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CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS

Journal of Social and Political Studies

Published since 2000

3 (57)
2009

CA&CC Press[®]
SWEDEN

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FOUNDED AND PUBLISHED BY

INSTITUTE
FOR CENTRAL ASIAN AND
CAUCASIAN STUDIES

Registration number: 620720-0459
State Administration for
Patents and Registration of Sweden

INSTITUTE OF
STRATEGIC STUDIES OF
THE CAUCASUS

Registration number: M-770
Ministry of Justice of
Azerbaijan Republic

PUBLISHING HOUSE

CA&CC Press®. SWEDEN

Registration number: 556699-5964

Journal registration number: 23 614
State Administration for Patents and Registration of Sweden

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SWEDEN

WEB ADDRESS:
<http://www.ca-c.org>

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CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS
Journal of Social and Political Studies
No. 3(57), 2009

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REGIONAL SECURITY

HOW THE AUGUST WAR AFFECTED THE CAUCASUS

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The August war had a paradoxical effect on the Caucasus. It turned the region into the main arena of the biggest international crisis in recent history. Russian-American relations had not reached such a critical point since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some observers harked back to the Caribbean crisis of 1962. The test launching of Russia's Topol-M ballistic missile in response to the appearance of American war ships in the Black Sea; the turning point in the seemingly irreversible process of NATO's enlargement that became evident after Georgia and Ukraine were refused Membership Action Plans in December 2008; and the new tone of the latest American administration in its dealings with Moscow all indicate that global security issues were placed on the map in August and that we should appreciate the fact that this local and short-lived armed conflict helped to resolve (although

not entirely) such acute and far-reaching contradictions.

For the Caucasus, however, the situation looks different. Of course, the external changes, primarily the appearance of two new independent states, reflect the scope of the crisis. But the old contradictions have not been resolved, while several new ones have appeared. Soon after the Russian presidential decree on recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states was signed and publicized, Russian diplomats began talking about the successful settlement of two ethnopolitical conflicts. There are technical grounds for such an opinion. But only technical. Suffice it to say that nothing has been done to accommodate the Georgian refugees who left their homes in South Ossetia or the Ossetian refugees who cannot return to the republic because their homes have been destroyed and are still in ruins.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia (particularly the latter) risk repeating the fate of Northern Cyprus, which was recognized by Turkey but has been unable to rectify its economic underdevelopment or emerge from foreign political isolation.

There can be no doubt that such a fate is preferable to the ethnic cleansing that would threaten the Abkhazians and Ossetians if they found themselves back under Tbilisi's jurisdiction. But can such a fate be considered enviable?

In August 2008, Georgia underwent a defeat comparable to the collapse of statehood it experienced in the first half of the 1990s. Loss of a large portion of its territory, the blatant incompetence of its political and military leadership, and its disillusionments about receiving any kind of significant assistance from the U.S. all gave rise to the national-state project that was being carried out in the country before. "The Georgian Way," which many in the region considered exemplary, turned into a complete fiasco. Whereby in Georgia itself the disaster was merely expressed in an emotional reaction and did not lead to reassessment of the previous strategy. The Georgian political elite is largely sticking to its former rhetoric and declaring its previous goals.

In August 2008, Russian-Georgian relations reached the lowest point in their entire history. After bottoming out, it would be logical to expect them to gradually normalize. But here we are a year later and even the embassies reopening seems like a remote prospect. And this is not

because Russian President Medvedev has directly stated his unwillingness to discuss anything with the current Georgian leader. The unfavorable personal compatibility between the Russian and Georgian leadership, which seemed to be a significant factor in bilateral relations before last August, has now receded into the background, or even further into the shadows. Neither of the sides has shown the desire to overcome the consequences of the conflict, their foreign political agendas are mutually exclusive. The extreme development of the trends in Russian-Georgian relations that became apparent even before August is continuing. The crisis did not resolve these contradictions either.

Broadly and metaphorically speaking, the Caucasus has not only failed to break out of its former rut, but has become even further entrenched in it. One of the fundamental questions that was resolved in August in South Ossetia was how actively and aggressively could the foreign players, primarily the U.S., carry out their policy in the region? Now Washington has learned a hard and bitter lesson which will force it to moderate its activity. But, having taught the Americans this lesson, Russia has found that its current approaches to exerting influence on the situation in the Southern Caucasus have exhausted themselves. The field is open to new players who until now have been standing by in the heavyweights' shadow. And Turkey's activation in the region is the first sign of this.

Insufficient Conditions for Sovereignty

Russia has recognized the independence of South Ossetia, which is the weakest of all the unrecognized state formations in the post-Soviet space. This is primarily due to two factors: the country's low level of economic development and its unsophisticated political system. This is explained by the difficult starting conditions in which South Ossetia found itself at the beginning of the 1990s, as well as by its long and exhausting opposition to Georgia in conditions when the front line (directly and indirectly) could literally pass along the streets of Tskhinvali and other settlements of the republic.

South Ossetia is experiencing a gradual decline in its population. The 1989 census registered 98,500 residents in the South Ossetian Autonomous Region. By the mid-2000s, the population of the unrecognized republic, according to A. Tsutsiev, amounted to 69,000 people, including 48,000 ethnic

Ossetians and 21,000 ethnic Georgians.¹ On the eve, during, and immediately after the hostilities, almost the entire Georgian population left the republic. According to the Federal Migration Service, in the winter of 2008-2009, there were approximately 8,000 Ossetian refugees from South Ossetia in Russia. It is unlikely that precise data on the size of the republic's population will appear soon. On the one hand, a large number of South Ossetian residents work or study outside the country, coming home only for a short time. While on the other, the size of the republic's population is the topic of a basically political argument between Tskhinvali and Tbilisi, which casts doubt on the figures presented by official sources on both sides of the conflict. In all likelihood, the most realistic figure is 40,000 people.

Cross-border trade (smuggling) through the Roki tunnel, which links the country to Russia, has long been the main source of existence for the residents of South Ossetia. The market in the Georgian village of Ergneti, which is on the southern outskirts of Tskhinvali, served as the main base for this trade. It was closed by the Georgian authorities in the summer of 2004. Although it has apparently been impossible to eliminate cross-border trade entirely (there are roads in South Ossetia that bypass the Georgian police posts), it was dealt a heavy blow and the republic's economic potential has been undermined. Between 2004 and 2008, the South Ossetian leadership was unable to set up other economic mechanisms. Their absence was compensated for by aid from Russia (its pre-war amount was not publicized) provided through the North Ossetian budget.

At present, cross-border trade has essentially stopped. The restoration program, on which Moscow is planning to spend 10 billion rubles, appears to be the only source of economic revival in the republic at present. If this money is used wisely with the help of local production, some of the demand for construction materials could be satisfied and an upswing in South Ossetia's construction industry ensured. But construction contracts will evidently be allocated in Moscow and it is here that the restoration plans will be formed. There is no guarantee that the republic's leadership will have enough lobby potential or administrative experience to ensure that some of the funds from the restored budget are invested in production in South Ossetia. Moreover, 1.5 billion rubles of the planned 10 billion have already been transferred,² but there have been no signs of its recuperating effect on the republic's economy.

There is no point in placing great hopes on the restoration of industrial production units in South Ossetia outside the construction industry. It still has mining industrial capacities left over from Soviet times. But in the conditions of the economic crisis, it will be difficult for the Russian leadership to find investors willing to put money into restoring these capacities. For example, in the Northern Caucasus, the state only managed to attract investments on "voluntary-compulsory" terms even when the foreign economic situation was favorable. Consequently, South Ossetia will fully depend in the next few years on direct budget inflows from Russia.

In other words, Russia is compensating for the critical shortage of economic conditions that could ensure South Ossetia's real sovereignty. This does not bother anyone. The autonomous republic declared its desire to be part of the Russian Federation back in 1992 and has not retreated from this intention since. The Kremlin is categorically against carrying out this scenario de jure, not wishing to be accused of annexing Georgian territory. But it would most likely accept its de facto implementation as inevitable.

The difficulty is that money infusions by themselves are not capable of creating an economic upswing. The experience of the Northern Caucasus (in particular Dagestan and Ingushetia) shows that if the corresponding institutional environment is lacking additional budget financing will not lead

¹ See: *Konflikty v Abkhazii i Iuzhnoi Osetii. Dokumenty 1989-2006 gg.*, Moscow, 2008. See map on the back flyleaf.

² See: M. Ararkov, "Osetinskiy finansovyi pirog," *Expert-online*, 30 April, 2009, available at [<http://www.expert.ru/articles/2009/04/30/Kokoity/>].

to the appearance of new or the expansion of old production units or to an increase in the number of jobs, but it will largely go to consumption. This approach will work only as a way to ensure stability in the short term, but not as a permanent development tool. We will emphasize that the North Caucasian regions are labor-surplus. South Ossetia, on the contrary, must hold onto its population and it will be difficult to do this by means of “money handouts” alone.

It is not clear whether South Ossetia will be able to create an institutional environment that will promote the productive spending of funds coming in from the outside.

An acute domestic political conflict is developing in South Ossetia. On 5 December, an interview with former secretary of the South Ossetian Security Council Anatoliy Barankevich was published in *Kommersant* newspaper. He accused President Eduard Kokoity of fleeing to Java during the storming of Tskhinvali by Georgian forces, of extremely inefficient organization of the restoration work, and of attempting to create an ironclad personal power regime.³ In response, Kokoity almost let it to be known that Barankevich was in cahoots with the Georgian special services.⁴ In April 2009, there was a scandal in South Ossetia around the split in the People’s Party, which intended to take part in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 31 May. Two party congresses with different participants were held within the space of two days, whereby the authorities recognized as legal the congress in which the people loyal to Kokoity took part.⁵ In mid-May, when talking at the Rosbalt Information Agency in Moscow, representatives of the opposition—former prosecutor general Askhar Kochiev, member of parliament Fatima Margieva, and Anatoliy Barankevich—made several harsh statements against the South Ossetian authorities. In particular, Eduard Kokoity was accused of tyranny, embezzling the humanitarian aid provided by Russia, and more.⁶

The domestic political crisis showed that the South Ossetian political regime is not consolidated enough. Large influential groups in society are deprived of access to the government. Some years ago it was precisely this fact that made it possible for the Georgian leadership to set up the “temporary administration of South Ossetia” loyal to Tbilisi and headed by Dmitry Sanakoev, who used to be prime minister of South Ossetia. Today’s opposition has little in common with him. But in both cases it was obvious that prominent figures were being pushed outside the boundaries of the systemic political field. The statements of the opposition in themselves do not threaten Kokoity’s personal power, but the conflict situation leaves few opportunities for institution-building.

Moscow has been unable to resolve the problem of the ineffective institutions in the Northern Caucasus. It is more or less propitious personnel choices and not systemic decisions that are promoting the achievements in economic policy and higher quality of state management (Kabardino-Balkaria, to a lesser extent Adigey) in this region. And there is no reason to believe that the policy in South Ossetia will be any different.

Moscow (or, at least, influential groups in the federal bureaucracy) is not happy with Eduard Kokoity. On 23 November, soon after the conflict between Eduard Kokoity and Anatoliy Barankevich surfaced, a report that placed the region’s leader in a very unfavorable light was published by the Accounts Chamber on the results of an audit of the use of budget funds sent from Russia to restore South Ossetia.⁷ Incidentally, later another audit by the Accounts Chamber did not reveal any untar-

³ See: O. Allenova, “Ne mesto etomu prezidentu v Iuzhnoi Osetii,” *Kommersant*, 5 December, 2008, No. 222.

⁴ See: O. Allenova and A. Gabuev, “Eduard Kokoity: segodnia khotiat ukrast nashu pobedu,” *Kommersant*, 23 December, 2008, No. 234.

⁵ See: M. Plieva, “Narodnaia partiia Iuzhnoi Osetii stala ob’ektom dlia politicheskikh eksperimentov,” *Kavkazskiy uzel*, 13 April, 2009, available at [<http://south-ossetia.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/152868>].

⁶ See: “Oppozitsiia obiavit Iuzhnuui Osetiiu ‘mertvoi zonoii,’” *IA Rosbalt*, 15 May, 2009, available at [<http://www.rosbalt.ru/2009/05/15/640854.html>]; “Oppozitsiia: Iuzhnaia Osetiia prosit zashchity i pomoshchi Rossii,” *IA Rosbalt*, 15 May, 2009, available at [<http://www.rosbalt.ru/2009/05/15/640870.html>].

⁷ See: “Schetnaia palata proverila ispolzovanie sredstv na vosstanovlenie Iuzhnoi Osetii,” available at [<http://www.ach.gov.ru/ru/news/archive/20081223-1/>].

geted spending of the allotted funds. On 14 May, 2009 (at the time a press conference of representatives of the South Ossetian opposition at Rosbalt Information Agency was held), head of the Russian presidential administration Sergey Naryshkin said in an interview to the TV station Vesti 24 that the upcoming elections “would confirm the chosen path toward independence, strengthening South Ossetian statehood and, most important, inviolability of the Constitution and its norms. As well as the impermissibility of making amendments to the Constitution to suit the whims of certain political changes.”⁸ There is a widespread opinion in the republic that Eduard Kokoity intends to cancel the constitutional provision after the parliamentary elections that prohibits the same person from occupying the post of president for more than two terms. The accent Naryshkin placed on the impermissibility of amendments to the basic law of South Ossetia can be interpreted as Moscow’s disapproval of these plans and possibly as the desire to see a different person as the republic’s president after the end of Kokoity’s term.

The sources of Moscow’s discontent could be twofold. On the one hand, restoration in South Ossetia is indeed going unbearably slowly. Compared to the rates at which refugees from the conflict zone are being accommodated in Georgia (by the winter of 2008-2009 they had all received housing), this puts Russia in an extremely unfavorable light. Not to mention the fact that South Ossetian residents are expressing their discontent not only with their own government, but also with the Russian leadership. On the other hand, Kokoity is demonstrating an uncompromising attitude about the procedure for spending the funds intended for restoration. In his opinion, the South Ossetian authorities should be their main distributor, while the Russian leadership prefers to create a special directory in Moscow that will allocate the contracts for restoration work.⁹

This standoff could be related to the conflict involving South Ossetian Prime Minister Aslan Bulatsev. Hailing from the FSB and former head of the North Ossetian Department of the Federal Tax Service, he became head of the government of South Ossetia in October 2008, but since then has essentially not begun performing his duties. Eduard Kokoity puts this down to health problems. But according to the version voiced by Oleg Teziev (the former prime minister of South Ossetia who was in conflict with the republic’s leader) in an interview to *Kommersant*, “Kokoity really did not want to see him in this post, understanding him to be Moscow’s eyes and ears, but he was unable to oppose Moscow. So he decided to render Bulatsev innocuous and take control of all the financial levers himself.”¹⁰

At the beginning of April, Kokoity said that he did not intend to make amendments to the South Ossetian constitution allowing him to run for a third term.¹¹ Since Sergey Naryshkin’s words about the inviolability of the republic’s constitution were voiced a month later, this shows that Moscow does not have very much faith in the promises made by the South Ossetian president. Even if he fulfills the wishes of the head of the Kremlin administration, his term does not run out until November 2011. It is very likely that the current development trends in South Ossetia will continue until that time, even if only because there is still no solution in sight to the inert standoff with respect to the distribution of restoration funds. The president’s early retirement might be an alternative, but that would most likely mean a conflict scenario over the transfer of power and would mean aggravation of the domestic political crisis.

It may be that only some of the upper Russian elite are not happy with the current president and that this is not the consolidated opinion of the country’s leadership. But this does not change anything

⁸ Sergey Naryshkin’s interview to “Vesti.” Full text available at [<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=284770>].

⁹ See: A. Gabuev, “Kontrolnaia dlia Tskhinvali,” *Kommersant*, 3 March, 2008, No. 37.

¹⁰ O. Allenova and S. Titov, “V Iuzhnoi Osetii vse bolshe byvshikh,” *Kommersant*, 5 December, 2008, No. 222.

¹¹ See: “Eduard Kokoity ne stanet prezidentom Iuzhnoi Osetii v tretiy raz,” *IA Regnum*, 9 April, 2009, available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/1149036.html>].

since restoration of the republic will continue to be postponed and the domestic political weaknesses of the new state conserved.

If the current trends continue, South Ossetia risks becoming a territory on which only state power structures, a Russian military base, and the small number of people servicing it remain. South Ossetia's de facto transformation into a Russian region will not prevent events from developing along this scenario. Nevertheless, its significance for the strategic balance of forces in the Caucasus was largely determined by the fact that its residents were ready with arms in hand to defend their right to independence. The decline in the permanent population and inability of the authorities to restrain this process is also reducing the country's military-political potential. This could have long-term consequences for the current balance of forces in the region.

Dispute about Vectors

Compared with South Ossetia, Abkhazia has greater potential for ensuring real sovereignty. It has a more reliable economic base (tourism, export of agricultural products) and is less dependent on Russian economic assistance. According to a recent statement by Speaker of the Russian State Duma Boris Gryzlov, which he made during a visit to Sukhumi, "this (2009.—N.S.) year, Abkhazia's budget amounts to 3.8 billion rubles, 2.5 billion rubles of which are pledged by the Russian budget."¹² In so doing, a third of Abkhazia's budget is formed from its own tax base, which is a pretty good index.

Although many facilities in Abkhazia are still in a dilapidated state since the 1992-1993 war, the August hostilities bypassed it (apart from the upper part of the Kodori Pass occupied by its armed contingents, which was hit by artillery and aviation strikes on the eve of the storming). So the Abkhazian leadership does not have to organize urgent restoration work under the threat of a social explosion, as is happening in South Ossetia.

Finally, Abkhazia has a more mature, compared with South Ossetia, political system. At the end of 2004-beginning of 2005, Abkhazia went through a severe domestic political crisis. We will remind you that at that time the opposition headed by Sergey Bagapsh and Alexander Ankvab contended the election results, which made Raul Khajimba, puppet of the republic's first president Vladislav Ardzinba, the winner. They insisted the results were falsified. Despite the pressure from Russia, Bagapsh was able to uphold his position and won the repeat election, although he had to give Khajimba the post of vice president (Ankvab received the post of prime minister). The Abkhazian non-governmental organizations in favor of Bagapsh played a significant role in this stand-off. Abkhazia acquired the valuable experience of a peaceful transfer of power and avoided the emergence of a closed clan regime.

The independent media began encountering limited access to information on the part of the power structures just a few months after Bagapsh came to power.¹³ Press representatives have been reporting recently on cases of direct threats and pressure on them.¹⁴ But they are continuing to work and the opposition parties are openly carrying out their activity, especially as the outcome of the upcoming

¹² O. Allenova, "Abkhaziiu prigliasili na Olimpiadu v Sochi," *Kommersant*, 19 May, 2009, No. 87.

¹³ See: N. Venediktova, "Sredstva massovoi informatsii Abkhazii v 2007 godu," report from the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations, available at [<http://www.cjes.ru/bulletins/?bid=2566&lang=rus>].

¹⁴ See: "Rodstvenniki prezidenta nachali predvybornuiu kampaniiu: obzor SMI Abkhazii," *IA Regnum*, 22 February, 2009, available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/1128283.html>].

presidential election next year is not clear. In terms of its institutional development, Abkhazia is no less developed than Georgia, at least, and is much more developed than South Ossetia and other regions of the Northern Caucasus.

Abkhazia traditionally has a diversified system of foreign relations. In addition to Russia, it maintains contacts (unofficial) with Turkey, which is promoted by the existence of a large Abkhazian diaspora in this country. The Adighe national movement is rendering Sukhumi immense support. In October 2008, during the extremely hardline international discussion about Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Federation of European Circassians organized a meeting between the Abkhazian delegation and deputies of the European parliament. Abkhazia was represented by presidential advisor for foreign policy Viacheslav Chirikba and deputy foreign minister Maksim Gvinjia.¹⁵

Abkhazia has also established contacts with the European Union countries. Last June, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana visited Sukhumi. He talked with Abkhazian leader Sergey Bagapsh for about an hour and summed up the experience as a splendid dialog with the Abkhazian leader. Later Bagapsh visited Paris on the invitation of Xorus Press, publisher of *Foreign Policy France*, and held several meetings in the French capital with experts and businessmen, while foreign minister Sergey Shamba visited Sweden.¹⁶ This was largely a local outburst of interest in Abkhazia on the part of Brussels and the EU member states, which was explained by the growing intensity of various consultations on ways to settle the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. But it should be noted that Sukhumi willingly entered a dialog with the European representatives, while the level of these representatives was quite high.

Nevertheless, Abkhazia's formation as an independent state in the near future does not promise to be smooth. There are several reasons for this.

First, Abkhazia is encountering serious challenges with respect to preserving the elements of economic sovereignty it currently has. There has been a boom in recent years in the real estate market to the north of the river Psou, on the Black Sea coast of the Krasnodar Territory, which only the economic crisis in Russia put the damper on. However, Russia's recognition of the republic's independence may help to extend this boom to Abkhazia's Black Sea coast, which is underdeveloped compared with Sochi. At present, the appearance at the Abkhazian border of a tsunami of money created by Russia is only being prevented by the shortage of funds from potential investors, the vague prospects of the Russian real estate market itself, and the legislative restrictions on real estate transactions for non-Abkhazian citizens (Russian citizens and the citizens of other countries can only buy real estate in Abkhazia through nominees).

Land is Abkhazia's main economic resource. If it loses control over it, the Abkhazian elite could also lose control over the republic. Competition over land is becoming aggravated. Recently a Greek national organization talked about the rights to land of Greeks who left Abkhazia in the 1990s.¹⁷

Legislative regulation of the right to land is becoming one of the main topics on the domestic agenda in Abkhazia. The Party of Economic Development that recently appeared headed by Beslan Butba accused Sergey Bagapsh of plans to introduce free sale of land to foreign citizens and criticized him for his decision to transfer Abkhazia's railroad to Russia's OAO "RZhD" state railroad company.¹⁸ The agreement entered with Russia on joint protection of the border is giving rise to disputes in

¹⁵ See: V. Pop, "Abkhazians Call for Recognition in European Parliament," *European Observer*, 7 October, 2008, available at [<http://euobserver.com/9/26877>].

¹⁶ See: "Zapad kliuet na ulovki Gruzii: Abkhazia za nedeliu," *IA Regnum*, 27 June, 2009, available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/1020729.html>].

¹⁷ See: Kh.G. Politidis, "Dioskuriada... Abkhazia... rodina!" *Mezhdunarodnaia evreiskaia gazeta*, April 2009, Nos. 1-2.

¹⁸ See: "Partiia ekonomicheskogo razvitiia Abkhazii kritikuet vneshniuiu politiku prezidenta Bagapsha," *IA Regnum*, 18 May, 2009, available at [www.regnum.ru/news/1164556.html].

Abkhazia—according to some sources, the Abkhazian organizations operating in Turkey are dissatisfied with this decision.¹⁹

The Forum of Abkhazia's National Unity Party and the Aruaa public organization of 1992-1993 war veterans, which are close to vice president Raul Khajimba, announced that they might demand the president's retirement. "Why do we need a government that is consistently transferring all the functions that ensure the sovereignty and independence of our state to foreign management?" says the statement about the transfer of Abkhazia's railroad to OAO "RZhD" and similar plans with respect to the Sukhumi airport.

The president is also blamed for the talks with representatives of Tbilisi and Brussels on the eve of the August war and almost for attempting to enter a conspiracy with Georgia: "The Abkhazian leadership held talks with Georgia on transferring the Kodori Pass to the control of international forces. During Georgian representative I. Alasaniia's secret visit to Abkhazia, a corresponding document was prepared. Work on it was continued in Stockholm. These meetings were held with the assistance of the U.S. and the European Union, which in itself led to an expansion of the format of the talks and a reduction in Russia's role in the settlement. It is no accident that the Danish and German foreign ministers, as well as EU High Commissioner Javier Solana, visited Abkhazia at this time. But these plans were fortunately undermined. In August 2008, Russia, when repelling Georgia's armed aggression, recognized Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence. In so doing, it can be stated that if Abkhazia had managed to sign the agreement with Georgia, there could have been no recognition of our independence."²⁰

It is difficult not to describe the criticism by the Forum of Abkhazia's National Unity and Aruaa as eclectic—Bagapsh is accused at the same time of pursuing an insufficiently pro-Russian foreign policy and of transferring strategic facilities to Moscow's control. But this reflects a possible domestic political clash about the choice of the republic's further development path. Most of the Abkhazian elite, to which the president most likely belongs, is striving to carry out a multi-vector and diversified foreign policy as before. First, because this policy could promote wider international recognition of the republic's independence. Second, because it would help to avoid extreme dependence on Moscow. It is doubtful that Abkhazia has forgotten the events of the end of 2004-beginning of 2005 when Moscow openly and rather grossly interfered in the elections in the republic and does not want to repeat this experience. On the other hand, some Russian politicians are worried that Abkhazia will begin showing too much independence, try to draw closer to the West, and so on.

The widespread expansion of Russian state companies in Abkhazia (in addition to OAO "RZhD", Rosneft also intends to carry out its projects in the republic)²¹ is dictated to a large degree by political considerations. In this respect, the fact that Vice President Khajimba, who for several years remained a "sleeping" political player, has been showing more activity during the last year is drawing attention to itself. The organizations close to him have been repeatedly criticizing the multi-vector nature of Abkhazia's foreign policy and calling for exclusive orientation toward Moscow. Keeping in mind Khajimba's role in the conflict around the last presidential election in Abkhazia, his increased activity could be a warning to the president by some of the Russian political elite not to become too carried away with diversifying foreign political ties and a multi-vector policy.

At the same time, the fact that representatives of various political forces are making active use of the agreements with OAO "RZhD" to apply pressure on the president shows that many people in

¹⁹ See: "V Abkhazii soglashenie s Rossiei o sovместnoi okhrane granitsy podvergaetsia kritike," *IA Regnum*, 16 May, 2008, available at [<http://regnum.ru/news/1164288.html>].

²⁰ "V Abkhazii mogut potrebovat otstavki prezidenta," *IA Regnum*, 18 May, 2009, available at [<http://regnum.ru/news/1164898.html>].

²¹ See: *IA Interfax*, 15 May, 2009.

Abkhazia are indeed worried about the country becoming too dependent on Russia. Of course, there is no need at present to talk about any major shifts in the position of official Sukhumi. But nor can the likelihood be fully excluded that since Russia has recognized the country's independence the Abkhazian leadership will begin to look for ways to retain at least some room for maneuver in its foreign policy. This might significantly complicate the political game in the Caucasus and create conditions for the appearance of new acute contradictions among the players.

Unrecognized Disaster and the "Power Trap"

"We fired about 250,000 people as a result of our reforms. A big percentage of these people have not managed to find themselves in the new economy. Fighting corruption and crime, we put thousands of people in jail. In Tbilisi alone we convicted 8,000 people; all of their relatives are outside today, asking me to resign," said Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili in an interview to *Newsweek*, which he gave at the height of the opposition demonstration in the Georgian capital.²² The president essentially admitted that the reforms (no matter how external observers assess them) have caused a split in Georgian society.

This split made itself known in November 2007 when the police dispersed opposition meetings in Tbilisi. This crisis became aggravated after the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2008, since the efforts to build Mikhail Saakashvili's personal power regime continued and intensified. We will note that the imbalance in the political decision-making mechanism in Georgia and the large spontaneous component in it contributed to the August disaster.

According to former Georgian prime minister Zurab Nogaideli, in the second half of 2008 foreign direct investments in the country dropped from one billion to several tens of millions of dollars, and, according to the 2009 results, an economic slump of around 5% can be expected.²³ Foreign direct investments, as Nogaideli believes, were the main driving force behind the growth of the Georgian economy in recent years, but in the conditions of the global economic crisis this driving force stopped working.

By the time Georgia felt the consequences of the military operation in South Ossetia, fundamental and long-term crisis trends had already made themselves known in the country. Meanwhile, August was the defeat of the nation-state project being carried out in Georgia during the past two decades, beginning with Zviad Gamsakhurdia's ascent to power. The essence of this project is a de facto unitary state within the boundaries of the former Georgian S.S.R., integrated into Western international military and political institutions and seeing Russia as the main threat to its sovereignty.

Mikhail Saakashvili tried to carry out this project as fully as possible. The promises to return Abkhazia and South Ossetia to the jurisdiction of Tbilisi before the end of his presidential term, which he gave in both his inaugural speeches, created a situation when the success of nation-state building was tested by the government's ability to carry out an efficient policy to return the break-away autonomies to its control. Due to this a situation developed whereby return of the territories became the condition on which the solvency of Georgia's national statehood depended, and not

²² See: A. Nemtsova, "Mikhail Saakashvili: Where Are My Western Friends?" *Newsweek*, 20 April, 2009, available at [<http://www.newsweek.com/id/193509/page/>].

²³ Interview with Zurab Nogaideli, Tbilisi, 22 February, 2009.

the formation of a democratic, law-based, and internationally responsible state. In addition, efficient economic development of the country was considered a condition for resolving the territorial problem.

The feeble nature of the current domestic political crisis in Georgia and the often tragicomic events on the streets of Tbilisi should not disillusion us. Georgian society and the state are going through a severe disaster. Worst of all is the fact that the crisis is proving fruitless. It is not giving rise to new ideas, approaches, or leaders, it is not helping to create a new paradigm of national development.

In the fall of 2007, the opposition put forward drafts of institutional amendments in Georgia (transfer to a parliamentary republic, reform of the election system, and so on). Now the only demand on the agenda is Saakashvili's resignation. But the absence of any specific positive program is dooming the oppositionists to failure. As for the presidential team, its inability to carry out even a partial re-examination of the current approaches in domestic policy (with their improvisation, closed decision-making mechanisms, and authoritative measures) is making Mikhail Saakashvili "a lame duck" long before the expiration of his constitutional term in office and is not leaving him any opportunity to make strong moves that might help to overcome the crisis.

The matter here does not only concern the personal qualities of the current Georgian politicians. The formation of a new paradigm of national development demands answers from Georgian society and the political community to a set of extremely difficult questions. How can economic policy be built in order to overcome the marginalization of those 250,000 people who were fired that Mikhail Saakashvili talked about in his interview to the American magazine? It stands to reason that this figure should largely be considered provisional, but this does not stop the problem itself from being provisional. How can the representation of their political interests be ensured and, in so doing, the political regime consolidated? How, by making a compromise with the "former," can the real achievements of the Rose Revolution be retained—the achievements in the fight against grass-roots corruption, in lowering the administrative barriers for business, in curbing crime? How can Georgian-Russian relations overcome the destructive context for Georgia of the standoff between Moscow and Washington? The latter requires a re-examination of the goals and tasks the Georgian elite is currently adopting concerning Euro-Atlantic integration, and this already shows how difficult it will be to achieve a new consensus in Georgia.

At present Tbilisi is continuing to place its stakes on confrontation with Moscow. The practical manifestations of this policy, to the extent they can be judged, vary from an uncompromising diplomatic standoff on all the international fronts accessible to Georgian diplomacy to attempts to have a destabilizing influence in the Northern Caucasus. Such a policy can hardly be called realistic. In essence, it proceeds from counting on a hypothetical disaster in Russia, whereby it would experience such a profound domestic political crisis that it would be on the brink of disintegration. It is presumed that in such conditions it would either be forced to fulfill the demands of Georgia's Western allies and rescind the decision to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia (with consequent internationalization of both conflicts) or it would be unable to carry out military intervention in the republics in the event of a new operation by Tbilisi aimed at their forced return to its control.

In other words, the Georgian authorities are hoping for something similar to the collapse of the Soviet Union. But, despite the understandable economic difficulties, contemporary Russia is not showing any signs of such a scenario. Not to mention that a disaster of such scope is not an everyday occurrence in world history and building foreign policy on such a hypothesis is not very sensible.

It is possible that Russia could help Tbilisi to develop a more realistic position by taking steps to reduce the degree of confrontation in the relations between the two countries, without, of

course, touching on questions relating to the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are of principal importance for Russia. For example, the ban on access of several Georgian goods to the Russian market has clearly exhausted itself. There is nothing to prevent Russia from taking such steps to alleviate the confrontation. But nor are there sufficient stimuli either. And this shows some of the weak sides of Russia's current position in the Caucasus that have still not been reckoned with.

Creating military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia would help Russia to resolve its significant problem of security in this region. In conditions where Georgia does not recognize the independence of the two republics, the two bases are hindering its membership in NATO.

- First, if it takes Georgia on board, the North Atlantic Alliance will have to face the fact that there are Russian troops on part of the territory it recognizes as a member state. Such a volatile situation makes it potentially dangerous for NATO and Russian military hardware to be in direct proximity of each other, particularly if we keep in mind the frequent armed incidents on Abkhazia and South Ossetia's borders with Georgia. It is unlikely that NATO will take such a risk.
- Second, the military base in South Ossetia is several dozen kilometers from the Georgian capital and several kilometers from the railroads and highways that link the east of the country and its capital with the sea and western regions. This largely devaluates Georgia in the U.S.'s eyes as a springboard in the Caucasus. Such great limitations on Georgia's entry into NATO remove enlargement of the bloc in other countries of the region from the agenda: without a country that occupies such an important strategic position, such enlargement is deprived of any practical meaning.

Georgia was one of the driving forces in the GUAM organization (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) and actively filled the action plan of this bloc with vectors advantageous to it. In particular, it put forward the idea of creating peacekeeping forces in it. The August crisis caused actual self-liquidation of the bloc, which was unable to form a coherent position regarding the events in South Ossetia. GUAM is unlikely to recover from such a blow. The energy and transportation infrastructure projects it was participating in will continue, but they will lose their former political component.

Political associations like GUAM which bring to mind the term "sanitary cordon" will appear but they will be situational and unstable. For example, the spontaneous and institutionally unformed alliance of three Baltic states, Poland, Ukraine, and Georgia, is largely motivated by the personal political ambitions of the Ukrainian and Polish presidents Viktor Yushchenko and Lech Kaczyński. The departure of these politicians from the stage will mean the collapse or radical reformation of the alliance itself. Moscow can add this result of the August conflict to its assets as well.

At the same time, it is obvious that Russia's new position in the region is largely (if not exclusively) ensured by force mechanisms. The presence of military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, recognized only by Russia and Nicaragua, as well as the predictability of the political processes in these two republics are critically important to it. If Russia increases its influence, this will require diplomatic "extension." Otherwise the Kremlin will find itself in a "power trap," when, after resolving its most pressing security problems, it loses the opportunity to further develop its policy in the region.

Theoretically this goal could be achieved either by means of major changes in Russian-Georgian relations (which is extremely difficult in today's conditions) or by increasing diplomatic activity in the Armenian and Azeri vectors (keeping in mind the prospect of Georgia's regional isolation).

Armenia's position during and after the August crisis proved more complicated than could have been imagined. On the one hand, the Nagorno-Karabakh factor is forcing Erevan, at least, to take an interested look at Abkhazia and South Ossetia's acquisition of independence. On the other hand, the country's extreme dependence on transit through Georgia means that it must maintain good relations with Georgia.

Armenian-Georgian interstate relations, which were almost non-existent before August, began to undergo development following it. Suffice it to say that at the end of September 2008, Armenia and Georgia reached an agreement on building an Erevan-Akhalkalaki-Batumi road, and Erevan began looking for financing for this project.²⁴ This road is important both for Armenia (it will expand its access to the Black Sea ports) and for Georgia (it will provide an additional transport route linking the east and the west of the country and passing far from the Russian military base in South Ossetia). We will note that Armenia's dependence on Georgian transit has made consolidated international-legal recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) impossible. By recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Armenia, a CSTO member, would automatically doom itself to a transport blockade by Georgia, which would have extremely serious economic consequences for it.

There can be no talk about such regional isolation for Georgia at least until Armenia's relations with Ankara and Baku have been normalized. Possible unblocking of the Armenian-Turkish border, the prospect of which appeared after the April statement of the foreign ministers of both countries, would make it possible to decrease Armenia's dependence on transit through Georgia. But it would also objectively weaken Armenia's ties with Russia, the complicated relations between Erevan and its close neighbors being one of the determining factors in these ties.

Movement is clearly visible in the Karabakh direction. The political declaration on settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict signed in Moscow in November 2008 and the meeting between the heads of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Serge Sargsian and Ilham Aliev, in the Russian capital in April 2009 indicate Moscow's willingness to actively assist in resolving the conflict. At present it is difficult to say how stable this trend will be. We will only note that Russia was unable to take advantage of the August events to achieve peaceful and mutually acceptable settlement of another ethnopolitical conflict in the post-Soviet expanse—the Transnistrian. Whereby its influence on the situation involving Transnistria is much higher than the influence it could have on Baku and Erevan.

This is perhaps the first time in its post-Soviet history that Russia is encountering such a clear imbalance between the tools of tough and soft power and such an urgent need to compensate for the shortage of the latter. If this challenge is recognized and an adequate response is made, Moscow will have the chance to channel the military achievements of August into a strictly political vector. If this does not happen, it will run the risk of reducing the sphere of its influence in the Transcaucasus to the territory of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

²⁴ See: L. Ovanisian, "Stroitelstvo dorogi Erevan-Batumi planiruetsia zakonchit za dva goda," *Kavkazskiy uzel*, 6 October, 2008, available at [<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1230445.html>].

THE U.S. VS RUSSIA IN MILITARY-POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH TAJIKISTAN

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U.S. Policy after 2001

Tajikistan, which has a 1,200-km-long border with Afghanistan, was in demand during Operation Enduring Freedom. At the beginning of 2002, Tajikistan opened its air corridor to NATO's military transport aircraft and 250 French servicemen were deployed at the civilian airport in Dushanbe. The United States was allowed to use the Dushanbe and Kulob aerodromes for deploying its contingents.¹ American congressmen, senators, ministers, and the heads of military departments began paying more frequent visits to the republic.

The republic, which borders directly on Afghanistan, was hoping for military-technical assistance in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. This hope was encouraged when U.S. Congress cancelled the embargo on arms deliveries to Tajikistan. However, the U.S. did not ask Tajikistan for permission to deploy its bases in the country. This was partly because, after taking a look at Kulob (a former Soviet base), the U.S. Central Command deemed it insufficiently equipped and too small,² although it could have provided the best access to the strategically important Pansher Valley. Moreover, Dushanbe could not respond in any way without first resolving the problem of Russia's military base, talks on which began back in 1999. However, the country's president, Emomali Rakhmon, was potentially in favor of deploying the American military base provided it brought economic benefit.

But the Americans did not want to have their military bases right next to the 201st Russian division. Nevertheless, American experts did call on the U.S. to deploy operational structures in Tajikistan in order to increase control over drug trade and support the American forces in Afghanistan in the event the Taliban or other anti-Western Islamic groups became further entrenched there.

¹ See: V. Kitspotter, "Bol'shaia igra v Tsentral'noi Azii," *Iadernyy kontrol'*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2005, pp. 81-102.

² See: V. Loeb, "Footprints in Steppes of Central Asia; New Bases Indicate U.S. Presence Will Be Felt after Afghan War," *The Washington Post*, 9 February, 2002, p. A01, Lexis-Nexis.

Deployment of the U.S. armed forces should have been explored as the first step in U.S. influence on Indian territory, a step that would cement the growing security relationship between New Delhi and Washington.³

Dushanbe could have gleaned benefit from Washington's interest in the region even without deployment of a military base. In 2003, Tajikistan was the last Central Asian country to join NATO's Partnership for Peace Program, which, according to Tajik Defense Minister Sh. Khairulloev, provided a new boost to the development of military cooperation with the Western countries. The development of these relations is gradually helping to resolve many problems facing the country's armed forces (personnel training and provision with means of communication, vehicles, clothing and medical supplies, engineer equipment, office equipment, and other supplies) thanks to the gratuitous assistance provided by partners.

Within the framework of the Border Security Program, with the participation of the U.S. embassy, the facilities of the Interior Ministry academy, expert-criminal department, and analytical center were repaired; support was rendered to departments engaged in fighting organized crime, illicit drug circulation, and illegal human trafficking; computer classes, lingaphone and study rooms in different departments were created; and special technical equipment was transferred to the investigative forces of the Tajik Interior Ministry.

The republic's Interior Ministry received a total of 15 million dollars in aid from the U.S. under this program.⁴ By 2005, the Defense Ministry had been allotted a total of approximately 25 million dollars in gratuitous aid. And between 2005 and 2007, Washington granted approximately 40 million dollars for the reconstruction, repair, and equipping of 15 posts on the border with Afghanistan.⁵

The U.S.'s willingness to assume responsibility for infrastructure development of the Tajik border is largely related to the experience accumulated in training the republic's law-enforcement and governmental structure employees. Beginning in 2002, more than 326 Tajik government officials went through training costing more than 6 million dollars.⁶

The desire to increase cooperation with the U.S. was expressed in the fact that Tajikistan did not extend the treaty with Russia on protection of the state border, while in response the American side told Dushanbe it was willing to modernize its border troops, ensure joint patrol of the border, and create Tajik-American border posts.

The Americans ended up not patrolling the Tajik border, but they did participate in modernizing the republic's border services. Evidently, the provision of this assistance hinged on withdrawal of the Russian border guards. Keeping in mind that talks were held as early as 2003 regarding extension of the treaty on the conditions for the stay of Russian border guards, Washington offered more advantageous conditions.

Talks between Moscow and Dushanbe on the status of the 201st division are dragging. Under pressure from the Tajik authorities, the headquarters of the 201st division and other contingents began being transferred from the center of the capital to its outskirts. While Washington has started to build an embassy complex there totaling 63 million dollars,⁷ and is also granting a billion-dollar loan and

³ See: *Central Asia in U.S. Strategy and Operational Planning: Where Do We Go From Here?*, ed. by J.K. Davis, M.J. Sweeney. The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Washington DC, 2004, p. 79.

⁴ *U.S. Government Support to the Ministry of the Interior*, Press Releases, 25 July, 2007, available at [<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/>].

⁵ From the speech by Evan A. Feigenbaum, *Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs*, at a conference dedicated to the fifteenth anniversary of the establishment of relations between the U.S. and Tajikistan at the Center of Strategic Studies. Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 13 April, 2007, "Fifteen Years of Tajik-American Relations," Official site of the U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan [<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/speeches.html>].

⁶ See: Ministry of Interior, *U.S. Embassy Team up for Antiterrorism Training*, Press Releases, 19 February, 2008, available at [<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/>].

⁷ See: V. Mukhin, "Interesy SShA i Rossii stolkivaiutsia v Tadzshikistane," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 12 August, 2003.

planning reconstruction of the military airport near Kulob, thus making Tajikistan even more dependent on it.

Russia in the Formation of Military Cooperation with Tajikistan

Between 2001 and 2004, there was another slump in military cooperation between Tajikistan and Russia. The arrival of the American military in the region and the financial acquisitions for U.S. military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan forced Dushanbe to increase its pressure on Moscow. The Tajik authorities demanded some preferences and delayed the talks on entry into force of the Treaty on the Status and Conditions for the Deployment of a Russian Military Base in the republic signed as early as 1999. Military-economic bargaining began on the principle of “investments in exchange for the base.”⁸ This is also confirmed by Chairman of the Military-Imperial Union of Russia Colonel General L. Ivashov. In particular, when answering the question of why the talks on creating a 4th military base in Tajikistan were going on so long, he pointed out that “the position of the Russian military will be stable while there is Russian economic interest in the republic. Russia should not restrict itself to military cooperation alone.”⁹

At the same time, Dushanbe got Russia to fully finance the base, transfer subordination of the base’s servicemen to the Tajik Ministry of Defense in emergencies, and write off the state debt of 300 million dollars. The question of the electronic-optical center of the Okno (Nurek) space control system that belongs to the air defense structures of the Russian armed forces was put on the agenda. This facility was built during Soviet times and has strategic importance for the security of the entire CIS.

The station was actively modernized after the U.S. withdrew from the ABM Treaty. Tajikistan suggested that Russia take over ownership of Nurek (the facility’s status was not determined before this) and insisted on the payment of 50 million dollars for its use.¹⁰

In June 2004, Russia and Tajikistan agreed to create a permanent base. In August of the same year, the presidents of the two countries signed a corresponding agreement and the 201st division was replaced with the 201st military base. Its facilities are located in three large population settlements—Dushanbe, Kurgan-Tiube, and Kulob. The base has approximately 6,500 servicemen, 15% of whom are Tajik citizens. But the number of servicemen cannot correspond to the base’s status. There are plans to expand it further to 8,500 people (this was the size of the division).

The Russian division/base consisted of three infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, tank battalion, and combat support unit, including a separate helicopter squadron and aviation group. The division units had the practical task of covering 11 operative areas of the Tajik-Afghan border and protecting several important facilities of the country and Russian institutions. The division has air defense forces and assets. But there has been no joint patrolling using Tajikistan’s air defense system, there is only distribution of responsibility by zone and cooperation.

⁸ Tajik expert J. Usmanov is of the same opinion (see: J. Usmanov, “Changes in the Configuration of Russia’s Military Presence in Tajikistan and its Influence on Maintaining Security in Central Asia,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (47), 2007, pp. 94-105).

⁹ See: “Tiazhelo v tadjzhiksko-rossiiskom uchenii...” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 6 August, 2003.

¹⁰ See: V. Panfilova, “Dushanbe nazval tsenu svoei druzhby,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 19 March, 2004.

Russia's need to counterbalance its position against the U.S. made it possible for Dushanbe to obtain Moscow's consent to participate in restoring the republic's key hydropower station, Rogun, which required more than 2.5 billion dollars at that time to complete.¹¹ But the land still belonged to the base, and the technology and armaments were also owned by Russia, Russia is not charged rent or electricity fees.

When the military base acquired its official status, everyday conditions began to improve too. By April 2008, according to commander of the Volga-Ural Military Okrug V. Boldyrev,¹² more than 2 billion rubles had been spent by Russia on equipping the 201st base, and there are plans to spend another one billion on this in the near future. But V. Boldyrev noted that the everyday living conditions of the servicemen and the infrastructure of the military settlements in Kulob, Kurgan-Tiube, and Dushanbe leave much to be desired. "Each garrison should not simply have barracks for the contract servicemen, but individual housing, as is the usual procedure in Russia," said the general.¹³ Ninety percent of the contract servicemen at this base have been provided with housing.¹⁴ A secondary school has been built at the 149th guard infantry regiment, which is part of the base, on the Tajik-Afghan border in Kulob and a kindergarten has been built in Dushanbe. Now not only the children of the Russian military but also local residents are attending to school there. Several more schools and kindergartens are also being built. The most talented Tajik graduates will have the opportunity to study in Russian higher education institutions. Moreover, Russia is paying for a military hospital to be built in Dushanbe and refurbishing it with up-to-date equipment.

The Nurek station was transferred to Russia by way of settling Tajikistan's state debt. The land on which it is located was rented for 49 years at a symbolic fee of 30 American cents a year. Russia is writing 242 million dollars of the Tajik debt off to the facility, which, according to estimates, is less than its actual cost. The then Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov did not hide his satisfaction about this transaction, saying, "...we are renting the land on which the base at Nurek is located for 49 years for a symbolic fee of 30 American cents a year. This will allow the space forces to feel confident for at least the next 50 years."¹⁵

After signing these military agreements, Tajikistan retained good relations with Russia and received 2 billion dollars in investments from it. Russian President Vladimir Putin noted, "I don't think that anyone has invested this amount of money in Tajikistan in the past 12-13 years."¹⁶ The complex, which has been placed in a state of operational readiness, does not have a full complement of staff. The remaining 50 million dollars of the state debt will be settled by transferring a set of shares in the Sangtuda GES being built to Russia.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Vladimir Putin stated that the opening of this military base "meets the vital interests of the two nations and serves to strengthen peace and stability in Central Asia and security of the entire Commonwealth of Independent States. Along with the air base in Kirgizia, in the town of Kant, the military base in Tajikistan will be a reliable link in the region's united collective security system. This will be a system that is called upon to create conditions for neutralizing terrorist and extremist raids throughout the entire CIS and in Russia, as well as assist in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime."¹⁷

¹¹ See: V. Panfilova, "Rossia ukreplit svoe voenno-politicheskoe vliianie v Tadjikistane," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 25 April, 2003.

¹² At present commander-in-chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces Land Troops.

¹³ See: "Rossiiskaia voennaia baza v Tadjikistane obespechivaet bezopasnost' gosudarstv ODKB—komanduiushchii okrugom," *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, 17 April, 2008.

¹⁴ See: "Zhiloi dom dlia voennykh postroen na baze PurVO v Tadjikistane," *Informatsionnoe agentstvo API*, 17 April, 2008.

¹⁵ See: N. Karshiboev, V. Panfilova, and I. Plugatarev, "V Tadjikistane poiavilas' voennaia baza RF," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 18 October, 2004.

¹⁶ See: "V Tadjikistane poiavilas' voennaia baza RF," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 18 October, 2004.

¹⁷ See: "201 Gatchinskaia dvazhdy Krasnoznamennaia voennaia baza," available at [<http://rusemb.tj/ru/index/index/pageId/95/>].

In addition, the importance for Russia of ensuring Tajikistan's security and the military base, according to Vladimir Putin's statement, guarantee the stability of Russian investments. But it is not clear why Germany, for example, which invests billions in investments in the Dutch economy, is not trying to deploy a military base in this country.¹⁸

The Tajik Foreign Ministry, in turn, believes that the need for Russia's military presence in the republic proceeds from the overall concern and interest in resolving the problems in Afghanistan, in particular the illicit circulation of drugs and fighting extremism and terrorism.¹⁹

In exchange for its military presence in Tajikistan, Russia pledged to modernize the republic's armed forces. For example, according to first Tajik deputy defense minister Major General R. Nadyrov, the military departments of the two countries are looking at the possibility of creating a regional center in Tajikistan for repairing and modernizing artillery systems and armored vehicles.²⁰ Of course, he is talking about Russia financing this project. For it is "thanks to Russian aid that it was possible to repair the radar stations that belong to the national air defense system," said the major general.²¹

In addition, it became obvious that withdrawal of its border guards from the Tajik border was the price Russia paid for the 201st base and Nurek station. In August 2004, an agreement was signed on withdrawal of the Russian border guards. However, Tajikistan benefited from the presence of the Russian border guards, during their entire stay more than 30,000 Tajik border guards obtained an education in Russian military academies.

Justifying Tajikistan's ability to defend its statehood without foreign military presence (in this case Russian), head of the Department of International Military Cooperation of the republic's Defense Ministry M. Khasanov emphasized: "...we should not play down or ignore the role of other states that are jointly protecting peace in Tajikistan,"²² in so doing making it understood that Dushanbe will not cooperate exclusively with Russia, but will expand its military-technical cooperation with other countries too, primarily with the U.S.

In July 2005, the Russian border guards, with the exception of a group of advisors (consisting of 300 people) from the FSS border service, were moved out of Tajikistan, and the U.S. essentially assumed full responsibility for financing the border service, export control services, and customs, positioning its help as support of sovereignty. It was precisely national control of the border that was the condition for allotting American and other Western aid to its infrastructure development. Training sessions, joint exercises, and deliveries of equipment were carried out for Tajik border guards. Keeping in mind that 50% of the activity of the Russian border guards is financed by Tajikistan, it was easy for Dushanbe to agree financially to "independent" protection of its border with the help of the U.S. government.

