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ENERGY POLICY**SOME SOLUTIONS
TO THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION'S ENERGY
COOPERATION PROBLEMS**

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It stands to reason that the resource-rich Central Asian Region (CAR), which is located at the crossroads between the Near and Middle East, South Asia, China, and Russia and is also in direct proximity to the countries experiencing “energy starvation,” is of important geostrategic significance. It is a well-known fact that CAR has vast energy potential. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have large supplies of oil and gas resources, which enjoy demand on the world market. In particular, 22 raw hydrocarbon fields have been developed in Kazakhstan, particularly in the Caspian Depression and South Turgai.¹

The State Development Program of the Kazakhstan Sector of the Caspian Sea (KSCS) bodes well for increasing the volumes of hydrocarbon production in the republic. The forecasted reserves of this raw material in the sections and structures where work has begun alone top 2 billion tons of oil equivalent. By 2010, oil production will amount to 90 million tons and gas production to 52.5 bcm, while by 2015, these figures will have risen to 150 million tons and 79.4 bcm, respectively (according

¹ See: G. Rakhmatulina, *Dinamika razvitiia integratsionnykh protsessov v gosudarstvakh SNG i perspektivy formirovaniia Edinogo ekonomicheskogo prostranstva*, ed. by M.S. Ashimbaev, KISR under the Kazakhstan President, Almaty, 2004, p. 198.

to the data of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan). In 2006, oil production reached 65 million tons, and natural gas production amounted to 27 bcm.²

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have unique hydropower potential. Its rational use will make it possible to supply the energy-deficit regions (including in Kazakhstan's southern regions) with cheap electric power and water.

The CAR countries also have a certain amount of potential for developing the atomic power industry. Large fields of uranium ore have been discovered in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. As one of the four largest producers of natural uranium, Kazakhstan possesses 19% of the world's total supplies, yielding only to Australia in terms of this index.³ On the world nuclear fuel and rare metals market, Kazakhstan is represented by the Kazatomprom National Nuclear Company. Its main production, 100% of which is exported, is natural uranium, nuclear fuel for atomic power plants, and items and semi-finished products made from beryl, tantalum, niobium, and their alloys. In 2006, 5,300 tons of uranium were extracted in Kazakhstan, and by 2010, there are plans to raise its production to 15,000 tons a year.⁴

The industry is focusing great attention on attracting foreign capital. Joint ventures have already been created with companies from Canada, France, Russia, and Japan. There are plans to engage in joint production with South Korea, the PRC, and the U.S., which, in light of the IAEA's prediction that world resources will be exhausted by 2020, should make Kazakhstan one of the monopolists on the uranium market. This is very realistic if we keep in mind that Kazakhstan has no equals in terms of ore supplies suitable for underground leaching.

The region also has coal resources; the main coal-producing states are Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In Kazakhstan, the production centers of this raw material are the Karaganda and Ekibastuz coal basins. There are 13 large coal-producing sites in the Karaganda Basin, where high-quality coke is extracted. At the mines of the Ekibastuz Basin, which is the third largest in the former U.S.S.R., subbituminous power station coal is mainly produced.

Kazakhstan is among the ten largest producers and exporters of coal on the world market (in 2006, the amount of raw material produced amounted to 91.5 million tons or around 2% of world production). The total volume of coal export was stabilized at a level of 22-27 million tons. The main importer is the Russian Federation. In recent years, the geographic area within which coal is exported has significantly expanded—Rumania, the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Turkey, and Ukraine have become the consumers of Kazakhstani coal. Taking into account the production potential of Kazakhstan's coal industry, the republic has the opportunity to raise its export volumes to 30-35 million tons in the next few years.⁵

In Uzbekistan, the Angren field is the largest source of this energy resource, which produces most of the coal used at power stations.

The Central Asian countries have all the prerequisites for intensifying integration cooperation and forming a common energy resource market in the future, which will become an important factor in the sustainable development of these states. CAR is a region for which integration processes in the economy (especially in its energy sector) were and will continue to be vitally important. This was the case for many decades during the existence of the single economic complex of the former U.S.S.R., where a system of high energy interdependence and reciprocity formed among the republics which belonged to it (including among the CAR countries).

² See: *Kazakhstan v tsifrakh*, Republic of Kazakhstan Statistics Agency, Almaty, 2006, p. 225.

³ See: Information from RCC SPECA meetings on questions of regional and efficient use of energy and water resources in Central Asia, 2002.

⁴ See: *Kazakhstan v tsifrakh*, p. 225.

⁵ See: Information of the CIS Interstate Statistics Committee and sites [www.centran.ru], [www.gazetasng.ru].

This is the way it should be now, in my opinion—in a situation where the complicated inter-economic ties have broken down as a result of the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and not been restored during perestroika, or during the nascent process of market reform. The main purpose of intensifying integration among the CAR states should be to create a single economic space, the main element of which is a common energy market of the Central Asian countries. Its formation presupposes the preservation and development of mutually advantageous economic ties among the CAR states in the energy industry, filling the domestic market with cheap fuel and energy resources, and expanding the possibilities for delivering energy resources to third countries.

* * *

The energy potential of the CAR states is drawing the attention of investors from the largest nations of the world. In this respect, Kazakhstan is the leader among the Central Asian and CIS countries in terms of investment volume. To be more precise, today the state has one of the most rapidly advancing economies of the world (Kazakhstan has achieved a 10-percent growth rate in the past five years). Among the former Soviet republics, Kazakhstan was the first to receive the status of a state with a market economy and high investment ratings. According to the World Bank, the republic is currently among the top twenty most investment-attractive countries in the world.

The republic is a large exporter of oil and is getting ready to become one of the five leading oil producers in the next ten years.

The main feature of Kazakhstan's economic policy is its multivector nature. The most important priority of our country's foreign policy is the development of cooperation with the Russian Federation, the U.S., China, and the EU countries. The implementation of a multivector policy promotes the strengthening of the country's energy security and helps to resolve the problem of export route diversification for oil and gas resources.

In particular, the following projects of raw hydrocarbon deliveries are being carried out in the republic:

- a) Atyrau-Samara;
- b) CPC;
- c) Atasu-Alashankou;
- d) Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan.

The country is also participating in the Baltic Pipeline System (BPS) project.

At present, questions are being considered with respect to laying a gas pipeline to the PRC. As the leader in the region, Kazakhstan is initiating many integration projects, in particular, a plan to create a Union of Central Asian States, the implementation of which could help to give the economy in these countries a powerful boost and remove the existing threats.

As already mentioned above, an important area in expanding the integration processes in the CAR republics should be the formation of a common energy resource market. But the studies carried out on the development of integration cooperation of the Central Asian states show that there are still serious problems with respect to their interaction in the energy sphere:⁶

1. The inefficient system of customs control of interstate electric energy crossflows.

The customs control procedure for energy resource crossflows in current effect does not promote the efficient functioning of energy systems in the concurrent mode. For example,

⁶ See: G. Rakhmatulina, op. cit.

when two parties exchange regulation power and engage in the transit of electric energy, customs clearance of electric energy crossflows is carried out without taking into account the net power flow. In addition, in some Central Asian countries (particularly in Kazakhstan) regulation power must be declared (the latter is not a commodity, it is a service for maintaining standard frequency in the energy systems, so does not require declaration). Declaration of regulation power in Kazakhstan is a certain negative factor in the development of energy cooperation among the CAR entities and in the functioning of energy systems in the concurrent mode.

2. Absence of single approaches to forming tariffs for the transit of electric energy.

When the CAR states conduct an uncoordinated tariff policy in electric energy, this hinders the development of the transit potential of the region's countries to a certain extent.

3. Lack of coordination in the use of fuel-and-energy and water resources.

In keeping with the agreement on the use of hydropower resources of the Syr Darya River Basin, the Central Asian states annually enter intergovernmental agreements, according to which Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan assume responsibility for guaranteed deliveries of coal, heating fuel, and gas to Kyrgyzstan. In turn, Kyrgyzstan assumes the obligation to provide the economies of these countries with water resources during the vegetation period.

But due to the failure of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to fully execute their obligations under the intergovernmental agreements entered, Kyrgyzstan's thermal power stations cannot maintain the given electricity parameters, which is leading to an additional load on the hydropower plants of the Naryn Cascade, an increase in water passage from the Toktogul reservoir (Kyrgyzstan), and a decrease in the volume of the latter. If interruptions in energy resource deliveries continue in the future, this will lead to a drop in the Toktogul reservoir level to a critical, so-called dead storage.

In turn, the supply of water from the Toktogul reservoir is accompanied by electric power generation, which should be accepted in the corresponding volume by the energy systems of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This gives rise to the need to intensify cooperation of the energy systems of the CAR states and to conduct a coordinated policy of consumer energy supply.

In this way, the priority tasks in the economic development of the CAR countries are expansion of integration cooperation in the energy industry and formation of a common electric power market. This presumes full satisfaction of the demands of the region's states for cheap electric power, favorable conditions for its export to third countries, rational use of hydropower resources, an increase in the possibilities of interstate electric power flows, and efficient use of the transit potential of the CAR countries.

These principles for creating an electric power market are reflected in the most important international agreements: the European Energy Charter of 17 December, 1991 and the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) of 17 December, 1994. Insufficient development of the oil and gas transportation infrastructure in the CAR states is the main problem in the oil and gas sphere.⁷

- a) In Kazakhstan, for example, many large gas fields (including Tengiz, Zhanazhol, and Uritau) do not have access to export pipelines. In this respect, expanding integration cooperation with the CIS states (primarily with Russia, as well as with other third countries, for example, China) regarding the development of the existing transportation infrastructure and the formation of new routes for delivering oil and gas resources is of pertinent importance for Kazakhstan (as it is for the other CAR republics).

⁷ See: Information from RCC SPECA meetings on questions of regional and efficient use of energy and water resources in Central Asia, 2002.

- b) The shortage of export routes and supply lines for transporting energy resources is just as acutely felt in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

In Turkmenistan, foreign companies and financial institutions willing to invest and already investing funds in the creation of Turkmenistan's energy export infrastructure are actively searching for and creating new routes for transporting energy resources from the republic.

In Uzbekistan, which is the largest gas transit center from Turkmenistan to Russia, as well as a gas supplier to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and the Russian Federation, export possibilities are still limited to the only gas pipeline linking CAR with Central Russia and other CIS countries.

In so doing, one of the most important priorities of economic policy of the Central Asian republics should be efficient use of their transit potential by creating new transportation systems and reconstructing current ones intended for increasing the export flows of oil and gas to the domestic and world markets.

The main problems of the coal industry of the CAR states is the low level of development of coal-washing plants, physical and moral wear and tear on mineshaft and mine transportation equipment, and the high level of railroad tariffs for coal delivery and transit. The aforementioned problems of energy cooperation among the Central Asian countries can be resolved by strengthening mutually advantageous ties among the CAR states in branches of the fuel and energy complex and forming a common energy market in the future, which presumes the following:

1. Joint drawing up of an overall fuel and energy balance (FEB) by the competent bodies of the Central Asian countries.

This balance will make it possible to estimate the demand and production of energy resources, and designate possible volumes of export and transit deliveries. Putting it into practice will help to carry out a coordinated transit and export policy for delivering energy resources to the domestic and foreign markets. In this respect, it is expedient to develop and adopt a corresponding agreement at the intergovernmental level, which should define a procedure for forming and implementing an overall FEB for the CAR states.

2. Developing an optimal system for transporting energy resources within CAR, creating new transportation systems, and reconstructing current ones intended for building up the export energy resource flows of the CAR countries.

3. Forming coordinated principles of tariff, tax, and customs policy in the energy sphere of the CAR states.

■ *In tariff policy, it would be expedient to:*

- draw up general methodological ways for calculating tariffs for the transit of energy resources (electric power and hydrocarbons); adopt corresponding agreements;
- optimize railroad tariffs for the delivery and transit of coal within CAR and to third countries; adopt a corresponding agreement in which unified approaches will be defined for forming tariff policy.

■ *In tax policy, it would be expedient to:*

- adopt measures to simplify the tax system in effect in the energy sector, raise its flexibility and adaptability;
- standardize the list of excisable goods.

■ *In customs policy, it would be expedient to:*

- draw up the corresponding regulatory legal documents for simplifying the customs clearance procedure of energy resource deliveries within CAR and to third countries (including

electric power flows of energy systems operating in the concurrent mode, taking into account the size of the net power flow);

- with respect to interstate electric power flows, adopt an Agreement on Customs Clearance and Control of Interstate Electric Power Flows via the Power Networks of the CAR States at the intergovernmental level.

4. Creating financial-industrial groups and joint ventures for producing and transiting energy resources, and for manufacturing energy equipment.

An important factor in forming an energy market is expanding the trade and economic relations of the countries in the energy sphere. A good example is the development of mutually advantageous Russian-Kazakhstani cooperation in the energy sector, which resulted in the creation of the Ekibastuz GRES-2 Joint Venture, the KazRosGaz Closed Joint-Stock Company, and the oil pipeline system of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) for exporting Kazakhstan oil; the contracts entered between Russian and Kazakhstani energy companies for developing and assimilating the Ekibastuz coal basins, “Severny” and “9-e Pole,” and the Bogatyr section; and restoration of the concurrent mode in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan energy systems, which ensures the transit of electric power via the power networks of Kazakhstan from Russia to Russia, as well as from other Central Asian republics to the Russian Federation.

The development of this mutually advantageous partnership is helping to draw investments into the industry, introduce contemporary standards of management, promote the exchange of experience, and renew the technological base.

In this respect, the things listed below are of prospective importance within the CAR.

■ *With respect to forming a common electric power market:*

- a) Functioning of an International Hydropower Consortium created in 2002 for the purpose of resolving questions relating to the rational use of hydropower resources.

As we know, 86% of Central Asia’s water resources are formed in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and, naturally, these republics are striving to develop the hydropower industry. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have supplies of gas, oil, and other minerals; they need water resources in order to promote agriculture and industry. The mechanism of reciprocal deliveries of water and energy resources by the CAR states is very underdeveloped. The corresponding intergovernmental agreements entered every year are not executed to the fullest extent.

In this respect, a legal mechanism must be drawn up within the framework of the mentioned Consortium for adopting active measures to carry out a coordinated and mandatory policy for distributing hydropower resources.

- b) Joint construction of the Kambaratinsk Hydropower Plant-1 and Plant-2 in Kyrgyzstan and the Rogun and Sangtuda hydropower plants in Tajikistan.

■ *With respect to creating a common coal market:*

Creating coal-producing and coal-washing joint ventures.

Joint development of the fields of Kara-Keche (Kyrgyzstan), as well as of Ziddy, Nazar-Ailok, Mienadu, and Khakimi (Tajikistan) is a pertinent task.

The development of integration cooperation with other CIS countries is also promising. In so doing, the use of raw material resources of the CAR states and of the equipment produced in the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation, and so on could be an efficient way of investing money.

5. *Creating an Energy Exchange in CAR.*

Forming a common market of energy resources presupposes the creation of an energy exchange, the database of which should provide information about the supply and demand of energy resources, peak and idle power, and the price of the energy resources being sold.

The energy exchange should include electric power, oil, gas, and coal exchanges. The functioning of this structure will help to cover the consignors' demand for energy, establish a normal competitive atmosphere on the market, form equilibrium prices for energy resources, and define the pegged prices given by the market itself for the foreseeable future. The procedure for creating an energy exchange should be envisaged in a corresponding agreement. The functioning of a common market of energy resources will be an important factor of stable economic growth of the CAR countries.⁸

Reinforcement of economic security of the CAR entities presupposes adopting efficient measures for eliminating the existing transnational threats, which are the following:

- a) the different levels of market reform in the states;
- b) the manifestation of religious extremism;
- c) the increase in illicit drug circulation;
- d) the intensification in migration.

One of the main reasons these threats still exist is the low level of economic development of many CAR countries.

Kazakhstan is the only state where stable rates of economic progress can be seen. According to the results of the past few years, it is currently one of the leaders of the CIS states in terms of GDP and industrial production volume growth rates. In particular, according to the Kazakhstan Statistics Agency, the growth rate of Kazakhstan's GDP was 10.6% in 2006, and the increase in industrial production volumes was 7%.

In Kyrgyzstan, the rates of economic development have significantly slowed. Whereas at the end of 2004, the GDP growth rate was 7.1% in the republic, in 2005, the GDP decreased by 0.6% and amounted to 99.4%. In 2006, the GDP growth rate was only 2.7%, compared to the previous period. As for industrial production, during the past two years, trends are seen toward a reduction in its development rates. In particular, in 2005, the industrial production volume decreased by 12% compared with the previous year, and in 2006 it fell by 10.2% compared with 2005.⁹

The political events going on in Kyrgyzstan are the main reason for the situation that has developed in the country's economy. The opposition forces are literally ripping the state apart in their struggle for power. The second reason is the inefficient structure of the economy, which is mainly represented by two branches: electric power and the gold-mining industry.

But in these priority sectors there are also serious problems. In particular, the electric power industry is suffering from immense wear and tear of equipment (80%), hardly any new generating capacities are being introduced and no major construction is going on. In the gold-mining industry, there are problems with assimilating the Kumtor field.

Talking about the inefficient structure of the Kyrgyzstan economy, we should note, among other things, the weak development of the processing sectors in the republic (primarily of the food and light industry), as well as of tourism. The use of the potential of the above-mentioned branches with significant investments would have helped to affect structural changes in the country's economy and achieve stable growth rates.

⁸ See: Information from RKC SPECA meetings on questions of regional and efficient use of energy and water resources in Central Asia, 2002.

⁹ See: Information of the CIS Interstate Statistics Committee and sites [www.centran.ru], [www.gazetasng.ru].

In Uzbekistan, signs of regression clearly appeared as early as the mid-1990s with significant deterioration of the socioeconomic situation. The relative economic growth (annual GDP increase amounted to between 4% and 8% in the past few years and at the end of 2006 the GDP growth rate was equal to 7.3%) was of an exclusive extensive and resource-consuming nature.¹⁰

The low rates of market reform, high level of state economic regulation, which hindered the development of small and medium business in the country, the absence of favorable conditions for foreign investment, the closed nature of trading conditions, and the high level of corruption are the main reasons detaining Uzbekistan's economic progress.

According to international financial organizations, the official macroeconomic indices did not correspond to reality, but were two-fold higher, and the declared economic growth was not accompanied by high-quality development. In particular, the standard of living is still quite low.

Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet republics in terms of per capita GDP, which amounts to 236 dollars, and is one of the most impoverished countries of the world. The UNDP Global Human Development Report for 2003 includes Tajikistan among the "priority states," in which poverty has led to a crisis requiring the international community's close attention and aid.¹¹

The five-year civil war that ended in 1997, the emigration of qualified specialists, and the absence of beneficial conditions for attracting investments are only some of the many factors complicating economic development. The republic's geographic isolation is aggravating regional cooperation problems. More than 90% of Tajikistan's territory is mountainous, which creates a serious hindrance to transportation routes and communication.

The state's large foreign debt, which essentially did not exist before independence, is complicating fiscal and economic management. Almost all of the government's investment budget is financed by means of official aid to developing countries. According to an agreement with the IMF, the government set the limit of new loans at 3% of the GDP, which in 2005 was increased to 4% with the possibility of further review.

The most important problem of Tajikistan's economic development is the high level of corruption and organized crime. In particular, the shadow economy, which is mainly related to the transit of drugs through the republic, amounts to 100% of its GDP, according to some estimates. The government regards organized crime as a whole and drug trafficking in particular as interstate problems, the resolution of which requires coordinated international efforts, due to which it is striving for active interaction with foreign partners.

The situation that has developed in the region relating to illicit drug circulation is creating a multitude of problems for Tajikistan. Since the end of the 1990s, a period of economic stability has begun in the country. In the past three years, the average GDP growth rate amounted to approximately 10%, while at the end of 2006, it was equal to 7%.

Nevertheless, there is still a very low standard of living in the republic. In particular, almost two thirds of the population live in poverty, and one third of the entire workforce (or 630,000 members of the able-bodied population) migrate every year to other countries in search of work. Less than 50% of rural residents have access to running water. Most of the water supply system is unreliable and inefficient due to the absence of technical servicing. There is a very high infant and maternal death rate, as well as level of infectious diseases. The average wage in Tajikistan amounts to 10 dollars a month.¹²

As for Turkmenistan, it has a very low level of its economic development. There has always been a system in the republic that prevented progress in human rights, democracy, and the market economy. For example, the Turkmenistan government's decisions to stop the import of and subscription to foreign publications and to close down libraries and rural hospitals aroused great concern in

¹⁰ See: Information of the CIS Interstate Statistics Committee and sites [www.centran.ru], [www.gazetasng.ru].

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² See: Information of the following website [www.undp.tj/documents/CPAP%20Rus.pdf], 12 June, 2007.

the international community. The level of development in education is very low in the country, which of course will have a negative impact on the state's future.

There are still other serious problems in the country's socioeconomic sphere. "Latent unemployment is very widespread in the republic. Professional staff with diplomas received in countries of the Far and Near Abroad are not in demand because their diplomas are declared invalid. Neither does the population's low subsistence level do anything to help the existing conditions. The wages received by Turkmen citizens are one of the lowest in the region in terms of real purchasing power. Latent inflation has been observed for several years now. For example, the manta (Turkmenistan's national currency) has been devaluated 12,500-fold (!) since the day it went into circulation. All the problems in the economic and social sphere since Niyazov's death will only become clear after the most contradictory elements in Turkmenistan's economy are revealed."¹³

The existing problems of economic development of the Central Asian states and transnational threats can primarily be eliminated by resolving the economic integration question.

We believe it is important to carry out the following measures:

1. Draw up coordinated principles of customs, tariff, and trade policy.
 - *In customs policy*, it is expedient to develop standardized principles of customs legislation defining the introduction of free trade conditions among the Central Asian countries; draw up a general procedure of customs clearance and control of goods transported over the border; and establish regulations for transporting currency and means of transportation by physical persons across the border.
 - *In tariff policy*, a single system of tariffs in the real sector of the economy should be drawn up (for transportation and the energy industry).
 - In transportation, it is expedient to introduce a single tariff system for all types of shipments (freight and passenger).
 - In the energy industry, general methodological approaches to the transit of energy resources should be drawn up.
 - *In trade policy*, the following should be drawn up:
 - a) mechanisms excluding the use of special protection, antidumping, and compensation measures in reciprocal trade among the Central Asian states;
 - b) standardized regulations regarding tariff and non-tariff trade-regulating measures to be applied by the CAR countries.
2. Create a common finance market.
 - *In the financial sphere*, the following measures should be taken to:
 - a) create a standardized mechanism of currency regulation and control, main types of taxes and their amounts, methodology and regulatory acts regarding price formation, and measures for ensuring the reciprocal convertibility of national currencies;
 - b) ensure the freedom of capital movement;
 - c) create conditions for developing national stock markets and their integration in the future.
3. Form a common market of goods and services.
 - With respect to *forming a common goods market*, it is expedient to estimate the total volume of commodity resources and production potential, make supply and demand balance settlements with respect to commodity classification, develop a mechanism for achieving a balance on the consumer market of the Central Asian republics, and draw up general principles for regulating interstate goods exchange.

¹³ A. Grozin, "‘Dubl’ Niyazova ne predviditsia," available at [<http://www.miningexpo.ru/news/714>], 12 June, 2007.

- *When creating a common service market, it is expedient to:*
 - a) ensure full liberalization of reciprocal trade in services;
 - b) carry out a coordinated policy with respect to third countries.
4. Create a common energy market (the main areas of its formation are presented above).
5. Create a single transportation space.
- The region's transportation system, in our view, should be developed on the basis of forming through routes to the European, Central Asian, and Asia-Pacific Region states.
 - In order to build up transit potential, a *General Transport Development Scheme* should be drawn up. It is presumed that this document will envisage the following mechanisms for:
 - a) intensifying interaction among the transport complexes of the Central Asian countries;
 - b) conducting a coordinated tariff policy with respect to transport.Priority routes of through transport corridors should also be included in this scheme, as well as a program for manufacturing and repairing technology and for building and operating roads.
6. Form a common agricultural market.
- An important element in the creation of a common agricultural market is that the CAR republics carry out a coordinated policy of agricultural development.
 - It seems expedient to draw up a *Conception for Forming a Common Reciprocal Agroindustrial Complex of the Central Asian Countries*. This document should envisage the following mechanisms for:
 - a) raising the productivity of land cultivation and animal husbandry;
 - b) increasing the harvest yield of crops;
 - c) encouraging specialization and cooperation among states to create reciprocal consumption resources;
 - d) changing the structure of planted acreages and of types and species of crops taking into account the level at which the population is provided with foodstuffs and industrial raw materials;
 - e) forming an infrastructure for storing and transporting vegetables and fruits;
 - f) introducing advanced technology and creating joint ventures for processing agricultural production;
 - g) ensuring conditions for developing direct market ties, forming stock exchanges;
 - h) forming a network of post-delivery maintenance and technical servicing of agricultural technology.
7. Develop machine-building.
- *In the machine-building complex, the main areas could be:*
 - a) expanding integration in airplane-building on the basis of the Tashkent aviation plant and using Kazakhstan's resource potential (Turgai bauxite mines and electric power of the Ekibastuz State District Power Plant);
 - b) creating an aerospace complex on the basis of the Baikonur space center;
 - c) developing cooperation in the car industry, producing spare parts and units for UzDAEWOOavto vehicles.
8. Form free economic zones.

- The creation of *free economic zones* (FEZ) with the necessary production infrastructure is of great importance. It is expedient to establish privileged tax conditions for FEZs. Within FEZs, it is possible to develop the agroindustrial sphere, chemical and petrochemical industry, ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, manufacture of consumer goods (leather, fur, and wool items), and produce building materials. FEZs could be formed in Aktau and in the Tashkent, Shymkent, Andijan, and Osh regions.

* * *

Implementing the above-mentioned vectors of integration cooperation of the Central Asian countries will promote their sustainable progress, raise the quality of economic growth in the CAR countries, and remove the existing transnational threats. The priority nature of integration cooperation is due to the need to restore and develop mutually advantageous economic ties among the CAR republics in the energy industry, which has the goal of filling the domestic market with cheap types of energy resources, covering demand for their consumption and increasing the possibilities of export deliveries of energy resources to third countries.

Today within the CAR, a certain legal base has been created for expanding integration cooperation in the energy sphere, but the development of the integration processes in Central Asia did not reach the desired rates with the signing of corresponding treaties and agreements. The main reason is that the competent CAR state bodies have still not fully drawn up a specific mechanism for putting the adopted decisions into practice. In this respect, at present, the development of a legal mechanism for creating and operating a common energy market is acquiring great significance. Its implementation presumes the adoption of specific measures for intensifying integration interaction of the CAR countries in the energy sphere, achieving a balance between the supply and demand of energy resources on the domestic market, ensuring the efficient development of the transit potential of the Central Asian states, and increasing the export potential of energy resource deliveries to third countries.

PROSPECTS FOR ENERGY INTERACTION WITHIN THE SCO

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Reliable energy provision is an important factor of sustainable development and political stability in the world. Not only growth of the global economy, but also the population's quality of life depend on the uninterrupted and efficient functioning of the energy industry, since it is the latter that ensures each and everyone access to the primary benefits of civilization.

During the past 2-3 years, the growth rates in demand on the energy market have exceeded all expectations, with China and other developing Asian countries taking the lead in this respect. In particular, the demand for oil increased in the PRC by 15.4% (whereby there has been a double-digit increase in this index for the second year in a row).¹

Questions of energy provision and, more broadly speaking, energy security are currently occupying the minds of politicians and scientists alike, as well as of the ordinary people. Everyone has come to understand that the world must be viewed as a single whole in this area, and this topic has become a regular feature in discussions of our planet's present and future.

These concerns and searches for solutions can be seen at the global, regional, and even subregional levels. At the last G-8 summit, the Russian president raised the issue of energy supply, which became one of the central topics on the forum's agenda.

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev came forward with the idea of drawing up an Asian energy strategy. The Kazakhstan side has still not presented a developed vision of this conception, but the very call for a common Asian solution to the energy problem is of course not accidental and deserves attention. The fact that energy security has also been placed on the agenda of a multi-profile association like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum also speaks in favor of this attitude.

Specific efforts are being exerted at the subregional level to create a regulation mechanism. For example, in particular, the Declaration on East Asian Energy Security adopted at the January 2007 East Asia summit held on the Philippine island of Cebu and bringing together 16 countries of East and South Asia, as well as of the southern part of the Pacific Ocean, aroused great interest.

It stands to reason that, in this case, we are talking more about a declaration of intent, while practical implementation of the ideas envisaged in the document is something for the future. Nevertheless, the APR is taking the first steps to create a mechanism of consultations regarding the energy problem in Northeast Asia. As early as August 2005, the U.S., followed by the Republic of Korea, spoke in favor of creating a five-sided Energy Forum of the NEA states, with the intention that Japan, the PRC, and Russia would also join it.

These considerations were specified through the foreign ministries and ministries of energy with subsequent involvement of the business community. The structure is already in operation (admittedly without Russia's participation), but there is still not enough information on its specific activity to carry out analysis and forecasts. We can only rely on the preliminary arguments expressed by the founders when the issue was first considered.

The new structure appears to be seen as a dialog on the problems of energy, development, and the transfer of pure energy technology as a regional specification of the global initiative called Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. Four blocks of issues were to be discussed—multilateral cooperation in energy, supply and demand on the world energy resource market, the functioning of global markets of hydrocarbons, and raising the energy efficiency of the world economy. Special attention was given to the creation of strategic reserves of energy resources, the progress of pipeline infrastructure and the investment climate, the prospects for world oil and gas markets, and the development of new technologies in all the energy spheres. The American side, as stands to reason, wanted the NEA Energy Forum to discuss broad aspects of security, including unresolved territorial disputes in the region.

Judging from the above, the impression is created that Washington and the subregional capitals allied with it have primarily aimed, by means of the new structure, to ensure diversification of their sources of energy resource supply and uninterrupted deliveries in the region (in order to counterbalance the import of oil and gas from the politically unstable countries of the Middle East).

¹ See: *China Statistical Yearbook*, China Statistics Press, Beijing, 2006.

The feeling unwittingly arises that one of the tasks of the NEA Energy Forum is to maintain control over deliverers and rival consumers. No mention has been made so far about measures for assisting them, for example, technological help to improve the production of energy resources or economize on their expenditure. This could be perceived as a form of unilateral pressure and not a format of equal interaction. We will stipulate again that there are not enough data so far for drawing final conclusions. However, there is quite a widespread tendency recently to engage in one-sided criticism of manufacturers or of "those consuming far too much." We believe that setting some partners off against others is unproductive in the post-confrontational world built on principles of multipolarity, mutual respect, and mutual benefit. After all, the recognized interdependence among the countries on our planet has long been manifested in the fact that manufacturers, transit countries, and importers are partners and not adversaries.

The same moods, worries, and intention to seek a solution to common problems that is acceptable to everyone are also characteristic of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization region. The influence of geopolitical factors, the development of partnership between Russia and China in the energy sphere, the PRC's interest in developing Central Asia's hydrocarbon fields, as well as the striving of the Central Asian republics to ensure the reliable sale of energy resources are giving rise to the need to structuralize relations in the energy sector of this region. The SCO with its perfect system of consensus structures is, in our opinion, the necessary foundation for mutually advantageous ties between energy resource deliverers and consumers, keeping in mind the position of the transit countries as well.

Questions of energy supply are extremely pertinent for the SCO members. In particular, it can be said that poor diversification of oil import sources is arousing serious concern among Chinese experts. Today, approximately half of the import of this raw material is ensured by deliveries from the Middle East. By 2010, this region's share in imports could increase to 80%. The worries are aggravated by the region's susceptibility to armed conflicts. So the PRC is trying not to become dependent on this region.²

Many Chinese experts regard Russia as the most promising partner, the priority ranking of which is defined in particular by two circumstances. First, the complementariness of the two countries' interests: the Russian Federation has to develop the oil and gas resources of Siberia and the Far East, and China has to diversify its energy sources. Second, territorial proximity, which makes it possible to carry out deliveries of high-quality resources at optimal prices.

In fact, Russian-Chinese interaction in the energy industry has already accumulated vast practical experience; there are also corresponding mechanisms. For example, the Russian-Chinese Sub-Commission on Cooperation is regularly and actively functioning in the energy industry.

The Sub-Commission's work has been placed on a firm basis. As of the present, a Program for Creating a Unified Gas Production, Transportation and Supply System in East Siberia and the Far East has been fully drawn up in Russia taking into account the possible export of blue fuel to the markets of China and other Asia-Pacific Region countries. The fundamental principles of this program were approved by the Russian Federation government as early as March 2003.

An important aspect of the development of the Russian-Chinese energy dialog was Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to the PRC on 21-22 March, 2006. This visit resulted in signing memorandums on creating an energy alliance between the two states. These documents presume the drawing up of long-term contracts on deliveries of gas, oil, and electric power to China.

Specifically, energy cooperation between the two countries is going on in several areas.

² See: A.A. Volovich, "Kitai na energeticheskom rynke Blizhnego Vostoka," available at [www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2004/22-09-04.html], 12 June, 2007.

■ Gas Deliveries.

During the Russian president's above-mentioned visit, the Gazprom Company and the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) signed a Protocol on the Delivery of Natural Gas from Russia to the PRC, which stipulated the main terms with respect to deadlines, volumes, and routes (Western and Eastern) for blue fuel deliveries, as well as the principles for forming price formulas.

According to the above-mentioned document, China's need for natural gas from the Russian Federation will amount to 68 bcm by 2020, including via the Western route—30 bcm and via the Eastern—38 bcm.³

The sides' intention to participate both in the joint development of deposits and in building pipeline branches draws attention to itself. In particular, Russia is helping CNPC's subsidiary—the Huabei Oil Company—to carry out research work and build an underground gas storage facility in the province of Hebei at the Ren-11 oil field. On the other hand, in correspondence with the current Russian-Chinese intergovernmental agreements, TNC-BP has been working (since 1999) with CNPC on a project to develop the Kovykta Gas Condensate Field (KGCF) and build an export gas pipeline. In this way, the Russian Federation is providing its Chinese partners with access to truly unique supplies of raw gas. The Kovykta GCF is the most ready of the East Siberian fields for beginning industrial development. Production at this unique structure (up to 40 bcm a year for 30 years) will make it possible to fully satisfy the needs of the domestic regional market (4-5 bcm a year) and provide a new export channel for deliveries of Russian pipeline gas to the countries of Northeast Asia.⁴

■ Oil Deliveries.

This area is very extensive; much information has been published about it. We will not go into details, but present just two examples.

During Vladimir Putin's visit to the PRC, Rosneft and CNPC entered an Agreement on the Main Principles for Creating Joint Ventures in the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China to intensify cooperation in the oil industry. The purpose of the agreement was to create joint ventures for surveying and developing oil and gas fields in Russia, as well as for oil refining and the sale of petroleum products in China.

We can also refer to the Protocol signed by the Transneft Company and CNPC on the planning and building of an oil pipeline to the Skovorodino section-PRC border. Working groups have been created in compliance with this document, which are engaged in processing organizational and technical issues regarding the project.

Transneft is the general contractor and ordering party for drawing up a declaration of intent and investment feasibility evaluation for building the above-mentioned oil pipeline. The Russian company has finished drawing up the declaration of intent; the necessary information about the contents of the document has been passed on to the Chinese side. The investment feasibility study will be completed in 2007.

■ Electric Power Industry.

It goes without saying that the active company on the Russian side in this sphere is RAO UES of Russia's subsidiary INTER RAO UES Closed Joint-Stock Company. The company is delivering electric power to the border regions of the PRC's northeast provinces via two

³ See: M. Gafarly, "Moskva obespechit kitaitsev gazom, neftiu i elektroenergijey," *Novye izvestia*, 23 March, 2006; "Fitch: rezul'taty energodialoga RF i KNR neodnoznachny," available at [www.aksnews.ru/m/100357/fitch:_rezul'taty_energodialoga_rf_i_knr_neodnoznachny.html], 12 June, 2007.

⁴ See: *Ibidem*.

interstate power transmission lines: Blagoveshchensk-Heihe and Sivaki-Shipazhan (with a branch to the Baina electric power substation).

Within the framework of the intended increase in the export of electric power to the border regions of China's northeast provinces, an investment project for building the Zavitaia-Xiongke line is being implemented in specific high-load areas (mainly the industrial zones being created), and the possibility of building an Obluchie-Luobei line is being considered.

In keeping with the *Definition of Conditions and Maximum Possible Volumes of Electric Power Export from Vostok Unified Energy System until 2020*, implemented by Dalenergosetproekt Open Joint-Stock Company, the areas for distributing the capacities of the Primoriye energy system, Primorskaia State District Power Plant-Raohe and Ussuriysk-Dongning, are also considered promising.

As a result of the activity carried out, on 21 March, 2006, the sides signed an agreement in Beijing on the comprehensive drawing up of a feasibility study for a project to deliver electric power from the Russian Federation to the PRC in keeping with the following stages:

- the first stage—from 2008, transmission capacity—600-720 MW, annual volume—3.6-4.3 billion kWh;
- the second stage—from 2010, transmission capacity—300 MW, annual volume—18 billion kWh;
- third stage—from 2015, transmission capacity—640 MW, annual volume—38.4 billion kWh.⁵

At present, the final system for distributing capacities and the export price for the first stage are being agreed upon.

As we know, Russia and China are also cooperating in this sphere to develop China's peaceful atomic power. In particular, Russian companies are participating in building the second line of the Tianwan Atomic Power Plant.

■ Development of Coal Deposits.

Coal energy, which was once subjected to ostracism and semi-neglect, is currently enjoying demand in the world economy once more due to the increase in the price of oil and the looming leap in gas prices. Russian-Chinese partnership is also focusing attention on it. For example, an agreement has been in effect since the end of 2005 between the Russian Tekhnopromexport Company and China's Shanxi International Electric Power Corporation on cooperation in building two coal thermal power plants: Ruiguang (2x300 MW) and Zhaoguang (2x600 MW).

■ Deliveries of Contemporary Equipment and Technology.

Both Russian companies and their solicitous rivals are pointing to the fact that Russia's innovative technology and state-of-the-art equipment (which is not the most expensive) are in great demand on the markets of the APR countries.

As for the Russian Federation and PRC, the SCO principle of reciprocity is frequently observed in this respect: Russian and Chinese corporations act on the basis of reciprocal deliveries. Here we can present the example of the above-mentioned Tekhnopromexport Company and the Shangdong Luneng Corporation which signed a memorandum on mutual understanding in 2006 envisaging joint participation in innovative projects and reciprocal deliveries of equipment during building projects, both in China and in Russia.

■ Financial Support of Energy Cooperation.

⁵ According to the information of RAO UES of Russia, available at [www.raoes.ru], 12 June, 2007.

The long-term nature and scope of Russian-Chinese interaction in the energy sphere require proper financing and bank services. The sides have accumulated extensive practical experience in this area; without aiming to shed light on all its details, I would like, as above, to present specific examples.

Russian banks are actively supporting Russian-Chinese trade and economic partnership. In January 2005, Vneshekonombank (VEB) drew a loan for 6 billion dollars from the China Development Bank and Eximbank for pre-export subsidizing of oil deliveries to the PRC. Vneshekonombank is servicing the contract between Transneft and CNPC for delivering crude oil from Russia to China.

VEB is also servicing the contract for the planning and building of the Tianwan Atomic Power Plant and is participating in building the Bureia Hydropower Plant. VEB is actively cooperating with the PRC State Committee on Development and Reforms within the framework of the project for creating the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean pipeline system, and has stable partnership relations with the China Development Bank and CNPC.

Cooperation with PRC counter agents in the energy sphere along VEB lines mainly features in the projects of the Silovye mashiny Open Joint-Stock Company and Ziomar Engineering Company, which are carrying out currency control transactions and guaranteed procedures through the aforementioned bank.

In this way, the large amount of work on the joint projects, interaction in all areas of the power industry (from processing to delivering energy to the end consumers), exchange of technology, and bank servicing of the transactions carried out could all form a solid foundation for active bilateral partnership between Russia and China, in so doing becoming the necessary basis on which a SCO Energy Club could be built in the future.

Another aspect of Russian-Chinese cooperation should be noted, which is probably not very interesting to the outside world, but is extremely important for Russian society. After all, big partnership can only be built on big social support. In the above-mentioned Program for Creating a Unified Gas Production, Transportation and Supply System in East Siberia and the Far East, the priority was placed in particular on satisfying the demand of Russian consumer's for blue fuel and providing Russia with stable supplies of gas by expanding the unified gas supply system to the East. As a result, the population of the Russian regions of Siberia and the Far East will gain access to reliable gas supply, including by carrying out a single export policy taking into account the current agreements on production sharing.

But nor should we forget the cooperation between the PRC and the Central Asian states, which is gaining momentum. The participation of Chinese companies in different joint projects, joint construction of oil and gas pipelines, and simply China's purchase of oil companies of the region's countries not only indicate China's immense cooperation experience with the Central Asian republics, but they are also being prompted to join forces in order to protect their interests in the energy sphere.

The idea of joining forces on the energy market within the SCO is a logical consequence of the new interest being shown in energy security on the agenda of international meetings. The heads of state and government are actively discussing the idea of uniting the energy potential of the region's countries.

For example, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov suggested at a meeting of the SCO heads of government (23 September, 2004) that a conception of a single oil and gas transportation system be developed and a club of energy resource consumers and manufacturers be created within the SCO.

This problem was discussed at an international conference called "The Energy Market of Central Asia: Trends and Prospects," which was organized in Tashkent by the Center of Political Research of Uzbekistan on 6-7 December, 2005. During the event, several proposals were put forward on forming a

specialized structure that would ensure the interests both of the regional manufacturers and of the consumers of raw hydrocarbons. According to director of the Center of Political Research G. Karimova, a single energy space within the SCO—the SCO Energy Club—could become the formation capable of harmonizing interests.

This idea was repeatedly put forward by the Russian Federation at summits and large meetings, since creating a SCO energy market is in harmony with the task posed by President Putin to form a strategy aimed at achieving global energy security (the G8 summit, 15-17 July, 2006, St. Petersburg).

On 15 June, 2006, when talking in Shanghai at the anniversary meeting of the Council of Heads of State of SCO Member States in the extended format, Vladimir Putin officially put forward the idea of founding the Club: “I believe the proposal to create a SCO Energy Club to be pertinent. In so doing, Russia is looking at the possibility of financially supporting certain projects in the economic sphere.”⁶

The meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of SCO Member States held on 15 September, 2006 in Dushanbe raised more specific tasks for forming a single energy space. When talking at this event, Kazakhstan Prime Minister D. Akhmetov noted the need to begin discussing the idea of creating a single energy market within the SCO. A joint communiqué on the results of the Dushanbe meeting of premiers of the SCO member states noted the importance of forming and launching mechanisms for special working groups on fuel and energy industry issues.

The heads of government entrusted a special working group for fuel and energy industry issues to study, in the shortest time possible (in cooperation with the SCO Secretariat), the possibility of creating a SCO Energy Club. According to the present agreement, the Kazakhstani and Russian sides are to present their ideas to those concerned about holding in 2007 a meeting of the SCO member states’ heads of ministries and departments responsible for the fuel and energy industry.

We believe that forming a SCO Energy Club will make it possible to draw other large manufacturers, as well as energy consumers—Iran, India, and Pakistan—into a constructive dialog in the future. What is more, it will also be possible for other interested sides to join up. The idea of a club, and not a strictly structured formation, will make it possible to hold a broad dialog in terms of the number of participants and problems raised with the possibility of entering into specific agreements without rigid bureaucratic frameworks.

In order to successfully implement the project, it would be expedient to base the SCO Energy Club on long-term, reliable, environmentally acceptable energy supply at substantiated prices, which suit both the exporter countries and the consumers. Of course, transit countries should not be forgotten either.

We believe that a program of action on energy cooperation should be drawn up, which would include such elements as forming a unified electric power system, a trans-Asian gas pipeline, raising energy efficiency and energy conservation, developing renewable sources of energy, coordinating regional energy policy, and planning.

In addition to harmonizing the interests of the participants of a single SCO energy market, practical measures should be defined for ensuring stable supply of the traditional types of energy resources.

The first step toward implementing the idea should be to compile country reports on energy that include an analysis of the energy balance and policy in this sphere, a statistics section, and a review of the supply and predicted demand for energy resources. The main goal of this activity is to define specific areas of mutually advantageous energy cooperation among the region’s states.

The structure created will make it possible to find a conflict-free solution to the problem of surveying and developing raw hydrocarbon fields, define its transportation routes, become acquainted

⁶ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the SCO summit in Shanghai, 15 June, 2006, available at [www.kremlin.ru].

with precise data on the growth rates of demand for oil and gas of regional consignors, implement joint investment projects, and so on.

At the same time, the formation of a SCO Energy Club is not pursuing and should not pursue the goal of creating an alliance aimed against third parties. Incidentally, the member states are invariably emphasizing not the confrontational, but the cooperative nature of their organization. We believe that as an informal association of business circles, this Club can serve as a base for developing new ways of interaction on the global energy market. At present, it is precisely the SCO, by using its experience of consolidating efforts in the fight against terrorism, that can apply this experience to forming a general platform, principles, and practical characteristics of cooperation within the framework of the oil and gas markets.

In conclusion, when reviewing questions of SCO energy partnership, we will permit ourselves to discuss a topic not directly related to this, but which has been giving rise to heated arguments and even gloomy predictions in the expert community recently. We are talking about the idea roaming around in people's minds of creating something akin to OPEC in the gas industry.

In actual fact, the idea as such is suggesting itself in some sense. As most specialists have predicted, the role of gas in the global energy industry is growing; its prices will keep on rising. What is more, we should keep in mind that the global supplies of blue fuel are rapidly depleting (in particular in the U.S., its largest consumer). This will inevitably lead in the next 5-10 years to a rapid increase in demand for gas and, as a result, to tough competition on the corresponding market.

These trends could bring the situation to a point where both consumers and manufacturers feel a real need to coordinate their actions on the world commercial arena. This does not mean forming a gas cartel (although the idea might seem tempting to some manufacturers), but, primarily, ensuring a certain amount of stability on the global blue fuel market.

What is more, according to analysts' forecasts, regional differences in gas prices will gradually be eroded, and in this case the mentioned cartel could become a reality, even without its official institution.

The gas producers already have a contact mechanism, even if it is largely in the form of a dialog. As early as 2001, the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) made up of 15 states (including Algeria, Iran, and Russia) held its first meeting in Tehran. According to the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, the GECF members account for more than 40% of the world's blue fuel production and its delivery via pipelines, and as far as supplies are concerned, they account for 80%. Nevertheless, the Forum has still not grown into a cartel, since its participants are of the most diverse opinions.⁷

Essentially all the gas produced at present—in contrast to oil—does not enter into free price bidding on the stock market: it is exported according to contracts which state the delivery volume and method of price calculation. This is preventing gas producing countries from coming to terms among themselves on a general price policy and dictating conditions to consumers. One of the differences between the gas and oil sectors is largely related to the fact that the largest amounts of gas (including liquefied) are transported by pipeline, they cannot be shipped like tankers of oil to different consumers at different ports, and this requires long-term contracts.

Incidentally, at the beginning of August 2006, Gazprom and its Algerian analog, Sonatrach, the two main gas deliverers in Europe, signed a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding which called for coordinating the price of blue fuel. In this way, the situation in GECF could change if a Russian-Algerian agreement is signed.

Domestic Russian problems could prevent GECF's rapid transformation into a "gas OPEC." Russian consumers are Gazprom's biggest customers, but they receive gas at the lowest prices. As a result, the company is not making any profit on its largest market. A cartel could, first, demand that

⁷ See: "Rossia peresmotrela otnoshenie k gazovomu karteliu," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 14 February, 2007.

everyone in Russia buy gas at world prices, and, second, insist on greater transparency of the Russian gas industry.

In this way, the idea of creating a SCO Energy Club is becoming increasingly pertinent. It will be based on the long-term and complicated relations of the East Asian energy security ring (Russia, India, China, and the Central Asian and Middle East countries) relating to production, transit, deliveries, and consumption of energy resources. This will make it possible to ensure a balanced approach to energy security issues throughout the Eurasian space, and in the future in the Asia-Pacific Region as well.

After developing on the basis of common interests in the gas sphere, the new structure will accumulate and acquire the experience needed for interacting and searching for solutions, will form a unified position and observe common interests in order to further transform into a full-fledged SCO Energy Club capable of resolving energy security questions relating to all types of energy resources.

The SCO states are well aware of the importance of cooperation in the gas sphere. As early as 2002, a joint statement was made at an unofficial CIS summit in Almaty by the heads of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia, with the active support of the meeting's organizer, Nursultan Nazarbaev, on cooperation in energy policy and protection of the interests of the gas producing countries.

The SCO participants are not undertaking any accelerated "cartelization" of the gas industry. For example, when answering a corresponding question at a joint press conference with Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, held in February 2007, President Vladimir Putin subtly called the idea of creating a cartel "interesting."

In so doing, the platform of the SCO Energy Club could become an association of gas-exporting states, which would make it possible to take into account the interests of both the deliverers and the consumers. For it is precisely the Club's informality, as an open arena of opinion exchange, that makes it possible, in our opinion, to involve Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan in its activity as members of the SCO, and Iran as observer. This same feature of the Energy Club could later open its doors to other producing countries too: Qatar, Algeria, Libya, and Turkmenistan. All together they will represent more than 60% of the world gas supplies.

It would be beneficial to use the potential of the SCO, to which Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Iran (as the largest deliverers) belong with different statuses, as well as India and China (as the largest consumers), for achieving greater coordination of action between this club of importers and the consignors.

There may be no need to institute the Energy Club as an organization with a Charter, structure, and management bodies.

First of all, it would be expedient, with the help of the unofficial basis and discussion nature of the Club, to come to a general understanding on a multitude of issues, which include access to the transportation system and its progress, price formation, coordination of revenue, profitability of production and transportation, strategic planning, and forecasting of the development of the gas industry in the region.

The next step, which already technically designates the borders and composition of the Club, might be to draw up and sign a SCO Energy Club Memorandum, a document defining the purposes, tasks, and rules of conduct in the energy industry for those states wishing to join this Club.

GEORGIA: NATURAL ENERGY RESOURCES

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This article examines Georgia’s natural fuel and energy resources (FER), both conventional (hydropower, oil, gas, coal) and non-conventional (alternative). Special at-

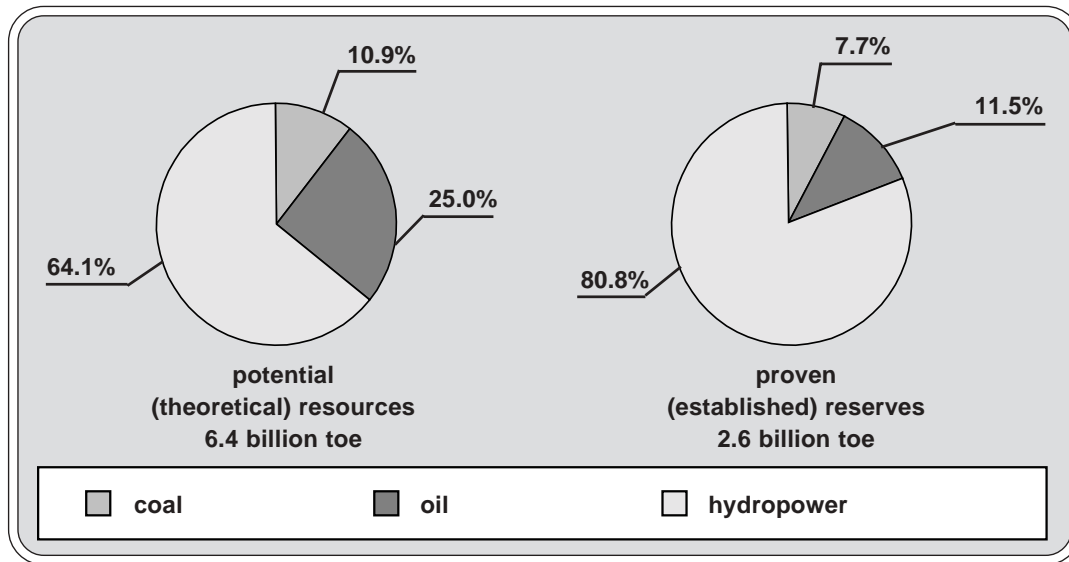
tention is paid to hydropower and to alternative energy sources. The author assesses the current level of their development in the republic.

