



THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL
OF THE UNITED STATES

THE GLOBAL FUTURE AND ITS POLICY IMPLICATIONS:
The Views from New Delhi, Istanbul, and Almaty

By

Robert L. Hutchings Bart M.J. Szewczyk

Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Isolated Interests, Common Concerns.....	1
III. Destiny of Demography.....	2
IV. Importance of Identity	5
V. Strategic Partnership with US.....	10
VI. Conclusion.....	14

I. Introduction

The fourth set of regional conferences to assess the views of leading policy analysts and policy makers in India, Turkey, and Central Asian states was held in November 2007 in New Delhi, Istanbul, and Almaty, the last of which included representatives from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Mirroring the format of the other conferences, the discussions began with an overview by Robert Hutchings of the Project 2020 report, *Mapping the Global Future*. After providing general reactions to the report and its findings, participants in each conference outlined their perspectives on the impact of key global trends on their respective regions: South Asia, Europe and Near East, and Central Asia. They then concluded with appraisals of policy implications for their countries, the international community, and the United States.

Our partners in each country brought together extraordinary groups of individuals from government, think tanks, and business to discuss the 2020 report and its implications. In India, our meeting was organized by the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses; in Turkey, by the Istanbul Policy Center at Sabanci University; and in Kazakhstan by the American Chamber of Commerce.

II. Isolated Interests, Common Concerns

There were few common interests among India, Turkey, and the Central Asian states, given the wide geographical scope and disjointed histories of these countries. Even Central Asia, one leading Kazak journalist noted, “does not exist . . . as a region in the political and economic sense.” To illustrate, he noted that “borders between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and [between] Kazakhstan and Tajikistan remain covered with minefields . . . equal to those on the border between North and South Korea.” A retired Indian foreign service officer observed that there is significant fragmentation within India itself, which is “as big as the EU and . . . trying to integrate.” With a similar perspective on the tenuous unity of China, a CEO of a major Kazak technology firm argued that while currently “[w]e see China as single big state, . . . we should also try to imagine a China like the EU as provinces grow richer and more autonomous.” Thus, he imagined “Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao with separate influential voices in the world.” In a similar vein, a leading Turkish professor of management and international business noted that “[s]maller economic units are viable under globalization” such that, for example, “the Scots . . . are talking about withdrawing from the UK.”

Notwithstanding these isolated interests, several common concerns emerged out of each country's conference. First, strong emphasis was placed on the role of demographics, and in particular the underlying knowledge base, in determining a country's success. In this context, migration and its associated challenges were recurring issues. Second, participants focused on the question of identity based on ethnic and religious grounds and the potential source of conflict that identity poses in a rapidly globalizing and changing world. Third, competition over natural resources, such as energy and water, was raised as an important concern in the future. Notably, each country – though with its own specific interests but similar problems – expressed an interest in establishing (in the case of Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian states) or expanding (in the case of Turkey and India) a strategic partnership with the United States.

III. Destiny of Demography

The fundamental role of demographics in determining a country's destiny emerged as one of the main themes in each of the conferences. As one leading Kazak professor of international relations stated, “demography is the fate of a country.” A senior fellow at an Indian think tank noted that the Asian continent is the “most populous” and with a “huge labor force.” In contrast, a former Turkish minister of foreign affairs observed that “declining population is a problem globally and for the EU.”

With this perspective and in the context of globalization, migration has become a significant factor in international politics. “[M]uch of Siberia may be inhabited because it is rich and will be habitable and will need population for development,” predicted one Indian professor of politics. “There could be planned migration of Chinese to Siberia,” he suggested, “but some cannot be planned.” Similarly, “people may be moving from coastal areas.” In general, he stressed, one “cannot say that those who have can have more and the others cannot have – that has to change.” Reflecting the same sentiment, a retired Indian air force officer emphasized that “[t]he critical point is economic development – people want to move for a better life.” The potential “huge implications” resulting from such migrations were illustrated, argued

one leading Indian professor of international relations, with the example of “Western Europe opening up to young Poles.”