The seeming speed with which the decision was adopted is explained by the fact that as early as September 2003, the then NATO Secretary General George Robertson promised, during a visit to Dushanbe, that the North Atlantic Alliance and OSCE would soon open a training center in Tajikistan and begin refresher training courses for the border guards of the Central Asian states.²³

Despite the transfer of border patrol to the Tajik military, the then Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed the desire to help "our Tajik friends to fortify the state border. We are the ones who

¹⁸ See: V. Socor, "Russian Army Base in Tajikistan Legalized; Border Troops to Withdraw," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 1, Issue 108, 18 October, 2004.

¹⁹ See: *ShOS-2009. Novyy shag v strategicheskoy partnerstve. Vzgliad iz Tadjikistana*, Exclusive interview of Tajik Foreign Minister H. Zarifi to "Nakanune.ru," 15 January, 2009, available at [<http://www.nakanune.ru/articles/13812>].

²⁰ See: A. Orlov, "Rossiisko-tadjikskoe sotrudnichestvo," *Voенno-promyshlennyy kurier*, 11-17 February, 2004, No. 5 (22).

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² "Opora na sobstvennyye sily," *Voенno-promyshlennyy kurier*, 24-31 March, 2004, No. 1 (28).

²³ See: "OBSE i NATO vydavlivaiut Rossiiu s tadjiksko-afganskoy granitsy," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 December, 2003.

are primarily interested in this,” said the president during a meeting with the new ambassador to Tajikistan R. Abdulatipov in June 2005. “It is a well-known fact that a large flow of drugs headed both for Western Europe and the Russian Federation is still crossing the Afghan-Tajik border,” said Putin.²⁴ But things got no further than words. It was the U.S. that rendered the Tajik border services the main assistance.

As a result, having created the Russian base, Tajikistan retained fairly good relations with Russia and, after withdrawal of the Russian border guards, drew the U.S. into security cooperation. In 2006, with the support of the United States, the World Bank wrote off Tajikistan’s state debt and, at Russia’s proposal, the republic’s state debt to the member states of the G-8. So Tajikistan not only remained on good terms with Russia, but also wrote off its debt, asked for investments, and received compensation from the U.S. for withdrawal of the Russian border guards, expecting in so doing stronger cooperation with the U.S. Later, when Russia entered advantageous military agreements, problems began with the fulfillment of Russia’s investment obligations in the Tajik hydropower industry, which indirectly shows that due to its desire not only not to lose but to increase its control, Moscow agreed to sign agreements on investments in the Tajik hydropower and aluminum industries.

Since 2005, the training of Tajik military at Russian military academies has been carried out on privileged conditions. Every year more than 80 Tajik servicemen have been obtaining an education in Russia’s military academies on a gratuitous basis and more than 20 on a privileged basis. Tajikistan is regularly participating in the military exercises of the CSTO and SCO, as well as in bilateral exercises with Russian servicemen.

Increase in the U.S.’s Role in the Military-Political Sphere

A new spiral in the U.S.’s political activity in Tajikistan began after the ambassador to the U.S. Hamrokhon Zarifi was appointed to the post of Tajik Foreign Minister in December 2006, which shows Dushanbe’s willingness to expand bilateral cooperation. In May 2007, due to the ongoing campaign in Afghanistan, NATO adopted a decision to increase the transit of freight through Tajikistan. In so doing, the Russian side was assured that the Alliance had no intention of increasing the actual size of the NATO contingent in Tajikistan. This question was discussed by NATO representative Robert Simmons, who came to Dushanbe in May 2007.

The increased attention to Tajikistan aimed at supporting the antiterrorist campaign in Afghanistan was confirmed during the visit in June 2007 by another high-ranking official—Commander of the U.S. Central Command General William Fallon, who held talks with President Emomali Rakhmon and others officials responsible for national security. And although there was no talk about opening another American base, which everyone had been repeating over and over for several years since the U.S. withdrawal from Uzbekistan, there was talk about increased cooperation in terms of airport use. It became known that by 2010–2011, the Pentagon hopes to take up residence at the aerodrome in Khorog on the border with the PRC. It is justifying this by saying it needs to repair the runway should there be an emergency in the air involving airplanes of the international coalition in Afghanistan.

²⁴ “Nachalo vstrechi s poslom Rossii v Tadzhikestane Ramazanom Abdulatipovym,” 3 June, 2005, Novo-Ogarevo, available at [http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/06/03/1707_type63378_89054.shtml].

Admiral William Fallon also suggested that Tajik servicemen participate in the peacekeeping operations. In response, in September 2007, in order to study possible ways to intensify cooperation with NATO, a group of Tajik government officials visited the NATO Headquarters and Allied Command.

In March 2007, for the first time in Tajikistan's history, joint training exercises of American servicemen and Tajik border guards were carried out on its territory. According to Kh. Rakhmatulloev, press secretary of the border department of the Tajik Committee of National Security, these exercises represented an exchange of experience between the two countries. "It is all related to drug trafficking from Afghanistan, international terrorism, and religious extremism," he noted.²⁵ But drug production in Afghanistan has grown during the years of the U.S. presence in this country, although no joint exercises were carried out until recently. It can be presumed that the increase in the U.S.'s activity is related to the expansion of Russia's military presence in the region, in particular to the agreements signed on the deployment of Russian military facilities.

Whereby, according to S. Safarov, deputy director of the Center of Strategic Studies under the President of Tajikistan, when the republic follows a multi-vector policy, this policy also works in the military sphere. But according to him, "the exercises carried out with Russia and China were very extensive, whereas the exercises with the U.S. were only symbolic."²⁶ Moreover, the list of units and contingents ready to participate in operations and exercises within the Partnership for Peace Program is essentially not used. Armaments and the command structure are still Soviet/Russian, which is preventing the development of cooperation in this sphere. And Tajikistan will not be of primary importance to NATO since the republic is still economically backward and does not have the means for full-fledged military cooperation.

In 2007, with U.S. support, international financial institutions granted Tajikistan loans totaling 1 billion 43 million dollars and grants amounting to 145.3 million dollars, which constitutes more than two of the country's budgets.²⁷ The United States itself raised financial aid to Tajikistan to 50 million dollars in 2007-2008.

The growing cooperation with the United States was confirmed at the end of 2007 by Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi, who emphasized that increased attention is being given to the joint struggle against new challenges and threats, illicit circulation of drugs and weapons, and cooperation in the law-enforcement and defense spheres.²⁸ In April 2008, more than 100 Tajik officers and border guards participated in courses on state border patrol, at which 15 U.S. marines acted as instructors. This again looks "symbolic" compared to the format of training in Russia.

After intensification of the economic crisis and change of administration in Washington, the United States attempted to sound out the possibility of further intensifying its influence in the region with respect to intensification of the Afghan factor in the U.S.'s foreign policy. In mid-November 2008, representative of the U.S. State Department John Krol visited Dushanbe, who said at a meeting with President Emomali Rakhmon that the change in the American administration would not affect Washington's policy regarding Central Asia, since the region is vitally important for stability throughout Asia. John Krol assured the president that the world crisis would not affect the amount of financial aid to the states of the region.²⁹

²⁵ See: "Granitsy Ameriki," Internet magazine *Oazis*, No. 4 (48), February 2007, p. 8.

²⁶ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁷ See: L. "Bondarets. Kogda poiaviatsia amerikanskie voennye bazy v Tadjikistane?" *IA MiK*, 23 October, 2007, 10:28.

²⁸ See: "Tadjikistan schitaet prioritetnymi otnosheniia s Kitaem, Rossiei i SShA, Agentstvo Xinhua," 23 December, 2007, 16:29, available at [http://www.russian.xinhuanet.com/russian/2007-12/23/content_548513.htm].

²⁹ See: "Vashington ispol'zuet protivorechiia mezhdou Moskvoi i Dushanbe," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 13 November, 2008.

The economic crisis has indeed had a noticeable influence on the poorest country in Central Asia. Due to the severe energy crisis, devaluation of cotton, and corresponding decrease in budget allocations, President Emomali Rakhmon was forced to ask for help from the Eastern countries at the International Conference on Financing for Development held in the capital of Qatar, Doha, and ask Russia to increase its Tajik migrant worker quotas and amnesty those migrants who have violated the visa regime. This is also important since Tajik families depend on migrant earnings for their livelihood.

But there was no talk about opening a U.S. military base. When talking at the conference during his visit, John Krol concentrated on the U.S. government's assistance in strengthening the security of Tajikistan's borders and supporting the corresponding departments. He talked about how in 2008, within the framework of the Export Control and Related Border Security Program of the U.S. government, the embassy and military engineering corps provided the Tajik customs service with mobile, x-ray, and other equipment totaling 6,729,000 dollars.³⁰ Nor did John Krol forget that on 22 August, 2008, U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson and Tajik Minister of Foreign Affairs Hamrokhon Zarifi signed two cooperation documents that provide \$13.4 million of security and law enforcement assistance to the Government of Tajikistan.³¹ Moreover, at the beginning of May 2009, the sides signed addenda to the current Agreement between the governments of the United States and Tajikistan on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement which envisage allotting additional means to strengthen security and the protection of law and order in Tajikistan.

It is possible that by taking advantage of the financial difficulties Dushanbe hoped to interest Washington in developing military cooperation. In an interview to *EurasiaNet*, an employee of the state scientific research center, who wished to remain anonymous, said that the Tajik authorities were ready to deploy foreign bases in the country. "Tajikistan can provide not only the technical possibilities, but also its territory for deploying bases. At present, the country is extremely interested in a peaceful neighborhood, but at the moment this can only be guaranteed by America's presence on the border (with Afghanistan.—*M.S.*). If the question arises of opening an American air-base in the country, the decision will doubtlessly be positive,"³² believes the specialist. The base is also very important for the republic's survival in conditions of the instable economic situation. The American base would be an additional source of money for the local economy, says senior economist of the Tajik Ministry of Economy and Trade Kh. Umarov. Today the situation "is not a viable economic model since it makes Tajikistan dependent on the Russian economy. Cooperation with the U.S., in addition to creating new jobs, will help to improve the information base of Tajik businessmen," believes Kh. Umarov.³³

But the U.S. is unlikely to want to spend the extra money that opening a new military base will entail. According to the U.S. ambassador to Tajikistan Tracy Ann Jacobson, the U.S. has no intention of opening a new base in Central Asia, including in Tajikistan." It is all the more impossible in the conditions of the financial crisis. Despite the fact that the world financial crisis is not seriously in-

³⁰ See: *U.S. Government Donation Strengthen Tajikistan's Border Security*, Press Release, 31 March, 2008; United States Hands over Nizhny Panj Border Facility to Government of Tajikistan. Press Release, 19 August, 2008, available at [<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/>].

³¹ These documents introduce addenda into the current Agreement between the governments of the United States and Tajikistan on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement and order signed in 2003 (see: "United States provides more than \$13 million to enhance Tajikistan's security and rule of law," Press Release, 22 August, 2008, available at [http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/pr_08222008.html]).

³² See: S. Magbatsho, "Tadzhikistan: vozmozhnost' rasshireniia svyazei s Vashingtonom v sfere bezopasnosti vyzyvaet v Dushanbe entuziasm," *EurasiaNet*, 29 January, 2009, available at [<http://www.eurasianet.org/russian/departments/insight/articles/eav012909aru.shtml>].

³³ See: *Ibidem*.

fluencing the level of American aid in the republic, “this (2009) fiscal year, there will be a slight decrease in the budget from 31 million dollars in 2008 to 29 million in 2009.”³⁴

In addition, in 2005 Russia reached an agreement with the CSTO member states, according to which the members of the organization are obligated to consult with each other in the event a third country asks to deploy military bases on the territory of the member states. Moscow is unlikely to consent to the presence of an American base in Tajikistan after the withdrawal of the U.S. military contingent from Kyrgyzstan. After it withdrew from Uzbekistan, Washington tried to take up residence at the aerodrome in Khorog on the border with the PRC, but nothing came of it.

Russia's Reaction to American-Tajik Military-Technical Cooperation

After the revolutionary change of power in Kyrgyzstan and the Andijan events in Uzbekistan, official Dushanbe, wishing to retain power, recognized the need to maintain the combat-readiness of its armed forces. In April 2003, the heads of the CSTO countries adopted a decision on mutual deliveries of arms and military hardware on privileged conditions. Keeping this in mind and taking account of the fact that all types of the republic's armaments are manufactured in Russia, the obvious decision was to rearm the army at the expense of the Russian side. Particularly since Dushanbe is also tied to Moscow by the agreement on cooperation in organizing the production, repair, and utilization of arms and military hardware.

In 2006, Russia gave the Tajik armed forces four helicopters—two attack Mi-24s and two transport combat Mi-8s. On the whole, Russian military-technical aid to Tajikistan amounted to 26 million dollars that year. In the fall of the following year, during his visit to the 201st military base, Russian Defense Minister A. Serdiukov said that rearming of the Tajik forces would be carried out by transferring them military technology and armaments from the Russian base.³⁵ The 201st base itself, according to the minister, will be fully rearmed and equipped with the latest armaments and technology. We will remind you that the cost of the armaments at the Russian military base was estimated at approximately 1 billion dollars, which is equal to almost one third of the Tajik GDP (3.5 billion dollars in 2008).

Keeping in mind that Tajikistan's entire military budget in 2008 did not top 63 million dollars, and the goods turnover between the countries in 2007 amounted to only 771.4 million dollars, military cooperation with Tajikistan is a top priority for Russia. Moreover, in 2007 Russia gave Tajikistan four training combat airplanes L-39 (these planes are nicknamed Albatross). In doing so, in 2007, Russian military aid to this republic increased to 30 million dollars.³⁶ Keeping in mind complete refurbishment of the 201st base, according to weapons expert V. Koziulin, Tajikistan could catch up with its neighbors in terms of the combat potential of the military contingents present on its territory.³⁷

³⁴ “SShA ne namereny otkryvat' novuiu voennuiu bazu v Tsentral'noi Azii – posol SShA,” Iuzhniy Kavkaz Research Center, available at [http://www.analitika.az/articles.php?item_id=20090304111437201&sec_id=8].

³⁵ See: “Tadzhikistan: Rossiiskoe oruzhie sdelat rezhim Rakhmona bolee deesposobnym,” IA Fergana.ru, 11 October, 2007.

³⁶ See: E. Baikova, V. Mukhin, “Tretiy srok dlia prezidenta Tadzhikistana,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 7 November, 2006.

³⁷ See: V. Koziulin, “Gosudarstva Tsentral'noi Azii: razvitie vooruzhennykh sil i perspektivy voenno-tekhnicheskogo sotrudchestva s Rossiei,” *Indeks bezopasnosti*, No. 3 (83), 2007.

The military-technical assistance process is increasing the importance of the 201st base and Russia's role as a whole as a guarantor of security and stability in Tajikistan and throughout Central Asia. Russia, in turn, is continuing to keep the Tajik armed forces dependent on Russian armaments, and this means on obtaining a military education in Russia in order to ensure high-quality servicing and operation of the hardware received.

There is a united sub-commission for military-technical interaction between Russia and Tajikistan under the intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation. On 12 November, 2008, a regular session of the sub-commission was held at which, according to head of the press center of the Tajik Ministry of Energy and Industry T. Azizova, the draft of an agreement between the countries was examined on cooperation in exporting military production to third countries and joint use of production units of the Zavod Zaria Vostoka state unitary enterprise for manufacturing defense production. "The meeting agenda also included questions regarding the improvement of the regulatory-legal base of military-technical cooperation, settling the debt for training of military personnel and technical personnel for Tajikistan at military educational institutions of the Russian Defense Ministry, organizing the repair of and modernizing armored technology and missile-artillery armaments of Russian manufacture by attracting Tajik enterprises," said T. Azizova. In addition, the implementation of the agreement on cooperation in safe utilization of the products and wastes of hard missile fuel was discussed, as well as the implementation of the agreement on mutual protection of rights to the results of intellectual activity obtained during bilateral military-technical cooperation.³⁸ It is obvious that Russia is trying to take control over the Tajik defense industry, and Dushanbe wants to settle its debt on servicemen training and obtain the opportunity to load its factories with contracts for arms modernization.

By way of implementing the decisions of the sub-commission session, at the beginning of December 2008, Russia gave the Tajik air defense forces a Pechora 2M air defense missile system. According to head of the press service of the Tajik Ministry of Defense F. Makhmadaliev, "the complex will be serviced by Tajik specialists who have been through a Russian air defense system training course. According to his data, only Moscow and Dushanbe have such missile systems at present. In December 2006, Russia transferred the latest set of equipment of aero-navigation instruments, communication means, and air defense automated control systems for the commander of the air force and Tajik defense minister. The installation and tuning of the new equipment was carried out with the participation of Russian specialists.

Of course, such deliveries of arms are very important for Tajikistan and it understands that Moscow is largely compelled to carry them out. Russia is extremely interested in further acting as a guarantor of security not only for the republic, but for the region as a whole, and under the conditions of the U.S. regional activation, will do as much as it can to ensure that Tajikistan becomes more dependent on it.

However, American publications are expressing misunderstanding about the deployment of Russia's air defense forces in Tajikistan, if the main threats to the republic's security come from Afghanistan, which is clearly incapable of threatening with missiles.³⁹ It is obvious that Moscow is striving not so much to increase its influence in the republic, which is sufficiently strong as it is, as to prevent other players from deploying their bases in the country, which could happen should Russian-Tajik relations deteriorate. At the same time, we forget that Tajikistan is a member of the CIS and partici-

³⁸ See: "V Dushanbe prokhorit zasedanie po voenno-tekhicheskomu sotrudnichestvu mezhdru Tadzhhikistanom i Rossiey," IA "Kazakhstan Segodnia," 12 November, 2008.

³⁹ See: R. McDermott, "Tajikistan Claims Border Security Improving," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, Issue 7, 13 January, 2009.

pates in the Joint Air Defense System being created among the Commonwealth states. The air force and air defense system of this republic could obtain all the information on the air situation over CIS territory, similar to that available at the Russian Central Air Force Command Center. Correspondingly, refurbishment of the Tajik air force by means of air defense systems is called upon to strengthen the position of the CIS, and Russia in particular.

It should also be noted that at the beginning of 2009, deputies of the Russian State Duma voted for ratification of the Protocol on the Mechanism for Rendering Military-Technical Assistance to the CSTO members in the event of a threat of aggression or commitment of such an act. As first Russian deputy defense minister A. Kolmakov said, under this protocol gratuitous military-technical aid from Russia to Tajikistan amounts to 315.5 million rubles.⁴⁰

The Ayni-Gissar Issue and Intensification of Russia's Role in the Military-Political Sphere

Since 2002, the aerodrome in Ayni has been under reconstruction with India's participation, which invested approximately 20 million dollars in this project. This work was carried out by approximately 150 Indian military specialists, mainly service engineers of the troops and auxiliary contingents. In December 2005, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov stated that at the trilateral Russia-Indian-Tajik talks held at that time, the question was discussed of creating a Russian-Indian air base in Tajikistan where India intended to deploy 12 MiG-29 fighter bombers. According to S. Blank, a professor at the U.S. Army Military College, by inviting India to participate in this organization, Moscow was clearly trying to stop China's influence from increasing in Central Asia,⁴¹ and also possibly to increase the military component in the SCO, where India became an observer.

But the situation dramatically changed—India stepped up its rather sluggish military relations with the U.S. After this, Indian airplanes in Tajikistan became an undesirable prospect for Moscow. According to S. Blank, Moscow began putting pressure on Dushanbe in order to get the Rakhmon administration to annul the contract with India.

The formation of the first foreign airbase of the Indian armed forces has indeed been delayed by the Tajik side since 2006, which possibly does not wish to see Indian air forces on its territory. Official representative of the republic's Ministry of Defense M. Makhmadaliev said that the Indian side's participation in reconstructing the military aerodrome at Ayni near Dushanbe does not mean the creation of an Indian military airbase there. In so doing, Makhmadaliev referred to the "repeated statements" by President Emomali Rakhmon to the effect that in Tajikistan "there were no, are no, and will never be any foreign military bases, apart from the Russian one that already exists."⁴² Moreover, Tajikistan does not want to spoil its relations with Pakistan, a country that supports the NATO troops and anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan.

⁴⁰ See: A. Korbut, "Etot khitryy, nesgovorchivyy Rakhmon," *Voенно-promyshlennyy kurier*, No. 8 (274), 4-10 March, 2009.

⁴¹ See: "Emomali Rakhmon rasshiriaet sotrudnichestvo s Evropeiskim soiuзом," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 18 February, 2008.

⁴² See: "Rossiia prirastaet bazoi v Ayni," *Voенно-promyshlennyy kurier*, No. 36 (252), 10-16 September, 2008.

We will remind you that in 2007, Russia began relocating from the airport in Dushanbe to Ayni, as envisaged by a basic agreement between the two countries on the status and conditions of the presence of the Russian military base in Tajikistan. In addition to Russian air technology, according to the agreement, Tajik air forces will be deployed at Ayni.⁴³ But Delhi is continuing to lobby its presence at the airbase in Ayni to this day.

Moscow, in turn, wanted to ensure its sole presence at Ayni. According to official data, Russia will deploy six Su-25 attack aircraft and 12 Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters at this base, as well as 30 vehicles and aviation technology. Moscow was willing to pay 5 million dollars to complete reconstruction of the aerodrome in order to ensure that it would be the only force present at the airbase.

Since international structures and other countries were failing to supply the country with enough financing, Tajikistan decided to obtain the necessary monetary funds another way by confirming its strategic orientation toward Russia and dashing the U.S.'s hopes of having any presence on its territory. But Moscow was unable to insist on its conditions; at the end of August 2008, the agreement on expanding military and military-technical cooperation was signed. According to it, Russia and the Tajik army will use the Gissar airport for military purposes.⁴⁴ During the talks, Tajik Foreign Minister H. Zarifi said that the republic would uphold its interests in this issue.⁴⁵

And indeed, Moscow had to pay dearly for its presence at Gissar. It said it was willing to finish building the aerodrome and renew construction of the Rogun GES (which Russia was asked to do as early as the beginning of June 2008) and transfer the 201st base's armaments to the Tajik armed forces. By refusing to grant Russia sole ownership of the base, Dushanbe possibly hoped to provide itself with some room for maneuver. And, if problems arose, put pressure on Moscow by letting it understand that Tajikistan could invite other contenders and their military to come to Gissar. Nevertheless, it is Russia that has taken up residence at Gissar and this means that it has increased its influence in the region and retained control over further development of events.

But several months have passed and the questions regarding the basing of Russian military air technology in Tajikistan, as it turns out, have not been resolved. Military transport flights to this country have been cancelled, since Dushanbe is charging the Russian air force international fees for the takeoff and landing of military transport planes.⁴⁶ Indeed, according to H. Zarifi, the sides are holding talks about the further status and conditions for the military base's presence in the country.

During Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's official visit to Tajikistan in August 2008, verbal agreements were reached between the heads of state about further functioning of the 201st military base. Experts from the two countries are currently working on these issues.⁴⁷ One of Dushanbe's demands in return for gratuitous basing of the Russian armed forces in Gissar was for Russia to build a medium-capacity hydropower plant (approximately 600 MW). This project, according to experts, costs about 0.8 billion dollars. For comparison, the country's entire GDP for 2009 is estimated at 6 billion dollars. That is, the Russian Federation should be providing almost 10 percent of the growth in the Tajik GDP out of its own pocket. Of course Moscow will not go for this. And if construction of the hydropower plant is organized, it will be on commercial mutually advantageous conditions.⁴⁸

⁴³ See: V. Mukhin, "NATO okkupiruet rossiyskuiu bazu," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 12 September, 2007.

⁴⁴ This is what the aerodrome in Ayni began being called.

⁴⁵ See: "Rossiia i Tadjikistan vedut peregovory ob ispol'zovanii aerodroma pod Dushanbe," *IA Fergana.Ru*, 24 October, 2008.

⁴⁶ See: A. Korbut, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ See: *ShOS-2009. Novyy shag v strategicheskoe partnerstvo.*

⁴⁸ See: A. Korbut, *op. cit.*

The Year 2009—Problems of Military-Political Cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan

The fact that during his visit to Tashkent at the beginning of 2009, President Dmitry Medvedev publicly expressed his solidarity with the Uzbek side's concern regarding construction of hydro-power plants in neighboring countries could have aggravated relations with Tajikistan. According to Tashkent, such construction threatens catastrophic consequences for the territories of Uzbekistan located downstream. Of course, this implied the Rogun GES being built with Russia's participation. The Tajik Foreign Ministry replied with a note in which it expressed its perplexity about the Russian president's statement on the conditions for building the hydropower plant, while Emomali Rakhmon even threatened to cancel his trip to Moscow for a bilateral meeting and participation in the CSTO-EurAsEC summit. Domestic socioeconomic problems nevertheless forced Emomali Rakhmon to pay his visit to Moscow.

But the number of jobs in Russia is steadily declining and it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep the army of Tajik work migrants on its territory. These problems, as well as the severe energy crisis Tajikistan experienced, made it necessary for Emomali Rakhmon to seek help abroad himself.

In February 2009, he visited NATO headquarters in Brussels, making a statement there that "NATO, as one of the important components in ensuring security in Afghanistan, should establish active cooperation primarily with neighboring countries, Iran, and in particularly Tajikistan, which has a long border with Afghanistan." But the president only meant by this that Tajikistan was consenting to the use of its railroads and roads for the transit of non-military freight to Afghanistan. That is, Emomali Rakhmon was simply offering the possibility of transit in exchange for more investments in the republic's economy, which was feeling the pinch of the world crisis. The severe situation in the country does not allow Emomali Rakhmon to demand anything but instead seek compromises.

Indeed, when he visited Moscow later, the Tajik president did not raise the question of charging rent for the Russian base, and Moscow did not toughen up its migration policy, keeping in mind the importance of this question for Tajik citizens working in Russia. Also sources in the Russian presidential administration assert that Emomali Rakhmon stated again that there would be no deployment of NATO and U.S. military bases in the country.

Activation of rivalry between Russia and the U.S. in Tajikistan is also confirmed by the fact that at the end of April 2009 a delegation of members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly headed by Secretary General D. Hobbs visited the republic. This was the first interaction between the parliamentary deputies of Tajikistan and the Alliance countries. And two days later, CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordiuzha paid a visit to Dushanbe to discuss with the republic's leadership the most important issues of military-technical cooperation and training of military personnel for the Tajik armed forces.

Conclusion

Dushanbe is participating in all the Russian military programs and considers itself one of Russia's most devoted allies,⁴⁹ which has never deployed American military bases on its territory or accelerated military cooperation with NATO. Interaction in the military-political sphere with Russia, according to H. Zarifi, "is the key sphere of bilateral cooperation. Here we essentially have no prob-

⁴⁹ See: *ShOS-2009. Novyy shag v strategicheskoy partnerstve.*

lems, just as there are none in international and regional policy. The long-term and reliable nature of bilateral cooperation is determined by geopolitical factors and the continuing threats to security and stability in the region," says the Tajik foreign minister.⁵⁰

At the same time, according to some experts, Tajikistan is considered "the most pro-Western state of the region." The measures taken by President Emomali Rakhmon are evaluated positively: giving the security services special powers for opposing Islamic fundamentalists and undertaking repressive measures with respect to the instructors of underground madrasahs suspected of proselytism."⁵¹

But this is more likely an assessment of Dushanbe's ability to establish sufficiently mutually advantageous relations in order not to threaten relations with Moscow. Tajikistan depends on foreign assistance, including military. Resolving the country's security issues requires the active participation of the international community for forming and training the national army, police, and other security structures that in the future will form a bastion for ensuring peace, stability, and peace in the country," notes H. Zarifi.⁵²

For example, France is present at the military base, India is reconstructing the aerodrome, China is gratuitously allotting millions of dollars to material and technical equipping of the armed forces and providing practical training for Tajik servicemen at its military training institutions. Iran is helping Tajikistan to train military personnel. The Japanese government is allotting hundreds of thousands of dollars to clean up mine fields in the republic.

It is important for Russia to keep hold of Tajikistan, which means that Dushanbe's desire to make the resolution of economic problems dependent on the expansion of military cooperation and hints at the possibility of an American base appearing in the country will further compel Moscow to accept many of the conditions put forward by the Tajik authorities. So Russia, in the words of its former ambassador to the republic R. Abdulatipov, has already noted, "we are against any 'ours-yours' policy and support Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon, who after declaring 'an open doors policy,' is showing his willingness to cooperate with all countries. But we cannot allow the bloc policy instruments of the past, which NATO, the OSCE, and other players are trying to introduce here today, to predominate in Central Asia."⁵³

Russia is certainly winning the military rivalry with the U.S. and Western countries. Two possible military bases, full endowment with armaments, and training of the Tajik military confirm this. Russia is still a priority of Tajikistan's foreign policy and it is being offered many opportunities for cooperation. Although both sides are very well aware that the Kremlin does not have that many resources, nor does it always have the economic interest to respond positively to these offers. All of this again leads us to conclude that the U.S. and China with their multi-billion investments could become more important and Russia transformed into just another regional player. Nevertheless, Russia still has the historical *carte blanche* for increasing its influence in the republic, which still recalls the common past of the two countries and understands the role the Russian side played in halting the civil war in Tajikistan.

⁵⁰ See: *ShOS-2009. Novyy shag v strategicheskoy partnerstve*.

⁵¹ See: "Situatsiia v SNG zatragivaet bezopasnost' Zapada," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 12 March, 2008.

⁵² See: N. Mirsaidov, "Diversifikatsiia politiki. Tadzhikistan idet na sotrudnichestvo s NATO, chtoby reshit' energeticheskie problemy," *TsentrAzia*, 18 February, 2009, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1234907820>].

⁵³ Text of the speech of Russian ambassador to Tajikistan R. Abdulatipov at the international conference on Cooperation and Integration Projects for Central Asia: A Comparative Analysis, Possibilities, and Prospects." Khujand, 28 June, 2007, in: *Proekty sotrudnichestva i integratsii dlia Tsentral'noi Azii: sravnitel'nyy analiz, vosmozhnosti i perspektivy*, ed. by A.A. Kniazev, Bishkek, 2007, pp. 5-8.

**ENERGY POLICY AND
ENERGY PROJECTS****CHINA'S ENERGY POLICY TOWARD
CENTRAL ASIA AND
THE IMPORTANCE OF KAZAKHSTAN****Zeki Furkan KÜÇÜK***M.S. student (Eurasian Studies),
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(Ankara, Turkey)****Introduction***

Oil has been a strategic commodity since the industrial revolution and it is the most influential element in contemporary world political history. When we observe historically important events, we can see that oil somehow affects these events and creates their causes. Good examples of this are World War I and II, the Gulf Wars, and the Oil Crises. Oil, as the only resource of the developed and developing countries, is likely to continue shaping world political history in the near future.

In this context, China has very interesting conditions. China has to overcome its energy hunger in order to continue its economic boom. However, China has an enormous population, which makes it very different from the other de-

veloping countries. In order to feed its 1.3 billion people and huge economy, China needs much more energy than other developing countries.

The existing situation in China has many similarities to the Central Powers' situation before World War I. The Central Powers completed their industrialization process later than other nations of the world; they could not gain control over the necessary raw materials and had to fight with the states that controlled these sources. China began its economic development in the 1970s, much later than the other important powers, and until 1993 it was self-sufficient in terms of energy. After that China began looking for energy resources elsewhere and started importing 60 percent of its oil from the Middle East, which is under the control of the U.S. The

Caspian Region, which is one of the richest oil sources in the world, is under the control of Russia. So the oil valves crucial for China's economic development are in the hands of other powers. This is why China is trying to find new energy resources, taking steps to diversify its energy sources, and making energy investments in Africa and South America. However, considering the size of its economy, it is almost impossible to feed the Chinese economy by means of these resources alone. This is why China wants to gain a stronger foothold in the Middle East and the Caspian Region.

China completed its economic development and, just like the Central Powers before World War I, began looking for more energy in every part of the world. In this context, we need to know whether China will follow an aggressive policy like the Central Powers or whether it will feed its economy by compromising with other powers.

In this context, China's western neighbor, Kazakhstan, is of great importance to it in terms of energy. Its geographical proximity, the safety of the transportation routes, and the absence of any hostile rivals in the region are the main advantages

of Kazakh energy for China. On the other hand, improving energy ties with China is also beneficial for Kazakhstan; it is dependent on Russia for sending its oil to the world markets because it does not have enough pipelines and transportation routes. This is why diversifying customers is crucial for Kazakhstan in order to continue its economic development. So China, with its increasing energy demand, presents a great opportunity for Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan can be a much more important energy actor if it manages to diversify its market and transportation routes.

The main aim of this study is to examine the importance of energy in developing Chinese-Kazakh relations in China's energy policies. The article consists of four parts; the first part examines China's energy demand in terms of oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear energy, the second part discusses China's energy policy, the third part explains Kazakhstan's role in China's energy activities in the Kazakhstan energy market, and the last part looks at the effects of energy on China's foreign policy, especially in terms of its relations with Central Asia, Russia, and the U.S.

China's Energy Demand

China has the sixth largest economy in the world with its 10.17-trillion-dollar GDP.¹ Between the 1970s, when economic reforms were carried out and the country made its transition to "a socialist market economy" during the Deng era, and 2000, the Chinese economy has grown four-fold.² China was a self-sufficient state until 1993 thanks to its massive coal resources. After that it began to import an average of 3.2 million barrels of crude oil (according to the 2004 figures) per year and this amount has been increasing with each passing year.³ China is the second largest energy importer after the U.S.⁴

China's growing energy demand causes fluctuations in the world energy markets because of its 1.3 billion population and average 8% economic growth rate. China's increasing oil demand is one of the most important factors effecting the increase in oil prices. This is why China's energy policy is not just important for China but also for other oil producers and consumers in the market. China is aware of the fact that it is a key element in the world energy market; it wants to guarantee its position and energy security by making investments in oil-rich countries in addition to buying oil from them.

China has three state-supported companies in the energy sector. One of these companies, Sinopec (the China Petrochemical Corporation), was founded by merging the Petroleum Industry Ministry and

¹ See: *CIA World Factbook, China*, available at [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>].

² *Ibidem*.

³ See: N. Pamir, "Çin ve Enerji Güvenliği," *Stratejik Analiz*, No. 66, October 2005, p. 66.

⁴ See: E. Downs, *The Brookings Foreign Policy Studies "Energy Security Series China"*, December 2006, p. 8.

the Chemical Industry Ministry in 1983.⁵ Sinopec is active in the south of China. Another important energy company in China, CNPC (the China National Petroleum Corporation), is China's largest energy company and it is active in the west and north of the country.⁶ The last company, CNOOC (the China National Offshore Oil Corporation), was transformed from a bureau inside the Petroleum Industry Ministry in 1982. This company is responsible for offshore exploration and exploitation activities.

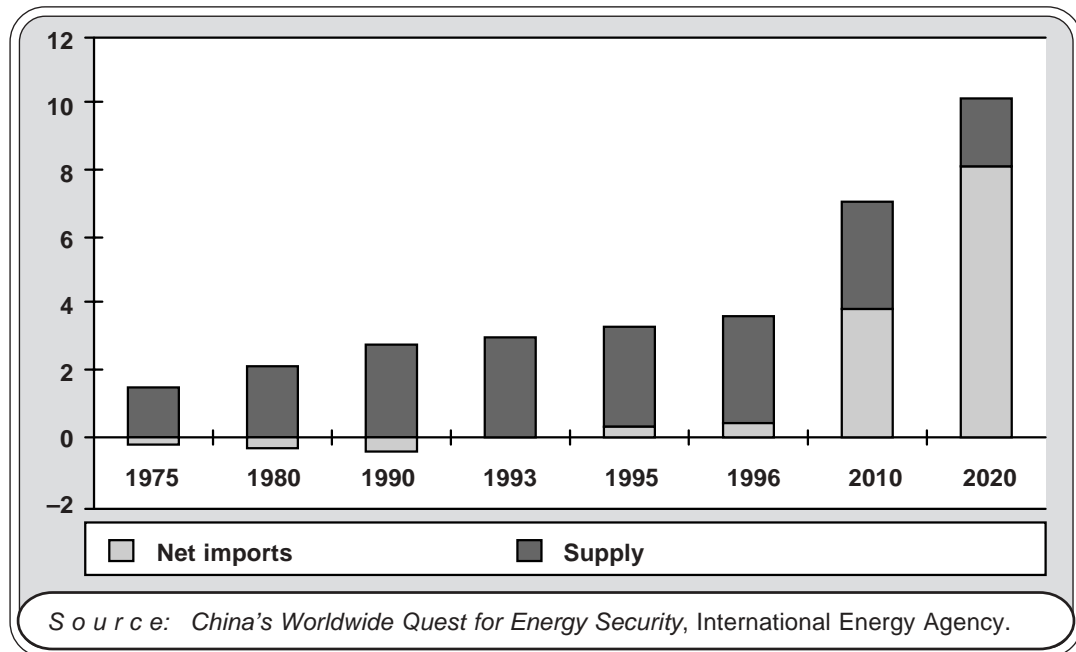
These companies took their first steps in the 1950s when they pursued a policy to create a ministry for every single heavy industry branch. In the 1980s, the Deng administration changed this policy and transformed these ministries into state-supported companies. These companies have great influence in the decision-making process in Beijing, especially in energy issues, since it was usually ex-bureaucrats who became the chairmen of these companies or ex-chairmen who were appointed to important posts in the state institutions. On the other hand, the state authorities also have a great influence on these companies in two ways; first, all appointments, promotions, and firing of administrative personnel in these companies are carried out by the Beijing government and, second, all the investments these companies plan to make must be approved by the state authorities. These companies create 22% of all the state-supported companies' profits and this is proof of their huge structure.⁷

Oil

Oil is a strategic key commodity for all the economies of the world. Oil is vital for improving industry and raising the standard of living. When we consider China's huge population and industry,

Figure 1

China's Oil Imports and Domestic Supplies



⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶ See: B. Dokuzlar, H. Yılmaz, C. Pala, "Çin'in Orta Asya Enerji Politikası," *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2006, p. 302.

⁷ E. Downs, op. cit.

the importance of oil for China doubles. China is the second largest oil consumer in the world and this shows how important oil is for China and its huge economy.

China has 18.3 billion barrels of oil reserves. Eighty-five percent of this oil is produced in the Daqing region. China can produce 3,900.62 thousand barrels a day but, on the other hand, total consumption reaches 7,578 thousand barrels a day.⁸ So there is a huge gap between oil consumption and production in China. Chinese state officials are trying to fill this growing gap by importing oil from the Middle East, Africa, South America, and the Caspian Region. According to the U.S. Energy Department, China's energy consumption will reach 14,200 thousand barrels a day by 2025 and 10,900 thousand barrels of this amount will be imported from other countries.

Coal

China was a self-sufficient country in terms of energy until 1993 thanks to its significant coal reserves. China produces 69% of its energy from coal.⁹ China has 1,034.5 billion tons of coal reserves, which constitute 13% of world's total reserves and make China the third largest coal producer (according to 2006 values).¹⁰ The dominance of low quality lignite coal in China's energy creates significant problems in terms of air pollution. Because of the increasing importance of oil and natural gas and international pressure regarding air pollution, the coal domination rate in China's energy will decrease in the near future, but it will retain its importance in the long term. On the other hand, China is developing new technologies for using coal in different ways, such as manufacturing natural gas from coal, improving methane reservoirs of coal resources, and liquefaction of coal. Important international companies, such as BP and Chevron Texaco, are participating in these projects along with Chinese energy companies.¹¹

Natural Gas

Natural gas comprises a relatively small part of China's energy consumption. However, in order to decrease environmental pollution, Chinese decision-makers are trying to increase the use of natural gas, which is more environmentally friendly. According to 2006 values, China's natural gas production amounts to 1,960.0 billion cubic feet (bcf) and its consumption is 1995.3 bcf.¹² China has 53,325.0 bcf of proved natural gas reserves and these reserves are located in the Daqing Region in the north-west part of the country. According to the forecasts, China's natural gas consumption will increase to 2120.0 bcf by 2010 and will be 3500.0 bcf in 2020.¹³

In order to transport the natural gas produced in the north-west of the country to the economically developed cities in the east, the CNPC launched the West-East pipeline project in 2005. This pipeline pumps the natural gas produced in the Xinjiang-Uighur Region and Ordos Basin to Shanghai. In addition, China exported its first liquefied natural gas (LNG) in 2006 from the Guangdong LNG fa-

⁸ See: *Energy Information Administration, Official Energy Statistics from the U. S. Government, Country Energy Profiles; China*, available at [http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=CH].

⁹ See: N. Pamir, op. cit., p. 68.

¹⁰ See: *Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, "China's Energy Conditions and Policies,"* p. 4, available at [<http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/policyrelease/P020071227502260511798.pdf>].

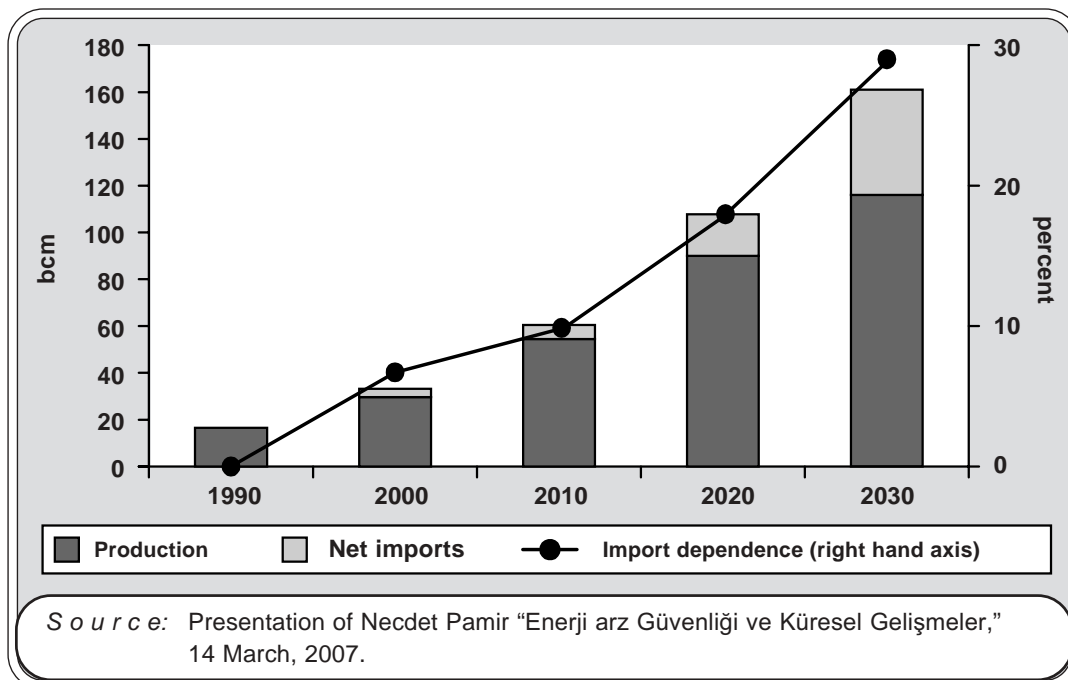
¹¹ See: N. Pamir, op. cit., p. 69.

¹² See: *Energy Information Administration, Official Energy Statistics from the U. S. Government, Country Energy Profiles; China*.

¹³ See: B. Dokuzlar, *Dünya güç dengesinde yeni silah: Doğal Gaz (Orta Asya'dan Avrupa'ya)*, IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, İstanbul, February 2006, p. 145.

Figure 2

Natural Gas Balance in China



cility. According to the Energy Information Administration's 2005 statistics, China exports 108.4 bcf of LNG. Beijing has begun building the Zhangzhou, Dalian, Hebei, and Jiangsu LNG terminals.¹⁴

Nuclear Energy

China made its first step toward nuclear energy in keeping with Zhou Enlai's declaration on the need for the peaceful use of atomic energy in 1970. Construction of the first nuclear plant started in June 1983 and the Qinshan plant began operating in 1991. China's second nuclear plant is located in Daya Bay near Hong Kong. China has five nuclear power plants with seven units and three plants with four units under construction.¹⁵ Nuclear energy constitutes only 2.3% of China's total energy production. Nuclear energy is the third energy production method after thermal and hydro power.¹⁶

China's Energy Policy

China imports 20% of its energy from external sources and the U.S.-dominated Middle East constitutes 60% of these imports. Imported oil is transported via tankers via a long sea route that pass-

¹⁴ See: N. Pamir, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

¹⁵ See: *International Atomic Energy Agency, Country Profiles: China*, available at [http://www.pub.iaea.org/MTCDD/publications/PDF/cnpp2003/CNPP_Webpage/PDF/2003/Documents/Documents/China%202003.pdf], p. 212].

¹⁶ See: Xinhua News Agency, 27 September, 2004, available at [<http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/108139.htm>].

es through the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Indian Ocean, Malacca, and the Strait of Taiwan. This transportation route runs through the most politically sensitive parts of the world. The tension between the U.S. and Iran in the Persian Gulf and Hormuz Strait, as well as the conflict in Taiwan, is akin to a bomb for China. Any instability along this route means stopping energy transportation to China and this situation will create a disaster for the Chinese economy. In addition, the length of this route increases transportation costs and creates another handicap. This is why China began looking for other energy resources and changing its transportation routes.

In this context China has turned to Africa and made significant investments in exploring and exploiting the resources in the region. China invested \$175 million in Sudan, Chad, Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Algeria, Congo, and Equator Guinea in the first ten months of 2005 alone.¹⁷ Imports from Africa constitute 25% of China's total oil imports, but this rate is not enough to substitute Beijing's dependence on Middle East oil.¹⁸ Moreover, African oil is being transported along nearly the same sea route as the Middle East oil, which is why problems of transportation security and high transit costs still continue. Because of this the Chinese government is trying to diversify and change its oil sources.

Under these circumstances, Kazakhstan presents an important opportunity for China in the energy issue. First of all, Kazakhstan borders on China, thus transportation costs will be much lower than for Middle East and African oil. Kazakh oil can be pumped via a pipeline, thus eliminating tanker costs and other expenses. Second, the transportation route is much safer than other sources. Kazakhstan is one of the relatively stable countries in Central Asia and there is almost no chance of the pipeline being attacked. However, there is some unrest in the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region of China and this could create a handicap for the pipeline. But compared to the sea route from the Middle East and Africa, the unrest in the Xinjiang Region creates fewer problems for Beijing and the Chinese government can implement more effective measures on its own territory to protect the pipeline. There are no rival forces in the Caspian Region and in Kazakhstan that could create problems for China in its oil transportation. The Middle East is a playground for all the important powers of the world, which is why there is severe competition over the limited oil in the region. This is why it is rather difficult for China to be influential and be a competitor in this region. On the other hand, there is only one dominant force in Kazakhstan, Russia, which is China's strategic partner and does not compete with Beijing. This is why China can be more active in Kazakhstan than in the Middle East.

The Importance of Kazakhstan for China in Terms of Energy

Kazakhstan is the second largest oil producer among the post-Soviet states after Russia.¹⁹ Its proven oil reserves amount to nearly 30,000 thousand barrels and total oil production reaches 1,144.96 thousand barrels per day.²⁰ Its possible reserves are much more important than its proved reserves and this is the main factor that makes Kazakhstan an important actor in the energy market.

¹⁷ See: E. Pan, "China, Africa and Oil," Council on Foreign Relations, 26 January, 2007, available at [<http://www.cfr.org/publication/9557/#2>].

¹⁸ See: J. Mill, "China Covets African Oil and Trade," *Jane's Defence Business*, 12 October, 2004, available at [http://www.janes.com/business/news/jir/jir041012_1_n.shtml].

¹⁹ See: J. Majid, "Kazakhstan: Oil, Politics and the New Great Game," in: *The Caspian, Politics, Energy, and Security*, ed. by Shirin Akiner, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2004, p. 202.

²⁰ See: *Energy Information Administration, Official Energy Statistics from the U. S. Government, Country Energy Profiles; Kazakhstan*, available at [http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=CH].

The main oil fields in Kazakhstan are Tengiz and Karachaganak, but most of the Kazakh oil comes from offshore sources in the Caspian Sea. The Tengiz oil field has been operated by Chevron-Texaco Company since 1993. The Karachaganak field is operated by a consortium called Karachaganak Petroleum Operating Partnership. British Gas and the Agip/Eni companies are the main partners of this consortium. The offshore Kashagan field is operated by Eni as a member of another international consortium.²¹

Kazakhstan also has a large amount of natural gas reserves. Its proved reserves are nearly 65,000 billion cubic feet.²² These reserves are mostly located at the Karachaganak field, while there are other large supplies at Tengiz, Zhanazhol, and Uritau. Although Kazakhstan has a significant amount of natural gas, it produces only 906 billion cubic feet. The most important reason for that is the outmoded production techniques, insufficient pipelines, and distance to the markets from the sources.

Today Kazakhstan meets 1% of the world's oil demand but its possible oil and natural gas reserves make it equal to the North Sea reserves.²³ However, Kazakhstan has significant problems that block its way in the energy market, the most important being the transportation routes. Kazakhstan pipelines were built during the Soviet era in order to transport oil within Soviet territory. This is why there are no pipelines to carry Kazakh oil to the world markets. Most Kazakh oil is pumped via the Atyrau-Samara pipeline. In 2002, thanks to the Caspian Pipeline Project, Kazakh oil began being directly transported from the Tengiz field to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk. From there Kazakh oil is transported to the oil markets via tankers.

Kazakhstan depends on Russia for sending its oil to the world markets. All the pipelines pass through Russian territory and make Russia a monopoly in Kazakhstan in terms of energy. When we consider that oil income constitutes 30% percent of Kazakhstan's budget revenue, it can be said that the Kazakh economy is in Russia's hands.

Under these circumstances, Kazakhstan must free itself from its dependence on Russia, find alternative ways to reach the world markets, and diversify its customers. Only then can Kazakhstan develop its economy without relying on Russia. So China presents a significant opportunity for Kazakhstan. China needs energy more than anything in order to continue its economic growth, and it also wants to diversify its energy sources.

Their geographical proximity, relatively safe transportation routes, and the absence of any rival forces are the main elements that bring these countries closer together. Transportation costs are the most important factor making Kazakh oil more expensive than other oil sources. Insufficient pipelines and having to send oil to the world markets via Russia reduce the appeal of Kazakh oil. Kazakhstan and China's geographical proximity reduces this effect and the direct link that ties these countries decreases the transportation costs. Moreover, the route that brings Kazakh oil to China passes through safer locations than those in the Middle East. Kazakhstan is one of the most stable countries in Central Asia and the Caspian Region Pipeline, which carries Kazakh oil, passes through Kazakh and Chinese territory alone. Only the unrest in the Xinjiang-Uighur Region could create a handicap, but this pales in comparison to the dangers posed by the route from the Middle East.