Overview of Natural Energy Resources and Their Development

Energy resources have a special place among natural resources. Their great importance is primarily due to the fact that these resources are the starting point for any kind of production; they determine the pace and scale of the development of all sectors of the economy and humanity as a whole.

Figure 1

Structure of Georgia’s Conventional Energy Resources¹



¹ Compiled from the materials of the Georgian Institute of Economics.

Generally speaking, Georgia is not very rich in FER, but almost all kinds of these resources are found in its territory in greater or lesser amounts. Despite its limited reserves of fossil fuel, the republic cannot be regarded as a region poor in energy resources in general, because its rivers hold huge amounts of hydropower, largely compensating for the fuel shortage in the country. Another reason is that Georgia is rich in alternative energy sources (sun, thermal waters, wind, etc.).

An approximate structure of the country's conventional FER is presented in Fig. 1, which shows that hydropower makes up the main part of both potential (theoretical) resources and proven (established balance) reserves (64.1% and 80.8%, respectively). Altogether, potential resources add up to 6.4 billion tons of oil equivalent (toe), and established balance reserves, to 2.6 billion toe.

These energy resources (together with alternative resources) constitute Georgia's total energy potential, which should basically ensure the development of the republic's energy sector.

Nevertheless, the FER development level in Georgia is currently very low (see Table 1).

Table 1

Conventional Energy Resources in Georgia²

Resources	Hydropower billion kWh	Coal million tons	Oil million tons
Theoretical resources	135.8	2,355	438.3
Balance reserves	68.5	430	110.9
Production in 2006	5.3	0.005	0.06
Production as a share of balance reserves, %	7.8	0.001	0.05

Hydropower Resources

The country's water resources include rivers, glaciers, lakes, ground waters and wetlands. Their total annual flow is 65.8 cubic km, including transit flows of 9.3 cubic km. These resources are distributed unevenly across the republic's territory: 49.7 cubic km (or 75.5% of all water resources) are concentrated in its western part, and 16.1 cubic km (24.5%) in its eastern part.

Annual precipitation levels are highest (up to 4,000 mm) in the coastal zone of the western part of the Greater Caucasus and the front ranges of southwestern Georgia, and lowest (50 mm) in the southeastern part of the country (Iori-Alazani interfluve). The republic has 26,600 rivers with a total length of 59,747 km. Stream density is 0.85 km per square km. The largest river in Georgia is Rioni, which carries an annual average of 12.6 cubic km of water into the Black Sea. The Kura River at the border with Azerbaijan has a flow of 8.2 cubic km.³

At present, the balance technical energy potential of annual river flow per capita is about 13,600 kWh.

According to the data of the Gruzgidroproekt Institute (Georgian HydroProject Institute) out of the total number of rivers in the country 319 stand out in terms of their energy indicators. Their poten-

² See: *Prirodnye resursy Gruzii*, Moscow, 1962-1964, and the materials of the State Statistics Department of Georgia.

³ See: Materials of the Commission for the Study of Productive Forces (KEPS) under the Presidium of the Georgian Academy of Sciences.

tial capacity is 15.63 million kW, and annual power generation, 135.8 billion kWh. Of these, 208 are relatively large and medium rivers with an aggregate capacity of 14.78 million kW, and the remaining 111 rivers are small, with a capacity of 851 thousand kW (5.4% of total capacity).

The energy of the surface flow of Georgian rivers totals 228.5 billion kWh, and its capacity, 26.1 million kW. For every square kilometer of Georgian territory there is an average of 3.27 million kWh of surface flow energy, including 5.06 million kWh in Western Georgia and 1.73 million kWh in Eastern Georgia. Overall, the western part of the country has 72.1% (164.8 billion kWh) of total energy, and its eastern part, 27.9% (63.7 billion kWh). Out of this total, the potential resources of small, medium and large rivers add up to 135.8 billion kWh, or about 60% of total surface flow energy (see Table 2).

Table 2

Potential (Theoretical) Hydropower Resources in Georgia⁴

Resources	Capacity, million kW	Energy, billion kWh	%
Total surface flow	26.08	228.5	100.0
including:			
Overland flow (surface runoff)	10.46	92.7	40.5
Large, medium and small rivers suitable for energy generation	15.62	135.8	59.5

Table 2 shows that the potential hydropower resources of the country's large and medium rivers are close to 136 billion kWh, and its technical hydropower resources (technically possible to exploit) amount to 68 billion kWh. As regards economic hydropower resources (economically profitable to exploit), these amount to 32 billion kWh.

Meanwhile, the republic's hydropower resources remain largely untapped: in 2006, Georgian hydropower plants (HPPs) generated 5,322 million kWh of electricity (or only 7.8% of the technically possible figure).

Based on the latest achievements in hydraulic engineering, tens of large and medium-sized economical HPPs can be built on the country's rivers.

Of particular importance here is integrated use of medium and small rivers for power generation. According to the Georgian Energy and Hydraulic Engineering Research Institute, very small rivers in the republic could be used to build up to 100 HPPs with a total output of 3.9 billion kWh. For small rivers, the figures are 150 HPPs and 17.5 billion kWh, respectively, and for medium rivers, 45 HPPs and 18.4 billion kWh.

It should be taken into account, however, that HPP construction calls for large capital investments and takes a long time. And this, together with seasonal generation, significantly limits the opportunities for utilizing water power.

Georgia has favorable conditions for the construction of hydropower plants, because 40% of its total technical hydropower resources are concentrated in eight major rivers (Kura, Rioni, Enguri, Tskhenistskali, Kodori, Bzyb, Khrami and Aragvi). At present, about 16.6% of these resources are being used. In the near future, it is planned to continue developing the Rioni River, and eventually the Enguri River (see Table 3).

⁴ Compiled from the data of the Georgian HydroProject Institute.

Table 3

Georgia's Economic Hydropower Resources by River⁵

Rivers	In billion kWh	As % of total
Enguri	10.0	31.3
Rioni	7.5	23.4
Tskhenistskali and Lajanuri	2.5	7.8
Shaori and Tkibula	0.3	0.9
Kodori	2.5	7.8
Bzyb	1.5	4.7
Kura and Aragvi	3.0	9.4
Khrami and Paravani	1.1	3.4
Alazani in Tusheti	3.2	10.0
Other	0.4	1.3
Total	32.0	100.0

It should be noted that these figures are based on 1990s data and need to be updated. According to the Georgian Energy and Hydraulic Engineering Research Institute, the updated figures will undoubtedly be higher.

All of this shows that Georgia is a country well endowed with hydropower resources.

Coal Reserves

Many years of research on Georgia's mineral resource base shows that despite its small territory the republic has many deposits of valuable minerals. The most important of these are oil and coal as a power plant fuel (steam coal).

Coal deposits were discovered in Georgia in the first half of the 19th century. Information initially appeared about deposits in Tkibuli, then in Akhaltsikhe and Gelati, and finally in Tkvarcheli. But until the 1930s geological exploration of these deposits was episodic.

Rapid development of natural resources in Georgia (including coal deposits) began after World War II. Coal production started in Tkibuli, while the first mine was being built in Tkvarcheli. Commercial production of brown coal in Akhaltsikhe began after 1948.

To date, nine coal deposits have been discovered in the country's territory, but only three of them are of commercial importance: Tkibuli-Shaori and Tkvarcheli bituminous coal deposits and Akhaltsikhe brown coal deposit. Most of the republic's coal reserves are concentrated in these deposits.

As of 1 January, 2006, the Tkibuli-Shaori deposit accounted for 78.8% of Georgia's balance coal reserves, followed by Akhaltsikhe with 16.6% and Tkvarcheli with 4.6% (see Table 4).

⁵ Compiled from the materials of the Georgian Academy of Sciences.

Table 4

Coal Reserves in Georgia
(million tons)⁶

Deposits	Balance reserves by category					Off-balance resources
	A	B	C ₁	A+B+C ₁	C ₂	
Total reserves	3.8	216.0	210.1	429.9	54.7	13.7
including:						
Tkibuli	3.8	170.3	164.9	339.0	49.8	3.7
Tkvarcheli	—	6.1	13.5	19.6	0.5	1.6
Akhalsikhe	—	39.6	31.7	71.3	4.4	8.4

The most valuable Georgian coals—bituminous coals belonging to the PZh (steam and rich) and sometimes to the GZh (gas and rich) group—come from Tkvarcheli. They are coking coals and, when mixed with Tkibuli gas coals, allow the production of quite acceptable metallurgical coke.

The calorific value of the country's bituminous coals is directly dependent on their ash content and varies widely. In laboratory conditions, the figure for Tkvarcheli coals is 7,500-7,800 kcal/kg for an ash content of 4-6%, 5,500-6,500 kcal/kg for 10-20%, and 3,500-4,500 kcal/kg for 30-40%, and for Tkibuli coals, 5,500-6,500 kcal/kg for an ash content of 20-30%. The average figures for ash content and calorific value are 30% and 5,500 kcal/kg for Tkvarcheli coals and 30.5% and 5,300 kcal/kg for Tkibuli coals.⁷

Akhalsikhe brown coal is a low-rank energy resource. Its average calorific value does not exceed 2,750 kcal/kg, and its ash content is about 40%. In view of this, and also due to high production costs, coal production in Akhalsikhe was stopped in 1987.

It should be noted that geological conditions for coal mining in Georgia are very difficult, while the coal produced belongs to the hard-cleaning category. Coal is mined at great depths in mountain areas; its methane content is considerable (from 20 to 45 cubic meters per ton); coal is self-ignitable (especially at the Tkibuli-Shaori deposit); and working conditions are very difficult (with temperatures of 22-26°C or higher).

The republic's coal deposits are sufficiently well explored, so that any future discovery of new significant reserves in its territory is unlikely. But geologists believe that there may be coal beds at great depths (1,500-1,700 meters). Balance reserves of coal naturally lag far behind its geological reserves. At the Tkibuli-Shaori deposit alone, the latter are estimated at one billion tons.

From the standpoint of integrated rational use of Georgian coal deposits, younger coals (so-called liptobioliths) are of particular interest. It has been proved that concentrates obtained from these coals can be used to produce plastics required for the economy. They can also be used for power generation. In terms of quality, Tkibuli liptobiolith shales compare favorably with Estonian shales and even surpass them. Through gasification in chamber furnaces, liptobioliths are now used to produce high-calorific household gas.⁸

The republic has peat deposits as well. Its current peat reserves are estimated at 813.2 million cubic meters. The largest deposits are found in the vicinity of Lake Paliastomi. In view of its high ash

⁶ Compiled from the data of the State Geology Department of Georgia.

⁷ See: *Prirodnye resursy Gruzii. Toplivnye resursy*, Vol. V, Moscow, 1963.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

content, peat is of little importance as a power plant fuel, but is used in Georgia to produce agricultural fertilizers. Experts believe, however, that it can be used (in the form of bricks) to heat greenhouses and lemon farms. Peat bricks are a good household fuel; one ton of such bricks equals 3-4 cubic meters of firewood.⁹

Georgia is the only country in Transcaucasia with significant coal deposits. Nevertheless, today there is virtually no production of this useful fossil fuel, even despite the negative energy balance. In 2001-2006, the country produced an average of 5-6 thousand tons of coal, whereas in the past its production exceeded 3 million tons (for example, in 1958).

Oil and Gas Reserves

The geological exploration of Georgian oil fields in effect began in 1868. That year, a special department was set up in Tbilisi with the support of Professor G. Abikh, but actual exploration work was started only in 1877. In 1881, Georgian engineer B. Tsulukidze explored for oil in Navtlugi; later on, such work was organized by foreign specialists.¹⁰

Systematic intensive oil exploration in the republic began in 1929-1930, but significant oil reserves could not be found for a long time, so that the scale of oil production was insignificant. The situation markedly improved by 1947 with the discovery of new oil fields. From 1984, oil production in Georgia fell sharply as a result of unexpected water encroachment. At present (as of 1 January, 2007), the country has 16 producing fields, including Mirzaani, Patara-Shiraki, Norio, Samgori-Patardzeuli, Taribani, Shromisubani-Tskaltsminda, and others. Five companies are engaged in oil production: CanArgo Energy, Frontera, Anadarko, Ioris Veli and Teleti. The country's geological oil reserves in the B+C category total about 180 million tons, including recoverable reserves in this category of 11.0 million tons. In 2006, oil production in Georgia was only 63.5 thousand tons.

Experts believe that there are fairly large oil and gas reserves in the Black Sea (in the Ajara-Supsa water area). According to surveys carried out by Anadarko-Georgia Company specialists, offshore oil reserves alone come to about 0.5-3 billion tons.

The quality of produced oil varies from field to field. The oil of Gare-Kakheti (Mirzaani, Patara-Shiraki, Taribani) is of medium gravity, for the most part containing small amounts of sulfur and wax. In the gasoline fraction, hydrocarbon prevails, while its resin content is insignificant.

The heaviest oil found in the fields around Tbilisi is Norio crude: its gasoline content is low and the presence of sulfur and wax is insignificant.

Samgori-Patardzeuli oil is sweet oil of medium gravity. Its wax content is 4.5%, and the presence of resin is insignificant. This oil has the highest gasoline content.

Guria oil typically has a high resin content coupled with an insignificant sulfur and wax content; the gasoline yield is low.

Eastern Chaladidi oil has a relatively high gravity and a high content of sulfur, wax and resin; its gasoline content is low.

Studies carried out by the Academician Melikishvili Institute of Physical and Organic Chemistry of the Georgian Academy of Sciences show that an increase in oil production in the republic creates wide opportunities for the development of related industries. For example, Samgori oil and low-octane gasoline could be used to produce ethylene, polyethylene and other products.

Gas fields of commercial importance have not yet been discovered in the country, although gas has often been found during exploratory drilling. Such cases were recorded back in 1954-1963, while

⁹ Ibid., p. 252.

¹⁰ See: *Proceedings of the Institute of Economics and Planning*, Tbilisi, 1972, p. 193 (in Georgian).

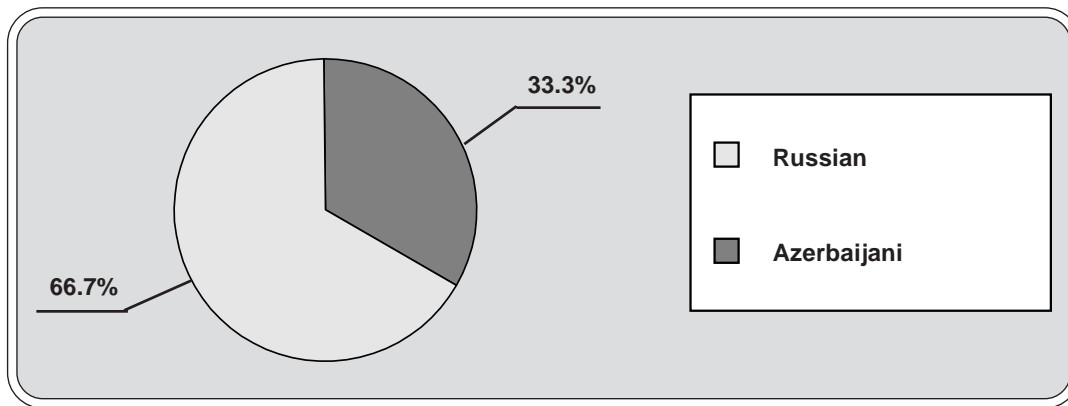
a major flow of natural gas was for the first time obtained in Georgia in 1967, when a gas pool was tapped at a depth of 2,712 meters. The well No. 11 was in operation for three days.¹¹

This fact suggests that the republic's subsoil holds natural gas in commercial amounts and that it will eventually occupy an important place in the country's fuel balance.

As of 1 January, 2007, there were three gas fields included in Georgia's State Oil and Gas Balance: Ninotsminda, Samgori and Rustavi. Their total reserves are 8,317 million cubic meters (Mcm), including 2,513 Mcm in Category C₁ and 5,804 Mcm in Category C₂. The only producing field today is Ninotsminda; in 2006, it produced only 21.4 Mcm of gas. The republic's current demand for natural gas is met from imports. In 2007, gas imports are projected at about 1.8 billion cubic meters, including 66.7% from Russia and 33.3% from Azerbaijan (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2

Satisfaction of Georgia's Demand for Natural Gas in 2007



Alternative Energy Resources

Apart from the above, Georgia has other energy sources, whose development and rational use in the near future will to some extent improve the country's energy balance. These are renewable energy sources, primarily thermal waters, wind and solar energy.

Thermal waters began to be used in the republic a long time ago: in 1987, their production reached 17.6 Mcm. In contrast to conventional energy resources, they are constantly renewed and are virtually unlimited. Georgia's balance reserves of thermal waters, as approved by the State Commission on Mineral Reserves back in the 1990s, total 112,484 cubic meters per day (cm/d), including 22,630 cm/d in Category A, 6,110 cm/d in Category B, and 83,744 cm/d in Category C₁.

Artesian wells have brought to the surface hot waters with a significant flow and a temperature of 65-100°C. Most of these wells are located close to population centers.

The country's thermal waters have a large calorific potential and a low degree of mineralization (0.22-2.9 grams per liter), causing virtually no corrosion or scaling.

Another promising avenue in Georgian conditions is use of **solar energy**. Due to its geographical location, the republic is among the countries best endowed with solar energy and is part of the so-called Earth's Sunbelt (45° N to 45° S).

¹¹ See: *Proceedings of the Institute of Economics and Planning*, Tbilisi, 1972, p. 193.

In most regions of Georgia, annual sunshine duration values are high, ranging from 200 to 250 days. The republic's rational characteristics point to real prospects for solar engineering in its territory. Use of solar energy for space and water heating in Georgia is a very promising area. Solar water heaters could be used on a particularly large scale.

Georgia was the first Soviet republic to start using solar water-heating units: at a metal plant in Tbilisi in 1950, a public bath in Sukhumi in 1951, etc. By 1957, 17 heaters of this kind were built in the republic, and some of these had a fairly high efficiency (43%). The solar heaters built in the 1950s are no longer in operation.

The Tbilisi Zonal Research and Design Institute for Standard and Experimental Design of Housing and Public Buildings (TbilZNIIEP) has designed an experimental one-storey single-family country or summer house equipped with an integrated solar heating and hot water system.

The results obtained in the use of solar energy in the national economy show the need for even wider research in this area. According to the Georgian Energy and Hydraulic Engineering Research Institute, the following tasks have been accomplished to date:

- monthly and annual solar radiation values (sunlight levels) have been determined for 28 sites in the country;
- the republic's territory has been divided into uniform solar radiation zones;
- the optimum tilt of solar water heaters has been established for Georgian conditions;
- efficiency factors for solar water heaters have been established for uniform zones.

Apart from so-called Big Energy, solar power can be used in various spheres of the economy: residential heating, hot water supply, and also in greenhouses, dryers, etc. It can be used to obtain low mechanical energy (1-5 kW). Work along these lines has been conducted at the Institute of Machine Mechanics of the Georgian Academy of Sciences. An appropriate device developed at the Institute has been tested at the solar concentrator in Makhachkala. This device was manufactured at the Krzhizhanovskiy Moscow Power Engineering Institute.

The country's mountainous terrain provides good opportunities for the use of **wind energy**. Relatively stable strong winds are observed in the republic in the fall and winter months, i.e., when the need for energy is greatest.

Theoretical wind energy resources in Georgia are 1.3 TWh and in some areas with higher wind speeds (4.1 meters per second), 4.5 billion kWh. Average wind speed ranges from 0.5 to 0.9 m/sec. In some parts of the country, the figure is higher: 1.5 m/sec.

Climatic studies of space-time solar radiation patterns and wind regimes as the basis for an inventory of solar and wind energy resources were carried out back in the 1980s. The republic was divided into administrative and economic zones depending on their potential resources of solar and wind energy. Sketch maps were compiled showing the distribution of renewable energy resources in Georgian territory.¹²

At present, intensive work is underway on the practical use of wind power. A wind energy resource atlas of Georgia was published in 2004. It presents regional estimates of the wind energy potential based on the criterion of wind power density. These studies cover the country's entire territory.

The atlas contains all data required to select sites for building wind power plants and for making technical and economic assessments. The work is based on data obtained by weather stations over many years in combination with relatively short (2-5 years) runs of wind speed and direction measurements at weather towers located in the most promising areas of Georgia. The authors applied an advanced

¹² See: G. Svanidze *et al.*, *Vozobnovliaemye energoresursy Gruzii*, Leningrad, 1987.

technique developed by the Danish national laboratory Risf and used to compile the European and Russian wind atlases.¹³

The use of wind power in the republic is projected along two main lines:

- implementation of batch-produced low-power wind turbines (water supply, grain threshing and milling, etc.);
- construction of groups of high-power wind plants.

At present, wind energy in the country is virtually untapped, but the *Main Lines of State Policy in the Energy Sector of Georgia*, approved by Parliament, provide for the construction in the short term of a 120 MW wind power station¹⁴ with its subsequent expansion. It is known that seasonal generation of electricity by wind power plants can increase sharply when they are used in combination with HPPs. Research in this area is of great importance to the republic's mountain areas from the standpoint of stable electricity supply.

Georgia has an opportunity to use energy from **biomass and waste**, which can meet a part of the country's energy demand, including in rural areas. The energy potential of different kinds of biomass is estimated at 3.2-4.7 billion kWh. Given rational use of waste, the country can annually save 260 thousand toe.

Apart from the above-mentioned energy resources, Georgia is rich in hydrogen sulfide, a material required for the development of **hydrogen-based** energy. As we know, commercial production of hydrogen has recently undergone considerable changes. Since the 1990s, international oil companies have regarded hydrogen as a "second oil." Iceland has been chosen as a testing ground for this purpose.

Hydrogen production technologies can also be implemented in Georgia, because the county is well endowed with hydropower resources, geothermal waters and hydrogen sulfide deposits in the Black Sea. At the present stage, the authorities are considering the implementation of two projects in the territory of the republic:

- (a) a study of the operation of hydrogen-fueled transport, to be carried out on the Black Sea coast, and the development of an infrastructure for the use of hydrogen and hydrogen sulfide, which will make it possible to use hydrogen obtained in the course of technological processes during subsequent development of Black Sea reserves;
- (b) production of hydrogen for commercial purposes using electric power. There are plans to produce hydrogen at electric power stations during floods and with the use of surplus electricity generated at night.¹⁵

As it follows from the above, Georgia cannot be ranked among countries poorly endowed with energy resources. It has an untapped energy potential and is able to offer a great deal to serious foreign partners by way of cooperation.

Georgia's long-term economic interests call for a sharp improvement in the development of all natural fuel and energy resources so as to enhance the country's energy self-sufficiency.

¹³ See: *Wind Energy Atlas of Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2004.

¹⁴ See: *Main Lines of State Policy in the Energy Sector of Georgia*, Tbilisi, June 2006 (in Georgian).

¹⁵ See: *The Energy Strategy of Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2004, p. 183 (in Georgian).

U.S.'S POLICY IN CENTRAL EURASIA: SPECIFICS AND PROSPECTS

EVOLVING UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD THE CASPIAN REGION: A DELICATE BALANCE

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Introduction: The Historic Picture

Historically, the United States had almost no involvement in the Caspian Sea region, which was so remote both in geographical and cultural terms that the U.S. government was barely aware of its existence. The 19th century "Great Game" of power politicking between Russia and Great Britain over the region took place before the United States had emerged as a world power, and it had at best a marginal role in this episode. Even when the United States became a major power, it focused its attention on

the western hemisphere and events in its own backyard.

The same could not be said of the actions of Russia in Manchuria at the time, and United States involvement in the Manchurian dispute brought the realization home to the Americans that in future Russia would be its major rival on the world stage.¹ Even at times in the following century

¹ Russia occupied Japanese-dominated Manchuria in 1901, an action which contributed to the outbreak of the

when the two powers cooperated, such as during World War II, their alliance was based more on strategic needs than on deep-seated conviction. The wartime military cooperation soon gave way to the Cold War, which lasted for most of the rest of the 20th century and affected most corners of the globe. The Caspian region was heavily dominated by Russia, with most of its territories comprising Soviet Republics. American activity there was nonexistent.

The situation was different in the countries bordering the former Soviet states, however. Iran, which lies on the Caspian Sea and shares borders with the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, was targeted by the U.S. as an ally against the Soviet Union at a fairly early juncture.² Russia retained a keen interest in Iran, despite the installation of the rightist regime in 1953, and the country became one of the earliest sites of superpower rivalry. Then, in 1979, the overthrow of the Shah by the ayatollahs and the siege of the U.S. embassy in Tehran destroyed the close relationship between Iran and the United States. This did not automatically give Russia the upper hand, though, because the Russian invasion of Afghanistan alarmed and threatened Iran, and the new Islamist rulers were suspicious of communism, with its atheistic overtones. In fact, Iran found themselves on the same side in supporting the anti-Soviet guerrillas in Afghanistan. Still, the ayatollahs did not cooperate openly with either Russia or the United States.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the geopolitical map of the Caspian region changed beyond recognition. The former Soviet republics of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan became independent and Rus-

sia's borders shrank back to levels unimaginable a decade earlier.

At the time, the American establishment took a number of views on how the Bush Administration should react to the new regional power shift. The seismic events in the former Soviet Union were regarded by some as a potential threat to U.S. interests, and they cautioned the administration to tread carefully and not antagonize Russia by being too quick to form relationships with the newly independent countries of the region. In the event, the United States, perhaps understandably, focused more attention on the effects of the Soviet collapse in Russia and east and central Europe than on Central Asia and the Caspian.³

The situation remained the same after the start of the Clinton presidency in 1993. However, unfolding events in the former Soviet empire were closely monitored within America and many experts advised the U.S. Administration to adopt a proactive stance on the Caspian region sooner rather than later. One commentator, Ariel Cohen, admonished the government because "The Clinton Administration—intent on placating Moscow—has hesitated to take advantage of the strategic opportunity to secure U.S. interests in the Caucasus. During the first term of the Clinton Administration, the Department of State and the National Security Council neglected the Central Asian and Caucasian capitals, creating a policy vacuum for the region. This approach must change. U.S. involvement in this region—and the economic growth, prosperity, and tolerance that would accompany it—can ensure access to oil and natural gas, as well as economic opportunity, for American businesses in coming decades."⁴

Once the dust raised by the Soviet collapse began to settle, the U.S. did indeed begin to focus more attention on the Caspian, appointing a "special envoy" to the region, organizing reciprocal official visits, and making encouraging statements on the importance of the region and de-

Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. The U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt, mediated at the postwar peace conference between Russia and the victorious Japanese, held in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

² The 1953 coup in Iran that toppled the government of Mohammad Mossadegh and installed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was orchestrated by the CIA and British intelligence. Oil exploitation in Iran had been controlled by a British company, which took the vast bulk of profits from this resource. Mossadegh nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) in 1951, a factor that contributed to the coup.

³ See: A. Jaffe, "U.S. Policy Towards the Caspian Region: Can the Wish-list Be Realized?" *The Security of the Caspian Region: SIPRI*, 6 January, 2000, p. 1.

⁴ A. Cohen, "U.S. Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Building a New 'Silk Road' to Economic Prosperity," *Background paper 1132, The Heritage Foundation*, 24 July, 1997.

velopments there. More substantial measures included the NATO Partnership for Peace programs, aimed at furthering military cooperation, the Co-operative Threat Reduction program in 1991⁵ and

⁵ The aims of this program, enshrined in a formal Congressional Act in 1993, were to facilitate the safeguard-

Foreign Military Financing program, as well as democracy-building assistance given under the Freedom Support Act 1992.⁶

ing and elimination of nuclear and other weapons in the former Soviet Union, and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

⁶ See: A. Jaffe, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

A Delicate Balancing Act

The new dispensation in the post-Soviet Caspian region may have provided new opportunities for American involvement, but in view of the fact that the newly independent states were still firmly in the Russian orbit, this involvement had the potential to incur the wrath of America's erstwhile Cold War foe. Besides this, having so recently won their independence the fledgling states were intent on guarding against any threat to their sovereignty, whether it came from America or anywhere else.

Involvement in the Caspian and Central Asian region would mean America had to contend with other players hoping to make their mark in the region, notably Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. This was to say nothing about the European Union and China, who were formulating their own policies toward the area.

Complicating the issue, as it so often does in geopolitics, was the oil question. Estimates of the oil and gas reserves of the Caspian region varied widely at the time, but it was apparent that they were substantial and hence gave the region a strategic importance that had to be factored into any U.S. decisions on its foreign policy stance. The idea was mooted that the Caspian oil industry could be developed to form a viable alternative to Gulf oil sources, hence ensuring better security of supply for those countries that depended heavily on Arab oil. Oil piped from the Caspian would also relieve stress on the Gulf oil ports and the Bosphorus Straits in Turkey, through which much Middle Eastern oil is transported and which are vulnerable from an environmental as well as a security perspective.

As scholars and diplomats debated, about thirty U.S. companies took the lead and invested billions of dollars in the region, hoping to "strike it big."⁷

Other major considerations for the U.S. were the possible security benefits that might accrue from a presence in this strategically important region. Although the Cold War was over, Russia and America had not overcome their rivalry. While the states of the region were now ostensibly independent, the shadow of Russian domination still fell over them, and there were those in the United States who felt their country should work to counter this. As one scholar noted: "U.S. policymakers are becoming increasingly concerned about the possible re-emergence of a new Russian empire, and they realize that ready access to the rich oil and gas resources of this region could fuel such an expansion. A new Russian empire conceivably might seek to gain exclusive control over the region's pipelines and limit U.S. access."⁸ It was argued that not only should Russia not be permitted to re-invent the Soviet Empire, but China, with its ever-increasing economic and political muscle, should not be allowed too much power in the region. Furthermore, there was the threat of Islamic radicalism: America needed to prevent militant Islamism from moving 'to turn Central Asia into its strategic rear.'⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸ A. Cohen, *op. cit.*

⁹ *Ibidem.*

American foreign policy in the Caspian region therefore needed to take all these things into account, with the ambition of not only forestalling Russian and Chinese ambitions in the area but also to help strengthen the worryingly weak states in the region. The Clinton Administration did in fact work “behind the scenes with mixed success to thwart foreign companies from joining with Iran’s national oil company, NIOC, to construct energy export outlets via Iran.”¹⁰

The terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September, 2001 threw the issue into a new light, particularly with regard to the threat posed by radicals in this heavily Muslim, potentially unstable region. More than ever before, Americans felt they had to have meaningful contact with the Muslim world, of which the Caspian region is such an important part.

The time had come to take a look at the big picture of Caspian affairs, rather than, as in the past, looking at events on a case-by-case basis. Under this approach, the policy focused on bilateral relations between the U.S. and the individual regimes, regional developments such as the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan,¹¹ the relationship between Russia and the U.S., and that between Iran and the U.S. This approach makes sense in terms of domestic considerations, such as the strong U.S. Armenian-American lobby, the demand for action against Iran on the grounds of its support for terrorist groups and its violent anti-American rhetoric; and the anti-Russian feeling that prompted Congressional opposition to the construction of pipelines through Iran, Afghanistan and Russia.¹² According to a member of the American House of Representatives: “The terrorist events of September 2001 brought a profound and lasting transformation to U.S. policies and priorities toward the countries of Central Asia. Regions and nations that had been at the periphery of concern have taken on new importance because of the threat posed by terrorists and the states that sponsor them. Expanding U.S. security engagement and cooperation with Central Asian States has been viewed as a key mechanism to promote their integration into Western political military institutions, encourage civilian control over militaries, and institutionalize cooperative relations with the United States military, while dissuading other parties—such as Russia and China—and threats to U.S. national security—particularly Iran—from seeking to dominate the region.”¹³

The 9/11 attacks also increased America’s fear of nuclear proliferation. After the disintegration of the Soviet empire the U.S. with the cooperation of Russia, had taken measures to put Soviet nuclear weapons and materials beyond use. Not all these weapons and materials were on Russian-controlled soil, however, and the possibility arose that they might be used by terrorists belonging to numerous radical Islamist and nationalist movements.

As the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Middle East and Central Asia, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, pointed out: “Major U.S. security interests have included the elimination of nuclear weapons remaining in Kazakhstan, for example, after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. There are active research reactors, uranium mines, milling facilities, and nuclear waste dumps in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, many of which reportedly remain inadequately protected. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan reportedly had significant chemical and biological warfare facilities during the Soviet era. U.S. efforts to dismantle chem-bio and nuclear facilities in the region to prevent terrorists from procuring these deadly weapons are a priority concern for this Subcommittee.”¹⁴

The United States’ view of the potential threat was summarized in a State Department advisory: “Elements and supporters of extremist groups present in Central Asia, including the Islamic Jihad Group,

¹⁰ For more detail, see: F.W. Hays, “US Congress and the Caspian,” available at [<http://www.ourworld.compusrve.com/HOMEPAGES/USAZERB/333.htm>].

¹¹ The two countries have been at loggerheads over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh since 1988.

¹² See: F.W. Hays, *op. cit.*

¹³ Opening Statement of Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chair, Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia Hearing: “U.S. Security Concerns in Central Asia,” 26 October, 2005.

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

al-Qa'eda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments in the past and have the capability to conduct terrorist operations in multiple countries." The advisory also pointed out that "Previous terrorist attacks conducted in Central Asia have involved the use of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers and have targeted public areas, such as markets, local government facilities, and the U.S. and Israeli Embassies in Uzbekistan. In addition, hostage-takings and skirmishes have occurred near the Uzbek-Tajik-Kyrgyz border areas."¹⁵

Besides energy,¹⁶ terrorism and geostrategic considerations, the United States policy on the Caspian region in the post-Soviet era has also been influenced by the political and social turbulence of the region, as well as its considerable economic problems. Although the governments in the region have acquired some of the trappings of democracy, they are still largely authoritarian, with little tolerance for dissent.

As Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., former deputy assistant Secretary of the U.S. State Department, noted in 2001: "All the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia now have parliaments, elected presidents, and (Turkmenistan excepted) multiple parties... (However) the ruler is a powerful president who typically was the Communist first secretary during Soviet days. There is no effective power sharing, whether with parliaments, local governments, or independent judiciaries... While presidents and parliaments alike are chosen through multiparty elections, chicanery and vote-rigging are common. Parties other than successors to the Communist Party are mostly small and focused on personalities ... in abrupt contrast with the overly strong Soviet state, all the states in this group are weak or weakening; several have wavered in and out of the 'failed state' category."¹⁷

The U.S. Department of Energy also views the Caspian region as an area of political tensions and regional conflicts,¹⁸ not to mention considerable health and environmental threats¹⁹ and enormous geographical constraints.

Into this complicated mix must be added two other factors of growing importance to the United States: creating and maintaining good relationships with the Muslim world, encouraging "U.S.-oriented regimes and open societies" and promoting the "well-being of Turkey," an important U.S. ally.²⁰ The deterioration in relations with the Muslim regions of the world following America's use of force in Iraq, and its hardline diplomatic stance, have made it more crucial than ever that America gets closer to potential allies in the Muslim world.

¹⁵ State Department Advisory, 29 April, 2005.

¹⁶ Other estimates of oil reserves were much lower than Cohen's (see note 17). According to the U.S. Department of Energy, "The Caspian Sea is developing into a significant oil and gas exporting area, and the Caucasus is a potentially major world oil transit center. Proven oil reserves for the entire Caspian region are estimated at 17-44 billion barrels, comparable to proven reserves in the North Sea (around 15-17 billion barrels). Natural gas reserves are larger, accounting for almost two-thirds of the region's total hydrocarbon reserves proved possible."

¹⁷ Ch.H. Fairbanks, Jr., "Ten Years after the Soviet Breakup: Disillusionment in the Caucasus and Central Asia," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2001.

¹⁸ To quote the department's website: "In almost any direction, Caspian region export pipelines may be subjected to regional conflicts... Numerous ethnic and religious groups reside in the Caspian Sea region, and continuing conflicts pose threats to both existing pipelines and those under construction. ...Afghanistan remains scarred and unstable after years of war. Negotiations to resolve the Azerbaijan-Armenia war ... have yet to make significant progress. Separatist conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Ajaria in Georgia flared in the mid-1990s ... Russia's war with Chechnya has devastated the region around Groznyy in southern Russia, and the September 2004 terrorist massacre in Beslan underlines the tenuous political situation in the Caspian region. The most significant problem with the Caspian Sea's oil and natural gas resources is the lack of an agreement among the five littoral states."

¹⁹ For a summary of these issues, see [www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspenv.html].

²⁰ B. Shaffer, "U.S. Policy Toward the Caspian Region: Recommendations for the Bush Administration," available at [www.ksg.edu/bcsia/sdi]. The executive summary is reproduced in *Kazakhstan News Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 3, September 2001.

Policy Objectives

A succinct summary of the U.S.'s main objectives with regard to the Caspian region was given by Doug Bereuter, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia of the House of Representatives in 1998: "Stated U.S. policy goals regarding energy resources in this region include fostering the independence of the States and their ties to the West; breaking Russia's monopoly over oil and gas transport routes; promoting Western energy security through diversified suppliers; encouraging the construction of east-west pipelines that do not transit Iran; and denying Iran dangerous leverage over the Central Asian economies."²¹

Congressman Howard L. Berman stated, somewhat disingenuously, that "American interests in the region are simply to ensure its progressive political and economic development and to prevent it from being under the thumb of any outside power, be it Russia or Iran."²² He did not apparently regard the United States as an "outside power," or consider that America's attempts to keep other powers out might be construed as dangerous interference in the region.

Clinton's Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott affirmed that the United States would "discourage any one country from gaining control over the region" and "urge all responsible States to cooperate in the exploitation of regional oil and other resources." The "any one country" was clearly Russia, which despite the fall of the Soviet Union still had an inordinate amount of power in the region.²³ Ambassador Richard L. Morningstar outlined the U.S. objectives in the Caspian region in the following order:

- "a. Strengthening the independence, sovereignty, and prosperity of the new Caspian states and encouraging political and economic reform;
- "b. Mitigating regional conflicts by building economic linkages between the new states of the region.
- "c. Bolstering the energy security of the U.S. and our allies and the energy independence of the Caspian region by ensuring the free flow of oil and gas to the world market place.
- "d. And, enhancing commercial opportunities for U.S. companies."²⁴

The Ambassador's testimony indicated that America gave the highest priority to political considerations, even over economic ones, and that "the fundamental objective of the U.S. policy in the Caspian is not simply to build oil and gas pipelines. Rather it is to use those pipelines, which must be commercially viable and environmentally sustainable, as tools for establishing a political and economic framework that will strengthen regional cooperation and stability and encourage reform for the next several decades."²⁵

The U.S. Energy Department indicated that while the U.S. had an interest in diversifying its sources of oil, the country's aims were much wider, centering on guaranteeing "the independence, sovereignty, and prosperity of the Newly Independent States of the Caspian Basin" and making sure that they would enjoy "unfettered access to world markets without pressure or undue influence from

²¹ U.S. Congress, 105th Congress, Second Session, Committee on International Relations, Hearing, U.S. Interests in the Central Asian Republics, 12 February, 1998, available at [http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa48119.00/hfa48119_0.HTM].

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁴ Testimony by Richard L. Morningstar, Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State for Caspian Basin's Energy Diplomacy, before the Senate Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Exports and Trade Promotion, 3 March, 1999, available at [<http://www.treemedia.com/eflibrary/library/morningstar.html>].

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

regional powers.” The commercial interest included “maximizing commercial opportunities for U.S. firms and for U.S. and other foreign investment in the region’s energy development.”²⁶ Satisfying these objectives could be best achieved by promoting the construction of multiple export routes on the basis of commercial viability, rather than political considerations.

The United States’ overwhelming interest was in making sure that the area was not dominated by Russia, for at the time the policy was formulated it was understood that Russia was the only dominant power in the region. However, this did not imply excluding Russia, and the State Department was careful to make it clear that no containment doctrine was in place. The Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs thus underlined in his testimony before Congress that “Our Caspian policy is not intended to bypass or to thwart Russia... We support continued Russian participation in Caspian production and transportation. We would also welcome their participation in the Eurasian corridor. U.S. companies are working in partnership with Russian firms in the Caspian.”²⁷

Purging Russia from the area might lead to the ascendancy of other emergent powers, such as Iran or China, an outcome that the United States would view with concern (see below).

Why did the U.S. policy statements underscore the necessity to support the sovereignty of the new states of the Caspian Sea region? As an American scholar explains: “Russia and Iran historically have dominated the Caspian Sea region. Preventing the resurgence of aggressive Russian imperialism, especially in what used to be Russia’s backyard in the 19th and 20th centuries, is strategically important to the United States. Russia may remain reasonably friendly and cooperative as a democracy, but this is unlikely to be the case if Russia chooses to reoccupy the southern Caucasus and Central Asia and coerce their peoples. Moscow, not Tbilisi or Baku, would gain from control of the area’s impressive energy resources. Tehran appears interested in turning Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and other countries in the region into a market for both its goods and its ideology. Iranian domination would be likely to prevent the successful flow of oil to the West as well as the involvement of American companies in the economic development of the new Silk Road. **An Iranian presence, like a Russian presence, would hinder the development of democracy and free markets throughout the Caucasus and Central Asia. Therefore, it is in the U.S. national interest to see that Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and other states maintain their sovereignty and territorial integrity** (emphasis added.—*A.I.*). These countries stand to benefit from the development of oil and natural gas on their soil, which would make their peoples richer and their governments solvent. The United States should make every effort to support the sovereignty of the Eurasian states over their resources.”²⁸

While the U.S. is not directly or even indirectly dependent on Caspian oil and, in fact, imports much of its oil from non-Middle Eastern sources, its economic performance is intricately connected with the state of energy supply in the international market. Events in and around the Caspian Basin therefore impact on the United States. The U.S. policy toward this region, by implication, thus has economic, as well as political and strategic, motivations. The 9/11 attacks and ongoing conflict between the U.S.-led western coalition and the Muslim world have enhanced the strategic significance of the Caspian region, which has a substantial Muslim population. This region, moreover, provides routes for drugs trafficking and light weapons proliferation, on which the United States is keen to crack down.

As long ago as 1999, the Pentagon recognized the increasing strategic importance of the Caspian region by reassigning senior command authority over American forces in Central Asia from the Pacific Command to the Central Command. Although largely ignored by the media, this move, de-

²⁶ Ibidem; Statement of Robert W. Gee, Assistant Secretary of State for Policy and International Affairs, Department of Energy.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ A. Cohen, *op. cit.*

scribed by Michael Klare as “a rare alteration of military geography,” marked an important shift in American strategic thinking on Central Asia. As a remote outpost of Pacific Command, which is centered on Japan, it had received scant attention. But now the region came under the direct authority of Central Command.²⁹

The events of 11 September 2001 further increased the strategic importance of the area in the eyes of U.S. policymakers. Under the pretext of combating terrorism and fighting drug peddlers, the Pentagon has reportedly adopted plans to enhance its military presence in the Caspian Sea region and to increase its patrolling of the area. To complement the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Central Asia,³⁰ the Pentagon has been showing an interest in gaining a foothold in Azerbaijan.³¹

Managing the Competition: Russia and Iran

After Russia, Iran and China are regarded by the United States as the two states whose interests are most likely to clash with its own purposes in the Caspian. Russia, China and Iran are major players in the Caspian region and Central Asia, for geopolitical as well as economic reasons, and while the United States has to accept their presence and role there, it regards them as major challengers to its own emerging interests in the region. While the U.S. cannot exclude their interests and ambitions, it tries to maneuver its affairs in such a way that these states do not hamper American activities and goals in the area.

Iran

One of America’s most implacable enemies, Iran has the potential to be a serious stumbling block for the U.S. in the Caspian region by thwarting U.S. aspirations to ensure that the area’s resources are not dominated by regional powers. Relations between the United States and Iran have been consistently poor since the overthrow of the Shah and the installation of the ayatollahs in 1979. The end of the Cold War did not change this situation, and in 1995 the U.S. government under Clinton imposed sanctions on U.S. economic activity in Iran. Through the Iran-Libya sanctions Act (ILSA) in 1996, foreign countries were also dissuaded from making substantial investment in Iran. In 1997 a brief thaw in relations resulted in certain trade restrictions being lifted, with American companies allowed to export food and medical items to Iran. But sanctions on arms remained and the United States has made ongoing attempts to limit Iran’s importance in the context of regional energy supply, notably in the area of pipeline planning and construction.³² ILSA was extended in 2001 by the Bush Administration.³³

²⁹ See: M.T. Klare, “The New Geography of Conflict,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, May-June 2001.

³⁰ The United States currently has military bases in Kyrgyzstan, but it was ordered out of its Uzbekistan base in 2005.

³¹ The U.S. has officially denied persistent rumors that it wishes to open a military base in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev is quoted as having said in December 2005: “I have said this before, and I repeat: ‘Azerbaijan will not host American military bases on its territory,’” available at [www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091205ru.shtml].

³² The logic was that: “Development of Iran’s oil and gas industry and pipelines from the Caspian Basin south through Iran will seriously undercut the development of east-west infrastructure, and give Iran improper leverage over the economies of Caucasian and Central Asian States. Moreover, from an energy security point of view, it makes no sense to move yet more energy resources through the Persian Gulf, a potential major hot spot or chokepoint. From an economic standpoint, Iran competes with Turkmenistan for the lucrative Turkish gas market. Turkmenistan could provide the gas to build the pipeline, only to see itself displaced ultimately by Iran’s own gas exports” (“Hearing on U.S. Interests in the Central Asian Republics,” House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Committee on International Relations, Washington, DC, available at [http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intrel/hfa48119.000/hfa48119_of.ht]).

³³ Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress CRS Issue Brief for Congress, Order Code IB93033, “Iran: Current Developments and U.S. Policy,” Updated 25 July, 2003, Kenneth Katzman Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division.

America's hostile, isolationist stance toward Iran had its critics. They argued that Iran is the only stable country in the region, which can provide a secure export route for Caspian gas and oil. For instance, Frederick Starr (Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies) said in testimony to Congress that "The heaviest burden of the measures we are taking toward Iran fall disproportionately on Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, for it prevents them from exporting their gas and oil by one of the obvious alternative routes to Russia, namely Iran. The U.S. position has been to argue that this would not be in the Central Asians' own interest. None of our friends in the region agree."³⁴

Starr also argued that "the Iran-Russia relationship in the last 6 years has been a curious one. Neither has great assets of oil and gas in their area of the Caspian, and both have felt themselves under pressure from U.S. policy. I think to that extent they have teamed up, the tie was created by us and not by events."³⁵

American-Iranian relations have deteriorated under the Administration of George Bush II. The United States is highly critical of Iran's apparent determination to develop a nuclear weapon and is apprehensive of its efforts to build relationships with some of the other countries in the Caspian and Central Asia, relationships which could neutralize America's growing influence.

Iran's growing ties with nongovernmental groups in the region are also a major concern. Besides giving support to certain Islamic groups branded as terrorists, Iran has, according to an American analyst, been increasing its activism in the states of the former Soviet Union. Ilan Berman, Vice President for Policy, American Foreign Policy Council, asserts that Iran is making "an effort to counterbalance and offset the expanded American military presence in the region through new energy contacts with countries such as Georgia and Ukraine, and a more aggressive military profile in the Caspian Sea; training regional radicals, such as elements of the al-Qa'eda affiliated Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)."³⁶ Berman feels that "Over time, these initiatives will have an impact on Central Asia and the Caucasus in a way that will be deeply detrimental to ongoing U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and to larger American policy in the War on Terror." The American option according to him lies in "regime change' ... initiatives that delay and derail Iran's nuclear ambitions and [through] those that empower opposition forces inside and outside of the Islamic Republic—should be the starting point for any serious American strategy."³⁷

Russia

America's relationship with Russia is far more nuanced than its overtly hostile one with Iran. Although the collapse of the Soviet Union and ending of the Cold War heralded an end to the open enmity between the two states, in the years since then their relations have waxed and waned, alternating between cooperation, estrangement, rapprochement and indifference. Things have not always gone smoothly between Washington and Moscow in the decade and a half since the Soviet collapse, but they do not regard each other as a real threat to their interests, and all three U.S. presidents who have

³⁴ Statement of Frederick Starr, Chairman of Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University, before the Senate Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Exports and Trade Promotion, 3 March, 1999, available at [commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa48119.000/hfa48119_0.HTM].

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ I. Berman, *U.S. Foreign Policy Challenges Posed by Iran*, Briefing before the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, 18 October, 2005.

³⁷ Ibidem.

served since then have kept in mind that “productive relations with Russia were one of the highest priorities of American foreign policy.”³⁸

In the post-Soviet era the United States has extended a great deal of assistance to Russia, particularly with the goals of helping develop civil society, protect and dismantle nuclear installations and weapons systems, promote democracy and assist with its economic progression to a market economy.

Although much diminished since the Soviet days, Russia is still a major power, and one that possesses considerable conventional military as well as nuclear power. American policy thus also aims to prevent the resurgence of Russia as a rival superpower, and one aspect of this is limiting its influence in the areas surrounding its borders. Since the Cold War, attempts have been made to get Russia to negotiate over arms control, as well as to participate in cooperative threat reduction programs. While selectively cooperative, Russia has maintained a fiercely independent stance on issues such as NATO’s expansion to neighboring states, separatist activity in Chechnia and other sensitive regions, American military actions in the Balkans, human rights issues in Russia itself and other contentious topics. One such point of disagreement is Russia’s response to regional conflicts in the Caucasus and its efforts to strengthen its control over Central Asia, efforts which have attracted strong condemnation from the U.S.

The slightly edgy relationship between the two former superpowers improved immeasurably after 9/11, when they formed a close alliance against extremist Islamic terrorism. Russia cooperated with the U.S. during its military intervention in Afghanistan, and supported the siting of U.S. bases in Central Asia to help with the Afghan campaign. The countries also cooperated on furthering energy security and nuclear issues, notably those concerning North Korea and Iran. According to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations,³⁹ “Moscow and Washington had never been closer in their reading of global dangers. The issues at the top of each side’s international agenda—Islamist terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and energy—seemed, for once, to be the same. And the United States, for a change, actively wanted Russia to join in meeting these threats, not merely to stay out of the way.”⁴⁰ However, it goes on to note that “there has been a swing of the pendulum in last couple of years and Russia has been increasingly concerned about its loss of influence in the former Soviet space and is suspicious of American motivation.”⁴¹

Russian interference in regional affairs, particularly in the former Soviet space, has generated concerns in the U.S. But the scholarly community appears to be more in favor of dialog and sympathetic understanding of the developments than raising an unnecessary hue and cry. As Eugene Rumer of the National Defense University says, “Russia’s pattern of behavior toward her neighbors has been the other major area of recent criticism of Russian international behavior ... Russian heavy-handed interference in its neighbors’ affairs is well documented. However, this is an area where once again Russian behavior is more apt to be interpreted as a sign of weakness, rather than strength... Perhaps, the biggest problem that Russia poses in relation to its neighbors is in the area of the so-called ‘frozen conflicts’—in Abkhazia, Moldova, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Russian involvement with a number of these breakaway regimes is a long-standing irritant in Moscow’s relations with some of its neighbors, the United States and other countries. The dilemma facing U.S. policymakers in this area is whether to confront Russia more forcefully or stay the course of patient, albeit unproductive

³⁸ St. Sestanovich, L. Feinstein, *Russia’s Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do*, Report of an Independent Task Force, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), 2006.

³⁹ See: *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

dialog. The balance of arguments appears to favor dialog, though one that needs to be intensified if we are to achieve our stated objective of ‘unfreezing’ these conflicts.”⁴²

However the U.S. responds to Russia’s actions in the future, it is likely that the American policy will have as its ultimate goal the reduction of Russian control over the neighboring area, including the Caspian Sea region.

C o n c l u s i o n

As the only remaining global superpower the United States’ over-arching foreign policy priority is to maintain the status quo in the world. This implies that the United States must prevent other major powers from challenging its position or altering the status quo in a manner that would go against America’s perceived interests.

President George Bush II came to power in 2001 with an overtly neoconservative foreign policy outlook, its policies aimed at perpetuating America’s global hegemony. This outlook has been tempered somewhat in recent years, in response to complex problems and challenges, not least of which are the events of 9/11 and the war against terror. Despite this, and despite that fact that many in the United States do not support the neoconservative agenda, there is a determination on the part of most Americans to ensure that their country retains its position as the senior partner in world affairs. There is unanimity on this right across the political spectrum; the major difference between the liberals and the neoconservatives center not on the goal itself but on the methods by which the goal is achieved. Whereas the liberals prefer a multilateral approach, the conservatives tend to be more unilateral in their approach.⁴³

However, as the broad goals of U.S. foreign policy will remain the same, whoever wins power in the next U.S. election is unlikely to alter that country’s strategy when it comes to the Caspian region.

