CENTRAL ASIA SECURITY: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR US INTERESTS

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Abstract

Independence has brought a host of new problems to the Central Asian States, as well as exaggerating the number of former ones. At the same time, statehood has meant that the leaders of these former Soviet republics have new tools at their disposal to try and address these issues, but international assistance and the instruments of statehood are often used unwisely, or not to their fullest possible extent. This paper discusses the internal and external security concerns of the Central Asian states and its implication for U.S interests.

The Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) face common security challenges from crime, corruption, terrorism, and commitments to economic and democratic reforms. However, cooperation among them remains halting, so security in the region is likely to vary by country. Internal political developments in several bordering or close-by states may have a large impact on Central Asian security. These developments include a more authoritarian and globlist Russia, an economically growing China, instability in Iran and the South Caucasus region, and re-surging drug production and Islamic extremism in Afghanistan. Now how U.S uses these security issues of Central Asia for its interest is the focus of this
paper. U.S interest in Central Asia can be summed up by three words: security, democracy and energy.

Introduction

According to DER SPIEGEL:

“No one has ever dominated the earth so totally as the United States does today... America is the Schwarzenegger of international politics: showing off muscles, obtrusive, intimidating... The Americans, in the absence of limits put to them by anybody or any thing, act as if they own a kind of blank check in their MacWorld.”

Schwarzenegger was a famous body builder, actor and governor of California. He has a very sound physique. The newly independent states of Central Asia are passing through a transitional phase of nation building. The Central-Asian –Caspian region is one of the richest in the world in its energy resources. Many countries compete for the right to develop its oil and gas reserves, jockeying for a share of a potentially very lucrative market. Because of rich natural resources, lack of capital and expertise, weak armed forces and landlocked position, Central Asia region is in the utter need of good relationship with the neighbors and other powers of the world.

All these features of the region provide a good reason for the involvement of outsiders. Various nations of smaller, medium and big stature are quite eager to engage in the new Central Asian republics, especially for exploitation of vast energy resources. In this context, the huge reserves of oil and gas are most attractive features of the region as a whole. For this purpose, a kind of diplomatic
struggle is going on among different countries, which see their stakes in this region.³

The U.S is also one of these countries and wants to have a say in the affairs of the region. To achieve this target, it is making its own diplomatic efforts. The United States has varied and at times competing interests in Central Asia. The region, which includes the five post-Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as Afghanistan and the Caspian basin, plays an important part in U.S. global strategy in view of its proximity to Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Iran, and other key regional actors. No less important are its ethno-religious composition and vast deposits of oil, gas, coal, and uranium. The United States has provided assistance for these efforts and boosted such aids and involvement after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, but questions remain about what should be the appropriate level and scope of U.S. interest and presence in the region.

In the past five years real and present dangers to U.S. national security, especially Islamist terrorism and threats to the energy supply, have affected U.S. policy in Central Asia. The region has great energy potential and is strategically important, but it is land-locked, which complicates U.S. access and involvement there.

Types of Insecurities in Central Asia: Internal and External

We can divide these insecurities threats of Central Asia in three broad categories. 1) Chronic threats which were inherited from the past, 2) new insecurities that have appeared during the transition
period, and 3) threats that have resulted from geo-political changes in the region and in the world. Ultimately, all of these have one commonality: They are manifestations of difficulties in the management of new processes.

**Inherited Common Insecurities**

These types of insecurities are related to what the countries of Central Asia inherited from their history, a combination of spatial distribution, the nature of the rural and traditional societies and the transformation processes which the republics underwent as part of the Soviet Union. These include Nation-state formation, geography, infrastructure, ecology and environment, traditional society and reliance on all-providing system. Human security continues to be seen through the responsibility of top-down measures, instead of bottom-up solutions.

**Human Insecurities acquired during the Transition Period**

The past decade of transition in Central Asia has been marked by a sharp increase in a variety of human insecurities, as a direct result of 1) sudden and multi-dimensional structural changes in society, the economy and the political system, 2) ill-conceived policies or reactions to these, and 3) the changing nature of the roles and responsibilities of the state. Transition offered an opportunity of change, but was also seen as a time of crisis for many individuals and households. Although the causes of these insecurities need to be further analyzed, their manifestations are the following, with varying degrees between the different countries. These includes economic insecurity, poverty, decline in level of
human resource development, education, healthcare, social welfare, political change, changing social structure, gender, young people, drugs, crime, globalization.  

