

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS: REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

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The Big Game-2 Territory?

Recently, the American and Russian presidents have been repeatedly confirming their resolution to move toward a new strategic partnership in order “to meet together the challenges of the 21st century.”¹ But these relations have still not been raised to the level of an alliance for several reasons: the disagreements on the Iraqi issue; American concern over the trends toward curbing democracy in Russia (“in Russia capitalism triumphed while democracy was defeated”²); the YUKOS case and arrest of its head Mikhail Khodorkovskiy; Russia’s policies in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, which many in America perceive as “aggressive,” etc.

The numerous recommendations by the American “hawks” and certain members of the Bush Administration to pursue a harsher policy toward Russia are creating the impression that the United States wants to squeeze Russia out of its traditional zone of interests and the settlement process of the post-Soviet conflicts. Russia is suspicious of the EU’s enlargement. The doubts remained even after Russia reached an agreement with the EU leaders on the Iraqi crisis in the spring of 2003. Moscow is responding nervously to any changes in the international security system: NATO’s movement eastward; U.S. military bases in Central Asia; the growing presence of NATO and the U.S. in the Southern Caucasus; Washington’s plans to use military force to guard the Azeri sector of the Caspian, the Caspian pipeline systems, etc. The Russian political establishment cannot ignore the consistent efforts to squeeze Russia out of its traditional spheres of influence in the Far and Near abroad, as well as the direct interference in the domestic affairs of the formally independent CIS countries to topple the regimes the U.S. and NATO find objectionable (at first in Georgia, and then in other countries). Under this pressure Russia is hastily readjusting its foreign policy strategy.

The “lost positions in the CIS” is a pet subject of the Russian critics of Atlanticism who are out to find an enemy in the United States. They were enraged by Moscow’s support for the U.S.-led antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan. Certain political forces are putting pressure on the Russian leaders in order to force them, the president in the first place, to compete with U.S. military might, its defense funding, and the money poured into military operations outside the United States. On the other hand, some of the politicians and members of the expert community warn against spoiling relations with the West. They suggest that the country should promote its own economic and political interests by using its geographic proximity to the post-Soviet South and the traditional ties with it.

The public in the West is equally concerned about the recently revealed strategic rivalry with the Kremlin and the anti-Russian rhetoric that appears more and more frequently in political statements and

¹ Joint U.S.-Russia Statement on the New Strategic Relationship [<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/21112.htm>].

² “Ekspertnoe zakliuchenie po problemam rossiisko-amerikanskikh otnosheniy Nikolaia Zlobina,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 January, 2004.

the media. The relations between the U.S. and the EU are not simple either. Its members (with the exception of the U.K., the traditional American ally) betray no readiness to promote American interests in the CIS members. They would rather pursue their own policy and object, in particular, to simultaneous containment of Russia, Iran, and China in southern Eurasia.

The new global alignment of forces that moved the “sphere of vital interests” of the U.S. and the West too close to the western and eastern borders of Russia is obvious. Still, this can hardly be taken to mean that America aims to push Russia away from the CIS, including Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus.

America aims at energy security that calls for America’s presence in the oil- and gas-rich countries and in the regions of ramified pipeline systems. Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus do not belong to these categories—from Washington they look like a reserve to be tapped when all other energy sources (the Persian Gulf and the Northern Sea) are depleted. In the post-Soviet South the U.S. (as other Western states) is aiming at maintaining security around the military bases used for the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan, stability for business operations, and security for the future pipelines. Crossing Azerbaijan and Georgia, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline to be completed in 2005 will connect the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli oil field with the Turkish Mediterranean port Ceyhan. It will be one of the longest in the world (1,760 km) with a daily carrying capacity of up to 1m barrels. The region has already acquired two pipelines: the Northern one that goes to Novorossiisk and the Western with terminals in the Georgian township of Supsa, both with limited carrying capacities. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan line will by-pass the ecologically vulnerable Black Sea and Straits to reach the new American bases in Eastern and Central Europe. British Petroleum is planning a Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum line to move Azeri oil to Turkey to be realized in 2006.