With these advantages in mind, China and Kazakhstan took their first steps in 1997 to start a profitable partnership in terms of energy. These countries entered an agreement for building a Chinese pipeline. This pipeline begins in Kazakhstan's Caspian port of Atyrau, passes through Kenkiyak and Atasu, and enters the Xinjiang-Uighur Region of China from Alashankou. From there the pipeline connects

²¹ See: J. Majid, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

²² See: *Energy Information Administration, Official Energy Statistics from the U. S. Government, Country Energy Profiles; Kazakhstan.*

²³ See: J. Majid, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

with the East-West Pipeline in Urumqi. China's CNPC and Kazakhstan's KazMunayGas are the main partners in this project. Construction of the first stage of the project, the Atyrau-Kenkiyak line, was completed in 2003, while the second stage, the 998-km-long Atasu-Alashankou line, was completed in 2006. Oil transportation has begun. When the third stage of the project is completed in 2011, this pipeline will be 3,000 km long, carry 20 million tons of crude oil, and meet 1/6 of China's oil demand.²⁴ In response to this huge pipeline project, China's CNPC won a tender to develop two of Kazakhstan's most important oil fields, Aktobe and Uzen, defeating important competitors like Amoco and Texaco. The main reason that the Kazakh authorities have chosen China was their desire to be more independent of Moscow and find new energy partners.²⁵ The CNPC also bought the Canadian-owned PetroKazakhstan Company in 2005 for \$ 4.2 billion. PetroKazakhstan is producing 9.5% of Kazakhstan's oil.²⁶

The Turkmenistan-China pipeline is another important pipeline project China is hoping to bring to fruition. In this project Beijing plans to link the Turkmen gas produced in the Dovletabat-Donmez region to the Kazakhstan-China pipeline through Uzbekistan. Although all the arrangements have been made this project has been stalled because of insufficient international investments.

Chinese Foreign Policy in the Energy Context

Sustainable economic development is the most important aim of China's state authorities. This is why energy is vital for Beijing and energy resources and transportation security constitute one of the most important aspects of China's foreign policy. Examining Chinese policy in light of the important actors in the Caspian Region is very important for understanding the effect of energy on China's foreign policy.

Relations with Central Asia

China-Central Asia relations expanded after the Soviet Union collapsed and the energy-rich Central Asian countries gained their independence. There are two main elements that shape Chinese policy towards Central Asia; first, oil and gas transportation security and, second, the separatist movements in the Xinjiang-Uighur Region.²⁷

China began looking for new energy resources after the U.S. penetrated into the Middle East where Beijing obtains most of its energy. Later China became more interested in the Central Asia countries. The energy resources of the Central Asia countries have great advantages for China although they are not as highly ranked as those of the energy-rich countries. The geographic proximity of the Central Asia states reduces transportation costs and creates safe transportation routes. First of all, China regards these countries as trade partners; Chinese companies have made large investments in these countries, especially in Kazakhstan. Mutual interests helped to enhance China-Central Asia relations. China neither regards these countries as its "backyard," like Russia, nor uses the

²⁴ See: B. Dokuzlar, H. Yılmaz, C. Pala, op. cit.

²⁵ See: F.K. Chang, "Chinese Energy and Asian Security," *Orbis*, Vol. 45, Issue 2, Spring 2001, pp. 233-234.

²⁶ See: A. Nogayeva, "Çin-Kazakistan İlişkilerinde Yeni Dönem," available at [<http://www.tusam.net/makaleler.asp?id=789&sayfa=26>].

²⁷ See: J. Majid, op. cit., p. 213.

expression “elder brother,” like Turkey. Nor does China establish alliance relations with these countries founded on military bases, like the U.S. In short China does not try to maximize only its own interests in its relations with Central Asia; it makes investments in these countries, contributes immensely to their economy, and protects their interests too. It tries to create a “win-win” situation. This policy of China’s is beneficial for the governments of Central Asia states and they prefer China in their trade relations.

Russia is still a key actor in Central Asia. Although the Soviet Union has collapsed and Russia no longer has control over Central Asia, Moscow is trying to maintain its political and economic influence over the region. The economies of the newly independent countries in particular are still under heavy Russian dominance even after 18 years. Russia declared in its strategic plans in 1993 that it would interpret any external penetration into its Near Abroad as hostile and make an adequate response to this penetration.²⁸ Although Russia has had to greatly adjust this policy after the U.S. increased its presence in Central Asia following 9/11, it is still a predominating force in the region and has significant influence over it. The Central Asian pipelines and trade routes are all associated with Russia thanks to Soviet heritage and they cannot sell their natural resources to the world markets without Russia’s permission. This means that Russia holds the oil and natural gas valve of the Central Asia states and makes them dependent on it in terms of energy and economy. This situation has created unrest among the decision-makers of the Central Asian states.

After perforation of Russia’s Near Abroad policy in the post 9/11 era, a new period began for the Central Asia states. Extra-territorial actors managed to enter Central Asia and created opportunities for the regional states to diversify their economic partners. Penetration of the U.S. and western companies and China’s increasing attention toward Central Asia are paving the way for severing their dependence on Russia and standing on their own feet. This is why the governments of the Central Asian states do not interpret China’s penetration into the region as expansionist.

The separatist movements in the Xinjiang Region are another issue that affects China’s relations with Central Asia. After the Soviet Union collapsed and the Turkic nations of Central Asia gained their independence, Beijing was alarmed by the attempts of the Uighur Turks of the Xinjiang Region to acquire their independence. This is why China has been trying to establish friendly relations with the newly born Central Asia states in order to prevent their support of the separatist movements in the Xinjiang Region. Central Asia is extremely important for China in terms of the Uighur Turks, because there are strong ethnic, linguistic, and religious ties between the Uighurs in China and the Central Asia states.

The road to preventing separation of the Uighur Turks in China lies through the Central Asia states and stopping their support of the Uighurs in China. This is why China is using its economy to curtail the support of the Central Asia states, which are in an economically poor state. The governments of the Central Asia states dependent on oil and gas revenues do not want to annoy Beijing and lose an important customer. This is why they will not support the separatist movements in the Xinjiang Region.

On the other hand, China’s dependence on Middle East oil creates disadvantages for Beijing in terms of its policy against the Muslim community in the Xinjiang Region. China is afraid of the reaction of the Muslim Middle East countries to the Chinese government in its policy regarding the Muslim Uighur people and interruption of its energy policy.

China’s interests in Central Asia are not limited to the energy issue. Its policy towards this region will either make it a superpower or make it lose control of its developing economy, territorial integrity, and political power.

²⁸ M. Kibaroglu, “Rusya’nın Yeni Ulusal Güvenlik Konsepti ve Askeri Doktrini,” *Avrasya Dosyası*, February 2001, p. 6.

Relations with Russia

Russia is another of China's important energy partners and energy is one of the most important subjects in Chinese-Russian relations. Russia can use its significant oil and natural gas resources as a weapon against other countries. However, Russia is also using this weapon as a way to keep its allies dependent on its energy. Russia has used this strategy against China too. By approving transportation of Siberian oil to China, Russia strengthened its political and military relations in terms of energy. The oil which comes from the Republic of Sakha, Kovykta, and the west Siberian regions of Russia reaches the Pacific shores of China via three different lines; Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and East China.²⁹ The East Siberia- Pacific Ocean Pipeline project (ESPO) is the most important project for transporting Russian oil to China through Eastern China. The Russian Transneft Pipeline Company is making plans to finish construction of this 2,694-km-long pipeline in the near future.³⁰ There are projects to lengthen this pipeline to South Korea and Japan through China.

During the Cold War, both Russia and China could not establish close relations, even though they were both socialist states. However, after the collapse of Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, these countries turned a brand new page in their relations and established close ties based on energy and opposition to the U.S. The U.S.'s policy in Eurasia, especially after 9/11, annoys both Russia and China and is bringing them closer. Although they do not declare it openly, the main factor behind the Russia-China alliance is opposition to the U.S. Russia and China as regional powers want to prevent penetration of the U.S. into their zone of influence. After 9/11 the U.S. implemented its policy in the Central Asia region on the pretext of fighting terrorism, and China and Russia could not object to its policy. This situation caused perforation of Russia's Near Abroad policy. So Putin wanted to reverse this process and limit the actions of the U.S. in its backyard. Russia realizes that it cannot resist U.S. policy on its own, which is why it creates alliances, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and acquires the support of other important powers in Asia. In this respect, China as the second largest military force is Russia's most important ally. The honeymoon between Russia and China will continue as long as the U.S. threat exists in Asia.

Another important issue that brings these countries together is threats to their territorial integrity. China's Taiwan and Xinjiang problems and the separatist movements in Russia's Northern Caucasus, especially in Chechnia, have created a common enemy for both states and promoted their cooperation to combat these threats. This is why Russia and China as the main actors in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are focusing their attention on "fighting separatist movements" and confirm that the organization's top priority is combating "separatism, terrorism, and extremism." Separatism as a common threat to both China and Russia has created a psychological effect and increased their cooperation.

Although both China and Russia regard each other as strategic partners, there are also some problems between these countries. Russia's decreasing population is one of these problems. On the other hand, China, the most densely populated country of the world, cannot fit into its boundaries. The Chinese population in Siberia and the Far East is increasing with each passing day and this situation is creating unrest not between the states but between the societies. Another important problem is the overlapping spheres of influence of these countries. Both China and Russia want to be influential in Central Asia. Russia does not object to China penetrating into its backyard because of their alliance developments. However Chinese-Russian cooperation in Central Asia may be a source of dispute in

²⁹ See: B. Dokuzlar, op. cit., p. 148.

³⁰ See: S. Blagov, "Arms, Energy and Commerce in Sino-Russian Relations," Jamestown Foundation, Vol. VII, Issue 16, 8 August, 2007.

Pipelines of China



Source: Presentation of Necdet Pamir *Enerji arz Guvenligi ve Kuresel Gelismeler*, 14 March, 2007.

the future if the interests of these countries clash. Opposition to the U.S. helps to cement relations between these countries and makes Russia and China forget their historical problems. However, if the U.S. threat disappears the old problems and conflicts may appear again.

Relations with the U.S.

The U.S. has become one of the most important actors, especially after 9/11. There was no U.S. military presence in Central Asia until the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon. Washington used diplomatic and commercial ties to implement its policy regarding this region.³¹ But 9/11 opened a new page in U.S. foreign policy and created the necessary prerequisites for U.S. decision-makers to implement a more aggressive policy in the Eurasia region under the pretext of waging a “war on terror.” After 9/11, the U.S. penetrated rapidly into Asia by means of its military operation in Afghanistan and military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. China and Russia, which are the main regional powers, were unable to object to this sudden and decisive penetration and the U.S. managed to implement its policy in this free atmosphere.

The U.S.’s main aim is to gain greater control over the rich energy sources of Central Asia and the Caspian. The U.S. wants to guarantee energy transportation security in the region. In order to ensure uninterrupted flows of energy to the world markets from this region, a stable political environment is *sine qua non*. This is why the U.S. supports governments that create a suitable atmosphere for secure energy transportation, even though they are undemocratic. It is also trying to shape the region according to its interests through the “war on terror” concept.

The U.S.’s “war on terror” concept created some advantages for Russia and China. The declaration of a war on terror by the world’s only superpower and its supporters caused fear among the actors who are creating a suitable environment for the spread of terrorism, and they had to curtail their support. This situation meant that the radical Islamist movements in the Xinjiang Region and the Caucasus could not obtain external economic and logistic support. This situation attenuated the Islamist movements and strengthened Beijing and Moscow.

On the other hand, China has been using the “war on terror” concept as a pretext to resort to force in the Xinjiang Region. The U.S. has been using extremely harsh methods in Afghanistan and Iraq against Islamist fundamentalists and no one even dared to object these procedures. This situation gave China more freedom to act as it saw fit. Beijing labeled every opposed idea as radical Islamist and erased it. On the other hand, the U.S. supported China’s policy in the Xinjiang Region because of the presence of terrorist organizations, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, in this region. The U.S. wants to stop any possible support of the Taliban in Afghanistan and prevent any Islamist formation in this region.

However, although there are some radical Islamist movements in Xinjiang, they cannot be marked as terrorist. There are different movements with different aims, such as equality with the Han Chinese and reforms in civil rights. There are significant human right violations in Xinjiang but they are not being taken into account by either China or the U.S.

However it is obvious that the U.S. presence in Central Asia is creating immense difficulties for China. A permanent U.S. presence in the sphere of influence of both Russia and China is the last thing that Beijing and Moscow want. China feels the U.S. presence in its east in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. If the U.S. manages to settle in Central Asia, China will be surrounded by the U.S. just like it was by Soviet Russia during the Cold War. This creates significant handicaps for Beijing in terms of security, economy, and, if we consider U.S. support of Taiwan, territorial integrity.

³¹ See: J. Majid, op. cit., p. 212.

That is why China is cooperating with Russia in order to limit or put an end to the U.S. presence in their backyard. Both countries are making use of the SCO to gain the support of the other states in the region and create a bloc against the U.S. The SCO bloc managed to close the U.S. military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. China cannot allow a permanent U.S. presence in Central Asia; this situation may have significant economic and political consequences for Beijing. This is why Central Asia may become an important area of rivalry between the U.S. and China, with energy likely being the key actor in this rivalry.

Conclusion

China is the fastest developing country today and it may become the largest economy in next couple of decades. Sustainability of economic development is the most important aim of the Chinese authorities. The economy is the key that opens the door for China to become a superpower. It is also using its economy as a diplomatic weapon against other countries in order to implement its policy. By the same token, China's armed forces are still not powerful enough to be deterrent against the great powers of the world. This is why China is using its economy with respect to relatively small countries in order to draw them to its side and form public opinion against the policy of other large forces. We can observe this policy in the South Eastern countries of Asia. There is a large Chinese diaspora in these countries with immense lobbying power. On the other hand, these countries are extremely dependent China in terms of external trade. China tries to solve its problems through diplomacy as much as possible and avoids armed conflicts, while its economy is the most important element in Chinese foreign policy.

On the other hand, its economic development is the glue that keeps the Chinese people together. There are significant social problems among the Chinese people emanating from unequal distribution of economic revenues. There are large gaps between the rich minority on the industrialized East coast of the country and the poor majority in the agricultural West. Beijing gives priority to economic development and ignores these social problems for now. The Chinese authorities suppress any social unrest using force and do not allow any objections to its policies. But this situation constitutes an important threat to China's future and may lead to dissolution of the country keeping in mind the Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet problems.

The economy is not just important for national wealth but also important in terms of foreign and domestic policies. This is why energy as a vital element since it augments the significance of China's economy. The fastest developing country of the world naturally needs much more energy than other developing countries in order to feed its 1.3 billion people and massive industry. This situation creates debility for China and makes its vulnerable to external effects. In order to avoid this situation the Chinese authorities have decided to diversify their energy sources and curtail their dependence on only one source and transportation route.

In this respect, Caspian energy sources, especially Kazakhstani, appear very propitious for China. China has made investments in Africa and South America in order to implement its source diversification policy and curtail its dependence on the U.S.-dominated Middle East. But Caspian sources are the most feasible and profitable for China. The geographic proximity, security of the transportation routes, and suitable political atmosphere of the region are the main elements that make these sources appealing to China as a substitution for Middle East oil.

On the other hand, building energy relations is also beneficial for the Caspian countries. Kazakhstan is the most propitious in this respect since it borders directly on China. Kazakhstan is dependent on Russia economically and has to send its oil to Russia first in order to reach the world markets

since it does not have enough pipelines. This situation makes Kazakhstan heavily dependent on Russia and causes great handicaps for Kazakhstan in its transition to an independent nation state. In order to stand on its own feet and be an independent country in every respect on the political arena, Kazakhstan must diversify its customers. Oil income provides the main flow of revenue into the Kazakh economy which means that customer diversification will create competition under free market conditions and increase this revenue. Kazakhstan is in a very suitable geographical position for diversifying its customers; it has a long border with China and Russia, two of the main economic and political actors in the region, and is geographically close to other important economic actors, such as Japan, South Korea, and Turkey. China is the most suitable of these countries thanks to its giant economy, population, and energy hunger. China is also making large investments in Kazakhstan both in the energy and other sectors. Beijing does not have a colonial approach to Kazakhstan and the other Central Asia countries, it only has mutual interests at heart. This is why the Kazakh authorities prefer Chinese companies for their investments.

Chinese policy is part of the “new great game” in Central Asia. In contrast to the historical great game, the number of players in this new great game has grown and the game rules have shifted from military and political aspects to the economy. China is trying to maximize its interests in this new great game and limit the opportunities of other players. In order to reach this goal it is creating alliances with other game players, such as Russia and Iran. There are two main blocs in new great game consisting of China, Russia, and Iran, on the one side, and the U.S. and Turkey, on the other.

China is moving toward becoming a superpower and its economy may either be its biggest advantage or its biggest weakness on this path. If it can continue its economic development and project this onto its military and political power, it will easily become a superpower. However energy is the most crucial element in shaping China’s future. If it cannot establish its energy security and secure a continuous energy flow, its greatest weapon, the economy, may collapse and create a disaster for China.

RUSSIA, THE U.S., AND THE EU: THEIR POLICY IN CENTRAL EURASIA

THE GREAT GAME IN THE EURASIAN HEARTLAND: A NEW SPIRAL

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Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union revived active geopolitical processes of regional and global dimensions across Central Asia. This could not but bring to mind the post-imperial past when the region was an arena for the great geopolitical game between Soviet Russia (which replaced the Russian Empire) and the British Empire.

Today, the situation is much more complicated in many respects. In the early 20th century, two main players operated in a region full of weak states (Afghanistan, the Bukhara Emirate, and the like). In the early 21st century, many more outside actors are involved: Russia, the U.S. and the E.U. complete with NATO, their military component, China, Iran, Pakistan, and India.

Within the region, all the local states (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) are actively positioning themselves as geopolitical entities of particular importance. Their elites have already formulated their national interests and are busy with fairly consistent strategies for their defense and promotion. The effects, however, vary depending on the countries geopolitical potential.

Afghanistan is another system-forming factor of regional geopolitics that affects, if not all, at least many of their aspects. This is a unique country that geopolitically belongs to three regions—Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia—while remaining, to a certain

extent, a sub-region with a development logic of its own.

The fairly vague nature of its geopolitical status is responsible for a great deal of spontaneity in Central Eurasian politics and the balance of forces. It is a unique geopolitical phenomenon: domination of one of the regional actors (for example, Pakistan, which prevailed there in the mid-1990s) tips the balance of forces in the neighboring regions and introduces a great deal of instability. The other regional actors are responding with more active involvement in the “Afghan developments:” Iran, India, and some of the Central Asian countries deemed it necessary to support the Northern Alliance against the Taliban with its Pakistani bias.

On the other hand, the ascent of one of the extra-regional powers over Afghanistan stirs up apprehension among all or at least a large number of the regional and some of the influential external actors. There is always the threat that one of the external actors might use Afghanistan as a springboard for geopolitical expansion. Iran and Pakistan, as well as the United States and China, were very concerned about the Soviet military presence in the country and shared the fears that Moscow might press southward, to the Indian Ocean.

In fact, the regional countries are fully aware of the potential threats to their “living expanses” (partially or completely connected with Afghanistan’s strategic field) created by unilateral domination in Afghanistan of one of the external actors. We all know that the “living expanse” of any state is not limited to its borders—it spreads beyond them to the adjacent territories, the developments in which directly affect the state’s political, economic, social, and ideological stability. Complete geopolitical autarchy is impossible: what goes on in one country inevitably echoes beyond it.

To achieve regional stabilization and a balance of interests of all the forces involved Afghanistan should be transformed from a geopolitical playing field into a full-fledged political entity. But this is highly unlikely at the moment: the country is a hub of too many problems. The future of all actors involved depends, to a certain extent, on how these problems will be resolved. Today Afghanistan should be regarded as a key factor of global geopolitics which determines the world’s post-crisis image. This explains why the new U.S. administration has spurred on the Great Game around Central Asia and Afghanistan.

New Subtleties of the Old Great Game

Barack Obama campaigned with several fairly unorthodox foreign policy statements, including the future of America’s policy in Afghanistan. He promised to make it one of his foreign policy priorities to reverse the generally negative developments and help Afghanistan complete the edifice of its democracy. So far, however, President Obama has not put forward any novel initiatives: he is still talking about sending more troops to intensify military activities and deliver a final blow to the Taliban. Thirty thousand more men are to be moved from Iraq where, according to the Americans, the situation has stabilized to a certain extent.

Early in 2009 it looked easy: acquire Congress’ consent and start moving people and materiel along the familiar routes. At that moment the newly elected president was obviously unaware of the Great Game’s inner logic. Today it has become even subtler than before—there are too many actors involved, which make forecasts next to impossible.

At first the White House was somewhat puzzled by the shifted accents of the Taliban’s military strategy: it concentrated on interfering with military, foodstuff, and fuel deliveries for the American and NATO troops in Afghanistan and blocked the main roads between Kabul, other regions, and Pakistan.

The main blow was delivered to the Pakistan routes: 75 percent of the freight service goes across Pakistan (up to 600 containers every day and 3 million gallons of petroleum products). According to experts, the Western troops in Afghanistan need up to 70 thousand containers of various goods every day.

The Taliban tried to cut off the road between Peshawar and Kabul via the Khyber Pass to prevent the counterterrorist coalition from storing up enough military equipment and fuel to launch an offensive in the spring and summer. Since early December 2008, they have organized three large-scale attacks and managed to suspend deliveries.¹

The American command insists that the attacks did nothing to undermine the combat-readiness of the American contingents while experts who rationalize on the basis of Taliban tactics believe that in the near future the situation might reach a critical point. In its December report the Senlis Council, an international think tank, informed that the Taliban was in control of 72 percent of the entire territory (compared to 54 percent in November 2007); they have established their administrative control in many of the southern and eastern settlements. Today they are moving to the north and northwest in an obvious effort to encircle Kabul.

There are large motor roads between the capital and the regions; three of them under regular Taliban attack. Experts have pointed out that the goods carried from Kabul to Kandahar via Vardak are attacked at the entrance to the province, 30 minutes away from the outskirts of Kabul. The Kabul-Logar road that heads south is not safe along essentially its entire stretch; nor is it safe to travel along the east-bound motor road that leads to Pakistan via Jelalabad where attacks can start just an hour out of Kabul. Of the two north-bound roads only one is completely safe—it crosses the Pandsher Gorge, negotiates the Salang Pass, and continues on north to Mazar-i-Sharif. The second road via Bagram is becoming increasingly dangerous as attacks increase.

The Senlis Council experts point out that the Taliban's tightened control over the roads allows it to move its bases closer to the capital, which is becoming less and less safe. Attacks, terrorist acts, and kidnapping of Afghans and foreigners in Kabul and its environs are growing more and more frequent.

The Obama Administration was caught unawares for the second time when the Kyrgyz leaders decided to close down the Manas airbase in Bishkek.² The Americans planned to use it as the key transit point for troop movement and as partial substitution for the Pakistan route.

At a press conference during his Moscow visit President Bakiev (who came for talks with President Medvedev) announced that he had decided to close down the base. Later it was announced that the base would be closed gradually over a span of 180 days. Several official reasons were given: the Kyrgyz president reminded everyone that in 2001 an agreement had been reached that the American troops would stay for a couple of years; the American presence added almost nothing to the state budget because Washington ignored the repeated requests to pay more.³

Experts believe that Kyrgyzstan is trying to stabilize the situation very much shattered by America's refusal to hand over the American private guilty of murdering a Kyrgyz citizen employed at the base to the Kyrgyz authorities.

¹ On 1 December, Taliban fighters attacked the Faysal transport terminal and destroyed 12 trucks that were moving armored Hammer off-roads to the coalition troops in Afghanistan. The attack took place in Peshawar in the northwest of Pakistan. An even larger attack followed on 8 December in the same area. Two hundred and fifty fighters destroyed a large convoy of 106 trucks moving foodstuffs and military equipment. Fuel tanks being taken to the American troops are regularly destroyed in the Khyber Pass.

² Under the U.N. mandate, the American airbase was deployed at Manas airport in December 2001 to support the Invincible Freedom operation. It has 1,200 U.S. servicemen deployed on a permanent basis, military transport aircraft, and fuel-supply planes.

³ According to official information, Kyrgyzstan is rewarded a mere \$17.5 million a year for the use of its base. According to CENTCOM Commander General Petraeus, the sum is much higher—at least \$63 million. The Foreign Ministry of Kyrgyzstan insists that since 2001 the country has not been receiving anything for navigation while the United States has never paid either customs dues or taxes. These questions were regularly raised by Kyrgyzstan and were as regularly declined by the United States.

Three parliamentary committees (for international, constitutional, and defense affairs) of the Kyrgyz parliament agreed that the base should be removed. Later, on 19 February, the parliament supported this decision with 78 votes for, 1 against, and 2 abstentions. The decision could have passed with 46 votes out of the total 90.

The White House found itself facing two unexpected problems in Afghanistan where, from that time on, it had to deal with Russia and Pakistan, two countries with which the previous administration had dealt summarily. The new president had either to readjust the old practices or face the mounting isolation of the American troops in Afghanistan.

The American expert community was the first to offer its comment on the Manas-related situation: it detected Moscow's hand in Bishkek's actions on the grounds that President Bakiev's statement came together with an agreement on unprecedented Russia's financial and economic aid.⁴

Defense Secretary Robert Gates was much more evasive. Russia was acting in its interests and trying to wring dry the base closure issue, said he. He also pointed out that the base was very important for moving freights and personnel from the U.S. to Afghanistan where the American military presence would be doubled in the next twelve months. The defense secretary said that, on the one hand, Russia declared that it was ready to cooperate with America on the Afghanistan issue; while on the other, it was working against the U.S. at least in the case of the base which was of great importance for America.⁵

The Russians, in turn, insist that as a sovereign state Kyrgyzstan is free to make any decision it wishes; as for the financial and economic aid, it was extended within the allied obligations. Indeed, Moscow could not abandon its ally to cope with the acute economic crisis on its own.

Some Russian experts have openly admitted that the closure served the interests of Moscow and Beijing. Andronik Migranian, for example, has pointed out that the American administration is involved in many things that Moscow does not like and described the closed base as the Kremlin's trump card. He added that while the CSTO was developing into a powerful military-political organization, the base of a country that belonged to another military structure in the territory of one of the CSTO members could not be accepted. The Russian expert said in so many words that the "closure of the Manas military base should be regarded in the context of Russia-NATO and Russia-U.S. relations" and that this act can be interpreted as an answer to the question "how should Russia build its relations with NATO and America when it comes to Afghanistan?"⁶

Manas as a Result of Geopolitical Processes and Their Catalyst

Seen in the Great Game context the Manas issue does not look like a random decision. From the viewpoint of the U.S.-Russia rivalry across the post-Soviet expanse and in Eurasia, the efforts to cut short or at least limit America's presence in Kyrgyzstan are absolutely logical: they reflect the entire gamut of the deep-cutting contradictions that resurfaced during George W. Bush's second term.

⁴ Moscow announced, in particular, that it would extend a grant totaling \$150 million, as well as \$300 million on easy terms to be repaid in 40 years at a 0.75 percent interest rate with a 7-year grace period. The loan should be used to set up a stabilization fund. Moscow agreed to write off Kyrgyzstan's debt of \$180 million in exchange for 48 percent of Dastan's shares, a company that produces equipment for torpedoes. There is information that Russia was prepared to take part in the construction of the Kambarata-1 and 2 hydropower stations on the Naryn River.

⁵ See: "Pentagon: politika Moskvyy vyzyvaet bespokoistvo, no bez Rossii ne oboitis," *Vesti.Ru*, 19 February, 2009.

⁶ "Kirgiziia vystavliaet amerikanskiu bazu 'za dver,' a obidet'sia za eto SShA mogut na Rossiiu," available at [www.prime-tass.ru], 19 February, 2009.

This logic belongs to the changes in Russia's policies in the sphere of its vital interests. Today, Moscow is obviously more determined to defend its interests which, as could be expected, increased tension in American-Russian relations. This became especially obvious in 2008.

President Medvedev countered Washington's continued attempts to set up a third missile defense positioning area in Eastern Europe with the statement that Russia was prepared to deploy its tactical Iskander missile systems in the Kaliningrad Region and target them at the radar in the Czech Republic and the interception missile bases in Poland. The Russian president did not mince words:

- first—there would be no concessions on this issue if America went ahead with its plans and,
- second—Russia would be ready to abandon its plans if America abandoned its.

The Russian-Georgian war produced another no less uncompromising clash in 2008. Russia acted promptly and harshly, which came as a surprise to the world since it was the first time in post-Soviet history that the Russian army had fought outside its territory. A second surprise followed the first: Moscow recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, established diplomatic relations with the former Georgian territories, and guaranteed their security.

At that point the tension reached unprecedented heights: American and NATO battleships entered the Black Sea. Russia reciprocated by sending its battleships to Latin America. Despite the statements that military exercises with Venezuela and visits to Nicaragua and Cuba had been planned well in advance, in the context of the war in South Ossetia this looked like a deliberate measure. This was when the announcement came that Moscow might block off the northern route to Afghanistan.

The third crisis in Russian-American relations was caused by another gas conflict between Moscow and Kiev in late 2008 and early 2009 fanned by Ukraine's gas debts and discontinued transit of Russian gas to Europe across Ukrainian territory. Some analysts believe that the crisis went far beyond the limits of bilateral economic relations. Several reasons for the crisis can be offered:

- The attempt to convince Europe to support Russia's Northern Stream and Southern Stream projects;
- The desire to demonstrate that Ukraine was an unreliable partner;
- The intention to deprive the Orange leaders of the large hard currency profits they earned by selling Russian gas to Europe; the money thus gained was used for Orange political projects;
- The intention to reduce Ukraine's competitiveness and change the balance of political forces in the country.

Washington, which refrained from criticizing the Kremlin, remained one of the interested parties: at the height of the crisis the media reported that earlier, late in 2008, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vladimir Ogrzyzko and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had signed a Charter on Strategic Partnership under which Washington would modernize Ukraine's gas pipelines.

Washington's repeated attempts to secure NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia caused even more contradictions: this would have moved NATO close to Russia's southwestern border (the northern Black Sea coast with the larger part of Russia's oil and gas export pipelines included).

As a NATO member Ukraine would have been in a much better position to demand withdrawal of the Russian Navy from Sevastopol. This would have deprived Russia of all territories in the Caucasus and the Northern Black Sea coast, the result of two centuries of wars and territorial acquisitions. So far, Russia is standing firm in the face of American pressure, mainly thanks to Germany and France which refused to quarrel with Moscow over Georgia and Ukraine. There is a pragmatic stand—NATO membership for these two post-Soviet states would have endangered the economic and energy components of Europe's relations with Moscow.

The Manas move perfectly fits the logic of the Russia-American rivalry. We can presume that this could apply to all the processes underway in Central Eurasia and may be used for bargaining with the United States on a wide range of problems. The fact that the base was closed immediately after Barack Obama became president suggests the intention to create a context in which the new president would be unable to follow George W. Bush's Russian policy.

Inertia is very strong in politics; rhetoric may change to create the illusion of a fresh start—it is very hard, however, to overcome inertia in the practical sphere. The closure of the Manas base did not wipe out the inertia, however it did force Washington to seek new alternatives. This is a novel situation in another respect: Russia, which has always merely reacted to America's moves in the past, is now taking the initiative. Washington is going to either have to talk to Moscow or to the other Great Game players, which will naturally demand considerable financial and other resources.

Russia and America: Possible Tactics

The rapidly approaching closure of the American base in Kyrgyzstan has created a fairly complicated balance of forces in Central Asia and Afghanistan, in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the northern Black Sea coast, and the Caspian area. In fact, in view of Russia's long-term interests of security and political leadership, the closed base is not a completely positive factor. It has improved Russia's geopolitical standing but left it vulnerable to the threats emanating from Afghanistan. The Taliban is gaining momentum in Afghanistan and is seen as a direct threat to Central Asian stability. To remain battle-worthy the Western troops must be sure of uninterrupted supplies, otherwise stability in the neighboring countries, and Russia, will be seriously threatened.

To stall off possible negative repercussions Moscow came forward with its own freight service—it offered the United States an alternative that has been successfully tested with other NATO countries, viz. moving non-military freights and personnel across its territory by air and railway. The United States has similar agreements with some of the Central Asian countries.

Moscow addressed two strategic tasks: on the one hand, troop supply will go on; on the other, the dangers of the Pakistani route make Moscow a monopolist where freight and personnel traffic is concerned. This might develop into a powerful tool of pressure in other spheres as well.

On top of this, Moscow is working hard to change the situation on its southern borders: for several years now their security has largely been ensured by the NATO troops fighting in Afghanistan. By placing its stakes on the CSTO the Kremlin intends to deprive Western diplomacy of its trump card. Early in February 2009, the CSTO Moscow summit passed a decision on setting up the Collective Rapid Response Forces (CRRF).

President Medvedev offered a detailed account of their aims. The new structure, said the president, would be used to repel military aggression, fight terrorists and extremists, organized crime, and drug trafficking, and liquidate the aftermath of emergencies. The summit decided to staff the CRRF with the best military contingents of adequate sizes and supplied with the latest weapons and military equipment. The Russian president deemed it necessary to stress that the new structure's fighting potential should be equal to NATO's corresponding structures.

Some analysts believe that the invitation to use Russia's air space and railway system for transit purposes says that the Kremlin does not want confrontation; it demonstrates, say analysts, its readiness to talk about productive and mutually advantageous cooperation, that is, to bargain.

The closure of the Kyrgyz base damaged the White House's bargaining position, which means that the American president will work hard to improve it before moving to the talks. This can be done if the situation in Afghanistan improves radically to reduce the heat of the hostilities: the international coalition will pull out some of its contingents. There are other possibilities: either the Americans continue using the base or another alternative to the Russian route is found. None of this is easy.

To achieve any noticeable progress in Afghanistan President Obama must "break the backbone" of the Taliban during the 2009 season to be able to switch to a national reconciliation process that should involve the Pashtoon leaders. We cannot but wonder whether President Obama will follow the tactics of his predecessor or offer a new variant.

Under President George W. Bush the United States tried several different things in Afghanistan: it placed the stakes on the Pashtoons as the core of the Taliban and tried to set up a Pashtoon Border Guard Corps staffed by volunteers from the border regions. It was expected to be 85 thousand strong with a budget of \$350 million and armed with the latest Western weapons. The Corps was to be used to stem the flow of Taliban fighters and foreign terrorists. So far, there has been no progress for several reasons.

- First, the skeptics doubted that the borderland Pashtoon tribes would fight co-religionists, most of them being Pashtoons. The Pashtoon chiefs fear the Taliban: it is responsible for several murders of tribal chiefs loyal to the West.
- Second, the latest weapons entrusted to the Pashtoons might spread across the region and reach the Taliban fighters. Pakistan cannot accept this: continued militarization of the borderland tribes threaten its stability and territorial integrity.

In 2008, still under the old administration, talks with the "moderate" Taliban leaders were gradually gaining popularity; it was believed that they might be tempted with posts in the official power structures in Afghanistan. Realization of this idea proved harder than imagined: the Taliban ranks remained united with the exception of small groups of fighters who changed sides. It seems that the failure is rooted in the psychology and logic of Oriental warfare: those ready to talk and to accept concessions are seen as weaklings.

In turn, having failed to exercise any of the novel approaches, the George W. Bush Administration had to go back to the use of force in the form of bomb strikes on the border regions of Pakistan: according to military intelligence, Taliban fighters had set up their bases there. This did nothing to improve the situation in Afghanistan and worsened America's relations with Pakistan.

It is commonly believed in the West that the present stakes on building up military force in Afghanistan and ensuring the Taliban's military defeat is the only realistic option. The United States should do everything in its power to stop the Taliban, which is spreading its control far and wide, and pave the way to presidential elections. These are short-term goals. In the long-term perspective the stakes on force are not unanimously approved especially if America follows the tactics of the previous administration of spreading the hostilities to the borderland of Pakistan.

Zbigniew Brzezinski was very open about this in his interview to *Le Figaro*. He suggested caution so as not to turn the problems with al-Qa'eda into problems with Pakistan. We all know, said he, that there were al-Qa'eda shelters in the areas over which Pakistan had virtually no control, but the Americans should distinguish between them. The Taliban and al-Qa'eda, Mr. Brzezinski specified, should be treated separately to arrive at a constructive strategy with the Taliban, a rather coarse and backward movement limited to Afghanistan and not a global terrorist structure at all. The American politician insisted that the United States should prevent its operation (at first hailed by the locals) from turning into a great disadvantage. He said that troops could be dispatched in any region but this should not be the main target. Americans should seek a political solution to detach the Taliban from al-Qa'eda

and arrive, at least in some places, at a political agreement with the Taliban leaders in exchange for their divorce with al-Qa'eda.⁷

In its editorial of 18 February, 2009, *The Washington Times* offered a fairly radical assessment of the "building up force" policy in Afghanistan. It pointed out that in recent years the size of the military contingent in this country has been increasing while the situation has been steadily deteriorating. The newspaper reminded: "But boots on the ground are not a panacea. It is worth noting that as troop strength has increased in recent years, conditions have grown worse. In 2001, Afghanistan was a model of success for a 'small footprint' war characterized by coalition success in working with tribal leaders, augmenting their forces with critical capabilities such as intelligence and fire support.

"In this way the Coalition was able to gain functional control over Afghanistan, a larger and more populous country than Iraq, with a fraction of the force used in Operation Iraqi Freedom."

The article looked at Soviet tactics in Afghanistan: "A far greater error than over-reliance on troops in Afghanistan would be to pursue unrealistic goals. This was the root cause of the Soviet defeat. Contrary to popular belief, the Soviet Union did not rely exclusively on military power in their Afghan war. A close reading of the Soviet counterinsurgency strategy shows that they avidly pursued political reforms, economic development, infrastructure improvements, education and all the other elements of what is now the 'smart power' agenda. Rather, Moscow's original sin was in trying to create a stable, socialized Afghanistan with a strong central government. Central control is inimical to the Afghan political culture and way of life. No amount of military power or political bargaining could bring that about. The harder the Soviets tried, the more people resisted."

The Washington Times did not merely analyze what America was doing in Afghanistan but also offered its recommendations: renouncing the "centralization" stakes and better relations with tribal chiefs as much more appropriate in the context of the country's political traditions: it had never known strong central power and always resisted those who tried to impose it on the nation.

"Dealing with Afghanistan requires accepting a level of ambiguity that may be beyond the Democrats' philosophical predilection for bureaucratic centralism," *The Washington Times* goes on. "If the U.S. seeks to make Hamid Karzai or his successor into an Afghan bureaucratic potentate, we will find ourselves in the same situation the Soviet Union faced, a never-ending struggle against a determined people defending nothing less than their freedom."⁸

Prompt stabilization is not President Obama's only concern. He needs supply routes alternative to Russia that would prevent any weakening of America's position in Central Eurasia and in the continent's other strategically important regions. Washington needs new bases for its troops and logistics. Without this, consistent supply of the contingent in Afghanistan would be next to impossible.

Here another geopolitical factor of the Great Game—the position of the Caucasian, Central and South Asian, and Middle Eastern countries—comes into play. I have already written that today the Great Game, with a much larger number of players, is more complicated than before. Together with the great powers, the regional states are involved with interests of their own and an ardent desire to extract the maximum profit from the geopolitical processes.

What can the U.S. Administration do to resolve the transportation dilemma? Besides the Russian alternative, it has two options: restored security along the Pakistani route and a new route bypassing Russia along the Caucasus—Central Asia—Afghanistan line. Both will call for considerable foreign policy adjustments and huge spending.

There is the opinion that restored security is possible if cooperation with Islamabad (similar to that during President George W. Bush's first term) is completely returned. President Musharraf sided

⁷ See: Brzezinski: "Esli Amerika ne smozhet spravitsia, to ostalnoi mir i podavno," *Le Figaro*, available at [<http://www.inosmi.ru/stories/08/11/05/3535/247550.html>].

⁸ "Lessons from Soviets in Afghanistan," *The Washington Times*, 18 February, 2009, available at [<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/18/lessons-from-soviets-in-afghanistan/>].

with the Americans by abandoning his earlier recognition of the Taliban and depriving it of his country's support (Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E. officially recognized the Taliban regime in Afghanistan), which was undoubtedly conducive to the coalition's prompt victory.

Over the course of time, the relations between the two countries deteriorated: the barely controlled borderland Pashtoon territories were teeming with Taliban and foreign fighters who set up their bases there and destabilized the situation in Afghanistan. In an effort to avoid even worse relations with the West and to quench Washington's and Kabul's incessant protests, President Musharraf, in turn, dispatched a 70-thousand-strong group, but failed to achieve his aim because of the stiff resistance put up by the Waziristan tribes. Faced with the threat of a wide-scale Pashtoon revolt that might destroy the country, the central powers had to sign an agreement with the tribes of Waziristan on a cease-fire and exchange of pows. Neither Washington nor Kabul liked this.

In view of the highly negative developments, those in the White House and the Pentagon who believed it expedient to move the military operations to the border regions of Pakistan strengthened their position: missile strikes on the border regions became a regular feature, which Islamabad interpreted as a violation of its sovereignty. The local people were not happy either: each strike killed civilians along with the fighters.

The widening gap between Washington and Islamabad cost President Musharraf his post: he was replaced with pro-American Asif Ali Zardari, while the Americans moved toward geopolitical cooperation with India. Contrary to expectations, the new president of Pakistan did not extend the official agreement on America's operations in the border area and failed to stabilize the situation there with his country's armed forces. The situation in the country's west was deteriorating: American transits were more threatened than ever before while terrorist activity in Pakistan was mounting. Today the convoys are threatened not only in the mountains but also close to Peshawar, the transportation hub.

This suggests a question: Will the United States be able to improve the convoy-related situation if it restores Pakistan's status of America's main regional strategic partner (and readjust, by necessity, its Indian strategy by downplaying some of its aspects)? The Americans will have to abandon the missile and air strikes on the border areas, which undermine the authority of the new president and add weight to the radically-minded Pakistani politicians and the military.

It seems that the American administration will not return to the old strategy: its Indian trend looks like a long-term one in South Asia. India is a regional power with dynamic financial, economic, and military sectors; it is actively developing into an unquestioned leader of South Asia. The economic potentials of Pakistan and India are incomparable: while the former can hardly pay for its oil import the latter is justly regarded as a locomotive of global economic growth. This means that Washington will hardly abandon its Indian policies pursued with vaster geopolitical aims in view for the sake of its transit in Afghanistan. The United States might return to its former Pakistani policy if those in the Indian establishment who oppose too close relations with Washington triumph.

Washington will hardly abandon the tactics of strikes on possible terrorist bases on the Pakistani side of the border especially in the context of President Obama's tactics of building up the military contingents and adding vigor to the hostilities. These tactics will be pretty useless without strikes on the bases of fighters in Pakistan; the Americans might find themselves in a quandary similar to that of the Soviet troops. They will liquidate fighter groups but will never defeat them because they are trained and recruited outside the Americans' reach, which makes the rebel movement resilient.

The Obama Administration will not change its policy in the above respects (at least in the near future). Economic aid is all the Americans can offer Pakistan in return for more resolute actions against the Taliban and security guarantees for the transit convoys.

In principle, Pakistan can help the United States to certain extent in exchange for financial aid: top Pakistani officials have already confirmed this. According to adviser to the prime minister of Pakistan Shaukat Tarin, in the last 9 months his country had spent \$1 billion on the anti-terrorist struggle;

every month the budget spends \$150 million on antiterrorist operations in its own territory. He asked the United States to repay the money and referred to an agreement under which Washington had pledged to allocate \$100 million every month for antiterrorist purposes. He also pointed out that his country had not received America's contributions since May 2008. The prime minister assessed the cost of the antiterrorist operations in the northwestern regions in the last fiscal year at \$8 billion.⁹

The question of transit across Pakistan looks fairly complicated, which makes the northern route bypassing Russia a priority; for several reasons the White House has no other alternative to this route.

So far, the U.S. is having no problems gaining permission to transit freights through Central Asia, one of the key components of the bypassing route. Washington has already reached agreements with several Central Asian countries on non-military transits. The bulk of them will be moved across Tajikistan where a bridge across the Pianj had been built with American assistance (its carrying capacity is 1 thousand trucks a day). Americans expect to move from 50 to 200 containers daily. They have to complete this with Caucasian transit.

Some experts believe that this route is technically and economically inadequate: the freights will be moved across the unstable Caucasian region and will have to be reloaded twice, on both Caspian coasts, to be moved across Central Asia.

The route across Russia is much more practical, despite its disadvantageous geopolitical aspect for the U.S. Trains loaded in Riga will cross Russia to reach the Afghan border without reloading. This is the second best alternative after the best one: 1 thousand kilometers from Karachi to Afghanistan, but it is much more secure than the Pakistani route.

Transit rights are not all: America needs logistic bases complete with transport infrastructure directly at the Afghan border. This is extremely important because all American bases (including Bagram) are vulnerable to Taliban attacks. Many of the bases to the south of the Hindu Kush can be blocked off—this happened during the Soviet invasion when the fiercest battles were fought for control over transport communications.

American diplomacy obviously wants to know whether the Central Asian countries will permit the United States to deploy its bases on their territories. The Central Asian countries concerned with regional stability and security should help America and NATO—they all, Kyrgyzstan included, know this.

Those who support the idea of logistics bases on their territories insist that the situation will not improve if NATO is defeated in Afghanistan or just pulls out. In either case, the struggle between the Pashtoon Taliban and the remnants of the Northern Alliance (which represent the national minorities) will resume. As soon as NATO pulls out, the old contradictions will resurface and take the country back to the late 1990s.

Regional forces will move in to fill the vacuum in Afghanistan: they will have to do this to keep the regional balance of forces intact. The vicious circle can be broken only by concerted efforts from certain hypothetical benevolent actors.

If NATO is defeated or just draws back, the Central Asian countries will be left to their own devices—there will be no southern transport corridor or a secure southern border.

There is a third possible variant: the Taliban's restored control over the entire country will make the situation unpredictable. A large number of foreign fighters in the Taliban ranks might try to transform Afghanistan into a large training base for a "terrorist international," which will undoubtedly upset the balance in the neighboring countries. This will push Central Asia to the forefront of the struggle for Central Eurasian security. It will be hard, if possible at all, to seal off the long mountainous border stretches between Afghanistan and Central Asia, which means that the regional countries should side with the United States and NATO and help them as best they can.

⁹ See: "Pakistan potreboval ot SShA oplatit voynu s Talibami," available at [www.centrasia.ru], 23 February, 2009.

Those who object to NATO bases in Central Asia have their own, no less weighty, arguments. An expanded NATO military presence in the region will turn it into an arena of uncompromising geopolitical rivalry because of the obvious fact that the global balance of forces is radically changing before our very eyes.

Indeed, eight years ago the United States was the only superpower with a dominating position on the international arena and unclaimed geopolitical initiative both in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Today, there are at least two other centers of power—Russia and China—which have become strong enough to snatch the initiative. This means that NATO's wider logistics in the region will be confronted by more active geopolitical rivals than ever encouraged by the weaker position of the "world hegemon." The Central Asian neighbors will not let this chance slip away from them either.

Those who object to NATO bases in Central Asia suggest the following solutions.

- First: if foreign bases in the region are inevitable their distribution should not give any of the leading geopolitical forces domination over others. This can be described as establishing a "direct balance of forces." Until recently, Kyrgyzstan with two bases (an American in Manas and a Russian in Kant) was pursuing this policy in an attempt to reduce the pressure of the geopolitical rivalry and obtain real political and financial dividends.
- There is another option: no foreign bases in the region, active foreign policy balancing with a full awareness that a stable balance is impossible by definition. This requires virtuosic diplomatic skills, otherwise the results might be highly negative. Ukraine is a recent and pertinent example. President Kuchma, at one time, tried to balance between Russia and the United States, blundered and failed. Washington won that round but the situation might change. So far Ukraine with its shaky political and economic systems remains a field for open geopolitical confrontation.

If Central Asia opts for the second alternative it must combine two different aspects. On the one hand, it must take care not to become a zone of direct geopolitical conflicts (which can be done by stationing foreign bases in its territory); on the other, it must preserve partner relations with the world's leading actors involved, in one way or another, in the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan.

This is possible only if a three-element geopolitical structure appears to the north of Afghanistan: the U.S./NATO (directly involved in the stabilization efforts and serving as a counterweight to Russia); Central Asia (logistics and transport support), and Russia (logistics and transport support as well as a counterweight to the West). The relative stability of such a system is possible only when all the states of the region will become a single geopolitical macrosystem.

So far the region remains disunited: it is a mixture of several actors with different levels of geopolitical subjectivity which cannot compete, in many respects, with the Russian Federation and the United States. The local states' different potentials and their diverging goals and interests in the geopolitical games underway in the region create the most favorable conditions for external actors pushing into the region and developing it into a Great Game field.

Conclusion

We can say that in the short-term perspective Afghanistan will remain the Great Game axis; in fact its role is extremely important for the future of the Eurasian policies of the United States and NATO, Russia, the Central Asian countries, Pakistan, and Iran. In the new round of the Afghan-Central Asian game, which began when Barack Obama was elected president, Russia has already passed the ball into America's court. This has strongly affected the entire range of their bilateral relations. It is for the United States to continue the game.

On the whole, the Great Game around Central Asia and Afghanistan will go on; the stakes are high and rising while the resource base of practically all the large external and regional actors is rapidly contracting under the pressure of the exacerbating world economic crisis. This makes the situation even less predictable than before with forecasting becoming a much more challenging task. Surprises cannot be excluded, nor can new and baffling temporary or more or less durable geopolitical alliances and cooperation alternatives.

FROM CENTRAL ASIA TO GREAT CENTRAL ASIA: THE GOALS AND ADJUSTMENTS OF U.S. CENTRAL ASIAN STRATEGY

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Introduction

To penetrate and maintain peaceful development of the Central Asian region is a consistent goal of the United States for its international interests. With the 9/11 event as the baseline, since 2001 America's awareness of the strategic importance of Central Asia and the latter's weight in U.S. global strategy has been greatly changed. According to Charles Manes, the 9/11 terrorist attack enabled the U.S. to "discover Central Asia."¹ As a result of this discovery the United States effectively gained a foothold in Central Asia. However, the U.S. has been so impatient that it made a policy mistake. In supporting the Color Revolution in

order to change the political system in Central Asian countries, it promoted democratization in the region in too great a rush.

Facts have proved that the Color Revolution model is not suitable for this area. The U.S. interference in Central Asia has caused some suspicion in Central Asian countries which in turn has affected relations between the United States and Central Asian countries. Due to their suspicion of aggressive U.S. actions in this region, Central Asian countries have reported a steady development in their cooperation with Russia and China. The operation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been very impressive and successful. It set a strong force to challenge the U.S. strategy in the region; for instance, on 5 July,

¹ Ch. Manes, "America Discovers Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 2, March/April 2003, pp. 120-132.

The author thanks Dr. Dan Trotter of Keuka College, NY, USA, for proofreading the manuscript.

2005, the SCO issued a declaration calling for the United States, though not explicitly, to set a timeline for withdrawing its military forces from Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, located in southern Uzbekistan.²

In terms of strategy, the U.S. is very far away from Central Asia. However, judging from the ongoing antiterrorist activities in Afghanistan and given the U.S. military bases in Central Asia, the five Central Asian nations have actually fallen into the U.S. "New Frontier" category.³ This is the first time the U.S. has observed and influenced the Central Asian situation so directly. Surprisingly, the happening of the Kyrgyz Tulip Revolution in March 2005 and the Uzbekistan Andijan Event in May of the same year interrupted the accelerating U.S. influence in Central Asia. Although the U.S. kept its Manas Air Base in the end, Kyrgyzstan failed to observe the Kyrgyzstan-American Goodwill Policy after the Tulip Revolution, and it vacillated on the U.S. stationing issue, which has remained a headache to the U.S.⁴ The

² See: L. Beehner, "The Rise of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *CFR*, 26 June, 2006, from IISS home page, available at [<http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-in-the-press/press-coverage-2006/june-2006/rise-of-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>].

³ See: Maj. V. de Kytspotter, *The Very Great Game? The U.S. New Frontier in Central Asia*, A Research Paper Presented to the Geneva Centre for Security Policy 18th International Training Course, February 2004, p. 6.

