

## REGIONAL SECURITY

**REGIONAL SECURITY AND  
COOPERATION ISSUES  
IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD  
POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA**

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*Introduction*

It stands to reason that at the early stage of independence the five republics in the Central Asian region—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—previously closely linked to the Soviet economic and political systems, faced a number of challenges, most of which were inherited from the Czarist-Soviet regimes. Coping with the challenges posed by the transition period required foreign support, and all the republics, except Turkmenistan, have been engaged in active cooperation with global powers such as the U.S.

Considering the main features of the Western powers' involvement in the post-Soviet are-

na, we can agree with Gertrude Schroeder, who defined the first years since 1991 as a period of "mutual learning." On the one hand, the leaders of the newly independent states have learned from their experience of establishing a market economy at the speed and with the specifics permitted by domestic reality. While on the other hand, international organizations and countries have obviously contributed enormously to this learning process<sup>1</sup> and, through investment and

<sup>1</sup> See: G. Schroeder, "The Economic Transformation Process in the Post-Soviet States: The Role of Outside Actors," in: *The International Dimension of Post-Communist*

bilateral assistance programs, also learned much about dealing with a previously unknown environment. Schroeder refers to this process as follows:

“They [international organizations and countries] now have much more in-depth knowledge about physical and behavioral legacies from the old Soviet order, legacies that differ significantly among the post-Soviet states. They have learned that changing the habits and mind-sets of employees in the numerous government bureaucracies with which they must deal is a slow, painful, and frustrating business. They have learned that the specifics of reform policies and programs are usually highly controversial among domestic participants, even though consensus may exist on the desired goals and long-run outcomes. They now perceive that general ‘textbook’ solutions or those based directly on ‘another country’s’ experience may require modification to take into account the peculiarities of the communist legacy in each state. Finally, they have learned, hopefully, to avoid some of the inevitable mistakes of the initial years of involvement. For instance, the perceived failure of donors, especially of technical aid, to involve the recipient country’s experts in all phases of project development has been a frequent complaint, especially from local intellectuals.”<sup>2</sup>

We will note the quite distinctive nature of American policy in Central Asia. In December 1991, Secretary of State James Baker announced that the U.S. “will work with those republics and any common entity which commit to responsible security policies, democratic political practices, and free market economies.”<sup>3</sup> Baker specified that some republics (Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan) seemed more prepared to take this course. Kazakhstan, like Russia and

Ukraine, on this list was given priority in U.S. policy because it possessed nuclear weapons.<sup>4</sup> While recognizing the sovereign status of all twelve former Soviet republics in 1991, the U.S. administration established diplomatic contacts with only five of the former states, plus Belarus, while omitting the Muslim republics of Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan from the list, “even though they had not been excluded for that reason [of being Muslim republics].”<sup>5</sup> Even the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Kazakh and Kyrgyz sides does not signify immediate involvement of the U.S. As Olcott stated, it was rather “show than substance in these bilateral relationships.”<sup>6</sup>

Actual interest grew considerably under George W. Bush with the announcement of the “war on terror” in 2001. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were among the most actively involved players in military cooperation with the U.S. by allowing the use of their airbases in Bishkek and Khanabad, respectively. On the American side, the U.S. Department of Defense has been among the most active players in defining the priorities and channeling huge military assistance to the region, which peaked in 2002-2003.<sup>7</sup> It is important to specify an essential feature of American aid—conditionality. Particularly in the cases of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the allocation of American aid (aid in Foreign Military Financing [FMF] and International Military Education and Training [IMET]) was linked to progress in the area of human rights.<sup>8</sup>

This paper focuses on analyzing the special features of U.S. Central Asian policy, especially regarding regional security and cooperation issues. I divide my analysis into two periods: the first period covers the years of early sovereignty

*nist Transitions in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (The International Politics of Eurasia Series, Vol. 10), ed. by K. Dawisha, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1997, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> G. Schroeder, op. cit., p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> R.L. Gathoff, “Western Efforts to Shape Post-Soviet Behavior: Contemporary Developments in Historical Perspective,” in: *The International Dimension of Post-Communist Transitions in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 2005, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> R.L. Gathoff, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> M.B. Olcott, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> See: Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>8</sup> See: J. Nichol, “Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests,” *Congressional Research Service*, 11 March, 2010, available at [www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30294.pdf], 20 May, 2010.

between 1991 and 2001; and the second period starts from U.S. involvement after the 9/11 events until early 2010, including the policy of the Obama administration.