The Caspian Basin/Central Asia has emerged from its status as a backwater as far as American goals and interests are concerned, to a crucial area for maintaining and advancing the United States’ global hegemony. Other regional and global powers, including Russia, Iran and China have interests in the region and so U.S. involvement in the Caspian gives America the opportunity to check the ambitions of these rivals. Important planks of U.S. policy in the area are: constructive engagement with Russia with the ultimate goal of regulating its economic growth and its role in global energy politics; and containing Iran by attempting to isolate it internationally and preventing it from developing leverages in the Caspian region and ties with other powers such as Russia. As far as China is concerned, the U.S. has been carefully monitoring the aggressive Chinese search for energy security and tries to make use of Caspian and other energy sources to develop leverages against China.

The troubled circumstances prevailing in the small states of the Caspian region provide the United States with many opportunities to advance its goals there, whether these are in the areas of security, economic considerations or political and economic reform.⁴⁴

⁴² Prepared Statement, Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats, “Hearing on Developments in U.S.-Russia Relations,” 9 March, 2005, by Eugene B. Rumer, Senior Fellow, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, available at [http://www.house.gov/international_relations/109/rum030905.htm].

⁴³ The foreign policy approach of the Bush regime, or the so-called “Bush Doctrine” was outlined by President George Bush in a speech at West Point on 1 June, 2002, available at [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html].

⁴⁴ For an up-to-date summary of stated U.S. goals and activities in the region, see: [www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/2006/65292.htm].

America has also made it a high priority to promote regional cooperation and integration, and the weakness of these countries will make it difficult for them to withstand U.S. overtures. In fact, despite some serious setbacks in relations with the United States, such as the repercussions experienced by Uzbekistan after the Andijan incident in May 2005,⁴⁵ there are signs that some of the Central Asian countries are seeking closer ties with America in a possible attempt to reduce their reliance on Russia.

It is debatable whether the U.S. will ever become the dominant player in a region with so many contending powers and interests. However, it is unlikely that the United States will allow any other country or group of countries to gain the ascendancy either in this strategically vital but volatile and unpredictable region.

⁴⁵ In which a number of protesting civilians, alleged by the government to be Islamic extremists, were machine-gunned by Uzbeki troops. The Tashkent government puts the death toll at 187, but other reports say it was much higher.

U.S. STRATEGY AND POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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It goes without saying that American geopolitics and geostrategy are of a genuinely global nature and affect practically every region and every country. And Central Asia is no exception in this respect. America's influence there is of a multi-factoral and multi-level nature in every aspect—the political, military-strategic, economic, and ideological. From the very first days of independence, the Central Asian countries have been aware of America's influence (and pressure) in essentially every sphere.

In Central Asia, America is confronted with other world centers of power (Russia, China, the EU, Iran, and other Islamic states), which explains the fairly frequent contradictions. American pol-

icy in Central Asia depends to a certain extent on Washington's relations with these states, but it is not determined by them. On the whole, Central Asia's policy is part of the U.S.'s broader Eurasian strategy, which covers the Caspian, the Caucasus, Russia, Afghanistan, the Middle East, South Asia, and China.

It should also be said that America's Eurasian policy is part of Washington's much broader global strategy designed to perpetuate America's domination in the world economic and financial system and its military-strategic superiority. America is seeking greater geopolitical influence (in Eurasia among other places) and containment of potential rivals (China, the EU, and Russia), as

well as struggling against so-called international terrorism (for control over the Islamic world).

Central Asia is an important, but not the only, element of the U.S.'s global strategy. At the same time, it is critically important for the U.S.'s Eurasian geopolitics to establish control over Eurasia. For this reason, Central Asia's role and importance for Washington will become even greater.

America's foreign policy is full of contradictions: its rational and well-balanced elements are combined with ideological approaches; presumptuous and even aggressive actions irritate the allies and provide the enemies with the chance to accuse the United States of Great Power arrogance and a unilateral approach to the world. This stems from the split in the American political establishment, which cannot be described as a group of

like-minded people. Ideally, the administration should act as a closely-knit political and ideological team. The split in America's strategic community (and society) over the country's foreign policy affects U.S. conduct on the international arena to a certain extent.

This contradiction has an institutional aspect as well: together with the State Department and the National Security Council, the structures directly responsible for America's foreign policy, the Congress, the media, and public opinion (through the lobbying system and NGOs) largely shape U.S. conduct abroad. In addition, from 2001, the Department of Defense acquired much more weight in foreign policy decision-making. This is only natural since the country has been de facto in a state of war since the end of 2001.

The Evolution of American Strategy in Central Asia

Washington's Central Asian policy can be divided into several stages. At the initial stage (1991-1996), it was guided by several factors: first, the U.S. unofficially accepted Russia's geopolitical responsibility for the region and its interests; second, Washington was more concerned over the future of the Soviet nuclear potential deployed in Kazakhstan; third, America was uneasy about the potentially stronger position of Islamism, since Iran was one of the closest neighbors.

At the second stage (1996-2001), American strategy acquired new priorities: the Caspian's hydrocarbon reserves; and the pipeline later known as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, which bypassed Russia and Iran. In 1997, Central Asia and the Caspian were declared a zone of "U.S. vital interests" and were included in the sphere of responsibility of the U.S. CENTCOM. These changes were molded into the so-called Talbott Doctrine. The United States made it clear that it was not seeking monopolist strategic domination in the region, but demonstrated that it would not tolerate the attempts of other great powers to seek such domination. At this stage, Washington was no longer concerned about taking Russia's interests into account.

It was at this point that America revised its attitude to Turkey's and China's role in the region, which was previously considered a positive factor that might bridle Moscow (at least theoretically). It looked as if Washington had decided to unilaterally shoulder responsibility for the region. At that stage, the United States was actively promoting the BTC pipeline, as its key geopolitical project, to move Caspian energy reserves bypassing Russia and Iran. By the end of the 20th century, America began demonstrating a growing concern over the threat to the Central Asian countries posed by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The 9/11 drama ushered in the third stage (2001-2005). The United States plunged into a wide-scale struggle against international terrorism represented by the militant Islamic radicals; it launched a military operation in Afghanistan and deployed its military bases in some of the Central Asian re-

publics to carry out the counterterrorist campaign. It should be said that from the very start, George W. Bush's Republican Administration practiced new approaches to Central Asia, which became part and parcel of the general counterterrorist struggle in the wake of the stormy events of 2001.

In fact, the U.S.'s new Central Asian strategy became part of the National Security Strategy formulated at approximately the same time. The United States discovered that the region was indispensable with respect to its united antiterrorist front and energy security. It was at this stage that the United States tried to formulate its Eurasian strategy, which presupposed drawing closer to Russia and India for strategic purposes, more consistent relations with China, using Eurasian hydrocarbon reserves (of Siberia, the Caspian, and Central Asia) as an alternative to OPEC, enlarging NATO further to the East, and changing the nature of America's relations with its West European allies. This strategy inevitably affected Central Asia.

At that stage the U.S. first consolidated its military-strategic presence in the region and set about expanding it together with NATO. Washington stepped up its military-political cooperation with the Central Asian countries. It built up its pressure on the local states within the "support of democracy" strategy; its biting criticism of the human rights violations by some of the Central Asian regimes could not but have a negative effect on the nature of the relations between the local states and the U.S. Washington was very vexed by the more active involvement of the other interested powers (Russia and China), which tried on a bilateral basis and within multilateral cooperation in the form of the SCO to limit America's influence in the region.

The concern of the Central Asian governments as well as of Moscow and Beijing over the results of America's involvement mounted along with the wave of so-called Color Revolutions that swept the CIS in 2003-2005, which the United States peremptorily supported. The events in Kyrgyzstan, which removed President Akaev, and Uzbekistan, which had to quench the riot in Andijan in the spring of 2005, produced a negative response to the American strategy both in the local countries and in their "elder" SCO partners. In the summer of 2005, the SCO unanimously demanded that the United States specify the deadlines for withdrawing its military bases from the region. In the fall of the same year, the United States began its withdrawal from Uzbekistan.

Since 2005, the U.S.'s strategic circles have been discussing a new geopolitical project for a Greater Central Asia under America's aegis. Washington intends to tie Central Asia and Afghanistan and possibly other neighboring regions into a single military-strategic and geopolitical whole.

The United States is putting its new strategic approaches into practice, including with respect to Greater Central Asia. The novelty was part of Washington's strategy of global readjustment to the vast geopolitical Eurasian expanses, of which the Greater Middle East was a part. By 2006, American strategy and policy in Central Asia entered a new, fourth stage.

So far, America's future strategy has not acquired a clear form. It looks as if it will include the following elements: creation of Greater Central Asia to incorporate the region into America's strategic designs in Afghanistan, South Asia, and the Middle East; revival of the "containment" policy in relation to Russia (and probably China) in Central Asia; much more intensive confrontation with Iran; more active American involvement in the Caspian; NATO's greater role in Central Asia, etc.

The strategy was launched at a time when the region was living through serious geostrategic and political changes. The events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the spring of 2005 revealed that the Color Revolution strategies carried out in Central Asia had their limits. It became absolutely clear that it was dangerous from the military-political and geopolitical viewpoint to artificially accelerate the regime change process using the methods that had proven relatively successful in Georgia and Ukraine.

America's relations with Uzbekistan took a drastic turn for the worse; the process that began in 2004 was brought to its peak by the Andijan events of May 2005. By evacuating the base in Khanabad America cut down its military presence in the region. At the Astana summit in early July 2005, the

SCO members unanimously demanded that the U.S. and NATO make it clear how long they intended to remain in Central Asia. This was a serious geopolitical challenge engineered by Beijing and Tashkent in particular.

The United States preserved its military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is obviously resolved to fortify its presence in the so-called Greater Central Asian region. The new American strategy is designed to change the situation in its favor under the rapidly changing military-strategic and geopolitical conditions.

Methods and Tools of America's Central Asian Policy

At the early stage, Washington was guided by two priorities and several issues of lesser importance when dealing with the newly independent Central Asian states. The United States recognized the five new Central Asian states immediately after the Soviet Union ceased to exist and established diplomatic relations with them. In 1992, the Congress passed the Freedom Support Act, under which American legislation was adjusted to the new geopolitical reality, in which there were fifteen newly independent states. The act helped to develop open markets, democracy, and civil society; it set up mechanisms conducive to trade, economic cooperation, and contacts in the sphere of education and ensured financial support of non-proliferation of weapons and demilitarization. The law was intended to strengthen the U.S.'s national security by preventing the restoration of communism and the emergence of religious extremism in Central Asia.

In July 1997, speaking at the Johns Hopkins University, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott described the U.S.'s foreign policy aims in Central Asia. He pointed out that successful economic and political reforms would promote stability and meet the interests not only of the regional states, but also of all the countries outside the region. Failure would encourage terror and religious and political extremism; more than that—it might end in war. He also pointed out that his country was very much interested in gaining access to the local oil reserves.

The United States was definitely determined to prevent a repeat of the 19th-century Big Game, in which the smaller countries would have been used as small change in the battle for energy resources initiated by Russia or any other country driven by neo-imperialist ambitions. In March 1999, when speaking at the Congress, Stephen Sestanovich, Ambassador-at-Large to the states of the former Soviet Union, confirmed the United States' continued adherence to these principles. He also pointed out that despite the rather shaky advance toward certain aims (such as democratic and economic reforms), Washington was determined to develop its relations with the Central Asian states.

The George W. Bush Administration that came to power in 2001 was very critical of the foreign policy course of its Democrat predecessor and formulated its own, typically Republican, priorities. However, prior to 9/11, the administration was not very concerned with the potential threat of Islamist terrorism; the "arc of instability," with Central Asia as its core, was not a top priority either. In Central Asia, America merely followed the course charted by the previous administration. During the 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush criticized those who said that the United States might have helped other countries develop their national and state structures and that it should have kept a lower profile on the international scene.

In Central Asia, Washington could effectively use two tools of political pressure: (1) the local regimes could be accused of human rights violations, criticized as authoritarian, accused of corruption, and urged to become more democratic; (2) financial economic, military, technical, and humanitarian aid could be cut down. During the election campaign, America's Central Asian policy became

part of the domestic political struggle between the Republicans and the Democrats, which acquired even more vehemence as the 2004 presidential election drew closer.

Early in 2003, the American legislature was presented with bills that offered much harsher wording than before. They expressed “Congress’ opinion,” which meant that they were not binding. These documents spoke of the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan as “dictatorships and tyrannies.” Early in 2004, President George W. Bush announced that the budget of the National Endowment for Democracy would be doubled to pay for even stronger interference in the domestic affairs of the Middle Eastern and post-Soviet countries. The NGOs are openly integrated into Washington’s general strategy aimed at America’s global domination.

In 2005, at the beginning of its second term, the administration announced that it would carry out another “charge for democracy.” On 18 May, 2005, when talking at a congress of the International Republican Institute (IRI), the U.S. president made no secret of his country’s intention to actively encourage the Color Revolutions that, he asserted, would take place in the future.¹ In August 2005, the United States announced that it had opened “democratic information centers” and that it was engaged in projects designed to keep independent media afloat in Kazakhstan and five independent radio stations in Tajikistan.

During 2004 and 2005, the situation in the CIS was developing under the strong impact of the events in Georgia, Ukraine, and partly Moldova, in the course of which the local regimes were replaced with pro-Western cabinets, while the new rulers demonstrated a strong desire to export Color Revolutions to other CIS regions. They did their best to support the opposition in some of the CIS members; the West, in turn, extended its direct political support to the opposition in Kazakhstan and Russia in particular.

The revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the events that followed it played a special role in America’s Central Asian policy. At first the West and its epigones across the post-Soviet expanse hailed the regime change; the mounting political crisis in Kyrgyzstan, which caused destabilization, reduced to naught the efforts of the country’s leaders to maintain any semblance of order, and the resultant political chaos forced the West to revise its regime change strategy in the CIS. It was obvious that the scripts written for the CIS European members were ill-suited to Central Asia. What was more, they were fraught with grave destabilization of individual countries and the region’s geopolitical situation. Under these conditions, the West once more became aware of Russia’s stabilizing role as a regional factor of great importance and was forced to take it into account.

By 2005, Washington’s regime changing strategy hit stalemate; America shifted its interests, either deliberately or due to the circumstances, to Kazakhstan. While the 2004 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan were accompanied by the “change of the elite” scenario actively promoted by NGOs and funds of all sorts living on Western money, the presidential campaign of 2005 was unfolding in a very different context: the tactics and methods of interference had been readjusted. Two factors were responsible for this:

- (1) apprehension of excessive destabilization as the result of a regime change (this had already happened in Kyrgyzstan) and
- (2) Russia’s possible interference or its vehement response.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, the threat of a U.S. initiated Color Revolution in Kazakhstan remained real. In his report of 18 May, 2005, the U.S. president predicted inevitable changes in Central

¹ See: “President Attends International Republican Institute Dinner,” available at [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050518-2.html>].

Asia. When talking about the region, he never mentioned Uzbekistan, which suggested that Kazakhstan had been selected for “democratization.” Together with “Kazakhgate”—type maneuvers, the Americans badly needed more tools to put pressure on Astana to protect themselves from any actions that might damage U.S. interests in the region.

The threat of another Color Revolution was averted by Astana’s unambiguous response to the events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, a well oiled mechanism of consultations with Moscow and Beijing, the delayed decision about the presidential election, as well as the unanimous position of the SCO members at the SCO summit in July 2005. As the date of the presidential election in Kazakhstan drew nearer, the danger of Washington’s interference did not abate. The events of the end of the summer of 2005 confirmed that certain political forces of the United States had not abandoned their plans to stage a Color Revolution. The situation in Kazakhstan changed radically in the summer and fall of 2005.

America’s Changed Strategy in Central Asia

The tactics and strategy of America’s Central Asian policy changed and acquired certain new elements. American experts suggested that U.S. policy in Central Asia should be restructured together with U.S. public diplomacy because of the mounting anti-American sentiments. The trend toward a reassessment of America’s policy and much more desired military strategic cooperation with Tashkent was further consolidated by a series of terrorist acts in April and July 2004.

It was recommended that Washington increase pressure behind the scene on its Central Asian partners to promote political and economic changes. In the process, it should be guided by two geopolitical imperatives. First, it should go on detaching Central Asia from the Caucasus in the geopolitical context. American experts were convinced that the region was typologically closer to the Middle East and Southeastern Asia, while the Caucasus was much closer to Europe.

American analysts pointed out that Washington would get bad headaches if the Islamists acting in Central Asia grew more radical and more belligerent: if forced to deal with shady regimes for the sake of its continued military presence, America would run the risk of tarnishing its image as a liberal and benevolent force. If the United States, they argued, became resolved to wage the “battle of ideas” on all fronts, it would need a much more coordinated and public diplomatic campaign to achieve positive results. It was recommended that Central Asia be included in the public statements on the need to observe democracy in the Muslim world.

Second, the United States was working toward developing a nationally oriented civil society in the Central Asian republics. Most of the expert community was convinced that the United States should support the idea of human rights and other aspects to which public opinion was especially sensitive. After a while, this would create a foundation for political movements able to act as a functional opposition to the ruling regimes, which was especially important in such states as Uzbekistan.

To put pressure on it, American analysts suggested that the U.S.’s military presence in the region should be diversified to make American policy there more flexible operationally and diplomatically. In this context, Kazakhstan was regarded as an alternative partner because of its highly promising economic and political potential.²

² See: J.K. Davis, M.J. Sweeny, *Central Asia on U.S. Strategy and Operational Planning: Where Do We Go From Here?* IFRA, Washington, D.C., 2004.

Prior to the terrorist acts of 2004 in Uzbekistan, Washington planned to put pressure on Tashkent to force it onto the road of liberalization. If the Uzbek side refused to cooperate, the U.S. should be ready to re-deploy its military from Khanabad and Karshi to Kazakhstan or other Central Asian bases. The events allowed Islam Karimov to go on with the old policy or even to intensify it. The West, in turn, increased its pressure.

The United States could safely ignore the interests of Russia and China in the region as long as they did not counter the global antiterrorist struggle. The airbase in Kant (within the CSTO framework) and the SCO antiterrorist center in Tashkent did not add tension to the relations between Washington, on the one hand, and Moscow and Beijing, on the other, merely because the American side never looked at them as threatening to its interests. Moreover, NATO may even conduct joint military exercises with Russian troops in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, while the SCO antiterrorist center in Tashkent might become a starting point for cooperation between the United States and the SCO.

America's strategy in Central Asia is determined, first and foremost, by geopolitical factors. This is the main thing about it. The United States has concentrated on its broader military-political contacts with the Central Asian and Transcaucasian states. This is the main aim of cooperation between America and these two regions. Washington obviously has no intention of encouraging agrarian reform and high technologies; it demonstrated no intention of increasing its humanitarian aid.

American analysts believed that the White House was not always aware that some of the Central Asian republics were unable to resolve their economic, political, and social problems, mainly because their democratic institutions were completely impotent and there was no elementary political culture indispensable to every contemporary state. If Washington insists on the present course, NATO, under U.S. leadership, will turn into the "region's gendarme" with a leading position in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia; this will allow America to outline the limits of Russia's influence in the region.

Washington has often indulged in headstrong policies that bordered on bluffing. In 2001, American politicians acquired the habit of making thunderous statements designed to convince Russia, Iran, China, and the Central Asian countries that the United States intends to keep its military in the region for a long time to come. As a result, these countries could not demand that the U.S. withdraw from the region in 2002 when the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan was over.

The American expert community believes that what they call "bureaucratic pluralism," or rather rivalry between the State Department and the Pentagon is the weakest point in America's policy in Central Asia. The State Department insists that today, when the Central Asian republics have found themselves on the frontline of the antiterrorist struggle, it is critically important to promote ideas of human rights and democracy. To achieve this, the State Department is pouring money into the independent media and journalism; it is helping to develop political parties, strengthen the freedom of religious convictions and the rule of law, and carry out local government reform and reform of the health system. Its annual reports habitually criticize all the Central Asian countries for their human rights violations.

The Department of Defense, in turn, concentrated on the security-related advantages created by cooperation with the region's states. In February 2004, when paying visits to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld did his best to play down the criticism hurled at the Karimov regime for human rights violations. America's interests in Central Asia are connected with the defense secretary's plans to modernize the American army and redistribute the American military bases on a global scale: they should be placed closer to the potential seats of conflict.

In 2005, the State Department, with Congress behind it, finally predominated: since that time on Tashkent's domestic policy has been criticized. On the other hand, the Department of Defense prevailed in its pragmatic approach to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan demonstrated late in July 2005 during Donald Rumsfeld's visit to the region.

In 2006, Washington shifted its accents. The official assessments of the situation in Central Asia changed. They were formulated by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried at a Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. On 27 October, 2005, he said that America's strategy in Central Asia presupposed balanced regional cooperation in security, energy, and regional economic cooperation, as well as freedom through reforms. He noted that "Kazakhstan does have the potential to merge as a regional model," and described Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan "as possible emerging reformers," while Turkmenistan "remains unfortunately an autocratic state... We are nevertheless pursuing a policy of engagement with the government, seeking cooperation where we can, and where there are clear benefits to our interests," he said. In Uzbekistan, "the United States will continue to speak privately and publicly about our concerns," he added.

Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs E. Anthony Wayne was much more specific when addressing the American Chamber of Commerce at approximately the same time: "As Kazakhstan's economy continues to develop," said he, "it will be an engine for growth within Central Asia." When talking about State Secretary Rice's recent visit to Central Asia, American analysts agreed that it was intended to specify America's interests in the region and to demonstrate them to the local ruling elites. America wanted Moscow to act in a similar way: to outline its interests, to coordinate them with those who rule the Central Asian countries, and to harmonize them, openly and unambiguously, with America's interests in the region.

When on a visit to Astana in mid-October 2005, Henry Kissinger made more or less similar statements. He said that Kazakhstan, as a country at the crossroads of the largest civilizations, played an important role in the region and the world. In fact, in 2005, the U.S. had to decide whether to fan another Orange Revolution or to follow the *laissez faire* principle. Washington opted for the latter.

The National Committee for American Foreign Policy (NCAFP), a public organization of several influential businessmen and politicians concerned with America's image abroad and the country's genuine national interests all over the world, has good contacts in the cabinet and the strategic establishment. In 2005, it made its contribution to the changed position of the White House with respect to Kazakhstan.

In the spring of 2005, it dispatched a sort of mini think-tank to Kazakhstan; eyewitness accounts, meetings, and consultations enabled NCAFP members to draw up an analytical paper that offered a balanced and objective assessment of the situation. The document left no chances for the opposition, while the White House was asked to support the current state of affairs in politics. The committee sent the paper to the U.S. State Department and probably played an important role in Washington's assessment of the situation in Kazakhstan on the eve of the presidential election and the prospect of a Color Revolution. In 2006, the NCAFP confirmed its recommendations.³

In 2005, the American strategic circles presented a new geopolitical project: a so-called Greater Central Asia created with Washington's help. It presupposed that Central Asia and Afghanistan might be united into a military-strategic and geopolitical whole later connected to the so-called Greater Middle East controlled by the West (paper by the American Institute of Central Asia and the Caucasus dated March 2005).⁴

It was intended to detach the extended region from the monopoly influence of the other great powers (Russia and China), to protect Afghanistan against the destabilizing influence of its neighbors (Pakistan and Iran), and to attach it to a much more stable and West-oriented Central Asia.

³ See: M. Rywkin, *Stability in Central Asia: Engaging Kazakhstan. A Report (with Policy Recommendations) on U.S. Interests in Central Asia and U.S.-Kazakhstan Relations*, NCAFP, New York, 2005; G.D. Schwab, M. Rywkin, *Security and Stability in Central Asia: Differing Interests and Perspectives*, NCAFP, New York, 2006.

⁴ See: F.S.E. Starr, *A Greater Central Asia: Partnership for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors. The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program*, Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Washington, DC, 2005.

The new strategy was also expected to alleviate the fears that the Central Asian states might start thinking of American policy as a sporadic rather than systematic phenomenon. In other words, the local leaders might start doubting the United States' opportunity and resolution to insist on its regional presence in the face of Moscow and Beijing.

On the whole, the Greater Central Asian project completed and extended the earlier geopolitical project designed to set up a Greater Middle East and was supposed to pursue the same strategic aims, namely, diversification of strategic interests and stability in the region under American domination.⁵

Under this plan, Washington should maintain an illusion of "geopolitical pluralism" to keep Russia and China happy by letting them indulge in self-importance. Together with the West, they should have been granted the status of the guarantors and donors of the modernization process. The American strategists, however, would have been much happier if the Russian Federation and China remained "benevolent observers," which means that they should be removed from the active geopolitical game. It was suggested that for the same purpose India and Turkey should be invited as unofficial guarantors.

The Andijan events and the radical changes in Tashkent's foreign policy endangered the part of the project related to Uzbekistan. Initially the country was intended as an integration engine for Greater Central Asia through agreements with Pakistan, building a railway to Afghanistan in cooperation with Japan, creating a transport corridor to the Indian Ocean, and forming a free trade zone in the Ferghana Valley, in which other Central Asian countries were expected to be involved.

The economic section of the Greater Central Asian project presupposed that the local states would be incorporated as promptly as possible into the world financial and economic structures in which the West dominated; the region was expected to gain access to trade and transport routes to become an important center of international transportation of raw materials and commodities under American control. The agrarian sector was to be treated as a priority compared to industrial growth; agrarian policy was to be used to fight drug trafficking (here Kazakhstan's experience in fighting drug money laundering could be used, at least in part).

The project outlines several organizational-technical and diplomatic means to successfully implement America's strategy aimed at boosting the roles of the Pentagon and the State Department to make America's presence in the region even more effective. It was deemed necessary to increase NATO's role and importance as one of the key instruments of Washington's strategy. There were plans to set up a Greater Central Asian Council to allow the United States to coordinate regional policy on a permanent basis and even shape it; annual visits by the U.S. State Secretary to the Central Asian countries were intended as a regular feature of America's policy.

In 2005-2006, the U.S.'s policy in Central Asia entered a new stage. In the short-term perspective, the Greater Central Asian project looked like a folly. It was too difficult to implement in the conditions emerging at that time and in view of America's headaches in other parts of the world. In the mid-term perspective, however, we can expect that the present administration (or the one that replaces it) will arm itself with the project. After all, it contains all of America's main priorities and foreign policy aims, as well as the mechanisms needed to succeed.

The State Department applied the concept in practice in the fall of 2005 as Washington's official strategy in Central Asia. The region was moved away from the European department to the South Asian sector. Early in April 2006, the Greater Central Asian project was presented in Kabul as a U.S. Central Asian doctrine currently in effect.

⁵ See also: I. Zviagel'skaia, "Kliuchi ot schast'ia, ili Bol'shaia Tsentral'naia Azia," *Rossia v global'noy politike*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2005, pp. 88-93; F. Starr, "Partnerstvo dlia Tsentral'noy Azii," *Rossia v global'noy politike*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2005, pp. 72-87.

Under these conditions, it became absolutely clear that Kazakhstan was returning to the forefront of the U.S.'s Central Asian policy. What is more, Kazakhstan might be removed from Central Asia proper because of its geographic and geopolitical position: it borders on Russia, China's influence is increasing, while the situation around the Caspian and the future of Greater Central Asia depend on it.

Early in 2004, prior to the period of cooling off with the United States, Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov forced the offices of Western international organizations to re-register, which caused a lot of displeasure in the West. The Uzbek authorities were especially suspicious of such structures as George Soros' Open Society Institute, the National Democratic and the International Republican institutes. The Uzbek president preferred to ignore the protests and criticism of the West: he closed down the office of the Open Society Institute in the republic and tightened his control over other Western democratic and human rights organizations that described themselves as international. The U.S. Congress responded by cutting down its aid to the previous volumes and made it much harder to receive it. The aid, however, was too small to seriously affect the country's economy.

The events of Kyrgyzstan that took place in the spring of 2005 urged Tashkent to adopt even harsher measures. They forced all the interested sides (the West, Russia, and China) to reach a temporary consensus in an attempt to avoid sudden and radical disruption of political and economic relations in Central Asia. This understanding, however, excluded Uzbekistan. The West remained convinced that Tashkent should be pushed toward radical changes in its domestic policy and in economy; it continued to interpret the events in Andijan in the anti-Karimov light. Tashkent deemed it necessary to curtail military and political cooperation with the United States and NATO and move closer to Moscow, an unprecedented move in the country's post-Soviet history.

These developments were fraught with geopolitical complications. There is no doubt that Washington will persist in its efforts to restore its presence, even at the cost of a regime change. Analysts believe that the events in Andijan were the first survival test. In any case, the West was increasing its political and economic pressure on the Karimov regime.

During the May 2005 events in Andijan, the regime demonstrated to the West (with Moscow's complete political support and the moral support of Astana) that it was resolved to cut short any destabilizing moves. More than that: Tashkent turned away from the West toward Russia. At the first stage (in 2004), America ignored Europe's demands that President Karimov be given an ultimatum: either he agree to an international investigation or he will have to face new sanctions in the form of an embargo on weapons deliveries; and Uzbek diplomats will be deprived of visas. The Americans did not dare to corner the president of Uzbekistan—they tried to invite him to participate in a constructive dialog on cooperation.

Uzbekistan became an apple of discord between the U.S. State Department and the Pentagon: indeed, what was more important: proliferation of democracy or the antiterrorist struggle? The Pentagon wanted to preserve the airbase, while the State Department was inclined to harsh measures, namely political changes as the basic factor preventing possible unrest.

America and the West as a whole found themselves in a quandary: continued pressing for a regime change might destabilize the situation. President Karimov, in turn, demonstrated that he never intended to carry out real economic reforms and liberalization. He intended to freeze the situation to preserve his regime and social stability. He even went as far as hinting that America should remove its bases from Uzbekistan.

While earlier American strategists intended to give Karimov some time (until 2006) to readjust his policy, under the new conditions Washington was forced to leave the Karimov regime to its fate. Starting in 2005, however, the United States could no longer put pressure on Uzbekistan partly because of the Russian factor. There was another consideration—possible destabilization might upturn Uzbekistan and the region along with it.

Despite the cooling off, the American strategic community (the National Defense University under the U.S. Department of Defense and the National War College) warned that Washington made a grave mistake by withdrawing its military bases from Uzbekistan and stepping up its criticism of the Karimov regime, which had proven its viability and determination to use force to squelch the opposition. On the other hand, experts added that the threats to the regime were real and not an invention of the regime's propaganda machine. This group of experts, which worked for the Pentagon, suggested that America should pay more attention to Kazakhstan, which could offer an example of successful economic reforms carried out with U.S. support.

It was highly unlikely that Washington would perform another U-turn in its relations with Tashkent under the pressure of the American strategic establishment's pragmatic wing. This could have affected the interests of Russia and China in Central Asia. There was evidence that the United States had decided to wait until the political regime changed in Uzbekistan. In the summer of 2006, it became more or less obvious that Washington was adjusting its policy toward Tashkent; the contacts between the two countries resumed in August after Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher's visit.

C o n c l u s i o n

Since 2001, America's policy in Central Asia has been defined by several geopolitical factors: the 9/11 events and the declared "war against international terrorism," America's policy in Eurasia and in the Middle East, relations with Russia, China, and the European Union, as well as the energy and oil factors. At the doctrine level, U.S. foreign policy was confirmed by the 2002 Strategy of National Security, which was partially revised and updated in 2006.

In recent times, four American analytic centers—the Harriman Institute at Columbia University, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis in Washington, the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University, and the Center for Technology and National Security Policy at the National Defense University—made an attempt to define U.S. policy in Central Asia. Details vary from one conception to another, but they all agree that America should preserve its geopolitical domination in Central Asia and through it in Eurasia too.

To guarantee the region's sustainable development, the geopolitical actors and parties involved should take the interests of all those involved into account. This particularly applies to Russia and the United States. Washington should take into account Moscow's interests in the region and its concerns about its strategic security. Under no circumstances should the United States undertake a regime change unilaterally, otherwise Russia will regard this as a "game without rules" and will respond accordingly.

The Central Asian states emerged onto the political scene as subjects of international politics more or less in their own right. This is probably the main change that occurred in the geopolitical situation in the region in the 21st century. This could not happen if any one power, the United States included, dominated there. If the process of transformation of the Central Asian states into "normal" states from the viewpoint of international politics goes on unabated for several more decades, it may trigger a consistent political and economic sustainable advance.

AMERICAN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA AND RUSSIA'S INTERESTS

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Five years ago I published an article¹ in which I assessed the results of the first decade of America's Central Asian policy. I came to the conclusion that between the early 1990s and 2002, it developed from mere recognition of the newly independent states to a long-term regional strategy. For obvious reasons, 9/11 served as the turning point: "From a geographically remote, unstable and, in general, unexciting region, Central Asia became a zone of the U.S.'s national security interests."² After the 9/11 events, America began launching a wide-scale counterterrorist campaign in Asia. In the wake of 11 September, when the United States began its military operation in Afghanistan and set up military bases in Central Asia, the American military and politicians worked against the clock. Tactics, not strategy, was on everyone's mind. The prospect of America's regional involvement was still vague. It was later, in the mid-2000s, that America's interests in the region were soberly assessed both in America and Russia. Today, when America, Russia, and China have outlined their interests in Central Asia in the context of its relative stability

and when regional structures have appeared with good prospects (in particular the SCO), we can return to the problem of America's policy in Central Asia and its prospects. The time has come to give a more objective and balanced assessment, to ascertain whether Central Asia remains high on the list of the U.S. foreign policy priorities, and to outline Russia's response to America's regional policy.

Today, three interconnected factors are responsible for the U.S.'s interest in Central Asia:

- (1) its geopolitical status;
- (2) the insufficient political and economic stability of the local states and the human rights problems caused by regional instability; and
- (3) the prospect of transferring the local hydrocarbon resources to the world market.

Since the United States is pursuing its Central Asian policy in the context of much wider regional and global problems, an analysis of what America is doing in Central Asia should take into account the Iranian nuclear program, the positions and roles of India and Pakistan, and SCO development.

¹ See: M.V. Braterskiy, "Politika SShA v Sredney Azii: itogi desiatiletia," *SShA-EPI*, No. 9, 2002.

² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Geopolitical Situation and Political Stability

The United States finds the region important because it borders on China, Russia, Iran, and Afghanistan and is a more distant neighbor of India and Pakistan, two other critically important Asian

powers. America wants to see the local countries politically stable and economically prosperous, because failure in any of them is the only, and unwelcome, alternative to sustainability that might turn the country into a source of regional instability, terrorism, and transborder crime. On the whole, the Central Asian states are not strong enough, which is explained partly by the fact they are geographically remote and isolated from the main world trade routes, and partly by the particular post-Soviet sociopolitical model they have chosen to follow. The ruling Central Asian regimes are authoritarian to different degrees; they infringe on civil freedoms, persecute political opposition, and redistribute the results of their nations' economic activities in favor of the ruling elites and the bureaucratic power-related structures that keep the elites in power.

Under these conditions the political institutions cannot develop properly, while omnipresent corruption reduces to naught the efforts to make economic management effective. No wonder protest sentiments are mounting; most of the local states are not strong enough and are open to domestic and external political risks. The harshest political regimes—those of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan—lived through grave political crises (the Andijan events in Uzbekistan and the change of the ruling regime in Turkmenistan caused by S. Niyazov's death). Today they look stable enough, but this stability is precarious and therefore short-lived. Kyrgyzstan has yet to disentangle itself from the political crisis caused by the removal of President Akaev. Regional poverty is endemic; the people are tired of corruption and repression. New crises and outbursts of popular discontent are inevitable; unrest might engulf the region and spread to neighboring countries. In anticipation, the United States would like to stabilize the situation through social and economic development; the region should no longer remain isolated from the rest of the world; it should join world trade.³ On the whole, America's view of the local situation is very close to Moscow's position, even though Russia prefers not to discuss the region's social and political problems in public. This is best illustrated by what President Putin said on 31 January, 2006 at a press conference: "We know much better than you what happened in Andijan. We know who trained the people who ignited the situation in Uzbekistan and in this city in particular. We know where and how many people were trained. We also know that there are many problems in Uzbekistan, but we shall never allow ourselves to destabilize the situation in the country. You are probably aware of the complex situation in the Ferghana Valley; you know how people live there, you are aware of the level of its economic health. We do not need another Afghanistan in Central Asia, therefore we shall act with caution."⁴

It should be said that despite the shared general assessments of the situation, Russia and the United States offer absolutely different solutions. The United States relies, first and foremost, on its own understanding of the "failed states" problem (most of the Central Asian states are placed in this category to one extent or another). The strategy of democratization, with which President George W. Bush's second administration armed itself, was selected as a political tool.⁵

It would be wrong to say that America has fully concentrated on competing with Russia⁶ and China⁷ over influence in Central Asia (this is how the situation is sometimes described in Moscow). The United States, though, is undoubtedly pursuing the aim of weakening Russia's traditional and China's growing influence. Rivalry with Moscow and Beijing is not an aim in itself, however it surfaces

³ See, for example: S.F. Starr, "A Partnership for Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, Jul/Aug 2005, p. 164; S.N. Macfarlane, "The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia," *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, May 2004, p. 447.

⁴ [<http://www.edinros.ru/news.html?id=110500>], 8 June, 2007.

⁵ See: *Fact Sheet: President Bush Calls for a "Forward Strategy of Freedom" to Promote Democracy in the Middle East*, Today's Presidential Action. For Immediate Release. Office of the Press Secretary. 6 November, 2003.

⁶ See: A. Pushkov, "'Amerikantsev 'ushli' iz Sredney Azii.' Rossia stanovitsia zhelannym protivovesom SShA," available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1120804020>], 8 June, 2007.

⁷ See: S. Mikhailov, "Popytki SShA obosnovat'sia v postsovetskoy Sredney Azii—ne antirossiskiy, a antikitsayskiy shag," available at [<http://www.kreml.org/interview/94878025>], 8 June, 2007.

every time America's economic interests clash with those of the large Eurasian powers. The U.S.'s contradictions with Russia and China in Central Asia are rooted in their different approaches to such issues as state sovereignty, democracy as a cornerstone of political order, and the interrelation between domestic and foreign policies. Washington is convinced that the stronger Russian and Chinese influence in the region is helping to reproduce the undemocratic sociopolitical model, the deep-seated source of the region's troubles. Russia and China, in their turn, are convinced that the American democratic model is unique and cannot be applied to other cultures without previous readjustment. America and Russia cannot agree on the approaches to this key issue, which explains why contradictions over Central Asia persist. For this reason, it seems that the American position should be explained in greater detail.

In the post-Cold War period, under conditions of accelerating globalization, the United States discovered that the new world situation created new, hitherto unknown, problems. Indeed, the Western economy and culture could reach the world's remotest corners; by the same token, the West received its share of the problems that, in the past, plagued the rest of the world. In the past, the numerous conflicts from which the Third World suffered could either be ignored because of the distances that separated them from the West or easily dismissed as Moscow's intrigues. Today, no longer controlled by the two superpowers, they became globalized in the form of terrorism, refugee flows, and proliferation of WMD. In this form they are directly affecting the developed world's interests. By a twist of fate, Pandora's globalization box once opened by the West cannot be closed again: there is no escape from unwelcome and troublesome neighbors. The global nature of Western, particularly American, interests has made the West vulnerable to the negative inner dynamics of the political and economic processes unfolding in the Third World, of which Central Asia is a part. In fact, the inability, or unwillingness, of many of these regimes to deal with their domestic problems in a fair and effective way produces instability, protest feelings and extremism, domestic and inter-state conflicts, leads to the proliferation of WMD, and upsets the psychological comfort of the "golden billion" by causing the horrors televised across the world. The destructive processes in the Third World are occurring against the background of economic stagnation and progressing degradation of the social and political life in vast regions. The traditional ruling elite can no longer govern their own countries. It is commonly believed in America that the destructive processes are producing several types of problems which cannot remain local in the globalization context and affect regions, the world, and even threaten America's national interests.

These problems can be described in the following way: national governments can no longer control their territories and countries (this happened in Afghanistan), which makes such countries seats of extremism, terrorism, international crime, and illegal trade in drugs. More often than not, this process is accompanied by domestic conflicts and civil wars fraught with humanitarian catastrophes that produce flows of refugees all over the world.

Americans are convinced that repressive regimes in various corners of the world not only violate the rights of the local population, but also create etatist economic models in which the local ruling elites indulge in appropriating the disproportionately large shares of national income. Removed from the sphere of consumption and investment, the money is channeled into ambitious military programs and aggression against other countries. On many occasions, such programs are aimed at developing nuclear armaments (North Korea, Iraq, Iran).

Such phenomena as lost control over state governance, "bankrupt states," repressive regimes nurturing regional and nuclear ambitions, and nuclear proliferation have become the hallmarks of a world in transition. In the process of grasping the meaning of what has been going on in the world, the United States launched a new political course designed to protect its interests in the rapidly changing world with due account of the new realia and threats.

The March/April 1994 issue of *Foreign Affairs* carried a program article by A. Lake, White House National Security Advisor, which dealt with the "backlash," or "rogue states." It said, in particular:

“...our policy must face the reality of recalcitrant and outlaw *states* that not only choose to remain outside the family but also assault its basic values.”⁸

In September 1997, the then U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, a former professor, presented an academic wrapping of the “rogue states” conception to the members of the Foreign Policy Council. She described the “rogue states” as one of the four categories of countries: the developed industrial states; developing democracies; “rogue states,” and “failed states.”⁹ She pointed out that the two latter categories were very close and explained that the difference between them lay in the foreign policy sphere. Later, this served as the foundation of the Bush Doctrine, which saw the remedy to the afflictions of the “rogue” and “failed” states in reforming their authoritarian or crumbled sociopolitical systems according to the democratic patterns used in the West.

The Kennan tradition was continued in the form of the “containment doctrine” for the new post-Cold War epoch: “As the sole superpower, the United *States* has a special responsibility for developing a strategy to neutralize, contain and, through selective pressure, perhaps eventually transform these *backlash states* into constructive members of the international community.”¹⁰ The quote enumerates the strategic tools the United States should use to achieve the desired aim: “neutralization” and “transformation.” These were the two components used, to different degrees, in the Cold War era—containment and engagement.

The former presupposes international isolation of a rogue state by means of international political coalitions, economic sanctions, and military tools designed, first, “to keep the country caged” so as to prevent its further criminal activities and, second, to force it to modify its conduct according to the commonly accepted rules. The “rollback” strategy can be described as an extreme version of containment that changes the nature of the ruling regime by supporting the domestic opposition, by means of special operations, or even by direct military intervention.

The engagement strategy pursues the same aims through different means: the regime is involved in international trade, cultural contacts, and tourism, as well as a system of international organizations and treaties. To preserve the advantages thus achieved, the rogue country is expected to move from petty concessions to complete rejection of its most odious plans, which will finally transform it into a “normal country.” Today, the final aim is described in the following way: “A plan of such scope must first recognize that the roots of the weak-state crisis, and any hope for a long-term solution, lie in development: fostering stable, accountable institutions in struggling nations—institutions that meet the needs of the people, empowering them to improve their lives through lawful, not desperate, means.”¹¹

Concern over the human rights issue is part and parcel of America’s Central Asian, and Greater Middle Eastern in general, policy; it is more than a mere priority announced by the Administration of President George W. Bush—it is intimately connected with the country’s policy as a whole. U.S. foreign policy is guided by the following logic: if a certain country begins to observe human rights (political rights included), the public will exert pressure, which will finally change the country’s domestic and foreign policies; it will stay away from military adventures, accept raising living standards as its priority, and will become, on the whole, predictable, wishing to be involved in international cooperation. President Clinton formulated this as follows: “Democracies don’t attack each other.”¹²

Russia is not yet ready to indulge in sweeping generalizations in its foreign policy and to put its strategy on any ideological foundation. In the absence of an ideological pillar, Russia is finding it hard to grasp the meaning of America’s policy in relation to the “backlash states,” the category to which most Central Asian states belong to different degrees. For several reasons it is critically important for

⁸ A. Lake, “Confronting Backlash States,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1994, p. 45.

⁹ [http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/9770930], 22 May, 2006.

¹⁰ A. Lake, op. cit., p. 46.

¹¹ S. Eizenstat, J.E. Porter, J. Weinstein, “Rebuilding Weak States,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, Jan/Feb 2005, p. 134.

¹² B. Clinton, “State of the Union Address,” 25 January, 1994, available at [http://www.thisnation.com/library/sotu/1994bc.html], 10 June, 2007.

Russia to acquire a clear idea of the American approaches. First, Russia is an important member of the international relations system, and it cannot remain indifferent to what is going on in it or to the motives by which the system's leader is guided. Second, Russia's attitude toward the "backlash" countries shows the developed world, particularly the United States, whether Russia itself has embraced or rejected the values of this world. This means that Russia's policy in relation to the "backlash" states either brings it closer to the West or moves it away from the developed world. Third, Russia may profit from America's experience when dealing with the problems arising on its southern borders or even inside the country, which are similar to those the United States is coping with. Finally, the national interests and policies of both countries are intertwined in many regional problems in one way or another. This might help Russia to develop the best possible foreign policy, which should take the partner's interests and motives into account.

Looking back, we must admit that in recent years, when dealing with regional crises and the "backlash" states Russia concentrated, with a few exceptions, on opposing America. The results can hardly be described as satisfactory: Russia's aims remained unattained, while relations with the United States and the West as a whole were crippled. Russia's efforts to restore effective governance in the countries that belong to its sphere of interests (the post-Soviet Central Asian and Caucasian states) also produced unsatisfactory results. In all cases, Russia placed its stakes on preserving the corrupt post-Soviet regime in power—and often failed.

Its foreign policy failures are rooted not so much in its recent relative weakness as in the absence of clear strategic political and axiological landmarks. While trying to preserve what remained of its formerly high status in Central Asia, Russia has not formulated a socially attractive and constructive agenda. At home and abroad, the Russian elite sees no interrelation between freedom and responsibility of power, social justice, and the supremacy of human rights, on the one hand, and peace, prosperity, and progress, on the other. So far, Russia remains closer to the "backlash" states rather than to the West as far as its domestic order and the society-state relations are concerned. This explains why Russia has no integral, consistent, or highly moral policy in Central Asia.

At the same time, Russia is very suspicious of what the United States is doing in Central Asia. First, it is concerned about the possibility of Color Revolutions in the Central Asian states, which might trigger political instability and might bring to power not merely democratic, but openly pro-American regimes. Georgia and Kyrgyzstan have already demonstrated what might happen elsewhere. Second, Russia is concerned about the continued American military presence in Central Asia. The terms and conditions for the withdrawal of the American bases from the region remain deliberately vague, which makes Russia a host whose guests refuse to leave. Third, and most important for those who wish to understand the relations between the two countries, the U.S. tends to combine democratization principles with seeking advantages for itself and its partners. This is quite natural for American ideology, but irritates Russian politicians. From the American point of view, oil and gas routes that will bring the local energy resources to the world market without going through Russia will help the local countries develop economically and will promote their democratization by making them more open to the world and removing them from the political and economic control of insufficiently democratic Russia. American companies are also seeking profit for themselves by their direct involvement in such projects and by operating on the world energy market. The West Europeans support the idea of the democratization of Central Asia and are seeking less dependence on fuel deliveries from Russia. Russian political tradition finds it hard to accept the blend of American and West European "altruism" and "egotism;" Russian politicians tend to regard American interests in the region as "egotistical." This is also true of Russia's perception of America's position on the Iranian nuclear program: there is the opinion that as soon as Russia withdraws from Busher, Western companies will immediately fill in the niche. Typically enough, Russia is less concerned about China's energy interests in the region partly because China keeps business and messianism separate in its strategic activities.

In the energy sphere, the rivalry is fiercer, but more transparent.

Development of Local Hydrocarbon Reserves and Their Transfer to the World Market

America's interest in Central Asian oil and gas is an independent aspect of the U.S.'s Central Asian policy, but is nevertheless connected to all the other aspects. At no time did the United States pose the task of establishing its direct control over the Caspian's energy resources; it wanted the West to buy energy resources from the countries outside OPEC to intensify competition among the oil producers on the world energy market and to increase and diversify supply. Issues of secondary political importance were to be addressed together with the central ones: maintaining control over the transportation of energy resources critically important for China's economic development; depriving Russia of its monopoly on selling Central Asian fuel on the world market; and encouraging social and economic development in the Central Asian countries along lines leading to a market economy and democracy under American patronage.

The story of the American-Russian rivalry over the Caspian oil and gas routes and control over its oil and gas fields is only too well known.¹³ The United States insisted on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, while Russia recently convinced its Kazakhstani and Turkmenian partners to abandon the idea of a trans-Caspian gas pipeline in favor of Russia's alternative project. China invested in a pipeline from Kazakhstan. It looks as if all the rivals have succeeded without achieving a monopoly and the storms around the Caspian hydrocarbon reserves have subsided. The sides achieved a balance of interests and realized that the Caspian reserves are large, but relatively limited. In the early and mid-1990s, the interest in Caspian oil and gas was enormous; some experts went as far as saying that the local reserves might be larger than those of the Gulf countries.¹⁴ Recent and more exact figures testify that the reserves are large, but by 2015, even if oil production is expected to reach its peak, the region will produce about 4 million barrels a day, while the OPEC countries will be able to extract 45 million barrels a day.¹⁵ In addition, investments and transportation costs will make Caspian oil fairly expensive. As for the situation with gas, President Putin's visit to Central Asia in 2007 demonstrated that so far Russia could find a common language with gas-producing Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan much easier than the United States.

Regional Context of American Policy in Central Asia

Central Asia is not one of America's foreign policy priorities, but it figures prominently among Russia's priorities. Today the United States is the sole superpower, while Russia, a regional power, is much more sensitive to Central Asian developments and sees them beyond the context of many other global political issues. The United States treats Central Asia as an important crossroads of problems and interests that belong to the regional and global contexts. Seen from Washington, Central Asia, the Caspian, and the Southern Caucasus look like a single geopolitical zone closely connected with

¹³ See, for example: A. Cohen, "U.S. Interests and Central Asia Energy Security," *Backgrounder #1984*, Heritage Foundation, 15 November, 2006.

¹⁴ See: D. Malysheva, "Many-Sided Rivalry on the Caspian Sea," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (14), 2002.

¹⁵ See: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, "Country Analysis Briefs: Caspian Sea Region," September 2005, available at [www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Caspian/Oil.html], 15 November, 2006.

America's other foreign policy priorities: the Greater Middle East as a whole and the Iraqi operation in particular, as well as the continued operation in Afghanistan, Iran's nuclear problem, China's economic growth, global nationalization of energy sources, the West's energy security, and the development of the structures of regional integration in Asia.

Today, America's Central Asian policy and its intensity are strongly affected by the Iranian nuclear program issue, the war in Iraq, India's new regional role, the problem of safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, and the development of the SCO as an organization set up to stabilize the situation in Central Asia.

It seems that in recent years the United States has channeled its resources, political resources included, into the settlement of the Iraqi and Iranian crises. In this context, Central Asia was temporarily pushed into the background. Today America is content to allow the SCO, CSTO, and to a certain extent India (which the U.S. recognized as the regional hegemon of South Asia) to shoulder a large share of responsibility for Central Asian stability. To cope with its priority issues, America needs cooperation with Russia and China, hence it is treading with caution in the spheres both countries find sensitive.

The country is moving rapidly toward a presidential election, which means that America is unlikely to initiate new steps in the region. It will revive its involvement in the region no earlier than 2009.

AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN KYRGYZSTAN: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS (*as of June 2007*)

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1. The U.S. Military Presence in Kyrgyzstan in the Context of Washington's Foreign Policy

The Manas airbase was set up in Kyrgyzstan in December 2001 on a temporary basis in connection with the counterterrorist operation launched by the U.S. and its allies in Afghanistan. America's powerful information impact presented the terrorist attacks of 9/11 on New York and

Washington as a challenge to the entire civilized world. Osama bin-Laden and al-Qa'eda based on the Taliban-controlled territories of Afghanistan were appointed as the main culprits, which was accepted as a matter of fact even though there has never been and is still no convincing evidence of their involvement. Part of the expert community doubts that this terrorist structure was strong enough to carry out such a large-scale act of terror.

