

## REGIONAL SECURITY

CENTRAL ASIA AS  
A REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX<sup>1</sup>

Ekaterina KLIMENKO

*Research Assistant to the Project "Managing Competition and Promoting Cooperation in the Arctic" within the Armed Conflict and Conflict Management Program at Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (Stockholm, Sweden)*

*Introduction*

According to the *Failed States Index* developed by the *Foreign Policy* magazine, for the last five years three of the CA states, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, have been among the 60 weakest states in the world. Turkmenistan "left" this group only in 2011. Kazakhstan is the only CA state, which has been considered to be a relatively sustainable state.<sup>2</sup> De-

spite this alarming statistics, the region gave the impression of relative stability. There have not been any major conflicts in CA since the Tajik civil war. However, the tragic events in the South of Kyrgyzstan of June 2010 have revealed the vulnerability of the region to various security threats.

For two decades of independent existence, CA has attracted significant academic attention. Nowadays, one can distinguish several directions in the literature devoted to the analysis of CA and its particular countries. Some studies focus on the interests of great or regional pow-

<sup>2</sup> See: "The Failed State Index 2010," *Foreign Policy*, available at [[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010\\_failed\\_states\\_index\\_interactive\\_map\\_and\\_rankings](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings)], 28 July, 2011.

<sup>1</sup> The longer version of this article was presented as a *Research Paper for the Geneva Centre for Security Policy*, European Institute of University of Geneva (GCSP/EIUG), Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in International and European Security.

ers in the region. Many scholars explore the political systems of CA countries by studying the undemocratic nature of CA regimes, while others focus on transnational threats to regional stability, such as the influence of Islamic terrorism, religious extremism, and organized crime.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See: *Tsentral'naiia Azia 1991-2009*, ed. by B.K. Sultanov, KISI, Almaty, 2010, pp. 11-36.

However, despite the wide variety of security studies on CA, until now, one can discern a lack of inclusive analysis focusing on a combination of different aspects of the regional security. The present article argues that the current security architecture in CA can be better explained by considering all levels of CA insecurity. In this regard, the combination of Barry Buzan's Regional Security Complex theory and Karl W. Deutsch's concept of security community proves to be a valuable tool for analyzing the regional security.

## Regional Security Complex and Security Community: An Application to Central Asia

In his book *People, States and Fear*, Barry Buzan focuses his analysis on regional security complex (RSC), "a group of states whose primary security concerns linked together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another."<sup>4</sup> A RSC is characterized by a set of intense security interactions between the members of a RSC that have strongly pronounced inward-looking character. The interaction within RSC is defined by the patterns of "amity and enmity between state"<sup>5</sup> that stems from distribution of power within the RSC, long-term historical links, and such specific issues as border disputes, ethnical relationships, common culture etc.<sup>6</sup> Significant advantage of Buzan's approach is inclusive analysis of regional security by focusing on three levels of RSC: domestic (internally generated vulnerabilities), regional (shared security concerns and the way to deal with them) and international (role of external powers in the region).<sup>7</sup> At the same time, his theory draws only general picture of security architecture. It answers the questions of "what is happening on one or the other level?" and "when it happens?" But it does not give an answer to the question "why?" Basically, Buzan's theory is empty in content and value free. It can demonstrate the different spectrum of intense relationships that can range from excellent relations to war that is in fact also one of the intense relationships, but this does not explain why countries take one extreme or another.

It is important to mention that Buzan was not the first author analyzing regions through the lens of security. The idea traced back to Karl Deutsch's theory of "security community," a group of people or states integrated to the point that they resolve their tensions without resort to war.<sup>8</sup> Deutsch goes deeper into understanding why states go further from being a security complex meaning simple security interdependence, which still has the potential of going into war, to becoming a se-

<sup>4</sup> B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, ECPR Press, 2007, p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> See: Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> See: Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>8</sup> See: A.J. Bellamy, *Security Communities and Their Neighbours: Regional Fortresses or Global Integrators*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p. 6.

curity community that excludes struggling. A security community is founded on the mutual “we-feeling,” trust and compatibility of values that stems from basic capabilities of states.<sup>9</sup> Such capabilities are of two main kinds. First is the state’s maturity or “capacity to act as a political unit” and second, the certain degree of state’s “responsiveness.”<sup>10</sup> Deutsch argues that adherence of countries, specifically their political elites, to the same values improves understanding between them and favors the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The states responsiveness to each other’s needs is reflected through the mechanisms to respond to the needs of other states, mutual interest and ability to make concession to each other.<sup>11</sup>

In my opinion, the combination of the RSC theory and the theory of security community provides a good theoretical platform to study regional security as they significantly supplement each other. The RSC theory helps to structure the analysis of security architecture by splitting it into three levels, whereas the security community concept provides deeper insights into the internal characteristics of states that influence the security dynamic in the region.