## U.S. Policy before 9/11

As mentioned above, the U.S. presence in the region in the early 1990s was of rather a symbolic nature. The period between 1992 and 1994 was marked by the establishment of bilateral contacts with each republic and the transfer of American values of “democracy, human rights, and economic liberalism.”<sup>9</sup> As Graham Fuller has put it, U.S. national interests during this stage, being “quite limited and primarily ‘negative’ in character,” are observed in six distinctive areas, “four of which are negative and two of which positive:”

1. Spreading U.S. policy all over the former Soviet Union so as to avoid the reemergence of any kind of Russian radical or ideological expansionism that could return the world to global nuclear confrontation.
2. Avoiding or maintaining damage control over further civil war or breakup of nations that might spill over into neighboring states, keeping the world in a state of disorder or mayhem.
3. Avoiding nuclear proliferation.
4. Avoiding the development of radical anti-Western forms of political Islam in the region.

The two positive U.S. interests are:

5. Supporting the enhancement of human rights, democracy, free market economies, and a cleaner global environment.
6. Enabling the United States to play a role in the economic development of the region, especially its raw materials.<sup>10</sup>

By defining American interests in the region as “negative,” Fuller meant that U.S. policy in the region was aimed at protecting against the negative developments in Central Asia as envisaged in the four designated areas.

Keeping in mind the peripheral location of the region vis-à-vis the U.S., America’s involvement at the early stage is mainly explained by its desire to form a counterbalance to Russia. This became especially clear in the mid-1990s when the Clinton administration started to express an interest in the energy reserves of the Caspian Sea Basin, particularly in the transportation of Kazakh oil and Turkmen gas via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline passing through Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, and Turkey to Europe and the U.S. while bypassing Russia.<sup>11</sup> However, further progress of the pipeline could pose serious challenges for both Central Asian states. For Kazakhstan, Moscow’s closest ally on the post-Soviet area, this new choice was called on to form a counterbalance between Russia and the U.S. As for Turkmenistan, it has complicated relations with Azerbaijan “over the ownership of sea-floor ener-

<sup>9</sup> N.S. MacFarlane, “The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 80, No. 3, *Regionalism and the Changing International Order in Central Eurasia*, May 2004, p. 450.

<sup>10</sup> See: G.E. Fuller, “Central Asia and American National Interests,” in: H. Malik, *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, MacMillan, London, 1994, p. 130.

<sup>11</sup> See: J.H. Kalicki, “Caspian Energy at the Crossroads,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 5, Sep./Oct.2001, pp. 122-124.

gy deposits, potential competition for gas markets, and concern in this context about dependence on an Azerbaijani export route for Turkmen resources.”<sup>12</sup>

Another area of America’s involvement during this period includes military assistance to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan through NATO’s Partnership for Peace activities. As MacFarlane noted, the U.S. encouraged the establishment in December 1995 of the Central Asian Battalion (CENTRASBAT), which was composed of troops from the three above states.<sup>13</sup> Other participating nations included Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, United Kingdom, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Mongolia. This regional military unit, “initially sponsored by U.S. Atlantic Command, with sponsorship shifting to U.S. Central Command,” is endowed with a mandate for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.<sup>14</sup> A notable fact regarding U.S. involvement in Centrasbat is that the foundation for this regime was based upon the CAEC (Central Asian Economic Community) established in 1994. The CAEC formed the Council of Ministers of Defense under its auspices in December 1995 with establishment of the tripartite Centrasbat the following year. Tajikistan joined the CAEC in 1998 after the five-year civil war in 1997.<sup>15</sup> The community was an attempt by the member states to find an alternative to the failed framework of the CIS. The U.S. administration appeared on time to meet the needs of the regional governments and to extend support of military affairs. This type of U.S. engagement is a rare example of support of regional cooperation. The latter argument is explained by the U.S.’s preference to deal with each republic bilaterally rather than at the multilateral level.

