landmark for cooperation between the other CSTO/SCO members and NATO as a factor of stronger confidence and a collective dialog. This approach would make possible to negotiate more harmonized political and military-political navigation of the states within all the formats of relations with NATO (individual partnership and collective cooperation). An improved institution of permanent coordination consultations among the representatives of the CSTO/SCO members in NATO could serve as a coordinating mechanism. The mechanism of consultations on security issues in the CSTO-NATO responsibility zone with representatives of members of other international organizations (the EU, OSCE, etc.) may improve coordination of all the steps taken by the sides.

It should be said that peacekeeping will become the central function of the CSTO in the near future. A political decision on joint peacekeeping activities has been already made.⁶ Russia and the Central Asian CSTO members can learn a lot from NATO in the field of peacekeeping, in particular in the system of readying and using the CIMIC forms and methods designed to restore the civilian infrastructure within the zone of a peacekeeping operation. The Russian author had a chance to assess

⁵ The EAPC format is used as a forum at which Central Asian countries and Russia can exchange opinions with NATO members. It does not presuppose concrete military-political steps on the issues on which the sides previously agreed.

⁶ The CSTO peacekeepers will be used in three main regimes: the main one within the CSTO framework; the second, and no less important, within the CIS, if approved by the U.N. Security Council and the states involved in the conflict; and the global regime, at the U.N.'s request.

their effectiveness at NATO training centers for peacekeepers and during the operation in Afghanistan while watching the PRT in action.

The Alliance could act as coordinator in the training the Central Asian and Russian peacekeepers in the CIMIC field for their potential involvement in the multinational peacekeeping forces. The 21st century has already provided numerous opportunities for joint peacekeeping activities. The heads of state and government of the NATO members and Russia, for example, have reached an agreement on cooperation in crisis regulation.⁷ It was decided to develop the Generic Concept of Joint NATO-Russia Peacekeeping Operations. The first document was created by the Workgroup of the Russia-NATO Council.⁸ It could be used to develop relations between the Organizations in peacekeeping; when an “anti-crisis response” calls for joint actions in any corner of the world, this becomes even more important.

Cooperation in Other Spheres

It should be said that humanitarian cooperation between the Central Asian countries and international organizations is based, very much as before, on bilateral relations. The reason is simple: multifunctional international structures (especially if they have declared priorities that are more global and significant from the security perspective) rarely concentrate on humanitarian cooperation. In addition, joint humanitarian actions cannot be realized without a collective funding mechanism; this has not been achieved to address priorities, which explains its absence in the sphere of humanitarian cooperation.

At the same time, the conflict potential in CAR is fed by the Islamist fundamentalist centers outside the region, which creates not only a political and military but also a humanitarian problem. Stability cannot be achieved in a region where part of the population can be described as legally and religiously uneducated and politically immature and in which large social groups of unemployed and functionally illiterate young people are swelling because of the complex social and economic situation.

Cooperation between organizations/alliances for the sake of regional security and stability should look at the possibility of long-term joint research program designed to study the sources, causes, and stimuli of religious extremism and the channel through which it, and the money that supports it, penetrate CAR. It is equally important to draw academic and practical forces together to launch collective international studies according to previously drawn-up plans in order to predict the places where ethnic intolerance and religious extremism might flare up next and assess their possible intensity.

The ideologists of contemporary separatism, Islamic extremism, and terrorism are past masters when it comes to manipulating public opinion through the media. For this reason it is advisable to actively promote Koranic secular Islam as a religious educational project being implemented by legal theological establishments as part of humanitarian cooperation. An agreement with trusted Islamic organizations on using the services of teachers of theology and missionaries looks possible in Central Asia where traditional religious institutions are being revived.

Humanitarian partnership could help to fight drug trafficking, another serious threat to Central Asian stability and security. It seems that ramification of the international data base on drug trafficking should receive more attention together with much more coordinated anti-drug aware-

⁷ This agreement was reached at the Rome meeting on 28 May, 2002.