The five CA states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, are closely related by centuries of common history, similar languages, culture, and religion. Despite the fact that every CA state tries to underline its uniqueness and distance itself from other countries of the region by appealing to difference of economic and political development, they still bear consequences of being part of one state, in particular, shared hydroelectric, energy, and road systems, unresolved border disputes. Thus, although it is difficult to predict whether the five “-stans” will stay together in the nearest future, the multiple shared security concerns allow to analyze CA as a RSC. In this regard, exploring three levels of the CA RSC is a valuable insight to understand security challenges faced by the region and interplay between them. The security community concept, in turn, is used to explain why the CA countries have achieved little progress in addressing existing security concerns and have not formed a security community.

## International Level of Analysis

After the collapse of the Soviet Union scholars and policy makers have started to talk about the new “Great Game” in CA. Indeed, due to the vast energy resources and important geostrategic position CA has become a zone of competing interests of many players of the international arena. Nowadays, in addition to the Russian and U.S. presence the strategic environment in CA is also characterized by considerable involvement of China. Overall, the interests of great powers focus on two spheres: political/security and economic.

### ***The Evolution of Great Powers’ Interests in Political/Security Sphere***

The 1990s can be characterized by limited involvement of all great powers in the security sphere due to the absence of urgent necessity and importance of the CA states to their strategic interests. Policies of the U.S., Russia and China in CA were mostly focused on overcoming political and

---

<sup>9</sup> See: K.W. Deutsch *et al.*, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1957, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>11</sup> See: *Ibid.*, pp. 123-133.

security concerns left by the collapse of the Soviet Union, dealing with Soviet political and military legacy, and building the relationships with the newly independent states. The political involvement of the United States, for instance, was confined to support a set of donor projects and policies aimed at democratization, promotion of human rights and establishment of market economy. It also worked with states that were left with nuclear arsenals from the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> Russian involvement in CA was also very limited due to both internal political problems and pro-Western/European orientation of its foreign policy aimed to free Russia from «the burden of the national republics.»<sup>13</sup> Russia's cooperation with CA states within the *Collective Security Treaty* and its bilateral agreement with Tajikistan over the 201st Motorized Rifle Division had mostly declaratory character and did not give any substantial results except for the significant efforts to mitigate the civil war in Tajikistan and prevent its horizontal escalation. China's major security objective was fighting against Uyghur separatism in Xinjiang.<sup>14</sup> It also tried to settle its border disputes with CA states and to reduce heavy military presence in regions bordering the Xinjiang region.<sup>15</sup> The border disputes were negotiated within bilateral consultations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and in the framework of the so-called "4+1" formula. The "Uyghur question" was discussed on multi-lateral basis in the "Shanghai Five."

The relative disinterest of these players in the 1990s has dramatically changed after 9/11. The beginning of *Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)* has significantly increased the importance of CA. During the first two years after 9/11, the U.S. guaranteed its physical military presence in CA by opening military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, signing strategic partnership agreements with Uzbekistan, and getting approval from other CA states for overflight through their territories. Since 2001, the U.S. agenda of human rights and democracy promotion has stepped back giving way to the strategic interests related to the operations in Afghanistan. The disagreement with the Uzbek government over the Andijan events (2005) and the forced closure of its military base in Uzbekistan has made the U.S. policy in the region even more pragmatic: to keep its *status quo* in the region and not confront the existing regimes as long as it can avoid it.

The intense U.S. involvement into the region has provoked significant concerns on the side of Russia and China as neither of them wanted to have U.S. bases in CA, the region that had traditionally been considered as their backyard. Additionally, Russia has been interested in increasing cooperation to fight terrorism and drug trafficking coming from Afghanistan through CA.<sup>16</sup> China has also particular interests in fighting Islamic extremism and terrorism in CA due to the fact that it borders XUAR, one of China's most unstable regions.<sup>17</sup> This Russian-Chinese common interest has resulted in the establishment of the SCO, which has become an important platform for security cooperation between Russia, China and the CA states. The principal point of the SCO founding agreement was the formulation of the so-called "three evils," in particular, cooperation in combating terrorism, extremism and separatism. In fact, the SCO was supposed to contribute to counterbalancing the U.S. and NATO and keeping friendly regimes in CA. However, it can hardly be said that it succeeded in this regard. Despite the *SCO Astana Declaration* that claimed that forces out-

---

<sup>12</sup> See: R. Giragosian, "The Strategic Central Asian Arena," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2006, pp. 139-159.

<sup>13</sup> V. Paramonov, A. Stokov, *The Evolution of Russia's Central Asia Policy*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom (DAUK), Shrivenham, June 2008.