As for U.S. military cooperation in the late 1990s, it is necessary to mention the emerging importance of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The growing threat from the al-Qa’eda camps in Afghanistan forced the American administration to strengthen security cooperation with Uzbekistan.<sup>16</sup> As a result, during a session of the U.S.-Uzbekistan joint commission in Tashkent in May 1999, the defense ministries of both states signed two important agreements: “one on combating terrorism and the other on cooperation between the Pentagon and Uzbekistan’s Defense Ministry.”<sup>17</sup> The practical use of these agreements appeared in 2000 when the U.S. forces sent Predator drones to Afghanistan in an attempt to kill Osama bin Laden. Additionally, the U.S. Special Forces conducted training in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan within the framework of anti-Taliban operations. Another important area in the focus of the joint commission’s attention was political reforms in Uzbekistan. As Stephen Sestanovich, State Department Special Envoy for the Newly Independent States (definition used by the U.S. officials for CIS), stated, Uzbekistan was facing criticism regarding the status of opposition and media on the eve of the parliamentary elections.<sup>18</sup>

However, even with such positive progress in military assistance, we note serious challenges for cooperation in this area. The main challenge was Centrasbat falling under the operational control of U.S. Central Command (CentCom), which was facing challenges of coordination between U.S. military officials and NATO member states looking for assistance to the region. In other words, the West, like Russia, felt the lack of a single policy in dealing with Central Asia.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> N.S. MacFarlane, op. cit., pp. 451-452.

<sup>13</sup> See: Ibid., p. 452.

<sup>14</sup> See: “CENTRASBAT,” GlobalSecurity.org., available at [www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/centrasbat.htm], 23 May, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> See: “Tsentralnoaziatskoe ekonomicheskoe soobshestvo (TsAES)—Spravochnaya informatsia,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia*, 17 April, 2001, available at [www.mid.ru/ns-rsng.nsf/0e82a568fbb5b2c043256a65002f56c2/3f235dd67746105243256a5a002bff4f?OpenDocument], 23 May, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> B. Pannier, Z. Echanova, “U.S. Signs Security Agreements with Uzbekistan,” *Asia Time Online*, 28 May, 1999, available at [www.atimes.com/c-asia/ae28ag01.html], 25 May, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> See: Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, op. cit., p. 71.

A final area of Washington's involvement is rendering technical assistance and making investments through leading international financial institutions and bilateral contacts. Multilateral assistance was conducted through such institutions as the IMF, World Bank, EBRD, and ADB. As for assistance at the bilateral level, the American administration used the Freedom Support Act (FSA), which was called on to assist the republics in carrying out market and democratic reforms.<sup>20</sup> However, the U.S.'s preoccupation with energy and military areas minimized the sociopolitical focus of the assistance since "the pursuit of such objectives might have complicated the pursuit of more concrete strategic objectives."<sup>21</sup>

Finally, with respect to U.S. involvement at the early stage, we will note the prevalence of "mutual learning" and the peripheral location of the region. Since the region itself was fairly new for American policymakers, they needed to accommodate their policy to the reality in Central Asia. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan became a primary focus because of the more open nature of the local societies and the presence of the nuclear factor in Kazakhstan. By the late 1990s, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan joined this group of American interests. Turkmenistan with its neutral stance remained mostly outside America's considerations. Despite this low interest in the region, the U.S. contributed significantly to regional cooperation through its energy and military projects. Through these projects, it became possible at the initial stage to conduct joint military exercises with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, and later Tajikistan, under the Centrasbat umbrella. Such cooperation was not limited to military issues, but also covered matters relating to domestic political reforms, as in the case of the U.S.-Uzbekistan joint commission. Lastly, the U.S. played an important role in directing financial flows from multilateral donor institutions to the region. At the bilateral level, the aid was channeled through FSA to support promotion of American values of market reforms and human rights.

