RUSSIA, CHINA, AND THE UNITED STATES IN CENTRAL ASIA: PROSPECTS FOR GREAT POWER COMPETITION AND COOPERATION IN THE SHADOW OF THE GEORGIAN CRISIS

Elizabeth Wishnick

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FOREWORD

An overview of changing U.S. Central Asia policy over the past 5 years reveals an effort to respond to changing developments on the ground, most recently the Georgian crisis, but also the "color" revolutions, the Andijan events in Uzbekistan and its subsequent decision to end U.S. basing rights at Karshi Khanabad, Kazakhstan's economic rise, and leadership change in Turkmenistan. At the same time, the worsening security situation in Afghanistan and growing insecurity about energy supplies has heightened U.S. interest in security and economic cooperation in Central Asia.

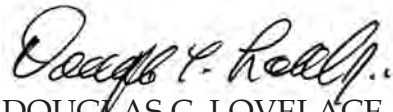
Russia and China have been reacting to these same pressures as the United States. In response to the "color" revolutions, they achieved broad agreement on the priority of regime security and the need to limit the long-term military presence of the United States in Central Asia. These are also two key areas—defining the political path of Central Asian states and securing a strategic foothold in the region—where the United States finds itself in competition with Russia and China.

Nonetheless, the Russia-China partnership should not be seen as an anti-U.S. bloc, nor should the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) be viewed as entirely cohesive. Although there is considerable suspicion of U.S. designs on Central Asia, divergent interests within the SCO, among Central Asian states, and especially between Russia and China serve to limit any coordinated anti-U.S. activity.

Despite the fissures within the SCO and the competitive tendencies within the Sino-Russian partnership, the United States will not have an easy time achieving its aims in Central Asia. Building on her

previous Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) monographs, *Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia* (2002) and *Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia Reassessed* (2004), Dr. Elizabeth Wishnick documents how American policy goals—energy cooperation, regional security, and support for democracy and the rule of law—continue to run at cross-purposes with one another.

In particular, she asserts that competition to secure basing arrangements and energy contracts only benefits authoritarian regimes at the expense of enduring regional security. She argues further that the rhetoric about a new Cold War in the aftermath of the Georgian crisis, and the more general tendency to view U.S.-Russia-China competition in the region with 19th century lenses, as some sort of "new great game," obscures the common interests the great powers share in addressing transnational problems in Central Asia.



DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

ELIZABETH WISHNICK is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Montclair State University and a Research Associate at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University. In 2002-03 she was a Fulbright fellow at Lingnan University, Hong Kong, and previously she was a research fellow at Taiwan's Academia Sinica, the Hoover Institution, and the Davis Center at Harvard University. Professor Wishnick's research focuses on Chinese foreign policy and nontraditional security. Her current book project, *China as a Risk Society*, examines how transnational problems originating in China (environment, energy, public health, and food safety) shape Chinese foreign relations with neighboring states. Professor Wishnick also writes about great power relations in East Asia and has contributed articles to *East Asia*, *Asian Survey*, *NBR Analysis*, *SAIS Review*, *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, *Issues and Studies*, and *Perspectives Chinoises*. She is the author *of Mending Fences: The Evolution of Moscow's China Policy from Brezhnev to Yeltsin* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001) and two previous studies for SSI, *Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia* (2002) and *Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia Reassessed* (2004). Professor Wishnick holds a B.A. from Barnard College, an M.A. in Russian and East European Studies from Yale University, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University.

SUMMARY

This monograph explores the appearance and reality of a consolidation of anti-U.S. interests in Central Asia via the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Sino-Russian partnership. The author asserts that while there is considerable suspicion of U.S. designs on Central Asia, divergent interests within the SCO, among Central Asian states, and especially between Russia and China, serve to limit any coordinated anti-U.S. activity.

The monograph takes a critical look at the Sino-Russian partnership and points to differences on energy and economic integration in Central Asia, despite common interests in maintaining regime security and limiting U.S. influence in the region. A section on the implications of the Georgian crisis shows how this war highlighted the divergence in Russian and Chinese interests, while accentuating the vulnerability of the Central Asian states to Russian influence, and underlining the risks involved in U.S. energy projects in the region.

The monograph then addresses the policy implications for the United States of the shifting regional picture in Central Asia. Despite the fissures within the SCO and the competitive tendencies within the Sino-Russian partnership, the monograph asserts that United States will not have an easy time achieving its aims in Central Asia. American policy goals—energy cooperation, regional security, and support for democracy and the rule of law—often conflict with one another. Declining assistance also leaves the United States with fewer effective policy instruments to recoup its declining influence among Central Asian publics, address underlying conditions which lead to regional instability, and press for accountable governments

that have the capacity to address the growing range of transnational threats to the region. The author presents policy recommendations in a concluding section. She notes that, despite the general tendency to highlight the clashing interests among the great powers in Central Asia, the United States also faces many opportunities for multilateral cooperation due the increasing primacy of transnational threats.

RUSSIA, CHINA, AND THE UNITED STATES IN CENTRAL ASIA: PROSPECTS FOR GREAT POWER COMPETITION AND COOPERATION IN THE SHADOW OF THE GEORGIAN CRISIS

Introduction.

The United States is facing an increasingly challenging strategic picture in Central Asia. The tensions in Russia-Georgia relations which had been building in 2008 erupted into a war in early August, involving disproportionate use of force by Russia in its intervention in Georgian territory allegedly to protect Russian and South Ossetian civilians from Georgian shelling. According to the terms of an agreement brokered by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Russia's forces pulled back from uncontested Georgian territory by October 10, 2008, but 7,600 Russian troops remain in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both of which Moscow recognized as independent on August 26.

The Georgian crisis has had far-reaching implications for U.S.-China-Russia relations in Central Asia. One obvious consequence was a ratcheting up of rhetoric by Russian and American policymakers, leading some observers to speculate about a new Cold War. Due to the integrated nature of the global economy, however, Russia cannot afford to isolate itself, and the United States and the European Union (EU) need to work with Russia to address a range of important economic, political, and security issues. Once the Medvedev government complies with international agreements on Georgia, the resumption of dialogue with Russia will be all the more important for global security. Moreover, this monograph argues here that

Russian actions in Georgia stemmed in part from a security dilemma that had been developing, according to which both the United States and Russia had been pursuing their security interests in a unilateral fashion, with little regard for the potential impact of their actions on the other state. To emerge from this situation and prevent miscommunication and miscalculation in future crises, greater consultation is needed on key security issues.

The Georgian crisis also has had a major impact on Sino-Russian relations. The Sino-Russian partnership reached a limit when Russia decided to recognize the two break-away regions. Because of China's own concerns with separatism in Xinjiang and Tibet, the Russian action evoked considerable concern in Beijing, and China reportedly stymied Russia's effort to gain the support of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on this issue. For their part, Central Asian states suddenly found themselves in an even more vulnerable position as Russian pressure for economic and political cooperation increased. The potential costs of what might be perceived in Moscow as unduly close relations to Washington became amply apparent in Russia's effort to destabilize the pro-Western government of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. Nonetheless, to maintain their own independence of action, Central Asian states have continued to seek cooperative relationships with a range of partners, including the United States.

Since 2005, the prospects for democratic change have been dimming, and Central Asian leaders have become increasingly suspicious of what they view as U.S. interference in their domestic affairs. Against a background of renewed concerns about regime security since the "color" revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, and in light of the 2005 protests in

Andijan, the Uzbek regime requested that the United States close its base at Karshi Khanabad (known as K2). With the rise in the price of oil, Russian influence in the region and on energy flows has increased. Moreover, Russia has become more determined to restore its influence on its southern flank, partly to guarantee access to needed gas supplies for reexport to Europe and for its own domestic needs, but also to keep the United States at bay. As China's energy needs have grown and its policymakers have sought to develop its western provinces, China, too, has sought to expand its influence in Central Asia. All of this is occurring at a time when Al-Qaeda has become reinvigorated in Afghanistan, instability is deepening in Pakistan, a poor U.S. image pervades the Muslim world, and the United States faces challenges in its relations with Russia and China.

This monograph explores the appearance and reality of a consolidation of anti-U.S. interests in Central Asia via the SCO and the Sino-Russian partnership. It argues that while there is considerable suspicion of U.S. designs on Central Asia, divergent interests within the SCO, among Central Asian states, and especially between Russia and China serve to limit any coordinated anti-U.S. activity. While a confluence of factors has come together in recent years to limit the U.S. role in Central Asia, this is not the same as the development of a unified countercoalition. The monograph takes a critical look at the Sino-Russian partnership and points to differences on energy and economic integration in Central Asia, despite common interests in maintaining regime security and limiting U.S. influence in the region. A section on the implications of the Georgian crisis shows how this war highlighted the divergence in Russian and Chinese interests, while accentuating

the vulnerability of the Central Asian states to Russian influence, and underlining the risks involved in U.S. energy projects in the region.

Despite the fissures within the SCO and the competitive tendencies within the Sino-Russian partnership, the United States will not have an easy time achieving its aims in Central Asia. American policy goals—energy cooperation, regional security, and support for democracy and the rule of law—often run at cross-purposes with one another and with U.S. policies towards Pakistan and India. Declining assistance also leaves the United States with fewer effective policy instruments to recoup its declining influence among Central Asian publics, address underlying conditions which lead to regional instability, and press for accountable governments that have the capacity to address the growing range of transnational threats to the region.