The American side presented a note to the government of Kyrgyzstan on the status of the base and the American military deployed in the country, which was pushed through the parliament by the active efforts of those in the upper echelons of power who supported the project. From that time on, the military was to be treated as administrative and technical personnel of the U.S. embassy in full conformity with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 18 April, 1961. American aircraft and transportation means were exempt from control; the U.S. government, as well as military and civilian personnel, could move personal property, equipment, supplies, materiel, and technology in and out of the republic without inspection or control. They were exempt from customs dues, taxes, and any other types of payment. The U.S. authorities were allowed to use their own telecommunication systems and entire range of supporting radio frequencies.

The Kyrgyz side preferred to keep away from conducting an in-depth legal analysis of the document or reviewing any possible political, economic, strategic, and other repercussions. This meant that from the very beginning the country's leaders and the public were kept in the dark about the American military base and its activities.

Washington skillfully exploited the Kyrgyz leaders' tractability, lack of political will, and pragmatism, as well as the haste with which it decided to allow a foreign country to deploy its military contingent in the republic. Under the guise of the "counterterrorist" operation, the United States raised the issue of deploying its AWACS (airborne warning and control system) E-3 Sentry planes. The plans have not yet been buried: in 2005, NATO Early Warning and Control Force Commander Major General Harry Winterberger publicly announced that in the near future NATO would have to either fly its AWACS planes from afar with refueling or set up bases nearby.¹

In 2004, the base commanders and the republic's Defense Ministry acting in strict secrecy signed an agreement on renting another stretch of land that extended the base area and its potential.

The loss of its base in Uzbekistan spurred on America's activities in Kyrgyzstan. President Bakiev, who came to power in 2005, seemed to accept America's stronger military presence. His meetings with top American officials (one of them with the State Secretary behind closed doors), who made a habit of visiting the Kyrgyz Republic, ended in an agreement on the continued use of the Manas airbase signed by Condoleezza Rice and Kurmanbek Bakiev.² This meant that the president of Kyrgyzstan unilaterally disavowed the Astana SCO Declaration that demanded that the "counterterrorist" coalition should specify the time period within which its military contingents would remain on the territories of SCO members.

2. America's New Designs

Late in March 2007, the U.S. embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic presented a note to the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry and asked for permission to allow all types of aircraft, including fighters and bombers, take off and land at the Manas airbase between April and July within the Enduring Freedom Operation, and *for other purposes*. The Defense Ministry and the National Security State Committee

¹ [<http://www.analitik.kg/politics/2005/08/01/895.htm>], 28 December, 2006.

² [<http://www.lenta.ru/news/2005/10/12/base/>], 13 November, 2005.

recommended limiting the use of the base to the 2001 agreement. This time, too, a very narrow circle of officials was informed about America's request and the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry's answer.

The story did not end there: on 2 May, the Moscow Interfax Information Agency supplied unexpected information received from an employee of one of Kyrgyzstan's special services about the Americans' use of the base for storing low-yield nuclear weapons. The Agency reminded everyone that some time earlier Colonel General Leonid Ivashov, President of Russia's Academy of Geopolitical Problems, had warned that America might use such weapons against Iran.³

U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic Marie Yovanovitch hastened to dissipate the rumors that nuclear weapons allegedly designed for strikes on Iran were already being stored at the airbase. She insisted that the base was being used as a transshipment point for humanitarian deliveries to Afghanistan. Murat Ashirbekov, who heads the press service of the Defense Ministry of Kyrgyzstan, assured the public that "if even one American aircraft with weapons on board leaves for Iran, this would be discussed in parliament and place the airbase's continued deployment in the republic in jeopardy." "The Americans are fully aware of this," he added.⁴

On 8 May in an interview with Al Arabia, a Dubai satellite TV channel, U.S. Secretary of State Rice, however, confirmed once more that the Bush Administration was not excluding the use of force against the IRI. Two days later, on 10 May, the Middle East News Line referred to diplomatic sources to inform its readers that the American military was in favor of the U.S.'s continued military presence in Kyrgyzstan, which may prove useful during the preparatory stage of air strikes against Iran. The agency also pointed out that the American Air Force had stepped up its activities, "especially at the Manas base."

On 17 May, Associated Press reported that the House of Representatives of the U.S. Congress had declined the bills that banned an attack on Iran without the parliament's consent. On 23 May, Reuters reported that on that day nine American warships (including two aircraft carriers) entered the Persian Gulf for military exercises.

This information pressure stirred up the public of the Kyrgyz Republic.

3. Response to the Developments

The Kyrgyz public responded with indignation to information about the possibility of using the Manas airbase to launch a strike against Iran and revived issues connected with previous incidents caused by the American military in Kyrgyzstan.

The Parliament. The Zhogorku Kenesh Committee for Defense, Security, Law and Order, and Information Policy chaired by Rashid Tagaev decided to discuss the question of the continued deployment of the American airbase in the republic. This step was prompted by the incident of 6 December, 2006 when an American serviceman, Zachary Hatfield, killed Kyrgyz driver Alexander Ivanov. The Americans ignored the demands of the Kyrgyz authorities and removed Hatfield from the country. Rashid Tagaev declared: "I have no doubts that if hostilities start, the United States will bomb Iran from the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan. We have only one landmark—the Collective Security Treaty Organization—and we should adjust our political course accordingly."⁵

³ Interfax, 2 May, 2007.

⁴ "Minoborony KR: SShA ne namereny ispol'zovat aviabazu 'Manas' dlia nanesenia udarov po Iranu," available at [<http://www.pr.kg/n/detail.php?id=16874>], 11 June, 2007.

⁵ Here and elsewhere information supplied by the information-analytical agencies of Kyrgyzstan Kabar, Obshchestvenny reiting, AKIpress, 24 kg, and others is used if not stated otherwise.

At an extended sitting attended by the heads of four parliamentary committees, the Zhogorku Kenesh members referred to the Declaration of the Heads of SCO Member States of 5 July, 2005 when they recommended that the parliament “ask the U.S. Congress and Government to specify the date of withdrawal of the American military contingent in the shortest time possible.”

During his Moscow visit, Speaker M. Sultanov invited Russia to return its border guards to Kyrgyzstan and extend the base in Kant.⁶ Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee for Interparliamentary Ties and International Relations Karganbeka Samakova called on the parliament to explain to the people of Iran that the forces of the counterterrorist coalition were deployed in the republic in connection with its mission in Afghanistan, and not with operations in other countries.

Executive Power. The recent events compelled the executive power to try and revise the conditions of the U.S. continued military presence in Kyrgyzstan.

American Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch was summoned to the Foreign Ministry and asked to complete the investigation of the murder of Kyrgyz citizen A. Ivanov by an American serviceman and of an incident in which an American air servicing vehicle was involved. On the eve of the aforementioned extended sitting, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement that said in part: “Any use of the Manas airbase for purposes outside the Enduring Freedom Operation is unacceptable and will be interpreted as a violation of the relevant agreements.”

The State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry under the Kyrgyz Government demanded 20,640,000 soms as compensation for environmental pollution caused by fuel discharged into the air. The Agency insisted that between 2003 and September 2005 there were 12 cases of emergency fuel discharge by American air servicing vehicles totaling approximately 345 tons.

At a closed sitting, the government discussed whether the country was profiting from the continued American presence at the Manas airbase. On the president’s instructions, the government set up an interdepartmental commission to revise some of the clauses of the agreement with the United States in order to take into account Kyrgyzstan’s national interests. The commission analyzed the events and the situation around the military base and elaborated several scenarios for future talks on compensations.

The parliamentarians did not like this. Deputy Iskhak Masaliev told the commission that it “should stop thinking about higher rent, since it could be interpreted as a bribe, a bribe asked by the state.”

The Foreign Ministry’s State Secretary Taalaybek Kydyrov said that the Manas airbase should remain in the country as a facility used by the “counterterrorist” coalition supported by the U.N. Security Council; the country should help the coalition forces to ensure security in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan in view of narco-threats from certain “extremist religious organizations,” among other things.

Security Council Secretary Tokon Mamytov was of a similar opinion: “The Gansi [now Manas] airbase was set up in the Kyrgyz Republic (in accordance with a U.N. mandate) for the purposes of the counterterrorist struggle in Afghanistan. I should say that since this country is part of the SCO zone of interest, our interests coincide with the U.N.’s interests.”⁷ Prime Minister Almazbek Atambaev, in turn, informed journalists that the Manas agreement “is very skillfully drawn up and can essentially not be annulled.”⁸

The Public. The Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan started a Movement for Withdrawal of the American Airbase from the Territory of Kyrgyzstan with the self-appointed duty to inform the people

⁶ See: S. Fedorova, I. Plugatarev, “Bishkek otdaet Moskve granitsu,” available at [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2007-05-23/1_bishkek.html?sublist], 11 June, 2007.

⁷ “Tokon Mamytov: Vo vremia zasedania sekretarey Sovbeza ShOS vopros o vyvode aviabazy Gansi iz Kyrgyzstana ne obsuzhdalsia,” available at [<http://www.press-uz.info/ru/content.scm?topicId=2803&contentId=67504>], 11 June, 2007.

⁸ “Atambaev: Soglashenie po aviabaze ‘Manas’ prakticheski nevozmozhno rastorgnut,” available at [<http://www.kyrgyznews.kg/news/real/3196>], 11 June, 2007.

about the negative consequences of its deployment in the country; start a joint Kyrgyz-American investigation of all the incidents that had taken place at the base; insist on complete compensation of moral damage and punishment of the person guilty of killing Kyrgyz citizen A. Ivanov; and take all sorts of measures conducive to removing the base from the country. The Movement intended to insist on the above in all ways, including a referendum. The Coordinating Council opened negotiations on concerted actions with the Green, Zhany Kyrgyzstan, and Ata Meken parties, the Movement for Preservation of Kyrgyzstan, and others. Early in May, the Movement joined forces with the Liberal-Progressive Party, the Party of the Communists of Kyrgyzstan and the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan to stage a protest action outside the American embassy.

The Sodruzhestvo Party shared this platform: it announced that the Manas agreement should be annulled because, Deputy Alisher Sabirov argued, the country could stand up to any aggression with the help of its border guards, law-enforcement bodies and the army. Political scientist Toktogul Kakcheev reminded everyone that the country belonged to the CSTO, an organization set up to fight terrorism, extremism, and other threats in the territories of its members.

Alisher Mamasaliev, however, who headed the Civil Platform, accused those politicians who favored immediate removal of the American airbase from the country of sham patriotism. He was convinced that Moscow was stirring up the issue. "The information campaign designed to create a negative image of the Manas airbase," said he, "is Moscow's attempt to retaliate to America's plans to deploy ABM systems in the Czech Republic and Poland."

Tolekan Ismailova, leader of the human rights center Citizens against Corruption, showed more restraint. On the one hand, she sided with the Zhogorku Kenesh committees, on the other, she called for a dialog between the two countries.

Russia. CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordiuzha announced that the organization was prepared to discuss Iran's membership.⁹ At the same time, Secretary of Russia's Security Council Igor Ivanov pointed out: "The very fact that none of the SCO members doubted Bishkek as the host site of the August summit proves that the states trust the president, the leaders, and the political forces of Kyrgyzstan."¹⁰

Iran. The country made no public statements, but on 3 May Ambassador of Iran Mohammad Reza Saburi met Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic Ednan Karabaev to discuss, according to information agencies, bilateral cooperation in all spheres. Tehran is closely following all American anti-Iranian steps, which means that information published on the eve of the meeting was not ignored.

It follows from the above that:

1. The position of the country's executive branch determined to wring dry the situation is different from that of the parliament which put the withdrawal issue on the agenda.
2. The issue split Kyrgyz society into two camps with a neutral group in-between.
3. Russia, the "main strategic partner," has no clear viewpoint on the American airbase issue and, more important, on its potential use for air strikes against Iran. The other SCO and CSTO partners preferred to ignore the problem and the possibility of its negative impact.

4. America's Response

The American embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic took staff members of the presidential and premier administrations, as well as the personnel of several ministries (Defense, Foreign Affairs, Trans-

⁹ [<http://www.24news.ru>], 14 May, 2007.

¹⁰ Kabar Information Agency, 25 May, 2007.

port and Communications, Finance) and deputies, to the Manas airbase. Accompanied by Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, they visited the passenger and cargo terminals and fitness center and watched the takeoff of servicing vehicle C-17 Globemaster III.

In numerous interviews, Ms. Yovanovitch diligently refuted information about the base's possible use against Iran. She never tired of listing the advantages Kyrgyzstan was reaping from the U.S.'s military presence on its territory; and made a point of drawing attention to the financial aid America had already rendered the republic. She was especially eloquent when talking about how the \$150 million the U.S. promised in 2006 had been allotted in full. She did not miss the chance to point out that the sum included not only the rent, but also funds intended for other programs being implemented in the republic with American assistance.

The American ambassador commented on the parliamentary discussions of the advisability of the airbase's continued deployment at the Manas Airport. Speaking on the eve of the decisive parliamentary sitting, she expressed her hope that the debates would be constructive and pointed out: "From the very first day of the airbase's existence, the number of terrorist attacks on Kyrgyzstan has diminished. This happened because the coalition has been carrying out activity to combat the terrorists in Afghanistan. Terrorists could no longer move to the Kyrgyz borders and cross over into the country. This means that the base primarily serves the republic's interests."

Ms. Yovanovitch made a brave attempt at vindicating the American side, which moved Zachary Hatfield, who killed a Kyrgyz citizen, back to the United States. She argued that this was done with the Kyrgyz side's consent: "We were in close contact with the government of Kyrgyzstan about Z. Hatfield's departure from the republic," said she. She went on to say that he had not been released from responsibility but should remain under U.S. jurisdiction. In an effort to reduce the tension, the U.S. Defense Secretary offered A. Ivanov's widow \$55,000 in compensation.

5. Summaries and Conclusions

The information that the Manas airbase might be used for launching air strikes against Iran, fanned by the media and encouraged by official sources, increased the country's conflict potential. The executive and legislative branches cannot agree on the issue; society is likewise split into two camps.

The anti-American wave rose too high for America's comfort: its state structures had to act promptly to neutralize the negative effects. An excursion to the airbase, which brought together bureaucrats and deputies, was one such step. The American ambassador did not spare words when describing the positive aspects of the base's continued deployment on Kyrgyz soil, while the widow of the murdered driver was offered compensation.

Much was done to strengthen America's position in the top echelons of power: problems were discussed with top bureaucrats, much was said about the bright prospects of bilateral cooperation and the "negative" consequences of withdrawal of the base, which would put the damper on bilateral cooperation.

Other levers were also used:

- The republic's financial and economic dependence on the World Bank and the IMF;
- The high corruption level in the country;
- The agencies of state and nongovernmental structures and other American organizations working unhampered in Kyrgyzstan;
- The wide network of U.S.-controlled NGOs.

The absence of a more or less clear response from the SCO and CSTO strengthened America's position; it continued to increase its influence on the republic's leaders and press for advantageous decisions.

The question is why did Washington start this "game" at all, and why did it strengthen its air group in the Kyrgyz Republic?

Indeed, the United States has airdromes in Kandahar, Kabul, and Bagram at its disposal with a more than ample number of bombers to deliver surgical strikes against the Taliban's scattered small units. In fact the Taliban has no aviation, therefore fighters are obviously not needed in Afghanistan. Iran, on the other hand, has aviation and enough identified targets to attract bombers, if we can trust the information leaking from the Pentagon.

Today, however, Washington can no longer use military force outside the U.N. SC (this happened in Afghanistan, Sudan in 1989, and Yugoslavia in 2000): neither Russia nor China (two states with the right of veto) would consent to this.

Second, not everyone in the United States agrees with the Administration's aggressive foreign policy.

Third, according to its military doctrine, the U.S. can be engaged in two local wars at the same time. It is already bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq. A strike on Iran would invite retaliation; this means another armed conflict for the United States that would exhaust its resources even more. Washington is fully aware of this.

From this it follows that the current demonstration of aggressive intentions is designed to put pressure on Tehran to force it to abandon its nuclear program and cut back its support of terrorists in Iraq and elsewhere.

The United States might imitate an attack on Iran to provoke a response and the use of force. The Iranian leaders have repeatedly stated that they will launch a retaliatory strike on the site from which the country is attacked. It is 1,500 km from the Iranian border to Bishkek as the crow flies, which means that the medium-range (2,000 km) solid-fuel Shehab-3 missiles used by the Iranian armed forces will easily reach Kyrgyzstan. "The missiles with sub-projectile warheads that use stealth technology to make them invisible and, therefore, impossible to intercept will upset the balance of forces in the region."¹¹

Manas is the only U.S. base in Central Eurasia, which America uses for strategic purposes and to control the gas and oil flows in the region. A preliminary agreement between Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan about a new gas pipeline along the Caspian coast made the base especially important. The new project could reduce America's efforts to lay a gas pipeline across the Caspian, bypassing Russia, to naught. No wonder Samuel Bodman, U.S. Energy Secretary, called on the European states "to pay special attention to this agreement."¹²

A negative alternative cannot be excluded either. The American president is rapidly losing his popularity outside the United States and at home. According to the Novosti Information Agency, the latest public opinion poll, the results of which were published in Washington on 24 May, revealed that "in the last month the share of Americans who look at the war in Iraq as a failure increased by 10 percent to reach a record 76 percent."¹³

This means that the U.S. president might take rash steps to restore his low job approval rate.

¹¹ "Iran ispytal kassetnuu 'stealth' raketu," available at [<http://www.cnews.ru/news/line/index.shtml?2006/03/31/198886>], 12 June, 2007.

¹² *Vedomosti*, 15 May, 2007.

¹³ "George Bush predskazyvaet 'krovavy avgust' v Irake," Kabar Information Agency, 25 May, 2007.

6. Possible Scenarios

The situation might develop according to three scenarios.

■ **Scenario 1.** *The United States manages to extend the time of its deployment in Kyrgyzstan until completion of the “counterterrorist” operation in Afghanistan due to the following circumstances:*

- The president of Kyrgyzstan supports America’s military presence in the country;
- The Cabinet badly needs American aid to patch the budget holes with the help of American funding and grants, the larger part of which are intended for the country’s administrative structures;
- The pro-presidential majority in the parliament, which came to the fore during in the events of the winter and spring of 2007;
- Support of the United States by a large part of the politically active population that lives on American money anyway;
- A large state debt to international financial institutions patronized by the United States;
- No clear negative response to America’s military presence in Kyrgyzstan from allies in the regional organizations.

■ **Scenario 2.** *Kyrgyzstan limits America’s military presence to a specific deadline.*

This can be realized if:

- The executive and legislative powers reach a compromise whereby those deputies who want to remove the base manage to build up a majority;
- The executive and legislative powers reach an agreement designed to prevent mass violence if society splits into irreconcilable friends and foes of America’s continued military presence;
- Third countries help Kyrgyzstan pay off its state debts;
- The SCO and CSTO allies demonstrate their negative attitude toward America’s military presence in the Kyrgyz Republic.

■ **Scenario 3.** *Kyrgyzstan comes to the conclusion that it does not need military personnel and military facilities on its territory and annuls the agreement with the United States.*

This requires a radically changed position on the part of the president and the Cabinet; it can be realized if:

- The parliament becomes even more stringently opposed to America’s military presence and wins wide social support;
- The Movement for Withdrawal of the American Airbase from the Territory of Kyrgyzstan gains mass support;
- Interested states or organizations buy off Kyrgyzstan’s foreign debts;
- The SCO and CSTO allies build up their pressure.

Under Scenario 1, the U.S. will never relieve its pressure on Kyrgyzstan to achieve prompt qualitative and quantitative expansion of its military presence in the republic. The U.S. will use it as a factor of influence on the political and military-political situation in Central Eurasia and the contiguous regions. As the experience of siting AMB elements in the Czech Republic and Poland has shown,

the United States will move forward aggressively and resolutely, while inventing and applying any levers it might find useful to destroy the SCO and CSTO.

Consolidation of the interests of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan in the oil and gas sphere (when the main pipelines to China and the EU across Russia, not across the Caucasus, are commissioned) could jolt the United States into feverish efforts to draw the local countries into the sphere of its interests.

The United States could act “asymmetrically” in Central Eurasia, South Asia, and the Middle East to adjust the current situation to America’s interests. We should bear in mind that in the past the United States has frequently refused to fulfill its foreign policy obligations under the pretext that due to the changed circumstances its promises no longer fit its security interests.

The Iranian problem is not the White House’s only concern; in the near future it will busy itself with the regime change in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, two SCO and CSTO members. The United States will use this fact to “promote democracy” in these countries, build new political architecture, and achieve a new balance of forces. The documentary *Bringing Down a Dictator*, the bible of “color revolutionaries,” has been already translated into Uzbek.

More likely than not, Kyrgyzstan will become a target of all kinds of sanctions and embargoes imposed by its regional allies. There are the first signs of this.

China, very worried about America’s military presence in the Kyrgyz Republic, has been increasing its investments in Tajikistan, which have already become much larger than its economic help to Kyrgyzstan. America’s greater military presence in the Kyrgyz Republic might divert the Chinese commodity flows to other countries. We all know that a large part of the population survives by selling cheap Chinese commodities. It is no secret that there is a Kazakhstan reshipment point of Chinese consumer goods forty kilometers away from the similar Bishkek Dordoy market, which is idling.

Moscow is growing increasingly irritated by Washington’s strategic designs in the region. The Russian president is becoming more critical of the United States, especially of the deployment of ABM elements in Europe. The Russian Federation might take “asymmetric” measures to oust the United States from Central Eurasia; as one of the measures Russians might be advised not to employ labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan.

Kazakhstan, which has already posed itself as the regional leader, is unlikely to abandon China and Russia: they are mutually interested in one another, particularly in the oil and gas sphere.

This will inevitably force Kyrgyzstan to either become an American satellite completely dominated by its patron or remain a member of the regional organizations. Surrounded by SCO and CSTO members, Kyrgyzstan will be forced either to limit the time the American base will function in the country or close it down altogether. This may happen if the neighbors and their allies act concertedly and actively.

Under the second and third scenarios, the U.S. administration will use its military presence to put pressure on the Kyrgyz government to readjust the situation. The Americans know that the Manas airbase, with its current international legal status, is the only strategically advantageous military toe-hold in the region. They will use every available political and military-political tool, even going as far as a regime change if the leaders go against American interests, to remain in the country.

However, the two latter scenarios will help fortify Kyrgyzstan’s allied ties, which will ensure security, political stability, and economic development. To achieve this, the SCO and CSTO allies should extend real aid to the country, which means freedom from financial dependence on the IMF and the WB.

U.S. POLICY IN TAJIKISTAN: FROM RECOGNITION OF ITS INDEPENDENCE TO PARTNERSHIP

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1

Tajikistan's relations with the United States are just as important for it as those with Russia and China. While relations with Russia have two equally important components (economic and political, the military dimension included) and its relations with China are economy-dominated, Tajikistan's contacts with America cannot be described in figures, at least to a much lesser extent than the relations with the two other members of the Big Three. Today, the political element, with military technical cooperation as its component, is the only significant aspect of Tajik-American relations. This absolute domination of the political element in bilateral relations is unlikely to be changed, at least in the near future.

From the very first days of its independence, Tajikistan has regarded its stable relations with the United States as a strategic task, a guarantee of its newly acquired sovereignty, which, in its turn, guaranteed the Tajiks' ethnic security and a stronger Tajik statehood. Security was, and still is, interpreted as the sum total of the political, economic, and other conditions under which the Tajiks will survive as an ethnos with an ethnic identity of its own.

The Tajik leaders were absolutely convinced that as soon as the Soviet republic adopted its declaration of independence, the United States would hasten to recognize Tajikistan's new status as an independent state. They argued that this would have been a logical political move for a country that had been the Soviet Union's political and ideological foe for many years and that had been working toward the U.S.S.R.'s disintegration. The West and the United States, however, did not hasten to take this step. This did not happen until the Soviet Union fell apart de jure.

2

After recognizing Tajikistan's independence, the United States found itself facing another difficult choice. While the other Central Asian republics reached independence as fairly united countries with commonly recognized national leaders, Tajikistan entered the new historical epoch amid a ruthless power struggle that flared up back in February 1990 while the federal state was dying. Each of the conflicting sides counted on the Americans.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, who visited Dushanbe in February 1992, created a new impetus for the relations between the two countries, and not only because it was the first visit of a high-ranking American bureaucrat to the newly independent state.

The visit took place amid an internal political crisis and Moscow's rejection of Tajikistan's official power; China and the European countries chose a wait-and-see policy, while Iran and its hectic

activities caused mixed feelings among the locals. Under these conditions, Tajikistan's future hinged on how the world's only superpower would treat the processes going on inside the republic and around it. The U.S. Secretary of State and the U.S. top political leaders he represented demonstrated political realism and pragmatism when they supported the Republic of Tajikistan—the Tajik state per se. In practice, this meant that from that time on the then President Nabiev had the United States behind him, while the Tajiks' choice was recognized as legitimate.

In November-December 1992, the republic's parliament inherited from Soviet times met for its 16th session in the city of Khujand. It was attended by the deputies and sides in the rapidly unfolding Tajik domestic armed conflict (represented by prominent warlords among others). The session elected a new leadership headed by Emomali Rakhmon. Prominent members of the political opposition saw no reason to hail the results, but the United States accepted them and expressed its official support of the newly elected leaders in line with the course set by James Baker's visit.

3

America's support of the official leaders made the relations between the two countries pragmatic and conflict-free. There are several other factors behind this: the consecutive U.S. administrations consistently pursued a positive course when dealing with Tajikistan. The Tajik leaders, on the other hand, from Rakhmon Nabiev to Emomali Rakhmon remained convinced that relations with the United States were of prime importance for the country's continued independent development. It was equally clear that the republic badly needed economic and political reforms, without which efficient long-term working relations with the United States would have been impossible. On the other hand, Washington expected not so much reforms themselves as at least a clearly stated intention to carry them out and the admission that they were the only and inevitable option.

It should be added that in their dealings with Rakhmon's team, the Americans demonstrated a lot of pragmatism free from any ideological considerations. In the past decade, this was obviously suggested by the fact that no immediate changes (Westernization) were possible amid the civil war and postwar rehabilitation. The Americans tried to increase their influence based on the fairly ambiguous attitude of a large part of Russia's political establishment toward Emomali Rakhmon and on the latter's obvious desire to diversify his country's foreign political aims. Finally, the Clinton Administration was fully aware that America could only achieve its aims in the country (and the region) if it relied on those in power and helped them to move forward.

In these trying years, the Tajik leaders were seeking peace in the republic, as well as a stronger state structure to better control the country and create prerequisites for better economic conditions. The country could hope to preserve its independence only if these tasks were successfully fulfilled. America approved of these intentions.

Indeed, the United States wanted stability in Tajikistan and Central Asia as a whole. It deemed it necessary to encourage the Central Asian states to cement their post-Soviet statehood as an important guarantee against a more or less consolidated pro-Russian post-Soviet expanse. Domestic conflicts and even minor collisions allowed Russia to interfere, politically and militarily, and to increase or, at least, preserve its regional role. This was what happened in the Republic of Tajikistan.

America's desire to promote the peace process, shared by the Russian Federation for different political reasons, developed into a specific and very efficient initiative. In March 1993, the Russian-American Peace Initiative was launched within a larger project known as the Dartmouth Conference; the conflicting sides were invited to participate in a series of informal meetings, which finally produced a dialog.

The project was initiated and carried out by the Russian Strategic Research Center and the Kettering Foundation of the United States under personal supervision of Vitali Naumkin, the Center's director, and Harold H. Saunders (former deputy assistant Secretary of State). The United States spared no efforts at all levels (the U.N. Security Council, OSCE, the American embassy in Dushanbe, international financial institutions and their regional and country offices) to promote the peace process and successful realization of the peace agreement. Its active and effective support for the peace process in Tajikistan, together with other political advantages, allowed the United States to oppose Russia's restored influence in Tajikistan and the rest of Central Asia.

At the same time, the United States was habitually promoting the democratization idea. It moved in two directions: a political one, which boiled down to consistent criticism of those in power of the discrepancies between what they were doing and the political norms they proclaimed. This was obvious from the U.S. State Department's annual surveys, as well as the reports supplied by other U.S. governmental agencies on the problems related to democratic developments, human rights, etc. in Tajikistan. This explains why the Americans avoided, as much as possible, direct contacts with the country's top officials. They supported, however, in different forms, those who were described as the opposition. Criticism of official power, the obvious avoidance of direct contacts, pauses in contacts at the highest level, as well as support of the opposition, which went on through the 1990s, were of a ritual nature and never presupposed any direct hostile moves in relation to the Tajik leaders.

There was another trend as well: the U.S. embassy and its structures, as well as local offices of American agencies and organizations, were engaged in educational projects based on standard educational programs implemented across the post-Soviet expanse. Officials, politicians, religious figures, businessmen, journalists, academics, post-graduate students, and students of higher educational establishments and secondary schools were given a chance of traveling to America for seminars, training sessions, work experience and other programs. They profited from extensive information about their chosen occupation, acquired new skills, received academic degrees, and had the opportunity to observe life in America at close range. They also acquired better knowledge about its political system and mechanisms, about the business activities in this country, the media, the relations between the government and the civil sector, between the government and the press, etc. By doing this, the United States was obviously pursuing long-term goals rather than immediate interests.

4

The presidential election of November 1999, in which an alternative candidate nominated by the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) was also involved, and the multiparty elections to the newly created bi-chamber parliament held in February-March 2000 (which also involved parties that belonged to the United Tajik Opposition) crowned the peace process and consolidated Tajikistan's new, post-Soviet statehood. This made it possible to move on to another priority: the Tajiks' ethnic security, which called for a set of political and economic measures to be carried out under conditions of peace and political stability. The country's leaders were involved in the process to a much greater extent than other forces; they were actively aided by the IRPT, the most influential political party, which came second after the ruling National Democratic Party of Tajikistan (NDPT). The victories scored in this sphere were closely associated with the country's positive relations with the United States.

After the domestic conflict, Tajik-American relations developed under the new conditions that took shape after 9/11 and remained very fluid both at the global and regional level.

The 9/11 events changed the nature and dynamics of the relations between the two countries. In the previous decade, the republic, the stormy domestic context notwithstanding, remained (along with its Central Asian neighbors) on the periphery of America's political interests: the Democratic Administration traditionally paid much less attention to Central Asia and the Muslim world as a whole than to other places. Indeed, Europe was actively getting rid of socialism; the East European countries were integrating into democratic Larger Europe while Russia was busy restoring capitalism on its territory. The Balkans were engaged in heavy fighting, while a sanitary cordon was being built between Europe and the Russian Federation. Under these conditions, the U.S. had no time for Tajikistan. The republic, which tried without much success to attract more attention from the United States, was doomed to the unenviable role of a supplicant.

11 September changed everything overnight. The new Republican Administration identified its foreign policy priorities as the antiterrorist struggle and democratization of the Greater Middle East. Washington's strategic priorities shifted from Europe to the Muslim East. Tajikistan and its Central Asian neighbors gained more political weight—seen from Washington, they were no longer a periphery, but instead the focus of the U.S.'s national interests.

In the past, too, the Republican administrations were more interested in the Muslim world than the Democratic administrations: all of America's military actions after World War II were initiated by the Republicans with the exception of the Carter Administration's failed military venture designed to liberate the American diplomats taken hostage in Tehran by the Iranians.

At all times, the Republican administrations demonstrated a heightened interest in the natural, particularly energy, resources of the Muslim states; besides, the Republicans are guided to a much greater extent than the Democrats by the imperatives of inter-civilizational clashes and are less inclined to be guided by the idea of promoting democratic values all over the world.

The new regional context forced each of the Central Asian countries to seek the best possible model of adaptation to the new conditions without sacrificing their national interests. Tajikistan could use the chance offered by its newly acquired strategic importance, first, to raise the level of its political relations with the United States and the West as a whole; second, to maintain its relations with Washington at a level that would not cripple the country's security; third, to use the new pattern of relations among the world's and the region's leading powers to promote and diversify its relations with Russia, China, and Iran—countries of vast economic and financial potential; fourth, to encourage these countries to invest in economic, energy, and transport-communication projects of strategic importance on Tajik territory.

In response to the appeal by President George W. Bush, Jr., the Tajikistan leaders sided with the United States and supported its plan to carry out a counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan. This time it was the U.S. that was the supplicant.

By joining the U.S.-led counterterrorist international coalition, the Tajik leaders were mainly concerned about the country's national interests. Tajikistan badly needed a stronger position as an independent state in order to preserve the Tajiks' ethnic security. This was the only way they could hope to survive as an ethnos. The new realities made the smaller states directly dependent on their relations with the world's only superpower and its benevolence. They should side with the United States, irrespective of the motives America guided itself by. This course was the only rational and pragmatic decision ensuring the U.S. positive attitude toward Tajikistan, at least while the Republicans remained in power and continued fighting international terrorism.

The pragmatism of the country's leaders brought obvious political dividends: high-ranking American bureaucrats and influential politicians frequented Tajikistan, thus forging closer relations with the United States and its Western allies. Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld was one of the ministers who regularly came to Tajikistan.

The U.S.'s military plans forced the U.K., France, and Japan to open their diplomatic missions in Dushanbe. Late in 2002, a delegation headed by President of Tajikistan Rakhmon came to the United States on an official visit. America's military plans added vigor to the Tajik-American partnership and diversified it. It was at that time that military-technical cooperation, both direct and within NATO's Partnership for Peace program, was launched and actively promoted. This forced the international financial structures to pay more attention to Tajikistan and its requests. It can even be said that the republic was offered the MFN treatment. From that time on, the West has regarded President Emomali Rakhmon as a reliable regional partner, while Western criticism based on Western political criteria was reduced to non-binding suggestions intended for domestic consumption in the United States, rather than for putting pressure on the Tajik leaders.

Better political relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the United States forced the other international actors to readjust their policies accordingly. In September 2004, Moscow agreed to settle some of the problems on conditions that Dushanbe found much more favorable than before; it transformed its 201st motorized infantry division into the 201st military base, wrote off part of the republic's debt, etc. In September 2004, Iran suggested that it would finance the construction of the Sangtuda hydropower plant; in October, Russia pledged to complete the project, even though earlier it postponed this decision.

In the new situation, Tajikistan could claim control over its border with Afghanistan, which was earlier manned by Russian border guards. The process started in December 2004 on the easternmost Khorugh section; in the spring, Tajik border guards started moving to the Moscow and Panj sections. On 14 June, 2005, the process was successfully completed; on 13 July, 2005, the state flag of Tajikistan was hoisted on the westernmost (Panj) section of the border. On 19 October, the entire Tajik-Afghan border was officially transferred to the Tajik border guards in the presence of General Pronichev, who headed the Russian border guard service. These developments were made possible because the United States and the EU, which it influenced, not only announced that they were prepared to extend material and financial aid to improve border security, but also launched corresponding projects.

5

The year 2005 marked an important stage in Tajik-American relations: America's position in Central Asia was somewhat undermined by the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, which removed President Askar Akaev, and the resultant chaos, as well as the Andijan events and America's impulsive response to them. Then came the Astana SCO summit, which invited the United States to specify the time within which it would remove its bases from Central Asia and put forward an official demand from the Uzbekistan government to close down the American military base in Khanabad. In fact, the excessively ideological approach of America's nonmilitary departments endangered the political advantages achieved after 14 years of consistent efforts.

Under these conditions, Tajik-American relations, which remained at a satisfactory level, received another impetus. On 13 October, 2005, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice came to Tajikistan. This was the second official visit of the U.S. State Secretary to the Republic of Tajikistan. It meant that the relations between the two countries remained good and were moving forward. On 25 October, at the follow-up on-line press conference, U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan Richard Hoagland said: U.S.-Tajik relations are generally quite good. We do not have dramatic ups and downs. We continue consistently to move forward as evidenced by several high-level U.S. visits to Dushanbe this year.

During her visit, the U.S. State Secretary pointed out that her country fully supported the economic and political reforms underway in Tajikistan as conducive to its long-term stability. She also said that the United States intended to continue its cooperation with Tajikistan in its fight against the new threats (terrorism, extremism, and the anti-drug campaign) evident in the region. While in Dushanbe, Condoleezza Rice preferred not to pedal the usual subjects—human rights and democratic developments. The conclusion was obvious: the Tajik leaders had tapped the difficult situation in which America unexpectedly found itself in the region because of the Kyrgyz and Andijan events to achieve even smoother and strategically mutually advantageous relations with the United States.

The sad results of 2005 and the radically changed attitude of both the regional governments and the public toward the United States, which plummeted from entirely positive in 1991 to obviously guarded, convinced Washington that it should readjust its policy regarding Central Asia. It abandoned its excessively ideological approach in favor of realism and more or less complete acceptance of reality. The State Department acquired the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, the head of which, Richard Boucher, received the post of Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs.

Washington's desire to adapt itself to the trend obvious among the de-Sovietized Central Asian republics toward a more kindred civilizational space is important evidence of the changed attitudes. The United States came to the understanding that Central Asia could no longer be regarded as part of the CIS common expanse (something that was done during the entire post-Soviet period) and that its former attitude had become unacceptable. It should be said in this connection that the United States remained resolved to build new liberal-democratic states in Central Asia. The attitudes, models, and instruments successfully applied in Eastern Europe and the Baltic states, but which failed in Ukraine, proved absolutely useless in Central Asia. The fact that the Central Asian countries were treated as different from the post-Soviet expanse meant that Americans dropped their Sovietological patterns and arrived at different approaches better suited to the new regional reality.

What is important from the viewpoint of Tajikistan's national interests is that starting with the events of the spring of 2005, the U.S. has been aiding the development of the sovereign democratic and prospering Central Asian states wishing to cooperate with the United States. This was what Richard Boucher said during his visit to Dushanbe in May 2006. In the early half of the 1990s, when the republic and its neighbors demonstrated the desire to shift from the Soviet to national rails, America and some of the Western countries were talking about a shift from communism to democracy. Today, America has achieved a better understanding of the region and the local realia.

Today, Tajik-American relations are developing in limited, yet strategically important areas. Normally, it is America that demonstrates the desire to cooperate in many specific spheres. According to Richard Boucher, his country wants to concentrate on helping Tajikistan strengthen its sovereignty and security. Recently, Washington has been paying a lot of attention to the local energy projects and has gone as far as hinting at its possible involvement. In the near future, however, the hints will remain a form of political support and nothing more. They are of huge strategic importance since they might encourage the international financial institutions to become involved, in any form, in the energy projects. It will inevitably jolt the countries with necessary resources willing to secure their regional positions into more active cooperation with our republic.

In fact, the American initiatives, no matter what the American leaders assert, are aimed at reducing Russia's influence in Central Asia, containing Tajik-Iranian relations, and probably achieving Tajikistan's wider involvement in the American project in Afghanistan. The American presence is strongly felt in the political contacts, bilateral military cooperation and military cooperation within NATO partnership, technical and other assistance to the Ministry of the Interior and the Tajik border guards, as well as implementation of the IMF, WB, and the ADB projects.

The United States fully supported another presidential term for Emomali Rakhmon; it is closely cooperating with Tajikistan in the security sphere, while the international financial institutions are favorably treating the republic (a large part of its debt, nearly \$100 million, to the IMF was written off). There is a lot of talk about extensive economic cooperation, while the republic was declared to be an important ally. These are positive features of Tajik-American relations, which help to consolidate Tajikistan's independence and guarantee it.

Under these conditions, the Tajik side should fully tap the potential of independence and of the multivectoral foreign policy activities. At the same time, the republic deems it highly important to maintain its relations with America at the best possible level so as not to cross the line beyond which the U.S. might become a despotic mentor. It is equally important to preserve the achieved balance in relations with Russia, China, and the United States. This balance alone allows the United States to remain Tajikistan's strategic political partner, which the Americans find profitable, as well as the guarantor of Tajikistan's independence.

It should be said in conclusion that Tajikistan will successfully deal with its main short- and long-term tasks (ethnic security of the Tajiks, which will prevent their assimilation by the non-Tajik ethnic groups) only if it manages to pursue balanced relations with the United States, Russia, and China, and if it maintains relations with each of them that will consolidate Tajik statehood and avoid any threat to its sovereignty and integrity. So far, the Tajik leaders have been successfully coping with this task.

**MILITARY-POLITICAL ACTIVITY
IN THE CASPIAN
IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD
(Legal Aspects)**

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**1. International-Legal Regulation of
the Military Presence
of States (Littoral and Non-Littoral) and
the Creation of Military Bases
in the Caspian**

Military presence at seas and lakes is one of the most acute and complicated problems of international relations and international law. In the past few years, this problem has acquired particular relevance in the Caspian basin where an arms race is escalating, new military bases are being created, and where not only Caspian but also third countries are looking to deploy their armed forces.¹ Military presence in the Caspian has become desirable for many states.

¹ See: G.S. Gorshkov, G.M. Melkov, *Voennoe moreplavanie i strategicheskoe ravnovesie: mezhdunarodno-pravovye aspekty*, Voenizdat Publishers, Moscow, 1986, pp. 48-49; M.A. Wahidi, "Voennoe prisutstvie SShA v Tsentral'noi Azii: reaktsia Rossii," *Amu-Darya*, No. 12, Summer 2002, pp. 93-94, 102-103.

Naval presence is one of the forms in which countries use their naval forces beyond their state borders, in the territorial waters of other states. Both from a legal and technical perspective, naval presence is an extremely complex and dynamic system of interstate relations and military ties.²

According to G.S. Gorshkov and G.M. Melkov, naval presence, in a particular part of the World Ocean, can be either constant or occasional, accompanied by actions (operations) by a country (a group of countries), designed to accomplish certain foreign policy goals. The content of these goals is pre-determined by the foreign policy and military strategy of states under whose flag naval forces are operating. Naval presence, they continue, “is an element of military presence—i.e., the presence of military contingents of foreign countries (ground, air and naval forces) on the territory of other states and in various parts of the World Ocean.”³

Naval presence is not so much a military as political and legal problem, which is of interest to all competing countries. It is connected—more than any other form of state activity at seas and lakes—with their political, economic, and military-strategic interests in the World Ocean. Naval presence fully reveals the character, foreign policy goals, and military objectives of countries that use their navies in particular parts of the world.⁴

From an international-law perspective, the aforementioned authors believe that the only criterion of legality or illegality of naval presence is the second part of this concept—i.e., the practical activity of warships.

2. The International Regulatory Framework for “Military Presence” in the Caspian Basin

As is known, the international legal groundwork underlying the procedure for “military or other forms of presence” in the Caspian basin was laid by the Russian-Persian Treaty (1921) and the Treaty on Trade and Navigation (1940), which prohibited third-party states from maintaining their presence in the lake. In the post-Soviet period, the relevance of this issue was confirmed by Caspian countries’ initiatives. Russia and Iran, which strove to demonstrate their commitment to Soviet-Iranian legal practice, especially stood out in this respect.

A draft Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, which is a basic document for discussion at the Special Working Group, reflects this problem in Art 3, which establishes, in particular, that “the activity in the Caspian Sea by the Parties hereto shall proceed on the principle that the military presence in the Caspian Sea of states other than the Parties hereto is impermissible.”⁵ This approach was endorsed by three Caspian states—Iran, Russia and Turkmenistan. Furthermore, Iran and the Russian Federation also put forward the idea that this provision should also apply to air space.

It is noteworthy that Kazakhstan “reserved” its opinion with respect to Art 3 in its entirety, while Azerbaijan objected to its inclusion in the draft Convention.

Nevertheless, the sides were unanimous on the issue of prohibiting “ships (both military and non-military.—*R.M.*) sailing under the flag of states that are not party to the present Convention from entering or passing through the Caspian Sea” (Art 3.8).⁶

² See: G.S. Gorshkov, G.M. Melkov, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

³ Ibid., pp. 56-58.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ *A Draft Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea. Project*, Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic Foreign Ministry.

⁶ Ibidem.

Art 3.6 is also a source of considerable controversy. It stipulates that any activity in the Caspian will proceed in accordance with the principle that "...[the passage of warships and other ships sailing under the flags of the Parties through specific sectors/zones of the Caspian Sea for non-commercial purposes shall be subject to permission...⁷]." This provision was proposed by Azerbaijan. The parties failed to agree on it or to coordinate other positions on this matter (hence the square brackets). For example, Iran put forward the principle that "...entry and passage of warships sailing under the flags of Parties through territorial [national] waters be subject to authorization," while Turkmenistan proposed that this provision be applied to [littoral states] (this position was later backed by Iran).⁸ For its part, Russia opted for the principle of "...[passage by warships sailing under the flags of the Parties through zones of national jurisdiction without calling at ports or mooring]."⁹

Analysis of these provisions shows that the Caspian countries are opposed to the principle of uncontrolled military presence in their "national waters." In other words, each of them can only legally maintain its presence in its "national" part of the Caspian, which does not quite answer the general, classic definition of "naval presence," as enshrined in international law.

We find a more detailed interpretation [of the concept of naval presence] in the Iranian draft Agreement on Confidence Building Measures and Stability in the Caspian Sea (2003). This problem is addressed in Art 5 of the draft agreement, comprised of six points.

In particular, Point 5.1 says that "military presence by third parties in the Caspian Sea in any form shall be prohibited."¹⁰ In this connection, the Caspian countries "shall refrain from using military personnel from other than Caspian states aboard their vessels or other military or nonmilitary ships in the Caspian Sea."¹¹

Point 5.3 of the Draft Agreement is noteworthy: Any vessel will be regarded as an element of military presence on the Caspian if it sails under the flag of any of the Caspian states. A comparison of this proposition with Point 6 of the Draft Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea points to some contradiction between them. In other words, Iran's legal theses are in contravention with the basic propositions of this draft.

Point 5.4 of the Agreement merits attention: "The Parties shall refrain from conducting joint maneuvers or military exercises with non-Caspian countries in the Caspian Sea."¹² The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) sought to use this provision to prevent any penetration by third forces—in particular, NATO forces—into the Caspian basin. Needless to say, this idea has always been endorsed by Russia, but not by Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan, both of which are willing to cooperate with NATO, specifically with the United States and Turkey, in protecting their oil and gas interests.

The Iranian Draft Agreement effectively prohibits any military partnership within the framework of special treaties (pacts) with third states with respect to the Caspian zone. The only exception is a possible five-way military pact (if it is adopted by the Caspian countries). Given the competition that exists between such pacts as Caspian Guard (a U.S. military project) and CASFOR (a Russian military project), it becomes evident that this proposition will not materialize any time soon.

The Draft Agreement enables the Caspian states to create their own military bases, which should be located in close proximity to their Caspian shores (proceeding from the essence of this provision, it could be presumed that it does not refer to a joint base with third countries). At the same time, they are to inform one another "about the potentials of forces in the Caspian Sea" (Art 10.1).

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ *A Draft Agreement on Confidence Building Measures and Stability in the Caspian Sea*, The IRI project, Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic Foreign Ministry.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Ibidem.

Almost at the same time as the Iranian Draft Agreement, the foreign ministries of the Caspian states received a Kazakh plan for a stability pact in the Caspian (7 June, 2003). A thorough analysis of its provisions leads to the conclusion that some points of this draft are at odds with those of the aforementioned legal documents. In particular, it does not contain a provision expressly prohibiting the naval presence of third countries. Furthermore, “the sides shall permit the joint or separate conduct of maneuvers and military exercises in the Caspian Sea” (Point 9).¹³

At the same time, the authors of this document say nothing about the parties with which it may be possible to conduct joint maneuvers or military exercises. In other words, a third party is not prohibited from cooperation.

Point 10 is also incompatible with the spirit and letter of the aforementioned draft agreements. It says in part: “The sides expressed their intention to interact with other regional security structures.”¹⁴ What regional security organizations are referred to in this point? NATO? The SCO? The CIS Collective Security Treaty? Or something else?

The authors of this Draft Pact set the Caspian countries, especially Russia and Iran, a serious problem, which they are not in a position to resolve, nor are they particularly interested in doing that.

Evidently, Point 5 will raise numerous questions. For example, it says that the sides “will under no circumstances permit their territories to be used by other states for staging acts of aggression or other military actions against other Signatories to the present Pact.”¹⁵

It turns out that if a third country does not commit aggression against Caspian states, its troops will have a right to be present in the Caspian basin.

Legal collisions between littoral countries over the military use of the Caspian Sea brought about the so-called military-political projects, pertaining to this lake, as well as a military-political “free for all”—both in its basin and in the surrounding area.

3. Legal Projects for Military Presence in the Caspian Basin

It has been generally assumed in Russian academic, political and military circles that the right and desire to have a presence in Caspian waters is connected with the need to ensure its security as a whole, as well as to protect Russia’s interests. Far from being enshrined in international law, the idea was effectively rejected. When the U.S., under the auspices of NATO, initiated the Caspian Guard project, the Russian side put forward a counter proposal—to create CASFOR, patterned after BLACKSEAFOR.

The appearance of these ideas and plans was to a certain degree provoked by the Iranian naval forces. Thus, on 23 July, 2001, an Iranian warship intruded into Azerbaijani territorial waters and forced an Azerbaijani research vessel, the *Geofizik 3*, to leave the area. According to RIA Novosti, the *Geofizik 3* was exploring the Alov oil fields for British Petroleum (BP). Later, an Iranian Air Force plane arrived and started circling over the *Geofizik 3* and the *Alif Gajiev*, another research vessel. The government of the Republic of Azerbaijan protested the incident to Iranian Ambassador A. Gazai, demanding an explanation.

For its part, the United States expressed its concern over the incident. However, according to the Iranian side, the IRI’s actions with respect to foreign companies operating in the “Azerbaijani” sector

¹³ *A Draft Pact for Stability in the Caspian of 7 June, 2003*, the Republic of Kazakhstan project, Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic Foreign Ministry.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

of the Caspian Sea were provoked by the U.S. Administration which had ignored Tehran's readiness to use last-resort measures in striving to defend its national interests.¹⁶

As a result, the operator of the disputed project in the southern part of the Caspian—BP Corporation—immediately halted all operations in that sector. Its representative in Baku urged BP to pull out of the project completely—at least until Iran and Azerbaijan delimit and demarcate the borders between their maritime sectors.

Following this blockade, the IRI started conducting naval exercises in the Caspian Sea. For example, on 29 September, 2004, a final stage of three-day maneuvers by the Iranian Navy's Fourth District forces was conducted at the Bandar-e-Anzali port in the Caspian waters, near the coast of the Gilan Province (northeast of the country), involving the *Peikan* warship and several boats from the Bandar-e-Anzali naval base. According to M. Behzadfar, commander of the Fourth Military District, the goal of the exercise was to enhance the combat proficiency of the naval forces deployed in the region. "We must be on constant alert to defend the nation's security," he said.¹⁷

A serious demonstration of force was also observed in the Caspian Sea in 2002. That year, in the wake of the unsuccessful April summit of the Caspian states, Russian President V. Putin visited the Caspian Flotilla of the RF Navy and issued orders that an exercise be conducted in August. According to Commander V. Kuroedov, it was the first large-scale exercise in the Caspian Sea since the Soviet era; furthermore, it involved not only Caspian Flotilla ships but also all branches and arms of service—subunits of the Caucasus Military District and the Federal Border Service Regional Directorate, units of the 4th Air Army, with 10,000 servicemen, 60 warships and boats, and over 30 aircraft. The exercise was, to a certain degree, international, since subunits of Azerbaijani and Kazakh naval forces also participated in it.¹⁸

From every indication, the exercise was carried out if not to demonstrate force and exert influence on the resolution of the Caspian issue, then clearly to avert undesirable incidents in the Caspian, particularly ones provoked by Iran, especially considering that in May 2002, Tehran described the 1998 Kazakh-Russian agreement and subsequent documents (the Russian-Azerbaijani and Kazakh-Azerbaijani agreements) as unlawful. The IRI also gave a hostile reception to Moscow's naval exercise initiative. In particular, an official organ of the IRI government, *The Tehran Times*, noted the "threatening tone" of the Russian leader.¹⁹

Evidently, after the aforementioned military-political incident between Azerbaijan and Iran, the last mentioned country was a major factor in the Caspian states' decision to move away from their original demilitarization plan for the Caspian. According to reliable sources, the IRI deployed a full-fledged squadron comprising several brigades and divisions of surface ships and submarines, as well as auxiliary vessels and support units (naval aviation and infantry). The core of the surface fleet was made up by missile carrying, antisubmarine, and amphibious assault ships, as well as minesweepers and PT boats. In addition to that, in 2002, Iran conducted demonstration tests of the Shahab-3 long-range ballistic missile that it had adopted for service.

A new spiral of tensions in the Caspian Sea occurred in 2004-2005.

