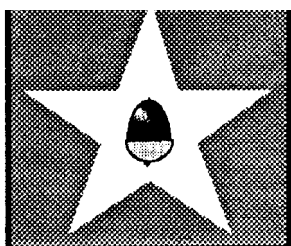


Conflict Studies Research Centre

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Reconstructing Inner Asia

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Economic development in landlocked Asia must start with improving transport links. Development is also fundamental to long term political stability and thus of major interest to neighbouring countries. It also links the whole larger Asian region inextricably together. Energy and water are likewise the two main areas of security competition. The tensions generated by this development pressure are likely to lead to unrest and political change.

Introduction

Despite the war that has ravaged Afghanistan and obstructed development throughout Central Asia, there are new grounds for hope concerning the Transcaspian area. The new Russo-Western partnership, if it endures, can provide a less competitive and more cooperative environment for the great powers to provide assistance and security to Central Asia and Transcaucasia. Certainly this development accords with Russian statements that joint collaboration against terrorism could become the basis for a more trusting relationship with NATO and with the United States in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia.¹ The US government now seems ready to accord a significant place in Central Asia to Russia on the basis of joint partnership and mutual recognition of each other's vital interests. Indeed, such partnership with the West can offer Russia a more legitimate prominence in the region, albeit one tempered by the demands of partnership.

As Richard Haass, Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff recently observed,

Another area for cooperation is Central Asia, where the United States and Russia have a shared interest in the economic reconstruction in Afghanistan, in halting drug and weapon trafficking, and more broadly in promoting stability, moderation, trade, and development. It seems to me that assuring Russia a prominent role in the economic reconstruction of this region could go a long way towards alleviating Moscow's concerns about the growing US military presence there.²

Similarly Secretary of State Colin Powell told Congress that

Russia has been a key member of the antiterrorist coalition. It has played a crucial role in our success in Afghanistan, by providing intelligence, bolstering the Northern Alliance, and assisting our entry into Central Asia. ...In fact, the way we are approaching Central Asia is symbolic of the way we are approaching the relationship as a whole and of the growing trust between our two countries.³

These statements should not be interpreted to mean either a speedy withdrawal of US interests or a perpetual large-scale military presence. Certainly some military presence will remain in these areas, but the key and enduring elements of American power here will most likely be America's economic-political influence. The same holds true for Europe. Partnership with Russia means that Russia's presence here will, to a considerable degree, be bounded by the parameters of the West's presence.

Therefore these trends provide hope with respect to the external dimension of security around the Caspian Sea. By providing that security they could also provide the spur to internal stabilization and foster a more benign climate for both foreign and domestic investment. As many have recognized, the enhancement of regional security is often regarded as a precondition for foreign investment. Certainly NATO's newest members came to recognize that membership in NATO was a precondition for such investment because it told investors that the area was safe for their investments.

Such investment is desperately needed, as are internal stability and progress because another equally critical, though less visible aspect of Central and Inner Asia's transformation has begun to take shape, and it too depends on a benign climate for investment. This trend is the gradual rise in interest and perhaps investment in infrastructure, particularly transportation within and between states. Indeed, the gradual construction of energy, trade, and transport lines in Central and Inner Asia that link those areas to East Asia and to Europe had preceded 11 September 2001. The end of fighting in Afghanistan opens up new possibilities for intensifying these efforts to transform Inner and Central Asia by means of these links.

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 transport projects are.⁴ This includes truck, auto, highway, rail, air travel, air cargo, and maritime trade. We have long known that the development of long-range transport 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 transport lanes. Recent research reconfirms that isolation from major trade routes is a prime cause of economic backwardness.⁵ 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 infrastructural 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 may *inherently* make 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 Gunther Baechler:

Developing and transitional societies or, more precisely expressed, marginalized areas in these countries are affected by an interplay among

Reconstructing Inner Asia

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 forest belt, and around expanding urban centres. 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.⁶

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 transport outlets. In this case, the cure for poverty and the accompanying risks of social conflict are not so much, or exclusively, better market institutions and economic governance as large-scale investment in transport infrastructure to spur the necessary economic growth.⁷ It would also appear that the commitment to build such projects and implement them generates a demand for better markets and economic institutions that would be harder to resist. While such programmes are under way or being contemplated in Central Asia and are vital to the region's future, unless the region is free from imminent or foreseeable danger of prolonged violence those projects may not be numerous or large enough to overcome the active security challenges confronting the region. At the same time these projects bring economic and political costs with them.

