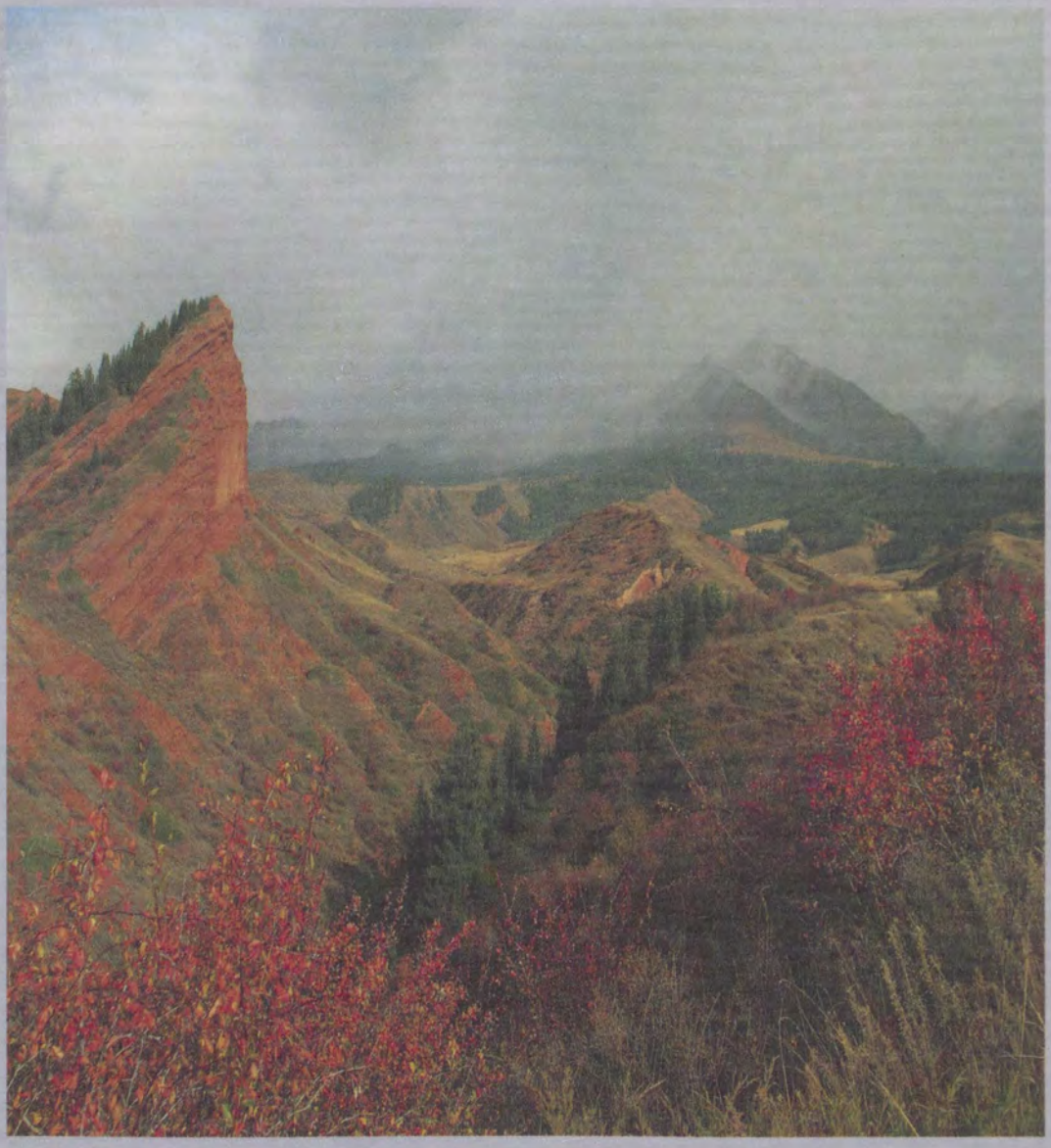
Prospects for

Democracy in Central Asia



Edited by Birgit N. Schlyter

SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL 2005

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Democracy in Central Asia

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Democracy in Central Asia

Papers Read at a Conference
in Istanbul, 1–3 June 2003,
and Additional Chapters

Edited by
Birgit N. Schlyter

SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL
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Front cover: View of the Jeti Oghuz Canyon, east of Issyk-kul, Kyrgyzstan.

Back cover: Statue of the Samanid Shah Ismail, Maydoni Ozodî, Dushanbe. Erected in 1999 on the occasion of the 1100th anniversary of the Samanid Dynasty.

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A Note on Spelling and Transcription

In a publication of this kind, one-hundred percent consistency in spelling is more or less impossible to achieve and transcription becomes a balancing act between phonological considerations and practical spelling systems.

It has been decided that only Latin characters will be used in this volume for the sake of homogeneity and, hopefully, greater readability. In cases of differences between American and British spelling, the former has been chosen (e.g. *neighbor* instead of *neighbour*, etc.).

Words and names from non-English languages with Latin scripts remain as they are normally written in their respective languages, even when they contain letters that are not found in the English alphabet (Swedish *å* /ɔ/, *ä* /æ/, *ö* /ø/, Turkish *ç* /tʃ/, *ğ* /ʁ/, *ı* /ɨ/, *ö* /ɵ/, *ş* /ʃ/, *ü* /ʏ/, etc.) or letters that have another sound value than the same English character (e.g. Turkish *c* /dʒ/).

As for transliteration, mostly from Cyrillic scripts, or transcription corresponding to certain phonological or phonetic values, the following should be noted for cases where there is frequently variation in the choice of Latin character or the original letter is different in form from any letter in the well-known Russian Cyrillic alphabet:

Characters identical to letters in the Russian alphabet:

Original letter	*Transcription*
е	*e* (in Russian words)/ *ye* (for /je/ in non-Russian words)
ё	*e* (in Russian words)/ *yo* (in non-Russian words)
ж	*zh* (in Russian words)/ *j* (in non-Russian words)
й	*y*
ц	*ts*
ч	*ch*
ш	*sh*
щ	*shch*
ъ	‘
ы	*y*
ь	’
э	*e*

Special Cyrillic letters from local Central Asian languages:

Original letter	*Transcription*
ә	*ə* (for /ɛ/ in Karakalpak words)
ғ	*gh*
қ	*q*
ң	*ng* (for /ŋ/ in Karakalpak words)
ө	*ö* for /, / in Karakalpak words)
ҳ	*h*
ў	*o'* (from the 1995 Uzbek Latin alphabet for [ɵ~o] in Uzbek words)/ *u* (in Tajik words) / *w* (from the 1995 Karakalpak Latin alphabet for bilabial, rounded /w/)
ӣ	*î* (for [i:] in Tajik words)

Transcribed quotations and titles of books and articles in languages other than Russian remain as they were spelt in the original manuscript. This also holds for less common personal and geographical names, except for the ending *-ev* in Russian or Russified surnames, where one convention was adhered to throughout the book (e.g. *Akaev*, not *Akayev*, etc.). In cases where for a certain personal or geographical name a frequently used American English spelling exists (e.g. *Tajikistan, not Tojikiston*, *Yoldash*, not *Yo'ldosh*, etc.), this type of writing has been chosen, even if the author of a particular chapter had originally chosen a more language specific spelling for transliteration.

Regarding Arabic names, no attempt has been made to attain a uniform standard in the writing of these names, except for the Arabic definite article, which has been rewritten as *al-* with no regard of phonetic assimilation (i.e. *al-tawhid*, rather than *at-tawhid* etc.), unless another internationally frequent spelling of a particular name exists (e.g. *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, with *-ut-* instead of *al-*).

One chapter presents Chaghatay poetry in the original language (pp. 197ff.). These poems, which were originally written in the Arabic script, have been transliterated from a modern edition in the Uzbek–Cyrillic script and the spelling does not conform to the conventional Turkological rendering of Chaghatay.

A Central Asian Thinker, Almaty. Photo: Bertil Rydén.

Preface

Is a democratic world a world of peace, stability, and security? Not necessarily. Are people happier in a democratic society than in a less democratic or non-democratic one? Possibly – at least in the West, where for probably most of us democracy equals individual freedom, one of the most precious human rights, as long as we are not hungry or stricken by great poverty. One suggestion for an explication of the notion of democracy, given the Western political discourse, could be a statement to the effect that the very foundation on which this notion rests is freedom of the individual and that democratic rule or administration is an act of power balancing for the maintenance of individual freedom.

Democracy is often referred to in static terms, as if it were first and foremost some state-of-affairs conceived of as a result that could be measured by degrees from total lack of democracy to complete democracy. Yet, we know all too well that the conditions that we expect to find in democratic structures relate to spheres in the lives of humans and societies so comprehensive and complex that the conception of democracy as an object – or any simplistic concretization of the defining attributes of what it is to be democratic – very soon appears utterly futile.

An alternative approach to democracy is to view it in terms of processes and activities governed by certain sets of rules. In other words, democracy would be a means of conduct rather than any state-of-affairs materializing from that conduct – a process manifested through various layers or levels of activity distinguished by different degrees of human participation and political span.

As for political span, from the point of view of both bureaucratic and geographical range, the level at which democracy has most often been considered and evaluated is without doubt the state level. This was also the point of departure for an international conference on *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia* held on 1–3 June 2003 in Istanbul. The conference, from which most of the ensuing chapters emanate, was organized and convened by the Department of Central Asian Studies at Stockholm University with the aim of initiating dialogues between scholars from different parts of the world with different research specialities and interests.

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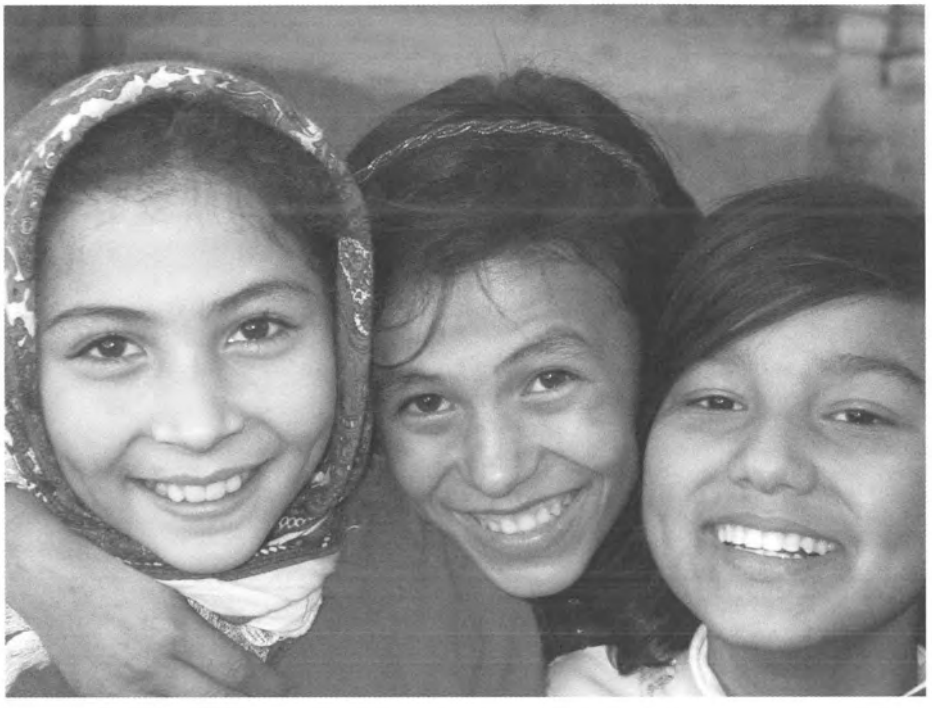
A little more than a decade has passed since the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc. The republics on the south-eastern fringes of the former USSR were far from ready to act as autonomous polities. This situation was aggravated by the circumstance that Soviet disintegration not only affected the former member republics but also left an even larger part of Eurasia in urgent need of local-state reorganization and regional reconfiguration. This had far-reaching political and economic implications for the Asian continent at large and, evidently also, for the international community.

All of the ex-Soviet Central Asian republics started their independent state- and nation-building at one and the same time, and many of the conditions were

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. xi-xvii.

similar. On the other hand, as sovereign states each one of these republics has its own fabric of political organization, and for the researcher it becomes necessary to determine how much democracy the fabric of each particular state entails. In the first part of the book (Part I: 'Political Pluralism and Civic Space'), the chapter by Stephen Blank (USA), who delivered the keynote speech of the conference, sets a global and – to say the least – pessimistic framework for the prospects of democratization in Central Asian states. The other chapters in this section of the book discuss state control in specific republics, either from a general point of view or with reference to specific settings. Each of the three southernmost republics of former Soviet Central Asia – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan – has its own chapter written by Pınar Akçalı (Turkey), Michael Hall (USA, Tajikistan), and Torgny Hinnemo (Sweden), respectively. Although obstacles to democracy are still paramount, processes in the direction of political pluralism – more or less oppositional and violent – are discernible in at least two of these republics. Tajikistan has experienced a period of multiparty politics, commented on in this volume by Muhiddin Kabiri, Deputy Chairman of the Tajik Islamic Revival Party and active participant in this movement. In the Kyrgyz Republic at the time of the writing of this preface, we have been witnessing political protests and actions which in just a few weeks' time after the February and March 2005 parliamentary elections developed into upheaval and turmoil seemingly beyond anybody's control – a development that may or may not turn into a true people's 'Tulip Revolution'. Once again the spotlights are directed towards the densely populated and ethnically complex Ferghana Valley, where political unrest may easily fuel antagonism not only between people and power élites but also between various social and ethnic interest groups. The ethnic complexity of Central Asia as a whole is an issue in need of more comprehensive study. The last two chapters of this section, one by Valeriy S. Khan (Uzbekistan) and the other by Birgit N. Schlyter (Sweden), deal with ethnic minority settings in the light of Central Asian state rule.

The Istanbul conference made two digressions from the level of individual states, one proceeding to issues concerning the Central Asian region as a whole (Part II: 'Interstate Issues') and the other to community levels (Part III: 'Trends of Thought in the Public Discourse'). The concern in the former case is to what extent these states can act as polities with a foreign policy of their own, through which they could become neighbors and members of a union, or political region. The latter case regarding community, or 'grass-roots' levels, is concerned with the degree to which, and the means by which, people participate actively in the protection of their individual freedoms. While the individual state appears as an intermediate level bearing as much on individuals as on societies, the other two settings differ from that and from each other in that the matter of concern at the regional level is the relationship between societies rather than between people, whereas in the case of grass-roots levels it is the other way around, and inter-individual relations are in the forefront.



Three merry girls in Khiva. Photo: Bertil Rydén.

From the point of view of international politics, a tendency still exists to regard the former Soviet Central Asian republics not as co-actors but rather as recipients of opportunities and aid, and the higher the level (region and/or state), the more external parties and forces are considered to be crucial to the democratization of Central Asian societies. A case in point is, for example, the fact that speakers who had been invited to deliver papers on security in the Central Asian region either from a general international perspective or from the viewpoint of a specific foreign country interpreted their tasks in the first place as a matter of deciding what contributions these external parties could offer in the maintenance and consolidation of security in Central Asia at the state and regional levels. The American military role in Central Asia is highlighted by Ariel Cohen (USA), who writes: 'The US is seeking to prevent a country, a group of countries, or a transnational movement or organization from establishing hegemonic control in the Central Asian region' (p. 144). With reference to 'a more pluralistic balance of power in Central Asia' after the War on Terror, Michael Fredholm (Sweden) concludes: 'While Russia remains the key guarantor of security, China has through the SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organization] as well as through her economic clout acquired a certain level of regional influence. With the new American presence in the region since late 2001, the geopolitical situation is beginning to resemble that of the nineteenth century' (p. 112). The question of how Central Asian security or lack of such security could affect the international community in general and the political agendas of the respective countries in particular was, on the other hand, given secondary importance.

In contrast, at local community levels, the readiness to consider society-inherent potentials is more obvious. What the conference also gave testimony of in this connection, however, was that the transfer from regional and state bureaucracy levels to community and lower levels appears both to necessitate scholarly reconsideration and – due to difficulties encountered in the process of reconsideration or even rejections of it – to evoke interdisciplinary controversies. Since one of the major ideas behind this conference was to convene as diverse a group of scholars as possible with respect to both research fields and geographical affiliation, the sessions not surprisingly generated a great deal of vigorous, if not ardent or even antagonistic, debate.

Against this background it is all the more interesting to note that, regardless of disciplinary affiliations and in spite of personal preferences, contributors and discussants were united by certain recurring thoughts and reflections hinting at underlying issues of general concern – though at times leading to disagreement. These thoughts and reflections have been summarized under the following two headings:

1. The cultural essence of the concept of democracy. One theme subjected to recurring comments during the Istanbul conference was whether the notion of democracy is a consequence of Western civilization or whether it should rather be defined on a universal basis regardless of culture and civilization. On this point, opinions are divided among the co-authors of the conference volume. Stephen Blank calls democratization a 'Westernizing' acitivity and points to female emancipation as an attribute of democracy and 'one of the most salient points of difference between Western and Islamic civilizations' (p. 6). By contrast, Dinora Azimova (Uzbekistan), Nurten Kılıç–Schubel (Turkey, USA), and Morgan Liu (USA), all of whom participated in the third conference section on trends of thought in the public discourse, argue that the striving for what is today conceived of as democratic values is as likely to be initiated without additional external impetus in a non-Western society as in a Western one and that early examples of quests for democratic orders or methods can be attested to in socio-political contexts outside the West. Kılıç–Schubel, for example, analyzes works by the 17th-century Chaghatay poet Turdi along these lines. Azimova distinguishes between political and cultural forms of democracy, the latter of which are claimed to be 'important signs of societal predisposition to democratic order' (p. 221). She offers examples of democratic features characterizing Asian societies and admonishes: 'By denying democracy in Asia and by maintaining the view that democracy is obligatorily Western, politicians are playing a dangerous game' (p. 220). Liu makes a point of contrasting democracy with authoritarianism. For Westerners it lies close at hand to regard these as incompatible concepts. However, as Liu's interviews with ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan indicate, democratic values may be held in as much esteem by a person believing in the benevolence of a strong leader as by a person opposed to authoritarian rule. For those Central Asian settings covered by his fieldwork, Liu concludes that the trust in strong authorities among Central Asians could be due, not necessarily to religious, viz. Islamic, culture, but rather or at least as much to pre-Soviet ancient societal traditions. This is a point that needs further discussion. Religion definitely plays an important and partly new role in present-day Central Asia;

see the chapters by Bayram Balcı (Turkey) and Mustafa Şen (Turkey). At the same time, in the study of the cultural predisposition of Central Asians, one must not forget to take into account all aspects of their partly Eastern–nomadic and partly West Asian–urban cultural legacy. Comments by grass roots quoted in Akçalı's chapter on Kyrgyzstan lend further support to this statement.

2. The importance of economic welfare and security for the democratization of Central Asia. The second theme instigating comments and the exchange of views throughout the three sessions of the Istanbul conference was the belief that economic welfare and security are factors *sine qua non* for a strengthening of state democracy and civil society in Central Asia. The fact that economic welfare is crucial to democratization is pointed out in the very first chapter by Stephen Blank, who states that 'the prospect and reality of broad-based sustainable growth must be visible to society at large for it to sustain its own belief in building democracy …' (p. 5) and continues by saying that: 'Only where the state cannot simply lay hold of that wealth for its own purpose is there any hope for the development of a sense of national interest supervised or fostered by more representative institutions' (p. 5). At the regional level, economy and security are intertwined by their dependency on coordination and fair deals between parties sharing natural resources and jointly administrating the exploitation of these. The chapter by Timur Dadabaev (Uzbekistan, Japan) reminds us of the fact that agreements on the use of water resources provided mainly by the Amu Darya and Syr Darya river basins remain one of the most crucial testing grounds for the success or failure of regional politics in Central Asia. The intricacies of both regional and international politics in connection with water resources also become evident in the chapter written by Anar Ahmadov (Azerbaijan) on the effects of prolonged negotiations concerning the division of the Caspian surface water and seabed. Yet another aspect of economic security is demonstrated by Gunilla Björklund (Sweden) in her chapter on the environmental crisis of the Aral Sea Basin. Security issues in the context of trans-regional relations can also be discussed primarily in economic terms, as is done in the chapter by Igor Torbakov on the strategic importance of Turkey in the post-Soviet Eurasian space.

As is usual for an anthology of this type, the authors are themselves responsible for all statements made in their respective chapters. Many of the papers presented at the June 2003 conference in Istanbul were extensively revised and updated in the editing process leading to publication. Therefore, some references are from as late as December 2004. For some areas touched on at the conference, written contributions could not be obtained in time. To remedy this, scholars who had not been present at the conference were invited to submit articles on these particular fields.

Recent parliamentary elections in three of the Central Asian states, and in particular the developments in Kyrgyzstan triggered by election campaigns and reactions to election procedures, make this volume even more interesting and valuable than could have been hoped for at the time of the conference. In our epilogue, an attempt is made to comment on these elections and their

significance as indicators of political dynamism and non-negligible trends towards more differentiated political awareness among the inhabitants of the Central Asian states.

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The choice of democracy as the topic for a conference on Central Asia may still be regarded as a great challenge. As most of us realize, we are still witnessing merely the first phase in a long and cumbersome political process that may eventually lead to greater welfare and democracy in Central Asia. Daring though it may seem, it is deemed important to keep the discussion going. The 2003 Istanbul Conference on *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia* is part of a series of seminars and conferences organized by the Department of Central Asian Studies at Stockholm University for discussions on socio-cultural and political issues relating to present-day Central Asia. A conference discussing issues in current Scandinavian research on Central Asia was held in 1996, from which the volume *Return to the Silk Routes* was published (edited by Mirja Juntunen and Birgit N. Schlyter, London 1999). Three years later, an international conference on 'Central Asia in a New Security Context' was convened in Stockholm by the present editor and researchers from the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, from which conference proceedings were published under the title of *Central Asian Security: The New International Context* (edited by Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, London 2001).

A great number of colleagues and institutes must be given credit for invaluable support during the organization of the conference and the production of the conference volume. These include Merrick Tabor, Lecturer of Political Science and coordinator of programs for the exchange of students between Stockholm University and universities in Kyrgyzstan, Bo Petersson, Senior Lecturer of Political Science at Lund University, Sweden, Elisabeth Özdalga, Professor of Sociology at the Middle East Technical University, Ankara, and former Director of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Vernon Schubel, Professor of Religious Studies at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, Kerstin Lindahl–Kiessling, Professor emerita at Uppsala University, former Vice-President of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and founding member of the Swedish Aral Society, Marianne Laanatza, Lecturer and researcher on the Middle East and North Africa at Uppsala University, and Mustafa Aydın, Associate Professor of Political Science at Ankara University. All of them shared with us their knowledge and skills as chairmen and discussants. After the conference, some of these have participated in follow-up seminars and one of them, Merrick Tabor, has co-authored the epilogue to this volume together with the editor, presenting among other things personal observations from his visit to Kyrgyzstan at the time of the most recent parliamentary elections in this country. From the Department of Central Asian Studies at Stockholm University, Michael Fredholm, defense analyst and Lecturer of Central Asian History, Mirja Juntunen, Indologist and Lecturer of Central Asian Cultural History, and two of our students, Johan Fresk and Patrick Hällzon, have been of great help throughout the editing process. They have read and commented on most of the chapters. Johan Fresk has worked as research assistant and played an important role both in

proofreading and in the final editing of the manuscript. Laotse Sacker and Ooi Kee Beng from the research group *Asian Cultures and Modernity* at this department have been engaged in the English-language editing of articles written by non-native authors

The practical arrangements in connection with the conference proceedings were skilfully taken care of by Sidsel Braaten, secretary and chief assistant at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, where the conference was held under the supervision of its Director, Karin Ådahl.

Generous grants for the holding of the conference were obtained from the Swedish Institute, Stockholm, and the Swedish Consulate General in Istanbul. From the latter, Consul General Ingmar Karlsson and Consul Annika Svahnström took an active part in the conference and have a great share in the follow-up of it by providing an additional grant for the production and publication of this volume.

Stockholm, April 2005
Birgit N. Schlyter
Editor

PART I

POLITICAL PLURALISM AND CIVIC SPACE

For a Transition to Democracy in Central Asia

STEPHEN BLANK

Talk of prospects for democratization in Central Asia appears to be either an exercise in mindless bravery or in futility. Nowhere in this region do the economic-political requirements for and understanding of genuine democracy exist nor will they anytime soon either in elite or mass practice.[1] Worse, both here and in the Muslim world generally, the transplantation of Western and/or democratic institutions has often paradoxically strengthened the forces of authoritarian rule, not liberalism or democracy. We may translate efforts to transplant Western institutions as modernization activities, while efforts to inculcate more specifically democratic institutions and values are clearly Westernizing activities.[2] Thus we should not delude ourselves and think that merely transplanting one or another form of capitalism in itself suffices for democracy. While economic liberalization is indispensable, and indeed a necessary condition for democracy, it is not sufficient. Although international experience shows that democracy is inconceivable without property rights, establishing them is only a major step on the road to democracy, not the culmination of the journey.[3] Therefore, we should realize that the demand to democratize the former Soviet Union as a whole and Central Asia in particular means advocating a revolutionary transformation of those areas. That transformation will probably not be a quick non-violent one, unless special care is taken by its advocates and leaders.

These statements apply equally to issues of both economic and political democracy. It is similarly clear that domestic forces are too weak to convince local regimes to undertake the necessary transformative measures to set this process in motion. Consequently, it is certainly arguable that whatever impetus for democratization must inevitably come from outside the region as internal forces cannot launch the process without foreign assistance.

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[1] The views expressed here do not in any way represent those of the US Army, Defense Department or Government. This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the Conference in Istanbul 1–3 June, 2003.

[2] Lewis 2002.

[3] At the Istanbul conference, Dr. Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation forcefully made this point; see also Pipes 2000.

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 3–20.

On the other hand, whatever external impetus might develop, it cannot offer genuine democracy of its own. It can only stimulate, support, or at best galvanize existing, even if latent, domestic impulses for reform. Neither is this assessment confined to Central Asia, for nowhere in the CIS, including Russia, do we see genuine democracy or its imminent advent upon the scene.[4] Moreover, the democratic deficits in Russia relate strongly to Central Asia. They lead Russia's elites to support Central Asian dictators for classic reasons of state, not least the idea that this will somehow strengthen hopes of a return to hegemony if not empire.[5] In turn, Central Asian rulers look to Russia for support against pressures for reform. Still worse a trend is that Russia, the most advanced of CIS governments, manifests disquieting and regressive efforts to restore the outlines of a police capitalism or moves to frustrate such essential democratic rights as free press, meaningful elections, and civilian democratic control of the instruments of violence. Consequently, Russia's democratization and renunciation of neo-colonial policies is an international precondition for the successful liberalization and democratization of Central Asian and Transcaucasian governments.

Despite the very strong current of opinion that proclaims a Western and/or American mission to be an evangel of democracy abroad or at least a force for democratization, there exists a powerful current of opinion that equally strongly criticizes the effort to bring Western democracy to Asia, Africa and Latin America. This line of argument forcefully contends that efforts to bring the supposed Western model of economic liberalism and political democracy to the Third World ironically become a force for destabilization, violence, and more anti-democratic manifestations or 'illiberal democracy'.[6] This vibrant debate underscores the vitality of the debate over democracy and of its imminent likelihood in world affairs, even if there is a consensus as to what the minimum requirements of a democratic polity ought to be. Precisely because we generally agree as to those minimal requirements, notwithstanding the polemics around the term democracy, we can here concentrate on the more immediate issue of the prospects or foundations for democracy through an admittedly lengthy process of democratization.

Attributes of Democracy

Since debate epitomizes democratic politics, an open discussion about prospects for democracy throughout the former Soviet Union remains topical. Therefore, as regards Central Asia, though arguments still rage over the requirements of democratic politics, certain attributes seem to be held in common. Lincoln's famous epigrammatic definition at Gettysburg appears to be widely accepted as necessary attributes of a democratic government. So too are the notions of a government subject to regular, free, and fair elections, the rule of law, parliamentary control of the purse through democratic and transparent means, official accountability to the legislative branch, separation

[4] See e.g. Shevtsova 2003; Kuzio 2003.
[5] Blank (forthcoming).
[6] Zakaria 2003; cf. Chua 2003.

of powers, limits on the executive, democratic control of all the means of violence, full civil rights of speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition, freedom from arbitrary police, legal equality of all citizens without reference to race, sex, ethnicity, creed, etc.

Furthermore, it is also clear since Aristotle, if not more recently de Toqueville, that a balance of economic power where there is a strong middle class, civil society, and thus a sphere of social and economic life free from state control, is essential. Unrelieved mass poverty and democracy are ultimately incompatible. Not only does this consideration mandate firm property rights, but because those rights must be anchored in a strong legal process, the implementation of solid property rights constitutes a giant step towards engendering a state based on the rule of law.

Similarly in economic terms, the prospect and reality of broad-based sustainable growth must be visible to society at large for it to sustain its own belief in building democracy and in liberal politics and economics more generally. This principle also mandates the existence of what used to be called intermediary orders or civil society, a body of social associations and civic groups that are free of state penetration and that offer the individual a legally protected sphere of privacy and freedom. This is because an inevitable corollary of economic growth is ever greater specialization and division of labor, which creates new needs, roles, and functions for citizens and encourages them to form associations with like-minded citizens. These considerations show the inextricability of economic and political conditions needed for progress toward democracy.

Another way in which economics and politics must be linked is that viable property rights must be in effect to deny to the state an uncontested monopoly over the sources of the nation's wealth. Abundant recent research confirms that energy-rich states face a very high risk of becoming a rentier state led by rent-seeking elites who corrupt and suborn democracy by controlling that wealth.[7] Only where the state cannot simply lay hold of that wealth for its own purpose is there any hope for the development of a sense of national interest supervised or fostered by more representative institutions.

It is well known that equalization of political and economic opportunities and of rights also makes the explosion of ethno-national or other divisive tensions much less likely. Of course, for this to happen they need to be adequately represented in government, a fact that also presupposes the expansion of electoral and representative democracy and institutions. Ideologically, too, the polity and its elites must internalize the need for political figures to desist from attempts to promulgate or impose their own vision of moral or ideological truth upon the populace for the state to be considered democratic. Ideological monism and democracy, in both thought and practice, are incompatible. This goes beyond merely establishing the relevant civil rights toward this end. Church and state, even if the religion is a civil religion like Communism, must be effectively separated both institutionally and cognitively. Whatever religious beliefs citizens may hold about the extent and nature of divine revelation of truth, democracy is founded upon the probability of human error, not theological, scientific or any other

[7] Karl 1997; Luciani 1994; Delacroix 1980; Bebalwi and Luciani 1990; Mahdawy 1970; Ross 2001.

certainty. As democracy arose from the 17th–18th centuries' critique of revealed religion that challenged the teachings and power of the church, such philosophical pluralism is absolutely essential for civil and human rights to be established. Even today debate over the proper place of religion in a democracy continues throughout Western democracies.

More recently, feminist thinkers would argue that the emancipation of women, as a category beyond mere citizenship and thus as a class of citizens in their own right, is an essential attribute of democratic polities. As Bernard Lewis wrote,

> The emancipation of women, more than any other single issue, is the touchstone of difference between modernization and Westernization. Even the most extreme and most anti-Western fundamentalist nowadays accepts the need to modernize and indeed to make the fullest use of modern technology, especially the technologies of warfare and propaganda. This is seen as modernization, and though the methods and even the artifacts come from the West, it is accepted as necessary and even as useful. The emancipation of women is Westernization, both for traditional conservatives and radical fundamentalists it neither is necessary nor useful but noxious, a betrayal of true Islamic values. It must be kept from entering the body of Islam, and where it has already entered, it must be ruthlessly excised.[8]

This emancipation goes beyond according women all the rights commonly enjoyed by all citizens of the state to undertaking what Americans call 'affirmative action' to equalize their status in critical ways. Whether or not female emancipation is an essential component of democracy, women's more emancipated role in the West has long been one of the most salient points of difference between Western and Islamic civilizations. As noted in the passage from Lewis 2002 quoted above, it has been one of the phenomena of the Western civilization that have most forcefully and negatively struck Muslim observers and is the touchstone of the difference between modernization and westernization. And to the extent that female emancipation is now seen as an essential attribute of democracy, we must admit that when we advocate democratization we are advocating a revolutionary transformation of Islam and Muslim societies.

But equally importantly, a systematic elevation of women's status and of the status of the issues most relevant to them entails a wholesale revision of local governments' socio-economic agenda, an extension of the political sphere to hitherto disenfranchised populations, and a revision of national economic priorities. As one participant at the Istanbul conference[9] pointed out, the World Bank has established that money spent on traditional 'women's issues' are often the most productive investment states can make. To the extent that such investment becomes codified policy, the scope for elite rent-seeking diminishes and the scope for representative democracy as well as greater social equality grow correspondingly. Indeed, historically one way in which efforts to initiate a social revolution in Central Asia took place was through the violent and authoritarian imposition of female emancipation, a campaign whose results were very limited.[10] Still this does not dissuade

[8] Lewis 2002, p. 73.
[9] June 2003; cf. footnote 1 above.
[10] Massell 1974.

activists from urging foreign support for a campaign pitched at the emancipation of women today.[11]

Monism as a Feature of Intrinsically Unstable States

The broader triumph of democracy in Central Asia must go beyond establishing its institutional prerequisites and make them into irrevocable laws and policies. To achieve such goals these societies must also and probably simultaneously will undergo what inevitably will be a wrenching ideological transformation. Western history suggests that these transformations entail a prolonged and generally violent crisis. Moreover, to the extent that economic development can take place bringing new classes like the working class or proletarianized women into being, that developmental trend will also greatly stimulate the struggle for democracy. And the reaction to that struggle, as the history of the labor and women's movement suggests, may well have violent episodes if not be one long violent struggle culminating in civil war at home. And this possibility of revolutionary upheaval or civil war is especially likely when there has been no prior preparation for liberalization or democratization and the old order suddenly collapses largely due to its own internal contradictions.

A state where ideological monism reigns or can be catapulted to power is a state that will turn upon those who are thereby 'alienated', i.e. made alien. Since all states and societies today are multi-cultural and multi-confessional entities, wherever we have a state church, whether civil or otherwise, or a privileged state-making ethnicity, there are by definition outsiders (class enemies, racial enemies, 'unbelievers', etc.). Such an ideology privileges the collective, whose rights are enshrined as an individual unit, over the individual – normally, the cornerstone of liberalism and its philosophical foundation.[12] Moreover, such a state must be an intrinsically intolerant one whose intolerance easily becomes translated into militancy in word and deed against all 'others'.

This militancy is not accidental. Ideological monism can only be enforced at the point of the sword. The state that proclaims an ideological and hence political monism proclaims itself at war with itself and with others. Turkmenistan's and Uzbekistan's prevailing tendency to shun cooperation with their neighbors reflects some of this tendency and strengthens the obstacles to liberalization across Central Asia. But the monistic state does not only entail a refusal to cooperate with neighbors. Indeed, it defines the world as being composed of enemies and supporters, whether it does so according to ideological or philosophical categories derived from Carl Schmitt,[13] Lenin, or radical Islam. This monism was an essential and integral point of Communism, Fascism, and Nazism with their imperial and racial cults and various forms of 'Führerprinzip'. It is also the essence of radical Islam.[14]

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[11] Cooper and Traugott 2003.

[12] For Eastern Europe after 1989, see Ramet 1997.

[13] For an introduction to Carl Schmitt's views, see Lilla 1997 and the books cited there. Schmitt was a major theorist and justifier of an approach to politics that postulated politics as a struggle between enemies.

[14] See e.g. Roy 1994; Abdullaev 2002.

The monistic state is thus by definition a mobilizational or at least mobilized state whose *raison d'être* is war, against both internal and external enemies. War and the ensuing aggrandizement of state power is a permanent project, the state's *telos* and justification. Whether the enemy be another people, race, religion, or social class, the monistic state cannot be secure until the other is exterminated or at least rendered incapable of defending itself. That condition is one of inherent oppression of those who fall into the defenseless category. Even in the most benign of these states, the citizen is essentially defenseless against the government, an inherently malignant condition. Hence the monistic state is perpetually engaged or at least poised to engage in warfare against its own citizens, not to mention outsiders. In this respect the monistic state ranges itself against one of the cardinal points of the democratic project, namely that the citizen inherently can defend himself against the state.

Lenin, in his rival Martov's words, introduced a state of siege into Russian democracy and then globalized it. As Central Asian leaders have inherited those traditions, they have often incorporated Communism as well as other traditional authoritarian forms of rule into their arsenal. Turkmenistan is the extreme example of that incorporation. But it is not alone, as Uzbekistan or Armenia indicate. These two states exist in a permanent state of war or at least controlled tension with all others and with key elements of their own society. Internal and external enemies abound along with permanent war scares or heightened tension and are permanent and necessary lodestars of the state's formation and development, whether or not they are real or imagined enemies. In such a state, the armed forces and police are generally arrayed in multiple organizations, each spying on the other to defend the regime in power and its various cultic phenomena. Thus, a reliable guide to the level of liberalization or democratization achieved by new states is the extent to which there is only one regular army, police force, and intelligence *apparat* with each having carefully delineated functions and transparent systems of real accountability to democratic authorities under law. Where these organizations have overlapping functions and are primarily tasked with internal security, we can be reasonably certain that we are dealing with an authoritarian and intrinsically unstable state. This analysis would also discern all the indices of rising militarization and domestic repression in the last decade, even before September 11, 2001.[15]

We may also observe here that prolonged peace is essential to the inauguration of a democratization process that will culminate in time in what could then be recognized as democracy. The democratizing state, to consummate its long march to democracy as perceived by itself and other states, must not be drawn into wars, or domestic strife. Avoidance of the monism trap delineated above is therefore both an essential aspect of this gradual pacification of the undemocratic state and of its equally gradual democratization.

The requirement for avoiding war also most certainly includes prolonged civil wars. The relationship of war to democracy is not a linear one but in the early period of democracy-building – a process often related to the process of state-building – the democratizing but incompletely realized democracy is

[15] Eaton 2001; Blank 2003.

prone to conflicts that can derail it or provide ways for atavistic elites to deflect or corrupt democratic possibilities.[16] This war proneness of incompletely democratized polities has been discerned for states as disparate as Hohenzollern Germany and Yeltsin's Russia, in the latter of which the two wars in Chechnya undoubtedly served and were intended to prevent democratizing trends from prevailing.[17] And the fact that many functioning democracies have had to overcome internal civil wars as well as make a revolution suggests that such strife may be or at least was a necessary phase of the democratizing process, if the first stages either fail to create a solid basis for progress or go too far and lead to anarchy. If this last observation is correct, then these incompletely realized democracies-states must undergo the trials of domestic or foreign war to become democratic, if their regimes fail to evolve. Therefore, to avoid war we must contribute an impetus for continuing democratization.

Prerequisites for Democratic Evolution in Central Asia

Two indispensable prerequisites of a future democratic evolution in Central Asia are, first, the avoidance of either internal or interstate wars and, second, continuing external pressure for reform to reinforce the efforts of domestic reformers and achieve a more broadly based and legitimate basis for domestic security. Without continuing and combined internal and external pressure for reform and more stable bases for security, it may only be possible for democracy to come about because of a war or series of wars culminating in the discrediting of the old order. The dangers here are precisely the likelihood of bitter protracted conflicts and the enmeshing of these states even more in international power politics and rivalries. Furthermore, as we want to spare societies the terrors of war and the hardships of what might be war's functional equivalent, e.g. cold wars, we must find or devise alternatives to create an international environment that mitigates the possibility of war while reducing as well the scope for local 'bad actors' to start them. Thus, the paradoxical relationship between war and democratization admits of no easy answers but does seem to point to certain guidelines for action that are at once moral and strategic in nature.

Specifically, the requirement for beginning a liberalization process that will end in something recognizable as democracy in part or in whole must probably be sparked by a *deus ex machina*, an external actor or actors who reinforce and strengthen domestic trends within those societies. And it must be done so, while the target state is in a condition of peace with its security anxieties reduced to a tolerable minimum. The guarantees of security provided by the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan and Central Asia, specifically NATO and US forces, can provide opportunities for building security that could also contribute to the general pacification and democratization of the entire area.

Thus, the task of initiating a democratic process in Central Asia equates, at least in some measure, to the perennial and ever difficult business of making

[16] Mansfield and Snyder 1995; Snyder 1991, 2000.
[17] Lanskoi 2003.

an existing political order a legitimate one beyond simply using force. It also involves fundamental questions of international politics as well, since the achievement of this task is also inherently a matter for international organizations and foreign governments. Subsumed in that issue is the question of how to use force which is already being deployed in ways that are legitimate and which can bring about more positive outcomes than has hitherto been the case. For democracy to evolve – and there is no other way known to us short of divine intervention – viable and secure states must precede it. For democracy to emerge from Central Asia's unfavorable conditions, those states must not only avoid violence, they also must form effective and viable states amidst strong international rivalries and even violence. Therefore, ultimately the role of foreign interlocutors, no matter how well intentioned they may be, must remain a secondary and limited one whatever their importance in the early stages may be. We cannot postulate a halcyon state of nature from which democracy may evolve because political order is always contextual. States exist in a temporal and spatial, i.e. historical context, a fact which is especially relevant to states which emerged out of the Soviet collapse and whose nationality was in many ways an invented or fabricated one.[18]

Just as continental Europe had to undergo a long, historical, often interrupted, and complex evolution before it could actually become democratic – so too Central Asian states to begin democratization will probably have to undergo long-term processes by which their evolving political orders can attain true legitimacy beyond simple coercion or bribery of elites. They will also have to expand economic opportunity beyond a circle of rentiers living off energy and associated incomes, because only as more social classes enter into economic and political participation, does the state feel compelled to grant them more and more rights and legal protections. Our responsibility is to create the most auspicious conditions for the evolution of conditions facilitating the legitimization of a political process that steadily widens the opportunity for economic and political participation under law. In short, we must simultaneously concern ourselves with both the internal and external conditions making for security in these states while preventing the international competition for influence in the region from getting out of control.

The Problem of State Order

Any assessment of prospects for democracy or democratization in Central Asia must duly start from the problems of state order and of constructing viable and legitimate states. A democratizing process only takes place within a state, i.e. a genuine political community, however presently constituted. That process must also concurrently be situated within a system of international relations that possesses at least minimum elements of the state's legitimacy. And it must be a political process from within, not one imposed from without. While there cannot be democracy unless the sovereignty and independence of these states is consolidated, we can insist that this sovereignty must be legitimately consolidated. That insistence upon legitimacy is, of course, a

[18] Olcott 1996.

critical instrument of leverage in the hands of those external forces who seek to induce liberalizing and/or democratizing change in Central Asian and Transcaucasian states.

Thus, the domestic and external circumstances of Central Asia's birth and recent development oblige us to focus on both the domestic and international context within which those states have evolved and are evolving. Although there is much cause for anxiety concerning Central Asia, it has avoided the wars that have torn apart the Caucasus, Central Africa, and the former Yugoslavia. However, since the prospects for stable domestic order in these states are under severe challenge, the prime task is to extend whatever peace exists in timely fashion.

Many of those challenges are well known. Apart from the dangers of terrorist or otherwise incited insurgencies, the Central Asian states must deal with immature, authoritarian state *apparats*, which all bear to varying degree the marks of their birth from a profoundly repressive, deformed, and corrupting Soviet order. Moreover, there is reason to believe that their level of competence has, if anything, declined since independence, often due to capricious or misguided state policies.[19] These strictures apply not just to political issues and to the quality of state administration at central and local levels but also to the profound challenges of widespread poverty, some of the most severe environmental challenges in the world, lack of basic social infrastructures of all kinds, collapsing or collapsed social security networks, geographical isolation from global markets, and potential internal and external ethnopolitical challenges.

Even before September 11, 2001, these states had become central objects of immense international competition and of internal rivalry, for example, the widespread fears of Uzbekistan's potential for seeking to dominate the region. Accordingly, Central Asia, and for that matter, all post-Soviet governments have had to confront enduring, dynamic, and difficult internal and external challenges without any history of cooperation among them or of spontaneous regional cooperation under the Soviets. Rather they were parts of a centralized administration that often deliberately strove to keep them from being able to play complementary roles for each other. Thus genuine regional integration was not a Soviet policy, nor is it Russian policy today. In its 1999 official submission to the EU of its strategy for relations with that organization, made by then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the Russian government stated that:

> As a world power situated on two continents, Russia should retain its freedom to determine and implement its foreign and domestic policies, its status and advantages of a Euro-Asian state and largest country of the CIS. The 'development of partnership with the EU should contribute to consolidating Russia's role as the leading power in shaping a new system of interstate political and economic relations in the CIS area' and thus, Russia would 'oppose any attempts to hamper economic integration in the CIS [that may be made by the EU], including through 'special relations' with individual CIS member states to the detriment of Russia's interests'.[20]

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[19] As for Turkmenistan, see e.g. Rickards 1999, p. 212; cf. Hinnemo in this volume.

[20] 'Strategiya Razvitiya Otnosheniy Rossiyskoy Federatsii s Evropeyskim Soyuzom na Srednesrochnuyu Perspektivu (2000–2010)', *Diplomaticheskiy Vestnik*, November 1999, www.ln.mis.ru/website/dip_vest.nsf items 1.1.,1.6, and 1.8.2000, cited in Adomeit and Reisinger 2002, p. 5.

If anything, genuine regional integration works against Russia's interests as they are presently defined, because it would imply much greater subordination to the economic logic of the marketplace and not to the political imperatives of rent-seeking rulers in Russia or at home. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that mutual cooperation has come only with difficulty or that they have also found it difficult and often against their interests to cooperate with Russian objectives even if the latter were not specifically aimed at curtailing their sovereignty and independence.[21] But the absence of regional cooperation also inhibits the growth among them and within them of the division of labor which could facilitate demands for democracy within them and in their interstate relationships. And it also weakens their ability to resist challenges to their security from within or without.

Equally, if not more importantly, we can follow other scholars' assessments that the exigencies of what the Soviets called state-building, under inauspicious and unexpected conditions constitute a major factor in facilitating the movement towards oil and gas dominated rentier economies and authoritarian polities. Lacking much else in the way of economic capability and in many cases being under immense pressure from neighbors, the short-term benefits, both tangible and intangible, generated by playing the energy card seemed to many political figures as perhaps the best or even only game in town and they chose it. And since then they have embraced the consequences and built states based on short-term, self-interested rent-seeking policies.[22] This is one example showing how internal and external trends have acted upon the new states' governments to influence them into choosing decidedly non-liberal and non-democratic courses of action.

Thus the situation in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus conforms to Mohammed Ayoob's penetrating observations that these states, like third-world states in general, simultaneously face the exigencies of both domestic and external security without sufficient means or time to democratize and without resources to compete successfully with other more established states.[23] Not surprisingly, their primary concern is internal security, hence the appearance of multiple militaries and their governments' recourse to rent-seeking, authoritarian, and clientilistic policies, if not ideological or other forms of the monism trap alluded to above. But beyond the foregoing observation, there is one more fact or perspective that merits our analysis before passing on to prescriptive remedies.

Bjorn Moeller observes that,

> While in modernity the inside of a state was supposed to be orderly, thanks to the workings of the state as a Hobbesian 'Leviathan,' the outside remained anarchic. For many states in the Third World, the opposite seems closer to reality – with fairly orderly relations to the outside in the form of diplomatic representations, but total anarchy within.[24]

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[21] Olcott et al. 1999.
[22] See the essays in Ebel and Menon 1999.
[23] See Ayoob 1999, 2002 and the works cited therein.
[24] Bjorn Moeller's quote is located in Alekseev 2003, p. 12.

Yet, as contemporary events in Central Asia and the Caucasus indicate, local governments cannot take foreign relations for granted. Too many of their neighbors are more than willing to try and subvert them using force or external agents who are supported either from Moscow or Islamabad, or Kabul. Therefore, these states face the constant danger of either internal collapse or externally induced pressure, which can align with those internal forces. This precarious existential situation may be another reason why nowhere is the succession marked out, for that would generate a classic struggle within all these states that would be abetted by interested foreign governments. Furthermore, their external relations are not confined to diplomatic representations abroad but also embrace an even wider network of international financial institutions (IFIs) or supranational bodies like the UN, OSCE, and the EU. On top of that they also have large and growing NGO communities, which are active within them and highly articulate in their critical assessments of internal trends within those countries. Therefore, any disturbance internally has wider repercussions than just the immediate neighborhood and would trigger multiple and diverse forms of external intervention in the country's politics. Consequently, for many post-Soviet states, the purpose of foreign policy is to protect the internal regime from the domestic anarchy, which lies inside of it and can be stimulated by the pressures of the outside world. As described by Mikhail Alekseev, this is reversed anarchy where the international state system is not nearly so anarchic as the domestic political scene is perceived to be.[25]

If international relations are perceived by post-Soviet leaders to be threatening to their internal capability to hold and wield power, then more isolation will be likely. Interdependence or cooperative actions may well be seen as a threat to domestic security, because in today's world where processes described by James Rosenau as 'fragmegration' or what others call globalization are commonplace, greater foreign involvement reduces the domestic government's capacity to control events and trends.[26] External pressures for reform will be resisted if they appear to contribute to pressures for devolution or deconcentration of powers. If, on the other hand, foreign support allows governments to suppress threats to their power, then it will be welcomed.[27] Uzbekistan's efforts to extend Islam Karimov's rule using US support exemplify this pattern and we can find other examples throughout the region, where the sad state of democratization has led some observers to claim that the situation has changed marginally if at all since 1991.[28] But what really is going on is a confrontation between the irresistible imperatives of globalization in all its manifestations and the formidable powers of state repression available to these governments and their multiple capabilities for misrule, intended or not.

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[25] Alekseev 2003.
[26] Rosenau 1997; cf. Rosenau 1990.
[27] Alekseev 2003, pp. 12–19.
[28] Pannier 2003, Alibekov 2003.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Despite many rulers' best efforts, Central Asia cannot escape from the world, particularly in today's system of international economics and security. This fact provides opportunities for external and internal pressures for reform and for their synchronization. Governments, IFIs, and private businesses seeking to invest in Central Asia, whether the investment be an economic one or one of more military instruments of power to achieve security, can now leverage their influence and widen the sphere through which foreign and liberalizing influences and social forces may enter into these countries. But they must do so intelligently. We must avoid the trap whereby institutions of reform in our world, when transplanted abroad, become facades for more effective authoritarianism. Three examples bear mentioning here: the expansion of Western bilateral military programs, the development of much broader economic and transport infrastructure to foster economic integration, growth, and more prosperity leading to demands for more certain property rights to preserve those benefits, and reform of laws so that foreign direct investment (FDI) can flow more freely to these states. These do not by any means exhaust the repertoire of instruments available to the West. Certainly international organizations should try wherever possible to promote regional cooperation among these states. But IFIs or NGOs illustrate or could exemplify intelligent approaches to the problem of foreign promotion of reform.

Obviously, the main purpose of bilateral military programs – or 'mil-mil' programs in American parlance – is to train forces in working with the US and NATO so that they are reasonably inter-operable with those forces and can augment US and NATO capabilities for power projection and military operations including so-called stability or humanitarian operations, not just war.[29] But the other major purpose of such programs, as expressed during NATO enlargement and the Partnership for Peace (PfP), to which all these states belong, is to provide a living and successful model of democratic civilian control over the armed forces. In many of these programs, too, most strikingly the PfP and European programs, the other major purpose besides upgrading quality of performance and inter-operability is to create the basis for more democratic structures and behaviors with regard to civil-military relationships.

In its Military Action Programs (MAP), NATO ensured a continuing process of close monitoring to ensure that aspiring members met its conditions. Essentially NATO and these governments entered into a continuing process whereby NATO reviews their progress in all areas and works with them to improve shortcomings or encourage further progress along desirable lines. Aspirants must conform to the basic principles of democracy, liberty, etc., set out in both the 1949 Washington Treaty, the original documents of the 1994 NATO Summit on the creation of the PfP, the 1995 NATO study on enlargement, and the 1999 NATO Summit in Washington. They must also commit themselves to the peaceful resolution of disputes, civilian democratic control of their armed forces, desist from using force in ways inconsistent with the purposes of the UN, and be able to contribute to the

[29] Barnett 1996.

development of peaceful international relations and democracy and the various institutions of the NATO alliance.[30]

While Central Asia's programs are not nearly so advanced, they do resemble the PfP programs. Today these programs should become part of what the United States professes to be its larger program of commitment to democratic reform in post-Soviet states. We should advocate that both the US bilateral programs and the PfP therefore be broadened to obtain a more pronounced democratic component with regard to Central Asia. This is particularly opportune, inasmuch as NATO is now going to superintend the peace-building effort in Afghanistan and will undoubtedly assume a larger role in the post-Soviet south. Moreover, these NATO alliance mechanisms and American programs should aspire to create the basis for genuine security cooperation among Central Asian states from the bottom up on the basis of perceived mutual interest among local governments in marginalizing security competition and fostering cooperation.[31]

The need for economic infrastructure of all kinds is critical and will certainly stimulate foreign trade and thus greater international economic integration and thus freedom of choice.[32] Strategists and writers on Central Asia have realized since at least 1979 (the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) just how vital to this region's security and development long-range transportation projects in all media are.[33] This includes truck, auto, highway, rail, air travel, air cargo, and maritime trade. We have long known that the development of long-range transportation projects, including energy pipelines, brings together markets and peoples and provides a major impetus to long-term economic growth. Similarly, we have also long known that a fundamental cause of Central Asia's backwardness was its remoteness from major shipping, trade, and transportation lanes. And recent research reconfirms that isolation from major trade routes is a prime cause of economic backwardness.[34] Therefore, a basic precondition of Central Asia's economic growth, political development, and stability is its linkage to such lanes and the completion of major infra-structural projects in energy, rail, air, sea, and land transport that connect it to foreign markets.

Such investment and the trade that should then ensue are essential, because they compensate for what is perhaps the most profound structural or natural obstacle to Eurasia's economic growth, i.e. its geographic endowment as a region that is entirely or largely landlocked and far from international waterways of any kind and from international trade routes. This aspect of the regional endowment *inherently* makes it prone to violence and economic backwardness. For example, the Environment and Conflict Project (ENCOP), conducted by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich and the Swiss Peace Foundation, found that, according to project director Guenther Baechler:

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[30] Cf. *Membership Action Plan* ... (1999).
[31] Johnson 2002.
[32] Blank 2002.
[33] Hauner and Canfield 1989; Ispahani 1989.
[34] Haussman 2000.

> Developing and transitional societies or, more precisely expressed, marginalized areas in these countries are affected by an interplay among environmental degradation, social erosion, and violence that intensifies crises. Crisis areas prone to conflict are found in arid and semi-arid ecoregions, in mountain areas with highland-lowland interaction, areas with river basins sub-divided by state boundaries, zones degraded by mining and dams, in the tropical forrest belt, and around expanding urban centers. Historically situated, culturally bound societal relationships to nature are subjected to upheaval and put acutely at risk in subregions of Africa, Latin America, Central and Southeast Asia and Oceania.[35]

Central Asia's situation appears to validate recent research suggesting that geography is a major contributing factor to the continuing poverty of landlocked states that are far from major transportation outlets. In this case, the cure for poverty and the accompanying risks of social conflict is not so much or exclusively better market institutions and economic governance as large-scale investment in transportation infrastructures to spur the necessary economic growth.[36] It also would appear that the commitment to build such projects and implement them would generate a demand for better markets and economic institutions that would be harder to resist. While undoubtedly these measures could bring instability in their wake along with environmental degradation, they also bring the possibility and prospect of greater economic development forcing demands for economic and political rights and the rule of law onto the agenda. They also strengthen the possibilities for regional cooperation and thus the independence of the local regimes. In any case, it is clear that poverty-stricken regimes cannot afford to deal with environmental challenges to security on their own and as long as they are not predisposed to cooperate with each other or have reduced incentives to do so, they will not cooperate with each other.

Similarly, we must understand that in order to attract desperately needed FDI it is not necessary to have a big bang effect that legislates an end to the obstacles to it or that imposes democracy in one fell swoop. FDI will enter even authoritarian regimes, if conditions for making money are improved to the point of worthwhile risk. But its arrival stimulates pressures for guaranteeing property rights with the benefits that accrue to the society from that incision of democracy or liberalism into the body politic. While calculation of that point varies with the country, anyone familiar with the realities of legislation knows it comes about only one step at a time and after a long legislative process that is anything but direct.[37] FDI's liberalizing effects are inherently gradual but we can see how it has dramatically improved conditions inside China and forced considerable devolution of state power and even a more liberalized regime compared with what existed in 1978.[38]

As part of the broader program recommended here of continuing pressure upon governments and supporting NGOs and other activities like those in the defense or security sector, we must readjust our horizons and support realistic efforts to ameliorate economic conditions in this region by encouraging FDI, especially investment that contributes to growth without despoilment of the population or the ecology. This can only be done incrementally over time to

[35] Baechler 1999, p. 108, cited in Ehrlich et al. 2000.
[36] Haussman 2000.
[37] Hewko 2002.
[38] Goldman 1994; Lieberthal 1995.

create a climate that leads to favorable conditions for investment. In turn, once that investment enters, it stimulates further pressures for economic liberalization and ensuing social change that must then be exploited to widen the breach in the authoritarian wall. But again, this must be done in ways that channel the resulting dynamism into constructive non-violent change, the end point of which is a cumulative pressure for reform that cannot be resisted.

Finally, one last item that our governments and NGOs can and should do to encourage democratization in Central Asia and the broader post-Soviet world is to increase pressure upon Russia by our governments, media and the other institutions active in these fields for democratization. Despite its relative weakness Russia will always be a point of reference in Central Asia. To the extent that we can successfully bring pressure to bear upon Russia to reform that will have a positive impact or gravitational pull upon Central Asian reformers and elites. It will also create strong incentives for local regimes to reform as they will be unable to hide behind Moscow and will have to reckon with the positive rise in Russian economic power and stability that reform should stimulate.

Right now, international and domestic developments are apparently pushing Moscow to strengthen its military-economic hold on the area.[39] However, this policy strengthens the hand of anti-reform elements in Moscow and Central Asia which is contrary to the interests, security, and prosperity of those states' peoples. Consequently, Russian support for democratization at home and abroad must be enlisted if the long-term project of Central Asian democratization is to succeed.

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[39] Cf. Torbakov 2003a,b.

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The Tajik Experience of a Multiparty System – Exception or Norm?[1]

MUHIDDIN KABIRI

Despite the similarities between the states of Central Asia during the Soviet period, and the many common conditions following their independence, these countries have experienced different developmental processes and achieved varied progress for democracy. The latter is due to the differences in the interaction between economic, social and cultural conditions, as well as regional and international events.

From our point of view, one of the main factors affecting the development of each Central Asian country – whether democratic or non-democratic – is the personality of the country's leader, and to what extent the president leans towards democratic and humanitarian values. This personal factor is essential under current conditions, where the Central Asian countries have only recently emerged from a totalitarian system that produced almost all of their present leaders. Nevertheless, the five post-Soviet countries of Central Asia, formerly ruled by a central power that imposed common conditions regarding human rights, freedom of speech, religious beliefs, and other aspects of individual freedoms, find themselves after twelve years of independence at different stages of democratic development.

Ever since the early years of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, Tajikistan's process of democratic development has differed from other Central Asian countries. If one may trust the results of the last referendum on preserving the USSR, conducted in 1991, Tajikistan was much more opposed to preserving this system than other republics. This distinction had been observable ever since the first years of independence, when the Communist Party of Tajikistan and political elite were steadily loosing their reputation on a daily basis, while the influence of new political forces such as the Islamic–democratic block grew stronger.

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[1] Speech held on the opening day of the Istanbul Conference on *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia*, 1–3 June 2003, by the Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, Dr. Muhiddin Kabiri. Being a document reflecting the political climate in Tajikistan at the time of its presentation, the text has been reproduced in its original version without any revision. [The Editor]

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The political élite of Tajikistan, educated within a totalitarian system, resisted handing over power to the new political forces. These forces were, in turn, inexperienced. This combination of the lack of readiness on behalf of the country's leaders to except changes, along with ambitious but inexperienced new political forces, brought Tajikistan to civil war.

While we shall avoid a detailed explanation of this stage of Tajikistan's recent history, it should be pointed out that today's multiparty system was directly influenced by the civil war, beginning with the inter-Tajik negotiations, the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord between the Government and the United Tajik Opposition in 1997, and its further implementation.

Does this point to the development of a multiparty system in Tajikistan? There is no single answer to this question in my opinion. On the one hand, the reduction of the number of political parties via government intervention can be considered an undue restriction on political activities. We should remember that while the Agrarian Party of Tajikistan and the Party of Justice and Progress contested their proscription at the Supreme Court of Tajikistan, nothing came out of it. However, the general attitude towards political pluralism and the multiparty system in the country has improved over the last few years, according to international observers. The general experience of political pluralism and the development of a multiparty system over the last few years present a mixed picture that is generally positive, but marked by phenomena that prevent us from describing the process as democratic. For Tajik society, the expectation that the General Agreement and the establishment of peace would bring full political pluralism has not been fulfilled.

The clearest evidence that the multiparty system in Tajikistan differs from that in other Central Asian countries is the existence and activism of an officially recognized political party that has a religious character. Observers have not made any final evaluation of this unique development. Many, especially in neighboring countries, watch this experiment with suspicion and consider such a step in their own countries to be premature.

Giving official status to a political party that has a religious character brought peace and security to Tajikistan. This lesson may not be universally applicable, but nobody can ignore its essential truth for Tajikistan.

Most importantly, the existence of such a party introduced a new pattern of relations between the secular government and religious political groups. There are no comparable cases in our region or in other parts of the Islamic world. For us some issues have become clear, the most important of which are the following:

1. The Tajik model refutes the usual pessimistic vision that it is impossible to sit at a negotiation table with Islamic political groups, especially with those conducting an armed struggle. The experience of Tajikistan shows that such a development is possible, and also demonstrates the ability of political Islam to follow a policy of flexibility and a readiness for dialogue.

2. The Tajik experience creates a unique mechanism for transforming a military–religious–political organization such as the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) into a purely political party. The fact that there are political–

religious forces elsewhere that refuse to lay down arms (in Afghanistan, for example) makes this experience vital. Such a transformation of organizations in Afghanistan is essential for the achievement of political and military stability.

3. It should furthermore be pointed out that the rapid evolution of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan was determined by factors unique to post-conflict Tajikistan. Therefore simply copying the experience in Tajikistan may not produce effective results elsewhere. One may state confidently, however, that there is a possibility for military-religious-political groups to move from radical to more moderate positions.

4. The Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan has proved by its actions over several years now that an officially functioning political-religious group can become an important and constructive part of the political system of a country, and bear responsibilities towards the government and society. For example, the position of the IRPT regarding many important international and regional issues has not differed from the official position of the Tajik Government. In the case of the Taliban and the antiterrorist campaign in Afghanistan, the IRPT fully supported the position of the Tajik Government.

There is no doubt that the official existence of the IRPT, and particularly its evolution, was among the fundamental factors for the normalization of the political situation in the country. Inevitably one must ask, however, what consequence the IRPT's rapid transformation from a radical position to a more moderate stand will bring to the country and the party. Might not party members who view the party as the defender of their political, social and religious interests (as opposed to the state) seek more radical groups like Hizb-ut-Tahrir? Certainly Tajikistan has only very recently emerged from civil war; radical elements in society – including those with religious agendas – remain; and numerous political, economic, social and cultural problems persist and, as they grow more serious, increase discontent in society. Given the present political situation in Tajikistan, such a shift of support from the IRPT ranks is not impossible.

IRPT election prospects are limited. On the one hand, the Party's relatively radical positioning (in the Tajik political spectrum) enables it to retain supporters within the framework of a predictable, official political structure.

On the other hand, given conditions within the region for combating terrorism and extremism, nuances among groups and parties of Islam are being swept aside, and the radical positions of the Party may work against it. In addition, political rivals within Tajikistan may utilize the Party's expressed radicalism against it. Moreover, higher officials who still harbor doubt about the granting of official status to the IRPT and its appropriateness within a secular state structure are not in the minority.

All of these factors force the Party to be cautious, consider its steps carefully, and maintain a high degree of responsibility for its activities and decisions. Fortunately, the Party has so far been able to maintain its balance between internal members, outside political rivals, and officialdom.

What will the future of the Party be and what changes can be expected in the political atmosphere of the country? First of all, it should be pointed out that the IRPT during the last parliamentary election won around 8 percent of the votes. This enabled the Party to place two of its representatives in the lower chamber of Parliament (there are 63 MPs in the lower chamber). Even so, the Party's leadership considers the results of the elections to have been manipulated. The Party leadership estimates that it received close to 20–25 percent of the votes. Taking into consideration estimates made by international organizations regarding the level of violations during elections, it can be supposed that the real share of votes received by the Party was 15–20 percent.

Certain research and survey centres estimate the current IRPT rating to be 5–6 percent and project no significant change to this figure in the coming 2005 parliamentary elections. However, one point should be underlined: On the eve of the parliamentary elections in 2000 the same centres estimated the Party support at 1–2 percent of the votes, and supposed that the Party would not pass the 5 percent barrier. This does not mean that the neutrality and quality of such centres are in question. The discrepancy merely emphasizes the peculiarity of the political atmosphere and political culture of Tajikistan; results of surveys and elections may totally contradict each other.

In free and fair elections, the Party may win up to 15 percent of the votes and increase its representation in Parliament. This will not change the political atmosphere of the country, however. First of all, the secular nature of the country is assured. The IRPT Charter and Program both state that the Party will act within the framework of the existing constitutional order. Moreover, the Constitution of Tajikistan forbids the secular nature of the state from being altered (Article 100), as well as the adoption of any religious or ideological school as state ideology (Article 8).

Finally, I want to share some thoughts regarding the existence of a religion-based political party in Tajikistan and the 22 June referendum on introducing changes to the current Constitution. As mentioned above, the existence of such a party is still not universally accepted. When parliamentarians proposed changes to the drafted Constitution, among other proposals was an alteration to Article 28, which provides guarantees for the activity of religious parties. It was proposed that the text protecting the existence of parties based on religion and the term 'religious parties' be deleted. Such a change would open the way for the banning of the IRPT. Not surprisingly, the IRPT reacted strongly, with the support of international organizations. President Emomali Rahmonov, in turn, also reacted negatively to the proposal and, moreover, recognized the existence of a religious party within the country as a positive factor. The proposed change was not included in the draft put forth for the referendum. It is clear, however, that despite the positive role played by the IRPT in strengthening peace and security in Tajikistan, the party still has opponents within the country.

Thus, one may say that the experience of the multiparty system in Tajikistan has its own specifics and peculiarities, and manifests a new and exceptional pattern. However, the system is still not entirely stable and is subject to swings. Precisely in what direction, only time will tell.

Tajikistan at the Crossroads of Democracy and Authoritarianism

MICHAEL HALL

Of all the republics in Central Asia, it is Tajikistan that has been most sorely tested since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Emerging from a ruinous five-year civil war that claimed tens of thousands of lives and left the country's economy and infrastructure – already the weakest in the former Soviet Union – in utter shambles. Since then, the country has undergone a long, slow, and at times painful process of reunification and reconstruction, for which it does in fact have much to show. Economic growth in recent years has been impressive, and visitors to the capital city Dushanbe today see few signs of the horrors and desperation of the 1990s.

At the same time, however, there are some reasons for continued concern. In recent years, the regime of President Emomali Rahmonov has shown an increasing tendency towards authoritarianism, neutralizing all those who might pose a challenge to it, whether militarily or politically. To a certain extent, the neutralization of some of the regime's enemies, particularly former warlords of both the opposition and the 'pro-government' factions, is to be welcomed. As Tajikistan prepares for parliamentary elections in February 2005 and presidential elections in 2006, however, the regime seems to be seeing an increasing number of potential enemies in other spheres as well, and has resorted to increasingly heavy-handed tactics in dealing with them. If these trends continue, there is a real danger that the impressive gains made by Tajikistan since independence will be jeopardized.

Neutralizing 'Enemies of the Nation'

In the spring of 1992, after months of increasingly tense confrontations between the largely unreformed Communist government of Tajikistan and a loose coalition of opposition parties, Tajikistan exploded into civil war. Eventually, the upper hand on the battlefield went to the Popular Front of Tajikistan (PFT), a loose coalition of militias from various parts of the country dominated by field commanders from the southern region of Kulob. The PFT was eventually successful in driving the opposition forces out of Tajikistan and installing Emomali Rahmonov, a previously unknown collective farm

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director from the region of Danghara, near Kulob, as ruler. Opposition forces regrouped in the country's mountainous eastern regions and in northern Afghanistan, and, known as the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), continued to wage war against Rahmonov's regime until a peace deal was signed in Moscow in 1997.

The installation of Rahmonov marked a major shift in Tajikistan's politics. Throughout the Soviet period, the republic's leadership had hailed almost exclusively from the northern province of Leninabad (now Sughd), the most economically-advanced of Tajikistan's regions. The accession of a Kulobi was unprecedented in the country's history and probably not especially welcome to many in Leninabad, but given the PFT's virtual control of the south of the country, there was little that could be done. In all likelihood, Rahmonov was seen by the field commanders behind him as someone they could easily control, while Leninabadis seem to have seen his rise as a temporary aberration before the country's political life returned to 'normal'.

Both groups could not have been more wrong. Rahmonov has shown a degree of political adroitness which none seem to have suspected in 1992. Since coming to power, his regime has systematically neutralized virtually all potential threats – co-opting and buying off opponents where possible, destroying them where not.

The thinning of the ranks of the PFT's warlords began quite early on, when two of the most widely-feared PFT field commanders, Sangak Safarov and Fayzali Saidov, were both killed in March 1993 under circumstances that remain debated to this day.[1] Khuja Karimov, a powerful field commander from the region of Ghozimalik, was arrested and charged with murder in 1995;[2] he later escaped from custody and fled the country. Colonel Mahmud Khudoyberdiev, who defected from the Russian military to the PFT in the summer of 1992, led a series of mutinies against the Rahmonov regime beginning in 1996; his forces were finally driven from the country in 1997.[3] An associate of Khudoyberdiev, the ethnic Uzbek field commander (and the *de facto* ruler of the strategically important city of Tursunzoda) Ibodullo Boymatov, was killed by government forces in the course of the mutiny's suppression.[4] And in 1999, the founder of the PFT (and one of the main instigators of the conflict that erupted into civil war in 1992), Safarali Kenjaev, was shot and killed in Dushanbe by unknown gunmen.

Other warlords have been quietly rotated out of positions of power or arrested on a variety of charges. Khudoyberdiev's flight from Tajikistan in 1997 was followed shortly thereafter by that of Yaqub Salimov, a field

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[1] According to official reports at the time of their deaths, the two were killed by unspecified 'enemies of the nation' (their obituaries were published in the government newspaper *Jumhuriyat*, 1–2 April 1993). Later, they were reported to have killed one another when a personal dispute got out of hand. To this day, many in Tajikistan believe that their deaths were arranged by the very government they had helped to install.

[2] Interfax, 2 November 1995, https://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe

[3] In November 1998 Khudoyberdiev resurfaced, crossing the Tajik-Uzbek border with some 1,000 armed supporters and occupying a number of cities and towns in Leninabad Province. A joint government–UTO offensive drove him out after heavy fighting, and he has not been heard from since; there are rumors that he was later killed in Tashkent, though this has not been independently verified.

[4] See *The NIS Observed*, Vol. II, No. 20 (6 November 1997), http://www.bu.edu/iscip/digest/vol2/ed20.html

commander who had briefly (1992–1995) served as Tajikistan's Minister of the Interior and was implicated in one of Khudoyberdiev's mutinies. In early 2004, at Dushanbe's request, Salimov was arrested in Moscow and extradited to Dushanbe, where he is facing charges of treason.[5] In January 2002, the field commanders Saidsho Shamolov and Qurbon Cholov, both former members of Tajikistan's border defense committee, were removed from their posts in a shake-up of the committee.[6] And on 13 January 2003, Qurbon Cholov's brother Sulaymon Cholov, formerly Deputy Chairman of Dushanbe's Customs Committee, was convicted of extortion, kidnapping, marrying a minor, and polygamy; he was sentenced to six years in prison.[7]

By 2004, only one powerful former PFT field commander remained who could represent a potential challenge to the Rahmonov regime: General Ghaffor Mirzoev (more commonly known by his nickname *Sedoi*, or 'Grey-haired'). A native of Kulob, Mirzoev had initially sided with the UTO before changing sides to fight for the PFT. In 1992, Mirzoev was given the rank of General and named commander of the elite Presidential Guard, and his forces were instrumental in suppressing Khudoyberdiev's mutinies in 1997 and 1998. His service to the regime notwithstanding, in January 2004 Mirzoev was removed from his position as commander of the Presidential Guard. Mirzoev was caught entirely off guard by the move, and tensions mounted rapidly as rumors flew that the general was gathering his supporters for a potential coup. Perhaps realizing that he had gone too far – for now – Rahmonov relented, naming Mirzoev the new head of Tajikistan's Narcotics Control Agency.[8]

Yet Mirzoev's reprieve was to be short. After biding his time for a few months, Rahmonov moved against the general again in August, this time acting much more decisively; Mirzoev was arrested, his home and office raided, in the course of which a large quantity of weapons was discovered. Mirzoev is currently in custody, facing a number of charges, including murder.[9]

Following each of the two 'Mirzoev incidents', there was concern in some quarters about possible unrest in the general's home town of Kulob. While there is indeed a strong undercurrent of resentment against the current regime in Kulob (see below), fears about a popular uprising in favor of Mirzoev seem to have been greatly misplaced. While expressing some regrets that the last prominent Kulobi had been removed from the scene, most Kulobis seem to have been largely indifferent to the general's fate, pointing out that Mirzoev had done precious little to help his native region while in power.