The U.S. Administration is extending its military presence in Azerbaijan and Georgia to protect the pipelines; in the summer of 2003 the former was included in the zone of USEUCOM’s responsibility; and in January 2004 NATO conducted large military exercises, Cooperative Best Effort-2004. In 2002 the U.S. started a GTEP—Georgia Train and Equip Program in Georgia (that became permanent as soon as Mikhail Saakashvili had been elected president) to modernize the Georgian armed forces and adjust them to NATO standards. American marines are training the Georgian army for counterterrorist operations: the republic has already acquired four marine battalions and one mechanized brigade to deal with the potential threats emanating from the Pankisi Gorge. The program is expected to boost the Georgian state’s ability to control its territory.

Since Baku and Georgia have not yet resolved their internal conflicts, their chances of becoming NATO members are slim. In December 2003 during his visit to Baku, U.S. Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld confirmed that his country intended to “broaden and strengthen its military cooperation with Azerbaijan” and pointed out that “so far the conception of the deployment of U.S. military bases on the territories of certain countries has not yet been completed.”³ It seems that Azerbaijan and Georgia will play a secondary role in future international operations similar to the one they played in the Afghan and Iraqi campaigns. Objectively, while helping the South Caucasian and Central Asian countries resolve their vital problems (in the security sphere as well) the U.S. is encouraging economic reorientation toward foreign markets and their course away from Russia.

Still, on the eve of his Moscow visit that took place on 26 January, 2004, U.S. State Secretary Colin Powell expressed his hope that the United States and Russia could cooperate in the spheres in which they were commonly believed to be rivals.⁴ He probably had in mind the post-Soviet expanse. To a certain extent the Americans, bogged down in Iraq, the Middle East and Afghanistan, and the Europeans, busy sorting out their own urgent issues, would welcome, under certain conditions, Russia’s efforts to preserve stability in the south of the CIS. A compromise between Washington and Moscow on certain security issues in Central Asia and the Caucasus (including settlement of the South Caucasian conflicts) is possible: the conflicts have been frozen, yet they can easily be defrosted if needed.

³ E. Alekperov, N. Ramizoglu, “Pentagon podtverdil vidy na Azerbaijan,” *Ekho* (Baku), No. 299 (721), 4 December, 2003.

⁴ Quoted from: A. Dubnov, A. Zlobin, “Powell—v Moskve, Bush—v ume,” *Vremia novostey*, 26 January, 2004.

Russia as a Mediator and a Peacekeeper

Moscow is convinced that it holds the key to the Abkhazian, South Ossetian and Nagorny Karabakh settlements, since for the second decade now it has been enjoying great influence in these autonomous and independently functioning, yet internationally unrecognized communities. In certain respects they can be counted as states and subjects of international law: they have permanent populations; authorities that control the territories; and they can enter into diplomatic and economic relationships with other countries. Having tasted independence, they will hardly agree to return to their old status on their own free will.

The Georgian conflicts are hard to resolve because real power in Tbilisi (which can boast of a fairly developed, within the CIS, civil society and relatively free media) belongs to several ruling groups dominating their own territories, where they appropriate natural riches and the poorly collected taxes. The local conflicts are also rooted in acute economic contradictions.

For example, Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia, who heads the opposition *Novaia sila* (New Force) movement, explained the removal of Shevardnadze on 23 November, 2003 by the “intrigues of the international Armenian lobby” that allegedly supported his opponents in exchange for a promise to change the oil route in Armenia’s favor.⁵ There is a certain logic in this (mainly intended for the Georgian audience: the opposition leader offered proof of betrayal by the “ethnically impure” post-Shevardnadze elite). Because of its ethnic homogeneity and the resultant absence of ethnic strife, the West has always regarded Armenia as a more stable state than its neighbors, Georgia and Azerbaijan. At the preliminary stage, Western companies discussed an Armenian transit for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Hence the attempts in the early 1990s to cut the Gordian knot of the Karabakh conflict (plans of Gobble, Maresca, etc.). Eduard Shevardnadze, however, convinced Western investors that the Georgian route was absolutely safe and much more profitable. As a result, for many years he exploited the nation’s expectations of a small economic miracle created by the transit money that would deliver Georgia from its economic and political dependence on Moscow. It seems that current instability in Georgia is somehow related to the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline in the same way as back in the early 1990s the project somehow destabilized the domestic situation in Azerbaijan and contributed to the Karabakh conflict.

