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STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF CENTRAL EURASIA

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January 2001

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The views expressed in this report reflect the consensus of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Atlantic Council, Central Asia — Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University or the Joints Chiefs of Staff.

Contract DASW01-99-M-1248
Prepared for the Middle East Division, J-5, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Table of Contents

<i>Foreword by Christopher J. Makins and S. Frederick Starr</i>	v
Preface	vii
Executive Summary	1
A. Key Judgments.....	1
B. Recommendations	3
Part One: Analysis.....	7
I. Does the Region Matter?.....	7
A. Region-wide Trends and Developments	11
B. Conflicts and the Use of Military Force.....	12
1. Wars with Outsiders.....	12
2. Wars among States	14
3. Civil Wars	15
C. Prospects and Timing	24
1. Political Change.....	24
2. The Impact of Energy Wealth	26
3. Long-term Social and Cultural Change	30
II. National Interests, Threats and Capabilities.....	33
A. Kazakhstan.....	33
B. Kyrgyz Republic.....	36
C. Tajikistan.....	39
D. Turkmenistan.....	45
E. Uzbekistan.....	50
F. The South Caucasus States.....	56
1. Armenia	58
2. Azerbaijan	61
3. Georgia.....	64
III. Interests of Other Powers	71
A. China.....	71
B. Iran	73
C. Russia.....	77
D. Turkey.....	82
E. South Asia	85
F. Others (Gulf States, Israel, OECD Countries)	89

IV.	U.S. Interests	93
A.	Definition of Interests	93
B.	Key Principles	93
C.	Key Interests	96
1.	Vital	96
2.	Strategic	97
3.	Important	98
Part Two: Courses of Action		101
V.	Strategic Concept	101
A.	Comparison of Alternative Concepts	101
B.	Major Uncertainties	105
C.	Key Priorities	106
D.	Measures of Effectiveness	108
VI.	Regional Policy Challenges	109
A.	Accommodating Differences	109
B.	Promoting Cooperation	110
Part Three: Recommendations		119
VII.	Planning	119
VIII.	Coordination	120
IX.	Implementation	122
About the Atlantic Council and the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute....		129

FIGURES

I.	Energy Potential	8
II.	Principal Regional Conflicts	18
III.	Threat Typology	20
IV.	Political Profile	25
V.	Key Economic Indicators	26
VI.	Military Balance	29
VII.	Russian Military Presence	82
VIII.	Policy Map	128

Foreword

Christopher J. Makins, President of the Atlantic Council of the United States
S. Frederick Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia – Caucasus Institute, SAIS

The former Soviet states in Central Asia and the South Caucasus have been the focus of considerable Western attention since they became independent nearly a decade ago. The rapidly evolving strategic environment in the region they inhabit affects not only Western interests, but also those of several other large powers, including two whose future is critically important to the United States – China and Russia. The interests of China and Russia in the region are not limited to a single area, such as hydrocarbon potential, or to a single category of threat, such as ethnic strife, political Islam, terrorism or narcotics smuggling. The impact of these developments both on the immediate neighborhood and on the wider world involves a complex and interwoven conglomeration of regional factors that we in the West are only just beginning to understand.

Unfortunately, history does not stand aside and wait for knowledge to catch up. The U.S. government is already actively involved in this region and has influenced developments there. In order to achieve a more complete assessment of U.S. interests in the region and a more systematic rationale for U.S. engagement activities, the Joint Staff commissioned this report. It is the product of a unique collaboration, combining the area expertise and foreign policy insight of the Central Asia – Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and the Atlantic Council of the United States.

In assisting the work of the authors, the counsel of the project's senior review panel has been important, particularly the advice from members Gen. Edward Atkeson, USA (Ret.), Gen. Michael Carns, USAF (Ret.), Mr. Curtis M. Coward, Amb. Chas. W. Freeman, Jr., Amb. Eileen Malloy, Col. Michael O'Grady, USA (Ret.), Mr. Charles William Maynes, Gen. J. H. Binford Peay, USA (Ret.) and Amb. Peter Tomsen. Also vital was the contribution of Amb. Henry Clarke, who provided some early drafts and inspiration to the project. Without their help, this report would not have been possible. In addition, we would like to thank David H. Saltiel of the Atlantic Council for his tireless work in editing and coordinating the publication of this report.

Central Eurasia will remain a vast and remote part of the world to most Americans. But in today's security environment we no longer enjoy the luxury

of immunity from problems in such “distant” regions. Achieving a better understanding of its complexity and impact on our national interests is essential. This report represents an important foray into what we hope will be a rigorous and constructive process of examining this aspect of U.S. interests in the first part of the new century.

Preface

The purpose of this report is to assess the strategic importance of Central Eurasia to the United States through analysis of the key threats and challenges to the region's stability and the interests of other major powers there during the next decade. It then proposes feasible U.S. policies toward the region in accordance with the broader strategic interests and goals of the United States.

Central Eurasia, for the purpose of this report, is defined to include all of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – as well as the three independent states of the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The report takes into account factors in neighboring areas – namely Iran, Afghanistan, western China, northwestern Pakistan, eastern Turkey and the North Caucasus – but its primary focus is on the newly independent states situated entirely within the region.

The vast, complex and comparatively unfamiliar nature of the subject to Americans demands a certain degree of oversimplification. The authors recognize this to be inevitable in a report whose target audience are the makers of official U.S. policy and not a specialized scholarly community. The report seeks to identify common characteristics, shared political and economic outcomes and unifying linkages throughout the region. This is not to suggest that the linkages are any more salient to an understanding of the regional environment than the manifold distinctions; in fact, they are probably less so. But linkages can be more creatively exploited for policy ends than differences in a region where many competing agendas already operate. Therefore, the analytic goal of this report is to consider the region as a whole in ways that illustrate clearly the impact that specific decisions in one area are likely to have on others and thereby to assist with the coordination of policy. The report seeks to bring issues together in ways that have not previously been emphasized or properly highlighted, rather than to break issues apart and split the region into distinct sub-zones or problem sets.

The normative goal of this report is to promote a deeper understanding among U.S. officials of the importance of other actors in the region. Throughout the report the argument is made that the interests of other important powers – China, Europe, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey – must be more objec-

tively and thoroughly understood in the United States than has been the case. While the challenges in this region will most likely come from a variety of internal sources, the interests that matter most to the United States are those of the other major powers. Furthermore, the United States has considerable interests that go beyond this region for which cooperation with the other major powers is important. Overlooking or misunderstanding their interests in this region could have negative consequences in other areas.

This report is based on extensive consultations with government officials and private actors both in the region and in the capitals of the other major powers over the past five years. It is also based on the collective experience and knowledge of the authors, as well as the advice of the project's senior review group. All judgments and any errors of fact, however, are the responsibility of the authors alone.

Washington, D.C.
January 2001

Executive Summary

This assessment outlines a basis for U.S. national security planning related to Central Eurasia over the next ten years. The region covered encompasses the five former Soviet states of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and the three former Soviet states of the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). Although the two halves of the region are very different and attract the attention of the major powers in distinct ways, planners should avoid rigidly compartmentalizing them given the economic and, to a certain extent, cultural, linkages that exist. It is most important to appreciate the role these linkages play in the geopolitical mindset of the other major powers, namely Iran and Russia, and to a lesser extent, China, India, Pakistan and Turkey. In fact, these linkages are expanding as trends and developments in the region become increasingly transnational, and as the regions overall profile in global affairs becomes more prominent.

A. Key Judgments

This region of newly sovereign states is growing in importance, both to the major powers that surround them and to the world at large, including the United States. The immediate focus for the United States is on economic access and appropriate diplomatic relations that promote stability in the region. Stability remains tenuous, while mounting challenges have put tremendous strain on the states and have increasingly concerned the major powers. These challenges include more frequent outbreaks of cross-border conflict, a surge in the narcotics (largely opium) trade and rising political discontent, including anti-Western varieties of political Islam in some places. Each threat or challenge is to some extent symptomatic of deeper problems of inadequate social, economic and political development common to almost all the former Soviet Union, including Russia. During the next decade, the major powers, including the United States, are more likely to be affected by the negative trends emanating from this region than by its positive aspects or potential.

The states of both the South Caucasus and Central Asia are still grappling with differing and often contradictory relationships with the major powers. These relationships involve varying degrees of cooperation and coercion. For stability, it is important for all the regional actors to reach common under-

standing on the means for ensuring one another's security. It may have been wishful thinking to expect this process to have culminated in the first decade of independence; but the region as a whole is unlikely to be peaceful if the process is allowed to linger without result for another ten years.

The United States has limited regional interests in the short-term but an important longer-term interest in the region's peace and stability. The United States is therefore in a unique position to help steer developments in this direction by pursuing two integrated and mutually reinforcing objectives: forging an understanding of regional security with the other major powers; and assisting the states to improve their own security capacities.

The concept that most logically advances these objectives is a regional concert, which means a system of mutual tradeoffs emphasizing the common objective of a stable and open environment in which sovereignty and independence are respected by all powers. It requires an agreement – either formal or tacit – among the states that the maintenance of the concert should be their principal regional objective. They all have more to lose by inter-state rivalry or competition than they have to gain by any short-term political or economic achievements at the expense of their neighbors.

The special role played by the United States in the concert comes from being an influential but distant power lacking a territorial border with this region. This does not mean the United States can turn its back on problems there; Central Eurasia has become too important to the rest of the world, both as a source of threats and as a potential market. Rather, it means that the United States can contribute to regional stability by reassuring other powers through diplomacy as well as targeted assistance. This role is necessarily both clear and nuanced: clear about U.S. interests and the limits of U.S. policy; nuanced about understanding the concerns of others in the region and responding to the precarious state of affairs that prevails at the present time.

U.S. policy should focus on the following goals:

- First, and most important, is the prevention of conflict among the major powers over or in this region. Such a conflict, by virtue of its scale, would necessarily affect key U.S. strategic interests – namely, peace and stability in Europe, the Middle East and Northeast Asia.
- Second is the prevention of conflict within the region, or failing that, its containment, so that the major powers are not drawn into conflict with any regional state or with one another.
- Last is the promotion of economic (particularly energy), cultural and diplomatic ties with the region in ways that enhance the region's stability, bolster

the independence of its component states, promote U.S. trade and investment and improve overall relations with its people.

These goals must be kept in proper perspective. They are by no means mutually exclusive; in most cases they complement one another. But the U.S. government should be very clear about the relative importance it assigns to each. In particular, the rich oil and gas reserves of some countries would not be significant on a world scale were it not for the continuing insecurity of the larger and cheaper Gulf sources. U.S. dependence, and the greater dependence of vital allies, on these sources makes Caspian oil and gas a significant if limited interest for the United States. The Clinton administration's Caspian strategy and the ensuing media discussion have made hydrocarbons appear more important than the geopolitical interests in the area, a disproportion that needs to be corrected. As in other areas, this early policy has created stakes that could not be lost or challenged without significant damage to U.S. prestige, but this should not stand in the way of sensible policy corrections.

B. Recommendations

To support the regional concert, the United States needs a coherent strategic rationale as well as a guide to action. Responsibility for Central Eurasia continues to be divided among geographic bureaus and is often subordinated to other areas in which U.S. interests are more urgently at stake. A higher level of U.S. interest, analysis, interaction and engagement is required for the U.S. government to perceive the region's evolving needs and make informed judgments regarding appropriate U.S. responses. These, in turn, must be based on specific priorities. Accordingly, the **National Security Council (NSC)** should take the lead in:

- Dealing far more urgently with Afghanistan. So long as the civil war and utter impoverishment persist in Afghanistan, it is very unlikely that any of the regional states will feel secure, even those in the South Caucasus, which have felt more of an impact from Afghanistan because of its growing ties to instability in the North Caucasus. There is also a diminishing likelihood that the major powers – including China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia – will be able to accommodate one another's interests in this region so long as they continue to support opposing sides in the Afghan conflict.
- Overseeing implementation of an approach toward Iran that emphasizes common regional interests. The Clinton administration has made notable progress in this area, but more should be done, particularly in the eco-

conomic field. While the U.S. government has shown an awareness of the declining popularity and strength of the Islamic regime in Iran, it is not sufficient to maintain a conditional policy shaped solely by the pace and scope of reform in Iran. While Iran still damages U.S. interests in some areas, it is not clear that U.S. sanctions have retarded any of these activities; what is clearer is that the isolation of Iran in turn isolates the Central Asian states and Azerbaijan, contradicting the other U.S. aim of helping to consolidate their full sovereignty and economic development. The inability to work with Iran also hampers the ability of the United States to play a greater role in Afghanistan and counter the activities of terrorists based there.

- Establishing U.S.-China and U.S.-Russia Strategic Stability Commissions made up of the principal national security officials from these countries and prominent former officials. This will help to ensure that proper attention is paid to the overarching interest of strategic stability and the full range of issues, including Central Eurasia, while not allowing lower tier issues to jeopardize more important priorities in mutual relations.
- Giving the president's special advisor on Caspian issues a portfolio that goes beyond promoting specific oil and gas pipelines. This person should oversee an effective interagency process under the NSC that helps to ensure that proper attention is devoted to all the key emerging threats and challenges to this region.
- Tasking the intelligence community to produce regular surveys of strategic/military trends, developments and vulnerabilities in the region and the latest thinking about these issues. Senior officials should be aware of who the leading strategic thinkers examining this region are and the views they are promoting.
- Also tasking the intelligence community to provide a regular set of reports highlighting the international linkages that might be important in bringing influence to bear on the region, including how the region fits in the strategic thinking of the other major powers.