These issues raised critical challenges for developed states. “How will the EU countries react,” asked a former Turkish foreign minister, “to the need for millions of immigrants?” Will they “tak[e] in Turkey and Turkish immigrants from a European country” or “keep Turkey out because of their internal Muslims?” He expressed great surprise when discussing this issue with his French counterparts, who said that “they would import Chinese workers!” One Turkish professor of international relations was more pessimistic regarding the “complementarity between European and Turkish demographics” due to “political reasons.” Moreover, he noted that both societies are “aging” such that by the time Turkey accedes to the EU, “not before 2022, the demographics will not be leading Turks to move into other countries of the EU” because an “EU hostile to Turks or Muslims will not be a place professionals will want to live and thus migrate to.” In contrast, Central Asian states have a very young labor force, a leading policy analyst affiliated with the Tajik government noted. With pensioners constituting only eight percent of the population and where the average age is 24 years, he argued that “there will be a struggle for labor migrants from Central Asia between Russia and Europe.” However, he observed a significant difference in the immigrant policies pursued by Russia and the EU. “Russia cannot integrate immigrants and views them as a negative factor in Russia,” in stark contrast to “how the West treats immigrants.” He acknowledged, though, that “[e]ffectively utilizing this immigration is hard.”

Of course, migration is not unidirectional. A leading Kazak policy analyst noted that Kazakhstan “recently had a migration amnesty, through which 165,000 migrants were cleared, 72% of them from Uzbekistan,” who worked in construction and trade at average salaries nearly equal to the national average. Drawing “workers from the other Central Asian countries,” Kazakhstan is “the ninth largest immigrant taker in the world” and needs to “solve Central Asia’s economic development problems,” the analyst concluded. In the same vein, a Turkish professor of international relations observed that “[i]n the 1980s, against massive resistance from the bureaucracy, Turkey lifted visas on Greece and the Soviet Union.” The number of migrants from the former Soviet Union increased to 5.5 million in 2005 from mere 40,000 in 1980 and 404 in 1964. As a result, a “Turkey that used to depend on remittances from Turks in

Germany is now providing remittances to states in the region.” “[S]urrounded by weaker states,” India similarly attracts people looking for employment, according to one leading policy analyst. He argued that “[i]t is in the long-term interest of South Asia for India to provide good opportunities for others in the region and free movement of people. But three conditions are needed first: economic reform has to be accelerated; more technology transfer must be accelerated; and governance has to be improved in some areas.”

Inasmuch as the sheer size of a country’s demographics determined much of its destiny, its knowledge base and technological capabilities were also emphasized in each conference. As a Kazak banker argued, “[n]either natural resources nor population size are the only factors making up power. One of the factors is the accumulated knowledge of the people and the capacities of elites.” He believed that “[i]f the West does not keep its lead in knowledge, it will fall relative to China, Russia, and India.” With a similar view, a leading Indian policy analyst argued that “the U.S. will come under increasing challenge, primarily from China, which will overtake the U.S. in Purchasing Power Parity in the next 20–30 years” by “expanding its knowledge base and its industrial base – not militarily.” He claimed that by 2025, “the U.S. population would be at most 40% of the Chinese population and the Chinese will be out-producing the U.S. in doctors, engineers, etc.,” compelling the U.S. “to import brains on a large scale” in order to expand its knowledge base. In this strategic context, he concluded, “India will be the most natural talent base” for the United States. A retired Indian foreign service officer echoed this assessment: “For the U.S. to retain its pre-eminence it has to maintain its knowledge power and one of the key factors for U.S. in engaging India is to take advantage of its knowledge power.” In turn, he emphasized that “if India is to become another center of power in the world, it must get access to knowledge to develop its economy.”

“Human movement,” concluded a former Indian foreign secretary, “should be part of globalization.” However, a leading Indian professor of international relations argued, continuing mass migration raises new “questions of global governance” beyond the ambit of “national legislation” and demanding new “international norms” to address “integrat[ing] other peoples.” In this context, identity emerged as another key theme of each conference.