Paradoxes & Implications of Reconstruction

This new external-internal interaction inevitably entails fascinating paradoxes that relate to the security of Inner and Central Asia and Eurasia more generally. Funding for investment in those projects must come from abroad and will inevitably entail greater or lesser restrictive political conditions on its recipients. Therefore this investment will surely promote greater conditionality and perhaps less autonomous capability over those projects on the part of the recipients, even as the projects themselves generate more resources and economic-social-political capacities in the host states. Second, the success of those projects that traverse the Transcaspiian area, e.g. the joint Russo-Iranian-Indian project (North-South transport corridor) or the European Union's Silk Road project also depends on successfully linking Central Asia with major ports, airfields, rail terminals, etc in other countries. For this reason and because they are essential to the participating states' larger national security or foreign policy goals these projects become a source of complex internal, external, and multilateral political struggles over priorities and the external economic orientation of the participating states. Russian efforts to link a proposed Trans-Korean Railway (TKR) to the Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR) and thus to European Russia are a case in point.⁸ The same consideration clearly holds for energy deals and pipelines.

This situation exemplifies some of the many paradoxes of Central Asian and Transcaucasian security. Given the widespread lack of sufficient governing capacity in these and other CIS states, to obtain the capacity to deal effectively with both looming and existing threats, these governments are forced to risk even more threats, such as environmental degradation and its consequences. Faced with such difficult choices, the natural reaction of these governments might be to temporize, muddle through, or "satisfice" the demands imposed on them. And since these governments are weaker than most of their interlocutors in world politics and

economics, their ingrained foreign policy reflex is to diversify choices and place many bets on many options - not necessarily the correct economic-political strategy here.

This consideration, after all, is what the struggle over energy pipelines is all about. For many of these states, if not all of them, economic growth is also essential to their long-term political stability and to the prevention of future internal or interstate conflicts and great power rivalries that either add to or aggravate existing problems. Such major projects can also bring governments and transnational interest groups together. Sometimes these alliances are at the same time exclusionary in nature, directed against third parties. But they also can become the basis for vast inclusive projects like the common market that has since evolved into the European Union. While the institutions that currently seek to bring states together in common fora are hardly so well organized, or so conceptually united as were the West European leaders of the 1950s, the organizational basis for joint efforts in Central Asia and Eurasia more generally that connects these governments to the wider world clearly does exist.

The programmes now underway and those still in the planning or discussion stage could fundamentally alter the economic-political geography of states from Central Europe to the Pacific and substantially add to their overall integration. Undoubtedly the states that will be most affected by this transformation are Russia, China, India and Iran, not least because of their size, economic potential and geography. Accordingly, the political decisions necessary to realize these trade and transport networks are matters of high politics and state strategy. Georgia's assertions that its participation in the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline and in the European Union's TRACECA project, also known as the Silk Road, is a vital Georgian and European interest that now requires construction of an equally large-scale security infrastructure around it are well known.⁹ Similarly Russian President Vladimir Putin has frequently stressed the need for a unified modernized transport structure to make Russia "develop as a unified, strong, and independent state" and to establish a lasting presence in Asian economic affairs.¹⁰ In fact not only Georgia and Russia see things this way, so too do Kazakstan, China, Pakistan and the Central Asian governments.

For example, a recent study of Chinese strategy observes that the land routes through Russia and Central Asia to China are vital avenues that China must control as far from its borders as possible if it is not to face an open flank. But such control not only confers strategic military advantages, it also allows China to invest more to control the maritime access route to China and gain access to the Indian Ocean and beyond.¹¹ Here geoeconomics and geopolitics come together. Therefore all these states attach great importance to these infrastructural projects, both as a token of their growth and of their stability. In another case Iran and India forged a pre-September 11 rapprochement on the basis of enhanced trade and transport links, including the joint North-South project with Russia, and not only in energy products.¹²

The possibilities for initiating large-scale transformative projects throughout Central Asia and the Transcaucasus that connect these lands to Europe and East Asia thus merit our close attention for at least three reasons. First, because the Central Asian and Transcaucasian states are the "connecting tissues" to these major players and because they are so vulnerable to internal and external crises, their economic and political stability are of direct concern to their larger neighbours and to more distant major powers like the United States and the EU. Second, as their

leaders frequently indicate, the development and completion of these projects are essential to these states' security, prosperity, and their future as well as to the major states that depend on this long-distance trade, especially energy. Given the enormous energy holdings that are being developed and the inherent difficulties of bringing them to market, the construction and completion of these pipeline grids is important not just to the local states but also to the global economy, increasingly the most dynamic sector of that economy, East Asia.

Third, we know all too well that as long as these "connecting tissues" are unsettled and insecure the chances of their being havens for terrorism, war and drugs and highways for illegal proliferation of nuclear or other means of mass destruction will grow. If large-scale economic development depends upon the durable linkage of Eurasia to major trading outlets and markets and is itself a precondition for security and stability, then this linkage's absence will surely aggravate all the well-known challenges to security that plague the area now. Central Asian governments and their primary interlocutors are no more immune to the rival and contending challenges of simultaneous forces pulling towards ever greater regional and global integration on the one hand and toward fragmentation, on the other. To use James Rosenau's term of "framegration", that denotes these simultaneous, interactive and cross-cutting forces, we can confidently state that framegration is alive and well in Central Asia and the CIS as a whole, as well as across the globe in general.¹³