⁴ See: J. Nichol, *Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests*, CRS Report Order Code RL30294, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Updated 26 April, 2007, pp. 34, 35.

development of the Andijan Event further led the U.S. to realize the complexity of the Central Asian situation. After the Andijan Event, the U.S. Government required the Karimov Government to allow the international commission of inquiry to stand firm on its independence, which forced the U.S. army to withdraw from the Karshi-Khanabad Airport on 21 November, 2005. The withdrawal of the U.S. army from Uzbekistan symbolized a great setback of its Central Asian Policy, and is regarded as a "Strategic Surprise" for the U.S. in Central Asia.⁵

In order to retard declining U.S. influence in Central Asia, the U.S. Government has been adjusting its Central Asian Policy ever since the second half of 2005. The aim of this paper is to outline the background of the above-mentioned adjustment by means of a comprehensive analysis of the internal controversy on the priority of U.S. Central Asian strategic goals after the Andijan Event. As such great controversy results from the above-mentioned strategic challenges against the U.S. in Central Asia, and because this controversy requires serious scholastic thinking on the part of the U.S. concerning its Central Asian strategy, it is necessary to combine a deep study of this controversy with a study of the Great Central Asia strategy (an extended Central Asian strategy) and its significant strategic points.

⁵ See: St.J. Blank, "Strategic Surprise? Central Asia in 2006," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2, May 2006, pp. 109-130.

The Internal Controversy on the Priority of the U.S. Strategic Goals

The question of the Central Asian strategy remains a domestic controversy in the U.S. This controversy came into existence as early as the time before the 9/11 attack happening in 2001. However, both the policy makers and scholars at that time regarded Central Asia to be on the periphery of the U.S.'s global strategy, and the question of Central Asian strategy was not a wide public concern in political or academic circles, so that the controversy on it was limited to relatively bloodless professional debates. But after the Andijan Event, the fact that the U.S. suffered a strategic loss in Central Asia led to a serious domestic controversy on U.S. Central Asian strategy and drove policy makers

and scholars to seriously reflect on almost all strategic problems in U.S. Central Asian strategy. It becomes clearer and clearer that the domestic consensus on Central Asian strategy existing when the 9/11 attack first happened is gone, and that this consensus will be followed by a lasting domestic debate on the controversy of the U.S.'s Central Asian strategy.

Although there is no consensus on the status of the Central Asia Area in the U.S.'s global strategy, there is, however, a consensus, rarely achieved in the past, on the strategic goal of U.S. Central Asian strategy. According to most Americans concerned, the U.S.'s Central Asian strategic goals include security, democracy and energy resources. In the *National Security Report* in 2006, the Central Asia Area was regarded as a region "enjoying lasting priority in our foreign policy." According to this report, there are three reasons for the predominant status of Central Asia in U.S. national security strategy: "In the region (Central Asia) as a whole, the elements of our larger strategy meet, and we must pursue those elements simultaneously: promoting effective democracies and the expansion of free-market reforms, diversifying global sources of energy, and enhancing security and winning the War on Terror."⁶ Similarly, according to Matthew Crosston, the U.S. interest in the Central Asia Area falls into three categories: to prevent terrorism from spreading, to provide implements for political and economic reforms in the Central Asian nations, and to promote the rule of law and to ensure the exploitation of energy resources.⁷ Ariel Cohen (An expert from The Heritage Foundation studying on the Central Asia and the Caspian Sea areas) has even pointed out concisely that the U.S. interest in Central Asia can be concluded with three words: security, energy resources and democracy.⁸

In Svante E. Cornell's opinion, the U.S.'s current Central Asian policy is concerned about three objectives:

- 1) "Hard" security. As the U.S. has launched a global "long-term" war of antiterrorism ever since 2001, the strategic accesses to Central Asia and the Caspian Region have become the primary strategic consideration for the U.S.
- 2) Ever since the cold war was over, U.S. has begun to aim at the diversification of the export of the energy resources from the Caspian Sea, which has been more and more strategically significant with the constant increase of global petroleum and natural gas prices.
- 3) The western camp led by the U.S. won the battle without a real fight in the cold war. The West's victory was interpreted by the U.S. and other western countries as a success of their own democratic strategies, so that this experience propelled the emergence in western international relations theory circles of the "Democratic Peace Theory,"⁹ both before and after the Cold War. The "Democratic Peace Theory" was cherished by western policy makers as the gold standard in handling foreign affairs. Under such circumstances, democracy was increasingly regarded as a powerful weapon to eliminate the roots of terrorism—social disorder, economic recession and governmental repression.¹⁰ In brief, security, democracy and

⁶ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, White House, Washington, D.C., March 2006, p. 40.

⁷ See: M. Crosston, *Fostering Fundamentalism: Terrorism, Democracy and American Engagement in Central Asia*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Aldershot, England, 2006, p. 15.

⁸ See: A. Cohen, "U.S. Interests and Central Asia Energy Security," *Backgrounder*, No. 1984, 15 November, 2006, p. 1.

⁹ The main point of this theory is: Compared with totalitarian countries, democratic countries have less tendency to war, at least between them. Although seriously flawed, this logic was later used by western countries' decision makers as an important evidence for the argumentation of their democratic strategies, which was especially true during the Clinton Administration and the Bush Administration (see: M.W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review*, December 1986; C.R. Ember, M. Ember, B. Russett, "Peace Between Participatory Polities," *World Politics*, July 1992; *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. by M.E. Brown, S.M. Lynn-Jones, St.E. Miller, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1996).

¹⁰ See: S.E. Cornell: "Eurasia Crisis and Opportunity," *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, No. 11, Fall 2006, p. 30.

energy resources form the strategic goals in the U.S.'s Central Asian strategy and jointly decide the important status of Central Asia in U.S. global strategy.

Although maintaining security, promoting democracy and obtaining energy resources remain the three lasting goals in the U.S. government's Central Asian strategy, it is worthwhile to note that security, democracy and demand for energy resources may have different concerns and devotions from the government agents. Therefore, how to allocate limited resources rationally to the three domains to best promote U.S. interests remains a problem in the U.S.'s Central Asian strategy. Someone used to point out: "fundamental tradeoffs remain in the U.S. policy goals, which include near-term access to military bases in the region, long-term political and economic liberalization, regional stability, access to energy resources, and reducing the flow of narcotics to the world market."¹¹ However, pursuing all these policy goals at the same time undoubtedly remains a great test to U.S. devotion and political will. Other problems are: "pursuit of possession goals may undermine the effort to construct a benign regional environment in the longer term. Conversely, the effort to foster a stable, peaceful, open and democratic regional order may require the sacrifice of concrete short-term objectives."¹² In the past ten-odd years, the U.S. government's Central Asian strategy has oscillated between achieving long-term goals and pursuing short-term interest. The oscillation between the three strategic goals (security, democracy and energy resources) and the unilateral concern of and devotion to any of them have formed an "Inharmonious Trio" concerning the U.S. government's Central Asian strategy. However, among this "Inharmonious Trio", what puzzles policy makers and scholars the most is the priority between democracy and security, which has caused many hot oral and written debates.

Three Arguments: "Boosting", "Democracy", and "Security First"

Giving priority to the promotion of democracy in Central Asia or to the maintenance of regional security and the enhancement of antiterrorism cooperation has remained an unsolved problem concerning the U.S. government's Central Asian strategy: "The United States thus faces two contradictory imperatives: on the one hand, the fight against terror tempts Washington to put aside its democratic scruples and seek closer ties with autocracies throughout the Middle East and Asia. On the other hand, U.S. officials and policy experts have increasingly come to believe that it is precisely the lack of democracy in many of these countries that helps breed Islamic extremism."¹³ In brief, can you spread democracy while fighting terrorism? Can these two goals be compatible?¹⁴

To the first question, most people will say "Yes." However, in answering the second question, there are many different opinions. Some people strongly propose that the government should focus its Central Asian policy on democracy, which is called the "Perspective of Democracy First." Others suggest cooperating with the Central Asian nations to wage a war against terrorism should be the current priority of U.S. strategic goals in Central Asia, which is called the "Perspective of Security First". And still others suggest juggling and promoting both at the same time, which is called the "Perspective of Balanced Boosting." It is worthwhile to note that the "Perspective of Balanced Boosting" is a mere speech strategy and diplomatic attitude, which will be inclined toward democracy or security

¹¹ S. Mahnovski, *et al.*, *Economic Dimensions of Security in Central Asia*, RAND Corp., Santa Monica, 2006, p. 73.

¹² S.N. Macfarlane, "The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia," *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, p. 450.

¹³ N. Abbas, "Bolstering Security and Bolstering Democracy in South and Central Asia", *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, No. 10, 1 January, 2006, p. 334.

¹⁴ See: M. Crosston, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

once put into actual policy. Therefore, the “Perspective of Balanced Boosting” is only a means of analysis with little practical significance for strategic constitution or implementation.

Neither the “Perspective of Democracy First” nor the “Perspective of Security First” or the “Perspective of Balanced Boosting” denies the importance of both democracy and security in Central Asian strategy and the necessity for the U.S. to pursue both in Central Asia. Cherishing democracy and worrying about the lack of democracy in Central Asian nations is common wisdom for political and academic circles. As indicated by Negroponte (the first Director of National Intelligence, a position created as a result of the 9/11 commission which criticized the lack of coordination among all U.S. intelligence agencies, especially the various military intelligence services and the CIA) oppression, corruption in leadership and love of wars is a staple of the regimes of the Central Asian nations, which provides fertile soil for the emergence of radical Islamic passions and movements and makes the stability of the Central Asian nations as the suppliers of energy resources and the reliability of them as antiterrorism partners doubtful.

What is worst is that this is not a specious prospect. One or more of these countries would disappear. As a result the door will be thrown wide open to crimes and the spread of terrorism, when these nations will be pushed to the edge of loosing nations.¹⁵ Just because of the possibility of this prospect, the U.S. government increased its concern and devotion to the Central Asia Area after the 9/11 attack. On the one hand, the U.S. cooperated closely with the Central Asian nations against terrorism in order to facilitate the elimination by the U.S. and its allies of the arch-criminal behind the 9/11 attack. On the other hand, the U.S. government boosted democracy in Central Asia by means of governmental aids and by encouraging the development of nongovernmental organizations, so as to bring Central Asia into the West-Atlantic Value System. None of the three perspectives above object to these U.S. government actions. However, there are controversies between the three opinions concerning the U.S.’s current main tasks in Central Asia and the main means to be adopted for these tasks.

“Perspective of Balanced Boosting”

The authorities undoubtedly support the “Perspective of Balanced Boosting,” for instance, former Secretary of State Colin Powell indicated that liberty, prosperity and peace are indivisible principles (or policy goals) that can be superimposed on each other. Therefore, a policy focused on only one of them will inevitably seek all the three goals at the same time.¹⁶ The former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice points out that the attempt to draw a pure and clear line between U.S. security interest and democratic goals cannot show the reality of the world today at all. Supporting the growth of the democratic systems in all countries is not against an illusion as a moral war but would be confronted with the actual response and challenges.¹⁷ To cater to the complicated U.S. situation in the Central Asia Area and to maintain U.S. strategic interests there, the U.S. government wishes to boost the democratic cause in the Central Asian Area, in order to eliminate the soil for Islamic extremism, while cooperating closely with the Central Asian nations on military action against terrorism. Also, the policy makers firmly believe that these two causes can support each other and work well in combination. It is the current policy of high-level U.S. officials that the U.S. won’t develop a singular policy focused on sheer security considerations or economic interests with any Central Asian nation. On the contrary, the U.S. is devoted to

¹⁵ See: J. Nichol, *Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests*, CRS Report Order Code RL33458, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Updated 26 April, 2007, p. 23.

¹⁶ See: The United State Mission to the European Union, “Assistant Secretary of State Jones on U.S. Policy in Central Asia”, 12 January, 2004, available at [<http://www.useu.be/Terrorism/USResponse/Dec1401JonesUSPolicyCentralAsia.html>].

¹⁷ See: C. Rice, “The Promise of Democratic Peace,” *Washington Post*, 11 December, 2005, p. B7.

boosting its strategic goals (politics, democracy and energy resources) in a balanced way,¹⁸ so as to implement a multidimensional approach covering security, democracy and economics.¹⁹ The opinion of James MacDougall (Assistant Secretary of Defense) is representative, "You cannot allow your security interests to prevent the agenda of political development, and you cannot prevent your agenda of political development from stopping your interests in the security and energy fields. These have to go hand in hand."²⁰ Thus it can be seen that domestic mainstream opinion proposes that pursuing democracy and achieving security are both important tasks for the U.S. in Central Asian affairs, and that these two criteria are important standards to appraise the performance of the U.S. government's Central Asian policy.

"Perspective of Democracy First"

The "Perspective of Democracy First" agrees to some extent on the official insistence that antiterrorism and democracy are not two contradictory goals, but what they criticize is the oral and behavioral nonconformity of the government's Central Asian policy: orally singing high praise for democracy but sacrificing democracy at the expense of security during the actual implementation of policy. As someone pointed out, "The deals on the stability and democracy of these inland countries in Central Asia clearly show the difference between what the American say and what they do." Especially ever since the Tulip Revolution occurred in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 and since the "Andijan Event" occurred in May 2005, the U.S. government has increasingly shifted the focus of its Central Asian policy from promoting further democratic reforms in the Central Asian nations to achieving stability of the Central Asia Area. The goal is to attract the Central Asian nations to support the U.S.'s proposed "West-oriented" and "South-oriented" Energy Resources Corridors and to prevent Islamic extremism from overthrowing the conventional Central Asia regimes.²¹ The "Perspective of Democracy First" proposes that the U.S. government's stress on such security problems as antiterrorism will lead to a misunderstanding among the state leaders in the Central Asian nations that the U.S. government's moderate tone on promoting their political and economic reforms is a reward for the support from Central Asian nations on the U.S. war of antiterrorism, so that their state leaders will regard boosting U.S. democracy and human rights causes in Central Asia as a long-term issue and will keep on with their own authoritarian regimes while the U.S. stresses antiterrorism.²²

The typical representative of the "Perspective of Democracy First" is Mathew Crosston of Clemson University. He agrees with the strategic goals the U.S. set in Central Asia for itself and regards promoting democracy, pursuing security and obtaining energy resources in this area as a most far-sighted action. He even agrees with the U.S. government about combining its antiterrorism cooperation with its Central Asian allies with the promotion of Central Asian domestic democratic development as the U.S.'s current philosophical foundation of its Central Asian policy. He agrees that the U.S. should learn from

¹⁸ See: R.A. Boucher, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priority," Part II, Testimony to Committee on International Relations House of Representatives, Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, 26 April, 2006, in: *109th Congress Second Session, Serial No. 109-186*, p. 9.

¹⁹ See: E.A. Feigenbaum, Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, "Kazakhstan and the United States in a Changed World," *Remarks to the Institute of World Economy and Policy*, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 23 August, 2006.

²⁰ Quoted from: G. Saidazimova, "Central Asia: Could Regional Dynamics Spell Closer U.S.-Kazakh Ties?" *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty Features*, 8 June, 2006.

²¹ See: P. Ipek, "Challenges for Democracy in Central Asia: What Can United States Do?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 39, No. 1, Spring 2007, p. 102.

²² See: Ibidem; R. Giragosian, "The Strategic Central Asian Arena," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 146-147; V. Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 138-139; F. Hill, K. Jones, "Fear of Democracy or Revolution: The Reaction to Andijan," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 132-133.

Afghanistan, which suffered from extremist and terrorist movements due to tyranny in the early 1990s. However, what Crosston unfortunately criticizes is the great divergence between the speech and the behavior of the United States. In his view, the U.S. says “Yes” to antiterrorism and the obtainment of energy resources but “No” to promoting the emergence of the democratic systems in Central Asia. In his opinion, stability, liberty, openness, property rights, dignity and justice are the most effective means to eliminate the threats of terrorism, and that a society must be deeply imbued with these democratic values in order to ultimately withstand terrorist attacks. Crosston believes that without maintaining these democratic values, a country will be a subject to attacks now and forever. And the U.S.’s single-minded pursuit of its security interest regardless of democracy in the Central Asian nations is taken by Crosston as a “Fatal Political Crime.” He strictly warns policy makers that insisting on such a security-oriented policy will lead to a more dangerous result than “the mess of democracy” and “Stability under totalitarianism,” namely violent Islamic radicalism, which has cultural, lingual and religious links with the majority of the Central Asian populations and airtight political foundations in terms of both logic and analytics, but is a chilling and irreparable threat to the U.S.!²³ Crosston’s opinions are somewhat radical and his words carry a strong ideological style, but his viewpoint, which is typical of the “Perspective of Democracy First,” can’t be ignored. These opinions will be of great significance in United States society and will furthermore greatly influence the U.S. government’s Central Asian policy.

“Perspective of Security First”

Those advocating the “Perspective of Security First” do not agree with the “Perspective of Democracy First.” The former recognize the important roles of democratic reforms on the stability of the Central Asia Area and U.S. interests in this area, but the proponents do not think it is necessary for the U.S. to currently focus its main resources and efforts on the promotion of democracy in the Central Asian nations. On the contrary, according to the “Perspective of Security First,” the U.S. should tone down its rhetoric about democracy or do more to understand the complicated situations in the Central Asian nations and cooperate with them against terrorism for the sake of U.S. national interest and long-term strategic goals. However, it is worthwhile to note that those proposing the “Perspective of Security First” claim to have many validating arguments supporting their view against the “Perspective of Democracy First,” and they claim that their opinion can be verified from several different points of view. Two points of view are especially influential. Based on the complexity of the situation in Central Asia, one point of view proposes that in the Central Asia Area where the interests of great nations intersect, the U.S. must consider many objective limitations when boosting democracy there. Advocacy of democracy in the region can be resisted by many large nations or damage the stability of this area. Another point of view focuses on the problems during the transition of the Central Asian nations, proposing that the U.S. should consider these nations’ actual concerns and national conditions when boosting democracy there, a point of view which considers with respect national aspirations. All points of view come to the same logical conclusion, that is, since the U.S. cannot promote democracy smoothly in Central Asia under so many limitations, the U.S. government should first pay attention to regional security and cooperation on antiterrorism. After all, resistance against the maintenance of regional security and the cooperation on antiterrorism will be much less than that against the promotion of democracy in this area.

From the regional angle, the “Perspective of Security First” proposes that the geopolitical status of Central Asia has led to the gathering of the interests of great nations, which makes the situation of this area rather complicated. Under such circumstances, the U.S. must be careful when promoting democracy in Central Asia. Large nations might achieve limited coordination on some important issues in this

²³ See: M. Crosston, op. cit., pp. 18, 19, 12, 11.

area, still the fact that the interests of large nations are too complicated to be automatically harmonized determines that even actions by the great nations thought to be restricted and of limited effect are subject to unexpected effects. Therefore, the great nations' concern about and struggle for the influence and energy resources in Central Asia might lead to (or have led to) the "New Great Game."²⁴ To prevent the "New Great Game" from coming true, the U.S. government should avoid boosting democracy radically in Central Asia for fear of great resistance from China and Russia, which might interpret that as an act of daring.

In addition—the "Perspective of Security First" proposes that the U.S.'s radical promotion of democracy in this area might lead to a firm determination of the state leaders of the Central Asian nations to go on with their extremism and cooperate with Russia and China against the U.S. efforts on democracy and indirectly weaken the powers of the parties and nongovernmental organizations in the Central Asian nations supporting western democracy.²⁵ For the long run, this action will damage the overall U.S. interests in this area and be worthless for the development of democracy here.²⁶ It is said that the "Andijan Event" added the last point for that. It is also said that the great distance between the U.S. and Central Asia is an obstacle for the U.S. to influence the orientation of the development of the political situations in Central Asia as the countries neighboring Central Asia (Russia and China) do by such powerful means of policy. Therefore, "the policy of promoting democracy and human rights in the region will continue to prove ineffectual and indeed counterproductive."²⁷ It is even said that as Central Asia is much less important than the Middle East, the U.S. should give up its "Crusade" to Central Asia to avoid taking the rash promotion of democracy as its overall strategic goals for fear of the unexpected negative results.²⁸

From the angle of the specific national conditions of Central Asian nations, the "Perspective of Security First" proposes that the U.S. must not promote democracy radically, which has caused numerous problems during the transition of the Central Asian nations. Especially since the happening of the Tulip Revolution and of the Andijan Event in 2005—there has been a better domestic awareness of the complicated situation in Central Asia, which is somewhat of a victory for the "Perspective of Security First." After the Tulip Revolution and the "Andijan Event," Martha B. Alcott (senior researcher on Russia and the Eurasia Project in the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) warned policy makers while giving evidence to the U.S. Congress, "In today's Central Asia, it would still be a mistake to romanticize the prospect of a 'color' revolution. A peaceful (or non-peaceful) popularly supported effort at regime change in the region would not necessarily produce a democratic outcome. A year after the virtually bloodless ouster of Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akaev, the country appears more fragmented and potentially unstable than before."²⁹ S. Frederick Starr also pointed out, "There is no fast track to democracy in Central Asia; democracy cannot be built in the absence of other key reforms, especially at the local level, and those can only come from working patiently with other governments, however frustrating this may be at times."³⁰

²⁴ M.E. Ahrari, J. Beal, "The New Great Game in Muslim Central Asia," *McNair Paper* 47, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, DC, U.S., January 1996; A.M. Jaffe, R. Manning, "The Myth of the Caspian 'Great Game': The Real Geopolitics of Energy," *Survival*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Winter 1998-1999, pp. 112-131; A. Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2000; *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia*, ed. by L. Klevevan, Atlantic Books, London, 2004; N. Swanström, "China and Central Asia: A New Great Game or Traditional Vassal Relations?" *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 45, No. 12, November 2005, pp. 569-584; M.K. Bhadrakumar, "The Great Game on a Razor's Edge," *Asian Times Online*, 23 December, 2006.

²⁵ See: V. Socor, "Cheney Visit Spotlights Kazakhstan's Pivotal Role," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 8 May, 2006.

²⁶ See: S.E. Cornell, op. cit.

²⁷ M. Mihalka, "Not Much of a Game: Security Dynamics in Central Asia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2007, p. 38.

²⁸ See: R. Weitz, "Averting a New Great Game in Central Asia," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2006, p. 161.

²⁹ M.B. Olcott, "U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priority," Part II, in: *109th Congress Second Session, Serial No. 109-186*, p. 33.

³⁰ S.F. Starr, "A Partnership for Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, July/August 2005, p. 169.

As a matter of fact, while stressing that the U.S. should promote democracy and human rights moderately, the “Perspective of Security First” proposes that the current main task in Central Asia is cooperation against terrorism in order to maintain U.S. security interests.³¹ After the “Andijan Event,” someone suggested that “No matter whether or not we are willing to,” the U.S. must continue its contact and communication with the governments and government offices in these nations (including Uzbekistan), for there were no better alternatives currently. Under such circumstances, in order to maintain its own security interests, including its cooperation with the Central Asian nations for the stability of Afghanistan, the U.S. should stop its punishment of Uzbekistan, should stop blackmailing Uzbekistan to respect democracy and human rights by means of aid, and should more multilaterally cooperate and coordinate with Uzbekistan within the NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program (PfP). If the U.S. government still goes its own way to stress democracy, its course of action “at best denies the U.S. policy community access to some of the most important institutions in Uzbekistan’s power structure and at worst limits the opportunity for U.S. policymakers to influence their Uzbek counterparts,”³² which can only serve to weaken U.S. security interests.

The Adjustment of the U.S. Government’s Central Asian Policy

From 2001 to 2005, in taking advantage of the opportunities brought about by the 9/11 attack and its great overall national strength, the U.S. military force marched into Central Asia smoothly and grew up within only several years to be an external force not to be trifled with in influencing the development of Central Asia. It is worth noting that U.S. policy toward Central Asia is claimed to be focused in a very fundamental way on supporting the full sovereignty of the five Central Asian states. Nevertheless, although the U.S. seems to have gained domination in the competition on the Central Asian affairs with Russia and China, this assessment neglects negative effects flowing from the U.S. presence in the Central Asia Area. These negative effects were caused by the aggressiveness of the U.S.’s Central Asian policy as determined by the Bush Government as part of its distinct global strategy. For instance, the surprising events in Central Asia in 2005—mainly the Kyrgyzstan Tulip Revolution and the Uzbekistan Andijan Event—showed that the increase in the influence of the U.S., which was a powerful external body taking an active part in Central Asian affairs, had aroused the worry and vigilance of those in power in the Central Asian nations, and in addition concerned other countries outside the region, such as Russia.

Because of the setback of U.S. influence in the Central Asia Area after the “Andijan Event,” the U.S. government has begun to adjust its Central Asian policy since the second half of 2005. The “Corridor of Reform” concept raised by Condoleezza Rice and her proposal on the integration of Central Asia and South Asia during her visits to the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in October 2005 are widely accepted as a symbol of the adjustment of the U.S.’s Central Asian policy.³³ Up to now, it can be seen that the main orientation of the adjustment of its Central Asian policy is: reconstruct gov-

³¹ See: M. Rywkin, “Security and Stability in Central Asia: Differing Interests and Perspectives,” *American Foreign Policy Interests*, Vol. 207, 2006, p. 198.

³² E. Rumer, “The U.S. Interests and Role in Central Asia after K2,” *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2006, p. 153.

³³ See: A.L. Boyer, “Recreating the Silk Road; The Challenges of Overcoming Transaction Costs,” *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2006, p. 73; USID: “A Central-South Asia Energy Corridor,” *Energy Update*, Issue 2, March/April 2007, p. 22.

ernment offices and set up the Department of South Asian and Central Asian Affairs; try to integrate Central Asia and South Asia with a focus on Afghanistan in order to create a "Greater Central Asia;" plan to make a "South-oriented" transport corridor to diversify the export of the Central Asian energy resources; treat different Central Asian nations in a different way in terms of strategy, so as to make the Republic of Kazakhstan a "Reform Corridor" and "Regional Leader;" pay more attention than before to the roles of educational aids and nongovernmental organizations in the promotion of the cause of Central Asian democracy, so as to ease the fear about promoting democracy in Central Asia.

The adjustment of the U.S. government's Central Asian policy is still in process, so it is not yet time to make an all-around evaluation on the potential consequences of this adjustment. However, in this adjustment, it is very clear that the U.S. government is reversing its own decreased influence on Central Asia by employing much more moderate means than before. Such a change in its Central Asian policy shows that the U.S. government is not pursuing a rapid change of the Central Asian situation by radical means after learning from the lessons in 2005. This has made its Central Asian policy more prudent, more flexible and more targeted than before. But in terms of strategy, there is no change in the content of the U.S.'s Central Asian strategic goals (still energy resources, security and democracy) but a change in the emphasis from the previous promoting democracy to the current maintaining security and obtaining energy resources. However, it is hard to know whether the adjustment in the U.S. government's Central Asian strategy will have the expected effects for the long run, because there are some mistakes in its Central Asian policy, and neither the Central Asian nations nor related nations agree on the U.S. policy in the Central Asia Area.

Domestic discussions currently in process concerning U.S. Central Asian strategy, ongoing as a response to the setback of the U.S. government's Central Asian policy, involve a wide range of strategic problems. This paper discusses one dimension of these strategic problems—the controversy on the ordering of U.S. strategic priorities in Central Asia. In fact, the discussions concerning other U.S. strategic problems are also intense. Other controversies include the nature of the U.S. strategic interests in the Central Asia Area, by what means should the U.S. maintain these interests, what is the status of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia in U.S. energy resources strategy, whether security or democracy is the preferred U.S. strategic goal in the Central Asia and whether the Republic of Kazakhstan should have a priority in the partnership in Central Asia. As scholastic discussions on the U.S.'s Central Asian strategy are still in process, it is predictable that there might be a change in the orientation of the discussions on the Central Asian strategy, especially with the increasing intensity of the discussions and the change of the Central Asian situation.

Especially since 2007 and 2008, there have been great changes in the international situation: the severe conflicts between the U.S. and Russia on missile defense systems, democracy, supply of energy resources and the Kosovo issue will further worsen their relationship. More changes: after agreeing on the first complete Central Asian strategy in June 2007, the EU has been entering the Central Asia Area more actively; in addition, the stagnated Afghanistan and Iraqi antiterrorist wars has diluted the U.S.'s strategic efforts in other areas (including Central Asia). Furthermore, in order to create its own diplomatic legacies in the last year of Bush administration, in 2008 (also an election year in the U.S.), the Bush government was focusing on what could more easily lead to resounding effects and outstanding achievements and therefore had no time for Central Asian affairs. Additionally, the success of the SCO Summit in August 2008 further consolidated the organization's cohesive force. Given such complexity, scholastic discussions on the U.S.'s Central Asian strategy might slow down a bit or even get weakened as the U.S. adjusts its Central Asian policy. However, since these controversies are about some core problems concerning the U.S.'s Central Asian strategy, it can be seen that the relevant discussions will still go on for a period of time. It is hard to know which opinions will win in the scholastic debate on the Central Asian strategy and what influence will this debate have on the current Central Asian strategy, but it is certain that this debate on the U.S.'s Central Asian strategy is indispensable.

Toward a Great Central Asia Strategy

Clearly, U.S. Central Asia strategy did not meet its original goals and objectives, and the controversies on the priority of the U.S. strategic goals in the region have been continuing since the very beginning. Seeing their policy being thwarted repeatedly in Central Asia, U.S. scholars and policy makers have begun to examine themselves. In the summer of 2005, Frederick Starr, chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, proposed a Great Central Asia strategy to refine the U.S. Central Asia strategy and its strategic interests in the region.³⁴ What Starr proposed is a Great Central Asia cooperative partnership for development, which will have the U.S. taking the lead, the five Central Asian states and Afghanistan entering as the main members, and India and Pakistan also participating. The main idea of the proposal is to take the U.S.'s control of the situation in Afghanistan as an opportunity to promote optional and flexible cooperation in security, democracy, economy, transport and energy, and, to constitute a new region by combining Central Asia with South Asia. The United States is to play the role of a midwife to promote the rebirth of the entire region.³⁵

Starr's new concept of a Great Central Asia strategy drew the attention of the Bush administration. In October, the State Department reorganized its South Asia Division and included the issues of the five Central Asian states into the jurisdiction of South Asia Division. Between 25 and 26 April, the U.S. held a congressional hearing, focusing on the Great Central Asia strategy. In June, just a few days before the SCO Summit opened, the United States called together Central Asian countries for an international conference entitled "Electricity Beyond Borders" to discuss energy cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia in Istanbul, Turkey. Having come this far, the United States has got a clear strategy to use energy as a breakthrough issue in order to set its Great Central Asia vision into action.

Richard A. Boucher, the U.S. Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs in his remark at the meeting clearly indicated: "We have profound and long-term interests in South and Central Asia that I think are underscored by the number of recent high-level official visits to the region. President Bush's trip to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India in March, Vice President Cheney's visit to Kazakhstan in May and Secretary Rice's trip to the region last October highlighted our three primary goals: strengthening democratic stability and economic reforms, fostering regional security and cooperation on the war on narcotics and terrorism, and promoting economic growth and regional cooperation."³⁶

The five Central Asian countries have long been a part of the former Soviet Union. Divided by the long-time war in Afghanistan, Central Asia and South Asia have been isolated from each other in history for a long period of time. The two regions have apparent differences in history, religious belief and culture. The reason why the United States is pursuing the "mandatory matching" policy is that it believes it has got two keys to open the south door of the Central Asia Area. First, it has succeeded in putting the situation of Afghanistan in control. Second, it has been able to continuously expand its influence in South Asia.³⁷

Afghanistan is an important channel connecting Central Asia with South Asia. The Anti-terrorism war has won the United States the full right to speak on the situation in Afghanistan. In their vision of the Great Central Asia strategy, Afghanistan is an important hub. U.S. Secretary of State

³⁴ See: S.F. Starr, *op. cit.*

³⁵ See: S.F. Starr, "In Defense of Greater Central Asia," 2008, available at [http://www.ifri.org/files/politique_etrangere/StarrVO.pdf].

³⁶ R.A. Boucher, *Remarks at Electricity Beyond Borders: A Central Asia Power Sector Forum*, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 June, 2006, available at [<http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/2006/67838.htm>].

³⁷ See: K. Strachota, "New Regional In-Security System in Central Asia," *CES Studies*, 22 February, 2001, available at [<http://osw.waw.pl/en/epub/eprace/01/02.htm>].

Condoleezza Rice said in her testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "In Afghanistan, we support the efforts of the new democratic government in Kabul to lead the nation toward freedom and prosperity. To achieve that goal, we have taken a hard look at our overall policy and adopted a true counterinsurgency strategy—a complete approach that integrates military efforts with political support, counter-narcotics programs, development priorities, and regional diplomacy... Our goal is to help the Afghan government improve the quality of life for its people by extending security, providing good governance, and opening up new economic opportunity."³⁸

In recent years, the United States has attached great importance to its South Asian operation and has been vigorously supporting India as its strategic ally in South Asia. Mr. Richard A. Boucher clearly indicates when speaking about the relationship between the U.S. and India: "The United States and India have become partners who can act together on a global scale, whether it is in the U.N. or peace-keeping issues, or other matters. It is very important to the U.S. and very important to India that we have a strong partnership to move together on a global scale. I am happy to be part of that. I am happy to do my bit of keeping it moving forward and looking for these areas of cooperation."³⁹

Economic relations between South Asia and Central Asia have grown in recent years. India has an advantage over Pakistan in this case in that its relations with Central Asia were strengthened during the Soviet era, creating the groundwork for further cooperation. Indian companies have gained a strong foothold in many Central Asian countries. Pakistan has set up Joint Economic Commissions with all Central Asian countries with the goal of promoting commerce and cooperation between both parties. Energy supply pipeline projects are naturally a major part of economic relations between these countries. It involves the Indian subcontinent's quest for supplies from the oil fields of the region. Much of India and Pakistan's diplomacy in the region has to do with the promise of transnational pipelines, including the Turkmenistan-Pakistan-India and Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline projects. These projects are at the heart of diplomacy between South Asia and other major players such as the United States, and are also dependent on the stability of Afghanistan and a normalization of India-Pakistan relations.⁴⁰

Although both India and Pakistan have had steady bilateral security and economic cooperation with Central Asian countries they lack a comprehensive mechanism for further cooperation. For this reason, they followed the SCO with interest and hoped that they could join the organization as full members as soon as possible.⁴¹ However, the Greater Central Asia strategy by the United States has provided both India and Pakistan an opportunity to participate in the affairs of Central Asia without a full membership of SCO. India has announced that it will join the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline project which is supported by the United States.

Russia and China are adjacent to each other in the Central Asia Area. Both countries have their own state interests in the region. The Central Asian countries have their common needs for economic development, antiterrorism and regional security with China and Russia. Under the framework of the SCO, the mutual cooperation between these countries is enhanced. Accordingly, the influence of China and Russia in Central Asia has become more important, while at the same time the ability of the West (the U.S. and the EU) to influence political developments in the region could be significantly diminished. To change this situation the U.S. has brought up the "choosing from the South" policy in Central Asia and determined to use energy, transportation and infrastructure construction as bait to attract Central Asian countries from the post-Soviet Union dominance. By this means, it can change the external

³⁸ Testimony of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Thursday, 8 February, 2007, available at [<http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2007/RiceTestimony070208.pdf>].

³⁹ R.A. Boucher, *Remarks to the Press New Delhi, India*, 10 November, 2006, available at [<http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/2006/75895.htm>].

⁴⁰ See: S. Varadarajan, "Energy Key in the New Asian Architecture," *The Hindu*, 25 January, 2006; A. Tarzi, D. Kimage, "Pipelines or Pipe-dreams?," *RFERL*, 18 February, 2005.

⁴¹ See: Maj. E. Turner, "What is Driving India's and Pakistan's Interest in Joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?" *Strategic Insights*, Vol. IV, Issue 8, August 2005.

strategic focus of Central Asia from the current Russia-and-China-oriented partnership to cooperative relations with South Asian countries. It can break the long-term Russian dominance in the Central Asian Area, it can split and disintegrate the cohesion of the SCO and gradually establish U.S. dominance in Central and South Asia.⁴²

An important part of the Great Central Asia strategy is to export energy from Central Asia to South Asia. However, the total energy reserves and current exploiting capacity in the Central Asian Region is quite limited. A large part of it is under control of Russia. To export energy to South Asia countries will inevitably cause conflict with Russia.⁴³ The reason Kazakhstan is not enthusiastic about this idea is that it does not want to damage its close strategic alliance with Russia. Tajikistan's future water resources basically have been under control of the Russian Aluminum Company and (until recently) the UES of Russia. Regarding the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Natural Gas Pipeline Project, the biggest problem lies in the gas reserves of Turkmenistan. According to the agreement, Turkmenistan should sell 100 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Russia every year. Starting from 2009, it will also provide 30 billion cubic meters of gas through pipelines to China. Considering Turkmenistan's current gas productivity, it already has difficulties in fulfilling its contracts with these two countries. It could probably hardly produce any more to the South.

Conclusion

Over the last few years, international commentary on Central Asia often turned to the imagery of the Great Game. Previously the Game was primarily a rivalry between the two major colonial powers, namely the British and Russian empires, for control over Central Eurasia.⁴⁴ More recently the Great Game has been expanded to include more players by bringing regional heavyweights China, India, as well as the key outside power the United States, but the Game has retained its main characteristic feature, which is big powers jockeying for position in Central Asia.⁴⁵ The latest conceptualization sees the Game as being largely driven by the desire of Russia and China to squeeze the United States out of Central Asia and establish their exclusive control over the strategically located and energy-rich region.⁴⁶

Magnificent as it appears, the Great Central Asia strategy will still have to face some practical problems in implementation. For historical and cultural reasons, Central Asian and South Asian countries lack a basic sense of identification and an in-depth experience of cooperation. The mutual trust between India and Pakistan is not strong enough for implementing large-scale cross-border infrastructure projects. The Energy reserve issues of Afghanistan and Central Asia are the two blind sides of the Great Central Asia strategy. Apparently, Afghanistan is the most critical pawn in the Great Central Asia strategy. Currently, the U.S. and Afghan central government has very limited control over the situation in Afghanistan. Taliban remnants still remain. The warlord regimes and drug trade are still

⁴² See: I. Torbakov, "The West, Russia and China in Central Asia: What Kind of Game is Being Played in the Region?" *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2007, pp. 78-91; M.K. Bhadrakumar, "Russia's Great Game in Central Asia," *Asia Times*, 25 August, 2006.

⁴³ See: M.K. Bhadrakumar, "Russia's Great Game in Central Asia."

⁴⁴ See, for example: D. Kimmage, "Central Asia: Is Regional Turbulence Return of the Great Game?" *RFE/RL*, 19 July, 2005; idem, "2005 in Review: The Geopolitical Game in Central Asia," *RFE/RL*, 29 December, 2005.

⁴⁵ See: F. Kempe, "Central Asia Emerges As Strategic Battleground," *Wall Street Journal*, 16 May, 2006; N. Schmiddle, "In Central Asia, New Players, Same Game," *Washington Post*, 19 January, 2006; N. Sokov, "The Not-So-Great Game in Central Asia," *PONARS Policy Memo*, No. 403, December 2005; St.A. Weiss, "Don't Play This Great Game," *International Herald Tribune*, 9 December, 2005; I. Torbakov, "Central Asia: Replaying the Great Game," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 13 October, 2005.

⁴⁶ See: I. Torbakov, "The West, Russia and China in Central Asia: What Kind of Game is Being Played in the Region?"; A.S. Tyson, "Russia and China Bullying Central Asia, U.S. Says," *Washington Post*, 15 July, 2005; F.W. Engdahl, "Central Asia, Washington, and Beijing Energy Geopolitics," *GlobalResearch.ca*, 19 December, 2005.

major regional security problems. According to the Great Central Asia strategy, most major transport infrastructure and pipelines will pass through Afghanistan. The risks are too high.

Obviously, in geopolitical terms, the United States' Great Central Asia policy aims at crafting the sinews of cooperation in the areas of energy, transportation and infrastructure construction with a view to bringing the region out of the current orbit of Russian-Chinese influence within the SCO framework and to forge cooperative relations between the region and South Asia. Washington calculates that the policy will inevitably break the long-term Russian influence over Central Asia, disintegrate the cohesion of the SCO and, inevitably, catapult the U.S. as the dominant power on the new template of Central Asia and South Asia.

However, in the long run, the United States may strategically misjudge other large countries by "setting up another cooking stove." It may also disrupt the existing cooperative mechanisms and put Central Asian countries into a dilemma of choice. It is suspected that the implementation of the Great Central Asia strategy will have a negative impact on regional security, because it is likely to destroy the integrity of the entire Central Asian Region and break the balance of the roles of big powers on Central Asian countries, hence leading to the emergence of polarization and confrontation within the Central Asian Region.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ See: M.K. Bhadrakumar, "Russia's Great Game in Central Asia"; A.S. Tyson, op. cit.; F.W. Engdahl, op. cit.

CENTRAL ASIA IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA, THE UNITED STATES, AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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The Soviet Union left behind a geopolitical vacuum in Central Asia which augmented the interest of outside powers in the region. | Indeed, its advantageous geopolitical location, natural riches (oil and gas in particular), as well as transportation potential and the possibility of

using it as a bridgehead in the counter-terrorist struggle have transformed Central Asia into one of the most attractive geopolitical areas.

The great powers' highly divergent interests have led to their sharp rivalry over influ-

ence in the region; after 9/11 this rivalry became even more pronounced. The United States, Russia, and the European Union are the key actors; this article will look at the specifics of their regional policy.

Russia-Central Asia

Amid the turmoil of the contemporary world, at a time brimming with global, regional, and national challenges and threats, the Central Asian states, like all the other states the world over, need one another and cherish their contacts. This is true of their relations with Russia.

This is not exhausted by their geographic proximity and 150 years of common history. In the post-Soviet period, each of the newly independent states (NNS) had to ensure its national interests; Russia, the Central Asian, and certain other NNS united into the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Russia's current Foreign Policy Conception identifies "a belt of good-neighborly relations along the perimeter of Russia's borders" as one of its important strategic aims and speaks of the need "to promote elimination of the existing and prevent the emergence of potential hotbeds of tension and conflicts in the regions adjacent to the Russian Federation," as well as "uphold in every possible way the rights and interests of Russian citizens and fellow-countrymen abroad."

The CIS countries are obviously regarded as one of the main trends in Russia's foreign policy because the perimeter of Russia's borders roughly corresponds to its borders with the NNS, where over twenty million Russian citizens reside.

The same foreign policy document goes on to say: "A priority area in Russia's foreign policy is ensuring conformity of multilateral and bilateral cooperation among the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to the country's national security tasks. The emphasis will be placed on developing good-neighborly relations and strategic partnership with all the CIS member states."

The Russian leaders accepted the five new Central Asian states that appeared in the center of Eurasia, each with its own domestic and foreign policy, as a historical reality; each defends its own national interests and seeks security. In this context, they put much store by Russia in their policies.

In turn, the Russian leaders are currently paying much more attention to this region which they consider very important to them; this explains Russia's efforts to coordinate its policies with the geostrategic realities that appeared in the world at the turn of the new millennium and that are perceived as a threat to Russia's security.

Another document, the National Security Conception of the Russian Federation, points out: "At the same time a number of states are stepping up their efforts to weaken Russia politically, economically, militarily, and in all other ways. Attempts to ignore Russia's interests when solving major issues of international relations, including conflict situations, could undermine international security, stability, and the positive changes achieved in international relations."

At the same time, under President Putin, the state fortified its international position. The National Security Concept says that new challenges and threats to Russia's national interests are developing in the international sphere; the trend toward a unipolar world under America's economic and military domination is gaining momentum.

Today, Russia remains under the pressure of certain power centers, especially along its western border with NATO members, which undermines its geostrategic position. The United States and its NATO allies are out to entrench themselves in Eurasia, they are pressing ahead in the Caucasus and Central Asia, wishing to gain political and military domination there.

The National Security Conception of the Russian Federation points out that today “threats to the Russian Federation’s national security in the international sphere can be seen in attempts by other states to oppose Russia becoming stronger as one of the influential centers of the multi-polar world, to hinder the execution of its national interests, and to weaken its position in Europe, the Middle East, the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, and the Asia-Pacific Region.” The document mentions Central Asia as a region where “other states” might “hinder the exercise of Russia’s national interests and weaken its position.”

What exactly is Central Asia’s role in the system of Russia’s national security?

At all times in the past and today the destinies of the Central Asian people have been affected by the unique geographic location of their common home at the crossroads of Eurasian geopolitical ties, which is indispensable for the regional powers’ cooperation. This means that the situation there has been and remains one of the most important balancing factors on the Eurasian continent.

In the early 21st century, the Eurasian geopolitical context changed a great deal with Central Asia receiving a more important role to play in global politics.

Russia’s position in the region is largely defined by its place and role in the post-Soviet balance of forces in the world.

In the post-1991 geopolitical situation, the Russian leaders were very much concerned about Russia’s southern borders. An analysis of the main security threats outlined by the National Security Conception reveals that the larger share of them emanate from Central Asia: the possibility of foreign military bases and large military contingents close to the Russian borders; conflicts that might spring up and escalate directly on Russia’s state borders and the external borders of the CIS countries; and attempts by other state to interfere with the realization of Russia’s national interests and undermine its position.

The world crisis that came to the fore in 2008 and that crippled the world security architecture makes these threats and challenges even more pronounced. Russia had to specify its position in the changing balance of forces on a world scale. In Central Asia, Moscow has to bear in mind the fairly obvious instability factor connected with the ever rising violence in Afghanistan.

The Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation says: “The protracted conflict in Afghanistan creates a real threat to the security of the southern CIS borders and directly affects Russia’s interests.” The war in Afghanistan, which has been going on for many years now, threatens the region with ethnic conflicts, drug trafficking, illegal trade in weapons, terrorism, and religious extremism which will spread further to Russia.

Central Asia has its share of the leading powers’ rivalry over the strategically important expanses: who gains control over Central Asia will control the Eurasian core and its resource, transport, and communication potential. So far, the rivalry is proceeding in the form of squeezing Russia, mainly through U.S. efforts, from a region which is vitally important to it.

Moscow, in turn, proceeds from the assumption that a wider American military presence in the region threatens Russia’s security; in the last few years the United States and its NATO allies have established control over Russia’s southern borders.

The indefinite terms on which NATO’s armed forces are stationed in Central Asia are one of the pertinent examples. It was expected that in 2005 the Alliance would either cut down its military presence in Central Asia or pull out of the region altogether. This did not happen.

Barack Obama built his election campaign partly on the promise to withdraw from Iraq in order to build up America’s presence in Afghanistan. The coalition needs the airbase in Kyrgyzstan and the

airports of Dushanbe and Almaty. In January 2009, during his one-day visit to Bishkek, General David Petraeus, Commander of U.S. CENTCOM, described the Manas base as an important logistical link in the northern chain of supplies and an "extension" of sorts of the Pakistani air route. It was agreed that the coalition would be able to move more cargos across Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. He added that the United States might send 30 thousand men to Afghanistan, not counting NATO's additional forces, and that the base in Kyrgyzstan would be needed even more than ever.¹

Today, these ambitious plans are endangered by the Kyrgyz government, which decided to close down the Manas airbase. President Bakiev said this much during his working visit to Moscow on 3-4 February, 2009. The denunciation act passed the parliament on 18 February, 2009; the next day it was enacted by the president's signature. Under the agreement of 14 December, 2001, each of the contracting parties had the right to unilaterally discontinue the agreement by warning the other six months in advance, which means that the coalition forces will be using the airbase until 19 August, 2009.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates does not despair; he deeply regrets the decision yet is looking forward to another possible and mutually advantageous decision between the United States and Kyrgyzstan. He probably means a different format with a different legal status and legal underpinnings.

Many hastened to celebrate the victory of Russian diplomacy, but the American military presence in the region has not been removed from the agenda. The Russian leaders know only too well that regional instability will spread to Russia, therefore, as the Foreign Policy Conception put it, it is necessary "to provide elimination of the existing and prevent the emergence of potential hotbeds of tension and conflicts in the regions adjacent to the Russian Federation."

Drugs and drug trafficking can be described as one of the gravest threats to Russia's security; the Central Asian countries have become one of the links in the drug chain. According to UNODC, Afghanistan has been increasing opium popper production for the third year running. In 2007, it produced 8,200 tons (an increase of 17 percent over 2006); in 2008, it gathered nearly 8,700 tons. Between 2001 and the present time, it increased the poppy cultivation areas more than 20-fold.

Experts believe that 65 percent of the total volume of drugs produced in Afghanistan (including 80 percent of Afghan heroin) is moved across Central Asia and Russia.

The mounting activities of Islamic terrorists in Central Asia are another threat to Russia's security. Their leaders made the 20-million-strong Muslim population of Russia their target; this is all the more dangerous because Central Asia borders on the predominantly Muslim regions of the Russian Federation.

The specifics of the Central Asian states' domestic policies might, at some point, trigger regional instability in several spheres, which cannot but affect Russia's security.

So far the region remains a minefield of ethnic and interstate conflicts with numerous unsettled border disputes. The deficit of land and water adds tension to the ethnic and border issues. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have the largest number of disputed border stretches in the Ferghana Valley.

Water and energy are another source of local tension; water in fact is developing into a major source of conflicts and regional threats.

It seems that a water-energy consortium might be the best answer, with extra-regional countries being invited to take part. Russia, which could help to diminish the contradictions among the local states, is directly involved in the problem. In the latter half of December 2008, during Prime Minister

¹ See: D. Petraeus, "Aviabaza 'Manas' v Kyrgyzstane igraet kliuchevuiu rol v dostavke soldat i oborudovania v Afghanistan," available at [www.24.kg].

of Kyrgyzstan I. Chudinov's visit to Moscow, it was agreed that Russia might allocate \$2 billion to complete the Kambaratinskaia-1 Hydropower Plant project. In January 2009, the prime ministers of Russia and Kyrgyzstan deemed it necessary to discuss the problem still further. This was one of the subjects discussed during President Bakiev's working visit to Moscow on 3-4 February, 2009. It was decided that Russia would allot \$1.7 billion to the hydropower project over the next 4 years; besides Russia announced that it was prepared to write off \$195 million of Kyrgyzstan's state debt in exchange for shares of the Dastan plant. At the same time, Moscow promised Bishkek a grant of \$300 million until April 2009. It was generally believed that Russia's generosity was repaid by the decision to close down the Manas airbase.

The fact that the local countries failed to settle their problems themselves and expected Russia's brokerage is very important. Their hopes are fed by the decision of the Bishkek EurAsEC meeting to create a joint anti-crisis plan and Russia's readiness to extend material aid to its neighbors.

The Afghan and local conflict potentials might merge into a force capable of overturning the Central Asian balance of forces and spread to the Caucasian instability belt. This will create many problems for Russia.

To sum up. The external threats and numerous domestic contradictions inside the Central Asian states and among them do not merely keep the region on the brink of instability but also threaten the Russian Federation. On the other hand, for their larger part the local countries look to Russia for support and brokerage. This means that both Russia and its Central Asian neighbors are equally interested in ensuring their security.

The United States-Central Asia

American strategy in Central Asia is part of its wider Eurasian strategy, which means that without complete control over the Central Asian states and their domestic and foreign policies Washington's Eurasian efforts would be deprived of any meaning. This means that it is seeking long-term control over the region's energy resources and a much wider military presence.