Measures Against Opposition Leaders

Erstwhile opposition commanders have fared little better. After the 1997 accords were signed, some UTO field commanders refused to accept them,

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[5] 'Tajikistan's Politics …' (May 2004), Part IV.

[6] 'Tajik Agency Names Sacked Senior Tajik Border Guards' (January 2002). Both Shamolov and Cholov have allegedly been involved in a wide variety of criminal activities, including drugs and weapons trafficking, kidnapping, and murder.

[7] 'Senior Tajik Official Sentenced for Polygamy' (January 2002).

[8] 'Tajikistan's Politics …' (May 2004).

[9] 'Parvandai pursarusado komilan makhfî shud' (November 2004).

continuing to wage war against government forces – and often terrorizing the civilian populations of the areas under their control. These groups also resorted to kidnapping – and sometimes murdering – journalists and foreign aid workers. Operations against these groups continued until quite recently. In 1998, field commanders Rizvon and Bahrom Sodirov were killed in the eastern suburbs of Dushanbe. The renegade UTO commander Rahmon Sanginov (known by his nickname 'Hitler', for his reported childhood fondness for playing the role of the Nazi Führer in school plays) and his associate Mansur Muaqqalov were killed in a military operation on the outskirts of Dushanbe in 2001.[10] Another former Islamist commander, Mullo Abdullo, was almost captured during an operation against his band by the Tajik military in 2000, although he apparently managed to flee to Afghanistan and allegedly joined forces with the IMU and the Taliban. He was captured by Northern Alliances forces in the Afghan city of Taloqan in February 2002 and appears to have since been executed.[11]

Perhaps the most potentially dangerous confrontation with former UTO commanders came in the spring of 2004, and centered around the person of Mahmadruzi Iskandarov. Iskandarov, a native of Tajikabad in the Rasht Valley, had been a major opposition field commander during the war. After the peace accords, he served briefly as head of the State Committee for Emergency Situations, then as head of the state-run gas company. In 1998 he became head of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT), and soon became known as one of the most outspoken critics of the Rahmonov regime. In 2003, accused of mismanagement and corruption, Iskandarov was fired from his position; he attributed his firing to his criticism of the 2003 referendum (see below). In early 2004, Iskandarov, apparently not feeling entirely safe in Dushanbe, left the capital for his native Tajikabad, accompanied by another former UTO field commander, the Pamiri Salamsho Muhabbatov. Soon rumors began to circulate that Iskandarov and Muhabbatov were gathering their former comrades-in-arms about them – and possibly reaching out to disgruntled former PFT field commanders as well.

The standoff between Rahmonov and Iskandarov came at a particularly tense time for relations between Dushanbe and the former UTO. One of the fundamental terms of the 1997 peace accords had been a broad amnesty for former UTO combatants seeking to enter Tajikistan's military and political structures. In recent years, however, Tajikistan's security services have been investigating the past activities of former UTO fighters, and there have been reports of some former fighters being illegally arrested, released only when promising to pay a bribe. One of Iskandarov's key demands for ending his standoff was that such pressure on former UTO fighters be brought to an end. In April, Iskandarov returned to Dushanbe to meet with Rahmonov personally. According to Iskandarov, Rahmonov promised to investigate allegations of the illegal arrest and detention of demobilized UTO combatants. For his part, Iskandarov reportedly was offered a position in Rahmonov's government, which he refused, stating instead his intention to run against Rahmonov in the 2006 presidential elections. His comrade-in-arms Salamsho Muhabbatov was

[10] Pannier 2001.
[11] *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 12 February 2002, https://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe

somewhat more amenable to the President's overtures; on 20 May, Muhabbatov was named head of Tajikistan's state-run tourist agency.[12] Iskandarov likewise submitted a list of 103 former combatants whose rights under the amnesty law had been violated to Tajikstan's Prosecutor General.[13]

Yet the confrontation did not end there. Pressure on former opposition fighters appears to have continued. In July, an attempt was made to arrest the former field commander Ahmadbek Safarov, who fled after a gun battle in which several of his would-be captors were wounded. And in late August 2004, an armed group opened fire on the Prosecutor General's office and local police headquarters in Tajikabad, killing a police officer. After the incident, yet another former UTO field commander, Yoribek Ibrohimov (more often known by his nickname 'Sheikh') was arrested and accused of organizing the attack. Ibrohimov confessed to ordering the attack but said that it was in retaliation for constant threats by local law enforcement agencies against himself and his relatives, including his wife. Investigators reportedly found a huge cache of weapons on land belonging to Ibrohimov, ranging from small arms to anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles.[14] Ibrohimov had been one of Iskandarov's lieutenants during the civil war, and it seemed that the Tajik government was laying the groundwork for another move against Iskandarov. who was in Moscow at the time.

Shortly after Ibrohimov's arrest allegations of massive corruption and mismanagement during Iskandarov's tenure as head of Tojikgaz began to resurface. Tajikistan's Prosecutor General Bobojon Bobokhonov denied that these allegations, as well as the ongoing arrests of some former opposition fighters allegedly still engaged in criminal activities, have any political basis whatsoever. He likewise refuted Iskandarov's claims of persecution of amnestied opposition fighters, pointing out that of the 103 names submitted by Iskandarov, 42 were not facing any criminal charges whatsoever, 28 had been arrested for crimes committed after the 1997 peace treaty, 10 were not included in the list of those to be amnestied, and the remainder had already been issued full pardons under the law.[15] Finally, on 9 December 2004, Iskandarov himself was arrested in Moscow at the request of the Tajik government, having been formally charged with ordering the Tajikabad attacks. At the time of writing he is still in detention there, facing extradition to Dushanbe.[16]

In the Aftermath of 'Warlordism'

Clearly, the end of 'warlordism' and the arrest of those who are in fact responsible for atrocities during the civil war is to be welcomed. Several aspects of these processes remain disturbing, however. First of all is the apparent selectivity involved: namely, that a disproportionate number of rank-and-file former UTO combatants seem to have been singled out, while former combatants of the PFT are left largely unmolested. Secondly, there are reasons

[12] See http://www.asiaplus.tj/khronika/may.htm.
[13] Bobokhonov 2004a.
[14] See Sharipova 2004.
[15] Bobokhonov 2004a.
[16] 'Tajikistan's Democratic Party Leader faces Charges …' (in Tajik; December 2004).

to be concerned about what is emerging in the place of warlordism. The Rahmonov regime seems bent on arrogating increasing power to itself and itself alone, and is becoming less and less tolerant of opposition of any kind, especially as elections draw near.

The case of Iskandarov is illustrative of this. There may well be truth to the charges of misdeeds at Tojikgaz, though it hardly seems likely that this is the sole state-run enterprise where corruption was (and is) rampant. Yet one simply cannot overlook the timing of the resurfacing of allegations about Iskandarov's past activities and recent security operations against his former subordinates. Many commentators have been quick to see political motives behind Iskandarov's troubles, including (not surprisingly) DPT Deputy Chairperson Rahmatullo Valiev, but also senior members of some of Tajikistan's other opposition parties, including Shokirojon Hakimov of the Social Democratic Party[17] and Sayfullo Hikmatzoda of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, IRPT.[18]

The DPT is not the only opposition party to find itself in an increasingly difficult situation on the eve of the elections. Recently the Socialist Party of Tajikistan (SPT) has been wracked by internal divisions, in which some are also inclined to see the hand of outside forces. The SPT's troubles began in July 2004, when Qurbon Vose', a senior advisor to President Rahmonov, and Abduhalim Ghafforov, an employee of Tajikistan's Ministry of Education, announced that they were forming an independent branch of the party, accusing Narziev of ineffective leadership. Ghafforov was later chosen official chairperson of the breakaway faction.[19] Later that month, the Ministry of Justice issued a statement that the SPT was in violation of its own charter and that its activities 'did not accord to democratic norms'.[20] A further blow to the party came on 21 August, when Ghafforov and Vose' conducted an emergency session of the local SPT branch, at which regional chairperson Mohinisso Khorisova, an ally of Narziev, was ousted. Khorisova herself claims that she had no advance knowledge of the session, which she says was organized in secret and held in a local government building.[21] Narziev has recently filed suit against Vose' and Ghafforov, accusing them of abusing their positions to promote discord within the party, and of defaming him in the press.[22] In mid-October, however, Tajikistan's Ministry of Justice sided with Vose' and Ghafforov, calling Narziev's appointment as SPT chairperson illegal.[23] Recently, Tajikistan's Central Electoral Committee rules that Narziev's wing of the SPT would not be allowed to field its own candidates.[24]

Again, opposition party leaders were wont to the see SPT's woes as the results of orders from 'on high'.[25] The question arises as to why the government would bother to interfere in the workings of what its own

[17] Bobokhonov 2004b.
[18] Sharipova 2004.
[19] Avesta News Agency, 10:39 GMT, 16 August 2004. Both Vose' and Ghafforov were apparently once members of the SPT, but were later expelled.
[20] Avesta News Agency, 11:05 GMT, 16 August 2004.
[21] Press conference with Horinisso Khorisova, Chairperson of SPT in Sughd Province, Khujand, 1 September 2004.
[22] Avesta News Agency, 09:49 GMT, 15 September 2004.
[23] Avesta News Agency, 22 October 2004.
[24] 'Hizbi sotsialistî, qanoti M. Narziev' (December 2004).
[25] Avesta News Agency, 08:52 GMT, 17 August 2004.

members acknowledge is the weakest of Tajikistan's political parties. One theory holds that the problems of the SPT are part of a government effort to undermine a three-party coalition consisting of the IRPT, the SPT, and the Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan, SDPT, formed to monitor the transparency and fairness of the upcoming elections. Indeed, the timing of the schism within the party, and the fact that its chief instigators are high-ranking figures in Tajikistan's government, would seem to lend credence to this view. Davlatali Davlatov, First Deputy Chairperson of the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, PDPT, was less inclined to see things this way:

> If the SPT can be divided up so easily by outsiders, then what kind of party is it? Internal disputes happen in all parties – if the leadership of the party can't handle this, then this only shows that they're not capable of fulfilling their responsibilities.[26]

Indeed, one cannot exclude the possibility of the individual ambitions of Vose' and Ghafforov's playing a large role. Parties in Tajikistan tend to be centered around particular influential individuals rather than based on clearly-defined platforms and ideologies, and the SPT has suffered considerably since the murder of its charismatic founder, Safarali Kenjaev.

It is not only Tajikistan's less influential opposition parties that have come under pressure. This is also true of the IRPT. Potentially the most influential of Tajikistan's opposition parties, the IRPT has in fact found itself with relatively little room to maneuver. In some instances, this has been the result of direct government pressure. Recently, two senior members of the IRPT have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms for crimes including child rape and murder. Regional party representatives have complained of harassment and threats from local administrators and security forces have occasionally taken advantage of the international 'war on terror' to crack down on IRPT activities in certain areas of the country. This has been particularly true in the northern region of Isfara, a deeply conservative area and a center of IRPT support. IRPT representatives often point to such instances as evidence of government unwillingness to give freedom of action to a potentially serious contender.[27]

On the other hand, the IRPT has problems of its own. For one thing, the party is acutely aware of the fact that, in the minds of many in Tajikistan, it is still tainted by associations with the Tajik civil war. The party's leadership has thus been rather passive in recent years, often going to great lengths to demonstrate its willingness to cooperate with the Rahmonov regime. This may have cost it dearly among potential supporters who might welcome a more confrontational, perhaps even Islamist, stance. The party is likewise said to be facing an internal split between liberals and the conservative old guard. At any rate, the IRPT seems unlikely to pose a serious challenge to the Rahmonov regime in 2005.

Having largely sidelined most of the existing opposition parties, the Tajik government seems loath to allow the emergence of any new potential contenders. A case in point is the *Taraqqiyot* (Development) party, which has been unsuccessfully seeking registration with Tajikistan's Ministry of Justice

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[26] Interview with Davlatali Davlatov, 5 October 2004.
[27] 'Tajikistan's Politics …' (May 2004).

since 2001. After being turned down yet again in the spring of 2004, the party's leadership, especially its outspoken Deputy Chairperson Rustam Fayziev,[28] took a much more confrontational stance, staging a short-lived hunger strike and threatening to picket government buildings.[29] Finally, when *Taraqqiyot*'s leadership threatened to appeal to the International Court of Justice in the Hague, the Tajik government decided to act. In late August, the offices of *Taraqqiyot* were raided by members of Tajikistan's Committee for National Security (CNS), the successor to the Soviet KGB.[30] At the same time, Fayziev was arrested at his home in Khujand by CNS agents and taken to CNS headquarters in Dushanbe. A draft copy of the letter to the International Justice Court was seized in the Dushanbe raid, and the leadership of *Taraqqiyot* now faces charges of 'damaging the honor of the President', a criminal offense in Tajikistan.[31]

The question naturally arises as to why the government would go to such extreme lengths to suppress a fledgling political movement which hardly seems likely to pose a serious challenge to the current regime. Some commentators point to the fact that *Taraqqiyot*'s Chairperson, Sulton Quvvatov, still enjoys considerable influence in Kulob, where discontent with the Rahmonov regime is growing. Indeed, Rahmonov seems quite sensitive to potential challenges from this region, as the Mirzoev case seems to have illustrated.[32] The simple fact seems to be that the government of Tajikistan is unwilling to allow *any* potential challenges, however seemingly minor, in such a politically sensitive time.

Maneuvers Before Elections

Thus, on the eve of Tajikistan's parliamentary elections, the political opposition has been effectively decimated. What is not clear is the extent to which this stems from direct orders from the President, or from overly zealous members of his administration eager to protect their own positions and curry favor with their leader. At any rate, all this is clearly to the advantage of the President and his party, the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT), which holds a majority of seats in Tajikistan's parliament and does not appear likely to lose ground in the upcoming elections. The party's First Deputy Chairman, Davlatali Davlatov, has confidently predicted that his party will garner 70 percent of the vote.[33]

There are many in Tajikistan's opposition who have accused the PDPT of using unfair tactics. Some of the party's detractors have claimed that the

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[28] Fayziev, a former teacher from Uroteppa (now known as Istaravshan) in Sughd Province, has been active in Tajik politics since the early 1990s, when he was a founding member of the popular movement *Rastokhez* (Rebirth), and later of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan.

[29] 'Tajikistan's Politics …' (May 2004).

[30] Avesta News Agency, 07:50 GMT, 26 August 2004.

[31] Avesta News Agency, 13:09 GMT, 30 August 2004.

[32] An oft-repeated comment in post-civil-war Tajikistan is that all power is in the hands of Kulobis. Residents of Kulob itself, however, are quick to point out that most Kulobis live in grinding poverty, while elites from outlying regions – especially the President's home region of Danghara – in fact hold most of the power in the country. This despite the fact that Kulobis formed a large part of the PFT's ranks. It is precisely this sense of disenfranchisement and disillusionment that made the arrest of General Mirzoev so potentially dangerous.

[33] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 7 October 2004.

PDPT has added to its membership roles by demanding that aspiring politicians become members of the party in return for their positions. Indeed, there have been allegations that the past and present leadership of the city of Kulob, including its current mayor Abdujabbor Zardiev, have simultaneously been members of two parties: the Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT) and the PDPT.[34]

This is true not only of political parties. In 2004, independent-minded media outlets have come under increasing pressure as well. Two particularly outspoken independent newspapers, *Ruzi nav* (New Day) and *Nerui sukhan* (The Power of the Word), renowned for exposing corruption in the highest levels of government, have repeatedly come into conflict with the authorities, and have faced charges of slandering the President. In early 2004, the state-run printing house *Sharqi ozod* refused to print the papers, citing an order from Tajikistan's Tax Police.[35] The two papers eventually moved to the independent *Jiyonkhon* printing house, yet their troubles did not end there, as the printing house was shut down yet again for alleged tax violations.[36] Similar problems have plagued the newspaper of the Islamic Revival Party, *Najot* (Salvation), which had also turned to Jiyonkhon to publish.[37] The IRPT subsequently opened a publishing house of its own,[38] while *Ruzi nav* turned to a printing house in Kyrgyzstan.[39] This failed to end *Ruzi nav*'s troubles, however, as the first and only shipment of papers from Kyrgyzstan was confiscated by tax police.[40] The paper has thus effectively been shut down.

In late August, the editor of the independent newspaper *Odamu olam* (Humanity and the World), Mirahmad Amirshoev, was summoned to the Prosecutor General's Office and the office of the newspaper was searched by officials of the Military Prosecutor. Amirshoev had been the Press Secretary of General Mirzoev, and the search was reportedly conducted as part of the investigations into the general's alleged criminal activities. At the same time, however, Amirshoev's newspaper has not been published since August, a fact which its editor attributes to orders from above.[41]

Pressure on journalists is not restricted to legal maneuverings. In July, Rajab Mirzo, editor of *Ruzi nav*, was attacked and severely beaten near his home in Dushanbe. This was the second such attack on Mirzo in the space of a year.[42] Other journalists who have written articles critical of the government have been subjected to threats and been the targets of smear campaigns in the official press.[43]

It seems quite clear that there is an ongoing campaign to stifle public criticism of the Rahmonov regime in the run-up to the 2005 elections. Yet the fact remains that many of Tajikistan's independent newspapers have

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[34] Avesta News Agency, 06:49 GMT, 2 September 2004.
[35] By law, all newspapers in Tajikistan are required to release their circulation figures, on the basis of which taxes are assessed. Underreporting of circulation is a common (perhaps universal) tactic for newspapers to escape heavy taxes.
[36] Kasymbekova and Sharipova 2004.
[37] Safar 2004.
[38] Avesta News Agency, 08:27 GMT, 22 October 2004.
[39] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 17 October 2004.
[40] 'Ruzi siyohî Ruzi nav' (December 2004).
[41] Avesta News Agency, 06:09 GMT, 27 August 2004.
[42] Abdullaev 2004.
[43] Kasymbekova and Sharipova 2004.

themselves given the Tajik government valid pretexts to limit their activities. Tajikistan's press laws are obviously being selectively applied. However, this fact alone should prompt Tajikistan's independent newspapers to ensure that they are in total compliance with the letter of Tajikistan's law.

Given the various forms of pressure being applied on potential or actual opponents, the prospects that Tajikistan's upcoming elections will truly be free and fair seem rather dim. Their results seem to be a foregone conclusion as far as most Tajiks are concerned, with sweeping victories for the PDPT and a few token seats given to opposition parties. In private, many members of the international community in Dushanbe express similar views, stating that while these elections will probably be an improvement over those held in 2000, they are likely to fall far short of international standards.

Tuyghun Karimov, a senior member of Tajikistan's largest opposition party, the Communist Party of Tajikistan,[44] may be typical in his own guarded assessment of his party's prospects:

> These elections won't be like the very unsuccessful ones last time. The difference is that the parties have a certain degree of experience now. And there's the new law – it leaves a lot out, but it's still an improvement. So I think things will be a bit easier this time. Of course, in the end, it's not how many votes you get, but how those votes are counted. We're hoping for better and more honest vote-counting this time around.[45]

In the summer of 2004, after months of often heated debate throughout the country, Tajikistan's parliament passed a new bill on elections intended to ensure greater transparency and fairness. While allowing some positive changes, the law still fell short on a number of points. One of its most curious provisions is a requirement that those planning to run for office pay a deposit equivalent to 200 times the minimum wage – at present, this would total roughly 460 USD, a not inconsiderable sum in Tajikistan. This money would be returned only if the candidate won his or her election. Despite strong criticism from within the country and rather more muted criticism from the international community, Rahmonov signed the bill into law in July 2004.[46]

In the Broader Post-Soviet Space

The growing pressure on opposition groups in Tajikistan must be seen in the broader context of politics in post-Soviet space. Georgia's 2003 'Rose Revolution', in which a popular uprising ousted President Eduard Shevardnadze, clearly alarmed the ruling regimes throughout Central Asia, all of which are characterized by increasing authoritarianism and corruption. The subsequent 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine in 2004 only heightened fears of a popular uprising. In many instances, this has resulted in increasingly tight controls over both foreign and domestic organizations engaged in political work. It has also led to increasing suspicion of international NGOs involved in

[44] The CPT boasts some 55,000 registered members throughout the republic and claims many more sympathizers. The party enjoys greatest support among older citizens nostalgic for Soviet times.

[45] Interview with Tuyghun Karimov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 12 October 2004.

[46] See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 21 July 2004.

political work. In April 2004, for example, the local office of the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute (OSI) was shut down on the orders of Uzbek President Islam Karimov, who claimed that the OSI was 'trying to destroy [Uzbek] traditions'.[47] Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev has accused some Western NGOs, in particular US-based Freedom House, of seeking to foment unrest in the country.[48] At present, there has been no such official condemnation of the work of international NGOs in Tajikistan, though there have been some troubling signs. An example is a comment made by PDPT First Deputy Chairperson Davlatov to Mashhad Radio on 5 October 2004, in which he condemned 'international organizations that have various goals, including geopolitical, political, and other goals, and look on every event taking place in Tajikistan with hostile eyes'.[49]

The simple fact is that heavy-handed measures against real and potential opposition are probably entirely unnecessary. Even in an entirely free and fair election, in the course of which opposition parties and independent media outlets were given full freedom of action, the PDPT and Rahmonov would probably win hands-down. There is at present no single individual who enjoys sufficient popular support to challenge Rahmonov; those who are not in prison or in exile have by and large been thoroughly compromised and discredited in the eyes of their potential constituents, who see them as having compromised their ideals in exchange for lucrative business or government positions – again, Mirzoev is a case in point. Rahmonov's most serious political rival, the influential Leninabadi businessman and politician Abdumalik Abdullojonov, left the country in the mid-1990s and has not been heard from in years; he has reportedly renounced politics altogether. What is more, memories of the horrors of the civil war are still very much alive, a fact which has made the Tajik populace at large decidedly unwilling to engage in any activity that could lead to confrontation and which makes a Georgian-style popular uprising virtually unthinkable. The government, too, has used this to its advantage; for the last several years there has been a massive propaganda campaign underway to portray Rahmonov as the sole architect and guarantor of Tajikistan's peace and stability.

Indeed, there is reason to believe that the increasingly repressive tactics employed by the Tajik government may not only be unnecessary, but self-defeating as well. By stifling legitimate channels of opposition, the government may be playing into the hands of other groups, in particular the underground organization Hizb-ut-Tahrir seeking the overthrow of all existing regimes in the Islamic world, replacing them with a unified world-wide Islamic state or caliphate.[50]

Active throughout the Islamic world since the 1950s, Hizb-ut-Tahrir first appeared in Uzbekistan in the 1990s and gradually widened its sphere of activity to include neighboring regions of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan,[51] and, more recently, southern Kazakhstan.[52] Hizb-ut-Tahrir largely engages in proselytizing through the dissemination of propaganda in various media

[47] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 30 October 2004.
[48] Turalieva 2004.
[49] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 7 October 2004.
[50] 'Radical Islam in Central Asia …' (June 2003), pp. 2–3.
[51] Ibid., p. 14.
[52] See e.g. 'Concerns Mount over Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Southern Kazakhstan' (September 2004).

(chiefly printed leaflets). The movement is reportedly also quite active among the prison population.[53] Illegal in most Central Asian states, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a highly secretive organization, its members working in small, loosely-connected local cells.

In Tajikistan, Hizb ut-Tahrir was initially active chiefly among the ethnic Uzbek population of Sughd Province, but has recently expanded its field of activity to include increasing numbers of ethnic Tajiks throughout the country, as the discovery of a number of active cells in the southern city of Kulob in 2004 demonstrates.[54] Tajik-language leaflets have also recently surfaced in the southwestern region of Shahritus.[55]

At present, there has been no evidence linking members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir to any acts of violence within Tajikistan or elsewhere in Central Asia. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of such acts in the future. The Tajik government has pursued an extremely heavy-handed policy towards Hizb-ut-Tahrir, for example, a policy that may contribute to further radicalization of the group – and increase its popular appeal. A case in point is the ongoing trial of some 20 accused members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Khujand. Mothers of some of the accused interviewed in late August 2004 described the horrific torture to which their sons had reportedly been subjected during interrogation, including beating and electric shock. 'My son is not a terrorist', one said, 'he only wanted to learn more about Islam, about how to be a good person. And this is how he is treated. Where is the justice?' Other relatives expressed similar sentiments. Given that much of Hizb-ut-Tahrir's propaganda rests on the premise that governments in the Islamic world today are unjust and corrupt, and promises that such abuses would never be allowed in a unified Caliphate, brutal repression of its alleged members may have very dangerous consequences for the Tajik government.

Looking around at Tajikistan's neighbors does not inspire great confidence for the future of democracy in the region. In general, the rulers of the Central Asian states have shown a marked unwillingness to give up power. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has pushed through constitutional amendments lifting all age and term limits for the presidency, and has recently declared his intention to run for another seven-year term in 2006.[56] Pressure on opposition groups and individuals has mounted, and the OSCE has commented that the country's 2004 parliamentary elections, though representing an improvement over past elections, were nonetheless characterized by serious violations.[57] Once hailed as the 'island of democracy' in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, too, has been sinking deeper and deeper into authoritarianism, and at the time of writing it is impossible to state with any certainty whether President Askar Akaev will step down in a year, as he is currently required by law to do, or whether he, too, will seek to prolong his time in office, a move which could have disastrous consequences.[58] Uzbek President Islam Karimov has likewise

[53] 'Radical Islam in Central Asia' (June 2003), pp. 22–23.
[54] 'Tajikistan's Politics …' (May 2004), Part XI.
[55] Interview, Shahritus, 16 August 2004.
[56] Blua 2004.
[57] For a report, cf. *The International Election Observation Mission …*
[58] See 'Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan …' (August 2004); cf. remarks in the Epilogue to this volume.

shown little inclination to mend his authoritarian regime's ways.[59] And the increasingly grotesque parody of statesmanship offered by Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov holds out scant hope for change.

Conclusion: The Problem of National Unity

For years, the Rahmonov regime has been promoting itself to both its citizens and the international community as the guarantor of stability in Tajikistan, and Rahmonov has repeatedly stated his determination not to allow a resurgence of civil war in the country. In truth, Rahmonov's considerable contribution to peace and stability in the country are praiseworthy. However, one wonders whether the regime's increasingly authoritarian policies can guarantee continuing peace and stability over the long term. Tajiks themselves may be less and less willing to accept the attribution of all the country's present-day woes to the aftermath of the civil war, which at any rate ended almost eight years ago. Arguments that deeper reform will jeopardize Tajikistan's stability seem less convincing as time goes on.

Rahmonov has made the idea of 'the unity of the nation' (*vahdati millat*) the cornerstone of his regime's ideology. Indeed, unity is something sorely needed in Tajikistan, where distrust among Tajiks from various regions of the republic is still strong. Yet it is not clear to what extent the regime's efforts to secure unity thus far can succeed over the long term. Since the end of the civil war, the Rahmonov regime has devoted much of its energy (and funds) to bolstering a largely *ethnic* model of 'nationhood', stressing the glorious past of the Tajiks. In recent years, particular emphasis has been given to the Samanid Dynasty, Central Asia's first indigenous Muslim dynasty which reached its peak in the late ninth century AD. Images of the dynasty's founder, Ismail, abound, and there has been a clear effort to portray Rahmonov and the modern Tajik state as the successors of Ismail and the Samanids, albeit at a remove of over 1,000 years. To be sure, the Samanid rule was marked by a great cultural flourishing in Central Asia and was witness to the rise of the New Persian language as the second language of the Islamic world. Yet there are certain problems with the Samanid model, not least of which is the fact that the Samanid capital was located in Bukhara, a city which to this day maintains a largely Tajik-speaking population and is located on the territory of Uzbekistan. The evocation of the Samanids as the model for Tajik statehood, then, is not entirely devoid of irredentist elements, which can hardly have a positive impact on Uzbek–Tajik relations.[60] A further question is how the promotion of explicitly Tajik ethnic symbols will sit with Tajikistan's Uzbek population, who may number from 15 to 20 percent of its population. Finally, the current monolithic model of 'Tajik-ness' being promoted does little to

[59] See 'The Failure of Reform in Uzbekistan …' (March 2004).

[60] The issue of Bukhara and Samarkand, another city with a largely Tajik-speaking population, is still a sensitive one for many Tajiks, who feel that these regions were unfairly given to Uzbekistan when Central Asia was carved up into national republics in the 1920s. The blatantly assimilationist policies of the Uzbek government towards these populations do little to improve the situation.

acknowledge the tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity of Tajikistan's population, and may offer little with which some Tajiks may identify.[61]

Given all these factors, one wonders how successful an explicitly ethnic model of statehood can be in securing the trust and loyalty of Tajikistan's citizens. Perhaps a far more effective – albeit much more difficult – approach would involve deep and far-reaching political reforms aimed at the strengthening of good governance. These might include extending Tajikistan's experiments in elected (rather than appointed) local governments from the *jamoat* (the lowest level of local government) to the district and, ultimately, province level.[62] A further step would be a process of true land reform; at present, the vested interests of local administrators and financiers in cotton-growing regions has proven a major hindrance to Tajiks' being allowed to make their own choices as to how their land is used. Perhaps most beneficial would be for Tajikistan's laws to be applied to all organizations, institutions, publications, and individuals equally, and not selectively to those who disagree with some of the Rahmonov regime's policies.

Virtually alone among its neighbors, Tajikistan's government is clearly interested in a positive and constructive engagement with the West. Indeed, despite all its shortcomings, the Tajik government may still hold out one of the last best hopes for progressive change in the region. If this is to be achieved, however, it will require the continued attentiveness and, at times, gentle pressure of the international community. It will also require great courage on the part of the Rahmonov regime. Yet the potential rewards for courageous steps toward reform are great. There is much to gain, and potentially everything to lose.

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[61] This is especially true of the Pamiris, inhabitants of Tajikistan's vast (and sparsely-populated) Mountain Badakhshan Autonomous Province. Most Pamiris speak a variety of East Iranian languages which, although related to Tajik, are as distinct from it as English is from German. A further point is the fact that most Pamiris are Nizari Isma'ili Shi'is, followers of the Aga Khan, unlike most other Tajiks, who are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school.

[62] At present, all city, district, and province administrators are appointed by the President and are ultimately accountable to him alone. In some cases, this allows them to govern their respective territories largely as they please, leaving their constituents little recourse in the event of abuses.

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Women selling pomegranates at a marketplace outside of Khujand.
Photo: Bertil Rydén.

Democracy and Political Stability in Kyrgyzstan

PINAR AKÇALI

The aim of this chapter is to explore the relationship between democracy and political stability in Kyrgyzstan within a general framework of the distinction between transition to democracy and the consolidation of democracy. Transition to democracy has been one of the most intensively studied subjects among scholars of comparative politics since the 1980s. At first, Latin America's experience in democratic transition was the main focus. Then, with the collapse of communism in 1989, the focus shifted to Eastern European countries. For both Latin America and Eastern Europe, scholars soon came to the conclusion that transition to democracy is a painful, complex and problematic process. With a few exceptions, the countries in these regions have not succeeded in establishing stable and well-functioning democracies.[1] Starting in the late 1990s, the consolidation of democracy emerged as a more widely used concept.[2] Even if a country makes a transition to democracy, it may still take several years or even decades before democracy is consolidated. The critical point here is that all the institutions and rules of democracy should be accepted by all political actors as the only legitimate means of coming to power.[3]

In present-day Kyrgyzstan, the relationship between democratization and political stability is complex, multidimensional and fragile. Due to the priority given to political stability, there is a tendency to limit and even prevent democratic tendencies and attempts. As such, political stability and democracy do not develop in tandem with each other, and in many cases they turn out to be mutually exclusive.[4]

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[1] Linz and Stephan 1996; Mainwaring and Scully 1995.
[2] Ominguez and Lowenthal 1996; Oxhorn and Ducatenzeiler 1998.
[3] Whitehead 1989.
[4] The present study includes views and comments provided by Kyrgyz intellectuals in a series of personal interviews conducted in Bishkek on 31 October and 1 November 2002. Information about the persons interviewed has been withheld in cases where these persons refrained from giving out their names, affiliations, contact numbers, and addresses.

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 41–58.

Democratization in the Hands of the Akaev Regime

The first signs of transition to democracy in Kyrgyzstan could be observed in 1988–1989, under the impact of Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) policies. At that time, the leader of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan was Absamat Masaliev, a hardliner who was very intolerant of the new political trends. However, as a result of ever-growing public dissatisfaction, the Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan decided to hold its first free presidential elections and in October 1990, Askar Akaev became President of Kyrgyzstan, a newly created post.[5]

Akaev, a physicist and President of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences, did not belong to the Communist Party élite. Akaev was quick to embrace several economic and political reforms that would make the country a market-oriented democratic republic. He promised a multi-party system and a free market economy even before independence. It was stated at the time that with Akaev, the 'Silk Revolution' would start in Kyrgyzstan. During the failed coup attempt against Gorbachev in August 1991, Askar Akaev sided with Boris Yeltsin and Gorbachev. He was the only Central Asian leader who explicitly stated that he was against the coup. The hard-line communists in Kyrgyzstan attempted a similar coup of their own. Their aim was to overthrow Akaev and restore the old-style communist regime. However, this attempt failed and the Akaev administration was preserved.

There appeared several political groups, movements, and discussion clubs in Kyrgyzstan in 1988–1990, such as *Demos*, *Ashar*, *Asaba* (Banner), *Erkin Kyrgyzstan* (Free Kyrgyzstan), *Kyrgyz Democratic Wing*, *Osh Aymagy*, and *Soglasie*. A new constitution was drafted and was approved by a referendum on 5 February 1993. This constitution established a new bicameral legislative organ known as the Jokorku Kenesh. The lower chamber, the Legislative Assembly, was to be permanent and directly elected by the people. It had 35 members. The upper chamber, the People's Representative Assembly, was made up of 70 members nominated by the President and elected by the people. This chamber represented the regions of Kyrgyzstan and met twice a year.[6] In September 1994, the 350-seat Supreme Soviet, which had been established in 1990, decided to dissolve itself.

These initial changes realized in the first couple of years after independence can be seen as the first steps of transition to democracy in Kyrgyzstan. Akaev was seen as a democratic and flexible leader determined to realize this transformation, and Kyrgyzstan was looked upon as 'an island of democracy' standing apart from the other Central Asian republics.[7]

However, with time, President Akaev gradually drifted towards more authoritarian policies. He stated in 1994 that the executive organ needed to be strengthened vis-à-vis the legislative organ.[8] He also scheduled the presidential elections of 1996 for 1995. After being re-elected, he sought ways of increasing his presidential powers and proposed some constitutional amendments to achieve that. He organized a referendum for the proposed

[5] Anderson 1999, p. 24.
[6] However, in the referendum held on 2 February 2003, the people agreed that Parliament should be unicameral again.
[7] Kangas 1995, p. 276.
[8] Anderson 1999, p. 49.

changes, although these changes were published in newspapers in a very detailed and complex manner only one month before the referendum. It was pointed out at the time that the electorate did not have enough time to evaluate the new propositions properly. The referendum was held on 26 February 1996 and 94 percent of the people approved of the proposed amendments. Parliament could no longer create watchdog commissions in the economic sphere. Akaev appointed the cabinet members without the approval of Parliament, and he nominated the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the National Bank, and the Attorney General. In February 1996, through another referendum, Akaev extended his term of office for another five years.[9]

The February 2000 parliamentary elections further indicated this authoritarian tendency. Many opposition parties were banned from participating in the elections for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the elections were fraudulent because pro-government parties were declared winners in some districts even when they had in fact lost. There were similar claims of fraud made for the October 2000 presidential elections. All the potentially powerful candidates besides Akaev were eliminated in the 'Kyrgyz language exam', a requirement for presidency, in which Akaev himself got the highest grade. Here it should also be pointed out that Akaev's strongest rival, Feliks Kulov, who in March 2000 had announced his candidacy for the presidential elections, was arrested and jailed for 10 years on false charges of corruption allegedly while he was the mayor of Bishkek in 1998–1999. Furthermore, according to some reports, prior to the elections, almost all the media supported Akaev who subsequently gained 74.4 percent of the votes.[10]

However, what was most striking about these elections was the fact that Akaev was elected for his third term of office, although the constitution set a two-term limit on the presidential office. This became possible, as the Constitutional Court of Kyrgyzstan ruled that Akaev should be given a third term because he was elected for the first time in 1990, when the Soviet Union had not yet dissolved.

The Aksu events of 17–18 March 2002 was a turning point for Kyrgyzstan. During an anti-government demonstration in the district of Aksu, the police opened fire on a group of unarmed protestors and killed six people. After the incident, opposition forces started functioning in close cooperation with each other in much more effective ways. They now wanted Akaev to resign.[11] According to Zayniddin Kurmanov Karpekovich, one of the leading opposition deputies of the Kyrgyz Parliament, these events were closely related to a struggle for political power. According to him, the government had no real relationship or interaction with the Kyrgyz people and no real understanding of the conditions that the Kyrgyz people live under. There was no long-term planning, only a 'reflex of self-protection' among the governing élite. The government acted like 'firefighters', concerned only with putting out the fire momentarily. As such, it may be suggested that the people of Kyrgyzstan had started to feel it was time for Akaev to step aside. According

[9] Olcott 1997, pp. 170f.
[10] 'Kyrgyz Preliminary Results …' (2000).
[11] 'Bloodshed and Rioting …' (2002).

to a student in international relations educated in Turkey, Akaev is no longer 'irreplaceable' and 'things will work out fine' regardless of whoever comes to power. Similarly, a professor of history from the Department of History Research at the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences, stated that 'any educated Kyrgyz' would rule better than Akaev was doing.

Threats to Stability

The authoritarian attitude of the Akaev administration is related to certain conditions and factors that are perceived as threats to Kyrgyzstan's political stability. In the ensuing sections, these conditions and factors will be analyzed under three headings: International Conditions, Economic Transformation, and Socio-Cultural Concerns.

International Conditions

With the sudden disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kyrgyzstan found itself an 'independent' and 'sovereign' state. Russian rule for more than a century had suddenly ended and the country was left on its own without any prior experience of independent statehood.

This was not an easy task. Ever since independence, there have been many regional conflicts, which forced the Kyrgyz government to give top priority to security and political stability. The country is either directly surrounded by or lies close to some of the most unstable parts of the region. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, bloody uprisings in Chechnya and Dagestan, the Tajik civil war, the American–Afghan conflict both during and after the Taliban regime and the long-term implications of the recent war between the United States and Iraq have caused serious concerns and tension among the political élite.

In addition to conflicts in neighboring countries, Kyrgyzstan has several border problems with China and Tajikistan. A series of negotiations about the redrawing of the Kyrgyz–Chinese border have been held since 1991, mostly as a result of the pressure from China. In May 2002, the Kyrgyz government agreed to give up 95,000 hectares of territory to China.[12] The basic problem with relations to Tajikistan are the poorly protected borders of the country, notwithstanding the fact that Russian troops guard the area. Weapons and narcotics are smuggled into Tajikistan and then to other Central Asian countries through Afghanistan. Furthermore, armed militants of opposition groups residing in Afghanistan also secretly pass the border into Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

In a still broader international perspective, it is possible to talk about the continuation of the famous nineteenth-century 'Great Game' between the British Empire and Tsarist Russia competing for influence and control over Central Asia. In today's version of the game, however, Russia and the United States are the basic players, even though there are many other regional and non-regional powers that are interested in the region. In other words, in this 'New Great Game' a number of other players, such as China, India, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, as well as Far Eastern and

[12] 'Kyrgyz Border Pact with China …' (2002).

European countries are involved.[13] All of them have their own interests, ambitions and motives in increasing their spheres of influence in the region.

Russia still continues to be one of the major powers. Exercising hegemony over Central Asia that dates from the nineteenth century, it enjoys clear historical, economic, political and linguistic advantages. The economic interdependence that was developed over many decades between the two sides cannot be easily changed. Since the late nineteenth century, Russian and Central Asian economies have been considered parts of a greater economic system with mutual benefits accruing to both sides. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this pattern has undergone sudden and dramatic changes, but it is still relevant. Russia now calls Central Asia its 'near abroad' to indicate its willingness to continue to be engaged in the region. This was in a way an indisputable reflection of post-Cold War 'Realpolitik'. Even if Russia no longer has the absolute power that it once had over the region, 'its departure would leave a void no other power could or would fill'.[14]

As for the United States, Central Asia was not of vital importance to the strategic, economic and political interests to this country in the first decade of the post-Soviet era. This changed dramatically after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in New York. Increased attention on the part of the United States regarding Central Asia marked a drastic change in its foreign policy. In other words, 'the wheel has turned' and the US government has started acting in close cooperation with Central Asian countries.[15] In the aftermath of the attack, a new security zone was established in Central Asia.

For the Central Asian states, with the possible exception of Turkmenistan, partnership with America was a positive development. It was expected that with US support, it would be possible both to attract more foreign investment and credits, and to secure a politically stable domestic order. That was the basic reason why Kyrgyzstan, together with Uzbekistan, supported the United States and allowed this country to use their military bases and air spaces for attacks on Afghanistan. It can be argued that the Kyrgyz government viewed American presence in Central Asia as an important contribution to regional and domestic stability. However, this expectation may actually backfire in the long run. American presence and influence in Central Asia may turn out to be one of the reasons for political instability. Some opposition groups have already criticized the US military presence in Kyrgyzstan. For example, Tursunbay Bakyrov, the leader of one of the most important opposition parties, considers it to be unacceptable for Kyrgyzstan to open up its soil and air space enabling a non-Muslim power to attack a Muslim country. Similarly, Klara Azhibekova, the leader of the Kyrgyz Communist Party, has pointed out that as a result of the 'foolish' policies of President Akaev, Kyrgyzstan is now one of the 'insolvent' states of the world.[16]

China, in addition to its border concerns, also puts pressure on Central Asia not to cause ethnic tension among the Muslim Turkic populations in its westernmost province of Xinjiang. China also encouraged its Central Asian

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[13] Rashid 2000.
[14] Rumer 2000, p. 176.
[15] Starobin 2001, p. 58.
[16] 'Kyrgyzstan: Anger at US Bases Mounts' (2002).

neighbors to be more cooperative in economic as well as security issues at the Shanghai Five Summit in Dushanbe in July 1996.[17]

Muslim countries are also heavily involved in Central Asia, basically to impose their own interpretation of Islam and to develop economic ties. Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan have on several occasions tried to develop ties with the Central Asian countries with varying degrees of success. None of them, however, seem to have as critical a role in the region as Russia, the United States or China.

Economic Transformation

The Kyrgyz economy is largely based on agriculture. Cotton, fruits and vegetables, tobacco, silk, sugar, barley, wheat and millet are among the basic crops. In addition, livestock breeding, especially cattle, horse and sheep, is very common. Most of the Kyrgyz people continue to lead traditional lives and engage in agricultural activities and animal husbandry.

Kyrgyzstan is not as rich as some of the other Central Asian countries in terms of natural resources and raw materials. It has limited reserves of coal, uranium, oil, natural gas, mercury, zinc, antimony and lead. It is, however, rich in hydroelectric power, mostly due to its fast-flowing rivers. Industrial activities are limited to the fields of light industry such as food processing, mining, as well as textile and thread production.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan, together with Kazakhstan, was very quick in embracing radical economic reforms to transform the planned, centralized economy into a free market economy. The Akaev administration seemed both very eager and determined to reform the Kyrgyz economy. To that end, as early as 1992, Kyrgyzstan introduced 'shock therapy' by liberalizing prices and starting a large-scale privatization program.[18] Initially, several Western countries including the United States and Great Britain as well as some international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, supported Kyrgyzstan and provided financial assistance. However, despite such support, economic transformation in the country has been only partially successful, and in general the reform program has turned out to be a failure in its social aspects.

One of the basic reasons for this failure is the sudden collapse of the decades-old Soviet economic system. During Soviet times, the Central Asian region in general and Kyrgyzstan in particular were viewed as a source of raw materials and all the pipelines flowed north to the Russian Federation. Central Asia (with the possible exception of Kazakhstan) remained basically the least developed and least industrialized region of the Soviet Union. The economy of Kyrgyzstan, similar to other Central Asian countries, was basically structured around the general interests of the Soviet Union, rather than to particular Kyrgyz needs.

Kyrgyzstan, like all the other Central Asian countries was hit hard by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Financial subsidies from the Soviet budget were cut off and commercial relations between Kyrgyzstan and the other

[17] Rumer 2000, p. 11.
[18] Sun 1998, p. 152.

union republics were significantly decreased.[19] Thus, the Kyrgyz leadership, like its counterparts in other Central Asian republics, was not jubilant about the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan was not prepared for such a sudden and dramatic change. Today, the Soviet legacy and economic structure still prevail to a large extent in the country, even if it is generally agreed that a liberal market economy should be created.[20]

Another basic reason for economic failure is related to Kyrgyzstan's disadvantageous position in terms of natural resources and geographical conditions. As was suggested earlier, Kyrgyzstan is not as rich as other Central Asian countries in terms of hidden wealth. Furthermore, most of the country is covered with mountains, making modern transportation and communication more difficult. As a result of these two conditions, foreign investment in Kyrgyzstan has remained rather limited. Even if Kyrgyzstan is rich in terms of water resources and hydroelectric power, these alone cannot fuel economic development.[21]

The Akaev administration, being aware of these shortcomings, aimed at developing both mountain tourism and 'clean' industry in the country. Mountain tourism seemed feasible, since Kyrgyzstan has several beautiful and snow-capped mountains, earning the title of 'the Switzerland of Central Asia'. The Kyrgyz leadership could advertise its natural attractions on 29 October 2002, when the Global Mountain Summit was held in Bishkek. About 26 governmental delegations from different mountain countries all around the world took part. Representatives from the United Nations and international financial organizations were also invited to the Summit.[22] Clean industry, on the other hand, basically refers to the avoidance of the heavily polluting, old-style Soviet heavy-industrial enterprises and development of electronics in the country. However, foreign interest in both mountain tourism and clean industry in Kyrgyzstan has remained rather limited, basically due to the lack of infrastructure and convenient and modern means of travel, transportation and communications.

In general, present-day Kyrgyzstan is facing economic hardship. Between 1991 and 1998, production and consumption sharply dropped and economic activities decreased by 40 percent.[23] Between 1992 and 1995, the gross domestic product fell by 43 percent.[24] Similarly, between 1990 and 1996, industrial production fell by 61 percent, agricultural output by 35 percent and capital investment by 56 percent.[25] The inflation rate was 200 percent in 1991, 900 percent in 1992, and 1,300 percent in 1993.[26] As a result of the shock therapy, about 70–80 percent of the people below the poverty line.[27] In 2001, the World Bank reported that 68 percent of the population lived on less than 7 dollars a month and the average monthly salary was 165 dollars.[28] Social

[19] In 1990, almost all of Kyrgyzstan's exports (98 percent) went to Russia and other union republics (Anderson 1999, pp. 67f.).
[20] Bacık 1999, p. 83; Öztürk 1999.
[21] Stone 2002, pp. 43f.
[22] 'Mountain Summit Begins' (2002).
[23] Rumer 2000, p. 44.
[24] Anderson 1999, p. 79.
[25] Rashid 2002, p. 129.
[26] Anderson 1999, p. 79.
[27] Jayashekar 1995.
[28] Rashid 2002, p. 129.

welfare expenses as well as health and education services were also severely reduced in the post-Soviet era, basically due to the lack of financial resources. In addition to these problems, Kyrgyzstan is challenged by high-level corruption. Underground economic activities and tax crimes have increased. Foreign investment and financial aid for the agricultural sector is literally disappearing. It has been suggested that some members of parliament used these foreign resources for private purposes.[29] What makes the situation even more serious are the claims that Akaev's own family is also involved in this general pattern of corruption. For example, according to Rina Prizhivoit, editor-in-chief of the independent paper *Moya Stolitsa-Novosti*, Akaev is enthusiastic about the donations given to Kyrgyzstan to end poverty, as this tides him over until his term ends, and 'he couldn't care less what happens after that. It is no secret that aid of this kind primarily benefits the president's family and closest allies.'[30]

Crimes related to narcotics have also dramatically increased in Kyrgyzstan, and the country is now portrayed as one of the 'biggest bases' for drug trafficking in Central Asia. During the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were the two ex-Soviet republics where the frequency of such crimes was highest.[31]

In general, the Kyrgyz leadership puts more emphasis on the 'Chinese model' according to which economic liberalization and reform must precede political reform. However, today the Kyrgyz people are troubled and frustrated with a transformation process where the state does not provide financial assistance. The economic expectations of the people are, to a large extent, not met, and some scholars fear this may result in a very big social explosion.[32]

As was suggested by Turar Koychuevich Koychuev, a former politician and head of the Center of Economic and Social reforms located in Bishkek, the most important problem faced by the country today is the weak and undeveloped economy, which cannot create employment opportunities, wealth and dynamism. This is the 'bleeding wound' of Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, Baktykan Makisheva Torogeldieva, an expert in the field of public administration at the Academy of Public Administration in Bishkek, claims that Akaev has to address economic problems first. Since these problems constitute the biggest threat to political stability, any other attempt at solving other problems would be nothing but an 'illusion'. Another expert on international relations, who is currently working at the Central Bank of Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek, also suggests that political instability is a direct consequence of economic problems.

Socio-Cultural Concerns

In the post-Soviet era, three basic socio-cultural concerns appear to be threatening political stability: 1) radical Islam, 2) tribalism, and 3) minorities. Although the Akaev administration has so far been generally successful in limiting the threats coming from these three factors, the pressure seems to be mounting.

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[29] Anderson 1999, p. 81.
[30] 'Kyrgyzstan: International Aid Concerns' (2002).
[31] Öke 1999a, p. 7.
[32] Rumer 2000; Gidadhubli 1995.

1. Radical Islam. Islam was introduced to Central Asia through the Arabic invasions of the seventh and eighth centuries. Later, in the ninth century, Muslim merchants started coming to the region, reinforcing the influence of this religion. By the tenth century, Islam had become the major religion in the region, either eradicating or severely reducing the impact of previous religious beliefs, such as shamanism, animism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Nestorian Christianity. Especially in large urban areas, such as Samarkand and Bukhara, Islam's influence was widespread and profound. However, the nomadic populations of Central Asia encountered Islam at a much later time and were influenced by Islamic rituals to a lesser degree. Islam among the nomads is both mixed with local, pre-Islamic beliefs and shaped by the social and economic conditions of a nomadic lifestyle.

In this respect, the Kyrgyz people are no exception. They were introduced to Islam between the ninth and twelfth centuries. In the seventeenth century, when some Kyrgyz tribes came to the Ferghana Valley, their contact with Islam intensified. In the eighteenth century, the Kyrgyz people began living under the rule of the more religious Kokand Khanate. However, it is possible that Islam among the Kyrgyz is associated with nomadic traditions and lifestyles, and was shaped, at least partially, by pre-Islamic beliefs, for example, shamanism. Even today, this influence can be seen, especially among the Kyrgyz who reside in the north.[33]

In Kyrgyzstan, as in the other Central Asian countries, a renewed interest in Islam emerged in the late Gorbachev years. Even though it was not as intensive as in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Islamic revival was evident in the increasing number of mosques and a general religious tendency towards popular religious practices. After independence, certain domestic and international developments resulted in the emergence of some radical groups in Central Asia. With the Taliban's coming to power in Afghanistan, radical Islamic movements throughout the region increased their strength. Radical groups started to be engaged in ideological propaganda by denouncing the secular character of Central Asian governments and by promoting the idea of Islamic regimes. Over the last couple of decades, these groups also started to engage in terrorist attacks.

One such organization is the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.[34] It is a secretive organization that aims to unite all Muslims by creating a caliphate ruled by Islamic law. The group originated in the 1950s in the Middle East. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Hizb-ut-Tahrir started to spread to the Muslim republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan.[35] The leaders of the group state that Hizb-ut-Tahrir wants to reach its aim peacefully and that it does not support guerrilla tactics or violence.[36] However, the group is reported to ally itself with drug traffickers and other Islamic militant groups in the region. According to Uzbek President Islam Karimov, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is responsible for several terrorist attacks in his country, although many analysts reject the Uzbek officials' view, saying that the group has never been linked to any acts of violence.[37]

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[33] Olcott 1997, p. 136.
[34] See Cohen in this volume.
[35] 'Emerging Islamist Groups …' (2004).
[36] Rashid 2002, p. 124.
[37] 'Uzbekistan: Investigation Continues into Blasts, …(2004).

However, it has also been suggested that Hizb-ut-Tahrir 'could turn violent, or serve as a breeding ground and support structure for other violent groups in the region, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) or Al-Qaida'.[38] The group is especially strong in the southern cities of Osh and Jalalabad, attracting basically ethnic Uzbeks.[39] However, there are many sympathizers or supporters among the urban intelligentsia, including college students, unemployed but educated young people and teachers, as well as people in the army intelligence services and the upper echelons of the bureaucracy.[40]

Another important radical organization is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an armed militant group established in 1998 by Takhir Yoldash and Jumabay Namangani, with the aim of establishing an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. Yoldash and Namangani had earlier been in Tajikistan, involved in the Tajik civil war between government forces and Islamic opposition groups. They had close contacts with Osama bin Laden.[41] Even though IMU mostly consists of Uzbeks, there are other Central Asians fighting for the realization of the aims of this group. According to Ahmed Rashid 2002, IMU is gradually developing into a pan-Central Asian movement.

IMU first became publicly known on 16 February 1999, when it claimed responsibility for the assassination attempt on Uzbek President Islam Karimov in Tashkent. In the summer of the same year, IMU took four Japanese scientists hostage in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan.[42] According to the Kyrgyz Secret Service, the gunmen of IMU are regularly involved in drug trafficking not only in Uzbekistan, but also in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.[43]

The IMU is reported to have suffered heavy losses during the US-led bombings on Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks. The military leader of the group, Namangani, together with many of his supporters, has been reported killed. The IMU also lost several of its camps in Afghanistan. However, it is improbable that the movement is totally destroyed.

In general, the traditional economic and political rivalry between the northern and southern tribes in Kyrgyzstan works to the advantage of radical Islamic groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir (see the following section). These groups intensify their activities in the much poorer southern regions of Osh and Jalalabad, two regions in which there are sizeable Uzbek minorities.[44] It is a well-known fact that sedentary Uzbeks and nomadic Kyrgyz traditionally practiced Islam quite differently from each other. The Uzbeks are known to be a lot more religious than the Kyrgyz. It can be argued that religious fundamentalism finds more ground among the Uzbeks of Kyrgyzstan than the Kyrgyz. According to a Kyrgyz graduate student in Turkey, Uzbek minorities in southern Kyrgyzstan 'may orient the Kyrgyz in the wrong direction' (i.e. towards radical Islam), because they are more religious. Similarly, according to a bureaucrat at the Kyrgyz Central Bank, people in Kyrgyzstan are not fundamentalists, but they are being influenced by Uzbeks and turning more

[38] 'Violators of Freedom: Hizb-ut-Tahrir'.
[39] 'Kyrgyzstan: Authorities Confused By Hizb-ut-Tahrir Challenge' (2002)
[40] Rashid 2002, p. 124.
[41] Starobin 2001, p. 13.
[42] Gleason 2002, p. 7.
[43] 'Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Controls Drug Traffic to Central Asia' (2001)
[44] 'Kyrgyzstan: Authorities Confused by Hizb-ut-Tahrir Challenge' (2002).

conservative and religious. A historian who works at the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences points out that the traditions of the Kyrgyz are not suitable for fundamentalism, because for many centuries, they were nomads migrating back and forth all year long. Under the conditions of nomadic life, constructing mosques were also neither possible nor necessary. This academician further suggested that even though the Kyrgyz call themselves Muslims, they do not abide by the rules and requirements of Islam. For example back in the nineteenth century, the Kyrgyz would observe Ramadan only in winter, when days are shorter and people are not as thirsty as in hot weather.

President Akaev is generally considered to be ineffective in dealing with fundamentalist groups and movements.[45] Under such conditions, radical Islam can very well be the biggest threat for the country in the long run.[46]

2. Tribalism. The Kyrgyz people are traditionally divided into three tribes, sometimes also called wings: 1) *sol* (left wing), 2) *ong* (right wing), and 3) *ichkilik* (insider). A Kyrgyz first considers himself to belong to one of these major tribes and then one of its sub-tribes. The Kyrgyz flag adopted after independence depicts a sun with 40 rays as a symbolic representation of the 40 sub-tribes of the Kyrgyz people.

In the post-Soviet era, tribalism has emerged as another serious socio-cultural concern threatening political stability in Kyrgyzstan. Tribal and sub-tribal identities and loyalties of the Kyrgyz people go back to the pre-Russian era. Even though their social influence was curtailed to a certain extent during the Soviet period, they did not disappear. In fact, under communist rule, northern tribes from the regions of Talas, Chu, Issyk-Kul and Naryn dominated the political life of the country, since the Kyrgyz political élite was largely coming from the north. The southern tribes from the regions of Osh and Jalalabad, on the other hand, were basically underrepresented.[47]

In the post-Soviet era, these tribal loyalties have re-emerged as important markers of identity and have become critical tools for political mobilization. In general, Kyrgyz political life is shaped around tribal interests and political loyalties are of a tribal character. These tribal rivalries are further intensified by the political and economic disparities within the north/south division. In other words, the opposition between the south and the north determine to a large extent the political dynamics of the country. Sometimes such regionalist concerns lead to the central power being ignored or neutralized.[48]

It has been suggested by a Kyrgyz graduate student from the Academy of Public Administration in Bishkek that there are important educational and cultural differences between the northern and southern regions and that these differences determine the political life of the country to a considerable extent. According to an employee of the Kyrgyz Central Bank, loyalties to tribes and sub-tribes are the most important obstacle for realizing political stability in Kyrgyzstan. This employee further suggested that it is very difficult for a well-educated, talented and patriotic young Kyrgyz who wants to use his skills for

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[45] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report, Kyrgyz News, 27 March 2002.
[46] Rashid 2002, p. 128.
[47] Anderson 1999.
[48] Roy 2000, p. 115.

his country's good to be promoted to higher posts unless he has some connections with the ruling northern élite. Similarly, according to another employee of the Bank, many of the political parties in Kyrgyzstan are small and weak. The large parties, on the other hand, get their power by appealing to and representing tribal and sub-tribal interests. According to him, the aforementioned Aksu events were a direct consequence of tribal conflicts. He gave the example of Feliks Kulov, the jailed opposition leader of the *Ar-Namys* (Dignity) Party from the Chu region, and indicated that the whole region showed its support for Kulov by becoming members of his party. A historian who works at the Department of History Research of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences expressed similar views. According to him, in general elections, members of parliament are elected 'only according to tribal loyalties and interests, not according to the rules of the democratic game'.

3. Minorities. At the time of independence, the Kyrgyz people made up only 52 percent of the population, followed by 22 percent Russians, 13 percent Uzbeks, 3 percent Ukrainians, 2 percent Germans and various other ethnic groups including Uyghurs, Tajiks and Kazaks.[49] Despite the fact that the Kyrgyz made up only a little more than half of the population, nationalistic tendencies emerged among the Kyrgyz to exclude other minorities. Some radical groups such as *Erkin Kyrgyzstan* and *Asaba* were established with reactionary nationalist agendas.[50] For example, the leaders of *Erkin Kyrgyzstan* would complain about the 'preferential treatment' of Slavic people living in their country.[51]

Such an attitude is found even among Kyrgyz intellectuals interested in reviving Kyrgyz national identity. For example, an expert on historical and cultural studies at the Academy of Public Administration in Bishkek suggests that it is 'both meaningful and necessary' that *Atameken* (Fatherland) be made an obligatory course in schools, because this course will help students to better understand the 'unique characteristics of Kyrgyzstan, give them historical consciousness and provide the opportunity of knowing who they are'. According to this expert, it is critical that 'Kyrgyzstan should analyze its own history, to learn to love it and make the necessary evaluations from its past, and learn the necessary lessons, as this is the only way of drawing up a unique model of development'. Similarly, according to a Kyrgyz graduate student in Turkey, even though the Kyrgyz do not make up a large majority, 'it is still necessary to create a national state'. Another academician from the Academy of Public Administration in Bishkek also suggested that all the problems of the country emerge because 'the Kyrgyz no longer evaluate the events with the same vision of their ancestors'. Therefore, they need to find their identity by looking at their original, unique qualities. Similarly, the Dean of the Department of Philosophy and Public Administration at the Kyrgyz National University, Alybek Akunov, claimed that 'the Kyrgyz are not inferior to any nation, but they need to know themselves well'.

For minorities, however, this trend towards a 'Kyrgyzification' of the country is quite disturbing.[52] They feel that there is inadequate multi-ethnic

[49] Anderson 1999, p. 42.
[50] Bohr and Crisp 1996, p. 403.
[51] Caspiani 2000, p. 278.
[52] Bohr and Crisp 1996, p. 403.

representation in the country's public and political life and that they are left out of executive and legislative policy making processes.[53] For example, in the February 1995 parliamentary elections, the Kyrgyz got 85 percent of the seats, whereas Russians won only 6 percent and the Uzbeks 9 percent.[54] There are also reports of discrimination in the treatment of minorities, who allege discrimination in hiring, promotion and housing procedures. Government officials at all levels favor ethnic Kyrgyz. It was announced that by 2010 all government documents are to be in Kyrgyz.[55]

The situation seems especially problematic for the Russians, who constitute the largest minority group. The Russian minority in Kyrgyzstan lives mostly in the northern regions and provides skilled labor, working mostly as professionals. In 1989, even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a language law making Kyrgyz the state language was adopted. In 1991, a land law stipulated: 'Land in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan is the property of the Kyrgyz.' In 1992, the citizenship law ruled out double citizenship for citizens of Kyrgyzstan, which excludes most Slavs from becoming citizens of Kyrgyzstan.[56]

In the post-Soviet era, the Russian minority started to pressure President Akaev to protect their rights and to give them certain concessions to avoid a mass exodus of Russians. Akaev himself was quite sensitive to this issue. He frequently emphasized the importance of ethnic harmony and peace and tried not to alienate the Russians.[57] He followed a moderate line and gave the Russian minority some important concessions. The land law was changed and the phrase 'property of the Kyrgyz' was rewritten as 'property of the people of Kyrgyzstan'.[58] Russian was accepted as the second state language in 1994, to be valid until 1 January 2005. Later in March 1996, a constitutional amendment made Russian an official language. The switch to the Latin alphabet was also postponed for the time being.[59] Russian language instructions in schools and universities as well as printing and publishing in Russian (especially in media institutions) were neither prevented nor discouraged.[60] In 1999, a Slavic university was opened in Bishkek to persuade young Russians to stay in the republic.[61]

Another sizeable minority group in Kyrgyzstan are the Uzbeks who reside in the southern regions. They make up about 25 percent of the population in the city of Osh. In Jalalabad, 40 percent of the residents are Uzbek.[62] Back in June 1990, when the Osh Soviet decided to give to the Kyrgyz people some land to build houses, riots broke out among the Uzbeks. This caused escalated tensions between the Kyrgyz and the Uzbeks. Violent clashes took place, leaving 300 people dead and several hundred injured.[63] Right after independence, certain movements for greater autonomy and even unification

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[53] 'Democratic Governance …'.
[54] Kortunov and Lounev 1998, p. 94.
[55] *Kyrgyz Country Report on Human Rights:* … (2001).
[56] Warikoo 1995a, p. 21.
[57] Liu 1998, p. 81.
[58] Warikoo 1995a, p. 21.
[59] Erdem 2000, p. 44.
[60] Kortunov and Lounev 1998, p. 95.
[61] Rashid 2002, p. 70.
[62] Anderson 1999, p. 43.
[63] Bohr and Crisp 1996, p. 396.

with Uzbekistan among Kyrgyzstan's Uzbeks were formed. In the two southern towns of Osh and Jalalabad, tensions still exist. These towns seem to consist of two totally separate communities, because the Uzbeks and the Kyrgyz live in different neighborhoods and attend separate schools, mosques and bazaars.[64] In addition to these conflicts, there are some border problems between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which seem to have intensified over the last couple of years. Some analysts are warning that frontier disputes could sow the seeds of inter-ethnic violence.[65]

Finally, it should also be noted that Uyghurs in Kyrgyzstan add to the tension between China and Kyrgyzstan. Even though the Uyghurs in Kyrgyzstan constitute a very small minority (about 37,000), the Chinese authorities are worried about separatist tendencies spreading among its own Uyghur population residing in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.[66] Under the pressure from China, President Akaev curbed the activities of Uyghurs living in Kyrgyzstan.[67]

Concluding Remarks

Central Asian countries are positive to the 'Chinese model' of economic liberalization, with minimum or no change in the political status quo in the short run. Central Asian leaders believe that the power vacuum following the collapse of the Soviet Union can only be filled by politically stable governments[68] and that transition to democracy in their countries should be realized gradually. It is indicated that Central Asian republics are neither prepared nor ready for Western-style democracy, which, if taken too far too quickly can threaten the political stability of the new states. Leaders have concluded that in order to realize the transition from communist totalitarianism to liberal democracy on the one hand and to achieve social and economic development on the other, a period of authoritarianism is necessary and even inevitable. Consequently, the regimes emphasize the importance of 'a firm, paternalistic authoritarian rule' as a 'viable model'.[69]

President Akaev himself also adopted this general attitude, although he was initially in favor of reforms, market economy, civil society, civil and political rights, ethnic harmony and social peace. He started to emphasize the importance of a strong executive power in order to hold the country together and realize the necessary reforms.[70]

One of the basic reasons behind such an attitude was related to the fact that Central Asian countries had no democratic tradition or culture. In the pre-Russian era, there were the hegemonic and authoritarian khanates in which leadership would pass from father to son. In these traditional societies, the idea of democracy and popular sovereignty were not applicable and relevant concepts. Later on, during Russian and Soviet rule, the situation did not

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[64] Rashid 2002, p. 70.
[65] For a brief review of these problems, see Babakulov 2002.
[66] Bohr and Crisp 1996, p. 397.
[67] Rashid 2002, p. 70.
[68] Kangas 1995, p. 271.
[69] Akiner 1998, p. 27.
[70] Anderson 1999, p. 24.

change much, as the democratic tradition among the Russians themselves was weak.

Another fundamental reason that explains the authoritarian tendencies among the Central Asian leadership is related to the idea that democracy is not a once and for all phenomenon, but a process. Central Asian societies started experimenting with democracy only about two decades ago. Therefore, they cannot be expected to make a sudden shift to any consolidated democracy. According to a Kyrgyz student who resides in Turkey, it is 'very difficult' for the Central Asian countries to adopt a Western-style democracy because they have passed through a very different historical process from that of the West. Western-style democracy in Central Asia is bound to remain 'only on paper'. Therefore, instead of adopting Western models, the Central Asian republics should take their own historical experiences into account first.

For another Kyrgyz student, Kyrgyzstan and all the other Central Asian countries are 'too Eastern and Asian' for Western-style democracy. According to this student, even if Central Asian people want democracy 'their mentality, living conditions, possibilities, and customs and traditions are very different from those of the Europeans'. Similarly, according to an academician from the Kyrgyz Turk Manas University in Bishkek, 'it is impossible to compare the West and Central Asia from the perspectives of historical development and mentality'. As such, the transition and consolidation of democracy in Central Asia 'has a unique structure of its own'. According to another academician from the Department of History Research of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences, 'Western clothing' is not suitable for Kyrgyzstan, because democracy has only existed in the country since 1991, whereas it has existed for centuries in the West; democracy in Kyrgyzstan is 'just a slogan', whereas in the West, it is 'a reality'.

Furthermore, it should also be remembered that most of the regional and non-regional powers, such as Russia, China, Turkey, the United States and other Western countries, have regarded Central Asia as an important buffer zone in a region full of unstable countries and/or regimes. Since the Central Asian republics are very rich in natural resources and raw materials, foreign investors are interested in the region. In this sense, political stability is a necessary condition in attracting foreign investment. Even prior to the September 11 attacks on the United States, Western governments tended not to overemphasize human rights abuses and violations in Central Asia and have not put much pressure on them for democratization. In other words, they too preferred political stability to democratization. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, when the United States started actively collaborating with the Central Asian governments, external pressures for democratization experienced a major setback.

The Akaev leadership gradually shifted towards authoritarianism in the latter half of the 1990s. The major problem here is that there is repression and suspicion of *all* opposition groups and movements in the country. If the legally functioning opposition groups, which are not against the existing political order and accept it as a legitimate milieu of political action, are repressed with the same intensity as the illegal and radical groups, then in the longer run political discontent may grow in secret. In such a case, these opposition groups as well as the public at large may tend to prefer and support radical, extremist

parties that seriously challenge the legitimacy of the present system. As a result of this, it will become much more difficult to understand the precise roots of political discontent, which may suddenly erupt in violent ways.[71] Therefore, it is crucial that the demands of domestic legal opposition be met and that support is not channeled into radical groups. This basic priority given to political stability in Kyrgyzstan results in a paradoxical situation: democratic formations and movements are repressed for the sake of realizing the long-term goal of democratic consolidation. In other words, democratic demands and movements, which are perceived to be potential threats to political stability, are repressed during the transition period and such an attitude provides only a distorted picture of democratic demands, and may eventually backfire, bringing more instability to the region than ever before.

Another very important problem facing Kyrgyzstan is economic decline. The Kyrgyz leadership has to mobilize sufficient resources for investment and infrastructure as well as for improving living conditions and standards in health care, education, and housing. If these measures are not taken as soon as possible, political tensions may escalate into ethnic, religious, nationalist and local conflicts, seriously threatening political stability.

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[71] Loersch 2002, p. 4; Gleason 2002.

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The Blocked Road to Turkmen Democracy

TORGNY HINNEMO

Democratic development in Turkmenistan in modern times peaked during the *perestroika* (1985–1991) just before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This was the period when potential centers for the distribution of democratic culture became visible. However, from the very beginning of Turkmen independence, the civil rights situation has been deteriorating. The attempted coup on 25 November 2002 and the following mass arrests and deportations of thousands of relatives of alleged perpetrators have come to highlight this negative trend. This happened in the shadow of a war in nearby Iraq – a country which had experienced a similar development in its internal and external politics for the past two decades. The similarities between Turkmenistan and Iraq do not provide much hope for a democratic development in Turkmenistan in the near future.

Freedom Rating

The non-partisan organization Freedom House[1] publishes an annual assessment of the state of freedom in most countries. Of course, the kind of rating it makes can be questioned in detail.[2] Nevertheless, an interesting pattern appears when one compares its series of assessments for each of the former Soviet republics from the last year of *perestroika* until today. According to Freedom House data, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan were never as free as during the last year of Soviet rule. According to the same data, sooner or later, democratic development turned negative in all fifteen ex-Soviet republics except the Baltic countries. There also seems to be a geographic pattern linking countries with related cultures to each other. Only the Baltic countries have been able to avoid a backlash. Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and also more European-oriented Georgia and Armenia got caught in

[1] Information on Freedom House is available at http://www.freedomhouse.org/aboutfh/index.htm

[2] The methodology is described at http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2000/methodology.htm (cf. Haynes 2001).

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 59–68.

a state that is often described as 'muddling through'. Most Central Asian countries showed a negative trend very soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union – a development paralleled only by Belarus in the European part of the Commonwealth.