**Human Insecurities as a Result of Changing Regional Contexts**

These types of threats were identified as a result of changing dynamics within Central Asia and from conflicts from outside the region, and call for a common regional platform to ensure regional stability. There are two sub category of this type of insecurities.

**Inter-Regional conflicts and Threats**

These includes fall-out from open conflicts and poor management of common resources. The former further creates escalation of instability in other countries, large scale displacements, armed insurgencies and threats of terrorism and extremism and destabilization of trade and economic security for markets in the region.

**Extra-Regional Conflicts and Threats:**

These threats come from two sources: Instability in Afghanistan as well as the changing global context, and demonstrated once again the need for regional stability to ensure human security.

**Security Threats to Central Asia**

The problems of authoritarian regimes, crime, corruption, terrorism, and ethnic and civil tensions jeopardize the security of all the new states of Central Asia, Kazakhstan has faced the potential of separatism in northern Kazakhstan Tajikistan faces threats from economic Mismanagement and the possibility of separatism,
particularly by its northern Soghd. In Kyrgyzstan, northern and southern regional interests vie for influence over decision-making in Central politics. Turkmenistan faces clan and provincial tensions and poverty that could contribute to instability. Uzbekistan faces escalating civil discontent and violence from those whom President Islam Karimov labels as Islamic extremists from a large ethnic Tajik population, and from an impoverished citizenry. Ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz clashed in 1990 in the Fergana Valley. This fertile valley is divided between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and contains about one-fifth of Central Asia’s population. All these states are harmed by drug and human trafficking and associated corruption and health problems.\(^7\)

**Islamic Extremism and Terrorism**

The practice of Islam is still state-regulated in Central Asia, and Central Asian leaders have not taken pains to distinguish between religious activists, religious extremist, and Islamic terrorist. Effectively, anyone who advocates the primacy of religious values over secular norms is understood to be “an enemy of the state”, whether or not this primacy is to be achieved through persuasion or through force.\(^8\)

After the Basmachi Revolt was suppressed and liquidated by the Soviet forces, no organized terrorist or militant activity could take place due to a strong vigilance by the Soviet law enforcement authorities and the government. But after independence, the situation changed totally and the Pandora’s Box of militancy and
terrorism opened up once again, taking advantage of the political confusion and uncertainty that engulf the region initially.\textsuperscript{9}

There are several phases in rise of terrorism in Central Asia. CARs regimes have recently taken to labeling Hizb-ut-Tahrir al Islami (HT, Party of Islamic Liberation) and the militant Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and civil war in Tajikistan as the main source of terrorism in central Asia. Different factors determining how these two groups have been able to effectively operate in the region will be addressed including: current CARs regime policies towards Islamist, especially in Uzbekistan, and the effects these policies have had on the population; the depressed economic situation, and the viability of fundamentalism as an alternate in the region; notwithstanding outside influences, such as international financial assistance and ideological teachings leading to the rise of radical Islam after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dynamics around surrounding the creation of the newly independent CARs. Uzbekistan, Kyrgstan and Tajikistan are the victims of terrorism\textsuperscript{10}

**Narcotics and Drug Trade**

The security of Central Asia can no longer be understood in separation from drug trade. Most processing of opium into heroin now occurs inside Afghanistan, and the largest increases in production are taking place in the country’s northern parts, making large quantities available in the vicinity of the Central Asian states. Known heroin laboratories in Kunduz province and elsewhere in the
north, as well as increased seizures of heroin coupled with decreasing opium seizures, indicate that the main volume of drugs Moving into Central Asia is in the form of heroin.