The inherent challenges of framegration: pressures to modernize and integrate with the developed world, autocracy, poverty, corruption, narcotics trafficking, demographic imbalances, internal, ethnic, and religious wars and insurgency, terrorism, poverty, dictatorships, environmental degradation, etc make the CIS governments prime territory for continuing crises until and unless they undergo major transformations. But even more importantly, this selfsame prolonged and never-ending transformation itself constitutes the triggering mechanism for the crises that they are now experiencing. Failure to meet the requirements of integration strengthens the forces of fragmentation and further prolongs the existence of crisis factors in these societies. Moreover, failure to meet the challenge of framegration invites external intervention, including externally backed terrorism. On the one hand, that intervention directly stems from the failure to resolve the crisis posed by insurgency and terrorism originating in Afghanistan. But on the other hand it reflects local governments' broader inability to overcome these challenges on their own or to collaborate together in any effective regional way either in economics or in defence.¹⁴

The Major Players & Their Objectives

All the reasons for beginning these large-scale economic-infrastructure developments feature prominently in Russia's evolving foreign policies in Central and East Asia and in India's connection to Iran, a key point of those two states' foreign policies. And as we noted they are no less vital to China. Therefore, by implication these projects and the policy goals that lie behind them are important to other players like Turkey, the EU and the United States. Recently Moscow has moved forward on at least two of three major railway plans that are intended to buttress its economic position, exploit its geography, and increase its presence in East and Central Asia. One branch of Russian policy is the railway and transport network that includes India and Iran. The other East Asian branch is found in the support expressed by both Koreas for Russian assistance in opening the railway between them and linking it to the Trans-Siberian railroad. This project not only is

a step towards reconciling the two Koreas and launching their economic integration, it also enhances Russia's standing in the Korean peace process and ability to play a greater role in East Asia.¹⁵ Russia's geographic position enables policymakers and planners to think of it as a hub for the CIS, if not of a revived Asiatic transport network that links together all the different parts of Asia through Russia and connects Europe to Asia as well. Putin openly expressed this idea in his November 2000 letter to APEC.¹⁶

Russia's ambition is that these and other similar and linked projects will facilitate a general recovery of the economy in Russian Asia which is essential for Russia to maintain its hold on the region and sustain a lasting economic-political influence there. In this sense these railway, pipeline, and other infrastructural projects symbolize a much greater process that is now underway to connect not just producers and buyers but also energy suppliers and consumers. The two railways in question, along with major energy projects to bring together Siberia and East Asia (Russia has lobbied for investment in the Sakhalin oil projects underway with Japan and the United States)¹⁷ apart from what they symbolize, also fulfil the three conditions listed above of bringing together markets, governments, and revitalizing regions now excluded from major trading lanes. If the projected Sakhalin-Hokkaido and Sakhalin-Russia systems open they too would facilitate the growth of Sakhalin and bring Russia closer to Japan's and Asia's overall economy.

Similar considerations undoubtedly animate the Russo-Iranian-Indian transport corridor that is now coming into being. Both India and Iran, not to mention Pakistan, are increasingly interested in overland trade and transport with Central Asia, and Central Asia too desperately needs secure outlets to its south.¹⁸ As long as Afghanistan and its borders remain unsettled, none of the interested states can maximize opportunities for economic development that might emerge from Central Asia's potential. However with the advent of a new regime that will be under much greater international scrutiny and perhaps impelled by domestic pressures to begin reconstruction in earnest, Afghanistan might soon be able to play a role in the larger Central Asian economic picture.

The Russo-Irano-Indian corridor not only facilitates Russia's ability to trade in the south and to exploit its geography as a bridge between Europe and Asia, it also should materially contribute to the ability of all these and adjacent states, including those of Central Asia, to trade with more distant markets. At the same time this project possesses important political implications. It brings together Russia, Iran and India in a major project having substantial material interest and reinforces their joint interest against Central Asian insurgents, the Taliban, and their erstwhile supporter Pakistan. Whereas in the past it would have strengthened foreign efforts to force Pakistan to stop supporting the Taliban, today it offers an inducement, even if only a relatively small one, for Pakistan to reorient its India policies. Otherwise this railway and the transport networks that will grow up around it will add to Iranian support for India against Pakistan and isolate it. Thus there is an implicit threat of economic and political coercion against Pakistan here. Second, this route, if it succeeds, will channel Central Asian economic development into directions more favourable to those three states who currently have a community of interest. These considerations might help Pakistan rethink its previous policies in Afghanistan and towards Iran and India.

This railway and the associated energy projects that Tehran and Delhi are discussing also mean energy for India. India, like the other growing Asian economies, needs energy and is improving its ties to Iran to acquire it as well as ties

to Central Asia to forestall Pakistani adventures.¹⁹ If this becomes a major and successful project, it poses an alternative to the EU's Silk Road project that bypasses Russia, and to American support for the Baku-Ceyhan energy pipeline and pipelines under the Caspian. That would redound to the benefit of Iran and Russia who seek - or in Russia's case sought - to exclude American and West European influence from Central Asia.