<sup>14</sup> See: V. Paramonov, O. Stolpovski, *Chinese Security Interests in Central Asia*, DAUK, Shrivenham, May 2008.

<sup>15</sup> As a result of the Chinese-Soviet conflict during the late 1960s Soviet armed forces were significantly concentrated in the CA countries bordering China. The Xinjiang region is the source of significant security concerns for China as Uyghur separatist movement wants to separate the region and establish an independent state of "Eastern Turkestan." In this regard, CA countries are of special attention to China as the independence of CA could inspire Uyghur separatists.

<sup>16</sup> See: V. Paramonov, A. Stokov, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> See: V. Paramonov, O. Stolpovski, *op. cit.*

side of the region should leave CA,<sup>18</sup> the U.S. military base in Kyrgyzstan, which is now called *Transit Center in Manas*, will stay at least until 2014.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to China, Russia has one more tool for projecting its power in the region, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The CSTO allowed Russia to legitimize its military presence in the region. The Kant airbase in Kyrgyzstan, the first new Russian airbase in the region was opened under the auspice of the CSTO.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the 201st Motor Rifle Division in Tajikistan was transferred under its patronage. The CSTO serves as a platform to indicate the tolerance of CA regimes toward Russia and vice versa. For example, after the Andijan conflict and the break-up of the Uzbek-American relationships, Uzbekistan joined the CSTO and Russia in turn declared its full support to the Uzbek government. CSTO has also been used to legitimize Russia's policy abroad. For instance, the CSTO countries supported Russia's action in Georgia. However, it had its limitations: no CSTO states followed Russia to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The real effectiveness of both organizations as security structures that are capable of contributing to security in CA is, however, debatable. Neither antiterrorist structures nor military exercises within them have actually contributed to the improvement of the situation in CA.<sup>21</sup> Both SCO and CSTO are dependent on the agenda set by the big players that often does not reflect the real situation in CA. For instance, both organizations have failed to provide sufficient support in the June events in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. Covering by the principle of non-interference into internal affairs the CSTO rejected to send troops into Kyrgyzstan. Although the SCO humanitarian assistance was appreciated by the Kyrgyz government,<sup>22</sup> there were no real steps to stop the violence. The internal conflict did not represent any direct threat to the interests of big players that can partly explain their relative reluctance to react. However, it is important to mention that different structures of these organizations give more space for maneuvering of the CA states; presence of two big players in SCO allows small CA states to balance between them.

### ***Competition for Central Asian Energy Resources***

The other sphere that attracts significant attention from great powers to CA is energy resources. Russian interests in CA energy resources are twofold. First is the joint development of oil and gas fields.<sup>23</sup> Second Russia traditionally had the monopoly over the transit of the CA oil and gas through its pipelines to the world energy markets. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium and Atyrau-Samara pipelines that connect Kazakhstan to the world market cross the territory of Russia. Whereas the Kenkiyak-Orsk pipeline delivers Kazakh oil to the Russian Orsk refineries, the Central Asia

---

<sup>18</sup> See: *Declaration of the SCO Member States*, Astana, 5 July, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> See: "Robert Blake: Soglashenie po tranzitnomu centru mezhdu Kyrgyzstanom i SShA imeet silu do 2014 goda," *AKIpress*, 12 March, 2011, available at [<http://kg.akipress.org/news:341881>].

<sup>20</sup> See: *Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC), Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010*, 2011, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, "Central Asia's Growing Partnership with China," *EU-Central Asia Monitoring (EUCAM)*, September 2009.

<sup>22</sup> See: "Otonbaeva poblagodarila strany ShOS za okazannuiu Kyrgyzstanu gumanitarnuiu podderzhku," *Kabar*, 25 November, 2011, available at [[http://kabar.kg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=10579](http://kabar.kg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10579)], 28 July, 2011

<sup>23</sup> See: I. Overland, S. Torjesen, "Just Good Friends: Kazakhstan's and Turkmenistan's Energy Relations with Russia," in: *Caspian Energy Politics: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan*, ed. by I. Overland, H. Kjaerndet, A. Kendall-Taylor, Routledge, New York, 2010, pp. 136-150.

Center gas pipeline controlled by Gazprom is one of the major routes for the CA natural gas. Dependency of the CA countries on transportation allows Russia to collect significant transit revenues and guarantee the security and sustainability of its energy supplies to Europe.<sup>24</sup> The control over energy transport routes also allows Russia to influence the CA states politically. However, nowadays Russia's relative monopoly over energy transit has been significantly undermined by other players.