## U.S. Policy in the Aftermath of 9/11

As noted previously, the region became a central focus for the U.S. and NATO after announcement of the "war on terror" in Afghanistan, with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan providing their airbases for carrying out the anti-terrorist campaign while the three remaining republics opened their airspace.<sup>22</sup> According to Olcott, MacFarlane, and reports from the U.S. State Department, Uzbekistan became a key partner of the U.S., which, in turn, significantly hiked its assistance to about \$300 million in 2002, the largest shares being in FSA assistance totaling \$124.46 million and U.S. Defense Department excess and privately donated humanitarian commodities valued at \$78.24 million.<sup>23</sup>

When reviewing the impact of American policy on regional cooperation, it is appropriate to mention two features specified by MacFarlane.<sup>24</sup> The first feature is the "heavily bilateral focus" of

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<sup>20</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>21</sup> N.S. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 452.

<sup>22</sup> See: J.K. Davis, M.J. Sweeney, "Central Asia in U.S. Strategy and Operational Planning: Where Do We Go From Here?" *The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis*, February 2004, p. 2, available at [[www.ifpa.org/pdf/S-R-Central-Asia.pdf](http://www.ifpa.org/pdf/S-R-Central-Asia.pdf)], 26 May, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> See: *US Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia-FY 2002*, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington D.C., January 2003, available at [[www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/23630.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/23630.htm)], 26 May, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> See: N.S. MacFarlane, op. cit., pp. 455-457.

the policy with special emphasis on Uzbekistan. The policymakers in Washington placed the priority on bilateral contacts and discouraged the Central Asian governments from cooperating at the regional level. The only exception was GUUAM's activity. This association started to receive U.S. support in the late 1990s, but by the early 2000 its activities slowed down to resume again in December 2002 after America raised its interest in the Caspian Basin and Black Sea, a location of competition between Moscow and Washington since the early 1990s. During the Yalta meeting of GUUAM in 2003, the U.S. agreed to provide funding worth \$46 million for training mobile anti-terrorist units to guard pipelines and combat terrorism, increase the number of the special forces based in Georgia to assist the training of border forces, and create the GUUAM Parliamentary Assembly.<sup>25</sup>

The second feature of American involvement was heavy reliance of assistance on the security component with an emphasis on border control, non-proliferation, and anti-narcotics / anti-terrorist assistance (see the table). In all the republics, except Tajikistan, security assistance comprised the largest share. The total amount of assistance gives an idea of the U.S.'s priority allies in the "war on terror," with Uzbekistan receiving the largest share, followed by Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>26</sup>

Table

**U.S. Assistance to Central Asia  
(\$m)**

Country	FY 2002 Budgeted	
Kazakhstan	Security & Law Enforcement	41.6
	Market Reforms	14.0
	Democracy Programs	13.7
	Community Development	11.5
	Social Services	6.0
	Humanitarian Assistance	3.2
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>90.0</b>
Kyrgyzstan	Security & Law Enforcement	37.4
	Market Reforms	17.6
	Democracy Programs	16.1
	Community Development	6.0
	Social Services	11.7
	Humanitarian Assistance	6.2
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>95.0</b>

<sup>25</sup> See: S. Blagov, "GUUAM Makes Comeback Bid with U.S. Support," *Eurasianet.org*, available at [www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav070703.shtml], 27 May, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> See: N.S. MacFarlane, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

Table (continued)

Country	FY 2002 Budgeted	
Tajikistan	Security & Law Enforcement	21.5
	Market Reforms	9.4
	Democracy Programs	12.4
	Community Development	10.4
	Social Services	12.2
	Humanitarian Assistance	75.6
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>141.5</b>
Turkmenistan	Security & Law Enforcement	8.0
	Market Reforms	0.9
	Democracy Programs	5.2
	Community Development	1.7
	Social Services	1.8
	Humanitarian Assistance	0.5
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>18.1</b>
Uzbekistan	Security & Law Enforcement	79.0
	Market Reforms	10.9
	Democracy Programs	26.2
	Community Development	5.5
	Social Services	45.5
	Humanitarian Assistance	52.7
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>219.8</b>

*Source:* Data compiled from: M.B. Olcott, "Taking Stock of Central Asia," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Spring 2003, p. 15, available at [www.carnegieendowment.org/pdf/files/jjiaolcott.pdf].