The latter is still a political priority for the newly elected president of Azerbaijan Ilkham Aliiev and his Armenian colleague Robert Kocharian elected to a second term on 19 February, 2003. Nevertheless, the positions remained the same: while Erevan wants a package agreement that should cover the status of Nagorny Karabakh, the refugees, and the occupied territories issues and suggests that Nagorny Karabakh should be represented at the talks as an equal partner, Baku prefers a step-by-step settlement that includes return of the “occupied territories” outside the “Republic of Nagorny Karabakh” under international guarantees and the refugees issue.

The 2003 presidential elections in both countries aroused numerous unfavorable comments from the OSCE and Council of Europe observers (both countries are members of these organizations), which weakened the positions of the newly elected presidents. Being aware of this, they will succumb to outside influences while trying to settle the conflict. For the same reason they cannot foil the talks or build up tension in the contact zone.

Until recently, Russia, in turn, was encouraging one-sided actions and mutual blockade and did nothing to settle the conflicts in order to preserve its influence there. Today, because of the radical changes in the region, Moscow can hardly expect to remain the sole ruler of the destinies of the local nations: tempting economic projects and a resolute diplomatic offensive from the United States and other countries challenge Moscow’s role. Russia can still occupy a highly desirable niche by using its economic instruments, primarily in the energy sphere. The United Energy System of Russia joint stock company

⁵ A. Gordienko, “Shevardnadze ubrali iz-za bol’shoy truby,” *NG-Dipkur’er*, No. 18, 8 December, 2003.

controls 80 percent of Armenia's energy capacities (part of the energy will go to Azerbaijan) and nearly the entire Georgian energy market.

This, and the fact that a considerable percentage of Georgian, Abkhazian, and South Ossetian citizens are living on the money earned by their relatives in Russia, serves as a basis for cooperation between the two countries, but leaves Tbilisi free to coordinate the key issues with Washington. A negative scenario is equally possible: the new Georgian leaders may fail to resolve the main problems or will find themselves involved in civil wars. On 24 January, 2004 during the first part of the inaugural ceremony in the Gelati monastery complex in western Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili called on the nation "to unite and restore Georgia's unity." He described this task as "the aim of his life."⁶ Before that he had promised that if he were elected president, the elections of 4 January, 2004 would be the last ones in which people in Abkhazia and South Ossetia did not participate. He hinted at the use of force. This promises another useless war in Georgia that will bring nothing but chaos. The rivalry between Russia and the United States in Georgia, as well as certain contradictions with the new Georgian leaders who are looking to NATO and EU, may provoke a conflict between the West and Moscow and destabilize the situation even more.

It should be said in all justice that Saakashvili admitted that Russia and Georgia should take account of each other's national interests. This is a promising statement since "restoration of Georgia's unity" by force will hardly be hailed in Moscow, which wants more stability in the Caucasus. In this respect both the West and Russia want to restore law and order in Georgia to prevent chaotic developments.

The Kremlin has the opportunity to maintain its dialog with all the sides in the conflicts, which makes Russia an important member of international peacekeeping and intermediary efforts related to the Abkhazia, South Ossetian and Karabakh issues. Moscow, on its part, wants more than the role of an intermediary: the Russian elite is determined to upgrade Russia's economic, as well as political role on the post-Soviet expanse. Two Russian military bases (the 12th in Batumi and the 62nd in Akhalkalaki) not only deprive Russia of a greater role in the conflict settlement in Georgia; they are financial burden as well. Their withdrawal, however, will cost even more, therefore Russia insists that Georgia should partly fund new military camps and related infrastructure on Russian territory to deploy the bases. The Russian military is convinced that the process will take not less than 11 years, while the Georgian side insists on 3 to 6 years.⁷

While offering its help to the Azerbaijanian side in the Karabakh conflict, Moscow is extending its military cooperation with Erevan called for by Russia's strategic interests: Armenia is one of the two members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization that has a common border with a NATO member. Baku finds it hard to accept this. In November 2003 the defense ministries of Armenia and Russia signed a plan of cooperation for 2004 that included supplies of new surface-to-air missile systems and outlined new conditions, under which the 102nd Russian military base would function in Armenia (all its objects should be united into a single whole, while Armenia agreed to finance its infrastructure). In the latter half of November 2003 while visiting Armenia, the Russian defense minister made public the plans to set up "a united Russian-Armenian military group" in the future.⁸ On 18 November Azerbaijan responded with an official harshly worded protest. It condemned Russia's efforts to boost the military potential of a state with which Azerbaijan is in a conflict.⁹