IV. Importance of Identity

The reality of mass migrations in a rapidly changing world has enhanced the importance of identity. One retired Indian foreign service officer noted that “[m]ost people agree with the idea of flux” and raised the prospect that “[m]ulticultural societies may be a trend of the future.” He argued that “religion is becoming stronger because of globalization” because “people who are uprooted need something that is certain.” With fundamentalism a general problem for many religious groups – Jewish, Christian, and Muslim – he observed that both India and the U.S “deal with multiculturalism on a daily basis,” though Europe “is having more problems.” He concluded that the challenges of multiculturalism are everpresent, because “[w]ith globalization, ethnic identity is being reasserted.”

Echoing this view, a Turkish parliamentarian from the Justice and Development party stated that “identity politics based on religion rather than ideology will become more prevalent” such that “ethnic conflict is likely to intensify.” Echoing this view, a Kazak official with the A former Turkish foreign minister praised the 2020 Report’s “emphasis on religion” because in light of “what is happening in Afghanistan, Iran, and throughout the Middle East,” the combination of nationalism and religion is explosive.” He further argued that “[t]here is a danger that radical Islam can be a force within these countries.” More generally, “[t]here are 3,000 ethnicities in the world but only 200 countries and this can lead to more conflict,” the former minister concluded. Similarly, a leading Indian policy analyst stressed the role of identity in South Asia, a region with “the largest Muslim population,” other religious groups such as Christians and Sikhs, and “a great variety of ethnic groups.” “The question of identity will be more and more important.”

In agreement with these perspectives, a retired Indian foreign service officer observed: “Religion is now becoming more important in defining identity – you can see it in Russia as well. In the absence of anything to create a common identity crosses borders like Marxism religion is coming to the fore.” Additionally, “there is a revival of the importance of Muslim identity of being part of the Ummah.” Echoing this sentiment, an Indian professor of politics concluded: “If I were to look back 20–30 years ago, I would say that we were more secular in the past.” Similarly, a policy advisor for the President of Tajikistan argued that “[p]eople are becoming more

religious in Central Asia” though he did not “think extremism a threat in Central Asia after the absolute atheism of the Soviet Union.”

On the other hand, a former Indian foreign secretary argued that rapid change was not a recent phenomenon: “We entered the period of flux a long time ago, with India’s independence and China’s revolution. There was flux during the Cold War, not just since. It may be intensified now, but it has been going on.” Viewing these trends also from a longer time-horizon, an Indian policy analyst suggested that one can “see a slow revival and then a radicalization of religion” over “the last century and a half.” Noting that in the past secularism “sought to put religion as a private affair, not a question for the state or even for society,” he raised the possibility whether “we need a new secularism?”

Though there was wide consensus regarding the problem of identity, regardless of whether or not it is a recent phenomenon, finding solutions was more difficult. As a leading Turkish professor of management summed up, “[w]e have not worked out a model of a multicultural society.”

India was a good subject of study and sources of lessons, argued one Indian policy analyst, because “[e]very major religion and group has been in India since almost its inception” such that “multiculturalism is a way of life for us.” Claiming that the “demonization of Islam in political terms has created problems,” he proposed “strategy by India to strengthen moderate Islam, including in Afghanistan.”

Others, however, disagreed, preferring to bolster secularism. A leading Indian policy analyst emphasized “the importance of secular values for stability.” Another analyst noted that “[w]hen people start emphasizing religion, there is a history of intersectoral wars, etc., so the more religion is emphasized, the more tension there will be within religions, especially within Islam, such as Shia-Sunni and within the Sunnis with the Wahhabis.” Thus, he claimed that in the past “[t]he concept of secularism did not arise from disputes between religions but in the U.S. to prevent conflict between different Christian sects. In Europe too, after Westphalia, secularism rose to preserve peace between different states with different Christian sects.” Similarly, a retired Indian foreign service officer argued that “[i]n Kashmir, we want

Kashmiri identity to transcend the Wahhabi talk of Islamic unity” just as in “Europe there is sense of cultural identity, for example, in the music of Chopin.”

