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Features of the Democratic Processes Development in Kazakhstan

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During the whole period of the independent development Kazakhstan has been realizing consistent transition to democratic and law state organization. In this period Kazakhstan's society has experienced important changes, achieved notable progress in democratization. At the same time Kazakhstan has faced considerable problems and obstacles. However, the common course of political reforms has remained invariable despite the problems of the first years of the transition period.

John Dewey, a well known American philosopher of XX Century, considering a unity of democratic activity as a result of "attempts to get rid of the evils inherited from former political institutes", understood democracy as a "gradual movement forward" every step of which is characterized by unexpectedness of the final result, executed under the influence of a lot of various conditions.

The conditions in which Kazakhstan began to fulfill political reforms were unfavorable in their majority. Let's remember that the country's stepping on the way of the system transformations in the beginning of the 90-s occurred in conditions, a short mentioning of which gives us a conception of the complicated situation of that period. The country experienced a fundamental socio-economic crisis, the consequence of which became recession in industry and hyperinflation. Changing of the economic and political formation led to a quick decrease of social living standard. At the same time there were no sources of market economy, which are one of the important economic suppositions for political reforms in the country. All that took place against the background of ethnic factor's politization, multinational relations aggravation. In these conditions Kazakhstan as a country not having traditions of democratic development and democratic institutes faced the problem to create the State system practically from zero.

At the same time the attention should be drawn to the fact that from 1990 to 1993 the Republic was forced to start creating the State system on the ground of the old Constitution and the Soviet Union laws, which, reflecting the principles of the former system absolutely did not respond to the new reality, could not be a legal basis for building up of the State system.

Exactly in that period very strong efforts were taken to form the first generation of imperfect but independent leg-

islative acts. The Soviet system of state governance that had existed before was completely dismantled, the Communist party stopped to be the "monopolist" on the political field of the country. The post of President of the Republic was introduced in Kazakhstan. Construction and institutionalization of the central organs of State governance started. At the same time the process of State building up included, first of all, a choice between the President and Parliament systems of governance, solving the problem of power separation and distribution of authority between the central and regional levels of power, i.e. what is called decentralization today.

In 1993 Kazakhstan began searching the optimal model of Kazakhstan's political system. By that time there the principle of power separation to the legislative, executive and judicial branches had been implemented, alternative Parliament elections had taken place for the first time in the history. Those changes of political system were legislatively fixed in the first Constitution of January, 1993.

Presuppositions of new Kazakhstan's Constitutional legislation were demands of comprehensive modernization of society being in condition of deep crisis in the beginning of 1990. The Constitution of Kazakhstan, which had obtained state independence, was to preserve continuity in everything positive in Kazakhstan's society; to lay the foundation of political and law regulators for possible conflict solutions with simultaneous declaration, fixation of principles and norms facilitating multi-vector reforming and further stable development of the society and state.

However, as time passed by, it became more obvious that the constructed system of power could not manage continuously appearing problems, especially in economy. Besides, during the first years of independence a contradiction between the course of the executive power presented by the President of Kazakh SSR and the legislative power of the Supreme Council occurred.

Therefore, the State represented itself as an unprecedented "hybrid" of a President's Republic of the Soviet type. It was explained by the fact that insuperable contradiction between the new President's way of governance and the old Soviet system, which genetically transferred to the new state all former defects, initially emerged. Later it appeared that exactly Soviets of Delegates became an obstacle for the paces of the society and state modernization, openly started

to conserve an old structure of economy, slowed down the progressive development.

The representative Soviet system of Kazakhstan was abolished at all the levels in order to improve the situation; their authority was delegated to the Head of State. In other words, all the responsibility for the country development was assigned to President N. A. Nazarbayev. Thus, Institute of Presidency in the conditions of the post Soviet reality appeared in a role of a leading political institute by the force of objective circumstances and for the welfare of the new independent state.

By 1995 a necessity for serious strengthening of the executive power being able to react promptly and manage the process of economic life had occurred

The nation of Kazakhstan made its historical choice by adopting the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the all people's referendum in August, 30th 1995. Therefore, Kazakhstan acknowledged its adherence to adopted democratic and economic transformations, intention to form and improve the civil society and promote the formation of the legal basis of our State's development.

Let us point out that the society can not be fully democratic in the absence of the certain conditions. One of such conditions is the society's adoption and absorption of the democratic values. The citizens' social, political, economic, religious freedoms should not only be legalized but realized in practice, their observance must be controlled by the civil society. It is necessary to separate authority provided by an effective system of check and balances. A basic provision of democracy is the executive authority's responsibility of the Parliament, independent judicial power and ombudsmen. It is impossible to imagine a democratic State without free, competitive elections. Right protection of cultural, ethnical, confessional and other minorities is not only essential attribute of democratic societies, but also a serious requirement for its development. Also the presence of constant means of the expression and representation of citizen's interests in the forms of parties, associations, independent mass media is essential. And the basic principle of the supremacy of law is at the top of the pyramid.

The political pluralism and multi-party system are today's reality. Major political parties which possess the real influence are formed; their role in election process is promoted. The liberal changes in electoral legislation were adopted. Very important step towards decentralization of the State governance system was taken. The recruitment of the public persons to any of the state body is being performed exclusively by the contest. Creating system of E-Government will expand an access to state services for citizens. Many effects were made for creating the independent judicial system. The Institute of Human Rights Commissioner was established. Country has joined the International Human Rights Conventions. Equal relationships between the all ethnical and confessional groups of society were really provided.

An important tendency in the social political system development became a development of the civil society institutes, increasing role of the public associations and non-governmental organizations. At the present time more than five thousands of non-governmental organizations perform their activity. Measures on the legislative support of non-governmental organizations activity are assumed. A new model of the partnership's relations between "third sector" and the State was created in the frames of the Civil Forum. The development of non-governmental sec-

tor contributes to an increasing citizen's public activity; strengthening of the society impacts to the quality of the state bodies functioning.

Independent mass media are developing by stable temps. Among the all working mass media in the republic 80% are non-governmental ones. Kazakhstan's Internet audience is the largest in Central Asia and amounts to more than 600 thousands of people.

Social development of Kazakhstan is characterized positively as well. Systems of health care, education and social protection are subjects for reforms. An active policy towards the social welfare improvement is conducted at the present time. The salary is increasing in state organizations and other offices with different form of ownership. Pensionary payments are being recalculated upward, peoples' income and average wage is increasing. An average family in our Republic is at the better place, than in majority of countries of CIS according to the size of the aggregate income. Considerable achievements in economy and social sphere allow Kazakhstan's people to face the future with optimism.

Generally we can emphasize that nowadays process of the Kazakhstan's society democratization has everything that is needed for the constructive and successive development.

Feature of the Kazakhstan's State policy is searching for the new structures and methods of further democratization and civil society development. Today the main attention in the State is attracted to the legislative and legal provision of the process of political reformation institutionalization, initiated by the Head of State and being studied in the frameworks of the activity of the State Commission on Democratic Reform Program Development and Specification. Creation of the State Commission on Democratic Reform Program Development and Specification under the direct governance of the Head of State illustrates that issues of the further Kazakhstan's society democratization are prioritized. Membership and authority expansion of the State Commission are the obvious demonstration of the transition of the nationwide dialogue to a new qualitative stage. A coordinated system activity of the work groups on particular directions of the political system reforming and expanding the political parties' involvement in the State Commissions activity became an indicator of the structure productivity.

The further development of the political system democratization and modernization are one of the components in the Strategy for Kazakhstan to join the world's 50 most competitive countries, presented by the President in his State of the Nation Address of 2006.

We need to bear in mind the following important postulates in order to achieve the intended objective.

First of all, the package of the democratic reform enhancement in political sphere of society and also all processing legislations must primarily proceed from the acting Constitution, basic principles of which are the foundation of the Kazakhstan's society democratization.

Secondly, it is obvious that on the further country's political system development it is necessary to balance up interests of the state and society, proceeding from Kazakhstan's political realities ignoring which may cause a collapse of all initiatives.

At the same time, taking into consideration not only the experience of the developed democracies but home cultural and historical traditions and national interests, the final result of all the transformations must become the qualitative changes of the Kazakhstan's society position.

Nation-state in the age of globalization

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Last ten years the theme of globalization has become very popular and the term “globalization” has been included into the scientific and politic lexicon. Thus, transformations of the world economy hold the significant place in researches of processes characterizing the globalization. Meanwhile the globalization has inserted new moments in the state policy, changed the role of the state in the world relations system. Formed huge supranational system functioning as a single integral mechanism with its institutional and legal systems, as well as with moveable economic borders, transforms basically and qualitatively both the traditional politic picture and the view of the state is classic role.

As it is represented, the formed skeleton of the world politics and economy is characterized by the following basic moments.

First. The globalization erases the verge between internal and foreign policy. Global and integration processes in the political, economical, financial, industrial, social, military - political and other spheres are becoming a guiding line on the way of development of any state. The ignoring of this factor makes ineffectual attempts to build development strategy of the state.

Second. The economization process of policy gathers momentum rapidly. In the foreign affairs it is shown in the integration process development. Realities have been dictated by all historical course of the world development and this tendency is stable and dominate.

Third. The concept of security is being transformed. Armed forces defend not only any more the sovereignty of the states and their national borders, but the economic interests of the states and transnational integration structures. Such system of ensuring the economical security changes the approach to the military reform, staff of armed forces and armament.

Forth. The role of state transforms. In conditions of the globalization states can not ignore challenges generating supranational flows in the economical, informational, financial, social, military and other spheres. Most developed states have already delegated a part of the long-term national interests to the financial, banking and credit institutions, transnational consortiums and corporations, integration structures.

Fifth. The interests of the world economy form and frequently do not coincide with the national interests of the states that compels them not only to consider world tendencies, but also to follow them in hope for the participation in the formation of managing world system and its distribution.

The mentioned factors testify that in the conditions of the globalization the mutually addition of supranational and national interests occur on the one side and on other side the strengthening influence of the supranational factor in relation to national is observed.

In Eduard Kochetov's opinion: «As the newest phenomenon the globalization could not put the world institutional system aside. Modification has touched on all components of the system. However, these tendencies are shown most brightly in qualitative and functional transformations of such institute as the state Traditionally the state bases upon a political regime and forms the legal system on the basis of it. But in current conditions the legal system should rest on not so much then the political regime of the state, as the geopolitical and geo-financial regulations. It issues from that the countries forming legal rules on the basis of policy (geopolitics) and political regime lose to the states which focusing on the formation of legal positions on the assumption of economical and financial purposes (geo-economical and geo-financial), defining the financial regime and policy. In order to the state be considered strong, capable to protect the national interests and than realize in the world economy, the law in this state should basically base upon on the financial regime. The long-term strategy of national development should be built proceeding from this » [1].

Similar statements have signalized new approaches for functions of the state. Nowadays the world community represents the whole elements with steady connections, dependence and certain relations among themselves. Certainly, first of all, such elements are the sovereign national states being the subject of policy not only as holders of power and authoritative attitudes in the frame of a single country, but as holders of state sovereignty on international arena.

However, besides the sovereign national states active subjects of the international relations are a different kind of the transnational structures and communities influencing more and more on the character and tendencies of the development of the international relations.

In the view of this it theoretical researches of the international attitudes have always placed special emphasis on the problem of mutual relations both among states directly and in the frame of various aspects of unions and associations. At that theoretical discussions on last problem had especially become active in XX century in communication with the significant growth of integration aspirations.

It is important to note, that the ending of the Cold War and change in the international system had become “nutrient” for the new view on this phenomenon. Today during integration processes in the Europe, America and Asia it can not be unconscious of countries having the integral attribute of the state independence - the sovereignty, demonstrate (though rarely) unprecedented previously readiness to transfer its part in the sphere of joint structures and institutes. Another became obviously that talk about the withering away of sovereignty and disappearance of states is prematurely. The occurrence of the new states on the world political arena has testified to the

attractiveness of sovereignty and state as the political institute. Thus new non-traditional security threats have become challenges not only for realistic theories, but also for many theoretical constructions of liberal-minded. The globalization of economic processes and the extension of pluralistic democracy were accompanied not only the expansion of the principle of cooperativity as the principle of the international relations, but also the beginning of new problems and conflicts.

It is to be observed that at the present day there are considerably various opinions among politologists that the state is function of the general, global or on the contrary the global world is secondary toward countries being part of one.

A number of authors [2] recognize the known reduction of administrative potential of the states, especially at the macroeconomic level. However they consider the maintenance of the key role of states is indubitable because only it - through cooperation with other states - provides conditions for the implementation of some effective international management.

Adherents of this concept give three initial postulates which confirm the theory. First of all, if the international economy mismatches the model of supranational global economic system working in the local mode that it is possible to assume the national states continue to carry out the important functions of regulation as national economies and as the international economic relations.

Secondly, the entering of sovereign states in the world community structure motivates them to carry out the important function of the maintenance of legitimacy of supranational and sub-national administrative mechanisms, as well as the control over their functioning. This function is one of the main things for the national state.

Thirdly, the formation of world and regional markets together with the growth of new telecommunication networks has narrowed the volume of the state exclusive control over the own territory. However the state has kept the considerable control over the population: people are less mobile, than money, the goods and ideas. Also they remain in a sense of word "more national" because they need passports, visas, the residence and professional accreditation. Only the national state has the right to speak in the name of its population.

Other part of scientists holds the opinion that the modern national states forming unions lose the ability of management, and the national development is determined by global and integration processes. If during the Cold War the state had maintained the defense potential on the desired level then with the ending of war the mobilization function has lost the former meaning.

Since the end of the last century the changes of the world economy have given the ground for the statement on the formation of global economy in which market stimulus prevail on motives and interests of separately taken states even the most powerful ones. The capital is mobile and flows there where it will be economic benefits. The labour power is rather static, but it should adapt to the world requirements of competitiveness. The wide rights of employees and social safety lose the importance, as well as the national monetary and fiscal policy coming into the antagonism with the requirement of global markets and transnational corporations. Thus, the national state discontinues carrying out the functions of the economic manager effectively; its fate is to give the social and public services necessary from the point of view of the international capital. Arguments in favour of this view were made by a number of researchers among which, first of all is Ohmae K. [3] and Reich R. [4].

In Robert Reich's opinion: «in the new prospect national states become local authorities of the global system. They are unable to influence independently the level of economic

activity and employment in the frame of own territories which all in a greater degree are determined by the mobile international capital. Functions of national states assimilate to the functions of municipalities inside the state to support the infrastructure and production of mass commodities required to business at the maximum possible low price ».

Nowadays attributes of convergence of above-mentioned concepts of the international relations are more and more appreciable, borders between them become in a sense reasonably diffuse. The globalization and its structural constituent integration are not the predetermined and independent process. The historical experience of XX century has specified inevitability of dynamic interaction of processes of national and supranational beginnings, the specific weight of which could essentially change, but any of these processes never superseded another.

The analysis of various theories testifies that modern world policy has become an arena of the escalate struggle of the global and internal political factor. On the other side, on the world scene the role of the national states varies. Their dependence grows not only from the international community on the decision of problems demanding the integration of efforts of many states or the drafting of integrated positions on large international conflicts, but also from the policy of group of countries which the most developed and powerful in economically and militarily and their politico-military alliances. According to the figurative expression of some authors the globalization along with integration «has challenged to the sovereignty of the national states» [5] as lead to some reduction of the sphere of authorities though do not pose a threat to the sovereignty of the states from the legal point of view.

The sense "sovereignty" has two meanings. As is known, there are the internal sovereignty and external sovereignty. The internal sovereignty is defined by the character of mutual relations between the state and society. The government possesses the internal sovereignty in the event that it is lodged with power authorization which makes opportunities to carry out the exclusive control over the most various social activities, including economic activities. In turn the internal sovereignty in economy is evidenced in the government management of the state assets, the authorization for government bodies to collect taxes or regulate the activity of private sector.

The external sovereignty demonstrates in mutual relations among state-members of the international system. Distinctive feature of these relations consists that they are not regulated by mono-central power which with the purpose of the getting of the certain preferences in the economic sphere and the security of the state, but granted the part of the sovereignty to the international structures. Thus economic interdependence forces national states to reduce the imported goods tariff and refuse the control over the flow of capital, thereby meaningfully agreeing on the certain limitation of the sovereignty.

At that in turn the international cooperation of the national governments on the one side and the international organizations and multinational or global structures on the other side promotes the strengthening of the sovereignty.

As a whole there are some variants of the cooperation as responsive factors on globalization's challenges, first of all, the strengthening of the international institutes' competence; secondly the creation of new structures, for a example WTO having the supranational mechanism for the resolution of disputes, and thirdly, the formation of large integration structures.

For the national security here the globalization makes the corrective amendments. In opinion of one of the established authorities on war and peace questions «after the ending of the Cold War, arms have lost the priority significance. Eco-

conomic and social factors are the main instrument of the establishing of security inside the states today and are brought to the forefront in the security maintenance» [6]. The truth of this thesis once again was confirmed in the events which took place in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2005.

Today it is obvious, that even the most influential states cannot solve this problem exclusively basing upon own forces. Transnational threats and challenges compel to join together efforts of states for the counteraction to negative factors of the globalization. At the present stage of the world development on the first place there is the thesis - the maintenance of collective security of the interested states is the security of each of them.

In the context of Kazakhstan in this case it is necessary to proceed from several basic positions:

- the national security of Kazakhstan is inseparable from the formation of strategic, balanced system of the Eurasian region security, because Kazakhstan geopolitically here represents one of the basic components of development;
- at the turn of centuries the Eurasian region has become the most sensitive to any world flows and changes, and represents the complex mosaic of civilization' systems and deep contradictions;
- the model of the harmonious and safer world XXI centuries will be predetermined by the Eurasian security.

As it is represented, the globalization as a whole does not have the direct threat for security of the national states. The reasons of possible dangerous influence of challenges of globalization see in that it is difficult to calculate all participants of the game on the world arena and consequently difficultly to develop the strategy of counteraction to some or other factors at the national level. Nevertheless, this problem quite settles in the frame of the regional unions and associations on condition of their interaction in the solution to the specified problems.

By the means of official and informal structures the global cooperation forms the decision mechanism of universal problems, including problems born of the globalization. Such cooperation is capable to ensure equality and stability in the world and be the key to the decision of problems of general scale, including health protection and environments, the prevention of political crisis and instability, the achievement of world peace and security of planet. The problem consists in finding new forms and creation new institutes for the decision of problems connected with globalization.

Today under the influence of integration factors in the world, preconditions for the further rallying the national states, the creation of more humanistic world order, the gradual forming of the global civil society, the statement of norms and principles of the culture of peace in relation among people are forming actively.

Among practical results of such integration ties can be named the certain disrupting of the monopoly position of Great Powers, the democratization of the international cooperation is increasing the information access of the population and involving in their concerning decision-making, the real deepening of cooperation between countries in the frame of the united Europe, a number of centripetal tendencies inside of the post-Soviet integration structures.

The expansion of resource base of separate states and existing international law enforce the observance of equality on the international arena; strengthen the influence of civilized factors on the foreign policy of governments, that as a whole it causes the strengthening of national states positions in the bosom of world politics. Such tendencies strengthening the role of various political and cultural centers of influence in the international sphere, finally, lead to the formation of policy and preconditions for the possible reconstruction of the multi-polar world on new principles.

It is necessary to have also in a view, that the globalization despite of its all influence, for the present does not carry universal character. Both elements of interdependence and elements of globalization are present at the international relations. Besides, in the different countries and various integration associations this combination far is not identical. The degree of integration depends on will of the states which define the level of the participation in integration processes. It is especially obvious, that the majority of states still have considered the inviolable reasons of the sovereignty of the rights.

Taking into account it can draw the conclusion that the globalization is demonstrated in the formation of united integration system, in the base of which are consisted both the national states themselves and sub-regional, regional unions and associations among states. Thus, from the point of view of the reconstruction of XX century history the globalization is interlink between the system of international relations in the war period and the system of the international relations of the succeeding period.

At that the process of the globalization has double character of interaction of direct subjects. On the one hand process is conducted through the national states and regional associations and other side it influences on them which is expressed by the aspiration of countries to the integration into various spheres. The dynamics of this interaction, in its turn, is determined by complex mutual relations taking place between global adjusting mechanisms and national interests of states, as well as priorities of regional unions. The states in these mutual relations are the major objects and subjects. That is why states should be featured the central place in the analysis of the processes of globalization and integration.

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Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia

ZEYNO BARAN, FREDERICK STARR, SVANTE CORNELL

Islamic Radicalism has become a serious problem in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Though these areas are bastions of moderate and traditional Islam and among the most secularized areas of the Muslim world, radicalism has made a forceful comeback in the past two decades. Beginning in the late 1980s, alien Islamic proselytizing has gathered speed across the Muslim regions of the former Soviet Union, and has resulted in the spread of radical ideologies, militancy, and even terrorism. Worst hit have been the Russian North Caucasus and some parts of Central Asia, especially the Ferghana valley shared by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Patterns of radicalism differ among the regions. In the North Caucasus, a Salafi revival in Dagestan coincided with the brutal war in Chechnya, and contributed to the radicalization of the Chechen resistance and its spread to adjoining republics. Coupled with backfiring Russian centralization efforts, the entire North Caucasus is now on the brink of long-term destabilization.