Despite the tendency to depict great power relations in Central Asia as essentially conflictual, the United States also faces many opportunities for multilateral cooperation due to the increasing primacy of such transnational threats. Given U.S. funding limitations, the Obama administration should attempt to coordinate with key allies, such as the EU and Japan, which also have significant policy initiatives in Central Asia and share many of the U.S. concerns. Moreover, the United States also should seek opportunities to engage both China and Russia on areas of common interest, such as achieving stability in Afghanistan, reducing narcotics and human trafficking, preventing proliferation, and encouraging energy conservation and efficiency in Central Asia. Finally, the United States should explore mechanisms to engage the SCO, either within the context of existing Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) initiatives, or through new efforts, such as an SCO plus three format, which could include the United States, Japan, and the EU on issues of common concern like Afghanistan or narcotics trafficking. The monograph develops these recommendations in a final section.

U.S. Policy towards Central Asia.

After developing a patchwork of security, economic, and political relationships with Central Asian states in the 1990s, U.S. military cooperation expanded rapidly with them in 2001-02, and anti-terrorism became the central focus of American policy.[1] As Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan became frontline states in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, the United States obtained temporary basing rights at Manas (Kyrgyzstan) and K2 (Uzbekistan). By 2003, with the U.S. military focused increasingly on Iraq, State Department officials identified a more diverse array of interests in Central Asia: (1) security (especially anti-terrorism, but also nonproliferation, and stemming narcotics trafficking); (2) energy (ensuring reliable access of regional supplies to global markets and encouraging associated revenue to be used for sustainable development); and (3) domestic reform (particularly the development of democratic political systems and market-oriented mechanisms).[2]

The 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) identified Central Asia as a "geostrategic crossroads." As the QDR explained: "The U.S. will seek to shape not only the choices of countries in those regions, but choices of countries outside them that have interests or ambitions within them."[3] In particular, Russia's more assertive energy diplomacy, at a time of peak oil prices, has

caused concern. The QDR goes on to note that energy represents an opportunity for economic development in Central Asian states, but also could present a danger that outside powers will seek to gain influence over them. In an interview with Ekho Moskvy, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice noted that U.S. policy in Central Asia proceeded from the belief that "Energy should not be used in any way as a political tool." To the contrary, Rice emphasized the importance of diversity of supply and diversity of routes, as well as the development of alternative energy sources.[4]

Despite the particular concern over energy, State Department officials continue to aim for "multi-dimensional relationships" with the Central Asian states. As Deputy Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Evan Feigenbaum explained,

> . . . some people say we have a defense policy, we have a democracy policy, we have a trade policy. No. We have a foreign policy, and we want to do all of these things simultaneously. . . . Now I personally don't expect that the speed of progress will necessarily be the same in terms of our cooperation in every basket. It wouldn't be realistic. But we do think it's important to be moving forward in every basket. So I think with each government and with each country the pace has varied a little bit from country to countries.[5]

In Feigenbaum's view, Central Asia is a particularly important region because it represents a microcosm of U.S. foreign interests, including Russia's resurgence, China's regional and global footprint, the role of Iran, the future of Afghanistan, terrorism, challenges posed by Islam, and the goal of democracy promotion.[6]

On the surface, U.S. Central Asia policy appears to have been highly consistent over the past 5 years. Thus, the March 2006 U.S. National Security Strategy explains

American interests in the region as encouraging energy diversification, promoting democracy and free-market economies, and enhancing security and anti-terrorism.[7] Nevertheless, there has been a shift in emphasis since 2003, and Washington's relations with individual Central Asian states have changed markedly since 2005.

The American intervention in Iraq contributed to an erosion of support for the United States across the Muslim world, including Central Asia. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, a May 2007 poll by the International Republican Institute and Gallup found that just 4 percent of respondents identified the United States as the country that should receive priority in Bishkek's foreign policy.[8] According to Orozbek Moldaliyev, the director of Bishkek's Research Center on Politics, Religion, and Security, no anti-American sentiment existed in Kyrgyzstan prior to the Iraq War.[9] Now opposition to the U.S. occupation of a Muslim state has reinforced views critical of the United States, thanks in part to the increasingly dominant Russian media, but also to a series of irritants in bilateral relations as well as domestic political changes (both discussed below).

The strategic significance of Central Asia for Washington also appeared to decline after 2003, as Iraq became the focal point in Washington and budgets were tightened to finance the war. Thus, neither American plans for Central Asia nor expectations in the region have been fulfilled. The U.S. budget for FY2009 shows a continual decline in overall aid to the former Soviet states since 2007. Funding to these states under the Freedom Support Act has decreased in recent years. With the exception of Turkmenistan, which saw a modest increase in Freedom Support aid, overall Central Asian states saw their funding

decline in FY2009.[10] Over the next 2 years, Kyrgyzstan will also receive an additional $16 million through the Millennium Challenge account, a program that links U.S. development aid to progress on democratic reform.[11]

Nonetheless, military aid for Central Asian states increased in FY2009,[12] particularly for Kazakhstan, through the Foreign Military Financing program, and for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and, to a lesser extent, Turkmenistan, through the International Military Education and Financing program. (See Tables 1 and 2.) In the case of Kazakhstan, the United States aims to develop a professional military that is capable of rapid deployment in cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and U.S. forces.[13] Generally speaking, most U.S. security aid to Central Asia focuses on threats to border security posed by terrorism, proliferation, and narcotics trafficking. Although much of the security assistance to Uzbekistan has been cut due to its lack of progress on congressionally required human rights benchmarks, in 2009 the country will continue to receive some limited counterterrorism aid through Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs. (See Table 3.)

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
FY 2007 Actual	3,205	1,425	250	250	0
FY 2008 Estimate	1,339	843	372	0	0
FY 2009 Request	2,000	900	724	150	0

Data comes from "US AID FY 2009 International Budget Justification," *www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2009/.*

Table 1. Foreign Military Financing (Figures in Thousands of U.S.$).

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
FY 2007 Actual	1,217	1,161	359	424	0
FY 2008 Estimate	952	1,142	538	286	0
FY 2009 Request	750	1,590	1,450	300	0

Data comes from "US AID FY 2009 International Budget Justification" *www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2009.*

Table 2. International Military Education and Financing (Figures in Thousands of U.S.$).

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
FY 2007 Actual	2,106	1,333	3,004	600	488
FY 2008 Estimate	4,188	2,984	3,976	1,050	893
FY 2009 Request	1,900	1,590	1,450	750	150

Data comes from "US AID FY 2009 International Budget Justification" *www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2009/.*

Table 3. Non-Proliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (Figures in Thousands of U.S.$).

Martha Olcott has noted that "The biggest complication . . . has been U.S. advocacy of a 'freedom agenda'," which was designed in large part to justify the ongoing human and financial costs of the war in Iraq, since it turned out there were no weapons of mass destruction [WMD] there."[14] Authoritarian leaders in Central Asia watched warily as the United States supported democratic change in Georgia's November 2003 Rose Revolution and then in Ukraine's Orange Revolution a year later. Suspicion regarding U.S. intentions mounted once its former ally, President Askar Akayev, was ousted in March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution.

In Central Asia and the Caucasus, as in the rest of the Middle East, little progress has been made towards democratization and, to the contrary, backtracking has occurred. Freedom House included Kyrgyzstan in its 2007 list of "partly free" countries, though religious freedom declined in the past year. The other four Central Asian states were all ranked as "not free," with

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan receiving particularly low marks.[15]

Indeed, many experts observe that the double standard in the priority of a commitment to democratization in U.S. foreign relations with countries in the Middle East and Central Asia, essentially exempting key (authoritarian) allies, is counterproductive. For example, a 2007 study by the RAND Corporation concluded that engagement with Uzbekistan on security issues had little impact on promoting democratic change, transparency, or respect for human rights.[16] To the contrary, Alex Cooley argued that the K2 basing agreement facilitated Uzbekistan's backsliding on human rights. Uzbek officials could crack down on domestic opponents under the pretext of cooperating in the war on terrorism while counting on American reluctance to hold them accountable due to the U.S. need for the K2 base. At a time when the United Nations (UN) and human rights organizations were sharply criticizing Uzbekistan's human rights record, the United States reportedly used extraordinary renditions to hand over suspects to Uzbek authorities, some of whom allegedly were interrogated in K2.[17]

Congress held hearings on the double standard in the Bush administration's promotion of democracy in the Muslim world. In his testimony, Thomas Malinowski, advocacy director for Human Rights Watch, criticized the U.S. Government for failing to impose sanctions on Uzbekistan after the Andijan massacre, like the EU did. Martha Olcott, on the other hand, argued that the aid provided to Uzbekistan after its agreement to lease a base to the United States in 2001 fell short of expectations and never proved enough of a carrot to prod resistant officials into making domestic policy changes.[18] Others see the vacillation in U.S. policy as a

struggle between competing priorities in the Pentagon where security interests take precedence, and in the State Department where democratic transformation is the main priority.[19]

Relations with Kyrgyzstan, which once presented the greatest hope for democratic change in the region, have become more complicated after recent political developments. Following President Akayev's ouster, Uzbekistan's decision to terminate the U.S. lease at K2 and pressure by the SCO for the United States to leave all of its bases in Central Asia, the Bakiyev government demanded $200 million—instead of the $2 million Washington had paid previously—to renew the lease for the Manas airbase. In part this reflected Bakiyev's effort to distinguish himself from the corruption of the previous government, since Akayev's family benefited from lucrative contracts associated with the U.S. base, and corruption in the country limited any benefits to the population as a whole.[20] In the end, Washington and Bishkek agreed to up the base leasing fee to $20 million with an additional pledge of $150 million in aid, thus ending up with a total figure close to the $200 million requested and enabling Bakiyev to claim that he had held firm in his demands with the Americans.[21]

Nonetheless, other irritants have emerged over the Manas base, similar to the frictions experienced by the United States at its bases in South Korea and Japan. A near collision between a U.S. military aircraft and a Kyrgyz civilian airliner and the shooting of a Kyrgyz citizen at the airbase prompted calls in Bishkek for the renegotiation of the terms of the lease, particularly regarding immunity from prosecution for U.S. troops.[22] If U.S. relations have become rockier with Kyrgyzstan, the most important change has been in the relative priority of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to U.S. policy.