Obviously, when trying to control and resolve old regional conflicts, Russia is confronted with the old problems and also has to deal with the new ones created by the changed geopolitical situation. The country obviously needs new approaches, fresh ideas and adequate conceptual support to develop its relationships across the post-Soviet territory with international organizations and the new influential centers of power (the U.S., NATO, the EU, and transnational corporations). Any claims to a special role should be supported by adequate economic and military arguments—something that Russia has not yet acquired.

⁶ [http://newsgeorgia.dmz-web.off/news.html?nws_id=224075/24.01.2004/].

⁷ See: "V Moskve obsuzhdalas' sud'ba rossiiskikh voennykh baz...", *Izvestia*, 9 January, 2004.

⁸ A. Gordienko, "Baku trebuet ob'iasneniy ot Moskvyy," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 November, 2003.

⁹ See: *Ibidem*.

If Russia wants to remain the peacekeeper and mediator in the Southern Caucasus, it should abandon its attempts to use confrontation to separate the region from the rest of the world; it should also abandon its practice of quarreling with the local countries and multi-sided international structures. It seems that Russia's active neutrality, a balanced approach to the regional processes, concerted actions with the multi-sided forces, and the use of their potential in its own interests is the best possible policy.

Militarization of the Caspian Sea

The arms race that has been going on in the Caspian for a long time was spurred on when foreign companies (British and American companies control, directly or indirectly, 27 percent of oil and 40 percent of gas reserves¹⁰) and extra-regional players (primarily the U.S.) came to the region. We cannot exclude that the region, which is rich in energy resources, will be re-divided by force. China, India, and other countries may be drawn into the confrontation together with the already present United States, European countries, and transnational corporations.

The Caspian navies of the former Soviet republics are based on the Soviet Caspian Navy, which was equally divided after the U.S.S.R. disintegrated among Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan (the latter rejected its 25 percent in favor of Moscow).

So far, Russia has the largest amount of military equipment and the largest flotilla in the Caspian with a 15 thousand-strong personnel. It includes brigades of surface vessels, screening ships, support ships, a command post of search-and-rescue operations, a group of hydrographic vessels, an air group of skimmer planes, and a guards marine brigade. Russia also has missile-carrying vessels to control its marine communications.¹¹ On top of this, it intends to use new surface-to-air S-300 complexes to protect its zone of the Caspian from the air.¹² Judging by what the defense minister said in November 2003 about the most urgent tasks related to army reform, Russia is determined to build up forces in order to adequately protect the Caspian border.

Other Caspian countries increase their defense spending every year; they insist on more military aid from NATO, the U.S., and Turkey, as well as China and Russia. Obviously, they mistrust each other; the resultant arms race suggests that conflicts are possible.

Kazakhstan leads in this process: its military spending comes third in the CIS (after Russia and Ukraine); twice during the years of independence (in 1996 and 2003) it announced its intention to create its own Caspian Navy. So far the country has no adequate naval forces. According to its military doctrine of 2000, Astana is concentrating on setting up mobile forces and guarding the borders, including the marine borders. The country plans to complete the formation of a navy which will include ships, a marine corps, and units of logistics and technical support. In March 2003, the country was included in the responsibility zone of the NATO South European Fleet; in September the Kazakhstani leaders signed a five-year plan of cooperation with the United States under which the American side pledged to supply military launches of 1 thou ton displacement each.

Defense Minister Mukhtar Altynbaev announced that the Kazakhstani Navy would control "the air space over the Caspian, as well as the surface and the underwater part of its sector." He said: "The Fleet will have to protect the state borders and the Caspian oil fields with large foreign investments."¹³ It is not quite clear whom the country is setting up defenses against: the oil fields with American and British investors border on Russia alone. The Western Military District set up along the Caspian coast (next to Russia) and the Caspian Fleet have already invited a lot of criticism because the southern and southwestern bor-

¹⁰ See: Z. Vil'danov, Kto na Kaspii vsekh sil'nee? [<http://www.iamik.ru/04/11/2003/>].