Central Asia, on the other hand, has seen stronger external link, as foreign radical groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Al Qaeda have established a presence directly, as in the former, or through local allies, as in the latter. Adding to the problem, these groups in Central Asia have splintered into smaller entities difficult to identify let alone counteract. In Azerbaijan, long spared a significant radical presence, an increase in both Shi'a and Salafi Sunni radicalism can be observed.

The causes of this radicalization are hotly debated. In the west, radicalization is often blamed on the socio-economic crisis, or political repression radicalizing oppositional forces. These explanations are only of limited validity, at best interacting with complex post-Soviet identity crises, personal vendettas, regional rivalries, relative deprivation, and most importantly foreign proselytizing, a factor widely underestimated in the West. To this should be added the criminalization of many of the most notorious militant armed groups, whose involvement in drug trafficking and other organized crime has been well-documented.

In Central Asia, where the West has had a considerable presence, the reaction has been different. In fact, the West has shown little understanding, let alone support, for the seriousness of the radical and militant challenge faced by Central Asian states. Instead, the west has focused on the governments' mismanagement of the situation, while refraining from responding to calls for assistance. This culminated in 2005 following the insurgency and crackdown in Andijan in Uzbekistan, which left several hundred people, mainly civilians, dead. The result of the episode and the mismanagement of the crisis by both the Uzbek and western governments was the loss of western influence and presence in Uzbekistan. It is apparent that radical groups now seek to emulate the 'color revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine, aware of the fact that popular rebellion against authoritarian

governments attracts support and not condemnation from the West. Hence, several groups appear to have adapted to this environment and benefited from the breakdown in Uzbekistan's relations with the West.

In this environment, there are several important implications for the West and the European Union in particular, explored in further detail in this paper:

1. Develop skills, especially in the intelligence community, in understanding the ideological framework of the radical and terrorist groups.

2. The radical and externally sponsored Islamic movements and organizations existing in the region offer little hope for a meaningful dialogue. Instead, it is the moderate majority and the secular parts of the population, that should be engaged in dialogue.

3. The West needs to support reform-minded officials within governments, not just anti-government forces. The West needs to find points for collaboration within the governments, to support progressive groups and work toward evolutionary change.

4. The link between drug trafficking and religious extremism is proven beyond doubt, and the majority of demand for drugs arises from EU countries. Lending major financial support to counter-narcotics would hence be a major effort in fighting militancy and terrorism.

5. The EU should promote continental trade across Central Asia and the Caucasus, which would bring new economic opportunities to these populations and reduce the appeal of radicalism.

6. EU educational exchanges should increase, and extended to the provinces, including those experiencing Islamic radical movements.

7. The EU should focus assistance on the delivery of governmental services to deprived areas, and in general, on greater degrees of decentralization and self-government.

8. Further, the EU should treat the issue of support for extremism in Central Asia, including Afghanistan, and the Caucasus as a subject for bilateral discussion with relevant Arab states and Iran.

9. The EU may find it useful to look at the Turkish example, which is relevant to understanding the tension between trying to create a modern and open democratic system and dealing with the threat of fundamentalist and militant Islamic political ideology. To this end, the EU should engage Turkey as it addresses issues of Islamic radicalism in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

CURRENTS OF ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN THE REGION

Islamists have long been interested in Central Asia, a historic center of classical Islam located in a region of strategic importance. Yet, they entered the region in significant

ways only since the late 1980s, as it had been closed off to the rest of the Islamic world by decades of harsh Soviet rule. As for the Caucasus, the South Caucasus is the only major Shi'a center in the former Soviet Union, while the Northeastern Caucasus – mainly Dagestan – has been a center of Sunni activism. Islamic currents in Central Asia and the Caucasus display significant similarities but also important differences. The North Caucasus is a particular case, where the war in Chechnya has been a major incubator of extremism, bringing foreign Islamic volunteers and groups to the region, which pushed parts of the Chechen resistance toward Islamic militancy and terrorism. In Central Asia, the focus of Islamic revival and of radical groups has been the Ferghana valley, a densely populated and ethnically mainly Uzbek territory divided politically between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The valley has traditionally been a center of Islamic fervor, and was the area where foreign radicals first established a presence. As we will see, though, there are other factors besides tradition at work here.

Aside from the Ferghana valley, the main other localities of radicalism have been Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan. The spread of radical Islamic political movement in Tajikistan in the 1980s was very much a result of the growing interaction between Afghanistan and Tajikistan during the Soviet occupation there. Islamic radicalism was the key force behind the resistance to the Soviet occupation, and spread to Tajikistan where important political movements on an Islamic basis emerged. South Kyrgyzstan is exposed to most of the same currents that prevail in neighboring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. By contrast, northern Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have seen considerably lower levels of Islamic activity.

RADICAL GROUPS: A SURVEY

The following pages provide a short survey of the radical Islamic groups active in the region. This will include groups across a political spectrum ranging from self-proclaimed peaceful groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Tabligh Jemaat, to militant and terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the North Caucasian groups tied to Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev.

Hizb ut-Tahrir al Islamiyya (The Islamic Party of Liberation)

Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) was founded in 1952-1953 by Shaykh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani in Jordanian-ruled East Jerusalem. Its main goal is to recreate the Caliphate, the Islamic state formally brought to an end in 1924 following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Al-Nabhani died in 1977 and was succeeded by Abu Yusuf Abdul Qadim Zallum, another Palestinian cleric who led the movement until his illness and death in 2003. He was succeeded by Ata Ibnu Khaleel Abu Rashta, who previously served as the party's official spokesman in Jordan. Abu Rashta, alias Abu Yasin, is a Palestinian who is believed to have lived most recently in the West Bank. Under his leadership, HT activities have become more aggressive. During fall 2003, the governing body (kiedat) is believed to have instructed members to engage in acts of aggression towards the diplomatic representations of countries that supported the Iraq War. At the same time, members are urged to reach out to the liberal politicians and media, as well as pro-democracy and human rights NGOs to obtain their support in their own "freedom" agenda. Today HT is active in over 40 countries,

with its ideological "nerve center" in London, and official headquarters in Jordan.

Whereas the West has seemingly forgotten the ideological dimension of the war on terror – the "war of ideas" – HT is openly discussing how it is engaged in such a war, which is aimed at undermining the legitimacy of both liberal democracy and market economy. Indeed, over the last several years, HT's long-standing vision of creating a global Caliphate has become a mainstream terrorist goal. Although HT's immediate aim is to create a Caliphate somewhere in the Muslim world, ultimately it seeks a global reach. This is evidenced in a 1999 leaflet, which states: "In the forthcoming days the Muslims will conquer Rome and the dominion of the [nation] of Muhammad will reach the whole world and the rule of the Muslims will reach as far as the day and night." ('Rome' is characteristically used to refer to the U.S. in Islamist writings.)

HT claims to be non-violent, and this is the basis for its successful aspiration to function legally in western Europe, where only Germany has banned the movement. Yet HT openly acknowledges that violence may eventually be necessary in order to overthrow the regimes standing in the way of the Caliphate. Thus HT cannot be called "non-violent"; rather, its ideology suggests that it is not using violence yet but will do so when the time is right.

HT's decision not to use violence stems from a pragmatic policy, having learned from the experience of other Islamist groups (and most recently from the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions) that the "peaceful" overthrow of authoritarian or corrupt governments receives international commendation, whereas violence and coup attempts lead to imprisonment or worse. The ideology that forms the basis of HT's work is by no means 'non-violent'. It is viciously anti-Semitic and anti-Western, and disseminates a radical Islamist ideology fundamentally opposed to liberal democracy, the free market, and to Western concepts of freedom more broadly. While HT as an organization does not engage in terrorist activities, it operates as an ideological vanguard that supports and encourages terrorist acts. Furthermore, its members appear to be recruits of movements that do involve in violence.

HT calls for the unity of the umma – a unity which it seeks to bring about by emulating the steps that the Prophet Muhammad took to establish the original Caliphate. According to al-Nabhani, the Prophet's work was performed in "clearly defined stages, each of which he used to perform specific clear actions" that led, in the end, to the creation of a Sharia-based Islamic government. HT effectively combines Marxist-Leninist methodology and Western-style slogans with reactionary Islamist ideology to shape the internal debate within Islam. As an organization, HT also bears striking similarities to the early Bolshevik movement. Both have an ultimate, utopian political goal (whether "true communism" or the Caliphate), and both show an intense dislike for liberal democracy, while seeking to establish a mythical "just society." Both also function with a secretive cell system. And while it insists on non-violence until the final stage, HT does justify the use of force, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks did in 1917.

In a recent interview, an HT member put the organization's vision succinctly: "Islam obliges Muslims to possess power so that they can intimidate – I would not say terrorize – the enemies of Islam ... In the beginning the Caliphate would strengthen itself internally and it would not initiate jihad ... But after that, we would carry Islam as an intellectual call to all the world ... And we will make people bordering

the Caliphate believe in Islam. Only if they refuse, then we'll ask them to be ruled by Islam ... And after all discussions and negotiations they still refuse, then the last resort will be a jihad to spread the spirit of Islam and the rule of Islam. This is done in the interests of all people to get them out of darkness and into light." Its partly leaflets, accessible over the Internet in various languages, provide the umma with timely and coherent explanations of current events that fit HT's ideological framework. The language of these leaflets is simple and direct; for instance, many repeat the call to Muslims to "kill Jews wherever you find them."

The tight compartmentalization of HT ensures that little information is known about its financial structure. The movement's cell structure ensures that data obtained from all but the most senior members is of little importance. Hence Central Asian and Western authorities have been unable to deny the group access to its funding sources. Moreover, HT does not require a great deal of money to sustain its activities. Its ability to create a virtual Islamic community on the Internet has allowed the movement to reach the hearts and minds of many without investing in an elaborate communications network or in party offices. Interviews with arrested HT members indicate that local entrepreneurs, party members and other sympathizers tend to make individual donations to HT's local organs. Meanwhile, more detached businessmen and Islamic charities are most likely to direct their money to HT's leadership committee, which in turn sends money to the movement's various regional branches. Funding is essentially drawn from a combination of private donations and the dues of party members. The latter is particularly significant, since in Central Asia each member is obliged to donate between 5 percent and 20 percent of their monthly income to the party.

Since 2001, there has been a clear and consistent trend towards the radicalization of HT. In June 2001, the HT publication *Al-Waie* (Consciousness) stated unequivocally that it is acceptable to carry out suicide attacks with explosive belts. In March 2002, HT argued that suicide bombs in Israel are a legitimate tactic of war. Over the next two years, HT leaflets and writings continuously emphasized that in the context of a clash of civilizations, offensive jihad against the Americans and the Jewish people is acceptable. It went as far as declaring, in a May 2003 leaflet, that jihad against unbelievers is the only type of jihad. At the time, an HT website displayed an image of American soldiers superimposed over the burning of the twin towers, carrying the legend "U.S. Troops: Die Hard." It is yet to be established whether HT has already formed a militant wing or whether it is simply "inspiring" members independently to join terrorist groups or engage in terrorist acts.

HT has made Central Asia its main battleground. The post-Communist identity crisis there implies a limited popular knowledge of the tenets of traditional Islam, which benefits a radical, unorthodox movement such as HT. Furthermore, poor economic performance by some Central Asian governments has denied them a high level of popular support among people who feel they lack opportunities for socio-economic improvement. HT's public relations campaign has already succeeded in diverting the world community's attention away from its activities in Uzbekistan. As a result of this propaganda effort, western observers are concerned more with the prison conditions of HT supporters than the possibility of a successful HT coup d'état. Also assisting HT's campaign in Central Asia is the proximity of Afghanistan and Pakistan, two primary bases for terrorists and radical sympathizers.

While in principle a centralized movement, HT is known to have splintered, including into specific Central Asian splinter groups. To date, known HT splinter groups include:

- **Palestinian Islamic Jihad** (founded in 1958)—Shaykh Assad Bayyoud Tamimi, a former HT member, founded both PIJ and a second splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Organization (also known as the al-Aqsa Battalions), which was created in 1982. PIJ has no known presence in Central Asia or the Caucasus.

- **Al-Muhajiroun** (1996)—Omar Bakri Muhammad, a former HT member, founded this extremely radical organization. Bakri has claimed to be "the eyes of Osama bin Laden" and reports indicate that communication between the two men dates back at least as far as 1998. Bakri fled London after the July 2005 bombings there. Al-Muhajiroun has no known presence in Central Asia or the Caucasus.

- **Akramiya** (1995)—Formed in the Uzbekistani section of the Ferghana Valley, it is a group with a primarily local focus (mentioned below).

- **Hizb un-Nusrat** (1999)—The Party of Assistance (mentioned below).

HT material was first brought to Uzbekistan in the late 1970s, but its activities there took shape in earnest only during 1992-1995, in the Ferghana Valley. HT is still most active in the Ferghana Valley, but has successfully spread to the rest of Uzbekistan and to all other Central Asian countries, as well as Azerbaijan. The February 1999 bombings in Tashkent were wrongly attributed to HT, though the charge was later retracted. Yet this sparked the activation of the movement in the region.

As a result of the repressive methods used by the authorities in the subsequent crackdown, many HT members left Uzbekistan and moved to more open Central Asian states, thus becoming excellent missionaries for the movement. At first, many settled in the ethnic Uzbek regions of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, but the group's activities have since expanded. Within the last year, Hizb ut-Tahrir members have been arrested in northern Kazakhstan, the Bishkek area of Kyrgyzstan, and in Tajikistan's capital of Dushanbe areas that are neither near the border with Uzbekistan nor known for significant Uzbek minority populations.

The precise number of Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Central Asia today is difficult to estimate. HT is numerically strongest in Uzbekistan, with estimates there ranging from 7,000 up to 60,000 members. There are 3,000-5,000 members in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The number in Kazakhstan is no more than a few hundred. But numbers are not central to HT's strategy which is based on penetrating political power centers as a method of obtaining power. Recent arrests indicate that support for HT is growing throughout the region, including among teachers, military officers, politicians (especially those whose relatives have been arrested), and other members of the elite.

Akramiya

Akramiya is named after its leader Akram Yuldashev, born in 1963 in Andijan. Yuldashev is believed to have been a member of HT for one year before founding a splinter group in 1992. He is believed to be profoundly influenced by al-Nabhani, and founded Akramiya in his native Andijan region, preaching widely among the youth of the area. He was first arrested in 1993 and later that year received amnesty and was released. Following the bomb attacks in February 1999, he was re-arrested and sentenced to over ten years in prison.

In 1992, Yuldashev wrote a theological pamphlet in Uzbek titled "Yimonga Yul" (The Path to Faith), which aims to call people to Islam. According to Uzbek scholar Bakhtior Babajanov, Yuldashev wrote a supplement (in March 2005) to this more philosophical piece, in which he outlined a five-stage process to establish an Islamic leadership. Those few analysts who have read the supplement believe that Akramiya shares HT's conspiratorial methodology and its multistage process for achieving the ultimate objective of the Caliphate. The aim of Akramiya is to gather enough strength to exert influence on regional authorities, if not to control them directly. With this aim in mind, Akramiya promotes a simplified version of Islam, in order to maximize its potential support base. Its structure is communal and cult-like, and members have limited exposure to outsiders.

Akramiya seems to have been rather successful in developing a following by delivering on socio-economic promises that the Uzbek government has been unable to fulfill: jobs and money. Wealthier followers set up small businesses such as bakeries, cafeterias, or shoe factories, in which they employ young males who are then required to attend study groups after work – a practice also known from other Islamic movements across the world to recruit followers. The owners of these businesses contribute about a fifth of their profits to a fund, which then assists poorer members of the group. This is one of the most successful examples of the bottom-up approach of pro-Islamic social engineering.

Hizb un-Nusrat

Hizb un-Nusrat (the Party of Assistance) was founded by a group of HT members in Tashkent in 1999. Its current leader and founder is believed to be Sharipzhon Mirzazhanov. Like HT, this group is fundamentally clandestine in nature, and prospective members must undergo six months of training in *The System of Islam*, HT's guidebook. Members are also required to donate money to the party's communal fund. Unlike HT, however, this group does not spread propaganda among the general public. Instead, it only recruits those whose backgrounds are first investigated. The group is thus mainly comprised of former members of other Islamic fringe groups, and those accused by Uzbekistan's government of engagement in Islamic radical activities. Its supporters also include HT sympathizers who fear public exposure.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

The IMU was formed in 1992 by Tahir Yuldashev, an underground Islamic cleric who operated out of the Otavaliyon mosque, in the Namangan region of Uzbekistan. Yuldashev's views were shaped by extensive travel to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, where he was influenced by Wahhabism and Deobandism. His radical message spread throughout the network of mosques and madrassas in the Ferghana Valley. With the help of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Harakat-ul-Ansar and al-Jihad, Yuldashev unified the four radical Islamist groups mentioned above (Adolat and Islam Laskarlari, both of which he led, as well as Barak and Tauba), under the framework of the IMU. At first, all four groups consisted of only a few hundred members, but in the absence of decisive action by the Uzbekistani government, they were able to disseminate their propaganda in the Ferghana Valley and recruit many more followers.

Yuldashev's ally, Juma Khodjiev Namangani, became the military commander of the IMU. Along with a Saudi-trained militant, Abdul Ahad, Namangani was Yuldashev's main supporter. By 1998, there were reports of hundreds of Uzbek mujahidin training in and operating between Tajiki-

stan and Uzbekistan, taking advantage of Tajikistan's civil war. The first instance of IMU violence occurred in August 1999, when Namangani and his associates abducted Japanese geologists, along with Kyrgyzstani government officials and military personnel in southern Kyrgyzstan, thus expanding its activity to a third country. The IMU was also believed to be launching carefully orchestrated attacks against Uzbekistan from neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, including the 1999 Tashkent bombings. Soon thereafter, when Namangani declared his aim to seize the region by force, thousands of refugees fled the Ferghana Valley. Namangani then headed for Afghanistan where, with the permission of the Taliban, he established an IMU training camp. Militants from all over the Ferghana Valley began to flock to the camp to receive instruction in terrorist tactics, under the guidance of the Taliban. In the only interview he has ever given, Yuldashev declared, "The goal of IMU activities is the creation of an Islamic State. We declared a jihad in order to create a religious system and government. We want the model of Islam which is nothing like in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia."

In late 2001, the IMU joined forces with the Taliban and al-Qaeda against U.S.-led forces during the Afghanistan campaign. After suffering grave losses (including the death of Namangani in Afghanistan), some IMU fighters fled to South Waziristan (a Federally Administered Tribal Area in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province along the border with Afghanistan), along with other jihadists who also escaped U.S. entrapment at Tora Bora.

On orders from Bin Laden, IMU militants have taken a leading role in South Waziristan, with Yuldashev in command of military activities. Since the conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU's infrastructure and manpower has been significantly weakened, but today there are at least 150 IMU militants who still have the capacity to fight.

HT and the IMU do not have a formal alliance, as it runs contrary to HT's interests to be directly associated with a terrorist group. The main difference between the two groups is one of focus: The IMU openly advocates and carries out militant operations, while HT concentrates on the ideological battle. The two nonetheless admit to the closeness of their goals, and both are propelled closer to the achievement of their ends by the weakness of Central Asian states.

The Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA)

Central Asian governments believe that in 2002 the region's Islamic radicals united in a framework of a new underground organization called the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA), which would bring together the IMU, Kyrgyz and Tajik radicals, and Uighur separatists from China, whose East Turkestan Islamic Movement had recently broadened to include Afghans, Chechens, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Kazakhs who share its new goal of forming an Islamic state in Central Asia.

Kyrgyz authorities believe that the IMCA was indeed formed in 2003, with the immediate goal of creating a Caliphate in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, while reserving expansion to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and northwest China for a second stage. The headquarters of IMCA, which is led by Yuldashev, are believed to be located in Afghanistan's northeastern Badakhshan province. This unified, militant Islamic force seeks to destabilize Central Asian governments by attacking American and Israeli targets. The main insurgent targets are the American bases in Uzbekistan (now closed) and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the embassies in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

While many other radical Islamist organizations have mushroomed in the region over the last two years, they can all be considered, in one way or another, to be under the IMCA umbrella.

Tabligh Jamaat (TJ)

TJ was established in India in the 1920s by Maulana Mohammad Ilyas as a direct response to Hindu proselytizing. The group claims to follow the Prophet's sunnah (way of life), which to Tabligh members means wearing long beards, robes, and leather shoes to replicate the Prophet's dress; the group firmly believes in outwardly showing that one is Muslim. Members are also required to conduct "Tabligh," that is, to try and convert others to Islam, on a regular basis. Members can spend this time camping in small groups in order to preach "the Prophet's way" in mosques. In Central Asia, they also preach in bazaars. Today, Tabligh has offices and schools in Canada and the UK, though its main centers are on the Indian subcontinent.

Its annual gatherings in India and Pakistan attract hundreds of thousands. Tabligh's annual summit in Raiwind is the largest Muslim gathering in the world following the hajj.