In the process of directing assistance to Central Asia, we notice a shift in U.S. policy toward achieving specific interests at the expense of the American values of free market and human rights. As practical evidence of this statement, MacFarlane presents the case of Uzbekistan which, despite criticism from the U.S. State Department on the human rights situation, was not treated by the Bush administration as a "state of concern."

The last important detail in the U.S. approach regarding the security component is the constant emphasis of American officials on the importance of the rule of law, especially in economic activities.

This emphasis is explained by the need to deal with the widespread corruption in all the beneficiary states of American assistance. However, MacFarlane notes that the increase in security assistance has provided government officials in the region with opportunities to engage in corrupt practices, as in the case of the U.S. military base at Manas airport in 2003, where economic interests were closely linked to the Kyrgyz government.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the criticism concerning the high level of corruption in the region and the weakness of the U.S. administration in pushing the local governments toward legal reforms, we emphasize one positive sign in this assistance. When examining the annual corruption indexes by Transparency International in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan during the peak period of American engagement (2001-2003), we find out that, owing to prioritization of the reforms and pressure from American officials, Uzbekistan registered significant progress in dealing with corruption, especially in 2002, the peak period of American aid (Uzbekistan's level of Corruption Perception Index (CPI) was registered at 2.9 (68th place among the 102 reported countries), while the indicator for Kazakhstan was 2.3 (88th), Kyrgyzstan not being included on the list). Meanwhile, the reduction in funding and stronger emphasis on reforms, together with negative domestic factors, led to a significant increase in corruption rates in all three states in the following order: 2003—Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan with similar rates of 2.4 (100th) and Kyrgyzstan with 2.1 (118th); 2004—Uzbekistan registered 2.3 (114th), while Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan share a rate of 2.2 (122nd).<sup>28</sup>

Coming back to the U.S. policies of 2003-2005, we note a policy shift. In Uzbekistan this shift was characterized by a minor decrease in bilateral cooperation by late 2003 caused by the lack of improvement in the area of human rights. Meanwhile, a real disappointment for the Uzbek side was the decision by the Bush administration to establish "a very limited alliance" with Central Asia caused by the Pentagon's policy regarding switching the status of the U.S. facilities in the region from "hot" to "warm." Besides its ability to balance relations with Russia and China, one of Uzbekistan's objectives in establishing close ties with the U.S. was the hope of speeding up its military reform, which would allow it to deal with domestic and regional security challenges. As Olcott notes, until 2005 Uzbekistan placed the priority in its foreign policy on relations with the US. Even though Washington continued to extend military-security support after the series of terrorist acts in 2004, Russia's role in this context appears more effective through offering participation in "joint antiterror operations."<sup>29</sup>

Relations between the U.S. and Uzbekistan deteriorated resulting from the Andijan events in May 2005 and failure to conduct an international inquiry.<sup>30</sup> Since then and until early 2008, we have been observing some cooling off in the relations between Uzbekistan and the West. One of the signs of deterioration was formulated in the SCO Declaration of July 2005 requesting that "the SCO member states consider it necessary that the relevant members of the antiterrorist coalition take a decision on the deadlines for the temporary use of the above-mentioned infrastructure facilities [military bases of U.S. and Coalition in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan] and military presence in the territory of the SCO member states."<sup>31</sup> Soon after that the U.S. troops left the military base in Khanabad and moved to the Manas airport in Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>27</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>28</sup> Statistics compiled from the annual surveys on Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International during 2001-2004, available at [www.transparency.org].