Meanwhile, to improve its own internal capacity to meet the challenges in this region, the **Joint Staff** should:

- Devote greater resources to contingency planning for this region under a variety of alternative scenarios. Planners should establish a working group to examine the linkages across this entire region and to coordinate policy under the separate commands.
- Task this group to reevaluate regional engagement programs in light of the overall priority of enhancing trust, transparency and mutually beneficial re-

lations with the other major powers. It is important to make an additional effort to see problems through the eyes of these other powers and to hear their arguments, since they now care far more about this region than the United States does.

- Monitor military assistance programs carefully for their utility in the recipient countries and for both their actual and symbolic value. U.S. military assistance, especially training, is an essential part of an overall strategy to prevent crises in a region into which the United States might be drawn. Programs should adhere rigorously to the modest profile of overall U.S. military involvement in this region and be coordinated with representatives of the other major powers. They must also respond to the specific needs of the regional militaries, namely small numbers of combat-capable infantry battalions and basic training. For the most part, joint exercises in the area and materiel provisions are best eschewed in favor of human relationships that effect more fundamental change. Such programs must be based on a sophisticated definition separating military and police functions, which acknowledges that the most trusted and competent armed forces often lie outside the ministries of defense. So long as these organizations perform military functions, U.S. assistance programs cannot rule them out, but working with them demands a rigorous procedure for monitoring and compliance.
- Reconsider the bifurcation of the region brought about by the assignment of Central Asia to Central Command (CENTCOM) and the South Caucasus to European Command (EUCOM). This division limits the ability of planners to develop expertise across the entire region and to appreciate key linkages. The entire region, including the unassigned Caspian Sea, should fall under a single command – preferably Central Command. Regional differences may outnumber similarities, but the interconnection of problems and threats are more important to the policy-maker. Situating the South Caucasus in EUCOM has also led to potentially dangerous misperceptions in that region regarding the potential role of NATO there, as well as provoking misplaced concerns about the ambitions of Turkey among officials in Moscow, Tehran and elsewhere in the region. A change in the area of responsibility along these lines need not hinder the cooperation of Azerbaijan and Georgia (and someday Armenia) with Turkey, or their participation in Partnership for Peace (PfP) and exposure to Euro-Atlantic security structures. The change would simply clarify the status of the entire region with regard to warfighting as well as the limits of NATO's regional role.

In practice, the regional concert requires that all the major powers demonstrate a degree of mutual restraint in pursuing their individual ambitions or in allowing specific interests to determine overall national policy. So long as this consensus develops with the other major powers demonstrating a willingness to respect and further it, the United States should assert straightforwardly that it harbors no hostile aims toward them. The U.S. government, particularly the Department of Defense, should state clearly that its regional engagement activities are not designed to:

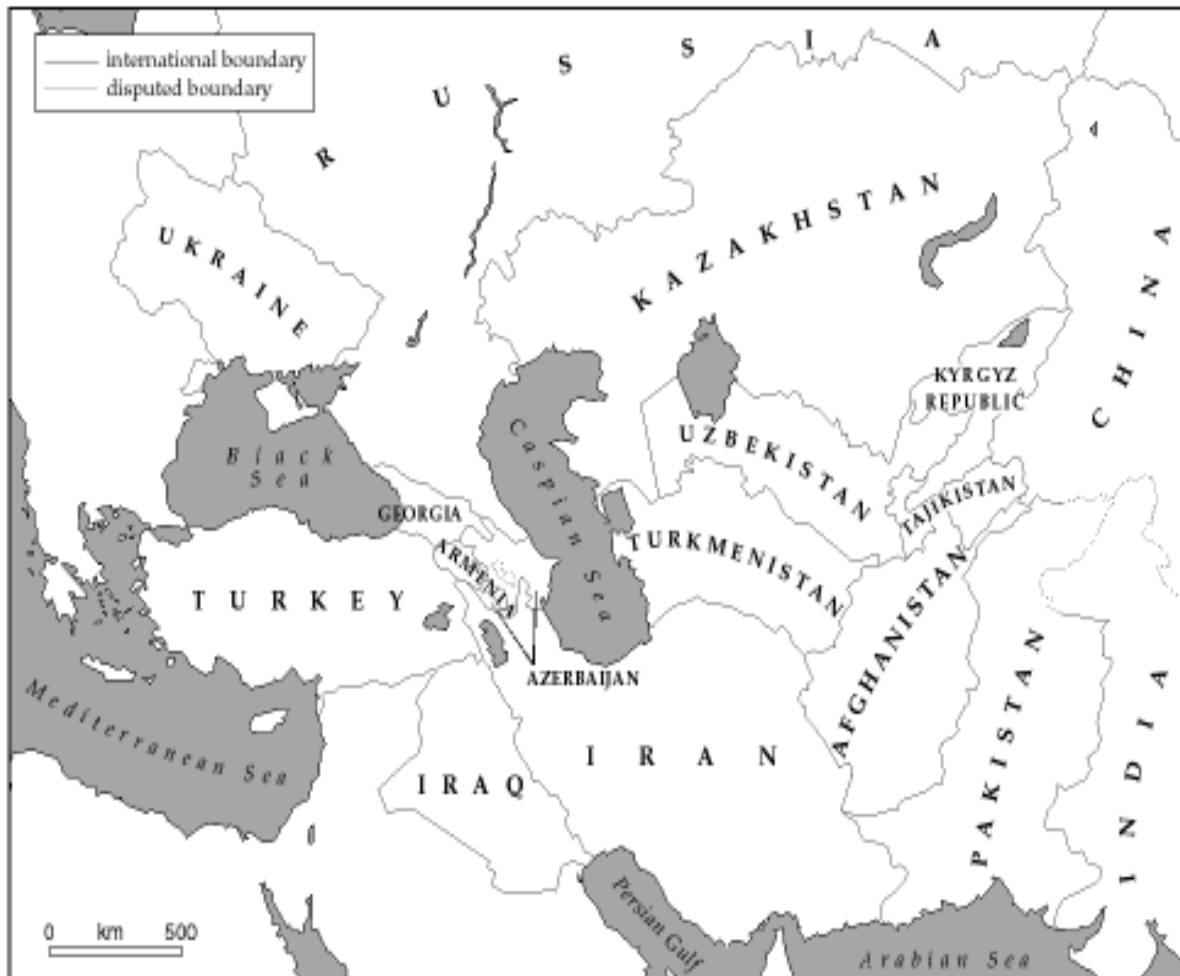
- promote the narrow interests of any regional state over those of others; i.e., the United States will not seek to create regional surrogates;
- extend its influence in the region by way of new military alliances directed against the other major powers;
- defend pipelines or other economic assets in the region with military force. The U.S. government may choose to assist regional militaries in improving defense capacities, but should avoid intervening directly in this region.

* * *

The security outlook for Central Eurasia is very unclear at the present time. The incomplete strategic rationale that has been provided for U.S. aims and activities has unfortunately exacerbated specifically anti-U.S. perceptions in Iran and Russia, and has led to considerable confusion, and occasional misrepresentation, in the region. The United States has little interest in a quest for supremacy in Central Eurasia, and its influence should be brought to bear in discouraging the other major powers from this aim. Their cooperation is essential for anything that benefits the region over the long term. As the United States goes about seeking a *modus vivendi* with Russia and begins to reconstruct a normal relationship with Iran, common regional interests can become more prominent in diplomatic discussions. Doing so will have the added advantage of engaging China, Europe, India, Pakistan, Turkey and others in an area of mutual interest.

By contrast, the continued ambivalence of U.S. policy toward the idea of regional competition and the related failure to assess U.S. longer-term, geopolitical interests realistically serve only to provoke negative rhetoric from the other major powers and nervousness among the regional states. Thus, in spite of geographic distance and the difficulty it poses to exerting a direct influence, the powerful image and potentially positive role of the United States place a special burden on the U.S. government to take this region seriously.

Part One: Analysis



I. Does the Region Matter?

This region should matter to the United States because it matters considerably to every other major Eurasian power whose global and regional interests affect U.S. interests. The governments of China, Iran, Russia and Turkey in particular believe they have an important stake there. U.S. interests in the near-term are summed up by maintaining access to the region without being drawn into its conflicts, particularly against any of the other major powers. Without access and an active diplomatic role,

Figure 1
Energy Potential

Country	Proven oil reserves (million barrels)	Proven natural gas reserves (trillion cubic feet)
Armenia	n/a	n/a
Azerbaijan	4-12,000	11
Georgia	35	0.3
Kazakhstan	10-17,000	53-83
Kyrgyz Republic	40	0.2
Tajikistan	12	0.2
Turkmenistan	1,700	98-155
Uzbekistan	600	74-88
Global	1,033,200	5,142

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration; *Oil and Gas Journal*

the United States cannot pursue its direct economic interests or its wider political and strategic interests that involve part or all of this region. Ensuring access requires first and foremost a stable geopolitical order. But the region's remoteness and unfamiliarity mean that the United States cannot succeed in producing this condition alone or with only one or two partners. Nor is any other country likely to be able to do so. Indeed, the U.S. government must design its policies with an appreciation for the interests and sensitivities of the other major powers so that conditions of acceptable influence may be defined and their activities in this region may be consistent with their overall policies toward one another.

This portrait of U.S. interests challenges a widespread tendency, evident in U.S. writings, to downplay the importance of the region. Those advancing this argument correctly claim that:

- The amount of oil and gas, while large, is not so great as to change the centrality of the Gulf as an energy source for both the West and East Asia.
- The low world price of gold and other commodities means that the other natural resources of the region remain of marginal importance to the United States and the West generally.
- The physical remoteness of the region places it at the outer limit of the zone of possible NATO interest.
- The region's population and base in agriculture and manufacturing are too small for the United States to devote more than episodic commercial attention to it.

Yet this is not the whole story. This region should be conceived as a vast and diversified space with significant resources that only gained sovereignty in 1992 and is rapidly evolving. A traditional transit zone of vacillating political orientation, the newly sovereign countries that comprise the region are surrounded by four and potentially five nuclear powers (China, India, Iran, Pakistan and Russia), as well as a NATO member, Turkey.

A predominant voice for any one of these neighboring powers in the region's affairs would put the security of the others at risk. This, in turn, would fan instabilities that would not only affect the immediate region adversely, but also destabilize a much wider area.

Nor is this region a *tabula rasa* linking powerful neighbors on the Eurasian landmass. It is also a significant region in its own right, with notable natural and human resources and unique, rich traditions. More than \$50 billion of U.S. and Western investment already has been committed there since 1992. The oil and gas resources of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are bound to play a significant role in energy security planning not only in Western Europe but also in China, India, Japan, Pakistan and Turkey. The energy environments in Russia and Iran also are linked, albeit in different ways, to the role of the Caspian in the global energy market. It is inconceivable that so important an asset would exist for long without suggesting the need for security arrangements that are acceptable to external investors, dependent consumers and the new states themselves.

Yet even apart from its future significance to world energy, a stable foundation for regional cooperation is desirable in its own right. The basic choice is whether the region's security will be organized from within through its own efforts, from without through the efforts of one or more external powers, or through some combination of internal and external forces. These are the only alternatives . . . besides chaos.

* * *

Thinking about the region is complicated because many of its neighbors believe they have historical claims to a predominant voice in its affairs. Russia, which ruled the area as a colonial power between 1800 (1864 in Central Asia) and 1992, has the most recent basis for asserting such role. China's claims are more ancient but shallow, consisting of little more than a few guarded points across the region during the first several centuries AD. Iran's cultural ties to the great

oasis centers stretch back before Islam to the Zoroastrian religion, which had its origins here. The fact that Farsi-Tajik remains the *lingua franca* of many of the older trading centers attests to the area's old links with Iran. But for the past millennium these ties have been swamped by waves of Turkic invaders and settlers who came to control the entire region politically. Naturally, modern Turkey feels a kinship with these Turkic peoples, a connection that has found expression in the series of Turkic summits held under Turkish patronage since 1992.

Still another factor that must shape U.S. thinking about this region is the fact that over the millennia Central Eurasia has itself generated a significant number of power centers that have extended their reach as far afield as Baghdad and Delhi. Though the likelihood of this recurring any time soon is slight, it is an important legacy that influences the strategic psychology of leaders in the region. The Greco-Bactrians, Safavids, Sogdians, Parthians, Samanids, Seljuks, Karakhanids, ancient Armenians and Timurids are but a few of the powerful states that arose on this land.¹

Therefore, one might conceive of two forms of security for Central Eurasia:

First, there is a form of security that would serve as the necessary foundation for the development of oil, gas and other extractive industries, or that would create new avenues of trade and communications spanning the region. This positive form of security enables states to develop economically and socially, as well as providing a more fertile environment for political reform. This positive form of security would surely benefit the United States. Its achievement would serve a significant strategic U.S. interest, if not necessarily a vital one.

Second, there is a form of security that prevents conflict among the regional powers adjoining the region, or between any one or group of those powers and the region itself, or that prevents chaos within the region. This negative form of security is most important not for what it permits but for what it prevents. The failure to achieve this form of security could bring such terrible circumstances in its wake that one must also consider this preventive aspect of regional security as being connected directly with strategic U.S. interests.

The second type of security – which emphasizes conflict prevention – is a necessary foundation for any more extensive positive security arrangements, and should therefore take immediate precedence as a policy goal. Whether tacit or explicit, understandings among the major powers on arrangements to avoid conflict outweigh in importance the need to secure parts of the region or individual states against specific threats.

¹Transliterations of proper names in this region have not yet reached a final, universally acceptable form. Throughout this paper the versions most commonly used in the West shall be used.

A. Region-wide Trends and Developments

Any workable security arrangements must address the region's dynamic quality. Yet impersonal forces for change, some coming from abroad and others arising from within, assure that the region is in constant flux.