State of freedom in CIS 1991–2004

Year	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
1991-92	5,4,PF	5,4,PF	3,3,PF	6,5,PF	6,5,PF	5,5,PF	5,5,PF	6,5,NF
1992-93	5,5,PF	4,2,PF	6,6,NF	7,6,NF	6,6,NF	4,3,PF	5,5,PF	4,5,PF
1993-94	6,4,PF	5,3,PF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	3,4,PF	6,6,NF	5,5,PF
1994-95	6,5,NF	4,3,PF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	3,4,PF	6,6,NF	5,5,PF
1995-96	6,5,NF	4,4,PF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	4,4,PF	6,6,NF	4,5,PF
1996-97	6,5,NF	4,4,PF	7,7,NF	7,7,NF	7,6,NF	5,4,PF	6,5,NF	4,4,PF
1997-98	6,5,NF	4,4,PF	6,6,NF	7,7,NF	7,6,NF	5,4,PF	6,4,PF	3,4,PF
1998-99	6,5,NF	5,5,PF	6,6,NF	7,7,NF	7,6,NF	4,4,PF	6,4,PF	3,4,PF
1999-00	6,5,NF	5,5,PF	6,6,NF	7,7,NF	7,6,NF	4,4,PF	6,4,PF	3,4,PF
2000-01	6,5,NF	6,5,NF	6,6,NF	7,7,NF	7,6,NF	4,4,PF	6,5,PF	4,4,PF
2001-02	6,5 NF	6,5 NF	6,6 NF	7,7 NF	7,6 NF	4,4 PF	6,5 PF	4,4 PF
2002-03	6,5 NF	6,5 NF	6,5 NF	7,7 NF	7,6 NF	4,4 PF	6,5 PF	4,4 PF
2003-04	6,5 NF	6,5 NF	6,5 NF	7,7 NF	7,6 NF	4,4 PF	6,5 PF	4,4 PF

Year	Belarus	Ukraine	Russia	Moldova	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
1991-92	4,4,PF	3,3,PF	3,3,PF	5,4,PF	2,3,F	2,3,F	2,3,F
1992-93	4,3,PF	3,3,PF	3,4,PF	5,5,PF	3,3,PF	3,3,PF	2,3,F
1993-94	5,4,PF	4,4,PF	3,4,PF	5,5,PF	3,2,F	3,3,PF	1,3,F
1994-95	4,4,PF	3,4,PF	3,4,PF	4,4,PF	3,2,F	3,2,F	1,3,F
1995-96	5,5,PF	3,4,PF	3,4,PF	4,4,PF	2,2,F	2,2,F	1,2,F
1996-97	6,6,NF	3,4,PF	3,4,PF	3,4,PF	1,2,F	2,2,F	1,2,F
1997-98	6,6,NF	3,4,PF	3,4,PF	3,4,PF	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F
1998-99	6,6,NF	3,4,PF	4,4,PF	2,4,PF	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F
1999-00	6,6,NF	3,4,PF	4,5,PF	2,4,PF	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F
2000-01	6,6,NF	4,4,PF	5,5,PF	2,4,PF	1,2,F	1,2,F	1,2,F
2001-02	6,6 NF	4,4 PF	5,5 PF	2,4 PF	1,2 F	1,2 F	1,2 F
2002-03	6,6 NF	4,4 PF	5,5 PF	3,4 PF	1,2 F	1,2 F	1,2 F
2003-04	6,6 NF	4,4 PF	5,5 PF	3,4 PF	1,2 F	1,2 F	1,2 F

Source: Freedom House 2004

Note: The values representing scores for each year are, from left to right, political rights, civil liberties, and freedom status. Each of the first two is measured on a one-to-seven scale, with one representing the highest degree of freedom and seven the lowest. 'F', 'PF', and 'NF' stand for 'free', 'partly free', and 'not free', respectively. Countries whose combined averages for political rights and for civil liberties fall between 1.0 and 2.5 are designated 'free', between 3.0 and 5.5 'partly free', and between 5.5 and 7.0 'not free'. The 'scores' for the Soviet Union 1990–1991 were 5.4 PF. Grey squares highlight the year after which the trend turned towards less freedom.

We know less about attitudes among the public at large in Turkmenistan than in other Central Asian states during the first years of independence due to restrictions in research on people's attitudes in this country. It can be concluded, for example, from the International Foundation for Elections

Systems (IFES) carried out in the mid-1990s,[3] that people in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the sparsely inhabited Karakalpak republic in the western part of Uzbekistan were generally more critical of the political leadership and more in favor of multi-party systems than those living in the rest of Uzbekistan. This has been explained by the traditionally higher degree of control in the densely populated agricultural areas of Uzbekistan. Over the centuries, Islam was also usually less mixed with nature worship and other pre-Islamic practices in these areas than in nomadic Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Karakalpakstan.

Since the Turkmen majority in Turkmenistan also represents a nomadic tradition and Islam in this republic has been considerably adapted to local customs,[4] we could expect similar attitudes there as in northern Central Asia. However, the example of Belarus shows that public attitudes alone do not determine the political development. The dissolution of Soviet society and the somewhat chaotic reorganization that followed is in itself evidence that Soviet society was not capable of a step-by-step reconstruction. In each state there arose a vacuum that was gradually filled by one or – generally – several structures of power. In Belarus and Turkmenistan, both with weak pressure groups, purposeful leaders made use of old mechanisms for control at an early stage.

A Nation-State Derived from Soviet Rule

Before 1992, no independent state with the name or the extent of present-day Turkmenistan existed, just as there was no Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, or Kyrgyzstan. Though Central Asia can be compared to the European Union from the point of view of area, there are only some 56 million inhabitants in ex-Soviet Central Asia. The population is concentrated close to fresh-water recourses. Before the Russian conquest, the political map of Central Asia reflected the water systems and the most important capitals were found in the basin of the Ferghana Valley, in the deltas of the two main rivers in the region, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, and in the valleys of the minor Zarafshan and Murgab Rivers.

Just as in Kazakhstan, the areas occupied by Turkmen settlements were separated by steppes and deserts. Immediately before the Russian conquest, the Khanate of Khiva and the Emirate of Bukhara included Turkmen settlements along the Amu Darya. However, the southern parts of contemporary Turkmenistan were at that time highly independent from the main political centers. According to reports from travelers in the 19th century,[5] most power was in the hands of local leaders with armed units of their own – a situation that is reminiscent of Afghanistan a hundred years later.

The establishment of nation-states in Central Asia during the Soviet period resulted in an entire reconstruction of the political map. Behind the new order was Lenin's idea that every nation had to pass the stage of a nation-state

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[3] Kazakhstan 1995 and 1996, Kyrgyzstan 1995, 1996 and 2001, Uzbekistan 1996, and Tajikistan 1996. See http://www.ifes.org/research_comm/publications.html

[4] The ancient metropolis of Margiana/Merv (today's Mary) was once a melting pot of philosophies. Among the remains of buildings found there are pre-Islamic Buddhist and Christian sanctuaries.

[5] For example, Marvin 1880.

before reaching the level of real communism. However, it was also an attempt to calm anti-Russian sentiments and to weaken the influence of local clans. The introduction of a nation-wide curriculum for language and literature studies did promote national integration within Turkmenistan and other Central Asian republics. Nevertheless, state borders between the republics were of little importance during the Soviet era.

During the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev from the middle of the 1960s, Central Asian leaders were given some freedom of action in exchange for the fulfillment of Moscow's production plans. Thus the head of the Turkmen communist party from 1969 to 1985, Muhammednazar Gapurov, was able to develop a personal network involving people especially from his own Chardzhev region. Though a protégé of Gapurov, the current Turkmen President Niyazov (not from Gapurov's region), was appointed his successor at a time when the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduced his *glasnost* policy.

In contrast to the European and even Caucasian parts of the Soviet Union western-style political parties had no tradition in Turkmen society. While public debate was under the influence of broad manifestations in the Baltic republics, Georgia and even Russia, the Turkmen intelligentsia did not appear in a society striving for the *revival* of a historic statehood. Therefore, the first impulses to establish political organizations came from intellectuals who tried to make their own synthesis from Russian and western thinking and Turkmen traditions.

The Dethroned Opposition

The first attempt to establish a genuine opposition in Turkmenistan was made in 1989, when members of the cultural elite in Turkmenistan founded the movement *Agzybirlik* (Unity). Their intention was both to support a revival of Turkmen culture and to establish democratic institutions. Two years later, members of the Turkmen Academy of Sciences founded *Paykhas* (Wisdom) a movement for liberal political ideas. At the end of 1991, the philosopher Muhammedmurad Salamatov established the independent journal *Dayanch* (The Pillar), which was closed just a few months later, when Turkmenistan became independent.

The last head of the Turkmen communist party, Niyazov, who also became president for life in independent Turkmenistan, simply tried to scare the first representatives of a political opposition into leaving the country. Since then, those who stayed have been prevented from traveling abroad and they have gradually also been isolated from their own countrymen by administrative measures.

Later, non-political organizations or associations with an independent profile were censored or declared illegal. They included religious congregations, some of them of little significance, but also Muslims with an independent approach.

A system of rotation was introduced both in government and local administration. Heads of ministries and regional bodies were exchanged at short intervals, as a consequence of which they rarely had any opportunity to

fulfill their tasks or to control their administrative bodies. Officials who were suspected of being disloyal were sometimes arrested or went into exile.

In mid-2002, the number of Turkmens imprisoned for reasons other than those they were sentenced for was some six hundred. Few of them were political dissidents in the usual sense of the word. Some of them had merely protested against the poor compensation that was given when their homes were expropriated by the government in connection with reconstruction work in the capital, Ashgabad.

After the attempted coup in November 2002, yet another function in society has been focused upon by the authorities, namely kinship. A large number of relatives of those sentenced for involvement (2,000 people according to well-informed sources) have been deprived of their homes and have been deported or are waiting for deportation to remote parts of Turkmenistan. They have usually been forced to sign an order to refrain from contact with relatives and foreign countries. This new measure can be seen as a confirmation of the importance of family ties to networking in Central Asian societies.

Thus, we can see how, step by step, the regime has disarmed any structure that might be a node for communicating public opinion in Turkmenistan. At the same time, the President, like some Turkestanian *khans* before the Russian conquest, surrounds himself with several advisers and a presidential guard with many representatives from ethnic groups other than the nominal population, i.e., with no other loyalties than those to their employer.

Our perception of the state of democracy in Central Asia is largely based on the general view of the ability of countries to hold elections with more than one political party. However, a party that exists only as a faction within a parliament is in itself not a manifestation of democracy. Political parties are not the same all over the world. In some countries they represent competing ideologies or interest groups. In others they are merely campaign machines that are mobilized before elections. But whatever they are, they depend on the nodes for communicating public opinion that exist in every free society, for example, NGOs, lobbyists, religious bodies, and the mass media.

Since Turkmenistan has been deprived of all these assets, the near future does not seem to open any prospects for gradual and peaceful political evolution. Turkmen autocracy is characterized by measures of repression that are dosed for every individual from a high level – often, it seems, by the leader himself. This is possibly due to the limited size of the country and its population. It is supported by reductions and restrictions in the sphere of education and intellectual life. Basic schooling has been reduced from ten to nine years. A new subject, 'Saparmurad Niyazov's policy for independence and permanent neutrality', illustrates the substitution of civics with a cult of personality. By direct order from the President, complete collections of books were weeded out from libraries. For example, a history book for the fourth grade was forbidden due to its lack of national sentiment.[6] Many independent intellectuals or their relatives are also on the secret 'black list' of people who are not let out of the country in spite of the dismantling of the exit visa system.

During the first ten years of Central Asian independence, the international community mainly focused its concern for unrest in the region on the civil war

[6] This and other incidents have been reported through many channels including the Human Rights organization *Memorial*. It is also discussed in Demidov 2002.

in Tajikistan and the armed Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The predominant opinion seemed to be the view that visible confrontation was more dangerous than silence. However, the conflicts in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan reflected an existing pluralism that was not as totally silenced as in Turkmenistan. In Tajikistan, civil war broke out when the Soviet mechanism for balancing regional interests was removed. In Uzbekistan, the importance of the many branches of the Islamic religion as a cultural identifier and moral base was highlighted by one of its extreme movements. The path of reconciliation in Tajikistan is fragile but did nevertheless, at least temporarily, lead to more pluralism than in any other country in Central Asia. Tajikistan is the only country in the region where a secular party guided by religious values is legal in the same way as Christian Democratic parties are in Europe.[7]

The Post-Soviet Laboratory

A question that has always puzzled historians is how much a certain stage of development was influenced by a single leader, and how much transformation is dictated by other currents within a society. A study of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when fifteen states with both common and different prerequisites began a parallel development, may give us some answers.

Economic development was probably regarded as a main task for all fifteen governments. In the public consciousness, however, ethnic conflicts and the further break-up of the former Soviet republics were seen as the main threats. Even the leaders of the mightiest of all republics, Russia, dedicated much effort to this issue. Only one of the constituent areas of Russia, namely Chechnya, made a serious attempt to break away. On the other hand, this threat became a tool for other constituent parts to negotiate with the central government about conditions for self-government. In smaller ex-Soviet republics, the issue of separatism became much more serious and civil wars followed in some countries. This caused governments in other republics with numerous ethnic groups, among others Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, to pursue a cautious policy vis-à-vis their minorities.

The main task, economic development, was tackled through varying degrees of reform. In countries where privatization had high priority, as in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, influential groups in society focused much of their efforts during the first years on gaining control of strategic assets. In countries with less economic reform, the main sources of income remained state property and there the power game was much simpler. All one had to do was maintain the power of the state.

The rather homogenous Turkmenistan, where the nominal population makes up almost 80 percent of all inhabitants, feared ethnic conflict less than most other republics. And still today, only a minor proportion of its core enterprises have become private. Thus, the Turkmen leader was not restrained by many of the obstacles that were of significant importance in other states.

At the same time, during the first political vacuum, many of the inhabitants in the former Soviet republics remained – like their leaders – observers rather than active promoters of reform. The collapse of the Russian economy in

[7] See Kabiri in this volume.

1998, almost seven years after independence, became the first practical lesson in market economy for many, not just in Russia but also in other CIS countries. Only from that bitter experience did people learn how to protect themselves against economic risks. In a similar fashion, people became more quickly observant of the real distribution of power in societies which experienced some internal political conflict, armed or not. From the example of Belarus we could see that even a couple of years after independence, there existed a political vacuum that could be used for restoring authoritarianism. However, in Turkmenistan, the public was never really given time for reflection, since power never saw any reason for temporary retreat.

Given the trend demonstrated by the Freedom House figures, we should perhaps show some caution when predicting the future of other states. As stressed earlier, the presence of two or more parties in parliament is no guarantee for democracy. Only when parties depend on other formations in society, can we expect a stable development.

The Foreign Factor

Among the possible domestic changes that can lead to at least some democratization in Turkmenistan, the most probable scenario is that an heir to the present leader may choose to modify the political system, although today such a development seems possible only in the distant future.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore a possible influence from abroad. In its most simple form it will be expressed as comparisons between peoples in Central Asia made by themselves. When the Soviet border was opened to the south, some Tajiks took the opportunity to visit Tajik societies in northern Afghanistan. A frequent comment from the Tajik visitors afterwards was: 'I'm glad that I went there but I'm glad that I don't have to live there.' Even if the Turkmen border is almost sealed for the time being, information is crossing it between relatives and friends, especially those of the same nationality. This is probably one reason for the Turkmen President's decision in January 2003 to resettle some 2,000 ethnic Uzbeks from the Uzbek border to the border on Kazakhstan. The message that is now passing to Turkmenistan through visitors and modern technology is that there is slightly more freedom in the neighboring countries, that living standards are rising in Kazakhstan and that there are better prospects in Russia and elsewhere for those seeking higher education and a professional future.

With reference to neutrality, Turkmen foreign policy today is mainly confined to its limited participation in international organizations and trade related to the main raw materials in the country. This profile makes Turkmenistan less sensitive, at least in the immediate future, to the surrounding world. The limited range of foreign policy also makes it easier for a single leader with the ambition of controlling all spheres of life within his country to keep even international relations under observation.

Nevertheless, there is an obvious risk that Turkmenistan will sooner or later come into conflict with one or several of its neighbors or even more distant trading partners. Before the Russian conquests and rule in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the borders in Central Asia reflected an economic reality. The Soviet leadership reshaped the map so that today we have five countries

that are mainly built around ethnic and linguistic identities. In the Soviet Union, internal borders were of minor importance and only after its dissolution did they become an important obstacle to small-scale business. Today, Uzbeks on the Turkmen side of the border suffer both from Uzbek fees for visas and Turkmen restrictions when they travel to Uzbekistan to trade. Discontent among the border population may at some stage lead to an escalation of Uzbek–Turkmen antagonism.

Relations with southern neighbors Iran and Afghanistan are ambivalent. Both are of potential importance since they represent possible transport corridors from Turkmenistan to sea ports. However, the Turkmen regime is interested in confining contacts with Iran to business because of the religious control of politics in that country. In the absence of other channels for internal criticism, religion may also play a future role in Turkmenistan, even if that is far less probable than in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Several other obstacles that may lead to complications in the future, where foreign policy is concerned, include the distribution of water resources, the re-routing of narcotics stopped by Iranian troops along the Afghan border[8] and conflicting interests between Turkmenistan's trading partners. There may be situations when escalated tension with some foreign interest may tempt the latter to 'help' some internal political process within Turkmenistan. A presidential guard of 3,000 men may be enough to resist a small rebelling population but not necessarily a foreign army.

The Turkmen leader is certainly aware of this. Since non-interference is a guiding star for Turkmen foreign policy, the country has hitherto accepted only a few demands from the international community. This indicates that a coordinated approach from the rest of the world could minimize unpredictability. The establishment of prerequisites for democratization in Turkmenistan will mainly depend on future developments within the country. However, such a process can be accelerated, delayed and even blocked by external interests. The attempt by a few dozen prominent Turkmens to depose President Niyazov in 2002 gained active support from at least one foreign government, and this resulted in strongly xenophobic behavior from several Turkmen authorities. On the other hand, Niyazov has also been honored by visiting counterparts from abroad in terms that would have been less hyperbolic were it not for his country's possession of gas and oil.

Concluding Remarks

The dissolution of the Soviet Union can be explained by several factors, such as economic collapse, growing protests against authoritarianism, and the striving for national independence and globalization. The process was pushed forward by several forces. They included (instinctively) the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and (deliberately) its branches in some Soviet republics. Initially, demand for sovereignty was accentuated through popular manifestations in countries, such as the Baltic

[8] According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 75 percent of all opium in the world is produced in Afghanistan.

states, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova. Eventually, sovereignty was declared by the regimes in all former republics.

Significantly enough, the degree of political and civil rights stabilized at a higher level than during the last year of Soviet rule only in those former Soviet republics where demands for sovereignty were forwarded by a wide opinion during the period of *glasnost*. In countries with little public manifestations for any kind of civil rights around 1990, democracy is less obvious today than during the Soviet Union under its last president, Mikhail Gorbachev.

The most authoritarian of all republics is Turkmenistan. Its president, the head of the Turkmen branch of the Soviet communist party during the last six years of Soviet rule, retained the main control mechanisms from the old system in order to stay in power. Although modern ideas were spread and discussed among the Turkmen intelligentsia, the lack of public movements and the limited scale of Turkmen society made it easy for Niyazov to control his opponents.[9] One by one these were ousted and are today in exile or under strict observation in their home country, some in prison or internal exile.

With no established mechanism for the election or appointment of the next president there is a clear risk for chaos in Turkmenistan the day Niyazov looses his capacity to rule.[10] Examples from other ex-Soviet republics indicate that democracy can grow only with active participation within society. Deprived of the experiences that most other republics in the former Soviet Union have had on their own since 1992, one cannot expect democracy to be established in Turkmenistan immediately after the reign of Niyazov.

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On the Problem of Revival and Survival of Ethnic Minorities in Post-Soviet Central Asia

VALERIY S. KHAN

The inhabitants of present-day Central Asian states are typically divided into, on the one hand, 'indigenous' peoples and, on the other, 'migrant' peoples. The first category includes members of titular ethnoses – Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmens, Tajiks, and Karakalpaks – and other related peoples who have lived on the territory of this or that Central Asian state for centuries. In the second category, Russians form the largest ethnos besides Ukrainians, Belorussians, Koreans, Jews, Poles, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Armenians, Greeks, Germans, Tatars and others, all of whom migrated to Central Asia rather recently and whose formation as ethnoses occurred outside this region.

The distinction between 'indigenous' and 'migrant' is far from clear-cut, in fact it is to a large extent artificial and depends on the evaluation of ethnic origins, the time frame of residence in a given territory, and the nation-state formations existing there at a certain point of time. The ancestors of ethnic groups living today on this or that territory were in fact once migrants. Arguments with reference to ethnic origins are also problematic. In Central Asia there are no ethnically 'pure' territories where there was the formation of only one ethnos. Furthermore, the formation of the Central Asian ethnoses involved the participation of various ethnic elements that originated outside Central Asia. As for state formations, the ethnic nature of the region's states from medieval times until now is not unequivocal, and present borders of the Central Asian states have arisen only in the twentieth century.

With these reservations in mind, I would like to devote this paper to the two following interconnected questions relating to ethnic minorities in post-Soviet Central Asia: (1) The problem of their national[1] revival, and (2) The problem of their national survival.

[1] The term *national* is used in the present paper as a synonym of 'ethnic'.

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 69–80.

National Revival

Since the beginning of *perestroika* and after the collapse of the USSR, the problem of national revival has become a much-discussed question for all ethnic groups in Central Asia. The goal of national revival was declared by all new states as a basic component of their policy as well as the charter documents of all existing national centers and associations of ethnic minorities.

Generally speaking, the theme of revival of culture has different meanings for titular ethnoses and for ethnic minorities. For example, for indigenous peoples, this question becomes a key issue in the formation of new state policies. Very often national revival for a titular ethnos is considered by Central Asian authorities as the revival of past power and past roles (like those found in the times of the Great Silk Road, with the Samanid and Timurid dynasties), serving as a bridge from a 'great past' to a 'great future' for these ethnoses:

> The intensive search for 'roots', the cultivation at a level of ordinary consciousness of an image of a traditional way of life, the accusation of neighboring peoples of domination, oppression, and a decline of traditional culture are typical attributes and components of that kind of thinking.[2]

The past becomes even more real than the present:

> The past is considered by the carrier of eastern types of culture to be more real than the present. [...] The original innovation does not change with present conditions, but is the opening of the historical monument, evidence, source, and document.[3]

Because of the principle value of the past in the modern political/ideological constructions of the Central Asian states, it became an arena for contestation between them. The historic past that brings native peoples of Central Asia together simultaneously becomes an apple of discord. Disagreements exist concerning the ancient and medieval history of certain states. According to Tajik sources, they are the historical beginnings of Tajik statehood, while according to Uzbek ones, they are the origins of Uzbek statehood, etc. The same fate has befallen great Central Asian thinkers (al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina et al.). The National University of Kazakhstan was named after al-Farabi, the great Central Asian thinker, while in other Central Asian countries he is not considered to be a Kazakh thinker. Uzbek historians and officials do not like to mention the Samanids, because this dynasty was monopolized by Tajikistan, but at the same time they are criticized by scholars from other Central Asian states for their monopolization of Amir Temur (Tamerlane):

> Attempts by the Uzbek scholars and government to make him the private property of Uzbek heritage for the construction of a 'great future' is not scientific and destroys the basis of the present political unity of the Central Asian states.[4]

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[2] Kusainov 2003, p. 86. This and the following quotations from Russian sources were translated by the present author.
[3] Arhipov 2003, p. 90.
[4] Ryskulov 2002, p. 269.

Even heads of states are involved in the justification of the fact that great civilizations of the past are the heritage of this or that people. In Uzbekistan, an Uzbek-centered model of the history of Central Asia has been implemented, much to the skepticism of other native peoples in the region. Similarly, Tajik-centered, Kyrgyz-centered, etc., models are being promulgated. Other questions related to claims on the past are arguments about nomadic and settled–urbanized pasts, the existence of written languages and great national entities, the antiquity of this or that people, the role of peoples in the ethnogenesis and ethnic history of the region, contributions to world culture, victories and defeats at these or those battles, etc.

Titular nations, indigenous peoples, and certain migrant peoples, first and foremost Russians, did not have to tackle problems such as the loss of native languages and customs. It is thus easy to understand that the term 'national revival' for such ethnic groups as the Germans, Koreans, Jews, and other minorities was quite unique and different from the 'national revival' of Central Asian titular nations and the Russians.[5] If the national revival of titular nations is considered a *political* key, national revival of ethnic minorities is considered a *cultural* key: The revival of national culture, language, customs, and traditions. It has found reflection even in the names of most of the national organizations – *the national–cultural* centers.

This narrow focus on *culture* was not a coincidence. The associations' emphasis on the revival of native languages, ethnic customs, and traditions as their basic goals reflected the interplay of several factors. First, the notion of 'revival' was characteristic of the *perestroika* period in general. All reforms of that period proceeded under the slogan of 'reviving' something that had been lost. People spoke of revivals of the Leninist conception of socialism, of the countryside, of ethnic culture, rites and customs, of traditional occupations and trades, the Aral Sea, etc. Here, too, the mission goals of the ethnic societies coincided with generally accepted trends and rhetoric in the formulation of urgent questions.

Second, when it came to ethnic relations, the theme of the revival of culture, customs and traditions on the part of ethnic minorities was less risky to the existing power structure than proposals made by the largest titular ethnic groups in the republics, such as secession from the Soviet Union on the basis of the right of self-determination, renegotiation of territorial boundaries between republics, and redistribution of power between the central government and the republics. In spite of the fact that both union-wide and local laws granted the right to form all sorts of social organizations (with the exception of extremist ones aimed at overthrowing the constitutional structure, distributing fascist propaganda, or kindling religious or nationalist enmity), in practice the registration of any organization depended entirely on the local power structure. In other words, registration was not so much a matter of a simple 'declaration' or 'filing' as it was of obtaining permission to exist. Thus, if, instead of cultural revival, ethnic minorities had listed as mission goals such delicate matters as the creation of ethno-administrative units – the USSR law 'On the freedom of national development for citizens of the USSR living within the borders of their own nation-state formations or else having no such

[5] In the USSR, Russians were never an ethnic minority in the national republics in the strict sense of the word.

territories within the USSR' made provisions for this possibility – or the return to historical motherlands, their by-laws would simply not have been accepted. This element of 'permission' in the registration process, which was controlled very tightly by the authorities, opened no more than a small window of opportunity for ethnic minorities for self-realization. Thus, although in theory the Soviet legislature had opened up broad possibilities for ethnic minorities, in practice the only outlet available to them was the discussion of such cultural issues as language, customs, and folk traditions. This restriction left untouched and untouchable other fundamental systemic political and economic issues and, thus, did not risk any complication of the socio-political situation.

Third, the theme of cultural revival among ethnic minorities was less risky not only for the power structure, but also for the minorities themselves. All peoples of the Soviet Union had seen precisely what could happen when ethnic divisions combined with other vexed problems: the cases of Nagorno–Karabakh, Abkhazia, the Osh Oblast, and the Ferghana Valley were familiar material. Nagorno–Karabakh, an Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan, was the site of numerous clashes, leading to all-out war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In the province of Osh, an irrigated area in southern Kyrgyzstan, arguments between ethnic Kyrgyz farmers and ethnic Uzbeks over water led to a bloody confrontation. Many Uzbeks were killed in the melee and the rest fled to Uzbekistan. One can readily understand why the founders of ethnic organizations in the 1990s studiously omitted any mention of goals in their statutory documentation that might have made their relations with Soviet authorities more complicated.

Fourth, some minorities who did not have their own nation-state formations on USSR territory based their ethnic identities on culture: language, customs, rituals, traditions, cuisine, songs, dances, etc. It was only natural that under changed conditions that provided new possibilities for ethnic self-realization, these ethnic minorities turned to those ingredients in their collective consciousness that distinguished them from others to resolve questions of group identity.[6]

Fifth, most ethnic minorities and their leaders did not yet regard themselves as subjects of political activity during the formative period of their new organizations; their political consciousness had not yet awakened. This circumstance explains the cultural emphasis manifested in the national organizations' program documents and activities.

The process of national revival is viewed by the state and all national organizations *a priori* as necessary and positive. In addition, in the public consciousness of people, national revival is directly related to national spirituality and mentality – the very essence of a given ethnos. This kind of approach simplifies the essence of the problem. Unfortunately, the problem of essence and the means of national revival among ethnic minorities have not received much careful scientific study on the part of national centers and governments. Rather, it is still discussed in lay, and often ideological, terms.

[6] Panarin 2003 (p. 438) writes that 'real, instead of ideal, revival is aimed first of all at a search for identity'.

What is to Be Revived and For What?

The purpose of the existence of national centers and associations should be, first and foremost, to express the real interests and demands of ethnic minorities, to protect their rights, to investigate extreme economic and political situations, to help the economic and spiritual development of an ethnos, and many other things. Unfortunately, these major concerns remain outside of the framework of these organizations. What is meant by 'national revival' is the actualization of such traditional habits, customs, and etiquette as were kept by early migrants – now ancestors of contemporary diasporas. Yet, for present generations living in another social dimension, traditional culture has the character of exotic, external folklore; there are too many examples of that. In order for a given project of national revival to be accomplished it is necessary to undergo a wholesale change in the mentality and the internal orientations of present-day diasporas. This seems utopian and superfluous. There is a paradigm hovering over the national associations: if we belong to this (or that) ethnos, we *must* revive its ethnicity. The forced character of the issue – the principle of postulated obligations as a norm of collective behavior – raises doubts as to how to proceed. Thus, it is not accidental that the national–cultural centers limited their activities to the mechanical reproduction of ethnographic pictures, to traditional celebrations, to ethnic dances and songs, etc. Nevertheless, holiday dinner tables and outdoor festivals are not the same as the essence of a national revival.

National revival could also be understood as the adoption of the modern culture (behavior, personal relations, values, ideals, etc.) found in historic motherlands (Germany, Poland, Israel, Korea, etc.). However, without mastering the matrixes of reproducing these cultures, such processes of borrowing would not differ from the imposition of external cultural forms; it would be an empty imitation. The mechanical projection of alien matrixes of ethnic consciousness (i.e., those found in the historic homelands) upon the screen of our diasporic existence would be absurd. Paradoxically, the 'native' world outlooks, lifestyles, and behaviors found in historic homelands are more foreign to diasporas than Russian and indigenous Central Asian ones. The attempts to imitate, to be like 'real' Koreans, Germans, Jews, etc., doom the diasporas to an inferiority complex. Germans, Jews, and even Russians have collided with this problem after repatriating to historic homelands.[7] It is very important to realize that diasporic cultures are the results of syntheses of different cultures. This is the principle issue. In other words, discussion about the identity of diasporic consciousness and culture and its development can be carried out only in the context of the 'multi-layeredness' of their cultural genetic pool. The diasporas are neither 'more real' nor 'less real' than their 'fellow tribesmen', they simply are 'another' because they are of another ethnic reality.

Once more, national revival could be understood as the creation of conditions that allow diasporas to be more fully able to realize their potential

[7] For many Russians who moved from Central Asia to Russia after the collapse of the USSR, 'the removal turned out for them to be not idyllic 'homecomings' but hard ordeals, connected with confrontations and the need to protect their own rights' (Pilkington and Flynn 2001, p. 17).

as an equal component of multi-ethnic states and to naturally and freely develop and be self-determined without any schemes imposed from the outside.

Not only the new homelands of diasporas but also their historic homelands are responsible for the direction and content of 'national revival'. Because of formed economic and political circumstances, the national–cultural centers depend on the financial support of the governments of historic homelands. As a result, the contours and content of 'national revival' come to be determined by these governments, in particular by embassies. As a rule, the content of national revivals tends to be determined by the cultures of these (foreign) countries, alienating the diasporas. Representatives from embassies have openly meddled with the activities of national–cultural centers, newspapers, TV, etc. That results in the contradiction between diasporic culture and the culture of the native ancestral land, which, in the policy of the relevant countries and embassies, is considered the 'true' culture of the given ethnos. The paradox is that in trying to preserve their own national cultures under the conditions of globalization and standardization, the governments of these countries do not notice that sometimes they themselves assume a standardizing role (on the basis of their understanding of ethnic identity), refusing the right of diasporas to have their own ethnic identity and to be what they are.

The confinement of national centers to the cultural realm cannot be viewed as a self-contained problem. The reality is that these organizations express the cultural needs of their diasporas because they cannot really protect their political rights. Given the strengthening ethnocentrism throughout post-Soviet Central Asia, political activism in the ethnic sphere is not an easy option.

Titular Ethnicization Rather Than Minority Rights

New situations unraveling in the republics of the CIS are giving rise to new problems for ethnic minorities.[8] Ethnic minorities collide not only with the problem of national revival, but also with the problem of conserving their ethnic integrity and identity, i.e. survival as a certain ethnic reality.

After the formation of the states of the CIS, many of which were based on the dominance of the national idea connected with the right of self-determination and the openly demonstrated priority to the development of titular nationalities, the sphere of the rights, freedoms, and opportunities for Central Asia's ethnic minorities have been narrowed. The analysis of ethnic processes in post-Soviet Central Asia shows a tendency towards the formation

[8] New problems have arisen with regard to not only groups of people who have recently migrated to Central Asia (Russians, Germans, and others), but also indigenous population groups (Uzbeks, Kazakhs, etc.). The nation-state delimitation in Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s, when administrative borders were drawn without taking into account the borders of ethnic areas, has generated ethnic enclaves on the territories of national republics: Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, Tajiks and Kazakhs in Uzbekistan, etc. But all this was within the framework of one country. After the disintegration of the USSR, these peoples who for centuries lived on their 'own' territories suddenly became inhabitants of 'foreign' states, where they – native residents – became ethnic minorities, and other native residents became the ruling nation.

of mono-ethnic states.[9] One can talk of the 'titular ethnicization' (mono-ethnicization) and indigenization of present-day Central Asia. A number of different factors provide evidence for this development.

First of all, the proportion of titular ethnic groups is increasing, while the proportion of other ethnic groups is decreasing. An important indicator of this problem has been the gradual and stable emigration of ethnic minorities from Central Asia to other countries, primarily Russia. In Uzbekistan, for example, the annual population decrease due to emigration was, according to official statistics, 80,000–90,000 in the 1990s – a substantial change in comparison to the 1980s, when the avarage number of emigrating people had been around 50,000. Almost all Germans, Crimean Tatars, Jews, and Meskhetians left the country. In addition, Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians, and other minorities steadily emigrated.[10] In total, between 1989 and 1999, 1,400,000 persons left Uzbekistan, while 571,000 moved into the country. The negative balance is 829,000.[11]

A high level of emigration can also be observed in Kazakhstan. From 1989 to 1999 the population of the country decreased by around 8 percent, from 16,199,154 to 14,953,131. The population of Russians declined by 26.1 percent, from 6,062,019 to 4,479,618; Ukrainians – 37.5 percent, from 875,691 to 547,052; Germans – 62.7 percent, from 946,855 to 353,441; Tatars – 22.4 percent, from 320,747 to 248,952; Belorussians – 37.1 percent, from 177,938 to 111,926; Koreans – 1.1 percent, from 100,739 to 99,662; Azerbaijanis – 12 percent, from 88,951 to 78,295; Poles – 20.3 percent, from 59,354 to 47,297; Chechens – 35.2 percent, from 49,053 to 31,799; Bashkirs – 43.3 percent, from 40,949 to 23,224; Moldovans – 39.9 percent, from 32,361 to 19,458; Ingushs – 13.5 percent, from 19,535 to 16,893; Mordovans – 44.6 percent, from 29,162 to 16,147; Armenians – 19.1 percent, from 18,469 to 14,758; Greeks – 72.5 percent, from 46,267 to 12,703; Bulgarians – 32.4 percent, from 10,228 to 6,915; Lezgins – 68.6 percent, from 13,807 to 4,616. There has also been a decrease in the number of Kyrgyz and Turkmens.[12]

From 1990 to 2000 more than 300,000 Russians left Kyrgyzstan. Before independence, the Russian community here accounted for 21.5 percent of the total population; now this figure has been reduced to 12 percent. In 1989, 101,300 Germans lived in Kyrgyzstan; by 1997 their number had dropped to 17,300. Other ethnic groups are also emigrating. From 1989 to 1997, the population of Ukrainians declined from 108,000 to 70,900; the population of Tatars – from 70,100 to 53,200; the population of Koreans – from 18,400 to 17,800. Increases can only be observed among indigenous Central Asian peoples.[13]

In 1989, 389,000 Russians lived in Tajikistan. According to official Tajik sources, 320,000 Russians live in the country at present. However, unofficial sources give another figure – 68,000.[14]

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[9] Some scholars note that in multinational states, nationalism often is a tool to construct a unified nation from a heterogeneous society; see e.g. Parekh 1995.

[10] Ata-Mirzaev et al. 1998.

[11] Ata-Mirzaev et al. 2002.

[12] *Kratkie itogi perepisi naseleniya 1999 goda po Respublike Kazakhstan …* (2000); *Ezhegodnik Kazakhstana po naseleniyu* (2002).

[13] Elebaeva and Omuraliev 1998.

[14] http://www.rusedina.org

According to information from Russian embassies and the opinions of independent experts, although the high wave of emigration from Central Asia has decreased, many Russian-speakers are still considering leaving. This tendency is manifested in different forms, including the illegal acquiring of Russian citizenship. In the first half of the 1990s, thousands of people in the Central Asian countries 'lost' old passports in which their Russian registration was recorded, and in place of the 'lost' passport, a new passport with the citizenship of the corresponding Central Asian republic turned up. Ways and schemes for the registration of a dual citizenship are extremely diverse.[15]

Titular ethnicization is also manifested in the unequal representation of non-titular ethnic groups in power structures. As Panarin 2003 writes:

> Researchers of nationalism have frequently discussed its nature, origin, time of occurrence, and future fate; however, they all come to the common conclusion that an ideal of nationalism is *having sovereignty in one's own state*. Usually it is understood as the concurrence of ethnic borders with political ones, and the ethno-cultural affinity of rulers with the main mass of people.[16]

For example, although Kazakhs make up 53.4 percent of the total population of Kazakhstan, their proportion in the leadership of the country is 85 percent. Russians, who compose 30 percent of the population, fill only 8 percent of governmental positions. Among ambassadors, who represent the interests of the country abroad, there are no Slavs.[17] In the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan, among 59 members there is one Kazakh, two Uzbeks, two Karachaevs, and seven Russians.[18] According to the results of a sociological survey carried out by the Center of Social Studies of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences, among delegates of parliament and leaders of national–cultural centers, 100 percent of the Azerbaijanis, 100 percent of the Georgians, 81.8 percent of the Germans, 77.8 percent of the Karachaevs, 75 percent of the Turks, 75 percent of the Uyghurs, and 54.9 percent of the Slavs feel inadequately represented in power organs.[19] In the Parliament of Tajikistan, there are no Russian members,[20] and the Constitution of Turkmenistan, explicitly states that the president of the country can be only Turkmen.

The Language Question

Titular ethnicization is manifested also in the language situation. In all post-Soviet Central Asian countries the languages of titular ethnoses have been declared state languages although, most members of non-titular groups do not know these languages. For example, in Kazakhstan, according to the 1989 census, the percentage of non-Kazakhs who could speak fluent Kazakh was as follows: Russians – 0.8 percent, Germans – 0.7 percent, Ukrainians – 0.6 percent, Belorussians – 0.4 percent, Poles – 0.4 percent, Koreans – 1.1 percent. Even among Turkic-speaking peoples, the knowledge of Kazakh was

[15] Brusina 2003.
[16] Panarin 2003, p. 439; cf. Gellner 1990, pp. 58–62.
[17] Karin and Chebotarev 2002.
[18] Stepina 2001.
[19] Elebaeva and Omuraliev 1998.
[20] http://www.rusedina.org

not much better. For example, only 5.8 percent of Uzbeks and 6.6 percent of Tatars could speak Kazakh fluently. At the same time, 72.8 percent of the population of Kazakhstan, and among ethnic Kazakhs 64 percent, could speak fluent Russian.[21] According to the data of experts, less than 5 percent of the Russians in Uzbekistan know Uzbek.[22]

As for Russian as an interethnic language, the Kyrgyz scholar Saralaev 2002 writes,

> This situation seems paradoxical. The Russian (Slavic) language, which is absolutely strange to our language, is popular, and its degree of influence in our country is much higher than that of kindred (Turkic) languages. But if we take into account historical facts, economic causes, degree of richness of various information in Russian, systems of communicating and real technical means of their delivery, and the number of Russian-speaking people, this situation does not seem as paradoxical.[23]

Kazakh scholars give a similar assessment. Baytenova 1998, while arguing for the thesis that the Kazakh language should be the means of consolidation and integration of Kazakh society, is nevertheless compelled to note:

> But the reality of the present language situation in Kazakhstan shows that the Kazakh language does not carry out its given function, in spite of the fact that it is proclaimed by legislation as the state language. ... The main reason is the absence of an objective need for the Kazakh language for the state. Knowledge of Russian suffices for communication, the conduct of professional duties, and the exchange of information. ... Administrative introduction of the Kazakh language in office-work has not led to an expansion of its communicative functions.[24]

The introduction of state languages in the newly-independent states has not changed the actual status of Russian as the language of interethnic communication. But the requirement of knowing the language of titular ethnic groups in order to get state positions has led to the indigenization of state structures. State language laws and their implementation have thus become tools for an ethnocentric policy.[25]

The 'Historical Right' of Dominance

Titular ethnicization is manifested also in the conception and policy of the unconditional right of titular ethnic groups for dominance in a given state. Although Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmens, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz lived together in Central Asia for centuries, today the new state ideology in all new Central Asian states is based on the above-mentioned idea of the 'historical right' of each titular ethnos over a given territory. Discussing President Nazarbaev's idea of a new state ideology to play the 'integrating role of Kazakh culture' for all the peoples of Kazakhstan, the Kazakh scholar Masanov 2002 writes:

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[21] Masanov 2002.
[22] Schlyter 1997.
[23] Saralaev 2002, p. 449.
[24] Baytenova 1998, p. 129.
[25] Karin and Chebotarev 2002.

> In this way, an ideology has been firmly reinforced in the social consciousness of Kazakhs, according to which Kazakhs as the indigenous ethnos have the unconditional right to political domination in the territory of Kazakhstan. Their language is to become the state language, and Kazakh culture is to play the integrating role for 'all ethnic groups in the country'. Consequently, representatives of the Kazakh ethnos have a 'natural' and 'historic' right to occupy the country's top government posts and to receive preferential treatment with respect to higher education, career advancement, and study of their culture and history.[26]

Titular ethnicization is manifested also in the dominant role of the culture (traditions, religion, mentality, values, style of behavior, historic heroes, etc.) of the titular ethnos in a given state. Karin and Chebotarev 2002 write:

> The citizens of Kazakhstan, representing more than one hundred nationalities, are being presented with a national patriotic ideology of the revival and self-identification of the Kazakhs. At the same time, it is quite clear, the history and spiritual values of the republic's other peoples, who under Kazakhstan's constitution are supposed to enjoy equal rights with Kazakhs, are ignored.[27]

The emigration of the non-titular population, along with interethnic tension, has led to the realization of the necessity of correcting the nationality policies of the states. The point is that the former policy has inflicted casualties not only on ethnic minorities but also on the states as a whole, including titular ethnic groups. These casualties can be observed in industry, science, education, etc. Nowadays, some attempts to correct the nationality policy can be seen in countries with achievements in democratizing public life. In Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, in particular, the problems of the rights of ethnic minorities are subject to – at times very open – discussions. Besides, one can see in these countries the transition from discussion to some practical actions to change the situation, such as the reconsideration of the status of Russian in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Conclusion

As regards the national revival – and survival – of ethnic minorities, we have noted that it has been reduced to culture. In a wider sense, revival implies the gamut of ethnicity, including a political component. However, given the present situation, we cannot say that the political consciousness of ethnic minorities has led to strong political activity in Central Asia. Only recently have the leaderships of some (not all) national associations come to realize the necessity of deviating from purely cultural paradigms in their activities. As Tskhai, President of the Association of Koreans in Kazakhstan, has said:

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[26] Masanov 2002, p. 25; cf. Oka 2002 (p. 111): 'History is being mobilized to support the idea that only Kazakhs have rights to claim the status of an indigenous people in Kazakhstan.'

[27] Karin and Chebotarev 2002, p. 73–74; cf Elebaeva and Omuraliev 1998: 'The sovereignty of the republic was interpreted by a certain part of the indigenous population, first of all, as sovereignty of the titular nation and the creation of priorities for it in all spheres of life.' The same situation can be found in the other Central Asian states.

> Our association has already grown out of its small breeches from the time when it was concerned with learning our language and folk traditions. We want to take an active part in the political life of the country now.[28]

Russian organizations like the Russian Community in Kazakhstan, the Slav movement *Lad* (Harmony), as well as Kazakh organizations carry out active political activity and debates, including questions on ethnic discrimination and equal rights. The question of equal rights for all ethnic groups is also discussed in Kyrgyz media.

Ethnic minorities in the Central Asian republics confront a problem of choice: emigrate or adapt. In this context, a preference for the former option prevails among non-indigenous peoples, according to sociological data. To prevent further emigration, the states must change their nationality policies. These policies should include democratic and humanitarian principles, and shifts from ethnocentrism to an expansion of minority rights. In turn, minority groups must seek broader inclusion by stepping up their political activities, and international institutions and organizations should also play a role in reforming these policies. An important component of new policies to be implemented by Central Asian governments could be a working out of a State Complex Program on Ethnic Minorities.

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[28] Tskhay 2000, p. 163.

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The Karakalpaks and Other Language Minorities under Central Asian State Rule

BIRGIT N. SCHLYTER

The demise of the USSR meant the invalidation of concepts such as 'Soviet language' and 'Soviet people', once intended to develop into a new cultural identity (*homo sovieticus*). After the dissolution of the Union on 25 December 1991, there were no longer any Soviet languages, and in the absence of a Soviet state, Russian lost its role as the supra-ethnic, all-union Soviet language. In Central Asia there were instead a number of official languages proclaimed already in 1989–1990 by the enactment of special state language laws. As official languages, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik acquired, in addition to their position as ethnic or so-called nationality languages, a new role as supra-ethnic state languages, in like fashion to the former status of Russian as a Soviet language.

While new state languages and efforts to consolidate them as such place Russian in a disadvantaged but highlighted spot for contrastive effect, most other minority languages are left largely neglected in current Central Asian language policy. The main concern of the present study is to consider what the prospects are for the maintenance of minority languages and cultures under the impact of Central Asian state- and nation-building and, in connection with this, what conclusions could be drawn as regards the political balance between center and periphery in Central Asian states. Particular attention will be given to Karakalpak, which contrasts with other Central Asian minority languages by being the titular language of an autonomous republic (though not state) and a de facto official language for the entire territory of that republic.

As was formerly the case in the Uzbek SSR, Karakalpakstan remains an autonomous republic, this time within the borders of independent Uzbekistan, where it makes up more than one third of the Uzbek state territory. This political status is unique to Karakalpakstan and is not found anywhere else in present-day Central Asia. The Karakalpak Republic has its own constitution and parliament. After Uzbek independence the province has been given additional symbols of autonomy, such as a flag and emblem of its own (1992) and a national anthem (1993). In Uzbek state language laws, both before and

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after independence, the Karakalpak Republic has been granted a fairly large amount of linguistic autonomy.

In spite of such new measures accentuating Karakalpak autonomy, my conclusion is at this stage of research that the degree of Karakalpak political and linguistic autonomy is decreasing, even though Karakalpakstan retains its status as autonomous republic, in accordance with what was stipulated for this region when it was integrated with the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. This could be viewed as further evidence of a more general tendency towards state centralism with decisive effects on minorities in general.[1]

Karakalpak History and Linguistic Culture

Most of the Karakalpaks, or 90–95 percent of the whole Karakalpak ethnic group in Central Asia, live in the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, which consequently is regarded as the present-day homeland of the Karakalpak people. On the other hand, the Karakalpaks are a small Central Asian minority. They number about 400,000 in Uzbekistan and constitute only 2 percent of the republic's total population. Moreover, though the titular people of Karakalpakstan, they constitute only around one third of the population of this autonomous republic.[2] As for other ethnic groups, there is a similar number of ethnic Uzbeks and the Kazakh population is just a little smaller than the Karakalpak and Uzbek ones. In addition to these, there are several other much less numerous nationality groups, such as Turkmens, (ca 50,000), Russians (ca 18,000), Koreans (ca 8,000), and Tatars (ca 7,000). Due to post-independence emigration of non-Karakalpaks the proportion of Karakalpaks in the total population of Karakalpakstan is increasing.[3]

During the Soviet period, the legal status of the Karakalpak region went through three major stages. With the so-called national delimitation of Turkestan in the middle of the 1920s, Karakalpakstan was incorporated as an autonomous oblast with the then Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, subsequently the Republics of Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan. In 1932 it was turned into an autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic. Finally, in 1936, when Kazakhstan became a full-fledged Soviet republic and Karakalpakstan was thus isolated from the rest of the RSFSR, the Karakalpak ASSR was, with no change in status, adjoined to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan.

By virtue of its republican autonomy, the Karakalpak administration in Nukus, the capital, made an attempt at declaring independence in 1990, on the eve of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This move was hardly spurred by any strong feeling of nationhood and economic potential. It was rather a desperate act to prevent an even greater loss of cultural identity and

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[1] This chapter is based on studies carried out within the framework of a large-scale research program financed by Stockholm University on language policies including minority language issues in present-day Central Asia. For further details about Central Asian language laws and language reforms, see e.g. Landau and Kellner–Heinkele 2001; Schlyter 1997, 2002b, 2003a, 2004.

[2] Thus, the official status of the language is not legitimized by any majority number of speakers but is defined by a politically delimited territory. This is unique to Karakalpak in relation to all other minority languages in Central Asia.

[3] Jacquesson 2002.

sociopolitical self-esteem. The chances of real political autonomy for Karakalpakstan seem infinitesimal because of such facts as great poverty, the scarcity of people in the province, and the environmental catastrophe in the Aral Sea Basin, due to which Karakalpakstan is economically and socially deteriorating into a new third-world status. The drainage of the Aral Sea, as a result of excessive irrigation schemes, has had a devastating effect on the ecological system of the whole region including the health of the local population.[4] Life expectancy for both men and women is much lower than in the rest of Uzbekistan and as many as two thirds of new-born babies suffer from illnesses or deformations. From a general socio-economic point of view the province is poor and has seen little industrialization. A major part (ca 60 percent) of the inhabitants of Karakalpakstan is a rural population engaged in agriculture, mainly the cultivation of cotton.

The declaration of Karakalpak independence in 1990 did not even receive much support from the people living in Karakalpakstan, not to mention the international community. Consequently, the Karakalpaks remained Uzbek subjects.

Although the historical origin and identity of the Karakalpaks has been subject to debate and conflicting opinions, Karakalpak historiography follows the general trends of Turkic legends and historical accounts, and the formation of the Karakalpaks into a 'people' in their own right is stated to have started in the 16th century against a background of a long-standing common-Turkic cultural legacy.[5] The final differentiation of Turkic tribes and clans into the population categories that we are used to thinking of today occurred in the 13th to 16th centuries. Turkic literature demonstrates a similar development. Early Turkic epics, for example, are rendered and modified in younger versions specific to particular population groups. In this fashion, ancient common-Turkic literature was with time transformed into 'national' literatures. Common-Turkic folk literature constitutes a strong cultural bond between the Turkic peoples, at the same time as they in later versions become cornerstones in the different national literatures of Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, etc.

The first occurrence of the name Karakalpak known to history is from 1598, when it was mentioned in connection with people dwelling along the lower Syr Darya.[6] The name means 'black cap' (*qara qalpaq*) and may have the same reference as an earlier Russian designation, *chernye klobuki*[7] (plur., 'black caps', where the second word is a Russian metathetic variant of Turkic *qalpaq*), which appeared in chronicles from as early as the twelfth century referring to Turkic people along the eastern and southern parts of the Dnieper, Don and Volga rivers. As residents and a herding people on the eastern shores of the Aral Sea during the first half of the eighteenth century, the Karakalpaks came into contact with Tsarist Russia as well as the neighboring Turkic khanates of Bukhara and Khiva, the latter of which eventually, in the early 19th century, took control of their land and turned its inhabitants into Khivan subjects till the Russian conquest of this khanate in 1873.[8]

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[4] See e.g. Klötzli 1994; Kiessling 1998; Kobori and Glantz 1998, pp. 23-88. Cf. Björklund in this volume.
[5] See e.g. Esbergenov 1988; *Istoriya karakalpakskoy literatury* ... (1994); Kamalov 2001.
[6] Krader 1963.
[7] Ibid., p. 66; for Old-Russian spelling, see Menges 1947, p. 5.
[8] Barthold 1973; Jacquesson 2002.

As regards earlier stages, or the pre-stages of Karakalpak ethnicity, there has not to this date been any complete consensus among scholars of language or scholars of other disciplines relating to ethnic features. The Karakalpak language of today is closer to Kazakh than to Uzbek. Phonological features in both Karakalpak and Kazakh relate these languages to north-eastern Turkic languages in Central Siberia and the Altai region. This is not, however, any definite proof of a straightforward eastern descent of the Karakalpak people. They could as well have originated from migrating western Turkic tribes or – alternatively, as some scholars have suggested – they were western tribes deported eastward towards their present habitat sometime during the first centuries of the second millennium, e.g. in connection with the Mongol campaigns in the 13th century.[9]

Now, uncertainty about their early descent need not be of any greater concern to the Karakalpaks. To them it may matter more to be the titular people of an autonomous region, where they have the right to conduct their own language policy within the confines of this region and where their Karakalpak language has the status of official language. In this respect they are in a far better situation than many other minorities of a comparable size, as far as the maintenance and development of their native language and their own ethnic culture is concerned. An interesting comment provided during an interview with a young researcher from the Nukus Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography[10] gives a good illustration to the point. According to him, it had been a good solution for Karakalpakstan to become an autonomous part of Uzbekistan instead of being joined to the Kazakhs, which was the other option in connection with the reorganization of Soviet republics in 1936. Due to the great similarities between Karakalpak and Kazakh, the former would most probably have lost its status of independent language and become even more assimilated to the latter, larger language, had Karakalpakstan been included in the Kazakh SSR. Such a development would also, most probably, have meant a greater threat to Karakalpak culture in general.

Karakalpak Language Issues

It remains to be seen what impact the new political context in Central Asia will have on the relationship between ethnic groups. As far as the Karakalpak people is concerned, a number of conditions indicate that the degree of Karakalpak political autonomy is decreasing – a development that most certainly will also affect Karakalpak cultural and, consequently, national identity. Not least in linguistic matters, Karakalpakstan has become more dependent on the central Uzbek government. Already the slight rephrasing of the paragraph concerning Karakalpak linguistic autonomy in the 1995 revision of the first Uzbek state language law from 1989 could in fact be interpreted as an indication of a deliberate move by the central government in order to infringe upon independent Karakalpak language planning. In the original law, which was passed by the Uzbek Parliament on 21 October 1989, Karakalpakstan was granted the right to 'decide on all linguistic issues within

[9] See Menges 1947, pp. 4ff.
[10] Anonymity requested, 13 November 2003.

its own territory'.[11] In the 1995 version, no mention was made of 'all linguistic issues' but merely 'issues concerning language function'.[12] Evidence for this development is the fact that after 1995, the year of the Uzbek state language law revision, decision making in Nukus regarding Karakalpak reform work on language corpus, i.e. the linguistic forms themselves – so far mostly considerations of a change-over to Latin script – has been subjected to more severe Tashkent control than before.

Latin alphabets have been introduced for both Karakalpak and Uzbek. The first version of the Karakalpak alphabet was adopted on 26 February 1994,[13] independently of the first post-independence Uzbek alphabet, the law on which had been passed by the Uzbek Parliament about half a year earlier. The Karakalpak alphabet did not follow the principles of the Uzbek one but was based on a general Turkic alphabet – very much like the Turkey Turkish one – agreed upon by the representatives of a large number of Turkic-speaking peoples at different conferences organized in Turkey in the early 1990s.[14] Less than two years later, in August and December 1995, respectively, a major revision of both alphabets was made, and this time the Karakalpak alphabet[15] showed the same type of changes as had been adopted for the Uzbek alphabet a few months earlier.

Resolutions in Nukus must be ratified by the all-state parliament, *Oliy Majlis*, in Tashkent. This was also the case in 1994, when the first version of the Karakalpak Latin alphabet was adopted. The Tashkent control over Nukus is thus nothing new. What may be new, however, is Tashkent control over the content of resolutions before they are passed by the Nukus Parliament, as a result of which Karakalpak self-determination becomes still more curtailed.

Minorities at a Loss under Central Asian State Rule

Further research is needed for more comprehensive evaluations and conclusions as to whether Central Asian minorities in general are losing out to tendencies of political centralism and titular-ethnic standardization in the cultural sphere. There are a great number of minority populations in Central Asia and the conditions under which they maintain their ethnic identity vary a lot.[16] This circumstance becomes still more precarious in view of the fact that very little attention has been paid to minority issues by the political leadership. At the same time, one could ask how much the minorities themselves can evaluate their own situation under the prevailing new conditions and take due measures against possible future obstacles.

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[11] *O'zbekiston Sovyet Sotsialistik Respublikasining Qonuni: O'zbekiston SSRning davlat tili haqida* (1989), p. 5 (preamble).

[12] 'O'zbekiston Respublikasining Qonuni: O'zbekiston Respublikasining davlat tili haqida (yangi tahrirda)', published in *Khalq So'zi*, No. 250, on 29 November 1995, paragraph 3.

[13] *Qaraqalpaq tilining imla qaghyydalary* (1994); see picture in Fig. 1.

[14] The earliest conference on an all-Turkic basis was held in November 1991; see Devlet 1992.

[15] See picture in Fig. 2; cf. *Latyn grafikasyna tiykarlanghan qaraqalpaq alfavitin engiziw haqqynda* (1995).

[16] Cf. Khan in this volume.

Figure 1. The 1994 Karakalpak Latin alphabet; cf. footnote 13.

«ЕРКИН ҚАРАҚАЛПАҚСТАН»

БИРИНШИ ШАҚЫРЫҚ
ҚАРАҚАЛПАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫ ЖОҚАРҒЫ КЕНЕСИНИҢ
БЕСИНШИ СЕССИЯСЫ

«ЛАТЫН ГРАФИКАСЫНА ТИЙКАРЛАНҒАН ҚАРАҚАЛПАҚ АЛФАВИТИН ЕНГИЗИЎ ҲАҚҚЫНДА» ҚАРАҚАЛПАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫҢ НЫЗАМЫНА ӨЗГЕРИСЛЕР ҲӘМ ҚОСЫМШАЛАР КИРГИЗИЎ ҲАҚҚЫНДА» ҚАРАҚАЛПАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫҢ НЫЗАМЫН ҲӘРЕКЕТКЕ ЕНГИЗИЎ ТӘРТИБИ ҲАҚҚЫНДА

ҚАРАҚАЛПАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫ ЖОҚАРҒЫ КЕНЕСИНИҢ ҚАРАРЫ

Басма	Жазба	Аўтыл	Кирил	Басма	Жазба	Аўтыл	Кирил
Aa	*Aa*	*a*	а	Mm	*Mm*	*me*	м
A'a'	*Ā ā*	*a*	ә	Nn	*Nn*	*ne*	н
Bb	*Bb*	*be*	б	N'n'	*Ñ ñ*	*ñe*	ң
Dd	*Dd*	*de*	д	Oo	*Oo*	*o*	о
Ee	*Ee*	*e*	е э	O'o'	*Ō ō*	*ō*	ө
Ff	*Ff*	*fe*	ф	Pp	*Pp*	*pe*	п
Gg	*Gg*	*ge*	г	Rr	*Rr*	*re*	р
G'g'	*Ǧ ǧ*	*ǧa*	г	Ss	*Ss*	*se*	с
Hh	*Hh*	*he*	ҳ	Tt	*Tt*	*te*	т
Xx	*Xx*	*xa*	х	Uu	*Uu*	*u*	у
Ii	*Ii*	*i*	ы	U'u'	*Ü ü*	*ü*	ү
İi	*İi*	*i*	и	Vv	*Vv*	*ve*	в
Jj	*Jj*	*je*	ж	Ww	*Ww*	*we*	ў
Kk	*Kk*	*ke*	к	Yy	*Yy*	*ye*	й
Qq	*Qq*	*qa*	қ	Zz	*Zz*	*ze*	з
Ll	*Ll*	*el*	л	Sh sh	*Sh sh*	*she*	ш (ц,щ)

Figure 2. The revised 1995 Karakalpak Latin alphabet; cf. footnote 15.

The Karakalpaks may be happy to note that their native language has remained an independent language, which it might not have done to the same extent had Karakalpakstan become an autonomous republic within the Kazakh SSR. However, at the same time they are currently faced with a situation where Karakalpak language reform develops under the impact of Uzbek language policy with much Uzbek influence on Karakalpak, as regards not only alphabet reform but also changes in the lexicon.

Uzbek state-wide standardization can be observed in other fields of society and culture as well. The year 2003 was proclaimed by President Karimov as the 'Year of the mahalla' in all of Uzbekistan. *Mahalla* (< Arabic, 'site', 'locality') is a traditional form of organizing the people of a residential area into a community of social and cultural interaction. This pattern was developed primarily in urban environments, among sedentary people and with time it has become strongly associated with Muslim culture.[17] The *mahalla* system as reinforced by the Karimov government for local self-government in present-day Uzbekistan has been judged by certain Western scholars to be nothing but a continuation of Soviet-style social welfare policy, with the difference being, though, that this time it appears in a traditional Muslim disguise. Its work is carried out by 'respected' members of the community, rather than by professional social workers, and administered by, among others, the chairman (*rais*, 'head') of the *mahalla* committee, who is appointed by the local district government, and an elderly man (*oqsoqol*, 'whitebeard'), selected by fellow residents for his wisdom and social authority.[18] Among the Karakalpak, for whom tribal identity is of fundamental importance[19] and who seem to have weaker bonds to Islam than the Uzbek majority population, *mahalla* has not been a natural form of social organization. Comments like 'We never lived like this. But, of course, we know what it is, and we try to follow the instructions that have now been given to us by the government', were heard when I asked people about the *mahalla* system during my November 2003 visit to Nukus.

Current *mahalla* policy in Uzbekistan could thus be another example of cultural hegemony of the central power towards the periphery – with effects also on language habits. The examples of Uzbek lexical interference into Karakalpak that were given to me this time were words of Arabic origin formerly used in Uzbek which are now reappearing in Uzbek-language practice as a consequence of revived Muslim culture among the Uzbeks – and apparently spreading to minority people as well. For example, the word *mustaqillik*, 'independence', from an Arabic root (and with the Turkish suffix *-lik*) is frequent in present-day Uzbek and has come to replace Russian *suverenitet*, which was in use during the Soviet era in all of Uzbekistan, including Karakalpakstan. Although *mustaqillik* was part of the Chaghatay vocabulary in nineteenth-century Turkestan, it has not been used in the

[17] Alternative minority language terms can be found for similar types of social organization (e.g. Tajik *guzar*). However, *mahalla* is by far the most common term used in Uzbekistan. For a critical discussion about the *mahalla* and other types of neighborhood systems, see Poliakov 1992.

[18] Sievers 2002; Kamp 2004. One account in Uzbek of traditional Tashkent *mahallas* is Orifkhonova 2002, written on the eve of the 'Year of the Mahalla', with due courtesy to President Islam Karimov.

[19] Jacquesson 2002.

Karakalpak language, which has a word of its own with the same meaning, *ghərezsizlik*.[20] Why then should the Karakalpaks have to adopt an Arabic word instead of an equivalent indigenous word, asked one interlocutor[21] employed at the Nukus University.

Trans-boundary language settings are another type of environment where the presence of official majority language policies in Central Asian states has special implications and may cause confusion in the field of linguistic communication between citizens in one and the same country. One example is the large bilingual Uzbek–Tajik region across the border between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, involving both language minorities and overlapping majority language groups supported by the official language policy of their respective states. With the emergence of new state borders in the early 1990s, there appeared a stronger line of demarcation than before through the Uzbek–Tajik linguistic area, separating varieties of the two languages spoken on one side of the border from those spoken on the other side. More than one million people on either side of the border are reported to be of the same ethnicity as that of the titular population on the opposite side and the age-old Uzbek–Tajik bilingualism can be expected to constitute a prominent linguistic pattern in this region for the foreseeable future. On the other hand, new language policies in the respective states will most certainly have their impact on this situation. A new status relationship between the two languages will develop for a great number of speakers, changing the conditions for the choice of language in different speech situations. For instance, although from a Tajik point of view the state-border separation of Tajik language communities from Uzbek ones may provide stronger protection against continued Uzbekification on the Tajik side of the border, the new political reality may have a disruptive effect on Tajik speech and writing across this border.[22] What consequences this situation may have on the trans-boundary cohesiveness of one or the other language is another topic in want of future research.

In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, issues on bilingualism and language status have been concerned mostly with Kazakh–Russian and Kyrgyz–Russian bilingualism, respectively, due to the previously large, but now shrinking percentage of Russians in the two states. As regards non-titular ethnic groups other than the Russians, including trans-boundary language communities, official policy in both countries has been less articulate or even discriminatory. Uzbek in Kyrgyzstan, for example, has not received any official recognition despite the fact that the Uzbek population is now the largest minority in the country (14 percent). According to Dave 2004, Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks are underrepresented in the higher echelons of power in general and in comparison to their numbers they have too low a share in the local administration of the southern oblasts of Osh and Jalalabad, where they constitute about 25 percent and 40 percent of the population, respectively.

For miniscule or dwindling Central Asian minorities, which in contrast to minorities like the aforementioned Karakalpaks and others have not received any special attention in language laws, or which have no access to cultural

[20] In the 1995 Karakalpak Latin script, *g'a'rezsizlik*: cf. alphabet in Fig. 2.
[21] Anonymous.
[22] Schlyter 1997, 2004.

support from any larger linguistically related language community,[23] minority rights and minority policy may turn out to be even more intriguing and sensitive issues. The old Central Asian Arab population, for example, is such a dwindling minority numbering less than 50,000 in Central Asia as a whole. Most of them live in Uzbekistan, concentrated to a small number of communities where they constitute the majority. The village of Jeynov, a former collective farm to the west of the city of Qarshi in the southern part of the country, is such a community, known to the outside world to be an 'Arab' village. When asked about their customs and language during a visit by the present author to Jeynov in September 1997, the inhabitants described themselves as an ethnic group of their own with their own language. Their language, which they called Arabic, is most probably a strongly relexified Arabic language variety or possibly an Arabic–Tajik mixed language. Being an isolated rural community with low mobility their linguistic assimilation has been limited to the nearest environment, a predominantly Tajik-language but typically bilingual Tajik- and Uzbek-speaking environment. During the Soviet era their ethnic identity was to a large extent officially denied or even suppressed, according to their own historical writing (Saidov and Ravshanov 1996). After independence they now expect greater opportunities to assert their ethnicity. However, what is not taken into account by these people is a future scenario where they are very likely to become more and more exposed to and integrated in socio-political orders set up by a new central government which is no longer as far away as during the former Soviet regime. There are good reasons for asking what will happen to such a language setting as the Arab one of Jeynov, when it is encompassed by global political actions for the purpose of standardization, such as citizenship education[24] and state language planning.[25]

Concluding Remarks: Center vs. Periphery, State vs. Society

The tendency towards stronger state centralism and consequently increased control by the central government over regional administration in Uzbekistan and perhaps also in the other states of the former Soviet Central Asia could be regarded as a natural and by no means unexpected course of development. The transformation from Soviet to post-Soviet power structures meant the reduction of a huge hierarchic complex of administrative units, where the distance between the center and the lowest levels had brought forth a large measure of alienation and anonymity or – from another perspective – self-reliance and autonomy. Given post-Soviet realities, the great change was to create a new central authority and to relate it to what was left of the Soviet hierarchy within the confines of the new state.

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[23] Central Asian Koreans, for example, generally considered to have been a well 'assimilated', i.e. Russified, minority during the Soviet era, now enjoy growing attention from South Korea as regards both business and culture, one consequence of which will most certainly be a greater interest in Korean language, history, and culture among members of this minority; Schlyter 2002a.

[24] Kanaev and Fägerlind 1996.

[25] Schlyter 2003a,b. The present text about the Jeynov Arabs is a slightly altered version of a passage in Schlyter 2003a.

Luong 2002 argues that the principle of regionalism applied by Soviet rulers for the sake of new loyalties and political stability in individual republics has to a large extent been retained in the three post-Soviet states included in her study – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. According to this author, it is this circumstance that mainly explains the fact that the transition to post-Soviet orders has been fairly calm and not as turbulent as might have been expected: 'Regionalism has contributed to political stability in Central Asia precisely because it has ensured an important degree of continuity with the Soviet system.'[26] Now, continuity does not necessarily mean non-change. The relationship between center and periphery or center and region is gradually changing in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states. The result of this will most certainly be, albeit to varying degrees for different republics, a strengthening of the central power and an all-state standardization not experienced even during Soviet times and which will in no small way affect minority communities.

Uzbek President Islam Karimov has acted with caution as regards center-periphery relations in Uzbekistan.[27] However, at the same time as old orders were retained and local élites were left with a seemingly large portion of influence, measures were taken already during the first years of independence in order to strengthen the presidential control of regional administration. In January 1992, a State Control Committee was established with representations in all of the country's thirteen provinces, including Karakalpakstan. This agency was directly subordinated to the president. Likewise, appointments, and dismissals, at regional and local administrative levels were subjected to greater control by the central government. In September 1993, a law on local government was passed to the effect that, among other things, local leaders were given the responsibility of reporting on *mahalla* committee activities directly to the central authorities, not as before to leaders (*hokims*) at the regional level.[28] This law was revised in April 1999, according to Sievers 2002,[29] who also states that in contrast to pre-independence orders, *mahalla* committees may now even have non-residents among their functionaries and their chairmen and secretaries receive state salaries.

Among the ex-Soviet Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan in particular has shown both decentralization to a considerable degree and concern for the cultural autonomy of minorities, paired with efforts to define the republic's statehood on civic criteria rather than titular nationality features. These are, however, parallel but not necessarily interconnected processes. Decentralization has been basically confined to former Soviet–Kyrgyz power élites and has had little to do with any all-state minority policy.

For minority cultures, and more generally, for minorities at large, this development may have negative, if not devastating effects. In a recent work, Luong 2004a, the same author as was quoted above, elaborates not only on the balance between center and region but also on the impact of the Soviet regime on present-day Central Asian state rule:

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[26] Luong 2002, p. 100.
[27] Ilkhamov 2004.
[28] Ibid.; Luong 2002.
[29] Sievers 2002, p. 96, note 9.

> New evidence strongly suggests that the Soviet regime succeeded not only in profoundly transforming social and political organizations in Central Asia but also in blurring the boundaries between state and society in distinctive ways.[30]

This may very well be true. However, for the Karakalpaks and other minorities it is just another, perhaps more to-the-point elucidation of their endangered position. The weakening of Karakalpak autonomy could be regarded as conditioned first and foremost by a blurred or perhaps even non-existent distinction between state and society, where a weak civil society is faced with a strong state.[31] On the other hand, this state-of-affairs is aggravated by conditions under which the relationship between center and periphery, though balanced, nevertheless is one-dimensional in the sense that governing or influential élites at both levels belong to the same ruling apparatus. The checks and balances between center and periphery within this ruling apparatus hardly allows for political and/or cultural autonomy for the latter but rather a certain amount of influence on, or benefit from, the political and economic system dictated and enforced by the central power.

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[30] Luong 2004a, p. 4.

[31] Cf. Sievers 2002, who concludes that post-Soviet Uzbek *mahallas* are being transformed 'into the main agencies of an emerging absolutist state', where one and the same institution 'is becoming the focal point of all state and non-state functions' (p. 152).

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PART II

INTERSTATE ISSUES

Russia and Central Asian Security

MICHAEL FREDHOLM

Russia remains the key guarantor of security in Central Asia, despite often heard claims that the United States has assumed this position. However, Russia regards Central Asia as of far less priority than her relations with the United States, Europe, and China. By the end of the Soviet era, Central Asia was considered an economic burden rather than an asset. Today Russia sees much of Central Asia and the Caucasus as a source of regional conflicts, international terrorism, religious extremism, and narcotics trafficking. Russia's key priority in Central Asia is the struggle against Islamic extremism. Since the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, this no longer necessitates major military operations. Russia accordingly remains unlikely in the near future to involve herself directly in substantial military operations in Central Asia. She is far more likely, in case of need, to assist the Central Asian rulers, and if required, favored Afghan commanders, with military support, intelligence, advisors, and international diplomacy. The means of influence available to Russia in the CIS member states and Afghanistan before the American intervention remain available even with the existence of limited American bases in the region. In other words, despite appearances Russia has not yet surrendered her regional influence. As long as Russian forces remain in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Russia will remain a key player in the region.