In Central Asia and Russia, as elsewhere, trade and the flag go together. Recent evidence indicates these projects have become major aspects of Russia's overall Asian policy, but their consequences far transcend Russia's Asian policy to include the two Koreas, Iran, India, and possibly Japan. After all, assuming these projects materialize, it then becomes relatively easy to connect the TSR and TKR projects with the North-South corridor.²⁰ These major initiatives thus have great potential significance for the future; only time will tell if they are successful in realizing Russia's ambitions. But the unintended or parallel consequences of these projects, possibly leading to other major programmes may yet have even more significant outcomes for CIS members, their neighbours, and their partners. Russia's potential success in realizing its policy goals thus entails equally intriguing paradoxes that are strongly relevant to Eurasian security more generally.

Tying Asia to Central Asia & The Transcaucasus

Paradoxically, successful completion of these projects and of other ones of comparable scale to increase Russian energy shipments and trade to China, Japan and the two Koreas also dramatically increases opportunities for all the Asian states: East, South, and Central Asia to expand trade and communication among themselves with little or no reference to Russian interests except for haulage and toll fees. The fundamental geostrategic transformation of the Transcaspian region after these states obtained independence has been their growing involvement in European, Asian, and Middle Eastern security calculations. The new great game is not just among the big powers but also includes smaller and weaker states like Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It has also stretched to include states like Israel, Saudi Arabia and even Greece, all of whom have clear and distinct strategic geopolitical objectives in the Caucasus and Central Asia.²¹ Thus today's "Great Game" includes both the larger and smaller states of Europe, South, Central and East Asia as well as of the Middle East and the United States along with local governments in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus. This multilateral and multilevel competition paradoxically strengthens the integration of the CIS into the rival zones in Europe and Asia even while intensifying geopolitical competition and rivalry over their ultimate destiny.²²

Consequently for all these players, large and small alike, to realize their interests and demonstrate their capabilities for improving conditions in the new states, they all have to pay in investment, trade and other economic benefits to local governments. This situation parallels the global arms trade, which today is a buyer's market so that sellers must increasingly transfer not just weapons but also knowhow and production capabilities to buyers.²³ That situation reflects the impact of globalization on the arms trade and the issues here similarly reflect how globalization is transforming the dynamics of regional security in Eurasia. Many of these projects from the Balkans to the Pacific are connected with energy pipelines, which not surprisingly coincide with the vital interests of these states, and reflect the tangible manifestations of the need to gain access to new states and markets by paying for it through large-scale infrastructural investments. China's plans to

develop Xinjiang and expand trade and energy purchases from Central Asia and in particular its huge plans for shipping gas from Siberia and Asiatic Russia through China to Korea and from Kazakhstan all the way to Shanghai exemplify this trend, but it is hardly alone in this respect.²⁴ Beyond realizing the various geostrategic and economic objectives of all the involved governments, the lasting result of this investment premium is the further integration to the point of virtual inextricability of the new states to Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

The trade statistics of Central Asian governments are moving increasingly away from Russia to the wider world. Certainly Russia cannot compete in the availability of investment capital with Western and international financial institutions (IFIs). It must leverage other players' assistance, e.g. the US', IFIs', or the EU's resources to build these mammoth projects. That gives other players ample openings to establish a lasting financial and economic presence throughout the CIS. Thus weak state capacity translates into opportunities for foreign investors to realize more easily their objectives of strategic integration of hitherto excluded areas into the global economy. This strengthens the ability of the new independent states to resist Moscow and/or Beijing while obliging them to integrate into larger regions or the entire global economy.

This trend to think of transport and infrastructure in strategic and economic terms is well established. Central Asian states have never neglected the purely Asian aspect of their foreign policy, and now Asian states are reciprocating. Russia and China have invited Japan, South Korea and India into major capital projects, largely relating to energy or to infrastructural investments: pipelines, transport, etc. China has solicited Russian and South Korean assistance in its high priority investment programme for Xinjiang. Russia, China and Japan are discussing financing pipelines and expediting delivery of Russian energy supplies from Siberia's Kovyntinskoye oil and gas fields through Xinjiang and Northern China to Japan and South Korea.

Japan, driven by its overall Eurasian initiative, and greatly stimulated by both security and energy needs, has substantially upgraded its Central Asian profile and investments, also meeting local interests in broadening the scope of foreign investment in Central Asia.²⁵ South Korean efforts to penetrate Central Asian markets and expand investment are equally visible. India's rising interest in Central Asia likewise owes much to its efforts to deny Pakistani influence and improve relations with Russia and China while curbing Islamic insurgency at home and in Central Asia.

Simultaneously Asian and Central Asian states are also investigating their own major infrastructural and energy projects in East Asia. This is not just a matter of gaining diplomatic or military support against Pakistan and Afghanistan-based terrorists. These governments' energy interests and overall investment needs are highly complementary. Russia, like Central Asian states, desperately needs markets, pipelines and investment capital for its energy holdings. Japan, South Korea, China and India need reliable and affordable energy sources to meet their rising demand for energy without overdependence upon OPEC and have the capital and technical skills to invest in them.