In FY2003 Uzbekistan received nearly three times as much funding ($8.6 million) under the Foreign Military Financing program than Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, which only received $2.9 million.[23] Now that funding levels overall are much reduced, Kazakhstan receives more than its neighbors—$1.3 million in 2008, with $2 million requested for 2009 (see Table 1). After the United States and other Western countries condemned the crackdown by Uzbek security forces against peaceful protestors in Andijan in May 2005, killing hundreds and leading to a wave of repression, President Karymov asked the United States to close its base by the end of 2005. Karymov, with the support of the SCO, justified the repressive measures as a response to an anti-government uprising supported by foreign groups.

As Uzbekistan's star has waned, Kazakhstan has become more central to U.S. Central Asia policy. Ever since the 1990s, Kazakhstan has been important for U.S. energy and nonproliferation policies, but since 2005 "Kazakhstan has become, by process of elimination, the partner of choice for the United States in Central Asia."[24] Because of its geostrategic position, sandwiched between Russia and China, and Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev's long-standing interest in carving out a uniquely Eurasian foreign policy, the country has succeeded in developing good relations with all of the great powers, its neighbors, plus the EU, Japan, and South Korea.

While Kazakhstan supported U.S. operations in Iraq[25] and the war on terrorism, experts warn that there are limits to American security cooperation with the country. Kazakhstan is unlikely to agree to any basing arrangement for fear that Russia would make a similar demand, as occurred in Kyrgyzstan.[26] Moreover, with the sharp rise in the price of oil, Kazakhstan has

taken a leaf out of the Russian playbook and started renegotiating its long-standing oil agreements with Western major buyers.[27] Although Kazakhstan remains an authoritarian regime, U.S. officials have been inconsistent in their attention to its poor human rights record. Thus, despite State Department criticism of the Nazarbayev government for suppressing dissent, Vice-President Dick Cheney expressed his "admiration" for Kazakhstan's achievements in political development. "The record speaks for itself," said Cheney.[28]

In November 2007, the United States supported Kazakhstan's bid to become the first non-European chair of the OSCE in 2010, conditional on its implementation of political reform.[29] Since then U.S. officials have performed verbal gymnastics to explain how such a state was supposed to uphold European democratic norms. Thus, in an interview with Voice of America, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Feigenbaum stated that ". . . this is a historic opportunity for Kazakhstan. There's never been a Chairman of the OSCE quite like Kazakhstan."[30] Further, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Affairs Richard Boucher optimistically told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that the prospect of the OSCE chairmanship "may become a useful catalyst for Kazakhstan to intensify political reform."[31]

Deputy Chief of the U.S. OSCE mission Kyle Scott noted that Kazakhstan had not improved its human rights record to the extent Washington had hoped, "but the year is not over, and I am optimistic that in the second half of the year we will see further progress by the government of Kazakhstan."[32] Scott spoke to reporters at Radio Free Europe, which had seen its website in Kazakhstan blocked for nearly 2 months in the spring of 2008. Service was restored in early June

only after pressure by the U.S. Government, the OSCE, and human rights organizations.[33]

Turkmenistan has been of increasing interest, especially since the death of Saparmurat Niyazov, its President, in December 2006, but prospects for cooperation remain uncertain. Considering Russia's efforts to monopolize Turkmenistan's gas exports, the United States has been pressing it to diversify to earn a better return. This led on the one hand to Turkmenistan's demand for a higher price for the gas it ships to Russia, but could also lead to higher prices for any gas shipped directly to Europe. A Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline (TAP), which would also involve Indian participation (sometimes called TAPI), has been discussed for some time, but regional security challenges pose considerable blockage to its implementation.[34]

Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov attended the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 to discuss TAP and other energy projects in private meetings with President George Bush and Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai, among others. Berdymukhammedov's attendance at the meeting, which he called a "good opportunity for an exchange of opinions about the problems of international security," was particularly notable given Turkmenistan's long-standing position of neutrality.[35] Although Turkmenistan has been a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace Program since 1994, former President Niyazov confined his country's participation in international organizations to economics and trade.[36]

The other surprise guest at the April 2008 NATO summit was Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov. The deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan

in recent years has reduced enthusiasm in Washington and European capitals for his continued international ostracism on human rights grounds. Claiming progress in human rights dialogue, the EU twice suspended sanctions it had imposed on travel by Uzbek officials responsible for the Andijan massacre.[37] In October 2008, the EU lifted the visa bans while continuing its arms embargo against Uzbekistan.[38]

A series of high profile U.S. visitors, including former Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Admiral William Fallon in January 2008, and Pamela Spratlen, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asian Affairs, in March, helped pave the way for Karimov's agreement to cooperate with NATO in a rail corridor through Uzbekistan to support reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Karimov also proposed restarting a lapsed multilateral initiative on Afghanistan and including NATO as one of the parties.[39] Although the United States no longer has basing rights at K2, German forces under NATO command continue to use an air base at Termez in Uzbekistan. One month prior to the NATO summit, on March 5, 2008, U.S. Special Envoy to Central Asia and the Caucasus Richard Simmons announced that the Uzbek government would once again allow the United States access to the base.[40]

With respect to Tajikistan, a poor country that depends heavily on foreign donors, particularly Russia, the United States has also been seeking to provide additional strategic and economic options, particularly in border control and energy. For example, the United States has provided $40 million in aid to rebuild border posts along the Afghan frontier, now that Tajikistan resumed control over its border security from Russia in 2005. The United States also financed a $36 million

bridge connecting Afghanistan with Tajikistan, replacing intermittent ferry service.[41] Washington is encouraging a regional electricity-sharing agreement among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, India, and Pakistan, and hopes to assist Tajikistan to become a major regional hydropower exporter.[42]

Since 2005, the United States has sought to encourage integration in Central Asia with South Asia, partly to reduce Central Asian dependence on Russia and China, but also to assist Afghanistan to become more economically stable. Unlike former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, who once termed Central Asia "an arc of crisis," Secretary Rice viewed it as an "arc of opportunity."[43] A number of initiatives have been promoted to foster regional cooperation. The State Department reorganized and now situates Central Asian states with South Asia in a new bureau for Central Asian and South Asian Affairs.[44] For U.S. policymakers, this reorganization was designed to anchor Afghanistan economically, as well as to eliminate what Secretary Rice called the Cold War era "artifact" of Central Asia's inclusion in the Soviet Bureau.[45]

According to Assistant Secretary of State Boucher,

> One of our goals in trying to work in Afghanistan is to stabilize Afghanistan, so it can become a conduit and a hub between South and Central Asia so that energy can flow to the south. Ideas and goods can flow to the north. People can move back and forth. Intellectual influences can move back and forth. And so that the countries of Central Asia are no longer bottled up between two enormous powers of China and Russia, but rather they have outlets to the south as well as to the north and the east and the west.[46]

To promote regional integration in Central and South Asia, the United States has supported a

number of initiatives. The U.S. Trade Representative has a trade and investment framework with the five Central Asian states to foster cooperation in electricity, telecommunications, water planning, and border controls.[47] The United States also works with the World Bank to develop transportation infrastructure in the region through the Asia Development Bank's project for Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), involving Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, plus Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Afghanistan, and China.[48]

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Flux: Implications for the United States.

Originating in an April 1996 meeting in Shanghai on confidence-building for China, Russia, and the Central Asian states bordering on China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, the Shanghai Five gradually adopted a broader economic, political, and security agenda. Just 3 months before September 11, 2001 (9/11), the group became a formal regional security organization known as the SCO, and expanded to include Uzbekistan. The U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan and agreements to use bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as corresponding Russian efforts to revive military cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), eclipsed the SCO's security role at first. Consequently, American officials initially downplayed the importance of the organization, but after Uzbekistan decided at the 2005 annual meeting to request American forces to leave its base at K2, the United States began paying closer attention to the impact of the SCO for U.S. interests in Central Asia. The possibility of Iran becoming a full

member of the SCO has raised concern. Currently, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Mongolia are SCO observers.