The CA resources have never been the top priority for U.S. energy security.<sup>25</sup> The major objective for the U.S. has always been to back up the participation of American companies in the development of Kazakh oilfields and to promote the transit routes bypassing Russia to decrease its political and economic influence over the region.<sup>26</sup> Besides joint development of Tengiz and Kashagan oilfields in Kazakhstan, one of the projects was the new Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline that came into operation in 2008. As for CA natural gas resources the U.S. supports two projects for the delivery of Turkmen gas, Nabucco and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline. The TAPI pipeline would allow transporting the CA energy resources to Pakistan and India through Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> So far, these projects are still under consideration.

China's rapid economic growth and need to diversify its energy supply in terms of origin and in ways of delivery has made CA resources crucial for its development. Nowadays, most of the energy resources come to China from the Middle East and Africa via sea routes through the Straits of Malacca. The pipeline system within CA will allow China to have land routes for delivery of energy resources. Although China has had less comparative advantage to buy oil and gas fields due to the late arrival to the CA energy market, its energy portfolio in the region has significantly improved. It controls over 24% of Kazakh oil production.<sup>28</sup> It is the only foreign investor in Turkmenistan's gas sector. Moreover China has guaranteed independent delivery systems, the Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline and the Central Asia Natural Gas Pipeline (CAGP). This pipeline system is a significant defeat for Russia's attempt to be a monopoly in the transit of CA resources.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, the economic/energy dimension has not provided the ground for effective multi-lateral cooperation in CA. Most of the deals in the energy sector are bilateral. Russia's promoted economic organizations, such as EurAsEC and CIS, do not go further than agreements on paper. Although some argue that China boosts the economic dimension of SCO, in reality even if agreement is reached within the SCO, it is implemented bilaterally.<sup>30</sup> One of the evident examples of such cooperation can be the SCO Energy Club. Agreement signed in 2006 on establishing the Energy club for coordinating energy policy and increasing energy cooperation in the region has not resulted in any common policies. China and Russia compete for access to CA energy that prevents them from cooperation in this field. In addition, it is easier to achieve more favorable deals separately with each CA as it gives advantage to greater power over the smaller state.

---

<sup>24</sup> See: M. Laruelle, "Russia in Central Asia: Old History, New Challenges?" *EU-CAM*, September 2009.

<sup>25</sup> See: O. Olikar, D.A. Shlapak, *U.S. Interests in Central Asia: Policy Priorities and Military Roles*, Rand Corporation, U.S., 2006, pp. 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> See: E.C. Chow, L.E. Hendrix, "Central Asia Pipelines: Field of Dreams and Reality," *National Bureau of Asian Research*, September 2010.

<sup>27</sup> See: D. Tynan, "Afghanistan: Will TAPI Pipeline Be Able to Beat Back the Taliban?" *Eurasianet*, 13 December, 2010, available at [<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62565>], 13 March, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> See: Y. Kim, *Central Asia's Great Game and the Rise of China*, Presented at the 2nd International Conference of the HK Russia-Eurasia Research Project, Hanyang Univ., Korea, available at [<http://www.eurasiacenter.org/data/ftpoot/2010%EA%B5%AD%EC%A0%9C%ED%95%99%EC%88%A0/%EA%B9%80%EC%97%B0%EA%B7%9C.pdf>], 13 March, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> See: A. Matusov, "Energy Cooperation in the SCO: Club or Gathering?" *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2007, p. 85.

## Regional/Interstate Level of Analysis

There is a number of security concerns that unites all CA countries: problems of water/energy management and potential for conflict among CA states related to it, and border security that includes such issues as drug trafficking and the spread of Islamic extremism.

### Water and Energy

CA countries are united by the system of rivers of the Aral Sea basin. The distribution of water resources in the region is highly unequal: two upstream countries, Kyrgyzstan (18%) and Tajikistan (66%) are the source of drinking and irrigation water for the rest of the region.<sup>31</sup> There has always been a so-called conflict of interest between downstream and upstream countries on the use of CA water resources: irrigation versus hydropower engineering. Downstream countries, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan need water during the summer agricultural season for irrigation of its crop and cotton fields, whereas upstream countries need water in the winter period for the production of electricity. The upstream countries, in turn, depend on energy resources supplied by downstream ones, which are rich in hydrocarbon resources such as oil and gas.

The barter mechanisms developed in the Soviet Union allowed mitigating the needs of all states: for irrigation water upstream countries were compensated by the system of subsidies from the central budget and provision of cheap fuel from neighboring countries and electricity through the CA common energy system. However, the collapse of the Soviet state destroyed the system of compensation. New attempts to reestablish it failed.<sup>32</sup> The main problems of water distribution are twofold: first, the failure of barter agreements, second concerns building of new plants. Indeed, compensatory mechanisms do not work. Uzbekistan, and to a lesser extent, Kazakhstan, has strenuously opposed all attempts to equate their natural resources in the form of hydrocarbons with natural resources of upstream countries, water. In addition, Uzbekistan's aspiration to build its reservoirs for accumulating the water in winter time and the withdrawal of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan from the common energy system reduces the possibility of their participation in barter agreements.<sup>33</sup> As a result, there is less possibility to reach new agreements on water sharing in future.