⁸ Political Aspects of a Generic Concept of Joint NATO-Russia Peacekeeping Operations. Annex 1.

ness efforts, much more active exchange of experience in preventing drug abuse and treating drug addicts. Health ministers and health departments involved in anti-drug efforts at the national level should be involved in closer cooperation; the latest medical test systems under the WHO aegis should be promoted in the region.

The current problem of access to the vitally important resources such as fertile land and water is closely connected with overpopulation of the environmentally favorable parts of CAR. The region suffers from demographic pressure in these areas because of the rapid population growth and the limited natural and material means of subsistence.⁹ The land-and-water problem could become exacerbated because of the rapid population growth (the population is increasing by 3 percent every year) and cause ethnic conflicts.

Dammed mountain lakes, large water reservoirs and the storage tanks of industrial waste (radioactive and toxic, in particular) hazardous to man and the environment are the source of many regional headaches. They are mainly found in zones where water runoff is formed and where floods, mud flows, landslides, and soil erosion are frequent. Two largest problem areas of water flow diffusion include the greater parts of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. They suffer from excessive water mineralization, desertification, and salinization of the soil. In Kazakhstan alone, for example, 18 million hectares are open to all types of erosion (wind, water, and irrigational) while one-third of all pastures have already become degraded. Nearly all the arable land has already lost up to one-third of its humus.¹⁰ The worn-out canalization and water treatment systems present a no less serious threat to the region's security as a potential source of infection.

The above cannot be improved by a simple statement of facts: international forces and means should take part in preventing negative developments and in eliminating their results. Today, however, the international community is exerting very little effort to eliminate the consequences of natural calamities and catastrophes. The Central Asian countries are prepared to help restore Afghanistan and Iraq and contribute to rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure by means of their own deliveries. They are also willing to open transit corridors for other states and international organizations (in the case of Afghanistan) and assist in highway and communication construction in Iraq. Practically all the Central Asian republics extended humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan after the March 2005 events, albeit on a bilateral level.

Transnational cooperation in eliminating the aftermath of natural disasters and catastrophes might profit from SCO involvement in efforts to create a program for monitoring the regional situation and coordinating the efforts of other international organizations and alliances in this sphere.

It can be concluded that cooperation in the fields and trends enumerated above is possible only if the Western actors become aware of the CSTO and SCO as facts of objective regional reality and enter into a constructive dialog with them on security issues without, however, damaging their bilateral relations with the Central Asian states. The CSTO and SCO leaders, on the other hand, should accept the West's presence as a permanent factor and should realize that suppressing or ignoring initiatives in the spheres of stability and security will not serve any useful purpose. The sides should show they are willing to cooperate while their leaders should support this with their political will. The local states and international organizations have adequate material and other resources.

Conclusion

It is not easy to build a stability and security system in Central Asia: it will take time, goodwill, and effort from many actors. The process is overripe and is badly needed today amid the numerous

⁹ See: [<http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-09-2000/13.Musaev>].

¹⁰ See: V.A. Moiseev, *Rossia-Kazakhstan: sovremennye mify i istoricheskaia real'nost'*, Barnaul, 2001, p. 116.

threats and challenges to civilization. This means that the objectively needed conceptions, programs, and plans aimed at comprehensively ensuring regional stability and security could be guaranteed by compatible and, later, universal approaches to the security problems.

None of the transnational organizations and alliances present in the region stands a chance of becoming an effective structure attractive to all entities of international relations if their politicians, experts, and practical workers miss the chance of creating a common strategy for responding to crises that embraces all spheres in which stability and security of the CAR should be achieved (political and economic as well as humanitarian, military, and other spheres) on a multisided basis. In such a case any of these organizations might repeat the fate of the League of Nations or the CIS. Each state involved in multisided partnership should be aware of the specific results of its contribution to regional stabilization, otherwise the process will be senseless.

It should also be borne in mind that until the external actors have taken into account the interests of all the local countries no stability or security in the one-sided format will be possible. The Asian states were and still are keenly aware of their national dignity and will never accept the role of a “disposable pawn in the geopolitical games of others.”