<sup>29</sup> M.B. Olcott, *op. cit.* pp. 176-179; J. Nichol, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> See: J. Nichol, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Declaration by the Heads of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, Astana, 5 July, 2005, available at [http://www.mid.ru/ns-rasia.nsf/3a0108443c964002432569e7004199c0/432569d80021985fc32570350038d121?OpenDocument].



The U.S. officials revised their stance by sending Richard Boucher, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, to the region in June 2008.<sup>32</sup> This warming in bilateral relations was preceded by the Uzbek President's proposal to expand the "Six plus Two" to a new "Six plus Three" format during NATO's Summit in Bucharest in April 2008. The "Six plus Two" format, originally composed of the six countries bordering on Afghanistan (China, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) plus Russia and the U.S., conducted its activities during 1997-2001 with the focus on "bringing about intra-Afghan reconciliation between the Taliban and its opponents." The format suggested by the Uzbek leader should include NATO.<sup>33</sup> Reset of American-Uzbek relations and the republics in the region came in 2009 with President Obama's idea to refocus military operations from Iraq to Afghanistan.

As for Kyrgyz-American cooperation, it appears even more complicated than in the case of Uzbekistan. Given the small size of its population, economy, and military capabilities, Kyrgyzstan was not in a position to become a central focus of America's considerations. However, despite this limited focus, the U.S. rendered the country military assistance, especially in improving border security.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, its lack of significant reserves of natural resources, and like Uzbekistan, facing regular terrorist attacks and incursions since the early 2004, as well as the limited attention from the U.S. administration, pushed Kyrgyzstan to strengthen its ties with Russia and China. Additionally, Bakiev, the new Kyrgyz president who came to power as a result of the Tulip Revolution in 2005, requested an increase in the lease payment for the Manas base to about \$200 million a year in 2006 with simultaneous reaffirmation of free use by Russia of the previously established base in Kant. After the Kyrgyz-American negotiations concerning the status of the base, both sides issued a joint statement in July 2006 allowing the U.S. to continue to use the airbase facilities with the American side providing \$150 million in assistance and compensation.<sup>35</sup> President Bakiev had the final say on U.S.-Kyrgyzstan relations during a meeting with his Russian counterpart in February 2009 regarding closure of the Manas base and a preferential loan of \$300 million for a period of forty years and financial assistance totaling \$150 million.<sup>36</sup> However, the Kyrgyz government appeared unable to proceed with complete closure of the American base since the Kyrgyz Parliament ratified an agreement with the U.S. in June 2009 on establishment of the Transit Center at Manas International Airport to be used for transporting non-military goods to Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> Like the U.S.'s previous arrangements, this time Washington directed financial flows to infrastructure improvements; air traffic control system upgrades; the U.S.-Kyrgyz Joint Development Fund for economic projects; counter-narcotics efforts; and counter-terrorism efforts totaling \$117 million.<sup>38</sup>

Proceeding with America's policy in Kazakhstan since 2005, we will note that Astana became a key strategic partner of the U.S. owing to the latter's tense and uncertain relations with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Energy issues have been the top priority in bilateral relations, even though Kazakhstan's oil exports can hardly be compared with those of Saudi Arabia or Russia. This interest of the U.S. is closely linked to the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, details of which were mentioned above.

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<sup>32</sup> See: "President of Uzbekistan Receives U.S. Assistant Secretary of State," *UzA Uzbekistan National News Agency*, 2 June, 2008, available at [www.uza.uz], 3 June, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> M.K. Bhadrakumar, "Afghanistan Moves to Center Stage," *Asia Times Online*, 19 April, 2008, available at [www.atimes.com/atimes/South\_Asia/JD19Df02.html], 22 April, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, op. cit., pp. 180-181.

<sup>35</sup> See: J. Nichol, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> See: "Bakiev ob'yavil o zakrytii voennoy bazy SShA v Kirgizii," *Lenta.ru Rambler Media Group Publication*, 3 February 2009, available at [lenta.ru/news/2009/02/03/base/], 4 February, 2009.