This complementarity of economic interests frequently reinforces major Asian governments' interest in internal stability in the CIS and Central Asia. The interpenetration of Central, South and East Asian governments in funding or developing these projects also reflects their appreciation of how important stable

Reconstructing Inner Asia

diversified energy sources are for their own vital or important national interests. Consequently East and South Asian economic and security interests appear to be in general very compatible with those of Central Asian governments. This harmony of interests creates or at least should serve as a basis for creating a durable basis for long-lasting energy cooperation between East Asia, South Asia and Central Asia.²⁶ By broadening their interaction with Russia, China and Central Asian governments, Asian states maximize their opportunities for broader access to capital markets, diversify their foreign exposure, and minimize the risks of excessive dependence on any one provider of major security goods, either economic or military.

This pattern of deepening Asian-Central Asian interactions reflects the interests of the concerned parties as well as the deeper and broader process of globalization by which Central Asian states are ever more integrated with Asia's and the global economy. While globalization is hardly risk-free, and makes very serious demands upon Central Asian governments' internal policies, it does give them, Russia, China and other Asian states access to more resources with which to meet internal and economic challenges. These interactions also make it harder for any one state to dominate East, South or Central Asia while making the pooling of resources among multiple partners easier, more economically advantageous to the partners involved, and more likely an outcome where major projects are concerned. This form of globalization also multilateralizes Asian security in general as well as its subregional components and offers some hope that more Asian and Eurasian states can overcome the serious challenges they face and begin truly sustained economic and possibly political development.

Hence projects intended to upgrade Russia's economic prospects, tie Central Asia to it and establish Russia's legitimate place in Asia's burgeoning economic development will probably have the unintended consequence of magnifying Asia's capability to influence Central Asian and Transcaucasian developments and compete even more effectively with Russia than is now the case. As we all know, interdependence almost necessarily mandates a multilateral approach to regional security.²⁷ Russia's future "geoeconomic" security, like its military security, "depends on the kindness of strangers" and the same holds true even more strongly for other CIS states.

While the same dialectic holds true for CIS involvement in Europe and the Middle East, we are not merely trying to point to a kind of Hegelian or Marxist cunning of reason in international economics and politics or to celebrate globalization. Rather we need to focus not just on the immediate problem of stabilizing Afghanistan, without which local security will be unthinkable, but also on how we can lift up the entire neighbourhood.

The External & Internal Security Agenda

The opportunities for doing so are now at hand. At the recent Moscow and Rome summits, the United States, NATO and Russia formally agreed to work towards a cooperative security regime throughout the CIS. They even agreed to discuss joint peace operations and to consider a generic concept for them.²⁸ This includes joint and cooperative endeavours to bring peace to Chechnya, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh and wage war on terrorism.²⁹ Energy cooperation is also on the agenda for the first time.³⁰ Russia and the EU are also seeking to develop a mechanism for effective joint cooperation in conflict prevention beyond merely exchanging information. Here it is noteworthy that Moscow stressed its experience in

environmental cleanup of military sites as a starting point for those discussions, as well as joint action to prevent conflicts.³¹ What is critical in this context is not the possibly questionable quality of Russia's experience but rather that this is an issue Moscow chose to stress, for there is undoubtedly a pressing need for just such activities throughout the CIS and especially in Central Asia.

While these trends offer considerable promise for the future, it also is true that we must not confine ourselves to enhancing the external provision of military security while misrule continues to be the order of the day. Instead, and given the scale of regional challenges, we must begin simultaneously from both the bottom and the top.³² Small scale and local investment projects must correlate with large-scale state and foreign sponsored investment to spur growth to the point where it will eventually become self-sustaining. This may not happen any time soon but the process can begin in Central Asia, as it did in East Asia. The opportunity for external cooperation and joint management of the defence of these states from threats that they cannot deal with on their own offers the same kind of opportunity that the US military presence in Asia offered Asia's tigers, including China, 40 years ago and that their example offered China. Just as peace, stability and capable governance were essential to that growth, so they are necessary here.

Illegitimate & Domestic Governance

The new great power partnership offers real opportunities to provide that external stability and security. But if the US intrusion into Central Asia turns out to be just another instrument by which the domestic status quo preserves itself, then that status quo's demise will have only been made a more violent and protracted affair. The internal dimension of each state's trajectory is as crucial to regional security as is the rivalry of all the external and interested players in the so-called new great game. This is what makes the disposition of energy and general internal resources so critical a factor throughout the CIS.