During that period, the United States started actively limiting the influence of its traditional rivals—the RF and the IRI—in the Caspian, as well as vigorously consolidating its positions in the three other states of the Caspian basin by penetrating their economies and domestic markets, implementing investment programs and granting loans.

¹⁶ See: "SShA ozabocheny reshitel'nyimi deistviiami Irana na Kaspiiskom more," available at [<http://rambler.ru/news/economy/10344/1798413.html?print=1>].

¹⁷ "Proshli voennye ucheniia VMF Irana na Kaspiiskom more," available at [<http://www.irna.ir/ru/20040929191800.txt.html>].

¹⁸ See: A. Chebotarev, "Igra muskulami," *Krasnaia zvezda*, 25 December, 2005.

¹⁹ See: Ibidem.

According to Russian sources, the United States intensified its activity especially in the sphere of military-technical cooperation with the Caspian countries.

In 2005, the United States invited Azerbaijan to create units of the so called Caspian Guard for the BTC pipeline and Caspian oil resources, purportedly to protect them against the threat of international terrorism—an international military grouping, comprised of 120,000 servicemen from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. It included plans to deploy command and control posts and conduct naval and air exercises. The United States intends to spend \$130 million on the project. Taking into account the U.S.'s military presence—to some degree or other, in Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kyrgyzstan—the formation of the Caspian Guard will help to considerably strengthen its positions in the region.

In bolstering its presence in the Caspian, the United States showed equal commitment to advancing military-technical cooperation with Kazakhstan.²⁰ Thus, in February 2004, during his visit to Astana, U.S. Secretary of Defense D. Rumsfeld told a press conference devoted to the results of his negotiations with the Kazakh leadership that stability in the Caspian region is a major factor not only for Kazakhstan but for the world as a whole. In this connection he highlighted the implementation of the Pentagon's financial assistance program to assist the development of Kazakhstan's first military base and training center located near the northern part of the Caspian Sea. Under this program, the sides agreed on the gratuitous transfer of warships for the Kazakhstan Navy.²¹

Needless to say, such intense activity by the U.S. could not possibly have been ignored by its rivals in the region. Via their representatives at the Special Working Group, Russia and Iran proposed introducing in the Draft Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea a provision prohibiting vessels sailing under the flags of extra-regional countries from passing through the sea, as well as a provision that only the Caspian states shall have the right to use sea resources.

However, the most serious step, or rather response by the RF to the U.S.'s projects and actions in the Caspian was the initiative to form a Caspian Sea Naval Cooperation Task Force, or CASFOR. It was to include, on a parity basis, warships from the littoral countries. The formal motives for the creation of CASFOR were the same as Washington's—i.e., to bolster the security system and fight against terror, although it was quite clear against whom it was directed.

Nevertheless, the formation of this interstate military grouping appears to be rather a dubious project. Who might support this idea on the practical level? First of all, Iran, which is interested in ensuring security—both its own security and the security of its allies, especially in light of the recent events, specifically Washington's reaction and threats concerning the implementation of Iran's nuclear program. To a certain degree, this plan also responds to the interests of Kazakhstan which strives, in its foreign policy, to maintain a balance between the major powers.

Russia's CASFOR initiative, designed to fight the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terror, drug trafficking, and poaching, as well as to conduct rescue operations, is, essentially, a diplomatic model in its competition with the United States. This competition proceeds through strengthening their respective positions in the Caspian basin.

In this connection it would be appropriate briefly to recall CASFOR's prehistory. The idea of creating this group, which is supposed to unite the naval forces of the Caspian states, was first put forward by Moscow in 2003. It took three years for it to become reality. In the course of his working visit to Baku (in January 2006), Russian Defense Minister S. Ivanov discussed with his Azerbaijani counterpart a plan for creating CASFOR. In Baku, S. Ivanov said that CASFOR could take on the functions of "some collective forces," in particular border troops and special purpose units. Judging

²⁰ See: A. Karavaev, "Pravovoi status Kaspiia i problema KASFOR," available at [http://www.apn-kz.ru/?charter_name=printadvert&data_id=283&do_view_single].

²¹ See: *Ibidem*.

from his comments, these forces could be used for countering “real threats and dangerous situations in the Caspian” together with the five Caspian countries.

Officially, the CASFOR initiative provides for the signing of an agreement on the creation of Caspian Sea Naval Cooperation Task Force. Apart from other things, the document contains six appendices:

- A—the scope of powers of navy commanders in the Caspian (six articles);
- B—the scope of powers of the Planning Group (four articles);
- C—the status of the Group (eight articles);
- D—CASFOR command structure and annual operations program;
- E—CASFOR flag and emblem (three articles); and
- F—Terminology.²²

The Draft Agreement proposed by Russia includes a Preamble and 19 articles. The document contains approaches toward principles of naval cooperation (Art II), the purposes and tasks (Art IV) and structure of the organization (Art V), provisions on political and military consultations, decision making, deployment and use of force, and command and control (Arts VI-VIII). The Russian draft includes Art IX (CASFOR command and staff), Art XI (information sharing), and Art XV (dispute resolution).²³

In the course of negotiations it was noted that CASFOR could enable the littoral states to prevent the unwanted military presence of third countries, which could cause further tension in the region between the Caspian states themselves, and affect their mutual understanding.

The goal of creating this multinational force, as V. Putin stressed, is to counter the terrorist threat and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through concerted efforts. The draft ruled out the possibility of third countries being involved in CASFOR.²⁴ It is common knowledge that to Russia, “third countries” meant not only the United States but also the U.K., Turkey and possibly NATO as a whole. These states have long struck deep roots in the post-Soviet space and maintain their military presence in Central Asia, refusing to set a concrete deadline on the withdrawal of their troops from the region.²⁵

On 24 October, 2005 President V. Putin directed the Russian foreign minister to discuss with the Iranian side the possibility of Iran’s participation in CASFOR: “As for the organization for the maintenance of peace, order and security in the Caspian, all Caspian states should be involved in it, including Iran.”²⁶

In the course of his official visit to Baku, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov also commented on the RF’s CASFOR initiative. According to him, CASFOR’s tasks would include fighting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, poaching and drug trafficking. The minister stressed that it will be not a military coalition, but a cooperation structure of the Caspian Sea countries.²⁷

²² For more detail, see: *A Draft Agreement on the Creation of Caspian Sea Naval Cooperation Task Force*, The Russian Federation project, Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic Foreign Ministry.

²³ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁴ See: “Putin zaiavil o zainteresovannosti Rossii v prisoedinenii Irana k silam obespechenii bezopasnosti na Kaspii,” available at [http://www.iran.ru/rus/print_news.php?news_id=34694&PHPSESSID=80ccca8e9f4a].

²⁵ See: “Ideia sozdaniia organizatsii po zashchite Kaspiiskogo moria,” available at [<http://www.politmonitor.ru/index3.php?&mess=1130316047>].

²⁶ “Putin zaiavil o zainteresovannosti Rossii v prisoedinenii Irana k silam obespechenii bezopasnosti na Kaspii.”

²⁷ See: “Azerbaijani Defense Minister: Azerbaijan Uses All Measures to Restore its Territorial Unity,” available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/english/577908.html>].

According to R. Ismailov, S. Ivanov's proposal on forming an interstate naval force in the Caspian confronted Azerbaijan with the need to choose between the strategic interests of the two powers—Russia and the United States.²⁸ It should be noted that, due to a balanced policy concept formulated by President Heydar Aliev, Azerbaijan is thus far resisting the pressure that is coming both from the north and from across the ocean.

Analysis of the Caspian Guard and CASFOR projects leads to the following conclusion: The two Caspian initiatives will not get along with each other very well. What is needed is a military pact between the five littoral states which could help sign a treaty on the territorial division of the Caspian.

Evidently, the Russian proposal was designed to push "outside" countries from the Caspian basin and give Moscow a free hand and greater leverage.

Addressing the 20th Session of the Special Working Group on the Status of the Caspian Sea, which took place on 14 March, 2006, S. Lavrov reiterated that Russia is opposed to the presence of third parties in the Caspian,²⁹ and that the RF will stand firm on its position. According to him, in the realm of military activity in the Caspian, the littoral states are to tackle two issues—demilitarization and a stable balance of military forces in the Caspian region. But in S. Lavrov's words, "demilitarization of the Caspian is out of synch with reality; this would mean disarming the Caspian states in the face of new threats."³⁰ At the same time, the RF foreign minister said that Russia is against "the military buildup in the Caspian Sea," proposing that development of military forces in the Caspian region should proceed within the bounds of reasonable sufficiency.³¹

In expanding on the corresponding provision of the Draft Convention, he pointed out that "the Caspian countries should respect one another's sovereignty, independence and integrity." The absence of external threats and military forces of third countries in the region is a guarantee that there will be no grounds for conflict there, S. Lavrov said. According to him, CASFOR is key to regional security, as well as to the implementation of this provision.³²

It is noteworthy that until now Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry officials have been reluctant to respond to questions related to CASFOR, while the Defense Ministry is refusing to discuss the topic completely. "Creation of CASFOR is a political matter, so all comments should be made by politicians," Defense Ministry officials say.

As soon as the issue of CASFOR came up, NATO started evading the question concerning the future of the Caspian Guard. This is evident from, among other things, comments by Robert Simmons, NATO Secretary General's special representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia: NATO does not intend to deploy its military bases in Kazakhstan or the Caspian countries...³³

According to H. Azadbakhsh, an Iranian expert, the non-viability of the CASFOR manifests itself in the lack of trust among the Caspian states even though in the course of meetings and negotiations they all speak about integration and cooperation. For example, Iran, even though it is Russia's strategic partner, nevertheless, regards its military buildup in the sea and in the entire region as a threat to its own position at the negotiations on the Caspian. IRI representatives believe that a strategic balance of forces in the Caspian region hinges on that the RF has a military base in the basin, whereas all other littoral countries do not. "Militarization of the Caspian is the greatest threat to peace in the Caspian

²⁸ R. Ismailov, "Mezhnatsional'noi voenno-kaspiiskoi gruppe byt' Baku obdumyvaet initsiativu Moskvu," available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1139219580>].

²⁹ See: S. Lavrov, "Rossia protiv prisutstviia voisk tret'ikh storon na Kaspii," available at [<http://vesti70.ru/news/full/?id=1125>].

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ See: Ibidem.

³² See: Ibidem.

³³ "NATO ne sobiraetsia razmeshchat" svoi voennye bazy na territorii Kazakhstana i v Kaspiiskom regione—spetspredstavitel' aliantsa," available at [http://www.interfax.kz/?lang=rus&act=print&int_id=10&news_id=585].

zone. Russia's haste will result in a situation in which such states as the U.S., which are looking for a good excuse, will establish their political and military influence in the region."³⁴

From H. Azadbakhsh's perspective, the Americans' involvement in developing security model for the Caspian is as unnatural as their military presence in the Persian Gulf, where they have created a model that excludes from the security process Iraq and Iran—i.e., two influential states in the region. The Americans have decided to use the same model in the Caspian. In this event, Russia and Iran will be excluded from the process."³⁵ In his view, the United States is striving to obstruct the use of the most economical route for energy shipments—i.e., via the Caspian Sea. Having beefed up its military presence in Georgia and Central Asia, the United States is now assisting Azerbaijan in strengthening its naval forces in the Caspian, and has declared its interest in creating a military base in Azerbaijan.³⁶

C o n c l u s i o n s

The logic of the Russian and Iranian sides is as follows: Having proclaimed, in the 1990s, the Caspian as a sphere of its vital interests, the United States has now invigorated its activity (including the attempts to play an independent role in post-Soviet conflicts).

According to M.A. Wahidi, a well regarded Iranian expert, the Americans are opposed to settling the legal status of the Caspian, arguing that this will do nothing to resolve issues involved in geological prospecting and production. Furthermore, some U.S. experts are proposing that the disputes on oil deposits be shifted from a legal to a political realm—that is to say, that they be settled within the framework of interstate relations in the Caspian region, since it will be difficult to reach a consensus on the legal status any time soon. M.A. Wahidi believes that the U.S. exerts intense pressure on the Caspian states both through economic and political leverage (lifting or introduction of sanctions, support for opposition, etc.) and through direct military threats.³⁷

From Iran's vantage point, the United States wants to expand its military presence in the Caspian region and to this end intends to deploy its military bases in the Caspian basin. Iranian experts believe that within the Caspian Guard, Washington assigns a special role to Azerbaijan, regarding it as a region advantageous both for deploying mobile rapid response forces and for resolving its foreign policy problems in the area (above all, in its relations with Iran). This international project includes the systems for monitoring the IRI's air and sea space. Implementation of the Caspian Guard program in the area will jeopardize, above all, Russia's and Iran's defense interests.³⁸ It seems that the RF and the IRI exaggerate somewhat the U.S.'s capabilities, indulging in wishful thinking. Azerbaijan, as well as Kazakhstan, categorically refuses to become involved in projects that do not quite coincide with its national interests or regional security concepts. These countries, therefore, strive to record their positions in treaties, international law, and not become a target of attack by the great powers and Iran.

The signing of a unified convention on the legal status of the Caspian, enshrining in international law all aspects of regulatory activity in the Caspian Sea is unlikely. There is little cause to expect that the countries will agree on key matters (the division of the water area and the sea bed, military activity, transit and the building of trans-Caspian pipelines). This is especially evident in connection

³⁴ See: H. Azadbakhsh, "Pri opredelenii statusa Kaspiiskogo moria razum i pragmatism dolzhny brat' verkh," p. 5, available at [<http://www.iran.ru/index.shtml?ch=1&lang=ru&view=story&id=3718>].

³⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ See: M.A. Wahidi, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-102.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-111, 120-122.

with the crisis over the IRI and the general stagnation of the negotiations. “Mothballing” the problem is beneficial to some parties, especially to Iran.

Any delay enables the IRI to weigh in on this international issue in the future with a greater political weight—perhaps as a nuclear power. Tehran will manage to review its positions in the future (Iran claims 20 percent of the sea bed, believing that the Caspian as a lake should be divided into five equal sectors). As of now, the uncoordinated convention on the status of the Caspian Sea does not in any way infringe on the IRI’s national interests. Should Iran accept the principle of a modified median line, it will control 14 percent of the shelf.

It has been proposed that negotiations on military activity in the Caspian be based on the principle of reasonable and stable balance of forces, which will enable Russia to maintain an overwhelming military advantage in the region. So at present the subject of demilitarization has been taken off the agenda. This is borne out by S. Lavrov’s statement: “No matter how attractive this term might sound, it hardly responds to present realities.” This formula does not at all mean that the principle of the non-presence of armed forces of third countries has been abandoned.

Addressing the 20th Session of the Special Working Group, S. Lavrov reiterated the Russian proposal that the forces and assets of the littoral states be coordinated through a single structure, CASFOR, which would ensure security in the Caspian region.

Russia’s CASFOR initiative is not at odds with external military aid but “closes the door” to third-party organizations. As S. Lavrov pointed out at the 20th Session, “we will lose a great deal if we open the doors to outside military presence in the Caspian. Experience shows that it is easy to invite foreign troops, but far more difficult to ensure their withdrawal later.”³⁹

In July 2005, a conference of representatives of the Caspian countries took place in the city of Astrakhan under the aegis of the RF Defense Ministry, at which Moscow presented its vision of tasks for the Cooperation Task Force and principles of its operation. In October 2005, a draft agreement was submitted to the sides’ consideration, but Russia’s CASFOR plan failed to receive support from the Caspian states.⁴⁰

As of now, the CASFOR project provides for the formation of a task force comprising the fleets of all Caspian countries. How realistic is it? Evidently, equal partnership between Russia’s Caspian Flotilla and other forces is thus far impossible. For all its ambitions as a regional power, Iran is still outside the bounds of close military cooperation, while the prospects of imminent sanctions do not make this possibility more real. Turkmenistan has effectively pulled out of the CIS and does not participate in military operations, maintaining neutrality. The Azerbaijani and Kazakh naval forces are in the process of evolution, nor do they set themselves the task of expanding their military operations in the Caspian. Should the U.S. Caspian Guard program materialize, they will be assigned patrol missions in their areas of responsibility, ensuring the security of the Aktau-Baku tanker route.

The goal of the Russian initiative (CASFOR) is to keep ships sailing under “extra-regional” flags out of the Caspian. CASFOR in its current interpretation is “an integrated military structure for countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as other threats and challenges” (i.e. poaching and smuggling). As a matter of fact, Russia considers the present as an opportune moment for urging the Caspian countries to “make up their minds.”

The prevalence of the Russian Navy in the Caspian Sea—if its presence there is maintained adequately—will remain a substantial factor in the region. But the potential of a Cooperation Task Force will depend on the desire of its participants to accept Russia’s military superiority as the principal component of the task force with all the ensuing consequences in command, control, and coordination of military activities.

³⁹ A. Karavaev, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ See: *Ibidem.*

This may be a substantial distinguishing feature that sets the Russian project apart from the American, which apparently provides for a modernization of national fleets as part of separate forces without placing them under general command. With a view to NATO cooperation, this plan looks highly attractive to Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan; at the same time, it does not make much sense to categorically reject the CASFOR initiative. So Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are balancing between the two projects.

UP FROM THE MONTREUX: SUBMARINES FOR GEORGIA, AND NATO'S FUTURE IN THE BLACK SEA

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

In October 2006, Russia's Black Sea fleet conducted live fire maneuvers off Georgia's Black Sea coast. According to Georgian officials, Russian ships were as close as 16 miles from the Georgia's coastline.¹ The live fire exer-

cise disrupted civilian shipping in the area, as the Russian military vessels blocked the Georgian ports Poti, Supsa, and Batumi. The Russian government intended this exercise as a hostile act, as they declined to inform the Georgian counterparts of the movements of their vessels, and deliberately

¹ See: V. Socor, "Tbilisi Claims Russian Navy Holding Exercises off Georgian Coast," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. III, Issue 194, 20 October, 2006, The Jamestown Foundation, available at [http://www.jamestown.org/publications_

[details.php?volume_id=414&issue_id=3895&article_id=2371563](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=414&issue_id=3895&article_id=2371563)].

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misinformed the public of the nature of the exercise. Defense Minister Ivanov labeled it part of Black Sea Harmony (BSH), a joint exercise with Turkey that is supposed to be conducted after advance planning. Ankara, however, rejected this claim, and expressed its surprise at such claims.²

The October live fire exercise followed the Tbilisi-Moscow spy row, and signaled sharp deterioration of Russo-Georgian relations. After imposing comprehensive economic embargo on Georgia, and organizing mass deportations of ethnic Georgians from Russia, the Kremlin sharply highlighted vulnerabilities in Georgia's defenses—its Black Sea coast has been virtually undefended from a potential sea invasion since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The small Georgian navy and coast guard cannot do much to deter such hostile acts let alone repel a full-scale invasion.

The Black Sea remains a sensitive area not only for the Russian Federation, and Georgia, but for the other riparian states as well. Russia would like to remain the only dominant naval power in the area as Moscow desperately tries to halt the

extension of NATO's naval Operation Active Endeavor (OAE) from the Mediterranean into the Black Sea. The Russians see the Black Sea as their sea, and would like to keep this perception alive. For that end the Kremlin has applied considerable pressure on both Georgia and Ukraine. For the latter it has been the question of Crimea, and the rights to the naval base in Sevastopol, which is due to expire in 2017.³ Abkhazia remains the sword of Damocles for the former.

Georgia should assert its sovereignty and independence by establishing a noticeable military presence in the Black Sea. It needs a deterrent for potential invasion and intimidation by a hostile power. With the Black Sea coast exposed, Georgian territorial waters poorly defended, and its exclusive economic zone poorly monitored, Tbilisi's chances of re-uniting the country and establishing itself as a viable political entity remain small. Even if the country's current problems could be solved, without a strong naval presence Georgia would remain very vulnerable for future encroachments on its sovereignty.

² See: V. Socor, "Tbilisi Claims Russian Navy Holding Exercises off Georgian Coast," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. III, Issue 194, 20 October, 2006, The Jamestown Foundation, available at [http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=414&issue_id=3895&article_id=2371563].

³ From its early days, the current Ukrainian administration indicated unwillingness to extend the current term beyond 2017 (see: A. Chernikov, O. Berezintseva, "Naval Retreat: Ukraine Intends to Get Rid of the Black Sea Fleet," *Kommersant* daily, 18 April, 2005, available at [http://www.kommersant.com/p570863/r_1/Naval_Retreat/]).

The Stakes for Georgia

For Georgia, submarines should be considered the primary option for protecting the country from a potential sea invasion, maintaining sovereignty in its territorial waters, monitoring its exclusive economic zone, and deterring intimidating acts by hostile powers. Of the types available, the diesel-electric, preferably with AIP (air independent propulsion), boat should be considered due not only to cost factors, but its suitability. The era of non-nuclear submarines is far from over.⁴ Many experts argue that diesel submarines run quieter, some say far quieter, than their nuclear powered counterparts due mainly to the fact that they do not have to run noisy coolant pumps for a nuclear reactor.⁵ Diesel-electric subs could also run for a long period on batteries—this makes them very difficult to detect.⁶ No comparison between the two need be argued here, for Georgia cannot possibly afford nuclear powered boats, nor are they suitable for her needs.

⁴ See: S. Zimmerman, *Submarine Technology for the 21st Century*, Trafford Publishing, 2006, p. 35.

⁵ See: N. Friedman, *Submarine Design and Development*, Naval Institute Press, 1984, p. 81.

⁶ *The Canadian Submarine Acquisition Project*, A Report of the Standing Committee on National Defense, Issue No. 41, The House of Commons, Ottawa, Canada, August 1988, p. 33.

Diesel submarines could be of immense practical use for Georgia. First, as it was noted above, Russia has been periodically violating Georgian waters in an effort to disrupt commerce, and intimidate Georgia's government. The Kremlin is unlikely to ever change this tactic unless it sees a credible deterrent. Relations between Moscow, and its neighbors and Western powers are likely to deteriorate in the near future as the Russian government tries to restore its imperial vision of and approaches to world politics. As tensions increase, whether multilateral on the world stage or bilateral between Tbilisi and Moscow, so would increase intimidation and blackmail in the Black Sea.

Second, the breakaway Abkhazia has acquired armed warships from Russia, and is claiming control over its "territorial waters." Abkhazia is a major piece in Russia's Black Sea region calculations, as it could serve a number of useful purposes. Small, but well armed and supplied Abkhaz armed forces could be used as a rogue deterrent against Georgia's ambitions to join NATO, and disrupt Tbilisi's efforts to disentangle itself from the web of Russian threat. The Abkhaz forces could also disrupt energy routes in the region not favored by Moscow. Further, Abkhazia could be used by Moscow to re-assert its control over Georgia as this renegade province remains *de jure* part of Georgia, and theoretically the country's re-unification could be initiated from both ends. Control of Georgia is crucial for Russia's new great power game, as Moscow sees energy as the key for its comeback on the world stage, and Georgia remains its chief rival in securing the access to energy resources of the Caucasus and Central Asia from the west.

Third, Georgia's Black Sea coast is virtually undefended from a sea invasion—currently this can be easily undertaken by Russia, and potentially even by Abkhazia. It is hard to imagine that the General Staff of the Russia's armed forces does not have a plan for a potential full-scale invasion of Georgia. Given its historical legacy (the Soviet army had offensive and defensive plans for almost every contingency), and current tense relations between Moscow and Tbilisi that are not likely to better anytime soon, this would be a very natural assumption. In such a plan, an invasion from the sea would figure as the most prominent option, as the sea side is undefended. Plus, the Russians have both training and military experience of sea invasion of Georgia. The Soviet navy, marines, and the army regularly practiced seaborne invasions in Georgia (and elsewhere).⁷ Russians have assailed Georgia's Black Sea coast in combat formations a number of times since the collapse of the U.S.S.R. The Russian Black Sea fleet and army supported the Abkhaz separatists during the 1992-1993 war, and have continued providing military assistance since the end of military conflict. Further, in 1993, combat-ready Russian forces landed in the Poti area to "help" the Georgian government, which was struggling with a pro-Gamsakhurdia uprising in western Georgia.

Georgia's land border with Russia is naturally protected by the Caucasus mountains. In fact, Georgia historically has not experienced a large-scale invasion from the north as hostile parties mostly came from southern and eastern directions. There are only a handful of passable roads that potential northern invaders could use, and even they could be easily blocked or destroyed. In a scenario of Tbilisi asserting its control over the Tskhinvali region, the only thing the Georgian army would have to do to cut Russia's military support routes with the local separatists is to block or disable the Roki Pass. All other roads linking the separatist Tskhinvali region with the Russian Federation will be impassable from late fall to early spring. However, Georgia would still be wide open to retaliation from the sea.

Because of the above, Georgia needs to restore its sovereignty over its territorial waters, deter potential aggression from Russia, and check military ambitions of the Abkhaz. It would be naïve to expect Moscow to just hand over control of Abkhazia to Tbilisi after extending so much effort and resources there. Georgia is the only alternative to Russia for South Caucasian and Central Asian en-

⁷ Back then Georgia was part of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet army used Georgian sea coast for practice purposes only. One of the authors of this article was part of such exercises in the 1980s.

ergy shipment routes and transportation corridors destined to Western markets. By eliminating this alternative, Moscow would make a major step toward re-establishing itself as a world power, and extending influence over its southern and western neighbors.

Georgia is a small country, and unfortunately, small countries often become victims of trade-offs among great powers. It would be foolish to expect that Western Europeans would physically protect Georgia from Russian encroachment or that their verbal protests would deter the Kremlin. Europeans hesitated even in their verbal condemnation of Russia's cyber attack on a NATO member Estonia in May 2007. Whether this is because of European military impotence, the lack of leadership, their increasing energy dependence on Russia or a combination of these and other factors, is beside the point. The bottom line is that Western Europeans would be more likely to settle for an expensive peace with Russia than a cheap war.

The United States remains the only viable ally in Georgia's efforts to avoid large-scale military conflict with Russia. However, U.S.'s support for Georgia should not be overestimated. It cannot be viewed in the same light, for instance, as Washington's unequivocal support for the State of Israel. The U.S. might walk out of Georgia in foreseeable future or use Georgia as an expensive trading stock with Russia. The United States has many problem issues worldwide, and it would be reasonable to expect that Washington will continue to look after its national interest first of all. Besides, the administrations change in Washington, and so do interests and priorities. Tbilisi should strive to establish such a balance in its relations with the United States so that Georgia is seen both as an expensive trading stock, and a difficult partner to abandon.⁸ Right now, Georgia is an expensive chip in great power game between Washington and Moscow, but it could be easily abandoned. Georgia could remedy this imbalance by acquiring a submarine fleet, and substantially increasing its value as an ally.

Why Submarines?

Navies are of paramount importance for maritime powers. Effective navies provide for active defenses, they influence foreign policy, enhance their prestige, and bolster diplomacy. Only in the latter area of foreign activity "Naval diplomacy in its various guises can reassure, strengthen, symbolize a growing relationship or commitment, establish rights and interests in near or distant regions, impress onlookers with the country's technical competence or diplomatic skill, restrain allies or adversaries, bolster the strength and confidence of allies and associates or third parties, encourage independent-mindedness of third parties, encourage or dissuade states in relation to particular policies, signal intentions or expectations, create uncertainty when necessary, neutralize the naval diplomacy of adversaries, complicate the problems and planning of adversaries and their associates, deter inimical actions, foreclose the options of competing states, reduce the confidence of selected targets, cause losses of faith in the associates of one's adversaries, discourage opponents, create a different politico-military environment and set of expectations, increase the level of profitable interaction with near or distant countries, gain access to new countries, maintain or improve the access with existing associates, and create a degree of dependency and so the possibility for manipulation."⁹

⁸ For comparison, Israel is both a high stakes chip and a difficult ally to abandon, if the U.S. were to consider trading it. Washington will not abandon Israel for not only ideological, but also for very pragmatic reasons—the Arabs, if they were to attack Israel left without U.S. support, would sustain so much damage from powerful Israeli armed forces that the U.S. would not gain anything from this potential trade. A full scale and long war in the Middle East would produce high costs and serious consequences for any U.S. Administration, both domestically and internationally. On the other hand, if Washington were to abandon Georgia, it could gain much from such a potential trade with Russia, and as Georgia would not be able to put up a substantial resistance to Russia, in such a scenario the costs of abandoning an ally will be minimal.

⁹ K. Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., New York, 1979, p. 47.

The power of the submarine in this equation cannot be overstated. A submarine is a true stealth platform, one is usually not aware of its presence until catastrophe has befallen them (provided the boat and crew are of reasonable quality). The stealth factor of the submarine acts as a strong deterrent, as one does not know where it may be at any given time, other than it is not at its berth. The submarine's primary weapon, the torpedo, is also fantastically effective, sinking an adversary more often than not. Whereas a ship may survive a missile or bomb attack (as did, for instance, the USS *Cole*), the recipient of a torpedo is rarely so fortunate. This is due to the fact that in water the explosive force is more effective than in air.¹⁰

According to Canadian Commodore Denis Rouleau, submarines are "a phenomenon tool for collecting intelligence."¹¹ Modern submarines are fitted with newest intelligence collecting capabilities that allow them to collect a variety of information about the surface vessels. A submarine can "sit" very quietly, and collect intelligence, complete with imagery, etc., without being detected by the opposition. For any surface vessel and/or fleet commanding officer "to know that there's a sub somewhere, but not to know where it is exactly, is the scariest thing out there."¹²

Geography also plays a key role for the submarine. Georgia is surrounded by a shield of mountains making an overland attack difficult to say the least. At present, the easiest and surest way into Georgia is by sea. However, had Georgia even a small fleet of submarines, such a venture would prove terribly costly for an invader—boats carry at a minimum 12 torpedoes each (most carry more, and some may carry missiles in addition to torpedoes). Any enemy considering invasion would be certain to reckon the submarine while performing a cost/benefit analysis. Most modern diesel-electric (and AIP) submarines have an endurance of weeks.¹³

Submarines could also deploy in an event of intimidating acts from a hostile government, such as a live fire exercise by their warships. Even two modern diesel-electric submarines could eliminate intimidation as a factor. Navy commanders would not normally knowingly expose their vessels to potential troubles, even if they are only needlessly subjected to intelligence gathering by a potential adversary. The live fire exercise the Russians held in October 2006 at the Georgian coast, would not have taken place had Georgians had a couple of submarines on duty.

Separatist claims over Abkhaz land and coastal areas are not likely to go away soon. The Sukhumi regime is being further armed by Russia with surface vessels, and used as an aggressive buffer against Georgia. A fleet of submarines will undermine separatist claims over Georgia's territorial waters and also will hugely diminish their coastal defenses. Subs could effectively block any further delivery of military equipment and munitions to the separatists by sea. The Russians would be less likely to get engaged in active military support of separatists groups in Georgia, if they know that there would be costly consequences for them and for the stability of the Black Sea region. In the end, the stable Black Sea is more advantageous for the Russians than the one mired in hostile relations among riparian powers.

As mentioned, the stealth feature makes the submarine a menace as one does not know where it may strike at any given time—if the conflict is prolonged, this will have a psychological effect upon the enemy, as he must constantly be on guard. Its offensive capabilities make it a platform to be truly feared. For years, smaller navies, such as those of Canada, and the Netherlands participating in navy war-games with the United States have repeatedly bestowed a thrashing upon American carrier groups, often slipping away unscathed. There are numerous instances of these successes since 1981, beginning with the NATO exercise Ocean Venture. During this exercise the U.S. NAVY was embarrassed by a pair of Canadian Oberon Class diesel submarines (1960s vintage). In this exercise the Canadian

¹⁰ See: N. Friedman, op. cit., p. 158.

¹¹ Commodore D. Rouleau, *Keynote Speech to the 23rd Annual Political Studies Students' Conference*, The University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 31 January, 2007.

¹² Interview with Commodore Rouleau, Winnipeg, MB, 31 January, 2007.

¹³ See: S. Zimmerman, op. cit., p. 3.

subs managed to elude the carrier screen, and each sub accounted for the “sinking” of an American aircraft carrier, one claimed the USS *America*, the other the USS *Forrestal*.¹⁴ Eight years later, in another NATO exercise, Northern Star, the USS *America* again was “sank,” this time by the Dutch submarine *Zwaardvis*. War games conducted in the 1990s continued this trend. In RIMPAC 1996, the Chilean sub Simpson “sunk” the American Carrier USS *Independence*. The 1999 exercise JTFEX/TMDI99 saw the Dutch submarine *Walrus* “sink” not only the USS *Theodore Roosevelt*, but the Command ship of the fleet, a cruiser, several destroyers and frigates as well as the escorting fast attack submarine, the improved Los Angeles Class USS *Boise*. The trend continued into the 21st century with the Australians and Chileans accounting for kills against nuclear powered attack submarines, aircraft carriers, and other surface vessels.¹⁵

Diesel-electric submarines proved themselves successful in the most recent real combat engagement between two navies. During the 1982 Falkland (Malvinas) war, after a British Royal Navy nuclear submarine sank the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano*, the British subs successfully confined Argentina’s remaining surface fleet to their territorial waters. However, the British Royal Navy, at that time the best in the world in the anti-submarine warfare, was unable to locate and destroy a single Argentine diesel powered submarine *San Luis* for more than two months.¹⁶

For Georgia’s current needs, of the available options available, the best option from available new subs would be an AIP powered submarine. These are, as the name suggests, submarines which may operate for prolonged periods without the need to surface for air. There are different types, but the best example thus far seems to be the German-built type 212a submarine, which uses hydrogen cells in addition to a diesel-electric drive. Incredibly quiet, these boats may travel or stay submerged for at least two weeks without having to surface. The type 214 is the export model of the 212a and should be worthy of consideration by Georgia—not only do the Germans build excellent submarines, but they would undoubtedly provide top quality training as well. Unit cost is estimated to be somewhere between 300-350 million dollars. The greatest asset of the German built 214 submarine, in comparing it with other AIP systems, is the fact that its hydrogen cells have no moving parts whatsoever, which means no noise to potentially give it away. Since it is not using a form of combustion to generate its energy it also does not have to vent any gasses into the surrounding sea water. Essentially, this type of fuel cell combines oxygen and hydrogen to produce heat, water, and electricity. In addition to these advantages, it is also a very efficient system. At the same time, its detractors make a very good point that storing hydrogen as a high pressure gas or liquid has its potential serious dangers;¹⁷ however, such concerns are likely to diminish with advances in relevant technologies.

Another option for Georgia would be the Swedish T-96 submarine, which uses a Stirling engine—runs on diesel oil and liquid oxygen—to charge its batteries under water. Unit cost for this sub is a rumored to be a somewhere around 100 million dollars.¹⁸ Though the Stirling system is termed an “engine,” it is important to note that unlike a conventional diesel drive, it does not produce noisy explosions during combustion.¹⁹ Undoubtedly a quality submarine, the T-96 may prove to be the best value of the various subs due to its low initial cost.

The French-Spanish built *Scorpene* class submarine also uses an AIP system, MESMA, in one of its two variants, the other is a conventional vessel. In this case a liquid oxygen-ethanol mix is used

¹⁴ See: R.G. Williscroft, “Is the Nuclear Submarine Really Invincible?” available at [http://www.sftt.org/cgi_bin/csNews/csNews.cgi?database=DefenseWatch%202004.db&command=viewone&op=t&id=331&rnd=954.9177124505652].

¹⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ See: *The Canadian Submarine Acquisition Project*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷ See: E.C. Whitman, “AIP Technology Creates a New Undersea Threat,” available at [http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/cno/n87/usw/issue_13/propulsion.htm].

¹⁸ See: D. Walsh, “The AIP Alternative: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?” available at [http://www.navyleague.org/seapower/aip_alternative.htm].

¹⁹ See: N. Friedman, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

to produce energy (heat), which in turn creates steam to power a turbo-electric generator which recharges the boat's batteries.²⁰ The MESMA system's main drawback is its lower efficiency relative to its competitors, especially that of the fuel cell. Unit cost is estimated to be somewhere around 500 million dollars. In addition to these subs, the Netherlands, a country which has traditionally built excellent submarines, is also working on developing an AIP submarine of its own.²¹

While a conventional submarine has several uses, its tremendous surveillance and intelligence gathering ability merely scratches the surface, above all it is a vital component which Georgia is lacking in regard to national security. Without a powerful deterrent at sea, Georgia remains very vulnerable. However, acquiring few submarines, especially for a small country like Georgia, is not a simple undertaking.

Montreux Controversies, and NATO in the Black Sea

Georgia may encounter a number of significant political and military obstacles if it decided to acquire submarines. Building subs, installing necessary equipment, training crew, building bases for them, etc. will take years. It will also be very costly undertaking for Georgia's budget, but we think that the cost should not be a prohibitive factor. Currently new submarine prices are high, especially of those with AIP technology, but further developments in this area, and proliferation of such submarines are likely to bring costs down.²² Not every potential problem related to submarine procurement could be envisioned and addressed properly, but some of them should be mentioned here.

It will not be easy for Western governments to sign a submarine deal with Georgia. The United States and the United Kingdom would be the most likely willing partners to sign such a deal, but they do not at this moment develop diesel-electric submarines or their more recent variations. The governments of most other countries mentioned above still find themselves challenged by the Putin phenomenon, and this confusion would likely last beyond the 2008 Russian presidential elections. A country like Germany, for instance, would find itself under immense pressure from Russia if it were to agree develop subs for Georgia, and train their crews. Germany alone would not be able to carry this project to its completion, as it is becoming increasingly dependent on Russia for its energy needs.

Moscow, no doubt, will be very willing to dub such an undertaking a hostile act, a new cold war or something along these lines. Even without energy dependency, most European governments would not want to see their country as the main cause for new arms race in Europe or even worse, an open confrontation with Russia. Even if Europeans cooperate with Georgia, Russia may not sit idly and wait for the delivery of submarines. It may attack Georgia before submarines are delivered or may instigate a coup in Tbilisi. One way or another, it is very likely that Moscow would actively oppose such a sub project.

Georgia cannot possibly surmount all the problems and obstacles that we have identified above only if we assume that things in Europe and Russia will stay as they are. However, things in international politics never stay static for a long time, and as current international developments indicate the Eurasian theater will become an arena of many changes.

²⁰ See: D. Walsh, op. cit.

²¹ For more on the newest efforts to improve non-nuclear submarines see Zimmerman's *Submarine Technology for the 21st Century*.

²² Zimmerman offers extensive discussion of the future of AIP and diesel-electric submarines in his *Submarine Technology for the 21st Century*.

European attitudes toward Russia may change dramatically as early as 2008. As next year's election approaches, the current Russian regime has clearly demonstrated its intention to stay in power, and to achieve this goal they will have to suppress opposition, revoke whatever is left in Russia of democratic rights, and rig transfer of power from Putin to his successor. They might even decide to transform the current imperial looking-government into a *de facto* imperial one—this may sound absurd, but currently very little in Russia stands between the current form of government and a full restoration of the Russian empire.

On the other hand, NATO will not stay idle as far as their activities around the Black Sea basin are concerned. A NATO naval task force has not yet sailed into the Black Sea, but according to one senior NATO military commander, one should expect something like that to happen in the near future.²³ The most obvious candidate for visiting the Black Sea is a Standing NATO Maritime Group (CSNMG) with the Operation Active Endeavor as its most logical cover. When this happens, it would be the first entry into the Black Sea by a non-Black Sea navy since 1936, when the Montreux Convention was signed regulating passage of vessels through the Turkish Straits (the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmora, and Bosphorus).²⁴

The 1936 Montreux Conference in Switzerland was attended by Turkey, Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Japan, Australia, France, and Yugoslavia. The Convention, which was subsequently ratified by almost all conference participants, regulates the movement of merchant and military vessels in and out of the Black Sea. The Turkish Straits are regarded as international waters, but Turkey has its military control. Although the articles of the convention regulating the passage of military vessels look outdated, the treaty is still in effect, and is being largely respected by both the signatories and non-signatories.²⁵ To address its outdated nature, it would suffice to mention that Ukraine and Georgia, the two riparian Black Sea states most in need of naval protection, did not exist as independent international entities in 1936. Besides, all navies concerned with the Montreux Convention have far outgrown the displacement limits set by the Convention.²⁶

As the United States looks more assertive in the region, the likelihood of Washington acting contrary to Montreux provisions is increasing. In December 2006, the influential Heritage Foundation called the U.S. Administration to re-draw its approach to the Black Sea region and come up with new policies.²⁷ This analysis is very critical of Russia's conduct toward its smaller neighbors, and calls the U.S. government to step up its support for Western leaning Georgia. The Heritage Foundation report is very skeptical of Russian-Turkish rapprochement, and criticizes their "anti-Western sentiments." The analysts point out recent occasions in which Russia and Turkey acted in concert to counter U.S. interests in the region.²⁸ Other studies published in the U.S. in 2006 voice similar sentiments. According to Hill and Taspinar, Russia and Turkey have found a common ground, and cooperated against Western interests in the region, because Russia and Turkey see American policies "to spread freedom and democracy around the world not as a bulwark against tyranny and extremism in places like Syria, Iraq, and Iran, but as an expansionist policy that will further damage their [Russian and Turkish] interests."²⁹

²³ Interview, 31 January, 2006.

²⁴ See: "Montreux Convention," *Naval Treaty Implementation Program*, available at [http://www.ntip.navy.mil/montreux_convention.shtml].

²⁵ For more comprehensive discussion of the Montreux Convention, and its evolution see an historical review by Professor John Daly, "Oil, Guns, and Empire: Russia, Turkey, Caspian "New Oil" and the Montreux Convention," available at [<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/usazerb/325.htm>].

²⁶ See: *ibidem*.

²⁷ See: A. Cohen, C. Irwin, "U.S. Strategy in the Black Sea Region," *Backgrounder* # 1990, The Heritage Foundation, available at [<http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/bg1990.cfm>].

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ F. Hill, O. Taspinar, "Turkey and Russia: Axis of the Excluded?" *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 1, Spring 2006, available at [http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/fhill/2006_survival.pdf].

In a policy review published by the Hoover Institution, Bruce Jackson points out the destructive nature of Russian conduct toward its smaller neighbors. He notes that one of the Russian political scientists close to the Kremlin, Gleb Pavlovsky, “had publicly suggested that it would be advisable for the Georgian people to simply assassinate their president, Mikheil Saakashvili, to avoid a Russian military attack. (Interestingly and perhaps tellingly, Pavlovsky recommended a single-bullet shot, a reminder of the Chekist assassinations in the South Caucasus in 1920-1921 as Bolshevik forces moved South.)”³⁰ Jackson further urges geopolitical revisions in the Black Sea region to remove the outdated and oppressive mechanisms that govern commercial and military relations in the region. Among other recommendations, he advises to “overturn the norms that have permitted an unstable and anachronistic militarization to persist into the twenty-first century, such as the 1936 Montreux Convention establishing Turkish military control over the Dardanelles.”³¹

The more criticism of Russian behavior in the Black Sea is voiced, and the more suspicion is born regarding anti-Western sentiments in Turkey and Ankara’s new partnership with Moscow, the more likely it would be for the Americans to sail against the Montreux Convention. It is impossible to predict what event may trigger such an act, but since lots of things are happening in and around the Black Sea, any significant change in policies by a Black Sea nation or its neighbor may convince Washington that a new course is worth charting. Something like Moscow’s declaration of new arms race in Europe in response to the planned U.S. anti-ballistic missile installations in Poland and Czech Republic may be the pivot for such a turn.³² Ankara’s recent aggressive approach to its Kurdish issue involving Iraq, and further military escalation of this problem may become a turning point as well. U.S. vessels need to stay longer than 21 days in the Black Sea to signal that the Montreux Convention is no longer respected. In August 2001, USS *La Salle* (decommissioned in 2005) stayed there for 17 days.³³ In 2005, the U.S. initiated talks with Rumania and Bulgaria on developing military bases in the Black Sea region. A November 2005 PINR report argued that Bulgaria, Romania and Georgia were “the three most attractive regional territories to redeploy U.S. forces;” however, it also noted that Georgia was more unstable than the other two.³⁴ Less stable or not, Tbilisi needs to be ready to accommodate U.S. interests, and enhance its own security.

U.S. interests in establishing military bases in the Black Sea have not progressed in 2007, as Washington subsequently decided to throw its support behind the Turkish-initiated Black Sea Harmony rather than extend NATO’s Operation Active Endeavor beyond the Mediterranean. Both Moscow and Ankara have vehemently opposed NATO’s extension into the Black Sea, and Washington yielded.³⁵ However, as noted above, Moscow has used BSH on at least one occasion in an abusive and dangerous manner against Georgia. The latter so far has been left outside the BSH, and even if Georgia joined this group, benefits Tbilisi may get out of it would be minimal. Despite Washington’s endorsement of BSH, its interest in the region has not diminished, and such an endorsement cannot be considered permanent, especially if the Russians continue to abuse the program for their aggressive needs.

³⁰ B.P. Jackson, “The ‘Soft War’ for Europe’s East: Russia and the West Square Off,” *Policy Review*, Hoover Institution, available at [<http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/3202956.html>].

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Before the June 2007 G8 summit in Germany, President Putin insisted that U.S. ABM policies in Europe would trigger a new arms race (see: “Deistvitel’no razvorachivaetsia gonka vooruzheniy: Vladimir Putin otvetil zhurnalistam i Zapadu,” *Vremia Novostei*, 5 June, 2007, available at [<http://www.vremya.ru/2007/96/5/179687.html>]).

³³ See: “6th Fleet Competes Black Sea Port Visits,” Office of the Special Assistant for Military Deployments, available at [http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/news/aug01/news_82901_001.shtml].

³⁴ See: “Intelligence Brief: U.S. Military Bases in the Black Sea Region,” PINR, 19 November, 2005, available at [http://www.pintr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=401&language_id=1].

³⁵ See: J. Dorschner, “Black Sea Security—Taking the Helm,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, 18 May, 2007, available at [http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/jdw/jdw070518_1_n.shtml].

If Tbilisi plays its hand right, Georgia may benefit from continuing geopolitical revisions around the Black Sea. It will need to make a strong case with Americans and Europeans that its survival as a sovereign nation will benefit them all. However, as a maritime nation it cannot survive without having adequate military presence at sea. They will be helped by desires of non-Black Sea powers, especially by the U.S., to open up the sea. This sentiment can be strengthened by increasingly belligerent behavior by Russia, both toward its smaller neighbors, and the West.

C o n c l u s i o n

In a recent interview to a Russian newspaper, Deputy Defense Minister of Georgia, Mr. Batu Kutelia noted that Georgia was already a *de facto* member of NATO.³⁶ Obviously, the Deputy Minister exaggerated somewhat, but developments in Georgia's defense policies since 2002, and its allied relations with the United States, and other NATO members, give Georgian officials confidence to declare that they are very close to joining NATO.

To continue and support this trend, Georgia needs active defenses to secure its Black Sea coastline, no matter how the Russian Federation may react to this idea. In the long run, Russia is not going away from the region, and Georgia will want to preserve its independence. Tbilisi will not be able to assert its sovereignty over Abkhazia without first securing its territorial waters and the coastline. Moscow is very unlikely to relinquish its unwarranted ambitions in the region, and they would only be deterred and eventually acquire some measure of respect toward their smaller neighbors if they have to deal with properly equipped and trained armed forces. Georgia's strive for survival will be helped by U.S. desire to increase its presence in the region. The 1936 Montreux Convention is not likely to last long as it against the spirit of more recent international treaties, and existing geopolitical realities.

³⁶ See: M. Vignanskiy, "Gruzia uzhe chlen NATO," *Vremia Novostei*, 5 June, 2007, p. 5.

REGIONAL POLITICS

**THE EU IN CENTRAL ASIA:
STRATEGY IN THE CONTEXT OF
EURASIAN GEOPOLITICS**

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The European Union is slowly but surely becoming an entity able to pursue a coordinated foreign policy. Every geopolitical actor needs a strategy that can be applied both to all other big actors (the U.S., Russia, and China) and to the regions affecting Europe's security and prosperity (Central Asia is one of them). The Central Asian region is unique in the fact that it is "impacted" between the EU's largest and most important neighbor (Russia) and an emerging

megapower (China).¹ This means that the EU's regional policy is strongly affected by its relations with both powers. Here I intend to assess the EU's political prospects in Central Asia in the context of the relations among the European Union, Russia, and China.

¹ The term was used by Victor Bulmer-Thomas, former Director of Chatham House in his valedictory lecture "Living with Two Megapowers: The World in 2020" delivered on 6 December, 2006.

**The EU "Neighbors of Neighbors" Policy
in the Making in Central Asia**

So far the EU does not have a more or less complete Central Asian policy. Despite the fact that the TACIS program, which has been underway since 1991, brought over 1 billion Euro to the local

countries in the form of financial aid, United Europe has just become aware of the region as a very specific part of the post-Soviet expanse and of its geopolitical challenges.

In the 1990s, Europe regarded Central Asia as the most backward and undeveloped part of the CIS, unprepared to embrace Western standards and values. It was generally perceived as a source of non-traditional threats to European security (narco-traffic, WMD proliferation, epidemics, and migration). As distinct from the United States, Europe was, on the whole, not very impressed by Central Asia's geostrategic location in Eurasia and preferred to concentrate on Russia and the "western" CIS republics.

In the wake of 9/11 and in connection with the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan, the region moved into the center of the international coalition's strategic plans. Later, in the context of EU expansion of 2004 and 2007 and Europe's revived fears about its energy security caused by the January 2006 gas conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the interest in Central Asia became even greater. Within the framework of the counterterrorist operation and with Russia's consent, NATO countries set up their military bases in Central Asia: the U.S. deployed its military at the Manas airfield in Kyrgyzstan and in Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan; Germans came to Termez in the south of Uzbekistan, while the French appeared on the Tajik-Afghan border.

The EU's enlargement made the Central Asian states (Kazakhstan in particular) "neighbors of neighbors" of the European Union. Central Asia, which borders on the Southern Caucasus across the Caspian, has become part of Europe's sphere of special interest. Part of the interest Europe is paying to those "western" CIS countries that are demonstrating their Euro-Atlantic orientation on an increasingly greater scale is reflected in the EU's interest in Central Asia.

The Russia-Ukraine gas conflict caused a lot of concern in Europe. It does not like the current political trends in the Russian Federation, which is gradually moving away from democracy and becoming a more nationalist-minded country indulging in Great Power sentiments. If these trends develop, Russia might use the energy resources (gas in particular) it delivers to Europe as a political lever. Today, half of the imported gas comes to Europe from Russia; in future Europe's increased demand for fuel might make it even more dependent on potentially unreliable Moscow. The danger is too grave to be ignored: fuel sources should be diversified. Brussels looks at Central Asia as one such source.

These factors compelled the European elite to wake up to the need to arrive at a reasonable Central Asian strategy.

Today, the European leaders are busy revising their relations with Central Asia and the general situation there; they are assessing the prospects for cooperation with other actors (states), as well as the prospects for the EU's Central Asian policy.

Hedi Wegener, Chairperson of the German-Central Asian Group in the Bundestag, has described Europe's policy in Central Asia in the last 15 years as "rather aimless, unplanned and uncoordinated" and demonstrated cautious optimism by saying: "Europe's patchwork of relations with the Central Asian states" will transform into "a more strategic one that could help to stabilize this volatile region."²

The following documents provide a general idea of Europe's Central Asian policy:

European Community Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013 (Strategy 2007-2013 for short) elaborated under the guidance of Germany during its EU chairmanship and adopted in 2007, and a Joint Discussion Paper on the Strategy for Central Asia (Project) adopted in January 2007.³

² H. Wegener, "Central Asia: At Last Europe May Be Getting its Act Together," *Europe's World*, No. 5, Spring 2007, p. 16.

³ See: *European Community Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013*, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/ceeca/c_asia/index.htm], 14 May, 2007; Joint EUSR-General Secretariat. *Joint Discussion Paper on the Strategy for Central Asia (Project)*, available at [<http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=17234>], 28 April, 2007.

Strategy 2007-2013 demonstrates a broad approach to security, which means that it stresses that security and development are tied together. The EU intends “to promote the stability and security of the countries of Central Asia, to assist in their pursuit of sustainable economic development and poverty reduction and to facilitate closer regional cooperation both within Central Asia and between Central Asia and the EU.” To achieve this money will go to three priority spheres:

- (1) Central Asian regional cooperation and good neighborly relations (networks; environment; border and migration management, the fight against international crime, and customs; education, scientific and people-to-people activities);
- (2) reduction of poverty and increase in living standards;
- (3) promotion of good governance and economic reform.