<sup>37</sup> See: "Parlament Kirgizii odobril pereformatirovanie bazy "Manas"," *Lenta.ru Rambler Media Group Publication*, 25 June 2009, available at [http://lenta.ru/news/2009/06/25/manas/], 27 June, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> See: T. Namatbaeva, "Kyrgyzstan Allows U.S. to Keep Using Base," *Agence France Presse*, 23 June, 2009.

As for military cooperation, although a less active partner of the U.S., Kazakhstan has been expressing a keen interest in assisting America's efforts in the "war on terror" by allowing use of its airspace for "coalition forays"<sup>39</sup> and three airfields in the southern part of Kazakhstan for emergency purposes.<sup>40</sup>

Neither Tajikistan nor Turkmenistan has a prominent place in America's considerations. In Tajikistan, most of the U.S.'s involvement is concentrated on improving drug control funded from the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).<sup>41</sup> In turn, the UNODC obtains financial assistance to run its drug anti-trafficking programs in the Central Asian region from the State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), which places particular emphasis on "train[ing] and equip[ment]" programs that aim to establish local capacity. Another notable detail of such assistance is funding to improve the "interdiction capabilities along the borders" in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Speaking of the practical benefit for Tajikistan, we will note a long-term funding initiative for the Tajik Drug Control Agency (DCA), which was included in the UNODC \$17 million project announced in June 2003.<sup>42</sup>

Although bilateral U.S.-Tajikistan cooperation in the economy is extremely low (as of January 2010, bilateral trade accounted for only \$2 million) compared to that with Russia, which is thirty times higher than the previous indicator, we emphasize America's leadership in rendering humanitarian aid to the republic, which received 48% of the total foreign aid allotted in January 2010. In the meantime, the only visible American investments have been made in constructing the bridge over the Panj River connecting the country with Afghanistan.<sup>43</sup> As a concluding remark on U.S.-Tajikistan relations, it is appropriate to mention the search by officials in Dushanbe for political support in building the Roghun hydropower plant. The official response to the Tajik side's request was voiced by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake: "We understand the importance of energy security for Tajikistan and support the government's efforts to make sure its citizens, enterprises, and institutions have access to adequate and reliable power. We encourage Tajikistan to take into consideration the views of their neighbors when pursuing hydropower development plans—like Roghun. In addition to Roghun, we encourage Tajikistan to consider developing small hydropower stations."<sup>44</sup> In this respect, we share the opinion of Head of the Representative Office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation in Tajikistan Rustam Haydarov, who notes that the attempts of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to find allies in the dispute around the Roghun plant are condemned because "neither the U.S., nor Russia nor the EU will act as arbiters, since these countries want to have harmonic relations both with Dushanbe and Tashkent."<sup>45</sup>

As for U.S.-Turkmenistan relations, they are at the lowest level in the region, which is mainly explained by former President Niyazov's "positive neutrality" policy, which rejected American support, especially in attractive oil and gas projects.<sup>46</sup> From the standpoint of bilateral military coopera-

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<sup>39</sup> M.B. Olcott, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

<sup>40</sup> See: "Special Report: Kazakhstan Celebrates 10th Anniversary of Its Military," *Kazakhstan News Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 16, 8 May, 2002, available at [prosities-kazakhembus.homestead.com/050802.html], 6 June, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, op. cit., pp. 184-185.

<sup>42</sup> See: T. Weihman, "U.S. Focus on Interdiction in Central Asia is Inadequate to Meet Drug Trafficking Challenge," *Eurasianet.org*, 22 September, 2003, available at [www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav092303a.shtml], 6 June, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> See: G. Faskhutdinov, "Tadzhikistan raschityvaet na podderzhku SShA v spore vokrug Roghuna," *Deutsche Welle*, 10 March, 2010, available at [www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,5338753,00.html?maca=rus-rss\_rus\_yandex\_new\_comments\_2-4163-xml], 11 March, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> U. Babakhanov, "Robert Blake: 'We Understand the Importance of Energy Security for Tajikistan'," *Asia-plus*, 13 February 2010, available at [www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/48/62064.html], 6 June, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> G. Faskhutdinov, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> See: M.B. Olcott, op. cit., p. 184.