Although former Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Edmund Giambastiani noted that the United States was monitoring SCO military exercises closely, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld downplayed the impact of the first Sino-Russian drill in 2005 (discussed below), claiming that "he didn't see anything threatening to Taiwan or anyone else."[49] Rumsfeld was less sanguine about Iranian participation in the SCO, however. He noted that it was "passing strange" for a group, supposedly committed to anti-terrorism, to consider membership for a state supporter of terrorism.[50] As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Feigenbaum noted, "There's a debate in the United States about what the SCO is, whether its members can cooperate, and what their cooperation might mean for us."[51]

Scholars in the West also are divided about the impact of the SCO on regional security and U.S. interests in Central Asia.[52] While recognizing that its members have different agendas on certain issues, some observers are concerned that China and Russia intend to use the SCO as a vehicle for coordinated opposition to the United States in Central Asia.[53] Another perspective goes even further, holding that the SCO is notable for "evolving into one of the most powerful regional organizations in post-Cold War Asia," which promotes strategic cooperation among Central Asian states and seeks to protect regime security.[54] Other analysts downplay the potential threat the SCO could pose to the United States and highlight the conflicts of interests among the participants.[55]

Despite some concern in the West about the SCO's emergence as an anti-American alliance, officials reject

this interpretation. Feigenbaum asserted that the SCO is not a "'new Warsaw Pact'. . . . Neither is the SCO a 'counterweight to NATO,' not least because its Central Asian members' participation in the SCO has by no means *precluded* their cooperation in NATO."[56] Similarly, on May 15, 2008, the defense ministers from SCO member countries signed a communiqué which stated unequivocally that "The SCO member countries' activities in the military field are not aimed at establishing a military or political alliance and are not targeted at a third party."[57]

China and Russia held their first joint military exercises (Peace Mission) from August 18-25, 2005, on the Jiaodong peninsula in the People's Republic of China's (PRC) Shandong province and the Yellow Sea, involving 10,000 troops and an array of modern military technology.[58] Peace Mission 2005 followed on previous SCO counterterrorism exercises in Kyrgyzstan in 2002 and in Kazakhstan and China in 2003, but was distinctive in its composition and unexpected location. The 2005 Sino-Russian exercise posited a hypothetical ethnic conflict breaking out in a third country, which then appealed to its neighbors and the UN for help.

While there was some speculation that China and Russia had a Korean peninsula crisis in mind, actually the location was a compromise. Originally Russia proposed holding the exercise in Xinjiang, due to its proximity to the Russian air base in Kyrgyzstan. Instead, the PRC suggested Zhejiang province across from Taiwan. When the Russian side rejected that location as too provocative, the two countries agreed to hold the exercise in Shandong province.[59]

Russia contributed a small number of forces, just 1,800 of the 10,000 total, but involved a substantial

naval contingent from the Russian Pacific Fleet, including a large BDK-11 assault ship, an anti-submarine warfare vessel, the *Marshal Shaposhnikov*; the destroyer, *Burny*; and diesel submarines. The naval squadron joined with Chinese forces to simulate a major amphibious landing on a beachhead in the Jiaodong peninsula. Russian bombers (Tu-95S *Bear* strategic bombers and Tu-22M3 *Backfire* long-range bombers) would stage an air landing near Qingdao, including air cover by SU-27SM fighters armed with AS-15 3,000 kilometer (km) cruise missiles against naval targets.

While Peace Mission 2005 may have been a joint exercise, China and Russia were pursuing different goals. For Russia this was an opportunity to train its pilots, test its equipment, and, most importantly, showcase its technology for China's purchase. For the PRC, the exercise provided an important training function, but was also designed to demonstrate its naval power to Taiwan and other neighbors.

In the aftermath of the Andijan events, cooperation in law enforcement has become a new feature of SCO exercises. Chinese officials attribute the shift to continued concern over terrorism and the need to take joint action to address a wide range of transnational threats such as trade in arms and drugs, human trafficking, and money laundering.[60] On August 24-26, 2006, law enforcement agencies from China and Kazakhstan cooperated in their first joint anti-terrorism exercise in Almaty province in southeastern Kazakhstan and in Yining in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous region.

From August 9-17, 2007, Chinese forces participated in an SCO anti-terrorist exercise in Russia for the first time. This was the first occasion since the 1969 Sino-Soviet border clashes that Chinese troops have been on Russian soil and President Putin had to sign a special law allowing for their presence.[61] Peace

Mission 2007 involved some 6,000 troops from all six SCO members (including 1,600 from China, 4,700 from Russia, plus smaller numbers of paratroopers from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan and staff representation from Uzbekistan), an additional 2,000 support personnel, Russian Mi-8, Mi-24, and Mi-28N helicopters, Su-25 assault planes, armored personnel carriers and tanks, as well as 46 Chinese aircraft (IL-76 transports and 8 *Flying Leopard* fighter-bombers) plus China-made Type 96 armored vehicles and Type 99 tanks.[62] It was the first overseas exercise for Chinese airborne units and the largest SCO exercise to date.[63]

Peace Mission 2007 involved strategic consultation and planning in Urumqi in Xinjiang and a drill in Chelyabinsk, Russia.[64] The scenario supposed that terrorists seized a village near Chelyabinsk, took hostages, and made political demands. The SCO then ordered a counterterrorist operation. Defense officials traveled to Urumqi to plan the operation, which was carried out in the town of Chebarkul in the Chelyabinsk region. Russian commentators questioned the antiterrorism rationale for the exercise, which they interpreted as a rehearsal for future operations to quell political opposition, such as occurred in Andijan.[65] The most important security development coincided with the end of the exercise. On its last day, Russian strategic bombers took to the skies again, an action that had ceased after the end of the Cold War.

One odd feature of this exercise was that the participating troops from the 4th and 6th Infantry Divisions of China's Xinjiang military district took an unusually circuitous route to Chelyabinsk in western Siberia.[66] Instead of traveling 600 miles by the trans-Asian railway from Urumqi through Kazakhstan via Astana to nearby Ekaterinburg, connected by road

and rail to Chelyabinsk, the Xinjiang forces instead traveled along a route 10 times as long, across China to Manzhouli in Heilongjiang province, then headed west across Eastern Siberia to the Urals, in effect circling Mongolia's entire border. According to some Russian and Chinese media reports, Kazakhstan denied Chinese troops transit permission.[67] This lack of trust between China and Kazakhstan was echoed in some less than welcoming reactions within Russia to the presence of Chinese troops. A spate of articles came out in the Russian media suggesting that military cooperation with China on Russian territory was foolhardy, given China's rising economic power and potential territorial ambitions.[68]

Despite the undercurrent of unease, in June 27, 2007, the SCO states signed a treaty on holding military exercises which member states are still in the process of ratifying. On May 17, 2008, the SCO defense ministers met to discuss further steps they could take to strengthen cooperation in combating terrorism, extremism, and separatism. They agreed to hold the next set of exercises in Kazakhstan in 2010. Although China's Ambassador to Russia, Liu Guchang, praised the 2005 and 2007 Peace Mission drills, he commented that joint Sino-Russian exercises would not be held frequently in the future. The Chinese Ambassador added that ". . . if they must take place, they will certainly be done quite successfully."[69] If regional security cooperation within the SCO has its limits due to a lack of trust among its members, its prospects for regional economic integration are sometimes overstated and confused with the (competing) efforts by Russia and China to reorient Central Asian economies in their direction, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Russia, for its part, has been seeking to maintain its access to Central Asian gas and contain Chinese economic ambitions in the region by involving regional producers in a gas cartel dependent on Gazprom's pipeline network. The rise in oil prices has, on the one hand, given Russia more global clout, but also has empowered Central Asian producers to look beyond Russia for better deals, especially on pricing. A variety of other countries, including Japan, the EU, and India, have indicated an interest. Thus, although Central Asian states have achieved a higher profile as economic players, through their individual connections to various states inside and outside the region, such efforts have not produced true regional integration.

This has not been for a lack of trying. Central Asian states first raised the prospect of a Common Market in 1993 and subsequent years saw a succession of efforts to create an economic community. Its ultimate expression, the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO), effectively merged with the Russian-organized Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc) in 2005, diluting the prospects for a truly Central Asian union.[70] Although President Nazarabayev continues to advocate such a union, scholars note that none of the previous efforts to create a multilateral trade network has been effective.[71]

Inadequate infrastructure has been a major impediment. At a meeting on regional integration, then Director of the State Department's Office of Central Asian Affairs Pamela Spratlen recounted her experience traveling in the region in 2006:

> . . . when I first came on board, I had the very ambitious idea that I would go visit all five Central Asian capitals in two weeks. And I thought I would be able to get around and come back, and have a more fulsome understanding

> not only of the capitals, but I was even ambitious enough to think that I could get out into the regions in this two-week period. Well, we started planning my travel, and I hear the chuckling. It turned out that the flight connections, not just within Central Asia but just getting to Central Asia; I mean, I had to sort of remind myself of the amount of time that takes. And then, the idea of actually traveling within turned out to be a great deal more challenging than I ever imagined; all the connections either went through Moscow or Istanbul or Frankfurt, and it just wasn't possible to fly between some of the capitals. And so I thought, well perhaps what I could do is fly between some, and then I would drive to get to other places; how about driving from Dushanbe to Ashgabat, for example. Well, we looked at that—(laughter)—and it turned out that wasn't going to be possible either. So I have a very personal understanding of the importance of integrating Central Asia, and the difficulties of trying to make that happen. And if I, as a U.S. government official going on a one-time basis or irregular basis to the region, have this understanding based on my attempt to try to do this travel, I can only imagine what it's like for a businessperson who's thinking about trying to build a business from the ground up in Central Asia or develop a partnership and really address the challenges of trying to do business there in one country, but certainly in trying to do it in many . . .[72]

While the more grandiose plans for an EU-type economic community have not borne fruit, progress has been made recently in improving regional transportation and energy infrastructure. The Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program, involving Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, plus Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, China, Mongolia, and six multilateral organizations (Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development [EBRD], International Monetary Fund [IMF], Islamic Development Bank, World

Bank, and the United Nations Development Program [UNDP]), is moving forward with a strategy to develop six transportation corridors to connect countries within the region and to the rest of Eurasia, to harmonize transport and customs regulations, and to develop a regional electricity market.[73]

Since 2004, the SCO has sought to develop cooperation in the energy sphere. In November 2006, Russian officials raised the idea of a region-wide energy club, an idea also supported by Kazakhstan. The declaration at the August 2007 summit called for continued "dialogue on energy to promote the pragmatic cooperation between energy producing countries, transit countries, and consuming countries."[74] President Nazarbayev spoke of the region's pipeline network forming a basis for "an Asian energy market."[75] Former President Putin, a major advocate of an SCO energy club, asserted such an organization would provide "a powerful impetus to regional projects in the interests of all SCO member states . . ."[76] Nonetheless, energy cooperation to date has tended to focus on bilateral projects, driven by competing development agendas. The creation of a true Central Asian energy market could speed up the diversification of pipeline routes, thereby anchoring producing states to consuming states and potentially undermining the cohesiveness of the SCO itself.[77] With Russia, China, and Western companies advocating for pipelines flowing in different directions, and Central Asian energy producing countries competing with one another for contracts, region-wide energy cooperation faces many challenges indeed.