It is not merely a question of extracting the wealth and getting it to market; it is no less important how it is used. The energy economy not only could be the core of these states' political economy, it also is clearly critical to resolution of their pressing environmental, demographic and public health issues, not to mention international and regional security agendas.³³ The same, of course, holds true for water. Therefore the quality of politics that emerges from these states is a vital issue for all concerned and the post-September 11 developments that have transformed the regional strategic landscape offer perhaps a last chance to influence trends in a positive way before the accumulated consequences of a decade or more of misrule and what Max Manwaring calls illegitimate governance unhinge the regional and local status quos.³⁴

Illegitimate governance is not confined to this region. We see it today in Zimbabwe, Argentina and a host of other countries all of which are on the edge of a precipice. Whatever specific forms it takes in each individual country the upshot is almost always the same, a state either in perpetual crisis, failing to reach its potential, on the verge of failure or a truly failed state that becomes a ward of the international community like Bosnia and Kosovo. As it is, the current strategic landscape is littered with 26 ongoing high-intensity wars, 78 so-called low-intensity conflicts, and 178 small-scale wars overlapping with the preceding ones.³⁵ This picture itself overlaps with a widespread breakdown of governance and the state in many countries across the globe, not just Central Asia. Often this failure is tied to the

fact that many of these states, like Azerbaijan and those in Central Asia, are rentier states that depend on the rents from energy or a single crop. Their record to date is discouraging with regard to both economic development and political democratization, not to mention internal and regional stability.³⁶ The ensuing mosaic of crumbling socio-political orders and dehumanization coexisting with or parallel to the breakdown of civil order into protracted violence is not that distant a possibility in the former Soviet Union. It is not difficult to envision a scenario where even Russia's cohesion, either de facto or de jure, becomes problematic.³⁷ Certainly its leaders in 1998-99 were gripped by the fear of such an outcome, and even employed the domino theory to justify the Chechen war.³⁸

As Manwaring observes, the logical consequences of this strategic environment are quite straightforward.

The primary implication of the complex and ambiguous situations described above is straightforward. That is, winning the military struggle against Osama bin Laden and his Taliban protectors will not end the threat of terrorism against the United States or anyone else in the global community. This is because the Taliban and Osama bin Laden are not isolated cases. They are only one component of the entire global security problem that is a manifestation of a complex and potentially durable human motivation and weak governance phenomena.³⁹

It is these fundamental considerations of societal and military security that make the future use of energy and of new opportunities for productive foreign investment so critical. The proper exploitation of energy is vital because it lies at the centre of virtually all the most important security challenges, internal and external, confronting Central Asia. And where it is not a question of energy it is a question of water.

Since so many CIS regimes are rentier states they live and die on the revenues extracted from the sale of natural resources.⁴⁰ In turn, that economic necessity breeds political relationships that distort domestic economics and politics away from market solutions and democracy and discourage conservation policies.⁴¹ Thus there is an ever-present danger of internal and/or external violence that may engulf these states, for their challenges hardly end with effective management of their rents. But under such circumstances, attempts to reorient the prevailing policies pertaining to the exploitation of natural resources will involve major political conflicts both internal and external. And in backward or undemocratic regimes, these contests could conceivably become violent. Collectivization throughout the former Soviet Union demonstrates the extent of the violence unleashed when a coercive state steps in to fundamentally transform long-enshrined social practices pertaining to the exploitation of the land and natural resources.

But we may also see the potential for coercive action in post-Soviet societies in a different light, especially if we factor in the current international rivalry for access to Central Asian resources. Nancy Lee Peluso observes that not only are resource-funded development strategies, such as those common in Central Asia, almost always skewed to the enrichment of the central governmental leaders; they can also foster violent struggles within or among states.

In addition, when a state's incomplete hegemony prevents it from sufficiently controlling the people living under its jurisdiction, the state may use both conservation and economic arguments to justify the

coercive exclusion of certain groups from valuable resources [exactly as under Soviet collectivization - author]. Coercion and resource control are intended to increase the state's powers of social control; and these in turn enable the state to extract more revenue from conservation or extractive zones ... In sum, externally based resource claimants (including the state itself) frequently redefine resources, the means by which they may be conserved or harvested, and the distribution of benefits from their protection. Such redefinitions often override, ignore, or collide with local or customary forms of resource management. When competition between external and local legitimation mechanisms is played out in the environmental arena, the result is often social and political conflict, which causes environmental degradation and ultimately fails to achieve the interests of international conservation interests.⁴²

Water Issues

From the foregoing we can conclude the following: first, issues relating to all resources, not only energy, will directly impinge on the security considerations of local governments. And that certainly includes the new environmental security agenda. The continuing debate among scholars over whether and how the environment may legitimately be regarded as part of the agenda of international security has little practical relevance in Central Asia, because it is clear that environmental factors do contribute significantly to the regional security agenda and are becoming ever more urgent.⁴³ Indeed, two prominent Americans, one civilian and the other military, each concluded that the most critical security threats to the area will centre around environmental issues and internal security.