tion during the “war on terror,” Turkmenistan could have had the most favorable position because of its geopolitical location—50 miles from the Iranian and 100 miles from the Afghan borders. The country also has the largest Soviet military base in Mary. However, because of its policy “at times bordering on isolationism,” Turkmenistan allowed the U.S. and the Coalition Forces to use its airspace only for flights with a humanitarian mission and refused participation in any type of combat operations from its territory, as in the case of the German Air Force in 2002.<sup>47</sup> However, despite this passive behavior by Turkmenistan, in February 2004 the American administration found a common area of cooperation when the Turkmen side agreed to join the U.S.-funded program on training national law-enforcement staff in narcotics interdiction.

A significant change in government policy occurred after the sudden death of the Turkmen leader in December 2006 when the new president proved to be a proponent of diversifying the country’s international contacts, including energy exports. Turkmenistan, like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran, exports electricity to Afghanistan. This export is a focus of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency’s (TDA) Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative (launched in 2005) and USAID’s Regional Energy Market Assistance Program (launched in 2006). The objective of both American agencies is to contribute to the “energy, transportation, and communications projects, including the development of electrical power infrastructure and power sharing between Central Asia, Afghanistan, and eventually Pakistan and India.”<sup>48</sup> Further activities resulted in the four above-mentioned states signing an intergovernmental agreement on the construction of a 500-kilovolt electric power transmission line in August 2008. Funding for this project (\$935 million) is to be provided by the World Bank, IsDB, and the International Finance Corporation.<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusion

Involvement of the U.S. in Central Asia—a region previously unknown to it—went through many changes during the two decades being examined. The first decade can be defined as a period of “mutual learning” when the regional leaders made enormous efforts toward diversification of their international relations. This period was followed by rapid growth of the region’s geopolitical significance resulting from the U.S.-led anti-terror campaign in Afghanistan in 2001. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which provided space for stationing American troops, as well as the remaining three republics, became the recipients of U.S. military assistance. As in other regions of the world, this aid was accompanied by stronger bilateral relations and requests to carry out reforms. However, emphasis on the security factor in the anti-terror campaign led to a decrease in American pressure on the reforms.

To summarize the role of the U.S. in Central Asia, we agree with Oles Smolansky, who stated that for all powers “it should be clear . . . that the Central Asian republics will first and above all pursue their own interests, as defined by their respective leaders. In this endeavor, the local actors will try to extract maximum benefits from all the outsiders and will not compromise their national interests in the name of ethnicity, religion, or anything else.”<sup>50</sup> By 2005, the U.S. and EU had fully realized the

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<sup>47</sup> See: J.K. Davis, M.J. Sweeney, op. cit., p. 53; M.B. Olcott, op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>48</sup> “Press Release: USTDA Launches Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative,” U.S. Trade and Development Agency, 14 October, 2005; J. Kucera, “Washington Seeks to Steer Central Asian States Toward South Asian Allies,” *Eurasia Insight*, 28 April, 2006; idem, “USAID Official Outlines Plan to Build Central-South Asian Electricity Links,” *Eurasia Insight*, 4 May, 2006.

<sup>49</sup> See: J. Nichol, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>50</sup> O.M. Smolansky, “Turkish and Iranian Policies in Central Asia,” in: H. Malik, op. cit., p. 306.

importance of the above argument due to their numerous failures in dealing with the region. The first failure came from criticizing the Uzbek government's policy in the area of human rights and economic reforms during the annual meeting of the EBRD in Tashkent. The second failure originated in the request to carry out an international investigation of the Andijan events and the ongoing sanctions by the EU since 2005. Taking into account the lessons of the "mutual learning" period and realizing the importance of the region in economic and geopolitical terms, the Western community began lifting the sanctions against Uzbekistan and promoting cooperation with the other states in the region. Finally, the West eased its initial pressure on conducting reforms and improving the human rights situation in favor of cooperation in economic and security issues.

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