Notably, a Turkish parliamentarian from the Justice and Development party reflected this general preference for secularism over religion in politics. “[W]hen we founded our party, most of the media said that we are a pro-Islamist party,” he observed. However, “[w]e believed that if you put in front of the name Islamic or Christian, it would not be correct. . . . We thought we are a party in the secular system and are not different from the other parties although others saw us as Islamic.” He concluded that “[t]he difference between us and the other parties is not very big – we just want to tolerate religion more.” As the rationale for keeping religion out of politics, he suggested that “[h]uman beings can make mistakes and should not tie politics to religion.”

In a similar vein, a policy director at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that “underlining secularism” does not imply “atheism or agnosticism.” “Devoted religious people should live by their religion as they have for 80 years. The government did not question why people practiced their religion and no one prevented them from going to Friday prayers.” Another parliamentarian from the Justice and Development party also assessed that there need not be an inherent clash between secularism and religion, or between other identities, but a potential cohabitation. He raised two primary issues facing Turkey: 1. “how do we cohabit greater religion with the traditional secular order;” and 2. “how do we cohabit with an ethnic group that wants its own identity.”

One reason offered for the recent success of groups perceived as more religious was their association with justice. A Turkish policy analyst argued that in “the Middle East and Latin America, religious groups usually stand for justice – they set up mechanisms for the marginalized to enter into the political process and decision making process on the distribution of resources. They see us as an incredibly wealthy country that is incredibly stingy and wasting \$2 billion a week in a mistaken war in Iraq that could be used for socio-economic justice.” He worried that it “would be unfortunate if Kurdish Hizbollah replaces the government in delivering services.” Similarly, a Kazak policy analyst noted that “[p]olitical Islam offers a real alternative to things like corruption and the collapse of traditional society.” “In Central Asia after a

long period of militant atheism Islam is reviving” and “filling an ideological, cultural niche, the revival of cultural traditions,” a leading Kazak professor of international relations argued.

With respect to the prospects for solutions overcoming the problems of identity, participants were overall hopeful. Quoting another Indian author, an Indian professor of international relations stated that “the West is within us.” He noted that “Earnest Barker in political theory book mentioned ideas we had considered as Western, then quoted the Indian Constitution and noted that they are no longer just Western ideas.” Thus, he concluded, “[t]he notion of individual empowerment has taken root in societies that are emphatically non-Western.” Similarly, one Turkish professor of international relations found it “fascinat[ing] to see how cities like Vienna and The Hague in xenophobic nations that are becoming more anti-immigrant are nevertheless trying to address the problems of immigrants.”

A policy director at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was concerned that Turkey not be mistakenly perceived as a Muslim, rather than secular, country: “The recent emphasis of Americans on Turkey as an Islamic country is wrong – it would be better to look at Turkey as a secular country, which would lead to a better image in the U.S. and a better role in the Middle East. . . . Americans should not emphasize the Islamic character of Turkey.” Similarly, a Turkish parliamentarian from the Justice and Development party argued that “[p]eople from the U.S. do not know too much about Turkey and thus they make mistakes” by saying that “Turkey is moderate and different from most countries that are Muslim.” In contrast, he claimed, “[m]any Arab scholars in other countries like Egypt see Turkey is a good example of a secular country.”

One obstacle to greater harmony and cohabitation in Asia will be posed by the issue of nationalism. In “Asia there is more of a sense of nationalism,” observed one retired Indian foreign service officer. A former Indian army chief of staff also argued that in “Asia, the notion of nationalism and sovereignty is greater due to colonial history and will stay in Asia much longer. Domestic issues are more important for Asian countries, including for India and China, than for the U.S. and Europe.” However, he noted that “[w]ithin nations there will be much more competition than

between nations” because “Asian nations are focused on their internal conflicts.” Thus, he concluded, “Asia will remain fragmented.”

Fragmentation was also likely to characterize the Muslim community. A retired Indian foreign service officer stressed that there are “aspects that fracture and dent political Islam – the politicization of other religions as well as the Sunni-Shia divide and different states. The concept of Ummah will not be realized because of this disunity among Muslims.” A former Turkish foreign minister agreed: “There was never a Caliphate in history like that described in the Report. In the Ottoman period, the Sultan never even went to Mecca. I do not think this is a serious possibility, but it is being used inside each country to push radical Islam.”