Construction of new dams in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Roghun and Kambar-Ata, respectively, increases the tension between upstream and downstream countries. The situation can escalate into a conflict with relatively high probability of the use of force. Recent tension between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan took the form of open confrontation. The Uzbek government declared that the construction of the Roghun station will cause environmental damage and violate the water balance in the region.<sup>34</sup> In response to the Tajik attempt to construct the dam Uzbekistan cut the supply of gas by half and closed the railway connection with Tajikistan.<sup>35</sup> In turn, the Government of Tajikistan believes the

---

<sup>31</sup> See: V. Niiatbekov, Kh. Dodikhudoev, "The Republic of Tajikistan in the Regional Dimension," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (39), 2006, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup> See: G. Petrov, "Conflict of Interests between Hydropower Engineering and Irrigation in Central Asia: Causes and Solutions," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2010, p. 53; St. Hodgson, "Strategic Water Resources in Central Asia: In Search of a New International Legal Order," *EUCAM Policy Brief*, No. 14, 10 May, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> See: E. Akhmadov, "Uzbekistan Exits Central Asia's Common Energy System," *CACI Analyst*, 26 November, 2009, available at [<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5226>], 20 January, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> See: *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> Due to geography connection between some areas of Tajikistan is only possible through Uzbekistan in winter time.

construction of such a facility is the sovereign right of any state, and is in full compliance with international law.<sup>36</sup>

Thereby, despite the obvious necessity for cooperation to work out mechanism to regulate water and energy issues, CA states failed to establish any. Indeed, the CA countries have huge potential to develop common energy market that can be a strong driver for economic integration and sustainable development of all CA states. Nevertheless, there are no sufficient steps to boost it; neither of the countries is ready to step back. The situation has direct security implications: controversy over countries' water and energy policies can result in open confrontation which in turn may lead to an armed conflict.

### **Borders, Drugs, Islamic Extremism**

Border issues can be divided in three main groups, which are closely related to each other: border disputes resulted in tense relationships between CA leaders, lack of capacity to control borders with Afghanistan, which caused the increase of Islamic extremist activities, and drug trafficking.

Since the first years of independence the CA countries have had to face challenges they have no experience in handling. Dissolution of the Soviet Union made loose borders between CA countries the frontiers of newly independent states. Long history of "national delimitation" within the Soviet state resulted in a number of border disputes closely related to the problems of national minorities and enclaves left in the territories of different states. There were several disputed territories between Uzbekistan, on the one hand, and all CA countries on the other; in addition, there were disputes between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Despite a number of bilateral agreements on delimitation of borders the process of demarcation took long time. In addition, the establishment of national border guards, and entrance fees for crossing check-points created enormous problems for population living along the border zones. This resulted in several armed clashes between the people and border guards. For instance, the incidents on Turkmen-Uzbek border in 2001 and 2002 resulted in several people being shot or wounded by border guards.<sup>37</sup>

The other source of potential threats to the CA countries stems from the neighborhood with Afghanistan. The conflict in Afghanistan created serious problems for Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which had to protect their borders from side effects of the Afghani conflict: drugs and insurgencies.<sup>38</sup> Tajikistan has been mostly affected as it shares the longest border with Afghanistan and lacks physical capability to protect it. As a result, religious extremists, who found safe haven in Afghanistan, could easily penetrate CA borders. Thereby, the Islamic factor proved to be a serious security concern for the CA countries, in particular, for Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) crossed the borders of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1999 and 2000 with the aim to overthrow the regime in Uzbekistan and establish an Islamic state in the Ferghana valley.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the loose control of borders made it possible to spread the ideas of Islamic

---

<sup>36</sup> See: S. Majidov, "Tajikistan-Uzbekistan Relations Freeze over Roghun Project," *CACI Analyst*, 17 February, 2010, available at [<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5271>], 31 January, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> See: "Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential," *Asia Report*, No. 33, International Crisis Group (ICG) Osh/Brussels, April 2002, p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Islamic factor as a destabilizing factor revealed itself in several occasions: the civil war in Tajikistan (1991-1992), the Batken events in Kyrgyzstan, IMU fighter inroads into Uzbekistan (for more information, see: O. Sidorov, "The Islamic Factor in Central Asian Countries' Domestic Stability," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (43), 2007, pp. 15-16).



state as in the absence of effective border control the extremist religious literature could go through the territory without any obstacles.<sup>40</sup>

The other problem closely related to the issues of border control and its delimitation is “prosperous” drug trafficking in the region. Around 25% of the Afghan opiate (total production amounts to 93% of the world supply<sup>41</sup>) is being transported through the territory of CA.<sup>42</sup> Tajikistan again bears the heaviest burden on opium seizures.<sup>43</sup> Major drug routes originating in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan cover the territory of all CA countries and mostly have Russia as a final destination.