Central Asia is an important part of the United States' Greater Central Asia project expected to become, together with Afghanistan, a single military-strategic and geopolitical unit to be later merged with the Greater Middle East under Washington's control. If realized, the project will allow it to wrench the Central Asian countries away from Russia and create a cordon of sorts between them and China.

The United States pins its hopes of turning Central Asia into a zone of its strategic interests on the Caspian Guard program designed to establish its military and political control over the Caspian region. Washington seeks to undermine the positions of Moscow and Beijing, establish its control over the movement of Caspian energy resources to the world markets bypassing Russia, and achieve military and political domination in the region.

The United States and its NATO allies are seeking stronger geostrategic positions by expanding their political and military influence into the Caucasian countries. The Russian-Georgian war and recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia merely made the situation tenser still.

Some Russian experts are convinced that American interests in the region are very vague: it is still engaged in probing action, intelligence, and wound-licking after the first failures. On the other hand, America is obviously determined not to let Russia and China develop into monopolists. The

United States knows that it is not yet ready for the final move: monopoly is not a light burden. America would like to content itself with competition, something that China and Russia are not prepared to accept so far.²

Here is another opinion. O. Reut, for example, believes that Washington would like to create pro-American regimes in the region, contain Chinese and Russian influence, provoke a conflict between them, and exploit regional potential to launch a long-term dialog with the Islamic world.³

Central Asian experts are of the same opinion. Fatima Kukeeva, in particular, believes that America is seeking energy security, West-oriented regimes, stability, and regional potential that would enable it to talk to the Islamic world.⁴

Washington has armed itself with adequate instruments which invite different comments from different camps in the United States. Those who favor a liberal approach proceed from the assumption that democratic values are more important than national interests, which means that the United States should revise its approach to the Central Asian authoritarian regimes. The realists are convinced that the American administration should be guided by the country's national interests and nothing else.

These approaches are equally applied to the United States' long- and short-term interests in Central Asia.

In 1997, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott pointed out that democratic reforms were impossible in unstable regions and unstable countries. His doctrine described elements of democracy and the market economy incorporated into the political life and national economy of states as the main factors of regional stability.

The American administration is out to balance its geopolitical and economic interests in the region with the Central Asian nations' desire to achieve democracy. This is best illustrated by the programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State designed to support and finance the independent media, develop political parties and NGOs, promote the freedom of religion and encourage administrative, educational, and health reforms. Logic suggests that attempts to improve the authoritarian political regimes would follow.

On the whole, it should be said that while the U.S. did contribute to the process of democratization in the Central Asian states, its policy was not always consistent. Washington, which needs economic and military-political cooperation with the region's countries, prefers to keep the authoritarian regimes in power rather than push the nations toward democratic changes.

America still insists that it spares no effort to support the democratic processes in these countries but in actual fact it treats them according to their willingness to deploy American military bases and other facilities on their territories, which made the foreign policy of the George W. Bush Administration a blend of extreme liberal interventionism and realistic unilateralism.

The dual-standard policy does nothing to implant the idea that stability and security are products of democratic development, it leads instead to mounting anti-Americanism in Central Asia.

The attempts to bring together the liberal (Kirgizia) and realistic (Uzbekistan) approaches in America's Central Asian policy failed. The local states did not become America's important partners either in the war on terror or in the triumphal march of Western values.

Muratbek Imanaliev has pointed out that today the position of the new U.S. president is all important: he was elected under slogans of cardinal changes in all spheres, foreign policy being no exception. Judging by what Barack Obama said about America's policies in Afghanistan, Wash-

² See: N. Zlobin, "Interes k osvoeniiu aziatskikh territoriy u Soedinennykh Shtatov segodnia nizok," available at [centrasia.ru], 14 September, 2008.

³ See: O. Reut, "Interesy SShA—ot soprovozhdeniia k upravleniiu?" available at [centrasia.ru], 9 October, 2008.

⁴ See: F. Kukeeva, "Politika SShA v Tsentralnoi Azii: 'novyi realizm,'" Regnum Information Agency, 5 November, 2008.

ington will introduce no serious changes in its policies in the vast Islamic region stretching from Maghreb to the Jungar Gates: only one aspect of America's foreign policy strategy will change radically.⁵

The very first month of 2009 revealed that Afghanistan, and Central Asia as a whole, will move into the center of U.S. foreign policy. *The Sunday Times* of Britain informed its readers that President Obama had asked London to add 4 thousand men to its military contingent in Afghanistan; this information was supported by several other sources. The request came immediately after the statement of Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who said that the United States would shift its priorities from Iraq to Afghanistan. He described the new priorities as fighting drug trafficking and terror. This was why, said the defense secretary, the new president intends to concentrate on Afghanistan and address the problem on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border.

The fact that the Obama Administration selected Afghanistan as its top priority was confirmed by the recent appointment of Richard Holbrooke, the brains behind the Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the war in the Balkans and special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. The West treated this as a signal: he is expected to do the same in Central Asia.⁶

This means that Central Asia will remain in the focus of American attention: Washington has attached its foreign policy priorities to the region. Relations with Russia, containment of China, stabilization in Iraq and Afghanistan, a dialog with the Islamic world, and promotion of democracy cannot be achieved without Central Asia cooperation.⁷ The far from ordinary step that Bishkek took in February 2009 has warmed up America's interest in the region and in each of its countries.

The European Union-Central Asia

The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership (2007-2013) presented in Berlin on 22 June, 2007 opened the latest stage of cooperation. The EU is expected to extend financial assistance totaling about •750 million to pay for bilateral contacts in several spheres.

The 2007 strategy is a comprehensive framework document that outlines the spheres of possible practical cooperation based on universal values such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. The document presupposes that the EU will use both traditional (special representatives, grants, and cooperation with other international actors) and innovative (so-called EU initiatives in various spheres and the "profound dialog" format in human rights and energy) instruments.

The strategy officially accepts two levels of EU policy in Central Asia: bilateral and regional approaches, which suits the Central Asian countries. This policy makes it possible to take the unique nature of each of the countries into account and develop regional projects to promote their integration.

It presupposes much more emphasis on various spheres from democratization to environmental protection; the EU has assumed responsibility for developing, encouraging, and supporting specific proposals (a united energy system, in particular).

⁵ See: M. Imanaliev, "Kyrgyzstan-SshA: nuzhdaemsia li my drug v druze?" available at [www.bpc.kg], 20 January, 2009.

⁶ See: O. Allenova, "Na Afghanistan nastavili priority. SShA vybrali strategicheskoe napravlenie," available at [www.centrasia.org].

⁷ F. Kukeeva, op. cit.

On 23 June, 2008, the European Commission Council published a progress report of the EU Strategy for Central Asia that analyzed the achievements and pace of implementing the strategy as the key indicators of the relations between the EU and the regional countries.⁸

The document pointed out that the strategy was going ahead and that the political dialog and practical cooperation between the EU and Central Asia had intensified.

To keep up the pace and positive trends the European Union intended to do the following:

1. Establish a regular, result-oriented Human Rights Dialog with each of the Central Asian countries to support human rights and democracy and involve civil society, the parliaments, local administrations, and other participants in monitoring the strategy's progress;
2. Start a European Education Initiative and support Central Asian countries in developing an "e-silk-highway."
3. Start an EU Rule of Law Initiative to establish close cooperation on key legislative and judicial issues.
4. Maintain a dynamic political process in the environmental and water resources sphere designed to create an integrated system of management of these resources.
5. Become more actively involved in coordinating anti-drug efforts as well as in keeping drug trafficking in check and establishing tighter border control to be able to successfully address the common problems.

It is most important to maintain the effective political impulse and pace of practical work achieved in the previous year.⁹

Today, Europe is mostly interested in free access to the region's hydrocarbon resources, an interest exacerbated by the gas crisis of January 2009 which added weight to the Nabucco gas pipeline project expected to bring Central Asian, Turkish, Azeri, and probably Iranian gas to Europe. The project figured prominently at the international conference held on 27 January, 2009 in Budapest, which failed to reach a corresponding agreement. This means that the EU will become even more interested in Central Asia.¹⁰

Conclusion

The Central Asian states treat economic cooperation with their foreign partners as their key priority, which suggests that the present situation is highly favorable for all of them. The global war on terror increased the region's value for the external actors, which resulted in greater financial and military aid. The pressure on the authoritarian regimes was eased by the greater urgency of the energy issue and the need to oppose religious extremism. The common interests and more or less moderate rivalry among America, Russia, and the European Union offer the Central Asian countries many more possibilities than before.

However, they should be soberly assessed because the continued contradictions among the local countries might lead them toward greater tension and unpredictable results. The external actors are not alien to exploiting the contradictions in their interests.

⁸ See: "Evrokommisiia opublikovala otchet o progresse Strategii ES po Tsentralnoi Azii," available at [www.centrasia.org].

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ "Nabucco' ostaetsia mechtoi. Konkretnykh dogovorennoستي uchastnikam Budapeshtskogo sammita dostich ne udalos," available at [www.centrasia.org].

CENTRAL ASIA: A REGION OF ECONOMIC RIVALRY AMONG RUSSIA, CHINA, THE U.S., AND THE EU

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Introduction

Over the past 15 years, since about 1993, Central Asia has been a primary topic in foreign political analytical publications. There were times in these years when publications on the Central Asian problems appeared more frequently, in 1993-1997, as America's search for new opportunities invigorated its interest in the region, and in 2005-2008, when the rise in world prices for raw materials generated greater interest among foreign states in these resources.

There were times when less was written about the prospects of foreign nations cooperating with the Central Asian states. As a rule, this happened when the world economic and political situation pushed other priorities to the forefront, for example, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Latin American countries.

A look at the domestic and foreign literature on Central Asia reveals two main themes. First, experts have been concentrating their attention on regional security problems and the regional influence of the rivalry among the foreign players—Russia, China, the U.S., and the Europeans in the form of the EU and NATO.¹

¹ See: R. Menon, "The New Great Game in Central Asia," *Survival*, January 2003, Vol. 45, Issue 2; L.C. Harris, "Xijiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World," *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 2, 1993; S.F. Starr, "A Partnership for Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2005; R. Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, Issue 2, 2004; M.M. Narinskiy, A.V. Malgin, *Iuzhniy flang SNG. Tsentral'naia Azia-Kasp'ii-Kavkaz: vozmozhnosti i vyzovy dlia Rossii*, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (university) of the Russian Foreign

Another topic that constantly attracts the attention of specialists in geopolitics and energy is control over the production and especially the transportation of the Caspian's energy resources. Many articles and specialized works have been written on this topic in which the authors mainly analyze the ways foreign players can create and control new routes for exporting energy resources to the world markets, as well as the political, economic, and geopolitical consequences of specific projects. A significant part of the analysis is focused on the rivalry among the main players (Russia, the U.S., the EU, and the PRC).²

Ministry, Logos, Moscow, 2003; D.B. Malysheva, "Tsentral'naia Azia i Yuzhnyi Kavkaz: Regional'naia bezopasnost' v epokhu novogo miroporiadka," in: *Rossiiia i musul'manskiy mir*, RAS Scientific Research Institute of Social Sciences, RAS Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow, 2002.

² See: A. Cohen, "U.S. Interests and Central Asia Energy Security," Backgrounder 1984, Heritage Foundation, November 2006; J.P. Dorian, "Central Asia: A Major Emerging Energy Player in the 21st Century," *International Energy Economist*, December 2005; S.J. Blank, "Eurasian Energy Triangle: China, Russia, and the Central Asian States," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 2005; M. Karayianni, "Russia's Foreign Policy for Central Asia Passes through Energy Agreements," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (22), 2003; I. Tomberg, "Central Asia and the Caspian: A New Stage in the Great Energy Game," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 59 (41), 2006; I.D. Zviagelskaia, "Faktory nestabil'nosti na postsovet'skom prostranstve (Tsentral'naia Azia i Kavkaz)," in: *Energeticheskie izmereniia mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii i bezopasnosti v*

Without denying the primary importance of international and energy security in Central Asia, both for the countries of the region itself and for Russia, it should be noted that the main foreign players have broader economic interests in this part of the world. These interests pale in comparison to main elements of their regional policies, but they do exist, and in the long run could be just as important as the security and energy spheres. This aspect of the policy of the foreign powers in the region has been studied in less detail,³ but also deserves attention.

This article is an attempt to analyze the economic interests of the Russian Federation, the PRC, the U.S., and the EU in Central Asia. Today, when the geopolitical struggle in the region is in the doldrums, an attempt should be made to analyze the economic interests of the foreign nations concentrated here and determine the extent to which they contradict or complement each other.

Vostochnoy Azii, edited and supervised by A.V. Torkunova, MGIMO; Navona, Moscow, 2007.

³ See: L.Z. Zevin, N.A. Ushakova, "Rossiiia i Tsentral'naia Azia: problemy i perspektivy ekonomicheskikh otnoshenii," in: *Vostok. Afro-aziatskie obshchestva: istoriia i sovremenost'*, RAS Institute of Oriental Studies, No. 2, 2005; Iu.I. Iudanov, "Tsentral'naia Azia—novyy favorit inostrannykh investorov," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 3, 2000; *Trudovye resursy i trudovoi potentsial*, Institute of Eurasian Studies, Moscow, 2006.

The Current Political-Economic Situation in Central Asia

The economic policy of the main foreign players in Central Asia goes hand in hand with the political-economic conditions that exist in the regional countries. On the whole, it can be said that political risks in most states of the region (with the exception possibly of Kazakhstan) are quite high, which puts a damper on the activity of foreign business there.

First of all, the presence of two inert conflicts in the region (Uzbekistan-Tajikistan and Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan) is arousing particular concern. The opposition between these countries has reached the brink of a full-scale war on several occasions.

The situation in the region has also been aggravated by the presence of two countries that essentially fall into the category of "failed states"—Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. They are rapidly deteriorat-

ing, their governments do not have full control over their national territory, and they cannot provide the population with the minimum acceptable standard of living and development.

The relations between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are causing concern and there is still tension on the Uzbek-Kazakh border. It is not difficult to see that Uzbekistan is in the epicenter of most of the regional problems. It is still the focus of internal social and confessional contradictions, without the prospect of rapid resolution. Agrarian overpopulation (in the Ferghana Valley there is 10 sq. m. of land per person), the extremely difficult socioeconomic status of the population, and the high level of unemployment are making the situation extremely tense.

The traditional perception of Central Asia's political-economic problems through the prism of the water-and-energy crisis is somewhat modified today. The lessons of the 2007-2008 winter, when Tajikistan's energy complex was in a state of complete collapse, showed that the mountain dwellers no longer hold their traditional monopoly on water and electricity. At the same time, the investment plans in Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's energy complex have yet to be realized. Neither the region nor the foreign players have the necessary financial resources, and the technology and "schools" necessary for creating powerful hydropower facilities in mountain areas have been lost. The political instability, corruption of the government, and ambiguous situation with respect to the protection of investor rights are interfering with the implementation of projects.

Afghan drug trafficking has a particularly detrimental impact on the political situation in Tajikistan. We will note that drug production in Afghanistan has risen ten-fold since 2002. Almost all of Afghan drug trafficking goes north, to Russia. Its human infrastructure is comprised of almost 400,000 Afghans living in the south of Tajikistan.

Dushanbe perceives Uzbekistan, which has a very combat-ready army, as an adversary. The borders between the countries are mined, which arouses mutual mistrust even more. Tajikistan also feels ethnic pressure from the Uzbeks in the form of the Uzbek diaspora, which is influential in its northern part. Tajikistan is essentially experiencing a revival of the old, even medieval, traditions of opposition—a civilizational split, one of oldest in Central Asia—between Iran and the Uzbeks.

Kyrgyzstan is moving slowly but surely toward the brink of collapse. Kazakhstan, which just recently was considered the main buyer of Kyrgyz production assets, is withdrawing its capital from the country, which shows that political-economic situation there is limping. The south of Kyrgyzstan has gradually become a base for the Uzbek Islamist underground. There are Islamist camps and training centers there that are readying fighters for waging a civil war in Uzbekistan. Most (more than 60%) of the population in the south of Kyrgyzstan consists of Uzbeks and their numbers are rapidly growing. The Kyrgyz are gradually being pushed toward the north, to Bishkek.

The situation developing in Kazakhstan is arousing concern. In September-November 2007, the country experienced a domestic default, which entirely erased the long propaganda campaign conducted by competent Kazakh structures throughout the world. A close look at the economic and political situation in Kazakhstan makes it possible to diagnose a severe domestic crisis there.

The ruling circles of the Central Asian countries are at once united and separated by common political-economic trends and factors. On the one hand, the desire to create a new network of transit routes for exporting energy resources unites Ashgabad and Tashkent with Astana, while it is just through Kazakhstan that the region can organize the sale of its gas to the East. On the other hand, political fears about China clearly prevail over the desire to expand mutually advantageous economic cooperation with it. The growing instability in the region is also arousing concern in China, which is trying to isolate Xinjiang from Afghanistan and the destabilizing factors coming from the Ferghana Valley.

The impending change of power in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Nursultan Nazarbaev and Islam Karimov have each been in power for a couple of decades) could launch a regional crisis. An

intricate knot of contradictions has formed in the region that affects not only Russia, but other CIS countries, too.

Due to its geographic location, the Russian Federation is directly affected by the impending crisis. It is neither physically nor technically possible to fully control the six-thousand-kilometer Russian-Kazakh border. It will be difficult for Moscow to keep the situation under control single-handedly without the participation of the Europeans and Americans, but practice has shown that Europe is interested exclusively in gaining access to Central Asia's resources, and the U.S. is worried about the Chinese factor and the war in Afghanistan.

The role of the CSTO in the impending destabilization is largely unclear since this military-political bloc keeps afloat on the voluntary consent of its member states. NATO, as the Afghani experience has shown, has proven a rather incompetent structure in this region. Moreover, the North Atlantic Alliance is categorically refusing to establish contacts with its natural ally in this part of Eurasia—the CSTO. NATO may very well withdraw from Afghanistan, which will complicate the situation in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan even more.

The Region's Economy

Central Asia is considered one of the new and rapidly growing markets of Eurasia, which naturally makes it attractive for investments from the RF, EU, PRC, and U.S. The neighboring states have their own economic interests in the region, some of which are claiming the role of regional nations—Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. The interest in Central Asia is generated by its energy and transit potential, as well as by its mineral supplies.

Investments in producing and delivering energy resources to the foreign markets form the bulk of the investments in the region's economy, but they are not enough to develop Kazakhstan's and Turkmenistan's fuel and energy complexes.

The production and export of cotton are Uzbekistan's and Tajikistan's main industrial assets, but the development of cotton-growing is hindered by state control and problems with water supply. However, Central Asian cotton is in demand on the world markets.

The region is one of the world leaders in uranium supplies. The production of aluminum (Tajikistan) is also of interest. But the underdeveloped transportation infrastructure, corruption, tax and tariff policy of the regional states, tension on their borders, and the national specifics of conducting business are hindering Central Asia's full-fledged integration into the world market.

Central Asia has sufficiently high supplies of energy resources. In particular, Kazakhstan has the largest proven oil supplies in the region—9-29 billion barrels, and also has between 20 and 25 tcm of natural gas, according to different estimates. Kazakhstan's oil export amounts to approximately 1.3-1.5 million barrels a day, which is a significant resource. According to the latest data, Turkmenistan has more than 37.5 tcm of gas, which is equivalent to Russia's proven supplies.⁴

Uzbekistan has lower supplies of hydrocarbons than Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, but this does not stop it from exporting its gas to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Until recently Russia was able to retain control over the export of energy resources from the region. Central Asian gas is delivered to the Russian and European markets via the Central Asia-Center gas pipeline system that existed back in Soviet times.

Gazprom entered a 20-year contract on the bulk of Turkmenistan's gas. Nevertheless, in December 1997, President Niyazov opened a small gas pipeline to Iran (Korpeje-Kurdkui), which made

⁴ [<http://www.grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.142749.html>].

it possible for the country to export between 5 and 8 bcm of gas a year bypassing Russia. In 2008, Ashgabad, Tashkent, and Astana came to an agreement with the PRC on building a gas pipeline to China (30 bñm a year). It is to be put into operation in 2010.

Gazprom's price policy also changed with respect to Central Asian gas suppliers. Beginning in 2009, the price of gas will come as close as possible to the market level, which should reduce Kazakhstan's and Turkmenistan's need to build a trans-Caspian gas pipeline. Back in the fall of 2007 the Kazakh leadership suggested that the two countries unite or coordinate their financial claims with respect to Russia in terms of gas sale conditions and begin consultations to build a Trans-Caspian pipeline.⁵

The oil produced in the region is delivered to the foreign markets via the Russian oil pipeline system. Russian shareholders have the control set of shares in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which has been delivering oil from Kazakhstan to the port of Novorossiisk via the new oil pipeline since 2001. But in October 2005, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan reached an agreement on deliveries of some of Kazakhstan's oil via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, and it was only the August Russian-Georgian war that somewhat cooled Astana's interest in this oil export route.

The first Kazakh export oil pipeline that does not cross Russia was put into operation at the end of 2005, linking Atyrau on the Caspian coast of Kazakhstan with the province of Xinyang in China. Its capacity will be raised to 45 million tons of oil a year.

At present it can be claimed that the main vectors of energy resource export (primarily natural gas) from Central Asia have been fully formed. They are:

- the Caspian, designed for transit through Russia;
- the trans-Caspian, designed for joining up with Nabucco;
- the Eastern, oriented toward the Chinese market.

Table 1

**Development of the Central Asian Gas Transportation
Network until 2012**

Gas pipeline	Capacity (bcm, million tons)	Entry into operation
Caspian gas pipeline	20.0-30.0	2010
Trans-Caspian gas pipeline	10.0-20.0	2011-2012
Nabucco	25.0-31.0	2012
Kazakhstan (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)-China	40.0	2010

Russia's Economic Interests

In recent years, Russia's economic position in Central Asia has perceptibly strengthened, but it has not become dominating. It managed to build up its presence here for a while by relying on the

⁵ See: "Kazakhstan predlagaet Turkmenii vmeste opredeliat' "vygodnuiu" tsenu na gaz," available at [http://www.afn.by/news/default.asp?pg=2&newsid=90381#data].

“Andijan syndrome” in the leadership of the region’s countries. But, as in the 1990s, the integration processes called upon to unite the Russian and Central Asian economies are still in a state of stagnation and the new initiatives in the EurAsEC and SCO did nothing to help their development.

Russia’s main efforts in Central Asia are aimed at preserving the economic and political status quo, strengthening the isolation of the region’s markets from the world market and fortifying its own positions as a geopolitical intermediary in the regional countries’ interaction with external actors. By keeping the clamps on its economic expansion, Russia risks losing in the impending struggle for the redivision of the spheres of influence in the region.

While criticizing Russia for the “sluggishness” of its capital in Central Asia and for its lack of desire to invest in significant joint projects and programs on which the sociopolitical and strategic stability in the region depends, the critically low level of protection of Russia’s investments in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan must also be recognized. However, if Russia chooses not to participate in the resolution of water-and-energy and transport-communication problems or in the resolution or other economic tasks in the region, this may have a negative effect in the future on ensuring its national security from the south.

Due to the specifics that have developed over the centuries of economic relations between Russia and Central Asia, the countries of the region still count on Russian economic aid. There is a popular opinion that Russia’s financial and technological support should be unconditional, aimed at reducing the socioeconomic tension in the region that is leading to an increase in extremist sentiments.⁶

The Russian Federation is continuing its attempts to retain its monopoly on the delivery of Central Asian hydrocarbons to the world markets. After coming to terms in June 2007 with the presidents of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on building the Caspian gas pipeline, in September 2008, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin reached an agreement with the Uzbek leadership on building a gas pipeline in Uzbekistan parallel to the Sredniaia Aziia-Tsentr-1 and Sredniaia Aziia-Tsentr-2 routes. The new pipeline will deliver gas from Turkmenistan through Kazakhstan to Central Russia.

Russia is not only interested in the region’s hydrocarbons. After the collapse of the Soviet Union it was left without any large uranium fields, while its nuclear industry had no raw material. At present, the Russian Federation has only one industrial mine in the Chita Region which produces 2,000 tons of uranium a year, whereas the demand reaches 4,000 tons.⁷ Russia has no alternative but to resolve this problem by means of uranium production in Uzbekistan, which has significant supplies of this resource (25% of the world reserves).⁸ But it is already encountering serious competition for the right to develop Uzbek uranium fields from Japanese and South Korean companies.

The main interest of Russian capital is still concentrated in the energy sphere. In particular, after many years of talks, in January 2008 Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon, Deputy Chairman of the Russian government Sergey Naryshkin, and Chairman of the Board of UES Russia Anatoli Chubais solemnly launched the first hydro unit of Sangtuda GES-1 on the River Vakhsh, which marked Russia’s gradual return to resolving Central Asia’s hydropower problems.⁹

Russia’s assistance in launching the first units of the Sangtuda GES (a EurAsEC profile project) prompted a meeting on the water-and-energy problem, which was held on 10-11 October in Bishkek at the CIS-EurAsEC summit. Russia was conducive in beginning active talks among the regional

⁶ See: G. Maikova, “Tsentral’naia Azia – paradoksy rossiiskoi politiki, amerikanskii innovatsii i blizhaishie perspektivy regiona,” available at [<http://centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1172572320>].

⁷ See: A. Vaganov, “Uranovaia treshchina. Rossii skoro budet ne boytis’ bez Uzbekistana,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 12 July, 2006.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ See: “Zapushchen pervyy gidroagregat ‘Sangtudinskoi GES-1,’” 21 January, 2008, *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, available at [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2008-01-21/7_tadgikistan.html].

countries on the regulations for a dialog in the water-and-energy sphere. In so doing, it had to act as a mediator in settling the contradictions between Tashkent and Bishkek. Moscow promised to facilitate financial issues with respect to deliveries of Uzbek gas to Kyrgyzstan. With its help, "Tashkent and Dushanbe also reached an agreement on the important issue of water use in the trans-border river Syr Darya."¹⁰ But on the whole, neither within the framework of the EurAsEC nor in the context of the Central Asian integration initiatives has any real progress been achieved in resolving the water-and-energy problem. The Sangtuda GES is not the main link in the strategy to provide Central Asia's agrarian sector with water and energy. The regional states do not have the resources to implement other projects. Only Russian specialists and energy companies have the knowledge and experience to resolve this problem in the region. Their participation in dealing with the water-and-energy problem must be coordinated at the political level.

Russian business does not have enough political support: Russian corporations are being drawn into economic projects in the region which European or American investors have refused to participate in for one reason or another. In particular, steady bargaining has been going on for quite a while now regarding the participation of Russian business in the Stroitrangaz project (Uzbekistan)—a complex for producing liquefied gas at the Mubarek gas refinery, the construction expenses on which look artificially high. The Uzbek side is taking advantage of LUKoil's interest in producing gas in Uzbekistan to draw it into participating in this project. At the same time, as the Russian press notes, "the Uzbek authorities are refraining from offering Russian companies most favored nation treatment in trade."¹¹ Russian business also has difficulties in the markets of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

The interests of Russian industry continue to rally around the production assets inherited from the Soviet Union. In particular, in 2008, an agreement was reached for the Tashkent Aviation Production Association to join the United Aviation Construction Corporation.¹²

Russia is also interested in Central Asia with respect to setting up labor-intensive production units and importing workers.

China's Economic Interests

At present, the PRC is the second largest energy consumer in the world after the U.S.¹³ China has been unable to meet its needs using its own resources since 1994, and by 2015 it will import 50% of the energy it consumes.¹⁴ For this reason, China's primary economic interests in Central Asia focus on the import of hydrocarbons and several Chinese economic projects in the region, for example, the Atasu-Alashankou Kazakh-Chinese pipeline, are designed to resolve the problem of supplying China's internal market with energy.

China's second economic interest in the region is to turn it into a sales market for Chinese goods, particularly those produced in its western, relatively undeveloped, and impoverished region.¹⁵ As of

¹⁰ A. Dubnov, "Bishkekskie sensatsii SNG," *Vremia novostei*, 13 October, 2008.

¹¹ P. Sidibe, "Shampanskoe s gazom," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*. Federal issue, No. 4742, 3 September, 2008.

¹² RIA "Novosti," available at [<http://www.afn.by/news/default.asp?newsid=95329#data>].

¹³ See: H.J. Kenny, "China and the Competition for Oil and Gas in Asia," *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2004, pp. 36-47.

¹⁴ See: B. Gill, M. Oresman, "China's New Journey to The West: China's Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests," *CSIS Reports*, 2005, p. 21.

¹⁵ See: N. Swanström, "Chinese Business Interests in Central Asia: A Quest for Dominance," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, Central Asia — Caucasus Institute, 18 June, 2003, available at [www.cacianalyst.org].

today, China's trade turnover with the Central Asian countries comprises a small part of its foreign trade, but it is growing and includes not only raw material, but also products from the machine-building, electronics, and high-tech industries. Chinese investments in Central Asia (with the exception of the energy sphere) are relatively small and concentrated in the textile, mining, and food industry. They are hindered by local corruption and the backwardness of the regional transportation network. China is gradually resolving several of these problems by linking its railroad network with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. It is trying to influence the authorities of the regional states at the political level in order to create a safer and more attractive climate for its investments.

China's long-term economic goal in the region is to turn it into a free market—a source of raw material for the Chinese economy and a sales market for Chinese goods. China's economic interests are clashing in this area with the corresponding interests of Russia and the EU. The former is cautious about the idea of a free market in the region, while the latter, like China, is interested in gaining access to the energy resources of Central Asia and the Caspian.

Development of the pipeline network connecting Central Asia with the western regions of China is transferring the rivalry between the PRC and EU to the sphere of geopolitical competition. Keeping in mind that more attractive prices have traditionally developed in the European energy resource market than in China's developing market, the hydrocarbon exporter countries have a choice. But China, which is less hampered by political problems when creating energy communications, clearly has an advantage over the EU. The first Turkmen gas will reach the PRC as early as 2010.

The EU's Economic Interests

The main economic interests of the EU countries in Central Asia are focused on gaining access to hydrocarbon fields that do not involve Russia, which meets the aim to diversify the sources of energy reaching the European Union. This strategy is built on the fact that Central Asian hydrocarbons are the last closest to the European Union and as yet not fully tapped energy resource.

The EU is keeping in mind Russia's desire to retain control over Central Asia's energy but is hoping that it will be able to counterbalance Moscow's political pressure. The Central Asian states are very satisfied with the current situation and are not shying away from the political and economic possibilities they are offered by playing on two fronts—the Russian and the European. In addition to diversifying energy resource export routes, the new transport routes are offering the regional states ways to activate their political ambitions.¹⁶

The Nabucco gas pipeline is the main project of united Europe called upon to ensure its sustainable access to the gas fields of Central Asia. In September 2007, France¹⁷ joined the project in the form of the Gaz de France state company. The conception of the gas pipeline, which was originally supposed to reach the eastern border of Turkey, has repeatedly changed. The orientation toward Iranian gas evidently did not justify itself, and now Nabucco's future is tied to Central Asian gas. In this respect, the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline is turning into a mandatory and inalienable component of Nabucco. But the August Russian-Georgian war has made the participation of Georgia, an important transit partner in the future energy network, dubious. It is possible that over time, a southern pipeline from Iraq and the Persian Gulf countries, as well as possibly from Iran in the event of political changes, will be joined up to the Nabucco gas pipeline.

¹⁶ [<http://centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1169588400>].

¹⁷ [<http://www.polit.ru/news/2007/09/14/gaz.popup.html>].

The EU is continuing to work with Astana regarding the building of a Trans-Caspian oil pipeline (at present Kazakhstan is shipping oil to Baku in tankers). This oil pipeline should become a component of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan route, which will largely resolve the problem of loading the terminal in the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

The countries of Central Europe, primarily Poland which in cooperation with Ukraine is trying to create new oil delivery routes from Kazakhstan circumventing Russia, are playing a special role in the attempts to tie Central Asian energy resources to the European markets. Poland has its alternatives for transporting Kazakh oil, which differ somewhat from the general EU and U.S. strategy. The Kazakh oil coming to Baku must be intercepted and re-channeled at the port of Supsa on Georgia's Black Sea coast to Odessa. If Kazakh oil reaches the Odessa terminals, Poland is ready to receive it via the Polish section (Plotsk-Gdansk) of the Ukrainian Odessa-Brody oil pipeline that is planned to be completed by 2011.

In 2008, the Russian leadership was able to torpedo the proposals of Polish President Lech Kaczyński, who arrived in Astana on an official visit. Moscow was able to make serious concessions to Kazakhstan. It promised to increase the volume of oil deliveries through Russian territory in the next five years, sign an agreement on building an atomic power station in Kazakhstan, increase investments in Kazakhstan's economy, and so on. President Nursultan Nazarbaev's statement on Kazakhstan's willingness to participate in Kaczyński's project providing Russia joined it was the political solution to the problem of the appearance of the new "Polish" energy corridor.¹⁸

However, the Polish project has certain prospects keeping in mind that by 2015 Kazakhstan plans to double its oil production (from 63 million to 130 million tons a year). The thing is that it is extremely difficult to increase the capacity of the CTC, and not only for technical reasons: shipping Kazakh oil from the terminal in Novorossiisk increases the load on the Bosphorus and Dardanelle straits.

We will emphasize that the European Union's economic interests in Central Asia are rallied exclusively around ensuring the EU's energy security and expanding the transport infrastructure. The participation of European business circles in other investment activity in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan is restricted.

The U.S.'s Economic Interests

The U.S. has a systemic approach to defining its economic interests in Central Asia, tying them to European regional strategy and its economic goals in specific countries of the region. The U.S.'s policy is aimed at bringing the region closer to the world markets, which includes activating international economic relations between the regional states and Europe. The U.S.'s strategic goal consists in weakening the position of OPEC in the world energy markets, which should be promoted by additional independent supply of Central Asian energy resources in the world market.

By assisting Central Asia to expand its transport infrastructure, the U.S. is solving both economic and military-strategic tasks. The building of transport routes between Tajikistan and Afghanistan meets these tasks.

Different government and nongovernmental foundations are actively studying the region, training personnel, acting as advisors, and providing various consulting services to support American and European business in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. At present, the U.S. only has bilateral investment agreements with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁸ [<http://21.by/u.php?u=http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.html?docId=755102>].

Large investments by American corporations in the region's economy are concentrated mainly in the Kazakh fuel and energy complex where American capital features in all the projects in small amounts. American investors are not showing any activity in other spheres of the economy. Washington does not want to be drawn into the region's difficult and financially expensive problems, primarily water-and-energy, preferring to observe the efforts of the leadership of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia from the sidelines.

On the whole, the U.S. is acting as the main center for lobbying the idea of creating new energy routes that circumvent Russia. It is also actively creating different projects and schemes to create routes for delivering Central Asian energy resources to the world markets that do not pass through Russia. At the same time, the U.S. is trying to keep the regional countries from transiting energy resources through Iran. The United States is advancing the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline project, which is an alternative to the Russian Caspian route. For example, in September 2007, representative of the U.S. State Department D. Sullivan succeeded in preventing the presidents of Russia, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan from meeting in Ashghabad to discuss building a Caspian gas pipeline.¹⁹

The Iranian problem is having a serious impact on the U.S.'s economic and political strategy in the region largely by restricting Washington's possibilities in Turkmenistan and particularly in Tajikistan where the U.S.'s interests are concentrated on rendering assistance in conducting U.S. and NATO troop operations in Afghanistan.²⁰

It seems that Russia could take advantage of the U.S.'s investment passivity in Central Asia to fortify its position in the economy of the regional countries.

Conclusion

As this analysis shows, the interests of the foreign powers in the Central Asian region essentially do not contradict each other beyond the framework of narrow energy issues. And in the energy sphere an unusual balance has formed: as of today, all the main players have ensured themselves a certain share in the region's energy sector and none of them has been able to acquire a monopoly position. The situation could dramatically change only if Iran's international status changes. If Iran comes out of international isolation, the Central Asian states could acquire an alternative route to the world energy markets, which will greatly weaken the position of Russia, the EU, and the U.S. China will retain and strengthen its position in any event. In the other spheres of the economy, Russia and China have an advantageous position for promoting their economic interests in the region. They are upholding different strategies, whereby in the current political circumstances in Central Asia (type of political regime), Russia's strategy is sufficiently efficient although not sufficiently flexible. The Russian Federation should regard the region as a multi-profile resource; now is the time for it to build up its economic presence.

¹⁹ See: V. Panfilova, S. Gamova, S. Mamedov, "Ashkhabad igraet na gazovykh trubakh," *Nezavisimaja gazeta*, 4 September, 2007, available at [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2007-09-04/1_ashhabad.html].

²⁰ See: V. Panfilova, Ramsfeld poprosil podderzhku u Dushanbe, available at [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2006-07-12/6_dushanbe.html].

RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA TODAY

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Russia's policy in Central Asia has arrived at a new stage in its development. This is confirmed both by the transformation of the situation in the region and by the changes in Russia's international position.

At the previous stage in its Central Asian policy, Moscow was busy trying to implement the so-called Putin Doctrine. This basically consisted of attempts to integrate the post-Soviet expanse (encompassing as much territory as possible) by primarily economic means. However, political means were also implied along with the economic levers. This policy was manifested in the various integration formations that sprang up in the CIS, such as the EurAsEC-Customs Union, the SES, the CSTO, and the Belarus-Russia Union State, as well as the multitude of bilateral and multilateral agreements with Russia's participation in economic trade cooperation, the energy industry, and transportation and communications.

This approach was most intensively implemented between 2003 and 2006, when Moscow was able to greatly fortify its position in Central Asia, enter long-term contracts in the production and transportation of energy resources, take partial or complete control over the strategic branches of several regional countries, and achieve advantageous conditions for building pipelines. In addition, the economic penetration of Russian companies into the region was accompanied by intensification of military-technical and military-strategic cooperation between the Russian Federation

and the regional states, the setting up of Russian military bases, and the ousting of rivals (with the exception of China).

However, after 2006 Russia's international position began to change, which could not help but have an effect on its Central Asian policy. Another spiral of the confrontation with the West began, pulling Moscow along with it and turning the region into an area where their interests clash.

There can be no doubt that the Color Revolutions in the post-Soviet expanse were one of the main reasons for the crisis in Russian-Western relations. And Central Asia was no exception—Russia (along with Kazakhstan) did not permit escalation of this kind of revolution in Kyrgyzstan and also supported Uzbekistan in its determination not to allow a full-fledged civil war in the country as a result of the rebellion in Andijan, which was inspired from the outside.

In 2007-2008, NATO's enlargement and the U.S.'s deployment of ABM systems in Eastern Europe posed a direct threat to Russia's national security. The relations between the Kremlin and the White House became aggravated during the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008. In this difficult situation, Moscow was counting on political support from its CSTO and SCO allies. The Kremlin made its military choice (as the U.S. did earlier) in favor of unilateral acts—it carried out unilateral operations in the CIS without taking into account the opinion of its allies in the integration unions. Moscow retained this approach in

its policy and it was to have quite a significant impact on security in the Central Asian countries (including negative).¹

At present and in the near future, the world financial and economic crisis, deterioration of the economic situation, and drop in Russia's economic growth rates will have the greatest influence on Russia's policy on the international arena as a whole and in Central Asia in particular. Nor can we exclude the fact that it will encounter extreme economic difficulties in the near future due to the incomplete structural reforms and modernization process.

This cannot help but have an effect on Russia's activity in Central Asia. It is very likely that Russian policy will become even tougher: it will need more new raw material sources in order to retain its position as the largest exporter of energy resources to Europe and competition among Russia, the West, and possibly China will intensify for control over raw material sources and major pipelines.

In addition, the nature of economic trade relations and development dynamics of the labor market both in Russia and in the Central Asian countries will change. It is also possible that the Russian government will begin to curtail integration measures and the movement of goods and the workforce in order to protect its own internal market. At the same time, there will most likely be attempts to expand its own market further to encompass the Central Asian markets.

In 2008, significant changes occurred in the mechanisms for forming Russia's domestic and foreign policy. Vladimir Putin's semi-autocratic (that is, essentially one-man) rule was replaced by so-called tandem democracy, that is, the Putin-Medvedev political tandem and the various groups of the Russian establishment that stand behind it. This factor could also have a certain influence on the formation of Russia's Central Asian policy.

¹ See: V. Amirnov, "Novaia Rossiia na mirovoi arene: modernizatsiia kursa," in: *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 12, 2008, pp. 113-116; A. Lukin, "Vneshniaia politika: ot postsovetskoi k rossiiskoi. Uroki konflikta s Gruziei," in: *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, No. 6, Vol. 6, 2008, pp. 78-90.

In July 2008, President Dmitry Medvedev approved the draft of a new conception of Russia's foreign policy. This completed the almost two years of work on a document that was called upon to formulate the foreign policy ideology of contemporary Russia.

Russia's armed action in support of South Ossetia in August 2008 undermined the model of Russia's relations with the West that had formed in the 1990s and created a new situation. Moscow refused to follow the game rules offered by the West and resolved to oppose it in practice in certain areas affecting Russia's vital interests, whereby a serious confrontation would do nothing to stop it.

Russian strategists are making no bones about the fact that the new course is aimed at restoring Russia's foreign policy appeal, something which is called "soft power." For Russia, the transition to a new foreign policy presumes carrying out the following measures: forming its own basic national interests; understanding which of them also correlate with the interests of the other players in world politics; making areas where these interests coincide the vectors of its foreign policy appeal; persuading its main partners, by means of cooperation in these vectors, to make concessions in those areas where their interests do not coincide with Russia's.

An important place in Russia's foreign policy is occupied by participation in the activity of international organizations. In this respect, Russian political circles have recently been discussing the expediency of Moscow participating further in the OSCE. The activity of this organization affects the security and political position of the Central Asian states to one extent or another. Moscow thinks the OSCE should be reformed, as a result of which its main structures, which act autonomously on the basis of their own mandates (the ODIHR, Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the field missions, which are quite independent in their work), would be placed under the strict control of the Organization's Permanent Council in Vienna. Decisions are made in it on the basis of consensus and all the partner states have the right of veto.

This innovation would mean that the main decisions, which are made independently today by the Organization's individual institutions, would require unanimous approval. In addition, Russia is insisting on increasing the Permanent Council's political supervision and control over the activity of the missions. Moscow is also proposing giving the OSCE the status of a legal entity, adopting the organization's Charter, and unifying the standard procedures for managing its operations and institutions.

That is, Moscow is essentially suggesting that the OSCE's autonomous institutions be clamped in the iron grips of political consensus, which makes its competence dependent on how successful the political bargaining is between Russia and its partners in the Organization. This reform is designed to stop enlargement of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures in the post-Soviet expanse and hinder transfer to the region of political mechanisms launched in the West (i.e., the Color Revolutions).

Russia's Strategic Interests and Their Influence on Central Asia

The new conception of Russia's foreign policy notes that Russia will work toward further realization of the CIS's potential as a regional organization, a forum for a multilateral political dialogue, and a mechanism of multilateral cooperation with the focus on the economy, humanitarian cooperation, and fighting traditional and new challenges and threats. It will also work actively within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) with Belarus and Kazakhstan to create a Customs Union and Single Economic Space; assist in involving other EurAsEC member states in this work; and take measures to further strengthen the EurAsEC as the nucleus of economic integration and a mechanism for carrying out large hydropower, infrastructure, industrial, and other joint projects. Its approaches to developing comprehensive interaction in the Black Sea and Caspian regions will be built along the same lines—on the basis of preserving the individuality of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and strengthening the cooperative mechanisms of the Caspian states.

But there is a noticeable difference in terms of goals, tasks, and ways to achieve them between the Russian Federation's official conception and its actual strategy for realizing its national interests.

Moscow believes that the main threat to security in most of the CIS countries, particularly in Central Asia, is terrorism related to Islamic radicalism and drug trafficking. If Russia becomes a world leader in fighting these phenomena, this would significantly raise its appeal in this part of the world. In addition to force, Moscow is offered using economic levers as well. Russia's friendly neighbors should enjoy a real economic return. The matter does not concern subsidies, but mutually advantageous economic factors: preferential access to markets, priority granting of contracts, and so on.

At the current stage, Moscow is proceeding from the fact that there is a systemic crisis in the CIS and in most of the integration structures in the post-Soviet expanse as a whole. On the other hand, it is obvious to Russia that the West, and such regional actors as the PRC, IRI, and Turkey, do not welcome the CIS as an entity of international relations. So preserving the Commonwealth is a strategically important task for Russia.

Moscow understands that the quality of the national ruling elites is extremely important for the future of the CIS. This means that in many countries of the Commonwealth it is largely corporative

and clan interests that are practiced under the semblance of national ideas. Understanding this affects Russian policy with respect to particular member states of this organization.

Russia has come to the conclusion that its CIS partners should reject the multi-vector principle. Russian strategists were brought to this conclusion by the events in the Caucasus in August 2008. According to the Kremlin, during the first days of the conflict, the post-Soviet leaders essentially adopted a stance of non-interference, which was replaced by verbal balancing acts with formal curtsies to Russia. Moscow mainly found fault with the fact that its closest allies did not want to reject the multi-vector principle and support Russia's actions. It voiced its main complaints against Bishkek and Minsk, and to a lesser extent against Astana.²

Moscow is proceeding in its evaluation of the prospects for conducting a multi-vector policy from the fact that playing on the contradictions of the big players is only beneficial if all of the participants follow the general rules. Any aggravation will inevitably lead to chaos and to the refusal to follow clear cooperation principles, which is having a negative effect on the position of Astana, Baku, and Tashkent.

Georgia's withdrawal from the CIS could force Russia to consolidate its ranks and enter more binding cooperation agreements within such organizations as the CSTO and EurAsEC. Georgia's withdrawal meant that there are now fewer countries whose aims are "proportionally opposite" to Moscow's interests. Consequently, there is a greater chance for the CIS to turn into a pragmatic and efficient structure.

So Moscow is still not able to offer a coherent development strategy for the post-Soviet space. Instead it is setting up a space in which its partners have a certain amount of room to move back and forth, but which also has boundaries, the overstepping of which is fraught with conflict (primarily in energy and security).

Russia's Interests and Policy in Central Asia

For most of the Central Asian countries Russia remains a key extra-regional partner capable of at least partly satisfying their military-political, economic, social, and cultural-educational requirements. All the Central Asian countries have historically close and multilateral ties with Russia. In turn, the Central Asian region occupies an extremely important place in Russia's foreign policy strategy. It represents an extensive territory that borders on Russia from the south, countries that are traditional economic trade partners for Russia, rich in natural resources, and that export most of the raw hydrocarbons they produce through Russian territory, and states, most of the population of which, comprises Russian-speaking citizens.³

Russia's strategic interests in Central Asia should include the following:

- preserving security and stability in the region; whereby Russia is the country that should guarantee stability;

² See: A. Orlov, "Ekho Tskhinvala," *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, No. 10, 2008, pp. 18-25; E. Piadysheva, "Piat dnei, kotorye izmenili mir," *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, No. 11, 2008, pp. 20-32; V. Sizov, "Piatidnevka protivostoianii," *Mezhdunarodnye protsessy*, No. 2, 2008, pp. 116-122; K. Syroezhkin, "Gruzino-osetinskiy konflikt i ego vliianie na bezopasnost v Kaspiisko-Tsentrarnoaziatskom regione," in: *Kaspiiskiy dialog-3*, papers of the international conference, IMEP, Almaty, 2008, pp. 38-44.

³ See: R.A. Gumerov, "Geoekonomicheskie interesy Rossii v Tsentralnoi Azii," *Rossia i sovremenniy mir* (INION, Moscow), No. 4, 2008, pp. 194-201.

- creating a collective security system (under the aegis or with the active participation of the Russian Federation);
- operating and preserving the transportation communication infrastructure, particularly in the energy sector; retaining Russia's control (or at least its role of active participant) over the energy resource transportation routes;
- supporting the Russian culture and the Russian language, as well as the Russian-speaking population.

On the whole, essentially all the vectors of Russian foreign policy affect the interests of the Central Asian countries to one degree or another. They include security issues, economic development, political cooperation, energy, transport and communications, humanitarian and cultural cooperation, the environment, water resources management, and migration.

The latter is acquiring great significance for Russia precisely in the context of its relations with Central Asia. The problem has become extremely serious. Approximately 10 million illegal migrants work in Russia every year, whereby 1/3 (approximately 3.5 million) live in Moscow. Only 145,000 of the 500,000 guest workers who arrived legally in 2007 were registered at their jobs. Today Moscow has entered agreements with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on the organized hiring of foreign workforce.

As of the end of 2007, money transfers from Russia to other CIS states amounted to more than 5 billion dollars. The income of Tajik migrants is equal to two of Tajikistan's national budgets. According to the Russian Federal Migration Service, migrants manage to export more than 10 billion dollars from Russia every year bypassing customs control. The economic damage inflicted by illegal workers from unpaid taxes amounts to more than 8 billion dollars a year. The money transfers are mainly sent to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Until recently, the Russian Federal Migration Service gathered up labor migrants, including through community and diaspora structures, primarily Central Asian and Caucasian, which gradually replaced the state in the formation and implementation of immigration policy. So the problem of transfers in Russia's relations with the former Soviet republics is just as urgent as that of the European states with the developing world. In this respect, the migration factor is acquiring strategic importance for Russia and its Central Asian partners. Russia is encountering the need to draw up an efficient, well-thought-out, and effective migration policy as part of its interaction with the Central Asian states.

According to Russian experts, in the context of the activity of NATO, the EU, and the OSCE, the Russian Federation should also take into account the practical actions of all these three international structures when drawing up its strategy in Central Asia, as well as of the large countries in this strategically important region, and allot adequate funds and highly qualified personnel for its own undertakings in the region.

Russia's Interests in Kazakhstan

Russia's interests regarding Kazakhstan are long-term and stable. They were formed as early as the 1990s and have not undergone any major changes. Nevertheless, during the transformation of international relations and the geopolitical situation in Central Asia, as well as due to the change in Russia's and Kazakhstan's position on the international arena, these interests could fluctuate.

From the perspective of the development of Kazakhstan's oil industry and its interrelations with Russia, Moscow notes that Kazakhstan's oil sector is still not performing the role of the driving force

behind the country's economy, despite the increase in black gold production volumes. Eighty percent of the oil-production equipment market is represented by the goods of foreign producers, and attempts to change this situation are not yielding the desired results. So it is hoped that contacts will be intensified with Russia's oil corporations for outsourcing.

However, the innovation (by the Russian authorities) of giving the Russian (Russian-speaking) population in several areas of Kazakhstan a so-called Russian ticket can arouse concern. This document, conceived to encourage promulgation of the Russian language and culture in the Near Abroad (initially aimed mainly at Ukraine), could turn into a kind of substitution for dual citizenship, since it grants its holders broad rights comparable to those of a permanent resident or even Russian citizen.

At present, Russia is interested in the following:

- keeping Kazakhstan as its closest partner and ally in Central Asia and the post-Soviet expanse;
- carrying out large-scale integration projects with Kazakhstan;
- maximum integration of the Russian and Kazakh economies;
- creating an energy pool with Astana: joint production and transportation of hydrocarbons, development of nuclear energy;
- creating a food cartel with Astana (primarily in grain production);
- limiting Kazakhstan's possibility of carrying out an independent, multi-vector policy in areas that are of vital importance to Moscow (energy and transportation);
- limiting cooperation between Kazakhstan and the West;
- monitoring Kazakhstan's relations with China;
- creating jointly with RK a monetary, customs, and commerce union.