According to Timur Dadabaev, an expert on Central Asian regional integration, multilateral development projects face three types of impediments. First, Central Asian states view each other as competitors, particularly

in the energy sector. This results in barriers to trade within the region, while individual states seek partners outside. Second, many of the more promising areas for cooperation, for example, regulating access to water supplies, would require states to address collective goods problems and involve some loss of sovereignty for the mutual benefit of the region. Finally, Dadabaev notes that the five Central Asian states are pursuing different economic models, with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan opting for liberal reform, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan continuing state-led development, and war-torn Tajikistan relying on foreign aid.[78]

While this monograph focuses on U.S.-Russia-China competition in Central Asia, other rivalries in the region pose challenges for economic integration. Nicklas Norling and Niklas Swanström note that the conflict between Pakistan and India brought the South East Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to a standstill and has the potential to stymie the work of the SCO, should the two countries accede to full membership.[79] Moreover, even as Sino-Indian relations improve, they are emerging as competitors for trade and energy markets in Central Asia.

China, Russia, and Central Asia.

Central Asia has turned out to be both an important arena for Sino-Russian cooperation and an equally significant test of its limits. The following section first explores the areas of agreement in Chinese and Russian policies towards Central Asia.

China and Russia have three areas of overlapping concern in Central Asia. First, they both view the region as a test case for their aim to create a multipolar world order, based on a "democratic" vision of international

affairs in which a variety of states wield influence and counterbalance U.S. power. In their May 23, 2008, joint statement, Russia and China asserted that "International security is comprehensive and inalienable, and some countries' security cannot be guaranteed at the cost of some others', including expanding military and political allies."[80] Russian and Chinese leaders regularly call for greater cooperation and coordination in the SCO between their two countries in the context of their broader goal of promoting of multilateral diplomacy.[81]

For Russia and China alike, events in Central Asia have appeared to vindicate their broader foreign policy goals. The loss of the K2 base at a time when the United States was bogged down in two wars was interpreted by some Russian analysts as the beginning of the decline of American empire and a potential turning point for Moscow's resurgence in Central Asia.[82] Others see Russia's embrace of the SCO as a defensive move, responding to a security vacuum in the region and disappointment in U.S.-Russian relations.[83]

For China, involvement with SCO reflects the Chinese leadership's conception of a "harmonious world" premised on multilateralism, common security, common prosperity, and respect for each country's right to choose its own development path.[84] Indeed, what Chinese officials term the "Shanghai Spirit" incorporates many of the same concepts. As the June 15, 2006, SCO declaration affirms: "The SCO owes its smooth growth to its consistent adherence to the 'Shanghai Spirit' of 'mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for multicivilizations and pursuit of common development.' This spirit is the underlying philosophy and the most important code of conduct of SCO."[85]

While agreeing that any U.S. basing should be short-term and directly linked to the security situation in Afghanistan, both Russia and China have been reluctant to grant Iran full membership in the SCO for fear that this would turn the organization in an explicitly anti-American direction and encourage Western states to increase their pressure on China and Russia to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis.[86] No new members have been admitted since Uzbekistan joined in 2001, but Iran has been seeking full membership as its conflict with the United States and the EU has intensified.

Second, Russia and China share concern over regime security and place a priority on stability over democratic change. Scholars note the similarity between the Russian conception of "sovereign democracy," which purports to adapt democratic principles to Russian values, and the "Beijing consensus," based on gradual socio-economic reforms with a priority on Chinese values such as equity and social stability, unlike the focus on democracy and privatization underlying the Washington Consensus.[87] Regime stability, for China and Russia, is essential for regional stability in Central Asia.[88] Consequently, they both uphold the priority of noninterference in domestic affairs of SCO states and proclaim the right for sovereign states to choose their own model of development free of external pressures.

Third, they are committed to combating what the Chinese term the "three evils": separatism, terrorism, and extremism. For Russia and China, this has largely referred to mutual support for individual steps to address domestic threats. It is worth remembering that the Shanghai 5 began meeting at a time when Russia was focused on threats related to Chechnya, while some separatists in Xinjiang used violence in

the 1990s to pursue their goals.[89] Since 9/11, concern over transnational threats emerging from Afghanistan has grown, and the SCO has opened a regional counterterrorism center in Tashkent. Nevertheless, anti-terrorist drills under the SCO's auspices continue to focus on domestic rather than regional threats, and it is hard to imagine how the group could agree to intervention in a scenario where a member faced a separatist threat, given the SCO's commitment to noninterference, not to mention ongoing border disputes and lingering tensions among members.

Despite the apparent identity of interests between China and Russia in SCO, the reality is more complex. Even on security matters, there are some differences. Despite Russia's preference for security cooperation as the main purpose of the SCO, an even better scenario (from Moscow's perspective) would involve its subordination to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a formal alliance under Russian control, which does not include China (but does involve Armenia and Belarus). Russia has been seeking to increase coordination between the two organizations in an effort to become the hub of all Eurasian security networks, but has met with resistance within the SCO, especially from China. For example, Russia sought to make the Peace Mission 2007 a joint SCO-CSTO exercise, but China rejected the idea and the CSTO was limited to the role of observer.[90]

Russia and China are competitors for economic influence in Central Asia and have different priorities on many key issues. In particular, Russia remains suspicious of China's interest in developing multilateral economic cooperation in Central Asia and, as a result, prefers to focus on security cooperation within the SCO, while pursuing economic cooperation either bilaterally

or through other organizations, such as the EurAsEc, a vehicle for restoring Russian economic influence in the post-Soviet space. China is not a member of EurAsEc.

While generally supportive of the SCO, the Russian Foreign Policy concept, published in July 2008, clearly places a priority on developing CIS institutions such as the CSTO, identified as "a key instrument to maintain stability and ensure security in the CIS . . .," and EurAsEc, termed "a core element of economic integration."[91] By contrast, the SCO's main purpose appears to be to coordinate multilateral initiatives with CIS and Asian organizations.[92]

Meanwhile, China has been pushing for greater economic cooperation within the SCO, while Russia has been demurring. According to Alexander Lukin, Director of East Asian and SCO Studies at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Russia has been unwilling to contribute to a planned SCO Development Fund for fear that China would dominate the institution, once it began to function.[93] The Russian government also has been reluctant to move forward with a plan to create a free trade zone in Central Asia scheduled to go into force in 2023, due to concerns over China's aggressive exports policy in the region. Lukin notes that the $920 million China offered to the SCO is to be used to support purchases of Chinese goods.[94]

Unlike Russia, China sees the goals of economic and security cooperation in the SCO as interconnected and places a priority on the economic dimension. Some Chinese analysts perceive a Russian effort to regain its influence in Central Asia,[95] which they view as an obstacle to deepening economic cooperation. Chinese critics have likened Russian views to a "siege mentality" and "old thinking,"[96] though others note

that Central Asian leaders are equally suspicious of Chinese intentions.[97]

Zhao Huasheng, Director of Russian and Central Asian Studies at Fudan University's Shanghai Cooperation Center, argues that economic cooperation will ensure the long-term relevance of the SCO, as current security threats recede.[98] Pan Guang, Director of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Studies Center at the Shanghai Center for International Studies, notes that economic cooperation, particularly in the energy sector, is accelerating and will continue to grow despite the lack of enthusiasm in Russia. He acknowledges, however, that Russian initiatives thus far have been reactive. For example, President Vladimir Putin proposed creating an energy club within the auspices of the SCO just weeks after China began receiving its first pipeline oil from Kazakhstan in May 2006.[99]

The intensifying Sino-Russian competition over energy in Central Asia is likely to overshadow plans for an SCO energy club. China and Russia are competitors in determining supply routes, creating transnational energy complexes, and investing in exploration and pipeline projects. How these three issues are resolved will not only have a significant impact on economic integration within the SCO, but also will affect economic development within Russia and China and shape flows of energy outside the region, including to the United States.