Inasmuch as secularism was favored by the participants, democracy was not perceived as a panacea. A former Turkish foreign minister suggested rethinking “democracy and authoritarian regimes. Is it certain that democracy brings peace? The Soviet Union was authoritarian but very prudent in its foreign policy. Are democracies always as prudent? This is not what we have seen recently. There are forces within democracies that can bring unfortunate outcomes – the U.S. is an example with Iraq.” He further noted that “democracy in the Middle East could bring groups like Hamas to power and could be in control forever.” One Indian policy analyst noted that there has been too much “emphasis on democracy in the last 5–10 years. Secretary Rice said that for fifty years the U.S. emphasized stability and not democracy, and it got neither. Under Bush, there was an emphasis on democracy and not stability and we got neither. In the future, we have to deal with states that are authoritarian internally, but which are quite comfortable in operating cooperatively internationally.” Emphasizing the need for inclusiveness over democracy, a retired Indian foreign service officer argued: “We have spoken of the integration of Europe – but can that be complete without Russia? I see a tendency to downplay the importance of Russia which has greatest resources and immensely talented people. The Russians feel they are being seen as the barbarians of Europe and the U.S. is putting Russia into a corner. You could get the revival of Russian nationalism and a more assertive Russia – with the Russians making common cause with the Chinese – they are forced into it.”

Regardless of the potential future scenarios and problems, each country expressed a strong interest in establishing or expanding on a strategic partnership with the United States.

V. Strategic Partnership with the United States

India

The greatest interest in strengthening its strategic partnership with the United States came from India. One leading Indian policy analyst stated: “I am in favor of a U.S.–India partnership, even alliance. This would be a drastic reorientation of Indian foreign policy. But realistically can we carry this partnership forward due to Indian domestic politics of coalition governments? We need less prescriptive advice from the U.S. on Iran and Myanmar. We have a vital national interest in Myanmar and this should be understood by the U.S.” Another Indian policy analyst surmised that there “would be a basis for U.S.–India partnership to develop the knowledge–based economy of India while the U.S. does the same. Whether energy, climate or new environmental technology, it is critical for the U.S.–India partnership to have technical cooperation and thus the importance of the nuclear agreement.” The concern for technical transfers was expressed by another analyst: “What the U.S. can do is to engage in technological cooperation with India, which is a very important part of the strategic partnership. There is concern in India that despite promises, there are still barriers to technology transfer. To maintain the required growth of 9–10%, we need an uninterrupted supply of energy, including clean coal technology and renewables and nuclear technology. This will also require U.S. support and cooperation.”

Limiting rise of China was perceived as one significant common interest between the United States and India. One Indian professor of international relations was concerned that “China is transforming India’s neighbors into satellite states with varying degrees of success. There has been a policy absence of the U.S. in Asia for the last eight years because of your obsession with the Middle East. India has no choice between United States global hegemony and Chinese continental hegemony.” Similarly, a former Indian foreign secretary observed: “The Chinese have penetrated the Indian Ocean with a port in Burma. This is creating a new strategic situation for India – will it bring India closer to Japan, Australia and the United States, or will we

fall into a trap of the India–China–Russia security community? There is an economic, security, political effect of China’s rise.” Echoing these sentiments, a retired Indian foreign service officer noted: “There is resentment of China in large numbers of small countries because of Chinese involvement in their economies in taking natural resources and giving them manufactured goods; this is seen as a very colonial thing and it is not seen as benign. So China’s rise is viewed with a degree of discomfort in Southeast Asia. . . . India does not have any territorial ambitions, but there is no doubt that there could be clash with China on energy – not a war, but a clash of interests as today in Burma. The Burmese are run completely by Chin, so it is difficult for India to get into Burma.” However, he also acknowledged that “[m]any countries around India will be resentful as India grows more and more powerful. If down the road the U.S. decides to withdraw from Asia – the ASEAN thinks the U.S. has already lost interest in ASEAN and is focused on the Middle East – there is going to be an expectation that India should be the balancer against China. That will be complex for India. This could lead to conflict down the road. There will be resentment in India that there would be an assumption that Asia would be under Chinese hegemony. India would not accept that.”