The group does not involve itself in politics (and has been criticized by radical Islamists for being apolitical), but over time Tabligh has become an international movement, active mostly in South and Central Asia. Tabligh has succeeded in introducing Islamic networks to Europe and the U.S., and often functions in parallel to the Wahhabi Muslim World League. In recent years, like many other Islamic movements, Tabligh has also become radicalized. Consequently, those who learn about Islam via the Tabligh are today at risk of supporting or joining terrorist groups. The group has been accused of having indoctrinated its followers to fight for the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups are believed to have used Tabligh as their cover to travel and smuggle operatives across borders; because the group is apolitical, Tabligh's members can fairly easily travel between countries. Other terrorist groups may have used the movement as a recruitment pool; its failure to discuss politics leaves room for others to provide a political message. In Central Asia, Tabligh is currently most active in the Ferghana Valley, especially in Andjian. Following their arrest in the summer of 2004, 14 members of Tabligh were sent to prison.

CURRENT ISSUES IN CENTRAL ASIA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ISLAMIC RADICALISM

If September 11 and its aftermath brought a strong blow to radical Islamists in Central Asia and the Caucasus, this was mainly a lull. Since 2004, a series of events have taken place that indicate that the problem of Islamic radicalism is not going away. However, it is also apparent from these developments that the radical groupings are continuously able to alter their shape, methods and tactics in order to evade attempts by governments to fight them. In this sense, the regions have come to differ. In the North Caucasus, the Chechen rebellion gradually morphed into a region-wide insurgency with Islamist overtones, negating all efforts by Russia to control the situation. In Central Asia, however, Islamists seem to have drawn important lessons from the 'color revolutions' in Eurasia, and the western reaction to them.

Uzbekistan, 2004: Terrorism Re-Emerges

In light of the inability of Central Asian governments to deal effectively with corruption, poverty, and basic gover-

nance issues more than ten years after independence, it is not surprising that the well-organized and focused ideological work of HT is producing results. Following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, the Islamists seem to have decided it is also time for them to rise.

Radical Islamist and terrorist activity in Central Asia has increased markedly since early 2004. Having seen no major terrorist activity since 2000, Uzbekistan was hit by two waves of terrorist attacks between March 28 and March 31, including the region's first ever female suicide bombing. The attacks, which caused 47 fatalities in total, were aimed primarily at police and Uzbek private and commercial facilities. A second attack targeted the American and Israeli embassies as well as the prosecutor general's office. The scale and level of preparation for these attacks suggests strongly that they received support from outside Uzbekistan. The country's chief prosecutor alleged that all 85 individuals (including 17 women) arrested had been trained as suicide bombers.

Yet another group, the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG), released a statement claiming responsibility for the Uzbek attacks, which was followed by the U.S. State Department's May 2005 designation of this group (under ten different names) as a terrorist organization. In the State Department's statement, IJG is described as a splinter of the IMU, and is held responsible for the July 30, 2004 bombing attacks in Tashkent targeting the U.S. and Israeli Embassies, and the office of the Uzbek Prosecutor General. The State Department's designation also called attention to the fact that "those arrested in connection with the attacks in Bukhara have testified to the close ties between the IJG leaders and Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. Kazakhstani authorities have declared that IJG members were taught by al-Qaida instructors to handle explosives and to organize intelligence work and subversive activities."

Despite all this information, most of the attention in the West from the spring of 2004 onwards was on the Uzbek government's reaction and not on the terrorists – even though these attacks were the first major violence in Uzbekistan since the 2000 insurgency. And despite being in the midst of the 'war on terror', the U.S., a self-avowed strategic partner of Uzbekistan, highlighted the need to improve democracy and human rights while doing very little to help the Uzbek government in its investigation or its response to the attacks. Overall, the terrorists were greatly emboldened, concluding that western opinion would allow them literally to get away with murder.

The Kyrgyz 'Revolution', 2005

In November 2004, in Jalal-Abad, where some of the strongest antigovernment protests took place in March 2005, HT reportedly collected some 20,000 signatures on a petition calling for more Islamic instruction in schools and segregation of sexes. In the February 2005 parliamentary elections, candidates who supported this view received backing from HT. While there was almost no overt Islamist activity during the revolution, the events began and gained momentum in the southern part of the country, which is where HT and other groups have, for several years, been urging people to rise against poverty, corruption and injustice – all of which were blamed on the central government.

Following the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions, opposition forces in the Kyrgyz Republic overthrew their government in March 2005. Unlike the Georgians and the Ukrainians, however, the Kyrgyz opposition used violence,

and in the post-revolutionary period failed to bring stability and order to the country. Indeed, the March 24 revolution ushered in a period of chaos, with the new government unable to control the country's borders or to bring about internal stability. This risks leading to ever deeper popular disappointment with secular politics in Kyrgyzstan. Unless the new government is brought to establish a democratic order and deliver on its promises, HT and others are certain to gain strength from this growing disillusionment.

The West's reaction to the collapse of the Akayev government emboldened the terrorists even further. They drew three key lessons from the experience: first, if a revolt were to be framed the right way, i.e. as another 'color revolution' against an oppressive, corrupt regime, neither the US nor the Europeans would be likely to step in. Second, that the West would, within limits, also tolerate the use of force, as in the Uzbek attacks the preceding years. Third, the radicals found that by using the excitement and anticipation of 'color revolutions' among the Western media and the various democracy and human rights NGOs, they could convince the world that they were the unalloyed champions of human rights and good governance.

The third significant event of lasting importance to the region took place in Andijan in May 2005. In fact, Andijan may prove to be a turning point in the West's loss of influence in Central Asia and the further strengthening of the radical groups.

Andijan is close to Osh, where the Kyrgyz uprising began, and even closer to Jalalabad, where only weeks before the Andijan events the majority Uzbek population successfully laid armed siege to the provincial government's headquarters. It is also close to Namangan, a center of Salafi activity in Uzbekistan. In many ways, Andijan is the heart of the Ferghana Valley, which itself is the heart of Central Asia. Akram Yuldashev realized that Andijan is the first stop along the path to power in Uzbekistan, which is the prize of the Islamists because of its geostrategically central location in Eurasia, and because of its historic and cultural position in the Islamic world. Its under-government and stagnation is also making it an increasingly easy target.

In June, 2004, 23 businessmen, followers of Akramiya, were arrested and in February 2005 they were put on trial. Peaceful demonstrations in support of the defendants went on for several weeks. According to reports from the region, Akramiya organized the uprising in a carefully planned way: the accused businessmen promised to pay their staff a full day's salary if they attended the protests. Moreover, their relatives organized transport for others to come from more distant regions. The protesters were orderly and asking merely for "justice" for their relatives and friends. By May 12th, the presumed final week of the trial, there were already several thousand peaceful demonstrators.

That night, the Uzbek government arrested some demonstrators. This arrest marked the start of the uprising. On the morning of May 13, armed militants first seized a police station, then a military post, and then a high-security prison, collecting weaponry in each place and killing officials and others along the way. Negotiations between the government and the militants broke down, in part because of the release of Akram Yuldashev was the main demand of the insurgents. Expecting a harsh reaction from the government, the insurgents then formed human shields with women and children. While it is yet to be determined who shot first, by the end of the day, some two hundred persons were dead, most

killed by government troops but a large number killed by the armed insurgents.

Over a year later, many in the West still do not have a sense of who the insurgents were. In fact, few have shown much interest in the insurgents, and instead blamed only the Karimov regime for conducting what was immediately labeled a massacre of peaceful protestors. As of June 2006, the number of people killed by both sides is still contested, although the Moscow Human Rights organization Memorial's estimate that the total was probably around 200 will probably prevail. But Western governments were quick to rush to conclusions, without carefully weighing the evidence and without seeking detailed knowledge of the mode of operation of groups like HT and Akramiya. The Uzbek scholar Bakhtiyor Babajanov (who served as a state's witness in the trial) interviewed Yuldashev in November 2005 in his prison cell. During a May 2006 visit to Washington DC, Babajanov stated that Yuldashev had told him that in a March 2005 article published a month and a half before the Andijan attacks, he had claimed that Akramiya was in the process of "waging a jihad against the oppressors and infidels" and stated that "death in the way of Allah is not death but a return to your Lord". There is as yet no independent verification of Babajanov's claim.

The planners of the Andijan uprising seem to have waited to initiate it until they felt that the local and international context was right. Specifically, they seemed to have been inspired by the successful Uzbek uprising in Jalalabad in the Kyrgyz Republic and also by the subsequent breakdown of civil authority there.

Following the events in Andijan, western intelligence agencies, governments, and media did a poor job of seeking and weighing the many conflicting strands of evidence left by the events. Most simply rushed to whatever conclusions they were predisposed to reach, attacking those who questioned them. The overall inability of many analysts to understand how Islamic radical groups operate is one of the reasons for why the analysis of the Andijan events has been inadequate. The role of Islamists in the uprising was generally not recognized, in spite of the fact that the organizers of the uprising are recorded as shouting religious slogans. On the other hand, it must be noted that Islamist groups are growing increasingly sophisticated, focusing on secular slogans that are likely to elicit more positive reactions internationally.

It is also important to understand the growing role of women in Islamic radicalism. The first suicide killings in Central Asia took place in 2005, and were conducted by women who did not fit the traditional profile of poor, uneducated and repressed. For example, the 19-year old Dilnoza Holmuradova and her 22-year old sister Shahnoza Holmuradova came from a relatively affluent family in Tashkent and were well-educated. Dilnoza reportedly spoke five languages and had attended the police academy. What seems to have turned them into extremists were the people they met. According to an interview with their mother, "they began studying Islam in 2002... they began to change a great deal... stopped wearing modern clothes, listening to music and watching television." They left home in 2004 and soon after carried out their attacks.

It is likely that at some vulnerable moment these women made contact with Islamists, who in turn influenced them ideologically, and led them to become terrorists. In the future, increasing numbers of women may be used in terrorist attacks, since they are harder to profile than men and more

likely to slip through security controls. This process has already taken place in the North Caucasus.

Sadly, what really happened in Andijan, how many people were killed, and by whom, has lost much of its relevance. Radical Islamist groups have won the information war. While the insurgency was an attempted coup d'état, international media framed the story as the massacre of innocent civilians comparable to the Tiananmen Square incident. Even some Uzbek dissidents in exile have deplored the West's reaction, and called sanctions counterproductive. While many in the West condemned Uzbek President Islam Karimov, leaders from the Muslim world either remained silent, or, in the case of the Great Shaykh of Al-Azhar University, Mohammad Sayed Tantawi, focused on the threat of a radical takeover. He reportedly stated that the methods and tactics used by Andijan extremists resemble acts of terrorism in Egypt in 1974, when commandos of Salah Sirriya, the former chief of the military wing of the Hizb ut-Tahrir division in Egypt, attacked the military technology institute in an effort to obtain enough weaponry for a coup.

Russia benefited most from the post-Andijan fallout. Russian government officials have publicly supported the Uzbek government, and declared that the uprising was planned and carried out by foreign groups wanting to overthrow the government. With scant evidence, Russia also backed the government's claims that about 50 foreigners were detained or killed. It also noted the ideological similarities with Chechen terrorist groups, citing the posting on a Chechen website of the IJG's call for jihad. Following his meeting with Putin, in Moscow, shortly afterwards, Karimov said that the attacks were planned from abroad, by mercenaries who "were trained at military training camps ... We have enough facts to prove that the operation was prepared several months and perhaps several years in advance from outside Uzbekistan." Putin backed Karimov and even added that Russians had information that militants had been crossing from Afghanistan into Tajikistan and Uzbekistan prior to the Andijan uprising.

The end result of Andijan is that the U.S. military lost its base in Uzbekistan, a major setback for essential intelligence and counterterrorism work. No less significant, the West lost whatever possibility it previously had to influence the Uzbek government to reform or open up the system. Its precipitous condemnation of the government's actions, without corresponding attention to the insurgents, effectively discredited whatever reformist currents had existed earlier within the Uzbek government. Instead, Uzbekistan now leans on Russian and Chinese guidance, which gives carte blanche to the most repressive forces within the Uzbek government. Indeed, the pro-Western liberal forces that had slowly strengthened their positions within the Uzbek elite over that past decade have now been almost completely purged and marginalized.

Another consequence of Andijan is the flight of hundreds of people who are seeking refuge in various parts of Central Asia. The question is whether these are all indeed innocent civilians, or whether there are radical Islamists among them, something that interviewers have not been trained to identify. Many of these refugees sought refuge in the Kyrgyz Republic (and some in Tajikistan), as did many Uzbek Islamists, who for years have been fleeing the repression at home to operate in a more open neighboring country. In fact, it is believed that the Central Asian HT leadership is based in the Kyrgyz city of Karasu, which has a large ethnic Uzbek population.

There have been numerous reports of Uzbek militants trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan going back to Uzbekistan. The militants are using networks of terrorists, criminals, as well as Islamist sympathizers to cross borders, traveling either via Tajikistan or Iran. Former IMU members have identified Mashhad, Iran's second largest city, as the transit center for Uzbek militants. In this context, the May 2006 incursion of militants from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan's Batken region is worrisome. Armed men attacked a border post killing several guards, before seizing a stockpile of weapons and killing additional people while crossing into the Kyrgyz Republic. It is surely not accidental that the site of these events lies astride an important and contested drug route. These events were reminiscent of a January 2006 incident, when militants raided a Tajik prison, killed the warden, and freed a prisoner with alleged IMU ties. It is clear that numbers of heavily armed people are operating in and around the borders of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It is less clear who these are, given the interaction of organized crime and radicalism, and whether they have any links with the Andijan uprising. Government officials in all three countries seem to be confused, variously blaming different radical groups, but in all likelihood simply do not know who they are.

The Sociology and Economics of Islamic Radicalism

Many facile claims have been advanced about the social profile of radical Islamists in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Since these claims have also served as justification for western policies on the issue, it is some importance to "get right" the social and economic dimensions of the phenomenon.

Various explanations have been advanced to explain the development and spread of Islamic radical ideologies. These have centered around economic as well as political explanations, or the class origins of the militants. Yet these hypotheses offer at best a partial and insufficient explanation.

In the West, the most frequently repeated claim regarding the social profile of radical Islamists in the Caucasus and Central Asia is that they come from the post-Soviet poor of the region. The fact that the North Caucasus is among the most impoverished regions of Russia and the Ferghana Valley a relatively poor region of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic, would seem to support this hypothesis. On this basis, all four governments are criticized for their failure to create economic opportunity in these zones of poverty, and generally to embrace reform.

It is undeniable that governments have failed to alleviate poverty in these and other areas in which Islamists have found a welcome. Yet poverty per se can scarcely be seen as the incubator of Muslim extremism. Andijan, for example, with its large Daewoo factory and international tennis center, is far more prosperous than most neighboring towns. Moreover, the Uzbek city of Khojent in Tajikistan is far poorer than any city in either Uzbek or Kyrgyz parts of the Ferghana Valley yet has not generated the same level of extremism. This does not exonerate governments from the duty to address issues of poverty, but it should not be assumed that, in doing so, they will also remove the cause of extremism.

The fact is that of those Islamists whose social profile is known (mainly on the basis of evidence brought forward in trials) the overwhelming majority are not poor, and are in fact drawn from middle class backgrounds or higher. This is, of course, the case with many Islamic movements elsewhere.

The Class Origins of Militants

A second widely cited hypothesis focuses on the middle or upper middle class origins of many of the leaders of the extremist movements, and on their education in the technical fields. Drawing mainly on the experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and also on the Saudi leaders of al Qaeda, it is frequently claimed that radical Islamists in the Caucasus and Central Asia are drawn mainly from the technical intelligentsia, and even from the elite of that group. This hypothesis in turn leads to several possible corollaries. One faults the cultural vacuum created by Soviet-style technical education, with its absence of humanistic learning and values. Another criticizes the states for training young men for jobs that do not exist, leaving them in a professional limbo from which Islamism becomes a plausible avenue of escape.

The trouble with this hypothesis is not that it is false but that it explains too little. It is undeniably true, for example, that most identified Islamists have had technical training. But so have many others. The Soviet-type educational system that still prevails across the region one-sidedly focuses on technical fields, at the expense of the humanities. Thus, nearly of all those who advance through secondary school and beyond are of the technical intelligentsia. Yet only a tiny fraction of these have found their way into the radical Islamists' camp.

Political Participation and Repression

A much-touted hypothesis, often advanced in both Central Asia and the West, is that repression and authoritarian rule is a direct cause of Islamic radicalism. With avenues of political activity closed, the assumption goes, frustrated opposition-minded young individuals are driven into the arms of radical groups that form the only possible avenue for political activity. There is some merit to this hypothesis, as the prohibition of moderate and secular forms of opposition leaves the playing field open to radical groups. Yet neither in Central Asia nor globally does the growth of Islamic radicalism seem to be correlated with levels of repression. Uzbekistan's Ferghana valley was affected by determined Islamic radical movements in the early 1990s, and their presence formed a cause of Karimov's repressive policies toward political opposition rather than being a consequence thereof. Meanwhile, southern Kyrgyzstan – a relatively liberal political atmosphere – has seen a growth of radicalism in the past few years comparable to that in Uzbekistan.

Outside Central Asia, the picture is similar: radical groups prosper not only in repressive societies such as Egypt or Syria; their performance has been even stronger in Pakistan, where the state, far from being repressive, long followed a policy of appeasement toward radical groups. Moreover, a major element in radical Islamic recruiting is what French researcher Olivier Roy terms 'Euro-Islam' – the Islamic communities of western Europe. In global perspective, Turkey seems to be a successful balance: a political atmosphere that is generally liberal, but a state that simultaneously understands the dangers of Islamic radicalism and that draws clear lines in the sand to prevent radical groups from emerging and threatening secularism. These examples show that it may not necessarily be repressive political systems as such that lead to a radical backlash, but the relative deprivation and alienation of specific communities.

Even this brief overview shows the difficulty in tracing radical Islamism to simple issues of class, economic deprivation, or political systems. Why do some follow this path, but

not most others? It is worth noting that no single explanation covers more than a portion of the known Islamists. Because of this, we are reduced to citing multiple factors that occur with enough frequency to draw attention.

Vendettas and Relative Deprivation

First among these are personal vendettas against a political leader, whether at the national or local level. These may have arisen from the official's perceived mistreatment of the future Islamists or a relative of his. While statistical evidence is lacking (this type of information is obviously suppressed in state trials), it is probable that this is the single most common factor leading to radicalization. But unlike Sicily, where a vendetta culture leads to personal retribution against individuals, in the Caucasus and Central Asia the reaction is more often focused on the "system" and its local defenders.

Closely related is the sense among rising members of a regional intelligentsia that their province lacks real power in the capital. This feeling unites such otherwise disparate groups as Ferghana Valley residents of both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Chechens and Ingush in the North Caucasus, and even the Pashtuns in post-Taliban Afghanistan down to 2005. To speak only of the Ferghana region of Uzbekistan, this region has been systematically excluded from national power for all but three years over the past four decades. Some have claimed that the radicalization of the Ferghana Valley traces to old traditions of religiosity. But these are equally developed in Bukhara and Samarkand, yet these centers have not produced radical Islamists in numbers. It is relevant that these cities are far more closely linked with national power centers than is the Ferghana region.

The "Drugs-Crime-Radical Islamist Nexus."

Third specific element concerns links with drug traffickers and criminal groups in general. It is not clear the extent to which this is cause or effect but the close tie between the more violent Islamist groups and organized crime has been undeniable from the time the IMU emerged as a major drug dealing enterprise. Indeed, in this sense Central Asia and the Caucasus are examples of a worldwide trend, the increasing involvement of violent groups in organized crime, particularly the drug trade. In fact, the traditional division of non-state armed groups into mutually exclusive ideal types – the ideological and the criminal – is an increasingly misleading description of most armed groups today. A criminal element is increasingly visible in the financing of most groups, but also in the motivations of many. This fusion of crime and terrorism or insurgency can be most clearly seen as regards the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and certain formations in the North Caucasus. For some of these groups, it is unclear whether they are mainly driven by ideological zeal or by criminal pursuits.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Though the IMU incursions of 1999 and 2000 were ostensibly waged in the name of the creation of a Caliphate with a base in the Ferghana valley, a strong body of evidence suggests they are in fact best explained by more mundane motivations, especially the drug trade. The geographical areas targeted, the timing of the attacks, as well as the tactics used, all point in this direction.

Rising Afghan opium production in the late 1990s led to increasing smuggling into Central Asia. This in turn led traffickers to seek out new smuggling routes. A new impor-

tant route crossed the Tajik-Kyrgyz border from Tajikistan's Garm province. The Jirgatal and Tavildara areas of Tajikistan had been IMU strongholds during the civil war, and the IMU used these areas as a base from which to launch two armed incursions into Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000. IMU militants established routes for crossing the border with the help of "drug barons" in Kyrgyzstan's Osh region. The geographical overlap in the late 1990s of the IMU's camps and activities with the main areas of drug trafficking into Kyrgyzstan point at a symbiosis between the group and drug trafficking networks. Yet other evidence shows that the IMU was in fact a leading actor in the drug trade in its own right. It had well-established links with the Taliban government and Al Qaeda, while maintaining close contacts with old comrades-in-arms in the former Tajik opposition, who were now in government, and in turn had close links with the ethnic Tajik-led Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Only the IMU had a network of contacts on all sides of the Afghan conflict, which enabled it to freely move across Afghanistan and Tajikistan unlike any other known organization.