These forces can be summarized in eight main categories, some positive and some negative, that bear directly on regional security:

1. Steady consolidation of sovereignty, strengthening of national identities and efforts to centralize state power;
2. Ongoing but unsteady integration into regional and global markets, trade and communication;
3. Sporadically increasing demands for new forms of public participation;
4. Declining investments in education, health and human services;
5. A movement toward traditional values or anti-modern and anti-Western forms of Islam by the more underdeveloped parts of the newly urban and agrarian populations, increasingly threatened by change;
6. Serious demographic pressure, caused by growing populations, that accelerates the move toward anti-modern, anti-Western Islam, as exemplified by situations in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, and to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan, which lack oil and gas that might be sold in large quantities on the world market and, most of all, access to a cheap supply of clean water for irrigation;
7. Generation of fears and opportunistic schemes among immediate neighbors, due to those internal developments; and
8. Growing defensiveness on the part of the region's insecure political elite, who increasingly emphasize the virtues of order and continuity as against development and change.

All these trends are likely to continue in the next decade. They have proceeded more slowly than predicted when the states became independent, due mainly to the novelty of sovereignty and the hopes generated by the possibility of closer economic and cultural ties with the West and the developed economies of Asia. However, the trends have shown more recent signs of acceleration because of weak economic conditions in nearly all the republics.

On balance, the negative aspects of regional development appear to favor the kinds of insecurity that most directly affect the region's powerful neighbors. U.S. interests in particular are likely to be less affected by the "upside" prospects of oil, gas and economic development than by the "downside" prospect of social erosion and political instability. The combined impact of these trends

transcends rigid sub-regional distinctions and fosters important trans-Caspian linkages in the strategic calculus of most major powers.

B. Conflicts and Use of Military Force

Which conflicts figure into the security calculus? Potential conflicts in the region can be placed into three categories: wars in which outsiders play a part, either as direct participants or protagonists; armed conflicts among states; and civil wars.

1. Wars with Outsiders

External invasions or wars involving outsiders could involve several powers, but none appears very likely at present.

Russia's interests in the region seem to clash with those of several regional states because of Moscow's conception of a more tightly organized Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and, to a lesser extent, by lingering concern for Russian minorities in what used to be commonly called the "Near Abroad." But the condition of Russian ground forces laid bare by the wars in Chechnya renders a regular invasion relatively unattractive. Russia is more seriously concerned with domestic necessities than foreign ones, even in what many Russians still call their "backyard." While a bellicose or reckless Russian official might order a ground (or airborne) attack, against which none of the regional states except Uzbekistan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh could defend itself, this is a remote contingency. The same weakness holds relative to China and Iran. All the regional powers are simply too small in population and too lacking in resources to devise a defense against a major power. The regional powers are well aware of this limitation, and it constitutes a key challenge of their future military development.

The present weakness of the Russian ground forces will push it to consider other military options if it chooses to exert its power in Central Eurasia. On the basis of experience since the USSR's disintegration, Russian leaders have sought two principal options. One has been the use of air power, which is encouraged by NATO's strategy in the Kosovo war and Russia's new military doctrine.

The other is internal destabilization. The fact that all the new regional states were part of one country with Russia so very recently has significant implications. It means that Russia has abundant personal networks within all the other CIS countries that can be used to advance Russia's interests in several ways. Such internal destabilization has the advantage that it is deniable; the in-

ternational community is less likely to call Russia to account for these actions than for overt military actions.

In many cases, the endemic corruption of the post-Soviet period, when practiced by Russian officials, contributes to weakening state authority in the region; smuggling through Russian border posts in Georgia and the drug trade carried on by Russian border troops in Tajikistan are examples. They illustrate how behavior that is normal for the post-Soviet environment could also be intentionally used; the two analytically separate categories tend to blur together in practice. What becomes clear from events is the *internal* manifestation of such threats, no matter where they originate.

The same is true of threats from other sources. For example, the *Taliban's* slender organizational capability is much more easily used in supporting groups of internal or third-country dissidents than in mounting a cross-border attack. Reportedly, the *Taliban* supported a group of Uzbek Islamic fighters immediately prior to their entrance into the Kyrgyz Republic in summer 1999 and 2000 and has acquiesced to their presence in northern Afghanistan.

The same dynamic also is theoretically relevant for **Iran**, which has few Islamic contacts in Central Asia yet could appeal to descendants of former Shi'a slaves that are said to inhabit some large Central Asian cities. The likelihood of an Iranian invasion of Turkmenistan or Azerbaijan is highly remote, while the threatened border action against the *Taliban* in 1998 was noteworthy for its restraint. In fact, the fundamental necessities of Iranian foreign policy make any cross-border attack extremely unlikely. These necessities – i.e., the need for stable borders and the avoidance of major conflict with the large Arab states – will remain so long as Iran remains internationally isolated.

The same is true for **Turkey** in the Caucasus, which remains uninterested in a direct engagement with Armenia or with Russian troops there. Turkish pressure and influence will continue to be exerted from within, by way of domestic allies in Azerbaijan and Georgia, Turkish financial support and military assistance.

China, at least in theory, also has substantial military capacity that might be brought to bear in Central Asia, but Beijing does not have available the same capacity for internal destabilization as Russia, Iran or the *Taliban*. China might make armed moves across the border, however, if guerrilla warfare on the territory of Xinjiang escalated between China and local Muslim separatists (Uighur or Kazakh, conceivably Hui, Kyrgyz or Tajik). There are Uighur and Hui (Chinese Muslim, also called Dungan in Central Asia) communities in Kazakhstan, the

Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic have made great efforts to control the sympathy of the local Kazakh and Uighur communities, but Kazakh officials have been heard to declare privately that in the event of an open conflict “of course, we would have to side with the Kazakhs.” Particularly in the case of a losing Chinese counterinsurgency effort, a cross-border attack on rebel “sanctuaries” could be tempting. The Kyrgyz Republic is protected from Chinese ground attack by the highest part of the Tien Shan range, but Kazakhstan is much more exposed at the Dzungarian Gate, in the Ili valley near Almaty and in the area near Lake Zaysan.

Except for this contingency and the still very remote possibility of Chinese, Russian or Turkish air attack, a large-scale invasion of the region from neighboring countries is exceedingly unlikely. *The security problems that neighboring countries could cause are mainly domestic in origin.* Some of them could escalate to external military attack, but they would almost certainly begin internally.

2. Wars Among States

With the important exceptions of a renewed war between Armenia and Azerbaijan (still quite possible) or another major outbreak in Abkhazia, wars between regional states are also rendered improbable by their fragility and military limitations. Above all, their weakness relative to outsiders as powerful as Iran, Russia and China would make regional countries reluctant to allow the outbreak of open, inter-state conflict. Uzbekistan, as the strongest Central Asian country, is probably the most likely to use its military forces in this mode. Like Russia, though, Uzbekistan has much easier ways of enforcing its will than resorting to war. The artificial boundaries in the Ferghana valley make both the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan economically dependent on Uzbekistan. Some shutoffs of cross-border gas flows have apparently been used in both cases, for political reasons as well as for non-payment of debts. The disruption of water sources has also occurred and remains a possibility.

In the case of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan organized more arresting pressure when angered by the exclusion of the Uzbek-aligned Khujand regional group from the Tajik peace process. The former Tajik army leader Col. Khudoberdiyev had taken refuge in Uzbekistan, and the Uzbek government gave at least passive support (and possibly more) to an incursion across the border to seize Khujand. Since the Batken events of 1999, Uzbekistan has mounted air attacks against suspected militants in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan as well as Afghanistan. But these have been sporadic and not necessarily effective. Like Russia, Uzbekistan is more

likely to use internal enemies of unfriendly states because it costs less than open military action and is deniable. While not comparable to Russia's capabilities, the regional states can still play internal cards against their neighbors. Uzbekistan used some ethnic-Uzbek citizens of Tajikistan against the side it opposed in the early stages of the Tajik civil war. There are also many Uzbeks in the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan and (together with Kazakhs) in Turkmenistan; a lesser number of Turkmens, as well as Tajiks and Kazakhs, in Uzbekistan; and quite a few Tajiks in the Kyrgyz Republic. Porous borders and diffusion of various physiognomies across the region make it easy to introduce hostile forces, incite violence and foster instability. In these circumstances, the disintegration of the Soviet Union may suggest an unusual case in the history of imperial declines. It created a power vacuum in the former Soviet space, but none of the surrounding powers moved to pick up the shattered pieces, Russia itself and the Islamic militants being only partial exceptions.

3. Civil Wars

The most serious threats faced by these states are internal, whether genuinely internal, exported to a neighboring state or exacerbated by foreign patronage. Foreign arming, training, supplying and funding of internal conflicts were more frequent in the former Soviet bloc than in any other part of the world during the 1990s.

In the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts, Serbia and Croatia assisted their co-ethnics across international borders; Albania did the same in Kosovo in 1998-99. Russia, as noted earlier, supported internal forces in Moldova; in the Abkhazian, South Ossetian, Ajarian, Armenian and perhaps the Mingrelian areas of Georgia; in the Karabakh, Lezgin and Talish areas of Azerbaijan; and in its own province of Chechnya. Chechens supported insurgents in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Dagestan; Armenia backed Armenians in Azerbaijan. Russia, Uzbekistan, the Rabani/Ahmed Shah Massoud government in Afghanistan and apparently the *Taliban*, have supported friendly forces in Tajikistan; while Russia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Iran and the Kulobi government of Tajikistan each have helped allies in Afghanistan.

Six Types of Internal Conflict

Internal conflicts in this region that are relevant to the United States can be divided into six types that overlap considerably: conflict among central elites or "clans," conflict due to succession, generational conflict, ideological conflict, reli-

gious-sectarian conflict (a distinctive subtype of ideological) and ethnic-regional conflict. Ethnic or subethnic conflicts (those based in regional groups of the same Soviet-defined nationality) have been the most prominent so far, followed by religious-sectarian conflicts.

The importance of these types comes from how the conflicts are perceived and not necessarily from the more basic material motives that underlie them. As before, it is useful to consider this within the context of the entire former Soviet bloc, since this procedure will capture common features of the trajectory away from communist society, on which different nations are at different points. Deep differences, however, do exist between cultures, though they share the communist experience.

Conflicts among central elites are important; in most of the region, politics is seen as a zero-sum game where prime ministers are considered dangerous rivals for the president, and frequently are dismissed, charged with corruption or other offenses, flee abroad and wage, with the help of their new wealth, political war

against their former bosses. For similar reasons, key officials including the defense ministers, security police ministers, national security ministers and foreign ministers are frequently moved to other, lower jobs. However, such

Water and Conflict

Access to reliable and clean sources of water for consumption and irrigation is one of the most vexing problems in Central Asia. The dramatic shrinkage of the Aral Sea is perhaps the best known water-related disaster, but others are just as critical for the regional governments. And a major drought in 2000 in several states laid bare the region's inadequate and unstable allocation of water resources.

As fate would dictate, most of the water in Central Asia originates in two of the weakest states – the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. The Kyrgyz reservoirs of Toktogul and Naryn fill the Syr Darya, which flows west from the Kyrgyz mountains; the Tajik reservoirs of Nurek and Rogun (still under construction) supply the Amu Darya, which flows to Uzbekistan and on to Turkmenistan, joining the Kara Kum canal. Uzbekistan and its cotton industry are the largest consumers of water originating further east; yet old networks allow Uzbekistan to control much of its flow. To ensure Kyrgyz and Tajik compliance, the Uzbek government has also reminded the others of its leverage over vital electricity and gas supplies by cutting them, citing non-payment. The implications for water were clear to many across the borders.

Nonetheless, Uzbekistan does not have access to all the water it needs, and the 2000 drought threatened large portions of the cotton and rice crops, particularly in southern regions and in Karakalpakstan, which supplies half of the country's total rice harvest. These shortages have led to even

rivalries are not likely to escalate to armed conflict except during a time of succession to a deceased leader or, conceivably, one not reelected, or during a deep crisis such as Tajikistan passed through during 1992-93.

The problem of succession is a very real one. Presidents Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Niyazov of Turkmenistan have health problems, and the Georgian and Uzbek presidents are not young. Given their fear of rivals, they are unlikely to prepare the succession adequately. Money and violence might

greater Uzbek pressure on the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, as well as additional tension with Turkmenistan. The Kazakh government has also clashed with both Kyrgyz and Uzbek authorities over supplies to Southern Kazakhstan, which are less than adequate. The tit-for-tat character of these disputes has stimulated numerous rumors, e.g. that the July 2000 suspension of international telephone service to Uzbekistan by the Kazakh phone company was done in retaliation for the Uzbeks limiting the water flow. However, barter arrangements are still the order of the day with regard to water, and this further heightens the risk of escalation of conflict. In July 2000, the Kyrgyz government reduced the amount of water to the Maqta-Aral region of Southern Kazakhstan in retaliation for noncompliance with certain provisions of a coal-water exchange agreement signed in 1999.

Various proposals for a regional water management program by the UN, World Bank, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other aid organizations have all been frustrated, mainly by Turkmen and Uzbek skepticism. Both governments prefer to deal with water issues on a bilateral basis, and for the moment think they have little to gain otherwise. Regional cooperation on water thus is highly problematic, but not impossible. USAID did manage to pressure the Syr Darya states in 1998 to sign an agreement concerning allocation of the river's flow.

well decide the outcome in a succession struggle; if related issues such as ethnicity, generational conflict or foreign meddling were involved, it could turn into a civil war. Planners should begin to anticipate this likelihood. (See section C. Prospects and Timing below.)