There was also an emphasis on equality in the partnership. An Indian professor of politics observed: “About learning to be partners, to be sustainable it must be seen as being mutually beneficial and addressing the core concerns of both countries and be seen as equal and mutual” notwithstanding the “great imbalance of power between the two countries.” He suggested that such an approach could lead to greater effectiveness in resolving certain “[c]ore issues including peace and stability in the Persian Gulf,” stating: “We understand the U.S. problem with Iran, but we do not have the same problem. The stabilization of Afghanistan is in India’s interest. We are seeing the after effects of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Pakistan is doing everything it can to prevent the involvement of India in Afghanistan. Is there any scope in the U.S. thinking about having India help moderate Iran?” A retired Indian foreign service officer warned that: “If there is no basis of common interest regarding Pakistan for the U.S. and India, there can be no stable partnership. India is a democracy and the U.S. has to learn how to deal with it just as we are told by the U.S. about how it has to deal with Congress and lobbyists. The same is true with India. It needs to be show why a strategic relationship is in the interest of both countries.” A leading Indian policy analyst summed up with the following request: “Please take seriously the term

strategic partnership, which means equality. When the U.S. asked us to not deal with Iran, I asked why you not tell Pakistan not to deal with Iran. You would like to bully us, but that won't work. You must understand that you are dealing with another power and deal with it on an equal footing. There are many people in this country who want to go back to the cocoon of non-alignment. A change in the U.S. mindset is in your own interest. The U.S. will have to learn to cultivate partnerships."

Turkey

There was also substantial interest in resurrecting and enhancing a strategic partnership between Turkey and the United States. A senior Turkish lawyer observed that it would be appealing that "Turkey should be to the Middle East what Germany was to the Europe and Japan in Asia." However, he argued that "it will be hard to put back together the U.S.-Turkey strategic partnership as in the past. It hasn't worked since 2003. A strategic partnership presumes a two way street, where both partners get benefits out of it. Since 2003, Turkey has been on the same page and helpful for the U.S. But since 2004, Turkey has been concerned about terrorism and the U.S. has not been there for Turkey. So it is difficult to put the strategic partnership back together. Until we do this, however, and also deal with the PKK and Cyprus, it will be hard to work together on energy and trade."

A similar concern regarding the current state and prospects of the alliance was expressed by a Turkish professor of international relations: "It used to be that many people would value the 50 year NATO alliance, the alliance with the U.S. People would get on TV and talk about it - they were proud of it and would explain. But no one does this anymore. It is not just because there is so much anti-Americanism in the population but also in the elite. If something were proposed in the past by the U.S., it would be looked at positively - now it would be seen as a bad thing. It will take a long time to break that. Now I am hearing for the first time Yankee Go Home from decision makers, not just the public." On the other hand, a Turkish parliamentarian from the Justice and Development Party argued that: "It may be true that 92.5% of the Turks are against the United States, but you don't feel the anti-Americanism on the street. If you asked the polling question in a different way you might have gotten a different answer. People do not hate the U.S., but they do hate the policies." Another Turkish parliamentarian from the Justice and Development

Party noted that: “We need to accept that there is a structural change in the relationship – that the interests of a regional power and global hegemon are no longer coinciding. Turkey can be seeking energy deals with Russia and Iran and work with the EU and the U.S. Many Americans are having trouble with dealing with a changed Turkey. We are a large democratic country that does not share perspectives on the region with the U.S. . . . But the golden days of relations are over, even if the PKK and other issues were resolved.”

Nonetheless, the parliamentarian suggested that “[m]ost Turks do not understand how American politics work” and if “Americans . . . want to fix the relationship” they “need to recognize that.” Similarly, he acknowledged that “[t]here is a need for Turks to understand U.S. pluralism and the diversity of views in the policymaking apparatus.” For instance, he noted, “[w]hen Turkey started engaging with Syria, there was a lot of attention on Turkey. Turkey can be engaged positively in the region – the ultimate objectives are pretty much the same with the U.S. It is the tactics that are different. If the U.S. pays attention to Turkey at a high level, the situation can change. The fact that we have good relations with both Israel and the Palestinians, and with Syria and Iran, provides an opportunity for the U.S. But the U.S. has not taken advantage of this. The U.S. criticized us for engaging Syria. A mental shift by the U.S. would have a forward-looking dimension to it in a volatile region.”