The IMU's insurgencies into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were in the form of simultaneous but small-scale incursions by comparatively small groups of fighters. This makes little military sense as the IMU could neither hope to defeat government forces nor to trigger an uprising that way. However, considered as a diversionary measure intended to create instability, confuse law enforcement and military structures, and gain access to mountain passes for trafficking, the incursions make perfect sense.

There is a significant consensus that the IMU was strongly involved in drug trafficking from Afghanistan toward Osh in Kyrgyzstan, where opiates are handed to trafficking networks that ship them further north and west. Drug control experts concurred with the estimate that the IMU controlled up to two thirds of opiates entering the Kyrgyz Republic. Interpol labeled the IMU "a hybrid organization in which criminal interests often take priority over 'political' goals", whose "leaders have a vested interest in ongoing unrest and instability in their area in order to secure the routes they use for the transportation of drugs." Kyrgyz government officials noted that the volume of drugs trafficked into Kyrgyzstan increased significantly after the 1999 incursion.

This does not mean, however, that the IMU completely jettisoned its religious ideology. In fact, the IMU was not a monolithic organization. Most studies of the movement indicate the coexistence of a more guerrilla-oriented and criminal faction and a more religious one within the group. As such, different actions attributed to the IMU were likely caused by different motivations. The IMU is best understood as an amalgam of personal vendetta, Islamism, drugs, geopolitics, and terrorism.

CONCLUSION

The prospects of Islamic radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus remain unclear. On the one hand, it is evident that radical groups do not have strong following in local societies. In spite of repression, poverty, and foreign proselytizing, only a minority of the population of the region appears to find the message of the radicals appealing. What is worrying, though, is that this message appears increasingly tempting to segments of the youth in the region. This does not appear to be related to levels of economic development or the openness of political systems. Indeed, if radical groups are finding an attentive audience amidst the poverty

and repression of the North Caucasus, they have shown equal skill at attracting the relatively well-to-do middleclass youth that flock around Baku's Abu Bakr mosque, or among businessmen in Andijan.

The regional scene is also far from positive. The insurgency in along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan has grown again, and Western countries have shown a disturbing inability to deal with the ideological element of the war on terror. Aside from the energy-rich countries such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the region's governments are failing to meet their citizens' basic socio-economic needs. All this fosters and environment in which Islamic radical groups can thrive. Islamist and terrorist organizations have also shown an ability to modify their tactics and increasingly cooperate with one other – based on the needs of local conditions. For example, HT distributed free meals and toys during the last Islamic holiday in Kyrgyzstan, in spite of never having done any social work before. It is therefore essential to regularly review assumptions and analyses as the radical groups are constantly adopting their tactics based on changing conditions on the ground. Meanwhile, western influence in Central Asia has been decreasing rapidly, and is non-existent in the North Caucasus. Only Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan can be said to be increasingly linked with the western realm. With the West more or less out of the picture, and Russian and Chinese influence growing, the Central Asian governments are likely to become more repressive and less reformist. Thus, the regional environment is moving in a direction where the worst authoritarian tendencies of the local governments will come out, while it will do little to improve the economic conditions. This will make the Islamist message of injustice increasingly appealing, and help the Islamists to grow stronger. In comparison, the carrots that the EU and the U.S. can offer the Central Asian governments will not be attractive enough, while the sticks that the West can use will not be painful enough to induce change. If this general situation is less than rosy, there are indeed areas where the West in general and the EU in particular can be effective.

First and foremost, it is crucial to develop skills, especially in the intelligence community, in understanding the ideological framework of the radical and terrorist groups. Unless this happens, even if there is increased human intelligence capacity (which is also needed), western governments will continue to be unable to put the information into the right context. As the preceding discussion has shown, the radical and externally sponsored Islamic movements and organizations existing in the region offer little hope for a meaningful dialogue. Even if they were prepared to engage in such dialogue with the West (for which there is no evidence), it would constitute a gross breach of normal diplomatic relations with countries of the region. The moderate majority is less organized and much weaker financially. However, it is quite possible to engage representatives of this majority, and also of the secular parts of the population, in dialogue. This could prove useful and should be pursued.

European governments and the various NGOs are today perceived in the region as exclusively supporting the opposition, with strongly counterproductive effect. Especially since the 'color revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine and the overthrow of the Akayev government in the Kyrgyz Republic, Central Asian leaders were convinced that both the U.S. and the EU sought to oust them from office. Segments of the mainstream public appear to agree with them. This in turn led to deteriorating relations and the closure of NGOs. It is important to change this perception, to be able

to invest in internal change and to provide political space for reformers and NGOs to function properly. For that, the EU, together with the U.S., needs to find points for collaboration within the governments. It must quietly and deftly support progressive groups within the system and work patiently but tenaciously toward evolutionary change. This will lay the foundation for a new generation of pro-democratic, tolerant, and competent leaders who provide alternatives both to the current leaders and to the Islamists who raise the banner of radical change.

The link between drug trafficking and religious extremism is proven beyond doubt. While most drug traffickers may have no connection to religious extremism, those who do are sufficiently important to provide a steady income stream for Islamic militant and terrorist groups. The drug trade in Afghanistan and Central Asia is demand-driven, with the majority of the demand arising from EU member countries. The one action by the EU that would do most to address the problem of religious extremism in the region would be to lend major financial support to counter-narcotics efforts. Such support must be commensurate with the huge European demand that sustains the industry and, indirectly, much of the extremism.

Related to this increasing economic engagement with Europe and with other Eurasian economic centers, is the value that comes from educational and cultural exchange. EU educational exchanges should be moved out of the exclusive control of the capital cities and the national elites, and extended to the provinces, including those now experiencing Islamic radical movements. The presence of a few dozen young men and women with cosmopolitan outlooks in such places can open prospects to thousands

of others. Significantly, they can also be a source of future leaders at the regional level. Educational exchange is a productive and cost-effective means of fighting sectarian extremism.

Further, the EU should treat the issue of support for extremism in Central Asia (including Afghanistan) and the Caucasus as a subject for bilateral discussion with relevant Arab states and Iran. The governments of Central Asia and the Caucasus all know full well that extremist movements receive support from abroad. If the EU, with its extensive ties with the countries in question, fails to include this matter in its bilateral talks with them, it will be signaling to the Caucasus and Central Asia that the EU's priorities lie elsewhere.

On dealing with religious radicalism and government repression, the EU may find it useful to look at the Turkish example, which is relevant to understanding the tension between trying to create a modern and open democratic system and dealing with the threat of fundamentalist and militant Islamic political ideology. Eurasia's Muslim majority countries that want to maintain their secular regime, will not listen to naïve suggestions from Western countries that have never dealt with the holistic nature of Islam. They will, however, listen to advice on creating the right legal and constitutional safety nets so that radical groups, or "sleepers cells," cannot take over secular systems. To this end, the EU should engage Turkey as it addresses issues of radical Islam in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Besides underscoring a common interest between Turkey and the EU, this would bring benefit in the form of better focused initiatives on the EU's part, and even possibly to initiatives that are coordinated between the EU and Turkey.

The Perception of International Terrorism by the Ruling Elites of Central Asian States and its Impact to Security Policy

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One trend that has gained particular prominence in current discourse on international relations is the increasingly active role of non-state actors. It has been asserted that these actors' spheres of operation are gradually shifting from the domestic and regional to the global level. Their actions are becoming sufficiently large in scope to transform the dynamics within a region and to change relations among countries of region and great powers, as well as relations among the great powers themselves. After the events of September 11, 2001, special attention has been given in this discourse to one type of non-state actor in particular: international terrorism.

From our vantage point, a crucial step in the study of international terrorism is clarifying the terms in which it is formulated and defined in current debate within the field of international relations. Any analysis of these conditions must focus primarily on the regional level, which avoids making the problem overly universal and allows us to distinguish between the specific features of various regional contexts. In this paper, I will analyze a specificity of regional security discourse, giving particular attention to international terrorism and using Central Asia as an example. I have chosen this region for two reasons. First, Central Asia has been drawn directly into the fight against international terrorism because of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. A second reason is that the actions of Central Asian countries are a demonstration of securitization in formulating approaches to international counterterrorism.

The main thesis of this article that the authoritarian nature of Central Asian regimes promotes the securitization of the fight against international terrorism in order to justify limiting political freedoms, strengthening power structures, and maintaining existing regimes.

Methodology of this research is based on discursive analysis goes to M.Foucault's ideas, and conception of securitization¹.

¹ See also [1, p. 10-70].

Following Wæver the key methodological idea of this paper is that "...policy can be partially *explained* ... by a *structural* model of national discourses" [2, p. 26]. The totality of discourses and discursive practices, which reside to some epoch, is labeled as discursive formation. The discursive formations systematically organize knowledge and demarcate what can be seriously spoken and heard, and who can seriously speak and be heard: "one cannot speak of anything at any time" [3, p. 44]. The rules of discursive formation define what has meaning – what kind of statements are significant in framework of this discursive formation.

Articulation the issues concerned with security is discursive practice proposed specific field of social interaction (field of security) that have specific structure and set of codes (rules).

According to B. Buzan and O. Wæver (Copenhagen School of Peace researches) securitization is "the discursive process through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat" [4, p. 491].

Authors of this conception distinguished several structural elements of securitization [5, p. 36]:

- *referent objects*: things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival in given discursive field of security (for example, state sovereignty, nation identity and etc.);
- *securitizing actors*: actors who securitize issues by declaring something-a referent object-existentially threatened. They pretend to use any means that necessary to manage giving threat (for example, political leaders, bureaucracy, governments, lobby and etc.);
- *functional actors*: actors who affects the security dynamics and significantly influences decisions in the field of security. They can be seen as threatening (for example, state carried out aggressive foreign policy, terrorist groups and etc.)

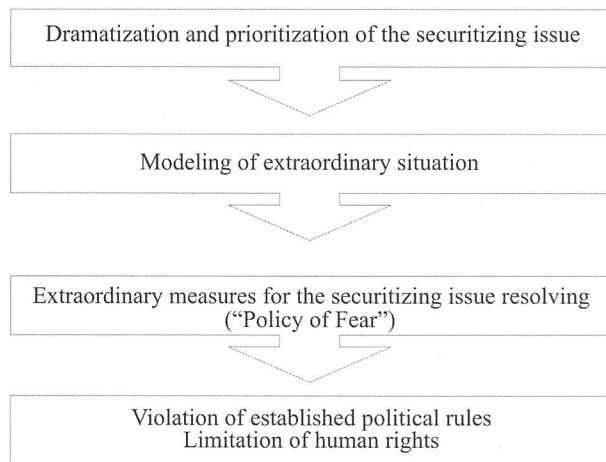
• *auditorium*: community, that are trying to be convinced by securitizing actors that existential threat to referent object exists (for example, nation, ethnic group and etc.)

Any social issue depending upon circumstances can be considered in the range from nonpoliticized through politicized to securitized [5, p. 23-24]:

- *nonpoliticized* – sphere that is not space for public political debates and decisions (decree of nature, free market economy, private life and etc.)
- *politicized* – sphere of public policy and public political debates and taking of decisions.
- *Securitized* – sphere that presented as existential threat, requiring extraordinary measures and confirming actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure².

Extraordinary situation. Securitization is an attempt to extent authorities of executive power and to reduce as far as possible legislative and judicial control [7]. At the same time securitization is opposed to politicization as it takes out one or another issue behind the political game rules, formulating this issue whether special political issue or over political issue. So securitization destroys an established political order.

Securitization is based on the conception of “extraordinary situation” that is mean the securitizing issue must be dramatized and articulated as a priority issue, that require extraordinary measures for its resolving.



Role of elites. Successful securitization depends on position of securitizing actor. Security sphere is sufficiently structured, in which some actors occupies more favorable positions, possessing power to determine what is the security issue and what is not security issue. Something is become of security issue, if the ruling elite (“government”) declare such is the case. In other words, as O. Wæver has pointed out, that “*In naming a certain development a security problem, the “state” can claim a special right, one that will, in the final instance, always be defined by the state and its elites*” [8, p. 54].

Within liberal democratic state ruling political elite is shaped in open political competition that is why its authentication with state (government) does not require special legitimization. Ruling political elite does not repress alternative (opposition) discourses presenting in political space [9].

Formation of political elites in Central Asian countries has some specific. The ruling political elite had come to

power during off-stage inter elites struggle. In Central Asia, the struggle for the right to construct national identity and state was expended in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This struggle was between former communist, democratic, nationalist, clan and religious elites. Until 1993, the former communist elite gained a victory so it might combine the key ideas of other elites but attach a more balanced character to them. But the impact of other elites is resided in political system. The struggle against opposition elites is still remaining behind the scenes. The ruling political elites of Central Asian states press alternative discourses get using mechanism of securitization as well. Climbing to keep power the ruling elite have to speak about *security*. The ruling elites in Central Asian countries speak about the necessity of keeping independence, constitutional order, peace, and stability. But the key purpose is to keep its power. Construction of the state and the nation is subordinated also to this purpose.

Specific of Central Asian ruling elite formation and constructing new independent states has determined its weakness.

The spectrum of weak and powerful nations is determined by [10, p. 96-107]:

- The degree of social and political unity between civil society and government institutions;
- The degree to which the state corresponds to the nation;
- The degree of statehood possessed by the country and the degree of stability in terms of internal order.

Central Asian states are weak, although not to an equal degree. One may generalize by saying that, to a varying extent, states in the region are typified by a low level of social and political cohesion and a narrow social base of support for existing political regimes (particularly among the “middle” class). This is less true for Kazakhstan. The vast majority of the population in Central Asian countries is politically apathetic. National identities are weak here, and are forced to compete with other forms of self-identity. Despite a well-developed state repressive machine (particularly in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), Central Asian countries are all experiencing one drawback of statehood: their governmental and national bodies are self-sufficient, and serve more as forums in which sub-state actors compete among themselves to ensure their own security and/or to exert influence over the country.

All other things being equal, weak states and their ruling elites are more inclined toward securitization. The governments of Central Asian states are convinced that security and stability are to be prized above all other values. This tendency toward securitization is largely driven by the fact that, when speaking about the security and stability of their country, the ruling elites equate themselves with the nation. For example, the weakness of Central Asian states leads to securitization when dealing with such issues as migration, the drug trade, religious extremism, and international terrorism³. This is most vividly manifested in Uzbekistan, where any decision on economic and political reforms is viewed through the lens of whether or not they will help to maintain “order” in the country and keep the ruling elite in power. In this sense, securitizing “Islamic fundamentalism” and “international terrorism” plays into the hands of the ruling elites of Central Asian countries.

² “Normal” political procedure is the liberal-democratic procedure that is the open competition for gain power and hegemony [6, p. 30; 7].

³ This is particularly typical of the works of the political leaders in the Central Asian states, e.g. [11; 12].

The ruling regimes attempt to portray any manifestations of extremism in Central Asian countries as being international in nature.

It's very useful for ruling elites of Central Asian states to use concept "international terrorism" because "international terrorism" along with threat of destabilization and fragmentation ("balkanization"⁴ in European case, "afghanization" or "tajikization" in Central Asian case) are instrument for legitimization political and social order without specifying well-defined enemy. Threats articulated by ruling elites of Central Asian countries are abstract and indistinct (for example, organized trans national crime, religious extremism and terrorism, illegal migration).

Case: "Andijon events" (May 2005). The most significant example of securitization of international terrorism in Central Asia is reaction of ruling elites of Central Asian states to "Andijon events" happened on May 12-13, 2005. Western countries demanded the independent international investigation of this incident and blamed for Uzbek authorities for unscrupulous using brute force to suppress insurrection.

The UN General Assembly had adopted resolution condemned Uzbekistan for persecution of Andijon event's participants. 73 countries supported this document. Azerbaijan, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Russia voted against this resolution. These countries have taken interpretation, proposed by the official Tashkent. According to the official point of view, the Andijon events were closely related to international terrorist organizations. Consideration of the Andijon events as international terrorism actions allowed to the official Tashkent again use rhetoric about "complicated external conditions" for development of sovereignty of Uzbekistan.

The given rhetoric had lost importance after peace settlement in Tajikistan in 1997 and gradual stabilization within the country, and especially after liquidation regime of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan during the military operation «Enduring Freedom». References to external conditions and international terrorism as well as deterioration of relations with West have allowing the ruling elite to postpone democratization and liberalization reforms and to reinforce persecution of opposition both of religious and secular.

In March 2006 Tashkent court had sentenced to leaders of unregistered opposition organization "Sunny coalition" Nadir Khidoyatova and Sanzhar Umarov, which appealed to resignation of Uzbek government and dismissal of Islam Karimov after repression of Andijon rebellion. This legal proceeding was not accessible to the public.

During 2005-2006 activity of such international non-governmental organizations as the «Eurasia Foundation», «Freedom House», «Internews Network» and others were stopped in Uzbekistan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan deprived the accreditation of journalists worked on radio "Freedom". The British radio corporation BBC itself closed down the office in Tashkent declared that its journalists were persecuted.

In political discourse of Central Asian countries the concept "international terrorism" contrasts with the conception stability. Discourse of ruling elites builds up on binary

opposition. Within this discourse chaos and disintegration, as circumstances of international terrorism actions, oppose to existing order and stability, that provided by the ruling elites.

The perception of international terrorism in global security discourse influences on security dynamics in Central Asia.

The *global level* of security dynamics is defined by the interactions with and securitization of global powers, either superpowers (the United States) and/or great powers (China, Japan, Russia, and the EU). Russia and the U.S. exert the greatest influence on Central Asia.

Russia actively securitizes the issue of international terrorism – thus defining to a great extent Russia's ties to the Central Asian states. A major reason for the formation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was this commonality of approaches to securitizing international terrorism. As a whole the Russian ruling elite has the same perception of international terrorism like the Central Asian ruling elites have. Thus, Russia adopted the official Uzbek opinion in relation to Andijon events. The Minister of Defence Sergey Ivanov stated within the meeting of Russian-NATO Council (June 9, 2005) in Brussels that the force of international Islamic terrorism had resisted Uzbek authorities in Andijon. It is his opinion that the international organizations have to investigate circumstances of the rebellion itself, but not actions of authorities to repress it. Also he announced Russia has information that Andijon events were inspired with Afghanistan with the assistance of Taliban.

The military actions taken by the *USA* in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the formation of the anti-terrorism coalition led by the United States created special conditions for the emergence of a new debate on international security, in which the fight against international terrorism occupies a central position. Reference in the discourses of all nations to the threat of international terrorism and the fight against it has become legitimate in the international community.

Central Asia has been drawn directly into the fight against international terrorism through Operation Enduring Freedom and due to its proximity to Afghanistan. This has enabled the ruling elites of the Central Asian states to strengthen authoritarian regimes by securitizing international terrorism and making declarations about terrorist groups' activities within their borders. What is important to note is that the emphasis is being placed on the *international* nature of these groups, since this makes it possible to ignore the domestic causes of terrorism and the conditions in which they emerged.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the international terrorism issues according to regional security complex theory makes it possible to identify the following conditions that shape the main ways that problems of international terrorism are formulated and articulated in Central Asian discourse:

- The weakness of Central Asian states create the space necessary for non-state actors to operate.
- The authoritarian nature of Central Asian regimes promotes the securitization of the fight against international terrorism in order to justify limiting political freedoms, strengthening power structures, and maintaining existing regimes.

⁴ "Balkanization is generally understood to be the break-up of larger political units into smaller, mutually hostile states which are exploited or manipulated by more powerful neighbors" [13, p. 488]. About idea of balkanization see [8, p. 71-75].

• The international community's acceptance of a discourse in which the central theme is the fight against international terrorism, and the nature of the international organizations currently arrayed around Central Asia, driven by the activities of the great powers, creates conditions that encourage securitization of the fight against international terrorism.

Speaking of the main characteristics of the discourse that is currently taking shape in Central Asia (in the context of this article), it may be noted that this discourse assumes

international terrorism as its subject, while at the same time it inhibits the possibility of stating and defining the domestic causes of terrorist acts directed against existing political regimes. The extremist actions that manifest themselves periodically, driven by latent tensions in society, are interpreted by the ruling elites as acts of international terrorism. A discourse in which a central position is occupied by the fight against international terrorism also stands in the way of a clear determination of the issues of human rights and civil liberties.

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The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Interests of Kazakhstan

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Over the past ten years, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has become a key player for Kazakhstan's international standing and the geopolitical processes in Central Asia (CA) more generally.

At the present time, the SCO counts six member states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. A group of states, originally known as the "Shanghai Five," has existed since 1996. Members of the Shanghai Five were united in their search for solutions to the problems relating to questions of frontiers and settling of territorial issues along the borders between the former Soviet Union and China. Later, in 2000, a decision was taken to transform the Shanghai Five into a regional structure for multilateral cooperation in various fields. In 2001, the SCO was created in Shanghai as a new international organization. It was implemented legally at the June 2002 summit in St. Petersburg, where the SCO Charter, the Agreement on the Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS) and the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State were also signed. Uzbekistan joined the SCO in the same year.