Russia's long-term goals regarding Kazakhstan include the following: ensuring the fullest possible integration between the two states, which presumes re-integration of their national economic complexes, creating a single defense expanse, and introducing a single currency.

Russia's Interests in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan does not occupy a particularly high place among the Central Asian states in Russia's foreign policy strategy. But it cannot be said that Bishkek is on the periphery of Moscow's interests. Security issues are particularly important in Russia's interests. It is interested in a stable situation in Kyrgyzstan for preserving stability in the region's heartland. Kyrgyzstan's geographical proximity to China and China's interest in having transport corridors through Kyrgyzstan are also important factors, as well as the presence of the American military base in Manas. All of this raises Kyrgyzstan's importance in Russia's Central Asian strategy.

Today Kyrgyzstan's energy sector (along with other branches) is attracting Russian investors. The country's hydropower complex is of interest to Russia. Russia's participation in developing Kyrgyzstan's energy resources is helping to settle the regional water-and-energy problems and accelerate the republic's economic development. But there are problems here that are difficult to resolve. One of these is completion of the Kambarata-2 hydropower plant; the Kyrgyz government and RAO UES Russia have signed several agreements on this account, but have still not begun implementing the project.

Gazprom is reviewing the possibility of participating in this work, as well as in reconstructing and creating new Kyrgyz gas transportation capacities under a long-term agreement on cooperation in the oil and gas sphere. This also envisages joint restoration of compressor stations in the Mailu-Suu underground gas reservoir and deliveries of equipment for Kyrgyzstan's gas complex.

Today Russia's interests in Kyrgyzstan are focused on the following:

- keeping Kyrgyzstan in the zone of Russia's cultural and information influence;
- supporting Kyrgyzstan's democratic institutions in counterbalance and as an alternative to developing the clan-nepotic system, as well as an obstacle to radical Islamism;
- not permitting the country's destabilization and collapse;
- supporting Kazakhstan's efforts to draw Kyrgyzstan into regional integration projects, but with Russia's active participation;
- establishing the control of Russian business over Kyrgyzstan's production branches, primarily, uranium;
- resolving the water-and-energy problems among Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan with the participation of Moscow as a mediator and guarantor;
- preventing the development of military-technical cooperation between Bishkek and Beijing;
- developing Russian-American cooperation in the strategic sphere in Kyrgyzstan, or if this does not work, curtailing America's military presence in the country.⁴

Russia's Interests in Tajikistan

Tajikistan has specific relations with Russia. For many years, this republic was de facto under Russia's protection, since the latter ensured its military security and domestic stability and was responsible for its economic and political development. The situation began to change after 2001 when Dushanbe began pursuing a more independent foreign policy, established cooperation with the West, and allowed its territory to be used for the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. In addition, between 2003 and 2006, Tajikistan successfully resisted Russia's attempts to take control over the strategic facilities and most important sectors of its economy located on its territory.

Russian direct investments in Tajikistan top 0.5 billion dollars, which is more than half of all the foreign investments in the country. In the next few years, Russian investment capital could increase to 2.5-3 billion dollars. Around 100 joint Russian-Tajik enterprises operate in the republic.

But despite the mutual interest of the two countries in developing energy partnership, there are several problems hindering this. The main internal problem is evidently related to the Tajik leadership's misunderstanding of market mechanisms of cooperation with Russia's economic entities, which is particularly evident with respect to construction of the Rogun hydropower plant. External problems are mainly situational in nature. They are related to the competition of other countries in the Tajik market.

Russia's participation in developing Tajikistan's energy resources is enhancing the republic's sociopolitical stability and its economic development. Russia is interested in Tajikistan's hydropower

⁴ See: A. Jekshenkulov, "Rossiia-Kyrgyzstan: etapy razvitiia mezghosudarstvennykh otnoshenii i ikh perspektivy," in: *Tsentrlnaia Aziia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentralnoaziatskoi tochki zreniia*, F. Ebert Fund, Berlin, 2008, pp. 277-293.

complex, on the efficient operation of which stability in the region largely depends. Moscow's interests in energy cooperation with Dushanbe are determined, first, by the sharp rise in energy resource prices, which makes hydropower projects attractive; and second, by Russia's desire to fortify its geopolitical position in the Central Asian countries. Dushanbe's reciprocal interest in cooperation with Moscow is associated with the favorable prospects for increasing electric power export to Russia, which presumes the modernization of power transmission lines, including construction of the South-North line.

At present, Russia's interests in Tajikistan are focused on the following:

- retaining Tajikistan as an important outpost between Central Asia and Afghanistan;
- retaining Russia's control over the republic's border and strategic facilities;
- interacting in military, law-enforcement, and anti-drug spheres;
- enforcing Tajikistan's role as a source of cheap labor for the Russian economy;
- establishing Russia's control over the republic's energy sector, investment in and raising of Tajikistan's water-and-energy potential as a basis for expanding Russia's industrial groups;
- limiting China's penetration into the Tajik economy, as well as the influence of Iran, the West, and India.⁵

Russia's Interests in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is not a very easy partner for Moscow. For a long time Tashkent either sabotaged or avoided participation in integration projects. Only after relations with the West became aggravated in 2004-2005 did its policy take on a more or less pro-Russian bent. Tashkent joined the SCO and EurAsEC and returned to the CSTO. But in 2008 Uzbekistan made another sharp turn and began withdrawing from Russia's integration field.

So Uzbekistan is Moscow's most problematical partner in Central Asia. On the one hand, this state retains its significance due to its size, strategic position, and so on, while on the other, Tashkent is objectively a potential counterbalance to Russia's influence in the region.

There are plans to orient the investments of Russian companies toward significantly increasing the export of Uzbek gas. Gazprom and LUKoil will invest in the survey, production, and transportation of Uzbek energy resources. The main problem is exhaustion of the current fields, due to which production and the loading of refining capacities is decreasing (the Ferghana and Bukhara refineries). Natural gas fields are also gradually reaching the limits of their productivity. According to the forecast, at the current production level, the proven reserves of this raw material will last in Uzbekistan for approximately 33 years, and of oil for eleven years.

The Russian side has recently been showing an interest in the ore-mining, primarily the gold-producing, industry of Uzbekistan (where American and transnational companies used to dominate). In turn, the Russian industrial trade holding, Alfa-Eko, which belongs to Alfa Group Consortium, stated its intention to become the co-owner of the Almalyk Mining and Metallurgical Combine (AMMC). The offer of the Russian investor is still being reviewed.

Moscow's main strategic goals with respect to Uzbekistan include the following:

⁵ See: V. Dubovitskiy, "Tadzhiksko-rossiiskie otnosheniia: istoriia, nyneshnee sostoianie, perspektivy," in: *Tsentralnaia Aziia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentralnoaziatskoi tochki zreniia*, pp. 390-415.

- preventing Uzbekistan from returning to the West's sphere of influence in the format that existed in 2001-2005;
- supporting Tashkent's efforts to retain social stability in the republic, preventing destabilization of the situation or an increase in the influence of radical Islamism and international terrorism;
- retaining Uzbekistan's dependence on military-technical cooperation with Russia; supporting the current format of military-operative cooperation; assisting Uzbekistan in the Afghan vector;
- retaining Uzbekistan's technological dependence on Russia, preserving Russia's influence in the main branches of Uzbek industry;
- fortifying the position of Gazprom and other energy companies in Uzbekistan's fuel and energy and gas pipeline sector;
- helping Russian companies to participate in the privatization and modernization of the Uzbek mining complex;
- restoring relations between Uzbekistan's cotton-growing sector and the Russian textile industry;
- carrying out a balanced migration policy;
- preserving Russia's influence at the regional level (Karakalpakstan, large metropolises).⁶

Russia's Interests in Turkmenistan

For a long time Russia's relations with Turkmenistan were limited and mainly associated with the gas sphere. Moscow deliberately closed its eyes to Ashghabad's cooperation with the Taliban, its de facto open border with Afghanistan, and persecution by the Turkmenbashi regime of the republic's Russian-speaking population. In exchange for Russia's decision not to apply political pressure, President Niyazov granted Gazprom a privileged position in the export of Turkmen gas to the external markets.

After G. Berdymukhammedov came to power, these relations did not undergo any major changes, although Ashghabad was able to ensure itself more advantageous conditions and prices on the gas it produced than before. Ashghabad, along with Kazakhstan, supported the Russian Caspian pipeline project, but evidently did not adopt a final decision on this. In addition to gas, Turkmenistan is important to Moscow with respect to resolving the Caspian problem.

So Russia does not have many strategic interests regarding Turkmenistan, whereby they boil down to the following:

- retaining Russia's decisive role in the transportation of Turkmen hydrocarbons to the external markets;
- imposing a collective (Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan) position on Ashghabad with respect to delimitation of the Caspian Sea;

⁶ See: R. Saifulin, "Uzbekistan-Rossia: sostoianie i perspektivy razvitiia otnosheniy v postsovetitskiy period," in: *Tsentrlnaia Aziia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentralnoaziatskoi tochki zreniia*, pp. 519-546.

- pushing Turkmenistan cautiously toward greater integration into the CIS structures;
- ensuring the investment and technological participation of Russian business in the survey and development of new oil and gas fields.

Russian Strategy on the Caspian Issue

The Caspian is one of the important factors determining Russia's policy in Central Asia. However the importance of this factor goes beyond the framework of Russian-Central Asian relations and affects a wider range of international relations.

Right up until the mid-1990s, Russia insisted only on further improvement and development of the provisions enforced in the 1921 and 1940 treaties. But over time it became clear that this position would not suit any of the partners in the talks. In the end, the arguments of the Kazakh side were considered entirely convincing and Moscow joined Astana's side.

Since 1997, Kazakhstan and Russia have been acting as a united front with respect to the main problems. First, the surface and water column should be in general use (exceptions are the littoral zone of the corresponding states), which, if the sides agree, would ensure preservation and reproduction of the Caspian's fish resources (primarily sturgeon). Second, division of the seabed into national sectors should be carried out down a median line that is equidistance from the opposite shores, and not in equal proportions as Iran has been insisting and continues to insist on. Russia acquired its share of the Caspian Sea, which was divided with its immediate neighbors according to the principle it has upheld since the second half of the 1990s: "dividing up the seabed along sectoral lines, while the water column is commonly shared."

The Russian-Kazakh-Azeri agreements were extremely important in terms of regional security. They essentially prevented any destructive interference from extra-regional nations. The main stumbling block to drawing up a universal approach to resolving the Caspian problem was the irreconcilable position of Iran, which stubbornly insisted on dividing the sea into five equal parts.

At the 2007 summit in Teheran, serious contradictions were designated regarding military activity in the Caspian. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan were in favor of demilitarization. Neither Moscow nor Teheran found this proposal acceptable. By the same token, the principle of dividing up the Caspian seabed into equal national sections was only supported by Iran, as already mentioned, the other sides, including Russia, were against this approach. At the same time, both Moscow and Teheran acted as a united front as opponents to demilitarization, that is, equalizing the navies of all the Caspian states, which Kazakhstan is insisting on with the support of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

The Russian side suggests defining a 15-mile national jurisdiction zone for each state. Within its limits, the corresponding country may carry out border, customs, sanitary, and other types of control and have exclusive fishing rights (but Kazakhstan is upholding a different scheme).

Russian policy in the Caspian may be built in keeping with the following scheme. If Iran backs down from its demand that the sea be divided into equal parts, Kazakhstan, which is most interested in Iran doing this, might withdraw its proposals regarding demilitarization and join Moscow and Teheran in establishing freer shipping and fishing regulations. Acting according to the "exchange" scheme and making concessions to Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan (for example, in redistributing fishing quotas), Moscow might achieve their consent in mutually acceptable solutions to other problems.

Russia, which is the main supplier of raw hydrocarbons among the post-Soviet states, to the export markets, would like to retain and fortify its position in this respect. Moscow is sticking to its guns in its conviction that projects for laying pipelines along the bed of the Caspian must be approved by all five states. Backing down from this position would help Russia to resolve other problems which are extremely important to its interests. It is obvious that Moscow wants to occupy a monopoly position in forming trans-Caspian transportation corridors. It is precisely this, and not environmental risks (which actually exist), that explains Russia's proposal voiced by Vladimir Putin in Teheran that pipeline projects on the bed of the Caspian be coordinated with all five Caspian states. If this proposal were adopted, any country not interested in implementing such a project would have the right to block it (essentially the right to veto).

In the current conditions, the Kremlin's refusal to introduce articles that envisage the need to coordinate trans-Caspian pipeline projects with all five participants into the convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea essentially could not change anything.

In so doing, Russia is in favor of strengthening security through the efforts of the Caspian states themselves and not permitting military interference by extra-regional states in the region's affairs. This also explains Moscow's and Teheran's extremely negative attitude toward Astana's proposals to demilitarize the Caspian. It seems that questions regarding the laying of pipelines along the seabed with mandatory approval of all the littoral states and the Caspian's demilitarization are inseparable. Russia's and Iran's consent to resolve the first in favor of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan could be equal to the latter's rejection of the idea of demilitarization.⁷

Russia and Security Problems in Central Asia

There are no longer any doubts that the CSTO members, including the Central Asian states, will be affected by the growing tension between Russia and the West, both in the economic and in the military-political respect. It is obvious that Moscow will do everything possible in the growing military confrontation with NATO to consolidate the CSTO member states.

Russia will also continue to promote the CSTO's consolidation as a military-political alliance, strengthen the Organization's peacekeeping potential, improve military-technical cooperation among the member states, and enhance coordination of their actions on the international arena. Further improvement of the CSTO's international prestige and development of its contacts with other similar regional organizations, including the SCO, are urgent tasks. Intensifying coordination between the CSTO and EurAsEC is acquiring increasing practical significance.⁸

According to Russian politicians (Nikolai Bordiuzha), the Afghan knot has been posing the greatest and most realistic danger for the CSTO. The activity of other international organizations, projected onto the CSTO's zone of action, cannot help but have an effect on the military-political situation in the post-Soviet expanse. The military activity of the U.S. and NATO is primarily being stepped up on the external borders of all of the CSTO's collective security regions, while the U.S. and

⁷ See: K. Landa, "Sovremennaiia geopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Kaspiiskom regione," *Rossiia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 1, 2009, pp. 62-73; M. Shaikhutdinov, "Kaspiy v sisteme sovremennykh geopoliticheskikh koordinat: voprosy bezopasnosti i sotrudnichestva," in: *Kaspiiskiy dialog-3*, papers of the international conference, pp. 11-16.

⁸ Z.A. Dadabaeva, "Rossiia i problemy bezopasnosti v Tsentralnoi Azii," *Rossiia i sovremennii mir*, No. 4, 2008, pp. 183-193.

NATO are restoring or creating anew the military infrastructure in Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus, and Central Asia.

The CSTO leadership is becoming increasingly concerned about other, including hidden, methods of external pressure bordering on interference in the internal affairs of its member states. Well-coordinated acts and campaigns designed to apply political, economic, and information pressure from the outside are being organized and carried out.

Russian specialists believe that the CSTO participants should adapt the Organization to the changing geopolitical situation and adopt practical measures to create a comprehensive system of auxiliary structures and corresponding collective forces and means, including multilateral mechanisms for coordinating antiterrorist and anti-drug activity, as well as for jointly opposing illegal migration.

Moscow sees another new area in the fight against international terrorism to be forming CSTO collective regional antiterrorist rapid response forces for counteracting any terrorist and extremist manifestations. Efforts are being made in the military sphere to form a Joint (Coalition) Force Group in the Central Asian region.

Russia's primary interests in Kazakhstan consist of the following: maintaining close bilateral military cooperation at the strategic level (keeping in mind possible threats from the south and east); ensuring joint operation and maintenance of the proper readiness of the space-launch complex, testing grounds, and strategic bases; and retaining Kazakhstan in the air defense collective force system.

The threats to Kazakhstan's and Russia's security from Central Asia can be assumed to be largely identical, and the mutual interests of the two states in fighting terrorism and extremism will be the same. On the whole, in recent years, military cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia has been one of the most successful vectors in the regional security system that has been taking shape.

But there are objective difficulties. For example, at the moment Astana and Moscow still prefer departments engaged in traditional aspects of security and are not encouraging de-centralization of the struggle against cross-border threats. Many regions (primarily border) of both countries have neither the means nor the authority to repel non-traditional threats—international terrorism, drug trafficking, cross-border crime and smuggling, and illegal migration.

In 2006, Tashkent essentially completed its foreign policy turn toward Moscow. Uzbekistan joined the EurAsEC (which is in essence the pro-Russian nucleus of the CIS) and also returned to the CSTO. These events were evaluated as breakthroughs, as the opening up of new possibilities for reintegrating the post-Soviet states.

Relations between Uzbekistan and the post-Soviet countries are developing along the trajectory created after 2004, which made a turn toward Russia. Two factors predominate in Russian-Uzbek relations: military and energy. Russia's decision adopted at the last CSTO summit to sell arms and special technology to its closest partners at internal prices in fact means that the Russian military-industrial complex is taking responsibility for further equipping the Uzbek army and special services.

Uzbekistan is still in the difficult situation it found itself in after the crisis in its relations with the West, although the pressure on Tashkent has been gradually easing off. There are signals that the sides are ready to partially restore the former level of partnership. But (apart from the factor of Islam Karimov's personality) there are obligations Tashkent has assumed to Moscow and Beijing.

So there has been a rapid transformation in the past few years: Uzbekistan has acquired an influential defender on the international arena in the form of Russia, while Russia, by means of its assistance, confirmed its status as a regional power in Central Asia. In so doing, Uzbekistan successfully blended in with the implementation of Vladimir Putin's strategy.

It is obvious that participation in the CSTO is burdensome for Uzbekistan. Tashkent may support Russia regarding withdrawal of the American base at Manas from Kyrgyzstan. In turn, if the tension between Russia and the European NATO members escalates, closing the Alliance's base in Uzbekistan may also come up for discussion.

Uzbekistan's armed forces are also in need of re-equipping. Armored vehicles, aircraft, and air defense assets require modernization. Although Uzbekistan already occupies first place among the Central Asian countries in purchases of Russian arms (totaling several tens of millions of dollars), this amount should rise manifold in the near future.

Since 2000, Uzbekistan has been stocking up to 250,000 tons of cotton fiber every year (approximately one quarter of the total cotton produced in the country) to offer in exchange for military-technical hardware from Russia. The transit of Turkmen gas through Uzbek territory is also being carried out in exchange for arms deliveries.

For several years the sides have been drawing up a joint helicopter program. According to the U.N., in 2005, Russia delivered 10 unnamed missiles to Uzbekistan. Small batches of spare parts for airplanes and armored vehicles and artillery ammunition are bought regularly. Today the main orders are for small arms and ammunition, special equipment for the National Security Service and Interior Ministry, police munitions and means of control over public gatherings: tear gas and truncheons. In 2007, Uzbekistan spent approximately 1 billion dollars on military needs.

Kyrgyzstan is a member of essentially every integration union that encompasses Central Asia—the CSTO, EurAsEC, CAEC, and SCO. In recent years, official Bishkek, which has declared strategic cooperation and partnership with Russia, China, and the U.S. to be its priorities, has concentrated its main efforts in foreign policy activity on strengthening relations with its SCO and CSTO partners. The contradictions between the financial interest related to the presence of the American military contingent in Kyrgyzstan, on the one hand, and its discontent with Washington's increased "export of democracy" and support of the opposition, on the other, have had a significant effect on its relations with the United States, its third strategic partner.

At the present stage, Bishkek is transferring from a multi-vector policy to domination of primarily one vector, the northern. Despite the insistent efforts made by the republic's leadership to draw closer to Russia, Kyrgyz-Russian relations have not been given an active boost. The syndrome of Bishkek failing to fulfill its promises, particularly the Astana SCO statement (July 2005) on deployment of U.S. army contingents at the Manas air base, has had a negative impact on them.

Kyrgyzstan is one of Russia's important partners in the CSTO. A Russian air base is located at the Kant airport, the task of which is to support the actions of the Collective Rapid Response Forces military contingents from the air.

Despite its underdeveloped war-racked economy, weak production forces, and unfavorable geographical location, Tajikistan is participating in most of the integration projects—the CSTO, EurAsEC, CAEC, and SCO. In recent years it has begun actively establishing contacts with new foreign policy partners (along with further strengthening its relations with Russia).

Tajikistan's armed forces are the weakest in Central Asia. The country has no money for military purchases and no defense industry. In this situation, military-technical cooperation with Russia is acquiring great importance for Dushanbe.

Tajikistan does not occupy the last place in Russia's military plans: the Russian-owned Nurek optical electronic unit of the space control system is located in the republic.

In this context, Russia is willing to undertake unprecedented acts: in 2008, military hardware and weaponry belonging to Russia's 201st base were transferred to the Tajik authorities. The list of Russian weapons transferred has not yet been published, but military analysts estimate it at approximately 1 billion dollars, which is equal to almost half of Tajikistan's GDP. Keeping in mind the in-

tense refurbishing of the 201st base, Tajikistan could catch up with its neighbors in terms of combat potential of the military contingents located on its territory.

In addition to this, an apparatus of the Principal Military Advisor has been formed under the Tajik Ministry of Defense on the basis of Russian-Tajik intergovernmental agreements. Russian advisors, as well as graduates from Russian military academies (as many as 300 students from Tajikistan study in Russia every year), are shaping the image of the Tajik armed forces. Russia is carrying out repair, delivery of spare parts, modernization of weaponry, and training of future officers almost free of charge. The greatest expenses are related to repair and modernization of Tajikistan's air defense.

There is also the SCO factor. The zones of responsibility of the SCO and CSTO significantly intercept both functionally and geographically. Of the seven countries that belong to the CSTO, five are represented in the SCO, and of the six SCO member countries, five belong to the CSTO. This does nothing to alleviate the relations among them. Rather it can be said that the two structures are becoming increasingly drawn into tacit and dangerous competition.

Such rivalry is not advantageous primarily to the CSTO. There can be almost no doubt that the SCO is able to resolve many security issues more efficiently, particularly from among the so-called new threats. Whereby the CSTO is reduced to an element in the common air defense system, training military personnel, and delivering Russian weapons to member states. It could essentially turn into a military organization with a very limited zone of responsibility.

It is no secret that the relations between the CSTO and SCO are very dicey. For several years now there has been tension between the secretariats of these organizations. In their Memorandum, the CSTO and SCO (October 2007) agreed to hold consultations and exchange information, invite each other to their corresponding functions, and draw up joint programs and measures. Whereby these forms of cooperation essentially apply to all spheres of the organizations' activity.

Some of the countries that are members of both organizations want a certain amount of rivalry between them. They want to counterbalance Russia's influence in the CSTO against its participation in the SCO, while others want to level out China's influence in the SCO by means of its participation in the CSTO. Russia is interested in the CSTO dominating in Central Asia's security sphere, where it, in contrast to the SCO, occupies a leading position.

All the same, the SCO is one of the most important areas in Russia's foreign policy. It is essentially one of the levers for raising Moscow's role and geopolitical influence on the world arena. At the same time, the SCO is very regional in nature and is focused on Central Asia. But due to the Chinese factor, the SCO could turn into a problem, provoke an increase in Russian-Chinese contradictions, and become a challenge to Russia's strategy in Central Asia.

On the whole, the Russian-Chinese contradictions in the SCO, and with respect to Central Asia, boil down to the following:

- differences in vision of the SCO's future;
- Russia's fear of the PRC's economic domination in Central Asia and Beijing's dissatisfaction with Moscow's political domination;
- differences of opinion regarding the creation of a free trade zone;
- competition over energy resources and control over their transportation;
- reducing the CSTO's and correspondingly Russia's influence by increasing the SCO's and China's influence;
- China's attempts to establish its military presence in the region under the cover of the SCO;

- Russia's fear of finding itself in the role of China's junior partner;
- rivalry between Russia and China for influence on Kazakhstan as the backbone in the region;
- differences among Russia, China, and the Central Asian countries in their positions on accepting new members into the organization.

So in the mid term it is possible that Russia's policy in the SCO will be determined by its fear of losing Central Asia to China.

Conclusion

As noted above, Russia is actively restructuring its former and possibly creating a new strategy in Central Asia. The goals of this strategy are to retain Russia's influence and protect its interests in this region. Full integration of the region's countries is being transferred to the mid or even long term. At present, Moscow is mainly concerned with preventing its geopolitical rivals from fortifying their positions in the region.

Russia's Central Asian policy touches on many aspects. To one extent or another they affect all the vectors of Moscow's foreign policy. This emphasizes Central Asia's strategic importance for Russia. At the same time, Russia itself is encountering significant difficulties, which, in one way or another, are reflecting on its Central Asian policy.⁹

For example, Russia is experiencing a demographic slump, while ranking second in the world in terms of inflow of immigrants after the U.S. Since 2006, the Kremlin has ranked the demographic problem first and been developing a state policy aimed at stimulating the birth rate and attracting people from the Near Abroad. As a country blessed with natural riches and experiencing a demographic problem, Russia is becoming a target of strong pressure from the outside. So as its role in world geopolitics grows, it will have to strengthen the security of its own borders.

Russia considers energy resources to be its main trump card in the next two decades, and since the geopolitical mentality of the Russian elite is based on ensuring a balance of forces, the idea of redistributing world resources in the name of global management and resolving the world's problems is entirely alien to Moscow.

The Kremlin's international policy will naturally be determined by the distribution of forces in the security sphere. The size of its territory presumes that Russia will be present on several regional stages in Europe and Asia at the same time, and it cannot change this no matter how much it would like. This also means that it has to be diplomatically active on the world (by means of international institutions and primarily taking advantage of its status as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council), regional (by means of such forums as the SCO), and bilateral level (where the balance of forces plays a key role, particularly in the post-Soviet expanse and in relations with European countries).

Consequently, under Dmitry Medvedev, there are clearly no signs of there being any cutback in foreign policy activity. In reverence to Putin's inheritance, he will use every opportunity to exert influence in different regions. Moscow has not actually managed to carry out regional integration. It is presumed that the Kremlin's foreign policy under Dmitry Medvedev (or Putin-Medvedev) will be of a more pronounced pragmatic nature.

⁹ See: T. Gomar, "Rossiia odna navsegda? Strategicheskoe partnerstvo Kremliia," in: *Pervyi Forum po problemam bezopasnosti i sotrudnichestva v Tsentralnoaziatsko-Kaspiiskom regione*, IMEP, Almaty, 2008, pp. 47-58.

The power structures, most of the population, and the political leadership of Russia believe the country's great power status to be a fundamental element of its self-determination. As people believe in the West, Moscow is continuing to pursue a foreign policy primarily based on the great power idea: "either Russia is a great power or it is absolutely nothing."

In so doing, Moscow's foreign policy is increasingly aimed at restoring Russia as a world class power. Its foreign policy is being drawn up keeping in mind the multipolar world order. But Russia is encountering an obvious paradox: geopolitical ubiquity as a result of returning to active international policy and economic revival is going hand in hand with strategic isolation.

We should be under no illusion that Russia ultimately sees completion of the integration processes as the post-Soviet republics rallying once more around itself and falling under its irrefutable leadership. It is possible that this is Moscow's main motive in its desire to support and preserve the CIS in its current comatose state.

It appears that Russia's foreign policy in the post-Soviet expanse as a complete doctrinal strategy since 2000 is now in the final phase of its development. There are primarily objective reasons for this, but from the formal viewpoint completion of the next phase is related to the change of Vladimir Putin's status in 2008 as the main creator and ideologue of restoring Russia's great power position in the CIS.

Russia's pursuance of its set goals is accompanied by many contradictions. It wants to use its economic might and economic development to fortify its position in the world, but the absence of restructuring and investments has led to its economy depending on hydrocarbons and other raw materials.

It is presumed that when implementing its strategy in Central Asia Russia will combine the multilateral with the bilateral approach. That is, it will give preference to a particular method depending on the degree of benefit and interest in achieving the set goals and depending on the situation.

Sooner or later Russia will recognize the need for building a rational system of water use in Central Asia and will push the region's republics toward unifying the water-and-energy exchange mechanism. In turn, the growing agrarian and industrial needs, as well as the demographic, environmental, and climatic problems, will force the Central Asian states to cooperate with Russia in the joint exploitation of Siberia's hydro resources.

Proceeding from its international obligations and its own security interests, Russia will increase its control over the export of arms and technology, in so doing continuing to cooperate with its partners and allies in the CSTO. But in critical situations, as the experience of 2008 shows, it will act independently, relying on its own resources.

The mounting world financial and economic crisis could made serious adjustments to Moscow's policy, including in its relations with Central Asia. In any case, the crisis will affect the labor market and competition will increase in the raw material markets and other sensitive points of interception between the interests of the Russian Federation and the Central Asian countries.

In so doing, the main question in Russia's integration activity remains open: what is Moscow's true objective: to create an economic union (along the lines of the EU) or, metaphorically speaking, "to restore the Soviet State Planning system?"

It is obvious that Central Asia will continue to be further drawn into the global processes. But much will depend on the fate of integration within the CIS and the processes initiated and advanced by Russia.

RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: CENTRAL ASIA— A VIEW FROM UZBEKISTAN

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Introduction

The history of Russia's policy in Central Asia is long and colorful, although the relations between Russia and Central Asia did not begin to gather momentum until the latter half of the 19th century when Central Asia became part of the Russian Empire. It was then that the region gradually established closer political, economic, cultural, and other contacts with Russia, which helped it overcome its economic and geographical isolation and added vigor to its social and economic life.

The downfall of the Russian Empire opened a new era in the relations between the two parts of the same state. It was under Soviet power that the region demonstrated unprecedented economic growth and received new statehoods. In Soviet times Russia was the driving force behind the region's social, economic, scientific, and technical progress, which shaped the region's modern image.

Russia's post-Soviet policy in Central Asia can be divided into three stages:

- At the first stage, the early and middle 1990s, Russia, guided by the illusion that it might become "part of the West," excluded Central Asia from its foreign policy priorities;
- At the second stage, in the late 1990s, Russia critically assessed its earlier foreign policy and its results in all parts of the world, Central Asia included;
- At the third stage, which began in 2000 when Vladimir Putin and his team came to power in the Kremlin and which is continuing under President Medvedev, Russia is working consistently and purposefully toward drawing the region into its sphere of influence to boost its foreign policy position everywhere.

First Stage (1992-1995)

As soon as the Soviet Union ceased to exist the new elite headed by Boris Yeltsin that came to power in Russia demonstrated a lot of determination in consistently and purposefully destroying the Soviet political and economic heritage, thus ruining the Soviet state system. Until the mid-1990s, Yeltsin's Russia pursued no more or less consistent policy in the post-Soviet expanse, Central Asia being no exception. The new Russian ultraliberal political elite looked at the West as the only source of ideas and believed that its interests were absolutely identical to those of Russia. In short, in the early 1990s, Moscow was determined to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic community.

Russia's Central Asian Policy

Early in the 1990s Russia regarded Central Asia as something which interfered with its economic reforms and its incorporation into the Western economic and military-political system. This explains the policy which can be best described as "getting rid of the burden of national republics."

Security and Military Cooperation

The Central Asian countries were in fact abandoned to face the dangers emanating from Afghanistan alone. In 1992, Russia declared itself to be the heir of the Soviet Union and as such was bound by the 1978 Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighborly Relations and Cooperation, with respect to Afghanistan, signed in Moscow and, in fact, by the Collective Security Treaty signed in Tashkent in 1992. Russia preferred to ignore these and other documents and left Kabul to its fate.

At the same time, Moscow decreased the level of its military cooperation with the Central Asian countries; and the declarations about a collective security system remained on paper. The same can be said about the bilateral formats, the 201st motorized infantry division stationed in Tajikistan and the Russian border guards deployed in some of the Central Asian countries remaining the only, and highly important, exceptions. It was the Russian military which, early in the 1990s, averted the region's complete destabilization under the impact of the civil war in Tajikistan.

Moscow, however, did everything to distance itself from the Central Asian developments. In the absence of political will and support, the Russian military was essentially left to make shift for itself while Russia's military presence became a mere formality. The Russian Federation proved unable either to stem the escalation in Tajikistan, or stop drug trafficking from Afghanistan, or prevent other countries moving into the region with their military contingents. In late 1994, when NATO launched the Partnership for Peace Program in Central Asia, Russia did nothing to arrive at a coordinated regional approach to the program.

The Economy

Russia not merely destroyed the military and defensive expanse it shared with Central Asia; it did everything to destroy the common economic expanse. Egor Gaidar and his government did more than anyone else to squeeze Central Asia out of the ruble zone. In 1992-1993, Central Asia was still

using the Russian ruble; the Central Asian republics would have preferred to remain in the ruble zone and preserve the common system of trade and monetary relations. In 1993, however, Russia resolutely pushed the republics out of the ruble zone, thus leaving them without a means of payment.

On the whole, Egor Gaidar destroyed the system of trade and monetary relations among the post-Soviet countries, which greatly undermined the close economic relations within the CIS. In 1992-1993, trade between the Russian Federation and the Central Asian countries dropped on average 10-fold compared to 1991 (from about \$60 billion to \$6.3-\$6.7 billion) and remained at the same low level in 1994 and 1995 (see Table 1).

Table 1

**Trade between Russia and the Central Asian Countries
(1991-1995)**

Years	Trade turnover, \$ million	Russia's export to Central Asia, \$ million	Import from Russia to Central Asia, \$ million	Russia's trade balance, \$ million
1991	59,226	33,785	25,441	8,344
1992	6,360	5,767	593	5,174
1993	6,750	4,703	2,047	2,656
1994	6,143	3,771	2,372	1,399
1995	7,679	4,230	3,449	781

Note: The sources cite 1991 in Soviet rubles because these republics were still part of the Soviet Union; in Table 1 the figures for 1991 were calculated in U.S. dollars on the basis of the exchange rate established by the State Bank of the U.S.S.R. (based on a purchasing power parity of \$1 = 0.78 ruble).

Source: National statistics structures of the Central Asian countries.

Institutional Cooperation

The institutional sphere likewise suffered from Russia's desire to move away from the Central Asian countries (and all the post-Soviet states for that matter). For the simple reason that the Euro-Atlantic trend was not only Russia's main, but practically only, foreign policy trend, the CIS was a mere formality from the very beginning. What was more, the Kremlin never hailed the attempts of the post-Soviet states to move forward to new formats among themselves.

Results

The very obvious "disdain" for Central Asia against the background of the equally obvious Western bias destroyed the region's former confidence in Russia and its policy; the local countries set

down to the business of re-orienting their foreign policy priorities. The ruling elites of the Central Asian countries (anti-Russian in at least some of them) should not be held totally responsible—no one knew whether Russia could be trusted at all.

The doubts amid the very real threat of regional destabilization were aggravated by the highly complicated and painful economic, political, and social transformations in the Central Asia countries, which lost much more than Russia when the economic ties in the post-Soviet expanse were ruptured.

The Soviet Union's disintegration bared the truth about the national economies of the Central Asian republics: they were relatively small and weak, the result of their niche in the Soviet economic system. The Soviet system of division of labor (and territorial distribution of the productive forces) made nearly all of Central Asian industry dependent (structurally and technologically) on the economies of Russia and other Soviet republics. The close republican economic ties of the past were destroyed when the Soviet Union disappeared and Central Asia found itself cut off from Russia's trade and monetary system.

The region's economic and geographic isolation became even more pronounced: geography imposed new "rules of the game." According to certain expert assessments, it is 50 percent more expensive to move goods from landlocked than from coastal countries.

The industrial branches of the Central Asian countries failed the test for endurance; the economic situation began rapidly sliding into chaos, while the social sphere degraded just as rapidly. At the early stage of independence, the standard of living plummeted; social tension increased while qualified people were leaving the region in great numbers. In the early 1990s this, and the social destabilization in Afghanistan, brought the Central Asian states to the brink of destabilization; one of them, Tajikistan, failed to keep the lid on social discontent. Had the common economic, defense, and institutional expanse survived there would probably have been no civil war in Tajikistan or other negative developments.

On the whole, it was in the early and mid-1990s that an "alienation barrier" appeared between the local states and the Russian Federation. Yeltsin's policy stirred up anti-Russian sentiments among the political elites of some of the Central Asian countries: they were prepared not merely to rid themselves of the "younger brother complex" but also to form much closer relations with alternative power centers. This was done by necessity: ramified foreign economic ties were badly needed to overcome the ruinous results of disintegration of the single economic system. The Central Asian countries placed their stakes on the developed Western states and some of the financially reliable and culturally close Islamic states.

The Second Stage (1996-1999)

In the mid-1990s Russia became more and more obviously concerned with looking for fundamentally new foreign policy approaches to the world, the post-Soviet expanse and Central Asia as its part. In fact, the course toward a multipolar world formulated in 1996 by Russia's new Foreign Minister Primakov added weight to Central Asia in the system of Russia's foreign policy priorities. The old foreign policy course was replaced with the aim of developing Russia into an independent power center; Euro-Atlantic integration was pushed aside to the margins of the Yeltsin team's foreign policy agenda.

Russia's Central Asian Policy

To realize its new doctrine Russia had to build up its “regional presence;” in this way Central Asia acquired a new dimension—that of a region where, and at the expense of which, Russia could potentially develop the muscles of a regional Eurasian power. It was expected that this could be done through much more intensive cooperation with the Central Asian countries in the security sphere as well as tapping Russia's monopoly on the transit of Central Asian energy fuels. It should be said that at that time Russia had no better tools. Amid its own economic and political turmoil, placing the stakes on cooperation in these spheres was in fact the best alternative: it was cheaper than full-scale economic cooperation yet fairly effective.

Security and Military Cooperation

In the latter half of the 1990s Russia paid much more attention to Central Asian stability and security mainly because it had become aware of the threat of political Islam to its own security. In the late 1990s the Islamic radicals who had defeated the Northern Alliance in 1998 became the masters of Afghanistan; they spread their control to Chechnia after the federal pullout in 1996. As the wave of terror mounted in the Russian Federation while the North Caucasian conflict rapidly escalated, Moscow awoke to the fact that the destructive forces operating in Russia, Afghanistan, and some of the Central Asian countries were closely connected. It was in the latter half of the 1990s that Moscow scored its first diplomatic success in Central Asia by brokering, together with other interested states (Iran and Uzbekistan in particular), the Tajik domestic conflict.

The Economy

Very much as before the Russian Federation refused to take trade and economic cooperation with the local states seriously. The volume of trade between Russia and its Central Asian partners decreased compared to the first half of the 1990s. Between 1996 and 1999, trade turnover dropped two-fold from \$7.2 to \$3.7 billion (see Table 2). The hard currency deficit both in Russia and its Central Asian partners forced them to resort to barter schemes.

It will be no exaggeration to say that fragmentation of the post-Soviet economic expanse triggered by the Gaidar ministers continued unabated. The oil and gas sector alone showed certain signs of revived cooperation limited to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. This can hardly be called economic relations: perfunctory cooperation was mostly used for political purposes, a lever of pressure to be applied to the countries. At that time Russia had the monopoly on moving oil from Kazakhstan and gas from Turkmenistan to the corresponding markets, which accounts for the ambiguity of oil and gas cooperation between Russia and the two Central Asian republics.

On the one hand, Moscow wanted to move Central Asian hydrocarbons exclusively across its territory and prevent any bypassing pipelines laid outside it. On the other hand, Gazprom, as the monopolist, was frequently tempted to block up the transit of Turkmen gas across Russia's territory, which caused serious tension between Moscow and Ashgabad. On several occasions Russia limited the transit of Kazakh oil across its territory.

Table 2

Trade between Russia and the Central Asian Countries in 1996-1999

Years	Trade turnover, \$ million	Russia's export to Central Asia, \$ million	Import from Central Asia to Russia, \$ million	Russia's trade balance, \$ million
1996	7,244	3,920	3,324	596
1997	6,833	3,402	3,431	-29
1998	5,411	3,165	2,246	919
1999	3,695	1,903	1,792	111

Source: National statistics structures of the Central Asian countries.

Institutional Cooperation

Throughout the first and latter half of the 1990s the Yeltsin Administration limited itself to cooperation within the CIS, which by that time had deteriorated into a de facto impotent structure, while Russia and the Central Asian countries maintained relations at the bilateral level.

Results

Mutual mistrust was fed by Russia's inconsistent and highly contradictory policy; the fact that the administration that had spared no effort to demonstrate that Central Asia was an "unwelcome burden" still remained in power did nothing to improve the relations. The Central Asian countries were well aware that Russia was not merely economically weak; what amounted to a defeat in the first Chechen campaign of 1995-1996 was ample evidence of its military impotence.

The Russian Federation and the Central Asian states had to address numerous and fairly urgent domestic problems: plummeting industrial production caused by ruptured or weakened traditional ties, the very contradictory social context, subversive activities by religious extremists, etc.

On the whole, in the latter half of the 1990s Russia failed to remove the "alienation barrier" that separated it from the Central Asian states; they, in turn, no longer looked to Russia for more or less considerable assistance. Left to rely on their own resources, they turned to all sorts of international organizations, sponsors, and power centers. In the latter half of the 1990s all the countries finally embraced a multivector foreign policy course.

**Third Stage:
2000 until the Present Time**

The advent of Vladimir Putin and his team to power in 2000 marked a turning point in Russia's policy. The country acquired a much clearer foreign policy designed to make it one of the

power centers on the international scene and in the global economy. The new president who came to power in 2008 has not yet changed the earlier vector. In fact, both Putin's course and that of the Putin-Medvedev tandem is rooted in the "multipolar world" conception formulated by Evgeniy Primakov.

As soon as it acquired sufficient financial, administrative, and other resources Russia displayed its determination to move "from word to deed." On the one hand, its foreign policy course became less chaotic and more consistent; while on the other, the extremely favorable (until September 2008) world prices for Russia's main export items (raw materials, oil and gas in particular) can be described as a boon to Putin's Russia. Petrodollars helped resolve many domestic problems that received the Kremlin's full attention in the first years of Putin's first presidential term. Part of the oil and gas income went into foreign policy projects.

Many of them became clear when Moscow finally became convinced that its restored regional position across the post-Soviet expanse would boost its international prestige. Central Asia was one of the regions where Russia could test its new policy and its methods—pragmatism, flexibility, and practicality. This became even more obvious when in the context of the U.S. and NATO counter-terrorist operation in Afghanistan Central Asia, the periphery of world politics, acquired strategic importance.

Today, Russia's foreign policy in general and in Central Asia in particular needs a more consistent conceptual basis with long-term and specific priorities (less abstract than "multipolarity") and corresponding mechanisms of their realization. Russia has not yet acquired a clear idea about the role and place of the countries and regions (including Central Asia and the post-Soviet expanse in general) in the system of its internal and external measures. This means that Moscow has not yet found the main vector of its development. So far, nothing can be said about a system of Russia's strategic goals in Central Asia. No success is possible without an algorithm of action in this direction, at which Moscow has not yet arrived.

The global financial and economic crisis might greatly change Russia's foreign policy strategy, which will undoubtedly readjust Russia's Central Asian policy. If the crisis develops further it might force Russia to choose between two options: either abandon the post-Soviet expanse and Central Asia to their fate and concentrate on its own crisis or push forward economic integration so that together with the CIS partners (or at least within the EurAsEC) it can find new possibilities of economic growth. Today, Russia's choice is not clear.

Russia's Central Asian Policy

Compared with the 1990s Russia stepped up its foreign policy involvement in the region as a result of which the numerous declarations about the "need to develop close cooperation" were gradually realized. Russia intensified its bilateral relations with the regional states. At the same time the Kremlin has not yet acquired effective forms and mechanisms of regional multilateral cooperation and a new, more effective project of post-Soviet integration.

It seems that Russia has not yet become convinced that economic integration with the Central Asian states is fundamentally important. On the one hand, Moscow is pouring a lot of effort into integration while, on the other, it lacks a detailed strategic course and a program of real integration and, therefore, still keeps to the bilateral format.

Institutional Cooperation

Russia moved to specific actions and initiatives related to institutional cooperation; this is a novel and extremely important turn in its Central Asian policy. Logically enough, it concentrated on devising new integration schemes and formats rather than reviving the old ones (the CIS, which has preserved its political club function, is one of the examples). Russia's new policy is fairly flexible: Moscow is developing several integration schemes/institutions simultaneously: EurAsEC, SEE, OCAC (in 2006 it became integrated in the EurAsEC) and the CSTO.

So far Russia has to cope with objective and subjective problems; the latter are created by the still cautious attitude of some of the post-Soviet states toward supranational structures: for obvious reasons they are apprehensive of the possibility of a restored "elder brother" represented by Russia. Moscow nevertheless remains the driving force of integration in the CIS. This has become especially clear against the background of the unfolding world financial crisis. At the special meeting of the EurAsEC interstate council held in Moscow early in February 2009 it was decided to set up a joint anti-crisis fund of \$10 billion (in which Russia will invest \$7.5 billion) to support the national economies of the CIS members. The Russian leaders expect that on 1 January, 2010, the Single Economic Expanse of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus will start functioning. It will be open to other countries.

From the very beginning, Moscow has been seeking greater influence when pushing forward institutional cooperation rather than promoting integration as a large-scale project albeit under its own aegis. For this reason the CSTO alone has retained its efficiency while the EurAsEC and SEE remain, to a much greater extent, economic blocks of doubtful efficiency. Today, multilateral economic cooperation is in crisis to the extent that it can boost neither comprehensive development of members nor of organizations; it cannot help but deal with the grave post-Soviet social problems. It is not yet clear whether concerted anti-crisis measures are possible. It seems that back in 2008 Uzbekistan had good reason to suspend its EurAsEC membership.

The low efficiency of Russia's institutional cooperation with the Central Asian countries is explained by the fact that even under Vladimir Putin Russia was doing little if anything to consistently promote economic cooperation as an important part of interstate relations. As the only leader in the post-Soviet expanse, Russia unwisely removed itself from settling, together with other countries, the water-and-energy issue, a problem of vital importance for Central Asia. The region's states (mainly Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) might be involved in a crisis that could have been avoided with Russia's help. By the same token, Russia could have promoted regional cooperation within EurAsEC in particular. It should be said that no economic integration between Russia and Central Asia is possible until another vitally important issue is successfully resolved. The situation in Afghanistan must be either settled or at least the impact of its threats on the region must be decreased. For objective and subjective reasons Russia's potential is fairly limited.

On the whole, Russia has failed to appreciate the fact that multisided cooperation with the Central Asian countries should become more dynamic, manageable, and better coordinated at the state level: this accounts for the low efficiency of the integration institutions. While the world financial crisis was unfolding in the late 2008 and early 2009 Russia tried to add new impetus to integration. Very much as before these efforts remain limited to bilateral relations.

Security and Military Cooperation

It looks as if the Kremlin still regards cooperation in the security sphere as the all-purpose tool of Russia's influence in the region, which perfectly fits its current course toward strengthening its global

position. The Russian leaders have learned the lessons of the 1990s (one of the worst blunders occurred in 1999 when the Collective Security Treaty was virtually emasculated) and tried to demonstrate to all the Central Asian countries the advantages of cooperating with Russia.

In recent years, Russia has learned to capitalize on the favorable strategic situation: the global struggle against international terrorism with the epicenter in Afghanistan. Cooperation in the military sphere is the most effective and cheapest of the political instruments.

The recent Caucasian developments helped to boost military cooperation within the CSTO. At the latest CSTO summit held in Moscow in February 2009 the heads of the member states agreed with Russia that the organization needed a joint rapid deployment force.

Russia is still resolved to maintain bilateral relations with the Central Asian countries; it looks less eager to develop multisided cooperation in which it might claim coordinating functions. Life has shown that the bilateral format is much more practicable since it avoids the negative impact of national ambitions that inevitably crop up in all multisided formats. So far, bilateral cooperation remains more specific and more practicable.

This means that Russia's policy in the security sphere and its military cooperation with the Central Asia countries cannot be called effective mainly because economic integration, the foundation of any interstate alliance, has not yet become real. In fact, the region's countries are sticking to multivector policies precisely because they see no progress in economic integration.

It is also possible that the growing negative trends in Afghanistan will give Russia the chance to achieve closer cooperation with the Central Asian states and establish common approaches to the regional security issues. So far, Afghanistan and the related issues have not yet moved to the forefront of Russia's foreign policy. In fact, the West is keeping Russia by the wayside. In the last two years, Moscow has been trying to acquire more or less considerable influence there, therefore it is too early to offer any opinion about the possible results of its efforts; there is even less ground to predict how Moscow will use them in Central Asia to cement its position there. The international conference under the SCO aegis held in Moscow in March 2009 revealed the fact that Russia and the SCO partners still have to elaborate a common position on Afghanistan. In March, they merely pointed out that there was a problem and declared that "the world should become more united and more efficient in its efforts to help Afghanistan revive."

The Economy

Russian business became much more noticeable than in the 1990s on the Central Asian economic stage; the same applies to Russia's economic policy, although it remains concentrated in the oil and gas sector. Projects and investments are much more visible in the countries with considerable hydrocarbon resources (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan); outside them Russia's economic involvement remains practically at the 1990s level.

Trade, one of the key indicators of Russia's economic involvement in the region, has been developing in the last 8 years but the level remains low (even compared to Soviet times). In 2000-2002, trade turnover between the Russian Federation and the Central Asian countries remained at the level of the latter half of the 1990s. It was in 2003 that positive shifts became obvious: between 2003 and 2008 the average annual trade turnover increased from \$7.1 billion to \$29.3 billion (see Table 3); on the whole, however, between 2000 and 2008 the share of the region's countries remained at 4 percent of Russia's total foreign trade turnover, slightly higher than the level of the 1990s.

Table 3

**Trade Turnover between Russia and the Central Asian Countries
in 2000-2008**

Years	Trade turnover, \$ million	Russia's export to Central Asia, \$ million	Russia's import from Central Asia, \$ million	Russia's trade balance, \$ million
2000	6,469	2,730	3,739	-1,009
2001	5,924	3,517	2,407	1,110
2002	5,464	3,492	1,972	1,520
2003	7,088	4,520	2,568	1,952
2004	10,463	6,103	4,360	1,743
2005	13,227	7,525	5,702	1,823
2006	14,869	7,982	6,887	1,095
2007	21,787	13,489	8,298	5,191
2008	29,267	16,144	13,123	3,021

S o u r c e: National statistics structures of the Central Asian countries.

Russia, however, has re-adjusted its economic policy: it is prepared to grant loans to the Central Asian countries for geopolitical reasons in exchange of regional support of its interests. The loan of \$2 billion extended to Kyrgyzstan that coincided with Bishkek's decision to close down the American base on its territory is one of the pertinent examples.

Today, Russia is prepared to exploit the region's economic problems created by the world financial crisis to strengthen the regional position of Russian businesses. In January 2009, RF Minister of Economic Development E. Nabiullina made public the intention to set up a special structure to coordinate the process of buying up depreciated assets in the neighboring countries by private businesses and the state. Moscow, the financial resources of which are limited, is unlikely to launch a wide-scale program of economic expansion but the new approaches to Russia's economic involvement in the post-Soviet expanse speak of the Kremlin's greater interest in Central Asia.

Results

Despite the cardinal and, on the whole, positive changes in Russia during Putin's presidency and the early period of Medvedev's presidency, the results of Russia's Central Asian policy remain highly ambiguous.