Generational conflict between older and younger groups aspiring to power played a role in the earlier Tajik, Azerbaijani, Georgian and Chechen violence. It has died down but is likely to reemerge within a decade with the maturing of young elites, who have been exposed to

the West and have higher expectations. The same is already true of some younger people who have been exposed to foreign varieties of political Islam.

Figure II
Principal Regional Conflicts*

Country	Conflict	Description	Status
Afghanistan	civil war	<i>Taliban</i> vs. Northern Alliance	Active
Armenia	Nagorno-Karabakh	Territorial dispute with Azerbaijan	Cease fire since 1994
Azerbaijan	Nakhichevan	Border tensions with Armenia and Iran	Potential/latent
	Talish areas	Iranian-populated region south of Baku	Potential/latent
	Lezghin areas	Ethnic separatists along border with Dagestan	Potential/latent
Georgia	Abkhazia	Separatist war 1992-3	Potential/latent
	Ajaria	Local boss ignores Tbilisi	Potential/latent
	Javakhetia	Armenian separatists; tension with resettled 'Meshketian Turks'	Potential/latent
	Mingrelia	Power base of supporters of former president Gamsakhurdia	Potential/latent
Kashmir	South Ossetia territorial conflict	Separatist war 1990-91	Potential/latent
		Small-scale war between India and Pakistan over disputed borders	Active
Kazakhstan	Vostochnyy Kazakhstan	Ethnic Russian separatists call for independence	Occasional incidents
	Eastern border	Uighur separatist support for compatriots in Xinjiang	Active
	Southern border	Skirmishes and tension with Uzbekistan	Active
Kyrgyz Republic	Batken & Lailek SW border/Ferghana	Periodic guerrilla activity	Active
		Tension and skirmishes with Uzbekistan	Active (at intervals)
Tajikistan	civil war	Government vs. United Tajik Opposition	Cease fire since 1997
	Khujand	Tension and skirmishes with Uzbekistan	Active
Turkmenistan	Gorno-Badakhshan	Separatist activity of Ismai'lis	Potential/latent
	Chirag (Caspian)	Demarcation dispute with Azerbaijan	Active
Uzbekistan	Eastern, northern and southern borders	Incidents with neighbors/skirmishes with guerrillas	Active
	Karakalpakstan	Separatist activity	Potential/latent

* Does not include ethnic conflicts within the territory of major powers, e.g., Chechens, Kurds, Uighurs, et al.

Ideological conflicts of the East-West variety were prominent around the time the Soviet Union was collapsing. But belief in communism is steadily declining, and the issue is no longer salient. It may at some point be replaced by strengthened democratic-authoritarian conflict, which already exists, or by the secular-Islamic divide.

Religious-sectarian conflict has taken a violent form in Tajikistan and the Ferghana valley generally and is tremendously feared by most of the regional governments, as well as by governments in Russia, China, India and Turkey. At one time, the United States feared Iranian religious influence, but this fear has been unfounded. Iran may keep an ideologically more activist policy in reserve by maintaining relationships with opposition groups and propaganda in their favor, but the moderation or collapse of the Iranian Islamic regime is likely before this card is used. Many Western observers have been skeptical about the strength of political Islam in the region, while others have either ignored or underemphasized the importance of sectarian divisions, most notably the Sunni-Shi'a divide, as well as divisions among schools of Sunni Islam (Wahhabi, Deobandi and so forth). In line with these expectations, the Islamic movement in Tajikistan turned out to be moderate enough to enter into a peace process dominated by Russia; the weak showing of Islamic groups in Tajikistan's 2000 parliamentary election suggests that the Islamic transformation of politics there has been postponed, perhaps indefinitely. The degree of Islamic responsibility for the 1999 Tashkent bombings, if any, is still not publicly known. On the other hand, the invasion of Tajikistan by Islamic militants at the same time as similar but better understood developments in Daghestan seems to contradict the skepticism of many scholars. The real strength of Islamic fundamentalism needs further study; but there is no doubt that a few real militants are inspired by religion. Even more significant is the money coming from international Islamic networks, notably from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Pakistan, which simply overwhelms local resources in many places. In weak state conditions, many opportunists can be attracted to political Islam.

Regional political elites are likely to remain resistant to political Islam, at least in the near future. During the Tsarist and Soviet periods, secularism became a sign of class superiority; the appeal of radical Islam to marginal social elements (as opposed to the mainstream Sunni faith embraced by most of the religious population) builds on this legacy. In periods of disorder, Islam may attract opposition leaders, particularly those without strong regional or tribal power bases, or others out of sheer opportunism, as it did Muhammed Solikh

in Uzbekistan and Nadir Khachilayev in Daghestan. The international political Islamist network has so much money relative to local resources that it can magnify any such armed Islamic rebellion. *In such instances, it is likely to oppose official (i.e., state-sanctioned) as well as traditional Muslim authorities as much or more than the secular state.*

Regimes throughout the region have been careful to distinguish between mainstream Islam, which they support, and radical Islamic currents. But careless actions against the latter could affect mainstream attitudes and discredit the officially accepted hierarchy of the faith. Political Islam tends to be a response to social Westernization or modernization. Moreover, social Westernization is now beginning; at some point, together with the prominent role of Western advisors and companies, it is likely to fuel an anti-Western backlash that may identify with Islam, particularly given the proximity to such tendencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. For the present, radical Islam poses an internal military threat of unclear dimensions, but it is second only to ethnic-regional conflict. It is important to be prepared for this threat to grow within a generation.

Figure III Threat Typology

Conflicts among central elites	Ideological conflicts
The problem of succession	Religious-sectarian conflict
Generational conflict	Ethnic and regional conflicts

Finally, **ethnic and regional conflicts** have posed comparatively less of a threat to the overall security of Central Asia than they have to the Caucasus. In the South Caucasus, they have occurred in Georgia (in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and the Armenian-populated Javakheti region of Georgia, without widespread violence so far); the Karabakh and Talish regions of Azerbaijan, Daghestan and Chechnya; and the Karachai-Cherkess Republic (also without widespread violence so far).

In Central Asia, a rash of ethnic riots preceded the breakup of the Soviet Union: in Kazakhstan at Almaty (between Kazakhs and Russians) and Novy Uzen (between Kazakhs and Caucasian elements of the very mixed population).

A number of massacres in the Uzbek and Kyrgyz areas around the Ferghana valley occurred, due to clashes between ruling and subordinate groups.

Central Asia, however, is more fortunate than the Caucasus in having only two autonomous regions: the Karakalpak republic in Uzbekistan and the Mountain Badakhshan Autonomous Province (since proclaimed a republic) in Tajikistan. Pamiri particularism may have played a role in the Tajik civil war, but now seems less desperate for survival and freedom than many post-Soviet nationalisms. The Karakalpak issue has never emerged as a major problem.

In Kazakhstan, the Russians have nowhere appeared very inclined to ethnic conflict; in Almaty, activist Russian intellectuals have seized the banner of internationalist democracy and human rights rather than their Russian identity, in spite of small-scale disturbances in late 1999. The Russian government, notwithstanding its intermittent rhetoric, has essentially abandoned Kazakhstan's Russian population. Either a further deterioration of the economy or its improvement could worsen ethnic relations; people are now concentrating on the struggle to survive. Moreover, a new policy by the Russian government could bring this potentially grave problem to life. It is not the likeliest ethnic conflict to confront future U.S. planners, but it would present the most agonizing dilemmas if it were to arise.

Tajikistan was torn apart by conflicts that emerged in ideological form (between communists, democrats and Islamic revivalists) but in essence were based on conflicts between regional or sub-ethnic privileged groups (Khujandi and Kulobi) and unprivileged groups (Garmis, Ismai'li Shi'i of the Pamir region and their resettled populations around Qurghonteppa). The Kulobi and Khujandi groups won the civil war with Russian and Uzbek help, but then fell out among themselves. Kulobis dominate the present Rakhmonov government, with the old Khujandi elite and their friends in the Uzbek government being the only large political force excluded from the present peace process with its power-sharing agreement.

Some residue of communism as well as basic economic motives contribute to these ethnic conflicts: the use of official favor, rather than the market, to distribute jobs, resources and land, particularly with access to water; the resulting creation of privileged ethnic and regional groups (such as all the "titular nationalities" of the Union republics and the ruling Party-State "clans") and deprived groups; the solidarity of such groups as against the state and their hostility to competing groups; and the creation of autonomous territorial units for some ethnic minorities. There is also a rapid worsening of ethnic or regional rivalries in

connection with the spiraling narcotics trade; though it tends paradoxically to encourage inter-ethnic cooperation, it also has led to rising numbers of “turf” incidents which are bound to take on a regional and occasionally ethnic character. The same is largely true with regard to the proliferation of other criminal activities.

The struggle over resources that was at the root of Soviet ethnic competition is obviously exacerbated by both the breakdown of state authority and economic privatization. Privatization gives the sitting government tremendous power to shift the distribution of property among groups, power that in the local context is almost bound to be used on behalf of the government’s group or clan. The weakening or feudalization of the state has led to ineffective protection of group rights and property, as well as the rise of informal private armies within the groups.

Those states whose presidents have tried to rule by balancing various groups within the domination of one “clan,” as in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, and to a lesser degree Turkmenistan, seem less vulnerable to the outbreak of ethnic conflict than the others. Such regional or clan-based conflicts have been more prominent in the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev has conspicuously rewarded the members of his family but has sought to balance the powers of the *zhuzes* (known commonly as “hordes”) to prevent any one from dominating. This motivation was in large

The Narcotics Whirlwind

In 1999, Afghanistan became the world’s largest source of dry opium, surpassing all others at an estimated 4,600 tons. Record seizures and other evidence points to the increasing popularity of northern export routes via Central Asia and on to Russia, the Caucasus or the Balkans for dry opium and heroin. These routes do not necessarily replace others through Pakistan or Iran but fit in with a long record of diversification. Though not known for certain, it is estimated that anywhere from 23 to 65 percent of Afghan opiates are exported via Central Asia. The effects have been drastic for the regional states, particularly Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, which have weak capacities for interdiction and curtailment of worsening levels of local consumption.

In August 2000 the *Taliban* publicly outlawed the opium trade, but the effects, aside from a sharp rise in price, were unclear given the parallel impact of the summer drought. What had been presumed, however, for several months was that the dramatic increase in narcotics smuggling through Central Asia and the Caucasus was responsible for the earlier price decline. Nearly every state includes well-known smuggling hubs: the Kyrgyz Republic has Osh, once known as the “Bogota of Central Asia”; though trade through it has dwindled somewhat since its heyday in the mid-1990s, it has not ceased.

In Tajikistan, trade through the Garm and Kulob regions has grown, while Dushanbe itself has become an important transit center. Remote Badakhshan remains a key transit and production zone as well. Tashkent and Bekabad are suspected transshipment points in Uzbekistan; while Kushka in Turkmenistan has become a key route for precursor chemicals. In the South Caucasus, Baku, Karabakh and South Ossetia all have reputations as key drug centers. Moreover, traders from nearly all the regional states have reportedly moved goods along the Herat road, in the opium bazaars of Helmand and Kandahar, and in other locations in Afghanistan.

It is not clear that significant portions of this trade ever makes their way to the United States; most is destined for the Balkans, Russia and Western Europe. The important factor for U.S. interests, rather, is the deep effect it has begun to have on regional stability, from the crime and corruption it has helped to further in each of the states, to the detrimental impact on local economies and the quality of health. Many people who live in the region rate the narcotics trade as the most pressing security threat, well above Islamic radicalism. Drug trafficking is also responsible for a whole new and complex set of inter-regional alliances among Russian and Turkish criminal gangs, as well as Iranian and Pakistani traders, among others. Accurate intelligence on these developments is certainly relevant to military planning.

part behind the transfer of the capital to Astana (former Akmolinsk, Tselinograd and Ak-mola), a Russian city in the middle *zhuz* area. Almaty in the east could become a center of opposition if its residents feel they have a lesser stake in the existing order. Although there are tensions between regional groups, these tensions tend to be overshadowed by the Kazakh-Russian divide.

Likewise, in the Kyrgyz Republic, the greatest potential for internal conflict is regional rather than ethnic. This is not because of the large Russian minority,

which is in a better relative position than anywhere else in Central Asia. The basic opposition is between the more secular northern part of the country, with the favored capital, Bishkek, and the more Islamic south. Rather than maintaining a balance between regional “clans,” President Akaev sometimes has disregarded the long-standing convention by which the local governor in the south was a southerner. Southern leaders have responded by complicating Akaev’s dealings with the legislature and, increasingly, with opposition parties.

The state remains stronger for the time being in Central Asia, except for Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, than in the South Caucasus. In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the rulers have firmly rejected that Western economic reform model that contributed to weakening the state in many other places. But elsewhere, the continuing trajectory of post-communist develop-

ment is likely to weaken the state further, enhancing the likelihood of ethnic and regional conflict. Although the present period is not as fertile for ethnic conflict as the periods of *perestroika* and of the Soviet collapse, ethnic conflicts, with their competition to establish new sovereignties and their mass mobilizations, are likely to remain a potential source of military clashes for many years into the future.

C. Prospects and Timing

1. Political Change

With centralized political systems in all of the countries, a change of leadership may mean a completely new direction for each country, making leadership transitions crucial. The current presidents grew up in the communist system, where there was no way of assuring succession and succession struggles were inevitable. As already noted, none of the presidents except for Azerbaijan's Aliyev has been grooming a successor, his son. Uzbekistan's president has only daughters, and the issue has not come up. Turkmenistan's president has half-Russian children who might not be suitable.