What initially stands out about this organization is the disproportion between its members: it includes giants such as China and Russia on the one hand, and considerably smaller Central Asian states on the other in terms of their political weight, the scale of their economies, their demography and the size of their territories. Considering this uneven playing field, it is worth pondering what exactly Kazakhstan may get out of the SCO.

Kazakhstan's participation and interests in the SCO are influenced by several factors: the first one is geopolitical, stemming from the participation in the organization of two major powers, Russia and China. These two powers automatically cast a shadow over the remaining members of the SCO.

Indeed, Russia and China have their own, specific geopolitical interests which extend far beyond the boundaries of the region: China's concerns lie predominantly in Asia (the Northeast, Southeast and Asia-Pacific region); those of Russia are in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic area (relations with the EU and NATO); while both countries share complex relations with the USA.

In addition to this, Russia has its own interests in the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia, where China is increasingly influential.

Geopolitical relations between Russia and China (as the

leading members of the SCO) as well as their relation with the outside world are of a great concern.

It is important to understand, therefore, the extent to which this bilateral relation in turn forms the strategic background of Kazakhstan's own international affairs. The second aspect, closely linked to the first, relates to security issues. In 2002, the Agreement on the Regional Antiterrorist Structure was signed within the framework of the SCO, and implemented by the creation of the SCO regional antiterrorist structure in 2004. Kazakhstan's interests depend on the SCO's capacity to protect Kazakhstan (as well as other Central Asian countries) from the threat of radical Islamism. As this concerns the fundamental question of security, it is important to remember that the SCO was originally set up to guarantee the inviolability and security of its member states' borders: the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Areas was signed on 24 April 1997, and the Agreement on Strengthening Mutual Trust in Military Fields in Border Areas on 26 April 1996 (which came into the force on 7 May 1998).

The third aspect is an economic one. Since 2000, when the decision to transform the "Shanghai Five" into a regional structure was taken, repeated announcements and efforts have been made to encourage economic integration within the SCO. Yet the SCO needs to contribute to Kazakhstan's economic development and well-being if it is to serve the country's interests.

The fourth aspect, lastly, concerns regional integration, namely, the extent to which all the constituent elements of the SCO (geopolitical, economic, multilateral and bilateral relations) influence regional politics and the relations between the republics of Central Asia, as well as how this in turn affects Astana's interests.

The wide range of questions raised by the SCO highlights the diversity of potential issues the organization faces. A number of these, however, are often solved outside the framework of the SCO. These include Russian-Chinese, Russian-American and Chinese-American relations; security problems with regard to the respective roles of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization²), NATO and the SCO; bilateral relations of the Central Asian countries – both among themselves and between them and the great powers. Consequently, there is no SCO policy per se.

However, the very fact that the SCO exists and seems to be active in the area of foreign policy (or geopolitics) creates the perception (or at least the illusion) of there being

a new and serious player on the regional and international stage. In this context and in regard to Kazakhstan's foreign policy, it is worth pondering whether the SCO is little more than a *trompe l'oeil*.

The SCO's activities in the field of security are, to a large extent, purely declarative, although the organization could play a significant role in certain areas—in Afghanistan, for example. Indeed, since the fall of the Taliban there has been little progress in that country. It is, for example, the source of a large flow of drugs, which the new administration cannot control. It is assumed that a substantial part of the income from this trade funds Islamic terrorist groups, which have not been eradicated by "Operation Enduring Freedom." This threat directly concerns the six member states of the SCO. China fears, and with good reason, that Uighur clandestine groups could form a common front with the Islamists. The concern is no longer an independent Uighur state in Xinjiang, but rather a "caliphate," which would encompass Central Asia and neighboring regions. For Russia, the threat from the south is highly significant: it is essential to prevent militants and drugs from infiltrating Russian territory by maintaining the southern republics of Central Asia to be stable at all costs.

In the spring and summer of 2004, and then in 2005, the terrorist underworld once again issued Uzbekistan with a reminder of its presence there by carrying out a series of terrorist acts. In Tashkent, authorities are fully aware that the fuse of Islamic terrorism could light the powder keg that is the Fergana valley—considered so because of the acute social and demographic problems there. In Kyrgyzstan, many Islamists live almost openly in camps in the southern part of the republic: they are not active against local powers, but instead attack Chinese representatives and are spreading into Uzbekistan. Tajikistan has also seen the full spectrum of the terrorist threats. Over the course of many years, even after the civil war ended, the territory of this republic has been permeated with both Afghan militants and Tajik Islamists trained on Afghan soil. At first glance, Kazakhstan appears to be the only state in a more advantageous position, but this is merely an illusion of security. The possibility of destabilization in southern Kazakhstan cannot be ruled out. Besides, Kazakhstan also has to take into account the Uighur factor in its relations with China.

As far as the SCO's place in Kazakhstan's foreign policy is concerned, the organization is currently of some importance, at least officially. In its capacity as chairman of the organization, Kazakhstan arranged a meeting of the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs at the end of February 2005 to discuss the question of maintaining stability in SCO territory, the organization's international activities, current problems of modernity, and the acceleration of efforts to implement the Tashkent initiative on creating a partnership network of multilateral partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. The second meeting of Security Council secretaries from SCO member states was held in Astana in early June 2005, to discuss questions of security and stability in SCO territory and neighboring regions, as well as measures to strengthen cooperation between SCO member states to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism.

The tenth meeting of SCO heads of state, held on 5 July 2005 in Astana, was heralded as a major international event. It was then that Iran, India and Pakistan were conferred the status of observer. Among the seven documents signed at this summit was the framework for cooperation in the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism. The SCO member states agreed to carry out joint antiter-

rorism instruction and personnel training, and to share their acquired experience. But the main outcome of this summit was the SCO's declaration on the duration of the stationing of the US military bases in Central Asia. The majority of commentators considered this declaration to be an ultimatum directed against the United States. However, after a time, the attitudes of the different parties became more divided. Kyrgyzstan, for example, has essentially repudiated this "anti-American statement." During the visit of the US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, to the region in July 2005, Bishkek stressed that Kyrgyzstan wished to maintain the American base on its territory at Manas.

After the events in Andizhan in May 2005, and in particular after the SCO summit in Astana, Uzbek-American relations reached a crisis point. Tashkent did not limit itself to a verbal declaration as Bishkek did, but actually made the USA close its base in Khanabad. This request was granted at the end of November, 2005. For its part, Washington exerted pressure on Uzbekistan in connection with the events in Andizhan, human rights violations and the general situation in the country. Kazakhstan meanwhile, which has no American bases on its territory, was able to set an example of "brilliant political distancing," having encouraged the anti-American *démarche* on the one hand, while doing nothing to significantly aggravate relations with the USA (or NATO) on the other.

At the end of October 2005, the regular session for the Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) was held in Moscow. At this meeting, Beijing attempted to steer the development of the SCO toward strengthened economic cooperation. The Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, declared that China was prepared to put US\$ 900 million toward financing the joint development projects. The Chinese were essentially proposing to heavily subsidize the economies of SCO countries, attempting to transform the political organization into an economic one: a proposal that was rejected by Kazakhstan and Russia. Had the Chinese solution been accepted, there would have been a danger of the SCO turning into a Chinese "economic protectorate." This scheme threatened Russia and Kazakhstan in particular since the Chinese strategy had assigned them the role of rear energy bases, suppliers of hydrocarbons and raw materials.

The fact that Central Asia is becoming part of a new economic and geopolitical order taking shape in Eurasia and Asia has recently been touted by certain commentators. This process would be characterized by market expansion towards the countries of Southeast Asia, China, Korea, India, Turkey and Russia, and a slowdown (even stagnation) in Europe's economic development—traditionally a guiding beacon for many countries of the CIS and Russia. Strengthening the "Asian" paradigm and consolidating Eurasian independence (should Russian and Central Asian integration projects be implemented) could have far-reaching strategic consequences.

Events of recent years have shown that the SCO has begun to follow the same path as other regional organizations, namely, it is becoming more institutionalized and bureaucratic. A Secretariat with headquarter function has been set up in Beijing; the activities of the Council of Heads of Government and Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs are organized; cooperation is underway between Security Council secretaries, and an executive committee for RATS has been established in Tashkent. The creation of a Development Fund and an SCO Business Council are telling of the member states' will to reinforce the economic aspect of the SCO.

However, many observers are distrusting and skeptical of efforts by SCO founders to present their organization as an element of the multipolar world and a modern geopolitical power. According to these, the SCO is little more than a colossal act of geopolitical bluff. The fact is that the "two main wheels on the SCO cart" – in the words of the Uzbek president Islam Karimov – Russia and China, have been trying to use the SCO in their relations with the USA and the West for their own advantage. They only use the SCO to "fly their flag" in Central Asia, in face of a mounting American presence there.

It is certainly the case that China is isolated within the SCO, confronted by a block of post-Soviet states that share a common past and confronted with the same problems, which facilitates understanding among them. Moreover, Russia has a specific, tried-and-tested approach to each of them.

A number of factors define China's interests in the SCO. Firstly, Beijing is attempting to restrain the separatist forces of "Eastern Turkestan" secondly, it is trying to preserve Central Asia as a stable and strategic base; and thirdly, it views certain countries in the region as both potential suppliers of energy resources and economic partners.

One of China's main goals is to prevent this region from becoming a base for separatist groups and a channel for their links with international terrorism. China is therefore proposing that the governments of CA republics ban these separatists from carrying out any activities on their soil and prevent any elements of this terrorist and extremist structures from entering Chinese territory. Beijing is working on the assumption that the security of CA states is interrelated with the security of the Xinjiang Uighur autonomous region (XUAR): in other words, any instability in Central Asia will affect the security of northwest China.

Beijing's success at ensuring that CA remains a stable and strategic base depends on three things. Firstly, it depends on the solving of the contentious border issues between China and other countries in the region, as well as establishing peace and security in border areas. Both of these problems are nearly solved: all that remains is to reach an agreement on certain unpopulated and insignificant bits of territory near the border. Secondly, it is contingent on the countries of Central Asia engaging in open foreign policies with regard to China which, in turn, must establish balanced bilateral relations with them. Thirdly, Central Asia must not be under the thumb of any superpower.

The Chinese strategy in Central Asia is not currently entirely autonomous, but determined rather by the Russian and American as far as Beijing is concerned, further development of the region's situation will, to a large extent, depend on the duration of the US's military presence there. China is therefore planning to build its strategy in Central Asia around the SCO by strengthening its position and refining its decision-making mechanisms, and by limiting institutional inertia in order to make it a tool for transforming the region as a whole. It has not escaped the Chinese political and military establishment that, over recent years, Russia has undertaken a "return" in Central Asia by asserting its military presence and political influence there. To them it is clear that Russia's deepened economic integration within the CIS is intended to increase its political influence. China is therefore trying to limit Russia's return to the region and to contain it via the SCO.

Considering Russia's diminishing economic clout, China sees its own growth as the main engine capable of providing a model for the whole region's development. Consequently,

the SCO appears at present to be a transitional structure for China, while it attempts to establish itself as a global power center. It is also clear that China will do everything it can to prevent the erosion of the SCO as a tool for spreading its presence in the region and for balancing the relations between China and Russia. Beijing's main difficulty is to find a way of coordinating the SCO's antiterrorist action with the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which has the same vocation and includes all SCO countries but China and Uzbekistan. Meanwhile, China has been trying to dispel the worries that the weaker Central Asian neighbors have in its regard, promoting counterterrorist measures and furthering its image as a peaceful superpower. In so doing, China is attempting to establish some semblance of soft hegemony. Considering China's growing energy demand, it is assumed that Chinese state companies will vastly increase their investments in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector, and strengthen their participation in Kyrgyzstan's hydraulic power sector (mainly with the aim of supplying electrical power to Xinjiang). For Russia, the SCO is above all a framework for cooperation with China. The scale of cooperation between Moscow and Beijing reached unprecedented levels in 2005. Russia and China held a series of joint large-scale military exercises, made a joint declaration on world order in the 21st century, and have used the SCO to counter US military presence in Central Asia.

The Russian military community views the promotion of cooperation with China within the framework of the SCO as indispensable, but remain divided over the extent of such strategic military cooperation in light of possible rivalry between the two. The Russian General Staff does not consider China to be a reliable partner, and refuses to sell certain military equipment and technologies deemed too sensible. Russia is also unwilling to sell China any kind of license to manufacture complex arm systems.

Moscow is clearly becoming concerned about the growth of Chinese influence in Central Asia and the region's increasing dependence on China. As mentioned previously, Beijing's attempts to transform the SCO from a political organization into an economic one have not been reciprocated by Moscow.

Russian analytical circles are currently working on a formula for cooperation with China within the framework of the SCO. In particular, they are attempting to rethink the internal structuring and functional specialization of SCO members, based on the conventional 2+2+2 model, with China and Russia at the top level; Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at the middle, regional level; and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan at the bottom, subregional level. For the purposes of functional improvements, they would not exclude the possibility of classifying Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as leading SCO subjects, responsible for stability and development in the region in the context of the Central Asian "Four," while Russia and China would assume the SCO's general strategic path, as well as its relations with the rest of the world.

Russia clearly fears the threat of becoming China's junior partner. Consequently, Moscow is taking a series of steps: by restricting the sale of new technology, by limiting regional economic integration, and controlling immigration. It is also with this in mind that Moscow is reinforcing trilateral relations between Russia, India and China.

To a large extent, Russia seems to view the SCO as a temporary geopolitical instrument in the spirit of the Primakov doctrine, in order to maximize the convergence of points of view with China. The proximity of the two countries helps

Russia and China to coordinate their positions in the international arena. Furthermore, Moscow believes that a stance coordinated with China cannot be ignored by the international community. Russia today believes it has a unique opportunity to restore its geopolitical influence in Central Asia. Russia has managed to merge the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc) and, by so doing, it has effectively taken control over the integration processes in the region. In reality, this was an attempt to find an answer to Chinese economic expansion in the region. Russia's strategy regarding Kazakhstan, at least in the short term, essentially overlooks the framework of the SCO. It aims rather to achieve a joint defense area, completing a Collective Rapid Deployment Force (CRDF) under its aegis, continuing the process of further integration with the economic and military structures of CTSO member states, and forming an integration core (on a Central Asia level) around Russia and Kazakhstan.

The USA clearly plays a role in the evolution of the SCO insofar as the two leading powers of the organization—Russia and China—have close strategic and economic (counter-) relations with Washington. The USA has a presence in Central Asia and influences, to varying degrees, the foreign policies in the region's countries, primarily in Kazakhstan. Since 2005, American strategy in Central Asia has undergone radical change. The essence of this change is that Washington was forced to come to terms with the fact that its influence is on the wane there, and as a consequence, of its need to adopt a more realistic policy. In the case of Kazakhstan, this more realistic policy manifested itself for example in the non-intervention of the 2005 presidential elections. In the preceding months, there was a very real threat that the USA could have recourse to a "color revolution" in Kazakhstan. A number of factors contributed to offsetting this threat: Astana's decisive reaction to events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, its concerted consultations with Moscow and Beijing, the change in the electoral calendar, as well as the joint *démarche* by SCO members in July 2005, when SCO participants raised the issue of the American military presence in the region. Consequently, it was the unequivocally frank position held by Moscow and Beijing that became the strongest limiting factor with which the USA was forced to contend. It is assumed that a review of certain previous methods and instruments for implementing American policy in the region is currently underway, all of which will inevitably have repercussions on Kazakhstan's security. The goals of the US strategy in Central Asia and their means of implementation are currently the subject of heated debate in the American establishment. In 2005, a new strategic approach to the region was developed in Washington—the "Great Central Asia" (GCA) project.¹⁰ The GCA project also had concrete political goals: to separate Central Asia from the Eurasian region, of which it appears to be a natural part, and in so doing isolate the countries of the region from Russia and the CIS as a whole; setup a "buffer zone" between the region and China; and creating a series of communications routes from the Caucasus to Pamir that avoid Russian and Chinese territories, etc. In short, the GCA plan can be perceived as a plan set up to counter the SCO.

From an institutional point of view, this project manifested itself in the redistribution of responsibilities within corresponding departments of the US State Department: in autumn 2005, Central Asia was transferred from the European department's area of responsibility to the department in charge of the countries of the Middle East and South Asia.

The new American strategy (as voiced by the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice during her visit to the region in October 2005) simultaneously takes into account several geopolitical, military-strategic and regional factors. With regard to Russia and China, the US has decided to act in accordance with the interests of these powers in the region and is prepared (if only formally) to consider this as well as acknowledging the influence of the SCO. At the same time, the USA insists on its presence in Central Asia. Consequently, a departure (at least in words) from the previous unilateral approach of the USA is becoming clear.

The trend towards NATO—and more precisely, the rehabilitation of the armies of Central Asian states—is a new tool in the process of strengthening the influence of the USA and the West. In recent times, cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and NATO within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) has gained an increased attention. Moreover, the idea that the best way of modernizing Central Asian armed forces is via this Partnership is gaining ground. This idea which, objectively speaking, is very sensible has nevertheless caused irritation and concern in Russia, as it indirectly threatens the functioning and credibility of the CSTO and the SCO.

NATO's strategic aims (in the context of US strategy) include maintaining stability across the huge expanse of Eurasia that lies east of Europe, as well as supporting geopolitical control of strategically significant regions in the Middle East, the Black Sea, Caucasus, Caspian Sea and Central Asia. Central Asia and Afghanistan have a special place in this lineup, being key regions for NATO to establish its geopolitical presence in the center of Eurasia, in terms of the impact they might have on Russia and China. NATO strategists, evaluating Kazakhstan's current foreign policy, believe that Astana is taking a conscious risk in its relations with Russia and China, aiming to strengthen its relations with NATO slowly but surely over the long term. On this basis, NATO is quick to underline Kazakhstan's dual obligations with the CSTO and SCO, as well as in its bilateral relations with Russia and China. It is therefore trying to enter the fray of Astana's balancing act.

The European Union is almost entirely absent from the geopolitical scene in Central Asia. This applies to both EU strategies concerning Central Asia as a whole and the level of political activity from individual member states. At the current time, Europe is able to influence Central Asia only indirectly, via the OSCE and NATO for example. This is largely due to the dramatic slowdown of EU integration after the failure of the constitutional project, but also to the EU's recent enlargement, the developments in Ukraine, the change of power in Germany, and the transformation of relations between the EU and Russia.

In regard to NATO, the question is how the US strategy will be coordinated with its European allies. It is clear that the EU strategy regarding Central Asia and Kazakhstan has been determined by prominent individual European powers (France, Germany, United Kingdom), but also by international organizations—namely NATO and the OSCE. The EU is presently very important for Kazakhstan's economy, but it does not carry the weight of a geopolitical and military-strategic force in the region.

For the time being, the EU is in retreat in Central Asia, satisfied in considering it a "buffer zone." The EU will therefore encourage (using various tools such as NATO and the OSCE) this role for Central Asia, as buffer against the dissemination of threats against European interests:

terrorism, drug trade, illegal migration, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction being prime example.

However, this approach has one important distinguishing feature: in contrast to the USA, the EU has always acknowledged Russia's particular interests in Central Asia. European strategists are also considering ways to further their relations with the region. In this respect, the Turkish problem is reviving, since building and developing formal alliances between the European Union and the Turkic states of Central Asia will depend on, though not be limited to, decisions made regarding the admission of Turkey to the EU and on the stances taken by Beijing and Moscow on this issue. Some European strategists have not ruled out the possibility of agreements being concluded with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and "democratized" (i.e. post-Karimov) Uzbekistan along the lines of the Lomé and Euromed agreements. Although these agreements do not offer any prospect of entry or associate membership of the EU, they imply more intense contact between partners in economic, customs and various other spheres.

However, the EU's strategy regarding Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus—still considered in Brussels as a single entity, will take as a starting point the demand for energy and natural resources, combining this approach with the doctrine of defending human rights and enforcing democratization.

Through the SCO, Kazakhstan remains at the mercy of the evolution of the Sino-Russian relations: on the one hand, excessive strategic rapprochement between Beijing and Moscow threatens to establish a double dictate of these powers in Central Asia (including within the framework of the SCO); conversely, however, there is also the danger of a flare-up in Chinese-Russian rivalry in the region, which cannot be ruled out in the future.

The problems that China presents for Kazakhstan are traditional ones and must be conceived of while bearing the long-term in mind: demographic penetration, China's growing economic influence and the threat of Kazakhstan becoming economically dependent on China, as well as growing conflicts between Beijing and other major powers. Yet China's strategy and policy is rapidly changing—which demonstrates an active, offensive vision for the future of CA and its relations with China. Needless to say, Beijing considers itself, in the medium term, the lead power and economic protector of the region. This kind of strategy on the part of China will, in the future, inevitably aggravate Chinese-Russian relations and could shift the style of relations from one of cooperation to one of rivalry over the right to be the major acting force in the region.