¹¹ See: Z. Askarova, Kaspiyskaia piaterka [www.gazetaSNG/11.Nov.2003/].

¹² See: V. Mukhin, "Voennye vyzovy Kaspiyskogo regiona," *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie NG*, 16 January, 2004.

¹³ [<http://www.kompromat.kz>].

ders remain unprotected and highly vulnerable should the situation in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, or Tajikistan destabilize.

Azerbaijan is seeking closer cooperation with the United States in guarding “its” Caspian sector. In August 2003 the two countries first conducted joint military exercises; in December, after the talks between Ilkhram Aliev and U.S. Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld, it became known that Washington intended to continue helping to guard the marine borders of Azerbaijan against terrorist attacks. At his meeting in Baku with Ilkhram Aliev, Deputy Commander of the U.S. Army in Europe General Charles Vold announced that complete control of the underwater expanse and water surface would be organized.¹⁴

Neutral Turkmenistan formally has no navy (with the exception of picket boats made in Ukraine, which belong to the border guards). Still, the country is actively arming itself and strengthening its aviation group, the largest in Central Asia, deployed in Turkmenbashi.

Iran is also strengthening its military presence in the Caspian 1.5-fold and moving its fleet there from the Persian Gulf. In 2003 it adopted a new development program for the National Tanker Company: a series of tankers will be built in Iran, which will acquire, in future, its own tanker fleet in the Caspian.¹⁵ Even though the numerical strength of the Iranian Caspian navy is second among the coastal states after Russia, most of its armaments are morally and physically depleted. Tehran will have to work hard to modernize them.

The Caspian states have obviously caught the “arms race fever” and will be strongly tempted to use the most radical of arguments when talking about the sea’s legal status or about contended oil fields. On the whole, militarization of the Caspian Sea and the adjacent politically unstable region is proceeding against a very negative background. First, the coastal states have not yet agreed on the sea’s legal status—consequently, no commonly accepted rules of the game are possible. Second, there is tension between some of them (between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan and between Iran and Azerbaijan). Third, the situation is further aggravated by the presence of extra-regional powers and transnational corporations: while controlling the key oil projects in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan they claim a special role in the region.

Russia, as well as Iran, remains devoted to its initial position on the militarization issue: since the Caspian is a domestic sea of the coastal states, they have the right to guard their borders themselves and do not need third countries to do this. Militarization of the Caspian served no useful purpose, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Kaliuzhniy said on 26 December, 2003 in an interview to the ANS TV channel (Baku), and added that the sides involved should avoid extremes. He also pointed out that it was hardly necessary to have five different military flotillas for the five coastal states.¹⁶

Moscow believes that militarization could be checked by a clause on inadmissibility of armed forces of third countries in the Caspian in the convention on the sea’s legal status now being discussed by the coastal states. More than that: the agreements between Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan rule out such a presence.

Late in 2003 Kazakhstan President Nazarbaev, who had already formulated numerous integration initiatives, offered another one: a Caspian OPEC of sorts made up of the coastal states and the transit countries. On 9 January, 2004 when discussing his new initiative with President Putin, who visited Astana, he said that the new project might defuse local tension, but complained that his project had drawn no enthusiastic response.

Who Will Guarantee Central Asian Security?

There are no ripples on the surface, but below the surface are many dangerous undercurrents and as yet unresolved contradictions. Here are some of them: the inefficient economy, which has not yet reached

¹⁴ See: “‘Kaspiiskiy gamburger’ poka ne s’edoben. Ranniaia skhvatka za ‘pozdniuiu’ neft’,” *Evrasia segodnia*, January 2004 [www.gazetaSNG.ru/ 20.01.2004/].

¹⁵ See: Caspian information channel [www.caspian.ru/ 23.01.2004/].