Discontinuity of government, and perhaps lasting instability, can come not only from a succession crisis but also from contested elections, from unconstitutional change and from death in office. President Aliyev of Azerbaijan and President Niyazov of Turkmenistan have known health problems that could remove them at any time. In the absence of a clear process of succession or a designated successor, the autocratic Turkmen regime is probably quite brittle. The Akhal Tekke might unite around someone, but tribalism is likely to come into the open. Uzbekistan and Russia might try to affect the result. In Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan, old age is not likely to raise the question of succession for another decade; at that point, one should expect uncertainty and probably instability. Tajikistan's Rakhmonov is even younger, although he is certain to be seriously challenged before he grows old. In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, assassination attempts have taken place. Assassination is a danger in all these states, where democratic politics, or the imitation of it, requires that rulers appear frequently in public, but where security forces are probably unreliable, possibly corrupt and open to foreign penetration.

There are three distinct types of electoral situations in the region: Turkmenistan's, Uzbekistan's and that of all other countries. President Niyazov of Turkmenistan now serves for life. Uzbekistan has a nominally multiparty system but

Figure IV
Political Profile

Country	President	Term	Born	Legislature	Opposition
Armenia	Robert Kocharian	2003	1954	Unicameral/190 seats	Active, several major parties
Azerbaijan	Heydar Aliyev	2003	1923	Unicameral/125 seats	Active, several parties
Georgia	Eduard Shevardnadze	2005	1928	Unicameral/235 seats	Active but weak; several parties
Kazakhstan	Nursultan Nazarbayev	2006	1940	Bicameral/47 in upper 67 in lower	Very weak
Kyrgyz Republic	Askar Akaev	2005	1944	Bicameral/70 in upper 35 in lower	Fairly weak
Tajikistan	Emomali Rakhmanov	2005	1952	Unicameral/181 seats	Strong
Turkmenistan	Saparmurad Niyazov	life	1940	Bicameral/160 in upper 50 in lower	None
Uzbekistan	Islam Karimov	2005	1938	Unicameral/250 seats	Mostly exiled

has not allowed an independent opposition to form or to run in national elections. In Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, a real opposition exists in the open but is frequently harassed or persecuted. The governments repeatedly and successfully rig elections: if they were to fail, the presidents would be forced to step down. That outcome is not anticipated anywhere, but is most possible in Tajikistan if Turanjonzoda runs successfully in 2004, and in the Kyrgyz Republic, where Masaliyev's branch of the communists was allowed to do well in a Parliamentary election in February 2000. The next elections (Tajikistan in late 2004, Kazakhstan in early 2006) could be moments of systemic change or instability. All the regional states except Turkmenistan have two-term limits which, if enforced, will make some rulers unable to run again, assuming they will leave office when their terms expire. But so far, leaders have been able to use judicial interpretation, referenda and new constitutions fairly freely to extend terms and change limits. The schedule of elections described above could be postponed accordingly.

In some circumstances, the attitude of military forces would make the difference as to whether a leader retains power or goes. At present, nearly all armed forces are not attracted to holding power themselves, and only the passage of time plus victories conferring public prestige on a general might change this situation. The U.S. government could be in a position to influence attitudes on this issue as it has successfully in Latin America and elsewhere.

The most basic factor that will decide the viability of these governments is the economy. GDP declined everywhere in the four years after independence, with the least decline in the largely unreformed economy of Uzbekistan. That fact, and the poor record of the others in spite of size, resources and Western-style economic reform, suggests that the formula to guarantee economic development in these economies is not yet known. Thus it is impossible to predict when the tremendous dissatisfaction due to the economic situation will decisively affect politics. The set of circumstances most likely to bring dissatisfaction with the economy into politics, however, would be the reversal of a period of growth sufficient to raise expectations.

Figure V
Key Economic Indicators

Country	Pop.*	GDP (est. 1999)	Avg. growth (in est. GDP 97-99)	Def. exp. (1999)	Def. budget (1999) (2000)		Principal trading partners (est. 1999)
Armenia	4m	\$1.9 b	4.5%	\$158m	\$74m	\$96m	Belgium, Russia, Iran
Azerbaijan	7m	\$4.6 b	7.7%	\$202m	\$120m	\$119m	EU (Ger. & It.), Russia, Turkey
Georgia	5m	\$2.5 b	5.6%	\$111m	\$24.4m	\$22.1m	Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan
Kazakhstan	15m	\$15 b	0.5%	\$504m	\$117m	\$116m	Russia, EU, US
Kyrgyz Rep.	5m	\$1.1 b	5.2%	\$51m	\$24.2m	\$29m	Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan
Tajikistan	7m	\$1.2 b	3.6%	\$92m	\$18.8m	n/a	Uzbekistan, Russia, EU
Turkmenistan	5m	\$3.3 b	3.2%	\$109m	\$108.8m	n/a	Ukraine, Russia, Iran
Uzbekistan	24m	\$15.9b	3.8%	\$615m	\$285m	n/a	Russia, EU (UK & Ger.), S. Korea

Source: World Bank; IISS, *The Military Balance 2000-2001*.

Note: Economic statistics from the CIS are of differing reliability. Only Kazakh statisticians reportedly have incorporated the informal or underground economy, which can be as much as 50% of the official economy. Also, because defense expenditure figures are in US\$, they may not represent the magnitude of growth since 1999. The Kyrgyz Republic, for example, raised defense spending last year (1999) by 46% *in local currency terms* from s1,350m (US\$65m) in 1998 to s1,972m (US\$51m). Actual expenditure was over twice the official budget in both years. Therefore, it is likely that spending will again be significantly higher than the 2000 budget of US\$29m

* Region-wide, the population is about 40 percent under 16 years of age and is growing on an average of about 10 percent annually.

2. The Impact of Energy Wealth

The energy-rich countries of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan will follow a different path of development from others in the region. Production and revenues from any given oil field are likely to rise slowly, then more steeply,

level off at their peak, and then fall in a pattern similar to their rise. Inequalities of wealth and power among the regional states will grow at an increasing pace, then subside. They could be maintained, however, if energy revenues in the meantime have been efficiently employed to build a diversified economy. One could imagine the peak of energy revenue coming in 2005-20 for Kazakhstan and coming slightly later, then ending more quickly, for Turkmenistan. It is not possible to find a more precise estimate of the timing because the availability of pipelines is politically conditioned, and world oil prices can move the cycle described above forward or back in time, or interrupt it. The cycle itself, however, is unavoidable.

What is most relevant for defense planning is that Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan may use their wealth to increase their defense expenditures greatly, giving them the resources to enter the international arms market. U.S. military missions will face the choice of whether to promote cheaper and more easily operable Soviet-descended weapons systems or more costly Western ones. This choice will influence the countries with which Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have continuing supply and training relationships. Being able to buy non-Soviet bloc weapons on a large scale may encourage them to expand overall military relationships with the United States. If these expenditures are not to be wasted on showy, high-technology armies, a sensible and supportable basic structure must be created beforehand. Depending on current political relationships, new Azeri, Kazakh or Turkmen weapons might be perceived as a threat by Armenia, Russia or Uzbekistan. Oil money, if it arrives, may intensify the intra-regional competition for supremacy, specifically between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Incentives to arm will be greater because the arrival of the energy wealth could coincide with the potentially more dramatic transformation of existing regimes in Iran and China, along with possible disorder that could produce refugees and even military threats to this region. The Xinjiang problem is a likely source of tension along the Kazakh-Chinese border. The Turkmens in one corner of Iran are not, as Sunnis, well integrated into the Iranian polity. Though unlikely, a disorderly transition from Islamic rule in Iran could produce either irredentist claims or an ethnically dominated local government in northern Iran that supports tribal or émigré activity directed against the governments of Azerbaijan or Turkmenistan. Somewhat later, presuming it remains in power, the *Taliban* government in Afghanistan may undergo the same process of deradicalization and loss of support currently taking place in Iran.

Wealth from energy will have other far-reaching social effects. Only such wealth would enable any restoration of the Soviet-era welfare system, which would be too costly to restore elsewhere. Sudden wealth will certainly exacerbate the already growing differences between rich and poor. But contrary to the democratic hopes of many Azeris, Kazakhs and Turkmens, some of the new money will be used to buy the acquiescence of the population to authoritarian rule. Anti-government protest in Kazakhstan is likely to decline for a time, though probably not in Azerbaijan. Social Westernization will advance more quickly in the energy-rich countries, with particularly sharp and divisive effects in the very traditional Turkmen society. Because political Islam is partly a response to social Westernization, these countries may attract more than the marginal influence from Islamism they now do.

Oil wealth often brings misfortune in its train. First, any given oil or gas field will eventually be exhausted; wealth from oil or gas is ultimately created by selling a non-renewable asset. Only if oil revenues are invested in ways that generate equal income when the oil is gone will the oil or gas boom not end in disappointment. Second, large oil and gas revenues give a false sense that free money is available, blurring economic signals to which countries must respond if they are to remain competitive and discouraging economic reform. This second problem is likely to be more severe in countries where the Soviet planned economy trained managers and politicians not to respond to market signals. Oil and gas wealth will probably arrive in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan before the generation formed by the Soviet economy leaves power. Third, sudden windfalls encourage corruption, which is already widespread.

Finally, there is the more complicated problem of "Dutch disease," the term used by economists to designate stagnation in manufacturing and agriculture attributable to energy wealth. It seems to operate in two ways. In one, windfall revenues create higher inflation in the energy-rich country than in its trading partners. This increases the cost of all imported inputs with corresponding decreases in the local currency value of revenue from international sales.

In the second, higher government spending increases demand both for tradable goods (food, consumer goods, etc.) and goods that do not enter foreign trade (services, particularly construction). But, while international competition may keep down the prices of tradable goods, it is less likely to hold down the prices of services, which become relatively more costly and more rewarding to those who provide them. Capital and labor move to the more dynamic service

Figure VI
Military Balance

Country	MOD/Border Forces	Paramilitary (MVD, National Guard)	Helicopters*
Armenia	44,000	1,000	14
Azerbaijan	69,900	15,000	35
Georgia	29,000	6,500	15
Kazakhstan	100,000	34,000	221
Kyrgyz Republic	14,000	3,000	34
Tajikistan	24,000	6,000	42
Turkmenistan	16,000	6,000	35
Uzbekistan	130,000	19,000	200

* All helicopters are not operational.

Note: These figures represent very rough estimates. Source: Department of Defense.

sector of the local economy, while agriculture and manufacturing stagnate. The energy-rich nation thus becomes less competitive internationally. This effect appears even stronger in the former Soviet Union, where trade has already boomed and production stagnated almost everywhere (except Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). These trends lead generally to massive flight to the cities where the population cannot be adequately fed or controlled.

Economists sometimes talk about Dutch disease as though the liabilities of energy wealth outweigh its benefits. But Oman is certainly a better place to live in 2000 than in 1950. Energy wealth will do a great deal for a country like Turkmenistan that has little else. There is a tendency, however, for economic betterment to be followed by disappointment. Dutch disease thus can trigger a tendency noted by Tocqueville in connection with the French revolution: that people become more impatient of bad conditions when they have begun to improve, but are not yet as good as people expect. The cycle of hope and disappointment that follows Dutch disease could well create more protest and disorder in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Yet none of these results is inevitable. The problem is everywhere better understood today than when it hit Nigeria and Venezuela. If Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan manage the employment of oil revenues as cleverly as they have formulated their foreign policies, they could escape it. But precedents set by the Soviet legacy are not promising. It is, therefore, important that U.S. military planners not make straight-line projec-

tions of improved conditions in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Trouble almost certainly lies along the way.

In defense policy, the result of the Dutch disease cycle and of the exhaustion of energy resources may be that the countries are not able to sustain force structures they built in more prosperous times. Sometimes a boom-and-bust cycle in defense policy can help to trigger preventive war. Japan's knowledge that it could not maintain the correlation of forces once the United States rearmed played some role in its 1941 decisions, for example. Any such result would depend on the underlying political conditions at the time. One effect that military buildup in the aforementioned three states will almost certainly have is to entice others to keep up.

3. Long-term Social and Cultural Change

Some changes will be inevitable as the generations of people who lived under Soviet rule gradually depart the scene. Soviet communism entailed not only a government but a distinctive system that directly or indirectly molded the whole of society. Around 2025-35, the last generation socialized in the Soviet system will retire. Long before that, they will be in a small minority because of the region's high birth rate. Already the relatively old presidents have chosen a large number of their ministers and other officials from people in their forties, skipping a generation. The Uzbek defense minister appointed in February 2000, for example, was born in 1949. These officials represent the last pre-*perestroika* generation. In most militaries, change has been even faster, because there were so few natives in the Soviet officer corps. Except at the very highest ranks, young natives are promoted very rapidly out of the new military schools.