The SCO in the mode seen in Moscow and Beijing may become another sizable challenge to the development of Kazakhstan. That is to say, as an influential international organization of geopolitical dimensions, in which China and Russia will undoubtedly dominate, Central Asian states are likely to be assigned the role of "the guided." In view of this trend, it is logical for Kazakhstan, as far as possible,

to work on maintaining a tacit alliance with the post-Soviet states within the SCO with a view to neutralizing the influence of China. At the same time, Astana must continue to be Russia's leading partner out of all member states. This means, coordinating with Russia on major energy projects linked with China. It appears that Washington will transfer its focus to cooperation between Kazakhstan and NATO, and not only with a view to matters of security, but to the broader spectrum. Under these circumstances, Astana is in a difficult position, since expanding cooperation with NATO will inevitably antagonize Moscow and China, as leading powers in the SCO. On the other hand, Kazakhstan cannot, with long-term prospects in mind, afford to forego full cooperation with the West for the sake of the SCO. The SCO is thus an extremely ambiguous organization: it is not a military-strategic alliance, nor a full-fledged economic union, nor is it a political organization in the traditional (geographical, cultural-civilizational, and so on) sense. Nevertheless the SCO holds an increasingly prominent place in Kazakhstan's foreign policy, even if this might be involuntary, mostly because of the participation in it of powers such as Russia and China, which Kazakhstan can evidently not ignore. The SCO's Central Asian trend is another factor compelling Kazakhstan to try and play a prime regional role.

In terms of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, the SCO holds risks as well as benefits. Because this policy relies on a clear balance of influences (or "multi-vectored"), the SCO presents Kazakhstan with added options in its dialogue with the West. However, the many priorities of the SCO proposed (or imposed) by Moscow and/or Beijing are inevitably a burden for Kazakhstan. Membership of the SCO thus creates yet more difficulties in terms balancing Russia and China, as it is likely that, in the future, Astana will have to choose between them.

In the end, Kazakhstan is not reaping any real benefit from its membership in the SCO, for the organization has practically no bearing on Kazakhstan's bilateral relations with either Russia or China, nor does it help advance any particular issue. For example, Kazakhstan has been as of yet unable to gain any concessions from China on such weighty problems as the use of cross-border rivers. The SCO's potential in the area of security therefore remains mostly abstract and provides no real guarantees. In conclusion, taking into consideration all of the objective and subjective factors, the prospect of creating an effective regional organization derived from the SCO's development seems extremely hazy. In any event, the main issues are solved at the bilateral level. And even if the SCO did succeed in developing into such an effective organization, the China's extraordinary growth would confine the other member states into little more than a supply-base for China's natural resources. The organization would then risk becoming an "economic trap" with foreseeable consequences in terms of their political sovereignty. This threat is, as yet, hypothetical. But even today the SCO embodies more challenges and risks for Kazakhstan than it does benefits.

China, Russia and the Balance of Power in Central Asia

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Russia and China increasingly seek to offset U.S. influence in Central Asia through enhanced cooperation conducted under the banner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). While its impact is often exaggerated, the SCO does offer certain benefits to the states of the region, as well as to Moscow and Beijing, that the United States can ill afford to ignore.

The United States and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies play a critical role in Central Asia through their stabilizing presence in Afghanistan, something that neither Russia nor China can match. Central Asia's geostrategic qualities keep America strongly interested in retaining access and building cooperative, stable relations with regional states.

Russia and China oppose U.S. democracy promotion as naive or subversive (or both). Yet neither has articulated a vision for systemic change and long-term stability in the region. Russia's influence is a matter of its imperial past, economic interdependence, and trading routes. Russia depends on Central Asian energy resources and labor, but its control over both gives it leverage over the region. China's influence has been growing due to expanding trade, acquisition of energy resources, and overall rise as a major power.

China and Russia will remain significant actors in Central Asia, and advancing U.S. interests in this region will become more complicated if Russia and China are ignored. Dialogue and limited cooperation with both countries in areas of mutual interest should be important elements of a successful U.S. strategy for the region.

THE SCO RECORD

Since the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) called upon the United States to commit to withdraw its military personnel from Central Asia at its July 2005 summit, the SCO has acquired the reputation as a significant obstacle to U.S. policy. However, this reputation obscures the real state of affairs. Notwithstanding press reports about the challenge posed by the SCO to U.S. policy in Central Asia, a close look at the organization, the behavior of its members, their motivations, and the practical impact of their declarations suggests that the SCO's challenge to U.S. interests and policies in Central Asia is less than meets the eye.

But ignoring the SCO simply because of its limited capabilities for action and concrete results would be a mistake; it is more than a paper tiger. As a political organization, it is an important vehicle for Russian and Chinese diplomacy

aimed to counter U.S. influence in the region. The SCO also provides a forum where Central Asian states, dwarfed by their giant neighbors, can sit at the table with them as equals, at least nominally. For all these reasons, the SCO is worth the attention of the United States. The question is what kind of attention we should pay to it.

The SCO has its origins in the April 1996 meeting of the heads of the Shanghai Five states—China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan—to address border management issues, enhance cross-border cooperation, and promote confidence-building measures. In an effort to put the legacy of Sino-Soviet tensions behind them and to avoid new friction arising from the uncertainties of the post-Soviet era, the heads of the Shanghai Five states signed the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions in 1996 and the Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions in 1997. The annual meetings of the Five continued until 2001, with the addition of Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov as a guest in 2000. Beyond the annual gatherings and the two initial treaties, however, the Five's record of accomplishment was quite slim.

In June 2001, the original five states and Uzbekistan established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and issued a declaration in which they pledged to work together to enhance mutual security and stability in their region. In 2003, a joint counterterrorism center was established in Shanghai; in 2004, a Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure was established in Tashkent; and in 2006, SCO members agreed to establish a new institute to fight transnational crime. In addition, SCO members have conducted several military exercises; pledged to promote economic cooperation; embraced the eventual goal of setting up a free trade area; and established an inter-bank council to fund future development projects.

While many of these initiatives look impressive on paper, the resources available to support them and the capabilities that member states can put into action remain uncertain. With the exception of China and Russia, SCO member states have few resources and capabilities for action in areas of regional security or economic development. Thus, the organization remains heavily dependent on its two leading members to develop such capabilities.

China and Russia see the organization as a useful vehicle for forging greater regional political cooperation but in a manner that would tend to limit the role and influence of outsiders in the affairs of Central Asia. The SCO has granted observer status to India, Iran, Pakistan, and Mongolia but has held off on extending actual memberships to new prospects.

The controversial issue of Iran's potential membership is both a source of opportunity for Russia and China to demonstrate their ability to challenge U.S. global dominance, as well as a nuisance, since granting Iran full membership could prove more of an irritant for relations with the United States than either Moscow or Beijing would like.

Thus, the SCO barely surpasses the sum of its parts. Its capabilities are quite limited. Its period of greatest activity coincided with Uzbekistan's decision to expel the United States from the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) airbase in 2005, but that decision was purely a matter of bilateral U.S.-Uzbek relations. The SCO served as a convenient forum for Uzbekistan to couch its demands in a multilateral setting and demonstrate a measure of international support for its action, but the SCO was most likely the net beneficiary of that episode, having seen its status as an international organization enhanced to the point where it could successfully challenge the United States. However, if Uzbekistan's demands had been made without the SCO's summit as a backdrop, the result undoubtedly would have been the same. The organization's strength is proving to be its chief weakness as well. Its role as Russia's and China's instrument of control in Central Asia is likely to come into conflict with the region's desire for greater integration in the international arena. The SCO's success as a regional security and economic development organization will hinge on its ability to generate the will and resources that its members need to address the many pressing concerns they have. So far, the organization's record is proving to be mixed at best.

NUISANCE OR THREAT?

How consequential is the SCO from the standpoint of U.S. interests? Clearly, the organization's influence in the region is considerable, and its biggest members—China and Russia—have the ability to undercut American initiatives there. But the SCO's power to produce concrete results where they matter the most to its members—security and stability—is limited at best, and all its members have a strong interest in the success of the principal U.S. mission in the region, which is to secure Afghanistan.

Russia and China have a big stake in another American mission in the region: setting Central Asia on the path of long-term, sustainable security and development. However, both have strong reservations about the U.S. approach to achieving these goals and any expansion of U.S. influence in their mutual backyard. Indeed, in 2005, the SCO established an Action Plan to advance trade and economic cooperation among member states.

Notwithstanding its recent setbacks in Central Asia, most notably the withdrawal from the Karshi-Khanabad airbase and the upsurge in violence in Afghanistan, the United States continues to exert substantial influence over the region's security. It does so despite the inherent challenge of operating in Afghanistan (which has no rail and very few paved roads), and the overall Herculean task of sustaining North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and coalition operations (International Security Assistance Force and Operation Enduring Freedom, respectively) half way around the world with no direct land or sea access to the country. Nothing illustrates the true global reach of the United States than its military operations in Afghanistan—a capability that is unique and beyond the grasp of Russia or China in the foreseeable future. Without U.S. and other NATO member presence, Afghanistan has few prospects to

return to stability and regain a measure of prosperity; it will threaten the security and stability of Central Asia. The ripple effect will not stop at Central Asia proper and is certain to reverberate into Russia and China—a fact that no doubt is well understood in both Moscow and Beijing.

U.S. INTERESTS

For the United States, Central Asia's importance derives primarily from its geographic proximity to Afghanistan; it has served as a stepping stone to the remote, landlocked-country, which otherwise would be even less accessible to the United States and its allies. Central Asia itself is only marginally more accessible than Afghanistan, but that margin makes an important difference, one that proved crucial during the early stages of the military campaign against the Taliban in 2001. Airbases in Kyrgyzstan and, until November 2005, Uzbekistan have played an important role in facilitating U.S. operations in Afghanistan.

The loss of K2 left the United States dependent on its airbase in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, as an important base for supporting operations in Afghanistan. However, Kyrgyzstan, rocked by instability since the 2005 "Tulip revolution" that overthrew long-time president Askar Akayev, has proven a difficult partner. Intense negotiations with the government, which has demanded significantly higher payments from the United States for the use of the Manas facilities, resulted in a new agreement in July 2006.

But Central Asia is more than a stepping stone to Afghanistan. It is the heartland of Eurasia, the continent's crossroads surrounded by every important continental power—Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and Iran. In the context of the U.S. global posture that puts a premium on unimpeded access and ability to deploy forces quickly, the crossroads of SCO influence in Central Asia is considerable, and its biggest members—China and Russia—have the ability to undercut American initiatives there. No. 223, November 2006 Strategic Forum Eurasia is an important piece of real estate.

Its control by a hostile power resulting in U.S. loss of access would be fraught with negative consequences for U.S. interests in several regions—from China to the Middle East. Central Asia has generated a good deal of interest in the United States and elsewhere because of its hydrocarbon reserves. Important as they are in the context of Eurasia, as well as for select U.S. commercial interests, these reserves are of relatively low significance in the global energy context or from the standpoint of U.S. energy security.

Central Asian oil deposits, located primarily in Kazakhstan but also in smaller quantities in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, are projected to generate less than 5 percent of the global oil supply once full production is achieved. The landlocked region will eventually be serviced by three pipeline routes—through Russia, to China, and across the Caspian to the recently completed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Given the limited volume of Caspian oil and its proximity to major markets in Europe and Asia, little, if any, of it is likely to reach U.S. markets. Nonetheless, as a nontrivial producer, Central Asia will contribute to global energy security through supply diversification. Central Asia is also home to significant deposits of natural gas with major fields located in Turkmenistan, as well as in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. However, Central Asian natural gas is a prisoner of the region's geography and limited export routes that make it hugely dependent on Russian gas pipelines. Because

of Russia's self-interest and control over export pipelines, Central Asian gas can reach only a handful of markets. This was amply demonstrated during the January 2006 gas crisis involving Russia, Ukraine, European customers, and Central Asian producers. The latter found themselves at the mercy of the Russian government, locked into less lucrative markets.

This situation is unlikely to change because industry analysts widely expect Russian gas production from existing fields to decline in the years ahead. Russia's Gazprom has not been able to attract investment in volumes necessary to bring new fields online.

The unmistakable implication of this is that the gap between Russia's demand for gas— for domestic consumption, as well as to satisfy its export commitments in Europe—and its available supply is unlikely to be closed by domestic production alone. Russia will need Central Asian gas to meet these obligations.

The bottom line with regard to Central Asian gas therefore is clear: its role in U.S. energy security is likely to be even less than that of Central Asian oil. Preventing state failure and uncontrolled spaces in Central Asia has been an important U.S. interest before and especially since the start of the war on terror. U.S. policy in this regard has followed three major avenues: political reform as a means to broader political participation and more stable political regimes; economic reform as a means of sustainable development, prosperity, and stability; and security assistance as a means of countering key threats to the region, including traffickers, terrorist groups, and illegal armed formations.

Significant as they are, especially with Afghanistan certain to remain one of the top items on the national security agenda for the foreseeable future, long-term U.S. interests in Central Asia are that of a global power. In other words, they are regional in nature and as such do not rise to the top tier of U.S. national security agenda, dominated by global concerns, except in unusual circumstances. Central Asia is nonetheless important to the United States as a function of its interests in the neighboring regions and global security concerns.

Central Asia appears more important to the other two major powers - Russia and China - as a matter of both their regional and global concerns. Besides Afghanistan itself and the five post-Soviet Central Asian states, Russia and China have been the biggest beneficiaries of the U.S. military campaign against the Taliban and the ensuing stabilization and reconstruction effort. While uncomfortable with the fact of the U.S. military presence in their shared strategic backyard, the two Eurasian powers accepted it and took advantage of its consequences—a more stable Afghanistan and Central Asia.

RUSSIA: ON THE REBOUND?

Neither China nor Russia has ever truly welcomed the U.S. presence in Central Asia or facilitated it significantly. Neither was willing to combine its efforts with those of the United States on behalf of regional security and stability. As the former imperial power in Central Asia, Russia especially held that its interests would be well served by “balancing” U.S. presence in form, if not in style. It deployed a token air contingent to Kyrgyzstan and touted the SCO as a security organization poised to counter U.S. presence as the key factor in regional security affairs.

Russian interests in Central Asia are relatively easy to

discern. They are a product of geography, history, economics, and culture, which add up to a powerful rationale for Russia to keep a close eye on the region. Concurrent with the downturn in U.S.-Uzbek relations in 2005, Russia has assumed a more active posture in Central Asia, seeking to minimize U.S. presence—political, economic, and especially military—and reestablish itself as the preeminent regional actor. A series of highlevel visits, including Russian-Uzbek summits and declarations, were clearly designed to send the message that Russia was back and resurgent.

The 2005 SCO declaration calling on the United States to commit to a schedule for withdrawing its troops from Central Asia was reportedly adopted at Russia's strong urging. Besides the imagery of Russia returning to its former position of influence in Central Asia, Moscow has demonstrated little in the way of improved capabilities for projecting power into the region or securing its interests there by other means. In fact, Russian actions have revealed even less by way of a clear vision of Russian interests in Central Asia or a strategy for realizing them.

Most if not all Russian actions appear to be tactical in nature with little consideration for their long-term consequences. Russian participation in the SCO falls into that category. Preventing state failure and uncontrolled spaces in Central Asia has been an important U.S. interest before and especially since the start of the war on terror. Russia has a strong interest in keeping Central Asia stable and free of radical elements.

Given the long and unsecured border Russia shares with Central Asia, Moscow's concerns about unrest in Andijon, explosions in Tashkent, or Tajikistan's civil war are easy to understand. Besides stability and security, Russia has important economic interests in Central Asia. The region's economy is still closely intertwined with Russia's as a legacy of Soviet central planning. Although the 15 years since the Soviet breakup have seen significant changes to that legacy, much of it is still in place as a matter of tradition, geography, transportation arrangements, and technology.

Transportation issues remain especially important in Russian-Central Asian relations, though much more as a matter of Central Asian interests in Russia than vice versa. Central Asian exports of energy and other goods move to markets through Russian pipelines, railroads, and ports. But that too has given Russia an additional economic stake in Central Asia as a trading partner.

Energy trade recently has emerged as an especially strong Russian interest in Central Asia, whose gas exports have figured prominently in Russian gas trade with Ukraine and the rest of Europe. The prospect of a significant shortfall in Russian domestic gas production and the importance for Russia to sustain its own lucrative gas trade with Europe make control of Central Asian gas flows a special concern for Moscow. The ability to control gas exports could prove decisive to Russia's relations with Ukraine, which relies heavily on a mix of Russian and Central Asian gas, as well as Europe, which relies on long-term contracts with Russia to supply gas to its environmentally conscious consumers.

Besides gas, Russia is keenly interested in one other key import from Central Asia—its people. Despite the economic recovery over the past 7 years, the Russian population has been declining by as much as 750,000 people annually. The demographic crisis and its impact on Russian population statistics as well as on the country's economic outlook were acknowledged recently by President Vladimir Putin in his annual address to the Federal Assembly and the nation.

Economic growth has generated strong demand for labor, which Russia has satisfied in recent years by importing hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of migrant workers from the former Soviet countries, including Central Asia. While the exact statistics on migrant labor are difficult to come by, media reports suggest that this traffic has developed into a two-way dependency - Russia on migrant labor from Central Asia, and Central Asia on migrant workers' remittances from Russia.

No list of Russian interests in Central Asia is complete without at least a passing reference to the fate of ethnic Russians in that region. Although many are reported to have moved back to the Russian Federation, as many as 7 million still remain. No Russian government will be able to ignore their fate in the event of significant disturbances in the region. Last but not least among Russian interests in Central Asia is the issue of China. The challenge of China's rise as a superpower is the single most difficult issue on Russia's foreign and security policy agenda. Central Asia is but one theater in which Russian interests are bound to be challenged by the ever-expanding Chinese economic, political, and security footprint. Russia's foreign policy community has only begun to grapple with this issue, but signs of future tensions are already appearing in Russian policy discussions and newspaper reporting. The future of Central Asian gas flows and control of oil fields have already emerged as contentious issues between Russia and China.

In the years to come, balancing China's growing influence in Central Asia is likely to be an important and increasing interest of Russia's - one that Russia is likely to share with the countries of Central Asia, whose ability to deal with China on their own is limited at best. From the standpoint of both Russia and its Central Asian partners, the SCO could play a useful role as force multiplier for dealing with China and constraining its influence in a subtle way.

Perhaps this is a sign of a future Russian strategy in the region, which could eventually combine elements of cooperation and competition with both China and the United States, while forging alliances with local regimes in Central Asia. This, however, would require Russia to muster the kind of intellectual and material capabilities that it has yet to demonstrate.

Despite an extensive list of important interests and considerable resources available to policymakers to advance those interests, Russian policy in the region cannot be even remotely considered a success. With few exceptions, it has been driven by near-term, tactical considerations at the expense of long-term interests and with no regard to the question of sustainability of Russian policy or the status quo in the region. For example, the Russian tendency to abuse its control of gas pipelines and squeeze its Central Asian trading partners for maximum short-term concessions on price has undercut Russia's long-term interest in securing access to Central Asian gas supplies. Turkmenistan has been seeking alternative routes to Afghanistan and China; Kazakhstan has made a commitment to the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline. All understand full well that they have to depend on Russia, and all resent this situation.

One interpretation of Russian policy toward the SCO is that Moscow uses the organization to reconcile its short-term interest in U.S. presence to help secure the region with its long-term interest in preventing the United States from establishing permanent bases there. The most notable aspect of Russian policy in this area has been its use of the SCO platform to encourage announcement of a timetable for

American withdrawal from the region. In the short term, a withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from the one remaining base in Kyrgyzstan would have an adverse effect on U.S. operations in Afghanistan and increase the risk of instability spreading into Central Asia as well. Such a turn of events would presumably be very detrimental to Russian security interests. Yet Russia reportedly sponsored the 2005 SCO declaration calling for precisely that. However, in the long term, the Kremlin clearly fears a permanent U.S. the challenge of China's rise as a superpower is the single most difficult issue on Russia's foreign and security policy agenda military presence in its backyard, a development also worrisome to Chinese leaders. Russian policy in Central Asia and position with regard to Afghanistan reflect little if any understanding of the need for systemic change in the region at large. Russian policymakers seem content with the status quo with little apparent concern about its sustainability. Hence, their policy amounts to currying maximum favors with incumbent regimes regardless of their expected longevity.

Russia's post-2005 rapprochement with Uzbekistan was heralded in the Russian press as a major victory of diplomacy. A more critical assessment of the relationship suggests that the victory was due more to Uzbek President Islam Karimov's decision to break relations with the United States following the Andijon crisis than to the skill of Russian diplomats.

Moscow simply offered a target of opportunity for Karimov who, having been criticized by the United States for his handling of the Andijon events, needed to demonstrate to his subjects that when it comes to foreign policy, Washington was not the only game in town.

Having embraced Karimov as Moscow's new best friend in Central Asia and taken on new security commitments toward Uzbekistan, few in Russia's foreign policy establishment seem to be concerned about internal instability in that country, the outlook for Uzbekistan's economy, prospects for political succession there in the event of Karimov's demise, and a whole host of other policy-relevant questions that analysts in the United States and Europe have been trying to answer for years. This rather lackadaisical attitude toward a key country in a crucial region for Russian security suggests that Russia still lacks a viable strategy for Central Asia.