The Russian National Security Concept and Foreign Policy Concept

The official Russian view on security policy is described in and confirmed by legislation.[1] The official view on Russia's foreign policy is likewise confirmed by another piece of legislation.[2] While discrepancies between official and actual policy certainly may occur, Russia, as a state, tends to take legislation seriously. There may be omissions in the legislation, deliberately so or merely because of events unanticipated when the legislation was adopted. Yet, Russia can generally be expected to follow her official policy. Any analysis of Russian security policy and foreign policy should begin in these two documents.

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[1] *Kontseptsiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti* ... (2000).
[2] *Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki* ... (2000).

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 97–116.

The national security concept was adopted in the wake of two events in 1999: the NATO air war against Yugoslavia which led to the separation of Kosovo and the resumption of Russia's war against Chechnya.[3] The national security concept accordingly identifies separatism, terrorism, and foreign (i.e. unilateral American or NATO) attacks on the territorial integrity of Russia or the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as key security threats.[4] When the national security concept was adopted, Russia accordingly emphasized the need for a multi-polar system of international relations. The concept only mentioned Central Asia by name once, as one of the regions in which the national interests of Russia may come under threat. However, references to regional conflicts, international terrorism, religious extremism, and narcotics trafficking no doubt were inspired at least in part by Central Asia, and in particular Afghanistan. The concept also pointed out that Russia strove to emphasize her relations with the CIS member states and Russia's traditional partners. In the military field, the concept particularly noted cooperation with the CIS member states, including the option of having limited contingents of Russian troops and military bases on their territory.

While even the previous national security concept had emphasized the threat from terrorism, two almost simultaneous events in early August 1999 brought the issue to the forefront of the Russian leadership: the outbreak of an Islamic rebellion in Dagestan together with the invasion of Dagestan by Islamic extremists from Chechnya, many but by no means all of whom were ethnic Chechens, although Dagestanis and other North Caucasian muslims also participated in the invasion which was led by two warlords, one Chechen and one Arab, and the invasion of the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan by armed, multi-ethnic extremists from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which not only consisted of Uzbekistani Uzbeks and Tajikistani Tajiks but also Arabs, ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks from Afghanistan, and even Pakistanis.[5]

The foreign policy concept, which was approved about half a year after the national security concept, in many ways mirrored the national security concept. The foreign policy concept emphasized the goal to form a good-neighbor belt along the perimeter of Russia's borders and the elimination of existing hotbeds of tension and conflicts there. Strategic partnership was to be developed with all CIS member states. The foreign policy concept attached special importance to joint efforts toward settling conflicts in CIS member states, and the development of cooperation in the military-political area and in the sphere of security, particularly in combating international terrorism and extremism. The foreign policy concept again emphasized the geopolitical

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[3] Work on the new national security concept reportedly began in spring 1999, probably as a reflection of the NATO air war against Yugoslavia. A draft of the concept was approved by the Russian Security Council in October 1999 and published in November 1999; Wallander 2000, p. 4. As compared to the November draft, the version of the national security concept eventually adopted played down the risk of direct military attack from enemies such as NATO and its members. This indicates that the threat from terrorism then was seen as more urgent than the threat of war breaking out with other states.

[4] The previous national security concept was *Kontseptsiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti* ... (1997). Being more concerned with social upheaval and economic crisis than military threats, it originated in a national security doctrine formulated and approved by the Russian Security Council chaired by Boris Yeltsin on 7 May 1997; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 7 May 1997.

[5] See e.g. Fredholm 2000, 2003a; Jonson and Esenov 2000.

position of Russia as one of the largest Eurasian powers. The conflict in Afghanistan was singled out as a real threat to the security of the southern CIS borders. The foreign policy concept specified that Russia, 'in cooperation with other states concerned, will make consistent efforts with a view to achieving a lasting and fair political settlement of the Afghan problem and interdicting the exportation of terrorism and extremism from that country'.

The foreign policy concept noted that relations with the United States were frosty at the time, indeed being characterized by 'considerable latter-day difficulties' and 'the presence of serious, and in a number of cases, fundamental differences'. Yet, Russia was prepared to work with the United States in a number of fields, including the 'prevention and settlement of the more dangerous regional conflicts'.

Although the foreign policy concept emphasized that relations with Europe was Russia's traditional foreign policy priority, it also specified that Russia wished to strengthen her traditional partnership with India and develop friendly relations with China. In addition, the foreign policy concept pointed out that it was important for Russia to develop further relations with Iran.

The foreign policy concept and the national security concept remain in force today. Following the hostage crisis in a Moscow theatre on 23–26 October 2002, however, it was announced that a new national security doctrine would be formulated, according to which Russia could deliver pre-emptive strikes against terrorists in other countries and use the armed forces against terrorists inside the country.[6] What complicates the picture, however, is that the option to deliver pre-emptive strikes against terrorists abroad almost certainly was aimed at Georgia, which for most of the year studiously had avoided any confrontation with the Chechens in the Pankisi Gorge. Among the large numbers of refugees from the war in Chechnya who had found a refuge there were also fighters who had fought the Russian occupation of Chechnya. However, Russia and Georgia mended fences at the CIS summit in Chisinau on 6–7 October 2002.[7] This, together with a wish not to force a confrontation with the United States, which earlier in the year had embarked upon a military assistance programme to Georgia,[8] may discourage Russia from adopting a more harsh national security concept at this point.

The Russian View of Central Asia

Central Asia is not a very important region to Russia. Indeed, Russia has problems of higher priority and more pressing engagements elsewhere. For Russia, the primary priority is and will no doubt remain in the foreseeable future her relations with the United States and Europe. After the dissolution of

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[6] Moscow Ren TV, 29 October 2002; *The Hindu* (India), 7 November 2002 (http://www.thehindu.com); *Moscow Times,* 14 November 2002 (http://www.moscowtimes.ru); Interfax, 30 January 2003.

[7] ITAR–TASS, 9 October 2002.

[8] The aim was to fight Chechen separatists from neighboring Chechnya, a few of whom were believed to be linked to Al-Qaida. About forty American military personnel visited Georgia in February 2002. See e.g. *Washington Post,* 27 February 2002, 2 March 2002; Devdariani 2002. Additional US Special Forces instructors arrived in late April in the same year; see *Washington Post,* 1 May 2002; *USA Today,* 30 April 2002. Cf. Hammer 2003, pp. 365, 478.

the Soviet Union, Russia was accordingly slow to formulate policy specifically towards Central Asia.[9] However, the existence of Russian military bases in Tajikistan as well as the ongoing war against separatists as well as Islamic extremists in Chechnya means that Russia cannot stay quite as aloof as the other neighboring great power, China. In addition, the unstable situation in Afghanistan and the rise of Islamic extremism since the emergence of the Taliban in 1994 prompted several Central Asian CIS member states to seek renewed relationships with Russia as they realized that Russia was the one major power that could guarantee regional security.[10] This development, in particular since Vladimir Putin rose to power in 1999, again increased Russia's influence in the region, apparently without her actively seeking it. The last point cannot be over-emphasized. Post-Soviet Russia has far greater problems, and other priorities, than any contemplation on whether it would be worthwhile to return to Central Asia, a region that by the end of the Soviet era was regarded as an economic burden rather than an asset.[11] Yet, Russia remains a far more important part of Eurasia than the new Central Asian republics for reasons of geography, size and military potential if nothing else.

Besides, Russia has a number of national interests in Central Asia. These include regional stability (any serious destabilization or armed conflict in Central Asia could cause severe repercussions to Russia); use of the transit potential of the region with regard to China, India, and Iran; the continued existence of a common economic sphere with Central Asia (the region remains an important market for Russian goods as well as a source of agricultural products and raw materials); and use of various strategic installations in Central Asia (among them several military surveillance and communications stations, Russian military bases, and the Baikonur space launch complex). International recognition of Russia's leading role in the region may well be termed yet another although less tangible national interest.[12]

Russia as a Guarantor of Central Asian Security

Russia also remains the one major power that in the long term can guarantee Central Asian security. In light of the American deployments during the War on Terror and the hyperbole surrounding them, this may need some explanation. First, Russia remains the militarily strongest external power within Central Asia. Russia controls 6,000–7,000 regular troops (the 201st 'Gatchina' Motor Rifle Division, to be changed in status into a military base) and perhaps as many as 14,500 border guards in Tajikistan. Russia also retains the ability to deploy aircraft to the region, as well as in case of serious conflict, launch air attacks against targets there. Russia even has naval assets in the region, in the form of the Caspian Flotilla.[13] The combat vessels, currently 32 in number, as well as manpower of the Caspian Flotilla, which includes naval infantry (the 77th Guards Moscow–Chernigov Independent Naval Infantry

[9] See e.g. Trofimov 2003, pp. 74f.
[10] Melvin 2000, pp. 91, 102.
[11] See e.g. Melvin 2000, p. 100.
[12] Trofimov 2003, p. 76.
[13] Jane's Sentinel: Russia, 30 May 2002, 28 August 2001; Jane's Sentinel: Tajikistan, 30 May 2002; Orr 2001; Ismagambetov 2002, p. 11; McDermott 2002, p. 17.

Brigade), have been reinforced in recent years.[14] In early August 2002, Russia, Kazakhstan, and reportedly also Azerbaijan conducted joint military exercises in the Caspian.[15] Naval infantry of the Caspian Flotilla served in Chechnya, remains a relatively élite force, and retains the ability both to seize beachheads in landing operations and conduct counter-insurgency operations. While the reinforcement of the Caspian Flotilla therefore no doubt is more a reflection of the present war in Chechnya and former unrest in Dagestan than any plans for Central Asia, the Russian naval presence there can just as well be used to project Russian military power to the states around the Caspian.

Second, the emergence of the Taliban in 1994, as noted, prompted several former Soviet Central Asian states to seek renewed relationships with Russia, as they realized the continuing importance of Russia as a regional guarantor of stability.[16] This was the period when the United States did not object to the Taliban regime and was even perceived by many as actively supporting the Taliban.[17] Russia was there, the United States was not – and this lesson might not yet have been forgotten.

Third, Russia will for geographical reasons always remain a close neighbor, even if the American forces are withdrawn due to domestic American concerns or commitments elsewhere.

Fourth, Russia is a leading member of two regional organizations with the potential eventually to develop into systems for collective security: the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). While admittedly neither has been of much use in real crisis situations so far, the potential eventually to develop into something functional remains.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia signed bilateral agreements on military and defense cooperation with the Central Asian CIS member states.[18] The chief agreement, however, was the Collective Security

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[14] The Caspian Flotilla comprises one patrol ship (the *Tatarstan),* five missile boats, seven landing ships and hovercraft, and several dozen gunboats and minesweepers; *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 12 August 2002; *Krasnaya zvezda,* 27 November 2002.

[15] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 2 August 2002; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Central Asia Report 2:30 (8 August 2002); *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 12 August 2002. For a yet more critical analysis, see *Kommersant,* 12 August 2002.

[16] Melvin 2000, pp. 91, 102.

[17] See Maley 1998, pp. 45-6, 49, 91, 134. American policy then saw the Taliban occupation of Afghanistan as a means primarily to (1) create a buffer state in Afghanistan to prevent Russian access to the former Soviet oil and gas resources in Central Asia and to isolate Iran, (2) restore order and evict Osama bin Laden and other foreign terrorists, and (3) allow the American energy company Unocal, its Saudi associate Delta Oil, and America's apparently loyal ally Pakistan overland access to what was believed to be the rich financial opportunities of the former Soviet Central Asian republics. There was also some hope that the Taliban would bring an end to the opium trade out of Afghanistan, and – most unrealistically of all – pave the way for the return of the former king, Zahir Shah. There is no real evidence that the United States actually supported the Taliban with weapons or funding; however, officials within the CIA and probably elsewhere were almost certainly informed about the Pakistani support of the Taliban and chose to regard this as a development beneficial to the interests of the United States; cf. Hammer 2003, pp. 137f.

[18] Jonson 2001, pp. 104–109.

Treaty (CST) of 15 May 1992, also known as the Tashkent Treaty. The Collective Security Treaty is a separate treaty and not part of the CIS charter.[19] All Central Asian states were parties to it with the exception of Turkmenistan, which instead regulated her military cooperation with Russia by means of a bilateral agreement. The treaty originally bound Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan into a collective security arrangement, and Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Belarus joined the following year; when the treaty was renewed in May 1999, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan refused to sign, instead forming GUUAM (so named after the initial letters of the organization's member states) in February 1999 with Ukraine and Moldova.[20] According to the treaty, the contracting parties are not to enter into any alliances or groups directed against any other party, they are to initiate consultations in the event of threats to their security or sovereignty, and they are to extend military assistance to each other in case of military aggression from outside powers. They are also to develop some degree of integration with regard to their military forces. The treaty does not provide for a joint command, although there is a loose coordination staff. The treaty also does not provide for joint operational planning or coordination of military training. Nor is there a common system of command and control.[21]

On 10 February 1995, a multilateral agreement was added to the treaty on the creation of a unified air defense system, aimed at the coordination of radar usage and anti-missile early-warning systems. Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova chose to remain outside this framework.[22] During the CIS summit in Chisinau in October 1997, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan agreed to develop the mulilateral CIS unified air defense system further.[23] While Ukraine and Uzbekistan participate in the unified air defense system, despite not being parties to the Collective Security Treaty,[24] not all other parties to the air defense agreement actually fulfill their obligations or participate in exercises, and some even refuse to participate in the work of the coordinating structures.[25] Whether Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan ever participated seems unclear for domestic political reasons, and Georgia may not be a very willing participant in the unified air defense system due to her outspoken ambition instead to join NATO – as well as the fact that Russian military aircraft on a number of occasions have attacked targets on Georgian territory.[26] Yet, groupings of joint air defense forces have been planned for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.[27]

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[19] For further information, see e.g. Minasian 2003.
[20] See e.g. Kochubei 2002; Arunova 2002.
[21] Petersson 1999, pp. 138f.
[22] See, e.g., *Krasnaya zvezda,* 21 August 2000. Other, lesser multilateral agreements have also been signed; cf. Petersson 1999, pp. 138f.
[23] *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 25 October 1997.
[24] Minasian 2003, pp. 132, 137.
[25] WPS Russian Media Monitoring Agency, 11 October 2002 (http://www.wps.ru), referring to Vremya MN, 11 October 2002.
[26] See e.g. Fredholm 2003b; Vignanksy 2002; Bochorishvili 2002; *IWPR's Caucasus Reporting Service* 156, 21 November 2002.
[27] *Rossiyskaya gazeta,* 9 October 2002. The plans to develop an air defense system for the southern part of the CIS, with a dedicated headquarters in Kazakhstan, were postponed in early April 2002 for a lack of funding; Smith 2002b, p. 7.

On 28 April 2003, a CIS summit resulted in the formal creation by Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan of a new political body, the Collective Security Treaty Organization[28] (CSTO). It was decided to form a unified CSTO headquarters in Moscow, probably to be headed by Russian Chief of the General Staff Anatoliy Kvashnin, by 1 January 2004. Nikolay Bordyuzha, a former KGB official and director of the Federal Border Service, was appointed secretary general of the new organization.[29] By then, the CSTO member states had already attempted to deal with the threats identified in the Russian national security concept in two ways: the creation of a counter-terrorism structure known as the CIS Anti-Terrorist Center and the formation of Rapid Deployment Collective Forces.

The CIS Anti-Terrorist Center[30] originated during the CIS summits in January and June 2000, when the member states agreed to create such a center and to work together to combat extremism, terrorism, and organized crime. The CIS Anti-Terrorist Center was planned to be set up in Moscow, with branches in affected regions. It is not envisaged as a center of actual operations or investigations into particular cases. A statute of the Anti-Terrorist Center, adopted in December 2000, described the functions of the center in the form of information analysis, the creation of an integrated data bank for security and special services, and coordination of measures by the competent bodies of the CIS member states. The CIS Anti-Terrorist Center in Moscow encountered unspecified problems, and was apparently not yet functioning by late 2001.[31] The Central Asian branch of the CIS Anti-Terrorist Center, however, which was to be opened in Bishkek in late 2001,[32] was reportedly in operation by 2002.[33]

The Collective Security Treaty includes provisions for rapid-reaction forces called Rapid Deployment Collective Forces, known under the Russian acronym KSBR.[34] The decision in principle to form collective forces to be used against external aggression and for anti-terrorist operations was taken during the October 2000 summit meeting of the signatories to the Collective Security Treaty.[35] It was decided to establish three regional security sub-systems within the Collective Security Treaty, one respectively in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. In May 2001, the decision was taken to set up the first KSBR force of about 1,500 men, with headquarters in Bishkek for counter-terrorist operations in Central Asia, and with troops contributed by Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.[36] The KSBR

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[28] *Organizatsiya Dogovora o kollektivnoy bezopasnosti (ODKB)* in Russian.

[29] See e.g. *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 25 April 2003; ITAR–TASS, 27 April 2003; *St. Petersburg Times,* 29 April 2003.

[30] *Antiterroristicheskiy tsentr SNG (ATTs)* in Russian.

[31] Jonson 2001, p. 109; Jonson 2002, pp. 239–240; Jonson 2003, pp. 85, 87.

[32] Smith 2001, p. 7.

[33] Aidarkul and Omarov 2003, p. 120.

[34] *Kollektivnye sily bystrogo razvertyvaniya.*

[35] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 12 October 2000 (http://www.rferl.org); Jonson 2001, p. 109. An attempt by Russia to introduce such forces within the CIS, the membership of which is broader than that of the CST, had failed at the January 2000 CIS summit; see Allison 2001, pp. 228–229.

[36] Jonson 2002, p. 240; Smith 2001, pp. 6–7; Minasian 2003, pp. 134f. It was later decided that a new collective force command and control system would be established within the framework of the Russian General Staff Main Operations Directorate, with regional staffs in the Eastern

force was formally set up in Bishkek on 1 August 2001, under the command of Major General Sergey Chernomordin. Its staff, under Colonel Nasypbek Abdybekov, held its first staff exercise on 22-24 August 2001. The KSBR force was based on the Russian 201st Motor Rifle Division in Tajikistan, which will provide a reinforced motor rifle battalion, together with a small Kyrgyzstani unit.[37]

In addition, on 14 June 2002, it was decided to deploy an aircraft group in support of the KSBR force.[38] For this purpose, a Russian aircraft group was in late 2002 based in the Kant Air Base, about 15 km north of Bishkek (and incidentally not very far from Manas International Airport, where the United States established her Gansi Air Base).[39] The KSBR unit in Central Asia is probably not yet fully operational.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) developed from a summit meeting in April 1996 between Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, which shared common borders. The resulting Shanghai Treaty of 26 April 1996 ratified and consolidated the borders between the former Soviet states and China. From 1999, the organization became known as the Shanghai Five after its five member states. The initial emphasis was on border demarcation and confidence-building measures.[40] During a summit meeting in Dushanbe on 5 July 2000, the Shanghai Five became the Shanghai Forum, as Uzbekistan was given observer status. At the summit meeting in Shanghai on 15 June 2001, Uzbekistan became a full member, and the Forum became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).[41]

The focus of the SCO was always security and since at least about 1999, a chief concern has been Islamic extremism and separatism. China and Russia even pledged to send troops to defend other states from terrorism and separatism – which was the first time China ever formally pledged in a treaty to project military power beyond her borders.[42] The SCO overlaps with the role played by the CIS Collective Security Treaty.[43] Yet, the SCO is not a military alliance, and the organization should not be regarded as such.

In July 1999, the member states agreed to establish a permanent mechanism for high-level meetings on security issues such as transnational crime and drug

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European, Caucasian, and Central Asian sectors. The KSBR in Central Asia is known as the *KSBR Tsentral'no-Aziatskogo regiona (KSBR TsAR).*

[37] Jonson 2003, p. 85; Orr 2001, p. 3.

[38] Otorbaev 2002.

[39] The group is expected to include more than a dozen aircraft of the Russian Air Force (five Su-27 'Flanker' interceptors, five Su-25 'Frogfoot' ground attack aircraft, two Il-76 'Candid' transports, two An-12 'Cub' or An-26 'Curl' transports, one An-30 'Clank' reconnaissance aircraft, and around two Mi-8 'Hip' helicopters), as well as around five L-39 Albatros trainers and a helicopter search-and-rescue team from the Kyrgyzstani Air Force. About 500–700 personnel were expected to be based at Kant. A draft agreement envisaged that Russian aircraft would use the base for 25 years; Interfax–AVN, 12 May 2003; ITAR–TASS, 30 April 2003; see also O'Malley and McDermott 2003.

[40] Jonson 2001, pp. 116f.

[41] See e.g. Trofimov 2002, pp. 86–92.

[42] Blank 2002, p. 12.

[43] Smith 2003, p. 7.

trafficking as well as transport cooperation and economic collaboration.[44] The result was a permanent body known as the Bishkek Group, formed in December 1999. The Bishkek Group comprised the heads of the law enforcement agencies and special services of the respective member states. This group was to meet at least once a year to coordinate activities against terrorism, separatism, and transnational crime.[45] The cooperation within the Bishkek Group developed into the ambition to set up a permanent SCO Anti-Terrorist Center in Central Asia along the lines of the CIS Anti-Terrorist Center, which was then being planned. During the summit in July 2000, it was agreed to establish such a center in Bishkek.[46] The new SCO Anti-Terrorist Center appears to have been intended to exist alongside the already projected CIS Anti-Terrorist Center in Bishkek. However, it was later announced that the SCO Anti-Terrorist Center would be established only in early 2004, and then in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent.[47]

Informal Means of Russian Influence in Central Asia

When discussing formal laws and treaties, it is easy to forget that countries also have informal means of exerting influence. In Central Asia, Russia has various such means at her disposal.

The CIS Member States

The CIS member states have been independent for little more than a decade. The vast majority of their leaders and intelligentsia were trained and educated in what was then the Soviet Union. With the exception of Uzbekistan and to a lesser degree Turkmenistan, Russian seems to remain a common language within the civil services of the Central Asian countries.[48] It would accordingly be incredible if the Russian leadership and special services could not use a multitude of personal contacts to further their objectives, if any, within the Central Asian states.

There is some evidence that not only the Soviet-educated élite remains favorably disposed towards Russia. Central Asians continue to study at Russian institutes and universities and some are regular employees in Russian commercial enterprises. Not all Central Asians in Russia are migrant seasonal workers. According to sociological polls among specifically young people in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, Russia is still perceived as the key guarantor of development and security in Central Asia. As many as 76.5 percent of the respondents in Tajikistan; 67.2 percent in Kyrgyzstan; 52.4 percent in Kazakhstan; and 42.5 percent in Uzbekistan believed that Russia 'might help to the greatest degree solve the problems of their countries'.[49] An

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[44] Jonson 2001, pp. 116f.

[45] Jonson 2001, pp. 125f., n. 74, referring to BBC Monitoring, *Inside Central Asia* 303 (29 November–5 December 1999). The Bishkek Group, unlike many other SCO structures, was set up quickly and functions as originally planned. Uzbekistan, however, has declined to participate; Interfax–Kazakhstan, 23 May 2002.

[46] See e.g. Trofimov 2002.

[47] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Central Asia Report 3:31 (12 September 2003).

[48] Cf. Schlyter 2003, 2004.

[49] Sharapova 2003, p. 70.

even higher percentage saw Russia as the country able to 'make the weightiest contribution to regional stability and security': 88.1 percent in Tajikistan; 71.5 percent in Kyrgyzstan; 60.6 percent in Kazakhstan; and 54.9 percent in Uzbekistan.[50] Especially the figure for Uzbekistan should be noted; more than half of the polled young people there still perceive Russia to be the key guarantor of stability and security in the region. As for the United States, only 15 percent in Tajikistan; 15.5 percent in Kyrgyzstan; 30.9 percent in Kazakhstan; and 36.2 percent in Uzbekistan expected that the United States could help solve the problems of their countries. Only 7.6 percent in Tajikistan; 18.2 percent in Kyrgyzstan; 25.5 percent in Kazakhstan; and 33.2 percent in Uzbekistan saw the United States as a key guarantor of regional stability and security. Interestingly, the polls indicate that Russia was not only regarded as the key guarantor of regional security but was even expected to be able to solve the domestic problems of the CIS member states to a far higher degree than the United States. The organizers of the poll concluded that young people in Central Asia were looking at the Western rather than Eastern or Islamic states for solutions to the many problems in their countries and the region as a whole. The polls indicate that they for this purpose identify Russia with the West, and moreover have what many would regard as a quite realistic view on the geographical situation which affects the respective role of Russia, Europe, and the United States.[51]

Russia's informal means are not limited to mere personal sympathies. The local economies of Central Asia also to some extent remain dependent on Russia. Even Uzbekistan appears to retain Russia as her main trade partner.[52] This leaves Russia the option of exerting economic pressure as well.

Afghanistan

By late 2001, many observers believed that the whole framework for Russia's continued influence in Afghanistan had collapsed overnight, as the United States in the war against the Taliban established military bases in several countries close to Afghanistan, and American aid in unprecedented amounts began to pour into Central Asia.[53]

Yet, Russia did not lose all influence in Afghanistan. The chief ministries of the new Afghan interim government were controlled by members of the Russian-supported Northern Alliance. While the United States through sheer military and political power prevailed in picking Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun, as head of the new government, Russia had long financed and armed the Northern Alliance and can be expected to retain a certain level of influence with its Tajik and perhaps even Uzbek leaders. Besides, Hamid Karzai might well have been acceptable to Russia and the Northern Alliance alike, for the very reason that his personal power base among the Pashtuns was

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., p. 72.
[52] See e.g. Linotte and Aune 2003, p. 54.
[53] See e.g. AP, 19 November 2001; *International Herald Tribune,* 19 February 2002 (on Uzbekistan); RIA Novosti, 11 December 2001; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Central Asia Report, 7 March 2002 (on Kyrgyzstan); Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 10 January 2002 (US restrictions on the transfer of military equipment to Tajikistan lifted).

comparatively weak.[54] Russia and Iran also supported the Northern Alliance, against the wishes of the United States, in its rapid advance that led to the fall of Taliban power in Kabul on 13 November 2001.[55]

Russia immediately afterwards showed her determination to reclaim an important role in Afghanistan by first arriving in Kabul with humanitarian aid (a Russian humanitarian center belonging to the Ministry of Civil Defense, Emergency Situations, and the Elimination of the Consequences of Natural Disasters was established in Kabul on 26 November)[56], then by being the second country (after Iran) to resume diplomatic relations with the Afghans. Russian diplomats arrived immediately after the fall of Kabul and moved into Kabul Hotel. An embassy officially re-opened on 28 December 2001.[57]

Afghanistan remains a concern for Russia because of her potential to cause instability in the region,[58] but the country forms no direct threat to Russian territory. Russian policy towards Afghanistan will no doubt remain pragmatic, as was exemplified by the fact that Russia provided support to Ahmad Shah Masud and his followers, those very Afghan warlords who fought Russia in the 1979–1989 Afghan war.[59] If Russia in the future sees the need to meddle in Afghan politics, she can certainly do so by supplying favored, probably Tajik or Uzbek commanders with weapons, supplies, and financial support. These were also the means available to Russia before the American intervention. In other words, despite appearances Russia has not yet surrendered her influence in Afghanistan.

Russian Relations with China

To determine the extent to which Russia is able to influence the situation in Central Asia, one must also evaluate Russia's relations with the other major powers in the region. First among these in importance is arguably China.

Russia shares a long border with China, and the Russian Far East is severely underpopulated in comparison to the Chinese territories just across the border. Russia accordingly realizes that it is far better to have good relations with China than to face an adversary situation, especially since Russia currently is weak while China is growing in strength both economically and militarily.[60] Moreover, Russia and China share a concern over Islamic extremism and separatism – which has been a prominent feature of the continuing work within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

While China currently is wealthier than Russia – and Russia derives substantial profits from arms sales to China – China in real terms no doubt needs Russia more than Russia needs China. Since at least 1997, China has repeatedly emphasized that she has no choice but to augment domestic energy sources through imports from abroad, in particular Central Asia and Russia.

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[54] See e.g. Rashid 2001.
[55] See e.g. *Economist,* 17 November 2001; *Guardian,* 15 November 2001.
[56] *Washington Post,* 28 November 2001, 29 November 2001. For the initial announcement, see AVN, 23 November 2001. See also the Ministry's web site, http://www.emercom.gov.ru
[57] Russian TV6, 28 December 2001; NTV, 28 December 2001. Iran reportedly re-opened her embassy in Kabul already within ten days of the departure of the Taliban; cf. Hiro 2002, p. 364.
[58] Jonson 1998, pp. 30f.
[59] See e.g. Isby 1989.
[60] Smith 2003, p. 3. See also Blank 1999.

Yet another Chinese interest in Central Asia, although perhaps not of immediate concern, is the creation of a regional rail network which, unlike the sea routes, would be beyond the control of the United States. Such a land transportation route, if fully functional, could in case of future conflict with the United States be used to move vital natural resources, consumer goods, and in particular war materials into and out of China. It is accordingly unlikely that China would support any move to increase the influence of the United States in the region, or the coming to power of a pro-American government in any country bordering China. The Chinese leaders would also no doubt prefer to retain influence over Pakistan, due to the continuing strategic objective of containing India and, in case of war, the hope to force India into a two-front war, a strategy that also includes Tibet and Burma.[61]

In the final analysis, however, both Russia and China regard their relationship with the United States as far more important than their relations with each other.[62]

Russian Relations with India and Pakistan

Russia has long-standing, good relations with India. The Soviet Union supplied India with about 70 percent of her arms imports, including recent models of fighter aircraft and submarines.[63] This relationship survived the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and Russia and India forged a strategic partnership between 1995 and 2000.[64] India remains Russia's second most important arms customer after China. Among acquisitions or planned purchases in recent years were not only fighter aircraft, naval vessels, and missiles but also Tu-22M 'Backfire' bombers.[65] The relations between Russia and India emerged in the Cold War rivalry between first the United States and the Soviet Union and then the Soviet Union and China. The foreign relations of Pakistan, India, and to some extent China can still be seen in the light of the Cold War rivalry.

While India forged links with the Soviet Union, Pakistan early on placed herself firmly in the Western camp.[66] As long as Pakistan protected the

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[61] Burles 1999, pp. 23, 39. See also e.g. Fredholm 1999; Fredholm 2002.

[62] Smith 2003, p. 13.

[63] Ispahani 1990, p. 31.

[64] See, e.g., *Jane's Foreign Report,* 30 November 2000, 6 October 2000.

[65] See, e.g., *Jane's Foreign Report,* 30 November 2000. India has leased ten Tu-22M3 bombers from Russia. Jane's Sentinel: India, 3 April 2003.

[66] On 8 September 1954 the United States, France, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan signed the Manila treaty creating the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). In the Middle East, Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Britain, and Iran formed the Baghdad Pact in February 1955 (re-designated the Central Treaty Organisation, CENTO, in 1958); see e.g. Nation 1992, p. 226. Pakistan and the United States also formalized their links through a 1954 Mutual Security Pact. The respective West–East alignment of Pakistan and India was reinforced in 1955, when Soviet leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolay Bulganin made a stop-over at Srinagar in Indian Kashmir, thus marking a new level of cooperation in Indo–Soviet relations; Schofield 1996, p. 178. However, Pakistan also grew dependent on support (against India in particular) from China. Relations between India and China soon grew violent. In the late 1950s, Indian and Chinese forces exchanged fire along their disputed frontier. In 1957, China accordingly began to develop good relations with Pakistan. This move began to pay off in 1960, when Pakistan in the United Nations for the first time broke ranks with the United States' established position regarding China's proposed membership of the United

Taliban, Russia applied pressure on Pakistan to encourage the Taliban to root out, or at least keep passive, those Islamic extremists that Russia considered a threat.[67] Russia's good relations with Pakistan's arch-enemy India no doubt emphasized the impact of this message on the Pakistani leadership, since any further development in Russo–Indian military cooperation would be a direct threat against Pakistan. Indeed, Russia, Iran, Tajikistan, and to some extent India appeared to form a nascent alliance based on a common interest in countering Pakistan's ambitions and local proxies in Afghanistan.[68] Although presumably dormant since the American involvement in Afghanistan began in late 2001, this alliance can easily be revived as the Americans pull out, if the participants continue to regard Pakistan as a security threat.

Yet, it was Islamic extremism, not Pakistani ambitions in a geopolitical sense, that Russia saw as a threat to herself and to regional stability. Having lost direct control over Afghanistan already in 1989, Russia no longer has any interest in a confrontation with Pakistan.

Russian Relations with Iran

Russia gives the impression of being an increasingly strong regional ally of Iran. This has been obvious in the growing trade between the two countries since the early 1990s[69] and also in the agreements to expand military-technical cooperation in December 2000 and March 2001. Russia is Iran's main foreign supplier of conventional weapons.[70] Although Russia was initially concerned about the possible spread of Islamic fundamentalism from Iran, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, headed by Yevgeniy Primakov, in 1994 stressed the distinction between 'Islamic fundamentalism' and 'Islamic extremism' and pointed out that only the latter was a threat to Russia. This paved the way for a more sophisticated policy towards Iran, especially from January 1996 when Primakov became foreign minister.[71]

Some Western analysts believe that Russia will abandon Iran when the Bush administration so requests. Even though Russia no doubt sees her relations with the United States as of higher importance than those with Iran, this is unlikely to happen as long as Russia benefits from the large volume of trade with Iran. In 2000, Russo–Iranian trade turnover was 603 million USD, a figure that grew close to 1,000 million USD in 2001. The major share of the trade consists of Russian exports. As for conventional arms sales, Iran appears to be Russia's third largest customer after China and India.[72]

In addition, the Russian ambition to maintain close and correct relations with Iran seems to be shared by most among those who are in a position to

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Nations. Pakistan merely abstained, instead of voting against the proposal, as the United States had wished.

[67] See e.g. Reuters, 29 September 2000; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, 2 October 2000.

[68] See e.g. Rashid 2000, p. 177; Fredholm 2002.

[69] See e.g. Herzig 1995, pp. 33f.

[70] Blanche 2001, p. 21; Korotchenko and Blanche 2001, pp. 18f. See also Smith 2002a.

[71] Jonson 1998, p. 30; Primakov 1996; cf. Rashid 2000, p. 177.

[72] Smith 2002a, pp. 3, 4.

influence Russia's security and foreign policy – and this factor in Russo–Iranian relations remains unchanged since the mid-1990s.[73]

The Russian View of the American Presence in Central Asia

Since the summit meeting between Presidents Putin and Bush near Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 16 June 2001 and yet more importantly, since the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC in September 2001, Putin has emphasized Russia's relations with the United States before those with Europe and Asia. Putin has also been eager to include the war in Chechnya in the general War on Terror – and to receive American support or, that failing, at least American acquiescence in the harsh methods used to enforce the submission of Chechnya. Despite the outcry of some domestic hawks, Russia accordingly did not object to the establishment of new American military bases in Central Asia by late 2001, chose not to send troops to fight the Taliban nor, after their fall, to keep the peace, and apparently played no significant role in the United Nations-sponsored Bonn agreement of 4 December 2001. While these decisions caused some domestic criticism,[74] they only confirmed the continuity of Russia's policy of regarding relations with the United States and Europe as her first priority.

Besides, it remains to be seen how deep and long-lasting the current American interest in Central Asia will be. The last period of American enthusiasm for Central Asia began after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, culminated in 1997 (rhetorical public statements claimed that the whole of the Caucasus and Central Asia was of strategic interest to the United States)[75], and all but died in 1998 because of Osama bin Laden's terrorist attacks on American embassies in Africa. Although the subsequent 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 compelled the Bush administration to move into the region in force, the American interest already seems to have dwindled due to the war in Iraq. Although the United States naturally wishes to play a role in the economic growth of Central Asia, her chief interests and highest priorities are China and Russia.[76] As long as Russia stays relatively stable, democratic, and above all, friendly, the small countries in Central Asia are of comparatively minor importance. One should also note that the United States and Russia share a concern about Islamic extremism. The United States is likely to tacitly support, or at least not oppose, steps taken by Russia to reduce the threat from such groups in Central Asia as well as on her own territory, even if this increases Russian influence within the region. Likewise, Russia has shown that she is not opposed to the deployment of American troops to the region, as long as their purpose is to fight Islamic extremism.

This is hardly surprising. As noted, the present Russian leadership, including President Putin, in 1999, if not before, came to the conclusion that Islamic extremism of the Wahhabi[77] type was a threat to Russia as well as the West and secular states elsewhere. In July 2000, in an interview with *Paris*

[73] See e.g. Mesbahi 1997.
[74] *Economist,* 15 December 2001; Torbakov 2002.
[75] See e.g. Jonson 1998, pp. 14f.
[76] Menashri 1998, pp. 9f.
[77] Also known as Salafi; see. e.g. Fredholm 2001.

Match, Putin clearly expressed the Russian leadership's belief that Islamic extremism had created a movement of extremists and terrorists that formed 'an arc of instability beginning in the Philippines and ending in Kosovo'. He also pointed out that Russia stood at the forefront of the struggle against this phenomenon, and that Europe should be grateful for this. The key center of the extremist movement and the center from which the greatest security threat emanated, in the view of Russia, was the Taliban regime of Afghanistan. The Russians realized that the threat from Islamic extremism would be the main security challenge at the beginning of the 21st century.[78]

The Central Asian states, meanwhile, appear to have drawn the conclusion that while American support would be preferable, the interest of the United States is fickle, dependent on domestic American developments, and often of short duration. Russia, on the other hand, is a close neighbor. The difference between the United States and Russia as a guarantor of security is that Russia will not, indeed cannot move away because of purely domestic concerns. Any serious instability in Central Asia will also create instability in Russia.

The Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, in an interview in mid-2002 pointed out, that the American presence in Central Asia 'would seem to be justified given the timetable defined by the UN Security Council for the peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan.' He also noted that representatives of the Bush administration had assured the Russian side that 'they are not planning on a prolonged military presence in the region'.[79]

The American long-term plans for Central Asia remain unclear outside the immediate circles of the Bush administration, and may not yet have been finalized. Yet, it is possible that in particular the build-up of a strong American military presence in Kyrgyzstan, at a time when the American operations against the Taliban were already concluded, was intended to serve as the means to acquire lasting strategic leverage in the region. If so, the American military presence may achieve two political goals: diminishing Russia's ability to influence the region through Russian support of individuals, perhaps local political leaders, and establishing a new, major surveillance post on China's activities in the region. According to the agreement between the United States and Kyrgyzstan signed in December 2001, the United States received very favorable conditions for her military deployment, including not only extensive use of the country's only international airport and a 37-acre military base but also the provision that American military personnel are immune to prosecution by the Kyrgyzstani government, and are free to enter and leave the country without hindrance, as well as to wear uniforms and carry arms.[80] These are fundamentally the same terms that the United States acquired in Japan and South Korea after the Second World War, two countries where the United States established a lasting military presence.[81]

The possibility to use bases in Central Asia as surveillance posts should not be underestimated. The existence of American signals intelligence stations, probably operated by the Special Collection Service, a joint project of the CIA and the National Security Agency (NSA), has already been reported from

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[78] See e.g. Smith 2001, pp. 1–3.
[79] *Izvestiya,* 10 July 2002 (as translated by BBC Monitoring on the same day).
[80] Jakypova 2002.
[81] See e.g. Cossa 1996.

Uzbekistan.[82] Bases in Central Asia could be used for radar reconnaissance and fire control for anti-missile defense systems aimed at Chinese intercontinental ballistic missiles launched from Xinjiang or Tibet. Missiles launched from these parts of China would according to some estimates earlier have been beyond the reach of the planned American anti-ballistic missile defenses.[83] In addition, an existing base can easily be used for the purpose of bringing in and launching unmanned reconnaissance drones such as the RQ-4A Global Hawk, or if the range allows, even the armed RQ-1 Predator much used in the War on Terror in Afghanistan. It also facilitates other forms of intelligence work. The United States currently has bases both to the east and west of China. If the American–Chinese strategic rivalry continues, which seems likely, the United States could use the bases in Central Asia against Chinese strategic resources.

In the long term, there is also the possibility that groups within the United States, governmental or commercial, desire geopolitical gains in connection with Caspian oil and gas resources, and in particular the opportunity to build pipelines across Central Asia.[84]

Conclusion

Russia remains the key guarantor of security in Central Asia, despite often heard claims that the United States has assumed this position. However, Russia regards Central Asia as of far lower priority than her relations with the United States and Europe. Besides, Russia's key priority in Central Asia is the struggle against Islamic extremism, not the creation of a new Russian empire. Since the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, this no longer necessitates major military operations. Russia accordingly remains unlikely in the near future to involve herself directly in substantial military operations in Central Asia. She is far more likely, in case of need, to assist the Central Asian rulers, and if required, favored Afghan commanders, with military support, intelligence, advisors, and international diplomacy. The means of influence available to Russia in the CIS member states and Afghanistan before the American intervention remain available even with the existence of limited American bases in the region. In other words, despite appearances Russia has not yet surrendered her regional influence. As long as Russian forces remain in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Russia will remain a key player in the region.

The War on Terror did, however, result in a more pluralistic balance of power in Central Asia. While Russia remains the key guarantor of security, China has through the SCO as well as through her economic clout acquired a certain level of regional influence. With the new American presence in the region since late 2001, the geopolitical situation is beginning to resemble that of the nineteenth century. Again three great powers face each other in Inner Asia. Between the great powers are a number of independent states which to a greater or lesser extent are dominated by the great powers and serve as buffer

[82] Agentura/Versiya (http://www.agentura.ru), *Bezzhalostnyy sosed: Dos'e na spetssluzhby Uzbekistana*, 6 August 2002; Agentura (http://www.agentura.ru), *Spetssluzhby Uzbekistana*, 13 August 2002.
[83] Kiesow and Sandström 2002, p. 224.
[84] See e.g. Rashid 2000, pp. 160–182.

zones between them. Again Afghanistan would seem to be the most important of the buffer states.

Yet, the potential for rivalry is most clearly seen in Kyrgyzstan. American troops are already deployed there. Russia already before the War on Terror chose Kyrgyzstan as the base for the Collective Security Treaty rapid-deployment forces. Even China has indicated a wish to establish a presence there through the SCO. The conclusion can only be that Kyrgyzstan's exclusive dependence on the Soviet Union and Russia has been replaced with a pluralistic dependence on three powers: Russia, the United States, and China. Kyrgyzstani President Akaev's response was, in effect, to tell the world that he loves all three great powers.[85] Yet, what could Kyrgyzstan possibly do if a conflict should break out between them?

The presence in Central Asia of the military forces of great powers such as Russia, the United States, and China serves to ensure security and, as long as they share a common purpose, stability. Security and stability are vital ingredients in the creation of the conditions necessary for building democracy. Yet, a military presence *per se* will not build democracy. It can be used to apply political and military pressure, but it seems unlikely that democracy in the long term can be enforced through military means.

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[85] In a speech on 'Economic and Democratic Reforms in Kyrgyzstan and the Political Situation in the Region' at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm, 7 March 2002, Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akaev announced that the American base 'responds to the national security requirements' of Kyrgyzstan. The decision to allow an American base was 'our own choice' and due to 'no pressure from outside'. At the same time, however, Akaev also referred to 'Russia, our strategic partner and ally' and mentioned that these decisions were taken 'in mutual understanding with' China.

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Turkey and Post-Soviet Eurasia

Seeking a Regional Power Status

IGOR TORBAKOV

Whenever the issue of Turkey's strategic importance is raised, commentators invariably point to the country's unique geographic location. Turkey sits right in the middle of the South Caucasus/Northern Mesopotamia region – the area one observer recently described as 'probably the most geo-strategically important piece of real estate in the world'. In fact, Turkey plays a direct role in at least seven different, if overlapping, regions: Western Europe, the Balkans, the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Caucasus–Caspian complex, Central Asia, and the Black Sea. As the specialists at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy point out, the United States, being a global power, values Turkey 'primarily for geo-strategic reasons'. Western concerns about Balkan instability, Caucasian conflicts, Russia's future direction, Iranian fundamentalism, Iraqi turmoil, and protracted conflict in the Middle East all reinforce the interest of US and European policy-makers in Turkey.

The importance of Turkey's strategic position is further enhanced by its close proximity to major oil and gas deposits – those in the Caspian Sea and in northern Iraq. This makes Turkey a key player – as a prospective energy consumer and transit country – in what was dubbed the *Great Game* of pipeline politics in the region.

Here I will limit myself to discussing only one aspect of Turkey's foreign policy – namely, its relationship with the post-Soviet world. This world is still rife with threats to Turkey but it presents opportunities as well – economic relations with Russia, a hub for energy distribution, new regional cooperation schemes. This paper intends to explore the role that the Turkish factor plays in Black Sea, Caucasus and Caspian geopolitics and, specifically, the nature of the current stage of Turkish–Russian relations. I would argue that, despite the unusually active foreign policy in post-Soviet Eurasia in at least the first half of the past decade, Turkey failed to attain a leadership role in the former Soviet periphery. This failure, exacerbated by Ankara's serious economic and political problems, has influenced the shift in Moscow's perception of Turkey's role in the Caucasus and Central Asian context. Russia and other countries in the region now tend to perceive Turkey in much more neutral terms than they did in the early 1990s, when Ankara was seen as something of

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 117–128.

a strategic competitor. Thus, the picture portraying Moscow and Ankara as uncompromising arch-rivals jockeying for position in the former Soviet Union's southern periphery is somewhat simplistic. Neither does the assumption that there are rigid, monolithic, and opposing blocs of states (like, say, US–Turkey–Azerbaijan–Georgia versus Russia–Iran–Armenia) correspond with the far more complex reality. To be sure, a Great Game is taking place in the post-Soviet space. However, as Gareth Winrow perceptively notes, it 'consists of a number of various games being played simultaneously at different levels within states, between states, and among firms and businesses'.[1] This game involves elements of both competition and cooperation.

The results of the November 2002 parliamentary elections in Turkey have introduced a significant amount of uncertainty into the picture. A moderate Muslim party that styles itself on the model of European Christian Democrats but with its roots in Turkey's political Islam has won the majority of seats in parliament and formed a one-party government – for the first time in several decades. At the moment, the leaders of the winning political force, the Justice and Development Party (in Turkish *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi,* AKP), claim that their primary goal is Turkey's integration into the European Union.

Turkish Foreign Policy: General Observations

It is common practice to explain much of Turkey's foreign policy through an appeal to the country's geography and twentieth-century history. Geographically and culturally, the modern Turkish Republic built by Atatürk in the 1920s and 1930s is very much a frontier state. From the very outset Ankara has been preoccupied with issues of national security and territorial integrity. This necessarily dictated a conservative or defensive approach to foreign policy, which has tried to avoid extra-territorial interests or activities extending beyond the country's borders. This type of cautious policy was encapsulated in Atatürk's famous dictum 'Peace at home, peace in the world'. Kemalism and the character of the Turkish state have also had an isolating effect on Ankara's relations with its neighbors – the Arab world and, arguably, with Europe.

During the Second World War, Turkey maintained a sometimes precarious neutrality – in part as an extension of Atatürk's cautious policy of limiting international contact during the years when the Republic was being created. It was Stalin's claims on north-eastern Turkey and the Turkish Straits that pushed Ankara into the Western alliance. The Cold War, however, imposed a certain amount of order, regularity, and predictability. During the long Cold War era, Turkish foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was restricted to just a few basic (if difficult and crucial) questions: how to ward off the Soviet threat and how to maintain and strengthen ties with the United States and NATO.

The collapse of the Soviet empire, the end of the Cold War and the accelerated pace of European integration challenged the very foundations of

[1] Winrow 2002.

Turkey's traditional foreign policy. The new geopolitical situation presented Ankara with both new opportunities and new constraints. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Turkey's geo-strategic value to the West was no longer as clear-cut as it had been. Moreover, the rejection of Turkey's bid to become a full member of the European Union was widely interpreted both by Turkey's political class and the broader public as exclusion on explicitly 'cultural' – i.e. religious and ethnic – grounds. These developments caused a deep sense of isolation and insecurity on the part of Turkish elites and – paradoxically – led to a more activist and assertive foreign policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as in the Middle East and the Balkans.

Turkey's embracement of the 'Turkic republics' of the former Soviet Union, argues Professor Ziya Onis of Koç University in Istanbul, embodied an important psychological dimension. A closer bond with people of common historical descent was a means of overcoming Turkey's traditional fear of isolation and insecurity – a feeling compounded by the negative attitude on the part of Europe and the Arab Middle East as well as by several ongoing conflicts around the country's own borders. The sense of isolation, Onis contends, is crucial in understanding both the initial euphoria concerning the 'Turkic republics' of the Caucasus and Central Asia and the subsequent development of close military and economic ties with Israel in the Middle Eastern context. Ankara also seemed to hope that an active leadership role in both regions would help revitalize Turkey's strategic value to the West and, thereby, enhance its own economic and security interests.[2]

Some commentators also point out the significant changes in Turkey's domestic policy that contributed to Ankara's external activism – particularly in relation to the former Soviet republics. Traditionally, Turkey's foreign policy was shaped by a narrow group of political figures, state bureaucrats and military top brass. Yet the recent resurgence of Islam and nationalism in Turkish politics broadened the circle of those concerned with foreign policy and trying to influence it. A distinct foreign policy orientation emphasizing non-European or non-Western dimensions of Turkish identity became the hallmark of the Islamist and ultra-nationalist parties, which gained more weight over the last decade in the highly fragmented party system.

To be sure, the basic tenets of Turkish foreign policy remain pro-Western, but Turkey's position at the edge of the Western world requires it to maintain a separate identity with a definable role in the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. In fact, one commentator, Malcolm Cooper, suggests that there is a genuine and fluctuating polarization of policy that in many ways reflects the European/Asian dichotomy in Turkish identity. 'In practice', he writes, 'Turkey's courtship with the European Union and Turkish policy towards its Asian neighbors represent opposing views of the country's trans-regional alignment, and prioritization of one is often a product of lack of progress with the other.'[3]

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[2] See Onis 2001.
[3] Cooper 2002, p. 125.

A Failure of the 'Turkic World' Model in the Caucasus and Central Asia

Central Asia and the South Caucasus are important for Turkey's interests in terms of the regions' internal conflicts, Russian influence, energy resources, and trade opportunities. Following the disintegration of the USSR and the relative weakening of Russia, many officials in Ankara had high hopes of establishing close ties with the newly-independent states, making Turkey a leading actor in the former Soviet southern periphery. Turkey's growing interest in the region quickly led to the formation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency and the setting up of annual 'Turkic summits', bringing together the presidents of Turkey and all other post-Soviet Turkic republics. The late Turkish president Turgut Özal entertained a sweeping project that included a vibrant Turkic Common Market and a powerful Turkic Trade and Development Bank. After President Heidar Aliev of Azerbaijan and President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia called for a regional stability pact, Ankara proposed the concept of the Caucasus Stability Pact as a means of settling the region's many conflicts and of accommodating sometimes contradictory interests. A so-called 'Turkish model', based on the country's imperfect but seemingly workable market economy and somewhat restrictive parliamentary democracy, was projected to the post-Soviet states as a roadmap for their transition. The Western governments encouraged both Ankara's involvement and the spread of the 'Turkish model', since the likely alternatives seemed to be an Islamist-based Iranian model or simply a return to Russian domination.

However, Turkey appears to have failed to play a leadership role in the post-Soviet space. As many regional analysts contend, Turkey's recent activism in Eurasia is real but fragile. Several factors explain this failure. First, the post-Soviet states have been wary of Ankara acting as a new *Ağabey* (Big Brother) while they just escaped the clutches of another big brother. The newly-independent Turkic states, in particular, were seeking to develop and consolidate their own national identities. One commentator suggested that Turkey's 'excessive emphasis on commonalities' between the Turks and the Turkic states' peoples has even caused resentment in Central Asia. The Caucasus and Central Asian states obviously preferred more limited and more equal relations with Ankara. Their leaders (particularly in Azerbaijan) were also suspicious of Turkey's attempts to influence their domestic politics. Besides, these countries were unwilling to bind themselves exclusively to Turkey-dominated organizations and eager to secure political and economic support from other states, including Russia and Iran.

Second, Turkey is a relatively poor country. Indeed, Turkey's more ambitious regional schemes, including Black Sea cooperation and efforts in Central Asia and the Caucasus, have been hindered by Ankara's limited ability to fund sweeping geopolitical projects. The recent severe economic crisis, additionally, cast doubt on the value of the Turkish connection.

Third, Moscow did lose direct control over its former borderlands, but Russia's influence did not disappear. The presence of Russian troops in a number of countries (Georgia, Armenia, Tajikistan), powerful economic levers (gas and electricity deliveries) and the ability to manipulate regional ethnic conflicts compel the local leaders to take heed of Russia's wishes.

Fourth, a 'Turkish model' appears to have lost much of its appeal, both for the post-Soviet states and the West. The democratic component present in the Turkish system proved not so attractive to the authoritarian leaders in the Caucasus and Central Asia, who obviously did not have much interest in fostering broader political participation and pluralism. Arguably, the newly-independent republics' rulers styled their regimes more on the old Soviet communist system than on Turkey's. For its part, the West has also reconsidered the usefulness of the 'Turkish model', having realized that the initial fears concerning Iran's influence had been exaggerated.

In addition, Turkey's identity-based foreign policy did not appear to help settle the South Caucasus conflicts, most notably the one between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno–Karabakh. Instead, Turkey actively supported Baku on the grounds of common ethnicity and culture. However, even some Turkish commentators suggest that a more far-sighted policy would have developed closer links with both countries, thus possibly reducing the efforts of Yerevan and the Armenian lobby in the West to wage a hate campaign against Turkey. To ease the tension between Armenia and Turkey, some Turkish analysts argue, Ankara might have suggested that the oil and gas export pipeline routes run across Armenia rather than following a roundabout path.

Finally, Eurasia's energy riches prompted the West and the US in particular to opt for more direct involvement rather than rely on regional proxies like Turkey. The deployment of American troops in Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan) and the Caucasus (Georgia) within the framework of the US-led war on terror has underscored the strategic decision to engage the region more actively that had been taken even prior to the September 11 attacks.

Relations with Russia: Competition and Cooperation

Ankara's relations with Moscow exhibit marked 'dualism'. As Onis has put it, 'Turkish–Russian interactions highlight how the relationship between key regional powers in the post-Cold War context can be characterized by significant cooperation and conflict at the same time.'[4] Historically, and perhaps in the longer term, the management of relations with Russia is the leading security issue for Turkey. But the magnitude of Turkish–Russian trade (including large-scale energy imports) and the need for coexistence at the political level work against more competitive policies.

For the first time in centuries and since the end of the Cold War, Turkey and Russia no longer share a border. However, since the Turkish and Russian 'near abroads' overlap in areas such as the Caucasus and Central Asia, some degree of geopolitical competition may be inevitable. At the beginning of the 1990s, almost everyone predicted intense rivalry between Moscow and Ankara in Eurasia. This has ultimately not been realized. For the reasons mentioned above, Turkey has been unsuccessful in gaining a leadership role in the region. Besides, Ankara has focused on its own internal political and economic problems as well as on other foreign policy priorities in Europe and the Middle East. Like Turkey, Russia has also been troubled by its own economic

[4] Onis 2001.

weakness and was diverted in the 1990s by competing foreign policy priorities, especially by its post-Cold War relationship with the United States.

Yet in the mid-1990s, Russia appeared to perceive Turkey as a massive security challenge. For instance, *The White Book of Russian Special Services* (1996) described Turkey as an aspiring regional power that supports 'Muslim movements' and cherishes 'pan-Turkic ideas'. It also argued that Turkey might move into the 'geo-strategic niche' in the Caucasus created by Russia's weakening state. Moscow repeatedly accused Ankara of supporting – both morally and financially – the Chechen separatists during the first Chechen war. At the end of the 1990s and later, however, Moscow fundamentally revised its perception of Turkey's role in Eurasia. Pavel Baev of the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo persuasively argues that Moscow now views Turkey primarily as a 'valuable partner', rather than a threat.[5] Two factors influenced this reassessment. As many regional analysts argue, the main reason and the transforming force behind the development of the bilateral relationship between Turkey and Russia is gas. Turkey, along with Europe, is Russia's major market for gas. Some of the largest energy-business deals in Russia have been signed with Turkey. The completion of the Blue Stream gas pipeline under the Black Sea has increased Turkey's dependence on Russian natural gas from 66 percent to 80 percent. Moreover, Russia is beginning to see Turkey as a transit country for its energy resources rather than as simply an export market.

Another factor that changed Moscow's perception of Turkey was the re-evaluation of Turkish strategic potential. By 2000–2001, a shift had occurred whereby Turkey came to be normally portrayed not as a geopolitical challenger but as a weakening competitor, preoccupied with internal political instability and economic troubles. Russia's Security Council, after a comprehensive re-evaluation of security challenges, now perceives Turkey's penetration into the Caucasus as a low-intensity risk, and the sharp political and economic crisis in Turkey in February–March of 2001 only confirmed these assessments. Thus, it is primarily such issues as the export of Russian gas to Turkey, oil tanker traffic through the Straits, and the regulation of the so-called 'shuttle' trade that dominate the agendas of intensive bilateral contacts at various levels. Strategic alliance with Armenia notwithstanding, Russia has stayed clear of the brewing international controversy around the genocide of 1915–1918, in contrast to the proactive stance taken, say, by France. Ankara, for its part, has not provided any political or material support to the rebels in the second Chechen war and has not shown any softness toward the Chechens inside Turkey.

Some analysts also note that, with respect to the EU, Turkey and Russia are basically 'on the same page'. Both countries have complex negotiations with the EU, not only for the development of their economies but for their future political and cultural identities as European countries. In addition, Russia and Turkey share similar views with respect to Iran and Iraq, which differ from those of the US. Both countries have improved their relationships with Israel. Further improvements in US–Russian relations as well as in Turkish–Russian relations and the US willingness to consult both countries on potentially contentious US policies in the broader region could help foster, some

[5] Baev 2001.

observers believe, the development of a real Russo–Turkish relationship. In the opinion of Fiona Hill of the Brookings Institution, the possibility of a rapprochement and partnership between Russia and Turkey could ultimately transform the politics of the Southern Caucasus even more so than any dramatic change in US–Russian relations. A pragmatic, stable economic and political partnership between Turkey and Russia in Eurasia, argues Hill, would seem 'tantamount to the reconciliation of France and Germany after the Second World War in Europe', opening the same kinds of prospects for economic development and integration in the region.

Moscow appears particularly keen these days to send some friendly signals to Turkey symbolizing the change in Russia's perception of its former formidable adversary. In a 2002 extensive interview with *The Turkish Daily News*, Aleksandr Lebedev, then Russia's Ambassador to Ankara, stressed in particular the unique 'Eurasian nature' of both countries and said that the relations between Russia and Turkey have evolved from the stage of competition through that of cooperation and further on to the level of 'multidimensional partnership'. Quite symptomatically, the Russian senior diplomat has also tried hard to prove the historic stereotypes wrong. The common impression that the Russian and Ottoman empires have been in a state of war most of the time is absolutely untrue, the ambassador said. He referred to the joint study conducted by Russian and Turkish historians that allegedly revealed that out of 500 years of relationship, the tsars and sultans were engaged in direct conflict for only 25 years. 'We also set up alliances in the past against the British and the French', pointedly added Lebedev.

There have also been some remarkable shifts with regard to the so-called Great Game over the Caspian oil export pipeline routes. In practice, until recently, Russia and Turkey have been rivals rather than partners with regard to the transportation of Caspian oil to lucrative Western markets. In contrast to gas, Turkey is not looked upon as an important market for Russian crude oil. Geopolitics together with commercial realities has played an important role in the game of Caspian oil pipeline politics. In particular, Turkish and Russian policy-makers have been competing to have a main export oil pipeline constructed across their territory to carry Azerbaijani and possibly Kazakh crude to the European market. Ankara (together with Washington) was pushing for the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan main export pipeline project that would bypass both Russia and Iran, whereas Moscow backed the so-called 'northern route' to Novorossiysk. Under Putin's leadership one key Russian objective remains to control energy export routes to Europe. By mid-2001, however, the Russian government – to the surprise of some observers – appeared to have dropped its opposition to the BTC project. Instead of trying to block the project, Russia has taken final steps toward finishing the construction of the high-capacity Tengiz–Novorossiysk pipeline (built by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium), cautiously but shrewdly playing Kazakh oil against Azerbaijani oil on the world markets. With the CPC pipeline becoming operational, it seems that officials in Moscow have come around to believe that a BTC pipeline will not run counter to Russia's strategic and commercial interests. Thus, despite occasional over-heated statements, Moscow clearly prefers to present this issue in geo-economic rather than geopolitical terms, putting cost-efficiency ahead of balance of power and emphasizing competition between

economic actors rather than struggle for spheres of influence with Ankara or Washington. While some anxiety about American and Turkish activities and intentions in the Caspian area still remains in many of Moscow's political quarters, there is also a predominant line toward downplaying the so-called Great Game and avoiding confrontational paradigms.

This is not to say, of course, that the potential for competition between Moscow and Ankara has disappeared. A fundamental objective underlying Russia's policies in Eurasia is to keep 'outsiders' like Turkey and Iran from interfering in what Russia considers its natural sphere of influence. As for Turkey, some regional analysts argue that, notwithstanding the prominence of new energy-related projects in the Turkish debate, Ankara's primary objectives in Eurasia are political rather than economic – consolidating the independence of former Soviet states and promoting 'strategic pluralism' across the region. Thus, Ankara is wary of the operation of Russian military bases in Georgia and Armenia; some top brass inside Turkey's military establishment consider these bases to be a source of potential threat. Turkey would also like to see the so-called CIS peacekeeping forces in the South Caucasus conflict zones (primarily in Abkhazia) replaced by international forces, since these peacekeeping contingents are almost exclusively manned by Russian military. For its part, Russia is obviously displeased with the cooperation between Turkish military and security officials and their counterparts in Georgia and Azerbaijan. In January 2002 in Ankara, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey concluded a tripartite agreement on regional security. Given Georgia's strategic location and the steady deterioration of relations between the Putin administration and the Georgian government, Turkey's lively contacts with Tbilisi appear to cause some concern in Moscow. As Zeyno Baran, director of the Caucasus Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, has pointed out, 'in the past, Georgia had asked the Russians for help against the Ottomans, but today Georgia receives military, economic, and political assistance from Turkey'.[6] In fact, in 2000 Turkey even surpassed Russia as Georgia's largest trading partner. Georgia's military contacts with Turkey make Moscow especially unhappy. A particular irritant is Turkey's assistance in modernizing the Marneuli airbase near Tbilisi. In addition, in October 2002, a Turkish military delegation arrived in Tbilisi to attend the formal opening of the United Military Academy set up and co-staffed by members of the Turkish armed forces. Speaking at the opening ceremony, the then Georgian Defense Minister David Tevzadze stressed that instruction would comply with NATO standards. The Kremlin was further annoyed by the April 2003 visit to Tbilisi of the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, Hilmi Özkök, leading a large Turkish delegation. Turkish leaders appeared satisfied with the security talks. 'Military cooperation between Turkey and this key Caucasus country is very strong,' the *Turkish Daily News* said in a commentary. Georgian officials noted the parameters for the training program would be similar to a US initiative known as 'Train and Equip'. Closer strategic ties between Ankara and Tbilisi appear to be rankling Russian leaders, who have already cautioned Georgia against

[6] Baran 2002, p. 227.

taking 'steps that violate the existing balance of forces in the Trans-Caucasus'.[7]

Turkey largely sat out events leading up to the Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze's resignation in November 2003. Ankara's political passivity was criticized by a number of Turkish commentators, who argued that Turkey had to be more active and vigilant in pursuing its own interests in the South Caucasus. The political analyst İlnur Çevik, in a commentary published in the *Turkish Daily News*, accused the government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of being 'mysteriously inactive' in the crisis in Georgia, which he termed 'our backyard'. The *Turkish Daily News* also quoted the former president and veteran politician Süleyman Demirel in a provocative vein.[8] In a piece from November 2003, Demirel called Turkey 'lost in this region', likening its silence on Georgia to its failure to forcefully oppose the American-led invasion of Iraq. Demirel has long advocated a Caucasus Stability Pact among the countries of the South Caucasus, to protect against Russian advantage. He asserted that Russia was now seizing that advantage in Georgia. But in the beginning of December 2003, Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer called the new Georgian leadership to pledge Turkey's continuing support for Georgia. According to Sezer's spokesman, the president stressed that protecting Georgia's independence and territorial integrity as well as strengthening stability, security and prosperity is 'very important' for Ankara. Turkey's Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, too, stressed that Ankara would do what it could to extend financial and moral support to Tbilisi.[9]

During the recent crisis over Georgia's renegade region of South Ossetia in August 2004, Turkish Premier Recep Tayyip Erdoğan apparently annoyed Moscow by offering, during his brief visit to Tbilisi, Turkish mediation in the conflict settlement. According to Erdoğan, should international organizations take an 'appropriate decision', Ankara is ready to help Georgia 'in the issue of internationalization of peacekeeping operation in the conflict zones'. The Kremlin is strongly against internationalizing the settlement process, claiming that all mechanisms necessary for conflict resolution are already in place and working. Being aware of Moscow's stance on the issue, Ankara still has suggested the idea of its mediation in South Ossetia and, possibly, in Abkhazia. 'Turkey is changing its passive policy on Georgia to a more active one', said a commentary in the Turkish daily *Star*.[10]

This seemingly confrontational trend, however, is counterbalanced by continuing cooperation between Russia and Turkey. This cooperation is not limited to the construction of gas sectors. In the 1990s, Turkey became the first NATO member to start purchasing Russian arms, helicopters and armored personnel carriers for use against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants in south-eastern Turkey and northern Iraq. Military ties continue to develop, as witnessed during the visit to Ankara of Russia's Chief of General Staff in January 2002. Also, in November 2001 in New York, the Turkish and Russian foreign ministers signed a memorandum promising to coordinate their policies in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Thus, despite Russia's and

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[7] See Torbakov 2003a.
[8] *Turkish Daily News*, 29 November 2003.
[9] See Torbakov 2003b.
[10] *Star*, 13 August 2004.

Turkey's longer-term competing agendas, Moscow, a number of analysts believe, is now more open to cooperation with Turkey in the Caucasus, and Turkey is becoming more adept at framing its involvement in the region in a way that does not offend other countries' sensibilities.

In the Aftermath of the 2002 Elections: A Period of Uncertainty

At the present moment, however, it would seem that Turkey's relations with the EU have completely eclipsed whatever ambitions Ankara might still have in post-Soviet Eurasia. In an interview with *The Turkish Daily News*, Çağrı Erhan, a political scientist from Ankara University, said 'there are three axes in Turkish foreign policy: relations with the EU, relations with the US, and relations with Israel', thus having completely ignored the relations with Russia and other post-Soviet states. The relationship with the EU is given top priority. Now, I would argue that Turkey (and the United States and Europe, for that matter) is entering a potentially turbulent period fraught with many uncertainties. As has been mentioned above, despite the current, seemingly stable, consensus on the issue of the country's 'European vocation', Turkey is a nation with a dual European/Asian identity. If Ankara encounters new obstacles and snubs 'on the long and winding road to Europe', it might again experience an acute fit of inherent fear of being isolated and marginalized on the periphery of the European system. This might well strengthen the 'non-European' elements in the peculiar Turkish dichotomy and ultimately bring about changes in policy orientation. This has already happened in the past. For instance, in August–December 1994 then Foreign Minister Mumtaz Soysal was stressing Third Worldism, nationalism and anti-Westernism in contrast to Turkey's traditional Western-oriented policy. Another example of an attempt to refocus Turkey's foreign policy was the efforts of then Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan in 1996–1997. Although at some point he dropped the rhetoric about Turkey spearheading a new Islamic NATO or Common Market, Erbakan kept on promoting the establishment of an economic grouping called the D-8 (D stands for development). This body was to consist of Turkey, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Initially it was even labeled the M-8 (M stands for Muslim). The Turkish military, the staunch guardians of the Republic's secularism, had to take care of Erbakan in what was later labeled a 'soft' or 'post-modern coup' of 1997. However, in the spring of 2002, a top Turkish commander, then National Security Council's Secretary General Tuncer Kılınç, apparently frustrated with the discriminatory attitude of what he called a 'Christian Club', suggested that stronger relations with Russia and Iran could be considered a viable alternative to the European Union membership.

In the November 2002 parliamentary elections in Turkey, the conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) with an Islamist origin won a landslide victory and secured almost two-thirds of the seats in the Grand National Assembly. The strong showing at the polls has given the AKP a rare opportunity to form a stable one-party government. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP top officials did not waste any time in affirming their pro-European choice and their eagerness to achieve Turkey's membership in the EU. It would be fair to suggest, however, that at least part

of the AKP constituency does not share the European aspirations of the party leadership. It is yet unclear how the AKP administration will behave under pressure from its grass roots in case their Europe-oriented policy is given a cold shoulder by the 'arrogant Europeans'. The first test occurred just after the AKP election victory. On 8 November, 2002, Turkey's bid to join the European Union was condemned by Valery Giscard d'Estaing, the former French president who has been charged with drawing up a new EU constitution. Mr. Giscard d'Estaing has bluntly said that Turkey 'is not a European country', and that its membership would represent 'the end of the European Union'. The European Commission has swiftly disassociated itself from Giscard's comments. However, the French politician is probably not too far from the truth when he has claimed that most EU members are privately against admitting Turkey but 'they never say it to the Turks'. Ali Tekin, Turkish parliamentary representative in Mr. Giscard d'Estaing's convention, branded the former French president's approach 'Christian fundamentalism'. The most recent blow to Turkey's European aspirations came from the Vatican, which said it would like to block Turkey's membership in the EU. In an August 2004 interview with *Le Figaro* magazine, the Catholic Church's top theologian, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, said that Turkey is 'in permanent contrast to Europe' and that linking it to Europe would be a mistake.[11] Such views are obviously not limited to the members of the Catholic Church's hierarchy. According to Nilüfer Göle, a Turkish academic working in France, most Europeans cannot accept Turkey being a member of the European family and having the same status as them. 'They simply can't accept this', she told the *Turkish Daily News.* A Turk, for a Frenchman, Göle argues, 'is not a part of Europe but something that belongs to the Middle East or Asia', and it is a force that has fought against Europe throughout history.[12] Symptomatically, to highlight Turkey's otherness, Cardinal Ratzinger in *Le Figaro* (above) cited the Ottoman Empire's incursions into the heart of Europe in centuries past.

A number of Western analysts argue that the EU is playing a potentially dangerous game, pursuing a policy of deliberate delay. They contend that Ankara is well aware that the EU is not Turkey's only option. Given its strong Muslim population and the fact that it is geographically 90 percent Asian, the country could look east, rather than west, analysts add. One such analyst, Simon Allison, claims that the EU might regret its current stance vis-à-vis Ankara. Referring to General Kılınç's and other Turkish conservative nationalists' suggestion that Ankara should start looking for new allies, Allison says: 'Just hypothetically, what kind of influence might a Turko–Russo–Iranian alliance have on the world? It could upset the status quo, with the potential to become a counterbalance to the US. Warm water ports, vast resources, nuclear weapons, probably the support of the Arab world as well', and Allison asks: 'Could we be looking at another Cold War?'[13] Most commentators would agree that this is an extreme and highly unlikely option. But it is undeniable that at a time of gathering conflict between Islam and the West, Turkey's strategic position does matter.

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[11] 'Saying No to Turkey' (August 2004).
[12] *Turkish Daily News*, 21 July 2004.
[13] *Turkish Daily News*, 19 October 2002.

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US Security Policy in Central Asia After the 9/11 Attack

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After the 9/11 attack, the United States has learned a painful lesson: it must be alert to emerging threats, including terrorism or other destabilizing activities against its military assets, citizens, or allies. Some of these emerging threats, combined with the actions of terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaida, may also generate political instability in key geographic areas and threaten friendly regimes.

Al-Qaida is still not fully neutralized and a threat of attack on US interests at home and abroad remains high. The Al-Qaida command twice escaped encirclement: at Tora–Bora and during Operation Anaconda. As long as this is the case, US presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia will remain crucial. While the majority of Central Asian governments welcome the US forces, the war in Iraq has complicated the picture. As will be demonstrated *infra*, Central Asian regimes are divided in their attitude toward the Iraqi war. However, I would argue that beyond the immediate pressure of the military hostilities, US interests in Central Asia, defined as the five former Soviet republics, remain limited.

The presence of a US military contingent in the region, close cooperation with the local political leaders, and the US operation to topple Saddam Hussein, may in the long term heighten tensions between Americans and local, primarily Islamic, political forces and bring friction with Islamic leaders and organizations. A perception that the US actually supports authoritarian local leaders, such as President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, may provide an anti-American and anti-Western dimension to an essentially local political rift. With that, transnational Islamic movements, such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami also contribute to globalization of conflicts in Central Asia.