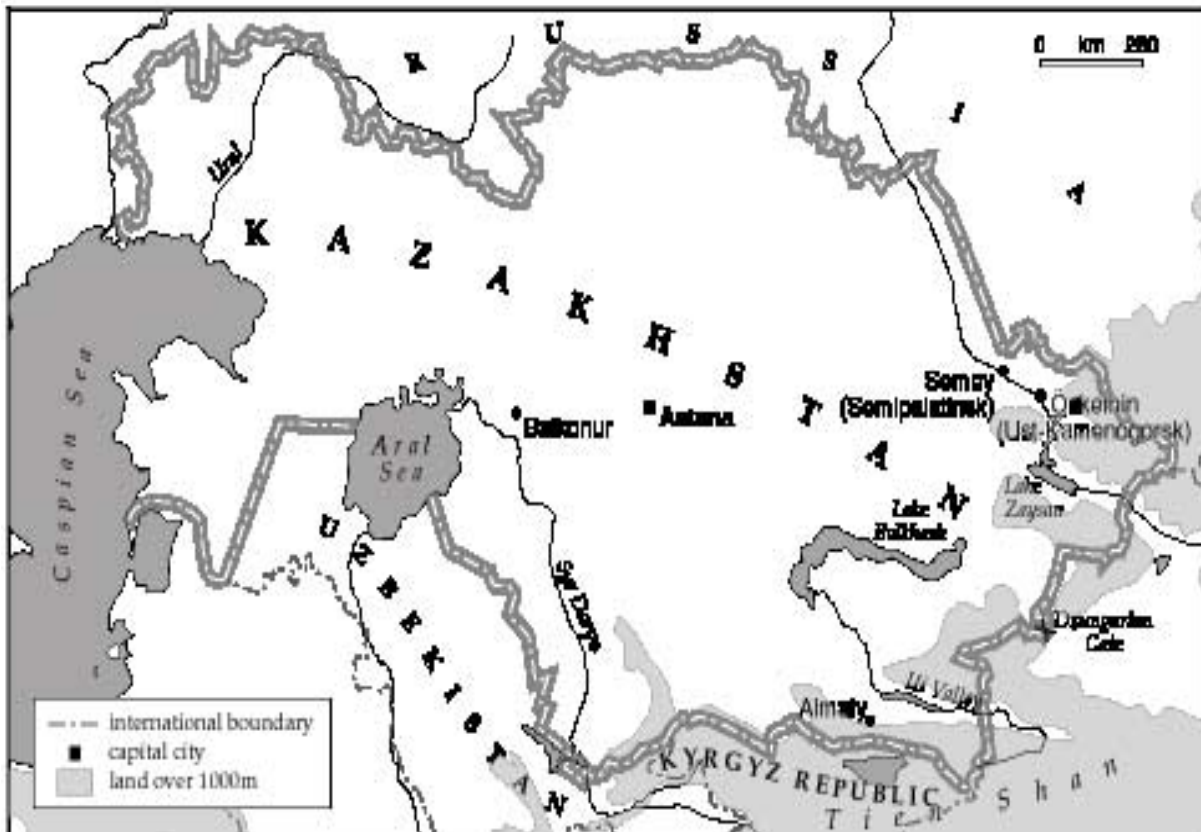
Cultural connections with Russia are declining rapidly. Young people in their twenties and early thirties have noticeably poorer Russian, and many younger people are not learning it at all. Conversion to the Latin script (in progress in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) will make both Russian and anything else written in the native language in Soviet times less accessible. This will cut people off from the past, as Atatürk's script reform did in Turkey. The partial exceptions in the decline of Russian are Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, where there are large Russian populations and significant numbers of natives who do not speak their national languages at home. Thus, Russian continues in practice to be the language of business and government. Even here, however, high birth rates of the Turkic populations and their growing role in government will favor local languages and English, reducing further the status of Russian.

One effect of these trends that is clear and important for military policy is the gradual extinction of Russian networks there. This situation presents a

would-be Russian restorer of empire with a “use it or lose it” situation. It coincides with the presidency of Vladimir Putin and a new mood of Russian national assertion. It is doubtful that Russia has the resources, the patriotism or the tenacity to sustain a reassertion of the role it once had in Central Asia or even the Caucasus. Putin himself has been known to invoke a common Russian paraphrase of Churchill’s aphorism on socialist tendencies, “only a heartless person would not be nostalgic over lost empire; but only a brainless person would seek to recreate it.” Nonetheless, Putin’s first term is likely to be a period of increasing Russian pressure, followed by a gradual moderation.

The case of Kazakhstan is particularly important, because Nazarbayev is relying on differential birth-rates during the next generation, plus some Russian emigration, to make Kazakhstan overwhelmingly Asian. At this point, Russians will no longer be able plausibly to claim an equal share in the state. As with U.S. neighborhoods in the era of segregation, there is probably a “tipping point” at which Russians will emigrate in even greater numbers. Thus Kazakh nationalist aims are on the way to satisfaction, but with a probably growing danger in the short-term of some Russian action to reverse the slide, by secession or by some republic-wide action.

II. National Interests, Threats and Capabilities



With its huge size, enormous resources and a population split between Asians and Europeans, Kazakhstan is arguably the most vulnerable of all eight countries to internal and external threats. Partition, invasion or collapse could have far-reaching international effects. Maintaining a workable and durable balance between the pressures of Kazakh and Russian nationalism is the fundamental challenge for any government in Kazakhstan, and it is critical to both domestic and foreign policies. The support of the large Russian population in northern Kazakhstan depends almost as much on the actions of the Russian Federation as it does on Kazakhstan's. Kazakhstan's need for good relations with Russia also results from fundamental economic realities, including the organization of pipeline networks and electrical power grids. Economic integration constrains

Kazakhstan's freedom of action more than most of the smaller and seemingly weaker regional states.

Kazakhstan's Interests

President Nazarbayev worked adroitly throughout the breakup of the USSR and since has been more willing to make tactical compromises in order to ensure the greatest possible degree of sovereignty. It was Nazarbayev who sought continued union with the Slavic republics in 1991, and who even after independence spoke out for a Eurasian Union or at least a strengthened CIS. When this seemed improbable, Nazarbayev was still ready for a closer relationship with Russia than most other non-Russian states and is a member of the customs union with Russia, Belarus, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. In late 2000 this was transformed into the Eurasian Economic Community. Russia and Kazakhstan have agreed that Kazakhstan will control its own border guards, with a substantial Russian Federation liaison section. Presumably, this is adequate for routine operations, but what actually would happen in a crisis on the 4,000-mile Russian or the 900-mile Chinese border is less clear.

For Kazakhstan such basic needs as national border protection and defense must be viewed as long-term, nation-building issues. Ideally, respect for Kazakhstan's borders by its neighbors, together with modest technical assistance from the international community, would create stable borders over time even without major forces to defend them, not unlike the U.S. border with Canada. Minimal trade barriers and market pricing are the best way to prevent smuggling of legitimate goods, but narcotics and other contraband remain a major challenge. Stable borders also require wise political and economic policies on both sides, so that nationalist and economic pressures do not cause massive shifts in Russians, Chinese, Uighurs or Kazakhs across them.

Military Profile

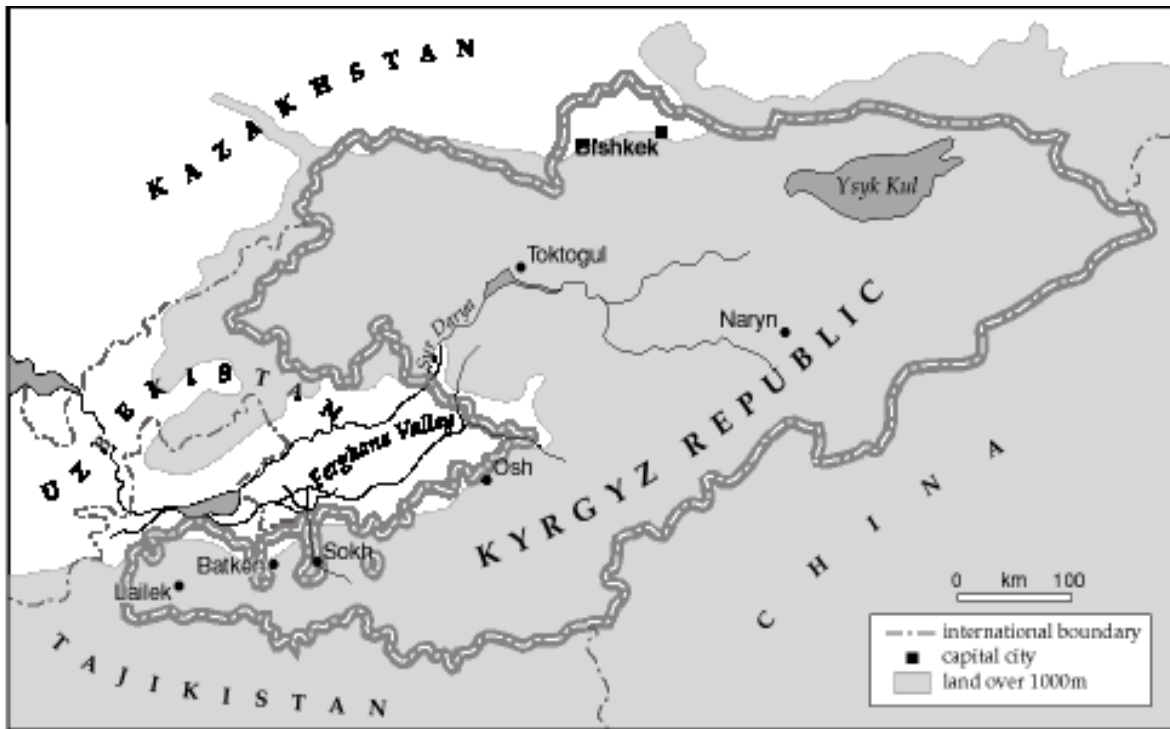
Kazakhstan's army, military observers generally agree, is the next most capable after Uzbekistan's. Yet it has shrunk considerably from the Soviet force structure of one tank division and five motorized rifle divisions on the territory of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is trying to field a force structure of two motorized rifle divisions plus one separate brigade and one separate regiment, an air assault regiment, as well as an artillery brigade and regiment. But all those units are quite under strength. The Border Guards and the MVD (interior troops) forces, plus the Republican Guard, equal the size and budget of the whole army during most of the last decade.

There are severe problems. To begin, most of the bases were along the Chinese border, which no longer meets Kazakh security needs. Second, there is a tremendous shortage of officers. Very few ethnic Kazakhs entered the Soviet army; in 1991 there were precisely 1,730. Of these, fewer than one-sixth returned to serve in the Kazakh army when invited. Others have since returned, due to the tremendous career opportunities open to ethnic Kazakhs. But the original figure is a measure of the discrimination against Central Asians, generally speaking, in the Soviet Army, and the lack of attraction of the military career to Central Asian youth. The small proportion who went home after independence reveals how very much Russified the Kazakh officers in the Soviet army were at that time.

Seventy percent of the ethnic Russian officers left between 1992 and 1995, which poses a tremendous problem for maintaining the army. The officer corps is probably now approximately 25 percent Russian. Except for the most sensitive positions, Russians largely fill the ranks of general, colonel and lieutenant colonel. Kazakh units officered by Russians could pose a problem if there were to be exacerbated ethnic conflict. New officers have been brought in from civilian life, from the KGB and MVD. Massive Russian flight from the army is due to ethnic tension between the two big communities in Kazakhstan, worse than in other republics, and a lack of discipline. There are many reports about looting, *dedovshchina* (hazing) and corruption as well as a considerable amount of desertion. A Deputy Defense Minister was convicted of corruption in 1999. In 1997 alone, there were 5,000 deserters, only 800 of whom returned after an amnesty.

Although not directly menaced by the Batken invasion in 1999 (elaborated below), Kazakhstan reacted almost as strongly as Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. Sightings of mysterious horsemen in the southern mountains exacerbated the alarm produced by Batken. President Nazarbayev ordered the defense budget raised to one percent of GNP. New border posts were set up, and special MVD units created to conduct night patrols in the south. The government inventoried weapons in its hands, conducted weapons searches among civilians and set up a program for the voluntary surrender of weapons. New training for guerrilla war contingencies was undertaken. Exercises were conducted with the CIS countries and with the United States. In March, the Border Guards conducted their first exercise in ten years. Kazakhstan was a participant in an agreement, with other Central Asian states, on fighting terrorism. Among equipment donated by Russia was an S-300 SAM system for the air defense of the new capital. In April, Kazakhstan took the controversial step of concluding an agreement with China for financial aid to the Kazakh army.

B. Kyrgyz Republic



It is hard to imagine a country with fewer strategic options than the Kyrgyz Republic. Situated in the northeast corner of the region between China, Kazakhstan and the Fergana Valley, it is both surrounded and bisected by high mountains. Although Europeans are not proportionately as numerous as in Kazakhstan, they are important to the economy of the capital, Bishkek. With little remaining industry and its agriculture limited by topography, the Kyrgyz Republic was not economically self-sufficient under the Soviets. Development of mining will surely contribute to some recovery in national income, but long-term prospects for economic growth may depend upon growth in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and on trade with nearby China. Thus, the Kyrgyz Republic has joined with the two larger Central Asian countries as well as Tajikistan in forming the “Central Asian Economic Community” (not to be confused with the “Eurasian Economic Community” mentioned earlier) and is part of the Shanghai Five, a consultative group formed in 1998 that joins China and Russia with the Central Asia states that share common borders with both.

Kyrgyz Interests

With independence, President Akaev correctly foresaw the end of Russian financial support, and he welcomed, more than any other leader in Central Asia, political and economic reform. The Kyrgyz Republic was the first country in Central Asia to leave the ruble zone, and did so under the tutelage of the IMF. Economic stabilization was largely successful, but generating new economic growth has proved difficult. The Kyrgyz Republic has received the highest concentration of U.S. technical assistance programs in the region. Akaev has tended to follow Nazarbayev in maintaining alignment with Russia in the CIS and in the customs union, even though the Kyrgyz Republic is less dependent upon its roughly Russian minority, once 26 percent but less today. At the same time he worked hard for his country to become the first former Soviet state to join the World Trade Organization.

The Kyrgyz Republic has over 500 miles of mountainous border with China and recently exchanged instruments of ratification of their border demarcation agreement. It also has an agreement with Russia for help in patrolling the border. Even more than Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic must also look to China for economic opportunities. According to press reports, during Akaev's April 1998 visit to Beijing, he was promised an eight million \$US investment in a factory to produce cardboard and a grant to help develop the Kyrgyz health care system. In return, Akaev firmly supported China's position on Xinjiang, and against national separatism. Reportedly, during the same month some 20 Uighur "separatists" were rounded up on Kyrgyz territory.