On the one hand, the centrifugal trends have slowed down; Russia has strengthened its position and largely removed a great deal of the Central Asian countries' mistrust in it and its policy. Its Cen-

tral Asian policy became much more flexible, pragmatic, and consistent mainly because Moscow became aware of the region's strategic importance and thanks to its much greater financial possibilities. The Central Asian capitals, in turn, moved away from their skeptical attitudes of the latter half of the 1990s to accepting the signals from Moscow about its willingness to show much more determination to draw closer in the political, economic, and military spheres. This boosted Russia's importance for each of its Central Asian partners.

On the other hand, Russia failed to fill the regional geopolitical and geo-economic vacuum for the simple reason that it has still not arrived at an understanding of the urgency of full-fledged and diverse relations with the Central Asian states at the bilateral and multilateral levels. This explains why no real changes occurred in the economic sphere (with the exception of the oil and gas sector). Russia still sees the region as a strategically important tool needed to revive its Great Power status and a trump card to be laid on the table when dealing with the West.

Conclusion

To boost the efficiency of its Central Asian policy the Kremlin should offer a new, and tempting, cooperation program based on accelerated economic integration as the foundation of real allied relations in all other spheres. The future of Russia's relations with the Central Asian countries largely depends on the Kremlin. In fact, Russia's economic and geopolitical potential makes it the only driving force behind comprehensive economic development of the Central Asian countries and the guarantor of their security. The Kremlin, however, has not arrived at an understanding that the region's importance is not exhausted by its contribution to Russia's stronger foreign policy position; Russia needs it for its own effective and comprehensive economic development.

- First, if economic cooperation remains at the present extremely low level, the Central Asian countries will slowly but surely turn to other power centers. Sooner or later the region's mineral riches will stir up even greater rivalry among the leading powers and economic blocs. Russia, with its economy oriented toward the export of raw materials and its weakened industrial and scientific potential, is not the obvious victor. It looks more probable that China, which is rapidly building up its economic presence in the region, will win the race for the huge mineral resources (energy, non-ferrous metals, and precious stones).
- Second, the current building up of Russia's political and military presence in Central Asia divorced from adequate economic cooperation can hardly guarantee that the countries will continue drawing closer together. This is best illustrated by the EurAsEC, which has not developed into a full-fledged economic community. It looks as if the fundamental discrepancies among the regional countries' economic strategies are the main reason for this: Uzbekistan and Belarus, as well as Tajikistan to a lesser extent, are not ready to embrace the neo-liberal model accepted by Russia, Kyrgyzstan and, to a great extent, Kazakhstan. Their reluctance is well-justified: the neo-liberal model is fraught with numerous risks; today, there is a more or less unanimous opinion in the expert community that the current global financial crisis was caused by the collapse of the neo-liberal economic model.
- Third, Russia has obviously underestimated Central Asia's strategic importance caused by the weakness of Russia's analysis and experts who regard the region as an "economic burden" which would be better left alone. They are losing sight of an important aspect: even in Soviet times the region was deliberately reduced to an unprofitable status and forced to live on subsidies. Russia's ruling elite and the academic community, as well as the Russian public, are still convinced that "the region had no economic value."

This means that as long as Russia continues indulging itself in chaotic, sporadic, and inconsistent economic integration across the post-Soviet expanse any, even the best, programs in any spheres of its domestic and foreign policies will contradict all the other programs and run up against cul-de-sac dilemmas that defy solutions within narrow national and sectoral frameworks or within narrow disciplines. They will never allow Russia to achieve its main goal: wide strategic and tactical possibilities.

ARMENIAN FOREIGN POLICY: COORDINATING THE INTERESTS OF THE U.S., THE EU, AND RUSSIA

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The severe depression of the 1990s that served the background for Armenia's foreign policy determined many of its outstanding features. Isolation and blockade forced the country to turn to the Armenian diaspora. The landlocked country living in "neither peace nor war" could not attract the West; however it established effective cooperation with Russia and Iran. In recent years it has widened its contacts with the European Union and the United States. This helped the Armenians to survive in the hardest first post-Soviet years.

The Soviet successor states (with the exception of the Baltic countries) were ill-prepared to conduct an independent foreign policy: the statehood experience and skills of coexistence had largely been lost in the region. Over the 70 years the three Caucasian states (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia) were detached from their immediate neighbors (Turkey and Iran) they cooperated solely with Russia—it was not until the 1990s that

they returned to their natural regional environment.

The region borders on Russia, Turkey, and Iran (in fact, on the Greater Middle East and Central Asia), while on the other side of the Black Sea it finds itself at the doors of the European Union. This explains why each of the countries has had to look for an acceptable balance of forces to protect its interests.

Their newly acquired independence suggested that the three Caucasian states build their foreign policies from scratch. The three republics preferred to indulge themselves in the myths of their advantageous geographic location¹ and the possibility of "making the best of both worlds" by living on their own resources—it was generally

¹ See: G. Demoian, *Simvolicheskaia geografia ili geografia kak simvol na postsovetskom Yuzhnom Kavkaze. Identichnost', vlast' i gorod v rabotakh molodykh uchenykh Yuzhnogo Kavkaza*, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Tbilisi, 2005, p. 88.

believed that the Center had hindered their development. Reality proved to be different: the region plunged into an abyss of economic crisis and post-Soviet chaos; Armenia suffered more than its neighbors: its standard of living took a nose dive.

The Armenian² and Georgian³ leaders obviously placed their stakes on civilizational aspects: both countries presented themselves as outposts of Christianity in the Muslim East. Azerbaijan likewise stressed its secular nature and dedication to democratic values to draw closer to the West; it never tired of reminding the world that it was the first republic in the Islamic world while its parliament was the first European-style legislature here.⁴

² Ibid., p. 93.

³ See: O. Vasilieva, *Severny Kavkaz v poiskakh regional'noy ideologii*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1994, p. 9.

⁴ See: *Azerbajjanskaia Demokraticeskaja Respublika-90, Predislovie*, Salam Press, Moscow, 2008, p. 5.

Georgia, which in Soviet times had been very open about its Western bias, expected to receive Western cooperation and economic and national prosperity in return. Instead it encountered sharp confrontation with Russia while the Georgians grumbled about inadequate Western support. Azerbaijan preferred a more balanced policy; it thought it wise to take the interests of the global and regional power centers into account and referred to the country's geopolitical location.⁵

Armenia found itself facing new dividing lines in the region, as well as political isolation and economic collapse. Such were the conditions in which it had to shape its foreign policy. Below I shall dwell on this in greater detail.

⁵ See, for example: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy*, CA & CC Press, Sweden, 2006.

The Economic Situation in the Post-Soviet Years

In the latter half of the 1980s the socialist camp began to be gradually sucked into a widespread economic crisis⁶ that became even deeper when the countries started moving toward a market economy and the Soviet Union fell apart. The ineffective economy geared toward political expediency failed: Armenian industry, expected to supply the rest of the vast country with its products, lost its raw material sources and markets. It was not alone: all the other republics also faced more or less similar problems, although Armenia was hit harder than most.

The military conflicts raging in the region hampered transportation and added an edge to the transportation issue. In the 1980s, Armenia traded via Georgia and especially Azerbaijan. "...Most of these supplies enter the republic by rail through Azerbaijan (85%) and Georgia (15%)."⁷ Because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict Azerbaijan cut off its transport communications with Armenia in 1989, while the Soviet Union was still alive.⁸ Armenia still had Georgia as a link with Russia, which disappeared in August 1992 because of the fighting in Abkhazia.⁹ Political instability in Georgia made the

⁶ According to the IMF, in 1980 the Polish GDP dropped by 10 percent; in 1981 by 6 percent. In 1985, the trend reached Hungary and Rumania. The Bulgarian economy has been declining at a fast pace starting in 1989.

⁷ *CIA World Factbook*, 1992. Armenia/Economy, available at [<http://www.umsl.edu/services/govdocs/wofact92/wf930017.txt>].

⁸ See: A. Khalatian, "Politicheskii monitoring: Armenia v ianvare 1993 goda," *Mezhdunarodny Institut Gumanitarno-politicheskikh issledovaniy*, available at [<http://www.igpi.ru/monitoring/1047645476/jan1993/armen.html>].

⁹ The railway bridge in Abkhazia was blasted on 14 August, 1992; transit railway transportation was halted and never restored (see: "Istoria abkhazskoy zheleznoy dorogi," *NEWSru.com*, available at [http://www.newsru.com/background/01dec2004/zheldor_print.html].

severe crisis even worse: Tbilisi was no longer in control of its entire territory and could not guarantee safe freight and energy transit.

The situation at the Armenian-Turkish border was critical. The relations between the two countries burdened with the past deteriorated when Turkey chose to side with Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. In 1993, on Baku's insistent request, Turkey closed its border to freight traffic to Armenia.¹⁰

This left Erevan with Iran as one more or less reliable trade partner. The Armenian-Iranian road called "the road of life" helped the Armenians to survive. This was all: inadequate infrastructure, Iranian protectionist policies, etc. made wider cooperation impossible.

Table 1 offers some of the social, economic, and demographic indices for 1990-2008, which provide an idea of the crisis that hit the republic.

Table 1

Armenia in 1990-2008¹¹

	GDP, \$ per capita, without inflation	Purchasing power parity, \$ in 2007 prices	Share of population living below the poverty level (paupers in parentheses)	Migration balance, thousand
1990	637	3,300		+1.7
1991	589	2,900		-70
1992	369	2,040		-228.6
1993	356	1,860		-141.1
1994	399	1,820		-127.8
1995	455	1,950		-37.5
1996	503	2,070	(27.7%)	-20.5
1997	521	2,140		-31.3
1998	607	2,300	56.1%	-24.4
1999	595	2,380	55% (22.9%)	-7
2000	620	2,520		-57.5
2001	691	2,760	50.9% (16.0%)	-60.4
2002	779	3,130	49.7% (13.1%)	-2.7
2003	924	3,570	43%	-10.2

¹⁰ See: S. Goldenberg, *The Pride of Small Nations. The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder*, Zed Books Ltd, London and New Jersey, 1994, pp. 54-55; G. Demoian, *Turtsia i Karabakhskiy konflikt*, Erevan, 2006, p. 77.

¹¹ The table is based on figures taken from different sources, including [http://armstat.am], Agency for Migration, Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Armenia [http://backtoarmenia.com/?heat=85&scat=87]; CIA World Factbook (1992-current), CIS Statistical Committee (Armenia) [http://cisstat.org/rus/arm.htm] and WB Consolidated Table "GDP of the Countries of the World, 1960-1990" [http://earthtrends.wri.org/text/economics-business/variable-638.html].

Table 1 (continued)

	GDP, \$ per capita, without inflation	Purchasing power parity, \$ in 2007 prices	Share of population living below the poverty level (paupers in parentheses)	Migration balance, thousand
2004	1,182	3,950	34.6% (6.4%)	2.1
2005	1,624	4,500	29.8% (4.6%)	12.5
2006	2,122	5,100	26.5%	21.8
2007	2,476	5,800	25.0%	-3.2
2008	3,740	6,400		-23.1

The above shows that the Third Republic was born in a very complex situation: between 1992 and 1994 the economic shock drove about half a million (about 15 percent of the total population) out of the country; emigration has been going on and still prevails (with the exception of the 2004-2006 period).

General Vectors of Armenia's Foreign Policy

The republic's political establishment was frantically looking for ways out. It was then that the republic formulated complementarity as its foreign policy doctrine. It was decided to take into account, in equal shares, the interests of all the global powers involved in the region rather than siding with one of them.¹²

This model was especially effective at the early stages of Armenian independence (1991-1992) when the country, at the height of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, successfully tapped its unique foreign policy situation. Erevan acquired weapons and military equipment from Russia, which allowed it to go on fighting; the Americans gave money to buy weapons from Russia and to build Armenia's statehood; foodstuffs and humanitarian assistance arrived from Europe mainly via Turkey; the country received fuel from Iran to continue fighting.¹³

Russia was the main guarantor of Armenia's security. The republic joined the CIS and in 1992 was one of the founders of the Collective Security Treaty.¹⁴ Russia deployed its military base in Armenia, while their military cooperation proceeded in many other spheres.

True as ever to its complementarian policy, Armenia went on to develop its relations with the West, represented by NATO and the European Union, as well as with Iran, while working hard to unblock its Turkish border.¹⁵ Despite the very loudly declared Islamist nature of the Iranian regime,

¹² See: S. Minasian, "Nekotorye kontseptual'nye osnovy vneshney politiki Armenii," available at [<http://www.noravank.am/ru/?page=analitics&nid=1684>].

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ See the organization's official site [<http://www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index.htm>].

¹⁵ "Armijskaja storona neodnokratno zaiavljala, chto ona za otkrytie granitsy bez predvaritel'nykh uslovij," available at [<http://www.rosbalt.ru/2009/04/15/633793.html>].

Armenia's relations with it were much more stable than with any of its regional partners. Today, Armenia has moved far ahead in its cooperation with NATO within the system of individual partnership and with the European Union within the Eastern Partnership program. Erevan and Tehran remain convinced that their relations are strategic and allied in nature.

The Nagorno-Karabakh settlement and international recognition of the 1915 events in the Ottoman Empire as genocide of the Armenians are two more major foreign policy issues. In this respect, the republic can rely on the lobbyist potential of the Armenian diaspora, which is especially strong in the United States. On many occasions it neutralized the American, traditionally pro-Azeri, oil lobby and actively promoted all the other issues (genocide has already been recognized by several leading countries of Europe and most of the American states).¹⁶ The economic potential of the Armenian diaspora is considerable enough to help Armenia revive after isolation.¹⁷

Armenia and Russia

In the post-Soviet reality Russia is still perceived as the Soviet Union's "alter ego." This was especially evident in the early 1990s: the Armenian elite of the time consisted of dissidents and nationalists who spent years fighting for independence. Their attitude toward Russia could be nothing but negative. At first the relations between the two countries were fairly cool but gradually they warmed up.

Very soon Russia became Armenia's main partner in many respects, economic and military included. This cooperation is based on many, not merely political and civilizational, aspects. The image of Russia as Armenia's patron country has survived in the Armenian national mythologeme for at least two centuries.¹⁸ On the other hand, the Armenians integrated into Soviet reality, so most of the migrants preferred to settle in Russia.¹⁹ Today, the Armenian diaspora in Russia is one of the key instruments in the cooperation between the two countries. Bilateral economic cooperation is lagging behind other aspects of mutual relations: Russia accounts for about 16 percent of Armenia's trade turnover:²⁰ it seems that the far from friendly relations between Russia and Georgia are keeping the region divided. Russia's presence is much more noticeable in the energy sphere: 82 percent of Armenia's Armros-gazprom gas company belongs to Gazprom, Russia's monopolist. Russia owns other energy facilities, including the Razdan Electrical Company (RazTES) that supplies Armenia and sells energy to Iran and Georgia. Armenia was one of the founders of the Eurasian Development Bank set up within the EurAsEC.

Military-political cooperation between the two countries is all-important. Armenia has joined all the integration structures that the Kremlin patronizes: the CIS, CSTO, and EurAsEC (with an observer status). There is a Russian military base in Armenia (stationed in Gumri) to which Russia moved

¹⁶ See: F. Rzaev, "907 popravka:istoria i perspektivy. Kavkaz i Tsentral'naya Azia," available at [http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-04-1999/st_21_rzayev.shtml]; "SShA ne budut finansirovat' stroitel'stvo zheleznoy dorogi v obkhod Armenii," available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/709719.html>].

¹⁷ See: M. Agajanian, "Diasporal'ny resurs Armenii kak "assimetrychny" otvet na ee izolyatsiu," available at [<http://noravank.am/ru/?page=analitics&nid=662>].

¹⁸ See: S. Lurie, "Russkie i armiane v Zakavkazie: dinamika kontaktnoy situatsii (etnopsikhologicheskyy podkhod)," available at [<http://svlourie.narod.ru/armenian-myth/russ-arm.htm>].

¹⁹ According to the official figures of the 2002 population census, there were about 1,130 thousand Armenians living in Russia; since 1989 their number has increased by about 600 thousand (see: "National'ny sostav naselenia Rossii po dannym perepisi naselenia (tysiach chelovek)," available at [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_nation.php]).

²⁰ According to CIA World Factbook /Armenia/Economy, in 2007 Russia accounted for 15.1 percent of Armenia's import and 17.5 percent of its export (see [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html#Econ>]).

the military hardware it pulled out of Georgia. Russian border guards cooperate with Armenians on the Armenian-Turkish border.

Cooperation within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) allows Armenia to modernize its military equipment at a lower cost while Russia preserves its military-political presence at the junction of the Caucasus and the Middle East. In September 2008, Armenia became CSTO chairman even though this function is mostly symbolic—in contrast to the rotational EU chairmanship, for example.

Some Western analysts believe that Armenia is Russia's "hand" in the region,²¹ which cannot be accepted as true: Armenia has traveled part of the road toward full-fledged statehood; it has become an entity of international politics with actively developing contacts with Russia, the European Union, and the U.S., as well as Iran and the Middle East.

From the very first days of its post-Soviet history Russia has been sparing no effort to keep its neighbors away from NATO and to preserve its own influence in the post-Soviet expanse. Armenia's cooperation with NATO, accepted as a fact, remains a source of Russia's concern.

Cooperation between Armenia and Russia has always been rather sluggish: the main thing for Moscow was to somehow retain its presence in the region. Today Russia is developing new foreign policy approaches. The Russia-Armenia-Iran axis, which many believed to be possible, turned out to be an illusion because of the absence of a direct communication line between Armenia and Russia. Russia's new policy will probably be determined by the hydrocarbon issue. This has already been confirmed by much better relations between Moscow and Baku.²² Moscow has already manifested this approach elsewhere in the world.²³ Today Armenia is experiencing certain difficulties in the transport communication sphere, which means that the Kremlin might lose its geopolitical interest in it. On top of this Russia is troubled by possible readjustments in Erevan's foreign policy course, which might prove to be damaging to Russia's interests. On the other hand, the Kremlin never moved across with its political weight onto the Armenian side, which caused a lot of displeasure in Erevan. This means that we can expect somewhat cooler relations between Erevan and Moscow.

Armenia- the European Union

In January 2001, Armenia joined the Council of Europe,²⁴ thus making it clear that it would seek integration into the European structures. Today Europe is associated with a high standard of living, but Armenia's intention is rooted in the past when Armenia belonged to the Byzantine civilization. This means that culturally and as a Christian country Armenia is very close to Europe in many respects. In fact, in the Middle Ages Christianity became the hallmark of the Armenian identity.

Occupying about 40 percent of Armenia's trade turnover, the European Union can be described as Armenia's main economic partner. Economically, Armenia is very close to Europe—a fact willing-

²¹ See: "Armenia: Russia's Strengthening Hand," *Stratfor*, 19 February, 2008.

²² Some analysts believe that Russia might support Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in exchange for wide cooperation in the gas sphere (see: E. Gospodinov, "Nagorny Karabakh podnimut na vysshiy uroven'. (Po rezul'tatam vstrechi prezidentov Rossii i Azerbajjana)," *Kommersant*, available at [<http://kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=1157669>]; Sh. Abbasov, "Azerbaidzhan: Is Baku Offering a Natural Gas Carrot to Moscow for Help with Karabakh? Eurasia Insight," available at [<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav042009a.shtml>].

²³ See, for example, Mathias Brüggmann's article in *Handelsblatt*: "Gazprom kreist Europa noch weiter ein," available at [http://www.robertamsterdam.com/deutsch/2008/04/gazprom_kreist_europa_noch_wei.html], 9 June, 2006.

²⁴ Council of Europe—Armenia, available at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/About_Coe/Member_states/e_ar.asp].

ly accepted by the Europeans. This has been further confirmed by applying the GSP+ regime to Armenia, which makes Armenian Europe-oriented exports much easier.²⁵

Today Armenia's representation in PACE cannot be described as adequate.²⁶ In 2008 the possibility of Armenia's suspended PACE membership because of the events of 1 March and their follow-up was very real.²⁷

Europe is interested in Armenia because of its proximity to expanding Europe. The demographic factor is equally important: with the mounting Arab and African demographic pressure on Europe, the European Union is out to regulate the flow of migrants from the former Soviet Union. The EU obviously wants stable and relatively prospering states along its borders.

The large Armenian diasporas in the European countries and the historical experience of contacts make it easier for the EU to accomplish this. The Armenians, in turn, would like to integrate into Europe: according to one of the polls, 64 percent of Armenia's population and 92 percent of the expert community favored integration with the EU.²⁸

The Eastern Partnership Program²⁹ will help to build bridges between the Caucasus and Europe; today it is one of the EU's priorities and a great irritant for Russia. It is expected that over the course of time the EU's "soft power" will gradually replace Russia's influence.³⁰ The program means that Europe will help these countries to reach greater financial stability; the visa regime might be simplified or even abolished.

Armenia- the United States

The United States is a relative newcomer in the region, however it feels very much at home there. The globalizing world allows the super power to be present in any region. This means that distances can no longer interfere with America's influence in the Caucasus.

The relations between the two countries are greatly affected by the Armenian diaspora in the United States. Inside the country there is a lot of idealism about America: President Wilson, who doubled Armenian territory by including a large chunk of historical Armenia in it, is one of the heroes of this mythologeme.

In recent years America's position on Nagorno-Karabakh has changed frequently: the country moved away from its support of Armenia in 1991 to become much closer to co-chairman of the Minsk Group Matthew Bryza, who tends to side with Azerbaijan. This obviously causes criticism in the Armenian press.³¹

Today, relations with America are less developed than with Russia, although they have entered an active phase. In 2008, several top American and Armenian officials met for a series of talks; Wash-

²⁵ GSP+ (General System of Preferences Plus) gives duty-free access to the EU market for around 6,400 tariff lines (see: Arka.am, 30 January, 2009, available at [<http://www.arka.am/rus/economy/2009/01/30/12921.html>]).

²⁶ Armenia is represented by 4 deputies in PACE, Azerbaijan by 6, and Georgia by 7 (see [http://www.coe.int/t/r/Parliamentary_Assembly/#P95_16425]).

²⁷ On 1 March, 2008, the authorities disbanded a rally in Erevan which developed into mass disorders; 8 demonstrators and 2 policemen died; hundreds were wounded, some of the suspected organizers were detained. This was followed by introducing a state of emergency and limitations on the freedom of meetings and demonstrations.

²⁸ See: *Delovoy ekspress* newspaper, 30 December, 2004, available at [http://www.express.am/50_04/korotko.html].

²⁹ The Eastern Partnership Program includes 6 post-Soviet states: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus.

³⁰ See translation of an article by Marc Deger from *La Tribune* [<http://inosmi.ru/translation/248627.html>].

³¹ See, for example, an article by Ruben Margarian "Agoniziruiushchiy Bryza," *Golos Armenii*, 3 April, 2008.

ington allocated Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh \$64.5 million in financial aid;³² every year the United States allocate several million dollars to be spent on modernizing the Armenian army.³³

Cooperation with NATO continued in 2008. Since the 1990s Armenia has been participating in the Partnership for Peace Program. In June 1998, the Armenian military contingent took part in the Prometheus-98³⁴ military exercises in northern Greece. The Armenian army took part in the NATO operation in Kosovo and Iraq (albeit on a limited and essentially symbolic scale). Greece is Armenia's closest NATO ally: in 2003 they signed an agreement on mutual military assistance under which some of the Armenian military are trained in Athens.

In 2005, Armenia signed IPAP designed to create a security system; according to the Armenian Defense Minister, it would meet the requirements of the 21st century. In 2008, Armenia hosted NATO's Cooperative Longbow-2008 and Cooperative Lancer-2008 military exercises.³⁵

Armenian-American relations are developing; in fact, the process actively unfolded throughout 2008, which means that bilateral relations might become even closer.

Results of Armenia's Foreign Policy

Armenia has built a stable statehood—a result recognized by international organizations. The country survived the 1990s crisis and topped the economic indices of the late 1980s. Stabilization has reduced the human outflow somewhat: in the early 1990s, tens and hundreds of thousands left the republic every year; today the annual migration balance is about 25 thousand on either side.

Armenia's foreign policy differed from that of its closest neighbors. While Georgia played on the rivalry between the largest regional actors, Armenia tried to keep all their interests in mind. Georgia enjoyed considerable political support from the United States while building up its confrontation with Russia. The result was a sad one—a military defeat in August 2008. Armenia, on the other hand, with no considerable political support from any of the actors felt much more confident to pursue its own policies. Azerbaijan demonstrated a lot of caution and combined complementarity with a bias toward Turkey and the West.

Today, however, Armenia has found it much harder to pursue its own version of complementarity: the war between Russia and Georgia in South Ossetia worsened the relations between the West and Russia, which means that their interests would be very hard to combine. President Obama's determination to "reset" his country's relations with Russia will allow Erevan to go on with the old foreign policy course: good relations between the United States and Russia are very important for Armenia's future.

The results of statehood development in the Caucasus are best illustrated by international ratings and other sources.

Table 2 demonstrates that international organizations are convinced that Armenia has achieved considerable successes in building its statehood. According to UNDP, Armenia has outstripped its

³² "Foreign Policy of Armenia in 2008: Final Report by the Foreign Ministry of Armenia (in Armenian). Unofficial translation made by the Regnum Information Agency can be found at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/1114655.html>].

³³ In 2007 Armenia received military assistance totaling over \$3.1 million from the United States (see [<http://www.washprofile.org/en/node/7958>]).

³⁴ See: V.A. Zakharov, A.G. Areshev, *Rasshirenie NATO v gosudarstva Zakavkazia: etapy, namerenia, rezul'taty*, Moscow, 2008, pp. 284-285.

³⁵ See: H. Mikaelian, "Organizatsia dogovora o kollektivnoi bezopasnosti i Armenia," available at [www.mitq.org/print/?l=rus&dir=2&news=1855] [<http://analitika.at.ua/news/2009-04-05-7427>].

Table 2

**The Caucasian Countries Ranked
by International Ratings (2008)**

	The U.N. Human Development Index ³⁶	Failed states, Fund for Peace ³⁷	Freedom of the Press, Reporters without borders ³⁸	GDP/PPP index (\$), CIA ³⁹	Economic freedom, Heritage Foundation ⁴⁰
Georgia	94	56	120	146 (4,700)	32
Armenia	84	109	102	129 (6,400)	31
Azerbaijan	97	64	150	110 (9,000)	99
Rating	diminishing (1->...->179)	increasing (177<-...<-1)	diminishing (1->...->173)	diminishing (1->...->230)	diminishing (1->...->179)

Caucasian neighbors in terms of the human development index. The Fund for Peace put Armenia in 109th place (the rating goes from 1st place up) in the conviction that Armenia is the region's most stable state. The Armenian economy is more developed than the Georgian but lags behind Azerbaijan's economic progress, achieved thanks to high oil prices. Armenia cannot be called a completely democratic country but the situation is better than in Georgia and Azerbaijan: in 2008 its press was freer than that of its neighbors. The economic freedom factor has already placed Armenia among the developed countries.

The policy of peaceful development without dividing lines is viable and is approved by the regional and global actors. Today, much is being done to normalize relations between Turkey and Armenia in order to reduce the tension in the region. Armenia's position is straightforward: the borders should be opened irrespective of the tragedies of the common past. Closed borders do not merely interfere with Armenia's development; they hamper the progress of the entire region.

The transition period in the Caucasus is over; it will not return if the world crisis ends more or less soon. The Soviet Union has retreated into history while the region's Soviet successor states have not yet arrived at an acceptable mode of interaction. Geographically the Caucasus is a single region, but the local states have still to establish peaceful coexistence on a firmer foundation.

³⁶ For the full report of the UNDP Human Development Index 2007-2008 see: [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_20072008_EN_Complete.pdf].

³⁷ For the complete rating see: Fund for Peace–Failed States Index 2008, available at [http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=140].

³⁸ Freedom of the press—2008. Reporters without Borders, available at [http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=29031].

³⁹ CIA World Factbook, Country Comparisons—GDP—per capita (PPP), 2008, available at [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>].

⁴⁰ See: Heritage Foundation. Index of Economic Freedom World Rankings 2009, available at [<http://www.heritage.org/Index/Ranking.asp>].

AFGHANISTAN: POTENTIAL FIELD OF RUSSIA-U.S. REGIONAL COOPERATION

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Introduction

Today cooperation between Russia and the U.S. in Central Asia, as part of the international efforts designed to neutralize the regional threats and challenges, is best described as spontaneous. There are, however, certain spheres in which their cooperation could be wider for the sake of regional stability. Afghanistan, which remains the main source of the destabilization threat, should become the main target of such cooperation.

Both countries need stability in this part of the world; they are united in their desire to cut

short radical extremist activities and drug production in this country. In fact, this is a rare example of unanimity related to several points on the long list of international priorities. Their cooperation might even develop, sometime in the future, into a system of regional security concurrent with the interests of both states and the world community. There is hope that these approaches will be discussed, among other issues, at the Moscow Russian-American summit scheduled for July 2009.

American Regional Policy and the Coalition's Strong and Weak Points as Seen from Moscow

Presidents Obama and Medvedev, the newly elected heads of the United States and Russia, told the world that the relations between the leading countries of the security structures (NATO, CSTO, and SCO) operating in Central Asia (and elsewhere) needed to be "reset." This will give these countries the opportunity to arrest their slide into another Cold War. In this context Afghanistan is practically the only field in which the interests of both countries related to the key issue of international security coincide.

The still unsettled conflict in Afghanistan and its echo can be described as a major negative factor that undermines regional stability and affects the world community as a whole. So far, stability in

Afghanistan is maintained by the U.S.-led counterterrorist coalition based on NATO forces. If squeezed out of Afghanistan, radical Islamist structures will spread across the region. This will upturn the Central Asian states' domestic stability.

On the other hand, the Russian Federation and the other CSTO members are not involved in the ISAF military component and have so far limited their cooperation to transit services. This and the other coalition's blunders increased, rather than reduced, the threat of the challenges spreading to Afghanistan's neighbors.

The European Union and the SCO are concentrating on economic and humanitarian issues; they are taking great pains to emphasize the absence of any military interests outside their antiterrorist efforts. China, one of the principal actors in Central Asia and an active SCO member, prefers to keep away from military-political cooperation either with the West or with the CSTO even if the threats to its national security bring its interests in the military sphere very close to those of the other actors.

It seems unlikely that any of the above-mentioned countries concerned with their purely egoistical interests will achieve regional domination. In fact, none of the outsiders and none of the organizations involved, with stabilization projects of their own, in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a whole can stand opposed, on its own, to the traditional and non-traditional threats the region and the adjacent areas are producing.

An analysis of Washington's approaches reveals two factors:

- First, the United States will probably go on with the Greater Middle East project and will try to incorporate the local states into its sphere of influence. Very much as its predecessor, the new U.S. administration will look at Central Asia as a potential object of its "zone of responsibility," which covers the "areas of instability" (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and certain other states).
- Second, President Obama will probably accept the previous strategy and will concentrate on dealing with the Afghan-Pakistani problem. He has already made public the plans to increase military aid to both countries and achieve greater involvement of the Kabul regime in the joint efforts by intensifying training of the armed and special forces of Afghanistan. The Americans are resolved to cut down the number of civilian casualties, extend even stronger support to the institutional developments in the country, and end drug trafficking.¹

There are no plans to involve the CSTO and SCO in cooperation probably because that would demand revision of the system of international relations in the region. While supporting the antiterrorist centers of both structures and the SCO-Afghanistan contact group (which has already invigorated international anti-terrorist cooperation in the region), Washington will probably remain loyal to its former individual approach to each of the Central Asian countries.

The United States, however, will have to readjust its Central Asian policies. The old administration was totally devoted to the idea of putting an end to Russia's influence in the region, however the widely promoted "resetting of Russian-American relations" will not allow the United States to go on in the same direction, not to mention leaving Moscow baffled. This will do nothing to improve freight transit to Afghanistan and is not what the United States seeks to achieve.

Today there are about 75 thousand servicemen stationed in Afghanistan; 56.5 thousand of whom belong to the ISAF.² The U.S. president plans to add another 17 thousand servicemen to the American contingent. The contingent is stationed in 5 regional commands and is based on a developed military infrastructure consisting of 27 deployment points (see Fig. 1).

¹ "NATO Integrated Data Service," *NATO News*, 26 February-11 March, 2009.

² In the last 7 years the numerical strength of the ISAF troops has increased over 10-fold.

It seems that recently the U.S. forces were put on “stand-by” mode in the expectation of boosted activities. This forced the European and Canadian ISAF contingents to operate on their own in the country’s south and northwest where the Taliban was showing signs of revival.

There is every reason to expect a new wide-scale military operation in Afghanistan and in the border areas (on both sides of the Durand Line) as soon as American reinforcements arrive. This will obviously call for a careful analysis of the successes the coalition has scored and the blunders it has committed in the course of “Afghan appeasement.”

Figure 1

ISAF Military Bases in Afghanistan



The United States and its allies demonstrated a lot of resolution; their interference was well timed; they made wide use of the units of the Northern Alliance, which, thanks to Russia’s military-technical assistance, proved to be valuable allies. The success achieved at the active phase of warfare were ensured by large-scale, regular, and effective missile and air strikes on the Taliban command and control centers and positions as well as highly efficient special operations in which coalition and Afghan commanders of the anti-Taliban alliance acted together supported from the air. The enemy was routed by a comparatively limited force and with comparatively few lives lost.

Psychological and information warfare was an important and highly productive element of the Operation Enduring Freedom. Special psychological and information acts were aimed at the al-Qa’eda

and Taliban fighters, units of the Afghan army, and the civilian population. In a country with a negligible number of TV sets and radios, leaflets and public-address systems were inevitably the main instruments.³ These actions were backed up by stabilization measures: good relations among the contingents fighting side by side and with the coalition command, government and non-governmental organizations, and the population for the sake of the operation's success.

The coalition owed its success partly to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and teams charged with establishing contacts with local administrations active in different parts of the country. They helped restore the ruined economic infrastructure and reach an understanding with the local authorities, field commanders, and elders on using local resources to support the army. They were behind the local official and grassroots approval of the coalition forces and helped the coalition command cope with legal issues.

Democratic changes began as soon as the Taliban was routed: a Loya Jirga (constituent assembly) was convened; political power was transferred to the legally elected parliament; and a national government was set up. Large national minorities became more or less autonomous—a very important step toward the country's rehabilitation.

Later, however, the excessive optimism about the future of the country, which stemmed from the obvious essentially nationwide support of the coalition forces, resulted in bad mistakes. The operation's drive was prematurely checked while the need to address the Iraqi problem transferred the operation to the regime of a planned and inadequately supplied closing stage. The surviving Taliban fighters escaped deep into agricultural areas and mountains to lick their wounds and restore their fighting capacity.

The expectations of substantial material assistance from the world community were unjustified, though at the early stages the world was concerned enough about the threat the country posed to global stability and security. This to a certain extent led to turning a blind eye to the mounting drug production as the population had no choice but to grow poppy in order to survive and support the numerous semi-legal military structures with relatively independent field commanders.

It was wrong to remove field commanders popular among the various ethnic groups from the power structures. Done too soon, this made them if not active supporters of the opposition, then latent ill-wishers of the coalition and central government.

These and many other mistakes made stability impossible. Recently the government published its state of the nation report, which registered mounting tension across the country. In 2007, NATO troops were attacked about 130 times a month; today this figure has reached 600. In a number of regions the PRTs stopped their activities. Some international humanitarian organizations are gradually pulling their people out. Taliban fighters are reported to be acting unhampered in Paktia, Khost, Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand, and Nimruz.

The efforts to maintain peace and stability are claiming more and more lives. Since 2006, the number of casualties has been steadily rising—they are mainly fighters, but civilians, employees of humanitarian organizations, and officials are also among the victims. Since the beginning of 2009, 3,700 Afghans (1 thousand of them being civilians) perished in the hostilities in the country's south and east. By 17 April, 2009, the coalition lost 1,128 military (the United States lost 606; over 2.7 thousand American privates and officers have been wounded).

The government remains passive in the face of the Taliban's pressure. There is an opinion that the leadership is much more concerned with what is going on in the north where field commanders tend to openly ignore the center. This throws the disagreements between the NATO commanders and the Karzai Cabinet into bolder relief.

³ During the operation, over 80 million leaflets were dropped on the territory of Afghanistan with a population of about 27 million.

Meanwhile, the Taliban's guerilla warfare against the NATO forces and official government is rapidly unfolding. Taliban units are very mobile and do not need military infrastructure; acts of diversion and terror are growing more threatening. The local guerillas have al-Qa'eda fighters and volunteers from Muslim countries on their side, in some of the provinces local people, likewise, are on the Taliban side. Guerillas operate on drug money. They rely on many years of fighting in familiar terrain, they spurn comforts and are driven by religious fanaticism. In the absence of NATO troops permanently stationed in the south they restored their influence there.

An analysis of the present situation in Afghanistan shows that its ethno-national and ethno-territorial specifics should be carefully studied and taken into account at the new stage of the efforts to achieve stability.

The social structure is still patriarchal and is based on clan and tribal relations; the way of life is archaic. The country can be best described as an ethnic patchwork, which means that there is no Afghan nation in the general meaning of this term. Its over 27 million-strong population is divided into numerous ethnic groups. The Pashtoons (who comprise 40-45 percent of the total population and are the main source of Taliban fighters) form the dominant ethnic group; the Tajiks (there are up to 20 percent of them) side with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance; the Khazareans constitute 16 percent; Uzbeks 9 percent; and there are also Turkmen and Baluchis.

It should be said that domination of the Pashtoons is the key factor of political stability. Today, the Karzai government lacks such domination, an omission that cannot be compensated for by powerful foreign support. It seems that democratic and common human values are unlikely to strike root in Afghanistan.

In the ethno-territorial respect the southern and eastern provinces are the traditional instability source, which explains why there were neither PRT nor contact teams nor humanitarian missions in these areas. In all other places, however, Taliban fighters force the local people to destroy the results of the "infidels'" great efforts. By day group members restore what was destroyed or build anew while by night they have to rebuff Taliban attacks. Almost all the provinces are caught in economic stagnation with accompanying unemployment and poverty. This means that people will hardly side with NATO against the Taliban.

The terrain is highly unfavorable; moving around the country is a far from easy task⁴ aggravated by complex meteorological conditions. Moreover, the country is protected by almost impassable and easy defensible mountain ranges. This means that on the ground the troops will encounter great problems in maneuvering and material-technical support, especially in the south.

The recent experience of fighting in Afghanistan indicates that there are several more failures that the coalition will have to remedy. Quite often, contingents within the ISAF are excessively autonomous and frequently fail to exchange intelligence. Fighting under their own command, the Americans violate the principle of single command accepted everywhere in the world; not infrequently they fail to inform the allies about planned actions.

Troop deployment and the responsibility zones of the allies do not always correspond to the contingents' numerical strength and the tasks to be accomplished. The troops stationed in the south and the east have to carry the main burden of fighting while the Germans and Italians stationed in the north are more concerned about obeying their governments' instructions to ensure their own safety. This cannot but perplex the American, Canadian, and Danish troops carrying the main burden of responsibility and sustaining the greatest losses.

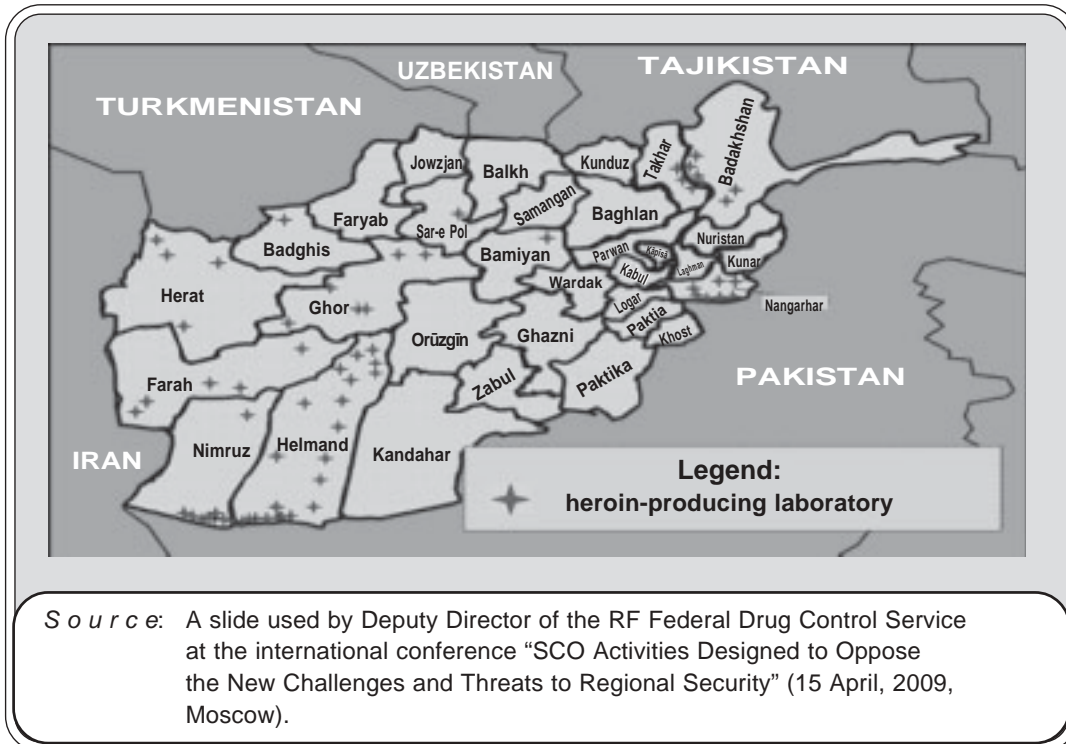
There is another aspect of the present situation in Afghanistan that deserves special attention. I have in mind drug production, the volumes of which created the term "global Afghan narco-expansion." According to expert assessments, the production of opiates in Afghanistan has increased

⁴ In the mountains, units moving on foot can cover 200-500 m/hr, which is 10 to 15 times less than in the valleys.

44-fold since the moment the American and ISAF forces entered the country to account for 93 percent of world production, which covers the requirements of all opiate-users in the world.⁵ The areas under opium poppy have increased nearly 40-fold—from 7.6 thousand hectares in 2001 to 193 thousand hectares in 2007. Hundreds of heroin laboratories were set up (see Fig. 2). Today Afghanistan is the world’s second largest producer of cannabis (hashish and hashish oil).

Figure 2

Distribution of Heroin Laboratories



Up to 60 percent of the locally grown opium is synthesized into heroin inside the country. This cannot be done without a huge amount of precursors brought from abroad.⁶ According to the U.N., drug production employs about 3 million Afghans or 13 percent of the country’s population. This has already developed into an inalienable part of socioeconomic life with no competitive alternative in sight. The money (\$40 million) the United States allocates to destroy poppy plantations and stimulate alternative agricultural cultures cannot resolve this problem. The barely developed border infrastructure and its technical support, which leaves the state border porous along many stretches, do nothing to stem the flow of drugs from Afghanistan.⁷

⁵ Report by Deputy Director of the RF Federal Drug Control Service Yu. Maltsev delivered at the international conference “SCO Activities Designed to Oppose the New Challenges and Threats to Regional Security” held on 15 April, 2009 in Moscow.

⁶ About 13 thousand tons of precursors are needed to process this amount of local opium; according to information supplied by Kabul, in the last two years only 200 tons of precursors were confiscated.

⁷ A mere 2 percent of the total amount of drugs moved across the border is confiscated at the border.

This creates a paradox: the present conviction that terrorism should be fought on its home ground leaves its financial and economic basis intact.⁸ This means that the efforts to destroy the Taliban and its recruiting, military, and material structures which keep the “fighting industry” afloat call for more than another military operation in Afghanistan but also a joint struggle, together with the world community, against narco-traffic which pays for terrorist activities.

The new phase of efforts to restore normalcy in Afghanistan will inevitably call for an invasion of Pakistan. The Taliban logistics in North Waziristan must be destroyed even if this is hardly feasible. Somewhat apprehensive of this extremist movement, the leaders of Pakistan do not want to see ISAF forces in the country’s north; there are talks about mining the border to prevent Taliban fighters crossing the Durand Line. This, however, will also keep the NATO contingent away.

On the whole, the coalition forces will pursue the following military-political aims in the course of the coming military operation:

- Total routing of the Taliban in the south and east; liquidation of its most implacable leaders (it might be transformed sometime in the future into a moderate movement with new leaders ready to talk to official Kabul);
- Setting up conditions conducive to political and socioeconomic reconstruction of the territories liberated from the Taliban and cooperation with the Pashtoon tribal leaders in the border area to set up a security zone along the border between the two countries.

History has taught us that force is not enough to bring stability to Afghanistan. This means that it can be restored as a secular and peaceful state solely by means of political and economic methods employed to achieve a mutually acceptable alternative. Force should be used only against Taliban and al-Qa’eda fighters. Civilians should be provided with maximum protection—something the ISAF has so far failed to achieve.

This means that interstate cooperation in the region should rest on a model that presupposes similar or identical strategic interests of Afghanistan and other countries, the United States and its allies as well as Russia and its CSTO/SCO partners in particular. To achieve this all the sides thus involved must arrive at a coordinated and balanced policy designed to neutralize the wide range of threats and challenges. A joint strategy of response to such threats and challenges that would involve the regional actors, world powers, organizations, and alliances interested in regional stability would clearly show such a coordinated and balanced approach.

The Prospects of Russian-American Cooperation within the International Structures Active in the Region

The disagreements over certain issues of Central Asian stability and security notwithstanding, Moscow and Washington have common interests: the anti-terrorist struggle, strategic stability, conflict settlement, WMD non-proliferation, etc. These are common tasks that presuppose cooperation rather than rivalry. Russia and the United States as well as the international structures in which they

⁸ In 2008, American special services officially admitted that part of the narco-money is spent on terrorist structures in Afghanistan.

are involved should pool their efforts. There are several promising trends of their cooperation, which will involve the Central Asian states. The sides should achieve a constructive dialog with them and between NATO and CSTO, two structures of regional security.

The dialog should produce new methods to be applied against all agents that threaten regional stability. At its Istanbul summit NATO spoke in favor of sharing responsibility with the CSTO for Central Asian security. The CSTO has already moved in this direction and is prepared to cooperate with the Alliance in all the main areas.⁹

Today, cooperation between America and Russia cannot move forward without restored and even deeper measures of confidence between them, which was undermined, to great extent, by the Caucasian events. They should be carefully analyzed; what happened in the Caucasus in 2008 brings to mind the Balkan events of 2001 when Moscow froze its relations with NATO. In 2008, it was Washington that froze its relations with Moscow. An impartial analysis will help defrost the situation and avoid similar developments in the future.

Russia and the United States could also work together in the Russia-NATO Council. Much can be done to revive the Council and military exchanges; broaden the discussion of operational cooperation in the future ranging from counterterrorist to peacekeeping, as well as further development of the operational compatibility of troops and forces; develop integrated communication means; exchange troop training experience, etc.

Individual cooperation can potentially be correlated with a collective dialog, therefore it seems useful to study the military-political resource the sides have accumulated within the Partnership for Peace program. This task can be formulated as building up partnership between NATO and the CSTO on the basis of the experience of bilateral relations accumulated by other CSTO members. This is important: it seems that in the near future peacekeeping might develop into the CSTO's main function—a relevant official decision has been made.

Meanwhile, both Russia and its CSTO partners can learn a lot from the United States and NATO. This is especially true of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), which is involved in restoring the ruined infrastructure in the peacekeeping zones. My personal observations of NATO peacekeepers during their training at centers in Europe and CIMIC involvement, as part of PRT in the north of Afghanistan, convinced me of their efficiency. So far this important element of stabilization in conflict zones is still undeveloped in the Russian training programs. While Washington could become a coordinator of such programs for Russian and Central Asian peacekeepers for their future involvement in international peacekeeping efforts.

The agreement between the heads of state and government of the NATO countries and Russia on cooperation in crisis regulation serves as a solid foundation for joint peacekeeping. It was decided to develop the Concept for Joint Russia-NATO Operations: it is abundantly clear that a joint "anti-crisis response" in any region of the world has become a must which is much more needed than before. The Russian peacekeepers have the experience of cooperation with Americans acquired in the Balkans when they operated as part of the American North division.

The fight against narco-traffic is the third cooperation sphere. Success in the Afghan sector primarily depends on an integrated approach: instead of cooperation among official structures as practiced today the interested sides should launch international operations. Issues related to Afghanistan should be discussed by the United Nations while contacts should be maintained both at the working and official levels along the Russia-the U.S./NATO, EU, and OSCE line.

A road map is badly needed to show the way toward a gradual, stage-by-stage solution to the Afghan drug problem. The Afghan government should be supported in its efforts not only to liquidate

⁹ Letter of CSTO Secretary General N. Bordiuzha to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer of 8 July, 2004 in which he outlined the main trends of a dialog and relations between the two organizations.

the opium poppy plantations but also to set up a full-fledged social and economic infrastructure. An international supervisory board should be set up to coordinate international aid to Afghanistan and improve its efficiency.

Borders should be reliably guarded with the help of state-of-the-art technology—this alone will close many channels through which drugs reach other countries. Russia and the Central Asian states are not the only ones that want this problem to be resolved. The NATO members can and should help Afghanistan's closest neighbors. Practical cooperation between the border guards and special forces of the SCO/CSTO members and the ISAF might help to stop the flow of drugs on the Afghan border; joint exercises can be followed by joint operations.

An international database on drug trafficking and exchange of experience related to the problems and achievements in the struggle against the drug threat among corresponding organizations would undoubtedly make this struggle more effective. The training programs for anti-drug specialists from Afghanistan and Central Asian countries organized within the SCO and NATO under the U.N. aegis should be extended; mobile training courses might prove useful.

Liquidation of the source of negative impact in the region represented by radical Islamic trends is the fourth important task that requires closer cooperation with the legal Muslim organizations.

Afghanistan's conflict potential is fed from abroad by radical fundamentalist centers—this is a political and military as well as humanitarian problem. The majority of the country's population is legally and religiously illiterate; their political convictions are half-baked. Coupled with the large strata of functionally illiterate and idle young people (the number of whom is rising amid the social and economic problems), this does nothing to breed stability. It would be expedient to discuss a joint program within U.S.-Russia cooperation designed to look at the sources, causes, and stimuli of religious extremism and the channels through which it is funded and infiltrates into Central Asia. Joint research of possible flare-ups of ethnic intolerance and religious extremism and their intensity can be also useful.

The ideologists of Islamic extremism and terrorism are past masters of manipulating public opinion through religion. Therefore, it seems expedient to create an educational project within the framework of international cooperation designed to promote secular Islam with the help of legal theological institutions. This can be done: traditional religious institutions are undergoing revival in Central Asia, which means that the most respected of them can send their theologians and missionaries to Afghanistan.

Peaceful life is the fifth possible trend of joint actions. The widest possible international aid is needed here. The SCO-Afghanistan contact group can work together with the U.S. and NATO, which will create a basis for regional cooperation. The most urgent trends should be identified. Roads look like the most promising field of economic cooperation. For example, the Zaranj-Delaram highway will join the Garland highway to provide access to the western Indian ports and shorten the road to the sea by 1,000 km.

Water is another stabilization factor in Afghanistan—without it its agriculture cannot be restored or developed. The problem has several solutions, including the Amu Darya River as one of the alternatives. All of them need investments, which not only Uzbekistan and Tajikistan but also Russia, the United States, and international organizations should treat as priorities.

Power supply is critically important for restoring peaceful life in the country and for the region's sustainable development. International organizations and transnational corporations, which are being drawn into the project on the U.S.'s and Russia's initiative, have the capacity to fund the Termez-Puli Khumri-Kabul power line.