The US Strategic Shift in Central Asia

The military necessities of the war in Afghanistan dictated the renewal of American interest and involvement in Central Asia. As the United States faced the challenge of a speedy power projection into the main front against the Taliban in the north, US policy makers turned to Central Asian states and

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 129–146.

Russia. In a short time – three to four weeks – the National Security Council, the US military and the US Department of State were able to secure facilities to re-supply the Northern Alliance and to pre-position aircraft and technical crews.

From the end of September 2001, the US started deploying special forces in the countries adjacent to Afghanistan and move them into the Northern Alliance territory. A US and NATO air force base was established in Manas International Airport, Kyrgyzstan, and Qarshi Khanabad, Uzbekistan. Some elements of the US military were positioned in Tajikistan. A number of these deployments came under the aegis of NATO and Partnership for Peace program, while others arrived through bilateral US–Uzbekistan military contacts.[1]

While these units have an immediate relevance to the war in Afghanistan, civilian public servants, the military, and analysts in the Pentagon and beyond have suggested that some of these units may be of use in the future action against terrorist organizations and regimes which support them. Off the record, the Pentagon officials have said that while the US has not requested permanent basing rights in the region, its presence will be open-ended.[2] US policy makers and officials have suggested different avenues of rationalization for the current and future presence. As preferred rationale for US presence they named protecting energy resources and pipelines; deterring the resurrection of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia; preventing Russian and/or Chinese hegemony; facilitating democratization and market reforms; and using Central Asia as a re-supply depot for possible action in Afghanistan. Moreover, Central Asia was mentioned as a launching pad in the future operations against Iraq and Iran.[3] It will be shown below that most of these explanations are insufficient by themselves. However, it is possible that a combination of such policies does require at least a level of the US military and political presence in the region. The size, scope, and duration of such a deployment is an issue to be defined by US needs, and host countries' desires and capabilities.

Since the beginning of the war, bilateral contacts with Russia and Central Asian states grew in both frequency and intensity. The Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage – Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov working group on counter-terrorism expanded its purview to include the war on terrorism and Afghanistan. A high quality exchange of intelligence was instituted between the Russian and American intelligence communities – an unparalleled achievement which goes even beyond the precedent of World War II, when the two countries' intelligence establishments viewed each other with extreme mistrust.

In addition to this, US diplomatic activity in the region is on the rise. In late January 2002, a delegation co-chaired by Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Mira Ricardel, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Eurasia, visited Tashkent for the first US–

[1] See *DoD News Briefing* (February 2002).
[2] Personal interviews with the Pentagon officials who requested anonymity, March 2002, Washington DC.
[3] Ibid.

Uzbekistan Joint Security Cooperation Consultations (JSCC). The delegation also visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.[4]

The US government put the best face possible on Uzbek President Islam Karimov's visit to Washington in March 2003. The Uzbek leader has faced widespread criticism in recent years for a crackdown on basic rights in Uzbekistan. But Bush Administration officials insisted Karimov recognized that domestic rights conditions in Uzbekistan needed to improve. The Uzbek leader also admitted that his government had to relinquish total control over the economy. Officials from the State Department, National Security Council and the Pentagon stress that Karimov promised to improve Uzbekistan's human rights record, adding that they believe Karimov is sincere in his desire to promote civil society in the Central Asian nation. Some human rights advocates have worried that by stepping up aid to Uzbekistan after joining the war on terrorism, the United States would reward Karimov's repressive rule. One official, speaking on background, disputed that notion saying: 'He understands that he has a problem with human rights, and he openly said so. He owes the United States his security, if not his survival. I don't think he will string us on and lead us by the nose.'

Karimov certainly seemed humbled, according to note-takers, at his meetings with President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell. US officials said both Bush and Powell stressed to Karimov that without significant improvements on human rights and economic liberalization, the US Congress will not be receptive to further allocations of economic and security assistance. 'If only anyone explained these things to me this way before', Karimov reportedly lamented, 'we would be along the way to implement these reforms... These issues are our responsibility. We will follow through on what we signed. I understand that Uzbekistan needs it, not the United States.'

US officials suggest that Karimov has already moved to fulfill his pledge to improve the country's democratic climate. Prior to his arriving in Washington, the Uzbek government registered a human rights organization and released over 800 political prisoners from prison. Human rights organizations have praised Karimov's recent moves, but say they alone do not comprise a liberalization.

Karimov's actions follow a big increase in American aid. In the current supplemental 2002 US assistance budget, Uzbekistan is about to receive over 155 million USD – 83.5 million USD above the aid allocated prior to the September 11 attacks. The US Export-Import Bank also inked a fresh 55 million USD credit facility for small and mid-size Uzbek businesses during Karimov's visit. About one half of the aid total will consist of security assistance, including communications gear for the Uzbek military and programs aimed specifically at improving border patrols. The remaining half of aid would be devoted to a wide variety of socio-economic areas, including programs to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, the environmental rehabilitation of the Aral Sea basin, and improvements in social services in the Ferghana Valley.[5]

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[4] See 'First U.S.–Uzbek Security Consultations' (January 2002).

[5] In Washington, Karimov also reached out to the international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), after repeatedly snubbing these organizations' advice for years. The IMF closed its offices in Uzbekistan in 2001, citing

The Bush Administration officials who deal with Uzbekistan on a daily basis understand that they must pursue human rights and political liberties in the name of security. Without security, there will be no investment; but without investment, there will be no economic development. However, they also stressed that in the middle of the war on terrorism, security takes the front seat.

Karimov remains concerned about national security and in Washington held meetings with top defense department officials. Indeed, the centerpiece of his visit was the signing of a Declaration of Strategic Cooperation. The Pentagon has taken a lead in cooperating, training and supplying the Uzbek military. Despite the rumored death of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan leader Juma Namangani during the anti-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan, Karimov is anxious to keep building the Uzbek military's capacity. Even if the IMU cannot reconstitute, Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami, a global radical Islamist party with presence throughout the Middle East and Europe, which advocates the overthrow of secular regimes, and the creation of a Caliphate, could help foment anti-government unrest.[6] The Strategic Cooperation pact includes a promise by Americans to 'regard with grave concern any external threat' to the Uzbek government.[7]

Because of close ties between the US military and local regimes, some in the US human rights community recognize that in order to pursue specific liberalization measures, or to get notorious cases of persecution reversed, it may be worthwhile to work through the Pentagon: 'The US military has a unique channel of communication with the Karimov regime', says one congressional staff member who is deeply involved in promoting democracy in Uzbekistan.

However, the Pentagon is primarily focused on future geopolitical engagement in Uzbekistan, irrespective of the human rights climate. In their meeting, Karimov and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld discussed the future of American bases in Central Asia. The US government's official position is that it does not seek permanent bases in Central Asia. At the same time, officials say they want access to former Soviet facilities for an indefinite period – at least as long as the war on terrorism is continuing. Such a formula is vague enough to keep everyone in the region nervous, but it avoids a direct clash with Russia over regional spheres of influence. In October 2001 Russia requested – and conducted – consultations with the United States over the future of Central Asia. The second round of consultations took place in Moscow in April 2002.

According to sources present at Karimov's talks with Bush, Powell and Rumsfeld, the Uzbek ruler's main worry – and warning – was about Iranian meddling in Afghanistan. Karimov apparently believes that Teheran may be undermining stability there by exploiting centuries-old ethnic rivalries, in order to undermine the United States and its allies. If that scenario were to materialize, the United States would need to act as a more solicitous friend to players throughout the region, including Karimov himself. As one American

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frustration over the Karimov government's reluctance to carry out essential reforms, including the convertibility of the local currency, the *som*.

[6] For details, see below; cf. Cohen 2003b.

[7] Monaghan 2002.

diplomat said, 'if you thought politics makes strange bedfellows, try war – it makes stranger ones'.[8]

It looks like Uzbekistan will become a centerpiece of American policy in the region, but engagement in other countries, and especially Kazakhstan, with its giant energy resources, is also in the cards. However, transnational factors may be emerging as threats to local governments and to US interests in the region.

Difficult Choices in Eurasia

The countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia were facing important policy decisions as the war in Iraq was approaching. Would they side with the UN, Moscow, Paris and Berlin, or stick with Washington? Should they keep neutrality or make strong statements supporting the war against Saddam? These choices are influenced by countries' relationships with Russia, the EU, and the US, and in some cases, by ties to the Middle East and the Muslim world. Countries are lining up with the United States – or with Russia and 'old' Europe – and the repercussions of these fateful decisions will reverberate in the region for years, if not decades, to come.[9]

Georgia and Azerbaijan consider Washington as their main protector and benefactor. So does Uzbekistan. All three countries view Russia with suspicion and are wary of Moscow's designs to rebuild what they see as a new Russian sphere of influence in the old Soviet space. Hence, the unmistakably pro-American tone of their declarations.

Thus, Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov stated after Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech at the UN Security Council Session on 5 February 2003, that the evidence provided by US has bolstered the case presented by Washington, Interfax reported:

> We believe that ... Powell's address ... and the arguments he provided have strongly reinforced the US call for more decisive and dramatic steps to exclude any possibility of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction or resources and technologies for their production, in order to rid mankind of this great danger...The international community, including Uzbekistan, cannot help but be concerned by the Iraq conflict, the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1441 and the position of leading countries on settlement of the conflict.

Georgian internal politics played out in the debate on Iraq in Tbilisi. Former President Eduard A. Shevardnadze, a staunch US ally since the days of the Bush 41 Administration, stated that he supported the US intention to start an armed operation in Iraq. According to Shevardnadze, 'the totalitarian regime, which produced weapons of mass destruction, poses an enormous threat to the region and to the whole world. This is why it must be punished... Another reason for Georgia assuming this stand on the Iraqi problem is that the United States has rendered enormous assistance to Georgia since 1992. This is why our duty is to support the friendly country.' Dzhumber Patiashvili, the opposition leader of the *Ertoba* (Unity) bloc, and the former Georgian communist party leader, was Shevardnadze's opponent in the 2000

[8] Cohen 2002a.
[9] Cohen 2003a.

presidential elections, and is viewed as being closer to Moscow. Patiashvili urged the United States and the world community to prevent an armed operation against Iraq.

The Foreign Ministry in Baku, a mouthpiece of the Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliev, issued a statement supporting the US efforts to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and settle the crisis in Iraq as soon as possible in compliance with the UN charter.

Azerbaijan's pro-American position may have annoyed the Saudi Arabian regime and some Gulf States, which are viewing this country as an inconvenient upstart and competitor in the oil business, and consider it too close to the US, Turkey and Israel. By contrast, Armenia has traditionally excellent ties with the Arab countries and a thriving diaspora in Lebanon and Syria. Armenian foreign policy is also viewed as pro-Russian. Nevertheless, the statements of the Armenian Foreign Ministry sound surprisingly pro-American, possibly because the two countries have recently taken steps to improve their relations.

The two most pro-Russian and anti-war states in Central Asia turned out to be Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In late January 2003, the Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbaev, speaking to ITAR–TASS, said that 'the questions of war and peace with Iraq should be decided through the United Nations... The Security Council must issue authorization to handle such questions... a one-sided war in Iraq would be a great mistake. In their hearts and souls the peoples of the Islamic states are absolutely against this war, that can only bring about integration of the world extremist forces.' Nazarbaev also called for a full disarmament of the world's nuclear powers (the so-called zero option), and advocated UN sanctions against the countries which refuse to dismantle their nuclear weapons: 'States which fail to fulfill decisions of the world community must be punished not by any one state, be it the United States, but by the world community.' Representatives of the Kazakhstani opposition who spoke on condition of anonymity said that Nazarbaev's position is dictated by his desire to score points with Russian and European leaders, as well as his dismay with ongoing investigations of bribery allegations in Europe and the US.

Kyrgyzstan, bolstered by the deployment of Russian aircraft at the Kant military base, also echoed a Russian position. Its Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov voiced his country's opposition to US use of the Manas air base: 'A military operation against Iraq is an extreme major step that might have a negative impact on the security situation in Central Asia and other countries.' Kyrgyzstan is also concerned that the US focus on Iraq may divert attention from stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan and may allow 'remaining militants, terrorists and extremist (to) intensify their activities', Aitmatov said. He unequivocally sided with Russia, France and Germany: 'These countries' efforts towards a peaceful settlement raise hopes for a realistic possibility of avoiding extreme measures... for Iraq and the entire world', Interfax reported.

As the winds of war were blowing over the Iraqi desert, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus were engaging in a delicate balancing act aimed at preserving their independence. They were looking to retain and strengthen important ties with Moscow, Washington and the European capitals, which bring them aid, foreign investments, and international and domestic legitimacy. They were hoping not to alienate their Muslim

populations and newly built relationships throughout the Muslim world. The war against Saddam turned out to be a real test of the newly-independent states, their leaders, and their young diplomatic establishments.

Russia Adapts to the New Reality

After the 9/11 attack, President Putin has directed Russia along the new path – that of acquiescence, if not acceptance, of the open-ended US presence in the region. He convinced Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov to reverse his opposition to the NATO use of Central Asian military bases. Whereas Ivanov had a legal basis to oppose such use in cases of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, both countries members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Collective Security Treaty, he had no such grounds in the case of Uzbekistan, which eagerly cooperated with the United States. Ivanov was dispatched on several trips to the region, including a trip to Tajikistan, in which some of the basing issues were discussed with President Emomali Rahmonov.[10]

Westernizers in Russia, such as the former Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, have long called for US–Russian cooperation in controlling the threats which emanate from Afghanistan and Central Asia: terrorism, drug trafficking, radical and militant brands of Islamic proselytizing. For years, American top policy makers, such as then-secretaries of state James Baker and Warren Christopher, have not paid attention to Russia's pleas.[11] However, as the US started addressing issues of common concern, the usual suspects continued to complain about the heightened US presence in the post-Afghan war Central Asia.[12] These are fears of Russia's imperial decline, which we have heard for the last twelve years, not really a concern about the US unilateralism. In fact, factors which influence changes in the strategic and geopolitical power balance go beyond the recent American military operations in Afghanistan. The timeframe of the balance of power shift is much wider, and its scope is truly global.

Moscow analysts see a connection between the martial feat of the Afghan war and the US announced withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. However, the roots are in the prevailing strategic analysis in Washington, not in the performance of the Green Berets in the mountains of Tora Bora. According to the policy trio at the Pentagon: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and Undersecretary for Policy Douglas Feith, the ABM Treaty simply outlived the world for which it was designed. In 1972 there were two military superpowers: the USSR, which invented and deployed its missile defense in the 1950s and 1960s, and the US, which was mired in the morass of Vietnam. It took President Johnson many hours to convince then-Soviet Premier Alexey N. Kosygin to limit the deployment of the Soviet anti-ballistic missile shield to the capital city of Moscow.

Today, the situation is different: while Russia will enjoy an ICBM (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile) arsenal capable of penetrating any American

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[10] 'Russian Minister to Visit Tajikistan …' (December 2001).

[11] Remarks by Andrey Kozyrev at a breakfast of the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia. Federal News Service, 2 April 2002.

[12] Torbakov 2002.

strategic defenses in the foreseeable future, an attack originating from North Korea, Iran, Iraq or any other emerging nuclear power, may be thwarted by the new ballistic missile defense. Thus, Russia has not been denied the second-strike capability and does not lose its strategic parity with the United States.

A liberal critic of the Russian policy with excellent ties to the upper echelons of the military establishment, Pavel Felgengauer, claims that Russia received a 'slap in the face' from its American ally. If President Putin heard about Felgengauer's soundbite, he would have disagreed. His measured response indicates that Putin understands that the US and Russia are facing the common enemy: global Islamist terrorism, which is not limited to Afghanistan. The flames of Jihad can be fanned in Northern Caucasus and eventually even in the Volga Valley by the same quarters who bankroll Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaida network – rich fundamentalists based in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States and radical Islamists in the Western world, who collect tens of millions of dollars for the support of Jihad.

Furthermore, and most importantly, Russia has been going through a decade of phantom pains of the amputated superpower. Today, it finally is getting over it. It starts to realize its real place in the world: that of a great power, but not of a superpower. It is true that its GDP, GDP per capita, population size, and even military prowess make it less intimidating or dominating than the USSR. But it is for the benefit of the Russians. The costs of empire impoverished the ordinary Soviet men and women.

Still, the Moscow foreign policy establishment should not forget that Russia turned out to be more important for the United States in the war in Afghanistan than any of its NATO allies save Great Britain, and was second only to Pakistan in geopolitical importance. While the Russian forces did not fight in Afghanistan, neither did the French or the Germans. It still may come out that the Russian *spetsnaz* played a critical role in re-supplying the Northern Alliance in the early days of the war. Moreover, Washington insiders said that US–Russian intelligence cooperation was exemplary – a great achievement after 80 years of rivalries between the Western and Russian spies.

China's Balance of Power Declines

The military action in Afghanistan affected the future of the emerging Chinese–Russian partnership in Central Asia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which some feared would be a Chinese 'co-prosperity zone' for Central Asia. The history of that organization made it clear that post-Soviet Russia cannot carry alone the burdens of the regional superpower in Central Asia, and that China had to step in to do some of the burden-sharing. However, China is primarily preoccupied with its Pacific strategy and economic instability at home. The leadership may not have time and resources to focus on Central Asia to make a difference.

After the US operation in Afghanistan, the Shanghai Six proclaimed their continuos commitment to 'combat the three evils: terrorism, religious extremism and ethnic separatism'.[13] Geographically, the members of SCO are committed to fight separatism in Chechnya and North-Western China, and the

[13] Becker and Agence France Press 2002.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The member countries have committed to launch a joint anti-terrorism center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. However, little was accomplished to counter these militant Islamic organizations. The only noticeable development so far was a joint operation with participation of Russian, Chinese, and Kyrgyz forces to intercept radical groups, which conducted kidnappings of foreigners in Kyrgyzstan in 1999.[14]

On the policy level, the SCO members voiced commitment to strengthening the administration of religious affairs, such as re-registering religious organizations and mosques, banning religious interference in politics, limiting prayer to mosques only (and not outside), and confining religious education to designated schools. Other recommended measures included textbook revision, banning illegal groups which spread fundamentalism, preventing foreign clerics from conducting unauthorized missionary work, and stepping up anti-terrorist operations.[15]

However, all these military and bureaucratic activities did not camouflage the fact that the leadership in Beijing did not expect such as massive demonstration of American military force halfway around the world. In less than three months after 9/11, China saw US air bases springing in its back yard: in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. It saw an unprecedented improvement in the ties between its decades-old client Pakistan and Washington, as well as a rapprochement between the US and the two largest of China's neighbors: India and Russia. The Russian leadership under Putin made it clear that Russia views the United States and the West as the principal partners in the future, while expressions of unease about China has become more frequent and more clear among the Moscow political elite. While reunification with Taiwan and South China Sea strategy allegedly remains on the top of Beijing's geo-strategic menu, the shift in the balance of power from China's point of view is pronounced. The dilemma – whether to fight international terrorism or to oppose the United States in the Pacific – is not an easy one for China and will continue to preoccupy the Beijing leadership in the years to come.

Iran, the Anti-Status Quo Power

The bifurcated regime in Teheran, which consists of elected Muslim moderates and unelected anti-American hardliners, initially voiced support for the US operation in Afghanistan, but within a week, the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenai had signaled the return of anti-American rhetoric. This was followed by a call from the former president and the Chairman of the powerful Guardians' Council, Hashemi Rafsanjani, to use nuclear weapons to destroy Israel – hardly a statement of peace and cooperation. However, the immediate concerns of the Iranian leadership are connected to the growing US power in the region.

According to a senior US security official who spoke on the condition of anonymity in Washington DC (Spring 2002), the Iranian 'non-elected' branch of the government allowed hundreds of Al-Qaida fighters to escape

[14] Gao 2001.
[15] Ibid.

Afghanistan, and supported anti-Karzai militias, including that of the exiled Islamist warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, in their attempts to upset the precarious post-war balance of power. The senior Bush Administration official suggested that Iran posed a threat to security over the near term:

> Tehran allowed safe passage to hundreds of Al-Qaida ... They allowed senior Taliban leaders to escape or are supporting them today. Tehran has sent arms, operatives, large amounts of cash, and even TV and radio equipment. ... They are positioning assets and people for future contingencies. They ... are building relationships for the long term. ... They feel insecure and fear a US encirclement. The insufficiently Islamic nature of the present Afghan regime makes the Iranians nervous. Our bases in Central Asia and Turkey make them nervous. And they take seriously the Bush Administration's desire to see Saddam gone. If Iraq changes, so might Iran.[16]

Iran so far has avoided a confrontation with the United States. Its Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani and UN Ambassador Javad Zarif expressed positions that are essentially defensive.[17] As the founder of the Soviet state, Vladimir I. Lenin, was willing to sign the peace treaty of Brest–Litovsk with the advancing German Empire, Iran is playing for time, while its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs come online. It will be a great challenge for the US Administration to find the right approach to Teheran. In the meantime, the Administration has its hands full, in Baghdad. It signaled that it does not want a confrontation with the Islamic Republic by disarming anti-Iranian guerilla Mujaheddin-e-Halq in Iraq.

Geo-Economics

The 'peace dividend' of the US operation in Afghanistan is slow to materialize. Since the war began, Western and local businesses did not announce hardly any new projects. Besides the renewed rumors of building an oil and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan (with a possible branch from Uzbekistan), to Pakistan and India, few hopeful developments were reported. The California-based UNOCAL and the Saudi Delta were two companies which examined the feasibility of such a pipeline, and even invited the Taliban officials to visit the US West Coast in 1996. Journalists often derisively referred to the pipeline from Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent as the pipeline 'from hell to hell, through hell'. The political risk outlook for the Ashgabad–Kabul–Delhi pipeline has somewhat improved. However, most analysts agree that, until such time that Afghanistan is pacified and stable, the political risk of such venture will be too high. Serious economic and political issues remain, which make the pipeline outlook in doubt.

First, the Russian–Turkmen 25-year gas deal announced in Moscow April 11, 2003, and signed by Presidents Putin and Niyazov effectively tied up Turkmen gas reserves for resale by Russia.[18] Second, the main target market for Central Asian hydrocarbons is India, not Pakistan, but it is impossible to build such a pipeline without trans-Pakistan transit. Despite the return of the Indian High Commissioner to Islamabad in May 2003, the relationship

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[16] Cohen 2002b.

[17] Zarif 2003. See also, 'Iranian Defense Minister on Iran's Defense Doctrine' (May 2003).

[18] Cohen 2003c.

between the two nuclear neighbors remained tense. Until such time that the New Delhi–Islamabad ties improve significantly, it is unlikely that energy companies would be interested in pouring billions of dollars into a pipeline which may be shut down because of tensions.

Third, and finally, the pipeline would politically benefit the authoritarian regime of President Saparmurad Niyazov, self-nicknamed Turkmenbashi, the leader of Turkmen. The US has deep misgivings about the nature of his regime, including brutal handling of the opposition, especially the entrapment and incarceration of Boris Shikhmuradov, the former Foreign Minister, in what many believed was a staged coup in November 2002. The Regime's role of friendly neutrality towards both the Taliban and Teheran, make the trans-Afghan pipeline a mirage. As long as Turkmenbashi is in power, it is possible that Washington and Moscow may independently impose a political veto over the project, which will prevent the pipeline from being constructed.

A Modern Fundamentalist Movement

The secular regimes of Central Asia have little to no democratic legitimacy. Most of their rulers are Soviet-era communist party leaders. Almost no political space is left over for secular opposition in these states. US objectives thus are jeopardized not only by the authoritarian parties of radical Islam, but also by the authoritarian nature of these Central Asian regimes themselves, with their rampant corruption, declining living standards, poor delivery of public goods and services, and stagnant or declining economic growth rates. By doing such a poor job of governance and being intolerant and undemocratic, these regimes inadvertently breed religious extremism.[19]

In this environment, Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Arabic for 'The Islamic Liberation Party'; henceforth Hizb-ut-Tahrir) has captured a protest niche that otherwise would be occupied by the legitimate political opposition. Despite this, the US government, along with the policy analysis and expert communities, as well as governments in the region and around the world have yet to attain a clear picture of Hizb-ut-Tahrir's real size, strength, and threat level.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is becoming an emerging threat to American interests – and to the countries in which it operates. It is particularly active in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and it is expanding its operations to oil-rich Kazakhstan. It is also active in Pakistan, Turkey and Indonesia.[20] By breeding violent anti-American attitudes, carrying out actions aimed at overthrowing existing regimes, and preparing cadres for more radical Islamist organizations, this organization poses a threat to US interests in Central Asia and elsewhere in the Islamic world.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a clandestine, cadre-operated, global radical Islamist political organization. Its proclaimed goal is the overthrow of existing political regimes and their replacement with a Caliphate (*khilafah* in Arabic), a theocratic dictatorship based on the *Shari'a* (religious Islamic) law. The model

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[19] Cohen 1999.

[20] 'Fourteen Members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir Caught' (2000); 'More Arrests Reported in Hizb-ut-Tahrir Operations' (2000).

for Hizb-ut-Tahrir is the 'righteous' Caliphate, an Islamic state that existed under the Prophet Muhammad and his first four successors, known as the 'four rightly guided Caliphs' (632–661).

Sheikh Taqiuddin an-Nabhani al-Falastini, the founder of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, has written that every Muslim should strive to establish a Caliphate, and that this religious imperative (*fard* in Arabic) upon the Muslim nation (*ummah)* was so strong, that Muhammad's close allies delayed burying his body until a new Caliph was appointed and the Caliphate established.[21] The Caliphate would be led by a Caliph, a supreme, pious leader who would combine religious and political power.[22] A Caliph, an-Nabhani believes, is a substitute for Prophet Muhammad as both political and religious leader. The Caliph would appoint an Amir, or a military leader, who would declare Jihad and wage war against all non-believers, including the US. According to Hizb-ut-Tahrir's political vision, such an entity, if established, would not recognize existing national, regional, tribal or clan differences and would include all Muslims.

An-Nabhani has drafted the constitution of this future Caliphate. It is not the constitution of a democratic state. The Caliph will not be elected, but appointed by the acclamation of 'prominent men'. The ruler will not be accountable to the people, no election will take place, and no checks or balances between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government will exist. The succession will be by designation of the Caliph or by the acclamation of the oligarchy. Thus, Hizb-ut-Tahrir explicitly rejects democracy. In fact, one of an-Nabhani's books is titled *Democracy: The Law of Infidels*.[23] Some regional observers have called for the legitimization of Hizb-ut-Tahrir and its integration into the existing political model.[24] In doing so, they ignore the obvious: the goal of Hizb-ut-Tahrir is to smash the existing state apparatus, not to become a player within it.

In a document drafted after 9/11, Hizb-ut-Tahrir accused the United States of imposing hegemony on the world, establishing an international alliance under the 'pretext' of fighting terrorism, and reinforcing its grip on the countries of Central Asia. Hizb-ut-Tahrir further claimed that the US accused Osama bin Laden of being responsible for the 9/11 attacks 'without any evidence or proof'. The party attempted to use its influence by calling upon all governments to reject the US appeal for cooperation in the war against terrorism. It further declared:

> Muslims! You are religiously obliged to reject this American question which takes you lightly and despises you. America does not have the sublime values that entitle it to tell you what to support and whom to fight against. You possess a divine mission. You are the ones to bring guidance and light to mankind. God described you with the following words: 'You are the best people brought forth for the benefit of mankind.' You enjoin good and forbid evil. And you believe in God.

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[21] Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *Khilafa*, quoted in Bissenova 2003, p. 6. Bissenova is a professor at the American University in Cairo.

[22] Al-Mawardi 1996. an-Nabhani based his judgment on the work of Al-Mawardi, the first Islamic scholar who decreed the necessity of establishing the Caliphate. Quoted in Bissenova 2003, pp. 8–11.

[23] 'Hizb-ut-Tahrir na *Svobode*'(2001). Interview with Vitaly Ponomarev, coordinator of Central Asian program of the Moscow Human Rights Group Memorial.

[24] Khamidov 2003.

> As for Jihad... it is legal, in fact it is an obligation, it is the apex of Islamic ethics, as Almighty God says, 'Keep in store for them whatever you are capable of, force and equipment with which you can frighten those who are enemies of God and enemies of yourselves...' God's Messenger (Mohammed) said, 'Islam is the head, prayer is the backbone and Jihad is the perfection.'
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> Muslims! The law of religion does not allow you to give to America what it is trying to impose upon you. You are not allowed to follow its orders or to provide it with any assistance whatsoever, no matter whether it be intelligence or facilities of using your territory, your air space or your territorial waters. It is not permissible to cede military bases to the Americans, nor it is allowed to coordinate any military activities with them or to collaborate with them. It is not allowed to enter into an alliance with them or to be loyal to them, because they are enemies of Islam and Muslims. God said: 'Believers, do not befriend my enemy and your enemy ... They have rejected the truth that has come to you.'[25]

In an article published by the party's journal in June 2001, Hizb-ut-Tahrir ideologists claim that all methods are justified in the struggle against the *kafir* (non-believer), including murder. Furthermore, they specifically mention that a pilot directing a plane hit by enemy fire into a crowd of *kafir* without bailing out with a parachute is a legitimate form of armed struggle. Hizb-ut-Tahrir demands that Muslims come to the support of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and states that the main targets of Jihad are America, Britain, and the Jews:

> America, Britain and their allies are leading a crusade in Afghanistan... These acts by America and Britain reflect their deep hostility toward the Muslim *Ummah*. It means that they are enemies. The relations between them and the Muslims constitute a state of war, and therefore, according to Islamic canons, all problems with regard to them should be dealt in accordance with war laws. This state of war also applies to countries that have formed an alliance with these two states.[26]

> The war of America and her allies against Islam and the Muslims has shown the corrupt nature of her civilization and her colonial world-view. The War on Iraq ... has demonstrated that America and her allies only strive to colonize and plunder the resources of the Islamic world, not to bring about justice and security... America is intending to deceive you ... she is inherently weak as her ideology is false and corrupt ... The time has come for Islam not just in Iraq but in this entire Ummah. It is time for the Islamic State (*Khilafah*) to lead the world and save the world from the crimes and oppression of the capitalist system.[27]

According to one of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir Central Asian leaders, 'we are very much opposed to the Jews and Israel ... Jews must leave Central Asia. The United States is the enemy of Islam with the Jews.'[28]

Anti-Americanism, extremism, and preaching the violent overthrow of existing regimes make Hizb-ut-Tahrir a prime candidate for the next wave of violent political action in Central Asia and other Muslim countries with relatively weak regimes, such as Pakistan and Indonesia.

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[25] 'Alliance with America is a Capital Crime Prohibited by Islam', Hizb-ut-Tahrir leaflet, 18 September 2001 (in Uzbek, translation courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan; stylistic mistakes preserved).
[26] 'General Principles of Self-Destruction ...' (June 2001).
[27] 'An Open Letter from Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain ...' (2002).
[28] Rashid 2000.

Measures Against Hizb-ut-Tahrir: What Should the US Do?

The US and its allies in the war on terrorism need to recognize that Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a growing threat in Central Asia. In order to develop a comprehensive strategy and counter Hizb-ut-Tahrir's influence the US should:

1. Expand intelligence collection on Hizb-ut-Tahrir. This needs to be done in its Western European bases, and in the outlying areas of operation, such as Central Asia, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Information on state sponsorship, leadership, finances, intentions and capabilities, timelines, links with violent terrorist groups, and penetration of state structures, is the most important. The US intelligence community should work with Great Britain's MI5 and MI6, and with the intelligence services of Russia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Central Asian states. US analysts and policy makers, however, should be aware that some of the regimes in question will attempt to portray Hizb-ut-Tahrir as a terrorist organization with links to Osama bin Laden, though at this stage it may not answer all the criteria of one.[29]

2. Condition security assistance to Central Asia on economic reform. As discussed earlier, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is growing in Central Asia due to the 'revolution of diminishing expectations', the increase in despair, and the lack of economic opportunity in the region.[30] While some are attracted to the party's harsh version of radical Islam, others see it as an outlet for their frustration with the status quo and an instrument for upward mobility. US assistance to Central Asian countries, which was expanded twofold since 9/11, did not change the economic dynamics in the region, and most of the funds were understandably earmarked for security cooperation and military assistance.

To jump-start economic development, the US Administration should condition security assistance, provided by the Pentagon, with the adoption of free market policies, strengthening property rights and the rule of law, encouraging transparency, and fighting corruption. These measures are likely to make the Central Asian economies more attractive to private investment, stimulate domestic economic growth, and increase prosperity and economic opportunity, thus diminishing the ability of Hizb-ut-Tahrir to use economic decline as an engine for recruitment, as it does in the Ferghana Valley and Kyrgyzstan.

3. *Encourage democracy and popular participation.* The lack of democratic politics, the scarcity of credible non-governmental organization (NGO) activities, and the lack of freedom of expression may be driving thousands of young recruits to join Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan. There have been no democratic elections in the region for several years, and the opposition press is either non-existent or severely curbed. Hizb-ut-Tahrir, as well as Jihadi organizations, recruit from among alienated students and urban youth, frustrated with the status quo and facing limited futures. While

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[29] Rashid 2002, Chapter 6, 'Reviving the Caliphate', p. 135. It should be noted that the representatives of Hizb-ut-Tahrir attended meetings in Kabul, Afghanistan, under the auspices of the Taliban, in which the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Al-Qaida also took part.
[30] Ibid., pp. 135–136.

economic opportunity, freedom of worship and freedom of expression are not a panacea against Islamist radicalism, as the swelling ranks of young Islamic fundamentalists in Western Europe demonstrate, expanding the civic space and allowing more political pluralism, media diversity, and grass root initiatives may diminish the draw of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. According to a representative of a major US NGO, some NGO liberalization has been attained in the Central Asian countries after 9/11. This trend needs to be encouraged.[31]

US AID and the State Department should, however, coordinate their activities with the Pentagon, World Bank and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, all of which are interested in political stability, achieving a reduction in corruption, and the development of property rights and a more investment oriented environment. Together, they are more likely to convince the Central Asian regimes to undertake further political liberalization, including competitive, free and fair elections.

4. Discredit radicals, encourage moderates. The US should encourage local governments not only to crack down on radical Islam. Uzbekistan has reportedly jailed hundreds of Hizb-ut-Tahrir activists. The Union of Councils' Central Asian Information Network has documented 14 cases of death in detention, disappearances, and over 500 cases of political prisoners in Uzbekistan.[32] Human Rights Watch claims that thousands of Central Asian prisoners can be qualified as political, including many members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, who receive 15–17 year sentences for minor offenses such as leaflet distribution.[33] More US media exposure, such as Uzbek and other local language broadcasts by Radio Liberty and the Voice of America, and educational contacts between local clergy and moderate Muslim leaders in the West needs to be encouraged by the State Department[34] and US-funded NGOs. The Central Asian public needs to be directly exposed to traditional moderate local brands of Islam, Sufi mystical branches, or reformist moderate Jadidi Islam.

Development of independent media and activities aimed at youth, women, business community, and ethnic and religious minorities – groups more likely to be discriminated against by Hizb-ut-Tahrir and other radical Sunni groups – should be encouraged and supported.[35] Hizb-ut-Tahrir, however, as well as Salafi/Wahhabi and other radical Islamic schools which preach Jihad against America and the West, should not be allowed to operate. The US should provide support to local media to cover negative examples of *Shari'a* law application, such as amputations for minor offenses or possession of alcohol in Afghanistan under the Taliban, as well as in Chechnya, Saudi Arabia and other places.

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[31] Personal interview, April 2003, source requested anonymity.

[32] 'Uzbekistan: List of 14 Possible Political Prisoners Who Died in Jail, 5 Disappearances and 505 Possible Political Prisoners' (September 1999).

[33] 'Uzbekistan: Harassment Before EBRD Annual Meeting' (May 2003); see also 'Persecution of Human Rights Defenders in Uzbekistan'.

[34] 'Muslim Clerics Visit U.S.' (December 2002). However, US AID, which is funding Central Asia clergy visits to the US to learn about how Islam functions in democracy, should be careful not to expose them to US-based Wahhabis, who are actively abusing the democratic system.

[35] Cohen 2003d.

Conclusion

The US is seeking to prevent a country, a group of countries, or a transnational movement or organization from establishing hegemonic control in the Central Asian region. This includes barring transnational Islamic fundamentalist organizations or drug cartels from emerging as ruling bodies or dominant power centers in the region. The US must also prevent Central Asia from becoming an arsenal of dangerous weaponry and should preclude the development and production of weapons of mass destruction in the region, which could fall into the hands of rogue regimes or terrorists. Furthermore, the US needs to ensure equal access to the energy resources of the region, primarily in the Caspian Sea area, and to boost the creation of East–West transportation and economic corridors. Last but not least, the US is/should be encouraging economic reform, expansion of civic space, democratization, and development of open society in the region.[36]

Economic and social development remains an Achilles' heel of the impoverished region. Tension generated by corruption, political repression, and Islamic radicalism will haunt the region in the foreseeable future. Russian analysts remain pessimistic. For example, Alexey Malashenko of the Moscow Carnegie office pointed out that as the pressures and demands on the US military world wide are likely to increase and a possibility exists that Islamist elements will start attacking American troops, the US might consider scaling down its regional deployment.

Geo-economic barriers may also delimit economic development in Central Asia. Washington now recognizes that in the past, Central Asian countries lacked the 'southern option' – a network of roads, railroads, and pipelines to markets of Pakistan and India and access to the global markets through the Indian Ocean. As the increased attention in the region and in Washington on the southern option suggests, economic development is playing an increasing role in Washington's thinking about the future of Afghanistan. Accordingly, the Bush Administration intends to invigorate follow-up to the January 2002 donor summit in Tokyo, where over 3.8 billion USD in aid was pledged. So far, not much financial assistance has been delivered to Afghanistan.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir represents a growing medium- and long-term threat to the geopolitical stability and secular regimes of Central Asia, and ultimately poses a potential threat to other regions of the world. The party is transnational, secretive and extremist in its anti-Americanism. It aims to overthrow and destroy the existing regimes and to establish a *Shari'a*-based Caliphate. Hizb-ut-Tahrir may launch terrorist attacks against US targets and allies, whether operating alone or in cooperation with other global terror groups such as Al-Qaida. A Hizb-ut-Tahrir takeover of any Central Asian state could provide the global radical Islamist movement with a geographic base and access to expertise and technology for the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. The US Government and its allies must do everything possible to avoid such an outcome.

The US Administration faces difficult choices as to whether – and to what extent – it should support authoritarian regimes in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and elsewhere in the region. While immediate military

[36] *Hearing on US Interests in the Central Asian Republics* (February 1998).

contingencies are dictating closer ties, long-term planning may advise caution. As the Soviet-era élites, with their common communist experience, are aging, it is not clear what will be the nature of the new, emerging leadership. It can be reasonably suspected that unconditional support of unpopular leaders may generate a 'Pahlavi' effect, similar to what happened in Iran, and stain US with association with dictators. It is equally difficult to predict what are the chances of anti-American radical Muslims to come to power in the first round of post-Soviet transition.

Ultimately, the US will continue playing a role in the regional balance of power, however, its extent will depend upon the relationship with Russia, China, and Iran, as well as upon the intensity of the conflict with radical Islam.

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Dividing the Caspian

Conflicting Geopolitical Agendas Among Littoral States

ANAR AHMADOV

The opening of the oil-rich Caspian Sea region after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 presents major opportunities for enhancing the democratization process in the newly-independent littoral states through the strengthening of their fragile economies. It also provides possibilities for the future development of world energy supplies. Proven oil reserves in the region, estimated as ranging between 16.9 billion barrels and 33.4 billion barrels, exceed those in the United States (22 billion barrels) and the North Sea (17 billion barrels). The possible oil reserves in the region could yield another 233 billion barrels of oil. Proven natural gas reserves in the Caspian region are estimated at 177–182 trillion cubic feet, making Turkmenistan (101 trillion cubic feet) and Kazakhstan (65 to 70 trillion cubic feet) two of the top 20 countries in the world in terms of proven natural gas reserves. More than 40 oil companies from 22 countries are involved in several consortia with an estimated 60 billion USD in investments in the Caspian Basin. Production in the region, which reached approximately 1.3 million barrels per day in 2001, is projected to increase to around 3.7 million barrels per day by 2010. By 2020, production could increase by another 2 million barrels per day.

The Caspian Sea is also important for its fisheries and for commercial transport. Future trans-Caspian pipelines connecting the Main Export Pipeline (MEP) from Baku (Azerbaijan) through Tbilisi (Georgia) to Ceyhan (Turkey) with oil and gas fields in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan would also facilitate the development of regional energy reserves.

However, the full realization of these opportunities is to a certain extent dependent on the outcome of the resolution, if any in the near future, of the Caspian Sea's legal status dispute among the five littoral states. Until these littoral states reach an agreement on the legal regime that specifies rights to the mineral resources of the sea and to energy transport as well as commercial and military navigation and fishing rights, uncertainties will prevail in Caspian affairs, considerably undermining the development and exploitation of the basin's riches.

The comprehensive picture that this paper purports to offer demonstrates that it is neither the provisions of international treaties, nor purely economic interests that can be sacrificed for political ones. Instead it is the specific set of

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national interests and geopolitical agendas of each of the shoreline countries that should be regarded as primary factors affecting a given country's position. These sets of interests and agendas are what should be given careful consideration by the parties involved, in order to come up with a viable solution. The successful long-term resolution of the overall dispute and of a number of minor border disputes requires understanding, manipulation and maneuvering between these national interests and geopolitical agendas.

The Legal Status of the Caspian Prior to 1991

Three centuries of diplomatic history regarding the Caspian Sea have almost exclusively been shaped by regional politics, and at different points in time, the international status of this body of water was a reflection of political affairs among the littoral states and of the broader regional balance of power. Power has been both one of the main goals of the littoral states and the key important factor impacting the status of the Caspian over the course of its legal history.

The main peculiarity of the pre-1991 legal history of the Caspian Sea is that during this period there was only one dominant player in the Caspian region: Russia, and then the Russia-led Soviet Union. The three 'pillars' of Russian foreign policy towards its so-called 'near abroad' since Tsar Ivan IV were 'stabilization of frontiers, assurance of favorable conditions for economic growth, and the unification of territories considered to be Russian by virtue of dynastic, religious, or national claims'.[1] On the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, this same aspiration for dominance by Russia and the Soviet Union has been considered a threat to Persia's, and later Iran's, security and its pursuit of national interests in the region, which have been very similar to those of Russia.

The Tsarist era: Russian domination (1729–1917). The first treaty regarding the Caspian region concluded between the two littoral empires – Russia and Persia – was the treaty of Resht of 1729. At the time, the Romanov Empire was rapidly expanding southward. The treaty ceded to Russia some Persian territories and provided it with freedom of commerce and navigation on the Caspian.[2]

The Treaty of Gulistan of 1813 and the Treaty of Turkmanchay between Russia and Persia established equal rights of commerce for both empires, but reserved for Russia the exclusive right of military navigation. Accordingly, it stipulated, 'no power other than Russia shall deploy warships in the Caspian Sea'.[3]

The Soviet era: de jure joint sovereignty (1917–1940). The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in Russia had its own impact on the legal status of the Caspian. The new Russian government terminated all legal agreements concluded by the previous Tsarist government with Iran or other third governments that 'proved disadvantageous' for Iran. In accordance with the

[1] Black 1962, pp. 6f.
[2] Romano 1999.
[3] Mirfendereski 2001; see also Assadi-kiya 1995, p. 7.

new Treaty of Friendship signed in February 1921, both countries were entitled to have a navy on the Caspian as well as freedom of commercial navigation.[4] Despite its seemingly predominant and unsophisticated ideological component (equalizing the rights of the littoral states), the treaty came about more as the result of rather complicated political games and bargaining processes. Granting Persia the right to deploy a navy in the Caspian was one of the concessions the Soviet government made in exchange for the Persian government's denunciation of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, which provided for British military assistance and technical advisors, and therefore, military presence in Persia.[5] Article 5 of the new Russian–Persian treaty prohibited either country 'to harbor or allow the presence or transit of any third country army, force, organization, individual, or materials serving hostile intentions toward the other country'. Article 6 gave Russia the right 'to cross into Persian territory in case a third party usurped any part of or intervened in Persia'.[6]

The subsequent 1931 and 1935 treaties of Establishment, Commerce and Navigation, and the 1940 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation provided freedom of military and commercial navigation to the now USSR and Iran. These treaties also established a 10-nautical-mile exclusive fishing zone for each country. Also, under all three agreements no vessel of any third country was allowed in the Caspian.[7] According to some sources, there was also a Soviet–Iranian Treaty of 1924, which stipulated that no men-of-war except Soviet ones could be deployed in the Caspian Sea.[8]

However, despite the agreements' provisions stating equal rights of commercial and military navigation for both the Soviet Union and Iran, the former had the region practically under its domination up until its dissolution in 1991. The latter, in its turn, never dared to contest this domination. As early as the 1940s, despite the provision of the treaties discussed earlier specifying that the Caspian is an 'Iranian and Soviet sea', the Soviets began extensive unilateral exploitation of the oil fields that supposedly were under joint sovereignty. At the same time only a small part of the Iranian coastal fleet as well as some small battle ships were cruising in the Caspian,[9] in contrast to the much stronger Soviet Caspian Fleet.

Furthermore, some sources suggest that a demarcation line did exist on the Caspian between the USSR and Iran, which, although it was never reflected in a major treaty, can nonetheless be found in minor diplomatic documents and can be clearly seen in internal legislative and other relevant documents of both countries.

The Astara–Hassanqoli Line and de facto delimitation era (1941–1991). In 1935, the USSR People's Commissary for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the predecessor of the domestic element of the KGB, issued a decree informing the relevant departments of the Soviet government that the Astara–Hassanqoli Line – which is the line crossing the Caspian from one Iranian settlement on

[4] Romano 1999.
[5] Mirfendereski 2001, p. 115.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Romano 1999.
[8] Lelyveld 2002b.
[9] Assadi-kiya 1995, p. 7.

the western side of the basin, bordering the then Azerbaijan SSR, to another one on the eastern side, bordering what was then the Soviet republic of Turkmenistan – constituted the Soviet–Iranian boundary in the Caspian Sea.[10] As a matter of internal Soviet law, the decree could not have established a lawful international boundary without Iranian consent. In June 1955, the Shah of Iran issued a decree that validated the Astara–Hassanqoli Line as the Soviet–Iranian boundary in the Caspian.[11] The boundary was formally established by virtue of the 1954 and 1957 Soviet–Iranian frontier agreements. It was further validated in an exchange of notes in December 1962 between the governments of the Soviet Union and Iran.[12] At the same time, in 1964, Iran and the Soviet Union entered into an Air Transport Agreement and confirmed the already-established Astara–Hassanqoli Line as the airspace boundary for the two countries.[13]

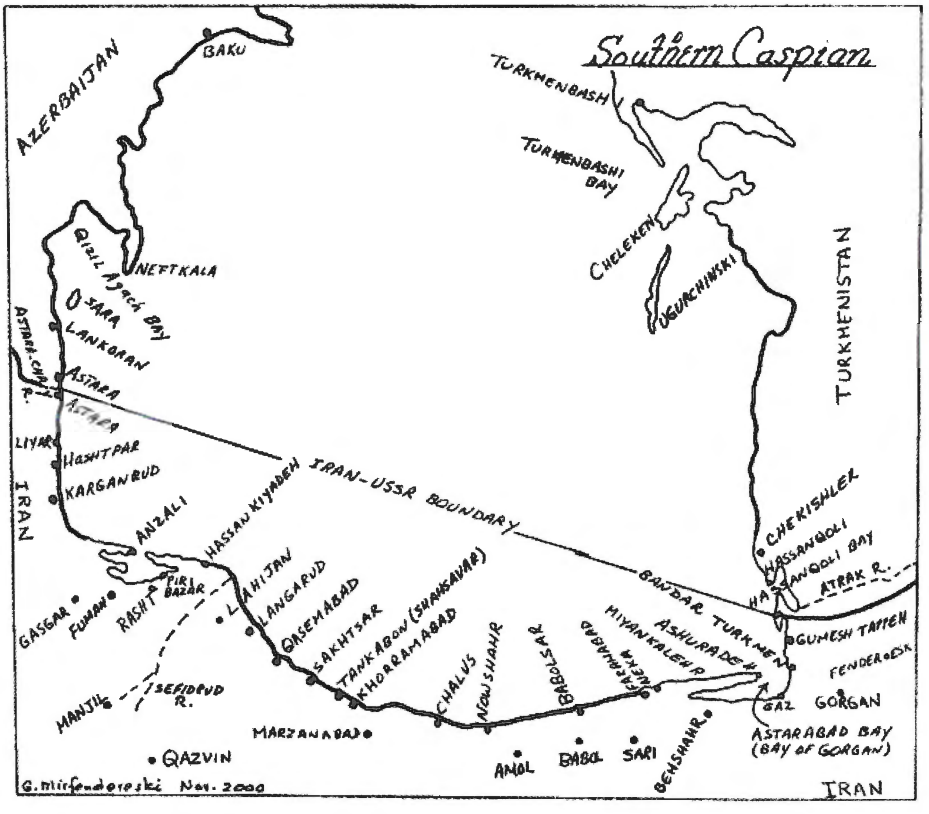

Figure 1. The Astara–Hassanqoli Line, 1935–1991.

Source: Mirfendereski 2001.

[10] Mirfendereski 2001, p. 175; cf. map in Fig. 1.
[11] Ibid., p. 166.
[12] Mehdiyoun 2000, p. 183.
[13] Assadi-kiya 1995, p. 7.

Finally, the boundary developed as a matter of bilateral custom and practice between the two littoral countries, posing a real, not imaginary, limit to Iranian and Soviet sovereignties in the Caspian.[14] One reason that the boundary was not exactly visible is that general or popular cartographical works showed no Soviet–Iranian boundary line in the Caspian. However, the description of the Astara–Hassanqoli boundary, can be found in specialized literature, particularly in military publications in Iran and Russia.

In 1970, the USSR's Ministry of Oil and Gas demarcated the Caspian into four sectors that were to be subject to the jurisdiction of the union republics bordering the basin. The same year, the law on water space established lines of delineation separating the four republics for the purpose of exploring and developing the mineral resources of the basin. No Iranian objection followed. With the Astara–Hassanqoli Line in effect, there was no basis for any objection to the subdivision of the basin by the Soviet Union within what both nations agreed was Soviet territory.[15]

In January 1991, a joint act of the Azerbaijan SSR Council of Ministers and the USSR Ministry of Oil and Gas also established lines of delineation in the Caspian for the Azerbaijan SSR.[16]

The Post-Soviet Period: Joint Sovereignty vs. Sectoral Division

Currently, no legal regime governs the whole Caspian Sea. In other words, no legal document of international law has been produced and signed by all the littoral states, specifying any agreement on activities in the Basin. Instead, there have been numerous unilateral decrees and several bilateral agreements between some Caspian littoral states that the signatories have considered legitimate in governing the whole or some part of the body of water their countries border. However, these decrees and agreements have not necessarily been consistent, each having sought legitimacy in international law in various ways adequate to their respective interests and objectives, thus creating inevitable collisions over border disputes.

The current positions of each of the littoral states have evolved from their initial adherence to one of the two approaches to the legal status of the Caspian Sea: joint sovereignty and sectoral division. Although both approaches have precedents in international law, in the particular case of the Caspian the task of applying either one has not been easy.

At the core of the legal status issue is the question of how to classify the Caspian: Should this body of water be considered a lake, a sea, or an inland waterway? As both international treaty law and international customary law provide substantially different approaches depending on how the body of water is classified, the legal regime to be applied to the Caspian is then theoretically dependent on the definition that would satisfy all five littoral countries.

Two terms from international legal practice seem to be most apposite to the issue. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of

[14] For additional information on the Astara–Hassanqoli Line, see Gizzatov 1995.
[15] Mirfendereski 2001, p. 172.
[16] Ibid.

1982 provides a definition for the term 'enclosed sea'. On the other hand, the concept of an 'international lake' is being used in customary international law.[17] However, in the case of the Caspian, neither of these terms can be applied without reservations.

The Caspian cannot be easily considered an 'enclosed sea' under UNCLOS for two reasons. First, for centuries, the countries bordering the basin have exercised exclusive control over its use. Second, although 5 major and more than 100 minor rivers drain into the Caspian, it nonetheless has no internationally navigable outlet, save only for the Volga River, unusable without Russia's permission, and several other rivers and canals which extend to the Black and Baltic seas through Russian territory.

Neither can it easily fall under the definition of an 'international lake', which would suggest that international rules governing seas are inapplicable to it. First of all, its vast size and oceanographic characteristics are those ascribed to the seas. Second, and more importantly, in contrast to similar cases (e.g. the Great Lakes between the US and Canada), the Caspian is surrounded by a relatively large number of countries, which makes agreement more difficult to reach. [18]

Two opposite approaches on how to divide the basin directly result from these two described characterizations of the Caspian – condominium, or the joint sovereignty approach, and the sectoral division approach. Since 1991, a number of proposals, based entirely or partly on these two approaches, have been made by Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan.

By the mid-1990s, two camps pursuing opposite interests advocated opposite approaches for demarcating the Caspian Sea. The newly-independent states of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan were highly interested in developing their mineral resources in the Caspian Sea in order to stabilize their economies. For this purpose they had to secure the respective sectors of the basin that the three countries had already began to develop jointly with major international oil companies. In addition, development being one part of the problem, the three states were also interested in ensuring the routes of transportation for produced oil and gas. This could be viable with the construction of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline (Main Export Pipeline – MEP) and trans-Caspian pipelines linking Kazakhstan's and Turkmenistan's oil fields with the MEP. All three nations aspired for the construction of trans-Caspian pipelines.

On the other hand, Russia and Iran advocated for the common control of the Caspian Sea, as this regime would address their key interests in keeping the region under their domination and precluding Western economic and political penetration. Joint control of the sea also blocked any possibility of trans-Caspian pipelines as those would violate Russia's monopoly on transporting Caspian energy resources, and also were not in Iran's interest. At the same time, both Moscow and Teheran opposed the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, and pushed instead for pipelines to run through their respective territories.

During a period of 'détente' and realignment (1997–2000), the legal status dispute shifted from whether the Caspian Sea should be divided to how to divide it. The prominent role in this shift was played by Russia, which after

[17] Jonas 2001, p. 66.
[18] Croissant and Croissant 1999, p. 26.

the initial frustration and incoherent foreign policy-making of post-imperial power,[19] revised its approach and methods of pursuing its national interests in the greater area of its 'near abroad' in general, and in the Caspian Basin region in particular, and also intended to secure possession of the newly discovered significant reserves of oil in the northern Caspian. At the same time Russia also began to soften its opposition to the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline.

Once again, there were two camps disputing the legal regime on the Caspian Sea. From one side, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan were advocating the division of the seabed in the Caspian. Russia and Kazakhstan also favored the common control regime over the waters of the Caspian, while Azerbaijan proposed the full division based on the principle of equidistant median lines.[20] On the other hand, Iran and less consistently, Turkmenistan, were advocating the full division of the Caspian – both the seabed and waters – into five equal parts by which every Caspian littoral state would be entitled to a 20 percent share. In addition, as it became clear that the condominium over the whole Caspian, including the seabed, is unlikely, the border disputes between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, and between Azerbaijan and Iran, became more strained.

During the last few years (2001–), tension among the littoral states has been increasing. In May 2001, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan ended up in an open conflict and exchange of diplomatic notes accusing each other of acting against the norms of international law.[21] Following this, Turkmenistan showed strong interest in obtaining navy vessels and military hardware from Ukraine and Russia.[22] This event added significantly to an already existing (albeit subtle) arms race in the Caspian. Russia had its Caspian Fleet, consisting of several brigades and divisions of ships, aviation and coast guard with about 20,000 personnel.[23] The Iranian Navy remains the strongest in the Caspian Sea after the Russian Fleet. In addition, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan had small navies and coast guards, including several patrol boats given by the US, Turkey, and even Russia (who provided five boats to Kazakhstan in 1996).[24] The choke point was that there was no agreement on the borders between the littoral states and therefore, it was (and remains) unclear exactly which borders would be defended by each side.

Military Presence in the Caspian Sea

At the same time, Iran was growing increasingly uncomfortable with the American and Turkish military donations to its neighbors in the Caspian Sea. On 23 July 2001, an Iranian navy boat reportedly threatened to use force against two Azerbaijani survey vessels with BP specialists on board in the Caspian, unless they withdrew five miles to the north of an area over which Iran contested ownership with Azerbaijan. The incident was the most serious to date and the first confrontation with the use of military force on the

[19] For a good discussion, see Light 2001.
[20] Cf. map in Fig. 2.
[21] Lelyveld 2001a.
[22] Lelyveld 2001b.
[23] 'Kaspiyskaya Flotiliya' (May 2001).
[24] 'Conflict in Caspian Sea Grows: …' (August 2001).

Caspian. Baku and Teheran each went on to warn the other that they would protect their 'legitimate rights' over the disputed oil field – Alov in the Azerbaijani version (a part of the Araz–Sharg–Alov structure), and Alborz in Iranian.[25]

A swift reaction followed from Russia and Kazakhstan. Russian President Vladimir Putin called the use of force in the Caspian Sea 'impermissible'. Putin further suggested that Moscow might mediate in the dispute between Iran and Azerbaijan.[26] The Kazakh Foreign Ministry also displayed unity with Moscow by speaking out against the use of force in resolving disputes in the Caspian Sea.[27]

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan reached a border agreement at a late-November 2001 CIS summit in Moscow. Iran protested the accord in harsh statements, a noticeable departure from its usual low-key diplomatic language.[28] However, in February 2002, shortly before a long-awaited Moscow conference of Caspian littoral countries, Iran's Oil Minister Zanganeh once again announced that Iran would initiate oil and gas projects in the Caspian without waiting for an ultimate agreement on the delimitation of the national sectors in the sea and 'will not allow neighbors to use the areas it regards its own'.[29]

After thirteen months of postponements and diplomatic delays, the Ashgabad summit of the leaders of five Caspian littoral states took place in April 2002. As one long-time Caspian observer put it, 'the summit was extraordinary for its inability to issue a joint declaration or a document of any kind, after months of diplomatic groundwork. Few high-level gatherings in the region have failed to produce at least a final communiqué.'[30]

However unproductive, the mere fact that the summit was even held seemed an important marker in the Caspian Sea's legal status dispute. The parties attended the meeting apparently for one or the other of two reasons: either in the hope of getting a concession from the others without moving one iota from their own stand; or to prove – to others and, for 'conscience's sake', to themselves as well – that the summit would be unproductive. The summit could well be devised as a routine event to 'mark' the beginning of 'the bilateral agreements era', now justified by the failure to reach a five-side deal. Also, despite the rhetoric that the Caspian should be 'the sea of peace and friendship', no document was produced at the April 2002 Ashgabad summit to assure the individual states that force would not be employed as a tool in resolving disputes in the Caspian.[31] This points out that the Caspian littoral states prefer to leave this issue open at least for now.

Immediately after the summit, President Putin ordered naval exercises and the modernization of the Russian Fleet in the Caspian. During a visit to Astrakhan, which is a base for the Russian fleet in the Caspian, he called the forces 'an essential factor in guaranteeing the economic and political interests of Russia', and told the officers 'to develop their presence' in the Caspian.

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[25] Lelyveld 2001c.
[26] Lelyveld 2001d.
[27] 'Kazakhstan Against Use of Force to Settle Caspian Disputes' (July 2001).
[28] Lelyveld 2001e.
[29] 'Iran to Start Implementing Oil Projects in Caspian' (February 2002).
[30] Lelyveld 2002a.
[31] Ibid.

Notably, following his visit, Putin also spoke of bilateral agreements on the division of the Caspian as a substitute for an overall five-nation deal.[32] The war games, as some reports suggested quoting Russian officials, were held, to the Iranians' chagrin, on the 280th anniversary of the Persian naval campaign of Tsar Peter the Great.

The exercises involved some 60 ships and 10,000 members of sea, air, and land forces. The missions included prevention of terrorism, drug smuggling, poaching, and environmental damage, as well as security for shipping and oil. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan joined the exercises while Turkmenistan refused to participate. As for Iran, Russia 'declined' an Iranian plan to send four ships to the exercises, referring to the 1924 Soviet–Iranian Treaty, according to which 'no men-of-war but Soviet ones can be deployed in the Caspian Sea'.[33]

A wave of bilateral agreements as well as attempts to reach a single agreement immediately followed the failed summit. The negotiations were scheduled between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan but did not take place. In May 2002, Russia and Kazakhstan signed a final protocol in Moscow on sharing the northern bed of the Caspian Sea. They agreed to conduct exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the offshore oil structures of 'Kurmangazy', 'Tsentralnaya', and 'Khvalynskoe' on an equal basis according to a formula of 50–50.[34]

On 24 September 2002, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Azerbaijani President Heidar Aliev signed an agreement delineating their common boundary in the Caspian Sea along a modified median line.[35]

Iran reacted harshly both to the Kazakh–Russian deal, stating that it was illegal,[36] and to Russia's naval exercises, calling them a 'provocation'.[37] President Khatami as well as Ayatollah Ali Khamenai, Iran's supreme religious leader, once again stated that Iran would defend its legitimate rights in the Caspian.[38] In terms of practical steps, Iran began development in the Caspian and announced that it would carry out drilling works in the sector of the Caspian claimed by Kazakhstan. In May 2002, this country also put its naval forces on high alert, aiming them at Kazakhstan.[39]

Kazakhstan also showed signs of strengthening its defense potential in the Caspian and launched two new military vessels with navigation equipment and a powerful satellite system in the western port of Aktau.[40]

Thus, currently, a stalemate in terms of reaching an overall agreement on the legal status of the Caspian remains in place, although high-level gatherings are being held regularly, the last one in May 2003. At the same time, bilateral agreements have been signed and all five littoral states develop, or have declared the intention to do so in the near future, those sectors of the sea to which they claim legitimate ownership rights but which are also claimed by another littoral state. Despite Baku's proposal to develop it jointly on a 50–50

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[32] Cohen 2002.
[33] Lelyveld 2002b.
[34] 'Kazakhstan and Russia Signed a Deal on Caspian Resources' (May 2002).
[35] Feifer 2002.
[36] 'Iran Condemns Russian–Kazakh Agreement on Division of Caspian Sea' (May 2002).
[37] Panfilova and Khanbabjan 2002.
[38] 'Iran Says Ready to Defend its Rights in Caspian' (May 2002).
[39] 'Iran Puts Navy on High Alert Against Kazakhstan …' (May 2002).
[40] 'Two New Vessels Launched in Kazakhstan' (May 2002).

basis, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have not resolved their border dispute over the Guneshli field, the deep portion of which is a part of the Azeri–Chirag–Guneshli structure currently developed by Azerbaijan's AIOC consortium. Azerbaijan and Iran have not yet come to an agreement on the Alov/Alborz field. Still Iran has announced that it will launch exploration in the sector of the Caspian claimed by Kazakhstan. And Russia, which takes a joint sovereignty regime over the water and its surface as an indisputable status for this part of the sea, held the large-scale naval exercises in the Caspian, despite Iran's protests.

Conflicting Geopolitical Agendas and National Interests

The patterns of behavior and the policies of the five littoral states with regard to the legal regime on the Caspian Sea show that the positions of all states on its status have been integral parts of their broader geopolitical agendas. In these agendas, the littoral states' aspirations for maintaining or increasing their power have been a priority. In the case of Russia and Iran, power is defined as political and, to a less degree, economic influence over the region and the regional states, while in the case of the newly-independent states of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan it adds up to political and economic independence. The players' vital and important national interests – in which political, economic, and strategic components are interwoven – have been a foundation determining the direction of their policies towards the issue of dividing the sea.

The patterns of behavior and the policies of the littoral states suggest that the parties in the Caspian Sea's legal status dispute have employed at different times different legalistic arguments suited to the respective country's interests and objectives. International legal norms relevant to the case, such as those of the UNCLOS, and sometimes agreements between the littoral states themselves, such as the 1921 and 1940 treaties, the 1954/1957 frontier agreements and the 1962 exchange of notes between USSR and Iran (see above), have been of little importance in practice, as they have been interpreted differently at different times, with *de facto* no binding force on the parties of the dispute. For instance, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia kept silent about the existence of the administrative division on the Caspian among the four Soviet republics, and both Russia and Iran denied the existence of the Astara–Hassanqoli Line as the USSR–Iran boundary in the Caspian Sea. Still later, at the end of the 1990s, Russia's policy of bilateral agreements in the Caspian indicated the arbitrariness for Russia of the 1921 and 1940 USSR–Iran treaties, through which Moscow earlier claimed sole legitimacy in governing the sea.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan share similar interests and pursue similar goals. All three attach great expectations to the development of their respective oil industries, and have made this development the cornerstone of their national economic policy, which aims at reversing their steady economic decline since the collapse of the Soviet Union. More than 40 percent of Kazakhstan's and roughly 75 percent of Azerbaijan's total exports are made up by their export of energy resources. The size of Turkmenistan's GNP is to a significant degree determined by the level of the country's gas exports.

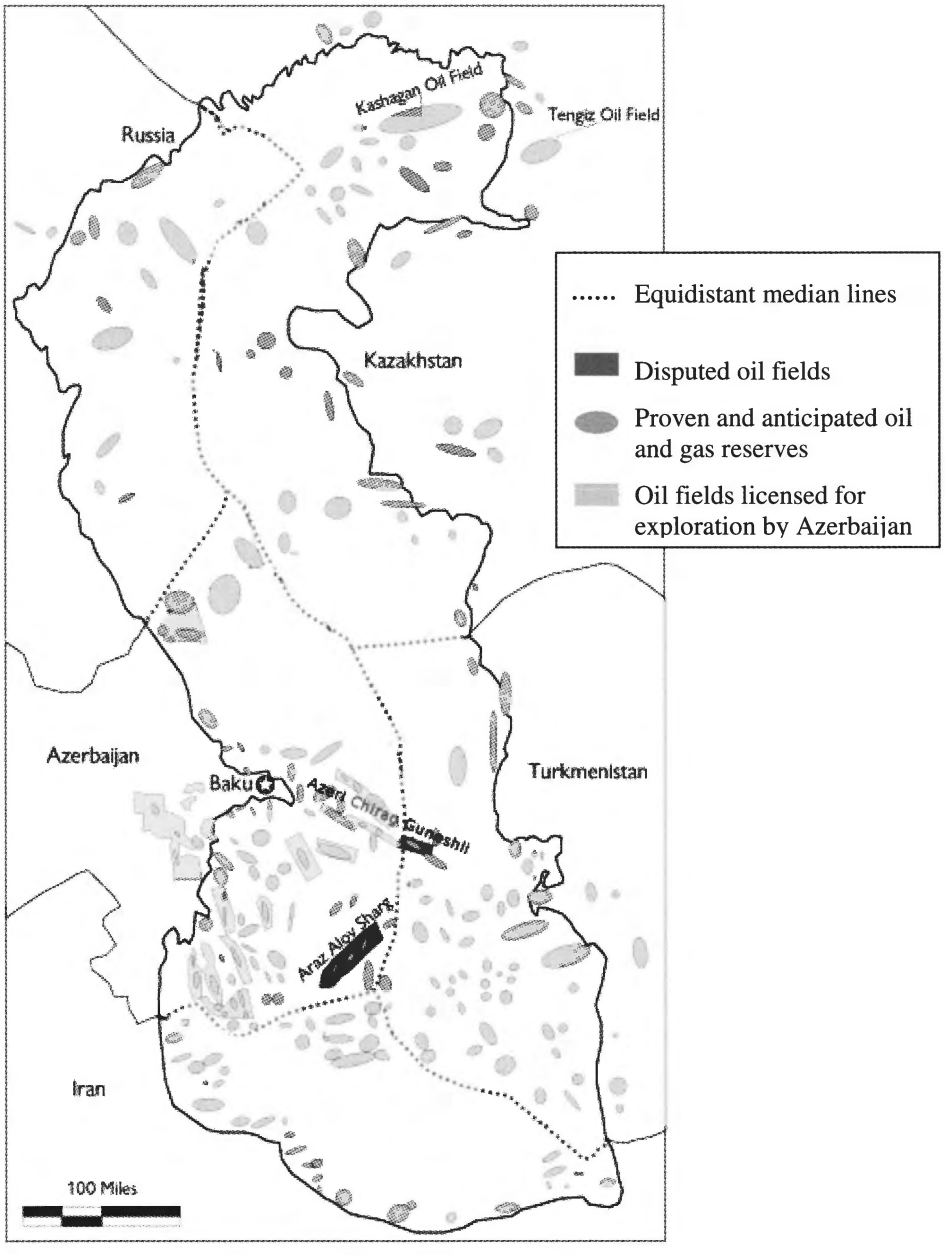

Figure 2. Sectoral division based on the equidistant median lines.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 2002, 'CIA Maps and Publications', retrieved from http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth.html

In contrast to Russia and Iran, which theoretically benefit from condominium as well as sectoral division in the Caspian – provided that both are 'properly adjusted' to their respective interests – the three former Soviet Union republics can benefit only if the water body is divided into exclusive national zones according to the equidistant median line principle. This is due to the fact that the most significant deposits would then be located in their would-be sectors.

However, similar interests do not necessarily lead to similar positions in the dispute over the legal status of the Caspian. If Azerbaijan's position differs only slightly from that of Kazakhstan's, as has been the case throughout the past decade, this has not been the case with Turkmenistan. The latter has seemingly been the only inconsistent party in the dispute throughout the same period. But it would be a mistake to interpret this kind of behavior as affected solely by the psychological traits of the autocratic regime and the private interests of Turkmenistan's leadership. Not just in case of Turkmenistan, but in all three cases, the positions of the states on the legal status dispute, although based on similar interests, have nevertheless been shaped by different external and domestic constraints, including private interests. Furthermore, these similar interests may well be perceived and formulated in different manners and also simply overlap and clash as indicated in the border disputes between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

In the following sections on each of the littoral states, respectively, their conflicting geopolitical agendas and national interests on the issue of the legal status of the Caspian Sea will be examined. Understanding these agendas and interests is essential in shedding some light on the future of the issue. As Kamyar Mehdiyoun has put it, 'if the past of the Caspian is any guide to its future, one may predict that the emerging issues of the technicalities of seabed division and the fate of the waters will be determined not so much by legal arguments as by the political and geo-strategic concerns of the littoral states'.[41]

Iran

Dividing the Caspian the conventional way by drawing median lines according to the principle of equidistance would give Iran only 13.6 percent of the sea, while Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, having the longest shorelines, would receive 28.4 percent and 21 percent, respectively. Russia and Turkmenistan would get 19 percent and 18 percent, respectively.[42] This does not suit Iran, because it will receive the smallest share *per se,* and because the portion the country would obtain through such a division lacks any proven significant hydrocarbon reserves and has instead the deepest water, which poses difficulties for offshore drilling.[43] Moreover, despite official rhetoric, Iran is currently not able to divert scarce resources to oil exploration and development in the southern Caspian and would have to attract foreign investors into joint ventures.[44] In this case, Iran will also have to overcome foreign legal obstacles,[45] such as the embargoes imposed by the US.

[41] Mehdiyoun 2000, p. 189.
[42] Maleki 2001; cf. map in Fig. 2.
[43] Nassibli 1999, pp. 114f.
[44] Moors 2002.
[45] Mehdiyoun 2000, pp. 182f.

Such an equidistant division would also mean an increase in oil production by other Caspian littoral countries leading to an increase in competition for Iran on the oil market. This is not an attractive prospect for the Iranian oil industry. Partly because of this, and for other apparent economic benefits, Iran has sought participation in the oil deals signed by its northern neighbors.

Thus, if the common control regime of the Caspian proposed by Russia in the early 1990s were to be established, Iran would gain much economically and in a broader sense – not just benefits from joint development of the resources. The joint sovereignty regime would grant Iran a much larger share of the basin's mineral resources than it would receive through a sectoral division. The Islamic Republic would also gain a powerful lever enabling it to oppose the presence of Western competitors in the Caspian, because all decisions concerning operations in the sea would have to be made through the consensus of all the littoral states, including Iran.

The Russian proposal for a partial division of the sea in 1996 was welcomed by Iran, since it offered the same benefits as common ownership. The most promising oil fields in the Caspian, being located in the areas outside 45 nautical miles national zones, would be developed jointly under this proposed regime.[46]

However, when Moscow changed its position to favor the division of the seabed by drawing median lines based on equidistance principle while leaving the surface for common use, Iran protested, claiming that any division of the Caspian must be equal. Now Iran suggested (and retains that position until today) 20 percent equal sharing, whereby it would be entitled to a sector that includes some of the significant hydrocarbon deposits already claimed and explored by Azerbaijan.[47]

Thus, not being able to block Western presence in the Caspian – due to the failure of the condominium approach – Iran has tried to maximize its economic benefits in a twofold way. By claiming the right to deposits to which it would be entitled only if the Caspian is divided into five equal parts, Teheran pursues its own apparent economic benefits, minimizing the chances for Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, which claim the rights to the same oil and gas fields, to achieve the same.