Central Asian States

The United States was perceived by participants from the Central Asian states as exhibiting limited interest in the region. One leading Kyrgyz policy analyst noted: “The dynamics in Central Asia are the rise of Chinese and Russian influence and decreasing American influence in political dynamics, especially compared with the mid 1990s, when it was typical of these countries to have closer ties and look to Western institutions. There was a crisis of political liberalism in Central Asia in March 2005 with the Kyrgyzstan developments, but since then we have seen the declining influence of the U.S. and rising influence of Russia and China. But unlike Russia and the United States, China does not have access to political actors. Their main influence is to drive out other economic influence from Central Asia businesses, from tractors to furniture. What is most evident is the decreasing relevance of the United States, based on both perceptions of the elites and the activities of the United States.” A Kazak policy

analyst agreed: “Why is American influence declining? For Russia, Kazakhstan is vital. Putin will come anywhere if it is necessary for Russia, even to Astana. Should an American president visit Astana and not use the word democracy and praise Astana as beautiful and modern, then he could ask for many things for America. The leaders of the Central Asian states are waiting for political support at the level of regular visits.”

Prospects for improving the U.S. influence in the region appeared to some to be limited. A Kazak technology CEO suggested that the “US lost its window of opportunity 5–6 years ago when Kazakhstan was weaker and Russia was not helpful. For example, you could have helped with educating the elites of Central Asia together, bringing in similar legal standards. Now Central Asia will be less affected by the United States than by Russia.” “Geographic remoteness from the United States is an important factor that inhibits closer ties with Central Asia,” noted one Kazak policy analyst. “American difficulties in the region are regardless of its relations with Russia. Being mired in Iraq makes it hard for United States to keep up its influence in Central Asia.”

Nonetheless, there was interest in increasing the U.S. role in the region. A policy advisor to the President of Tajikistan suggested that “Central Asia must be on [the U.S.] priority list” since “terrorism . . . could spread from Afghanistan into Central Asia.” Moreover, in enhancing its influence, the U.S. should not stop “promoting human rights and democracy in Central Asia,” according to a Kazak technology CEO. Overall, one Kyrgyz banker suggested, “send here the best people in the broad sense of the word, including the best from the State Department.”

VI. Conclusion

The overall view that emerged from these three conferences was of a new central Asian “Great Game.” In this vast transit area between Russia and China, Russia was perceived to be the strongest, China’s influence was restricted mainly to

economics, and the United States has become less important over time primarily due to its own negligence. In this region, there is a competitive scramble for energy resources among suppliers, purchasers, and transit countries.

Another key issue in this region was massive migration from across southeast, south, and central Asia, with unregulated flows exacerbating problems of wealth disparities, crime, terrorism, water, and food scarcity. The destiny of demographics would play an important role, as there was greater movement of peoples here than in other regions. Notwithstanding the size and seriousness of this matter, there was no regional regulation of migration in central and south Asia, and existing international institutions were perceived as weak and rudimentary to address this issue.

Each country expressed a strong interest in developing (in the case of Kazakhstan) or enhancing (in the cases of Turkey and India) a strategic partnership with the United States. India, however, faced a strategic dilemma where it would like equidistance among the major powers but feels that it lacks the power to make this work. While it is attracted by the prospects of a strategic partnership with U.S., it is wary about being manipulated as counterweight to China. China is India's major concern since its relations with China are not as extensive as with Russia and U.S., and are further complicated by border disputes and Chinese "penetration of the Indian Ocean." Moreover, there was concern in India about competition with China for resources and the ensuing potential revival of protectionism. For India, "energy security" means diversification of domestic and international supplies.

Turkey's role in its region was perceived as analogous to Germany's in Europe and Japan's in Asia during the Cold War, particularly given the prospect of accession into the European Union. On the other hand, there was concern as to its regional role if it is excluded from the EU, especially given its growing challenge of reconciling religious observance with secular order.