Obviously, all the above-mentioned challenges need cooperative action of all CA states. It seems that religious extremism is the problem of Fergana valley; however, it is difficult to deny that increasing instability in the Fergana valley will affect neighboring Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Additionally, there is sufficient evidence that there is a close link between activities of religious extremists and drug trafficking, the problem that for sure impacts the whole region.<sup>44</sup>

However, the CA countries do not demonstrate any major attempts to solve these problems in cooperative manner. With the exception of border disputes that were mostly resolved peacefully by 2008,<sup>45</sup> the CA countries fail to act together. Moreover, in some cases the reaction to these threats is inadequate and counterproductive. Most of the measures aimed at the prevention of the above problems resulted in unilateral strengthening of border checkpoints between states to control the movement of goods and people. For instance, Uzbekistan’s reaction to the IMU insurgency was very rough. It accused Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan of being unable to control their borders<sup>46</sup> and took unprecedented measures to plant mines around the perimeter of the state borders with them. As a result, since 1999, dozens of Tajik and Kyrgyz citizens have died and were injured from stepping on land mines on borders with Uzbekistan. There is no evidence that this improved the control of either the spread of Islamic activities. As for combating drug trafficking, the situation is quite similar: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have been relatively ready to cooperate whereas Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan took unilateral measures to protect their borders.<sup>47</sup>

## Domestic Level of Analysis

CA has significant potential for internal conflicts due to the considerable concerns regarding difficult economic conditions, human security, and possible ethnic clashes. The situation is often exacerbated by incompetent government, bad leaders, and corruption. Additionally, some security issues that have internal character or origin may have repercussions for neighboring countries.

---

<sup>40</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> See: *EU Central Asia Drug Action Program*, available at [<http://cadap.eu/ru/node/29>], 4 August, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> See: *Ibidem*.

<sup>43</sup> See: “UNDOC, Central Asia Drug Seizures, Online Database,” available at [[http://dbroca.uz/?act=seiz\\_chart&drug\\_type=19](http://dbroca.uz/?act=seiz_chart&drug_type=19)], 3 August, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> See: S.E. Cornell, N.L.P. Sandström, “The Eurasian Drug Trade: A Challenge to Regional Security,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 2006, p. 16; S.E. Cornell, R.A. Spector, “Central Asia: More than Islamic Extremists,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2002, pp. 193-206.

<sup>45</sup> See: “Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential.”

<sup>46</sup> See: *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> See: E. Marat, *The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, Silk Road Paper, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Silk Road Studies Program, October 2006.

### Human Security

The CA economies have all experienced serious difficulties since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Their industrial and agricultural production has sharply decreased because of the collapse of the command economy and the withdrawal of subsidies and transfers from the Soviet central budget as well as problems of transition such as price liberalization, privatization, and closure of unprofitable enterprises. The economic recovery was fostered by economic reforms, foreign investments, and rich natural resource base.<sup>48</sup> However, the distribution of economic development in the region is very uneven; oil and gas rich countries, such as Kazakhstan and to a certain extent Turkmenistan, significantly outpace the rest.

Dramatic changes in economy in the first years of independence resulted in drastic decrease of income and standards of living of the population. Until now most of the countries cannot overcome this problem. According to the OECD, only Kazakhstan is ranked as a country with the per capita income higher than average. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are ranked as countries with low income, whereas Turkmenistan is a country with lower middle income. Additionally, economic stagnation, unemployment, mistakes of the privatization and liberalization programs have resulted in significant income inequalities and appearance of extremely poor population. Except Kazakhstan, all countries are characterized by high number of population living below the poverty line (see Table 1). This led to migration and outflow of the highly skilled labor trained during Soviet times from the region, which negatively influenced other spheres of the social life.

Since independence the education and healthcare systems in the CA states have struggled with difficulties associated with economic stagnation, underinvestment and shortage of human capital. Many teachers, academics and experienced medical personnel have left the region due to the low standards of living. Low salaries combined with significant delays in their payments discouraged most of the young specialists to work in these spheres. All CA countries launched programs aimed at modernization of their education and healthcare. So far, these programs have been ineffective and failed to make any difference. The main reasons are again lack of financing and bad governance exacerbated by the high level of corruption in the ministries.<sup>49</sup> CA states already bear consequences of these failures, although MDG database shows that the CA countries still have very high literacy rates (see Table 1). This statistics most probably reflects the levels in capital cities and will not be the same in the next decade. The problems of the healthcare system have already resulted in low life expectancy and significant problems with tuberculosis and spread of HIV/AIDS.<sup>50</sup> According to the MDG database neither of the CA state will meet MDG on reduction of high levels of child and maternal mortality.<sup>51</sup>

The problem of electricity supply is another dimension of human insecurity in CA. The electricity shortages are common in all CA states. However, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan experience severe energy crisis. For instance, during the winter of 2008 and 2009, the poorly maintained energy system in Tajikistan simply collapsed. In most rural areas people had electricity not more than three hours a day. In Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, the electricity cuts left thousands of people without heating, and hot and cold running water.<sup>52</sup> It is remarkable that the Aluminum plant, the major consumer of electricity in Tajikistan and the main source of revenues for the Rakhmon's clan, was still running.