By the early 2000s, the number of drug users in Central Asia had skyrocketed. Central Asia has so far not seen an addiction epidemic as Russia has, but heroin-addiction levels are rising rapidly. Societal consequences are emerging, including a rapid rise in HIV cases and drug-related crime. Concomitantly, the economic and political impact of the drug trade in these states has also been significant, especially in the region’s weakest states, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In the absence of a strong licit economy—especially in the case of Tajikistan, still suffering the ravages of war—the large turnover and profit margins of drug trafficking have a serious impact on state and society. This has created a severe corruption problem across the region at all levels, especially among low-paid government officials in law enforcement. High-level government officials have also been involved in the trafficking of drugs, raising the question of whether systematic criminal infiltration into state agencies is taking place. Meanwhile, the Islamic insurgencies in the region have been tied intimately to the drug trade.

**Border Tensions**

While border tensions have been a salient feature of Central Asian politics for the past decade due to the undemocratic and often undetermined drawing of their borders at independence, the area has seen considerable progress. By 2005, most of the boundary disputes
between Central Asian states and between them and China were resolved. The process was often difficult and produced political crises, especially in Kyrgyzstan, but it nevertheless testifies to a certain maturity of the political leadership.¹²

The problem of delineating their 4,200 mile border has been an important source of concern to Russia and Kazakhstan. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have agreed on the delimitation of about one-half of their 579 mile shared border and pledged in September 2007 to peacefully settle contentious disputes involving borders in the Fergana Valley. Uzbekistan’s unilateral efforts to delineate and fortify its borders with Kazakhstan in the late 1990s led to tensions. In September 2002, however, the Kazakh and Uzbek presidents announced that delineation of their 1,400 mile border was complete, and some people in previously disputed border villages began to relocate if they felt that the new borders cut them off from their “homeland”.¹³

Crime and Corruption

The collapse of legal economies in conflict-torn and transition countries has created a severe corruption problem across the region at all levels. Low-paid government officials in law enforcement are routinely bribed to look the other way as smugglers take a shipment through, and are otherwise involved in protecting the local transport and distribution of drugs. One leading Central Asian specialist estimated the average proportion of corrupt officials in the law enforcement agencies of the region at 70 percent. The interior ministries across the post-Soviet space remain the most
unreformed sectors of the state, and have attracted little foreign interest, with the exception of some activity on the part of the OSCE. This has helped to sustain high levels of corruption among these entities.\textsuperscript{14}

**Domestic and Transnational Issues**

While the region’s political environment is unstable, the states of the region need to deal with a host of domestic problems in their quest for stability and development. Foremost among these is the development of the political systems of the region. The five post-Soviet Central Asian states have so far failed to make significant progress in building of, participatory transparent and accountable government institutions. While some progress was noted in the mid-1990s, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, a certain backtracking in political reforms was widely noted from the late 1990s onwards.\textsuperscript{15}

**Current WMD Proliferation Threats**

The continued presence of fissile and radioactive material in the countries of Central Asia poses a persistent proliferation risk. Obtaining fissile material such as highly enriched uranium (HEU) or plutonium is one of the most important steps separating terrorists from a nuclear device of very destructive power, while acquiring certain types of radioactive material is the principal hurdle to creating a radiation dispersal device (RDD) or "dirty bomb". Central Asia is a potential source for both types of material. HEU remains at several sites in Central Asia. Another potential proliferation threat in Central Asia is the significant number of "orphan" radiation sources.
These are sources abandoned by medical, scientific and industrial users who are either unable or unwilling to dispose of them properly, leaving them vulnerable to theft. Some of these sources could be used in unsophisticated radiological devices.¹⁶

**Energy and Water Issues**

Energy issues have been more complicated, mainly because of the unbalance between water and hydrocarbon resources in the region. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan dominate its oil and gas resources, whereas 90 percent of water resources are concentrated in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These resources were bartered in Soviet times, a process that effectively collapsed in the 1990s as gas producers demanded payment but refused to pay for water, a dynamic known from the Middle East and other areas.¹⁷