In Alexei Malashenko's view, alternative energy pipeline routes are "the Kremlin's worst nightmare…." because they will reduce Russian leverage over Central Asia as well as making it less likely for Russia to become an energy superpower.[100] Indeed, Russia is facing rebellion in two directions and is seeing its monopoly over Central Asian gas exports increasingly challenged. The most heated competition is centered on

control over gas exports from Turkmenistan to Europe, which now flows through Russian pipelines. The EU and the United States have been trying to convince Turkmenistan to participate in the trans-Caspian and Nabucco gas pipeline projects which would connect Europe to Caspian resources, bypassing Russia. In response, Gazprom announced in September 2008 that it was prepared to offer Turkmenistan (as well as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) "European" prices for contracts beginning in 2009, possibly as much as $400/thousand cubic meters (tcm), and more than double the current rate of $150/tcm.[101]

Frustration with negotiations with Russia on an oil pipeline spanning from Eastern Siberia to Northeastern China, coupled with mounting concerns over the stability of oil supplies and shipments from the Middle East, and an interest in transforming Xinjiang into a new major oil and gas production and refining center, have led China to seek out a number of cooperative projects with Central Asian states.[102]

For the past decade, for example, China has been pursuing a "Go West" strategy to develop its western provinces, including Xinjiang.[103] In the past 5 years, President Hu Jintao has raised the priority of boosting the development of inland areas. Growing energy and transportation ties with neighboring Kazakhstan help support that aim as Xinjiang is becoming a new center for China's oil and gas industry. As in Tibet, in Xinjiang the Chinese government has sought to create disincentives for separatism by boosting the local economy and harshly repressing activities seen as promoting in any way Uighur self-determination. The Uighurs, who are Sunni Muslims, constitute 46 percent of Xinjiang's population of 19 million. Another 350,000 Uighurs live in Kazakhstan, with 50,000 in Kyrgyzstan, and 50,000 in Uzbekistan.[104]

The Chinese government claims to have disrupted plots by Islamic terrorists in Xinjiang in the months leading up to the Olympics and reported that violent attacks in August 2008 resulted in the deaths of 22 police officers and one civilian.[105] Beijing also has alleged that Uighur terrorists were fighting in Afghanistan and Chechnya. After the Chinese contended that the leader of one Uighur group, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), had ties to Osama Bin Laden, both the United States and the UN listed it as a terrorist organization in 2002. According to a Canadian security analyst, after ETIM's leader, Hasan Mahsum, died in 2003, this group largely has been inactive. Moreover, he notes that Uighurs follow Sufi practices which Al-Qaeda views as heretical, making any real alliance between Uighur groups and Al-Qaeda unlikely.[106]

Many Western experts on Xinjiang dispute the existence of a threat by Islamic radicalism in Xinjiang. They note that while a religious renewal has been occurring, the threat of radical Islam really originates within Pakistan and Afghanistan, not in Xinjiang or its Central Asian neighbors.[107] By conflating separatism and terrorism in Xinjiang, the Chinese government has a pretext to pressure Central Asian governments to limit activities by Uighur groups in their countries, as well as to crack down on legitimate religious activity within Xinjiang. For example, in September 2008, Chinese authorities instituted new rules prohibiting government officials, Communist party members, students, and teachers in Xinjiang from observing Ramadan, as well as limiting the size of prayer groups, imposing new travel restrictions on religious pilgrimages to other countries, and opposing Muslim traditions such as women wearing veils and men growing beards.[108]

Beijing's effort to develop Xinjiang's energy industry, coming at a time of mounting concern about energy security, has led Chinese energy companies to seek out new projects for exploration and pipeline delivery in Central Asia. Major energy projects are already underway with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. In a first for the Central Asian state, Turkmenistan agreed to a production-sharing agreement with China. According to their 2006 agreement, a 7,000km gas pipeline will be built to ship 30 billion cubic meters of gas annually, mostly from Turkmenistan, to Shanghai in China for 30 years beginning in 2009.[109] China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) is the operator for the project, while companies from Turkmenistan as well as transit countries, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, will hold 50 percent ownership of the pipelines passing through their territory. Pipeline construction has already begun in all three countries, with Kazakhstan building a 1,300km pipeline, Uzbekistan a 530km pipeline, and Turkmenistan a 188km pipeline.[110]

After 7 years of negotiations, in 2004 China and Kazakhstan finally agreed on a multistage pipeline project.[111] The first stage, spanning from Atasu in Kazakhstan to Alashankou in China was completed in December 2005 and began shipping oil in July 2006. The second stage, slated for completion in October 2009, will connect this pipeline to Kazakhstan's western fields, providing China with access to Caspian oil. China now receives 3.6 percent of its crude oil by pipeline from Kazakhstan, just under 6 million tons.[112] Once the final stage of the Kazakhstan-China pipeline is completed, China could receive up to 20 million tons of oil annually, making Kazakhstan one of China's top four crude suppliers.

Although China and its Central Asian partners view their expanding cooperation as a means of

diversifying their energy partnerships, Russia has thus far been successful in participating in major projects. In November 2007, two Russian companies (TNK-BP and GazpromNeft) signed an agreement with KazTransOil to ship up to 5 million tons oil annually to China via the Omsk-Pavlodar-Atasu-Alanshakou pipeline. In the first quarter of 2008, 300,000 tons of Russian crude were exported to China along this route.[113] Moreover, a Russian engineering company, Stroytransgaz, won a tender to build Turkmenistan's section of the gas pipeline to China.[114]

As Russia struggles to maintain its preeminent position in Central Asian energy networks and the EU and the United States also compete for access, China is likely to face new pressures from its partners in the region to pay higher prices for its gas and oil. Some Chinese energy experts already question the cost-effectiveness of relying on lengthy pipelines to connect China's energy-hungry eastern cities to Central Asian energy resources, when these cities could more easily rely on imported liquid natural gas (LNG) from Australia and Indonesia.[115]

Impact of the Georgian Crisis.

Russian-Georgian relations had been on a downward spiral since the election of President Saakashvili in 2004. As Georgia increased its cooperation with the EU and the United States (which supported Georgia's bid to join NATO), Russian-Georgian tensions heightened over the status of two autonomous regions within Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Saakashvili sought to reintegrate those regions into the Georgian state, while Russia expanded cooperation with them and supported their bid for autonomy.[116]

After exchanges of fire broke out between Georgian and South Ossetian forces on August 6 and 7, Georgian forces attacked Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, providing a pretext for Russian intervention. Russian forces then moved beyond South Ossetia, occupied Georgian territory, destroying villages and infrastructure, and also moved into Abkhazia, which had not been involved in the fighting.[117] Russia claimed that it was acting in defense of Russian peacekeepers and civilians,[118] although most of the latter were South Ossetians to whom the Russian government recently had provided Russian passports.

Georgia has disputed Russia's claim that war erupted after Georgian forces shelled the South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali, on August 7. On September 15, the Georgian government released transcripts of intercepted telephone calls among Georgian military personnel that provide evidence of Russian troop movements prior to August 7.[119] A Russian journalist's eyewitness account from South Ossetia makes a similar claim about Russian armored troop movements on the night of August 6.[120]

In contrast to Georgia's depiction of its actions as defense, however, independent military observers for the OSCE lent credence to the Russian position. According to these observers, who were unable to confirm Georgian accounts of Russian attacks on Georgian villages, Georgia's military fired indiscriminately on civilians and Russian peacekeepers in Tskhinvali.[121] A report by Amnesty International condemned both sides for failing to protect civilians and engaging in serious human rights violations. As a result of the conflict, as many as 200,000 civilians

were displaced and civilian deaths surpassed military casualties. [122]

If Russia sought to use Gazprom to dominate the Central Asian economies at the expense of other investors prior to the Georgian crisis, since August 2008 the Medvedev government has defined more explicitly a sphere of political interest in regions with which Russia historically has had special relations. In an August 31 television interview, President Medvedev outlined five principles governing Russian foreign policy, including (1) respect for international law; (2) the unacceptability of a unipolar world dominated by the United States; (3) interest in cooperation with other countries and rejection of policies leading to confrontation and isolation; (4) determination to protect Russian citizens and interests overseas; and (5) placing a priority on developing friendly ties "with regions in which Russia has privileged interests."[123]

Medvedev later tried to justify military action as a defensive effort to protect Russian nationals and South Ossetian civilians, comparable to U.S. actions after 9/11.[124] As Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov explained, Russia's economic successes now enable it to play a key role in the international community and to stand up for its citizens, according to the UN Charter's right to self-defense.[125] Lavrov also reminded his audience that he had spoken the previous year of the prospect of international recognition of Kosovo's independence as a red line "which inflict[s] unacceptable harm upon our national interests and undermine[s] international legality." The Foreign Minister went on to describe other areas where Russia felt its security interests were disregarded, including the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, missile defense in Eastern Europe, and NATO expansion.[126]

In a November 5 speech to the Russian Federal Assembly, President Medvedev put the blame for the Georgian events squarely on "the arrogant course of the U.S. administration, which hates criticism and prefers unilateral decisions." He greeted Barack Obama's election with tough talk on missile defense in Eastern Europe, which he pledged to counter with mobile missiles in Kaliningrad.[127] After a meeting with Sarkozy, Medvedev appeared to reconsider, arguing instead that a conference on European security should be held next summer and that all states should avoid any unilateral moves in the interim. France, which held the EU presidency in the second half of 2008, has urged the Obama administration to reassess its missile defense plans, while supporting a resumption of EU talks with Russia in November. [128]

Another goal of the Russian intervention in Georgia was to destabilize its political leadership in hope of unseating its president, whom Medvedev referred to "a political corpse." Prime Minister Putin further speculated that the United States "gave Mr. Saakashvili carte blanche for any actions, including military ones" in hope of benefiting one of the presidential candidates, a reference to John McCain.[129] McCain, whose top foreign policy adviser, Randy Scheunemann, worked as a lobbyist for the Georgian government,[130] strongly supported that government and counts President Saakashvili as a close friend. After the Russian invasion, McCain stated that "We are all Georgians," a reference to the headline in *Le Monde* after the 9/11 attacks, which proclaimed that "We Are All Americans."