From the political perspective, a condominium on the Caspian Sea would be beneficial to Iran for mainly two reasons. First, it would considerably limit Western political and economic influence in the Caspian region. As long as all the decisions under the joint sovereignty regime are made by the consensus of all the littoral countries, Iran would have veto power over Western participation in Caspian Sea projects in general, and American participation in particular. This would limit overall American economic and military presence. Second, it would impede the development of the newly-independent states of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which otherwise may become competitors to Iran.

This seems especially true of Azerbaijan. Nearly one-third of Iran's population is ethnic Azerbaijanis, concentrated in the three northern provinces of Iran – East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, and Ardebil. These provinces encompass the former Azerbaijani *khanlygs* (princedoms) that remained under

[46] Menon 1998, pp. 17f.
[47] See Lelyveld 1999.

the rule of the Gajar dynasty – the last Turkic (Azerbaijani) dynasty that ruled the Persian Empire until the early twentieth century – after its unsuccessful war against the House of Romanov in Russia. The northern Azerbaijani princedoms were ceded to the Russian Empire, and now constitute the independent republic of Azerbaijan. Teheran currently fears that the existence of a prosperous northern neighbor will inevitably fuel ethnic separatism among Iranian Azeris, leading to the disintegration of Iran.[48] Thus, impeding Azerbaijan's development is seen as a critical goal for Iranian foreign policy.

After changing its position in 1998 and proposing the full division of both the seabed and the waters in the Caspian into five equal parts, Teheran still hopes to minimize opportunities for the development of its three newly independent neighbors. However, the main factor here is Teheran's belief that the reason for Russia's emphasis on a dual regime over the seabed and surface waters – applying the median line division to the seabed while keeping the surface open for all the littoral countries – is a sign of Russian interest in reaffirming its long-time privilege of naval exclusivity in the basin. In case of the delineation of the Caspian into five 20 percent portions, Iran would avoid having a common border with Russia and the sectors of the two Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan would serve as buffer zones between them in the Caspian.

One further reason for Iran's long-standing antagonism to the sectoral division based on the equidistant median lines relates to the time factor. Not having much to lose economically, i.e. as long as the sector to which it would be entitled through this method, lacks any significant mineral deposits, Iran prefers to bide its time in talks in the hope of maximizing its share.[49] Additionally, the prolongation of the dispute impedes the full development and exploitation of resources for Iran's northern neighbors, which also may be viewed as an indirect benefit by Teheran officials.

Russia

In the early 1990s, the northern part of the Caspian Sea that Russia would receive, should the basin be divided into national sectors, was known to be lacking significant oil deposits. The immediate benefit to Russia from a condominium regime over the basin would be, therefore, its control over the rich portions of the Caspian that were closer to the shores of other littoral states.

Joint sovereignty would also discourage Western investment in the region since all decisions would be made only after the approval of all the littoral countries and, clearly, Russia's as well as Iran's opposition to the participation of Western companies would be the most likely accompanying feature of this decision-making process.[50]

Joint sovereignty on the Caspian Sea would also impede the economic development of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In addition, it would preclude the construction of a trans-Caspian pipeline, proposed by the US, without Russian approval. Not less than 70 percent of the oil and gas exported from the Caspian region flows through Russian pipelines. It is a

[48] For a good discussion of this issue, see Shaffer 2002.
[49] *Caspian Sea Region: Legal Issues* (February 2002).
[50] Croissant and Croissant, 1999, p. 35.

fundamental goal of Russian policy not to allow a breaking of Russia's transit monopoly.

At the same time, Russia's agenda was not merely limited to a broad range of economic interests. In fact, it may well be argued that economics was only of secondary importance for Moscow, while geopolitical and strategic goals and security interests in the Caspian Basin were the top priority.

The shift in Russia's position in 1996 was due to several factors also stemming from Moscow's broader agenda of interests. This shift came partly as an attempt to promote a northern pipeline that would be an alternative to the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline proposed as the Main Export Pipeline by the US.[51] In addition, the condominium approach had gradually lost its relevance for Moscow. By 1996, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, as well as foreign oil companies had already adhered to a strategy of co-optation with Moscow by including Russian companies in their energy deals.[52]

Russia's 1996 proposal was in essence a new approach of pursuing the same old interests. The proposal included a 'double-tender' system giving riparian states first claim to the exploration and exploitation of mineral deposits ahead of non-Caspian bidders in any future contracts.[53] By this method, as well as by the proposal to jointly use the fields that were beyond 45-nautical-mile exclusive national zones, Russia would achieve the same goals it would achieve through joint sovereignty over the whole Caspian Sea. If applied, the proposal would grant Moscow powerful leverage to promote its own interests, put a restriction on those of the three newly independent states in the Caspian Basin, and also preclude the construction of a trans-Caspian pipeline without Russia's approval.

By the year 2000, Russia's position had gradually evolved, and Moscow started officially advocating the full division of the seabed according to the equidistant median line principle while keeping the waters for joint use. This time Russia was driven by reportedly exciting oil discoveries in the northern part of the Caspian, which Russia could secure if the basin was to be divided according to the median line principle.[54]

Notwithstanding the partial division of the seabed, Russia has not committed itself to the division of the water surface. This is mainly dictated by Russia's security concerns and interests in maintaining its military dominance in the Caspian region. As a matter of fact, exercising naval power in the Caspian Sea may serve as a powerful tool for Russia in controlling its neighbors.[55]

Azerbaijan

For Azerbaijan, ensuring sovereignty over the portion of the Caspian it already develops, by dividing the body of water into exclusive national sectors according to the conventional method of drawing equidistant median lines, is a matter of vital national interest. If the sea were divided in this way, some of the largest oil and gas deposits would be situated in the Azerbaijani sector,

[51] Amineh 1999.
[52] Menon 1998, p. 16.
[53] Bolukbashi 1998, pp. 408f.
[54] 'Caspian Sea: Russia Moves to Settle Caspian Status' (August 2000).
[55] For detailed analysis, see Yeliseev 1998.

which is the shallow-water portion of the southern Caspian. This allows for easy offshore drilling. Approximately 80 percent of Azerbaijani oil production comes from offshore fields. Only three of more than fifteen Production Sharing Agreements concluded between SOCAR and a number of large international oil companies cover onshore fields. It is estimated that the September 1994 'deal of the century' alone will bring profits of more than 80 billion USD for Azerbaijan. These investments also mean new jobs and a huge service infrastructure.[56] Losing sovereignty over these offshore fields in the Caspian would be catastrophic for Azerbaijan's economy and would have an extremely negative impact on the overall political and economic situation in this country.

Two other proposals regarding the division of the Caspian, namely, those by Iran and another by Turkmenistan, also do not suit Azerbaijan. By agreeing to divide the Caspian into five 20 percent shares the country would loose several prospective deposits where exploration works have already been carried out. Accepting Turkmenistan's proposal on demarcation in a different manner, Baku would thus cede its largest deposits in the Azeri–Chirag–Guneshli offshore structure to Turkmenistan. Despite the Azeri proposal to share these disputed fields, which are already being developed by the AIOC consortium, the Turkmen position argues instead that Ashgabad should exert full sovereignty over them.

The political implications of economic changes in Azerbaijan that could be brought about by the establishment of a condominium regime over the Caspian, as well as the fact itself of 'joint ownership' with Iran and Russia, are not at all desirable for Baku. The same holds true of the kinds of division suggested by Iran and Turkmenistan. Along with lost investments in its economy Azerbaijan might face the danger of losing the political support of those governments that have been promoting their countries' oil companies' activities in Azerbaijan, as well as the support of these companies themselves. For instance, Azerbaijan has been trying to secure support in its territorial dispute with Armenia over the Daglyg Garabagh region of Azerbaijan, often referred to as Nagorno–Karabakh. Azerbaijan has lost about 20 percent of its territory due to the secession of the self-proclaimed Nagorno–Karabakh Republic, and now has more than 860,000 refugees and internally displaced persons from the disputed regions. Azerbaijan is incapable of dealing with these problems alone, both economically and politically, and needs assistance from developed countries.

Condominium over the Caspian with Russia and Iran would also be a significant limitation on Azerbaijan's real independence, as it would basically mean the indirect domination of two regional powers.

Finally, Azerbaijan considers itself a fledging US ally in the region and a strategic partner with Turkey. Close cooperation with both is seen as a very important national interest, causing great concern in Moscow and Teheran.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan also attaches great significance to offshore oil production, although unlike Azerbaijan, oil has often ranked below metals as the top

[56] Croissant and Croissant 1999, pp. 30f.

export of Kazakhstan since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The offshore oil deposits Kazakhstan will get through dividing the Caspian into national sectors through the median line principle are believed to contain from 5.4 billion to 17.6 billion proven,[57] and 85 billion possible barrels of oil.[58] By the year 2030, the country plans to be the sixth largest oil producer in the world. However, the success of this and other ambitious plans depends on the completion of several major export pipelines, which Kazakhstan presently lacks, as well as on the outcome of the Caspian legal status dispute.

Kazakhstan's adherence to sectoral division based on the equidistant median line principle stems from interests similar to those of Azerbaijan. However, Kazakhstan is far more vulnerable to Russian pressure than the latter, and this has had an impact on its position over the legal regime on the Caspian. First of all, Kazakhstan has a 3,000-mile border with Russia, 'the validity of which Russian ultra-nationalists have frequently called into question'.[59] Ethnic Russians constitute about one third of Kazakhstan's overall population, mostly residing in the northern parts of the country bordering Russia. In January 1999, Russian ultra-nationalists went on trial for conspiracy against the state and for trying to declare a pro-Russian Republic in these northern regions.[60]

Kazakhstan is heavily dependent on Russia for trade and the transportation of its energy resources, since the country at present does not in itself possess any other transport options. In 2001, the majority of Kazakhstan's oil flowed from its port of Atyrau on the northern coast of the Caspian Sea to the Samara refinery on the Volga (Russia), and additional supplies were shipped by rail and by barge across the Caspian Sea. The pipeline of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) from the Tengiz field in Kazakhstan also runs through Russian territory to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk.[61]

Finally, Russia provides border defense along the Kazakhstan–China border as well as military training and arms for Kazakhstan.[62] In 1999, Russia agreed to pay Kazakhstan 27.5 million USD for the use of four military test sites. However, only 2.3 million USD out of the total amount were paid directly to the Kazakh government; the rest met the costs of training about one thousand Kazakh officers in Russia.[63]

Not being able to fully challenge Russia's position for political reasons, Kazakhstan since 1994 has chosen a less radical position than Azerbaijan's – dividing the seabed while leaving the surface for common use as provided by the USSR–Persia/Iran treaties of 1921 and 1940, until a new legal status is adopted.

Turkmenistan

Economic interest is also a top priority for Turkmenistan on the issue of the Caspian's legal status. However, the fact that the method proposed by

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[57] *Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan* (January 2002).
[58] Croissant and Croissant 1999, p. 32.
[59] Menon 1995.
[60] Rashid 2000.
[61] *Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan* (January 2002).
[62] Menon 1995.
[63] Rashid 2000.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia would entitle Turkmenistan to a relatively small share of prospective deposits has prompted Ashgabad to search for a different method of dividing the Caspian. Also, the Russian formula calls for sharing disputed oilfields. This would compromise Ashgabad's claim to a major deposit of Guneshli, one portion of which is developed by Azerbaijan.

The country has changed its position repeatedly over the past decade, sometimes coming up with a solution that has been clearly contradictory to its previously declared preference. In the early 1990s, Turkmenistan began unilaterally developing the gas deposits in the sector of the Caspian to which it was entitled during the Soviet period. Later, however, in 1997, after Primakov's initiative, Ashgabad endorsed Russia's condominium proposal and then signed a protocol with Russia and Iran to establish a company that would jointly develop Caspian riches beyond the 45-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone for each country. Still later, the country again changed its position, siding first with Russia and then with Iran. At the same time, Turkmenistan has tendered rights to over 25 offshore fields within the sector it regards as its own.[64]

Apparently inconsistent, Turkmenistan's position is shaped not only by its sultanistic and erratic-style leadership's desire to get a slightly larger share using non-conventional ways of drawing a median line by ignoring some of the geographical factors, such as the fact that Azerbaijan's Absheron peninsula extends far into the Caspian Sea, but also by several considerations and restraints from Russia, and also Iran.

Until recently, Turkmenistan's military was largely dependent on a contingent of Russian officers that served in the Turkmen military forces and provided a border guard that patrols its border with Iran. In addition, Turkmenistan's trade is dependent on its access to the shipping on the Volga River. This and other factors were used by Russia as leverage to influence Turkmenistan's position in the Caspian legal status issue in the 1990s.[65] In April 2003, along with the gas pacts, President Niyazov and President Putin signed a security cooperation agreement and a protocol confirming Turkmenistan's friendship treaty with Russia.

On the other hand, Iran is a neighbor with which Turkmenistan would like to keep good political and economic relations, especially since Teheran has demonstrated strong willingness to provide major transportation routes for exports of gas from Turkmenistan. Iran's challenging of Azerbaijan and its claim to several fields in the southern Caspian also makes Teheran a natural ally to Ashgabad against Baku. In the view of Turkmen officials, Azerbaijan is likely to avoid the possibility of a two-front military operation if it is faced with this prospect in the Caspian.

Conclusion: General Implications for the Littoral States

The unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea already negatively affects the development of oil and gas resources in the region. It may well be a cause of

[64] *Caspian Sea Region: Legal Issues* (February 2002).
[65] Menon 1998, p. 16.

another crisis, since negotiations on the sea's legal status do not keep pace with rapid petroleum operations in the basin.

The long-term five-side resolution of the dispute is possible only if the parties interested in this kind of resolution take into account and appreciate the full range of various national interests involved. The broader geopolitical agendas of the parties in the dispute need to be looked at for factors that shape their respective postures as well as for possible levers and concessions. This long-term resolution will require that practical steps be taken toward softening antagonistic positions through bargaining and concessions, and through addressing those individual interests it is possible to address without undermining others, in order to gain flexibility in a country's position toward the legal status issue.

Three obstacles to the successful resolution of the Caspian's legal status dispute in the near future remain: Iran's insistence on a disproportionate share and the full division of the sea, Turkmenistan's adherence to an unconventional method of drawing median lines, and a possibility of an arms race in the sea.

Because bilateral deals are approaching Iran's presumed national sector, and hard-liners in Iran accuse the Khatami administration of being too lenient in bargaining with the country's northern neighbors, the Islamic Republic's liberal executives may be inclined toward a harder line in the Caspian's legal status dispute. At the same time, it seems possible that Iranians may be willing to soften their approach in return for an offer of multiple pipelines from the Caspian running through Iran's territory. Other concessions, such as relaxing embargoes on Iran, may also open the way for a shift in Teheran's posture in the Caspian. However, these policy options seem highly unlikely in the light of the current US strategy toward the Islamic Republic.

Turkmenistan's antagonism is to a considerable degree conditioned by its relations with Iran and Russia, and changes in Teheran's position or considerable pressure from Russia may be a prerequisite for a shift in Ashgabad's stance. Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan as well as the US may use their few levers on the Turkmen leadership in conjunction with some concessions in encouraging Ashgabad to agree to some mutually beneficial solution. For example, a Turkmen gas pipeline through Azerbaijan is a possible common point for cooperation between the two countries.[66]

An arms race in the Caspian remains a distinct possibility. The largest regional naval exercises since the break-up of the Soviet Union were conducted by Russia in August 2002. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan sent their representatives to the maneuvers. Kazakhstan itself has shown a willingness to strengthen its own military potential in the Caspian. Iran, officially protesting Russia's intentions, deployed 38 new gunboats in the sea's southern sector.[67] Turkmenistan turned down Moscow's invitation to take part in the exercises. Although it would be premature to talk about a militarization of the Caspian, nevertheless the display of force by the Caspian littoral states has a potential of impeding both the development of oil and gas resources in the sea and the resolution of the legal status dispute.

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[66] Moors 2002.
[67] Peuch 2002.

Bilateral agreements to carve up specific sections of the Caspian hold little hope of settling the status dispute definitively, because the regulations of one such agreement will not necessarily be in accord with those of others. Instead a comprehensive framework needs to be worked out that would address the security and economic interests of all five littoral states to the highest extent possible without undermining those of others. Perhaps, two-phase negotiations involving bilateral and multilateral talks would be a more effective strategy in resolving the dispute than possibly a fragmented set of bilateral negotiations. First, bilateral and multilateral agreements drawing median lines in the Caspian Sea and resolving the specific issues of developing the disputed oil fields could be reached between the littoral states. The second stage of the process could be finalized, based on the bilateral and multilateral agreements, by a five-side agreement explicitly stating the principles regulating military and commercial navigation, easement rights, if necessary, for the construction of trans-Caspian pipelines, fishing rights and environmental issues.

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Water Politics and Management of Trans-Boundary Water Resources in Post-Soviet Central Asia

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Before the collapse of the USSR, 'because of ... economic might and political-military power, the Soviet Union dominated the water-management agenda' in the region.[1] All decisions regarding water issues were made in Moscow and the voices of union republics, Afghanistan and Iran in those issues went unheard or were neglected to a great extent. New geopolitical realities resulted in the creation of five newly-independent states, each with its own interests, economic situation and water-management policies. The 'eco-nationalism' of the late 1980s turned into 'eco-centrism' and furthermore into 'eco-egoism' in the 1990s.[2] Issues that had largely fallen under the coordinated water-management policy of just one state, the USSR, were internationalized. This has exposed the reality that a new cooperative approach is required to prevent, mitigate, administer, and solve problems arising from the use of trans-boundary waters.

The main questions that the present chapter aims to address are the following: What is lacking in present water-management cooperation in the region? What can be done to prevent and resolve water disputes in Central Asia? What are the main dilemmas and challenges in interstate water consumption in Central Asia?

This chapter demonstrates that the present situation with regard to the availability of water resources in Central Asia is unbalanced, with some states finding themselves in a less favorable situation than others. In order to demonstrate this, several levels of disparities between two groups of regional states – upstream states with excessive supplies of water versus mid- and downstream states with water shortages – will be discussed It is suggested that the major problem in setting up an effective water-management

[1] Micklin 2000, p. 1.

[2] The term 'eco-nationalism' in a Central Asian context is borrowed from Weinthal 2002, pp. 106–109.

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 169–184.

mechanism in the region is the drastic differences in perceptions amongst parties involved of how cooperation should be planned. After analyzing selected arrangements and agreements on water-management in the region, attention will be drawn to the weaknesses of institutional frameworks that have prevented fully fledged, constructive regional cooperation over water-related issues. Finally, an effort will be made to suggest what can be done to further develop interstate cooperation in this field.

The Trans-Boundary Nature of Central Asian Water Resources

The largest water basin in the Central Asian region is the Aral Sea Basin, which comprises the Amu Darya and Syr Darya trans-boundary river basins, and a network of smaller rivers.

The Amu Darya headwaters are formed in the Pamirs, at the tri-junction of the territories of Tajikistan, China and Afghanistan.[3] The river Pyandzh flows between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, creating a natural border between the two countries. The Pyandzh then becomes the Amu Darya. Therefore, further downstream, the Amu Darya serves as a border delimiting Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The flow of the Amu Darya River is augmented by the Afghan Kundus River and the Tajik Kafirnihan River. The latter, in its upper course, also forms a part of the border between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Besides forming the border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, the Amu Darya River further delineates the Turkmen–Afghan border and the Uzbek–Turkmen border. It finally enters the Khorezm region and then flows through the Karakalpak region of Uzbekistan into the Aral Sea. There are also a number of canals and water reservoirs on the river.[4]

The trans-boundary nature of the Amu Darya Basin can be clearly understood by analyzing the nature of several rivers that constitute its basin. For instance, the rivers Murgab and Tejen are shared between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, and the river Atrek forms a section of a common boundary between Turkmenistan and Iran.[5]

The situation in the Syr Darya River Basin is very similar. The headwaters of the Syr Darya are formed in the Tian Shan Mountains of Kyrgyzstan, and several tributaries cross into Kazakhstan. One of the most significant rivers of Kyrgyzstan – the Naryn – also crosses the border into the Namangan region of Uzbekistan. The Naryn is controlled by Kyrgyzstan using a system of several dams, one of which is the Toktokul Dam. Once in Uzbekistan, the waters of the Naryn are first stored near the town of Uchqurgon and then join the Karadarya River. The Karadarya, too, originates in Kyrgyzstan and flows into the Andijan Reservoir. Eventually, these rivers flow into and constitute the Syr Darya River. The Syr Darya flows through Uzbekistan into Tajikistan only to re-enter Uzbekistan later, flowing towards the Aral Sea. The Syr Darya terminates in Kazakhstan.

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[3] See Polat 2002, p. 124.
[4] For detailed characteristics of smaller rivers and reservoirs, see Polat 2002, pp. 125–128.
[5] Ibid.

Inter-connection of water resources in the region should not be seen as a problem *per se*. This issue becomes problematic because it is further complicated by the imbalance of, and consequent disputes over, water contribution, withdrawals and compensation for supplied water in this region.

Imbalances in Water Availability: Contribution vs. Withdrawals

'Imbalance' is a salient feature of the present situation with regard to water consumption in the Central Asian region. This imbalance is mainly predetermined by the geography and demography of the region. Uzbekistan, with a population density of about 53 inhabitants per km^2, is the largest demographic entity in the basin. The second most densely populated country in the region is Tajikistan, with a population density of 42 inhabitants per km^2. Kyrgyzstan has about 20 inhabitants per km^2, Turkmenistan has 10 per km^2, and the least dense is that of Kazakhstan, which has 8 inhabitants per km^2 in the basin. [6]

However, most of the water supply is concentrated in mountainous areas, from which all the major and lesser rivers emanate. Four-fifths of this water network are located in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which have small land areas. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which together occupy approximately three-fourths of the region's land area and most of its arable land, have only one-fifth of the region's water.[7]

According to Micklin 2000, considerable disparities exist in water generation and consumption in the region between upstream and downstream countries. Upstream countries Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which constitute 20 percent of the regional territory, generate 90 percent of the river flow. In contrast, downstream states Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan occupy 80 percent of the geographical territory but contribute just 10 percent of the river flow.[8]

The figures for water contribution and withdrawals in the region also show that there exists a disparity in water consumption. Thus, according to Micklin 2000, the composition of the Amu Darya River flow comprises 80 percent from Tajikistan, 8 percent from Afghanistan, 6 percent from Uzbekistan, 3 percent from Kyrgyzstan and 3 percent from Turkmenistan and Iran altogether. According to other region-based information sources, the figures for the water composition of the Amu Darya River stand at 74 percent from Tajikistan, 8.5 percent from Uzbekistan, 2.0 percent from Kyrgyzstan, 1.9 percent from Turkmenistan and 13.6 percent from Afghanistan and Iran taken together.[9] The composition of the Syr Darya is as follows: 74 percent from Kyrgyzstan, 12 percent from Kazakhstan, 11 percent from Uzbekistan and 3 percent from Tajikistan. Region-based figures for contribution to the Syr Darya, stand at 75.2 percent from Kyrgyzstan, 15.2 percent from Uzbekistan, 6.9 percent from Kazakhstan and 2.7 percent from Tajikistan.[10]

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[6] For figures, see ibid., pp.142–143.
[7] Rumer 1989, p. 77.
[8] Micklin 2000, p. 8.
[9] See 'Tsentral'naya Aziya: problemy opustynivaniya' (January 2002).
[10] Ibid.

The comparative data for water withdrawals and contribution show that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan contribute 25 percent and 55 percent, respectively, of the average annual river flow in the basin, but withdraw just 16 percent altogether.[11] Afghanistan contributes nearly 4 percent of the Aral Sea Basin river flow but withdraws just below 1 percent.[12]

In contrast, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan contribute only 14 percent of the Aral Sea Basin river flow.[13] Yet they withdraw around 83 percent of the flow altogether.[14] Moreover, with foreseeable stabilization of the political situation in Afghanistan, it is anticipated that Afghanistan could potentially claim 6 to 15 billion m^3 from the Amu Darya River annually because of forecast growth of agricultural and industrial production.[15] Country-by-country data show that Uzbekistan contributes 8 percent of the water but withdraws 52 percent, Turkmenistan contributes no water to the Aral Sea Basin but withdraws around 20 percent, and Kazakhstan contributes 4 percent of the basin's water but withdraws 13 percent.

The importance of dealing with regional imbalances in water supply can be felt with a higher degree of urgency during the drought years. For instance, during the dry season of 2001, the upstream area of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan withdrew 85 percent to 100 percent of their shares while downstream areas such as Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan and Tashaus in Turkmenistan received minimal, paltry, and seriously inadequate amounts.[16] These disparities in water contribution and withdrawals between upstream donor-states (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan) and downstream consumer-states (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) are predetermined by the geographical position of these states. However, the lack of regional cooperation to coordinate the water policies of regional states exacerbates the existing imbalances, placing a heavy burden on all Central Asian states.

Regional Cooperation: Institutionalization vs. Eco-Egoism

As many experts suggest, it is a relatively easy matter to propose and set requirements for efficient water-resources management or the technical standards corresponding to the 'most reasonable' regime of water-resource management.[17] Yet the real difficulty concerns practical enforcement of those standards. There are several factors to take into account in order to make this cooperation in Central Asia possible.

There are two human-factor determinants that facilitate the smoother emergence of cooperation over water resources in this region: firstly, the very firm political will of the various presidents to avoid water-related conflicts based on their awareness of a complicated situation; and secondly, personal

[11] The data is for 1995.
[12] Micklin 2000, p. 9.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] See Trushin 1998, p. 268.
[16] See e.g. Moigne 2003, p. 7.
[17] See Caponera 1985, p. 563.

linkages and contacts among hydro-bureaucrats of the Central Asian republics.

Some skeptics ironically observe that these water-management specialists mentioned as a second driving force for cooperation are in most cases exactly those people who served for decades within the water-management institutions that designed or at least implemented disastrous water-management policies under the Soviet regime. In addition, skeptics insist that since former central Moscow-based officials find themselves made irrelevant, there exist no mid-level political structures that can provide a forum for equitable conflict management.[18] Yet these arguments are misleading and destructive as far as the immediate work on crisis alleviation in the region is concerned. There is no alternative to engaging these water specialists in regional water ministries who are currently in a position to deal with this problematic water situation.

Significantly enough, it has been the active support of these water experts in the post-Soviet period that has been instrumental in securing a well-informed consensus and support from the heads of states and setting up a smooth institutional mode of cooperation in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the USSR. In most cases, these water-management specialists were educated in the same university classes or worked together in the same region for decades, which created a consensus among them for cooperative work even after they found themselves on different sides of the borders and negotiation tables.

Even before the collapse of the USSR, the leaders of the five Central Asian republics signed a joint declaration on 23 June 1990, expressing their concern over water shortages and water pollution as the major factors in the Aral Sea Basin ecological catastrophe. It was both an appeal to Moscow to pay closer attention to the environmental needs of the region and a call for joint action in the region. Remarkably, this was one of the earliest and clearest attempts by Central Asian republics to voice their concerns from a joint stance.

The primary concern of Central Asian states in the early 1990s was to maintain a stable supply of water to the agricultural sector. Therefore, on 18 February 1992, the heads of states of the five Central Asian nations signed an agreement 'On Cooperation in the Management, Utilization, and Protection of the Water of Interstate Sources'.[19] Accordingly, the Central Asian states agreed to follow the norms of water supply set in the Soviet Union.[20] This agreement also stipulates that each party to the agreement accepts the obligation to prevent application of measures in water-management within their territory that would compromise the interests of other parties or result in water pollution.[21] However, certain states, Kyrgyzstan in particular, have repeatedly violated this article of the agreement by releasing larger volumes than set limits of water during the winter months for electricity generation.[22]

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[18] See e.g. Buck et al. 1993, p. 624.

[19] The text of the agreement, *Soglashenie ... o sotrudnichestve v sfere sovmestnogo upravleniya ispol'zovaniem i okhranoy vodnykh resursov ...* (February 1992), can be obtained directly from the Ministry of Agriculture and Water-Resource Management of Uzbekistan.

[20] Ibid., article 2.

[21] Ibid., article 3.

[22] See e.g. Micklin 2000, p. 46.

Nevertheless, this agreement served the important purposes of, firstly, not compromising the status quo that had existed in the region, and secondly, coordinating further policies on water-management of the states after the collapse of the integrated system of shared water-management.

The agreement of 1992, mentioned above, established the International Committee on Water (Management) Coordination (ICWC) with powers to define and develop water-management policies and approve of annual water allocation limits for each state.[23]

The executive body of the ICWC consists of the Secretariat, which is based in Khujand (Tajikistan) in the Ferghana Valley. There is a Scientific Center, which is located in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) with regional branches in the other four Central Asian states. The two Basin Water Management Organizations (*Basseynoe Vodnoe Ob'edinenie*) were also established at this time: BVO Amu Darya (based in Urgench) and BVO Syr Darya (based in Tashkent), the facilities and structures of which constitute the shared property of all parties to the agreement and shall be considered as transferred for their temporary use without the right of further transfer or privatization of that property.[24]

In addition to the above, the agreement on the 'Joint Activities to Address Problems in the Aral Sea and its Surrounding Area' was signed in March 1993. This agreement established the International Council on Aral Sea Basin Problems (ICAS) and the International Fund for the Aral Sea (IFAS). ICAS was designed to set policy, provide inter-sector coordination and review the projects and activities conducted in the basin. IFAS was entrusted with the coordination of financial resources provided by member states, donors and international organizations.[25]

In January 1994, the 'Program of Specific Measures to Improve the Ecological, Social and Economic Situation in the Aral Sea Basin for 3–5 Years' was adopted. During their March 1994 meeting in Dashkhous (Turkmenistan), the heads of states approved the ICWC annual report and considered the Aral Sea Basin Program.

In September 1995, the Declaration on the Sustainable Development of the Aral Sea Basin was adopted in Nukus (Uzbekistan). Parties affirmed their financial obligations to the ICAS and IFAS. The subsequent draft agreement concluded in 1996 set out the composition and functions of the ICAS in highly general terms.[26]

In 1997, ICAS and IFAS were merged into IFAS. The new structure has a board composed of the Deputy Prime Ministers of Central Asian states concerned with agriculture, water and environment. The Executive Committee (EC) is the permanent working body of IFAS.

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[23] *Soglashenie* ..., articles 7 and article 8.
[24] Ibid., article 9.
[25] See Vinogradov and Langford 2002, pp. 347, 351.
[26] Ibid., p. 352.

The Internationalization of Water Issues in Central Asia

All the Central Asian states support regional ownership of water that cannot be considered a property of any one state. At the same time, each of the countries has solemnly enshrined in its constitution and other legislative acts that the water within its territory is an integral property of the state and that water policy is its sovereign entitlement.[27] Inevitably, disputes must thus arise and often competition replaces cooperation, and angry noises emanate from all the capitals.[28]

In addition to the geographic imbalances mentioned above, the economic needs of the Central Asian states with respect to water are in direct conflict. For instance, natural resources of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are insufficient to satisfy their energy needs. They compensate for this by power generation using hydro-electric dams. Therefore, it is profitable for them to release a large portion of water during the winter months when the demand for electricity is at its highest. Storage of water in Kyrgyzstan's Toktokul Dam (gross capacity: 19.5 km^3) and Tajikistan's Nurek Dam (gross capacity: 10.5 km^3) in the winter months is hence counter-productive to their immediate energy needs.

On the other hand, storage of water in these dams mentioned above during winter months is vital for the downstream states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, since they need adequate water for their water-intensive agricultural sectors during the summer months. This kind of water-policy dilemma creates water shortages in downstream states in the summer and also causes annual floods in immense areas in the downstream territories during the winter, with lethal effect on the newly-planted crops.

In order to resolve this energy dilemma with mutual benefit, an agreement was concluded in 1994 between Kyrgyzstan, on the one hand, and Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, on the other, to supply Kyrgyzstan with coal and gas as a compensation for water storage and supply. Unfortunately, this agreement and others like it (see below) were not implemented due to disagreements on the quota of energy resources to be delivered or simply due to the inability of one side to deliver on the agreement.[29] This in turn led to a number of complications, the latest of which occurred in February 2004 (see below for further details).

The Commercialization of Water and Unilateralism of Water Policy

The upstream states consider the schemes mentioned above to be temporary and ineffective. They also view these energy-swap schemes as a tool of pressure from the downstream states. What they suggest instead can be referred to as the 'commercialization of water'. For instance, Deputy of the

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[27] See e.g. Article 4 of the 'Water Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan', Article 5 of the 'Law On Water' of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, Article 4 of the 'Water Code of the Republic of Tajikistan', and Article 3 of the Law 'On Water and Water Use' of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at the Ministry of Agriculture and Water-Resource Management of Uzbekistan; cf. the 'Water Law of the Kyrgyz Republic' of 2001.

[28] See e.g. Villiers 1999, p. 138.

[29] For details, see Mainguet and Letolle 2001.

Kyrgyz Parliament T. U. Usubaliev calls for introducing payments from downstream states for water emanating from Kyrgyzstan by arguing that annual losses to the Kyrgyz economy amount to 61.5 million USD due to water collection in winter months.[30]

The water commercialization paradigm has dominated the Kyrgyz leadership's thinking on water policy, and this led in March, 2001, to a unilateral declaration by Kyrgyzstan that it would provide just 750 million m^3 of water to downstream states instead of the previously agreed 2.3 billion m^3, dramatically affecting the agriculture of Uzbekistan.[31] Water-commercialization rhetoric further translated into the 29 June 2001 'Law on the Interstate Use of Water Objects, Water Resources and Water Management Installations', which states that all water in the territory of the country belongs to the state and demands that downstream states pay for water coming out of Kyrgyzstan.

The downstream states of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan categorically dismissed such Kyrgyz claims and cited international norms and the 1992 interstate agreements to support their arguments. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan also questioned the practicality of the Kyrgyz approach. Certain officials in downstream states have indicated that should Kyrgyzstan enforce its stance on selling water as a product, downstream states would hit back with the imposition of high value-added taxes on Kyrgyz water during the winter months.[32] Such an imposition would threaten the hydrogen-water generation of the upstream states, making it very expensive, and none of the states would benefit.

Eventually, compromises were sought. Kyrgyzstan also rephrased its demand for compensation from downstream states. It currently insists that these states pay only for water passing through Kyrgyz reservoirs and canals – in other words, that they share the maintenance costs of water supply installations.[33] Kazakhstan has favored such an approach, stating that it should not pay for water but for services provided to deliver that water. Kazakhstan agreed to pay 100,000 USD a year for the maintenance of those facilities. A similar agreement was concluded with Uzbekistan in March of 2002.[34]

In a different development, the Director of the Kyrgyz Institute of Water Problems and Hydro-Energy, Mamatkanov, has suggested constructing regionally- and World Bank-funded additional dams (the Kambarta Dams N 1 and N 2) in the upper stretches of the Syr Darya, which would serve for Kyrgyz energy generation. The water would then be released into the Toktokul Reservoir for storage.[35] Deputy Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan

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[30] Olimov and Kamollidinov 1999.

[31] See Slim 2002, p. 500.

[32] Personal communication with a high-ranking official at the Ministry of Water Management of Uzbekistan, August 2003.

[33] See 'Central Asia: Water and Conflict', May 2002, p. 16.

[34] Ibid., p. 16. Trushin 1993, advocates the idea of payments for delivery of water to the delivering states as compensation for amortization and modernization of facilities rather than for water as a product. He insists that water in Central Asia should be considered regional property rather than national property.

[35] For a similar example regarding Bazarbai Mambetov, head of the Interstate Council of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, who lobbied for the World Bank funding of the

Djoomart Otorbaev shares this vision, arguing that such a project would benefit both upstream and downstream states.[36] Kazakhstan has agreed to consider providing a portion of the required overall costs of 1 billion USD for Dam-1 and 210–230 million USD for Dam-2, if Kyrgyzstan issues stock shares of the two dams.[37]

In a related development, in August of 2004, Head of the Governing Board of Russian Energy Company 'EES Rossiya', A. B. Chubais signed an agreement with Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan H. T. Tanaev on coordinated construction of the Kambarta Dams 1 and 2 indicating Russian interest in the project. [38] While Russian involvement in this project might be associated by some as a part of Chubais's controversial idea about creating a 'liberal empire' in Russia and surrounding areas (ultimately through uniting energy systems and creating integrated economies), which he still strongly supports, undoubtedly, the construction of the Kambarta Dams means a positive step towards the resolution of the most acute water supply problems not only for Kyrgyzstan but also for the remaining Central Asian states. As a substitute or even alternative to the Russian involvement in the construction of water-related facilities, in September 2004, the Kyrgyz President discussed the feasibility of Chinese participation in the construction of dams in Kyrgyzstan.[39]

In addition to all the logistic problems mentioned above, donor-community representatives and local specialists have concluded that there is currently a lack of willingness in the Central Asian region to ensure sustainable and equitable development of the shared water resources and that the present policy climate on this issue promotes only selfish interests, resulting in a very unstable water supply for everyone.[40]

Trans-Boundary Water Issues in the Region

Tajikistan, like Kyrgyzstan, is an upstream state, poor in energy resources and forced to use dams for generating hydro-electricity. Tajikistan is an integral part of the two river basins. The total capacity of the dams situated in Tajikistan is lower than that of the Toktokul Dam in Kyrgyzstan. Eighty-five percent of the energy supply to Tajikistan's northern part is maintained mainly through the Wakhsh system of dams. The energy supply to the remaining part of Tajikistan is still a problematic issue. In addition, there is an energy-swap agreement between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan on mutual supply of energy, which is also irregular because of the capacities of the Tajik dam.
In order to increase its energy-generation capacity, Tajikistan is considering the possibility of reviving the Rogun Dam project. This project was planned

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project to build additional installations for the benefit of Kyrgyzstan, see Weinthal 2002, pp. 192–193.

[36] See Taksanov 2003.

[37] 'Kazakhstan gotov stroit' GEA v Kyrgyzii esli emu dadut chast' aktsiy' (April 2002).

[38] For details, see *A. Chubais podpisal memorandum …* (August 2004).

[39] 'Kirgiziya predlagaet Kitayu sovmestno dostroit' kaskad Narynskikh GES' (September 2004).

[40] See e.g. Moigne 2003 p. 6, and Dukhovny 2003, p. 1.

under the Soviet government. After gaining its independence, the government of Tajikistan attempted to implement the plan, but due to financial problems and instability in the country the project came to a halt in 1992. The Tajik government returned to its implementation after the end of the civil war. The governments of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were cautious in their assessment of this project, since they feared that the new dam could potentially divert more water from the Wakhsh River for Tajikistan's agriculture, damaging interests downstream.[41]

Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan constitute the Amu Darya River Basin. The situation with regard to water in the relations between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is less dramatic though no less tense. Both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are downstream countries with the highest water consumption in the region. Their economies depend heavily on water supply. Initially, both states divided the water flow equally and relations between them did not seem to contain any potential tension. However, there are three alarming issues.

First, the water-sharing between the two countries remains problematic. Disparities exist in both the demographic sense and in the amount of withdrawals between the states. For instance, the more densely populated and territorially larger Uzbekistan is allocated the same amount of water as the smaller Turkmenistan. There is a substantial discrepancy between the quotas allocated and the real amount of withdrawals. While both countries are allocated 22 km^3 of water, Turkmenistan, for instance, is thought to use as much as 30 km^3 of water due to water-use inefficiency.[42]

Second, relations between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have also been affected by the announcement of Turkmenistan's intention to extend the Kara Kum Canal. This canal already carries twice as much water as it did in Soviet times and the projected increase in its capacity threatens not just to leave the Amu Darya with an extremely limited water flow, but also endangers the downstream territories of Uzbekistan, in particular the Karakalpak region, with a deficit of water for both agricultural and household usage.[43]

Third, Turkmenistan announced in 2000 that it intended to consolidate the drainage water of territories surrounding a dry area into one lake, the Golden Age Lake.[44] The project site is 500 kilometer from Ashgabad, and the overall size of the new lake is to be 3,460 km^2. According to Turkmen specialists, this would allow Turkmenistan to grow an additional 500,000 tons of cotton, 300 thousand tons of grain and several thousand tons of fruit annually.[45] However, this clearly leaves the question of whether the sustainability of the Golden Age Lake would be guaranteed through drainage resources alone and whether Turkmenistan would eventually be forced to withdraw water from the Amu Darya to support the Lake. This in turn would result in water crises in the downstream Urgench Province and the Karakalpak region of Uzbekistan and would consequently have a disastrous impact on the whole Amu Darya Basin.

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[41] *Tajiks, Uzbeks to Sign Agreement on Power Engineering* ... (January 2002).
[42] 'Central Asia: Water and Conflict' (May 2002), p. 21.
[43] Weinthal 2002, pp. 118–119.
[44] 'Nastupaet vodenoe protivostoyanie?' (November 2000).
[45] See Insarova 2002.

These issues are likely to affect not only Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan but also Afghanistan. With the expected reconstruction of Afghanistan, the water issue is going to turn into one of the most disputed issues in the region. Naturally, the reconstruction of Afghanistan would require additional amounts of water to expand agricultural and industrial production. During the Tokyo conference on the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Western and Japanese experts supported larger water allocations for Afghanistan, even if it meant draining the Aral Sea. Central Asian delegates voiced their concern over these plans and warned that drying the Aral Sea and the artificial creation of three lakes in the area would lead to a catastrophe affecting the whole region.[46]

The Siberian River-Diversion Project

Many leaders and water specialists still regard the Siberian river-diversion project as the only way to compensate for the shortage of regional water from external sources. Over 150 Soviet research institutes developed a plan according to which the Siberian waters would be directed into Central Asia. The plan was rejected by the Communist Party in 1986.[47]

Attention to the rejected plan re-emerged in April, 2002. ECOSAN (International Fund of Ecology and Health; 'ECOSAN' was constructed from the words Ecology and Sanitation), an environmental NGO, held a conference in Tashkent during which the Russian Presidential Adviser on Agriculture and Water Management Jurabekov voiced his support for a revival of the Siberia–Central Asia canal plan, possibly in reflection of the President's views. Specifically, the plan involves the diversion of the Siberian rivers Ob and Irtish, so that they would connect to the Central Asian water resources.[48]

The story developed further when Mayor of Moscow Luzhkov addressed a confidential letter to President Putin in 2002, in which he strongly supported the project and suggested that Russia consider the project to be of strategic and commercial value. Luzhkov considered water to be a sustainable product that can be sold without damaging Russian interests. The essence of Luzhkov's idea was to divert 5–7 percent of water from the Ob through a 200m x 2,500m long canal to Central Asia.[49] This water is supposed to return into Russia as a result of evaporation, therefore representing a sustainable and reusable 'product'. A number of influential persons, such as the Russian Minister of Natural Resources Mikheev, also expressed their interest but President Putin chose not to comment on the issue.[50] Supporters of this project argue that regional institutions should take leading roles in its implementation.[51]

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[46] See Jumagulov 2002.

[47] 'Pokupat' sibirskuyu vodu gosudarstva Azii vse ravno ne smogut – deneg net' (April 2003).

[48] For details, see 'Evropa tolkaet Rossiyu na razvorot sibirskikh rek' (February 2004).

[49] 'Luzhkov zaymetsya problemoy Arala' (January 2003).

[50] Interview with Nikolay Mikheev, 9 January 2003, available at http://www.news.ferghana.ru

[51] See, *'Smisl' ... U proekta povorota sibirskikh rek poyavlyayutsya novye storonniki* (July 2003).

At the same time, one of the most prominent regional experts, Rim Giniyatullin, who heads the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, warns that the first stage of the project alone would require 15–16 billion USD, whereas the second stage would require another 30 billion USD.[52] Other opponents of this project suggest that there are alternatives, such as water conservation, improvement of irrigation techniques and diversification of crops – all are supposed to decrease the demand for water.[53]

Central Asian Water Crisis: Latest Developments

In January 2004, the government representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan met in the southern Kazakh city of Chimkent to tackle the issues of excessive water discharges from the Toktokul Dam and the problems connected to seasonal flooding; both factors trouble regional downstream states every spring. The Chimkent Agreement (signed on 4 January 2004), which arose from the meeting stipulated that Kyrgyzstan was to cut water discharge into Kazakhstan's Chardara Water Reservoir from the Kyrgyzstan-owned Toktokul Dam to the level of 500 m^3 per second. Kazakhstan pledged to compensate for potential Kyrgyz energy losses resulting from such a cut, by providing fuel oil to Kyrgyzstan. In addition, Uzbekistan agreed to allow the excess water (around 350 m^3 per second) from the Kazakhstan-owned Chardara Reservoir to the Uzbekistan-owned Arnasay Reservoir, bordering the Chardara and separated by a dam. These measures were supposed to keep the water volumes at the projected level and decrease the threat of over-flooding at the Chardara Reservoir.

However, by the beginning of February, it became obvious that the agreement was not respected by either party. Water from the Kyrgyz Toktokul Dam kept flowing at levels higher than 500 m^3 per second peaking at 560 m^3 per second. Uzbekistan was unable to facilitate the water discharge from Chardara beyond levels of 200–220 m^3 per second, substantially short of the levels agreed upon during the January meeting in Chimkent. This situation was pregnant with further complications, since by that time the water had filled the Chardara Reservoir to the limit leaving no emergency spare-capacity for dealing with potential spring floods. In addition to these problems, Tajikistan kept discharging a considerable amount of water from its Kayrakkum Dam, which it uses for energy generation. At certain times, Tajik discharges reached levels as high as 1200–1400 m^3 per second, which further complicated the situation in the downstream states of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.[54] The environmental and interstate crisis appeared imminent.

Kazakhstan appealed to its neighbors and several emergency meetings of the government representatives were called at the beginning of February 2004. During one of those meetings in Tashkent on 7 February, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan provisionally agreed that Uzbekistan would complete the construction of additional reservoirs within 10 days and increase discharge of

[52] See Taksanov 2003.
[53] See e.g. Buck et al. 1993, p. 605.
[54] 'Syrdarya Floods Due to Lack of Regional Coordination' (February 2004).

water from the Chardara Reservoir to Arsanay. This meeting was followed by a multilateral meeting of the Deputy-Prime Ministers of regional states in Bishkek on 11 February, to attempt to coordinate water discharge policies between upstream and downstream regional states.[55]

The Bishkek meeting ended in a clear stalemate, with re-registered stances and mutual demands by the states. As a compromise solution, however temporary, the parties signed a protocol that stipulated that Kyrgyzstan would reduce the water discharge from Toktokul to the Chardara Dam to a level of 500 m^3 per second from 12 February 2004. Uzbekistan, in its turn, agreed to allow water discharges from Chardara to Arsanay at the rate of 550 m^3 per second from 20 February 2004. And for its part, Tajikistan pledged to discharge no more than 950 m^3 per second from its Karakkum Reservoir.[56]

While the agreements mentioned above decreased the level of water in the Chardara Reservoir and alleviated the problems of flooding for the time being, they still represented temporary measures that did not set up a reliable mechanism for trans-boundary water-management in the Central Asian region. The water crisis of February 2004 again saw mutual recriminations from all regional states.[57] Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan blamed downstream states for ignoring their energy needs. Both downstream states of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan remain displeased with the Kyrgyz and Tajik energy-generation policy, because annual excessive spring-water discharges from Kyrgyz and Tajik dams and the recurrent threat of flooding affect the lives of 800 000 residents in Kazakhstan and 3 major regions in Uzbekistan.[58]

The situation further makes relations among regional states tense, which forebodes annual water crises. For instance, as indicated above, the winter of 2004, as any other previous post-independence year, witnessed excessive water discharges causing both interstate and ecological crises. In addition, in May, 2004, the water-management agency of Kazakhstan, warned that the water collected at the Chardara and Toktokul Reservoirs would most likely be short of agricultural needs in down-stream states in the summer of 2004.[59] According to these data, the water inflows into the Chardara Reservoir, as of May 2004, amounted to 566 m^3 per second, while water discharges run at 755 m^3 per second. Under the projected water collection capacity of 5.2 billion m^3, the Chardara Reservoir had 4.77 billion m^3 (as of May 2004), with no additional large water flows expected. Fortunately for agricultural sectors of Central Asian states, these warnings did not materialize and a major water shortage was avoided. Yet, the excessive water discharges expected in the coming winter of 2005 keep Central Asian leadership and water specialists concerned. As an indication of such concern, in 2004, water ministry officials in Central Asian states commenced the new round of negotiations on winter water discharges and energy exchange earlier than in previous years. In particular, on 16 September, 2004, representatives from ministries of water-management in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan met to

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[55] 'Kak ostanovit' potop? Vitse-Prem'ery … sobralis' v Bishkeke' (February 2004).
[56] 'Kyrgyzstan priznal svoy ozhibki v sbrose vody – uvereny v Kazakhstane' (February 2004).
[57] For instance, 'Kazakhstan obvinyaet v potope (February 2004); cf. Kamilov 2004.
[58] Zarudnaya 2004; cf. 'Uzbek President Accuses Kyrgyzstan …' (February 2004).
[59] 'Zapasov vlagi v Shardarinskom vodokhranilishche ne khvatit na poliv' (May 2004).

discuss the issues of discharges of water along the Syr Darya and energy swaps between concerned states. While this meeting did not produce any sensible outcomes, it symbolizes an understanding of the urgency of the water-related issues in Central Asia among member states.

Conclusion: From Absolute Sovereignty towards Limited Sovereignty?

One of the cornerstones for establishing cooperation in water-related issues in Central Asia is the issue of the sovereignty of each member state. It is obvious that in water-management, Central Asian states cannot practice and apply absolute sovereignty, as their internal policies would have an adverse impact on all the states in the region. For these states, it is important to proceed on the basis that all issues regarding interstate water consumption be perceived as the subject of collective decision making. Regional knowledge and expertise should be consolidated in a single transnational institution designed to enhance the region's capacity to deal with environmental hazards. Regional institutions in different parts of the world have proved more effective than those operating at the universal level.[60]

Accordingly, the notion of absolute national sovereignty with particular respect to water resources should be attenuated, while the importance of the collective or regional sovereignty of the Central Asian region as a whole merits reinforcement at policy level. The establishment of a Central Asian Water Consortium, if successfully realized, might serve as a case of successful regional sovereignty application. The formation of the consortium is based on the 17 March 1998, Bishkek agreements, which were also ratified by Tajikistan on 7 May 1999. The consortium brought together states from the delta of the Syr Darya River in order to form a system of water and energy swaps between these states. At this stage, the idea seems to enjoy the understanding and support of the Central Asian leadership, which revives hope that eco-nationalism, exemplified in the commercialization of water and other unilateral actions, will change into a multilateral mechanism to coordinate management of water and energy resources in the region.

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[60] See Caponera 1985, p. 579.

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People, Environment, and Water Security in the Aral Sea Area

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The story of the Aral Sea is a story of an ecological catastrophe caused by unsustainable use of water resources. The sea was the fourth largest inland water body with an area of 68,320 km^2, including 2,230 km^2 of islands, a volume of about 1,066 km^3, and a depth in most parts of less than 30 meters. Between 1960 and 1998 the sea area decreased to 29,000 km^2, the volume decreased to 181 km^3 and the sea level dropped from 53.3 meters above sea level to 35 meters above sea level.

The total drainage basin of the Aral Sea is 1.9 million km^2, of which 28 percent is in South Kazakhstan, 24 percent in Turkmenistan, 23 percent in Uzbekistan, including Karakalpakstan, 12 percent in North Afghanistan, 7 percent in Tajikistan and 6 percent in Kyrgyzstan. Of the water reaching the Aral Sea before 1960, 4 percent originated from what is now Southern Kazakhstan, 1 percent from Turkmenistan, 9 percent from Uzbekistan, 6 percent from Northern Afghanistan, 55 percent from Tajikistan and 25 percent from the Kyrgyz Republic.[1] This was not a problem in 1960 when all the states except Afghanistan were included in the Soviet Union. After 1990, in the post-Soviet era, the fact that the downstream countries are mainly confined to exogenous water became more problematic.[2]

The Historical Background

Historically the Aral Sea has varied a lot in size, depending on the climate, since its 'birth' approximately ten thousand years ago, when it was very small and only the Syr Darya flowed into it. The Amu Darya at that time discharged into the Caspian Sea.[3] The Amu Darya, four to five thousand years ago changed its course into the Aral Sea, which at that time was four to five times larger than in the middle of the 20th century. Thus, in historical perspective,

[1] FAO 1997.
[2] Björklund 1999, 2000.
[3] Aladin 2000.

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 185–194.

the Aral Sea has gone through several ecological crises, the last of which was exclusively a man-made crisis.

The only rivers that in recent times have discharged into the Aral Sea, which is a closed drainage system, are the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, both of them with their sources in the high mountains. By 1989 the Aral Sea has receded into two parts, the northern Small Aral, where the Syr Darya terminates, and the southern Large Aral, where the Amu Darya terminates. The Large Aral will soon split into a Western Aral and an Eastern Aral when what is now the Vozrozhdeniye Peninsula will separate the two parts.

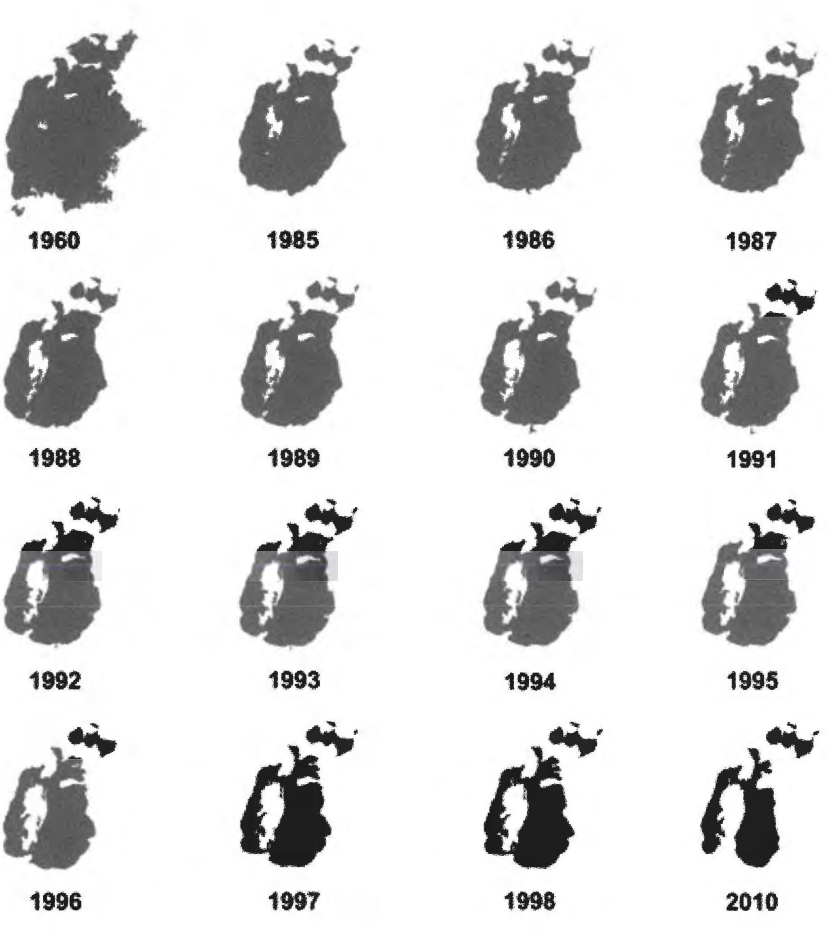

Figure 1. The development of the Aral Sea surface, 1960–2010.

Source: http://www.dfd.dlr.de/app/land/aralsee/chronology.html

Note: The images were derived by satellite remote sensing data and conventional data (WDB II for the mask of 1960, bathymetry for the year of 2010).

Areas along the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya were irrigated already in the first century AD. This agriculture was intensified in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but was mainly confined to areas close to the rivers. After the Russian Revolution, Central Asia was regarded as the ideal region for cotton production.[4] Cotton growth expanded after World War II, and production demand for water grew beyond any sustainable limits. An increasing number of canals and inter-basin diversion canals were constructed. Between 1965 and 1986, irrigation areas expanded at an annual rate of 2.3 percent. In 1989, 4.3 million hectares in the Amu Darya Basin and 3.3 million hectares in the Syr Darya Basin were irrigated.[5] The majority of the irrigation canals were built without any lining, allowing the run-off to infiltrate into the sandy soils, the remaining water then running into depressions in the desert resulting in hundreds of drainage lakes in the desert. These become filled with salty run-off, part of which infiltrates into the groundwater or evaporates. The salt-concentration of the lake almost tripled between 1960 and 1990.[6]

The increasingly less productive condition of the soils resulted in an overuse of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. Central Asian cotton fields in 1985 received about 6–10 times the normal Soviet dose of pesticides, such as DDT, lindane and other types of dioxins. Added to this were huge amounts of fertilizers and heavy metals, altogether making the water, in the rivers as well as in the shrinking Aral Sea, unfit for any type of human consumption. The salty areas have been exposed to wind and salty dust is transported long distances. The soils have become polluted and unproductive. Almost 30 percent of irrigated land is severely salinized and the crop yields are reduced by 20 to 50 percent. Several frequently occurring serious diseases, such as hepatitis, typhoid, throat cancer, and birth defects, are presumably linked to the bad water – and soil – quality.

The health of the population in the Amu Darya Basin is very much dependent on water quality, and the decreasing surface water quality is mainly a result of agricultural water use.[7] There is a clear linkage between domestic water quality and infant mortality. There is also a linkage to infectious diseases and there is a need for adequate technical, political, and economic measures to improve human health, particularly in the Karakalpak area.

International Claims on the Water

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the competing interests in and demands upon the Amu Darya and Syr Darya water resources by the newly-independent republics have become increasingly obvious. Even though the republics decided in 1990, for the time being, to keep to their quotas from the Soviet era, they also affirmed their rights to control land, water, and other natural resources within their territories. Management systems were also completely changed.[8] For instance, Kyrgyzstan, the most upstream country of the Syr Darya, is now heavily dependent on Russia and the neighboring

[4] Klötzli 1994.
[5] Raskin et al. 1992.
[6] Kotlyakov 1991.
[7] Khasankhanova and Abdullaev 2000.
[8] Klötzli 1994.

countries for its energy supply, and this republic demands the possibility to explore the hydropower potential within its borders. Uzbekistan, lying downstream of first Kyrgyzstan and then Tajikistan, has access to cheaper energy production with its own fossil fuel but depends on Kyrgyzstan to release water at the right time for the country to be able to use it for irrigation. Kazakhstan, the most downstream country, now receiving a reduced quantity of water of lowered quality, has claims on the upper riparian states to increase quantity and improve quality. Uzbekistan also makes territorial claims on parts of Tajikistan, where a majority of the inhabitants are Uzbeks. Where the Amu Darya is concerned, Tajikistan, the most upstream country, has not yet fully explored its hydropower potential, nor has Afghanistan, which is an upstream riparian state. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are putting competing claims on the downstream water in order to feed the increasing population – and to sustain the cotton production.

Seminars in Sweden

In 1998 the Swedish UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and the Swedish Save the Children arranged a conference on the Aral Sea, focusing on contributions to alleviate the consequences of this environmental catastrophe. It concentrated on the relation between health and the environment and, in particular, the health of women and children, as well as the equal participation of men and women in societal development.[9] In early 2000 the Swedish UNIFEM arranged a seminar on security aspects in Central Asia.

At the Stockholm Water Symposium in August 2000, the Stockholm International Water Institute held a seminar 'Water Security – Opportunities for Development and Cooperation in the Aral Sea Area', co-convened by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Swedish UNIFEM. This was followed up with a seminar on 'Central Asia and International Safety', organized by the Swedish Pugwash Group and the Swedish UNIFEM Committee at the Department of Central Asian Studies, Stockholm University, on 24 October 2001.

Ongoing Activities

The Aral Sea Basin Program, ASBP, was a result of inter-state agreements from 1992 and 1993 and was designed to be administered by the new regional institutions. The main actors that have an influence on the coordination of international assistance within this program are UNDP and the World Bank together with UNEP (United Nations Environment Program). Another important actor has been UNESCO, which in cooperation with the Scientific Advisory Board for the Aral Sea Basin prepared the regional Water Related Vision for the Aral Sea Basin presented at the Second World Water Forum in The Hague, the Netherlands, in March 2000.[10] This Vision presented goals to

[9] Lindahl–Kiessling 1999.
[10] Verhoog 2000.

be reached by 2025 within the fields of health, nutrition, environment, wealth, agriculture and drinking water supply. The Vision concluded:

- The Aral Sea Basin 'has everything necessary for a bright future, including sufficient water, but regional cooperation is needed to reach the socio-economic development objectives established'. Present knowledge on water and land and related socio-economic factors is not sufficient, not reliable, and not consistent, and availability is not sufficiently well organized for planning and decision-making.
- The largest environmental problem in the basin is soil salinity.
- Higher agricultural productivity per cubic meter of water is needed to avoid water shortage.
- Non-agricultural water use activities, such as industry and tourism, are potential water saving activities as they allow for food imports.
- The restoration of the Aral Sea to the state it was in before 1960 is no longer feasible.
- Water saving measures are initially expensive but economical in the long run.

The ASBP objectives as formulated in 1998 are: to stabilize the environment; to rehabilitate the disaster zone around the Aral Sea; to improve the management of international waters; and to build the capacity of regional institutions. Several international projects and programs are ongoing within the Basin, the most important being the one by the World Bank/Global Environment Facility (GEF), closely linked to the ASBP. The main components of the GEF program are water and salt management; public awareness; dam and reservoir management; trans-boundary monitoring; and wetland restoration. There are also large projects within the area of water supply and sanitation, hydro-meteorological monitoring, water and energy agreements, ecological research in the delta areas etc. Several small-scale projects, most of which are run by NGOs, do exist and are mostly aimed at helping the human population.

Methods for Ensuring Water Security

Methods developed within an Integrated Water Resources and Environment Management framework could increase environmental water security as well as human water security and may also increase food security. For a more encompassing water security, broader cooperation is necessary.

Besides a legal framework, a vision and strategies at a regional level are crucial to the identifying and resolving of water resources. Legal agreements for cooperation as drafted by the International Fund for the Aral Sea Saving, IFAS, and the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in the Aral Sea Basin, ICWC, should include agreements on the status of the organizations within the IFAS and on the institutional strengthening of the ICWC organizations; on the construction of regional, national and basin-based information systems and the exchange of information; on water use from trans-boundary waters; on the planning of joint interventions on the trans-boundary rivers; and on water quality and the ecological sustainability of the rivers. Tools developed include the Water Resources Management

Information System, WARMIS, and systems for historic and recent data within databases covering administration, land, water, water quality, climate, industry, economy, and hydropower. Different kinds of models have been developed with the help of those data bases, among which are one for water and salt balance and another for water use in agriculture, Water Use and Farm Management System, WUFMAS.[11]

The analysis of different models including those for national and regional planning and scenarios of water resources development is done within the framework of the strategic work. Future improvements related to water development may be possible in the region if an action program is set up based on the following:

- Ancient water use was based on the valid use of water for the benefit of the whole society.
- Historically, water use was based on water savings and the prevention of pollution.
- Water use in the region could be improved by the application of methods such as those that have so far shown the best results in water use and management under similar conditions in other parts of the world (Israel, Jordan, Western USA, Spain, etc.).

The impact of human-induced changes of the hydrological cycle on the ecological system of the Aral Sea during the Soviet era is defined by Allan 2000 as 'yesterday's political ecology'. In the new political ecology of the Aral Sea Basin, visions must consider the fact that yesterday's hydraulic mission has been modified and that yesterday's politics has been lost. Work undertaken under the Regional Water Vision for the Aral Sea area and the accompanying Framework for Action, includes analyses to provide advice and recommendations on five policy priorities; water for health, water for food, water for the environment, water for the creation of wealth, water for energy production to produce heat in the winter and water for peace in Central Asia. The study demonstrates the need for improvement in irrigation management and that agricultural reform is required to achieve sustainability. The current farming practices are associated with large resource costs, and at some point, the cost of irrigation will outweigh the benefits of production. Farmers should be encouraged to grow crops suited for the prevailing agro-climate and available resources. According to Allan 2000, the main issue for the future of the Aral Sea area may not be increasing water deficits and water insecurity, but low social adaptability. In order to cope with the situation it is even more important for the countries of the region to increase their capacity to adapt to changing social circumstances. This is the only possible way for people to economically and socially survive in the long term.

Shared Resources: Diplomatic Efforts and Experiences

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union several meetings between the newly-independent states on issues of water sharing have taken place. At the first

[11] Sokolov 2000.

one, held in October 1991, it was decided that the Soviet principles of water allocation would remain in force.[12] In 1992 the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination, ICWC, was formed. The ICWC worked out a common approach for limiting the consumption of water in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers and initiated a common strategy for trans-boundary water resources management. At this early stage, the cooperation over the trans-boundary resources within ICWC was far from comprehensive. For example, water quality issues and the need for data and information sharing were not addressed.

Due to an agreement in 1993 the institutional structure for the management of shared water resources within the area was restructured and redeveloped. The head organization, IFAS, is now established under the authority of the Deputy Prime Ministers of the five states. The organization's task is to administer the Aral Sea Basin Program, ASBP, or more specifically, to 'prepare a general strategy of water distribution, rational water use, and protection of water resources in the Aral Sea Basin, and to prepare on the basis of this strategy draft intergovernmental legal and normative acts, which will regulate the issues related to the consumption and protection of water from pollution, and the social and economic development of the region'. The ASBP now forms the framework within which different programs, including the World Bank program and the GEF program are administered.

One of the issues that have been added to the ASBP agenda concerns long-term water and energy issues. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement concerning dams in the upper Syr Darya Basin in March 1998. The agreement includes provisions for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to share equally in the purchasing of summer hydropower from Kyrgyzstan, while the payments can be made in cash or by means of delivery of coal or gas.

This long-term water and energy agreement can be seen as an effect of diplomatic efforts, where the USAID served as a third party, and as a result of confidence-building within the new institutional structure. The initial issues dealt with in that structure were broader subjects, and could serve as a framework within which more contentious issues can be dealt with. If proven successful, the 1998 Long-Term Water and Energy Agreement will be an example of the need for a confident interstate structure within which diplomatic efforts can work and show that such a structure needs some time before it can be fully operative.

In the process leading up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, September 2002, the EU initiated a cooperative partnership over water, the EU Water Initiative. One important component in this is the Central Asian water cooperation initiative.

In 2002, Central Asian countries, mainly the former Soviet member states of the Aral Sea Basin, together with Caucasian countries, formed a CACENA Regional Water Partnership under the Global Water Partnership, GWP. Within this framework, state departments, local and regional organizations, professional organizations, scientific and research institutes as well as the private sector and NGOs cooperate to establish a common understanding of the critical issues threatening water security of the region, in particular by

[12] UNESCO 2000.

exchanging experience, information, and data for mutual benefit and by capacity-building.

The Principle of 'Equitable Utilization' of the Basin Water

During the Soviet era, 'equitable utilization' of water in the basin area was regarded as shared water usage by the Soviet republics according to quotas established by the central government. In 1991 the newly independent republics decided to keep the established quotas, a 'sharing' scheme for the water that has been renewed several times since then, as no new formula for the sharing of water rights has been agreed upon among the states in the Aral Sea Basin. This also implies that those countries, which were not republics of the former Soviet Union but are also parts of the drainage area, such as Afghanistan and to a minor extent Iran, are not legally recognized as 'shareholders' with any legal right to equitable utilization of the basin water.[13] To reach a sustainable solution for the management and use of water resources within the basin it will be necessary to establish a framework within which all parties can participate on mutually agreed terms, including the former Soviet republics as well as other basin parties. The issue of Afghanistan being part of such a framework was raised during the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto in March 2003, and once again during the Stockholm Water Symposium in August 2003.

The Principle of 'Not to Cause Significant Harm'

For the Aral Sea Basin, the principle of 'not causing significant harm' could be applied, for instance, to the situation where Kyrgyzstan, being an upstream country and heavily dependent on other countries for its energy supply, has requested the possibility to use the upper reservoir system of Syr Darya for hydropower. This would, no doubt, cause significant harm to downstream Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which need the water for irrigation. The above-mentioned 1998 Long-Term Water and Energy Agreement could thus be seen as a first, very important step in preventing significant harm being caused by Kyrgyzstan on Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and in return for which Kyrgyzstan is granted access to fuel from those countries. This would be a win-win situation, where both parties gain and the situation in the area becomes less tense.

Cooperation under the CACENA Regional Water Partnership would ensure increased knowledge and capacity for all stakeholders, thus decreasing the risks of overlooking the causing of significant harm to people.

Trade-Offs between Users

The Aral Sea Basin area is an area where the ecosystem's need for a stable water supply has for a very long period not been recognized. During the Soviet era, the economic outcome from cotton production was seen as the key

[13] FAO 1997, UNESCO 2000.

motivation for water use in the area. Neither the ecosystems nor the ecosystem users were expected to have any rights to water access. Today, when severe ecological damage is a fact and when the ecosystem of the basin has been seriously depleted, ecosystem health is still a low-key issue; to rehabilitate the ecosystem of the Aral Sea is considered to be an impossible task. The only trade-off, which might include positive outcomes for the ecosystem and ecosystem users, would include the abolishment of the southern Large Aral in favor of keeping a northern Small Aral in a condition close to what it is today and separated from the Large Aral by a dam. Any successful attempt at restraining the ongoing depletion of water quantity and quality in all of the Aral Sea and the downstream areas of the river systems must include a change in the management systems. This includes changing the dominant high water usage cotton production to more environmentally friendly, tolerant, and less water-demanding production. Such a trade-off may be required to keep the ecosystems and the people depending on them sustained.

Conclusion

The situation in the Aral Sea Basin is a multi-stakeholder situation, where the competing interests are represented by upstream and downstream riparian states, by old-system politics and new-system politics, by economic, social and ecosystem interests, and by politicians, professionals, and the people living in the region. The situation that had already become ecologically contentious during the rapidly increased irrigated cotton production in the Soviet era, developed into a multi-state water competition after the split-up of the Soviet Union. The 'equitable sharing' of the water within the basin is only now starting to be recognized between some of the riparian states. The issue of not 'causing significant harm' in an upstream–downstream situation was ignored till 1998, when it received its first legal recognition within the 1998 Long-Term Water and Energy Agreement. The institutional framework established in the area would need to recognize all riparian states and to apply the principles of 'equitable sharing' and 'no harm'. It would also need to achieve a balance between economic, social, and environmental interests in order to arrest the ongoing adverse trends, which will result in a completely depleted Aral Sea and a totally polluted area. It would further have to include a consideration of people's needs, given that they are the ones building up the system.

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PART III

TRENDS OF THOUGHT IN THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Poetry and Political Dissent in Central Asia from a Historical Perspective

The Chaghatay Poet Turdi

NURTEN KILIÇ-SCHUBEL

There is a tendency among policy makers to see the principles of democracy and pluralism as fundamentally at odds with the cultures of the Islamic world. For them ideas associated with modern democracy, such as individual liberty, political and cultural pluralism, and human rights, are the unique product of the European enlightenment. As the neo-liberal historian Arthur Schlesinger has put it:

> ... those liberating ideas ... that constitute our most precious legacy and to which most of the world aspires ... are *European* ideas, not Asian, nor African, nor Middle Eastern ideas except by adoption. [1]

This view of the world is simply inaccurate. The Enlightenment ideals, which are now associated with Western modernity, emerged from a complex set of social, cultural and economic, factors and had their antecedents in earlier historical periods. As Hodgson 1974 has so ably pointed out, many of these same antecedents of modernity can be seen in the traditions of the medieval Islamic world.

If dissent against injustice is a central feature of modern democracy, policy makers should recognize that this was not something foreign to political culture in pre-modern Islam. This was particularly true in Central Asia, where the inherent ethnic, cultural, and religious pluralism of the region meant that rulers were constantly contending with issues of dissent. Political dissent has a long history in Central Asia, which can be drawn on by current actors in charting their future.

Among the primary forms of dissent in the medieval period were satirical stories and poetry. For example, the satirical stories (*latifas*) of Afandi (who is known as Nasreddin Hoca in Turkey) hold an important place in the popular culture of the Central Asian region. In these stories, Afandi criticizes not only rulers, but also the Muslim religious scholars (*ulama*), bureaucrats and, in general, people in authority. Other forms of oral literature such as *dastan* (oral

[1] Cited in Sardar and Davies 2002, pp. 168f.