**Economic and Defence Security Threats**

The Central Asian states have worked to bolster their economic and defense capabilities by seeking assistance from individual Western donors such as the United States, by trying to cooperate with each other, and by joining myriad international organizations. Regional cooperation has faced challenges from differential economic development and hence divergent interests among the states, and from more nationalistic postures. Cooperation also is undermined by what the states view as Uzbekistan’s overbearing impulses. Regional cooperation problems are potentially magnified by the formation of extra-regional cooperation groups such as the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PFP), and the Shanghai
Cooperation Organization (SCO). Each group reflects the diverging interests of Russia, the United States, and China, although the fact that each group stresses anti-terrorism would seem to provide motivation for cooperation. All of the Central Asian states have been faced with creating adequate military and border forces the capabilities of the military, border, and other security forces are limited, compared to those of neighboring states such as Russia, China, or Iran. Military forces range in manpower from about 16,300 in Tajikistan (excluding Russians) to 87,000 in Uzbekistan.18

The global economic downturn that began in 2008 contributed to halting or even reversing the growth of per capita income in the Central Asian states in 2008-2009, the first such lack of growth in several years. Reductions in remittances from migrant workers and rising food and fuel costs account for some of the decline. Regional currencies depreciated against the dollar, contributing to plummeting imports, and fluctuating world commodity prices contributed to declining exports. The banking sectors were severely stressed by a jump in non-performing loans, and banks cut back private sector lending. These economic stresses threaten government spending on health, education, and other social programs.19

**Implication for US Interest**

United States and the West in general find themselves increasingly dependent on the continued stability and development of the Central Eurasian region. The United States is heavily invested in Afghanistan, and its engagement there and in Central Asian states
is a long-time endeavor. The future of this region has considerable bearing on the development of the Global War on Terrorism and in general on U.S. security interests in Eurasia: the maintenance of access to airspace and territory in the heart of Asia, the development of alternative sources of energy, and the furthering of freedom and democratic development. The Eurasian drug trade is a threat to all of these ambitions.20 After the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the former Bush Administration stated that U.S. policy toward Central Asia focused on three inter-related activities: the promotion of security, domestic reforms, and energy developments.21

Although then-U.S. Caspian emissary Elizabeth Jones in April 2001 carefully elucidated that the United States would not intervene militarily to halt incursions by Islamic terrorists into Central Asia, this stance was effectively reversed after September 11, 2001. U.S.-led counter-terrorism efforts were undertaken in Afghanistan.22 In October 2003, then-Assistant Secretary Jones in testimony stressed that “our big strategic interests [in Central Asia] are not temporary” and that the United States and its international partners have no alternative but to “be a force for change in the region.”

Participating with Members on November 18, 2009 in launching the Congressional Caucus on Central Asia, Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake, Jr. stated that the Obama Administration” has placed a high priority on building partnerships and enhancing our political engagement in Central Asia.”
this enhanced engagement include the establishment of high-level annual bilateral consultations with each of the regional states on counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, democratic reform, rule of law, human rights, relations with NGOs, trade and investment, health, and education

Reactions to U.S.-Led Coalition Actions in Iraq

U.S. ties to the Central Asian states appeared generally sound in the immediate wake of U.S.-led coalition operations in Iraq in March-April 2003 to eliminate state-sponsored terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Initial responses in the region ranged from support by Uzbekistan to some expressions of concern by Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan that diplomacy had not been given enough of a chance. Alleged incidents where civilians have been killed during U.S. operations have been criticized by some Islamic groups and others in Central Asia.

Designations of Terrorist Organizations

The U.S. government has moved to classify various groups in the region as terrorist organizations, making them subject to various sanctions. In September 2000, the State Department designated the IMU, led by Yuldash, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, stating that the IMU resorts to terrorism, actively threatens U.S. interests, and attacks American citizens. Among other terrorist groups, then-CIA Director Porter Goss testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 17, 2005, that the IJG/IJU “has become a more virulent threat to U.S. interests and
local governments.” On the other hand, the United States has not yet classified Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) as a terrorist group.\textsuperscript{24}

**Military Cooperation:**

U.S. security accords were concluded with several Central Asian states after September 11, 2001. These include a U.S.-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership signed on March 12, 2002, that included a nonspecific security guarantee. The United States affirmed that “it would regard with grave concern any external threat” to Uzbekistan’s security and would consult with Uzbekistan “on an urgent basis” regarding a response. Kazakh accords were signed in 2002 on the emergency use of Kazakhstan’s Almaty airport and on military-to-military relations. Turkmenistan, which has sought to remain neutral, allowed the use of its bases for refueling and humanitarian trans-shipments. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have sent several military liaison officers to USCENTCOM.\textsuperscript{25}