This approach to the security and development issues is in line with Europe’s general security strategy of December 2003, which treated “a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union”⁴ as a priority. Europe has obviously shifted the emphasis from the military-political to non-traditional security aspects achieved through good governance.

This approach does not presuppose the direct confrontation and animosity typical of the traditional approaches to security that divided countries into friends and foes. It does presuppose, however, rivalry which brings to mind the Cold War ideological rivalry. Values, organizational principles, and standards cause dissent and contradictions in international relations.

The relations between the European Union and the Soviet successor states, including the Central Asian republics, are a vivid illustration of this. The Europeans insist on political and economic reforms Western-style, while the Central Asian countries and Russia insist on their “special ways” and on the temporary nature of their present lagging behind (the long road Europe covered before it reached its present development level is one of the favorite arguments).

Little by little the ideological confrontation is spreading to all other fields to degenerate into familiar geopolitical rivalry over the spheres of influence and interest. In the case of Central Asia, these are the military bases deployed to support the campaign in Afghanistan and the energy issue. While rejecting the idea of the “new dividing lines in Europe,” the EU is aware of the grim reality of the revived bitter geopolitical competition between Russia and the West.

While Strategy 2007-2013 mentions in passing Europe’s increasing dependence on imported energy fuels and the important role the oil- and gas-rich Central Asian countries may play in reducing this dependence, the document dated January 2007 pays much more attention to the need to create energy corridors between Central Asia and Europe via the Caucasus. It points to the “strong ambitions of Russia and China,” two “strategic heavyweights” interfering with the EU’s plans to tie the region’s resources and transportation potential together. It says, in particular, that “the economic presence of Russia and of key Asian partners of Central Asian states, concentrated on very targeted sectors and areas, has installed a competitive context in which the EU is not a major player, in spite of its substantial involvement.”

By “very targeted sectors and areas,” the document means the energy sector, while the RF and China are seen as the key rivals in the region’s energy sphere. Russia’s recent self-confidence is based mainly on the high oil and gas prices, which means its status depends on its ability to export its energy fuels to the world market. Very soon, however, inadequate funding of prospecting and extraction will make the extracted amounts insufficient for this purpose.⁵ Central Asian resources may help remedy

⁴ *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy, December 2003*, available at [<http://www.iss-eu.org/solana/solanae.pdf>], 23 March, 2007.

⁵ See: V. Milov, “Russian Energy Policy: Challenges and Implications,” Roundtable discussion meeting, Chatham House, 20 September, 2006, available at [<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/viewdocument.php?documentid=7916>], 15 April, 2007.

the situation, which explains why in recent years the RF has been actively working in Central Asia and has been concentrating on acquiring the maximum possible oil and gas obligations from the local countries. Russia is also actively opposing all alternative transportation projects designed to deprive it of influence in the Central Asian raw material sphere.

Russia is stubbornly opposing the trans-Caspian gas pipeline through which gas from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan would reach the European markets, something that the EU badly needs. The May 2007 agreement between Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan on a gas pipeline along the Caspian shores seems to have buried the trans-Caspian project. There is the opinion, however, that the rumors of its death were premature.⁶ The Central Asian governments will postpone the final decision as long as they can and will use the alternative routes for bargaining. All the pros and cons will be carefully weighed. The outcome is still not quite clear. Russia's position is strong, but its "gas victory" is not final.

Another country with a strong interest in Central Asia's energy fuels is China, which is consistently augmenting its presence in the local energy sectors. An oil pipeline has recently been built between Kazakhstan and Western China (Atasu-Alashankou). There is an agreement between China and Turkmenistan on a gas pipeline that is expected to move considerable volumes of Turkmenian gas to China in the next 30 years, starting in 2009. The Chinese National Oil Company has several oil and gas contracts with Uzbekistan.⁷

China, Russia, and the West are competing for the Central Asian energy resources. It should be pointed out that if Russia succeeds in implementing its alternative, Central Asian oil and gas will finally reach Europe; if China gets the upper hand, Europe and Russia will be left out in the cold. This explains their keen interest in the construction projects in the East.

The European Union is busy adjusting its policy to reality, which can be described as uncompromising rivalry. While in the past the EU preferred not to be viewed as another influence-seeking force and left this role to the United States, Russia, and China, today Brussels is obviously concerned about its inability to compete with the other actors, Russia and China in particular.

For several reasons the EU has been unable to develop an adequate Central Asian strategy: first, it is not an easy task for a supra-national political project to arrive at a united foreign policy; second, there is no clarity about the future of its relations with Russia (until recently the region's key partner); third, and a more recent factor, the absence of clarity in the EU's relations with China.

European politicians and foreign policy experts are becoming increasingly aware that the European Union needs a Chinese strategy: the People's Republic of China is building up its economic weight and political influence while Central Asia serves as a connecting link between Europe and China.

The EU-Russia: Times of Troubles

The relations between the European Union and Russia are far from simple: the Russian Federation has essentially stopped mentioning its "European choice" in its official statements.

In fact, Moscow is hurling scathing criticism at new EU members, the Euro-Atlantic organizations (OSCE and NATO), and the West's double standards. The latest EU-RF summit in Samara stirred

⁶ See: I. Rubanov, "Ne po pravu sily," *Ekspert*, No. 19, 2007.

⁷ See: Xuanli Liao, "Central Asia and China's Energy Security," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2006, pp. 65-67.

up no hopes and was all but short of a flop. Typically enough, shortly before the summit the EU Institute for Security Studies deemed it necessary to discuss the subject of Russia being one of the EU's most difficult partners.⁸

In recent years the RF has gained a lot of confidence and moved away from the West for reasons about which there is no agreement in the expert community: some people blame the West, which abetted Russia's authoritarian trends and was reluctant to integrate it; others insist that the Russian elite itself was not ready to integrate into the West and indulged in the still live imperial sentiments of a former superpower seeking very special treatment.

Dmitry Trenin put this in a nutshell by saying that the Russian Federation is busy creating a "solar system of its own" separated from the Euroatlantic one in which it was no closer and no more important than Pluto.⁹ Since Russia treats the post-Soviet republics, with the exception of the Baltic states, as part of this system, it feels deprived of its old status, due to the fact that these republics are involved in the European neighborhood policy, that is, moving closer to integration into Europe.

In the process of enlargement, the European Union is doing its best to make it less painful for Russia to avoid the "new dividing lines" in Europe, but it does not hesitate in the face of Moscow's negative responses. Brussels is determined to involve Russia in mutually advantageous cooperation within the "neighborhood" post-Soviet expanse. The Russian Federation Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013, for example, describes "fostering the political and economic stability of the Federation and cooperation in various fields in order to combat 'soft' security threats, ...stepping up cooperation with Russia in the Southern Caucasus and Western NIS"¹⁰ as one of the EU's main interests.

The same paper describes Central Asia as a Russia-dominated region. It also points to the fact that not all of the Russian-Kazakhstani border has been delimited and that border control along the entire stretch is inadequate. As long as the Russian Central Asian border remains porous and open to threats from the south, the EU will never go very far toward easing the visa regime, something on which Moscow insists.¹¹

Russia's EU policy is of a defensive nature. The Survey of the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy issued by the RF Foreign Ministry in March 2007 says nothing about Russia's cooperation with the European Union in the CIS countries. Instead, it contains indirect criticism of Brussels, which is trying "to influence the processes within the CIS," "restructure the European periphery according to alien patterns," put "pressure on the states that are not NATO and EU members to change their political vectors up to and including regime changes."¹²

The authors assert that "there are reasons to believe that Moscow's 'European choice' is shared by the societies and political elites of the other CIS countries" and that "personal example is the best method of paving the road to this goal."¹³ One wonders why Moscow does not rejoice at the post-Soviet republics' "European choice" made outside the CIS.

"Indirect" logic is another outstanding feature of strategy, or rather absence of strategy, in Russia-EU relations. According to two prominent British researchers, "both sides lack an overall strategic vision of the relationship and this deficiency is not remedied by their tendency to adopt grand programmatic schemes."¹⁴ When discussing the subject "Russia as the EU's difficult partner," members

⁸ See: EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 23 April, 2007, available at [<http://www.iss-eu.org/activ/content/rep07-04.pdf>], 10 May, 2007.

⁹ See: D. Trenin, "Russia Leaves the West," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2006.

¹⁰ *Russian Federation Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013*, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/russia/csp/index.htm], 28 April, 2007.

¹¹ See: *Ibidem*.

¹² MID RF. "Obzor vneshney politiki Rossiiskoy Federatsii," 27 March, 2007, available at [http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3647DA97748A106BC32572AB002AC4DD], 5 April, 2007.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ M. Light, R. Allison, "The Place of Europe in Russian Foreign Policy," *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, Chatham House Papers, Blackwell Publishing, London, 2006, p. 16.

of the workgroup likewise concluded that the RF leaders have no clear idea about their country's choice, which negatively affects its relations with Europe.

Having announced its "European choice," Russia refused to go further; those who support its speedy integration with the West have found themselves on the political roadside inside the country; EU membership, either full or associated, has been removed from Russia's agenda. In his article published on the eve of the EU's 50th anniversary, President Putin confirmed this by saying that in the near future his country had no plans to join the European Union or to become associated with it.¹⁵

Prominent Russian political scientist Sergey Karaganov partly blames Europe for the present state of its relations with Russia: "Today the temporarily weakened European Union, in which the 'new Europeans' (which the EU has not yet entirely integrated) play a great role, is dominated by frantic rivalry." In his opinion, the wait-and-see policy is the best one in this situation. After a while, he argues, Russian society will grow tired of "stability," and the possibility of reforms and a new development vector will appear.¹⁶

While Russian politicians and political analysts remain relatively composed, their European colleagues look disappointed and even concerned. They are trying to understand how they should treat this new confident Russia no longer wishing to integrate with the West; how to respond to the West's growing dependence on Russian gas, and how to combine inevitable cooperation with inevitable rivalry. The EU's Central Asian policy will depend on the answers to these questions.

The EU-China: "A Latter-Day Asian Empire at the Gates of the West"

While RF-EU relations and their subject range have become habitual and ramified, there is still no expertise or forecasting regarding China, another Eurasian giant. The EU Institute for Security Studies has undertaken an analysis of Europe's Chinese policies and published the results in the form of a book called *Facing China's Rise: Guidelines for a EU Strategy*.¹⁷

François Godement, one of the contributors, has pointed out that China is obviously moving ahead. This is "an international trade giant with ever-increasing military spending and hyperactive regional diplomacy both in Asia and throughout the developing world," says he, and goes on to point out that another bout of China's hegemony in Asia cannot be excluded and that there will be "a latter-day Asian empire at the gates of the West."¹⁸

The United States has been concerned about the "Chinese factor" for a long time now, while Europe has just begun pondering on how China's rise might affect its position and the global world order. Here are the main baffling questions: How will the relations between America, Europe's traditional and main ally, and progressing China, which will be determined to squeeze the U.S. from Asia, develop in future? How will this geopolitical shift affect the security of Asia, in which Europe has

¹⁵ See: V. Putin, "Polveka evropeyskoy integratsii i Rossia" (the article appeared in several European newspapers), 25 March, 2007, available at [<http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2007/03/120754.shtml>], 27 April, 2007.

¹⁶ S. Karaganov, "Kak Rossii popast v Evropu," *Novaia gazeta*, 6-13 April, 2007.

¹⁷ See: *Facing China's Rise: Guidelines for a EU Strategy*, ed. by M. Zaborowski, in: *Chaillot Paper*, December 2006, No. 94 (EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris).

¹⁸ F. Godement, "Neither Hegemon Nor Soft Power: China's Rise at the Gates of the West," *Facing China's Rise: Guidelines for a EU Strategy*, p. 51.

vast economic interest? What can Europe do in the context of the mounting geopolitical rivalry in Asia, especially between China and Japan?

So far the European countries have been demonstrating caution when dealing with China, designed to make it a “responsible participant” in international relations. Europe is China’s largest trade partner and an investment source; the sides are engaged in a dialog on a variety of issues in the bilateral and multilateral formats (the Asia-Europe Meeting, or ASEM is one of the examples). In 2003, it was announced that the EU and the PRC were strategic partners.

So far this strategy has not received concrete content and was even differently interpreted by the sides: Beijing expected that Brussels would lift the embargo on selling weapons to China, while the EU did not do this, even though such a possibility was discussed. An embargo was introduced in 1998 after the Tiananmen events; its lifting is contingent on the human rights issue in China. Before lifting it, the EU expects Beijing to ratify the U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and release those who were imprisoned in 1998.¹⁹

As could be expected the U.S. and Japan were dead set against lifting the embargo. Brussels, on the other hand, feels responsible for Asian security and the EU’s role in it. Since China has been purposefully increasing its military budget (over 10 percent during the last 17 years), and since there is a smoldering conflict between continental China and Taiwan, which might develop into a war between China and America, the EU preferred to preserve the embargo to the great disappointment of its new “strategic partner.” The transparency of China’s military spending is another, newly formulated condition under which Brussels would be prepared to lift the embargo. In addition, China cannot rejoice at the newly established EU-U.S. and EU-Japan dialogs on security in Eastern Asia.

The current Asian context is not the Europeans’ only headache—they are very concerned about China’s mounting influence the world over and the way it is affecting politics in the developing countries, especially in Africa. As distinct from the West, China’s financial, technical, and military aid has no strings attached in the form of human rights conditions. This has helped China to draw the leaders of not particularly democratic states rich in natural resources to its side. This policy is known as the “Beijing consensus,” as opposed to the “Washington consensus.”

Central Asia is another arena of rivalry from which China is more or less successfully driving away the West, which is brandishing its values and principles there. At the June 2004 SCO summit, Beijing offered the SCO members soft loans totaling \$900 million.²⁰ The EU is obviously involved in a hard battle over Central Asian resources. On the one hand, it is endangering its position by insisting on the human rights issue, on the other, it cannot drop it lest it loses its identity.

Central Asia in the Eurasian Strategic Triangle (the EU-Russia-China)

The three centers of power are working toward changing the international balance of forces. The RF and China can be described as classical examples of states dissatisfied with their place in the current world order: Russia is seeking the global power status it lost along with the Soviet Union and its former sphere of influence in the post-Soviet expanse. China, after a “century of humilia-

¹⁹ See: A. Berkofsky, “The EU-China Strategic Partnership: Rhetoric versus Reality,” *Facing China’s Rise: Guidelines for a EU Strategy*, p. 105.

²⁰ See: V. Panfilova, “Uzbekistan zarabotal na sammite SCO pochti 4 milliarda dollarov,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 30 June, 2004.

tion,” which lasted from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, wants to restore its traditional hegemony over Asia. Both countries favor multipolarity to trim the current status of the United States as the only superpower.

The European Union belongs to another category of revisionist states: its enlargement is not aimed at prestige or restored status: security is its only aim. It is out to create a “belt of stable and prospering states” on its borders by drawing their political and economic systems closer to the European patterns and standards. The EU looks fairly attractive as a successful political project and economic giant. This is its main weapon.

Russia regards Central Asia as part of the sphere of its vital interests. This is a traditional approach: in the past, the region was consecutively part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. China regards the Central Asian republics as its strategic rear to be kept under control for the sake of security of its western provinces. The European Union regards the region and its republics as “neighbors of neighbors.” It deems it necessary to build up its influence there for the sake of Europe’s security. The three actors are obviously after the region’s rich natural resources.

Early in the 1990s, Zbigniew Brzezinski described Central Asia as a “power vacuum” in which none of the powers could claim hegemony.²¹ Russia, China, and the United States (the latter with ebbs and flows) are trying to fill in the vacuum. The European Union is becoming involved in the game. Since the U.S. is geographically removed from the region its interests there will not necessarily be long-term, they might vary. The Eurasian actors (Russian, China, and the EU) will be drawn into regional rivalry on a grand scale.

The future of the local republics depends on how the relations between the three actors unfold. There are three preliminary alternatives. Under the first of them, Russia will move even further away from the European Union and will draw closer to China to set up an anti-Western front in the multipolar system. China will acquire more weight, which Russia will find hard to balance out. Working together they will be able to minimize Central Asia’s integration with the West, thus causing irreparable damage to the region’s political future.

Under the second alternative, Russia will preserve the status quo and will remain an autonomous force waging its own game and keeping away from the EU and China. Russia will avoid showing preferences in its competition with both rivals. The local countries will use the situation to insist on favorable conditions and, in this way, will undermine their long-term prospects. Day-by-day policy deprived of long-term planning is not the best of options. Russia will do its best to integrate the Central Asian republics—the project, though, does not look promising.

Under the third alternative, Russia will resume its integration with the West; there is any number of politicians and political scientists in the West and in Russia who are looking forward to this. China’s growing might is seen as one of the reasons for Russia’s resumed integration with the West. In one his interviews, René van der Linden, President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, pointed out with a lot of chagrin that Russia and the EU are moving apart, even though they have many interests in common, China’s growing might be one of the reasons.²²

Roy Allison believes that Russia and the EU should coordinate their Asian policy. In fact, this may become the central link in their relations: “Russia’s uneasiness about the proximity of China as a rising power from a geopolitical point of view could be reduced through deeper structural cooperation with the EU.”²³

Those politicians and political experts in Russia who support the “European choice” for their country agree with the above. They are convinced that the West will also profit from its integration

²¹ See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Great Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. 124.

²² See: “Evropeyskiy dom bez truby,” *Novaia gazeta*, 26 January-2 February, 2007.

²³ R. Allison, “Russian Security Engagement with the European Union,” *Putin’s Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, p. 80.

with Russia. Sergey Karaganov, for example, speaks of a super-alliance strategically advantageous for the EU because of Russia's vast territory, armed forces, and resource potential.

If Russia resumes its Western trend, Central Asia's future will be vague: will Moscow move further from the problem region (this already happened in the early 1990s)? It is thought that a visa-free regime between Russia and the EU will call for tighter control on Russia's southern borders.²⁴ Will Russia try, with Europe's help, to bring more order to Central Asia? So far those in Russia who support the European choice for their country prefer to ignore the issue.

Prospects for EU Policy in Central Asia

Judging by the key documents, the EU has decided to build up its influence in Central Asia and join in the rivalry with Russia and China, two other big actors. It has enough resources to do this. First, the European political and economic models and values are tempting. The Central Asian population has already learned to look at Europe as a vehicle of modern civilizational values: the political opposition and the civil sectors appeal to them, while the ruling elite cannot continue ignoring them either. Second, the EU is a strong economic power close enough to the region to profit from this. It is the main source of investments and technical innovations. Third, the EU, together with the United States, is setting up an alternative to Russia's and China's domination in the region. The local political elites are fully aware of this.

The European Union has its weak sides, too: first, a coordinated foreign policy is hard to achieve in a multinational alliance; second, so far its knowledge about the region is inadequate (experts in Central Asia are few and far between in Europe); third, the distance between the EU and Central Asia is comparatively large, which is not a weakness, rather a factor that diminishes Europe's interest in Central Asia (drawing closer will obviously require much effort).

Potential EU membership is the strongest weapon the EU uses to enlarge its spheres of influence. This helped transform the Central and East European states and accelerated reforms in Turkey. In the case of Central Asia, EU membership is not a prospect, but closer involvement in the Neighborhood Program could stimulate the local countries' pro-European orientation. If Central Asia remains outside the transport corridors that start in the Southern Caucasus, Europe's energy security will be impaired.

If Europe abandons Central Asia to Russia and China, the region may develop, in the long term, into a source of threats, since neither Moscow nor Beijing will be able to cope with its problems. Central Asia is a conflict prone area, which means that the EU should be prepared for unfavorable situations and arm itself with preventive measures.

So far I have regarded Central Asia as a single whole and a target of the EU's Central Asian strategy. However, this approach explains only a part of the problem. Successful policy depends on profound knowledge of the specific features of each of the countries.

Despite all sorts of integration projects and alliances, the Central Asian countries are becoming increasingly distinct from each other; they are drifting apart as far as their politics and economy are concerned. Kazakhstan has traveled farther than its Central Asian neighbors along the road of market reforms and has attracted considerable foreign investments. Thanks to the high oil prices, its GDP is higher than the total GDP of all the other Central Asian countries put together. The political systems of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan can all be described as authoritarian with

²⁴ See: M. Light, "Russian Political Engagement with the European Union," *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, p. 59.

considerable distinctions. Kazakhstan's relatively liberal authoritarian regime looks better against the background of the highly authoritative system of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and the "barely defrosted" totalitarian system of Turkmenistan. The Tulip Revolution that removed Askar Akaev left Kyrgyzstan in a state of perpetual crisis with no end in sight.

The European Union cannot accept cooperation with authoritarian regimes: this prospect is neither attractive nor acceptable. European politicians are facing and will face all kinds of dilemmas—they will either have to defend human rights and undermine their economic and other interests or ignore human rights violations and impair their reputation. The absolutely correct thesis about the highly effective policy of involvement and low effectiveness of sanctions cannot be applied to each specific situation.

From the geopolitical viewpoint, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are weak states. This explains their enthusiasm over Russia's patronage. Judging by the latest events, Turkmenistan is moving in the same direction. Kazakhstan, the key Russian integration ally and partner, will continue balancing its interests for some time thanks to its greater political weight. While maintaining contact with each of the republics, the EU should concentrate on Kazakhstan as a country ready for all-round cooperation and free in its actions, even though the degree of its readiness and freedom is fairly low.

While pursuing its Central Asian policy, the EU should concentrate on its relations with Russia. Today it prefers to cooperate with Russia across the post-Soviet expanse, but it is becoming increasingly harder to stick to it in the context of the mounting geopolitical rivalry. Russia-EU partnership in Central Asia is the most favorable for the region. If the European countries manage to convince Moscow that cooperation in Central Asia will serve the interests of both sides, the region will have a chance to stabilize the situation and start developing.

The Eurasian expanse is a field on which the EU can operate; it is also a source of threats and possibilities. The EU's future as a geopolitical actor depends on whether the EU will manage to elaborate and implement an effective strategy in relation to the other Eurasian giants—Russia and China—as well as Central Asia.

IRAN'S CULTURAL FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA AND THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS SINCE 1991

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Although many foreign policy strategists put Iran's cultural policy on the forefront of its foreign policy agenda, in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus the Islamic Republic's emphasis on culture is diminished when compared with its security and economic foreign

policies.¹ Iran's foreign policy today is shaped more by pragmatism and *realpolitik* than it is by revolutionary Islam and a desire to export the revolution. Tehran's reasons for pursuing a foreign policy that relies more on pragmatism than ideology are many.

The Islamic Republic's current foreign policy objectives were molded significantly by its experiences with incorporating religious ideology into its foreign policy soon after the Islamic Revolution. A strong and coherent culturally-emphasized foreign policy based on Revolutionary Islam as a prime motivator for geopolitical decision making was emphasized by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The influence of the Islamic Revolution in Iran clearly had a profound impact on Iran's foreign policy objectives. As such, in its early days the Islamic Republic of Iran attempted to spread the Islamic Revolution beyond its borders into the Muslim countries of the Persian Gulf.² However, the Islamic Revolution was not accepted by Iran's Persian Gulf neighbors, who instead felt an existential threat on their security made by Tehran's brand of Islam. This threat was part of Saddam Hussein's reasoning for attacking the Islamic Republic in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988. The war had a significant impact on Iran's domestic capabilities to provide both a sense of security as well as economic stability for its citizens. The impact of the conflict shifted Iranian thinking away from Islamic ideology and toward a foreign policy that focused on *realpolitik* and pragmatism. As Iran was isolated geopolitically and devoid of any influence outside the circles that supported Revolutionary Islam, the Islamic Republic was forced to reorient its foreign policy to meet its security and economic needs. Thus, when the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, a cultural foreign policy was not at the top of Iran's agenda in the new former Soviet south.

Nor was the environment ripe for an export of the Islamic Revolution in the former Soviet republics. Islam had developed quite differently under the tutelage of the Soviet Union than it had

developed in Iran. Soviet leaders emphasized nationalism and an overarching Soviet culture that naturally included use of the Russian language and state-sponsored atheism. Religion was not dismantled totally by the Soviets in the Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, but it remained in place largely as a tool of nationalism rather than as a means of expression of piety.

The cultural impact of the Soviet Union on these countries was not limited to Islam, and the need for cultural influence came soon after independence. For the countries of Central Asia nationalism was only wrought under the watchful eye of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow, while it flourished in Georgia and Armenia centuries prior to Soviet occupation. It was the Central Asian countries, therefore, that subscribed the most to the Soviet-influenced nationalism; independence brought the overarching Soviet nationalism in these countries to an end, and opened the door to allow for cultural influence from countries like Iran.

Iran's lack of use of revolutionary Islam as a cultural policy in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus thus stems from these two historical precedents: the lack of success in exporting the Islamic Revolution to Persian Gulf countries, and the legacy of the development of Islam under the Soviet Union. Iran's non-pursuit of the export of the Revolution is *realpolitik* at its finest. Tehran now views promotion of revolutionary Islam outside its borders as potentially destabilizing for the Islamic Republic in terms of both security and economy. Furthermore, the former Soviet republics are wary of Revolutionary Islam due to the nature of the development of Islam under the Soviet Union. In addition, Iran must check its own foreign policy desires in the context of Russia's foreign policy needs. Iran's restraint in exporting the Islamic Revolution is best characterized in the example of Tajikistan, where the political atmosphere was the most likely to accept an export of radical Islam. Iran could have supported the Islamist Coalition that was in power in Tajikistan, but instead chose to support the Russian-backed ex-communists.

Tehran's tools for cultural foreign policy are not limited to revolutionary Islam and ideology,

¹ See: D. Byman *et al.*, *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era*, RAND, Santa Monica, CA, 2001, p. 7.

² See: *Ibid.*, p. 8.

but rather incorporate language, ethnicity, and moderate religious advances. These tools are all used in Iran's attempts to spread its influence through the concept of regionalism. Rather than support the U.S.-dominated unipolar world, Iran

has sought a multipolar world with itself as a point of power. Its use of cultural influence in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, therefore, is to open the doors for potential regional cooperation and to spread its geopolitical authority.

The Failures of the Islamic Revolution

One of the most interesting aspects of the Islamic Revolution in Iran is that it developed not only as a political movement, nor solely as a cultural one. The Islamic Revolution existed as a response to political concerns of the Shah's dictatorship, as well as a signaling of the desire to return to a less corrupt government based on religious principles as well as social issues. Interestingly, the revolutionaries in Iran saw the movement not simply as a domestic issue, but as a movement that Muslims worldwide would join. The Islamic Republic promoted the export of the Islamic Revolution in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as it "supported Islamist revolutionary groups in Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait."³ One of the intended aims of the Iranian government was to bring about an end to the perceived corrupt rule of Muslim countries who allowed Western and secular interests to supersede the religious interests of its Muslim population. The leaders of Muslim countries, Iranian thinking supposed, had allowed corruption of government to take place; the people of these countries would support Islam rather than corruption for governance and guidance. Characterizing the global nature of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Noori, a professor of theology at the University of Tehran wrote in 1985: "It [the Islamic Revolution] has sprung forth from the very souls of those Muslim masses who were crushed by imperialism for centuries and whose Islamic character was severely repressed."⁴

The export of the Islamic revolution was a grassroots movement supported by the intelligentsia of Iran as a movement that would bring Muslim countries in the Persian Gulf region into alignment with Iran against Western and Communist interests in the region. Surrounding Persian Gulf countries, however, did not welcome the Islamic Revolution with open arms as Iran assumed they would. Conversely, many of these countries actually felt threatened by the Shi'ite dominated Iranian brand of Islam, and more importantly felt threatened by what they saw as a potentially violent overthrow of their respective governments.⁵ Rather than open direct lines of communication and extend Iranian influence in the Persian Gulf region, the rhetoric to export the Islamic Revolution instead isolated Iran in the Persian Gulf and precipitated a conflict with its secular neighbor Iraq.

The war with Iraq and the isolation on the part of Iran's Persian Gulf neighbors had a significant effect on Iran's foreign policy as it relates to matters of cultural and religious policy. Iran was no longer afforded the luxury of dealing with its neighbors strictly in Revolutionary terms, but had to use a more realistic political approach. Issues of economic and security concerns took precedence over religious and Revolutionary concerns, particularly as the immediacy of the Islamic Revolution drew to a close.⁶ When the Soviet Union finally disintegrated in 1991, the war with Iraq that had only just

³ D. Byman *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴ Ayatollah Allama Yahya Noori, *Islamic Government and the Revolution in Iran*. Royston Limited, Glasgow, 1985, p. 36.

⁵ See: M. Mesbahi, "Iran and Tajikistan," in: *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey, and Iran*, ed. by A. Rubinstein and O. Smolansky, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1995, p. 115.

⁶ See: D. Byman *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

ended in 1988 was a far more recent memory for Iranians than the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Tehran had two choices of what to do in the former Soviet south: they could either continue to follow a policy centered on exporting revolutionary Islam as they had attempted in the Persian Gulf, or they could institute a policy based on pragmatism. The nation chose to approach relations with the former Soviet republics far more cautiously than its radical approach to Iran's Persian Gulf neighbors immediately following the Islamic Revolution.

Cultural Cautiousness

Cultural aspects of Iran's foreign policy, particularly religion, had dominated the international political scene under the guidance of Khomeini. Aggressive and unabashed use of religion in developing Iran's foreign policy had been the norm during the leadership of Khomeini. Hunter describes the change of Iran's foreign policy orientation under the Ayatollah Khomeini as enhancing "the ideological and universalist—as opposed to statist and nationalist—dimensions of its foreign policy" as Iran's primary foreign policy objective was "the spread of revolutionary Islam."⁷ Iran's foreign policy changed significantly after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, as is exemplified in Iran's dealings with the former Soviet states on its northern frontier. With the advent of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Iran approached its relations with its new neighbors to the north with relative caution that it did not exhibit toward its Persian Gulf neighbors in the decade following the Islamic Revolution.

There are a few reasons for this cautiousness, the most important of which is the need for geopolitical stability. The Iran-Iraq War, which began only a year after the Islamic Revolution, was in part the result of the threat perceived by Saddam Hussein of the call by Iran for the establishment of an Islamic state in Iraq. The war lasted eight years and wreaked havoc upon Iran's economy and its ability to provide for its own security. The absence of economic and physical security as a result of exporting the Islamic Revolution led to the belief that rather than establishing a multinational, multi-ethnic Islamic safe haven, the exportation of the Revolution was in fact a catalyst for conflict between Iran and the countries it sought to embrace through Islamic solidarity.⁸ The revolutionary leadership of Iran, including Ayatollah Khomeini, realized that Iran would have to change aspects of this revolutionary ideology in order to maintain its own economic and security guarantees; in the mid-1980s diplomatic relations were opened with all countries except the United States, Israel, and South Africa at the behest of Khomeini.⁹

Current Iranian foreign policy follows the transition made from the early stages of the Islamic Revolution to be more aware of the need for geopolitical stability. It is most interesting to note, therefore, that Iran's dealings with the independent former Soviet republics have not emphasized religion to the extent that one might expect from a revolutionary Islamic state. It is exceedingly more interesting as the majority of at least six former Soviet republics are predominantly Muslim,¹⁰ one of which (Azerbaijan) adheres to the same particular branch of Shi'ite Islam as Iran: Twelver Shi'ism. The restraint shown by Iran in its cultural dealings with the former Soviet republics reflects the shift of importance of revolutionary ideology in the Islamic Republic. The relations between Iran and the former Soviet republics are complex and necessarily involve the relations between Iran and Russia as well as the relations between Russia and the former Soviet republics. Iranian foreign policy with regard to culture has by and large shifted from a religiously dominated orientation to a secular policy that em-

⁷ Sh. Hunter, *Iran after Khomeini*, Praeger, New York, 1992, p. 106.

⁸ See: D. Byman *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

⁹ See: Sh. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁰ Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan.

phasizes ethnic and linguistic ties while, to a large degree, it deemphasizes radical Islam as a focal point of relations.

The Soviet Cultural Legacy

Iran's positioning insomuch as cultural policy in the former Soviet south is concerned must be taken into consideration along with an understanding of cultural experiments that took place in these republics under Soviet rule. When the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, they quickly absorbed the territories of the Russian Empire, created borders on maps, and named them Soviet Socialist Republics. During its long rule over the Central Asian and South Caucasian nations, the Soviet Union exerted a significant amount of influence and sought to change the landscape of the cultural conditioning of these Soviet Socialist Republics. Josef Stalin's Nationalist Policy was most instrumental in changing the sociopolitical identity of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus. Stalin's idea was that of "divide and rule." He created arbitrary borders that were not indicative of ethnic populations, and then he attempted to create an ethnic identity in that republic if one did not exist prior to the Soviet absorption of Russian Empirical territories.¹¹ Countries like Armenia and Georgia, however, had a well-established national identity that was created centuries prior to Russian and Soviet rule, and thus had no need of arbitrary nation creation by the Soviets. The attempt was to create a sense of nationalism in the new Soviet republics, and then supplant that nationalism with the idea of a superior all-encompassing Soviet identity. Lenin and Stalin strategically developed a system in which nationalism, they believed, could not grow unless it was the supra-nationalism of the Soviet state. This then, could consolidate Soviet (Russian) authority, power, and influence in the region to serve its own self-interests.¹² Russian was promoted as the national Soviet language, and many Russians immigrated to these new Soviet republics to provide good socialist leadership for the indigenous peoples. The Russian culture was promoted significantly, and the process of Russification began in the early years of the Soviet Union.

Another effect of the Soviet control over the Central Asian and South Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republics was that it changed the history of these countries. A great deal of Persian influence had been wielded in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus from pre-history until the Russian conquest in the 19th century. At one point in time or another, the Persian Empire extended from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea to Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula to the borders of China. The Soviet conquest erased this long chapter of cultural connections between Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus, and Iran. In order to attempt to create separate national identities, the Soviets chose different aspects of the common cultural identity of the peoples of the region, and attributed them to different republics they had created. Hunter mentions that "the heritage of the Iranian Samanids was attributed to the Uzbeks, while Iranian cultural heritage was attributed to the Tajiks," a process which did not reconcile the connection of both groups to a common Iranian culture.¹³ This historical revisionism was rather useful for the Soviets in creating a national identity for the Central Asian republics that did not have a solid foundation of a sense of "nationhood." However, what was a convenient tool for the Soviets in the creation of a Soviet identity ultimately became the undoing of the Soviet Union, as nationalism reached a fever pitch that reached its apex in the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. in 1991.

The Soviets left another cultural legacy for Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus in terms of the pursuit of religion. As the Soviets were ardent atheists, the cultural policy they instituted succeed-

¹¹ The Uzbeks, for example, were a creation of the Soviet State but became a separate cultural identity under Moscow's designs.

¹² See: Sh. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, 1996, p. 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

ed Christianity and Islam with atheism. Although atheism did not really take strong root in the Central Asian and South Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republics, they did to a large extent limit the ability of believers to worship freely. Religious movements were taken underground, and the influence of religious institutions paled in contrast to the influence of the Soviet apparatus.

Culture and Nationalism in the Former Soviet South

Independence can be characterized differently for the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. The countries in the Southern Caucasus, particularly Georgia and Armenia, had a very solidified and institutionalized cultural self-identification. The conflict over administration rights between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the province of Nagorno-Karabakh during the waning moments of the Soviet Union had blossomed into a full-scale war that further nationalized the two states. Georgia, for its part, was busy fighting a civil war to assert Georgian nationalist control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. For these countries, independence from the Soviet Union meant the opportunity to extend regional autonomy and authority over culturally and historically significant areas. For Central Asia, however, independence came largely as a shock. As Atabaki mentions, the Central Asian Soviet Republics “were founded as territorial states and not as nation-states” and largely continued to be so after independence.¹⁴ The nationalistic tendencies of the Central Asian states were not as defined as they were in the Southern Caucasus, and the notion of a civil society was not strongly developed in Central Asia. The Soviet nationality thus appealed to those in Central Asia as a means of identification, and this identity was stripped after the advent of independence.

The ramifications for the notion of cultural identification are two-fold. Firstly, the newly independent nations that already have a strong sense of identity and culture are unlikely to seek new means of identification after independence. Instead, they will look to nationalistic figures from their well-established history as a means to further nationalistic agenda and to solidify their cultural identification. Secondly, the newly independent nations that do not have a strong sense of national identity, namely the Central Asian nations, will be forced to find a source for nationalism. Some would find nationalism in the revised history presented to the nation via the Soviet Union (i.e. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), while others would be more apt to cultural identification from a point in time further in the past. For Iran’s cultural policy, then, those countries without a significant civil society or cultural identity that was firmly established prior to the conquest by the Soviet Union would be more open to establish cultural ties with Iran in a search for national identity.

Islam in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus¹⁵

Although Communism had taken root in the Soviet Union as a whole, it was not able to replace religious ideology completely. In the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, for example, the

¹⁴ T. Atabaki, “The Impediments to the Development of Civil Societies in Central Asia,” in: *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, ed. by T. Atabaki and J. O’Kane, Tauris Academic Studies, London, 1999, p. 38.

¹⁵ As Armenians and Georgians would identify themselves primarily as Christians, discussions of Islam in the Southern Caucasus for the purposes of this paper are limited to Azerbaijan, as Iranian cultural inroads to Armenia and Georgia would not involve Islam.

Orthodox Church was not stamped out completely; the Communist Party did, however, put a great deal of pressure on the adherents of Orthodoxy and did not make it easy for them to practice their religion freely. Similarly, in Azerbaijan and the Central Asian Socialist Republics, the Communist Regime was unable to replace Islam completely with its ideology in a cultural context.¹⁶

The brand of Islam that was brought to the Central Asian countries was Sunni Sufism, which embraced a mystical understanding of one's relation to God.¹⁷ As such, there was not a need to attend a mosque or to even have a traditional infrastructure in place for the cultural Islamic character to remain within Central Asia. Islam as a system of beliefs that governed every day life and how the individual acted in society was not supplanted by Communism. The impact of Communism on Islam in Central Asia was more on the infrastructure of Islamic organizations, as religious organizations operated under the supervision of the Communist Party.¹⁸ Official religion was therefore largely a source of nationalism rather than spirituality,¹⁹ and was seen by the Communist Party as a tool of control rather than a threat to Party authority.

By contrast, Azerbaijan was influenced most by Twelver Shi'ite Islam, as it was heavily influenced by the Persian Empire until Russian and later Soviet occupation. This sect of Islam is the same type of Islam that is predominant in Iran, and its history is full of existence within the regimes of detractors. From the early days of the Shi'at 'Ali, or "Partisans of Ali," the Shi'a have been more or less opposed by the widespread and dominant Sunni Islam sect. Shi'ism accounts for this opposition, and "taqiyya," the act of concealing true faith for the purposes of prolonging the lives of family or self, is a long-standing tradition that is highly acceptable for adherents to the religion.²⁰

Islam in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, therefore, was not removed by Communism although it was shaped and influenced by it. Communism did not provide a true alternative to Islam as a cultural means of self-identification and action within society. Conversely, it affected the structure of Islam and the ability of Muslims to practice Islam as they saw fit within the Soviet Union. The Islam that emerged out of the ashes of the Soviet Union in the newly independent republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan was not the same type of Islam that developed in countries with regimes that supported Islam. It developed more as a means of which to promote nationalism (i.e. "all Turkmen are Muslims") and a cultural tool that gave the community a certain notion of ethos rather than regulating every aspect of life. In other words, that it emerged from Azerbaijan and Central Asia at all speaks of Islam's abilities in self-preservation; that it emerged in the form shaped by the Communist Party speaks of its practical and secular applications as a means of which to solidify Communist rule by promoting nationalism.

Why not Revolutionary Islam in the Former Soviet South?

With the advent of independence in the former Soviet republics, many political scientists theorized that the influence of Iran in the region would largely stem from its export of Revolutionary Islam

¹⁶ See: T. Pahlevan, "Iran and Central Asia," in: *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, pp. 81-82.

¹⁷ See: E. Walker, "Islam, Islamism, and Political Order in Central Asia," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 2003, p. 23.

¹⁸ See: T. Pahlevan, op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁹ See: M. Atkin, "Tajikistan: Reform, Reaction, and Civil War," in: *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. by I. Bremmer and R. Taras, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 618.

²⁰ For an excellent discourse of this and other Shi'a development issues, see: S.H.M. Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.

to Central Asia and Azerbaijan. However, Iran has shied away from using its brand of Revolutionary Islam as a means of which to bring cultural ties closer with these nations. Although religion does play a role in Iran's foreign policy, it has developed a more "secular" foreign policy in its dealings with Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus.²¹ When Turkmenistan's president was asked about the threat posed by the potential Iranian export of the Islamic Revolution, he responded that he "could see neither an exporter nor anybody who can use such exports."²² Tehran's emphasis for cultural ties in the region have been more focused on historical ties with Iran than any push to start an Islamic Revolution in these predominantly Muslim countries.

There are a few key reasons that leadership in Iran has decided not to pursue an aggressive policy of radical revolutionary Islam in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus. One of the biggest obstacles for an Iranian export of the Islamic Revolution to the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus is Iran's need for political and economic stability in the region.²³ Political stability is necessary because of the large numbers of minorities within Iran that have the potential ability to cause problems for the leadership of Tehran.²⁴ The Islamic Republic had a profoundly negative experience in its conflict with Iraq, and sees the potential for other conflicts just on the other side of the border or within its own borders. As Byman *et al.* poignantly remind us, in Iran "ethnic minority groups are concentrated mainly in border areas and have ties with ethnic groups or states across the border."²⁵ The Islamic Republic is multiethnic, and Iran fears that some of its citizens will identify more with their ethnic identity than with their national identity. Iran is most fearful of its Azeri minority in the northwest of the country, and the potential for that population to be disengaged and dissatisfied with Tehran's governance in lieu of its independent northern neighbor.²⁶ If Iran were to pursue a policy of export of the Islamic Revolution, they will likely run into opposition from leadership in these countries. Furthermore, there is a great probability that these countries would attempt to marginalize Iran's ability to export revolutionary Islam by attempting to mobilize ethnic minorities against Tehran. For its own security and to maintain stability in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, it is within Iran's best interests not to pursue a cultural foreign policy designed around the export of the Islamic revolution as its keystone.

Regional stability is desired by Iran mostly, however, because of the economic repercussions of its war with Iraq. The Islamic Republic lost a great deal in terms of infrastructure, industry, and manpower during the Iran-Iraq War. Its economy was in shambles, and its economic relations with other countries proved to be rather weak and incapable of obtaining resources and money to repair the country's damage. Iran's efforts with regard to Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, therefore, are "to improve bilateral relations with Iran's trading partners and neighbors in particular, and to avoid or minimize tension."²⁷ Revolutionary Islam is certainly a point of tension, and is capable of closing potential economic partners off from Iran. In terms of cultural policy, Iran places a greater emphasis on stability and ease of obtaining economic cooperation than on the export of the Islamic Revolution.

Iran has declined to pursue an aggressive promotion of revolutionary Islam in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus also because of the wariness and fear on the part of the newly independent republics of Islamic radicalism.²⁸ One of the results of the Soviet occupation and the Soviet control of

²¹ See: H. Peimani, *Regional Security and the Future of Central Asia: The Competition of Iran, Turkey, and Russia*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, 1998, p. 32.

²² Sh. Hunter, "Iran's Pragmatic Regional Policy," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 2003, p. 140.

²³ See: H. Peimani, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

²⁴ See: D. Byman *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁶ See: G. Winrow, "Azerbaijan and Iran," in: *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey, and Iran*, pp. 102-103.

²⁷ H. Peimani, *op. cit.*

²⁸ See: *Ibidem.*

religious groups and promotion of atheism was in some Central Asian countries a resurgence of religious political parties and movements. Many of these movements have been particularly Islamic in character, and some have been violent in their attempts to obtain their political goals. This is the case of the Russian North Caucasus just across the border from Georgia, particularly in the area of Chechnia. Radical Islam in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 led to a civil war that only ended when the Taliban took full control of the country in 2000. Radical Islam borders both the Southern Caucasus as well as Central Asia, and the result of such a form of Islam has resulted in conflict in both cases; opposition in the region to radical Islam runs high.

After the fall of the Soviet empire, Iran was seen largely as the bastion of Islamic involvement in political struggles in the region because of its past Islamic Revolution. However, as Byman *et al.* remind us, Iran's war with Iraq caused Tehran to be rather cautious, as it failed time and time again to spread the Islamic Revolution to its Persian Gulf neighbors.²⁹ Iran had to work hard, therefore, if it was to convince its neighbors, particularly those countries with Islamic opposition parties³⁰ that the sights it had set on those countries did not involve an export of the Islamic Revolution. As Iran's motivation for involvement in the region is largely economic, as mentioned above, export of the Revolution would be contrary to Tehran's realpolitik needs. Although revolutionary Islamic rhetoric in terms of both a cultural policy and a security policy would demand that Iran support Islamic parties in the former Soviet Union, Iran has instead actively pursued non-involvement with Islamic movements in the region.

Another reason for the restraint in seeking an export of the Islamic Revolution in the newly independent republics of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus has to do with Iran's relations with Russia. The Russian Federation is the most important partner that the Islamic Republic has in the region: in addition to their cooperation on trade issues, Russia is also Iran's primary source of arms and technology. Moscow is also the most powerful country in the region, and it would not bode well for Iran's security interests to intentionally provoke its neighbor to the north. What this means for Iran's cultural policy is that it must check its interests in promoting Iranian cultural ties with Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus to ensure that its interests do not clash with those of Russia.³¹ Until recently Russian troops acting in the interest of the Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) were stationed in almost all the Central Asian and South Caucasian republics, in order to protect the territorial integrity of the CIS members as well as to act swiftly against any perceived threat to Russia or the CIS. One of the perceived threats Russia is prepared to act against is the Islamic "threat from the south."³² If Iran were to export the Islamic Revolution to its new northern neighbors in an attempt to garner cultural influence, it would likely instead find itself faced, at the very least, with increased tension with Russia. The export of the Revolution to Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus would cause Iran to lose its most important trading partner and source of arms and technology, as well as turn that partner into an enemy.³³ Realpolitik interests in its relations with Russia mean that the export of the Islamic Revolution to the former Soviet south is simply not an option for the Islamic Republic in terms of its cultural policy.

The case of Tajikistan clearly characterizes both the former Soviet republics' opposition to radical Islam as well as Iran's restraint in supporting revolutionary Islam in the region. After the fall of the Soviet Union, a political power struggle emerged in Tajikistan between the former Communist leadership of the country and an alliance of various Islamic-oriented parties. The Islamic party coal-

²⁹ See: D. Byman *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

³⁰ Namely, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

³¹ See: Sh. Chubin, *Iran's National Security Policy: Intentions, Capabilities & Impact*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1994, p. 7.

³² G. Winrow, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

³³ See: H. Peimani, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

tion was far from the revolutionary Islam characterized by the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and it promoted democratic reform coupled with an Islamic sense of morality.³⁴ This, however, did not stop the characterization of the coalition by the former Communists as being “radical Islamists” that would employ tactics and rule similar to the Iranians in their Islamic Revolution.³⁵ The relatively moderate and modest aims of the Islamic-democratic coalition were seen regionally in light of the Islamists in neighboring Afghanistan or Chechnia on the other side of the Caspian Sea. This characterization was further solidified as the political conflict between the ex-Communists and the Islamists turned into a full-scale civil war that devastated the country.

Iran operated in the Tajikistani civil war with a great deal of restraint in terms of its potential to export the Islamic Revolution. The Islamic republic officially declared that it would remain uninvolved in the civil war, and that it had no desire to export the Islamic Revolution to Tajikistan.³⁶ Furthermore, Iran went so far as to show support for the secular ex-Communist Tajikistani leaders when they took over the Tajikistani capital of Dushanbe, and to deliver humanitarian aid to the civil war-ravaged country.³⁷ This restraint in Iran’s actions was coupled with Iran’s desires and attempts to broker a peace deal between the warring parties in Tajikistan. Tehran was attempting to send a clear signal to the rest of the former Soviet south in terms of how it would deal with the question of where Islam belonged in former Soviet politics. The signal sent by Iran seems to be that Islam is less important than the normalization of relations between the Islamic Republic and the former Soviet republics, a stable and productive former Soviet south, and strong economic relations between Iran and the former Soviet south.

If not Revolutionary Islam, then What?

Although Revolutionary Islam is the most visible aspect of Iranian culture, it is far from being the only viable cultural connection between Iran and the republics of the former Soviet Union. Linguistic and ethnic issues are at the forefront of Iran’s cultural foreign policy as Tehran seeks to build bridges of understanding and inroads of influence into its neighbors to the north. Persian language and culture has a history and had an impact in the Central Asian and South Caucasian states, Iranian logic surmises, and time spent under the domination of the Soviet Union severed those ties. Iran’s realpolitik interests hold that in order to garner influence in geopolitics, it must first start with re-establishing the cultural ties that were severed by the Soviet Union with the countries of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus. Furthermore, religion does play a part in Iran’s foreign cultural policy, albeit a much more diminished role when compared to the aims of revolutionary Islam. Religion is used in Iran’s foreign policy only in terms of its cultural connection with the countries of Central Asia and Azerbaijan, and not in any sense of the export of revolutionary Islam characterized by the Islamic Republic’s early days of foreign policymaking.

Languages are a key form of self-identity in a cultural context, and also can be used as a component of nationalism. In the case of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus after 1991, linguistic ties help to establish a line of communication as well as orientation between the former Soviet republics and their more powerful neighbors. Prior to the establishment of the Soviet Union, the people of Central Asia and Azerbaijan used Arabic script for writing, and Persian was the “administrative and cul-

³⁴ See: M. Mesbahi, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

³⁵ *Ibidem.*

³⁶ See: H. Peimani, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

³⁷ See: *Ibidem.*

tural language” of the area.³⁸ Eventually, however, the Soviet Union introduced Cyrillic script for use in Central Asia as a means by which to solidify the created nationalism (Peimani notes that the republics each had a unique set of Cyrillic letters to differentiate nationalities)³⁹ as well as to pave the way for Russian to be used as the de facto administrative and supranational Soviet official language.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, therefore, one of Iran’s policy objectives is to reunite Central Asia with its Iranian cultural roots, and language is the keystone with which Iran can make this connection. The only country in the region that speaks Farsi, the most widespread language used in Iran, is Tajikistan.⁴⁰ Therefore, although Tajikistan does not share a border with Iran, it is a country that is of utmost importance for Iran insofar as culture is concerned. Tehran actively supported the decision to replace Cyrillic script with the Arabic script in Tajikistan in order to make the written language mutually intelligible in both countries.⁴¹ The result of this change increased education opportunity and cooperation between the two countries, as Iran provided school textbooks and other media to Tajikistan.⁴² The Islamic Republic also provided scholarships for Tajik students to study in Iranian universities. Furthermore, this cleared a path for an increased cultural exchange of literary work, both Iranian and Tajik, as well as television broadcasts from Iran into Tajikistan.

All of these efforts to increase the language compatibility between Iran and Tajikistan should really be viewed as an Iranian attempt to gain influence in Tajikistan through cultural means. By promoting the use of Farsi and Arabic script, Iran was then able to promote prominent Iranian literary works. Additionally, the promotion of the use of Arabic script undeniably sought to attach the Tajik people historically to the Persian through the use of their common language. Most importantly, the promotion of the use of Arabic script was a harmless and non-intrusive means by which Iran could shift identification on the part of the Tajikistanis away from the Cyrillic script-using Russians toward the camp of the Arabic script-using Iranians. Iran could simply use the argument that the language is more easily expressed in written form through use of the Persian script without eliciting much argument from the Russians.

Religion has also been used in Iran’s foreign policy, although it has not been in the form of Revolutionary Islam that many expected. Although Rubinstein characterizes the Russians as unconcerned about Iran’s spread of the “Iranian revolution” in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus,⁴³ the reality is that the religious factors promoted in the region bear hardly any semblance of the Islamic Revolution that ousted the Shah in 1979. It is more accurate to characterize the Iranian spread of missionaries, teachers, and assistance in building mosques not as a spread of Revolutionary Islam, but rather as a counter to the strong Sunni presence in the region supported by countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt.⁴⁴ The Iranian use of religion is not an attempt to overthrow governments and spread the Islamic Revolution; it is simply an attempt to gain regional credibility and spread regional influence.

Regionalism and Iranian Culture

The cultural issues put forth by Iran’s foreign policy seek to reinforce a strong sense of regionalism in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus with Iran at the core. Regionalism is the tool that

³⁸ See: H. Peimani, op. cit., p. 45.

³⁹ See: Ibidem.

⁴⁰ See: M. Mesbahi, op. cit., p. 119.

⁴¹ See: Ibid., p. 123.