¹⁶ [http://www.rian.ru/ 26.12.2003/].

the level existing on the eve of the Soviet Union's disintegration and depends on one or two exportable items. This increases the risk of social upheavals and corruption. The list goes on to include the non-representative political structures that are using inadequate mechanisms of power transfer; there is no effective regional cooperation on key issues (guarding of borders, security, trade, distribution of water resources); the region cannot combat the mounting religious and political extremism and organized crime, especially the groups smuggling drugs from Afghanistan; the health system has deteriorated; the younger generation, the numerical strength of which is rapidly increasing, has little hope of obtaining an education and good job; the situation is further aggravated by the large powers' rivalry for domination.

Today, there are parallel military structures in the region funded by Russia, on the one hand, and by the U.S. and NATO, on the other.

The American model of "democracy enforcement" combined with peace enforcement tested first in former Yugoslavia and then in Afghanistan and Iraq is stalling. The NATO-supported attempt to pool the local armed forces into a single Kazakh-Kyrgyz-Uzbek battalion (Tsentrazbat) failed. The U.S. military bases are unlikely to protect anybody in the event of aggression, while the U.S. contingents deployed there will hardly interfere in regional conflicts to settle them. The U.S. bases in Central Asia were not intended to ensure its security: they are an instrument of Washington's global policy and control over its potential rivals.

All this taken together testifies to the fact that Moscow is the only real security guarantor in the conflict-prone region. Moscow is proceeding from the assumption that a vacuum of power should be avoided to deny extremist elements the chance of filling it and that measures are needed to prevent instability along the southern borders. Russia has armed itself with the U.S.-elaborated and tested forward basing strategy, the key element of which is to meet potential threats as far from one's own territory as possible. Russia has already renewed its military-political ties with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. On 23 October, 2003, it opened a military base in Kyrgyzstan (the first one in Central Asia in the post-Soviet period). Although staffed with Russian personnel, it serves as an air component of the Rapid Reaction Forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).¹⁷ The talks on a military base in Tajikistan (at which the Russian 201st motor rifle division will serve the core) are nearing completion. Together with the air base in Kant, it will protect the rapid reaction forces from the air and will serve as the main transshipment base, a "lily pad" in the Pentagon parlance.

The Russian initiatives of spring-fall 2003 show that, on the one hand, Moscow is trying to repair the harm done by the previous period of inaction during which centers of stronger attraction moved in. Whereas on the other, these initiatives betray Moscow's painful response to the obvious desire of the local countries to huddle together under the "umbrella" of the victor in the war against the Taliban and Iraq.

Meanwhile, other possibilities of resolving conflicts are coming to the fore. The CSTO has very good prospects; significantly, this structure within the CIS looks at NATO as an ally in the antiterrorist struggle and the fight against other threats. Its General Secretary Nikolai Bordiuzha said in Bishkek that the members intended to pursue their own line in dealing with the North Atlantic Alliance.¹⁸

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is developing into another factor of Central Asian security. It can be described as an embryo of the cooperative security model. D. Feldman, a prominent Russian political scientist, has pointed out that this model "takes into account different dimensions of international security, and the interests of non-state actors in international relations ... it does not exclude the use of military force and does not rule out rivalry over resources and influences combined with cooperation on the basis of mutually complementary interests."¹⁹ As distinct from the more popular collective security model in the CIS, in which there is a leading country and a common enemy, the SCO is an alternative regional security system based on the Russian and American military presence in Central Asia.

¹⁷ The Organization includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.

¹⁸ Website of the Caspian information channel [<http://www.caspian.ru/18.11.2003/>].

¹⁹ D.M. Feldman, "Modeli mezhdunarodnoy bezopasnosti: vybor dlia rossiiskoy elity," *Natsional'nye interesy i problemy bezopasnosti v meniaushchemsia mire. Materialy seminarov*, Moscow, IMEMO RAS, 2003, p. 14.

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The above suggests that stability in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus mainly depends on foreign factors that are responsible for the local states' domestic problems. The latter will probably persist for a long time to come mainly because of poverty and corruption—two evils hard to deal with. A large-scale conflict in Central Asia can hardly be expected, while the local border and ethnic conflicts that have become fairly common will continue.

No one can exclude the possibility that one of the South Caucasian conflicts (frozen but not settled) may flare up again and destabilize the situation in the South Caucasian states and Russia.

It seems that since the majority of the Central Asian and South Caucasian states are potentially politically unstable, it is extremely important to upgrade global and regional controllability. This is important because the countries of the post-Soviet South are joining the world community.