---

<sup>48</sup> See: H. Peimani, *Conflict and Security in Central Asia and Caucasus*, ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> See: "Central Asia: Decay and Decline," *Asia Report*, ICG, No. 201, 3 February, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> See: MDG Monitoring Database, 25 April, 2011, available at [<http://www.mdgmonitor.org/>].

<sup>52</sup> See: *Tajikistan on the Road to Failure*, ICG, Osh/Brussels, 2009; C. Kindelan, "Central Asian Energy Crisis Leaves Millions of Tajiks without Heat," 4 February, 2008, available at [<http://www.groundreport.com/World/Central-Asian-Energy-Crisis-Leaves-Millions-of-Taj/2854707>].

Table 1

## Selected Developmental Indicators\*

	Population below Poverty Line %	Maternal Mortality Ratio per 100,000 Live Births	Adult Literacy Rate (both sexes) (% aged 15 and above)	HDI Rank
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>99.7</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>99.4</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>99.7</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>99.6</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>96.9</b>	<b>102</b>

\* Based on MDG Monitor, and Human Development Index databases.

Thereby, the issues of human development and security pose serious concern in most of the CA countries. According to the Human Development Index database, only Kazakhstan is ranked as a country with high level of human development. The source of the problem is twofold: economic stagnation and bad governance. In many cases the CA governments ignore the problems of human security; this, however, has already influenced stability in the region.

### ***Domestic Security Concerns with Regional Implications***

Ignoring issues of human security, as well as failure to deal with internal conflicts, may result in significant security implications not only for the domestic stability of CA countries but for the whole region. The events in Andijan in 2005 and in the South of Kyrgyzstan in 2010 demonstrate how internal conflicts may spill over to the neighboring countries and generate instability in the region.

Unpopular economic reforms undermining the living standards of the poorest population, shortages of gas and electricity supply during cold winter, worsening corruption and bureaucracy provoked a wave of protests throughout Uzbekistan in 2004.<sup>53</sup> The events in Andijan in May 2005 became the tipping point of the long-term dissent in the country. The demonstrations in support of local Andijan businessmen transformed into the massive uprising against the existing government system that, in fact, failed to provide basic human needs to the population.<sup>54</sup> The Uzbek government severely suppressed the popular unrest and accused its participants of terrorist activities. As a result, up to 500 people were killed and thousands of people had to seek asylum in neighboring Kyrgyzstan in order to avoid the persecutions.<sup>55</sup> The massive movement of people created difficult situation on the border between the two

<sup>53</sup> See: *Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising*, ICG, Bishkek/Brussels, May 2005.

<sup>54</sup> See: *Ibidem*.

<sup>55</sup> To be precise 187 people according to official data (Prosecutor General, Report on the investigation of Andijan events for Olij Mazhlis (Parliament)), 7 September, 2005, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1126077420>],

countries. Moreover, it created significant political tensions as the Uzbek government required extradite the asylum seekers back to Uzbekistan.<sup>56</sup>

The ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the South of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 had similar consequences. Searching for rescue from massacre about 111,000 people were displaced to Uzbekistan while 300,000 internally displaced people stayed at the border areas. As in case of Andijan events, tensions on the borders and difficult humanitarian situation had considerable security repercussions for both countries.<sup>57</sup> The June violence was the result of rising ethno-nationalism and long-term unresolved problems of ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan as well as difficult economic and political situation in the country left after the coup in April 2010. Due to the continuing political struggle within the Kyrgyz political elite the interim government failed to assess the situation adequately and take necessary measures to prevent the burst of violence.

Although the reasons of these events may seem different at first glance, the nature of both conflicts is the same, in particular, the failure of government systems to solve internal problems. Neither of them addressed the root causes of unrests. In case of Uzbekistan, repressive security apparatus suppressed popular opposition, while the main reasons of anger with the regime, such as uneven regional development, economic inequality, and systematic violation of human rights, remain unresolved. Adoption of new constitution and political system in Kyrgyzstan did not increase an opportunity for national minorities to participate in political life of the country. Hence, both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are still vulnerable to future conflicts.