President Akaev showed insight and flexibility in adopting democratic practices, and the Kyrgyz Republic has seen more openness in the media and in parliament than elsewhere in Central Asia. Yet even he decided to reduce his opposition's chances in 1994 and 1995 through less than democratic means. In the 2000 parliamentary election, some fraud occurred, but Akaev allowed the Masaliyev wing of the Communists to gain a plurality. With the Kyrgyz constituting barely half of the population, and numerous dependencies upon Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, operating a democratic system in a basically undemocratic region seems almost too courageous. Yet democratic processes may offer one of the best means of maintaining cohesion, especially for a small, poor and geographically divided country.

Military Profile

The Kyrgyz Republic has the weakest of the new armies with a nominal strength of only 9,200 up until 1999. It has fixed-wing aircraft but cannot afford to fly

them. Wages are rarely paid, and when they are, they are extremely meager. There have been significant numbers of desertions. Morale seems to be low; and officers have streamed out of the army (and very few were professional officers to begin with). Few Soviet military units were stationed in the country because the Tien Shan mountains stood between Soviet Kyrgyzstan and China. The basic cause of the army's current catastrophic situation has been the dreadful state of the economy and the low priority given to military affairs in recent years.

Despite its small military force, the Kyrgyz Republic has contributed to the CIS force in Tajikistan and was one of the early Central Asian participants, with Uzbekistan, in Partnership for Peace (PfP) exercises at Fort Polk in 1995. With Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, it contributes to the Central Asian Peacekeeping Battalion. The Kyrgyz strategy seems to be straightforward: small but visible participation in multinational and bilateral activities in order to earn the support of all the larger countries.

Yet the Kyrgyz government's priorities appear to have changed after the August 1999 incursion of 600 to 1,000 Islamic fighters, mostly Uzbeks, into the deep, forested mountains near the Tajik border. Eventually the Kyrgyz were able, with considerable Uzbek and other assistance, to put enough pressure on the insurgents that they decided to withdraw to Tajikistan, and then to Afghanistan in April, 2000. The incursion revealed very starkly the vulnerability of the Kyrgyz Republic, in the absence of serious military forces. Reports of the situation at the time of the invasion spoke of soldiers being sent to Batken without either guns or a change of uniform or socks, and of the sudden discovery of a lack of spare helicopter parts. In the aftermath of the Batken crisis, President Akaev gave military forces a high priority for the first time. In spite of the country's desperate financial situation, a 46 percent increase of the defense budget was announced. Many personnel changes were made and exercises held to improve the coordination of units from different agencies. A new Batken military district was set up.

The Kyrgyz government also increased its cooperation with foreign powers and their defense establishments. During the invasion, Uzbekistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, the United States and the United Kingdom all gave assistance, some of it possibly given secretly. Russian and Uzbek assistance was apparently offered on a larger scale, but refused because of Kyrgyz nervousness about these countries' intentions. An illustration of this nervousness was the continued phasing out of Russian border guards, which was to be complete by the end of 2000. But given the persistent weakness of the Kyrgyz military, it would not be

surprising, in the conditions of a new threat, if some Russian border guard presence remained informally. In April, 2000, the Kyrgyz government came to an agreement with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan on measures to fight terrorism. The Kyrgyz Republic held joint exercises with both Russia and these Central Asian countries and with NATO countries in the months after Batken. Kyrgyz military capability has probably improved substantially, with combat experience, the bureaucratic and budget changes and foreign aid, because it started from such a low level. Nevertheless, the fundamental problems of the Kyrgyz army – lack of money and professionally trained officers – have not been solved. Overall, the aftermath of Batken put the country in a more fearful and pressured state. The fears of the Kyrgyz government over future attacks of this kind proved valid in August and September, 2000 during several weeks of fighting, again in Batken and near Uzbekistan's enclave of Sokh. Though somewhat more prepared than a year before, the Kyrgyz military still had trouble combating very small groups of mobile guerrillas. It knows it cannot repel them without assistance from Uzbekistan and Russia, but views these countries with caution as well.

C. Tajikistan

In a series of steps beginning in 1925, the Soviet Union sided unequivocally with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia – mainly the Uzbeks – against those of Persian heritage, namely the Tajiks. Moscow turned over the two main centers of Persian cultural and linguistic influence in the region, Bukhara and Samarkand, not to the new Republic of Tajikistan but to Uzbekistan. It then moved to turn economic and political power in the new Tajik republic over to the heavily Uzbek influenced minority inhabiting the northern province of Lenina-bad (now Khujand).

Several motives impelled the Soviets to take these steps. Many Tajiks had taken up arms against Soviet rule and were still resisting in 1925. Moscow also viewed Iran as a hostile power while it acknowledged Ataturk's Turkey as "progressive." The result was that Moscow created a Soviet republic, now an independent state, dominated by a sense of injury, division and lost glory.

Tajikistan's physical isolation hinders both its security and the development of its economy. Traditionally a transit point between north and south and between east and west, Tajikistan today lacks both the access (due to instability in Afghanistan) and the infrastructure for ready communication even with its immediate neighbors. Therefore, the development of roads, rail and air



routes, as well as telecommunications, is strategically more urgent for Tajikistan than for any other former Soviet state with the possible exception of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Each such move carries strategic implications. The opening of the Kulma Pass connecting eastern Tajikistan (Badakhshan) to China and on to the Karakoram Highway to Pakistan and India has encouraged Tajik strategists to think about their eastern and southeastern neighbors. China has responded to Tajik diplomatic overtures with promises of economic aid and military assistance.

Important factors amplify the primacy of geography for Tajikistan. Regional divisions remain strong. The eastern half of the country constitutes an “autonomous republic” populated with people whose first language is Shughnani or Rushani but not Tajik and who are Ismai’li Shi’a Muslims rather than Sunni. The north, with 27 percent of the population and most of the country’s industry, remains partly ethnic Uzbek and under Uzbekistan’s heavy influence. The urban intelligentsia was devoutly communist until recently, while the countryside remains traditional in outlook.

Tajikistan's divisions caused a civil war that cost 40,000 lives. Remarkably, at the war's end, many members of the opposition were reintegrated into the military. Consequently, the Tajik government turned control of its Afghan border over to Russia, which thereby conveniently maintains a military presence in what is perhaps the most vulnerable northern frontline state of the Afghan war. The economy is growing at about four to five percent. But the absence of oil, few gas deposits, undeveloped hydroelectric potential and a demographic distribution that places much of the population in high mountains that cover 96 percent of its territory, leave Tajikistan in deeper poverty than any other former Soviet republic.

Tajikistan's Interests

Tajikistan's government sees its main goals as survival, integration and consolidation. The best means of achieving those involve the revival of the rudiments of a national economy on any possible basis. In its quest for survival both as a sovereign state and as a secular regime, the government of Tajikistan places its hopes in reintegrating former members of the armed opposition into national life and in resisting centrifugal tendencies through bureaucratic centralization. The country now faces a stark choice between some imperfect form of decentralized democracy and a renewal of civil war.

It sees three main threats to the success of national reconciliation. Each has both a foreign and domestic component. First, the government in Dushanbe, dominated by Tajiks from the southern city of Kulob, fears that the heavily Uzbek north, with support from Uzbekistan, will regain the political and economic power it wielded through most of the Soviet period. As a consequence, Khujand (Leninabad) has yet to be fully integrated into the peace process, let alone in the national political-security system.

Second, full victory in Afghanistan's north by the radical *Taliban* would confirm the reality of a permanent opponent and potential ideological and security threat on Tajikistan's long southern border. Equally serious, it would drive hundreds of thousands of poor, disenfranchised Afghan Tajiks into Tajikistan, where they are far more likely to make common cause with the anti-Russian United Tajik Opposition than with the President's pro-Russian secularist party. At the same time, Afghanistan is a treaty partner with Tajikistan in the use of the region's potentially most valuable asset, water from the Amu-Darya (Oxus) River. Until a stable regime exists in Kabul, neither country can exploit this resource fully.

Third, the drug trade, originally a predominantly Afghan affair, has now been thoroughly domesticated. The steps to this process included active involvement of Russian border troops, especially in the Badakhshan region, and then the intrusion of Uzbeks as well as organized gangs of Russians, Kyrgyz and Tajiks operating out of Moscow and the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh. When the so-called "Osh Knot" began to fray in 1998 and 1999, the traffic moved westward through Dushanbe to Turkmenistan and thence to Europe and America. At the same time, returning opposition soldiers brought with them close links with the narcotics trade. Once President Rakhmonov was forced to concede control over the crucial tariff ministry and border patrol to the opposition, the business could be fully domesticated. Important officials in Rakhmonov's faction are now heavily involved. As this happened, Tajik processing and production of drugs, as opposed to mere transshipment, soared.

In spite of still close ties to Russia, Tajikistan seems prepared to enter into security arrangements with any state or organization that promises to make headway against any of these dangers. The Tajik government has trolled the international arena for useful partners, particularly for economic development but with limited success. Tajikistan's president has visited India and Vietnam, both solid partners of Russia, yet not Pakistan, a far closer neighbor, but a self-declared "Islamic Republic." He has made only one brief visit to the United States, where Tajikistan has yet to establish an embassy, but he frequently visits Moscow.

Tajikistan's relations with Iran also are dictated by considerations of security. During the 1980s, the revolution in Shi'a Iran brought a strongly negative official response from Soviet and Sunni Tajikistan. After the fall of the USSR, Iran lent support to leaders of the Muslim opposition fighting the Soviet-style rule of President Rakhmonov. However, the advance of the *Taliban* in Afghanistan fostered not only a settlement between Tajikistan's warring factions but also a *détente* between Tajikistan and Iran, which opposed *Taliban* rule.

Today positive if wary relations exist between Iran and Tajikistan and between both these states and Russia. Iran has been shipping military equipment to the Tajik-Afghan leader Massoud, who is fighting the *Taliban* in northern Afghanistan. Iran provided limited investment funds, opened cultural links and began developing plans to reopen the important road route connecting Mashad and Dushanbe via Herat. Clearly, Iran sees the possibility of channeling a significant part of Tajik and Central Asian trade through its ports on the Indian Ocean, rather than through Pakistan's main port of Karachi.

Tajikistan cannot afford to “tilt” too far in any direction, however. Former members of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) object to further cooperation with Russia or Uzbekistan, which at different times led the drive against it. Tajikistan therefore courts Korea, India and Japan, now the largest supplier of foreign aid, and has allowed an opening with Israel, which now maintains an embassy in Dushanbe. Iran has objected strongly to this move, but to no avail. The question remains whether this development will sour Iranian-Tajik relations to the same extent it soured Iranian-Uzbek relations. This is unlikely, however, given the distinct regional visions of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Divisions within the ruling circles and between the president and the United Tajik Opposition have taken a long time to heal, though they finally appear to offer some hope that the political logjam in Dushanbe might be broken, along with more decisive steps with regard to security arrangements. But in spite of the vast war-weariness of most of the Tajik population and the success of the presidential elections in 2000, the peace process still could break down. The poor showing of the Islamic Revival Party in recent elections greatly reduces the possibility that they will come to power peacefully, but has allowed President Rakhmonov to dismiss some of their leaders from the lucrative official positions that motivated their commitment to the peace process. The Islamic opposition now has less reason not to return to the battlefield. Thus Tajikistan is still the area of Central Asia most likely to generate armed conflict in the near future. *It therefore deserves much more attention from U.S. officials, including military planners, than it has received to date.*

Military Profile

The armed units of the Tajik government were built from informal militias of the Popular Front, joined in 1999 by the Islamic forces they had fought for years. The Popular Front militias, which are in fact private armies, were formed to recover power for the old communist rulers, who happened to be disproportionately from the Khujand area in 1992. The organizational efforts of the rising Kulob forces provoked further militarization of the opposition, largely from the under-represented Garm, Qurghonteppa and Pamir regions.

By 1999, the Tajik Presidential Guard, the most competent military force under Tajik command, still had only three officers with professional military training. The commander, General Mirzoyev, comes from the *Militsiya*, or ordinary police, a notoriously corrupt profession in the USSR, and in fact, Mirzoyev has known criminal connections. He also comes from Baljuvon, the same Ku-

lobi village as the president. The favor given to this unit, which has its own military academy, its own budget and the pick of the annual conscript pool, comes from the president's expectation that it will defend him out of regional or sub-ethnic solidarity. The president does not rely solely, however, on loyalty. He gave Mirzoyev the control of the Dushanbe Casino, a very lucrative source of income. Such sources of income, which go to officials or bureaucratic units outside the state budget, are called "non-budget funds," in post-Soviet parlance. They clearly create a semi-feudal situation with multiple sources of income and followings. For this reason, it is not easy to draw a line between private armies created by the society and armies raised, in the manner familiar to most in the West, by the state.

Fragments of the principal armed groups headed by uncoopted junior officers and less important armed groups have been left in the countryside, largely excluded from the redistribution of resources. The most important of these groups was composed of Uzbeks under Juma Namangoni, who had fled under President Karimov's crackdown on militant Islam. During the civil war, Namangoni's fighters had a base in the Tajikabad-Jirgatal *raions* (districts) of Tajikistan, adjacent to the mountainous Kyrgyz-Tajik border, and thus not far from the Uzbek part of the Ferghana valley. It was this group that undertook the incursion into Kyrgyz territory in August, 1999 and was thought to be behind additional incursions during the summer of 2000.