The Bush administration denied strongly any complicity in Georgian military action, and State department officials testified that, to the contrary, they urged Georgian officials not to be provoked by Russian

and South Ossetian actions.[131] Nonetheless, some observers in the United States and Europe argued that Washington was sending mixed messages to Georgia and saw Vice President Cheney's September visit as unnecessarily provocative.[132] Indeed, Konstantin Kosyachov, who heads the Foreign Affairs Committee in the lower house of the Russian parliament, accused Cheney of masterminding the Georgian crisis and seeking to create an "anti-Russian axis."[133] During his visit to Georgia, Cheney condemned the Russian invasion in the sharpest terms, calling it "an illegitimate, unlilateral attempt to change your country's borders by force that has been universally condemned by the free world." In Cheney's view, Russian actions in Georgia cast doubt on its reliability as a partner and its overall intentions.[134]

Despite Russian efforts to portray their actions in Georgia as defensive, the United States and most European countries viewed their behavior as aggressive. Secretary Rice warned that "the legitimate goals of rebuilding Russia has taken a dark turn with the rollback of personal freedoms, the arbitrary enforcement of the law, the pervasive corruption at various levels of Russian society, and the paranoid, aggressive impulse which has manifested itself before in Russian history."[135] Although no specific sanctions were imposed, the United States and the EU committed to a major economic and humanitarian assistance effort for Georgia and many planned areas of cooperation with Russia were put on hold indefinitely.[136] Specifically, the Bush administration suspended talks with Russian counterparts on civil nuclear cooperation and sent Navy ships to Georgian ports to assist with humanitarian aid, while the EU shelved plans to negotiate a partnership agreement with Russia, and the NATO-Russia council

became inoperative. Russia now faces an uphill battle in its efforts to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

If Russia had hoped that it would find support for its actions in Georgia within the SCO, this turned out not to be the case, apparently largely due to China's unease over Russian recognition of the two breakaway regions. Prior to the recognition, Chinese media coverage largely echoed Russian positions, and, even afterwards, Chinese experts sympathized with Russian opposition to NATO's expansion.[137] After Russia recognized the two regions on August 26, however, Chinese officials began expressing their concern. On August 27, Hu Jintao and Medvedev met in Dushanbe and discussed the Georgian crisis, among other issues. After the Russian President briefed his counterpart on South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Hu confined his remarks to an extremely bland statement, which was far from the expression of support Medvedev may have been seeking. Hu stated: "China has noticed the latest developments in the region, expecting all sides concerned to properly settle the issue through dialogue and cooperation."[138] The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Qin Gang, issued a statement that same day which further noted that "China is concerned of the latest development in South Ossetia and Abkhazia" and reiterated the hope that "the relevant parties can resolve the issue through dialogue and consultation."[139] Depicting the minimal support Moscow received from friends and allies, Dmitri Trenin of the Moscow Carnegie Center noted that the "Foreign Ministry of China took its time before issuing an essentially pointless statement." [140]

Although the SCO held its eighth meeting in Dushanbe on August 28, 2 days after the Russian

recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the joint declaration made no mention of it. Instead, SCO members "expressed deep concern over the recent tension triggered by the South Ossetia issue, and urge the relevant parties to resolve the existing problems peacefully through dialogue and to make efforts for reconciliation and negotiations."[141] Although the SCO went on to praise Russian efforts to promote a resolution of the conflict, they also highlighted the importance of "efforts aimed at preserving the unity of the state and its territorial integrity . . ."[142]

The key role China played in narrowing the scope of SCO support for Russia's approach to the Georgian crisis seems readily apparent when the SCO statement is compared to the one issued by the CSTO, which includes Armenia and Belarus as well as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (but not China).[143] Although the CSTO's September 5 declaration sides with the Russian view of the conflict, only mentioning Georgia's efforts to resolve the South Ossetian situation by force and praising "Russia's active role in assisting peace and cooperation in the region," nonetheless even the CSTO member states did not go so far as to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Instead, the declaration confined its support for "the ensuring of lasting security for South Ossetia and Abkhazia."[144]

One of the immediate implications of the Georgian crisis was to reinvigorate energy diplomacy in Central Asia, while highlighting the risks involved in building pipelines in the region.[145] Failing to receive the desired level of support on Georgia from the Central Asian states, Russian leaders have sought to anchor the region more firmly through a more extensive web of energy agreements. During a visit by President

Putin in early September, President Karymov, who is cooperating with China on another pipeline project while also seeking to improve his country's relations with the West, signed an agreement to build a gas pipeline that would ship up to 30 billion cubic meters of gas from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to Russia.[146] In October, Kyrgyzstan agreed to sell a 75 percent stake in Kyrgyzgaz to Gazprom. Although there is little gas in the country (6 billion cubic meters), Russia is seeking to expand its influence in Kyrgyzstan, while the latter hopes to reduce its energy dependence on Uzbekistan.[147]

U.S. officials were equally active in the region. Following a Russian visit to Turkmenistan to discuss energy cooperation, Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia George Krol went to Dushanbe in early September to discuss the trans-Caspian pipeline. Despite new awareness of the project's vulnerability and sensitivity, since the pipeline would need to transit through Georgia, both the United States and Turkmenistan remain interested in the project.[148] In September Vice-President Cheney visited Georgia, Armenia, and Ukraine, while Secretary of State Rice visited Kazakhstan in October. She denied that the Bush administration sought to encourage Kazakhstan to improve its relations with Washington at Moscow's expense. Rice noted that "Kazakhstan is an independent country. It can have friendships with whomever it wishes," a sentiment echoed by Kazakh foreign minister Marat Tazhin.[149]

This fall Chinese leaders also visited Central Asia. In late October Prime Minister Wen Jiabao traveled to Kazakhstan to discuss keeping the second phase of the construction of their joint oil pipeline project on schedule as well as other aspects of bilateral cooperation.[150]

That same month, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) agreed to develop an oilfield in Uzbekistan, which has estimated reserves of 30 million tons with expected annual capacity of 2 million tons.[151] CNPC is already building a gas pipeline through Uzbekistan. After signing a framework agreement with Turkmenistan in late August, CNPC announced in September that it would increase gas imports from Turkmenistan to 40 billion cubic meters a year from the current level of 30 billion cubic meters.[152]

Although the Georgian crisis reinvigorated the competition for energy resources, it also revealed Russia's vulnerabilities by destabilizing Russia's economy. In the weeks following the invasion, foreign investors fled, taking $21 billion in capital with them. Investors already were concerned about the Russian government's economic approach in light of pressure placed by Russian shareholders on the British BP-TNK joint venture and Putin's threatening attitude towards a coal and steel executive, whom he accused of price gauging.[153] With the American financial meltdown in September and the resulting decline in the price of oil in October, since May the Russian stock market has lost two-thirds of its value. The Russian government had to close down the stock exchange early on a number of occasions in September and infused $190 billion into the banking system.[154] Despite the analogies between the Russian intervention in Georgia and Soviet behavior during the Cold War, one major difference, providing the West with leverage, is the Russian economy's level of global integration. Medvedev has acknowledged that the Georgian crisis has had a negative impact and claimed that Russia does not want to be isolated economically, though he added that his country would not be pressured economically by the West.[155]

Conclusions: Prospects for Great Power Competition in Central Asia.

In assessing U.S.-Russia-China competition in Central Asia, this monograph has outlined a complex web of relationships in the region. An overview of changing U.S. Central Asia policy over the past 5 years reveals an effort to respond to changing developments on the ground, most recently the Georgian crisis, but also the "color" revolutions, the Andijan events in Uzbekistan and its subsequent decision to end U.S. basing rights at K2, Kazakhstan's economic rise, and leadership change in Turkmenistan. At the same time, the worsening security situation in Afghanistan and growing insecurity about energy supplies has heightened U.S. interest in security and economic cooperation in Central Asia. These concerns have further undermined the already inconsistent and marginally effective U.S. efforts to promote democratic change in the region.

In fact, U.S. policy goals are turning out to be mutually incompatible and counterproductive. The initial phase of U.S. involvement in Central Asia after 9/11 focused on anti-terrorism, highlighting a symptom rather than underlying domestic causes of regional insecurity, such as corrupt and unaccountable governments, and pervasive poverty.[156] In recent years, the growing priority of energy in U.S. relations with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states has created disincentives for further political reforms in these countries. According to a 2008 Freedom House report,

> . . . energy needs are increasingly distorting relationships between democracies that consume hydrocarbons and

> the authoritarian states that produce them. Euro-Atlantic democracies have yet to agree on a common strategy that advances both energy-security needs and basic democratic values. Energy dependence is promoting an uncoordinated and short-term approach to relations with authoritarian governments, the hardening core of which is located in the non-Baltic former Soviet Union. These democratically unaccountable countries are moving farther from the Euro-Atlantic neighborhood and creating alliances and networks outside of the Western community. As energy wealth has emboldened authoritarian rulers, the Euro-Atlantic democracies have seemingly lost their resolve and sense of common purpose in advancing democratic practices.[157]

Freedom House points to a correlation between the rising price of oil in the past decade and declining indicators of democratic governance in major energy producers, such as Kazakhstan. This is because energy sector wealth strengthens the hand of authoritarian rulers in countries where accountability was already weak and exacerbates corruption and other rent-seeking behaviors at the expense of democratic governance.[158]

Russia and China have been reacting to these same pressures on the ground as the United States. In response to the "color" revolutions, they achieved broad agreement on the priority of regime security and the need to limit the long-term military presence of the United States in Central Asia. These are also two key areas—defining the political path of Central Asian states and securing a strategic foothold in the region—where the United States finds itself in competition with Russia and China.