Additionally, in both cases, the system failed to prevent the consequences of the conflict for the neighboring countries. Refugee movements and difficult humanitarian situation created significant economic burden for recipient countries. However, political cost could be even higher. In case of aggravation of the situation, mutual accusations between countries, tensions in border areas between people and border guards could result in significant interstate conflict.

Thereby, the accumulation of various internal security problems has led to their internationalization, and resulted in increase in the number and severity of interstate tensions. The fact that many of the CA states do not address the internal security challenges, such as human security, underdevelopment, corruption, institutional weakness makes internationalized internal security problems one of the major factors of future instability in CA.

### *C o n c l u s i o n :* *State Regimes as the Major Obstacle to Stability in Central Asia*

Analysis of the CA RSC reveals that the major factor of instability in CA is the coexistence of multiple security challenges on all levels. Moreover, the security problems faced by the CA states are closely inter-related and often reinforce each other. Considerable tensions over water-management and border disputes may provoke traditional inter-state conflict in the future. Proximity of Afghani-

---

29 March, 2011, and 300-500 according to OSCE (*Preliminary Findings on the Events in Andijan, Uzbekistan, 13 May, 2005*, OSCE ODIHR, Warsaw, 20 June, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> See: A. Baltabaeva, "Kyrgyzstan's Intention to Return Uzbek Refugees Causes Concern," *CACA*, Vol. 6, No. 13, 2005, pp. 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> See: *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010*, KIC, 2011, pp. 45-46.

stan aggravates transnational threats such as terrorism and drug trafficking. All regional problems have significant implications for human security due to considerable impact on population. Human insecurity, in turn, has become the main driver of internal conflicts, which have considerable potential for internationalization and regional spill-over. This can aggravate each of the existing traditional and non-traditional security threats and have a trigger effect on regional instability. In my opinion, there will not be any major breakthrough in improving the existing situation as current regimes fail to address them on both domestic and regional levels. Moreover, political elite in CA states often represents the main obstacle to achieve any progress.

Indeed, the nature of current political regimes is an obvious obstacle to domestic security. One of the reasons is the high degree of state privatization by existing leadership and their families. All the CA political rulers see the state and power as a method for self-enrichment. Control over natural resources, remaining viable parts of the national infrastructure and the most profitable sectors of the economy and successful businesses are common practices in CA. This kind of resource management significantly undermines the ability of the CA states to develop their economy, decrease poverty, and address problems of human security. Additionally, the fact that the population cannot influence the situation due to the absence of legitimate mechanisms to change the ruling elites creates the ground for possible popular unrests and conflicts over them.

Cooperation and peaceful resolution of the existing tensions on the regional level is significantly confined by the absence of necessary preconditions within the CA elites. As it was mentioned above, according to Deutsch, effective cooperation is largely defined by compatibility of values of ruling elites, the “we-feeling,” and certain degree of states’ “responsiveness.” One can argue that values of the CA elites are quite compatible: they are all authoritarian states interested in regime survival. However, a deeper look reveals that this type of values does not favor building the necessary trust between states creating necessary “we-feeling». On the contrary, fixation on necessity to stand in power by any means often causes mutual suspicion about both internal and external partners. One can also claim that elites in all CA states are united by the interest in stability as this secures their power. However, they do not try to achieve this stability through cooperation. On the contrary, stability of the regime and the state is often viewed in isolation from others. Turkmenistan and, to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan can be good examples of this tendency.

The level of elites’ “responsiveness” is insignificantly constraint.

- First, the CA countries did not experience full sovereignty before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Once the CA countries got independence strengthening of statehood or sovereignty became the priority goals for the political elite. “Priority of independence” declared by many CA countries became the ultimate goal for their foreign policies.<sup>58</sup> Any type of integration and cooperation presuppose sharing sovereignty. Leaderships of the CA countries are not ready to delegate it to any other state or organization. This prevents them from any successful and effective cooperation within the region.
- Second, and perhaps, most important is that responsiveness of the CA states is considerably confined by the political culture of the current leaders. Concentration on power and its maximization, “zero-sum thinking” dominates the political behavior of the current CA presidents. The fact that maximization of power is the primary goal makes it difficult to think strategically and search for compromise at both regional and domestic levels. Thereby, the inability of CA elites to adequately respond to each other’s needs creates significant constraints for addressing any regional security problem.

---

<sup>58</sup> See: *Tsentrāl'naia Azia 1991-2009*, p. 44.

Thereby, with the existing nature of the political regimes in CA it is impossible to make any progress in stabilization of CA security. There is an urgent need in further reforms of political system in the CA states. Although one can argue that any political transition in CA may also result in further instability, it is necessary to recognize that the current system hides even greater danger. Unless regional elites and the great powers acting in the region support the status quo, the region will remain vulnerable to various types of insecurity.

---