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 197–214.

epic), *ertak* (story) and *maqal* (proverb) were filled with motifs and symbols in which rulers and those in power are harshly criticized.[2] They served as important forms of social and political critique and opposition. Such stories are still widely circulated and recited among Central Asians. The number of publications of Uzbek folk tales (*o'zbek khalq ertaklari)* in modern Uzbekistan in recent years is a significant indicator of the continuing popularity of this kind of literature.[3]

Along with satirical prose, poetry has also long been vehicle for expressing political dissent. A number of recent studies have demonstrated this close relationship between poetry and politics in the Muslim world, where poetry has long been a traditional channel for conveying political beliefs.[4]

The present chapter will explore the role of poetry as a channel for articulating oppositional political discourse in Muslim Central Asia by examining the poetry of the seventeenth-century Central Asian Uzbek satirical poet Turdi (Farogiy). Throughout his poetry Turdi's main concern seems to have been the suffering of ordinary people and their oppression by the ruling élite. Although he was himself a member of the ruling élite – at least during a part of his career – Turdi was a harsh critic of the injustice that arose from tribal conflict and its impact on ordinary people. Turdi is thus a precursor of later poets like Mashrab (1640–1711), who used poetry to lambaste and attack nearly every institution of authority.

Crossing the Lines: The Role of Poetry in Central Asian Culture

Throughout history, poetry has held a crucial place in the social and cultural lives of the people of Central Asia.[5] For them poetry has always been just as concerned with message as with purely aesthetic concerns. Up until the present day writers have used their talents to pursue ideological, religious, social, ethnic and nationalist goals. In particular, poetry has played a variety of roles in Central Asian culture. Historically, various forms of poetry were important devices of social and private entertainment. In medieval times, private and public gatherings were often accompanied by poetry recitals. They were an integral part of social and public life.

Poetry has provided a common ground connecting the culturally, ethnically and politically diverse peoples of Central Asia. McChesney 1990, for example, has demonstrated the role of poets and their poetry in connecting various cultural zones and transcending the religious and political boundaries in Central Asia and Iran.

In the Soviet period, the creation of separate national literary histories and heritages for the artificially created eponymous republics as part of the program of national and ethnic delineation in the region created a tension among the Central Asian republics, each of which attempted to claim certain

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[2] Cf. Rasulov 1973.
[3] One example is Afzalov et al. 1995.
[4] See e.g. Abu–Lughod 1986; Caton 1990; Edwards 1993.
[5] See e.g. Allworth 1994, p. 398, where it is noted that Central Asians have always looked to their poets for the formulation and communication of ideas.

renowned literary figures for themselves.[6] Even in this period, however, literature maintained its role as a common thread among the diverse ethnic and cultural geography of Central Asia. Furthermore, literature, particularly poetry, provided continuity with the pre-Soviet Central Asian past. Indeed, medieval poetry has become integrated into modern Central Asian popular culture. People commonly know traditional and classical poetry along with the works of modern poets, and stories and legends surrounding famous poets have become part of popular culture. Contemporary musicians in Uzbekistan and the other republics make frequent use of medieval poetry in their songs. For example, the famous Uzbek singer Munaajat Yalchinova, uses the poetry of Mashrab, Sufi Allahyar and Nadira among others in her recordings and thus helps to maintain their popularity.

Perhaps because of this popularity, poetry has always been one of the primary channels for articulating political opinion in Central Asia. Far from restricting their poems to the personal and romantic, Central Asian poets have throughout history addressed a significant array of political and social issues in their verse. Therefore, the role of the poet as political activist, cultural critic and witness to injustice is not a novelty in Central Asia. At times poets have been so threatening to the regime, that they became targets of repression and even assassination. Even today, the major political opposition figures in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, are poets and use their poetry to voice opposition.

In recent times, poetry has been a vehicle particularly favored by dissidents arguing for human rights and democracy. This is true not only in Central Asia but also throughout the Muslim world. This should not be surprising, for whether it is explicitly political in content or not, poetry, as an expression of the individual voice, often allies itself with ideas about individual dignity and humanism that are the very foundation of democracy. These modern voices of opposition do not emerge from a vacuum. They have their antecedents in the medieval world.

Turdi is only one of a number of medieval and early modern poets who made use of popular idioms and satire to express his disgust for oppression and injustice. His contemporaries or successors, such as Mashrab, Makhmur, Gulkhaniy, Dilshad, and several others in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, contributed significantly to this tradition.[7] While sharing a distrust of and dislike for authority these poets expressed their dissent through a variety of poetic genres. For example, Turdi, like Gulkhaniy, takes a rather secular tone in his poetry and frequently makes use of folk idioms rather than religious symbolism. On the other hand, Mashrab is much more of an explicitly Sufi poet and a clear exponent of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being).[8] Despite the differences in their use of genres and motifs, Turdi, Mashrab, Gulkhaniy, and Makhmur are representatives of an indigenous strand of humanism and anti-authoritarian thought in Central Asia.

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[6] For a detailed examination of Uzbek literary politics in the Soviet period, see Allworth 1964; cf. Allworth 1990.

[7] Ahmedboeva and Ibrahimova 1985, pp. 116–120; Zahidov 1961, pp. 196–227.

[8] *Wahdat al-wujud* is often translated as monism. It refers to the doctrine associated with Ibn al-Arabi that all existence participates in the existence of God. For studies on Mashrab and his poetry, see Zakirov 1966; Shadiyav 1990; Mashrab 1963: Abdullaev 1967.

Although Turdi is not as popular as his contemporary Mashrab, and has left a relatively limited number of poems, he has been frequently anthologized in Uzbek school textbooks and Soviet studies of Uzbek literature, which devote an important place to Turdi and his poetry. It is well known that Soviet literary criticism tended to emphasize social protest poetry and to promote those poets whose poetry was explicitly less religious and 'non-feudal'. Much of Turdi's fame in the Soviet period comes from the way in which he can be read as a precursor of socialism and democracy.

In studies of Central Asian and Uzbek literature, Turdi was considered populist, democratic, anti-feudal and progressive. He shared these attributes with other late seventeenth and eighteenth century poets, such as Gulkhaniy and particularly Mashrab, whose martyrdom at the hands of the ruler of Balkh is the stuff of legend and has insured his status as an anti-authoritarian cultural icon. Indeed, Mashrab was described as an *isyankor shoir* ('revolutionary poet') in the Soviet period.

But Mashrab's designation as a revolutionary voice is anomalous for pre-modern writers in the Soviet period. Soviet studies of Uzbek literature have tended to divide the Uzbek literary tradition into two groups; one democratic and anti-clerical, drawing on progressive European (and Russian) ideas; and the other courtly and feudal, locked into Central Asian cultural norms.[9] 'Democratic literature' is described as literature emphasizing realistic, populist and revolutionary themes and motifs. Soviet studies of Central Asian literature have tended to explain the development of 'democratic literature' as a result of the literary and cultural interaction between Central Asia and Russia after the Russian conquest of the region in the nineteenth century. The Soviet academy considered only a very few pre-modern Central Asian literary figures as examples of 'non-feudal' or 'democratic' literature. In other words, Soviet scholars believed that progressive ideas were largely Russian in their origin, and failed to recognize an indigenous source for 'democratic' literature.

Furthermore, Soviet criticism of Uzbek poetry also argued for the existence of a conflict and tension between 'progressive' and 'reactionary' literature, which occurred especially after the Russian conquest of the region. For example, Abdullaev 1967 in his book on Uzbek literature writes:

> ... in written literature a strong struggle began between two movements, the movements of democratic and reactionary feudal literature. While literature with a democratic tendency is progressive, feudal–clerical literature is reactionary.[10]

We can find similar statements in most of the textbooks and studies on Uzbek literature.

There is no doubt that this dualistic approach towards Central Asian literature is firmly rooted in the intellectual prejudices of the Soviet-Marxist tradition. As in other academic areas, such an approach in the Soviet period obviously aimed at creating a historical break with the Central Asian past and the reification of a 'traditional–modern' dichotomy in which indigenous Central Asian ideas and institutions represent 'tradition' and the non-

[9] Abdullaev 1967, pp. 25f; Ahmedboeva and Ibrahimova 1985, pp. 108–116.
[10] Abdullaev 1967, p. 25 (translation from Uzbek by the present author).

democratic past, while Russian and Soviet ideas and institutions represent 'modernity' and democratic culture. Such a dualistic approach clearly underestimates and undervalues the indigenous traditions of dissent and democracy in Central Asian culture and literature.

There are other problems with regard to this dualistic Soviet approach. Firstly, it is difficult to draw a line between 'democratic anti-clerical' and 'feudal clerical' poetry. Such categorizations underestimate both the continuity and diversity of Central Asian literary traditions. Poets like Turdi, Mashrab, Gulkhaniy, and others, who are categorized as 'democratic' and 'progressive', were simultaneously participating in and maintaining the traditional literary culture, while making use of that tradition's classical genres and motifs in expressing their ideas. Turdi, for example, was neither 'democratic' nor 'revolutionary' in the modern sense of these words. In his poetry, he voices his opposition to injustice and oppression using indigenous folkloric and traditional images and motifs.

Secondly, Soviet studies of Uzbek literature tend to define the 'democratic' literary movement as realistic and secular while defining the courtly literature as religious and mystical and thus irrational and anti-democratic. Such a scheme is deeply problematic when we speak of poets like Mashrab, who is an explicitly Sufi poet making frequent use of religious and mystical symbols and motifs in his critique of power and injustice. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why he has acquired such an important place in popular memory. His poetry is still sung and recorded today.

It must constantly be kept in mind that not all of these poets were of one single mind. There were important differences in the ways in which they expressed themselves. Turdi, who is not explicitly a Sufi poet – although he occasionally refers to religious images and Sufi concepts – uses more down-to-earth idioms and language than Mashrab in expressing his criticism of those in power and their oppression of the people. By contrast, Gulkhaniy – who lived in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century and who like Turdi once served at the court of a ruler and functioned as a court poet and later became alienated from the court – uses allegorical stories in his famous work *Zarbulmasal* to attack and criticize rulers and those in power.[11] Gulkhaniy's contemporary Makhmur has a lot in common with Turdi. In his poem *Hapalak* he criticizes the policies of the Kokand khans, particularly Omar Khan.[12] Suffice it to say, that the simplistic dualism of Soviet literary criticism is insufficient for understanding the complexity of this literature.

In post-Soviet Central Asia, literature plays an important role in the struggle for decolonization and in the re-creation of national and native idioms and identities. In the Central Asian republics, particularly in Uzbekistan, we see an attempt to rehabilitate major historical and literary figures, such as Fitrat and Cholpan. Even a cursory glance at the increasing number of books, pamphlets and booklets on both medieval and modern poets and their poetry shows this new trend. As part of this new movement, we also see new scholarly approaches regarding the Uzbek literary history and heritage. Although current studies of Uzbek literature still bear the impact of the Soviet dualistic approach, there is now a tendency toward the re-evaluation and reassessment

[11] Ahmedboeva 1985, pp. 116–121.
[12] Ibid., pp. 112f.

of Central Asian literary history in the post-Soviet period. For example, Hayitmetov, a prominent historian of Uzbek literature, in his recent book on Uzbek literature addresses the problems of this dualistic approach, when he writes:

> ...Uzbek literature, which has a rich history, went through a complex development. Uzbek literature has several problems, which are so far unresolved. One of them is the issue of 'court' or 'feudal-court' literature. When we speak of 'feudal court literature', we think about the poets who as court poets protected the interests of the rulers. Yet, we have not yet understood this literature in connection with the general literary movement. Most of the time this literature is underestimated and its representatives were generally looked down upon.[13]

Hayitmetov, who is one of the scholars of Turdi and his poetry, also points out the connection and continuity between 'democratic' and 'feudal' literature by stating that most of the poets who were recognized in the Soviet period as 'democratic' in fact belong to the classical courtly literary tradition. Although a new history of Central Asian literature has yet to be written that will finally put to rest the excesses and misreadings of the Soviet period, scholars like Hayitmetov are beginning to take the first steps in that direction.

Turdi and His Poetry

There are certain problems in studying Turdi and his poetry. First of all, unlike Mashrab and some other contemporary poets, there is little, if any, information in contemporary sources about Turdi's life and work. Seventeenth-century chronicles[14] as well as anthologies of poets[15] do not mention Turdi either as a poet or as a political figure. Thus, the main source of information is Turdi's own poetry, which has some scant biographical information.

In his poetry he uses both his real name Turdi and his penname (*makhlas*), Farogiy. Two known manuscripts of his works preserved in the Biruni Oriental Institute in Tashkent, date respectively from the first half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.[16] His known poetry consists of 434 lines. One hundred and sixty-five lines out of these were devoted to a critique of Subkhan Quli Khan, the ruler of the Tuqay–Timurid dynasty. His poems are in the form of *mukhammas* (five-lined poem) and *ghazal*. Although his poetry shows the influence of classical poets, such as Navai and Fuzuli, Turdi's poems are quite different in their use of both the themes and the language of the classical *ghazal*. The language is quite different from classical Chaghatay. In his poems, he uses both vulgar and vernacular language to such an extent that sometimes it becomes quite difficult to translate them. Like most of his contemporaries, Turdi was a bilingual poet. Most of his poems, however, were written in Chaghatay; only two were written in Persian.[17]

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[13] Hayitmetov 1997, p. 18 (translation from Uzbek by the present author).

[14] For example, Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, *Tarikh-i Muqim Khan*; cf. Semenov 1956; Samandar Tirmidhi Khwajah, *Dastur al-muluk*; cf. Salakhetdinova 1977; Muhammad Amin, *Muhit al-tawarikh*; I am grateful to Devin DeWeese for giving me access to a microform copy of this manuscript preserved at the RIFIAS, Indiana University.

[15] Muhammad Badi Samarqandi, *Mudhakkir al-ashab*.

[16] Turdi, *She'rlar*; cf. Urunbaev and Epifanova 1964, pp. 100f.

[17] On Turdi's poetry, see Turdi 1951 and Turdi 1971.

It is important to note that it was only in the early twentieth century that Turdi's poetry became known to the academic world, when the first copy of his poetry was discovered by an Uzbek scholar, A. Majidiy, who also wrote the earliest study of Turdi's poetry in 1925.[18] In 1971 the Uzbek scholar Hayitmetov published his poems transliterated into Cyrillic under the title of *She'rlar.*[19]

It is not known exactly when and where Turdi was born. From his poetry it becomes clear that he lived in the second half of the seventeenth century during the reigns of the Tuqay–Timurid Abd al-Aziz Khan (1645–1681) and his brother and successor, Subkhan Quli Khan (1681–1702). What distinguishes Turdi from his contemporary poets is that he comes from an Uzbek tribal background and seems to have functioned as a tribal leader before becoming a somewhat rebellious and dissident poet. It can be read from his poetry that Turdi was from the Uzbek *Yuz* tribe, one of the traditional 92 Uzbek tribes, and that he once held a prominent position at the court of Abd al-Aziz Khan. In the following lines, Turdi remembers those days:

Hukm jori, so'z qabuli, bir duri der go'sh edim
Ahli davlatlar bilan yaru harif, hamdo'sh edim
Hayu-huyi bazmlarda shahdi no'sho-no'sh edim
Khush zamonlar Yuz qazoni boshida sarkhush edim
Bu zamon yuvgan qazon ostida qolgan yundiman[20]

I was known as an arrogant person whose authority and words are accepted
I was a companion of statesmen, their friend and rival
I used to drink honey at loud and boisterous parties,
In the good old days, I became drunk at the head of the caldron of the 'Yuz' tribe,
Now, I have become like the water remaining at the bottom of a washing caldron.

Here, Turdi tells us of a drastic change in his career and life. Once in a position of authority and respect, now he finds himself among ordinary people. In the following lines, he lets us know more about his misfortune:

Charkhi dun qildi manga javru jafolar behisob
Gardishi davron berur har lahza yuz ming pechu tob
Har sari yeldim, yugurdum suvsanib mavji sarob
Tashna lab, gardi kudurat zeri borinda kharob
Bahri davlatdin yiroq, gardan shikasta mo'ndiman[21]

Destiny befell me and brought me incalculable torment and suffering
The revolving sphere gives me a hundred thousand pains every moment.
I whirled in every direction, thirsty I walked towards the waves of a mirage
Thirsty lipped, I am shattered under the burden of the dust of unhappiness.
Being distant from the benefit of fortune, I am a jug with a shattered neck.

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[18] Turdi 1971, pp. 3f.
[19] Turdi 1971. All poems in this chapter were chosen from this edition of Turdi's poetry. Transliteration from Cyrillic script and translations were carried out by the present author.
[20] Turdi 1971, p. 34.
[21] Ibid.

In these lines, as in many other lines of his poetry, Turdi shows us his alienation from the ruling élite, his poverty, and his suffering. Although Turdi is unclear about the reasons for the change in his fortunes, it is possible to suggest that his career and position had been very much affected by the change of leadership in the Chinggisid Tuqay–Timurid dynasty. One could assume that when Abd al-Aziz Khan, whom Turdi seems to have served, abdicated and left his throne in Bukhara to his brother, Subkhan Quli Khan in 1680–1681, Turdi lost his position as a member of the tribal élite at the court. It is not uncommon in the history of seventeenth-century Central Asia that change of rule from one *khan* to another involved a change of positions, especially those held by prominent tribal leaders at the court. It is easy to assume that Turdi's critique of the ruling élite is the result of bitterness due to this change in his position. However, Turdi's harsh criticism of the new *khan* and his ruling élite should not be merely interpreted as personal resentment. As will be seen in the following pages, Turdi's criticism is directed not only against Subkhan Quli Khan and his *amirs* (tribal leaders), but also against his fellow tribesmen, who were fighting with each other for what Turdi called 'selfish reasons'. Furthermore, his frustration with the ruling power and his critique of it goes beyond his personal grudge toward Subkhan Quli Khan. In his poetry, he is quite direct about his own mistakes, which he made when he was in a position of authority:

Oh, bu o'mri kiromi sarfi ghaflat ayladim
Ghussayi behuda, asbobi nadomat ayladim
Bilmadim o'z aybimi, khalqa mazammat ayladim
Shukr shohdin bilmadim, kufroni ni'mat ayladim[22]

Ah, I spent my noble life carelessly
I grieved in vain for material things
Not recognizing my own fault, I blamed the people.
I never knew gratitude from the king, and I accepted his ingratitude as blessing

In another poem, Turdi expresses his regrets for having been part of the ruling élite. He says he should not have done the things he did. He also says self-critically that he spent most of his life living in hope of favor from the ruler. He says that in his efforts to become *khas* (élite), he alienated himself from the *avam* (ordinary people).[23]

Turdi's poverty and suffering changes his view of people and his purpose of life. In several poems, he tells us that his present position has made him understand people and their suffering:

Boqiyi omringni sarfi mardumi fahmida qil
Maqdaminda bosh qoyub, pobo'si mardum dida qil[24]

[22] Ibid., p. 34.
[23] Ibid., pp. 17f.
[24] Ibid., p. 40.

Spend the rest of your life understanding the nature of people
Place your head at their footsteps, kiss their feet.

Pok etib isyonlaring, yuz ming nadomat qil bukun
Ashki hasrat oqizib sho'ri qiyomat qil bukun
Shikva qilma khalqi, o'z nafsing mazammat qil bukun
Fursating favt etma, Turdi, ish qil o'lmasdin burun[25]

Make your revolt sincere, repent a hundred thousand times today
Let the suffering of love flow, assemble as on the Day of Judgement today
Do not complain about the people, blame your own selfishness today
Do not miss this opportunity, Turdi, accomplish something before you die.

Regret regarding his own past is one of the main themes in Turdi's poetry. In these lines, he tells us – and himself – that rather than blaming fate or recollecting the past, he should spend the rest of his life understanding the people and their suffering and doing something to change it. The above quoted poem also reflects a change of mood in Turdi's poetry from fatalism to activism. As such it is also a warning addressed to the current ruling élite, calling on them to change their behavior.

Some studies suggest that Turdi joined a major popular uprising in Bukhara led by some discontent tribal leaders against Subkhan Quli Khan around 1685–1686.[26] Although contemporary chronicles, such as *Muhit al-tawarikh* and *Dastur al-muluk*,[27] describe this uprising and those who lead it in some detail, they do not mention Turdi's name at all. Although Turdi, in some of his poetry, requests help from some of the participants in the uprising mentioned in the chronicles, it is not clear whether Turdi was himself actively involved in this uprising. What is clear, however, is that he used his poetry to voice opposition to what he saw as injustice and oppression by the ruler and the ruling élite.

Turdi's Poetry in the Context of Seventeenth-Century Central Asia

The analysis of Turdi's satirical poetry in the context of seventeenth-century Central Asia opens a unique window onto the complex nature of the politics of the period, in particular the relations between rulers and Uzbek tribal leaders and the relations among the various Uzbek tribal groups.[28]

In his poetry, Turdi criticizes three groups: the *khan* and his ruling élite, the Uzbek tribal leaders and to some degree the *ulama*. Indeed, the relations among these groups make up the foundations of political order in Central Asia in the seventeenth century.

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[25] Ibid.
[26] On Subkhan Quli Khan and the tribal politics during his reign, see McChesney 1991, pp. 149–161.
[27] Cf. footnote 14.
[28] On the role and position of Uzbek *amir*s in the seventeenth century, see McChesney 1983. For an in-depth analysis of the changing relations between the Chinggisid Khans and the Uzbek tribal leaders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see McChesney 1991.

The incursion of Turco–Mongolian Uzbek tribes into Mawarannahr under the leadership of Shaybani Khan (1500–1510) from the Chinggisid line not only brought nomadic Uzbek tribal elements into the region, but also changed its political culture. They introduced a number a Chinggisid political ideals and values, one of which was power sharing. The Shaybanid–Uzbeks created a political order, which favored power sharing among various groups, particularly, the Uzbek tribal leaders (*amirs)* and the members of the dynastic family. This concept of power sharing reflected itself in the Uzbek *appanage* system, in which political authority over territory was distributed among the collateral members of the ruling dynasty and the non-Chinggisid Uzbek tribal elements who supported them. As a result of this system there emerged agnatically related but semi-autonomous political and economical units – generally called *mamlaqat* – which were mainly centered in and around cities. Tashkent, Samarqand, Bukhara and Balkh were among the centers of the Uzbek Khanate in the first half of the sixteenth century, and Bukhara and Balkh in the seventeenth century.[29] In this multi-centered political order, the ruler (*khan*) was seen as arbitrator among various power-holders, particularly the Uzbek tribal groups who supported his dynasty. This political system took a new shape under the rule of the Tuqay–Timurids (also known as the Astrakhanids), another Chinggisid dynasty from the line of Jochi, which replaced the Shaybanid dynasty in the early seventeenth century.[30] The Tuqay–Timurid dynasty, like their predecessors the Shaybanids, followed Chinggisid political traditions and divided the territory among themselves as *appanages* in a *qurultay* (an assembly or convention of Chinggisids). Bukhara, Samarqand, and Ura Tube were among the regions, which were distributed in this manner.

In 1612, the Tuqay–Timurid Uzbek *khanate* evolved into a bipartite state divided between two brothers; Imamquli Khan (r. 1612–1642), who became 'great *khan*' in Bukhara, and his brother Nadir Muhammad (r. 1642–1645), who became a 'lesser khan' in Balkh. Bukhara and Balkh were thus turned into two autonomous but interdependent political entities. However, in 1642 when Nadir Muhammad became *khan,* he unified the *khanate* by distributing appanages among his sons, Abd al-Aziz Khan, Subkhan Quli, and others. In 1651, the double *khanate* was re-established again with Abd al-Aziz Khan ruling Bukhara as *khan* and his brother Subkhan Quli Khan in Balkh as lesser *khan*. Despite the fact that there was hostility between the two, this situation lasted until 1681, when Abd al-Aziz Khan abdicated his throne and Subkhan Quli Khan assumed the unified *khanate* of Balkh and Bukhara until his death in 1702.

The reign of Subkhan Quli khan in the late seventeenth century was a critical period in the history of Central Asia, in which the relations between the Uzbek tribal leaders and the Chinggisid Tuqay–Timurid Khans, and the relations among the Uzbek tribal leaders themselves took a new form. The delicate balance of power between *khans* and *amirs* changed in favor of the *amirs*, as they assumed increased political power in the region and inter-Uzbek tribal conflicts became a common feature of the period. Subkhan Quli Khan

[29] For the evolution of the Uzbek political order, see Dickson 1960 and McChesney 1991. A new book on the Shaybanid dynasty in the sixteenth century, based on a previous Ph.D. dissertation (Kılıç 1999), is currently being prepared for publication by the present author.

[30] McChesney 1991, pp. 72–79.

tried to change the status of Balkh as an autonomous *appanage* by bringing it under his control. Between 1683 and 1685 he appointed four of his sons as *qa'alkhan* (khan-apparent) in succession. They all died as a result of fighting among the *amirs*. From 1695 Balkh was governed by a series of *amirs*. Subkhan Quli Khan's policy toward Balkh (and some of his other policies) created further *amirid* dissatisfaction. This led to *amirid* infighting as well as a series of rebellions against Subkhan Quli Khan.[31]

Turdi's Criticism of Uzbek Tribal Leadership

Turdi, who wrote most of his poetry during the reign of Subkhan Quli, closely experienced these tribal rebellions, as well as intertribal fighting among Uzbek tribes. In the following *ghazal* he addresses the Uzbek tribal leaders:

Tor ko'ngullik beklar, man man demang, kenglik qiling
Toqson ikki bo'li O'zbak yurtidur, tenglik qiling

Birni Qipchoqu Khitoyu birni Yuz, Nayman demang
Qirku yuz ming son bo'lub bir khon oyinlik qiling

Bir yaqodin bosh chiqorib, barcha bir to'nga kirib
Bir o'ngurlik, bir tirizilik, bir yaqo-yenglig qiling[32]

Oh! Selfish *beks*! Don't say 'me, me', be generous,
This is the land of the ninety-two Uzbek tribes, treat each other as equals.

Don't say 'this one is Kipchak or Khitay or this one is Yuz or Nayman',
Gather together in your hundreds of thousands and recognize the rule of one khan.

Put your head through one collar; let everyone wear one robe
Lower and superior come together in one collar and one sleeve

This is one of the frequently quoted poems of Turdi. Modern Uzbeks have argued that the poem implies the existence of a movement toward a common Uzbek national identity transcending tribal identities. These lines are important in many ways. In them, Turdi clearly refers to the political situation in Central Asia, particularly tribal conflicts and comes up with a program to end this. Turdi asks tribal leaders to give up selfishness and tribal fighting and come together.

A primary concern of Turdi is the situation of the people, who suffered from this fighting and tribal rivalry. In another poem (*muhammas*), which is devoted to the criticism of Subkhan Quli Khan and his ruling élite, Turdi again addresses tribal leaders – especially those who served the *khan* – using the

[31] For a description of these rebellions, see Burton 1997, pp. 350–360; cf. McChesney 1991, pp. 149–161.
[32] Turdi 1971, p. 13.

popular idiom *el rabotu*[33] *to'ra*[34] *qo'noq* meaning 'rulers come and go but the people remain':

Ey yuzi qora, ko'zi ko'r, quloghi kar beklar
Bilingiz bu so'zumi, pand sarosar, beklar
Aylangiz payrav shar'iyi paygambar, beklar
Sizge darkor bu yurt, ey gala zangar beklar
Bu qadim naql erur: 'El rabotu to'ra qo'noq'.[35]

Oh! Shameless (black-faced), blind and deaf *beks*!
Beks, heed my words of advice completely
Beks, follow the *shari'at* of the Prophet
Oh flocks of *beks*! You need this country,
Remember this old saying: 'the people are a hostel, the ruler is a guest'.

Turdi's Poems on Subkhan Quli Khan and His Ruling Élite

Turdi's harshest criticism is directed at Subkhan Quli Khan and his ruling élite. In seventeenth-century chronicles, Subkhan Quli Khan is portrayed as a benevolent scholar-like ruler. He is described as having close ties with scholars and religious figures. Furthermore, Subkhan Quli Khan is shown supporting various public projects, like the construction of *madrasas* (religious colleges) and tombs both in Bukhara and Balkh, and establishing *waqfs* (pious foundations) for their maintenance.[36] In Turdi's poems, however, Subkhan Quli Khan is presented in a completely different way:

Joyi osoyish emas hech kima bu ko'hna ravoq
Yaghdurur boshimiza sangi jafo gardi firoq
Yoqalib rasmi vafo, bo'ldi hama bosh-oyaq
Mulkdin adlu karam ketti, qolib kinu nifoq
Yakhshiliq qilma tama', zulm ila doldu ofoq[37]

This ruined arch is not a place of peace for anyone,
It throws stones of oppression and dust of separation on our heads.
The rule of fidelity has disappeared; everything is turned upside down
Justice and beneficence have left this land; vengeance and discord remain.
There is no goodness, but greediness and oppression dominated the sky.

Turdi's criticism of Subkhan Quli Khan's rule is expressed in terms of classical themes and language. In his poetry he uses traditional terms originally from Arabic, which are common in all Islamic poetry like *fitna* ('revolt') and *zulm* ('oppression'). On the other hand, there are also some important differences between classical poetry and Turdi's work. Generally

[33] *Rabot* or *ribat* means 'hostel', 'caravanserai'.
[34] *To'ra*, *tura*, or *turah* is used in the seventeenth century to refer to the Chinggisids.
[35] Ibid., p. 26.
[36] McChesney 1991, p. 128.
[37] Turdi 1971, pp. 23f.

Central Asian poets place the blame for social injustice on members of the ruler's court, rather than on the ruler himself. The ruler is generally portrayed as someone who is unaware of the oppression that his aides and underlings are inflicting on people. Turdi's poetry however, directly blames the ruler along with his court. In the following lines, Turdi directly condemns Subkhan Quli Khan:

Shohning khizmati yetib (turadur) sakkiz oy
Toshkand mulkida ilghor yetib zoru qashok[38]

The *shah* has been in service for no longer than eight months,
But the cry of the poor has already advanced upon Tashkent.

In the following *mukhammas,* Turdi is completely open about his negative feelings towards the *khan*:

Bid'atu zulm ani khilqatu aslu zoti
Yurtni buzdi havola bila taklifoti[39]

His essence, his self and his nature are oppression and heresy
His false promises and proposals have wrecked the country
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Bor mundin sharafi murda sho'yu isqoti
To'ra o'ghli ichida yoq munidek istihqoq.[40]

It would be an honor to kill him, the one who washes the dead,
Among the sons of the ruling family, there is no one more deserving this.

Turdi's feelings toward Subkhan Quli Khan are very strong. However, he is not in any way against Chinggisid rulers or power *per se*. Indeed, he praises Abd al-Aziz Khan for his justice. He is critical of unjust rule and the use of power for oppression. In the following lines Turdi expresses his opinion about what a ruler should be and and how he should act:

[38] Ibid., pp. 24f.
[39] Ibid., p. 25.
[40] Turdi 1971, p. 25.

Shohligh oldur oni hukmu so'zu bir kerak
Adl yayini qurub, rost nishon tir kerak[41]

The ruler should be one whose rule and word is one
He should establish the bow of justice and needs an arrow with the right target.

In several places in his poetry, Turdi expresses his disappointment in the *khan* for entrusting authority to those who have no ability to rule. He is especially critical of Subkhan Quli Khan's connection with people who have no interest in the welfare of the country:

Ikhtiyorin barining qoligha qullar olghay
Har biri aysh ila qonuni tana'um cholghay
Mulkning neku badi maslahatini qilghay[42]

The 'slaves' take the will of people in their hands;
Each one plays the dulcimer of enjoyment for pleasure
For better or worse they take charge of the affairs of the state
.
.
.

Khon eshikinda kishi qolmadi bir sohibi fan
Bor bir necha soqim kaydiyi mahzi gardan
Kelmas qollaridan ish, hama oshkho'r gharzan[43]

No one with knowledge remained at the court of the khan
There are some cattle whose only concern is to feed themselves
Incapable of anything, they are all harlots obsessed with food

Turdi's main concern is the oppression and exploitation of people by the ruling élite. In several a places throughout his poetry, Turdi criticizes Subkhan Quli Khan's officials for their greediness and selfishness:

Yedingiz barchangiz it dak fuqaroni etini
Ghasb ila molin olib, qo'ymadingizlar bitini i[44]

You ate the flesh of the poor like a dog
You confiscated all of their property, not even leaving them their lice

Speaking of court officials Turdi says:

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[41] Ibid., p. 24.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p. 28.
[44] Ibid., p. 26.

Barchasi paravu rishvagha o'lub badomuz
Khalq qoliga tama' birla tikib doim ko'z
Yoq murabbiy manga khon eshikida, bir dil so'z[45]

They have an addiction to money and bribery
They fix their eyes on the hands of the people with their greed
There is no compassionate tutor for me at the threshold of the *khan*

And he continues:

Fuqaro bo'ldi bu shoh asrida ko'p zoru nahif
Zulmdin bo'ldi ra'iyat eli kim khoru zaiif[46]

In the reign of this ruler the suffering and downtrodden poor are many.
From oppression the ordinary people have become impoverished and weak.

Turdi also criticizes religious representatives and complains about hypocrisy among Muslim leaders:

Atolur Hoji kofir Makka borib, haj qilib kelsa
Ki hargiz o'zga bolmas haq yo'li yurgan bilan eshshak

Ko'rub suratda zohir shaykhu sufi, i'tiqod etma
Kirib mesjidgha chiqmak birla quymas (go'ng) yemakni sak[47]

An infidel is renamed 'Hajji', once he goes to Mecca and does the pilgrimage
A donkey never changes, even when he walks in the path of God.

Do not believe in sheikhs and sufi just by looking at their exteriors
A dog does not stop eating shit because he goes to the mosque

In his criticism of the corrupt *ulama* and *sufis*, Turdi is continuing a longstanding tradition within Islamic poetry. The criticism of the hypocrisy of religious élites is frequent, especially in the writings of Sufi poets. It is interesting to note that Mashrab, who is an explicitly Sufi poet, is even stronger in his critique of Muslim authority figures. But Turdi is not anti-religious or anti-Islam. For him Islam represents justice, and the injustice he sees in the world around him represents a lack of true religion. For him Islam means an end to oppression and suffering and sedition. In the following lines Turdi draws on Islam to criticize his fellow Uzbek tribesmen and their in-fighting:

[45] Ibid., p. 29.
[46] Ibid., p. 31.
[47] Ibid., pp. 14f.

Musulmon bilma aslo hech mazhab qavlida o'zbak
Bularni kufrigha bilittifoqi jumla yoqtur shak

Na mazhab, qaysi din o'z mulkining o'zi kharob etgay?
Erurlar mufsidul, arzi arozil firqai badrak

Bir sari 'azm ayla, joyi nomusulmondur bu mulk
Fitnayi avboshu zulmu kufru tughyondur bu mulk

Joyi Islomu musulmonligh, Farogiy, istama
Poyitakhti kishvari Subkhonqulikhondur bu mulk[48]

Never in the view of any *mazhab* are the Ozbeks seen as Muslims,
Unanimously, there is no doubt as to their infidelity.

What *mazhab*, what religion destroys its own country?
They are the conspirators of this land, they are a group of vile people.

Go somewhere else! This is a land of non-Muslims.
This is a land filled with sedition, conspiracy, oppression and unbelief.

Farogiy! Do not look for a place of Islam
This land is the seat of the kingdom of Subkhan Quli Khan

Conclusion

The Soviets praised Turdi as a proto-democrat and socialist. However, although he is critical of the *khan*, his critique is not a modern critique of the institutions of his period but is rooted in a seventeenth-century view of justice. Turdi is not opposed to the political system *per se*. His criticism is directed against a particular regime, which is accused of being unjust. At the same time his critique is not a personal attack on a ruler who wronged him. It is not rooted in personal resentment but is rather an ethical critique based on concepts inherent to Islam and medieval Central Asian culture.

Throughout his poetry, Turdi demonstrates a sense of solidarity with ordinary people – the *avam*. He judges a ruler and his administration by examining its impact on the lives of ordinary people. For Turdi, drawing both on Muslim and Central Asian traditions, justice – defined in terms of the fair treatment of ordinary people – is an ultimate source of legitimacy. Thus, his critique of the state and its institutions is rooted in humanistic ideas that are inherent in the Muslim culture of Central Asia, not a precursor to Marxist anti-feudalism. While Turdi is by no means a modern democrat, his humanism provides a crucial basis for the development of modern democracy. Just as the major figures of the European reformation, who were far from democrats, surely played a role in the development of democracy in early modern Europe through their positions of dissent and anti-authoritarianism, Turdi and other dissident poets – such as the aforementioned Mashrab – represent an important potential corrective to absolutist tendencies in Eurasia through their inherent

[48] Ibid., p. 14.

humanism. In fact, it should be noted that throughout Central Asian history, the centralized state had been the exception rather than rule. Even the centralized states, such as the empire of Timur, were based to some degree on power sharing. The tendency in Central Asia was always towards political decentralization. And this tendency is intimately linked to a tendency toward anti-authoritarianism – a tendency often expressed in poetry.

It is interesting to note that the tradition of dissent poetry continues in contemporary Central Asia. Major opposition figures frequently use poetry as a vehicle for expressing their positions and literary organizations remain fertile grounds for political debate. Many figures in exile or in prison are in fact poets. In this way, the legacy of Turdi and Mashrab remains strong in Central Asia and will undoubtedly be a factor in the development of true democratic pluralism in the region.

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Democratization as a Global Process and Democratic Culture at Central Asian Élite and Grass-Roots Levels

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There are two complicated definitions in social science: democracy and culture. Neither of them can be measured according to GDP (gross domestic product), GNP (gross national product) or other data, yet they both have an indirect influence on processes in the indicated fields. Despite the absence of a consensus concerning the definition of democracy, when it comes to country identification, it is less difficult to recognize which country is democratic, and which is not. A modern phenomenon has been the appearance of semi-democratic countries, who are willing to proclaim themselves as democratic, who formally admit norms of democracy as being of high value, but who are still unsuccessful at complying with the requirements of these norms. The same situation may be seen in Western Europe, where the sovereignty of political systems and the constitutionality of its organizations have been observed since the eighteenth century. But due to a sharp stratification of society, the bipolar division between the extremely rich and the huge mass of extremely poor has made it difficult to talk about democracy in modern terms.

The evolution of initial forms of democracy, including exemplary Athenian versions, was followed by the establishment of modern forms, such as the sovereignty of political systems and the constitutionality of their organization. All these processes primarily occurred in Western Europe, following further expansion of its borders during and after the seventeenth century. Global democratization captures all the industrially advanced countries of the northern hemisphere and now includes other regions world-wide.

In its annual report on democracy, Freedom House counted 42 free countries in 1972; and within only twenty years (until 1991), the number had grown to 75, which clearly shows a speed-up in process. Between 1995 and 1998, democratic regimes increased to 117, given a broader definition of democracy, and 76 according to a narrower one.[1]

[1] Huntington 1991.

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Democratization has experienced various phases generally referred to as 'waves'. The first wave was during 1828–1926, the second during 1943–1962, and the third wave started in 1974 in Portugal, following a very symbolic signing at the 1975 Helsinki Summit of an agreement on cooperation in security, economics, science, technology and human rights, and the establishment of OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe).

Analysis of democratization processes, especially third-wave processes, has allowed the basic conditions of the transition to modern forms of democracy to be revealed. Some preliminary conditions for the establishment of democracy have been determined. For example, important and almost universally accepted concepts in this connection are national identity and state unity, i.e. the existence of a nation which is both a sovereign territorial state and a civil society. Imperial, theocratic, feudal, and other similar structures are only capable of keeping and sustaining an 'impregnation' of traditional democracy.

All Central Asian countries are involved in the global democratization process and it will be difficult to agree with those who simply deny this. Many of the processes to be discussed below have occurred at very basic levels in society. Within families, they reflect a promotion of new values, a weakening of conservative stereotypes, and a preparation for a new civil society. In supporting these phenomena, the world community of nations will be helping the newly-born Central Asian states to proceed in the right direction.

Economic Development, Civil Society, and International Relations

Another condition of democratization is the economic development of the state. There are certain disagreements over this. Many scientists support S. M. Lipset's 1993 view that economically successful countries have more chances to become democratic.[2] To substantiate this, they basically refer to statistical data which show that there is no democratic country in the world with an average income lower than two thousand dollars per capita per year. Andrein 2000, for example, when analyzing composite parts of the democratic system, such as pluralism, legitimate conflict of interests, competition between parties, electivity of legislative bodies, independence of mass media and independence of associations, comes to the conclusion that 'the most effective conciliatory (democratic) system operates in industrial market societies, where groups with various political interests are united on a basis of consensus'.[3] According to Andrein, the basic condition and guarantee of any democracy is a sustainable economy. Economic growth leads to an increased portion of the 'economic pie'; certain parts of this growth will reach different social groups. Likewise, Huntington 1984 indicates a strong interrelation between national welfare and democracy.[4] According to Lipset 1993, 74 percent of the countries with the lowest level of economic development have authoritarian political systems, whereas 24 percent are semi-democratic and only one country – India – has a democratic regime. Thirty-nine percent of countries which are above the average in economic development and 11 percent that are below the average in

[2] Lipset 1993, pp. 27–31.
[3] Andrein 2000, p. 71. This quotation from Russian was translated by the present author.
[4] Huntington 1984, p. 199.

economic development may be considered as democratic.[5] However, other researchers show that economic development itself is merely a precondition and not a guarantee of democracy. Non-democratic states, such as Kuwait, Bahrain, the Emirates, Singapore and Thailand, all with rather high levels of economic development, are well known. Meanwhile India, a country with a rather steady democratic order, continues to remain among the poor and developing countries. Many researchers would like to present India as a cautioning example to other Asian countries, but there is a question to be raised as to whether a single country with such a modest economy may be used as a common case. The reason why India cannot show visible progress in human development may be a negative consequence of a premature jump into democracy.

However, to continue with the example of India, doubts may be expressed as to whether it is legitimate to regard democracy as subject to economic determinism. Przeworski et al. 2000 argue that a specific feature of the Third Wave is the absence of direct dependence between democratization and the level of economic development.[6] In their opinion, democratization is not necessarily an immediate product of economic modernization and may occur in economically undeveloped states. At the same time, it is admitted that development gives more chances for preservation of democracy and its consolidation. Economic development is only the precondition or desirable condition of democratization, but it is not a guarantee. According to this position, the key moment in the democratization process is not so much economic development and accompanying well-being, but the formation of a middle class or élite as the social shock-absorber and main basis for democracy. That is especially true for transitional societies. Only the élite with its competence, creativity and dignity can support democracy and oppose authoritarianism. Democracy, in all cases, is based on a representative middle class, on the intellectuals, who create the core of the nation and the moving force (potential) to push it forward.

The inter-conditionality of democratization becomes essential from the point of view of the theory and practice of international relations. Democratization depends not only on the inner conditions or internal resources of the state, but also on the external influence of international institutions and other actors. However, these are not necessarily in harmony with each other; nations cannot always accept a message from outside players, and international institutions are not always capable of catching the national 'flavor' of a state. Relations between international players and national institutions may become extremely complicated. There are cases when international institutions approach the independent state openly expressing ignorance of national values. Their 'coca-colonial' attitudes may not be veiled, but rather, very clearly expressed. A vivid example is the *Code of Conduct for UNDP staff in Uzbekistan*, where on the very first page it is stated: 'We remain independent of any authority outside UNDP and we will not seek nor accept instructions from any government institutions, persons or entities external to the organization.'[7] When

[5] Lipset 1993, pp. 45–51; cf. Lipset 1994.
[6] Przeworski et al. 2000, pp. 92–103.
[7] *Code of conduct for UNDP staff in Uzbekistan* (2003), p. 1.

international organizations based on such a code start to act in a country, the sovereignty of the state (which is the basis of democracy) might be questioned.

Center vs. Periphery

Economic schools of global-system analysis assert that capitalist systems can be categorized in terms of center versus periphery. External actors are frequently representatives of the center and their 'clients' the periphery. At the center are the advanced countries with high levels of technological development and a high level of GDP per capita. By contrast, the periphery consists of regions with chronic lateness in technological and market development. In this relationship, they are center-dependent. Technological innovations are always implemented in the center, promoting local profit. The periphery does not profit to such an extent, but the costs of environmental and other losses are much higher there. This backlog is shouldered by backward economies and predominantly traditional social structures. The most important realization in the discussion of this problem is that technological and economic development has specific political consequences. According to Prebish 1959, the process of democratization started at the center, when a sufficiently high degree of capital accumulation had already been achieved. In the periphery, by contrast, democratization started before that 'break-even point', when the accumulation of capital did not meet development requirements.[8] Democratization here is closely bound to the struggle for participation in the distribution of the fruits of economic development.

Representatives of the school of Dependent Development add to this 'center–periphery' design another component, that of 'semi-periphery'.[9] They present four phases of democratic system development for peripheral countries heading towards semi-periphery status:

Phase 1: Extensive pre-industrial development, when political authority reflects the interests of the highest layers of society;

Phase 2: The beginning of industrialization and the introduction of engineering – first in sectors focused on the domestic market, later in the export sectors of the economy. The middle class starts to grow quantitatively but remains weak politically;

Phase 3: Processes of industrialization, urbanization, communication and significant quantitative growth of the middle class. However, democratization has a predominantly formal character, as do its institutions;

Phase 4: Political parties and middle class trade-union movements acquire certain trends oriented particularly towards struggles for participation in profit distribution. This transformation starts changes in the economic system. This is immediately reflected in politics and frequently results in a reactionary wave of authoritarianism, followed by resistance from the democratic majority.[10]

In this article we would like to add a further phase:

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[8] Prebish 1959.
[9] Cardoso and Faletto 1979, pp. 277–279.
[10] Ibid.

Phase 5: When small and middle-sized business grow up quantitatively as well as qualitatively, agro-producers organize into movements or parties in order to defend their interests; new political leaders fight for participation with a few successful cases; leadership starts to be more balanced in terms of gender; and a new generation of national élite appears on the political stage.

There is only one way of avoiding the authoritarian pressure mentioned under Phase 4, and that is through a movement from the periphery towards the semi-periphery. Japan, for example, has consistently passed all five phases up to the level of an advanced industrial country. This shows an 'external' factor playing a rather substantial role in supporting economic development, which itself was founded on the creation of a dynamic domestic sector. All this may promote self-sustainable growth, whereby greater democratization and a transition from a traditional society to a modern one become inevitable.

Globalization

O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986 discuss the concept of globalization of democratic space[11] by allocating four analytical categories for descriptions of ways in which external actors influence internal politics:

Control stands for the establishment of democracy by one country in another country by means of external politics, commonly by the open use of sanctions. This is the so-called theory of humanitarian intervention;

Diffusion represents the influence of one state on another by means of the exclusion of compulsory channels and the inclusion of neutral channels (operating according to a principle of mimicry);

Linkage by conditions means the creation of special conditions that are favorable to democratic transformations and sensitive to any inclination of the state towards democracy. The establishment of certain conditions leads to the distribution of benefits from international institutes like the EU, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, NATO, and others;

Consensus is manifested through a set of complex interactions between international actors and internal groups, expressed through new democratic norms and expectations from below (e.g. aspirations of Spain and Portugal within the EU, aspirations of citizens to unite Germany, etc.).

Among the above-mentioned forms of external influence, *control* is the cheapest and *consensus* the most complicated and expensive. Therefore, Western democracies opt for control as the most reasonable way of influencing a state. However, this sad picture of newly-born states jointly marching under the approving eye of the US towards global democracy, like new recruits guided by an old general, starts to become boring.

The concept of realism is not useful for an analysis of global democratization. It proceeds from a basic distinction made between internal and foreign policy, caused by the principle of state sovereignty. Realists believe that the protection of individual state interests makes international

[11] O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, pp. 96–102.

collaboration impossible. The opposite point of view is represented by liberals who base their arguments on traditions of the Enlightenment and emphasize the tendency towards modernization in international relations, where elements of cooperation are amplified and conducted to facilitate an expansion of democratic freedom. Neo-liberal institutionalists believe that the numerous political and economic organizations, which appeared in the second half of the twentieth century under the initiative of 'A Liberal World', have radically changed the image of the international system. These organizations promote democracy, and through them the international system may be able to have some influence on the internal political order of a particular country, using a system of international principles, such as an international trade agreement, the international financial-currency mode, sustainable development requirements in the field of ecology, or the concept of human development and human rights. They are thus believed to provide relative order in the sphere of international relations.

Western Standards vs. the Asian Way of Life

Aside from the above-specified economic parameters, preconditions for democratic development connected with state sovereignty exist. However, our analysis would not be complete if we did not pay attention to the components of socio-cultural preconditions, which decide the real destiny of democracy. Many researchers share the opinion that the world will experience the formation of a new cultural paradigm in the twenty-first century. Within this framework, the realities of social phenomena will shift from an economic context to a cultural and informational one. This optimistic view is based on the assumption that under the influence of globalization, the process of creating a democratic civilization will be launched. It is difficult to adhere to this view with any conviction, as the economic gap between poor and rich nations is growing. A serious and important question to be addressed is to what extent existing civilizations are susceptible to this idea. Researchers of democracy face a dilemma: to try to use careful comparative historical analysis in order to reveal to what extent democratic ideals correspond to certain civilizational traditions,[12] or to simply proclaim that democratization and Westernization are interrelated phenomena.

In order to explore the first choice, we must investigate what results the imposition of a democratic 'universe' on the cultural heritage of different countries will have, and how this will affect the norms of political culture, which have existed for centuries in certain regions. The complexity of this approach is that it presupposes a study of the culture, history, and political structure of different nations.

By denying democracy in Asia and by maintaining the view that democracy is obligatorily Western, politicians are playing a dangerous game. In most Asian societies, the family's support of its weaker members has always been very strong.[13] Another very clear democratic feature is how in Asian

[12] Instead of one uniform civilization we have, according to confessional divisions only, at least four large ones: Christian (Western), Muslim, Hindu–Buddhist and Confucian–Buddhist. There is also one national, however, globally important religion, Judaism.

[13] By which is meant the extended perception of the family as characterized in the East.

gatherings and circles, all are seated around the table on the carpet, at the same level and with no different seats according to divergent social positioning. These are not political forms of democracy, but cultural, and are important signs of societal predisposition to democratic order.

Meanwhile, there is another, much easier approach, which is the simple proclamation of universal Westernization and the conclusive victory of the West. Such a conclusion was made by Fukuyama 1992, who wrote: 'We witness not only the end of the Cold War, but the end of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of governance.'[14] Such a judgment may cause delight in the West but it inspires suspicions of expansionism rather than triumph in Asia.

The West is not, after all, as democratic as it is perceived in Asia, and Asia is not as undemocratic as it is described in the West. It is undoubtedly so, that modern democracy was developed in the West, particularly in the US. Here we have a country which was not burdened with nationalism and therefore with national culture. Democracy and national culture developed simultaneously. To a certain extent democracy was at the forefront of national culture, as American culture developed only after Americans stopped perceiving their continent as secondary and subordinate to Europe and liberated themselves from their European political heritage. Democracy in the US is different from what it is in Europe, something which is increasingly noticeable.

Culture and National Identity

This may make it difficult to understand why the road to democracy is so complicated for Asian societies. Japan became democratic after World War II, and this happened under the direct influence and huge financial and technical assistance of the US, similar to the Marshall Plan for Western Europe. By making such an investment in the country, the US made an exclusionary choice, and Japan remains an Asian insular country in all senses. The demand for other Asian nations to go the same way, even when conditions for such a transformation remain absolutely different, may become too hard an exercise for some of them.

Culture is important, as it creates a sense of community and a spirit of creativity and because it guides morals and social norms. In transition, this is an important counterbalance to social stress, economic difficulty and instability. A strong culture can restore human values and reinforce national identity, pride and unity. Contrary to calls for global cultural homogeneity, many countries are reasserting their diversity and individualism. The nation that isolates itself lags behind culturally and misses out on many opportunities for progress and exchange. The interaction of different cultures is mutually enriching. This keeps human expression alive and ever evolving. From early on, a great number of world-famous scientists and poets have lived and worked in Central Asia. Among them are such names as Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Khwarezmi, Beruni, Ulughbek, Al-Bukhari, Al-Ferghani,

[14] Fukuyama 1992.

Alisher Navai, Babur, Nadira, and many others. They left to their descendants a unique and timeless heritage of science, literature, and art.

The evaluation of the global process should go beyond gloomy pictures and analyze the processes which promote democracy and which have definitely occurred in this region. Considering the grass roots and the élite as social layers supportive of democracy, the following processes are important and have their impact on either one or both of these layers:

1. Massive temporary labor migration all over the world enriches knowledge as well as it broadens skills and political perception.
2. Women contribute increasingly to the family income, as many of them are involved in small trade, services, and the production of goods.
3. Growing financial obligations stop old stereotypes surrounding traditionally shaped families, where members become more literate and 'family-planning' oriented.
4. Distribution of housework burden starts to be more balanced. Men try to share domestic obligations, thus creating space for women to earn a wage.
5. As a result of national and international programs for the education of the best students abroad, a new élite is created, enlightened with the best principles of Western democracy.
6. Governments respond to the requirements of the international community by opening doors to previously forbidden parties and giving permission for the registration of new ones.
7. Court reforms, reduction in the number of imprisoned, decrease of high-punishment sentences, and other developments witness a slow but steady movement towards democracy in legislation.
8. Open convertibility of local currency has improved business conditions for small and middle-sized businesses, leading to an enlargement of the middle class.
9. A sufficiently large share of researchers, engineers and representatives of the intellectual sphere among the population (1,754 per one million in Uzbekistan, 581 in Kyrgyzstan, 716 in Kazakhstan) also demonstrates democratic potential.[15]
10. A growing number of NGOs, national and regional, with plenty of women NGOs, is a very healthy feature in a fledging democracy.
11. The loose understanding of the concept of 'family' has meant greater responsibility for a society's less successful members. Therefore, even if not politically (vertically), Asian societies have been democratic on a basic (horizontal) level for a long time.
12. The demographic structure of Central Asian countries also proves a nation's ability to become democratic; more than 60 percent of the population is below 25.

Certain external political conditions could also be pointed to as positive factors for a development towards stronger democratic structures in Central Asia. For example, the end of war in Afghanistan and political stabilization in the Middle East means better security for the countries of Central Asia and thus more chances for a stable development. Furthermore, the Russian factor

[15] Islamov and Shadiev 2001.

is very important for all CIS countries, including Central Asia. A democratic and stable Russia will serve as a good example and partner for the region.

Concluding Remarks: Difficulties for Central Asia

The difficulties facing the democratic development of CIS countries, especially for the newly-born states in Central Asia, may be summarized in the following fashion:

1. All regional countries were less economically developed parts of the USSR, and had the lowest social achievement in health, education, public welfare, food quality, etc.
2. *Perestroika*, which occurred on the eve of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, did not touch the southern periphery of the USSR, and was contrary to claims of democracy. For example, the Uzbek so-called Cotton Deal was very close to Stalinist repression.[16]
3. Population proportions in urban and rural areas are not similar to those of democratic countries (40 percent urban population and 60 percent rural, compared to an opposite situation in average democratic countries).
4. The threat of terrorism (e.g. the incident of 16 February 1999 in Tashkent and the attempts to seize power a year later in Batken (Kyrgyzstan), Surkhandarya, and other places) have also negatively effected democratic development.
5. Cultural behavioral stereotypes with extremely high levels of authority among older or socially higher positioned people, and subordinate behavior among the rest.
6. Demographic progression of the region, limited by the scarcity of water and arable land.
7. The absence of women in decision-making processes, in politics and management, and the low profile of women in social life.
8. Poor environment – something that has hardly improved during the second half of the twentieth century.
9. The absence of stable democratic countries in the immediate neighborhood (for example, for Uzbekistan, it might be difficult to become democratic while having Turkmenistan as its neighbor).
10. Low regional indicators of human development, connected with weak economies, constrain people's ability to participate in political life, as all their creative energies are engaged in a struggle for survival.

Democracy has started to grow in Central Asia under new and varied conditions. However, the road to democracy should be contingent and

[16] The 'Cotton Deal', organized in Uzbekistan, was an exact copy of the Stalinist repression of the 1930s. If in the case of the Stalin regime repression occurred all over the country, in 1988–1990 it took place in only one of the republics of the USSR. Only Uzbeks were under investigation, and the purpose was to make Uzbeks an 'exemplary case' for other Central Asian nations. Seventy percent of the top political élite was arrested in the late 1980s. The accusations of corruption had in the majority of cases no factual basis and many persons were released after the judicial processes. Others, however, spent several years in jail and came out physically as well as spiritually and morally ruined. The massive character of these arrests had very negative effects on ethnic conflicts in the Ferghana Valley.

scrupulous, or its rapid development might be compared to cloning: quick and abnormal. The case of Iraq has been a sufficiently vivid example that not only governments and élites, but also the grassroots should be prepared for democracy, before we can start hoping for a successful process.

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Post-Soviet Paternalism and Personhood

Why Culture Matters to Democratization in Central Asia

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After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, much of the scholarship about Central Asia has interpreted the complex postsocialist transformations through a grand narrative of 'transition' toward democracy and the market.[1] Such analyses tend to miss the actualities of how processes of change play out on the small scales of communities and individuals. There is little theorization about the unintended consequences and newly emergent phenomena that can arise from the play of forces at local levels, where contestation takes place over ways of interpreting political and economic situations and imagining alternative possibilities.[2] The actual processes of how democratic ideas and institutional practices might take root (or fail to do so) in post-Soviet Central Asian societies occur in the sphere of not national politics but everyday life. Research investigating these must be sited not only at the commanding heights of political elites, but on the ground where ordinary people live.[3]

We need to consider how ordinary Central Asians understand the nature of the post-Soviet state, because importing democracy to the region involves more than legal reforms, institution building, or expertise transfer. It crucially requires realigning the fundamental orientation of the citizenry with respect to the prevailing structures of authority. A democratic constituency needs to understand itself as political subjects able to understand public issues, to participate in effecting change, and to select leadership accountable to it. Democracy presupposes a political subjectivity where the individual stands in a particular form of empowered relationship with respect to hierarchies of authority. The liberal conception of a political choice-making individual is a specific socio-historical product rather than a universal condition. This is not to argue against the universal applicability of democratic ideals and practices, but rather to acknowledge that their application in most societal contexts

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[1] I avoid the term 'transition' for postsocialist transformations because it implies a unidirectional movement toward a definite endpoint. This linear evolutionist assumption is highly problematic, given the complex, multiple directions in which these societies are actually changing; see Berdahl 2000.

[2] Liu 2003.

[3] Cf. Burawoy and Verdery 1999, p. 6.

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would require hard work directed specifically at shaping people's fundamental orientations toward authority and the state. The prospects for democracy in Central Asia, in short, depend not only on the reform of laws and institutions but also on the transformation of communal understandings and dispositions. They depend on 'culture'.[4]

This essay analyzes in ethnographic detail a particular political conception held in Central Asia today. I will show how certain Central Asians see the relationship between the people and the state during the first decade after Soviet socialism; how they characterize what an effective post-Soviet state is supposed to look like; and what they consider to be the proper role of the state in economy and society. My exposition concerns a particular conception of post-Soviet state that I found prevalent during the 1990s among Uzbek men in the city of Osh, located today in the independent Kyrgyz Republic.[5] Uzbek men in Osh articulated a political imagination about the ideal political leadership that they believe will exercise the paternal discipline (*tarbiya*) necessary to move their society beyond state socialism and reach liberal standards of modern statehood. They advocate a paternalistic state that directs the economic, political, and social course of the republic, and transforms its citizens toward 'civic perfection'. The state is seen as the primary engine to drive the country through transformation to what they describe as an eventual democratic and free market society. The people of the nation, in other words, properly fall under the care and guidance of a state that knows what is good for it.

Before describing this conception of postsocialist state, I will start with a conversation I had with a young Uzbek man in Osh. My discussion of this conversation will render the socio-political context for this study and show how deeply-rooted the conceptions of state are for the Osh Uzbek men who hold to it. I will then describe this political imagination, and conclude with the conception of personhood implied by this conception and the implications for democratic reform in Central Asia today.[6]

The Socio-Political Context

In the summer of 1999, I had lunch with a young Uzbek friend whom I will call Nurolim (not his real name) in the city of Osh, located today in the Kyrgyz Republic. Of all my friends in this city, Nurolim stood out as a uniquely cosmopolitan individual He spoke idiomatic American English, as well as fluent Russian, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Turkish, and was one of the very few from Osh who had studied in the United States. He expressed to me his sense of alienation from 'traditional Uzbek culture' and described the oppressive atmosphere of living in a *mahalla* (neighborhood), pervaded by

[4] I am using the overdetermined and contested term 'culture' only as a familiar tag for the more precise notions of local understandings, dispositions, and orientations toward authority on which I am focusing.

[5] Since 1995, the country has been officially called the Kyrgyz Republic (*Kyrgyz Respublikasy*), although 'Kyrgyzstan' is widely used. The adjectival form 'Kyrgyzstani' refers to the state (as in citizenship), while 'Kyrgyz' refers to the ethnic group or language.

[6] My thanks go to the participants of the conference on *Prospects of Democracy in Central Asia*, 1–3 June 2003, for their constructive criticism of this paper, particularly to Birgit Schlyter, Vernon Schubel, and Marianne Laanatza.

what he called 'Islamic ways of thinking'. In the *mahalla* where he used to live, for example, the elders insisted that weddings be done without loud music, dancing, mixing of the sexes, nor alcohol. Many younger residents resented these rules and often attempted to evade them. Nurolim knew an unmarried woman who bought a house in his *mahalla* and sometimes had male visitors. The elders assembled one evening, called on her house, and delivered an ultimatum: she was to either stop receiving men, get married, or move out. Nurolim himself moved out of the *mahalla* as soon as he was financially able, and was working at the time for a United Nations-funded non-governmental organization promoting the development of independent media in the Kyrgyz Republic. Nurolim was, simply put, the most well-educated and Western-minded Uzbek person whom I knew in Osh.

Our lunch conversation turned to politics in the neighboring republic of Uzbekistan. Since Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, President Islam Karimov has declared that he would conduct post-Soviet reforms according to a unique, 'Uzbek' model of transition.[7] What this has meant in practice is that Karimov runs Uzbekistan much as he had during the late Soviet period while forever holding up his supposed neoliberal trajectories as a shield to deflect criticism. Over a decade after the USSR, Uzbekistan has barely begun real reform: there are no true opposition parties in Uzbekistan, no independent media (state censorship, though officially ended, is still *de facto* in force), severely restricted civil and religious freedoms, stifled market development, and unconvertible currency.[8] Should Karimov's policies continue much longer, it has been widely noted, Uzbekistan risks both long-term economic underdevelopment and the radicalization of political dissent increasingly channeled toward violent Islamist forms.[9]

In our lunch conversation, Nurolim commented that although President Karimov ruled Uzbekistan with a Soviet-style iron fist, he astutely created a self-image of being the benefactor of the Uzbekistani people. But then, Nurolim took me by total surprise with the following words:

> I've spent years criticizing Karimov's authoritarianism. But I now recognize that Karimov's ways are not all bad. Things like a quasi-command economy, state-run media, relentless crackdowns on political dissidents and on Islamic militants are perhaps necessary for the time being in Uzbekistan, because the alternative would be chaos.
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> There is an Uzbek proverb that captures this: *Shoh ko'rgan, khon ko'rgan khalqmiz*, 'We are a people who have seen the shahs, seen the khans'. Uzbeks have witnessed only dictatorial rule in all of their history. Why should we expect them to understand democracy in the short years after independence?

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[7] Karimov 1993, pp. 15–16.

[8] See International Crisis Group 2003 and Gleason 2003, pp. 117–140. Other reports include Bohr 1998; Dailey, Laber and Helsinki Watch 1993; Fierman 1997; Human Rights Watch 1998; Human Rights Watch 1999; Shields and Human Rights Watch 2000.

[9] See report on Uzbekistan from the International Crisis Group 2001b. However, some economists argue that Uzbekistan has done surprisingly well in its gradualist reform, maintaining reasonable social stability with modest economic growth since the mid-1990s (Anderson and Pomfret 2003, p. 23; Spechler et al. 2004), although these analyses tend to take Uzbekistan's official figures and statements of intention without sufficient critique, and minimize the growing rural poverty and discontent.

This comment shocked me because it came from an active democracy-booster in Central Asia, who had just finished telling me how much he resented the paternalism of social life in the *mahalla* neighborhoods. Nurolim was offering his advocacy, provisional though it might have been, of President Karimov as a kind of modern *khan* figure – an enlightened despot whose harsh ways work for what was hoped to be long-term good. Despite his personal distaste for 'traditional Uzbek authority' and his open advocacy of Western societal models, Nurolim acknowledged the need for this kind of political leader in Central Asia at this time. In his view, only through the political and economic stability that a dictatorial state provides can a people who are used to such rule be educated in the ways of liberal states. Authoritarianism was, in short, the best means towards liberalism.

Although much of Nurolim's background and thinking was exceptional, his advocacy of President Karimov's approach to post-Soviet rule was widespread and fervent in the late 1990s among Uzbek men and women in Osh of various education levels, professions, and ages. During my fieldwork in 1997–1998 and in 1999, I found that many Osh Uzbek men, in particular, harbored what I must call a collective obsession about the Uzbekistani president and the Uzbekistani state. When talking about all sorts of topics, in casual conversation and formal interview alike, these men were fixated on the idea of President Karimov's effective leadership. They extolled his ruthlessly unilateralist approach to policy, crediting him for maintaining what they saw as Uzbekistan's exemplary political order and economic development in a region rife with collapse and conflict since the end of Soviet rule.

Moreover, almost all Uzbek men and women in Osh expressed at that time deep dissatisfaction with the economic and political course of the independent Kyrgyz Republic, the country of their own citizenship since 1991. The Kyrgyz Republic has steered most decisively toward political and economic liberalization in the region, and maintained the most independent press and viable opposition parties, prompting some outside observers to call it Central Asia's 'island of democracy', although this label has become rather problematic since the mid-1990s.[10] Nonetheless, Askar Akaev, a former physicist, became the Kyrgyz Republic's president in 1991 as the only Central Asian president who was not a former Communist Party leader. The Kyrgyz Republic was also the first Central Asian republic to leave the *ruble* zone, launching its convertible currency the *som* in 1993, whose relative stability has held thanks to the republic's massive foreign aid.[11] In 1998, it became the first Soviet successor state to join the World Trade Organization. However, while outside observers have mostly lauded the Kyrgyz Republic's overall political and economic reforms despite its sluggish economic growth and slightly eroding political freedoms, Uzbeks in Osh saw in their republic's liberalization only an inflationary 'wild capitalism', idle factories, unemployed youth, disintegrating social services, delapidated infrastructure, governmental corruption, and unchecked 'Wahhabism', a vague term used loosely in the

[10] Anderson 1999, pp. 55–62 and International Crisis Group 2001a. Huskey 2002 argues that President Akayev has shifted to a calculated strategy of applying just enough of a strong-hand to stay in power amidst various crises – a 'minimalist authoritarianism'.

[11] On the introduction of the Kyrgyzstani som, see Pomfret 1995, pp. 116, 144–146; concerning the profound consequences of the Kyrgyz Republic's foreign aid debt, see Mogilevsky and Hasanov 2004, pp. 235–239.

former Soviet Union analogous to what the Western media calls 'Islamic fundamentalism'.[12] Those issues were indicators to them of a state that was reneging on its responsibility to properly oversee the republic's post-Soviet development. Their objection to the Kyrgyz Republic's liberalization was not its goal, for many Osh Uzbeks stated that they wanted democracy, free markets, and more connection with the wider world, although what these terms actually mean to them is another matter. Their fundamental concern is what kind of *posture* the state assumes with respect to the republic's economy and society. These Osh Uzbek men were talking about current events and conditions through a conceptual framework about what effective political authority is supposed to look like and how the state should operate, as I will discuss next.

Conceptions of Post-Soviet State

Osh Uzbek men treated the state as standing in a moral relation of stewardship with respect to the republic's productive resources and to its people. What they advocated is more accurately termed *state paternalism*, rather than 'authoritarianism'. State paternalism means that the state reserves for itself the nearly exclusive prerogative for directing the economic, political, and social course of a country. It involves more than central control, however, but the moral notion that the nation properly falls under the care and guidance of a state that knows what is good for it. My numerous interviews and conversations with Uzbek men in Osh in 1997–2003 revealed that their conceptions of an ideal post-Soviet state possessed three related characteristics.[13]

First, they identify the characteristics of the state closely with the personality of the leader himself.[14] They judge the correctness of policy according to what they see as the leader's moral constitution and personal intentions. Good policy emanates from virtuous leaders with wise, benevolent intentions, ineffective policy emanates from 'evil-hearted' leaders with foolish, self-serving intentions. Osh Uzbek men linked the state so closely with the leader that they believed they could 'read' the character of the leader by looking at the effects of his authority in concrete social and economic phenomena within the country. I analyze elsewhere this conception of state space as a projection of the leader's *personhood* and will not pursue it here.[15]

Second, Osh Uzbek men expect the state to be actively involved in the economic and social life of the republic. This expectation, produced by life under Soviet socialism, includes social welfare provisions, such as pensions,

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[12] Knysh 2004, pp. 24–25.

[13] Research was funded by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), University of Michigan (UM) Center for Russian and East European Studies, UM Rackham Graduate School, and UM Department of Anthropology.

[14] This notion has antecedents in Turko–Mongol political ideals in Inner Asia. While the actual political power of Chingizid khans varied over the centuries since the 13th, they were acknowledged to carry a personalized authority as ruler. See, for example, McChesney 1991, pp. 46–71; Sela 2003. In fact, President Karimov has sought to position himself as a spiritual successor to the 14th century Turkic conqueror Tamerlane (Timur); see Kangas 2002, p. 139; Manz 2002.

[15] Liu 2002, pp. 183–191.

free or cheap medical care, kindergartens, etc. They also hold the state responsible for the functioning of the economy, which to them means that the state should support industrial production from collapse; secure new sources of raw materials for factories (now that the all-Union network no longer functions); ensure that privatized farm lands have access to water, tractors, seed, and expertise; support prices for agricultural products; and regulate private enterprise and trade against criminal activity (as all independent commerce has tended to be seen). Similar attitudes about economic matters can be found across the postsocialist world, but what is interesting here is the specific ethical valence Osh Uzbek men attach to them. They see the state's role in terms of its *stewardship* of the republic's land and people, where it is morally responsible to 'take care of' the country. The Uzbek word they use, *boqmoq,* is the ordinary term for the care of children, animals, or gardens. Consider how one of my interviewees explained the state's role, bearing in mind that this Uzbek man is a resident and citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic:

> In order for people to be fed, in order to provide agricultural products, the [Kyrgyzstani] government must support agriculture. I've told you this before: '*If you look after the land, then the land will look after the people* (*yerni boqsangiz, yer elni boqadi*).' For 100, 200 years on this land, our ancestors, all of us, have been well fed. … If the land is worked well, if you treat it well, you will reap goodness from the land.

By contrast, this man sees wise use of land and resources in post-Soviet Uzbekistan:

> But Uzbekistan is conducting good reforms, proceeding slowly. The collective farms remain working and are delivering cotton to every combine. With sufficient cotton, the combines keep working. Wheat is being planted. There are 25 million people [in Uzbekistan], right? Wheat enough for 25 million is being planted. …
>
> They have this saying: 'I have an old house. I will build a house for myself.' If I destroy the old house, where will I live? Karimov said: 'Do not destroy the old house.' He said: 'Let us build the new house.' He said: 'After having built it I will destroy [the old one].' But with us [in the Kyrgyz Republic], we have destroyed the old house, and haven't yet built the new one. … And so it has become difficult for us. This is what's happening.

The last passage linked state economic policies (such as collective agriculture and wheat import substitution) with the notion of the personal stewardship of a house. The house metaphor cast President Karimov of Uzbekistan as the prudent master of a household, because his gradualist approach to reform shows his wise stewardship of his republic. Almost like a biblical parable, it effectively cast the Kyrgyzstani leadership as foolish masters who ruined their own house. In either case, the state has the obligation to oversee a carefully managed, centrally-controlled process of building the 'new house', referring to the liberalization of a post-Soviet republic's economy and politics.