Nonetheless, the Russia-China partnership should not be seen as an anti-U.S. bloc, nor should the SCO be viewed as entirely cohesive. Thus in assessing U.S.-Russia-China competition, it is important to note that

the United States is not necessarily squaring off against Russia and China together. To the contrary, there are areas where Russia and China are in competition with one another, particularly in the economic realm, which provide opportunities for U.S. policies. Moreover, the lack of consensus between Beijing and Moscow over economic integration within the SCO has weakened the organization's cohesiveness, while leaving room for projects to integrate Central Asia economically with South Asia, East Asia, and Europe, as well as for other diplomatic initiatives to engage Central Asian states on transnational issues of common concern.

The tendency to view U.S.-Russia-China competition in the region with 19th century lenses, as some sort of "new great game" obscures the impact of globalization and the common interests the great powers share in addressing transnational problems. The United States, Russia, and China all have an interest in addressing narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal arms trade in the region. They also have a common stake in achieving stability in Afghanistan and routing Al-Qaeda from the region. To the extent that Russia, China, and the SCO as an organization share these goals, the United States will face opportunities to expand region-wide as well as for bilateral cooperation with Russia and China on transnational problems.

In the short term, Russia's intervention in Georgia has created new obstacles to Russian-American cooperation in Central Asia and elsewhere. The meeting on October 22, 2008, between Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Nikolai Makarov, Chief of the Russian General Staff, was a hopeful sign that the two countries are trying to work together to resolve pressing global problems. They discussed exactly those issues that are most promising for cooperation in Central Asia: NATO's relations with

Russia, improving cooperation on counterterrorism, nonproliferation, and narcotics trafficking.[159]

Competition to secure basing arrangements and energy contracts only benefits authoritarian regimes at the expense of enduring regional security. U.S. dialogue with Russia and China on security and energy in Central Asia would contribute to regional stability and help bring out areas of shared interest. With China in particular, a fellow energy importer, the United States shares many common interests in energy in Central Asia, particularly the diversification of supply routes away from frameworks monopolized by the Russian energy sector. Although available reserves in individual Central Asian states create competitive pressures for access to energy supplies, expanding Sino-American dialogue on energy security would create better understanding of each country's concerns and generate ideas for moderating demand.

Policy Recommendations.

First, the United States needs to develop a set of achievable and consistent policy goals for Central and South Asia. The U.S. diplomatic approach to Central Asia is premised on the elaboration of a broader regional strategy that seeks to integrate Central and South Asia. Despite the possible merit in seeking to view Central Asia within a South Asian context, both to support stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan and to encourage regional economic integration more broadly, the Bush administration did not develop a coherent strategy to this end.

Instead, the U.S. Government pursued a Pakistan policy, an India policy, and policies towards individual Central Asian states. Although some progress has been

made in encouraging the development of regional transportation and electricity links in Central Asia, the United States cannot hope to succeed in viewing the region as an integrated whole if the countries concerned fail to have such a vision themselves. Moreover, as was noted in the first section of this monograph, the United States pursues different priorities in relations with the five Central Asian states.

U.S. policies towards Pakistan, India, and Central Asian states also often work at cross-purposes. For example, even as the priority of human rights concerns declined in U.S. policies towards Central Asian states since 9/11, in the case of Pakistan, U.S. support for the authoritarian government of its long-time ally, Pervez Musharraf, well after he lost the confidence of pro-democracy segments of the Pakistani population, undercut the entire premise of democratization as a U.S. policy goal for Central and South Asia. Similarly, the effort to encourage further U.S.-India cooperation through a separate U.S.-Indian agreement on civilian nuclear cooperation, despite India's unwillingness to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, undermines U.S. nonproliferation efforts elsewhere in the region and outside.

Second, the United States needs to redress the imbalance in aid to Central Asian states. Although security assistance to the region is needed in support of U.S. and NATO Afghanistan missions, regional stability will not be achieved if greater efforts are not taken to address regional development needs and encourage accountable governance. The decline in Freedom Support funding is particularly short-sighted in this respect and more needs to be done to address poverty, encourage the development of civil society, and address social problems such as the environment and public health.

Third, the United States should work with its allies in the EU and Japan to coordinate assistance and avoid overlapping efforts. In July 2007 the EU announced its "Strategy for a New Partnership for Central Asia" and designated a Special Representative to the region, Pierre Morel. Although the EU provided $2 billion in aid (1.3 million euros) through the Technical Assistance Program to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) from 1991-2006, the new Central Asia strategy raises funding substantially to $1.17 billion (750 million euros) for 2007-13. The strategy involves a series of dialogues on key areas of concern such as human rights, the rule of law, education, trade, energy, transport, and the environment.[160] Although regional cooperation will be encouraged, 70 percent of the funds for 2007-10 will support bilateral assistance projects.[161]

Japan's interest in Central Asia grew out of former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's Eurasian diplomacy initiative launched in 1997, which sought primarily to reinvigorate Japan's ties with Russia, while promoting dialogue and cooperation with Central Asia in a variety of areas. Since 2004, Japan has developed a "Central Asia plus Japan" dialogue to encourage regional economic integration and has provided bilateral aid through its "Silk Road Diplomacy."[162] Although Japan has given out some $2.5 billion in humanitarian and economic aid to the Central Asian states since the 1990s, some Western observers believe that Japan's main interest is in expanding its influence in the energy sector, an area where investment is likely to be more effective than aid but where the risky investment climate creates significant entry barriers.[163]

Despite some differences in emphasis, the United States, Japan, and the EU broadly share many of the same priorities and face many of the same tradeoffs,

especially achieving progress in human rights while moving forward with energy diversification and counterterrorism projects. Regular efforts to coordinate initiatives on Central Asia would help promote more consistent and effective policies.

Fourth, the United States should engage China in dialogue on Central Asia, both to increase trust and to address common concerns, especially narcotics and human trafficking, proliferation of WMD, terrorism, and stability in Afghanistan. The United States has already been discussing Central Asia in subdialogue discussions at the assistant secretary level. Central Asia could be included in the context of other higher level meetings, such as the Senior U.S.-China Dialogue where regional stability issues often are raised, and also the Strategic Economic Dialogue where energy security already figures prominently on the agenda.

Although the United States and Russia have some competing energy and security interests in Central Asia, they have discussed related common concerns, for example, through the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counter-Terrorism, the U.S.-Russia Energy Dialogue, and the NATO-Russia Council. Addressing shared interests, for example, in promoting energy efficiency and conservation in Central Asia, preventing loose nukes, and reducing narcotics and human trafficking in Central Asia could be addressed in the context of these bilateral meetings.

Before such dialogue can occur, the Obama administration needs to reevaluate its Russia policy and, once such a review is concluded, speak with one voice to and about Russia. Although the Russian invasion of Georgia brought back unpleasant memories of Cold War era confrontations, as Henry Kissinger and George Shultz reminded us, while the United States needs to express its concern about Moscow's actions, "isolating Russia

is not a sustainable long-term policy."[164] Despite many differences, President Obama will need to consider the areas where cooperation with Russia continues to be in American interests. Hasty retaliatory actions such as a commitment to membership action plan for Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO and the acceleration of missile defense deployments in Eastern Europe should be avoided until the Alliance fully thinks through its security interests and the best ways of achieving them.

Fifth, the United States should seek to engage the SCO to improve its understanding of the organization and encourage greater trust between its permanent members and the United States. While some have proposed establishing a relationship between NATO and the SCO,[165] this would serve to equate the SCO with a military alliance, when its own members reject this characterization. A Japanese scholar has suggested a more promising approach which involves creating an SCO plus alpha format,[166] which could include the United States, the EU, and Japan, perhaps to discuss issues of particular concern, such as Afghanistan, counterterrorism, or narcotics and human trafficking.

Another way for the United States to engage the SCO is through the OSCE, particularly in the event Kazakhstan assumes its leadership in 2010. The OSCE and the SCO already have a limited relationship, and the SCO has participated in a number of meetings on counterterrorism in recent years.[167] Nonetheless, the OSCE and the SCO are at loggerheads over political issues, such as election monitoring, which Russia claims is biased. The Russian government has been seeking to dilute the role of the OSCE by creating a new Eurasian forum that would involve the SCO, the CSTO, NATO, the EU, and the CIS.[168]

Finally, the success of U.S. policies in Central Asia depends on long-term changes in other policy areas. A withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq without seeking permanent basing options in the country, for example, would add to the credibility of U.S. assertions that its military presence in Central Asia is linked to the security situation in Afghanistan. Similarly, a serious effort by the Obama administration to reduce the U.S. dependency on imported energy would enable the United States to be more consistent in its political and economic policies towards Central Asia.

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