**Closure of Kurshi-Khanabad**

Uzbekistan on July 29 demanded that the United States vacate K2 within six months. On November 21, 2005, the United States officially ceased operations to support Afghanistan at K2. Many K2 activities shifted to the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan. Some observers viewed the closure of K2 and souring U.S.-Uzbek relations as setbacks to U.S. Influence in the region and as gains for Russian and Chinese influence. Others suggested that U.S. ties with other regional states provided continuing influence and that U.S.
criticism of human rights abuses might pay future dividends among regional populations.  

**Emphasizes on Kazakhstan as Strategic Partner**

With the closure of K2 and the cooling of U.S.-Uzbek relations, the United States appeared to shift more of its regional emphasis to Kazakhstan. In a joint statement issued at the close of Nazarbayev’s September 2006 U.S. visit, the two countries hailed progress in “advancing our strategic partnership.”

**The Manas Airbase in Kyrgyzstan**

In early 2006, Kyrgyz President Bakiyev reportedly requested that lease payments for use of the Manas airbase be increased to more than $200 million per year and at the same time re-affirmed Russia’s free use of its nearby base. After reportedly drawn-out negotiations, the United States and Kyrgyzstan issued a joint statement on July 14, 2006, that they had resolved the issue of the continued U.S. use of airbase facilities at Manas.

**The “Transit Center” Agreement**

The Defense Department announced on June 24, 2009, that an agreement of “mutual benefit” had been concluded with the Kyrgyz government “to continue to work, with them, to supply our troops in Afghanistan, so that we can help with the overall security situation in the region. The agreement was approved by the legislature and signed into law by President Bakiyev, to take effect on July 14, 2009.
The Northern Distribution Network (NDN) of Afghanistan

Because U.S.-coalition and NATO supplies transiting Pakistan to Afghanistan frequently were subject to attacks, the Central Asian region has become an important alternative transit route. Gen. David Petrels, the Commander of the U.S. Central Command, visited Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in late January 2009 to negotiate alternative air, rail, road, and water routes for the commercial shipping of supplies to support NATO and U.S. operations in Afghanistan. To encourage a positive response, the U.S. embassies in the region announced that the United States planned to purchase many non-military goods locally to transport to the troops in Afghanistan.

US Security Assistance

In FY2008, peace and security assistance was boosted further to $213 million, with increases in Defense and Energy Department funding for Global Threat Reduction in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Defense Department Sec. 1206 funding for Caspian Sea security training and equipping in Kazakhstan, Defense Department Sec. 1206 funding for counter-terrorism training and equipping in Kyrgyzstan, and Defense Department Sec. 1207 funding for stabilization operations and security sector reform in Tajikistan. In percentage terms, peace and security assistance has become an increasingly prominent aid sector. Budgeted peace and security aid to Central Asia in FY2002 was 34% of all aid to the region. Budgeted peace and security assistance increased to 78% of all aid to the region in FY2007, and was 66% in FY2008.
Non-Proliferation

The breakup of the Soviet Union, U.S. fears of nuclear proliferation were focused on Nuclear-armed Kazakhstan, and it has received the bulk of regional CTR and Department of Energy (DOE) aid for de-Nuclearization, enhancing the “chain of custody,” and demilitarization. Some CTR and DOE aid also has gone to Uzbekistan. On May 19, 2009, the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration announced that CTR funds had been used to remove 162.5 lb. of highly enriched uranium “spent” fuel from Kazakhstan. The material originally had been provided by Russia to Kazakhstan, and was returned to Russia by rail for storage in a series of four shipments between December 2008 and May 2009.

Counter Narcotics Aid

There is rising U.S. concern, since Latin American and other international organized groups have become involved in the Central Asian drug trade, and European governments have begun to focus on combating drug trafficking through this new route. U.S. policy also emphasizes the threat of rising terrorism, crime, corruption, and instability posed by illegal narcotics production, use, and trafficking in Central Asia.29

Military Assistance

The principal components of U.S. military assistance to Central Asia are Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), the Regional Defense Counter-Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP), the Regional
Centers for Security Studies (RCSS), and transfers of Excess Defense Articles (EDA).