The ruined infrastructure should be restored (including about 140 Soviet-built facilities of state importance), but it is premature to talk about Russia cooperating with the ISAF because of the very complex military situation in Afghanistan and the "Afghan syndrome" still alive in Russia.

Conclusion

Stability in Afghanistan is very hard to achieve and is just as hard to maintain. This task will require time, goodwill, and the joint efforts of numerous actors. The process, however, is calling for urgent action and is vitally important for a civilization confronted with numerous threats and challenges. This means that Russia and the U.S. should arrive at a joint strategy of anti-crisis measures that will embrace all spheres of regional stability and security in the military as well as economic, humanitarian, and other spheres on a multilateral basis. Moscow and Washington have a good chance of establishing regional cooperation and “resetting” their relations. For the sake of the world community this chance should not be missed.

KAZAKHSTAN AND THE STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF THE GLOBAL PLAYERS IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Every Central Asian state today is concerned about its relations with the world powers, and Kazakhstan is no exception. This topic is even more urgent in the context of the global financial and economic crisis, when essentially all the world's countries have had to rethink their strategy on the international arena and make certain adjustments to their foreign political priorities. The global players want to retain their leading positions, the regional nations are trying to advance their positions as their stronger rivals backslide, while the economically undeveloped countries are hoping to avoid bankruptcy and loss of sovereignty.

But such active, ambitious, and resource-rich states as Kazakhstan are not locked in a bat-

tle for survival. The matter concerns broader problems. What will the world be like after the crisis and what place will Kazakhstan occupy in it? How will post-Soviet Central Asia further evolve? Can the regional leaders show their political will or will national egoism take the upper hand? How should the Central Asian states react to the world powers' strategy in the region? Will Central Asia become an independent entity of world politics, or will it miss its historical chance by becoming just another cog in the wheel of other nations' geopolitical projects and strategies?

Both the long-term prospects of the individual Central Asian states and the destiny of the region as a whole directly depend on finding the right answer to these and several other no less

complicated questions. Today's political elites must understand that they are responsible not only to the present, but also to the future gener-

ations. Today the ground is being prepared for the future. What will it yield—strong or weak states?

Kazakhstan and Russia's Central Asian Strategy

Russia occupies a historical place in Central Asia, so any talk about it "leaving" or "returning" to the region is pure rhetoric. Russia is a historical and geographical given, a geopolitical and geo-economic constant that each state must always keep in mind when drawing up its own foreign policy strategy. And finally, it represents common historical memory, close state and human ties, and the longest interstate land border in the world. So Russia will always be an exclusively important and priority partner of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

But how successful is Russia in its Central Asian policy? Is it ready to engage in tough competition with the other global players in the new geopolitical conditions? How great are its current opportunities in the conditions of the global financial and economic crisis? Is it capable of conducting a consistent strategy regarding the region or will its policy again boil down to a perfunctory sum of situational tactical steps and attention focused on the development of bilateral relations, as has been the case so often in post-Soviet history?

It stands to reason that the crisis has affected Russia's economic opportunities within the post-Soviet expanse. The country has been burdened by a multitude of domestic problems (the higher budget deficit, cutback in foreign trade revenue, disproportional development of the regions, reduction in the number of donor regions, growing difficulties in relations between the center and the federation constituencies, changes in the political landscape, intensification of oppositional and protest moods, and so on). But all the same, in our opinion, despite the difficulties generated by the world crisis, the Russian Federation will continue to steer a course toward restoring its position among the leading nations of the world and this must be reckoned with. Russia will make an economic comeback, raise its international significance, and build up its military-strategic potential much faster than some politicians and experts are inclined to believe. So there is no point in prematurely forecasting a decrease in Russia's role in the world and in the post-Soviet expanse.

Russia has been searching long and hard for its own geopolitical identity. Through trial and error, it is trying to find the right tone in its relations with different countries and regions of the world, including Central Asia, frequently making mistakes along the way (including with respect to the frozen conflicts and energy security, to name a few). This is arousing very natural caution since any "rash" move it makes with respect to the states of the post-Soviet expanse plucks at the extremely delicate and sensitive strings of historical memory. If Russia has too harsh a reaction to a particular event—puts pressure on its allies, shows an excessive desire to flex its military muscles, or applies economic levers of influence against a particular state—many Central Asian experts will inevitably project this onto their own region.

It is not always possible to find a single system-forming origin in Russia's Central Asian strategy either. Although it may make significant strides forward in its relations with a particular state, Moscow is unable to achieve significant progress in its relations with the region as a whole. Large-scale contracts with one state mean losses in relations with others.¹ Water facilities in Tajikistan

¹ See: "Prichina otkaza Uzbekistana ot uchastii v ODKB veroiatno kroetsia v okazanii Rossiei podderzhki Kyrgyzstanu i Tadzhiistanu v stroitel'stve GES," by S. Ezhkov, available at [<http://www.ca-news.org/print/118471>].

and Kyrgyzstan are a good case in point.² Year after year the drama over the price of natural gas produced by the Central Asian states continues.³ Whereby the interests of large Russian corporations are not always justifiably identified with Russia's interests as a state (this became particularly evident during the recent conflict between Turkmenistan and Gazprom with respect to the gas pipeline explosion).⁴

On the whole, in our opinion, Russia has not quite achieved a strategic vision of its relations with the Central Asian states. Moscow is still unable to develop a unified and integrated approach to the region. Instead of concentrating on one chess game it is playing five at once. This has its advantages up to a certain point, but in the end it will lead to greater contradictions with partners. In this respect, the Kremlin's somewhat skeptical attitude toward the integration processes in Central Asia and its unwillingness to talk to the region as a whole do not appear particularly productive.

However, experience shows that the most positive dynamics in developing relations with Central Asia are achieved precisely by those states that encourage regional integration. We are sure that Russia's assistance in regional integration will only help to strengthen those projects Russia is directly involved in (the CIS, EurAsEC, Customs Union, the SCO). Central Asia's consolidation will ultimately be beneficial to Russia itself. But this will only be possible if its strategy acquires more distinct features and if Moscow trusts its partners and allies more. The old axiom that you can only lean on what is capable of resisting is true not only in physics, but also in international relations.

Recently, Russian policy on the international arena has begun acquiring softer forms. Dmitri Medvedev is resorting increasingly to the significant potential of "soft power," which is doubtlessly helping to enhance Russia's image and establish more productive relations with the other grandees of world politics, including the EU and U.S. If this trend continues, it will have a favorable influence on cooperation among the world powers in Central Asia and be beneficial to Central Asia. For example, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's recent statement to the effect that Russia is not claiming a monopoly in Central Asia and recognizes the interests of other world powers in the region was positively perceived by all the interested sides, including Kazakhstan.

As for Kazakh-Russian relations proper, both bilateral and multilateral, they have the most favorable prospects. The role of bilateral cooperation has become particularly dynamic in the context of the world crisis. Kazakhstan's and Russia's joint efforts in the economic sphere are having a favorable influence on the entire Eurasian expanse.

The experience accumulated by the two countries over the years of independence makes it possible to confidently talk about a strategic partnership between Astana and Moscow that covers almost all the most important spheres—from problems of global and regional security to cooperation in the military-political and energy spheres,⁵ as well as in high technology.

Both the intensive political dialogue between their leaders and the successful development of economic trade relations, as well as the greater interaction at the level of civil society, show the high level of mutual understanding between the countries. It can be confidently said that Kazakhstan and Russia have become equal strategic partners in practice.

² See: "Uzbekistan: zaiavlena ofitsial'naiia pozitsiia po voprosu stroitel'stva novykh GES," available at [<http://www.ferghana.ru/news.php?id=11690&print=1>].

³ See: A. Grivach, "Tsena sredneaziatskogo partnerstva," available at [<http://www.vremya.ru/print/227122.html>].

⁴ See: D. Trilling, "Turkmenistan: truboprovodnyy spor s Kremlem prevrashchaetsia v politicheskuiu proverku na prochnost'," available at [<http://www.inosmi.ru/translation/248528.html>].

⁵ See: "Mazhilis odobril ratifikatsiiu soglasheniia mezhdru pravitel'stvami RK, RF i Turkmenistana o sotrudnichestve v stroitel'stve Prikaspiiskogo gazoprovoda (s dopolneniem)," available at [<http://www.kt.kz/print.php?lang=rus&uin=1133167994>].

Kazakhstan and Chinese Interests in the Region

China has been one of Central Asia's most important partners from the very beginning, which is very understandable keeping in mind their geographical proximity, similar mindset, and traditionally close economic and cultural ties. At the same time, two important circumstances are making this partnership especially pertinent and mutually advantageous.

- First, China is currently moving up to a higher rung in the world hierarchy. The PRC is becoming a global power with a very strong influence on all the political and economic processes in the contemporary world.
- Second, in the context of the world crisis, China is among the few states that has not only avoided recession but also retained fairly high GDP growth rates. The PRC was able to shift the accents in its economic development on time and is striving to compensate for the drop in exports by expanding its internal market.
- Third, China has significant international reserves, which allow it to carry out large-scale operations in crisis conditions aimed at acquiring both natural resources and the shares of foreign enterprises.⁶ It is essentially investing in its geopolitical future. When the world recovers from the crisis (and China will be one of the first to overcome today's difficulties), Beijing will have everything it needs for another economic and technological breakthrough, and the yuan will possibly become one of the world reserve currencies.⁷

Central Asia and Kazakhstan cannot ignore these important facts. Moreover, they simply have to make use of them in their own national interests. China's fortification is a sustainable and long-term trend, so cooperation with it can only be to Kazakhstan's advantage, particularly if we keep in mind the complementariness of the two countries' economies.

The desire of some politicians and experts to evaluate the intensification of Kazakh-Chinese relations in the traditional terms of "zero-sum game" is entirely understandable. They interpret the rapprochement of the two countries either as Astana's "distancing" from Moscow toward Beijing,⁸ or as Kazakhstan's striving to avoid excessive pressure from Washington,⁹ etc.

Kazakhstan is acting very pragmatically. It is not losing sight of the general context of what is going on in the world. All the global and regional players are actively cooperating with China. Other countries, including Iran and the RF, are also signing contracts for the delivery of energy resources to China.¹⁰ For example, Kazakhstan fully understands China granting Russia a loan of 25 billion dollars. On the whole, stronger cooperation among the SCO member states in the context of the world crisis is an exclusively positive phenomenon.

⁶ See: "Ministerstvo kommersii: zakupki za rubezhom stanut obychnoi deiatelnosti," available at [<http://russian.people.com.cn/31518/6639210.html>].

⁷ See: S. Tarasov, "Iuan' gotovitsia pokorit' mir," available at [<http://www.stoletie.ru/print.php?printid=14592>].

⁸ See: "Ne dozhdavshis' Rossii, Kazakhstan prodaetsia Kitaiu," available at [<http://svpressa.ru/issue/news.php?id=7386>].

⁹ See: "Kitai ne dast Kazakhtanu stat' amerikanskoi marionetkoi v regione," available at [<http://evrazia.org/news/8107>].

¹⁰ See: "Kitaiskie eksperty: Sotrudnichestvo KNR i Rossii v sfere energetiki priobrelo politicheskii smysl," available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/1154849.html>].

Kazakhstan and the U.S.'s Central Asian Strategy

The U.S. traditionally occupies an important place in Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities. This stands to reason, since despite all the changes in the world balance of forces the United States will long continue to be the most powerful nation in all respects, a nation with global influence and with which all of today's states will have to reckon.

Barack Obama's ascent to power has brought up many questions, hopes, and expectations not only in the U.S., but also throughout the world regarding the content and general tone of America's foreign policy. It should be noted that Obama's first 100 days at the helm created a rather favorable impression since the new president is showing his adherence in practice to searching for diplomatic solutions to the most complicated problems of international affairs, as well as a willingness for compromise.

Central Asia was not a very easy region for the former American administration during its eight years in power. The desire to fight international terrorism and achieve stabilization in Afghanistan, as well as the interest in gaining access to natural resources often contradicted with advancing democracy in Central Asia. This was expressed in the events around Andijan and the subsequent withdrawal of the American military base from Uzbekistan. The end of 2008 and first half of 2009 were marked by discussions about the withdrawal of the American base from Kyrgyzstan. Washington's recent statement to the effect that after it pulled out of Manas the U.S. would not create a new base in Central Asia seemed to put the final end to this story and open a new page in relations with the region.¹¹

Of course, at present many questions concerning the new American administration's strategy in Central Asia have not been answered. We still cannot say with certainty whether the concept of Greater Central Asia, which was unofficially upheld by the George Bush Jr. administration, will remain in force. It is also difficult to say whether Barack Obama's new policy in Afghanistan will become an integral part of this concept. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan is interested in Afghanistan's rapid stabilization and in establishing strategic cooperation between NATO and CSTO and NATO and SCO.

The U.S. has been and still is conducting an active policy in energy security, which directly affects Central Asia and the Caspian Region. Washington is insistently advancing the idea of diversifying export routes and opposing any monopoly in this sphere. It must be admitted that Gazprom agreed to calculate the prices for Central Asian natural gas in keeping with the European formula, for which the U.S. can take some of the credit. But excessive politicization of energy security issues sometimes stoked up the tension in issues that require moderate approaches. In this respect, the recent appointment of Richard Morningstar as U.S. Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy was a positive signal for all the sides concerned.¹²

Further development of Central Asia and Kazakhstan largely depends on resolving the problem of Iran's energy program. Kazakhstan, which has large supplies of uranium (around 20% of the total world reserves) and has voluntarily declared itself a non-nuclear state, is upholding a principled position in this issue. Astana recognized Iran's right to the peaceful atom and is in favor of a peaceful

¹¹ See: A. Dubnov, "Ekho 'perezagruzki' v Tsentral'noi Azii," available at [<http://www.vremya.ru/print/227723.html>].

¹² See: "Richard Morningstar stanet osnovnym sovetnikom Hillary Clinton po voprosam Evrazii," available at [<http://regnum.ru/news/1153845.html>].

solution to all problems relating to its nuclear program. In this respect, the Obama administration reacted rather positively to the idea of creating a nuclear fuel bank on Kazakhstan's territory.¹³

The U.S. is an important partner of Kazakhstan in investment cooperation (the total amount of American investments in the Kazakh economy has already topped 15 billion dollars), in the fuel and energy complex, and in high technology. In this respect, the Kazakh-American initiative to establish state-private partnership could play an important role.

On the whole, Astana intends to continue pursuing friendly and constructive relations with Washington and develop a dialogue in all the main areas of cooperation—political, economic, and military—as well as in security and the advance of democracy. Kazakhstan will also strive to remain the U.S.'s key partner in Central Asia in the future. In this respect, it highly values the assistance Washington is rendering to the integration processes in the region.

Kazakhstan and EU Strategy in Central Asia

The European Union has become more active in Central Asia in the past few years. The peak of the EU's relations with the region came during Germany's chairmanship, under which a document entitled "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership" for 2007-2013 was drawn up and adopted. According to this document, the EU's main goals in the region include ensuring stability and security of the Central Asian countries, helping to reduce poverty and raise the standard of living of its population, and developing cooperation between the European Union and the regional states.

Kazakhstan was positively inclined toward this strategy. Its foreign policy departments in all of the Central Asian countries took part in preparing and coordinating this document. Kazakhstan is particularly interested in the sections of the strategy that deal with encouraging Central Asia's integration into the world economy, including by means of the WTO's mechanisms, supporting regional trade, helping to resolve environmental and water problems, and strengthening the energy and transport ties between the EU and the region. So Astana has been trying to reinforce the nascent positive trends in the EU's policy, particularly under France's chairmanship.

Kazakhstan reacted to the EU's Central Asian strategy by adopting the "Path to Europe" state program in 2008. This program envisages:

- developing and intensifying cooperation with the European countries in all vectors, including political, economic, and social;
- interaction in the sphere of security and humanitarian cooperation;
- improving Kazakhstan's institutional and legal base using positive European experience, and so on.

Within the framework of this program, Astana succeeded in greatly stepping up its relations both with Western and with Central and Eastern European states. In so doing, by upholding the multi-vector principle, Kazakhstan was able not only to raise its relations with the EU to a new level as a global player, but also retain a reasonable balance in relations with Russia, China, and the U.S.

¹³ See: K. Esbergen, "Astana snova primeriaet na sebja rol' geopoliticheskogo igroka," available at [<http://rus.azattyq.org/articleprintview/1606655.html>].

Unfortunately, at present, it must be said that the European Union's activity in the Central Asian vector has subsided somewhat. And there are reasons for this.

- First, the EU, like the other global actors, is experiencing great economic difficulties caused by the world financial crisis. In this respect it cannot fully realize the intentions set forth in the Strategy for 2007-2013.
- Second, the EU is currently headed by the Czech Republic, which is experiencing an internal political crisis and does not enjoy enough economic and political clout to have a significant impact on the policy of United Europe in Central Asia. We will remind you that the Czech president is "Euro skeptic" V. Klaus, while M. Topolánek's "Euro optimistic" government was recently given a vote of no confidence in the country's parliament. In addition, the Czech Republic ranks only 16th in the EU in terms of GDP, has still not entered the Euro zone, and is experiencing certain economic difficulties.
- Third, in 2008 and at the beginning of 2009, the European Union was forced to undertake extraordinary measures with respect to the events in the Caucasus, Middle East, and the gas war between Russia and Ukraine.

So both objective and subjective factors are hindering the development of cooperation between the EU and Central Asia to a certain extent, which European representatives are openly talking about. Admittedly, in March-April 2009 the European Union did attempt to draw attention to itself in the region. In particular, P. Morel, its special representative for the Central Asian countries, said that he was concerned about the unequal distribution of water resources in Central Asia and recommended that the region's states re-examine their attitude toward the water problem.¹⁴ The signing by Germany's RWE and Turkmenistan of a memorandum on cooperation, which makes it possible to talk about a new round in the struggle for Caspian energy resources, did not go unnoticed either.¹⁵

Kazakhstan is extremely interested in the EU remaining Central Asia's main partner since this will not only promote the region's development, but will also make it possible to retain a reasonable balance of forces there. In addition, cooperation with the EU is extremely important for Kazakhstan due to its upcoming chairmanship in the OSCE in 2010. Astana is willing to examine any issues that are important to the members of this organization, including the Central Asian states. While keeping its own national interests in mind, Kazakhstan will do everything it can to make the OSCE an area of peace, stability, and mutual understanding.

* * *

Recognizing its special role in Central Asia and in Eurasia as a whole, Kazakhstan has never been a country to play an underpart, quietly observing the competition among the world nations in the region from the wings. During all the years of its independence, it has conducted a policy aimed at integration of the region, its unification in the face of the global challenges and threats, and its transformation into a united geopolitical entity. The Union of Central Asian States Kazakhstan offered its regional neighbors is another confirmation of this.

At the same time, Astana is not hiding its long-term geopolitical and geo-economic ambitions. There can be no doubt that the country is interested in retaining its role of regional leader, outstripping

¹⁴ See: V. Panfilova, "Brissel' protiv ogromnykh plotin," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 April, 2009.

¹⁵ See: A. Grivach, "V obkhod Rossii. Turkmenistan podpisal s nemetskoi RWE memorandum o sotrudnichestve," available at [<http://www.vremya.ru/print/227454.html>].

its neighbors in all the main parameters of national might. It intends to reach the top rungs of the world hierarchy and gradually become a member of the most influential associations.

Kazakhstan is not only striving to successfully integrate into world economic relations, but is also actively participating in forming the agenda of the post-crisis world. In this respect, it is exerting efforts to become one of the most competitive countries of the world and possibly join the “Asian twenty.” Finally, it will continue to promote the idea of creating a regional Asian currency and supra-national world currency.

Can these and other problems be effectively resolved without active and constructive cooperation with the key global players—Russia, China, the U.S., and the European Union? Of course, not. Recognizing this, Kazakhstan is trying to retain its status as a key strategic partner of the world nations in Central Asia in all the most important areas—political, investment, economic trade, energy, military-strategic, scientific-educational, and cultural.

By intensifying its cooperation with the world powers, Kazakhstan certainly hopes that the inevitable competition among the global players in Central Asia will not escalate into confrontation, but will act as a counterbalance to their active cooperation, primarily in regional security (including with respect to post-conflict rehabilitation in Afghanistan), as well as in the energy industry and transport communications.

In this respect, Kazakhstan is in favor of equal and mutually advantageous partnership between the various collective security and cooperation organizations—the CSTO and NATO, the SCO and NATO, the SCO and EurAsEC. It is trying to create an atmosphere in the region whereby the success of one global player cannot be interpreted as the failure of the other. Moreover, Kazakhstan is against any one global player having excessive domination in Central Asia, since this would hinder realization of the region’s geopolitical and geo-economic potential.

The world nations must realize that all the Central Asian states (including the economically weakest) have already had a taste of freedom and independence. Not understanding this simple truth creates certain difficulties for the world powers themselves, since they are not always able to make an adequate assessment of certain steps taken by the Central Asian leaders. For example, when investing large amounts of money in the economy of the regional states and drawing corresponding benefit from this, the world powers are often inclined to expect that their partners will also show geopolitical loyalty and support certain steps on the world arena. So it stands to reason that the global players sometimes perceive the attempts of the regional elites to ensure the national interests of their own countries as much as possible as being inconsistent¹⁶ or even as their ingratitude.¹⁷

But the countries of the region no longer want to be mere cogs in the wheel of the geopolitical projects advanced by the global players, even if their implementation promises significant economic and other dividends. So at the expense of making certain tactical and strategic mistakes, the Central Asian states will strive to carry out (regardless of the specific terminology) the same multi-vector policy, balancing out some of the world powers against others, global players against regional, and geographically nearby states against distant ones.

In this respect it should be kept in mind that for Central Asia and Kazakhstan the outside world is not limited to the world nations. The role of other countries is gradually strengthening—India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, the Middle Eastern states, Latin America, and so on. This will make it possible to diversify foreign policy in the foreseeable future and to some extent counterbalance the influence of the world nations in the region. This factor must be kept in mind. For Central

¹⁶ See: R. Fedoseev, “Uzbekistan povorachivaet na Zapad,” available at [www.vz.ru/politics/2009/4/15/276710.print.html].

¹⁷ See: “Ekspert: Rossia dolzhna napomnit’ Tsentral’noi Azii o svoem vklade v razvitie regiona,” available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/1151562.html>].

Asia it is a valuable geopolitical and geo-economic resource. So not one state, no matter how strong and influential it is, should cherish vain hopes about the prospect of gaining supremacy in the region—the controlling set of shares will always be held by the Central Asian countries.

Of course, Kazakhstan clearly recognizes the seriousness of the Central Asian region's problems (water, ethno-territorial, and others), but it is sure that all of these questions can be resolved by manifesting political will. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that the states of the region will gradually come to understand the need for accelerating integration, within the framework of which mutually acceptable compromises can be sought. In this respect, Kazakh politicians and experts believe that the arguments that Central Asia is almost threatened with collapse are much too categorical.¹⁸ As for the “insurmountable” contradictions, it is enough to recall how difficult and thorny the European path to integration was (and remains to this day).

On the whole, Kazakhstan is willing to continue steering a course toward a balanced, equal, and constructive dialogue with all the world and regional nations. It intends to integrate into world economic relations and occupy a worthy place in creating world order. While upholding its own national interests and the interests of Central Asia, Kazakhstan is also willing to take its share of the responsibility for the state of affairs in the region and the world as a whole.

¹⁸ See: A. Shmulevich, “Tsentral’naia Azia i Kazakhstan: tochki griadushchego raspada,” available at [<http://www.apn.ru/publications/print21535.htm>].

MASS MEDIA

TERRORISM AS
A COMMUNICATION
PHENOMENON

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Some of the contemporary theories of the mass media and political communications¹ teach their audiences and mold public ideas about events or phenomena which political forces exploit for their own ends. The media do not merely cover events or describe phenomena—they cover them with “outgrowths” that disfigure them to the extent that the public gradually shifts from discussing the real phenomenon to its virtual likeness, which might well be a product of media skills. This explains why from time to time the public concentrates on phantoms at the expense of real and even urgent issues, which remain uncovered and therefore ignored.

¹ See, for example: A.V. Atanesian, *Aktualnye problemy sovremennykh politicheskikh i konfliktnykh kommunikatsiy*, Erevan State University Press, Erevan, 2008.

The agenda-setting theory postulates: “We judge as important what the *media* judge as important.”² Significantly, according to the agenda-setting theory the media determines not merely what the public would think but also the objects of its deliberations: “The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.”³ This is true when applied to the press; the electronic media—TV and the Internet—have gone even further. They not merely suggest what people should think about—they tell them what they should think, how to treat the events, and what terms should be applied.

² E. Griffin, *A First Look at Communication Theory*, McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York, 1996, p. 332.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

This creates a gap between the objective meanings of any social-political phenomenon and its subjective treatment in the media and public consciousness. The range of instruments the media use to manipulate public opinion and mobilize human resources in the interests of national and global poli-

cies are few: shifted accents, substitution of one phenomenon for another, overstatements, building up public tension to fix public attention on a certain side of the described phenomenon, emotional descriptions of the phenomenon, and overstating some of its sides at the expense of others.

“Terrorism” in the System of Media Communications

Recently “terrorism” has become the media’s most impressive pet term. The problem of terrorism treated as a priority is discussed on a par with other phenomena that, from the point of view of the media, deserve priority treatment. Terrorism along with conflicts, crises, wars, and mass actions with critical results invariably occupy the front pages of newspapers and open all the news programs. The contemporary media malaise, civic malaise, violence cultivation theories, and partly the agenda theory offer their explanations of this phenomenon.⁴

Today, when the uproar caused by another wave of terror has subsided and has been replaced, at least temporally, with the uproar caused by the financial crisis, we can discuss terrorism as a communication phenomenon much more soberly and impartially. Both Western and Russian language academic writings are not alien to comparing real functional descriptions and media manipulations with reality.

It is fundamentally important to distinguish between the objective characteristics of terrorism identified while studying cases of terror and its subjective perception.⁵ At the level of subjective perceptions and assessments the real picture often becomes blurred; it is transformed into a system of emotional images and descriptions that are not necessarily true to reality.

D. Olshanskiy of Russia described the extent to which the public’s subjective assessments differ from the objective definition of the concept of *terrorism*: “In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist acts in New York, the Center for Strategic Analysis and Forecasting organized a poll among Muscovites. At first glance the question: What does the word terrorism mean? invited a simple answer. This impression proved false. Out of over 1,000 polled Muscovites 47 percent described terrorism as terrorist acts, that is, defined the word with the help of two others related to the first, which did not clarify its meaning; 38 percent offered their emotional assessments saying that it was ‘crime,’ ‘barbarity,’ ‘violence,’ etc; 12 percent had no answer or refused to discuss it; 2 percent were honest enough to admit that they did not know. A mere 1 percent tried, though far from unambiguously, to define terror as someone’s actions aimed at achieving certain aims.

“According to the Obshchestvennoe mnenie Fund that organized a similar public opinion poll, people did not really know how to describe ‘international terrorists.’ Twenty-six percent spoke of them as ‘bandits, enemies of mankind, monsters’; 16 percent as ‘criminals of worldwide scale’; 6 percent as ‘fanatics’; 5 percent as ‘criminal groups, bands, mafia’; 5 percent as ‘contract killers’; 4 percent as ‘a group seeking world domination’; 3 percent as ‘aggressive Muslims’; 2 percent as ‘people with crippled psyches’; and 2 percent as ‘avengers.’”⁶

⁴ See, for example: A.V. Atanesian, op. cit., pp. 15-39.

⁵ See: P. Norris, M. Kern, M. Just, *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public*, Rutledge, New York-London, 2003, p. 5.

⁶ D.V. Olshanskiy, *Psikhologiya terrora*, Akademicheskii Proekt, Moscow, 2002, pp. 11-12.

Similar polls in other countries might have produced a different picture. It is highly unlikely that in the Arabic countries terrorism would be associated with Islam. In the United States, however, post-9/11 assessments of terrorism were invariably associated in the media with Islam. Mustafa Al Sayyid has written in this connection that in the West the term *terrorism* is invariably defined and perceived as “Muslim terrorism” and as a phenomenon “stemming mainly from the Muslim countries.” Terrorists are those who are “not us” while “we are not terrorists.”⁷

The Russian media created a similar image of terrorism during the Chechen war even though everyone knows that terrorism in Russia is a weapon of local criminal communities and nationalists who terrorize people from other parts of Russia and foreigners. Xenophobia is one of the most detrimental effects of terrorism. “According to human rights activists the *anti-Chechen sentiments especially evident after the Nord-Ost act are gradually being replaced with dislike for ‘non-Russians.’*”⁸

H.A. Cooper points out that most discussions come up with a lopsided and highly biased picture of terrorism: what I do, even if others reject it, is not terrorism; if you do the same you are a terrorist. Therefore, writes H. Cooper, *terrorism* should be defined on the basis of what was done rather than on the basis of its perpetrators and its denouncers and concludes that its unbiased definition is hardly possible.⁹

V.A. Medvedev offered a similar opinion: “Blasting a train in Spain and coalition soldiers’ shooting at a crowd of Iraqis are both acts of terror; they intend intimidation and control over people established through the threat of sudden death. Strictly speaking, *terror and anti-terror* are absolutely identical. A fighter of a special unit armed with a radio-controlled mine or a ballistic missile to intimidate a political or religious leader his superiors find encumbering is identical to a suicide bomber where their motives and potential results are concerned. Both aim at mortal intimidation of their potential victims or, better still, at control over their behavior.”¹⁰ In fact, biased assessments of *terrorism* and acts of terror are inevitable.

Terrorism is not only what takes place but also what we say about it. *By making terror an object of wide discussions we turn it into a communication phenomenon which may independently affect our perception of it and our behavior. By discussing terrorism, demonstrating it on TV, and reporting about it in the press and on the Internet we go ahead with it by performing its intimidation function.*

Can the Media be Objective and Unbiased when Covering Terrorist Acts?

Subjective definitions of *terrorism* and related phenomena are inevitable; this is the level at which the events are reassessed by the media. They re-channel public sentiments and ensure a dialogue between society and the government on the urgent problems and decisions. Can the media be objective and unbiased when covering terrorist acts?

P. Norris, M. Kern, and M. Just have pointed out that media coverage of terrorism and terrorist acts is fraught with a dual danger. First, it is hard, or even impossible, to remain objective and unbiased when writing about terrorist acts. On the one hand, when covering terrorist acts on TV and pro-

⁷ M. Al Sayyid, “Mixed Message: The Arab and Muslim Response to ‘Terrorism,’” in: *The New Era of Terrorism. Selected Readings*, ed. by G. Martin, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks-London-New Delhi, 2004, pp. 64-71.

⁸ “Informatsionnye aspekty terroristicheskikh aktov,” in: *Psikhologiya i psikhopatologiya terrorizma*, ed. by M.M. Reshetnikov, The East European Institute of Psychoanalysis, St. Petersburg, 2004, p. 216.

⁹ See: H.A. Cooper, “Terrorism: The Problem of Definition Revisited,” in: *The New Era of Terrorism. Selected Readings*, pp. 55-63.

¹⁰ V.A. Medvedev, “Terror kak osnovanie kommunikativnoi kultury XXI veka: ot ponimaniia k interpretatsii,” in: *Psikhologiya i psikhopatologiya terrorizma*, p. 105.

viding details, journalists popularize terrorism as a behavior model, legitimize terror and, probably, encourage potential terrorists. On the other hand, they side with the official anti-terrorist policy and justify any, not always fully substantiated or adequate, countermeasures by the expediency of the counter-terrorist struggle. The authors have written, in particular, that in the post-9/11 era the American public, under media pressure, developed much greater concern about international terrorism than the phenomenon deserved. This called for several institutional and organizational reforms inside the country (a Department of Homeland Security was set up; the security regime in airports was tightened while secret services became much more active) and legal frameworks for unprecedented foreign policy decisions related to Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.¹¹

We can say that a sharper media-induced public response to terrorism and terrorist activities allows political leaders to take extreme actions that would be impossible in different conditions. This leads to securitization of certain problems and tasks which are raised to the level of vitally important and related to the security of the state and society.¹² It is much easier to mobilize resources and public support for decisions of this kind; the “counter-terrorist struggle” may serve as an umbrella for unrelated decisions that could be presented to the public as “a terrorist issue.” The current broad discussion of the legitimacy of the American and allied military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan presented to the public as a counter-terrorist struggle was generated by making a poorly justified association between terrorism and the threat of terror emanating from Iraq and Afghanistan (and later Iran), as well as by doubts that tasks formulated in this way can be resolved.

There are any number of studies that prove beyond doubt that after 9/11 in particular any crisis can be used to take the media temporarily under total control (for an undetermined period of time). Amid conflicts and crises the government strives to control media coverage of everything related to the conflict, its causes and its course, crisis, terrorism, and the way society perceives it. The so-called theory of media liberalism which says that the media respond to social requirements and work under pressure from below is not applicable in crises. According to Sarah Oates, after 9/11 the American media concentrated on the president and Congress, the way the president and other officials responded to the terrorist acts, and their speeches and their arguments in favor of invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. In Russia, says the British author, coverage of the Chechen war and terrorist acts corresponded to “the Kremlin line.” For this reason Russia was seen as the most hazardous country for those foreign journalists who tended to disagree with the official information policy.¹³

Not infrequently politicians exploit terrorism as a communicative phenomenon during election campaigns: they move forward with novel suggestions and arguments in favor of the use of force to pose as strong and determined leaders capable of achieving much more than their predecessors. Vladimir Putin acquired wide popularity during the so-called Second Chechen War associated with terrible terrorist acts in several regions: on 27 December, 2002, the House of Government in Grozny was blasted; on 5 June, 2003, two Chechen women committed suicidal terrorist acts at a rock festival in Tushino (Moscow); on 6 February, 2004, there were several explosions in the Moscow underground; on 9 May, 2004, Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov was killed in a terrorist act in Grozny, etc. Vladimir Putin acted as a strong and resolute politician whose rhetoric included the formula “flush the Chechen terrorists down the toilet.”

Sarah Oates testifies that her sociological studies in Russia confirmed that Russians confronted with the threat of Chechen terrorism were prepared to side with leaders capable of tough decisions; Stalin was frequently mentioned in this context. She further pointed out that the anti-terrorist rhetoric

¹¹ See: P. Norris, M. Kern, M. Just, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹² For more about securitization see, for example: B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., London, 1998, p. 23.

¹³ See: S. Oates, *Through a Lens Darkly? Russian Television and Terrorism Coverage in Comparative Perspective*, paper prepared for The Mass Media in Post-Soviet Russia International Conference, University of Surrey, U.K., 2006, pp. 6-7.

of the political leaders of Russia, Britain, and United States gains momentum during election campaigns. During the 2004 presidential campaign in the United States, about 43 percent of the news releases dealt with election topics; and about 22 percent with terrorism. John Kerry and George W. Bush frequently referred to the anti-terrorist struggle as one of the arguments in favor of their election. John Kerry sounded quite determined: "Let me just make it clear—crystal clear—as Americans, we are absolutely united in our determination to hunt down and destroy Osama bin Laden and the terrorists. They are barbarians. And I will stop at absolutely nothing to hunt down, capture, or kill the terrorists wherever they are, whatever it takes" while his opponent was gathering points by indicating Kerry's weak points and accusing him of having no specific "war" plans.¹⁴

It should be said that control over the media during crises and conflicts is not limited to the legislative and executive levels—it is formed in a natural way through demand and supply in the media market. Being directly involved in all domestic and foreign policy crises, the government wields immeasurably more and much fresher information about the process, which allows it to portion information out to the media it controls. Society, which always wants to know more and learn everything promptly, turns to the media that possess information, that is, to those controlled by the government. In dramatic conditions, therefore, the media compete for the right to receive official information "first hand"; those who achieve this have the public's attention riveted on them. Others are doomed to copying their materials. In this way, the government, as the source of the most reliable information, can disseminate it in various forms, proportions, and interpretations, which gives it control over a large media sector and public opinion.

The Media Strategy and Techniques of Terrorism Coverage

It is interesting to find out the extent to which the media are guided by any particular strategy when covering conflicts, wars, terrorism, and deaths. Are there any special methods and so-called filters that reduce the dysfunctional and dangerous aspects of media presentation of terrorism and conflicts? What do the media use to mobilize the masses and obtain responses in the context of crises, wars, or terrorism? This is not a question of the skills needed to realize the principles of presentation of crisis-related materials—the question is: Are there principles binding for everyone engaged in covering conflicts, terrorist acts, deaths, murders, mass deprivations, and disasters?

Opinions differ about the extent to which journalists use professional skills when dealing with unconventional material related to conflicts, wars, and terror: some believe that the choice of methods is purely subjective and that there are no strategies related to the coverage of conflicts and terrorism in general. Their opponents argued that the media have relevant principles and methods.

Certain researchers have demonstrated that journalists are not inclined to stick to uniform and generally accepted principles of coverage; they do not always remain within the bounds of professionalism and ethics in the interests of higher ratings and a wider audience for their reports or merely because of professional inadequacy. When writing about the ways journalists use visual means when covering conflicts, crises, and acts of terror, Barbie Zelizer, professor of communication at the University of Pennsylvania, has pointed out: "Journalists practicing all types of journalism, not just war journalism, remain unclear about what to do with images. From their earliest uses, images have been looked at the fluff of news, material that is secondary and adjunct to the words at their side. Even today, in an age of still photos, television and cable images, and the interactive displays of the Internet, there

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

are no standards regarding how to use images in news: where to put an image, how to title an image, how to caption an image, and how to position an image alongside words all remain generally unarticulated in the journalistic community. This means that when difficult targets of news depiction present themselves to journalists, there is no clear way to discern what might be a workable, appropriate, or even relevant image.”¹⁵

An analysis of the ways conflicts, wars, and terrorism are covered by the media these days has revealed certain tactics and principles the journalist community applies more or less effectively, the results depending to a great extent on the audience. Any information about hostilities, a “just” war, justified/unjustified involvement of any of the sides in the conflict, the degree to which the threat of terrorism is real, and the gravity of the crimes committed varies in the system of dichotomous objects inevitably covered in such contexts. As a rule the following dichotomous objects are present in media coverage and public discussions:

- (1) one’s own participants—alien participants;
- (2) friends—foes;
- (3) our goals—their goals;
- (4) our methods—their methods;
- (5) our arguments—their arguments;
- (6) our victims—their victims;
- (7) civilians—the military;
- (8) class, race, gender, age of the criminals and their victims;
- (9) our heroes—their criminals.

When writing about the strategies used to present conflicts, wars, and terrorism, A.E. Jasperson and M.O. El-Kikhia point to so-called “media coverage” as one of the “agenda-setting” levels: “Media coverage is characterized by an active construction, selection and structuring of information to organize a particular reality in a meaningful manner for the public. Framing occurs when media make some aspects of a particular issue more salient in order to promote ‘a certain problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation’.”¹⁶

The authors discuss the process of media coverage of conflicts at the following levels:

1. **Media coverage of the political elite’s activity and public addresses** (those engaged in creating and resolving problems). Here the system of mirrored images comes into play: “ours” are presented as heroes while the “others” are described as the main culprits, terrorists, and aggressors. According to Jasperson and El-Kikhia, the Americans close ranks around the president when confronted with a crisis; this should not be ascribed solely to media efforts—this is part of the national psychology: “Where national leaders are united in agreement against a perceived external threat to the country, then we would expect that the news media’s coverage would generate and reinforce support for the administration and its security policies, providing positive frames of government. Generally, in times of international crisis, the American public supports its political leaders and military actions taken in these contexts. As Mueller¹⁷ argues, it is natural for the public to exhibit a ‘rally-round-the-flag’ response, unit-

¹⁵ B. Zelizer, “Death in Wartime: Photographs and the ‘Other War’ in Afghanistan,” *Press/Politics*, No. 10 (3), 2005, p. 27.

¹⁶ A.E. Jasperson, M.O. El-Kikhia, “CNN and al Jazeera’s Media Coverage of America’s War in Afghanistan,” in: *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public*, Rutledge, New York-London, 2003, p. 114.

¹⁷ See: J. Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*, John Wiley, New York, 1973.

ing behind the president. This support is seen in terms of public approval from political elites as well. According to Brody,¹⁸ since the White House controls information during an international crisis, members of the opposition party will suppress their disagreement with the president in public, thereby creating the appearance of an elite consensus.”¹⁹

2. **Media coverage of what the military (security structures) do.** Any crisis or conflict demands media coverage of the activities of the military (security structures) in the form of direct armed clashes, either mutual demonstration of power or terrorist activities and the way special services respond to them. It is natural for the media to present information and cover the events so as to belittle the losses of “ours” which are described as inevitable and which might have been more numerous had the power-wielding structures acted less professionally. The enemy is described as a skillful and dangerous adversary armed with the latest weapons and using the landscape (be it mountains or forests), the clan system and solidarity of the locals to perpetrate its crimes and avoid retribution (the reports from Afghanistan and Chechnia are the best confirmation of this). This creates the background against which all losses of “ours” look like a feat of arms and the smallest of victories, as unrivalled heroism. The same goes for the media strategies of the terrorists who pass themselves for heroes standing opposed to a professional army, a nation, a country or mankind.
3. **Media modeling of the humanitarian situation.** The media shaped public opinion in connection of a conflict, war or terrorism by demonstrating “the other side of war,” namely, the plight of the civilians, starvation, crowds of refugees, epidemics, sufferings of the victims of terrorist acts and deaths. Both sides can exploit these arguments, this is a double-edged weapon yet the media should use humanitarian issues to call society to humanity.

There are purely technical problems that might emerge in crisis situations, military actions and terrorist acts. Should unidentified remains of the victims of military actions (terrorist acts) be presented to the public or should the press wait till they are identified?

The problem is: unidentified remains might belong to “ours” or to the “enemy”; they can be used to tip the balance in any of the two sides. If interpreted as “ours” they might produce a dual effect—either the public regards itself as a victim or it becomes ignited with the desire to revenge itself. If unidentified remains of the victims in a conflict (terrorist act) are interpreted as belonging to the “enemy” (terrorist) an ambiguous effect is likewise possible. More likely than not the audience will respond to the picture of a dead enemy (terrorist) with the feeling that justice has triumphed and retribution been achieved. It becomes convinced that the authorities can stop criminal activities and that its country was on the side of justice.

On the other hand, not all members of the audience need the sight of dead bodies to know that terrorists are criminals and that they should be fought. Terrorists on the TV screens are not always needed.

According to the Russian Information Agency Rosbalt, “the way the audience perceives events depends to a great extent on the methods the media employ. After the Dubrovka events,²⁰ the press long savored the picture of a dead female terrorist which repeatedly appeared on the TV screens: ‘A young girl, suicide terrorist, remained sitting on a red seat her head on the backrest. Her face with a dried trickle of blood is finally uncovered’ (*Komsomolskaia Pravda*, 28.10.2002). This was accompanied by a large color photo with the comment: ‘This suicide terrorist remained sitting in the second

¹⁸ See: R. Brody, C. Shapiro, “Policy Failure and Policy Support: The Iran-Contra Affair and Public Assessment of President Reagan,” *Political Behavior*, No. 11, 1989, pp. 353-369.

¹⁹ A.E. Jaspersen, M.O. El-Kikhia, op. cit., pp. 116-117.

²⁰ On 23 October, 2002, Movsar Baraev and his group, which partly consisted of girl suicide bombers, took over 900 hostages, the audience in the Theater Center on Dubrovka.

circle, fourth row.' The picture reappeared in two more issues of the same newspaper. This was done to intimidate the enemies and warn them about inevitable retribution. At the same time it was used as a tag or a stamp that makes it easier to grasp the meaning of what happened by driving away all doubts about the images and arguments."²¹ Barbie Zelizer offers no less convincing information: after 9/11 American readers actively protested against the photographs of Osama bin Laden that appeared in *The Boston Globe*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* with letters protesting: "We don't need to look at that evil face, big and bold on the cover of your magazine."²²

When analyzing the efficiency of pictures (visual images) related to the coverage of conflicts and wars, the author answers several questions. Visual images have the following functions:

- (1) they create the effect of a real presence at the site of the event;
- (2) they capture public attention and polarize the audience;
- (3) they create the conviction that justice reigns and the decisions were wise and well substantiated;
- (4) seeing is believing.²³

Normally, readers/viewers trust pictures more than censored reports; pictures are taken as a piece of reality, a window looking into the world, a mirror of events.

There are certain rules related to the media's use of visual images of hostilities and terrorist acts. Barbie Zelizer has pointed out that the media of the fighting country avoid pictures of dead civilian victims of one's own missiles but indulge in visual images when it comes to justifying one's own actions. "Ours" are usually presented as heroes while the "others" are demonized. The same author has noted that war-related stories avoid mentioning the blunders of one's own or allied governments; the media likewise avoid pictures of the enemy's suffering and deaths to avoid accusations of aggressiveness on the part of one's own side.

The media prefer to present hostilities, terrorist acts, and death in an indirect way to avoid shocking the audience but to make it aware of the full scale of the tragedy in order to achieve a certain response. Live coverage of hostilities is not needed—everything can be told in many different ways: a dusty road with personnel carriers taking armed men to the place of action. This informs the audience that very soon they will be engaged in fighting and that some of them will return home in body bags while others will be honored as heroes.

Not infrequently journalists turn to the innocent victims of wars and terrorist acts: homeless and starving refugees. A picture showing a dirty homeless child against the background of a devastated area is an eloquent sign of a war in which the child has lost his family and many people have been left homeless.

In fact journalists are fond of telling sentimental stories about an "unknown hero" drawn into the conflict purely by chance; he coped with the situation and demonstrated his humanness, patriotism, and heroism.²⁴

The media offered a wide coverage of those trapped in the 9/11 aircrafts: some of them tried to stop the terrorists, others reached their relatives on cell phones. There was any number of stories about the heroic firemen who arrived at the burning Twin Towers and were buried under the rubble. Historical and action films abound in similar stories; documentaries and news reports about wars, terrorist acts and conflicts present the military, sailors, the police/militia, firemen and "common guys" as real heroes.

²¹ "Informatsionnye aspekty terroristicheskikh aktov," p. 206.

²² B. Zelizer, op. cit., p. 30.

²³ Ibid., pp. 29-30.

²⁴ Ibidem.

It should be said that these subjects are dedicated mostly to heroic men-antiterrorist fighters and male terrorists (the media coverage suggests that the leadership of international terrorist structures is entirely male). Women appear in media-coverage mostly as terrorists and victims of terror rather than antiterrorist fighters. The face of the dead female suicide bomber became a symbol of media coverage. Experts from the Rosbalt Information Agency have pointed out: "The media covers female involvement in terrorist activities by comparing it to male terrorism, a sort of norm of the 'terrorist world.' Female terrorists are described as irrational, fanatical, and overly aggressive. The national press concentrated on the driving motives of female terrorism; some of them tend to overstate the 'black widows' determination to take revenge for their husbands or other male relatives. 'They have nothing to lose—they are even ready to sacrifice their own lives' (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, No. 135, 2003). On 29 October, 2002, *Komsomolskaia pravda* wrote that they 'are avenging their brothers or husbands.' The same issue of *Nezavisimaia gazeta* wrote that some of the women involved in terrorist acts had been blackmailed: 'Recruiters force others to become suicide bombers by threatening their relatives.' There are other versions: drugs are one of the most frequent explanations. 'The terrorists were humiliated, raped, and forced to take drugs or psychotropic substances. Death was seen as an escape from this sort of brainwashing' (*Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 8 July, 2003). On 8 July, 2003 *Komsomolskaia pravda* agreed: 'It was drugged women who were involved in the terrorist acts.' The RF Public Prosecutor Office insisted: 'The suicide bombers are drugged with opiates regularly added to their food and juice.' The press remains convinced that women are driven into terrorism contrary to their wishes and doubts their ability to make independent decisions."²⁵

It should be said that demonstration of violence, death, and terrorist acts as proof of coverage reliability and the unprecedented nature of the event as one of the methods of media coverage does not always achieve the desired aim. This fully applies to cases when such acts are shown indirectly (refugees, homeless and destitute people instead of scenes of actual fighting). There is a widespread opinion in the expert community that terrorists profit from this coverage because the media help them spread fear, horror, and the feeling of vulnerability.

Paul Wilkinson of Britain has the following to say on this score: "For the mass media organizations the coverage of terrorism, especially prolonged incidents such as hijacking and hostage situations, provides an endless source of sensational and visually compelling news stories capable of boosting audience/readership figures... However, once terrorist violence is under way the relationship between the terrorists and the mass media tends inevitably to become symbiotic. In sociology the term symbiosis is taken to mean relations of mutual dependence between different groups within a community when the groups are unlike each other and their relations are complementary. It would be foolish to deny that modern media technology, communication satellites and the rapid spread of television have had a marked effect in increasing the publicity potential of terrorism... And for as long as terrorists commit acts of violence the mass media will continue to scramble to cover them in order to satisfy the desire of their audiences for dramatic stories in which there is inevitably huge public curiosity about both the victimizers and their victims."²⁶

This suggests that in a crisis not only authorities but also terrorists try to control the media to achieve the desired results through media coverage and information about their goals. The same author has written further: "The most frequent terrorist techniques for influencing the mass media and reaching a wider public is the creation of terrorist events and armed propaganda with the object of seducing or trapping the mass media into giving the terrorists huge publicity and portraying them as such a powerful force that it would be folly to resist them... In using TV, radio and the print media the terrorists generally have four main objectives:

²⁵ "Informatsionnye aspekty terroristicheskikh aktov," pp. 206-207.

²⁶ P. Wilkinson, "The Media and Terrorism: A Reassessment," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1997, pp. 5-6.

- 1) To convey the propaganda of the deed and to create extreme fear among their target groups;
- 2) To mobilize wider support for their cause among the general population, and international opinion by emphasizing such themes as righteousness of their cause and the inevitability of their victory;
- 3) To frustrate and disrupt the response of the government and security forces, for example by suggesting that all their practical antiterrorist measures are inherently tyrannical and counterproductive; and
- 4) To mobilize, incite and boost their constituency of actual and potential supporters and in so doing to increase recruitment, raise more funds and inspire further attacks.”²⁷

This shows that the number of victims of terror is not limited to those directly involved in terrorist acts but also spreads to those affected by media coverage. The dangers of terrorism as a communication phenomenon are not limited to actual violence and any specific temporal and spatial bounds. More likely than not its psychological effects are much graver and more lasting. The Rosbalt Information Agency offered the following information: “According to sociologists, the psychological response of the audience to cruel pictures about terrorist acts is very acute. A month after the Nord-Ost terrorist act and the related TV coverage, the Obshchestvennoe mnenie Fund discovered that 68 percent of the country’s population was convinced that their city or town would be the next target. An amazing result since the poll covered 40 types of settlements—from the village of Shamysheika in the Penza Region to St. Petersburg. Over 70 percent were as appalled as if this had happened to their own relatives, colleagues, or children. More than that: the poll of over 300 Muscovites with no relatives or friends caught in the Nord-Ost tragedy conducted by the department of clinical psychology of the RAMS Medical Center revealed that 24 percent of them demonstrated the symptoms of post-traumatic syndrome similar to that which normally develops in participants in hostilities and terror victims. *These 24 percent can be regarded as indirect victims of the terrorist act.*”²⁸

This means that the problem of media coverage of conflicts, wars, and terrorist acts remains as urgent as ever.

²⁷ P. Wilkinson, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

²⁸ “Informatsionnye aspekty terroristicheskikh aktov,” p. 213.