This brings us to Osh Uzbek men's third conception about the state: the state has the obligation to transform or train the people to prepare them for a prosperous post-Soviet future. They believe that economic and political transformation involves not only new freedoms, available capital, or entrepreneurial knowledge, but also a *change of heart and mentality*. This inner, moral transformation among the people can be accomplished only by a paternalistic state with the virtuous leadership and vision to affect the necessary discipline on the populace. For these men, the relation of state to

citizen is analogous to how Uzbek parents and elders are supposed to raise children in *mahallas*. A *mahalla* is a residential neighborhood consisting of courtyard-centred houses, where constant social interaction takes place. To live in a *mahalla* means to conduct every aspect of one's life under the expectations of the elders and the community. The *mahalla* can appear as a space of sinister panoptic power, where one's every action is seen, reported, and judged by others. On the other hand, the *mahalla* is also a place of mutual care, assistance, and 'proper' moral upbringing of its residents. Uzbeks use the word *tarbiya* (originally from the Arabic) to refer to the teaching and disciplining of children for the purpose of training them toward moral maturity.

My informants talked about the state's moral charge over the country as being like the elders' charge over the *mahalla*. Neighborhood elders or imams were required to discipline violators of community norms, just as the state is responsible for the upbringing of the people. I argue elsewhere that the manner in which Osh Uzbeks *use* space in everyday life at the *mahalla* level bears homologies to the way they *talk* about space at the republic level.[16] Space has the same 'look and feel' for them on both social scales, so that, in this sense, the state is treated as a *mahalla*-writ-large. The notion of *tarbiya* thus characterizes the kind of authority under which people are supposed to live at every scale of social life.

One of my interviewees, for example, talked about why Uzbekistanis were currently subjected to state-controlled agriculture and a low standard of living. According to this man, poverty and lack of private property was a 'temporary' sacrifice enabling the resourceful Uzbekistani state to work for the eventual good of its citizens. He assigned to the state the primary responsibility in building the country's infrastructure and industry at this time, implying that the people were not ready to assume a more active role in the nation's economy. Using President Karimov's name as a metonym of the Uzbekistani state, my interviewee personified the state as a disciplining father. Karimov was harsh but unquestionably wise, because he *alone* would decide when the country's economic infrastructure is sufficiently built up and declare when it is time to privatize. Were Karimov to liberalize without managing the state's careful self-withdrawal from the economy, he would be reneging on his personal stewardship of his country. And so, my interviewee characterized Karimov as subjecting Uzbekistan under his paternal discipline that would shape the land and its people into readiness for democracy and capitalism.

Democracy and Personhood

If this conception of state authority holds sway among many Central Asians, what does this imply for the prospects of democracy in the region today? First of all, it does *not* mean advocating Karimov's style of rule or his supposed 'Uzbek path of transition', even though Osh Uzbek men seemed to applaud it overwhelmingly during the 1990s. The key question for Karimov's stated approach is: can a paternalistic state be capable of actually molding its people into citizens of a liberal state? Does the analogy hold between state guidance

[16] Liu 2002, pp. 94–202.

on one hand and parenting on the other? Can one regard, for example, a state that mandates industrial production figures as essentially doing the same thing as a father who makes his daughter practice her piano? In order for a state to accomplish this, it would have to exercise what philosopher Thomas Wartenburg calls *transforming power*, where the dominant agent exercises the power relationship for the benefit of the subordinate agent, such as between parent and child, or teacher and student.[17] According to Wartenburg, paternalism works to constructive ends only if the paternal figure views the subordinate as a developing creature whose maturation is enhanced by the relationship. The goal of transforming power is actually to make the power relation itself obsolete, after the subordinate has internalized the discipline, as when a child grows up or a student graduates. Transforming power *em*powers, not subjugates. Islamic theorists of state have claimed that this is precisely the ultimate goal of Muslim states throughout history: to shape its people, forcibly if necessary, into an active, virtuous community of believers.[18] However, in his famous 'neopatriarchy' thesis, Hisham Sharabi is pessimistic that modern Arab states, specifically, are capable of exercising this kind of power. He sees those states as fostering a posture of *heteronomy* in its citizenry, that is, unquestioning obedience, unilateral deference, and fear. Those states fail to encourage the development of *autonomy*, which values justice over blind obedience, mutual respect over fear, and consensus over arbitrariness as the basis of rules. Sharabi's study reveals the difficulty for a modern paternalistic state to exercise *tarbiya* on its citizens toward any civic ideal, whether Islamic or liberal. Given the dearth of effective models, there is little cause for optimism about President Karimov's 'unique path of transition to democracy', which, over ten years into independence, has failed to yield any plan to wean the population off state paternalism, even if that were Karimov's true intention.[19]

Even if the Uzbekistani state is unlikely to provide the people with the *tarbiya* that my Osh Uzbek friends so hoped for, we can nevertheless profit from analysing their conceptions about authority and state. What we uncovered was a conception of personhood where the individual is seen as always being under definite hierarchies of social authority – under fathers, elders, and by extension, state leaders. Being under authority includes the relationship of *tarbiya*, whereby a person's capacity to understand and make judgments are always in formation under the moral and intellectual tutelage of his or her superiors. This notion is what grounds the tendency of some Uzbeks to believe that as ordinary people, they are not able to fully understand issues of government, much less voice consequential opinions or press for effective changes about them. The success or failure of policy is perceived to inhere rather in the moral character of the state leaders: 'pure-hearted' leaders, by virtue of their *virtue* alone, make beneficial, effective policy; 'evil-hearted' leaders make harmful, ineffective policy. Osh Uzbek men generally interpreted the post-Soviet rule of the presidents of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz

[17] Wartenberg 1990, 1992. I am grateful to Val Daniel for suggesting Wartenburg's relevance to my argument.

[18] See for discussion, Al-Azmeh 1997, pp. 115–153; Fischer 1980, pp. 154–156.

[19] The 'Asian Tigers' such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan are often cited as authoritarian states who successfully worked toward liberal ends. Karimov, indeed, has referenced them as better models for Central Asia than Euro-American ones, but I will not take up this issue here.

Republic, respectively, in this moralistic way during the 1990s. In both cases, the success of an administration is seen as depending primarily on the personhood of the leader, rather than the structures of governance or its accountability to the people. This character-centred understanding of political authority explains why many Uzbeks are pessimistic about the success prospects of institutional reform as the primary engine for positive societal change in post-Soviet Central Asia. Because good government stems only from righteous leaders in this conception, no amount of structural tinkering will free society of corruption or stagnation as long as the men at the top are 'evil'. It is clear that such a passive posture of the citizenry toward politics diverges widely from the orientation of individual empowerment presupposed by a democratic constituency.

However, what I have identified in this essay is not an unchangeable 'Uzbek traditional mentality' but rather an enduring, yet mutable, current of thought and attitude – a discourse – concerning paternal authority that runs through Uzbek society in Osh, the Kyrgyz Republic. Even within an individual, this discourse of *tarbiya* can co-exist in creative tension with liberal modes of thought. We saw this in my lunch conversation with Nurolim, who considered state paternalism a temporary but necessary evil for attaining democracy. Another Western-educated Osh Uzbek man with whom I spoke in 2003 advocated democratic freedoms alongside with Islamic morality in the public sphere. The fact that this discourse is recombinant and adaptable to novel ideas suggests that it will likely mutate in response to the pressures of globally-circulating liberalisms in the post-Cold War world, while retaining some of the basic sensibilities concerning authority and subjectivity that we saw in this essay. Tracking the changes in dispositions about paternalism and personhood will require further ethnographic research during Central Asia's second decade of independence.

Indeed, this discourse about state represents a dominant, though not the only, strand in their political imagination of the late 1990s. Uzbeks in Osh and elsewhere certainly hold other views about authority and the role of the citizenry, particularly among youth, women, and the Russian- or Western-educated. Moreover, general opinion among Osh Uzbeks appears to have undergone a definitive shift in 2002, when President Karimov strengthened yet again his strict border regime in an effort to close Uzbekistan off to foreign goods, much of which were from China via the Kyrgyz Republic. Some Osh Uzbeks felt that Karimov had gone too far this time, as these measures hurt both Uzbekistanis and Kyrgyzstanis greatly. In contrast to the high level of unanimous opinion among Osh Uzbek men in 1997–1999, I found in 2003 a more mixed spectrum of sentiment concerning Karimov's policies. Some Osh Uzbeks admitted to me that they enjoyed the greater economic or intellectual freedoms in the Kyrgyz Republic relative to Uzbekistan (for the first time since I began working in Osh in 1994), and a few even said that they were glad to be Kyrgyzstani citizens.

The *tarbiya*-centred political imagination described in this essay and the more recent shifts in sentiment together indicate the precarious and contradictory political dilemma in which the Uzbek community of post-Soviet Osh finds itself. On one hand, Osh Uzbeks are included *de jure* as Kyrgyzstani citizens but excluded *de facto* from meaningful participation in the political

arenas of the ethnic Kyrgyz-dominated republic in which they reside. On the other hand, even while Uzbekistan promoted an aggressive Uzbek nationalist campaign within its borders during the 1990s, Uzbeks outside of Uzbekistan have been largely shut out from any benefits, given Karimov's progressively draconian border regime. I have called the Osh Uzbeks' dilemma their 'predicament of double exclusion', and have argued that it is precisely such a tense political environment that is most productive of passionate discourses about authority and state.[20] These discourses represent *local expressions of political commentary and criticism* concerning the Kyrgyzstani and Uzbekistani policies that affect them. Recall that when Osh Uzbek men praised the *tarbiya* exercised by Karimov's decisive actions, they were implicitly disapproving of the Kyrgyz Republic's more *laissez-faire* course. And later when some expressed gratitude about the Kyrgyz Republic's freedoms, they were casting doubt on the efficacy of Karimov's heavy hand. All of this reveals that Central Asians indeed have their own modes of political expression, albeit under constraints that forestall conventional political mobilization.[21] This revelation relates to the democratization of the region, because it shows that, contrary to some outside perceptions of their general political passivity, Central Asians are quite politically aware and active in discursive arenas, and these local modes of expression need to be understood before they would be channelled toward democratic ends.

Conclusion

Any effort to promote democracy in post-Soviet Central Asia (or anywhere else) must reckon with fundamental orientations that ordinary people have about their socio-political world – it must reckon with 'culture'. Addressing this issue involves more than encouraging political reform at the top levels, transferring technical expertise to local elites, or even building so-called 'civil society'.[22] Such efforts do little to connect with the political imagination of the populace – how people envision the horizon of political possibility and their place in the political landscape.[23] As long as Central Asians orient themselves to political authority with the posture of deference and dependence inherent in the paternalistic *tarbiya* idiom of state, political reform will fail to bring democracy.

To the extent that this disposition toward authority runs deeply among Central Asians, those who would promote democracy in the region need to address it explicitly, rather than assume that the liberal modes of sovereign individuality necessary for a democratic constituency would spontaneously emerge after the institutional and legal structures are put in place.[24] Here is where the Uzbek notion of *tarbiya* itself can instruct those who would reject it

[20] Liu 2002, pp. 31–58.

[21] Also see Nurten Kılıç-Schubel's article in this volume concerning Central Asian genres of socio-political commentary and dissent in poetry.

[22] For a critique of the conceptual fallacies of civil society programs in Central Asia, see Mandel 2002, and for a theoretical critique of the very notion, see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999.

[23] For a case study on political imagination illustrating its significance, see Humphrey 2002.

[24] The lack of attention to this cultural dimension of democratization will continue to hamper fatally, in my view, efforts to impose democratic restructuring in post-Taliban Afghanistan and post-Saddam Iraq.

as a paradigm for social organization. *Tarbiya* points to the socio-political import of inner transformation and personhood formation. Ultimately, the task of bringing a viable democracy to Central Asia involves fashioning new societies through the making of new persons.

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A Kyrgyz man. Photo: Bertil Rydén.

Uzbek and Uyghur Communities in Saudi Arabia and Their Role in the Development of Wahhabism in Present-Day Central Asia

BAYRAM BALCI

The aim of this paper is not so much to explain the nature of Wahhabism as to aid understanding of the role of Saudi Uzbeks and Uyghurs and of the pilgrimage, *hajj*, in the development of Islamism in Central Asia. The study is based on research on Uzbek and Uyghur communities in the cities of Mecca and Medina, whereby the present author discovered the existence of contacts between the Saudi Wahhabism and Islamic movements in Central Asia.

Wahhabism in Central Asia is a sensitive issue; no one will tell you that he is Wahhabi. Even in Saudi Arabia, Wahhabis claim that they are *ahl al-sunna*, 'members of the tradition', meaning the tradition of the Prophet. On the other hand, according to at least some of the scholars who have studied this religious movement, there are several kinds of Wahhabism in the world. The Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia is very specific, and its import by other Muslim countries often took a nationalistic path.

The founder of the movement was Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792). He studied in Medina with teachers of the Hanbali school, as defined by Ibn Taymiyyah, the famous Muslim theologian of the thirteenth century. 'Abd al-Wahhab spent many years of his life traveling. He spent four years in Basra, five years in Baghdad, and one year in Isfahan and Qom. After Qom, he returned to Uyaynah, his native city, and started to preach his message. His 'Book of Unity' (*Kitab al-tawhid*), which he wrote during this period, met more opposition than interest and he was forced to seek refuge in the small town of Dar'iyyah, whose chieftain, Muhammad Ibn Saud, gave him protection.

It has been stated by various sources that the two men made an arrangement according to which 'Abd al-Wahhab would be the religious leader and Ibn Saud the political leader. In 1765 Ibn Saud died and his successor, 'Abd al-Aziz, also chose 'Abd al-Wahhab as the religious guide. In 1766 the doctrines

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of 'Abd al-Wahhab were accepted by all the scholars of Mecca. As the area under the power of 'Abd al-Aziz increased, the number of doctrines from 'Abd al-Wahhab also increased. In the second Saudi Kingdom, created after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the official ideology of the State was the ideas of 'Abd al-Wahhab (and 'Abd al-Aziz al-Saud).

Since the first years of its existence, this religious school has advocated the practice of a 'pure Islam', as it was during the times of the Prophet Muhammad. Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia fight against what they call the 'pollution' of authentic Islam, first and foremost the worship of local religious leaders and deceased persons. Thus, in present-day Saudi Arabia, cemeteries are seldom visited, and there are no pilgrimage areas besides Mecca and Medina.

According to many scholars, Wahhabism did not have much influence in Central Asia before the independence of the Central Asian republics. Before and under Russian colonization, there was just scant Wahhabi influence in the region. During the Soviet period, Wahhabi ideas were totally absent in Central Asia because of the total absence of contacts between Muslims in the USSR and Muslims in other parts of the world.

There are major contradictions between the Islam of Central Asia and the Islam of Saudi Arabia. For example, in Central Asia, Sufism, pilgrimage to the tombs of Sufi leaders (Baha'uddin Naqshbandi, Ahmad Yasawi, Najmaddin Kubrawi, and others) and the worship of local sheikhs, Sufis, Pirs and Ishans are very important and constitute the main features of the local Islamic faith. The 'Turkic Islam' of Central Asia is markedly different and has always contained pre-Islamic elements from Shamanism and other practices. Needless to say, this sort of Islam is regarded negatively in Saudi Arabia.

According to certain prominent scholars, for example, Olivier Roy and Ahmed Rashid, the development of Islamism in Central Asia began during the Soviet period itself, thanks to local non-official Islamic leaders and to contacts between Soviet Muslims and Afghan Muslims during the invasion of Afghanistan by the Red Army. The first example of these Islamic contacts is the case of Juma Namangani, leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Namangani was a soldier during the war and this provided him with the opportunity to study Islam. The collapse of the Soviet Union allowed for the development of Islamic movements all over the Union. The main political party to have emerged following the Union's collapse is the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). The independence of each state then produced the fragmentation of this party into local branches – Uzbek, Tajik, etc. We cannot say that IRP was Wahhabi but we know that the religious parties and movements that emerged from this party had real contacts with Saudi Islamic organizations. It is not my intention in this article, however, to dwell on the history of the IRP and the legend of its leading members, such as Namangani and Yoldashev.

Uzbek Emigration to Saudi Arabia

There are two major Turkic diasporas in Saudi Arabia that arrived through specific processes of migration. The first is Uzbek and began to arrive in Saudi Arabia during the 1930s.

Very few studies have been conducted on Uzbek migration from Central Asia to Saudi Arabia.[1] As for the Uyghurs, a large part of our information stems from investigations and interviews with old immigrants carried out during two pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia in 2000 and 2001. After this fieldwork, complementary research was carried out in Uzbekistan and Turkey among Uyghur and Uzbek communities whose members stayed in touch with their Saudi brothers.

The Uzbek immigrants in Saudi Arabia can be subdivided into three groups:

1. Those who left the USSR from the early 1930s onwards.
2. Those who arrived from Northern Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion in 1979.

In addition to these two categories, a very small group of students (or political opponents) arrived after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sent by the Uzbek government or by their families, they refused to go back to their country when the Uzbek authorities, concerned with the 'Wahhabi danger', asked them to leave Saudi Arabia.

More than Russian colonization, it was the policy of Bolshevikization, collectivization, and above all, violent Stalinization that motivated thousands of inhabitants in Western Turkestan to flee the country. The strengthening of tough Soviet control over the region, as a prelude to the Stalinist purges, during which dozens of Turkestani intellectuals were killed, still remained in the collective memory of the Uzbeks I met in Saudi Arabia. Those who chose exile were the most anti-Soviet and anti-communist elements of the local society. These included:

- Rich landowners and economic élites.
- Intellectuals, but not exclusively the religious intelligentsia.
- Families, whose members were involved in military resistance against the Red Army. Some of the old Uzbek intellectuals interviewed in Saudi Arabia said that some of their relatives were involved in the *basmachi*[2] movement as *korbachi*[3] or simple fighters.

The migration occurred in two main waves. The first wave left the homeland to go to Kashghar, when it was still possible to cross the border (before 1949).

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[1] See e.g. Komatsu et al. 2000.

[2] From the Turkish verb of *basmak* ('press', 'oppress') referring to the military resistance against the Russian–Soviet domination in Central Asia during the first years of Soviet rule. This term had a negative connotation during the Soviet period and was regarded as a synonym of 'outlaw'. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Basmachis were again considered 'heroes of the independence', especially in Uzbekistan.

[3] *Korbachi* was the highest level in the *basmachi* military command.

Culturally and linguistically very close to the Uyghurs, those Uzbeks were partly assimilated by the Uyghur community. Some of them then left Eastern Turkestan together with the Uyghurs to protest against Chinese domination. The second wave chose to cross the Amu Darya and enter Afghanistan. Some stayed among the Uzbek–Afghan population in the north, while others went further south to places like Saudi Arabia.

Uyghur Migration from East Turkestan to Saudi Arabia

Up until 1949, the migration movements were very important between the eastern and western parts of Turkestan, i.e. between Chinese and Russian (or Soviet) Turkestan. In Central Asia, it was common for the Uyghurs to cross the boundary and go to the Ferghana Valley in order to find good jobs, especially in the cotton fields. Similarly, it was not unusual for the Uzbeks of the Ferghana Valley to go to the region of Kashghar for economic or political reasons. After 1949 with the advent of the communist regime in China, Uyghur emigration changed its destination. The border between the USSR and China was then hermetically closed and those fleeing Communist regimes in the world had to find asylum further afield, and go southwards to Pakistan, where, in the 1950s, thousands of Central Asian refugees arrived. Their exile occurred under difficult conditions caused by the geography and the hard climatic conditions, which led some of them to compare it symbolically to *hijra* – the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad – and this more than other emigration waves left a strong emotional charge on the collective memory of the Uyghur refugees. But for them Pakistan proved to be a transit place only, as the community chiefs negotiated with the UNHCR for the distribution of the refugee population among Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Reactions to the Turkestani Diaspora

The Uzbek and Uyghurs (or Turkestani diaspora), escaping the atheist regimes of China and Soviet Union, were attracted to Saudi Arabia partly by the high symbolism of the holy cities of Islam, but also because the young kingdom of Saudi Arabia was among the few Islamic countries which willingly welcomed refugees.

During the 1930s and 1940s, when most Turkestani refugees arrived, the country was a big and empty desert. The creation of the Kingdom only dates back to 1902, when ʻAbd al-Aziz Ibn ʻAbdurrahman al-Saud won over his rivals in the dynasty of the al-Rashid. After 1910, and the decline of the Ottoman Empire, ʻAbd al-Aziz began a successful conquest campaign which gave him Assir (bordering on Yemen) in 1920 and Mecca in 1924 as well as other territories until the borders of the kingdom were definitively fixed in 1936.[4]

The Uzbek and Uyghur diasporas were essentially welcomed as support in the construction and development efforts of the sparsely populated kingdom.

[4] Da Lage 1996.

For the Saudi leaders they presented a good opportunity by which to benefit at low cost from an immediately available educated workforce. At that time, Saudi Arabia had still not developed its petroleum infrastructure (created in 1944, the ARAMCO became the first component of the Saudi economy in the 1960s and 1970s). Before the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabia had only one source of wealth: the Holy Land of Mecca and Medina. These were also the places where the first immigrants settled, besides Jeddah and other towns along the road of the pilgrimage.

When old refugees tell you that their dream was to live in the cities of the Prophet Muhammad, we can assert that this intention is largely exaggerated and is part of the exile mystification. Their *hijra* was in fact more economic than religious. At that time all economic activities were concentrated in Mecca and Medina. And as new industrial or administrative cities emerged (Yanbou, Jeddah, Riyadh, Taef), large numbers from the population moved there because of new job opportunities, and so did the immigrants. Good businessmen by nature, the Turkestanis are nowadays present in all the major cities of the kingdom, where they have developed various business activities.

It is difficult to tell how many Uyghurs and Uzbeks live in Saudi Arabia today. The kingdom has no official statistics on the population or on the foreign communities settled in the country. According to some scholars, more than half of the kingdom's inhabitants are not of Saudi origin. Foreign workers, now called 'economic migrants' from South Asia, South-East Asia and from the Arab world are very important. There is a belief that the percentage of Saudi-born citizens in the total population is exaggerated for geopolitical reasons; for the Saudi authorities it is of immediate interest to show that the kingdom is mainly inhabited by people of Saudi origin.

In spite of the total absence of official data, we can say that there are approximately 50,000 Uyghurs in Saudi Arabia.[5] This number seems to be fairly reliable, even though the leaders of this community talk about there being more than 100,000 Uyghurs. In recent years the number of weddings outside the community has increased, making it more difficult to make an estimation of the Uyghur population in the country.

In the Uzbek case, the situation is slightly different, because they arrived before the Uyghurs, in different waves and from different places. My belief is that there are more than 60,000 Uzbeks and around 100,000 Afghani–Uzbeks in Saudi Arabia. Though differences are still visible, these two Uzbek communities increasingly form a homogeneous group.

In general, Uzbeks and Uyghurs have a positive attitude towards the Saudis and are still very loyal to the state. The image of Arabs has always been good in Central Asia, where they are considered to be good Muslims. Turkestani community leaders often recall that King 'Abd al-Aziz was good to Central Asian refugees and other persecuted Muslim populations who found asylum in his country.

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[5] These numbers are not official, as there are no official data in Saudi Arabia relating to the number of foreigners in the country. The numbers given in this article are only estimates, established after interviews with the leaders of the community and discussions with Saudi local authorities.

The Pilgrimage as a Means for Cooperation with the Motherland

The majority of Uyghurs and Uzbeks in Saudi Arabia were born there and know very little about their homelands. Of course all have the possibility of going to Xinjiang, since the Chinese government relatively easily grants visas to Uyghurs with Saudi citizenship. Some old immigrants do take the opportunity to visit their native land again. The young, however, rarely make the trip to the homeland of their parents. In contrast, it is very difficult for the Uyghurs in Xinjiang to gain permission to leave their country, especially to visit the holy places of Islam. The Chinese government in general is reluctant to let Han Chinese go abroad and the rule is even more strictly applied to national minorities, such as the Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Mongols. The opening of the country to international trade after 1978 has encouraged small entrepreneurship and facilitated business trips. In spite of great difficulties, a lot of Uyghurs benefit from this every year, having two possibilities to go on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia:

- The so-called 'small pilgrimage' (*umra)*, which can be performed at any time of the year but is usually accomplished during the Ramadan period.
- The *hajj,* one of the five pillars of Islam and which must be performed two months after Ramadan according to the calendar of the *hijra*. Each year more than two million pilgrims come to Mecca and Medina to perform the *hajj*.

Because the pilgrimage offers opportunities for religious, business, and political contacts with Uyghurs in Saudi Arabia, and because Uyghur irredentism in Xinjiang is a threat to state stability, the Chinese authorities pay great attention to this religious activity, keeping a close watch on each Uyghur who goes or wishes to go on pilgrimage, and tend to reduce their numbers every year. Those who eventually get a visa have to follow an official route that takes them to Urumchi, then Beijing and thereafter Hong Kong, from where they fly to Saudi Arabia via Pakistan. At the same time, only a few hours' drive separates Kashghar from Pakistan along the Karakorum highway. However, this special border is never easy to cross, for pilgrims at least.

Pilgrims do not all have the same motivation. Some do their religious duty as recommended by the *Qur'an* and the tradition of the Prophet. Others use the pilgrimage as a good opportunity to do business in the fantastic trade centers of Mecca and Medina. And last but not least, the pilgrimage provides opportunities for militant Uyghur nationalists to create networks and connections with Uyghurs in Saudi Arabia and in the world, and with Islamic organizations willing to help 'persecuted' Muslims of all sorts.

Both Uyghurs and Uzbeks receive big contributions – and sometimes incentives – from Uyghurs and Uzbeks holding Saudi citizenship to come to the holy places and accomplish the pilgrimage under good conditions. This support is often the basis for further cooperation.

At this stage, it seems to me very important to study the nature and functions of the special institutions, the *ribats*, where I conducted most of my

fieldwork. In Arabic, the root *rbt* means 'link' or 'knot'. In Islamic tradition, *ribats* are those special institutions along the road where pilgrims can relax before continuing their trip. They are also the place where pilgrims meet for discussions and exchange and possibly too for further contacts. The modern *ribats* in Saudi Arabia today are organized as pious foundations (*waqf*), which are a sort of bed-and-breakfast lodgings where the pilgrims can stay freely. Normally, *ribats* are founded by some rich man or philanthropist who through pietism and faith establishes them to provide people from his village or city with good conditions as they perform their pilgrimage. In Saudi Arabia, *ribats* have recently been set up by philanthropists from Kashghar, Khotan, Andijan, Kokand, Marghilan, and Namangan. Pilgrims coming from these cities may stay as long as they wish in their particular *ribat*, and none are expected to pay anything, although contributions to support the foundation are always welcome. Pilgrims who do not originate from the city of the founder of the *ribat* have to pay a fee, with priority given to 'town citizens' before other pilgrims.

These foundations give a certain rhythm to the pilgrims' life. The *ribats* are a sort of exchange platform and business center facilitating the development of contacts and networks. In the case of Central Asian communities, these *ribats* are important meeting points, serving as headquarters for the Uzbek and Uyghur diasporas and pilgrims from the homeland, in which they can exchange views, decide on common actions, coordinate cooperation and eventually redefine a common identity.

In that sense, pilgrimage is the moment and *ribats* in Mecca and Medina the theater for the diaspora and the pilgrims to debate national identity. This phenomenon is very specific to the Uzbeks. Indeed, when the first diasporas fled Russian Turkestan, the Ferghana cities, or the Emirate of Bukhara, Uzbekistan did not exist and Uzbek consciousness was very weak. The first migrants in the 1930s identified themselves as Muslims and then as Turkic or Turkestani, or if associated with the former Emirate of Bukhara or Khanate of Kokand, Bukhari, Kokandi, etc.

Most of the early migrants are now known as Turkestani among the Saudi. They dreamt for some time of returning home, to Turkestan. The intellectuals of the community collaborated with pan-Turkic movements that had engaged in a political fight against the 'communist occupation' of Turkestan. One of these intellectuals, Zuhriddin Turkestani, told us that the leaders of the community had already in 1980 given up the idea of returning home. As long as the USSR and its violent anti-clerical policy lasted, it was virtually impossible for the 60 million Muslims of the Soviet Union to perform the pilgrimage. The Cold War pitted the Soviet Union against the democratic and liberal system of the West, making the former a possible model for the Third World, and pushed Moscow towards a more opportunistic policy of tolerance towards its Muslims to gain necessary support from emerging oil and Islamic countries. It was not until the Brezhnev period that the Department of Religious Affairs (*muftiat*) based in Tashkent was allowed to send a very small number of pilgrims to Saudi Arabia again. This benefited a very limited number of pilgrims, all carefully chosen by the authorities and even sometimes members of the Soviet Intelligence Service. Contacts with the

Uzbeks of Saudi Arabia were impossible.

With the *perestroika*, on the other hand, new hopes were raised among the Uzbek community of Saudi Arabia to find 'salvation for the motherland' at last. In the meantime, this motherland had changed in its geography and in its name. Turkestan had been divided into five distinct territories by means of some vague nationality policy. The towns from which most of them originated now belonged to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan. The regime worked hard to create an artificially distinguishable Uzbek identity for the new Uzbek nation.

This was at a time when in Saudi Arabia, the dilution of the Uzbek (and Uyghur) identities in the Arab culture was felt to be a real threat, according to the intellectuals I met there. The Arabization process of foreign communities like the Uzbeks and Uyghurs had been accelerated by the absence of contact with the homeland and further encouraged by Saudi authorities that forbade foreigners to gather in cultural associations, spread publications, provide linguistic courses, or engage in other activities for the preservation of their national identity.

Perestroika, *glasnost* and then the independence of Central Asian states had positive effects on the opening of the country and on new travel opportunities for citizens. Since the independence of Uzbekistan, the pilgrimage of native Uzbeks is perceived in Saudi Arabia as a good opportunity to restore a dialogue between the diaspora and the homeland that will contribute to the redefinition of Uzbek identity and its survival in Saudi Arabia, where it is indeed endangered. For the younger generations, Uzbekistan, the homeland of their fathers and mothers, is not attractive and seems empty of any significance to them. Lacking personal and professional motivation, only a few visit the region. They are Arabs in their way of living and thinking. Old immigrants believe the pilgrimage will save their community from dilution by Saudi society.

However, this may not be as easy as it seems. Uzbeks of Uzbekistan and Uzbeks of Saudi Arabia do not share the same vision or interpretation of their national or ethnic identity. Observing Uzbek pilgrims discussing their common identity with Saudi Uzbeks is highly interesting for the researcher. First, they do not really speak the same Uzbek language. When Saudi Uzbeks use their mother tongue, they include some Arabic and speak with a strong Arabic accent, while Uzbeks of Uzbekistan speak an Uzbek language largely influenced by Russian. And the inability of some Uzbeks – even well educated ones – to distinguish Uzbek words from Russian words is always very surprising.

Besides the linguistic difference, when one asks the Saudi Uzbeks about their identity, they identify themselves first as Muslim, second as Turkestani, third as Uzbek, and fourth as Kokandi or Andijani according to the town of origin. Some old intellectuals refute the term 'Uzbek', as they consider it a pure Soviet invention and insist on the idea that the Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen nationalities were created by the Russian and Soviet colonizers to break the strong Turkic unity in Central Asia and beyond. However since the development of new contacts with today's Uzbekistan, Saudi Uzbeks use 'Uzbek' more and more to designate a common belonging to a special group

in the Turkic family. They have probably been influenced in that sense by Turkey and the Uzbek community there. Indeed, while some chose Saudi Arabia as their place of exile, others chose Turkey. Many rich families had a second residence in Istanbul, since Soviet Central Asia was not accessible. All Uzbek diasporas in the region had maintained contacts and therefore had adopted the notion of 'Uzbek' as a common identifier.

For the Uzbeks of Uzbekistan, the nation became very important, particularly after independence. A new nationalist Uzbek ideology replaced Marxism–Leninism and its role is to guarantee the stability of the new state and its independence, and also its viability by strengthening all the attributes of the state: a people, a nation, a language, a flag, definite borders, etc. Uzbek propaganda is as strong as the Soviet propaganda once was and there are no better advocates of the new Uzbek identity than the pilgrims who bring the 'gospel to the stray flock' of Saudi Uzbeks and other diaspora Uzbeks they meet in Mecca and Medina.

Trade is definitely not the primary motivation when Saudi Uzbeks and Uzbek pilgrims make contact with each other. Saudi Arabian exports are far too expensive for Uzbekistanis, and Uzbekistan has little to offer Saudi Arabia. Economic ties are therefore insignificant. Both governments and individuals realize this, and it is because of pilgrimages that contacts have developed and mutual influence is at work.

In the Uyghur case, similar observations can be made. Pilgrimage helps the community to develop and maintain contacts between the different Uyghur diasporas in the world. Each year their leaders meet their ethnic fellows in Mecca and Medina. These meetings became possible after 1987 when the Chinese government introduced a more liberal policy towards religions and religious faith in China and allowed more and more Muslims to perform the pilgrimage. However, since September 11, 2001, American military measures in Afghanistan, and suspected Uyghur cooperation with the Taliban and Al-Qaida caused Beijing to forbid all Uyghurs from leaving the country for pilgrimage reasons. Since then, candidates for the *hajj* (officially for business purposes) take a route via Hong Kong, where they attain Saudi visas for Mecca and Medina.

Religious Cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Central Asia

During the Soviet period, the religious influence of Saudi Wahhabism in Central Asia was practically non-existent. The only assistance granted by the Saudi government to the Muslims of Central Asia was asylum to all Turkestani refugees. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of the region, the Saudi authorities, apart from the millions of *Qur'ans* and other religious literature sent to Central Asia, developed two mainstreams of assistance for the revival of Islam in Central Asia.

Good Relations with the New States of Central Asia

In all the newly-independent Central Asian republics, Marxism–Leninism was thrown out to be replaced by a strong nationalist ideology that had inherited the attributes defined during the Soviet regime: a territory with borders, a nation with its own culture, language, history, and religion. Some leaders, like Uzbek President Islam Karimov or Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, have performed the pilgrimage. However, their motivation was essentially political. The objective was to give Islam an official place, but nothing more.

For the Saudi government, it was crucial to develop good relations with these new republics because the region accounts for more than 50 million Muslims (although the unexploited oilfields are not a minor consideration). As early as 1992, the Saudi government received an official visit from Islam Karimov, considered to be the direct descendant of the famous Islamic thinker Ismail al-Bukhari (who originated from Bukhara in today's Uzbekistan). Karimov did not hesitate to use this historic thinker and other Islamic references to entertain good relations with the Saudi authorities. The pilgrimage to Mecca helped the president show his people and his Islamist opposition that he was a good Muslim and a defender of Islam. During his *hajj*, he visited the inside of the Ka'ba and this exclusive privilege granted to Karimov carried a clear message: Saudi Arabia expects the Uzbek leader to encourage and facilitate the revival of the Islamic faith in Central Asia.

The Muslim World League and the Uzbek Missionaries

Created in the middle of the 'Arab Cold War' that pitted the 'progressive Arab nationalism' of Cairo against the 'feudal and American Islam' of Riyadh, the first ambition of the Muslim World League was to support and defend the international *Umma* against the *state–nation*, the faith against race, Islamism against Arabism. The League has three main objectives:

- To promote Islamic education where it is necessary.
- To propagate the Islamic faith by distributing the *Qur'an* and other Islamic literature.
- To provide humanitarian assistance to persecuted Muslims throughout the world. This last objective represents more than half of the global budget of the League.[6]

From its creation in 1962 until the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the League was totally absent in Central Asia, since the region was completely sealed to any external influence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the leaders of the League decided to initiate a specific policy towards Central Asia. *Qur'ans* and Islamic literature were distributed in local languages in all the Central Asian states with the help of businessmen and pilgrims.

[6] Schulze 1988.

Still more important, however, was the engagement of old Turkestani Uzbek intellectuals. The leaders sent old Uzbeks of Mecca and Medina as missionaries back to their native land. Their mission was very simple: they were expected to preach the authentic Islamic message in the mosques and among their families. Approximately one hundred men visited their native villages and preached the Islamic message in accordance with the policy of the League, while others together took individual initiatives to help build new mosques and restore others throughout the Ferghana Valley.

However, having been converted for a long time now, these missionaries promoted no other form of Islam than Wahhabism.[7] Their task was not easy, since Saudi Islam differs much from the traditional Central Asian faith and rites, which are mixed with mysticism and deeply rooted in Sufi traditions.

Their actions no doubt contributed to the development of Wahhabism, even if the violent and hardest version that exists in marginal parts of Uzbek society stems from Pakistan. Although they were tolerated by the Uzbek regime in the beginning, these missionaries were later expelled from the country, when Wahhabism became a threat to the state. The Uzbek consulate in Jeddah suddenly stopped issuing visas for these missionaries of the League. After 1994–1995, Uzbek pilgrims were recruited in Mecca and Medina to take the word of God home with them, until a suspicious Uzbek government started systematic control of these pilgrims. Pilgrimages are now organized by the *muftiat* of Tashkent in groups controlled by the religious authorities, and individual initiatives are often forbidden. In Mecca and Medina, the groups are forbidden to stay in the *ribats* controlled by Saudi Uzbeks and to make contact with members of the Uzbek diaspora.

Now, conscious of the difficulties of spreading Wahhabi Islam in Central Asia, the Saudi government has lost interest in Central Asian Muslims. Leaders of the League now think that conditions are not favorable enough for any mission to be sent to Central Asia in the near future.

Another important way for the promulgation of Wahhabism must be mentioned. Going to Saudi Arabia to study at the international Islamic University of Medina became possible after the collapse of the Soviet Union. During our field studies in Saudi Arabia we were impressed by the number of students who originated from the former Soviet Union, especially Uzbeks, Tajiks, Daghestanis, etc. Just after the declarations of independence, some post-Communist regimes encouraged their young to study in Saudi Arabia. This was the case in Uzbekistan. However, with the development of Islamism in the Ferghana Valley, the Uzbek government now tries to prevent young Uzbeks from studying in Saudi Arabia. Some students who had earlier been sent out by the Uzbek government were asked to return home, although some refused. The contact between these students, the local Uzbek community and Uzbek pilgrims contribute to the spread of Wahhabism in Central Asia.

[7] Algar 2002.

Conclusion: Relations between Saudi and Central Asian Islamism

The research work conducted in Saudi Arabia was limited to the Uyghur and Uzbek communities and did not include the Afghan–Uzbeks who constitute the biggest Turkic community in the Saudi Kingdom. These Afghan–Uzbeks are very different from other communities; they arrived after the occupation of Afghanistan by the Red Army in 1979 and must be studied separately.

Each community played an important role in the revival of relations between their homeland, Central Asia at large, and Saudi Arabia. However, contacts did not last for long, especially in the Uzbek case, since after a short period of active and open diplomacy, the Uzbek government returned to the old Soviet style of power and diplomacy. Under present conditions, it is not interesting for the Uzbek government to develop its relations with Saudi Arabia and with the Uzbek diasporas. The development of an Uzbek Islamism, its spread in Afghanistan and its relations with Al-Qaida complicated Uzbek and Saudi relations even further. The consequences of September 11 and the US military action against the Talibans and their *protégés* (Namangani and Yoldashev) convinced Uzbek authorities to forget their Saudi Uzbek brothers, who are supposedly allied with Uzbek Islamists operating against the Uzbek government in the Ferghana Valley.

For Uzbeks and Uyghurs living in Saudi Arabia, the future of their community depends on the changes in Uzbekistan and in China. If the Uzbek and Chinese regimes adopt more liberal foreign policies, it will be possible to 'save' Uzbek and Uyghur identities in Saudi Arabia. However, if the relations and contacts remain weak between Central Asian and Saudi regimes, the Turkestani communities may be fully assimilated into Saudi Arabian culture

It is difficult to ascertain the present state of Islamic cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Islamic movements in Central Asia. I think that the international situation is so bad for Central Asian Islamists that they cannot possibly develop their relations with Saudi Islamists. In Central Asia today, the most important Islamic movement is not Wahhabism but the Hizb-ut-Tahrir party, which does not adhere to the principles of Wahhabism.

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Turkish Islamist Entrepreneurs in Central Asia

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After the emergence of new independent states in Central Asia, Turkey has been active across the region in diverse areas, such as telecommunications, transportation, pipelines, education, media and military cooperation. Parallel with these activities, religious and political groups from Turkey have shown great interest in the region. Furthermore, there are numerous migrant entrepreneurs from Turkey operating in the Central Asian countries.[1] This paper focuses on the motives, both economic and non-economic, of migrant entrepreneurs who are the followers of the so-called *Fethullahcı* order, a religious community founded by Fethullah Gülen, commonly addressed by his followers as *Hocaefendi* (Master; for a person with high religious authority). Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Gülen's followers have been energetically involved with the new Turkic republics. They have founded nearly eighty high schools in the Central Asian countries and have also set up many companies that operate trans-regionally between Turkey and the region.[2] The present study is based on in-depth interviews with followers of Gülen engaged in business in Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, and Almaty in Kazakhstan. In the ensuing sections they will be called 'follower-entrepreneurs', because in the interviews, they described their own activities not as 'purely' economic but as the duty of their religious community and they referred to the Islamic stock of knowledge to legitimize their economic and cultural activities. Moreover, Gülen's followers are different from other Turkish entrepreneurs operating in the region by their heavy emphasis on the Islamic roots of Central Asia – a region which they regard as the cradle of Turkish Sufism – and by their efforts in supporting an Islamic revival in that region. In other words, it is not only a matter of making profit but also a mission for them to revive the Islamic faith in their forefathers' land and to introduce Turkish Islamic culture.

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[1] For an extensive study of this topic, see Şen 2001.
[2] For the community's schools, see Demir et al. 2000; Agai 2003; Balcı 2003.

Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions, Vol. 15 (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 253–264.

The Gülen Community

Fethullah Gülen was a disciple of Saidi Nursi (1876–1960), the founder of the Nurcu[3] movement. Nursi was trained in *madrasas* (traditional religious schools) and in seminaries of the Halidi-Naqshbandi order in various parts of eastern Turkey. Although Nursi was deeply influenced by Sunni Sufism, he was critical of the Sufi orders, thinking that traditional Islamic learning had become insufficient and irrational under the threat of Western culture, civilization and institutions that imposed other priorities and urgencies. Saidi Nursi wrote several volumes of Qur'anic exegesis, collected under the generic title of *Risale-i Nur* (The Epistles of Light). These texts in the form of manuscripts written in the Arabic script were distributed clandestinely by his disciples until the 1950s. Saidi Nursi described two objectives as two facets of the same principle: the renewal of the Islamic faith and the compatibility of Islam with modern sciences.[4] After Nursi's death in 1960, the Nurcus were divided in their views and strategies for action. One of the most powerful and influential of the Nurcu groups is the Fethullah Gülen community, which emerged in the mid-1970s and which has gained much public attention since the second half of the 1990s.[5]

The Gülen community draws much of its human resources from entrepreneurs, students, teachers, and journalists. There are various foundations and associations that promote Gülen's views. For example, Gülen's followers own a non-interest bearing financial institution, *Asya Finans* (Asia Finance) founded in 1996, with a paid capital stock of 125 million USD. It supports the follower-entrepreneurs in the Central Asian countries and facilitates their financial flows. *Işık Sigorta* (Light Insurance) is another financial institution owned by the community.[6]

The Gülen community is also very influential in the media sector. The first journal of the community, *Sızıntı* (Oozings), published since 1978, focuses on new scientific developments that are seen as essential for the understanding of divinity. The community has journals on various other subjects as well. Among them are the environmental journal *Ekoloji* (Ecology), the theological journal *Yeni Umut* (New Hope) and a journal introducing Islam in English, *The Foundation*. In addition to these journals, the weekly news journal *Aksiyon* (Action) has been published since 1993. The daily *Zaman* (Time) newspaper, which was bought by the community in 1986, carries the highest responsibility for spreading the ideals and teachings of the community in the media sector. This newspaper is also published in the USA, Europe, Australia and three Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan). Furthermore, the Gülen community owns a TV channel (*Samanyolu TV*), which broadcasts to the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, a radio channel (*Burç FM),* and a news agency, *Cihan Haber Ajansı*

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[3] *Nur* means 'light' and the suffix *-cu* designates a follower of Nursi's teaching. The same ending appears as *-cı* in *Fethullahcı*, 'follower of Fethullah (Gülen)' above. For an account of the life and work of Said Nursi, see Mardin 1989.

[4] Mardin 1989; Doumont 1986.

[5] Within the last decade there has emerged a rich literature on Gülen and his community, such as Altınoğlu 1999; Aras and Caha 2000; Başkan 1998, 2000; Bulut 1999; Çalışlar 1997; İnsel 1997; Kömeçoğlu 2000; Koyuncu 1997; Kozanoğlu 1997; Laçiner 1995a,b; Sevindi 1997; Turgut 1998; Yavuz 1999a.

[6] Aras and Caha 2000; Bulut 1999; Yavuz 1999a.

(World News Agency). As a complement to its activities in the media sector the community also possesses several publishing houses.

The Gülen community displays a special interest in education. Rather than supporting public religious schools, such as the İmam Hatip schools or introductory Qur'an courses, Gülen encourages his disciples to establish private elementary and high schools, whose language of instruction is English. The community owns around 300 schools and runs five universities. Its educational infrastructure also includes dormitories, student houses, summer camps, as well as centers for training students for university entrance exams. All these institutions play a crucial role in teaching and disseminating religious values and practices.[7]

The presence of the Gülen community in such areas as education, media, finance, and trade can be regarded as a decisive attempt to transform modern institutions to accord with Islamic precepts. Indeed, the community's organizations and associations are well organized and strong enough to compete with secular ones in the economic and cultural spheres. More importantly, all these activities have created a social and economic space for the community's own elite, eager to replace the existing one in Turkey as well as in Central Asia. Therefore, day-to-day activities in such diverse areas should be perceived as a strong indication of the community's high organizational capacity. What makes this organizational capacity possible is the community's ability to mobilize its followers, who are strongly united by a collective identity. More clearly, the modern organizational capacity of the community should be understood as a consequence of the communal energy created by the devotion of their disciples to 'a shared future project', that is, to restore the power and glory of Islam. All activities of the community are managed by a hierarchical organization 'based on the tenets of trust, obedience and duty to the community'.[8] The managers of the community's organizations that form its public face are chosen mainly in accordance with the inner hierarchy of the community, just as the main target of the activities is set by the common ideal that unites the community. An analysis of the inner structure of the Gülen community shows how a religious community based on the Sunni Sufi stock of knowledge combines traditional and modern organizational forms and mobilizes its followers.

The Gülen community has two faces. One of these represents foundations, associations, media institutions and schools. The community carries out its activities through these organizations in the public sphere where formal principles and relations are dominant. It is through these types of organizational forms that the community becomes 'visible' in the public sphere. This other face can metaphorically be called the 'material world' of the community or the 'outer husk' of the community. However, the Gülen community also has its own 'private sphere'. It has an inner world composed of its own language, symbols, and practices that cannot easily be penetrated. Again metaphorically, this face forms the 'spiritual world' of the community or the 'interior' of the community. This dual structure enables followers to go in and out of the material world and the spiritual world, or the 'outside' and the 'inside'. The continuous flow created by the organizational duality is one

[7] Bulut 1999; Sevindi 1997; Turgut 1998.
[8] Yavuz 1999a, p. 596.

of the most important aspects of the community that enhances its organizational capacity.

Hizmet or 'Disinterested Action'

A closer examination of both Gülen's writings and the accounts of follower-entrepreneurs interviewed for this study show that certain concepts, among them *hizmet* and *himmet*, play an immensely important role in mobilizing the community for economic, cultural, and religious action in the Central Asian countries. Such concepts are also crucial for the construction of a framework through which the community's economic and cultural endeavors in the region are legitimatized and by means of which the community tries to expand its influence and organizational capacity.

The religious origin of the term *hizmet* (< Arabic; 'service', 'duty' etc.) can be traced back to the Sufi stock of knowledge. In the Sufi tradition, disinterested actions are treated as a merit and they are utilized as a method for stripping away material concerns laden with self-interest. Therefore, the principle of rendering *hizmet* to humanity for the sacred cause can be viewed as integral to the legitimacy of the Sufi orders. Gülen considers every effort that may contribute to the struggle for the Islamic cause and hence all activities of his community as *hizmet*.[9] Above all, he employs *hizmet* as a general characteristic of his community. In fact, in the community's language, this is well reflected by a common expression used for a person who has recently been enrolled in the community: 'He joined the service' (*Hizmete katıldı*). Undoubtedly, this expression mainly aims to present the community as a disinterested and generous organization working for the public interest and the common good and thereby justifying its activities. This also permits the community to describe itself as a civil society or voluntary organization that only recently started to become a 'popular' trend among the Sufi orders and religious communities in Turkey.[10]

More significantly, in a similar vein with the Turkish historical narrative,[11] it is around the notion of *hizmet* that the community constructs a historical narrative about Central Asia as a region having a special sentimental value for the Muslims of Turkey. The narrative is largely based on Fuat Köprülü's view that Sufism played a decisive role in the conversion of the Turkish tribes to Islam.[12] Sufism, partially at least, allowed them to integrate their customs and practices with the new faith. This in turn induced nomads and tribesmen to acculturate rapidly to the Islamic faith. It is in this context that the teachings of the Central Asian Sufi orders, such as *Yasaviya* and *Naqshbandiya* were significant means for introducing the Islamic faith to the new groups while permitting them to retain their own ethno-linguistic peculiarities and identities.

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[9] Can 1996; Erdoğan 1995; Sevindi 1997.

[10] For an analysis of how the concepts of civil society and state are used in different fashions and contexts and how competing and complex meanings are projected onto civil society by Islamists and secularists in Turkey, see Navaro–Yashin 1998. Also, for studies extensively focusing on the relationship between civil society, democracy, and Islam, see Özdalga and Persson 1997.

[11] Copeaux 1996.

[12] Köprülü 1966, 1993.

Indeed, since the eleventh century, a great many dervishes and sheikhs from Central Asia had accompanied waves of migrating Turkmen tribesmen and settled in Anatolia. Having had a close relationship with the Seljuk and Ottoman Beys, they inculcated Islam throughout the countryside and spread the new devotional life towards the frontiers.[13] For Gülen, they were the so-called colonizer dervishes and *ghazis* who devoted themselves to God's service and who played a decisive role in the Islamization of Anatolia and the Balkans.[14]

This historical narrative has two important aspects of relevance for this study. First, Gülen takes Islam as his basic point of departure, but he also agrees with the assertion that there was a perfect harmony between the Islamic religion and the Turks who very rapidly became the defenders and the vanguard of the Islamic faith. To him, this was due to the fact that the Turks were predisposed to Islam and found their 'true culture' and identity within Islam. Moreover, Gülen believes that, although the message of Islam is universal, Turkish Islam is distinguished from the Arabian and Persian types of Islam not only in terms of its tolerant approach, but also through its leading role in spreading Islam into new regions.[15] Undoubtedly, it is through the idea of the historical services the Turks rendered to Islam in its spread, defense and revival[16] that the community's narrative is articulated with the Turkish Islamic synthesis – an ideology formulated by a group of nationalist intellectuals, which became semi-official state ideology in Turkey in the 1980s.[17]

Second, according to Gülen, his followers carry a message – the message of Islam – for humanity. Like the colonizer dervishes, they are servants of this universal message and carriers of the Muslim spirit. He also believes that the Sufis who rendered great historical *hizmet* to Anatolia and the Balkans made Turkey indebted to Central Asia. Hence, his followers are now paying this historical debt to the grandsons of Yasavi who are distanced from their roots and culture and who are desperately in need of material and spiritual help. In a similar vein, the follower-entrepreneurs interviewed often repeated Gülen's expression: 'We are here to pay our debt of loyalty to Hoca Ahmed Yasavi' (*Hoca Ahmed Yesevi'ye vefa borcumuzu ödemeye geldik*).[18] Above all, they have described themselves as missionaries providing *hizmet* to Central Asia, that is, the land of their forefathers. At this point one can argue that it is through the notion of *hizmet* that the historical narrative becomes an integral part of a future project and operates as a directive for an activist utopianism[19] that converts everyday life into, what Mike Featherstone calls, heroic life.[20]

There is a further dimension directly linked to the strategic context in which the Gülen community utilizes the notion *hizmet* as a significant tool for shaping the views and attitudes of its followers. Gülen and his disciples view Central Asia as a region of strategic importance to the re-emergence of Turkey as a state with grandeur in world politics. The stress on the strategic

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[13] Inalçık 1973, pp. 186–202.
[14] Can 1996, pp. 33–70.
[15] Ibid., pp. 33–35; Sevindi 1997.
[16] Copeaux 1996.
[17] Bora and Can 1999, pp. 149–177; Copeaux 1998, pp. 54–92; Güvenç et al. 1987.
[18] Can 1996, pp. 34; Sevindi 1997; Turgut 1998.
[19] Al-Azmeh 1996.
[20] Featherstone 1997.

importance of the region mainly depends on the view that Turkey, which is willing to integrate with Europe, should establish strong ties with Central Asia in order to enhance its stature vis-à-vis Europe. In the community's view, this could also make Turkey a powerful link between East and West. Moreover, Gülen states that the disintegration of the Soviet Union has created a huge cultural and political vacuum in Central Asia, which could be filled by Turkey by virtue of its common bonds with the region. If not, there could be a risk that the countries of the region will be exploited and conquered by rival countries, such as Iran, Russia, and China. In other words, according to Gülen, Turkey should pursue an active policy in Central Asia in order to revive common cultural roots and to integrate the region with Turkey and the Muslim world.[21] It is in this strategic context that the community's activities in the region are justified as *hizmet*, but this time the beneficiary is Turkey. Indeed, the follower-entrepreneurs have explained their main aim as an endeavor to create a lobby in the region that will be loyal to Turkey, in the same fashion as they are themselves loyal to Yasavi. Apparently, this derives from their conviction that Turkey can put an end to its isolation on the international arena, only if it has a powerful lobby in a Central Asia – a region that has already become the center of world politics. In their view, this would also help Turkey to overcome internal and external obstacles to its development. That is why the follower-entrepreneurs are eager to present their efforts to create a lobby as *hizmet* that benefits Turkey. Naturally enough, the interviewees referred to the community's schools as significant means for creating a powerful lobby in the region. In fact, they described the community's schools as the most prominent asset in developing their economic activities in the rich but unstable Central Asian market.

The Gülen community's heavy stress on *hizmet* should not lead one to conclude that economic considerations play a marginal role in its involvement with Central Asia. On the contrary, Gülen himself sees Central Asia as a new market having vital importance for Turkish entrepreneurs. He describes the region as 'a breathing spot' (*nefes borusu*) for Turkey, that needs new markets to achieve grandeur.[22] Likewise, the follower-entrepreneurs are sure that there is no future for the Turks elsewhere; the future of Turkey is in Central Asia. As a follower-entrepreneur in Almaty said: 'Our relations with the Arabs are always fragile, but here we have no preconditions.' (*Araplarla ilişkimiz her zaman sorunlu. Buralarda şart yok.*) Some of them, especially those with low levels of education, are aware of the fact that their personal qualifications and economic capital are not sufficient enough for them to be involved in international trade in other countries. Follower-entrepreneurs believe that small and medium-scale Turkish entrepreneurs have very limited possibilities in Western countries where the market is more structured and the economy more developed. Some of the interviewees said: 'Our market is Central Asia. We cannot sell all goods to the West, but we can easily sell every type of goods here.' (*Bizim pazarımız Orta Asya. Batıya her malı satamayız ama burada her çeşit malı kolayca satabiliriz.*) The following comment from a follower-entrepreneur in Bishkek gives further illustration to this point:

[21] Can 1996; Sevindi 1997.
[22] Can 1996, p. 58.

> We are shopkeepers (*esnafız*). We cannot do business in Western countries where there are a lot of shopkeepers and small businessmen. Our only option is to become workers, if we take visas. The Europeans do not like Turks at all because our culture and religion are fundamentally different. It is not easy for Turks to adapt to the social and cultural conditions in Western countries. But in Kyrgyzstan one can make considerable profit with a small amount of capital. The local people do not exclude the Turks. We are relatives; we come from the same roots. If a Turkish person trading in these countries does not treat locals as fools who could easily be cheated, he can become a respected person in a short time and may make a larger profit than he would in Turkey. [In-depth interview with a male *Fethullahcı* entrepreneur in Bishkek; March 1996]

Himmet as a Way of Devotion

Along with *hizmet,* there is another concept that provides a framework for the economic and social relations of Gülen's followers. In the Sufi tradition the notion of *himmet* (< Arabic), which contains a variety of meanings, such as 'endeavor', 'zeal', 'auspices', etc., is also used to describe a situation in which the individual's heart with all its spiritual power is directed at *Hakikat* (Truth) for the attainment of maturity and perfection. In this sense, *himmet* denotes the importance and power of having the will and intention (*irade ve niyet*) to acquire good qualities and higher spiritual status. It is considered the most powerful and perfect form of will that brings progress and sublimation, and that endows the true believer with good qualities while saving him from being a slave to ordinary and transitory things.

The meetings organized by the Gülen community to obtain financial support for its activities, especially its educational activities, are called *himmet* meetings. Generally, pious entrepreneurs who sympathize with the community's teachings are invited to these meetings. It is through *himmet* meetings that the community presents its goals and activities in a highly persuasive manner so as to instigate religious feelings in the participants and induce them to make financial contributions to the community. There is no doubt that *himmet* meetings function as religious platforms where financial support is implicitly evaluated as an indicator of religious commitment and of having the will and intention to strive for the Islamic cause. Gülen himself was the first person to organize such meetings in Izmir in order to obtain donations for his educational activities, convinced as he was that the method of requesting money from individuals one by one did not produce effective results and that higher amounts of money would be obtained when collected from the people invited to special meetings.[23]

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Gülen community directed its human and financial resources to the region as quickly as possible. Within a year it managed to establish schools in all countries of the region. The community's daily newspaper, *Zaman*, opened branch offices in the capital cities of the new republics. Gülen follower-entrepreneurs from different parts of Turkey were among the first visitors to the newly-independent Central Asian countries. They were organized in small groups, visiting the Central Asian countries as early as 1992. However, it was after the establishment of the community's schools that there was an sudden increase in the number of follower-entrepreneurs with ambitions to carry out trade in the host countries.

[23] Bulut 1999, pp. 182–187; Erdoğan 1995, pp. 110–111.

Obviously, the community has operated as a steering mechanism at every stage of their visits and hence of their involvement with the region. Furthermore, it was mainly the community that motivated its followers to set up multi-partner companies operating trans-regionally between Turkey and the host countries. The following two cases from Almaty are evidence of how the boundaries between economic and non-economic activities have become blurred:

> *Hocaefendi* [Fethullah Gülen] gathered us in 1993, stating that 'Turkey has become full. We have to go outside'. He said that 'the schools need support and you have to extend support to them'. We thus decided to go to Almaty in 1993. After searching for business opportunities we started up our firm in 1994. Our partners are from Izmir. We asked them when giving us money to pretend that their money was lost. We have 280 members at the moment. In addition, we have a supermarket chain in Almaty. Some 40–50 trucks come from Turkey each month. We have our own foreign trade company in Turkey that sends goods here. Our company is among the largest five companies in Almaty. The schools provided great help in carrying out our bureaucratic procedures. Administrators of the schools helped us to establish contacts and good relations with the ministers and bureaucrats of the country. Thanks to these relations we have been able to buy a huge building from the Kazakh privatization administration. [In-depth interview with a male *Fethullahcı* entrepreneur in Almaty, October 1997]

> We had love and affection for Central Asia before. *Hocaefendi* said that we have a debt of loyalty to Central Asia. He said far back in 1979 that these places would be seized after the collapse. We were influenced by *Hocaefendi*'s advice that Turkish entrepreneurs should go to the Turkic republics. We are here not only for commercial reasons, but we have social aims as well. We came to realize our ideals. Our company was established in 1994 with 12 partners. But we needed more capital as the business grew. Now we have 58 partners. Our partners gave their wives' bracelets and earrings in order to become shareholders. Some of them even donated their retirement salaries. The ones who had little money joined the company, hoping that they would also be blessed (*ben de dua alayım*). We asked them to forget about the money they gave us. None of our partners are experienced in international trade on the present scale, but God helps if your aim is not to exploit the country you do business in. You can become successful if your priority is not only to maximize your self-interest but to help the locals. We are one of the main companies distributing consumer goods. We also have investments in the industrial sector. We constantly face difficulties, but obstacles do not hinder us since we came to stay here and we have to provide financial support to the schools. We have to stay here. This is a matter of faith, not profit. We are here with the consent of God (*Allah rızası için*). Our aim is to share and to support the Kazakhs. We are aware that sharing brings success. [In-depth interview with a *Fethullahcı* entrepreneur in Almaty, October 1997]

Economic Power

The Gülen community is known as the most prosperous religious community in Turkey. Gülen constantly encourages his devotees to be involved in economic activities and to operate in every sector of the economy. For instance, in an interview with a famous journalist, he says that he continuously recommends his audience to establish large-scale firms, thinking that economic globalization will eventually cause small shopkeepers and small-scale trade to disappear.[24] Moreover, Gülen puts much stress on the importance of economic power as a means to increase his community's influence in Turkish society as well as in Central Asia. This certainly stems

[24] Armağan and Ünal 1999, p. 21.

from his conviction that religious rules and divine wisdom (*hikmet*) must be equipped with material power (*kuvvet*). For him, without economic power, religious rules cannot exert their anticipated effects on people and may become abstract principles on paper. He is also confident that material power (conceived of in economic terms) has become more significant than ever before for the dissemination of the Islamic faith and for protecting the message of the Qur'an. This explains why he identifies two interrelated types of religious worship: financial and bodily (*mali ve bedeni ibadetler*). The former can take such diverse forms as alms (*zekat*), donations (*hibe*), charity (*sadaka*) and pious foundations (*vakıf*), all of which can be used for financing private schools and student dormitories as well as economic enterprises. In short, for him, the true believer must join the Islamic struggle (*jihad*) not only with his body but also with his property and wealth.[25] This is not only congruous with widely shared Islamic principles that 'all property, and nature in general, including man's own body and organs, are ultimately owned by God' and 'use of property ought to comply with divine ordinances',[26] but it is also in agreement with the gradualist and 'peaceful' strategy of the community.

As analyzed above, Gülen emphasizes the gradual transformation of society and takes an open stand against radical militant action. His community cautiously avoids confrontation with the state machinery and deliberately refrains from being involved in any controversy or public debate.[27] Rather, the followers of Gülen try to infiltrate strategic state institutions, such as the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education, the police, universities, and even the army, so as to change the existing secular republican institutions from within.[28] Parallel with this strategy, the Gülen community seeks to create its own alternative social, cultural, and economic spheres in order to reduce the effects of secularization on daily life. It is in this context that economic power is seen as an essential condition to increase the influence and power of the community in society and politics. Therefore, accumulation of wealth by the disciples, and the growth of a large bourgeoisie committed to the community and the creation of its own economic sector are explicitly encouraged by the Gülen community.

Concluding Remarks

The Gülen community, like other organized Islamic groups,[29] began to be actively involved with economic activities and to stress the importance of economic power, self-discipline, and hard work in the 1980s – a historical period characterized by major economic and political changes on the domestic arena as well as by certain new developments in the global patterns of production and trade. In Turkey, it was a period during which the role of the state in economic issues was subject to substantial change as an inevitable result of neo-liberal economic policies favoring the private sector to the disadvantage of the public sector, encouraging the growth of exports as against

[25] Bulut 1999, pp. 98–112.
[26] Ayata 1993, p. 58.
[27] Aras and Caha 2000.
[28] Akbaş 1998; Ayata 1993, p. 56; Bulut 1999; Çalışlar 1997; Kındıra 2001.
[29] Yavuz 1999b.

the protectionist trade regime and discrediting import substitution for the sake of export-oriented industrialization strategies.[30] At the international level, it was a period characterized by the rise of small and medium-sized enterprises associated with the downsizing of large firms and the decentralization of vertically integrated enterprises. Ayşe Buğra argues that, in this new domestic and international setting where there is a favorable climate for 'alternative ways of instituting the economy' and 'different articulations of economy, social structure, and culture', culture and religion appear 'as a resource in strategies of economic and social transformation'.[31]

The Gülen community not only has the capacity to integrate the personal interests of its followers with the communal interest, but it also operates as a channel for economic action. This makes the community one of the most powerful Islamic groups in the region. It is fair to argue that the community aims at a gradual transformation of secular Central Asian societies on the basis of Islamic principles, thus providing a secure place for its Turkish and Central Asian disciples. However, whether the community's establishments and followers may contribute to the rise of Islamic movements in the region or not is a question to be answered by future research.

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[30] See Eralp et al. 1993.
[31] Buğra 1998, p. 522.

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Epilogue
Reflections on Recent Elections

Nearly two years have passed since the conference on *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia* was held. In the meantime, while papers presented at the conference were revised and new articles written and edited for final publication, political developments in Central Asia have revealed some new aspects of this topic and even given an indication of possible democratic trends in the region, not least in recent months, when parliamentary elections have taken place in three of the Central Asian states. This provides a further basis for considering some of the issues that have been taken up in the present volume.

In conjunction with the parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan on 26 December 2004, President Karimov seemingly once again demonstrated his determination to bring about societal reform in Uzbekistan through gradual rather than radical change. The election was based on a new parliamentary arrangement. A bicameral parliament has been introduced with an upper chamber composed of indirectly elected and appointed members and a lower chamber composed of directly elected members. Using Karimov's own slogan, this parliamentary novelty can be characterized as a 'new house' built on top of the old unicameral one, all members of which had been elected indirectly through local bodies. Seen in this light, the direct election of members together with their legislative power in relation to the upper, indirectly elected, chamber does involve new elements of political pluralism. In addition, Karimov has declared his intention to resign from his post as chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and limit his range of authority to the presidency.

At the same time, however, the order of Karimov's 'old house' still sets the framework for political mobilization. All but five political parties – five that had declared their loyalty to Karimov – were disqualified on technicalities from participation in the elections. Among the parties disqualified were *Birlik* (Unity) and *Erk* (Freedom), both of which have existed as organizations since independence, and two newer parties representing the rights and interests of rural populations. The charges leveled against these parties included falsification of signatures.

On the other hand, things are not what they once were after all, and Karimov may get his 'assistants' in the building of his 'new house' sooner than he perhaps would wish. The Uzbek elections were preceded by popular protests and demonstrations, in which people openly declared their lack of trust in members of the central political élite and their ability or intentions to work for economic welfare and social justice. Growing political awareness and engagement in matters not primarily related to group interests defined in ethnic or religious terms, but rather to social and economic conditions and governance, can be observed in Uzbekistan, although mass meetings for the articulation of political opinions did not have the consequences that they would just a few months later in Kyrgyzstan. Organized political work

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extending from intellectual circles to greater masses of people at the local level is another new trend strengthening the prospects for democracy in Central Asia.

Parliamentary elections were held in Kyrgyzstan in February and March 2005, with more dramatic results. Even there the elections were based on a new parliamentary arrangement and new election system. The previous bicameral parliament was to be replaced with a unicameral one composed of 75 members. The new election system, based on single-member constituencies rather than on proportional representation, was justified as a move towards greater pluralism.

One of the motives behind the changes seems, in fact, to have been an attempt to increase representation for supporters of President Akaev and, consequently, decrease representation for the opposition. The systematic under-representation of opposition parties can often be a consequence of this type of election system. In addition to the problems for the opposition presented by the election system, some candidates were disqualified on technicalities, others for allegedly violating election laws. There were charges of voting irregularities, including manipulation of the mass media, vote-buying, multiple voting and ballot stuffing. Pro-presidential candidates won a strong majority of the seats.

Both the new election system and charges of electoral abuses had unintended consequences. The single-member constituencies may have created difficulties for opposition parties, however, it led to candidates with more local grass-roots support. The level of electoral competition was significant, with nearly 400 candidates vying for the 75 seats in the Parliament. Only 31 of the seats were decided in the first round. The remaining 44 seats required a second round of voting. Local electorates were mobilized to an extent that might not otherwise have been the case. Compounding this, to the extent that the disqualification of candidates and voting irregularities challenged candidates with a stronger local base, reactions were more pronounced.

The election days themselves were relatively calm. Some older voters commented on the serene atmosphere, as compared to the festive election atmosphere in Soviet times. Many voters seemed to have a somewhat cynical attitude towards the elections. At the same time as they turned out to vote, they were not only aware of irregularities that were taking place, but openly shared concrete experiences from the polling stations with each other. The use of invisible ink and ultraviolet readers to prevent multiple voting was a source of irritation for some, who had heard rumors of the harmful effects of the ink, and of amusement for others, who had heard of cases of multiple voting despite the use of ink. The presence of international observers was yet another source of both irritation and amusement – observing the observers noting irregularities and, lacking the authority to intervene, moving on to the next polling station.

Demonstrations and protests had occurred in various parts of the country in the run-up to the election. After the election, mass movements became more widespread and eventually turned violent. Akaev fled the country to be replaced by a self-proclaimed interim regime comprised of prominent opposition leaders. The so-called 'Tulip Revolution' that had been speculated

on prior to the election had apparently occurred. To what extent the 'Tulip Revolution' is a revolution or more of a coup remains to be seen. The opposition leaders presently in power have previously been key members of Akaev's regime and do not seem to be generally viewed as a new or different breed of political leaders. Furthermore, power struggles can already be discerned in anticipation of the coming presidential election scheduled for July. The acting president, Bakiev, seems to be using his post to position himself well for the election. Given that the two most likely candidates for the presidency – Bakiev and Kulov – are considered to have their bases of support in the south and north of the country, respectively, the possibility of the presidential election exacerbating regional tensions is an imminent risk.

In February 2005, on the same day as the first round of the elections in Kyrgyzstan, parliamentary elections were held in Tajikistan. Opposition parties faced very similar difficulties in Tajikistan as in Kyrgyzstan. In the months before the elections, opposition groups from the two countries discussed various possibilities for coordinating activities and providing mutual support. Charges of irregularities in connection with the election were widespread. The People's Democratic Party – the party of President Emomali Rahmonov – won almost all of the 63 seats in the Parliament, the Communist Party winning three seats and the opposition Islamic Revival Party (sometimes also referred to as the Islamic Renaissance Party) winning only two.

There was talk of trying to organize public demonstrations and protests and even of a boycott of the Parliament by the opposition parties. However, although the opposition parties have been actively pursuing legal remedies, other forms of opposition have been very limited. One explanation for this seems to be a fear that demonstrations and protests could lead to a resumption of the civil war of the 1990s. A boycott of the Parliament and other actions on the part of the opposition parties that could be interpreted as potentially contributing to a breakdown of the civic accord in the country could have consequences for the opposition, both in terms of support and in terms of legitimating more repressive measures on the part of the regime.

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The former Soviet Central Asian republics are still young polities working for their consolidation as states, and they still have many difficulties to overcome for a large-scale transition to democracy. However, as the most recent elections have also shown to some extent, in many of the present impediments to democratization in this region may well be found indications of possible democratic trends.

One factor often mentioned as an impediment in elections in Central Asia, and in many elections elsewhere, involves a lack of 'transparency'. Many aspects of the three recent elections have not met international standards in this regard. At the same time, the actual practices involved in the elections – from the modifications of the parliamentary system to the creative interpretation of election laws, irregularities and fraud – seem to have been quite 'transparent' to a significant portion of the populations concerned. Whether or not dissatisfaction with these practices leads to protests and demonstrations, to 'revolution' or merely to grudging acceptance, at least for the time being, of the situation, the people are not being fooled. In this

growing understanding of how political systems can be manipulated and, therefore, of how they operate lies an important prospect.

A related factor is the notion of 'rule of law'. Interestingly, virtually all of the changes in the parliamentary systems and the election practices, such as the disqualification of candidates, were justified in terms of democratic principles and existing laws, even if sometimes based on creative and questionable interpretations. This, too, may represent an important prospect for the future.

A third factor often mentioned is 'accountability'. Some political commentators have spoken of a sophistication among the electorates in some of the Central Asian states that is perhaps not always recognized. The practice of 'vote-buying' led to a slight shift from a buyers' market to a sellers' market, in which voters in some constituencies more or less openly negotiated with candidates over the price for their votes and even played candidates against each other. Some voters have rationalized this by pointing out that in some parts of the world politicians make promises to be fulfilled after the election (a vote as payment in advance), while in other parts of the world politicians are not to be trusted and should be called on to fulfill their promises before the election (a vote as payment upon delivery). Irrespective of the merits of this argument, which should probably not be ignored, the argument may reveal trends in the direction of greater activism and notions of direct accountability.

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The most recent elections reflect both the progress that has been made and the failings that can still be registered in the efforts of the Central Asian republics to become sustainable states and independent actors on equal terms with other states in the international arena and – not least of all – polities strong enough to harbor political pluralism and viable civil societies.

There is every reason to believe that continued socio-political mobilization in the Central Asian states will in the years to come be a dynamic process of intriguing attraction, not only for political analysts and statesmen but also for scientific researchers. The topics taken up in this book will certainly be among the key factors having a direct impact on this process.

Stockholm, 26 April 2005
Birgit N. Schlyter & Merrick Tabor

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