**Safety of US Citizens and Investments**

The U.S. State Department advises U.S. citizens and firms that there are dangers of terrorism in the region, including from ETIM, IMU, and Al Qaeda. Groups such as Hizb ul Tahrir (HT) also foment anti-Americanism. The Peace Corps pulled personnel out of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan after September 11, 2001, but in a policy aimed at fostering pro-U.S. views among Islamic peoples, personnel were re-deployed by mid-2002 (Uzbekistan declined Peace Corps services in 2005). U.S. military personnel in the region mostly stay on base, and travel in groups off base to maximize their safety.  

**Embassy Security**

Immediately after September 11, 2001, U.S. embassies in the region were placed on heightened alert because of the danger of terrorism. They have remained on alert because of the ongoing threat of terrorism in the region. The IMU explained that the suicide bombing of the U.S. embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in July 2004 was motivated by U.S. support for Karimov and U.S. opposition to Islam. No embassy personnel were injured. Embassy personnel also may have faced greater danger to their personal safety after Uzbek officials accused the embassy of orchestrating and financing the May 2005 uprising in Andijon.
Analyses

American policy makers took advantage of conditions created by the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington to shake up the strategic balance in Central Asia. The biggest complication, though, has been US advocacy of a “freedom agenda”, which was designed in large part to justify the ongoing human and financial costs of the war. Moscow, competing for energy stakes, has made substantial investments in Uzbekistan’s oil and gas industry. The Russian have also promised Turkmenistan that they will finance construction of new pipeline along the Caspian coast as alternative to a plan supported by the United States and the European for an undersea pipeline across the Caspian.

Bush administration has begun to group the Central Asian states with India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan in various policy-making activities of the US government. The priority of US policy in the region has been energy security. Washington has pressed for multiple pipelines as the key to protecting the independence and economic security of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which border the energy-rich Caspian Sea.

US policy makes did hope that these states would make steady progress towards becoming democracies with market-driven economies. U.S Kazakh security cooperation has increased; there is no possibility of the United States gaining basing rights in Kazakhstan. Similarly US interest in Turkmenistan has increased subsequently. US access to Turkmenistan facilities was increased after Washington fell out with Tashkent.
Despite official statements to the contrary, the Central Asian states are less important to Washington, in and themselves, than they are as facilitators of US policies towards other countries, or in the pursuit of American double standard, which they believe many European states adhere to as well. Because of this perceived double standard, many Central Asia prefer dealing with Russia and China and with Asian states generally.

Central Asian leaders frequently feel caught in a struggle between great powers. So United States should find new ways to advance its security interests in the Caspian region providing opportunities for local elites and leaders to broaden their options by closer engagements with Washington, in ways that do not antagonize either Russia or China.

Conclusion

The U.S. is not unlikely to become a single dominant power in Central Asia, nor is there any reason why it should attempt to achieve such a status. Realistic goals—energy security; proximity to the main theaters of operation in the war on terrorism, Afghanistan and Pakistan; combating the traffic in drugs, weapons, and weapons of mass destruction technology; and encouraging participatory and transparent social and economic development—require a sustainable engagement. This is especially the case as the U.S. focuses its resources and attention elsewhere, primarily in the Middle East. The strategic location of the region and the intense global competition over its energy reserves will, to a certain extent, keep the U.S. involved. U.S. engagement is particularly constricted by uneasy
relations with current Central Asian regimes, whose authoritarian tendencies are of no consequence to Russia, China, Iran, and even India. Even if the U.S. had the capacity to limit the presence of other large powers in the region, to do so would be unwise. First of all, the primary U.S. goals in the region are energy security and proximity to terrorist threats, not outright control. The U.S. and other great powers share the goals of stability, economic development, and preventing religious radicalization and terrorism. Rather than openly antagonizing China, Russia, or India over their involvement in Central Asia, the U.S. should pursue the benefits to be derived from regional cooperation.