However, opportunistic, tactical moves by Russia, perhaps in collusion with China, could still damage U.S. interests considerably. Depending on the state of U.S.-Russian relations in the future, the Kremlin might see a continued U.S. military presence in the region as more worrisome than the risk of some additional turmoil along Russian borders. Moscow's lack of a long-term strategy for Central Asia is no reason to ignore its behavior there.

CHINA: RISING HEGEMON

China, while taking a lower profile than Russia with respect to a military and security presence in the region, has continued to expand its economic ties to Central Asia. But along with economic ties, it has begun to acquire political weight and recognition that it lacked in the region during the previous decade. The 5 years since the original U.S. deployment to Central Asia have seen China's emergence as the rising economic power in the region formerly dominated by Russia.

China's interests in Central Asia, while manifested most clearly in the economic sphere, are highly unlikely to be limited to trade, investment, and energy flows. Central Asia borders on China's western provinces,

where Uyghur separatists have long challenged Chinese sovereignty. The breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia's loss of Central Asia, and the resulting destabilization of the region must have been a worrisome development for Chinese leaders, one that they most certainly were not prepared to accept as precedent-setting. Important as they are, China's interests in Central Asia pale in comparison to its interests in the East: Taiwan, relations with North Korea, Japan, the United States, and a whole host of neighbors in Southeast Asia.

With its strategy for securing its western provinces evidently resting on the domestic pillars of economic development and ethnic assimilation, Beijing appeared content to leave Central Asian security to Russia and the United States, while expanding its economic ties in the region. The fruit of that expansion has begun to show in recent years, as China emerged as a major player with regard to Central Asian energy. It is close to completing an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to Xinjiang; it has signed an agreement to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China; and it has acquired stakes in Caspian oil fields. Membership in the SCO has served China well, giving it a major voice in Central Asian affairs without antagonizing Russia and alarming regional leaders, while keeping the United States at bay. However, beneath this low-key, patient approach to the region lies the same lack of strategic direction seen in Russian policy toward Central Asia. While reaping the benefits of U.S. security assistance to Central Asia in the short run and letting Russia play the "heavy" role in the regional tug of war with the United States, China appears to heed the same policy of adhering to the political status quo as Russia with no questions asked about the future. This reflects China's longstanding policy of noninterference in the internal political affairs of other countries. This policy has been welcomed by the authoritarian leaders of other SCO countries and enshrined in various SCO summit declarations as a rallying cry against the more forceful democracy promotion activities of the United States and its allies. As the 2005 SCO summit declaration contended: multilateral cooperation, which is based on the principles of equal right and mutual respect, nonintervention in internal affairs of sovereign states, nonconfrontational way of thinking and consecutive movement towards democratization of international relations, contributes to overall peace and security, and calls upon the international community, irrespective of its differences in ideology and social structure, to form a new concept of security based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and interaction.

Neither China nor Russia has been willing to sign on to the long-term vision put forth by the United States, which has always included political and economic liberalization as the twin pillars of sustainable regional security order. Since the beginning of the war on terror, political and economic reforms took on new urgency as an integral element. That in turn has led to stepped-up tensions between the United States on the one hand and Russia and China on the other. The former is more convinced than ever before China's interests in Central Asia, while manifested most clearly in the economic sphere, are highly unlikely to be limited to trade, investment, and energy flows and China have, and are likely to have, throughout Central Asia in the future, their reactive posture and reliance on local regimes make it difficult for the United States to reduce its own exposure to local instabilities.

TOWARD A NEW STRATEGY

Geography alone, to say nothing of history, economics, and culture, means that a successful U.S. strategy for Central Asia requires efforts aimed at bringing Russia and China along. Each of them is in a position to act as a spoiler. At the same time, neither has an interest in making the situation in the region worse. It is not clear whether China and Russia accept the necessity of region-wide transformation but disagree with the United States only on the methods for achieving it. Considerable evidence suggests that if political liberalization is both the means and the end of reform in Central Asia, Russia and China are likely to be opposed to it, at least in the near term. Both are likely to view political liberalization as especially destabilizing and threatening the security of Central Asia and its neighbors, including themselves. Both Russia and China are prone to view the experience of the Orange, Rose, and Tulip revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan as harmful to their interests.

The lesson most likely drawn by Beijing and Moscow from those upheavals is that decisive use of force is critical for stability and security. Such Russian and Chinese perceptions are likely to be reinforced by the experience of 1989 in China and the entire chaotic decade of the 1990s in Russia. By contrast, political consolidation in China post-1989, and in Russia post-2000, has coincided with periods of greater stability and unprecedented prosperity.

With regard to Central Asia, where democratic traditions have very shallow roots at best, and the prospect of instability represents an ever-present danger, Russian and Chinese policymakers must have seen U.S. attempts to promote democracy as destabilizing and naïve.

They must have been reinforced in that view by the experience of the Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan where, since the 2005 upheaval triggered by charges of fraudulent elections, the new government has been unable to consolidate its power and return the country to stability. That its emphasis on liberalization is the necessary precondition for long-term stability in the region. The latter, joined by regional governments, have rejected that vision and opted for the status quo without putting forth an alternative to the U.S. approach. The result has been an impasse.

DEMOCRACY AND STABILITY: COLLUSION OR COLLISION?

U.S. elevation of democracy promotion into an existential struggle for victory over terrorism and an essential foundation for peaceful relations among states has put it squarely at odds with China and Russia, both of whom have approached the task of combating terrorism as a matter of defeating specific organizations and strengthening regimes currently in power. They see noninterference in internal political affairs as the key to regional peace and cooperation. A free hand in dealing with internal threats of terrorism, separatism, and extremism is viewed as necessary to maintain stability.

Neither Russia nor China has developed a long-term vision for combating terror or a model for sustainable development in Central Asia. Both Russia and China have sought to undermine U.S. efforts to promote political and economic liberalization in Central Asia, having evidently determined that these efforts posed a threat to their influence and the region's stability.

The Chinese eschew any "good governance" conditionality on their foreign assistance, partly because cooperation without conditions is a Chinese comparative advantage in increasing Beijing's influence. Moscow has reacted to the idea of U.S. democracy promotion even more vigorously. Russian policymakers have perceived U.S. initiatives as a challenge to the Kremlin's power and authority not only in neighboring countries but also in Russia itself. They even felt compelled to articulate their own doctrine of "sovereign democracy," which treats foreign support for domestic democratic movements and nongovernmental organizations as a form of external meddling in the internal affairs of Russia and its neighbors.

China and, increasingly, Russia under Putin have stressed that economic development is key to long-term political stability. Russian and Chinese leaders have maintained that authoritarian rule can be useful in promoting economic development. This claim grows out of China's and Russia's respective paths toward economic modernization in the last 15 years. It is also supported by development patterns of some countries in East and Southeast Asia. However, China's and Russia's approach to long-term stability in Central Asia, emphasizing economic development at the expense of political liberalization, does not stand up to scrutiny.

There is no evidence to suggest that they have encouraged economic reform in any of the Central Asian countries. Central Asia—with the notable exception of Kazakhstan, where economic development owes much to its oil wealth—has not followed in the footsteps of the so-called Asian Tigers who pursued a combination of internal economic reforms, trade liberalization, and foreign investment, even as they moved more slowly on political reforms. Economic development has stalled in most of Central Asia; authoritarian rule has led to further corruption and done little to cure poverty and underdevelopment.

Thus, the Russian and Chinese strategy of economic development first and political modernization second does not seem to be working in Central Asia and appears dangerously close to an ad hoc policy of going along with incumbent regimes as long as they are friendly. Moscow and Beijing appear to equate stability with good relations with a particular local leader or regime. They invest heavily in the status quo, which forces them to adopt a reactive, rather than proactive, approach to Central Asian security, and which in turn leaves them dependent upon events on the ground. Considering the influence that Russia geography alone, to say nothing of history, economics, and culture, means that a successful U.S. strategy for Central Asia requires efforts aimed at bringing Russia and China along membership in one of the very few clubs that will take them is important.

The U.S. policy community has not recognized the importance of the SCO, which has been either dismissed as insignificant or criticized as hostile to the United States. At this point, it is neither. Often ignored or spurned by the United States, the SCO could, but does not have to, become the antidemocratic bloc of authoritarian Eurasian governments that rail against intervention in internal political affairs. A more accepting stance on the part of the United States, a recognition that Central Asian countries need the SCO for reasons that are not necessarily detrimental to U.S. interests, and exploration of ways for the United States (as well as NATO, OSCE, and the European Union) to work with SCO countries on mutual interests could help prevent this outcome.

Should the United States attempt again to join the SCO as an observer? The United States was previously rejected in its attempt to obtain an observer's status with the organization. The potential benefits of American involvement would include better information about the organization's activities and internal workings; increased diplomatic leverage with Russia, China, and Central Asia; increased ability to counter Iran's overtures to the SCO and Central Asia; and improved ability to advance U.S. interests in Central Asia. The list of potential drawbacks of U.S. involvement in the SCO includes the possibility of another rejection of U.S. application for an observer's status; the limited opportunities that such a status (if acquired) would confer upon the United States as a mere observer; and potential conflicts between the SCO charter and other U.S. treaty obligations. None of these appear as either a major breakthrough or a fatal flaw. The organization's importance to China and Russia, as well as to Central Asia, suggests that this issue merits serious consideration.

A U.S. decision to pursue an observer's status with the SCO would send an important signal to all concerned that the United States views the organization seriously and recognizes its value to its members. The U.S. position with regard to the SCO could be instrumental to American efforts to Russian and Chinese assessments of that experience are likely to have resonated in other Central Asian capitals as well, where the U.S. campaign of democracy promotion and free market reforms has been met with reluctance and suspicion by the communist era leaders still in charge. As a result, Russian and Chinese positions in Central Asia have been strengthened, most likely as a counterweight to U.S. pressures for liberalization.

Since 1991, U.S. policy has emphasized dealings with Central Asian governments as independent and sovereign. The notion of consulting with Russia and China about Central Asian countries has at times been viewed in the U.S. policy community as a violation of Central Asian independence and sovereignty. Combined with Russian and Chinese suspicions of U.S. policy in Central Asia, U.S. reluctance to engage Moscow and Beijing in discussions about the region left the five Central Asian countries free to exploit the differences among the major powers. Without seriously engaging Russia and China in a dialogue about Central Asian security, their interests and policies in the region, as well as U.S. interests and policy there, the United States is likely to have increasing difficulty forging an effective policy and realizing its interests there. Such a dialogue may indeed appear as undercutting Central Asian sovereignty and independence. However, since achieving their independence, none of the Central Asian countries has been able to fully realize it, act truly as a sovereign nation, and stand on its own in the community of civilized nations. To some degree, these countries have been wards of the international community and consumers of a security environment shaped substantially by others.

As their governments remain unwilling or unable to face up to the challenge of long-term sustainable political and economic development, they endanger their own citizens, as well as the neighboring countries. As stated in the 2005 U.S. National Defense Strategy: It is unacceptable for regimes to use the principle of sovereignty as a shield behind which they feel free to engage in activities that pose enormous threats to their citizens, neighbors, or the rest of the international community.

U.S. policy must remain respectful of Central Asian independence and sovereignty. But it cannot afford to remain

blind to regional realities and ignore key actors in regional affairs. Nor should U.S. respect for Central Asian independence and sovereignty come at the expense of U.S. security interests. Those regional realities are such that China and Russia will remain significant actors in Central Asia for the foreseeable future. U.S. policy in Central Asia is bound to be more complicated if Russia and China are not, at least tacitly, on board. Therefore, a deliberate effort to reach out to them would be an important element of a successful U.S. strategy for the region.

More dialogue between the United States and China/Russia could be useful concerning competing views on the balance between economic development and more representative political institutions. This dialogue could complement ongoing discussions between the United States and China on foreign aid and the balance between conditional programs that produce more growth and stability and unconditional programs that produce immediate political influence.

One further result of changing Central Asian politics has been the rise of the SCO. The organization serves a useful purpose for the countries of Central Asia by providing them with a common forum with Russia and China. Membership in the SCO provides an alternative destination for Central Asian leaders resentful of the United States and suspicious of its democracy promotion.

Moreover, membership carries with it the symbolic but important benefit of belonging to a larger whole. For countries that are routinely criticized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and have no prospect of joining NATO, U.S. reluctance to engage Moscow and Beijing in discussions about the region left the five Central Asia countries free to exploit the differences among the major powers. Ultimately, the SCO is neither a paper tiger to be ignored nor a strategic heavyweight to be countered aggressively. By virtue of its political influence, it poses a challenge to U.S. interests, but one that in all likelihood can be managed at a relatively small cost. If successful, U.S. efforts to engage the SCO in a series of cooperative

ventures could minimize the organization's negative impact on U.S. interests and contribute to the security and stability of Central Asia.

Engage China, Russia, and Central Asia in a discourse about the future of the region, its near-term prospects, and long-term outlook. But it does not need to be more than that a mere instrument of U.S. outreach to the key actors in Central Asia. A dialogue with China and Russia about Central Asia could lead to a more cooperative stance on the part of both Beijing and Moscow, as well as a better future for the region itself.

Even without observer status, the United States could seek to engage the SCO on a wide range of issues of concern to both the United States and SCO members. These consultations could include representatives of the United States, European Union (EU), and NATO/ Partnership for Peace (PFP). For example, they could include consultations on: - anti-terrorism cooperation and information exchanges with Central Asian governments.

U.S.-EU-Russia-China cooperation with Central Asians on enhancing border policing and customs procedures. This could help foster and safeguard trade, economic cooperation, and energy transit as well as help in countering terrorist activities, drug trade, and other illegal trafficking that undermine security and stability. PFP humanitarian and peacekeeping activities/exercises in Central Asia. These have included the Russians and could be opened to the Chinese. They could even become joint PFP/SCO activities if SCO really develops this cooperation. Also, the United States has helped build a United Nations Center for Peacekeeping Training in Mongolia, which is an SCO observer. Central Asians could be invited to train together at this center to develop regional peacekeeping capability. - a dialogue on how enhanced governance and economic reforms could heighten long-term stability and security in the region, as a way to convince Russia and China that these Central Asian regimes need to undertake internal reforms.

Central Asia: Factors in the Reestablishment of Economic Growth, 1996-2004

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In the last seven to eight years, the economies of Central Asia have demonstrated high

rates of economic growth, and these have become especially impressive since 1999. As is evident from the data in Table 1, in 2001-2004 the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an annual rate of 14.4 percent in Turkmenistan, 10 percent in Kazakhstan, and 7.95 percent in Tajikistan. These countries (along with Azer-

Table 1

Panorama of Economic Growth Rates in Central Asia (1990-2004)

| Country | Per Capita GDP Growth Rate (percent) | | Year | | | Index of Liberalization (EBRD, 2004)* | Population (2004 as Percent of 1990) |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | 1991-2004 | 2001-2004 | Year Growth Resumed | Interruptions in Growth Resumption | First Stabilization Agreement with IMF | | |
| <i>Substantially Reformed Economies</i> | | | | | | | |
| Armenia** | -0.85 | 11.70 | 1994 | | 1995 | 4.3 | 90 |
| Georgia | -3.15 | 8.65 | 1995 | | 1994 | 4.3 | 79 |
| Kyrgyzstan | -2.65 | 3.55 | 1996 | 2002 | 1993 | 4.3 | 116 |
| Moldova | | | 1997 | 1998-1999 | 1993 | 4.0 | |
| <i>Slowly Reforming Economies</i> | | | | | | | |
| Azerbaijan** | -1.75 | 9.5 | 1996 | | 1995 | 3.85 | 112 |
| Kazakhstan | 0.8 | 10.0 | 1996 | 1998 | 1994 | 3.65 | 92 |
| Russia | -0.9 | 6.3 | 1997 | 1998 | 1992 | 3.65 | 97 |
| Tajikistan | -4.25 | 7.95 | 1997 | | 1998 | 3.5 | 1.26 |
| Ukraine | -3.0 | 9.55 | 2000 | | 1994 | 3.5 | 91 |
| <i>Weakly Reformed Economies</i> | | | | | | | |
| Belarus | 1.6 | 7.3 | 1996 | | 1993 | 2.5 | 96 |
| Uzbekistan | -1.05*** | 2.7*** | 1996 | | 1995 (suspended 1996) | 2.2 | 126 |
| Turkmenistan** | 0.45*** | 14.4*** | 1998 | | None | 1.85 | 128 |

* Mean arithmetic index of price liberalization, index of liberalization of the exchange rate and foreign trade; each index is assessed on a scale of 0.0 (total control) to 5.0 (maximum liberalization)

** The author's own estimates of the size of the population

*** IMF estimates

Sources: calculated from the database of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and from national statistics

bajan, Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine), if one discounts the productive catastrophe in the first half of the 1990s, entered into the group of leaders in global growth. The rate of growth in per capita GDP in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan exceeded 2.5 percent per year. In the coming years, the dynamics of growth should, to judge from all signs, be somewhat less intensive, but remain rather high. In Kazakhstan the expected increase in the production of oil and natural gas will sustain a rate of growth on the level of 10 percent. In the event of an improvement in the terms for the sale of natural gas on the markets of Ukraine and Russia, and still more if there is an increase in the volume of the production and export of natural gas, Turkmenistan will also strengthen its position among the leaders of global growth.

What are the factors that lay at the base of a positive economic dynamic, which the Central Asian region demonstrates from the second half of the 1990s? The standard and most widespread answer to that question runs as follows: this is the result, long expected and predicted, of the market reforms adopted in the first half of the 1990s. Just as in the transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe, the transformational decline gave way to growth, so too in the post-Soviet transition economies – one after the other – shifted over to a trajectory of positive rates of growth. It is possible that, for the European transition economies, such an explanation in some respects is valid. In the Central Asian context, however, it is more than debatable.

As the data in Table 1 attest, those post-Soviet economies that are slowly reforming and weakly reformed (in terms of the standard neoliberal prescription) are no worse off, if not in even a better position, than the more radically reformed neighbors. That of course must not be interpreted to mean that the cause of what, on the surface, is the rather favorable economic dynamic of Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan lies in their refusal to undertake market reforms. But neither is there a direct and unambiguous correlation between the level of radicalism of market transformation and economic growth.

However, let's return to the factors of growth in the economies of Central Asia during the period 1996-2004. In my opinion, these factors include the following:

- a substantial improvement in conditions of trade for raw material countries on global markets in the period 1999-2004;
- the significant influx of foreign resources (relative to the modest scales of local economies) through various channels;
- some changes in economy policy, including a partial return to low prices for energy and the services of natural monopolies;
- the increase in the export of the labor force and corresponding growth in the monetary remissions of migrant workers.

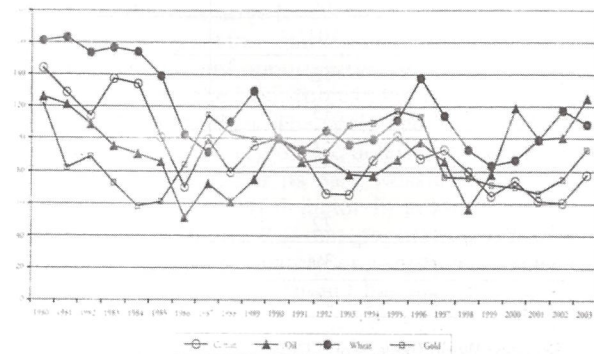
Given that the significance of each of the above factors varies from one country to the next, these are not subject to a simple, uniform ranking. We shall examine in detail each of these factors in turn.

The critically important role that export demand plays in the development of the Central Asian economies is well known. On the world market they are exporters of oil and natural gas (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan), petroleum products (Turkmenistan), raw cotton (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), gold (Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), ferrous, nonferrous, and precious metals (Kazakhstan and Tajikistan), and wheat (Kazakhstan). Since 1999 the prices on the markets of these commodities (which are important for the countries in this region) have moved steadily upwards (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

**Index of Commodities Prices, 1990=100
(current prices deflated by World Bank
manufactures import unit value)**



The active trend on world commodity markets has been especially advantageous for Kazakhstan, which is a major exporter of oil, wheat, and metals. In addition, the share of this country in the markets for oil and wheat has steadily risen during recent years. The rise in the price of oil coincided here with a sharp increase in oil production, which directly translates into a high level of economic growth. In Uzbekistan the growth in the export prices of cotton coincided with three very bountiful harvests in the years 2002-2004. With a certain level of simplification, one can confirm that, after the tremors and turbulence of the 1980s and 1990s, the raw-material Central Asian economies were doing very well by the beginning of the new century.

Another important factor in the resumption of economic growth has been the influx of foreign resources. This inward flow came through three main channels: in the form of foreign direct investments (FDI), official development assistance, and capital borrowed from official and private sources. As the calculations in Table 2 indicate, the five Central Asian economies fall into three groups in terms of the sources or the incoming resources. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (the poorest) received in 1996-2002 foreign resources on a volume that corresponds to one-sixth or one-seventh of their GDP; moreover, both countries drew the bulk of the flow in foreign resources in the form of official development assistance. Of the countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Kyrgyzstan received the largest volume of aid relative to the size of its GDP. Tajikistan lagged only slightly behind. The obverse side of such a substantial inward flow of aid became the rapid growth in foreign indebtedness. One must bear in mind too that in 1992 Russia assumed all the obligations to repay the former Soviet debt; hence all the other Soviet republics began their independent development with zero debts. But in less than a decade the foreign debt of Kyrgyzstan exceeded its GDP, and the foreign debt of Tajikistan was equal to three-quarters of its GDP.