⁴² See: E. Herzig, *Iran and the former Soviet South*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1995, p. 51.

⁴³ See: A. Rubinstein, “Moscow and Tehran,” in: *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey, and Iran*, p. 52.

⁴⁴ See: H. Peimani, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

Iran can use to reorient the former Soviet nations away from dependency on Russia, and towards a more solidified relationship with the Islamic Republic. Iran's endeavors in regionalism are important not only to keep the country from being isolated geopolitically, but rather to reinforce the potential for Iranian influence and build the nation up in terms of geopolitical authority. Herzig recognizes the importance of culture in developing a regional policy, as "Iranian conceptions of regionalism generally attach importance to culture both as a defining feature and as a basis for cooperation."⁴⁵ In regional organizations promoted by Iran the influence of culture is inseparable from both the means in which cooperation is promoted as well as the reasons for cooperation to begin with.

Promotion of a clear cultural policy is for Iran a means by which it can promote its desire for regionalism. It is not globalism that Iran fears; rather, it is the American dominance in geopolitics and unipolarity that the Iranians wish to marginalize.⁴⁶ In this context, the nature of the Islamic Republic's cultural policy with regard to Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus becomes clearer. By promoting cultural understanding and linking Central Asian and South Caucasian cultural identity to Iran, Tehran is attempting to garner support for its regional capabilities and limit American unipolar influence in the region as a whole.

For example, within Iran's primary regional organization, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Islamic Republic strongly touts shared cultural values between members of the organization. Although some critics, such as Pahlevan, see the ECO as ineffective as an economic organization and "only a framework for a minimum possible cooperation at the regional level,"⁴⁷ Iran sees the organization in terms of not only its economic effectiveness. Iran views the successes of the ECO with regard to its ability to connect member states culturally as well as economically, with the former eventually contributing to the success of the latter.⁴⁸ It has been the Islamic Republic of Iran that has emphasized the Islamic nature of the ECO, and that has attempted to use the organization to expand cooperation between the member nations beyond economics to include issues of language, culture, and religion.⁴⁹ Iran has used the ECO as a tool to promote regionalism and as a means of which to expand its regional power to the detriment of the United States and Russia; it has used cultural issues, such as religion, in order to attempt to forge strong relations between the member states of the ECO and Iran.

Conclusion

Iran's cultural foreign policy in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus was strongly influenced by its experiences in attempting to export the Islamic Revolution as well as the legacy left by Soviet occupation of the region. Its failures in its attempts to export the Islamic Revolution to countries of the Persian Gulf immediately after the ousting of the Shah in 1979 signaled Iran's shift toward more pragmatic and realpolitik orientation of its foreign policy in lieu of a culturally dominated policy. The impact of Soviet structure left Central Asian countries in particular in need of cultural influence, but the development of Islam within the region left it suspicious of any kind of radical Islam, particularly of the Shi'ite variety.

The Iranian choice to pursue an aggressive export of radical Islam in the region is notably absent from the Islamic Republic's foreign policy agenda. Iran chose not to pursue an export of Revolution-

⁴⁵ E. Herzig, "Regionalism, Iran and Central Asia," *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2004, p. 510.

⁴⁶ See: *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ T. Pahlevan, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁴⁸ See: E. Herzig, *Iran and the Former Soviet South*, p. 37.

⁴⁹ See: *Ibidem*.

ary Islam to Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus because it was not a pragmatic policy to follow. Revolutionary Islam could be a destabilizing factor in the region, as Iran's own experience in the war with Iraq showed. Tehran needs stability in the region in order to protect its own security and economic interests. Furthermore, the Soviet legacy left the countries of the former Soviet south convinced that radical Islam would supplant its unique national independence with domination by a foreign regime. Finally, Iran's relations with Russia are tenuous enough that Iran must defer its own foreign policy desires to Russia's. Russia is too important a trading partner and too great a power in the region for Iran to upset Russia in its attempts to gain influence.

Iran's cultural policy in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus has promoted linguistic, ethnic, and religious ties to Iran with the attempt at solidifying its position as a regional power. Its use of cultural policy as a tool of regionalism signals Tehran's pragmatic approach to a geopolitical response to American unipolarity. In contrast to its foreign policy approach immediately after the Islamic Revolution, Iran's foreign policy today does not rely heavily on cultural issues. When it does use cultural issues, however, it is as a tool to promote regionalism and a return on the part of Central Asian and South Caucasian countries to the Iranian sphere of influence.

IRANIAN-TURKMEN RELATIONS IN AN ERA OF CHANGE

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In the fifteen years that have passed since the U.S.S.R. collapsed, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has gained sufficiently diversified experience in bilateral relations with the newly independent states that formed in the place of the former Union republics. One of the primary things to be noted about the IRI's relations with the Central Asian states is the fact that Iran was one of the first countries to recognize their independence and establish equal relations with them. Over the past fifteen years, every version of interstate relations has acquired its own specifics and its own set of particular stratifications and ad hoc characteristics in the Central Asian expanse, which are interfering with the progressive development of a dialog.

In this context, Iranian-Turkmen relations can quite rightly be called the most stable and dynamic. Throughout the fifteen years of their existence, they have proven the strength of the potential invested in them. This gave reason for deceased President Saparmurat Niyazov to say the following in 2003 in his famous speech *How Difficult It Is to Build a State*: "We have fraternal relations with the Iranian people, devoid of mutual suspicion." This description very adequately reflects the current reality of the Central Asian region. Iranian-Turkmen relations have almost no features that irritate either participant in the dialog, and restraining counterbalances are kept to the minimum. This makes the problematic aspects of the IRI's interrelations with other countries of

this region stand out in sharp relief. For example, Iran's relations with Kazakhstan are aggravated by Astana's desire to focus priority attention on the pro-Western and pro-Russian vectors of its foreign policy. Recently, a pro-Chinese bent has become increasingly crystallized in its predilections. The hypertrophied fear that bilateral relations might be used as a channel to export the ideas of Islamic fundamentalism is taking its toll on Tashkent's relations with Tehran. Iran's negative emotions about Dushanbe's extensive military cooperation with the West and Russia are being sloughed off on cooperation with Tajikistan,

which is presented by the Iranian mass media as the most sincere in terms of ethnic communality. The same motive is complicating relations with Kyrgyzstan, which, however, have been acquiring obvious dynamism recently, this being explained by Bishkek's desire to reduce military cooperation with the U.S. to the minimum. As for Turkmenistan's interrelations with the IRI, they are being built exclusively on the basis of the economic expediency that is increasingly affirmed in the world today and with almost complete disregard for the political discrepancies that arise from time to time.

Special Features of Iranian-Turkmen Relations

The main feature of Iranian-Turkmen interrelations is that the mutual involvement of both countries is based on the fact they have no other choice. Both states are destined to have active bilateral relations. Turkmenistan's new head Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov confirmed this again on 8 March, 2007 in a telephone conversation with the Iranian president.¹ Iran and Turkmenistan are united by an extensive common border, to which four of the five regions of the latter are contiguous, as well as many centuries of historical, confessional, and civilizational proximity. The territory of present-day Turkmenistan has often been part of historical Iran, and the capital of legendary Iranian-speaking Parthia—Nisa—was located near the present-day Turkmen capital.

By developing relations with Turkmenistan, Iran is primarily pursuing rather pragmatic goals—strengthening its position in the region and drawing maximum benefit both from the huge supplies of hydrocarbons in the neighboring republic and from its convenient geopolitical position at the crossroads of transit routes. Another important factor of good-neighborly relations is the presence of a large Turkmen population in the north of the IRI, which has largely retained kindred ties on the other side of the border. With respect to this, we will note that neither country has tried to use the ethnic factor in the political game during these years, as is the case, for example, in the relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

It is also important that both states can equally be considered rogue states. For Iran this was due to the confrontational policy of the religious leaders, who have raised an outstanding number of countries against them—both in the neighboring geopolitical space and throughout the world. Since 2005, after the neo-conservatives came to power in the IRI headed by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the state's isolation has become even more aggravated. The unresolved state of the Iranian nuclear problem is prompting the world community to introduce political and economic sanctions, which is undermining the country's prestige on the international arena. In our day and age, friendship with Iran is not always seen as beneficial and prompts statements such as, "Who wants to cut itself off

¹ See: "The Presidents of Iran and Turkmenistan Confirm Their Resolve to Intensify and Expand Cooperation in All Spheres," available at [mehrnews.com], 8 March, 2007 (in Farsi).

from the comforts of the Western civilization along with Iran?"² Turkmenistan's isolation in the contemporary world was due to the unprecedented totalitarian trends, which were subsequently aggravated by deceased President Saparmurat Niyazov, his regime's gross violation of human rights, complete neglect of democracy, and the terrible crimes against his own people. But these circumstances in no way influence interstate interrelations and the IRI and Turkmenistan hardly bat an eyelid over them.

All these years, Iranian-Turkmen relations have been demonstrating Iran's significant potential in rendering comprehensive assistance to the newly independent states of the post-Soviet space. A contractual-legal basis of cooperation has been drawn up and is working effectively. It consists of approximately 150 contracts and agreements in a wide range of areas, including mutual legal assistance to the citizens of both countries, a practice seldom encountered in world practice.³ The stable domestic situation in each of the two republics is conducive to the development of transit operations through both Iran and Turkmenistan. The IRI has become one of Turkmenistan's most important economic partners, currently occupying second place (after Russia) in the state's trade turnover: during the past 15 years, its volumes increased from 52,000 dollars in 1992 to 1.4 billion dollars in 2006. The representative offices of more than 200 Iranian companies have opened in Turkmenistan. In so doing, according to a statement by the head of the Iranian Foreign Ministry Manouchehr Mottaki, which he made during a visit to Ashgabad in March 2007, the volumes of bilateral cooperation—particularly in such priority areas as power engineering, the oil and gas industry, and electric power generation—far from tap its entire potential.⁴ Approximately 100 industrial facilities of immense importance to the national economy have gone into operation or are being put into operation in Turkmenistan with Iranian help. The targets of technical-economic cooperation with Iran have made it possible for Turkmenistan to acquire the most contemporary technology—particularly in high-tech, communications, building materials, medications, and chemical water purification, to name a few. Iranian assistance in creating a transportation infrastructure is also highly appraised in Turkmenistan. The Tejen-Serakhs-Mashhad railroad, which went into operation in May 1996, opened up the shortest route for the country to the Middle East and put the Great Silk Road back into operation. Since 1998, 14 million tons of freight have been shipped along this route, which added 218 billion dollars to the republic's treasury. This project's success boosted the two countries' continued cooperation in the transportation sphere. At the end of November 2006, the IRI government approved of Iran joining the international project for building a trans-Asian railroad. This is creating a contractual-legal basis for intensifying Iranian-Turkmen partnership in the transportation sphere.

The oil and gas industry has been a priority area in cooperation between the two states: Iran has become the main importer of Turkmen oil. Its share reached 52% as early as 1997 and continues to increase every year. In July 1998, the first agreement on the transportation of Turkmen oil to the Iranian ports of the Persian Gulf was signed. Iranian companies participated in surveying and boring wells after winning several international tenders. Cooperation with the IRI in the gas sphere is developing more intensively. It has opened up broad opportunities for Turkmenistan to export gas to this country and created the possibility of transporting it by transit through Iran to the states of the Mediterranean and Europe, as well as via Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf—to the Far Eastern and Southeast Asian regions. The Iranian corridor also has political significance for Turkmenistan: it made it possible to put an end to Russia's monopoly on the transit of Turkmen blue fuel and to gain access to a market beyond the post-Soviet expanse. Of extreme importance for Turkmenistan's gas industry is the IRI's

² See: O. Gushchin, "I ne drug, i ne vrag, a tak..." *Rossia*, 28 December, 2006-10 January, 2007.

³ See: "The Mejlis Approved Three Agreements Between Iran and Turkmenistan and Tajikistan," *ISNA*, 17 April, 2007 (in Farsi).

⁴ See: "The New President of Turkmenistan Pledges Allegiance to the Previous Bilateral Agreements," available at [<http://www.roshangari.net>], 17 March, 2007 (in Farsi).

assistance in laying the Korpėje–Kurt-Kui gas pipeline, 200 kilometers in length, which was put into operation in 1998 and is a main gas export route alternative to the Russian. In the beginning, it pumped 6 bcm a year, whereas by 2006 this amount had reached 12 bcm. But it will have to be further expanded since Iran would like to buy 14 bcm from its neighboring republic. The IRI provided 80% of the financing for building this gas pipeline and signed an obligation to purchase the transported fuel for 25 years. According to the official data, in 2007, 80 bcm of gas will be produced in the country, which is 20% higher than the previous year.⁵ According to a statement by Turkmenistan's new president Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, the growing volumes of gas production will make it possible to guarantee the contract deliveries of blue fuel to Iran. There are very real prospects in Turkmenistan for increasing gas production,⁶ which is definitely arousing the IRI's interest. But with respect to gas transportation, the current Turkmenistan president is inclined toward upholding the idea of diversifying routes. Of course, this is reducing the possibility of Iranian transit. This is how the agreements reached on 12 May, 2007 on building the Caspian gas pipeline can be viewed. A joint declaration was signed at a meeting of the presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan in the city of Turkmenbashi (on the eastern coast of the Caspian), on the basis of which it was decided to initiate trilateral cooperation to build an export route (construction will begin in the second half of 2008). The pipeline will pass for 360 km through Turkmenistan, 150 km through Kazakhstan, and then join up with the Central Asia–Center gas pipeline in operation since as early as Soviet times. It can be used to transport raw Turkmen hydrocarbons to the European markets. "The deal to build a pipeline along the Caspian Sea coast to ship Turkmen natural gas to Western markets via Kazakhstan and Russia is a blow to the U.S. and European countries' efforts to secure reliable sources of oil and gas outside the Middle East that also would be independent from Russian influence."⁷ According to several publications in the Russian mass media, this is blocking the construction of an alternative, trans-Caspian gas pipeline bypassing the Russian Federation, the idea for which was put forward by Western countries, including the U.S.⁸

In Iran, this gas pipeline is regarded as "the end of the West's sweet dreams, which has been trying for the last few months to win over the sympathy of Saparmurat Niyazov's successor and incline him toward cooperating with the West in pipeline policy in order to squeeze out Russia."⁹ By 2012, the new gas pipeline will reach a throughput capacity of 20 bcm, and its cost will amount to 1 billion dollars. But Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov is not rejecting the idea of the trans-Caspian gas pipeline lobbied by the West, believing it to be in keeping with the world trend toward diversifying routes for transporting energy resources.

Both countries are also cooperating in creating a common energy system. In 2003, a jointly-built power transmission line, which stretches between Balkanabat in Turkmenistan and Aliabad in Iran, went into operation. An agreement on deliveries of electric power to Iran was signed for 25 years and will bring Turkmenistan an annual revenue of 120 million dollars. Another power transmission line is being built—from Mary in Turkmenistan to Mashhad in Iran. When it goes into operation, the IRI will be able to receive 2.4 billion kWh annually from its neighboring republic. According to the results of 2006, Iran has become the largest importer of electric power from Turkmenistan: its share amounted to 55%.

The IRI is placing great importance on bilateral cooperation with Turkmenistan, characterizing it as exemplary. Strengthening friendly relations with its northern neighbor became one of the priority

⁵ See: "Turkmenia vdvoe uvelichila postavki gaza v Iran," available at [iran.ru], 12 April, 2007.

⁶ See: *Neytralniy Turkmenistan*, 3 April, 2007.

⁷ "Russian, Central Asian Leaders Strike Crucial Natural Gas Pipeline Deal," *Associated Press*, 12 May, 2007.

⁸ See: *Novye izvestia*, 14 May, 2007.

⁹ "The End of the West's Dream About Possessing Central Asian Gas," available at [http://www.isna.ir], 13 May, 2007 (in Farsi).

areas in Iran's foreign policy. The leaders of the two countries made a habit of exchanging frequent visits. During the years of his presidency (1989-1997), Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani met with Saparmurat Niyazov 16 times. Sayed Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), who replaced him in this post, made his first foreign visit to Ashghabad. The current (since August 2005) president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose conservative ideology goes essentially unnoticed in Ashghabad, made some changes in the republic's priorities and paid his first visit to Damascus. However, when he was in Turkmenistan during his first Central Asian tour in July 2006, he said that his state would not place any restrictions on the development of relations with Turkmenistan and also spoke in favor of making the fullest possible use of the cooperation potential of both countries.¹⁰

Iran regards stability on its northern borders as an indubitable advantage of good-neighborly relations. In light of the current instability in Iran's relations with its main foreign political foe, the U.S., head of the Center of International Research of the Iranian Foreign Ministry Rasul Musavi believes this component of the bilateral dialog to be a vital necessity for his republic, justifiably emphasizing that Iran did not find peaceful neighborly relations in the Middle East.¹¹ Turkmenistan's declaration of permanent neutrality, which is unprecedented in world practice, as the foundation of its foreign policy is of great rational interest to the IRI. Turkmenistan's purely pragmatic neutral status made it possible for its leader to successfully maneuver between the poles of power in today's world "...without being afraid of arousing the irritation of strong and authoritative America."¹² For Iran, it is also important that Turkmenistan's neutrality is a restraining factor that allows Ashghabad to distance itself from participation in international bloc structures. The documents of a symposium held in Tehran called "Turkmenistan After Saparmurat Niyazov" (January 2007), at which many Iranian political scientists spoke, expressed the hope that this special feature of Turkmenistan's supreme policy will not be reconsidered, since it meets Iran's national interests.

This Strange Neutrality

Saparmurat Niyazov motivated the need for permanent neutrality by the fact that this would efficiently promote the country's economic progress and its dynamic integration into several developed countries of the world. Pursuing a policy of permanent neutrality made it possible for the president to avoid criticism from the rest of the world about his absolute personal power and suppression of the slightest manifestation of dissidence. In this respect, the Turkmen leader managed to essentially "close" the republic to the outside world by permitting only high-ranking leaders and businessmen to visit the country, as well as keeping the discussion of domestic political issues to a minimum. Iran, however, welcomed this international status of Turkmenistan, believing that the neutrality policy was the reason for the success of the talks held in Ashghabad between the participants of the Tajik peace process, which led to the signing of the 1997 Agreement, as well as of the talks with the leaders of the fundamentalist movement of the Afghan Taliban, which significantly promoted inter-Afghan settlement.

However, it was precisely over the Taliban regime that Iran and Ashghabad did not see politically eye to eye. At first, Saparmurat Niyazov supported the Northern Alliance opposed to the Taliban. The Iranian leaders fully supported him in this, who saw the Taliban as their rivals in the struggle for regional leadership. But as early as the fall of 1996, when the Taliban actually became the most

¹⁰ See: "Po zakonam dobrososedstva," available at [turkmenistan.ru], 26 July, 2006.

¹¹ See: "Turkmenistan After Saparmurat Niyazov: Iran Hopes that Turkmenistan Will Continue the Policy of Neutrality," available at [isna.ir], 3 January, 2007 (in Farsi).

¹² O. Gushchin, op. cit.

influential military-political force in Afghanistan, Saparmurat Niyazov took steps toward rapprochement. Right up until 2001, while the world community was condemning the Taliban movement, the Turkmenistan president maintained constructive business ties with it and even opened a Consulate General in Herat—the most important center of Northwest Afghanistan. This was explained for economic reasons—in December 1997, Ashghabad signed a treaty on forming a consortium in order to lay a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan.

Ignoring the summit initiated by Iran and Russia to oppose the threat of the Taliban's enlargement into the Central Asian region, which was held in Almaty in October 1996, Turkmenistan juxtaposed itself to the policy of consent of those countries that regarded the Taliban as a threat to regional security. Saparmurat Niyazov justified his position by the fact that in his view the Taliban was that integrating and stabilizing force capable of overcoming Afghanistan's ethnic split. Taking economic priorities as a basis, Turkmenistan upheld the policy of establishing a dialog with the Taliban. In 1998, a trilateral commission was formed, in which the Taliban, Turkmenistan, and Pakistan participated in order to implement the gas pipeline project from the Turkmen field of Dauletabad to the Pakistan town of Multan through Afghanistan. The laying of this route would give Turkmenistan access to Pakistan's extensive market, and Afghanistan would receive significant transit revenue, as well as the possibility of partially resolving the problem of employment during the building of the gas pipeline. Pakistan could count on the prospect of guaranteed provision with energy resources for a long time to come. Of course, Iran had a negative attitude toward this project: its potential operation would have given rise to an alternative transportation artery that would not have met Iran's interests in light of the cooperation which had begun in those years to lay a major gas pipeline to India. But there is another explanation that justifies Turkmenistan's close ties with the Taliban. It was not to the republic's advantage to oppose the Taliban's forces, for this could destabilize the situation within the country. Rapprochement with the Taliban at that time nevertheless had an effect on the relations between Iran and Turkmenistan: there was a temporary slowdown in the rate of cooperation, and in 1998, the Iranian ambassador to Ashghabad was even recalled for a time.

What Lies Ahead?

Iran in no way wanted its relations with Turkmenistan to deteriorate, viewing this country as a strategic partner. Turkmenbashi's clearly undemocratic methods of leadership and authoritative style of decision-making led to instability and a certain amount of rockiness in relations with the IRI, which the Iranian press noticed.¹³ Tehran counted on Iranian territory possibly becoming the main export transit route to the world markets in the event that the Turkmen oil and gas industry successfully developed. At the same time, Turkmenistan was hardly inclined to overestimate cooperation prospects with Iran. The development of relations between Turkmenistan and the West, which was gaining momentum, will inevitably play the role of a restraining force in the Iranian-Turkmen dialog. In the short term, the West will try to keep rival Russian and Iranian influence to a minimum in this republic. In the West, the post-Niyazov period is viewed as a time of possible change. The current chairman of the OSCE, head of the Spanish Foreign Ministry Miguel Ángel Moratinos, has already expressed himself on this account, believing that gradual changes are happening in Turkmenistan and the dialog with its leadership should be stepped up.¹⁴ With this in mind, the U.S. is drawing up a new cooperation pro-

¹³ See: Salam (Iran), 24 April, 1999.

¹⁴ See: "OSCE Chairman Encourages Turkmenistan to Intensify Cooperation with the Organization," available at [<http://gundogar.org>], 12 April, 2007.

gram with this country, which, in the words of Matthew Bryza, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, could become an absolutely new chapter in interrelations with Turkmenistan.¹⁵ In particular, U.S. companies are indeed gaining a foothold on the agricultural technology market after signing long-term contracts for corresponding deliveries to Turkmenistan. A representative delegation of the Turkmenistan Ministry of Agriculture, which visited the U.S. in April, signed several contracts in this sphere. Representatives of American agricultural technology manufacturing companies met earlier with President Berdymukhammedov.

In the oil and gas sector—the foundation of the Turkmen economy—this could be expressed in the West's extensive investment participation in large-scale projects and the execution of export pipeline developments from Turkmenistan bypassing Iranian territory. In this context, cooperation has been designated with one of the world-renowned leaders in the oil and gas business—the American Chevron Company—a delegation of the leaders of which met in May 2007 with the Turkmenistan president and received an offer to review partnership issues in implementing projects on geological survey, oil refining, and the development of fields on the Caspian's Turkmen shelf. Reaching an agreement on the broad participation of large Saudi Arabian companies in investment activity with respect to the Turkmen oil and gas industry can be viewed in this same context.

Turkmenistan's new leadership does not plan to reject cooperation with Israel either, despite the Iran's extremely negative perception of this fact. For example, a large Israeli company, Merhav, will continue its many years of partnership with the Turkmen government. In the past, it performed the functions of a representative of the republic's government in several large oil and gas projects. During reconstruction of the Turkmenbashi complex of oil refining plants, Merhav was able to attract foreign investments amounting to 1.5 billion dollars. As of the present, Merhav is one of the two most influential foreign business groups in Turkmenistan.¹⁶ On 27 March, 2007, the Turkmenistan president received the heads of the Israeli company and was presented with new proposals for activating Turkmen-Israeli cooperation. The Turkmenistan president himself stated at the meeting that he places his full trust in the company, seeing it as a reliable and time-tested partner.¹⁷

After Saparmurat Niyazov's Death

Iran is closely following the latest changes in Turkmenistan's political life after the death of Saparmurat Niyazov. Local analysts do not think this sad event will have any significant effect on the continuation of Iranian-Turkmen partnership. In his letter of official condolences to Turkmenistan's acting president Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, which was signed by the head of the Assembly of Experts Expediency Council, former Iranian president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani noted that it is to the deceased president's merit that bilateral relations are exemplary for the region's nations.¹⁸ After officially taking office as president, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov said in a conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki that his country would remain loyal to all the obligations it assumed in the past with respect to implementing bilateral agreements.¹⁹

¹⁵ See: "The U.S. Leadership Intends to Expand Cooperation with Turkmenia," available at [<http://gundogar.org>], 18 April, 2007.

¹⁶ See: "Turkmenistan: vliiatel'naia izrail'skaia kompaniia 'Merhav' ostaetsia rabotat v strane," available at [<http://www.fergana.ru/news>], 28 March, 2007.

¹⁷ See: *Neytralniy Turkmenistan*, 28 March, 2007.

¹⁸ See: "Hashemi Rafsanjani Sends His Condolences to the Turkmenistan People," available at [isna.ir], 22 December, 2006 (in Farsi).

¹⁹ See: "The New President of Turkmenistan Pledges Allegiance to the Previous Bilateral Agreements."

The Iranian mass media responded to the Turkmenistan president's death with a series of analytical publications which expressed concern about whether the post-Niyazov era would be as predictable as during the life of the deceased president. As the newspaper *Ayandeye no* believes, Saparmurat Niyazov's death would mean an immediate increase in rivalry between the two poles of power—Russia and the U.S.—for influence on the country's new political leadership. This, in the opinion of the newspaper, which reflects the views of the Iranian reformers, could acquire the nature of a latent war.²⁰ The newspaper *Ebtekar* relates Niyazov's sudden death to the beginning of a vague period in the republic's fate. According to the newspaper *Jawan*, the death of the Turkmen leader will give rise to many questions regarding the future of Iran's neighboring country, but would in no way influence the continuation of the bilateral dialog.

A few months after Niyazov's death, a publication appeared in the Iranian press about what the new political reality in Turkmenistan was like and how serious the changes occurring in the state were. The Mehr Information Agency noted in its comments that during the election campaign, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov promised to continue the domestic and foreign policy conducted by the deceased president, but at the same time announced adherence to reforms in public health, national education, and "even the political system," where he intends to put an end to the one-party system inherited from Soviet times. One of Berdymukhammedov definite virtues is his willingness to get rid of the most odious symbols of Niyazov's personality cult, while strengthening his own private power. When talking about the republic's new leader, Mehr expressed surprise that he occupied a ministerial post for ten years. "It is nothing short of a miracle, because it was impossible to remain in the power elite for such a length of time in this Central Asian country, since all-powerful autocrat Turkmenbashi regularly weeded it out and sent high-ranking officials to prison or into exile."²¹

Among the analytical articles published in the Iranian mass media, we will note the information provided by Abuzar Ibrahim Torkman on the Iranian site [www.baztab.com]. The author believes that, in recent years, this small republic has undergone significant progress, moving up to the role of economic leader in Central Asia. "The deceased president imbibed a lost sense of national pride in the Turkmen people." Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov's nomination as Niyazov's successor, writes Torkman, saved the world community from concern about how radically this country's political course might change at the new historical stage. The author regards the alternative nature of the presidential election, the presence of six candidates who put forward their own vision of the sociopolitical changes the country needed, as definite progress in the state's political life.

According to the Iranian analyst, at the new stage, the approaches to implementing bilateral cooperation must be adjusted.

First, the slightest tension existing between the two republics and complicating their dialog must be overcome. The only thing that fell into this category was the contradictions related to gas prices which sometimes led to a halt in its export to Iran. A balanced approach to this problem will make it possible to harmonize Iranian-Turkmen relations to the greatest extent possible. The initial basis—historical and civilizational communality, a common border, as well as affiliation with the same religion (Islam)—will make this goal easy to reach.

The first Turkmenistan president laid a solid foundation for the bilateral dialog. From this proceeds the need to continue the previous policy, which the country's new leadership should unconditionally follow.

Iran considers it important and necessary for the new president to fulfill his promises, which can be regarded as correcting mistakes and overcoming the stratification of the recent past. The Iranian

²⁰ See: *Ayandeye no*, 22 December, 2006.

²¹ "Berdymukhammedov is Eternally Loyal to Turkmenbashi," available at [http://www.mehmews.com], 11 April, 2007 (in Farsi).

analyst considers this to be carrying out educational reforms, ensuring the republic's withdrawal from information isolation by providing the population with broad access to the Internet, recognizing higher education diplomas received at foreign universities as valid, and so on. The author also notes that thanks to his political versatility, Saparmurat Niyazov was able to successfully maneuver between the two major poles of power—the U.S. and Russia, drawing significant political and economic dividends for his country from this. It is important that Turkmenistan's new leadership skillfully avoid the snares set by these powers and not fall into their trap. Iran's and Turkmenistan's diplomacy faces much work aimed at preserving the priority nature of bilateral relations to the benefit of the peoples of both republics. The Iranian analyst draws the following conclusion: both countries have accumulated vast interaction potential. It is not only important not to waste it at the current stage of changes, but also to make it a trampoline for a qualitative new jump. "This must be done slowly in order not to lose what has already been gained."²²

The Iranian scientific community also responded to President Niyazov's death. A symposium called "Turkmenistan After Saparmurat Niyazov," held in January 2007 at Tehran University, looked at many of the problems relating to the current reality in present-day Turkmenistan and its immediate future. Head of the Department of CIS Countries of the Iranian Foreign Ministry Aga Jani expressed the following viewpoint when speaking at this event: there are no political forces inside Turkmenistan capable of carrying out fundamental changes in the next year or two. He believes that the kinship-tribal structure established in Turkmenistan has helped to retain the atmosphere of the Soviet communist period and conserved the era of Turkmenbashi's rule, squelching the desire among the obedient, tolerant, and easy-going people of this republic to engage in social protest and depriving it of the strength to do this. But Turkmenbashi's death marks the beginning of the new period in which a gradual evolution of the political-administrative system will take place. Just how the power vacuum will be filled is also important. According to Aga Jani, Saparmurat Niyazov's era will not pass into oblivion with his death, many of its features will be subjected to revision. We will become, he believes, witnesses to gradual changes in the power structure and political system. Some have already occurred due to the reconsideration carried out of the principle of power transfer. Aga Jani means the election by the Khalk Maslakhaty (the National Consultative Council) of vice premier of the government, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, as acting president instead of parliament speaker Ovezgeldy Ataev, as stipulated by the Constitution, against whom a criminal case was instigated. In the short-term perspective, no other significant changes in political life are predicted, according to Aga Jani, but in the medium term—in the next five years—the head of the Iranian Foreign Ministry Department sees the possibility of a significant evolution in the government and political system. This is unlikely to be related to the actions of the opposition, which is living abroad and in no way influences the processes going on in the country. Turkmenistan's relations with the outside world might be aggravated for one reason only—the price of energy resources, but this will in no way reflect on domestic stability. The high-ranking Iranian Foreign Ministry official criticized the policy of state control over the religious processes going on in Turkmenistan, but in so doing, he noted that Islam does not occupy a significant place in the spiritual life of the people of this republic. In his view, the country's new government should establish a dialog with the opposition. The leadership's headstrong methods relating to the personality cult should also be rejected. Otherwise this might lead to negative trends in the state's domestic life and interfere with its foreign policy dialog. The country needs to open up more to the outside world, which could give rise to new prospects of bilateral dialog for its partner, Iran.²³

²² "Proposals for Restructuring Relations," available at [www.baztab.com], 5 February, 2007 (in Farsi).

²³ See: "Turkmenistan in the Era After Saparmurat Niyazov. The Personality Cult and Voluntarism of the Turkmenistan President Should Be Overcome," available at [http://www.isna.ir], 3 January, 2007 (in Farsi).

Professor at Tehran University Allahe Kulai expressed the opinion at the above-mentioned symposium that, by taking advantage of the pluses of good-neighborly relations with the IRI, Saparmurat Niyazov was the only leader of the Central Asian states who occupied an unequivocally independent and clear position in the bilateral dialog with America. Under conditions when, after the 9/11 events, the U.S. managed to impose its military presence in the region, Turkmenistan became the only country that avoided American pressure and did not consent to the troops of the U.S. or its allies being deployed on its territory. According to A. Kulai, it is precisely Turkmenistan's enormous supplies of hydrocarbons that allow it not to become involved in interregional conflicts and occupy a position that differs from that of other neighboring states in the context of the crisis in American-Iranian relations. She characterized Turkmenbashi as a real relic of the Stalinism era, who did not permit nonconformity in the country in the form of the opposition. Nevertheless, A. Kulai believes that the republic's geopolitical position and its latest political reality make it possible to predict certain progress in domestic life.²⁴

Neo-Conservatives and the Bilateral Dialog

It is possible that factors in Iran's political life are also having an impact on the Iranian-Turkmen dialog. Recently, the position of the neo-conservatives who came to power in the country in 2005 has noticeably weakened. This is related to the fact that at the December 2006 municipal elections and the elections of the Assembly of Experts, the supporters of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad unexpectedly underwent a serious defeat. Most of the Iranian electorate preferred moderate conservatives to Islamic radicals. During the year or so they were in power, most of the socioeconomic programs the radicals promised failed to materialize. It is possible that former IRI president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, well known as a pragmatic politician, will rise again to the summit of Iranian political life. In this way, most of the Iranian electorate is demonstrating its adherence to the idea of the state becoming integrated in the globalization processes and emerging from its isolation. The moderate conservative forces, in counterbalance to the neo-conservatives, are promising a more constructive and irreversible dialog with the West. Of course, this will have a positive effect on the entire complex of Iranian foreign political ties. In particular, this might place the priority again on Iran's interrelations with the Central Asian countries. The advent to power of the neo-conservatives headed by current president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has shifted the accents somewhat in the state's foreign policy to the Islamic countries of the Middle East, where the current administration is trying to act more efficiently in order to achieve real leadership in the region. A close analysis also clearly shows the introduction of adjustments into the Central Asian vector of Iran's foreign policy. For example, only three of the 25 leading Tehran newspapers responded to the death of the Turkmenistan president.²⁵ When reporting on the arrival of the Iranian delegation to participate in the inauguration of the new Turkmenistan leader, the analytical website "Baztab" headed the note as follows: "Davudi (the IRI's first vice-president.—*V.M.*) has left for Turkmenistan instead of the president."²⁶ The Central Asian region, which is definitely important for Iran, does not look like an area of priority attention just now. Even the new president's trips to the republics of this region are not felt to be the next steps in cultivating integration with the Central Asian

²⁴ See: "Turkmenistan in the Era After Saparmurat Niyazov. After Niyazov, Radical Changes will Occur in Turkmenistan's Policy," available at [<http://www.isna.ir>], 3 January, 2007 (in Farsi).

²⁵ See: "The Most Important Headings in Today's Morning Newspapers," available at [mehrnews.com], 22 December, 2007 (in Farsi).

²⁶ "Davudi has Left for Turkmenistan Instead of the President," available at [baztab.ir], 14 March, 2007 (in Farsi).

states—they are aimed at maintaining the status quo at the current level. This, incidentally, does not indicate a cooling off in the Iranian leadership's attitude toward this region, it only shows that the neo-conservatives are defining their strategy in this geopolitical space.

The Iranian leadership is closely following and trying to objectively analyze the new reality in the region's countries over the past year or two: the foreign policy advances in Uzbekistan, which are expressed in a shift away from the pro-Western toward the pro-Russian orientation, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, one of the results of which was inconsistency in the foreign policy predictions. IRI is also concerned about the possibility of a change in Turkmenistan's domestic and foreign policy relating to the death of its eternal leader, Saparmurat Niyazov. Keeping in mind the anti-Western component of the foreign policy of the current president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which is greater than was espoused by Iran's previous leaders, tougher steps can be expected from the IRI in opposing other foreign players in Central Asia's geopolitical field. This toughness can be most clearly seen in resolving the problem of the Caspian's legal status, where the Iranian position is closer to Turkmenistan's view. Iran is making frequent and loud statements against non-regional players being involved in using the hydrocarbons of the Caspian zone. This precept is based on the fact that any actions and proposals coming from non-regional states are capable only of harming regional integration and undermining mutual trust. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad himself has repeatedly stated that the West is only pursuing its own political goals in the region and is in no way concerned about the interests of the Caspian zone countries. The IRI on the other hand, as its leaders constantly declare, are placing and intend to continue placing primary importance on regional economic integration based on historical, cultural-civilizational, and geographical similarities. It encompasses such vitally important spheres for Iran as trade, transportation, power engineering, and the advance of new technology. In so doing, integration is occurring, in the IRI's opinion, at a rate that does not suit it, due to the West's, but primarily the U.S.'s, interference. Taking into account the clearly expressed anti-American component in the foreign policy of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government, we can expect its unequivocal non-acceptance of any pro-American trends in Turkmenistan's foreign policy. Iran will not have an immediate response to this, concentrating for the time being on continuing mutually advantageous economic cooperation. It will only react, and the nature of this reaction is so far unclear, if this process crosses certain IRI "red lines." However, on the whole, there is no sign that the basic principles of Iran's strategy in the region will undergo any significant changes. A specific situation might cause a change in tactics, but in all likelihood Iran's strategy in the Turkmenistan vector will continue to hold the maintained course.

There can be no doubt that the IRI does not particularly want the position of other Islamic states to strengthen in Turkmenistan (particularly Sunni Islamic states). This, or at least, the desire to diversify its relations with the Islamic countries is shown by the fact that the new Turkmenistan president made his first foreign visit to Saudi Arabia. The IRI press is stressing the fact that the first visit is always symbolic.²⁷ Berdymukhammedov's trip to Riyadh laid the foundations for real contacts between the two states (officially these ties were established at the beginning of the 1990s, but did not acquire practical content). The specificity of Saudi relations with the Central Asian countries, the priority of which is "restoring ties between these states and the universal Muslim ummah,"²⁸ could not have been realized during the era of the first Turkmenistan president. Of course, in this context, Berdymukhammedov's desire to shift the relations between the two countries onto a practical plane shows that the country is moving away from the political stereotypes that developed in the previous era. The members of the delegation, which included the leaders of various economic and social-cultural blocs,

²⁷ See: "The Turkmenistan President Arrives in Saudi Arabia," available at [mehrnews.com], 13 April, 2007 (in Farsi).

²⁸ G.G. Kosach, "Perviy zarubezhniy vizit prezidenta Turkmenistana: Saudovskaia Araviia," available at [http://www/iimes.ru] 19 April, 2007.

demonstrated the areas of potential interrelations—including the progress of Islamic education, the building of mosques, and the increase in the number of pilgrims going to the Islamic shrines. It is precisely this area of Turkmen-Iranian contacts that was not significantly developed under Saparmurat Niyazov. Against the background of tough competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia for leadership in the Islamic world, this step could mean a trend toward the more pragmatic nature of Turkmenistan's international policy in the new historical era and the desire of its leadership to move beyond the narrow framework of fraternity imposed by the IRI.

In this way, no significant changes should be expected in the development of the bilateral Iranian-Turkmen dialog. The foundation of mutually advantageous cooperation appears to be still firmly in place after the death of authoritative President Niyazov. This confidence is based on the new president's desire to retain everything positive that was built during the old regime. In so doing, it is possible that the new leadership will go for moderate liberalization of sociopolitical life in order to raise the people's trust in the government. Nevertheless, this will have no effect on the above-mentioned bilateral dialog.

ETHNIC RELATIONS

GEORGIA'S SLAVIC POPULATION

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As citizens of the newly independent Soviet successor-states that arose after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Slavs found it extremely hard to adjust to the new conditions. It was particularly difficult to accept the fact that Russian, their native tongue, which

used to be lingua franca of sorts, had lost this function and its importance altogether. Large groups of the Slavic population found emigration the only answer; Georgia has already lost nearly all the Slavic groups that used to live on its territory.

The Russians

Slavs came to Georgia when the Russian Empire stepped up its involvement in the Southern Caucasus. Having strengthened its military and political position, Russia needed reliable local support in the form of non-military Slavic settlements, of which Russians were the largest group.

In 1865, there were 25,900 Russian newcomers in Georgia, or 2 percent of its total population; in 1886, their number increased to 42,500 (2.6 percent). By 1897, there were 92,813 Russians, or 5.3 percent. The Slavic military comprised 22.7 percent (21,113) of Georgia's total Slavic population. In the latter half of the 19th century, the process continued at a good pace. Slavs settled in great numbers in Tbilisi and the coastal cities, as well as in 21 villages.¹

Wide-scale industrialization of Georgia unfolded in the 1920s and attracted numerous migrants from other republics. The collectivization and "de-kulakization" of 1930-1933, during which the country

¹ See: N. Zakariadze, "Czarist Colonial Policies and Georgia's Slavic Population," *Demography*, No. 1 (2), 2000, pp. 88-90 (in Georgian).

lost several millions of lives in Southern Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, swelled the Slavic (mainly Russian and Ukrainian) population. Driven by famine, hundreds of thousands moved to Georgia. Between the 1926 and 1939 population censuses, the number of migrants in the republic increased from 110,500 to 354,000, that is, by 320 percent.²

In 1959, the number of Russians in Georgia reached its peak (407,900), only to start declining. On the eve of the widespread migration processes of 1989, there were 341,200 Russians living in Georgia. They and the other Slavic groups were badly hit by the negative post-Soviet developments. The Russians who failed to adjust to the new and absolutely unfamiliar situation burdened with anti-Russian sentiments regarded emigration to their historical homeland as the only solution.

The migration processes that started unfolding in the 1990s were clearly dominated by the military, civilians employed by the Soviet army and their families; they poured out of Georgia in great numbers and, together with their military units, moved beyond Georgia in the early 1990s. Over 60 percent of migrants were Slavs (mainly Eastern Slavs, that is, ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians); nearly all of them (88.5 percent) were urban dwellers, therefore they headed to cities in Russia.³

In the 1990s, Russians, who suddenly became an ethnic minority in the former Soviet republics, were driven away by the mounting nationalism, idling industrial enterprises, and economic instability to seek a better life elsewhere, mainly in their historic homeland. Those who stayed behind found it hard to palate the new cultural, religious, and social context.

The nationalist rhetoric of the early years of Georgian independence was quenched to a certain extent under Eduard Shevardnadze. The poll of 1993 revealed that Russians and other groups were driven away not so much by political factors as by the economic crisis, unemployment, and crime. In 1993, the Russians were trying to escape social and economic difficulties rather than political circumstances.⁴

The fighting in Abkhazia drove its Slavic population to Russia and Ukraine. According to Felix Korla, in 1996 Slavs comprised 10 percent of Abkhazia's total population, which means that the 88,600-strong Slavic population (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians) of 1989 shrank to 15,000-25,000 mainly elderly people. According to Georgian academic Revaz Gachechiladze, the larger share of them (the ethnically mixed families) resettled elsewhere in Georgia and, therefore, could not be counted as emigrants. In fact, about 50,000 Slavs who used to live in Abkhazia left Georgia altogether. They were emigrants in the true sense of the word.⁵ Those who stayed behind in their Abkhazian homes are in a very bad position indeed, alleviated to a certain extent by the aid extended by all sorts of organizations based in the Russian Federation (the Moscow Mayor's office in particular) acting through the local Russian communities in Abkhazia.⁶

According to the 2002 population census, the number of Russians dropped (compared with the figures of the 1989 census) to 68,000,⁷ half of whom live in Tbilisi.⁸ As distinct from other national minorities, the Russians were urban dwellers; few of them lived in the countryside. There are no compact Russian settlements in the cities of Georgia (exceptions are few and far between). Today, because of the intensive emigration, the Russian diaspora consists mainly of elderly people. In the last few years, Georgia lost quite a few Russians and their families, who moved away with the Russian military bases when they withdrew from Georgian territory.

² See: R. Gachechiladze, *Population Migration in Georgia and Its Socioeconomic Results*, The Letters for Discussion Series. The U.N. Development Program—Georgia, Tbilisi, 1997, p. 12 (in Georgian).

³ See: *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

⁵ See: *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶ See: A. Feofanov, "Iubileynai obshchina," *Chegemskai pravda*, No. 26, 2005.

⁷ Certain public organizations quote smaller figures.

⁸ See: The State Department of Statistics of Georgia. Results of the 2002 General Population Census of Georgia.

Everyday Problems

Those Georgians who lived in the Russian Federation were badly hit by the acute political disagreements between their country and Russia. Back home, many thought that Georgia should have responded in kind to Russia's aggressive anti-Georgian steps and deportations of Georgians. Neither the Georgian authorities nor the ordinary people at large, however, showed anti-Russian sentiments. Against the background of discrimination of Georgians in Russia, the Georgian authorities did their best to demonstrate their benevolence toward all national minorities, Russians included. The Georgian public organizations expressed their regret over the developments in the Russian Federation.⁹

Whatever the case, the number of Russians in Georgia will hardly remain the same: emigration will undoubtedly be spurred on by the recent laws of the Russian Federation designed to encourage ethnic Russians to move to their historical homeland. In October 2006, the Congress of Russians Living Abroad decided that the Russian Federation would shoulder the responsibility for those who wished to return to their historic homeland.

The Federal Migration Service was responsible for practical implementation of the State Program for Voluntary Resettlement of Compatriots to Russia that came into force on 1 January, 2007. The state offers newcomers Russian citizenship, housing, jobs, and social insurance, and pays for their resettlement. Seventeen billion rubles of budget money will be spent in the next three years. Late in 2007, the Federal Migration Service will open its office in Georgia, but it is unlikely to be overworked: there are hardly any Russians willing or able to move away left in the Southern Caucasus; those who stayed behind are too old to look to a future in Russia with hope.¹⁰ Not everyone at the congress accepted the idea of financing emigration. Valeri Svarchuk, who headed the Georgian delegation, was one of them: he would have preferred stronger support of the Russian diaspora using money supplied by Russian businessmen.¹¹

Under Soviet power, Russian was the language of inter-ethnic communication; those who did not know Russian could not expect to be promoted. The Russians living in the Union republics never bothered to learn the local tongues. This was true of Georgia, as well as of the other republics. In independent Georgia, the Russian language lost this function, those born in the independent country have no reason at all to study Russian. So far it remains the language used by different ethnic groups to communicate among themselves, but this function is declining rapidly. For the reasons enumerated above, the Russians in Georgia do not know enough Georgian to cope with the current realities (especially with respect to the education reforms).

The innovations in this sphere will drive even more young Russians out of the country. Alla Bezhentseva, Chairperson of the Iaroslavna Union of Russian Women in Georgia, said that Russian children born in Georgia after 1991 studied in Russian schools because their parents had doubts about the local educational system and hoped that this would help their children to find employment in Russia. Russian children did not know enough Georgian to be able to study in Georgian schools; many Russians whose knowledge of Georgian is inadequate are driven to the Russian Federation in search of employment or further education, unemployment and low salaries being two other factors.¹²

⁹ See: J. Rekhviashvili, "Georgia: Ethnic Russians Feel Insulted from Tensions," *RFE/RL*, 11 October, 2006.

¹⁰ See: "Russkoiazыchnym zhiteliam SNG predlozhili vernut'sia na Rodinu," *Nezavisimaa gazeta*, 25 December, 2006, available at [http://www.ng.ru/courier/2006-12-25/12_narodinu.html].

¹¹ See: *Iu. Taratuta, A. Konfisakhor, R. Pearl*, "Vsemirny congress sootchestvennikov poluchil gospodderzhku," *Kommersant*, No. 200, 25 October, 2006, available at [<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.html?docId=716076>].

¹² See: J. Peuch, "Southern Caucasus: Facing Integration Problems, Ethnic Russians Long for Better Life," *RFE/RL*, 21 August, 2003.

In 2003/2004 academic year, there were 168 Russian schools in Georgia; 55 of them were one-language schools. The others taught in two or three tongues, along with the Georgian, Azeri, and Armenian schools.¹³ The number of Russian schools in the republic dropped along with the numerical strength of the Russian population. While in the past most students of Russian schools belonged to ethnic groups other than Russian, new trends have appeared recently in this sphere: the non-Russian ethnic groups (Armenians and Azeris) prefer Armenian, Azeri, or Georgian schools; today few Georgian parents send their children to Russian schools, which have no choice but to close down.

Russian speakers find it hard to cope with the new rules of the entrance exams to the higher educational establishments: under the recent education reform, the tests are conducted in Georgian. Young Russians who know everyday Georgian well enough still have insufficient knowledge of the language to pass the tests. Those who continue their education in Russia tend to settle there permanently.

The Russian population of Georgia is struggling with socioeconomic problems. According to Alla Bezhentseva, the relatives of those who moved to Russia survive on what they receive from them. Unlike many Georgians, urban-dwelling Russians can hardly expect help from the villages. In a country where the salaries and wages are impossibly low, help from abroad is more than welcome. Ms. Bezhentseva is convinced that Russians are facing economic rather than political problems.¹⁴ The Russian population, in which elderly people predominate, depends on their small pensions and aid from Russian organizations for their survival.

There are several organizations in Georgia engaged in helping the local Russians, the largest of them being the Otchizna Union of Russian Compatriots in Georgia, which has 24 structures. It has been functioning since June 2004 and is actively involved in the program realized by the Foreign Ministry of Russia.¹⁵ The Union helps receive qualified medical aid, places students in Russian higher educational establishments, sends war veterans to health resorts, and renders them financial aid. All the other structures—the Iaroslavna Union, the Slavic House in Georgia, and the Nadezhda International Humanitarian Charity Association—are funded mainly by state organizations of the Russian Federation. They work in various fields, extend material and financial aid, and organize cultural events.

Russian journals and newspapers are sold in Georgia; there are also local Russian-language publications (including the newspapers *Svobodnaia Gruzia* and *Vecherniy Tbilisi* and the *Russkiy klub* magazine). People in Georgia have access to Russian-language satellite TV programs, which few can afford. The Obshchestvennoe veshchanie TV channel in Georgia offers a weekly 25-minute information program in Russian (Georgian Obshchestvennoe veshchanie radio offers a similar 10-minute program in Russian). Many Russians have no problems with understanding information programs in Georgian, even though they can hardly speak the language.

The Griboedov Tbilisi State Academic Russian Drama Theater is an important center of Russian culture. It regularly shows plays in Russian and arranges Russian culture evenings. The theater, which was founded in 1845 on the initiative of Count Vorontsov and named in 1934 after great Russian playwright Alexander Griboedov buried in Tbilisi, played an enormous role in drawing the Georgian and Russian cultures closer; it marked its 160th anniversary in 2005.

The Cultural and Educational Russkiy klub Union, a member of the International Union of Russian Compatriots with members in 57 countries, plays a very special role in preserving the Russian culture

¹³ The Ministries of Education and Science of Georgia. The Main Indices of Day Secondary State Schools of Georgia for the 2003/2004 Academic Year.

¹⁴ See: J. Peuch, op. cit.

¹⁵ See: S. Mamedov, Iu. Simonian, A. Gordienko, "Nevoennoe rossiyskoe prisutstvie na Iuzhnom Kavkaze," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 25 December, 2006, available at [http://www.ng.ru/courier/2006-12-25/12_kavkaz.html].

in Georgia. The Russkiy klub Union has about 5,000 members of all nationalities and has been functioning since 2005. It concentrates on cultural and educational activities and helps to improve relations between the two countries. It runs a *Russkiy klub* publicist and literary monthly.

Dukhobors and Molokans

So-called sectarians scattered across the country form a special group of Georgia's Russian population with a very specific culture of their own. They are mainly Dukhobors and Molokans. The former, an extreme protestant sect, appeared in the Russian Empire in the latter half of the 18th century (in the Voronezh, Tambov, and Ekaterinoslav gubernias); in the 19th century they came to Javakhetia. In 1837, convinced that the Dukhobors threatened the state, the Russian emperor moved them to the Caucasus; in 1841, they settled around Akhalkalaki in the southeast of Georgia.