It is vital that the U.S. maintain and expand a multifaceted presence in Central Asia. The benefits of U.S. involvement accrue to both sides: The U.S. can protect its security, military and geopolitical interests and its energy access while helping to promote the development of democracy and civil society in Central Asia. The developing nations of Eurasia can gain access to much-needed U.S. investment, security assistance, and global integration above and beyond what they are offered by Russia, China, India, and Iran.

**Recommendations**

There are two recommendations for Central Asian security in international action plan perspective. One is An OSCE-led Central Asia security initiatives and other is that the international community should develop a new approach to assistance to Central Asian states in the spheres of economy and security. U.S. and Central Asian political, economic, and security interests are not
mutually exclusive and may be better achieved through cooperation than through confrontation. Development and security of supply and transit is one such common interest that needs to be cultivated.

Seeing eye-to-eye on every issue should not prevent states from working together to attain shared goals. Even if relations between the U.S. and Central Asian states or Russia are at a post-Soviet low point, common interests such as energy development, fighting terrorism, and limiting nuclear non-proliferation should be pursued and cultivated.

To achieve these goals, the National Security Council should coordinate activities by the U.S. State Department, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, and other departments to pursue the following policies:

- Continue to encourage the governments of India, China, and Pakistan to create alternatives to the Russian energy transit monopoly by establishing new energy transit routes (pipelines, shipping lines, and railroads) that head west and, in some cases, east and south.
- Encourage multinational corporations to diversify energy transit routes to mitigate risk. This is a common interest of the U.S., members of the EU, and China
- Develop closer ties to Central Asian states by stressing mutual gains from Western investment, military presence, and security cooperation. Specifically.
- Assist economic and legislative reform in order to attract and protect foreign investors and spur economic growth.
- Coordinate reform activities with international financial institutions and programs administered by the members of the EU, such as the British Know-How Funds.
- Strengthen military-to-military, intelligence, anti-terrorism, and law enforcement relationships.
- Enhance democratic and civil society institutions through programs administered by the National Endowment of Democracy and non-governmental organizations.
- Emphasize common security interests, especially fighting Islamist terrorism, and pursue military-to-military cooperation when it is in U.S. interests.
- Adopt a nuanced approach to states whose leaders are not amenable to cooperation with the U.S., specifically Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Specifically:
  - Assist economic and legislative reform in order to attract and protect foreign investors and spur economic growth.
  - Coordinate reform activities with international financial institutions and programs administered by the members of the EU, such as the British Know-How Fund.
  - Strengthen military-to-military, intelligence, anti-terrorism, and law enforcement relationships; and
  - Enhance democratic and civil society institutions through programs administered by the National Endowment of Democracy and non-governmental organizations.
Adopt a nuanced approach to states whose leaders are not amenable to cooperation with the U.S., specifically Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Specifically:

- Emphasize common security interests, especially fighting Islamist terrorism, and pursue military-to-military cooperation when it is in U.S. interests;
- Facilitate energy cooperation, including private-sector investment projects and transit (pipeline) projects that enhance hydrocarbon supply to global markets;
- Support secular or moderate Islamic democratic opposition parties or figures (who necessarily must be opposed to any jihads or terrorist–extremist sponsor states or organizations) without openly pursuing regime change;
- Examine and encourage possibilities for stability-enhancing dialogue between existing regimes and democratic and moderate Islamic opposition groups to facilitate the opening of the political system;
- Engage, where necessary, in public information campaigns to criticize existing leaderships and expose their abuses; and
- Guard against Islamist backlash by supporting recognition and dialogue between existing regimes and secular opposition groups and other legitimate, non-destabilizing political actors.
U.S. involvement and assistance contribute to the economic, political, social, and security development of the states of Central Asia. The United States should remain as engaged as possible in the region. Given recent tensions concerning values, preferred economic models, and political systems, such engagement will be complex. Continuous dialogue with regional actors, as well as with Russia, China, the European Union and its key members, Japan, and India, is required to coordinate policies and prevent crises.

Notes

25 The State Department. Fact Sheet November 27, 2002; Supporting Air and Space Expeditionary Forces, RAND, 2005.
29 Svante Cornell, “Narcotics and Conflict: Tracing the Link and Its Implications” Working Paper(Uppsala University, Department of East European Studies, February 2005), 38.