Table 2

Relative Significance of the Influx of Foreign Resources Through Various Channels (As Percent of the Gross Domestic Product)

| Country | Foreign Debt (beginning of 2003) | Development Aid in 1996-2002 (average unweighted indicator) | Net Inflow of FDI in 1996-2002 (average unweighted indicator) | Net Inflow of FDI as Percent of Gross Investment in Fixed Capital in 1996-2002 (average unweighted indicator) |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Central Asian Countries</i> | | | | |
| Kazakhstan | 77 | 1 | 8 | 39 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 101 | 15 | 2 | 16 |
| Tajikistan | 72 | 12 | 2 | 17 |
| Turkmenistan | 33 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Uzbekistan | 51 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| <i>Caucasus Republics (for Comparison)</i> | | | | |
| Azerbaijan | 22 | 4 | 20 | 52 |
| Armenia | 39 | 12 | 6 | 29 |
| Georgia | 50 | 8 | 5 | 21 |

Sources: World Bank, World Development Indicators 2004; UNCTAD, World Investment Report 2003; data from national statistics.

The influx of resources into the Kazakhstan economy in 1996-2002 amounted to approximately one-tenth of that country's GDP. Moreover, Kazakhstan proved to be the sole country of the region that was able to attract from a broad significant amounts of foreign direct investment. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan did not receive substantial foreign resources – either in the form of FDI or as official development assistance. In many respects, that was due to the refusal to follow the standard neoliberal prescriptions of Bretton-Woods tandem (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), but also because of objective reasons. With the exception of the raw material sector, the region lacks economic assets that would be attractive to foreign investors. Having created the most favorable conditions for the activity of foreign capital, Kyrgyzstan suffered a fiasco in its attempt to attract direct investment from abroad.

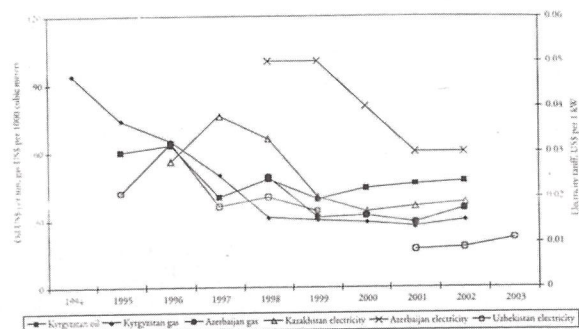
It is important to underscore the circumstance that, in the second half of the 1990s, the inward flow of foreign resources through official channels remained at a high level. Furthermore, the donors carried out a certain restructuring of the resources being directed toward the poorest of the Central Asian economies. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, they began to realize the direct financing of state investment programs, primarily in the sphere of the infrastructure. The influx of direct investment into Kazakhstan has remained at a very high level.

As a third factor in the resumption of economic growth, especially in the poorest countries of Central Asia, one should point out a certain change in the ideology of transition, but above all the changes in the economic policy being conducted. Donors not only reexamined their initial, sharply negative attitude toward the state (using their resources to support state investment programs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), but in fact closed their eyes (although, most likely, just temporarily) to the return to the practice of regulating the key domestic prices. Figure 2 shows the dynamics of domestic prices on primary energy resources and electricity in several Central Asian economies. The calculations offered here

unequivocally demonstrated that, if expressed in real (dollar) terms, the prices on natural gas, oil, and electric power noticeably decreased in the second half of the 1990s.

Figure 2

Energy Prices Dynamics



As is well known, in Central Asia (and, before them, in dozens of developing countries) the main thrust of market reforms in the first half of the 1990s was price liberalization. The slogan "set correct prices" aimed at raising the domestic prices of energy resources to conditional average world levels. The shock price liberalization made a major contribution to the "transformation recession." The slogan, though not widely advertised, in the second half of the 1990s was "set incorrect prices." Kazakhstan, for instance, at the end of 1994 returned to the regulation of prices for the energy, coal, and petroleum refinery industry, for transportation, and for communications.¹ The reduction of key prices made possible a partial reanimation of productive capacities, which had proved helpless in the new configuration of costs and limits on demand.

¹ Z. Akhmetova, "Tsenovoe i antimonopol'noe regulirovanie," Vestnik Kazakhstanskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, Seriya ekonomicheskaya (Almaty), 1998, no. 10.

In fact, the government returned (and some had never renounced) to the old practice of subsidizing production and consumption at the expense of the energy sector.

According to calculations by experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in 2002 these energy subsidies alone amount to 21 percent of the GDP in Tajikistan, 15 percent in Uzbekistan, and 13 percent in Kyrgyzstan. For the sake of fairness, it should be pointed out that in Tajikistan prices on electric power remained and continue to remain) at a very low level for the entire course of the transition. Having met with a fiasco in Kyrgyzstan, the donors were not especially harsh in demanding a price liberalization from Tajikistan, which signed its first stabilization program with the IMF in 1998. In Uzbekistan the subsidies provided for local producers always constituted the heart of the government's economic policy, but here too, after the devaluation toward the end of the 1990s, energy resources in real terms decreased noticeably.

It is revealing that the prices on natural gas and petroleum products fell even in those countries that are importers of energy resources. That became possible because Russia cut its export prices on energy resources going to member countries of the CIS, and in the first instance that means natural gas. In addition, among the Central Asian countries

themselves the trade in energy resources and electric power returned to lower prices. A powerful impact from the reduction in energy prices was quickly transformed into positive rates of economic growth.

Finally, the most important factor behind the resumption of growth in the poorest economies of the CIS was the flow of remittances from migrant labor. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan filled the ranks of developing countries and emerged as large-scale exporters of a labor force.

It is well known that the attempts to stimulate even temporary labor migration from the Central Asian republics to the labor-deficient republics of the USSR by relying on administrative levers were a total failure. The market has done what the command-administrative system could not. The lack of opportunities to find employment is literally driving the labor force out of the labor-surplus Central Asian republics. The scale and intensity of the labor flows from this region are determined not only by the factor of a push. For its part, Russia is objectively functioning as a powerful factor in attracting migrant labor. The size of the Russian population is steadily decreasing (by approximately one million persons per year), and the Russian economy has an acute need for the influx of workers.²

Table 3

The Scale of Labor Migration from the Countries of Central Asia

| Country | Official Estimates (thousands) | Maximum Estimates (thousands) | Realistic Estimate | | Realistic Estimate in Russia | | Percent of Labor Migrants | Other Destination (thousands) |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | Thousands | Percent of Official Workforce | Thousands | Percent of Official Workforce | | |
| <i>Central Asian Countries</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Kazakhstan | | | | | | | | |
| Kyrgyzstan | | over 500 | 450-500 | 31-32 | 350-400* | | | Kazakhstan (80-120) |
| Tajikistan | 250 (1997) 1200 (2001) | 1500 | 600-650 | 32-35 | 500-550 | 27-30 | 85 | Uzbekistan: 30 Kyrgyzstan: 20 Kazakhstan 5 Ukraine: 5 |
| Turkmenistan | ? | ? | | | | | | |
| Uzbekistan | 600-700 | C. 1,000 | 600-650 | 8-8.7 | 500-550* | 6.7-7.4 | | Kazakhstan |
| <i>South Caucasus Countries (for comparison)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Azerbaijan | | 2300-2500 | | | | | | Ukraine |
| Armenia | | | 200 | 16 | 200 | 16 | | Ukraine |
| Georgia | | 700 | | | | | | Ukraine |

* Based on the assumption that Russia receives 85 percent of the flow of migrant labor Sources: S. Olimova and I. Bosc, *Labor Migration from Tajikistan* (International Organization for Migration in Cooperation with the Sharq Scientific Research Center, Dushanbe, July 2003); World Bank, *When Things Fall Apart. Qualitative Studies of Poverty in the Former Soviet Union* (World Bank, 2003); L. P. Maksakova, "Eksport rabochei sily iz Uzbekistana," *Trudovaia migratsiia v SNG: sotsial'nye i ekonomicheskie efekty*, Tsentrazucheniia problem vuznuzhdennoi migratsii v SNG, Nezavisimyi Issledovatel'skii Sovet po migratsii stran SNG i Baltiki (Moscow: Institut narodnokhoziaistvennogo prognozirovaniia RAN, 2003); A. S. Iusunov, "Trudovaia migratsiia iz Azerbaidzhana: strategii integratsii v rynek truda i riski," *ibid.*; A. Elebaeva, "Trudovaia migratsiia v Kyrgyzstane Report ID=40232>SelectRegion=Central_Asia&SelectCountry=Kyrgyzstan); Interv'iu s Zh. Zaionchkovskoi, prezidentom Tsentra izuchenna problem vuznuzhdennoi migratsii v SNG" (<http://analitic.efko.ru/news.php?idsubj=7&idnews=8742&npage=1&ncvst=1&searchf=0&archivef=0>); A. Petrov, TsIK Obviniaiet v fai'sifikatsii" (<http://www.vb.kg/lk2003/O2/O7/polit3.html>); "Kyrgyzstan: Poverty Fuels Labor Migration in the South" (<http://eng.gateway.kg/cgi-bin/age.pi?id=28&cvstoryname=doc4063.shtml>).

² A. Vorobyov and S. Zhukov, "Globalization: Structural Shifts and Inequality," *External Liberalization, Economic Performance, and Social Policy*, ed. L. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 252-54).

Table 4

Estimates of Remittances by Migrant Workers from Central Asia

| Country | Amount of Remittances (Millions of US Dollars) | | | As Percent of GDP in 2003 |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Through Bank Accounts | Through Other Channels | Total (Including Goods) | |
| <i>Central Asian Countries</i> | | | | |
| Kazakhstan | | | | |
| Kyrgyzstan | | | 190-240* | 10-12 |
| Tajikistan | 78.3 | 75 | 200-230 | 13-15 |
| Turkmenistan | | | ? | |
| Uzbekistan | | | 250-310* | 3 |
| <i>South Caucasus Countries (for comparison)</i> | | | | |
| Azerbaijan | | | 500-1500 (up to 2500)** | 7-21 (35) |
| Georgia | | | 900 (to 1260)*** | 23 (32) |

* Calculation based on the assumption that each migrant worker transfers to the home country a sum equal to the average remittance of a Tajik worker (35 to 40 US dollars per month)

** According to an extremely high (in my view, unrealistic) estimate of up to 5 billion US dollars (see G. Alieva, "Migratsiia: kuda i radi chego edut azerbaijdzhantsy?" (<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/ItemPrint.asp?id=39>); N. Suleimanov, "V SNG migratsiia plokhov sovmeshchaetsia s demokratiie" *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 24 July 2003).

*** Estimated based on the assumption that Russia has 700,000 citizens from Georgia, who each month transfer 150 US dollars to their families and relatives (see: "Chego khotiat Rossiia i Gruziiia drug ot druga?" *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 15 November 2004).

Then too, in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan the level of the official wage is *lower* than the penurious Russian pension. Hence a mass labor migration and, even if on a smaller scale, the resettlement of peoples to the empty Russian expanse will also be inevitable in the future.

Tables 3 and 4 generalize the highly diverse and contradictory information from many sources to give a very general picture of the scale and macroeconomic significance of the labor migration in this region. For purposes of comparison, the tables include analogous calculations for countries in the South Caucasus. However, in this case the assessment is complicated by the fact that it is virtually impossible to separate labor migrants from those who have resettled and have received Russian citizenship.

With a high degree of probability, one can presume that in Central Asia only Turkmenistan has excluded itself from the intensive flows of the labor force. Apparently, Kazakhstan, where the social and economic situation in general is better than its neighbors in the region, is not a major exporter of labor. By contrast, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan each year export approximately 1,650,000 to 1,800,000 workers, and the majority of them go to Russia to find work. If one uses not the maximum of available estimates, but the most realistic figures, then in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the labor migration involves approximately a third of the local labor force, whereas in Uzbekistan is approximately a tenth (see Table 3).

It is still more difficult to assess the scale of the remittances sent by migrant workers to their country of origin. The estimates offered here rely on the results of a detailed research poll of migrant workers in Tajikistan. This study showed that in 2002 the remittances of Tajiki workers to their homeland, through official bank accounts, amounted to 78.3 million US dollars. The migrants sent home approximately the same amount in cash (seeking to avoid taxation and the risks of using bank channels). If one adds as well the goods that they brought in, the average monthly

remittance of each Tajik worker amounts to approximately 35 to 40 US dollars.³

In 2003 these remittances from migrant labor brought resources equal to 13-15 percent of the GDP in Tajikistan, 10 to 12 percent in Kyrgyzstan, and 3 percent in Uzbekistan (see Table 4). Moreover, these estimates refer to the minimal possible resources. The existing information attests to the fact that the earnings of Kyrgyz workers in Russia are apparently somewhat higher than that of Tajiks.⁴ According to estimates made by Kyrgyz economists, the remittances of migrants amount to 10 to 25 percent of that country's GDP (200 to 500 million US dollars).⁵

However that may be, in Kyrgyzstan the remittances of migrants are comparable to the scale of the resources obtained through the channel of official development assistance. In the case of Tajikistan, these remittances actually exceed that official assistance. The means directed at families in the home country expand domestic consumption, but in some cases they are used to organized small business, especially in those instances when migrant workers appear as shuttle-traders.

Thus, five factors have played a decisive role in the resumption of economic growth in Central Asia:

- an increase and/or restoration of the extraction of oil and natural gas in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan;
- the favorable price trends on world commodity markets;
- return to the use of the energy sector as a donor for other branches and resources:

³ All the factual information is taken from: S. Olimova and I. Bosc, "Labor Migration from Tajikistan." International Organization for Migration in Cooperation with the Sharq Scientific Research Center, Dushanbe, July 2003.

⁴ A. Elebaeva, "Trudovaia migratsiia v Kyrgyzstane," *Tsentr'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, 2204, no. 3: 96.

⁵ D. Esenaliev, "Effekt vneshnei trudovoi migratsii dlia ekonomiki Kyrgyzstana polozhitelen" (http://www.akipress.org/_ru_analit.php?id=736).

- the readiness of Russia to absorb the surplus labor forces that cannot find productive use in the region;
- the favorable position of foreign donors, who continue to pump assistance into the poorest countries of the region and who are prepared to restructure the foreign debt.

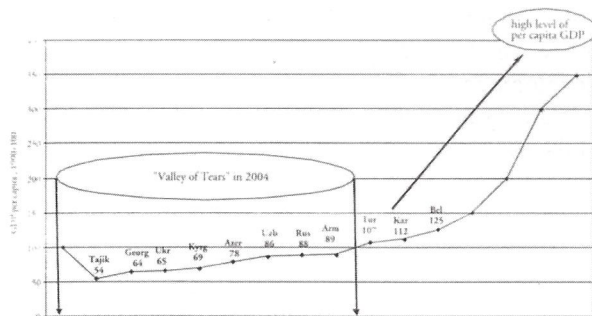
It is not difficult to see that the Central Asian countries have virtually no control over the majority of these factors, or at most have very weak and incomplete control.

Despite the positive dynamics of the last few years, Central Asia (or, in any case, the poorest countries of this region) need a great deal of time to return to that level of development that they had achieved within the framework of the Soviet division of labor. To make an adequate assessment of the contemporary situation, this must be seen within a broader temporal perspective, taking into account the entire period of transition. In the beginning of the 1990s, American economists characterized the transition from a planned economy to the market as the "valley of tears."⁶ Democracy of the Western type and a high level of well-being are supposed to be the prize given to the transition countries for the difficulties of the transformation.

To judge from the per capita GDP, in 2004 only Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan had left the "valley of tears" and by that time had achieved a per capita GDP that was 12 and 7 percent (respectively) higher than in 1990. In the immediate three to four years, Uzbekistan has a chance to leave the "valley of tears." However, Kyrgyzstan and especially Tajikistan have become hopelessly mired in the valley (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

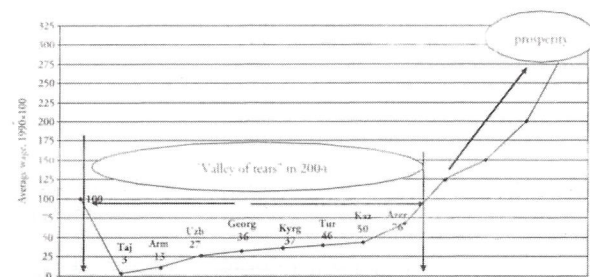
Central Asia: Relative Position in the "Valley of Tears", GDP per capita in 2004 as % of 1990.



In making use of indicator for average wages, the situation appears even less optimistic. By the end of 2004, the real wages in the regional leader, Kazakhstan, amounted to just 50 percent of the level in 1990. The corresponding indicator is 46 percent for Turkmenistan, 37 percent for Kyrgyzstan, 27 percent for Tajikistan, and just 3 percent for Tajikistan (see Figure 4). Under a condition where the real wages steadily rise at 10 percent per annum (which, I must say openly, is an unrealistically optimistic assumption), Kazakhstan will leave the "valley of tears" only in 2011, Turkmenistan in 2013, and Kyrgyzstan in 2015. Uzbekistan and, all the more, Tajikistan are doomed to remain in the "valley," at a minimum for the next two decades. In a dollar equivalent the average monthly wages in 2004 amounted to just 52 US dollars in Kyrgyzstan, 46 US dollars in Uzbekistan, and 19 US dollars in Tajikistan. One should also keep in mind that wages are being received only by a portion of the workforce-75 percent of those employed in Uzbekistan, 60 percent in Kazakhstan, 57 percent in Tajikistan, and just 39 percent in Kyrgyzstan. The incomes of the mass of the so-called "self-employed" is even lower than the official wage.

Figure 4

Central Asia: Relative Position in the "Valley of Tears" average wage in 2004 as % of 1990



It is difficult to say whether the political systems of these countries will endure for so long a period of time such deprivation and poverty. As the events in the spring and summer of 2005 in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan demonstrated, the social and political situation in the region is ready to explode at any moment.

⁶ Making Markets: Economic Transformation in Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet States, ed. S. Islam and M. Mandelbaum (Moscow, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), pp. 11-15.

15 Years of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Achievements and Perspectives

The 16th of December, 2006 is the fifteenth anniversary of the Republic of Kazakhstan's independency. During these years Kazakhstan has passed the most complicated and important stage of the nationhood formation and development. The developed market economy and socio-political stability have been achieved; the Republic's international status has been strengthened.

At the same time in the context of the strategic tasks of the further country's development there occur the various internal and external issues which should be comprehended and analyzed for the effective administrative decisions.

In this connection Scientific and Practical Conference "15 years of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Achievements and Perspectives" was held in the Kazakhstan Institute of the Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 28th of November, 2006.

Within the frameworks of this Conference a batch of the problems concerning Kazakhstan's external policy in the global and regional processes, political system's reformation during the independency and Kazakhstan's economic strategy was considered.

Realization of the Scientific and Practical Conference gave an opportunity to exchange views and discuss the results of Kazakhstan's formation from the moment of gaining independency, discuss a wide spectrum of the socio-economic and political problems, and also the perspectives of the further development.

Burkhanov K.N., the Director of the Institute of History and Ethnology after Ch. Valikhanov, Akimbekov S. M., the Chief Editor of the "Continent" magazine, Zhusupov S.E., the President of the Kazakhstan Institute of Socio-Economic Information and Prognosis, Lokhman B., the Rector of Kazakhstan – German University, and also the leading experts of KazISS: Sultanov B.K., the Director, Syroyezhkin K.L., Laumulin M. T., Senior Research Fellows, Kushkumbayev S. K., the First Deputy Director, Abisheva M. A., the Deputy Director, Rakhmatullina G. G., the Head of Economic Researches Department, and the representative of the diplomatic corps took part in the Conference.

The Conference consisted of two sections on the main tendencies of the political and economic development of the contemporary Kazakhstan.

Within the frameworks of the first section a wide range of the problems was discussed: Kazakhstan's way of development, the features of development processes in Central Asian countries, the dynamic of the political system development in Kazakhstan.

The second section was related to external political achievements of the country. Such questions as Kazakhstan's multi-vector external policy and its perspectives, Chinese and Central Asian factors, economic reforms as an important provision of the stable country's development were considered.

During the discussion the participants agreed that Kazakhstan had achieved a visible success in the economic and socio-political life of the country during the independency. That was promoted by timely carried out reforms and also good neighborhood with allied countries; it guarantees the socio-political stability which is necessary for the Republic's dynamic development.

The participants' speeches brought up the problems of the necessity of the political reforms, the new technology implementation, and the development of the process industries of economy.

The participants touched upon the questions which demand the further consideration. In particular, Lokhman B. spoke about energy problem which is not solved at this moment. He suggested solving it by the modernization of the energetic sector.

Syroyezhkin K. L. spoke about the problem regarding uncertain status of the water resources in Central Asia which may cause a lot of conflict if not being solved.

In whole within the frameworks of the Conference an open and enough interesting discussion took place, in the course of this discussion the participants expressed their opinion that Kazakhstan has achieved the considerably high level of development during the independency.