At first they were strictly ruled and closely supervised; in the 1840s, when they received all sorts of privileges, their situation improved. This happened because by that time the Russian authorities not only regarded the newly acquired South Caucasian territories as a military-strategic and political target, but also started looking for economic advantages.¹⁶

The newcomers were mainly moved to two geographic areas. In the southeast, they settled in the villages of the Ninotsminda (previously Bogdanovka) District: Gorelovka, Efremovka, Orlovka (Terpenie), Spasovka, Rodionovka, Tambovka, Bogdanovka, Troitskoe; in the east they came to the village of Krasnagorka (previously Malkhazovka) of the Sagaredjoisk District; the village of Ul'ianovka¹⁷ (previously Novoalekseevka) of the Signagskiy District, the village of Ninigori (previously Novo-Mikhailovka) and the village of Svobodnoe (previously Grafovka) of the Lagodekhskiy District.¹⁸

The Molokans mainly settled in Eastern Georgia: the villages of Krasnagorka, Ul'ianovka, Ninigori, and Svobodnoe. A few of them lived in Tbilisi. In 1990, they emigrated: today there are practically no Molokans in Georgia. Ninety families are still living in the village of Svobodnoe; and there are several families in the village of Ul'ianovka. All of them preserved their ethnic identity; they understand, but do not speak Georgian. Russian is the tongue in which they wish to educate their children; a nearby village school offers primary education in Russian; for secondary education students have to go to the district center several kilometers away from the village. Molokans emigrate to Russia in search of education in their native tongue.

The Dukhobors are more numerous than the Molokans. After moving to Georgia they united into communes. Agriculture and usury were their main occupations. Over time, they became an ethnographic group with customs and traditions of their own. Initially they were sent to eight villages of the Ninotsminda District. In 1898-1900, when part of the commune moved to Canada, the commune split. In 1999, descendants of the migrants came to Javakhetia to celebrate the 100th anniversary of their ancestors' emigration.¹⁹ In 2001, the Dukhobors of Gorelovka village celebrated the 160th anniversary of their resettlement in Georgia.²⁰

In 1926, there were 5,171 Russians living in the Ninotsminda District; in 1959, the number dropped to 4,616; in 1970, to 4,344; in 1979, to 3,830; and in 1989, to 3,161. The number of Russians

¹⁶ See: *Russkie starozhily Zakavkaz'ia: molokane i dukhobory*, ed. by V. Kozlov, Moscow, 1995, p. 20.

¹⁷ Before reaching the village of Ul'ianovka, the sectarians from the Saratov Gubernia first lived in Tbilisi in 1859.

¹⁸ See: *Russkie starozhily...*, p. 142.

¹⁹ See: G. Rioneli, "Dukhobors: 250 years of Wandering," *The Caucasian Accent*, No. 19 (92), 1-15 October, 2003 (in Georgian).

²⁰ See: "Etnograficheskiy zapovednik," *Mnogonatsional'naiia Gruzia*, No. 3, November-December 2001.

living in compact groups on the territory of the Gorelovka village council dropped 57.2 percent compared with 1926; the average family size decreased from 6.2 to 2.8 members.²¹

Between 1988 and 1991, the money allocated by state departments, state structures, and the state budget, as well as private means, was used to buy 113 houses from the Dukhobors, who lived in five villages within the Gorelovka village council. This was done through the Georgian Merab Kostava Society and the Armenian funds, the Parvana Fund being one of them.²²

The Dukhobors of the Gorelovka village council insisted that their houses be bought from them; they also wanted more money to be able to move back to their historical native area (mainly the Tula Region of Russia). The young people were especially enthusiastic about emigration. Much strength was spent on convincing people from the mountains of Ajaria badly hit by natural calamities to move to the houses vacated by the Dukhobors. The houses were bought from them for a trifle, but the ecological migrants from Ajaria did not find the climate to their liking. Many houses were merely abandoned and later used as building material and firewood.²³

The Dukhobors were encouraged by the 1998 decision relating to the Dukhobors of Georgia issued by Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Evgeni Primakov. The State Duma passed a special resolution on the same issue. The Georgian Ministry of Emergencies supplied buses, while the International Migration Organization paid for their transportation. In January 1999, the community leader, Lyubov Goncharova, accompanied the larger part of her fellow sectarians to the Briansk Region. Those who stayed behind have not abandoned the idea: they are attracted by the better economic conditions they hope to find in Russia and a chance to avoid the current tension between the Russian Federation and Georgia.

The Dukhobors in Ninotsminda support themselves through cattle-breeding and the products of their own labor on private plots of land; in the last 15 years, however, they have been pestered by the local Armenians and ecological migrants who have claims to the same land.²⁴ The land reform changed many things in the Dukhobors' everyday life. Currently, there is a land commission working in the area; the land belonging to the cooperative the Dukhobors set up to replace the collective farm in Gorelovka will be re-distributed. So far the Dukhobors are left with 600 hectares of the initial 5,000 hectares; each family has to survive on 6 to 15 hectares. The sectarians insist that the farm was used to preserve their traditions of communal life. These changes made emigration inevitable. Tatiana Chuchmaeva, head of the Dukhobor community, said that 470 local Dukhobors have already applied to the RF government for permission to move to Russia. They have already been promised free transportation and housing, together with privileges, for the next 6 months.²⁵

Between 1992 and 1996, the Dukhobor cooperative accumulated a debt to the state in the amount of 4 million laris, the payment of which will bankrupt it. On 28 November, 2006, at a round table in the office of Georgia's ombudsman, the Dukhobors asked for their debt to be written off. Expert Hedwig Lohm, associated researcher at the European Center for Minority Issues, pointed out that "if the Dukhobors move to Russia, the Russian government will use this fact against Georgia. The Dukhobors want to keep away from political games and prefer to remain in Georgia."²⁶

²¹ See: T. Gugushvili, *Georgia's External Migration and Demographic Problems (1990-1998)*, Tbilisi, 1998, pp. 75-76 (in Georgian).

²² See: N. Akhmeteli, "Taxes, Land Reform and Better Life in Russia: The Dukhobor's Georgian Exodus," *Georgia Today*, 24 November, 2006.

²³ See: D. Kamikadze, "Dukhobor Tribulations," *IWPR's Caucasus Reporting Service*, No. 106, 20 November, 2001.

²⁴ See: L. Vardanian, "Tevdoradze's Visit Ended Peacefully," *Samkhetis Karibche*, No. 31 (59), 2007 (in Georgian).

²⁵ See: O. Vartanian, "Land Reform May Be the Last Straw for Georgia's Dukhobor Community," *IWPR's Caucasus Reporting Service*, 20 September, 2006.

²⁶ See: Interpress, 17 November, 2006.

The Ukrainians²⁷

Ukrainians first came to Georgian territory in the latter half of the 18th century soon after Empress Catherine the Great disbanded the Cossack organization called Zaporozhskaia Sech for disobedience. Cossacks fled in great numbers to the empire's southern fringes.

Early in the 19th century, Russian military units (there were Ukrainians among the military) moved to Georgia as settlers. After their long military service, soldiers lost contact with their homes and relatives, which explains why many of them, Ukrainians as well as people of other nationalities, preferred to remain in Georgia on the land they received from the state next to the units in which they had served. This happened mostly in Eastern Georgia, but the practice did not survive because there was no one wishing to use the privilege. By the mid-19th century, the practice was discontinued altogether.

Officers, some of them Ukrainians, employed by the administrative structures were not numerous, but they preferred to settle in Georgian cities forever. In the 19th century, Ukrainians moved to Georgia for political reasons to avoid infringements on their rights and repressions of all sorts. The economic factor was even more important: those peasants who had been deprived of land had to move elsewhere in search of unoccupied landed plots. With the abolition of serfdom in Russia, in 1861 the process became even more widespread. The simultaneous events in Georgia left many landed plots vacant; Abkhazia attracted Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Greeks, and members of other ethnic groups.

Development of navigation on the Black Sea, which stimulated construction of new ports, a railway, and spas, attracted qualified Ukrainians with the prospect of employment. The above suggests that that Ukrainians moved to Georgia for two reasons: political (repressions at home) and economic (landless peasants arrived in search of vacant land and industrial employment).

In 1887, there were 8,500 Ukrainians living in Georgia (64 percent of them were urban dwellers, others lived in the villages). The Ukrainian inflow showed no tendency of slowing down. What was more, Georgia attracted members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia: writers, academics, actors, and journalists. Early in the 20th century, a Ukrainian theatrical company was set up under M. Beliaeva in Tbilisi; in 1902-1913, she staged several dozen plays. It was at the same time that prominent Ukrainian poet Lesia Ukrainka lived in Tbilisi together with her husband, ethnographer K. Kvitka. In the 1890s, Mikhail Grushevskiy, prominent historian and public figure later elected as first president of the Central Ukrainian Rada (1917-1918), was a student of Tbilisi grammar school No. 1.

Of the total 2,500,000-strong population of Georgia (according to the 1917 population census), 185,000 were registered as Russians (in actual fact, according to Ukrainian public organizations, 70 percent of them, or about 129,000, were Ukrainians). Their absolute majority lived in industrial centers (Tbilisi, Batumi, and Sukhumi) where they were engaged in different spheres (workers, handicraftsmen, traders, and the intelligentsia). There were few Ukrainians living in the Georgian villages. According to the 1970 figures, 82.2 percent of Russians and Ukrainians preferred to live in cities.

In 1917, the Ukrainians convened a military conference that set up the Ukrainian Military Rada of the Caucasus and the Ukrainian Rada. The former published a newspaper that was first called *Vesti* and later *Ukrainskie vesti*. In the same year, the Ukrainian Rada, supported by the Central Ukrainian Rada, convened the first Ukrainian conference of the Southern Caucasus in Tbilisi to coordinate the activities of the Ukrainian communities and alliances as well as party organizations.

²⁷ The section is based on the following sources: M. Boris (Chairman of the Ukrainians' Coordinating Rada), *Konferentsia: Istoriia i realii etnicheskikh obshchin Gruzii (9 November, 2001)*, Tbilisi, 2003; *Assotsiatsiia ukrainsev Gruzii*, Tbilisi, 2006.

In 1918, Ukraine established diplomatic relations with Georgia and sent an extraordinary diplomatic mission to this country under the supervision of I. Krasovski. In 1918, the Ukrainian Rada convened its second conference; Ukrainian communities were set up in Tbilisi, Batumi, Sukhumi, and Poti to preserve the Ukrainian language and culture. They were also involved in public and political activities and took part in the elections of the Tbilisi and Batumi dumas; several Ukrainians were elected to the latter. In 1919, Ukrainian Alexander Kliuzhniy was elected to the Georgian legislature.

In 1917-1926, the number of Ukrainians in Georgia dropped because of the outflow of Ukrainians to Ukraine. In 1922, more Ukrainians came to Georgia; during 12 years (between 1926-1939), the number of Ukrainians in Georgia increased 3.2-fold to reach the figure of 46,000 in 1939. Georgia's rapid industrial and agricultural development, which created numerous jobs for qualified workers, attracted people in great numbers.

Post-World War II industrialization attracted even more Ukrainians, who contributed to the construction of the metallurgical plant in Rustavi and several hydropower plants and to the development of the Colchis lowland. The retired military preferred to stay behind in Georgia.

Between 1959 and 1979 the share of Slavs, Russians and Ukrainians included, decreased from 11.3 percent to 8.3 percent, but if we look at a much longer period of time (1926-1979) we shall see that the total number of Russians and Ukrainians in Georgia increased from 110,400 to 416,600.

According to the 1989 general population census, there were 52,400 Ukrainians in Georgia, or 1 percent of the total population. They lived in Tbilisi, Sukhumi, Batumi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, and Poti. In the post-Soviet era, they could either emigrate to their homeland or any other country or remain in Georgia. Ukrainians were driven away by the social and economic difficulties and problems that afflicted the republic for many years.

The large emigration wave has been left behind: those who would like to leave stay for financial reasons; some people prefer to remain because of the high integration level. Despite certain problems created by their inadequate knowledge of the Georgian language, elderly people prefer to stay in Georgia close to their Georgian relatives and friends. Mixed marriages keep members of such families in Georgia.

According to the 2002 population census, there are 7,039 Ukrainians in Georgia, half of them live in Tbilisi; Ukrainians also live in the autonomous republic of Ajaria.²⁸ According to the Ukrainians in Georgia, their total number in the republic is twice as large since many Ukrainians were erroneously registered as Russians in the census papers.

On 1 September, 1999, the first Ukrainian school named after Mikhail Grushevskiy was opened in Tbilisi. On 8 June, 1997, Georgian Citizens' Day, President Shevardnadze asked the Ukrainian children what they would like most of all. They asked for a Ukrainian school. It was opened two years later, the delay caused by funding problems. The pupils come from mixed marriages; primary school teaches in Ukrainian; older children study the Ukrainian language and literature, while other subjects are taught in Georgian. The younger generation of Georgian Ukrainians knows Georgian better than their parents and grandparents. Today, Ukrainian children are educated mainly in Russian or Georgian schools and go to higher educational establishments in Georgia or Ukraine. Every year the latter funds higher education for 10 Ukrainian students from Georgia.

The Ukrainians in Georgia have to cope with the same problems as the rest of the Georgian population. According to the Ukrainian structures, unemployment is the main stumbling block, which they cannot eliminate single-handedly. These structures are mainly concerned with preserving the ethnic specificity of the local Ukrainians. Much is being done by the Association of Ukrainians Living in Georgia set up on 15 February, 1992. From the very first day, it has been

²⁸ See: State Department of Statistics of Georgia...

working in close contact with other organizations of national minorities, the ministries of culture and education, the parliament, the mayor's office of Tbilisi, etc. Mikhail Boris elected as its leader in 1994 still holds this post.

New Ukrainian public organizations have been set up since 1995 in places where Ukrainians reside in compact settlements: the cultural-public organization Slavutich in Rustavi, the Chervona kalina alliance in Kaspi, the Olesia alliance in Zugdidi, etc. They are all engaged in cultural, educational, and charitable activities. On weekends, the Tbilisi cultural-educational center offers computer, dancing and singing courses, and English lessons. The center receives more or less regular technical and financial aid from Ukraine.²⁹

On 19-20 May, 2001, the embassy of Ukraine in Georgia convened a forum of the Ukrainian public organizations of Georgia. It was held in Tbilisi to draw the public organizations closer together and set up a coordination center in the form of a coordinating Rada of the Ukrainians, complete with a Charter and governing structures. It united 18 organizations.

The Poles³⁰

According to the 2002 general population census, there are 870 Poles in Georgia, the majority of them living in Tbilisi, while the rest are scattered across the country.

Caucasian Poland is one of the world's oldest communities of ethnic minorities; the first Poles who came to Georgia in more or less large numbers were driven by the political repression that followed the 1794 riot. The Polish soldiers involved in it were taken prisoner and executed. Poles remained in the Caucasus because of Russia's military actions in Daghestan and Chechnia; it was during the war that the Polish tongue acquired a new term "Kaukazczycy" meaning the Poles living in the Caucasus.

In the 1830-1850s, there was a "Group of Caucasian Poets" consisting of forty exiled Polish writers. In the 1830-1840s, the Tbilisi Polish population was about 900-strong. Later, in 1897, the number increased to 4,200. According to the 1922 population census, there were 2,300 Poles in Tbilisi (not counting the military); in 1926, there were up to 1,780; in 1939, about 1,500; and in 1959, up to 1,300.³¹ In later years, their number was steadily decreasing. The last wave of emigration was caused by economic problems: the Poles, mainly engineers, musicians, teachers, doctors, and artists, could hardly find employment in Georgia.

In the 1920s, there was a Polish school in Georgia; until 1924, there was a Club of National Minorities in Tbilisi built on the initiative of the Polish community, which also owned all its property. The Club united Polish workers. Part of the building was occupied by the Polish School of Labor.³²

The Polish intelligentsia played an important role in developing cultural and educational institutions. Since 1907, the Poles set up several organizations: the Polish House societies in Tbilisi and Batumi engaged in cultural and educational activities among the local Poles; it had a Polish amateur theater, libraries, and reading rooms. Literary and musical events, as well as readers' conferences, were

²⁹ See: T. Turula, "Our Diaspora: A Visit with the Ukrainian Community in Tbilisi," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, Vol. LXX, No. 30, 28 July, 2002.

³⁰ The section is based on M. Filina (Chairperson of Polonia, the Cultural-Educational Union of the Georgian Poles), *Konferentsia: Istoria i realii etnicheskikh obshchin Gruzii (9 November, 2001)*.

³¹ See: Sh. Kakuria, *Tbilisi Population, 1803-1970*, Metsniereba Publishers, Tbilisi, 1979 (in Georgian).

³² See: A. Songulashvili, *Culture of the National Minorities of Georgia*, Metsniereba Publishers, Tbilisi, 2002, pp. 13, 20 (in Georgian).

a regular feature of the Poles' cultural environment. In 1914, an Aid Committee for the Victims of War was set up at the Polish House to support the Polish refugees.

It was at this time that the Polish Democratic Center in Tbilisi, which united all the local organizations, came to the fore. The intelligentsia was actively involved in founding military unions of Poles; the congress of the Polish organizations and unions convened in 1917 in Tbilisi played an important role in the lives of those who lived in the Caucasus. In 1918, the first issue of the *Polish Weekly* appeared, which covered the events in the Polish community; its last (seventh) issue appeared on 7 August, 1918.

Between 1918 and 1921 many of the Georgian Poles, especially those who came during World War I, preferred to go back home. In 1926, there were no more than 6,000 Poles in the Trans-Caucasian Federation.³³

Independent Georgia offered new opportunities to the local Poles. On 9 February, 1995, descendants of the Poles who settled in the Caucasus in the 19th and 20th centuries formed an Association of the Poles of Georgia. In 1997, its branch appeared in Erevan. In Georgia, the association is actively creating an archive and is compiling lists of local Poles and the members of mixed families. Today, it unites about 700 members, mainly university professors, doctors, engineers, and teachers.

At first the new structure concentrated on rendering financial and humanitarian aid to Poles living in the villages, the disabled, and the Kaspi orphanage.

The Georgian Poles have very poor command of Polish: this ethnic group has become almost entirely assimilated. Today, the Poles belong to mixed Polish-Russian, Polish-Georgian, and Polish-Armenian families; their ancestry betrayed only by their Polish family names.

In 1996, the local Poles opened a school for children and older students; in the summer of 1997, they were given the opportunity to visit the land of their forefathers.

On 3-5 December, 1998, the Mickiewicz Days in Tbilisi initiated by the association (in 1998, it was renamed the Polonia Cultural-Educational Union of the Georgian Poles) developed into Days of Polish Culture; on 3 December, the academic community attended a seminar at the State University, which produced two publications. Since that time cultural events of this sort have become a regular feature of local life.

In October 2000, Tbilisi State University hosted an international conference called "200 Years of Poles in the Caucasus," which summed up the Poles' contribution to the region's development; in the same year the Polonia Union marked its fifth anniversary. The Senate of Poland and the Georgian parliament highly assessed its contribution. Recently its efforts were awarded with an international order, *Fidelis Poloniae*.³⁴

There is a center of Polish Culture in Abkhazia called The White Eagle and a Sunday school that teaches the Polish language.

The Czechs³⁵

According to the 2002 general population census, there are 46 Czechs in Georgia, 39 of whom live in Tbilisi.³⁶ In the 1990s, the number slightly dropped; this was when the government of the Czech

³³ See: "Pol'skie zhenshchiny," in: *Zhenshchiny Gruzii: Polietnicheskiy i konfessional'ny aspekt*, The Women of Multinational Georgia Association, Tbilisi, 2006, pp. 46-51.

³⁴ See: *Svobodnaya Gruzia*, No. 259-260 (22617), 28 November, 2002.

³⁵ The interview the president of the Czech community in Georgia Zlata Praha gave on 21 October, 2006 was used in this section.

³⁶ See: State Department for Statistics of Georgia...

Republic drew up a program, under which compatriots from countries with harsh economic conditions (the Soviet Union and Rumania) could move to their historical homeland. Few of the Czechs, however, chose to leave Georgia.

In the 19th century, Georgia, then part of the Russian Empire, attracted the first Czechs by its fantastic landscapes and local exotics. Some of them found the local attractions irresistible: they settled down and started families. Later, skilled workers and other specialists came to Georgia in search of employment. In 1925, Georgia received the second wave of Czech immigration: qualified specialists, academics, engineers, and mechanics.

Being involved in the construction of plants, hydropower facilities, and railways, they helped to build up Georgia's industry. Tbilisi owes the underground crossing at the Central Railway Station to Peter Šmalcel, who was also involved in a no less impressive project—the tunnel at Zeleny Cape. Nikolai Šmalcel, who was one of Georgia's first hydro engineers, simulated hydraulic processes for essentially all the large hydropower plants.

The Czechs made an important contribution to culture. In 1880, well-known opera singer Joseph Rátíl (Navrátil), a soloist, leader, and teacher at the Prague and Helsinki opera houses, spent 32 years of his life in Georgia. Lado Agniashvili, known all over Georgia for his teaching and public activities, his vast knowledge of Georgian folklore, as well as his literary and journalist contributions, invited the Czech singer to set up and lead a Georgian folk choir. The singer was the new choirmaster for 10 years. He was the first to put over 30 Georgian songs to music and arrange them.³⁷

Stage designer Franz Novak spent many years working at the Tbilisi Opera House; another Czech, Ivan Sokol, founded the first factory of wind instruments in Tbilisi; stage designer Joseph Brouček worked with the Paliashvili Opera House and the Rustaveli Theater. Assistant professor at the Batumi Conservatory Irina Kherzh trained five Grand Prix winners; for several years Gertrude Šmalcel was a solo singer and performed the leading parts in Abesalom and Eteri, Tosca, Eugene Onegin, and others. Recently the Georgian Musical Society celebrated her 90th anniversary.³⁸

Doctor of Medicine and Surgery Ivan Přibil is well known for his contribution to medicine. In 1822, he founded the Tiflis (Tbilisi) Military Hospital and became its chief medical advisor. His contribution to the study of the climatic properties of Eastern Georgia cannot be overestimated. In 1838, he initiated testing of the Abastumani and Uavela springs and carried out climatic research in the vicinity of Akhtala in Gurjaani. He did much to develop the Borjomi spa and popularize its mineral waters. He is also the founder of the Caucasian Medical Society. Another Czech, Antonin Lukeš, organized a gymnastics society of Georgia called Shevardeni (Falcon).

Today the Czechs in Georgia speak Russian and study at Russian schools. Since 1996, they have been represented by the Zlata Praha organization set up on the recommendation of the then Deputy Foreign Minister of Georgia Mikhail Ukleb and his Czech colleague, Alexander Wonda. Seventy of its total membership of 110 have Czech ancestors; others are merely interested in the Czech Republic. The Analitpribor, the Institute of Scientific and Technical Information, as well as the Georgian National Center of Health Protection, are also members with the status of a legal entity. Until recently, the Zlata Praha Society was allowed to use the latter's offices free of charge. Recently the building was earmarked for sale, which means that the Czech society might find itself homeless.

Zlata Praha maintains wide contacts across Georgia, the CIS, and in the Czech Republic to promote business between these countries and Georgia; it is doing a lot to encourage an interest in Czech politics, culture, science, art, language, and history, as well as in drawing up policy related to ethnic minorities, civil integration, etc. In 2005, Zlata Praha initiated thirteen events, including three large

³⁷ See: Ts. Beridze, "Cheshskiy muzykant Iosif Rátíl v Gruzii," *Cheshskoe zemliachestvo v Gruzii* "Zlata Praha." *Sbornik statey*, ed. by Harold Šmalcel, Bene Dicta Publishers, Tbilisi, 2006, pp. 87-91.

³⁸ See: "Cheshskie zhenshchiny," in: *Zhenshchiny Gruzii: Polietnicheskyy i konfessional'ny aspekt*, pp. 65-68.

concerts and two conferences. With the support of the European Center for Minority Issues, Zlata Praha published a Georgian-Armenian-Russian-Azeri dictionary of frequently used words.

On Saturdays, the society offers lessons in the Czech language, history, culture, and songs. Concerts are held on its initiative in the Catholic Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral and in the concert hall of the Georgian Musical Society. Together with the embassy of the Czech Republic, it organizes events at the State Opera and Ballet House, the State Drama Theater, and the embassy.³⁹ The embassy of the Czech Republic in Tbilisi is a loyal and dedicated ally of the Zlata Praha Society.

The Belorussians

According to the 2002 general population census there are 542, Belorussians in Georgia; half of them live in Tbilisi, while the rest are scattered across the country. The largest group outside Tbilisi is found in the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria.⁴⁰ They have no clear ethnic identity and tend to associate themselves mainly with the Russians.

The Bulgarians

Sixty-two Bulgarian families (300-400 people in all) came to Georgia in the 1860s on two ships via Ukraine, from the Sea of Azov. One group settled in Ochamchire; the other in the village of Vladimirovka at Sukhumi. There was a compact Bulgarian settlement in the village of Chakvi as well. According to the 1989 population census, there were 650 Bulgarians living in Georgia.⁴¹ According to the 2002 general population census, there are 138 Bulgarians in the country, 65 of them live in Tbilisi. Others can be found in Ajaria and Guria, smaller groups are scattered across the country.⁴² They are mainly women who married men of other nationalities; the Georgian Bulgarians are mostly Russian speakers; there is a Bulgarian community in Tbilisi; the Bulgarian consulate offers Bulgarian language lessons on Sundays.

Conclusion

In the 1990s, the number of Slavs (Russians in particular) in Georgia dropped considerably. The socioeconomic factors and Russia's migration policy will cut down the number still more. Since most of the Russians who stayed behind are elderly people, we can expect that if the present trend continues, the Russian community will disappear in the next 20 to 30 years. The same can be said of the other Slavic communities, which are even smaller.

³⁹ See: H. Šmalcel, "Informatsia o Cheshskom zemliachestve v Gruzii 'Zlata Praha,'" in: *Cheshskoe zemliachsetvo v Gruzii "Zlata Praha,"* pp. 75-78.

⁴⁰ See: State Department for Statistics of Georgia...

⁴¹ See: "Bolgarskie zhenshchiny," in: *Zhenshchiny Gruzii: Polietnicheskii i konfessional'ny aspekt,* pp. 26-29.

⁴² See: State Department for Statistics of Georgia...

STATEHOOD, LANGUAGE, AND ALPHABET: A KAZAKHSTAN CASE STUDY

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As a young state, just 15 years old, the Republic of Kazakhstan is still developing its national identity and civic spirit formula. The absence or, at least, precariousness of the basis on which a *civic nation* united by a *shared system of values* could emerge is a popular topic of discussion. More often than not this problem is seen through the prism of ethnic relations, which, in turn, are reduced to the “autochthonous population”-the Russian speakers dichotomy.¹ Today, this dichotomy is still dominated by a language issue of great symbolic significance. Reform of the alphabet came to the fore as one of the aspects of the country’s state language problem in the wake of President Nazarbaev’s speech at the 12th Session of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan. It seems, however, that vague and often confusing interpretations of everything related to the concepts of *ethnos*, *nation*, *nationalism*, *national state*, and *civil society* are the real stumbling blocks. We have inherited this from the Soviet times; today, this part of Soviet legacy causes misunderstandings fraught with conflicts, at least among politicians. We intend to outline our approaches to a few of the most burning issues within the statehood-language-alphabet triangle.

Today, ethnic relations in Kazakhstan are associated with the relations between the “locals” and the “Russian speakers.” In fact, the situation is not that simple: not only is *Kazakhstani society* divided, the state-forming *Kazakh ethnos* is too. There is a vast cultural-psychological gap between the urban Kazakhs, who speak Russian and are integrated into the post-Soviet (to a certain extent Western-oriented) culture that uses the Russian language, and the population that speaks the Kazakh tongue and is guided by traditional values. The objective social distinctions between the two groups make it even harder to bridge the cultural-psychological gap. The “rupture syndrome” of the Kazakh cultural and spiritual expanse presents the main obstacle on the road toward forming a common civil self-awareness among the Kazakhstanis. Below we shall dwell on this in greater detail.

¹ N.I. Kharitonova, “Natsional’ny vopros v Kazakhstane,” available at [http://www.ia-centr/public_php?id=30], 15 June, 2006.

The far from simple relations between the “locals” and the “Russian-speaking population” are also pertinent, but in order to bring the two groups together into a real (rather than proclaimed) political entity, the Kazakhs themselves must achieve spiritual unification and national revival lest the entity known as the Kazakhstanis is left without a *supporting structure* and a firm foundation on which their statehood can be built. We shall demonstrate below that the *ethnic* structure does not contradict the idea of the nation’s *civic* model.

President Nazarbaev has posed himself the task of building a Kazakhstani *political nation* patterned on the French model,² which can be described as a prime example for civil and democratic states ruled by law. Not infrequently, the idea of a political nation is erroneously interpreted as a purely political community that has nothing to do with ethnic values (language and culture in particular). In this context, political or civil nationalism is perceived as political loyalty to any given state. This leads, on the one hand, to the illusion that it is possible to build a nation without a common tongue or cultural standards. The demand to make Russian the second state language is an example of such delusions. The opposite camp criticizes the erroneously interpreted idea of civil nationalism; the critics argue that it will not survive the simplest of tests and that a “nation” of this sort will be a community made out of whole cloth. From this it follows that purely ethnic nationalism, Kazakh nationalism in our case, is the only acceptable form of nationalism. The ideological and theoretical misunderstanding described above produced two irreconcilable positions. There is the danger of a split along ethnic lines, which is the most dangerous prospect of all.

Nationalism is the key idea. Under Soviet power, this was a term of abuse that meant either “hatred of other nations” or “the idea of superiority of one nation over the others,” or both put together. Perestroika taught us to distinguish between “correct” nationalism (“love of one’s own nation and respect of others”) and the “extreme” nationalism described above. This, however, failed to explain the deep-seated meaning of nationalism. We can even describe nationalism in general as a broad idea without negative connotations very close to what was habitually described as “national self-awareness.” Strictly speaking, nationalism is a global trend in which *ethnicity (language and culture* in particular) becomes a tool of *politics* and *power*, as well as an inalienable part of *civil self-awareness*. As distinct from the pre-capitalist states of the pre-industrial era, the state today cannot function without a common language understood by all and common cultural standards (see above about the ethnic-supporting structure of statehood). The opposite is also true: to survive in the world today an *ethnos* needs *statehood*.³ It would be no exaggeration to say that in the 21st century, nations without statehoods are either doomed to oblivion and loss of individuality, or isolation and backwardness will be the price they pay for survival (this is best illustrated by the tribes of the Amazon jungles).

This situation, which first emerged in Western Europe throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, was rooted in socioeconomic and ideological conditions. On the one hand, developing technologies required at least a universally literate population able to read and write in a particular *language*. The developing market called for mutual understanding, at least within the same state; destroyed social obstacles and increased social mobility accelerated the process of linguistic and cultural *unification*. During the pre-capitalist period, the cultural gap between a peasant and a feudal lord from one country, for example, was much more obvious than between two peasants or two feudal lords from different countries, during industrialization and capitalism, this gap became a problem. On the other hand, in the pre-capitalist world, there was uncontested faith in the holy and divine nature of power (this explains why the Ottoman sultans preferred to call themselves caliphs, that is, representatives of the Prophet, the Chinese emperors referred to themselves as “sons of Heaven,” and the Christian mon-

² Ibidem.

³ See: E. Gellner, “Prishestvie natsionalizma. Mify natsii i klassa,” *Put*, No. 1, 1992, pp. 19, 22.

archs were crowned in churches and were believed to be “the Lord’s anointed”). In the 18th and 19th centuries, when religion loosened its grip on people’s minds, the European intellectual class came to the conclusion that *the people*, rather than a supra-human Higher instance, were the source of the legitimacy of power. Only power elected by the people or acting in the interests of the people or, at least, pretending to act in the interests of *the people* (a habit of all 20th-century dictators) can be accepted as legitimate. The greater political role of language and culture led to a situation in which the people were identified with the *ethnos* as a community based on a common language and culture, while statehood began to be perceived as the “servant of the people.” Hence the slogan: every *nation* should have a *state* of its own, that is, the familiar idea of the *right of nations to self-determination*. The *nation* can be described as an *ethnos* perceived as an object of the political loyalty of its members, which recognized itself as an entity of politics and, therefore, strove for political self-organization, of which the *national state* is the highest form. The political element means that despite its ethnic foundation, the nation can no longer be regarded as a purely ethnic category.

Until the 1980s, nationalism was banned in the Soviet Union as a topic of discussion. A contemporary expert has aptly remarked: “The very lexical field in which a discussion of nationalism could have unfolded remained occupied and ideologically distorted to the extent that it was very hard to translate into Russian any Western work on national issues.”⁴ In the West, Nationalism Studies became a developed branch of sociology. There are many outstanding experts in this field: Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Miroslav Hroch, and others. So far there are only Russian translations of works by E. Gellner; there are no Kazakh translations of his works or the works of others. Meanwhile, the academic communities of young states, of which Kazakhstan is one, busy shaping their national identities badly need academic knowledge of the theory of nationalism.

The contemporary theory of nationalism distinguishes two main models of nation-building—civic and ethnic.⁵ In the past, France was a model civic nation, today the term applies to the United States and Canada. Japan, a mono-racial and mono-ethnic country, is the best example of an ethnic nation. The classics of nationalism admit that hardly any of the now existing nations can be described as totally “ethnic” or totally “civic.” Both elements are invariably present to different degrees.⁶ The Republic of Kazakhstan, still undecided about the best version of nation-building, is at a crossroads. The local situation can be placed somewhere in the middle between the two extremes of the American and the Turkish model. As the world’s largest superpower, America attracts a lot of interest, while Turkey is interesting as a linguistically, culturally, and religiously kindred country. Let’s look at both models.

America is a classical country of emigrants where the Anglo-Saxon *ethnos*, its culture, and its Protestant religion dominated from the very beginning. Today, however, multiculturalism is the predominant ideology, according to which the Americans are united in a single society by the ideal of political freedom and democracy shared by the majority. Ethnic, racial, and confessional differences have survived and are recognized by the state, but they have no decisive role to play. In real life, the state has moved away from this ideology several times. During World War II, the American Japanese were interned; today Muslims are under strong pressure. Despite this, American society is commonly regarded as a civic (political) nation united by the emotionally-charged *ideal* of political freedom and democracy.

In 1923, the Republic of Turkey replaced the Ottoman Empire, which fell apart as a result of World War I. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), a leader who managed to mobilize the masses and

⁴ *Natsionalizm i formirovanie natsiy. Teorii—modeli—kontseptsii*, ed. by A.I. Miller, Moscow, 1994, pp. I-II.

⁵ See: H. Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York, 1967.

⁶ See: C. Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, No. 19, 1993.

save the country on the brink of a national catastrophe, played an outstanding role in the development of the new Turkish state. Later he showed the way to modernization European-style. As the center of the former empire, Turkey was a polyethnic country in which the Turks of Asia Minor (Turks proper) lived (and are living) side by side with Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Kurds, Bosnians, Pomaks (Bulgarian Muslims), Lazes, Georgians, "Circassians" (a blanket term for the North Caucasian peoples), as well as members of nearly all the Turkic-speaking ethnoses of the former Soviet Union. Turkey followed the road that France and some other West European countries took in the 19th century. For the purpose of nation-building, the groups that differed ethnically and confessionally from the majority were officially recognized as minorities—Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. All Muslims, their ethnic origins notwithstanding, were regarded as Turks. The following decades saw uncompromising efforts to impose on the people a single culture that used one literary language based on the Istanbul dialect. Until recently the state refused to recognize the fact that there are more than three minorities in Turkey. At the same time, ethnic origin has never been an obstacle: all citizens are equal and all can aspire to fill any official post if they voluntarily assume the Turkish identity on which the state insists. Presidents İsmet İnönü and Turgut Özal, for example, were Kurds.

All Turkish citizens are aware of their ethnic roots, so far ethnic origins have not become a political issue; the subject is not taboo, but shared self-awareness is real and the level of shared Turkish patriotism is very high. The Kurds who live in compact groups in the country's southeastern corner—an economically and socially backward area—refuse to accept the Turkic identity. Most of the population willingly accepts everything said above.

On the whole Turkish patriotism rests on:

- the *idea of Motherland (Vatan)*, understood as the territory, statehood, and its long history (joint opposition to the Christian world within the united Ottoman state);
- the successful idea of the people's *cultural unity*; and
- the Muslim *religious feeling*, which the secular state does not openly promote; this factor, however, plays a very important role.

Turkish nationalism is closer to ethnic rather than to civil nationalism, even though it rests on a heterogeneous ethnic substratum. It should be said that its obvious etatist bias makes Turkish nationalism very similar to Russian nationalism.

The above demonstrates how the principle "many ethnoses—one *nation*" can be realized. In the case of America, this principle was realized through the unique nature of American society as a community of emigrants who share an ambitious, and emotionally uplifting political ideal. The English language, as an element of culture, plays an important role despite the ideology of multiculturalism. In Turkey, the Turkish tongue, as a cultural value and element that binds the nation together, is nothing short of an object of veneration. The confessional uniformity of the larger part of Turkish society and the long history of shared statehood are no less important.

The time has come to look at Kazakhstan, another polyethnic country, and identify the features that make it different from the U.S. and Turkey. What pattern should the Kazakhstanis follow: the American melting pot or the Turkish Kemalist nation? Kazakhstan shares the following features with the United States:

- Ethnic and confessional variety;
- Official recognition and support, to a certain extent, of cultural diversity;
- The short period that the *entire* population can regard as its *common* history (essentially the post-1917 period).

Kazakhstan shares the following features with Turkey:

- A trend toward domination of the Turkic-speaking Muslims (today, over 60 percent of the total population);
- The absence of a purely *political* (that is, non-ethnic and non-religious) ideal able to inspire and mobilize the *entire* population.

The linguistic situation in Kazakhstan sets it apart from both models: for well-known historical reasons, the Kazakh language and Kazakh culture are so far neither dominant nor venerated.

Here are several general conclusions. First, for the reasons described above, it is impossible to apply either the American or the Turkish model of nation-building to Kazakhstan; it should look for a path of its own; America and Turkey have successfully solved the problem, while following their own, very different, paths. Kazakhstan cannot emulate Turkey; it stands *even less* chance by emulating America. The French model of nation-building that President Nazarbaev selected lies between the American and the Turkish model. On the one hand, in France, like in the United States, the ambitious and emotionally charged ideal *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* played a huge role in bringing the initially heterogeneous population together. People of different ethnic origins could regard themselves as part of the French nation. On the other hand, the French culture, the French language in particular, was expected to play one of the key roles. By the time of the French Revolution, less than half of the country used the French tongue. Until the mid-20th century, the state ruthlessly imposed it on the nation. Even though the pressure was lifted, in the last few decades “linguistic chauvinism” is still very strong in France.

The linguistic side of the French model is not stressed at random. The idea of a civic nation in Kazakhstan has many ardent supporters and no less ardent opponents for the simple reason that it is erroneously understood as an idea of a complete abandonment of the ethnic element of the Kazakhstani civic spirit. In other words, the idea of a civic nation is reduced to the primitive “there is no need to study the Kazakh language.” The ardent supporters refer to Switzerland, which uses three languages, and Canada, with two state tongues, and point out that both are highly successful states at the top of the list of 50 most successful countries. They prefer to ignore the fact that the former is a confederation, while Canada is a federation with strong separatist sentiments in French-speaking Quebec. If applied in Kazakhstan, the Swiss-Canadian model would mean federalization of the single country into two semi-independent units: the Kazakh-speaking south and west and the Russian-speaking north and east coexisting under the national flag as a symbol of formal unity. This is *unacceptable in principle* as well as for many other important reasons. Those busy promoting the Swiss model are either sincerely deluded or are Kazakhstan’s secret ill-wishers.

No unitary state—Kazakhstan is and will remain one—uses two official languages. Sweden and Finland are two legal, and purely formal, exceptions: their Finnish and Swedish minorities comprise several percent of the total population. For this reason, the Finnish language in Sweden and the Swedish language in Finland are used as second state tongues. In real life, this is merely a goodwill gesture because both countries use only one tongue: Swedish in Sweden and Finnish in Finland. Russia could have displayed its goodwill in the same way in relation to Kazakhstan by making the Kazakh tongue the second state language. An impressive, but completely meaningless gesture. To sum up: only federations and confederations use more than one official language (an alternative that is completely unacceptable in Kazakhstan’s case), or such use is reduced to fiction, no matter how impressive (those who insist on two tongues for Kazakhstan will not like this⁷).

In other words, worldwide experience has already rejected the idea of two equal state languages in a unitary state. This means that Kazakhstan should use one of two alternatives for dealing with its

⁷ Interview with I.S. Klimoshenko, Chairman of the LAD Republican Slavic Movement, available at [http://www.russians.kz/2006/12/12/intervju_s_predsedatelem_respublikanskogo_slavjanskogo_dvizhenija_lad_is_klimoshenko.html].

linguistic predicament: either (a) the state should insist that sooner or later all its citizens master the Kazakh language as the state tongue. It will become the dominant one and gradually develop into a tool of communication among ethnic groups, or (b) the state must go back to Soviet times when the Russian language dominated in almost all spheres of life, while the Kazakh language was driven to the social margins.

No compromise is possible for the very deep-rooted reasons explained above. The idea of the Kazakh-speakers and Russian-speakers existing in parallel dimensions and using their own languages in all spheres without infringing on the rights of each other is a utopian one that cannot be realized. For historical reasons, sooner or later, one of the languages will be forced to retreat.

We shall demonstrate below why the (a) alternative is the only acceptable one and why the (b) alternative will destroy Kazakhstani society. The utopian effort to perpetuate domination of the Russian language in Kazakhstan would have been a crying injustice to the Kazaks from the moral point of view. There is also a pragmatic side. Continued domination of Russian would have preserved the still obvious cultural and psychological rupture and a linguistic and ethnic gap. This means that the pernicious situation in which part of the nation can use two languages, while the other part uses only one and does not understand the native language of the other part will be preserved. Indeed, who will learn a language that is useless for everyday and career purposes? In other words, the two groups will continue living in different cultural and in partly different information environments. They will never blend into a single civil society and will remain two separate communities living under one, fragile, political roof that may collapse at any moment. To bring all those who live in Kazakhstan together into a *single cultural and information expanse* so that they recognize themselves as a *united civil society*, it is absolutely necessary for the Russian speakers to learn the Kazakh language. Even if we do accept bilingualism as Kazakhstan's hallmark, it should become a *universal* feature that would unite *all* Kazakhstanis. Since Russian is fairly widespread, the problem is reduced to the need to master the state tongue: this is the *civic duty* of all who do not know it, but who sincerely regard themselves as citizens of Kazakhstan and wish the country well.

There is another important aspect: we have written above that one language will be forced to retreat and tried to prove that in the Republic of Kazakhstan it is the Russian language that should retreat for the sake of the Kazakh and not vice versa. This should not be taken to mean that we want to drive the Russian language from the republic's social life. We do not mean that. Even if we imagine that in future the Russian language will be deprived of any special status (that is, have no legal advantages over the German, Korean, or Dungan languages—this is suggested merely for the sake of argument), it will never be forgotten and never be excluded from the social sphere. The Russian diaspora has a strong metropolitan country just across the border that produces and will continue to produce a stream of cultural products in Russian. They are used today by all Kazakhstanis, not only ethnic Russians, and will be used in the future as well. In the future, the Russian language's status in the "linguistic hierarchy" will be lower than that of the state tongue, but much higher than of any other language used by the ethnic groups.

The time has come to discuss a switch from the Cyrillic to the Latin script. This is a pet idea of the nationally-oriented sector of the Kazakhstani public, which has been a topic of discussion since the late 1980s. The president, who officially voiced it at the 12th Session of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, triggered a heated discussion. We are convinced that (a) this switch is inevitable and (b) it should be realized immediately without waiting for a "more opportune moment." Here are our reasons.

First: why should the alphabet be changed? Here is an example: recently one of us witnessed a disgusting and humiliating situation in which a Kazakh family, when selecting a name for their newborn daughter, rejected the alternatives Meldir and Rabiřa because the older generation feared, not without reason, that the girl would be called Moldir or RabiGa, which sounded wrong to their ears. To

put it simply, they were concerned about how the name would sound in Russian. In academic parlance, they took into account the objective fact of the domination of the Russian orthoepic norm in the Kazakhstans' linguistic perception (this is true not only of the Russian speakers, but also of a large number of locals. To better understand the depth of the Kazakhs' national humiliation, let's imagine that a Russian family declines the names of Ivan or Timofey because they would sound wrong in English. We do hope that this black day for the Russians will never come).

Is Cyrillic at the bottom of all the problems? Yes, but this is only part of the answer. It would be more correct to say that the switch to the Latin script is not so much a linguistic as a political issue. This does not make the change of alphabet less urgent. Linguistically, the Latin and Cyrillic scripts are two kindred graphic systems that can be used for an absolutely adequate alphabet for any of the Turkic languages, the Kazakh language included. In real life, however, the purely linguistic approach turns out to be one-sided and therefore insufficient. Under the strong and permanent impact of the Russian culture and the Russian language, Cyrillic, an absolutely harmless system per se, becomes a factor of powerful cultural pressure. The sounds absent from the Russian and denoted by additional letters in the Kazakh Cyrillic alphabet are seen to be of secondary importance and little suited for official use. In the episode described above, the elegant Kazakh names of Møldir and Rabıra, with the suspect sounds denoted by letters "ø," "ı," and "ƒ," were rejected. The fact that the Russian tongue dominated in Soviet times irrespective of the alphabet used by the Kazakh language could have produced similar attitudes. The Cyrillic script merely enhances this effect and will continue doing this. If the Kazakh language started using another script and all letters became "non-Russian," the involuntary psychological attitude toward the sounds of the native tongue as "normal" and "specific" will disappear.

This raises another question: Will another language, English, take the place of Russian? This means: Will we trade bad for worse at our own expense? The answer is "No." The alphabet is the hallmark of any civilization and the choice of alphabet is the choice of a country's civilizational future. This is what the reform's opponents say.⁸ It is too early to speak about a shift to the Latin script as a "drift toward the West."⁹ The Latin script holds a very special place in the world today: it is used by many countries geographically and civilizationally far removed from each other. It is used by Muslim states of the far abroad—Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Kenya, and Nigeria (the first three are among the leaders of the Islamic world); Turkic-speaking CIS countries—Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan; Vietnam and the Philippines in the non-Muslim part of Asia, as well as Latin America, Africa, and Oceania. This makes the Latin script an international alphabet. It arrived along with the Western civilization, but it became detached from it long ago. Today it is a *universal cosmopolitan phenomenon*.

The Cyrillic script, on the other hand, is one of the *regional alphabets* clearly associated with the civilizational area of the Orthodox Slavs. The switch to the Latin script will mean that Kazakhstan joins the world community as an equal member, while the Cyrillic remains a symbol of our country's cultural, psychological and, therefore, political dependence on Russia. (We have cited above the ugly and degrading forms of this dependence.) In fact, this does nothing to promote healthy and mutually advantageous relations between Kazakhstan and Russia. The switch to the Latin script will indeed symbolize a certain "distancing from Russia,"¹⁰ but by the same token it will help us leave the negative legacy of the past behind for the sake of both countries and their nations.

Why should this be done now? Is haste advisable or inevitable? Would it not be wiser to wait until the end of the transition period when the national economy becomes strong enough to cope with this far from simple—and far from cheap—task? We cannot and we should not wait. This important

⁸ Interview with I.S. Klimoshenko, Chairman of the LAD Republican Slavic Movement, available at [http://www.russians.kz/2006/12/12/intervju_s_predsedatelem_respublikanskogo_slavjanskogo_dvizhenija_lad_is_klimoshenko.html].

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

task should be completed now: the cultural-political issue has not only an economic aspect (the state can find the necessary means), but also a psychological, or even moral-psychological, aspect. In other words, the reform should cause as little discomfort for the nation as possible. Today, when the absolute majority of the non-Kazakhs do not know the state language, while knowledge of the Kazakh language is limited to its oral form among a large share of the Kazakhs, a change in alphabet will be a relatively painless process. Those who do not know Kazakh will learn it in its Latin form. In 10 or 20 years, when most Kazakhs and people of other ethnic groups have mastered the state language in its Cyrillic form, it will be much harder (although probably slightly cheaper) to reform the alphabet. Moral and psychological traumas will be inevitable.

There is another fairly sensitive issue. We mentioned at the beginning of this article that the state-forming Kazakh ethnos and its cultural and spiritual expanse are ruptured. This is not an issue of domestic political importance alone. The Kazakh tongue, which will become de jure and de facto the state language, should be restored not only among the Russified urban Kazakhs. There is another, no less important, aspect. The state and the academic community should concentrate on the *Kazakhs living abroad* (the *oralmans*); much attention should be paid to those who are prepared to return to their historical homeland from the Far Abroad. The problem is a grave one: even those Kazakhs who lived in Kazakhstan and avoided assimilation under Soviet power (that is, preserved the native tongue and many of the ethnic traditions) had to perform a “leap forward” together with the rest of the country, losing in the process some of their traditional culture and mentality. The Kazakhs of the Far Abroad (especially those living in the Muslim world) preserved what had been a common heritage on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution.

These two groups (separated in the physical sense) need each other and seek mutual assistance. The heritage that the *oralmans* have preserved should be restored to the Kazakhstani: we should launch systematic studies of their linguistic features and folklore as well as the traditions and myths preserved by the older generation. (It should be said here that nothing is being done on the international scale to restore and to study the overall picture of the Kazakhs’ language and their literary and folklore heritage.) On the other hand, the *oralmans* will find it hard to adjust to contemporary Kazakhstani society and its mentality, which is very different from what it was in the past. This means that they will need assistance in the form of adaptation centers where they can study the Russian language and the history of Kazakhstan (the Soviet period especially) and profit from psychological and consultative services. Everything should be done to help these people adjust to the land of their ancestors and to ensure that others, including the local Kazakhs, not regard them as aliens.

Not all Kazakhs living abroad are prepared to move to their historical homeland. There are many who want to return, while just as many prefer to live where they are. This is true, in the first place, of the Kazakhs in Western Europe and Turkey, as well as in some other countries. The metropolitan country, that is, the Republic of Kazakhstan, should remain in contact with the entire diaspora; it should not restrict itself to persuading people to come back “home.” Those who prefer to stay abroad and who will not come to Kazakhstan in the near future should receive their share of the attention. Israel, Armenia, Greece, and Ireland are doing precisely this. This calls for a single information expanse in the form of a high-quality informative international Kazakh website equally interesting to the Kazakhstani and the Kazakh diaspora. This is very important: the Kazakhs inside and outside Kazakhstan need cultural and spiritual reunification. The distance between a Kazakh in Afghanistan and a Kazakh in Sweden is no shorter than the distance between the Russified “shala-қзақ” and the Kazakhs of the remote auls inside the country. The gap should be bridged. We also need a complete database on Kazakh academics, businessmen, and people of the creative arts living in the Near and Far Abroad to be able to invite them to cooperate with their historical homeland.

Finally, Kazakhstan should extend cultural assistance on a regular basis to those parts of the Kazakh diaspora that have chosen to stay in the country they are living in and to remain *Kazakhs*: they

prefer to use their native tongue and be aware of their history and culture. Kazakhstan can encourage these determined people by providing them, at their request, with language and history teachers, musical folk instruments, etc. Such groups should receive Kazakh films, music, etc. on a regular basis. So far the Ministry of Culture of Kazakhstan has established contacts with the Kazakhs of Turkey. It seems that a specialized agency working together with a network of adaptation centers mentioned above would be better suited to the task.

Obviously, the Cyrillic-Latin script issue should be resolved in favor of determined promotion of the Kazakh tongue as the state language based on the Latin script. This is of vital importance for establishing closer contacts with the Kazakh diaspora and for successful adaptation of the *oralmans* to Kazakhstani society. On the one hand, the Latin script is much better suited for Kazakhstan's emerging international information expanse. On the other, it is needed to let those who return to their historical homeland feel at ease once they master the Kazakh language. Finally, the very fact that the two issues—the language/alphabet and the emergence of an international Kazakh community under the aegis of the independent Republic of Kazakhstan—are closely connected is another argument in favor of the state language/alphabet alternative.

To sum up. We are convinced that a single civic nation in the Republic of Kazakhstan stands a good chance of emerging. To achieve this we should realize that the *nation* is not merely an ethnos, it is larger than an ethnos, and the *civic* model of a nation is an open door for all who wish to naturalize. In no way can the civic model be interpreted as linguistic and cultural “omnivorousness” and rejection of the language and culture of the state-forming ethnos. To become the supporting structure of the civic nation and the state, the state-forming ethnos of Kazakhstan, in turn, urgently needs inner reunification. We are much closer to this aim than it might seem, therefore we should go on ahead until we perform the last and critically important thrust. Success is not guaranteed. To negotiate all the obstacles on this path, we must work hard, while our leaders, the academic community, and the public should develop a clear understanding of what they want to achieve.