S Frederick Starr, Director of Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School for Advanced International Studies, writes that,

For a region of desert and steppes, conflicts over the allocation of scarce water resources are inevitable and pose the single greatest threat to regional security. Water will become increasingly scarce in the years to come. Salinity in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan has caused the prevailing West-East winds to sweep up tons of salt and carry it to the Tien-Shan mountains and the Pamirs. Deposited on the high mountain moraines, this salt is gradually melting the massive glaciers that are the source of water for the entire region.⁴⁴

Soon afterwards, General Anthony Zinni, then Commander in Chief of the US' Central Command whose area of responsibility included Central Asia, stated that, "The region suffers from the horrific environmental legacy of the Soviet Union. The Department of Defense is focusing on water-related problems in the region. Water, not energy, probably will be the cause of conflict in the region within five years."⁴⁵ Zinni's successor, General Tommy Franks, also stressed the importance of water as a factor in Central Asian security, even if his assessment was somewhat less bleak.⁴⁶

Zinni and Franks also confirmed that the key issue for US policy in Central Asia is access to energy - and this also applies to the other contestants in the great game.⁴⁷ It is not clear that the war on terrorism has superseded this factor as a long-term vital interest of the United States. But if security against terrorism and violence is now the primary or most urgent interest, access to energy is not far behind.

Reconstructing Inner Asia

Questions about control of that access and of the exploration, refining and transport of oil and natural gas inherently involve profoundly important issues of economic regulation and the distribution of material assets in and from those societies. And the interest of the US military - and presumably that of other militaries too - reflects the fact that in some quarters the more active involvement of host country armed forces is now being advocated as a way to regulate questions of resource use in the Third World.⁴⁸ One can easily imagine conflicts within Central Asia over control and regulation of energy and/or water sources.

For example, a recent Chinese assessment of the Central Asian security situation gives a very thorough list of the problems confronting the region. This assessment observes that

Population pressure also threatens the long-term stability of the region; according to the World Bank forecasts, by 2015 the five countries of the region will have a total population of 90 million. The geographical and climatic conditions of the region are poor, there are insufficient water resources, and there is in fact very little space suitable for economic activities, so the region can hardly bear an excessive population burden ... There are also serious ecological problems in Central Asia. In the past 30 years the Aral Sea has shrunk by one half and its volume of water by two-thirds, and sea-bottom desertification has appeared over an area of 4 million hectares; as a result, abnormal climate changes have occurred, with dust and salt storms wreaking havoc, and epidemics have spread in neighbouring nations, pollution from radioactive material, the exhaustion of water sources, and atmospheric pollution.⁴⁹

This and other similar reports should impart a sense of urgency to policymakers concerning Central Asia's potential. Yet, when taken in tandem with the other, more immediately visible threats to Central Asian security, it becomes clear that the agenda for responding to these problems is immense and the means at hand for doing so quite limited. Thus, the report concludes that: "There are very many factors for instability, covering a very large scope, within the five countries of Central Asia, and in these circumstances any slight error can cause consequences affecting the entire situation."⁵⁰

Since the advent of independence in 1991, the problems of water, energy, land use and control over their sources have always been on the agenda - whether they facilitated regional cooperation and solidarity or aggravated regional frictions and divisions. Although environmental considerations are not always the prime issue at stake, they either add to regional tensions or serve as mitigating factors - depending on the context in which they appear on the agenda. But in Central Asia, these issues do not appear in a context of otherwise stable and harmonious internal and interstate relations. In fact, the situation is quite the opposite.

As Starr observes, ecological security is tied to other profoundly stressful trends that threaten the region.

Rapid population growth, headlong urbanization and rising water consumption in the cities are depleting a water supply that is already inadequate. Urbanization is also placing social services - especially education and health care - under great strain, and financially pressed governments are incapable of mounting an adequate response. This trend, along with the growing polarization of incomes and disorientation

that accompanies migration to the cities, creates potentially flammable social conditions. While a renewal of traditional Sunni Islam provides inner harmony and consolation for millions, some of the most bewildered sections of the population - both urban and rural - are attracted to politically radical forms of the faith. Corruption in both the government and private sectors provides ready justification for such discontent. Also contributing to both the corruption and the physical and moral malaise is the rapid spread of narcotics throughout the region. To date, no national or international efforts have succeeded in reducing this socially corrosive activity.⁵¹

At the same time, these environmental and socio-economic tensions take place in a political environment characterized by states with low capability for domestic governance. It is precisely this mismatch between capabilities and needs that creates a vacuum which foreign agencies can fill but which also is the most crucial point that must be overcome by the new cooperative regimes that have started to emerge in Eurasia. Different analysts cite differing causes for the political manifestations of this low capability to govern effectively.⁵² But the virtually unanimous conclusions of all these assessments point to governments that possess few resources for dealing with the multiple social, economic and environmental challenges to stability or the tensions they generate. Thus, one study of Turkmenistan's bureaucracy offers the following, highly negative, assessment:

Historically, there has been no Turkmenian civil service as a professional corps. Since Soviet times, recruitment, assessment, and promotion have been on an *ad hoc* ministry to ministry basis. Low, post-independence salaries and the resultant corruption have affected civil servants' professionalism negatively, caused them to have a bad reputation, and has made coherent policy toward them difficult. That is not to say that the Turkmenian bureaucracy is altogether incapable. Informal, social relations among officials enable the system to function. However, what technical capability Turkmenistan's civil service possesses pertains to fulfilling centrally planned goals and implementing the Communist party [or now Niyazov's - author] line. It has no experience with either democratic government or free enterprise. The country thus has some highly skilled officials, but they lack knowledge in such areas as economic and financial management, human resources, and legal and organizational development. Hence, creating a bureaucracy to support self-sustaining institutions for collective decision-making and efficient resource allocation poses a particularly daunting task.⁵³

This evaluation could also apply to all the other post-Soviet states. Indeed, it applies to a considerable degree to many Asian states. Thus, a recent paper composed for the Asian Development Bank regarding Asian enforcement of environmental protection observes that:

Progress in addressing many of the region's most pressing environmental challenges has been blocked by failures of governance. In the last decade, most Asian governments have developed an impressive array of environmental legislation and regulatory frameworks. However, enforcement is weak. Environmental agencies are marginalized with respect to ministries charged with promoting economic growth. Moreover, in many countries, weak civil societies and justice systems fail to provide alternative mechanisms to hold government and corporate

actors accountable for their environmental performance. As a result, the pollution of air and water from household and industrial sources threatens the health and well-being of hundreds of millions of people in the region.⁵⁴

Although no Central Asian state has been overthrown, some regimes' juggling act may soon draw to a close. It is now clear that insurgency and domestic unrest - whether over contested drug routes or as a rallying cry of the dispossessed, disenfranchised and radicalized Islamic constituency - will be an enduring fact of life in Central Asia. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, in particular, are threatened by these insurgencies - whether they are domestic in origin or fomented by outsiders - and cannot stop these radical or criminalized movements by their own means. Therefore, they face great pressure to bring in foreign forces and governments. The war on terrorism only reinforced this pressure. But unless those foreign forces and the widening social ramifications of their presence become a force for reform and for cooperative security as may now happen, it is unlikely that relatively small foreign garrisons, even American ones, will be able to stand up to protracted insurgency and unrest.

This line of analysis appears to conform to other research on the connection between issues of environmental policy and possible violent conflict within or among states.⁵⁵ While it is not the environmental or any other specific issue connected with energy extraction and sale abroad in any given state that provokes conflict, the socioeconomic and political consequences of ecological degradation, resource shortages, and the like interacting with preexisting structural social, economic, political and other factors that make conflict more likely. While we cannot definitively trace a direct link from environmental problems to war and violence, many ongoing and parallel studies suggest that where severe degradation occurs, conflict becomes more likely. Thus there are direct and multiple linkages between failures of governance internally and externally induced strife that do not necessarily include foreign subversion or intervention.

Conclusions

As Starr observes,

Analyses of strategic issues in the Caspian Basin focus mainly on the geopolitical situation and only touch incidentally on internal factors. However, if the most dangerous scenarios are those that would be triggered by domestic breakdown within the region, then internal factors must be accorded graver attention than they normally receive.⁵⁶

Thus, the most-dangerous potential crisis facing Central Asia is one where the outcomes generated by internal factors interact with external threats of violence, insurgency and foreign pressures for ever greater involvement in the local security agenda, thereby linking this neighbourhood to other strife-torn regions of the world. Where potentially rich countries cannot effectively govern or provide for themselves, foreigners will intervene by all conceivable means and extend their other quarrels to the region.

Central Asia's current states entered the world as socio-politically stressed areas, and their situation has probably worsened in significant respects since 1991-92. The challenges to security involve fundamental issues such as democracy, poverty,

governing capability, ethnic and border issues, energy and water, and thus exercise a significant, if varying, impact upon the relationships of Central Asian governments with each other and their neighbours. Yet it is unclear if these governments can muster the necessary domestic and administrative resources to begin to overcome these challenges. Since this region must contend with numerous external power influences and rivalries, yet remains dependent mainly on one or two cash crops or natural resources such as oil and gas, it will also now be subjected to intense external pressures for development at all costs. Consequently, the interplay between internal and external pressures on its governments will increase. And so too will the stresses on Central Asian regimes and societies grow, not just because of the overlapping fragmentationist tendencies inherent in their present condition, but also because the process of working through those pressures is itself an inherently crisis-generating process.

Since poverty pushes local governments towards developmental imperatives that privilege development at the expense of conservation and an ecologically oriented policy, Central Asia faces a tragic but inescapable paradox. While the new external cooperative order that has been inaugurated may provide major benefits regarding external security, the fact remains that in order to accumulate the resources and capabilities needed to confront all the security issues in Inner Asia local governments must follow policies that further stress the general socio-economic and political environment and increase the risks to security. Even under a cooperative US-Russian or East-West security regime there is no other alternative, although cooperation is certainly more hopeful and efficacious a regime than the preceding geopolitical rivalry. In many respects this is an unenviable prescription for the future of Eurasia. But in world politics, as in life, beggars cannot be choosers.

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