The Uzbek Islamic militants crossed Tajikistan as they entered and left Kyrgyz territory, and their numbers clearly included disaffected Tajik fighters from some groups of the former UTO. Charges by Uzbekistan that the Islamists were supplied from Tajik territory are quite plausible. Tajikistan, like the Kyrgyz Republic, was held responsible by Uzbekistan for the Islamists' unimpeded march, and its territory was bombed. While Tajikistan joined in several of the joint exercises provoked by Batken, the events there do not seem to have led to as much reappraisal of defense capabilities as in the republics to the north. One has the impression that the peace process was at such a delicate stage that the Tajik government did not wish to upset it. Unlike the other states, Tajikistan relied for protection primarily on the government's relationship with UTO field commanders who had been rewarded for making peace. By using these relationships, Tajikistan was finally able to negotiate the withdrawal of the Islamic forces. However, a broad zone of eastern Tajikistan is not controlled either by Rakhmonov's supporters or by the major opposition warlords.

In the aftermath of Batken, there seemed to be more clashes between government military units, and between former UTO forces incorporated in the

government forces and those not so incorporated. Frequent bombings and attempted assassinations shook Dushanbe. Beginning in March, 2000, the government mounted a massive effort to control crimes committed in the capital by armed off-duty soldiers. Those arrested belonged to a range of units, including the elite Presidential Guard. Officials announced that the units whose servicemen had committed the most crimes would be exiled from the capital. Meanwhile, financial constraints are pressing against the Russian military presence. Russia announced in April, 2000 that border guards – about 80 percent manned by cheaper Tajik citizens – will be augmented, while the more efficient 201st division will be cut and turned into a “base.”

D. Turkmenistan



Just as ill prepared as the other poorer regional republics to shoulder the burdens of independence, Turkmenistan's nomadic culture did not give it the sense of a glorious heritage possessed by the Uzbeks and Tajiks. Russification did not leave behind a more modern population, as in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Bound by

Iran, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan appears tiny and frail. This was the awareness with which Turkmen policy had to cope.

Turkmenistan has a less diverse population than many of the Central Asian states; Turkmens comprise over three-fourths of the population, and Slavs continue to emigrate. Tribal/territorial allegiances are probably stronger among the Turkmen than anywhere else in the region. The dominant tribe is the Akhal Tekke, with the Northern Yomut of the Amu-Darya delta sharing some important ministries, including defense. In the army, for example, tribal preferences are prevalent from the highest ranks to the lowest. Major tensions between the dominant and other under-represented tribes have erupted and continue to simmer. The other tribes largely populate the areas rich in oil and gas.

Beset by these challenges, Turkmenistan decided to base its foreign policy on the general formula called "positive neutrality." Contrary to how it may sound, this strategy appears to be an intelligent one, enabling Turkmenistan to evade demands from more powerful neighbors to join against others and participate in regional blocs (except the CIS, where Turkmenistan's participation is now purely nominal). It does not belong to the Central Asian Union or contribute to CIS peacekeeping forces. As a consequence of this neutral stance, Turkmenistan enjoys good relations with both Iran and the United States. The strategy also allowed Turkmenistan's mediating role between the *Taliban* and the other Afghan factions. The challenge will be to uphold this and other aspects of neutrality in the face of a direct threat. Like the concept of the buffer state, neutrality depends not only on the wishes of the state that proclaims it, but also, and more importantly, on the inclinations of its neighbors, particularly in places without mountains, oceans or other key geographic defenses.

Turkmenistan, like Uzbekistan, is mostly desert. Like Kazakhstan, it is a "hollow" country, with the population and arable land concentrated around the margins. Except for the Mary oasis, the traditionally irrigated areas are largely in the north, in the delta of the Amu-Darya river, formerly called Khorezm, which is an economic appendage of the larger delta areas in Uzbekistan. The Soviets developed irrigation in the extreme south, along the Kopet-Dagh mountains bordering Iran and along the Kara-Kum canal. The oil- and gas-rich areas are along the arid Caspian sea coast, in the southeast, and along the Amu-Darya river to the northeast. These geographical features present Turkmenistan with a difficult military problem: the points that need to be defended are close to the border, while retreat is effectively ruled out by the barren Kara-Kum desert where there are no resources to sustain military effort.

Turkmenistan's Interests

Turkmenistan's greatest assets are the world's third-largest gas reserves and sizeable oil deposits, so its national interests understandably revolve around energy exports. Largely due to the U.S. embargo on Iran, Turkmenistan must export the bulk of its gas via the former Soviet pipeline that runs through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to Russia, making Turkmenistan dependent upon Russia for the distribution of most of its gas. Following Soviet internal practice, Russia has sent this gas to its poorest customers in Ukraine and the Caucasus, who were unable to pay in hard currency while Russian exports served hard-currency customers in the West. Turkmenistan thus found it hard to get its bills paid. What should have been instant wealth for Turkmenistan turned into a question of collecting bad debts, and in 1997 Turkmenistan ceased exporting gas through Russia. But given its lack of other options, it concluded a new gas export agreement with Russia in February, 2000 and in July agreed to resume exports to Ukraine, under an agreement that guaranteed 50 billion cubic meters annually for a ten-year period thereafter, at a price of \$42 per thousand cubic meters. Given Turkmenistan's large reserves, these agreements need not exclude others, and despite some setbacks, Turkmenistan still hopes for a U.S.-proposed trans-Caspian gas pipeline, another remote possibility of a pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and, above all, new routes to Iran.

Turkmenistan's other great vulnerability is water, most of which comes from the Amu Darya and its offshoot, the Kara-Kum canal. The quantity of water from those sources cannot be increased without potential conflict with its much larger neighbor, Uzbekistan. Past suggestions by Turkmenistan that it plans to draw substantially larger quantities from the Amu Darya for development have caused Uzbekistan to respond that it would prevent this by force if necessary. To the outside observer, the most logical strategy for Turkmenistan to pursue would be full participation in multilateral water management of the Aral Sea watershed together with all five Central Asian states (see textbox in Section I). Yet Turkmenistan's government, in the spirit of "positive neutrality," has been more skeptical of this cooperation than the others, understandably fearing that its dependence would be a zero-sum game.

Military Profile

The general lack of human and material resources has put severe strains on Turkmenistan's defense forces. The Turkmen army has given up the goal of having three motorized rifle divisions, limiting itself to three combined arms

The Gray Area of Private Armies

Private armies like those in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Chechnya, as well as Tajikistan, have had characteristics very different from those of normal armies. People joined them when they want and quit when they want. Not all these units were known to wear uniforms. The Tajik “self-defense detachments” in Badakhshan reportedly still do not wear uniforms. The Tajik 11th Brigade, whose rise and fall are chronicled below, did not wear uniforms. Neither did the Mkhedrioni in Georgia, most of the National Guard there, most of the Chechen fighters, and some of MVD Colonel Iskandar Gamidov’s fighters in Azerbaijan during 1992-93. Since the 18th century, uniforms have been a powerful symbol of unit loyalty and subordination to the state; the decision — for whatever reasons — not to wear them in many post-communist wars is quite significant.

While soldiers in state-run armies are compensated for their risky work by a salary, that standard feature of modern bureaucracy, soldiers in private armies most often are not. Their reward comes from plundering; from the income of seized businesses or state bureaucracies; from selling equipment, food, ammunition or weapons; and from using their position to get money from smuggling, particularly of drugs and arms. As noted, the border guards in Tajikistan, both Russian and Tajik, are deeply involved in that trade. And some army units have seized resources or been given a source of income by the government. In Abkhazia, for instance, Russian and North Caucasian officers or adventurers were promised dachas or tangerine groves by the Abkhaz government. In Tajikistan, a military unit in Qurghonteppa, the 11th brigade, owned the central market and collected its taxes. And there are cases in the new armies, for instance in Turkmenistan, where generals or officers ordered soldiers to do private construction work, for example, building dachas. The unit commanders receive the pay for the completed dachas or for the work as it is done.

In private armies, the meaning of a unit designation, such as regiment or company, depends heavily on the particular case. It cannot be assumed, if one reads about the First Brigade or the 11th Brigade, that it is a unit of a certain size with a certain organization and equipment. In the Georgian National Guard, as the Georgian Army was initially called, groups of five to 30 men were called battalions. The Tajik Fifth Brigade, which was assembled to fight in Tavildara during the civil war, was a composite brigade put together from troops belonging to the MVD, KGB and army ministries. But it was given a brigade number. The Russian army in the first Chechen war adopted similar practices, showing that the characteristics of private armies are something inherent in post-communist society and not simply an early stage of improvising armies. There is an extraordinary fluidity in the organization of these units.

Private armies almost never have a full set of ranks. They usually have an overall leader and other leaders at the platoon-size level. They do not have non-commissioned officers. Some foreign military attachés reported that they had never seen a non-commissioned officer in the Tajik army, though they formally existed. Units tend to be headed by officers who were not trained as such. In the Tajik case, as elsewhere in Central Asia and the Caucasus, this was initially necessitated by the small number of Tajik officers in the Soviet army. In 1992, Tajik officers of the Soviet Division that supplied the Dushanbe garrison made up four percent of the total.

During a period when the Central Asian and Caucasian states have great difficulty raising revenue, unit commanders are often forced to raise part of their own budgets. If they do so, they become more like warlords controlling private armies, who raised and equipped them from the beginning. From professionals and bureaucrats they turn into feudal lords. For this reason, U.S. intelligence analysts and military planners ought to pay more attention to private armies, which are usually treated as a marginal phenomenon characteristic of a few places in rare times of disorder. Yet they reveal tendencies that underlie almost all military life in the former Soviet space. Because these groups are not formed by government activity alone, they are not always controlled by central governments.

Western military planners should be aware that post-Soviet private armies often have a link with the criminal world. Sangak Safarov, the leader of Tajikistan’s Popular Front fighters, who later turned into the army of the Rakhmanov government, spent many years in the Gulag as did the Georgian military leaders Ioseliani and Kitovani, the Chechen commanders Labazanov, Gantemirov and Nukayev, and many others. Some of these warlords are pure criminals, others Robin Hood figures who care about the public interest.

The military profession was not socially prestigious in the last years of the Soviet Union, attracting either the children of serving officers or people from parochial, disadvantaged parts of Soviet society. In addition, the police, ordinary (*Militsiya*), militarized (Internal Troops and paramilitary forces [OMON] of the MVD), or political (the KGB), who were to merge with the professional army in the coming disorders, were intimately involved by their work with the criminal world. As the legitimacy of the Soviet regime waned, the wall separating their public-spirited exploitation of criminal connections and skills from pure criminality crumbled as well. In the growing anarchy, access to weapons and arms became a valuable asset to keep one's family and friends safe and prosperous in difficult times.

The odyssey of a certain Captain Khudoberdiyev, who was in charge of recruiting in the Qurghonteppa mobilization base of the Soviet army in 1991 and 1992 illustrates the uses of weapons and military skills in the post-communist environment. Khudoberdiyev was a Lakai, a former nomad tribe assimilating to the Uzbeks. Before the Soviet Union collapsed, Khudoberdiyev was already in comfortable circumstances from his recruiter job: sons of the local elite wanted to evade the horrors of conscript life, while the less advantaged, like himself, could turn certain officer positions into a source of income. In the chaos accompanying the collapse of the USSR, the Tajik Communist Party and the Soviet Army, Khudoberdiyev found valuable the low-quality equipment of his unit, stockpiled for use in a general war. He drove out of the base with some friends and three armored vehicles, joining with other Lakai co-ethnics in the nascent Popular Front. It also has been mentioned that he may have also looted a bank in Kulob. He may have been encouraged or helped by GRU officers attached to the more combat-worthy 201st Division, which had served in Afghanistan, perhaps acting on instructions from Moscow, perhaps motivated by their connections with the local communist elite who faced losing everything. The Russian officers of the Soviet army who helped Khudoberdiyev also faced losing everything, abandoned by Moscow in a country about to be taken over by Tajik nationalism or Islamism.

Khudoberdiyev, along with colleagues from the mobilization base, civilian friends and relatives from the streets, organized the First Brigade of the Tajik Army once the Kulobis, Khujandis, Lakais and allied groups had won the first phase of the civil war. The First Brigade and the Presidential Guard became the best units of the Tajik Army. But Khudoberdiyev did not feel that their rewards were comparable to their prowess; the 11th Brigade, a less competent and even more criminal unit, monopolized the profits of the Qurghonteppa market. In a brief battle in the center of the city the First Brigade shattered the 11th, taking over the market. The government in Dushanbe consecrated the result, and the 11th Brigade disappeared from the Army's Order of Battle. The First Brigade of the Tajik army was renamed the Rapid Reaction Force. But other warlords and units on the government side still seemed to be getting more money. The Rapid Reaction Force rebelled in January-February 1996 because its officers, particularly its commander, Colonel Khudoberdiyev, did not think they were getting a fair share of the revenues in Qurghonteppa, where they were stationed, and they did not like some of the appointments to local government positions by the Tajik government.

By this time Khudoberdiyev had cut his connections with Russia and formed an alliance with his remote ethnic relatives in Uzbekistan, which did not like the exclusion of its Tajik allies, the Khujandis, from the government. The Tajik government gathered the street toughs of Dushanbe in the stadium, handing out AK-47s to anyone who would defend the capital against Khudoberdiyev. But it was the Presidential Guard, similar in origins and professionalism but more privileged, that defeated the Rapid Reaction Force, driving the survivors into Uzbekistan. Khudoberdiyev took his revenge later, when the Uzbek government, losing patience with their clients' exclusion from the Tajik peace process, apparently backed an inroad by Khudoberdiyev that briefly seized Khujand, the northern provincial capital. The Tajik government, perhaps with Russian help, defeated this incursion. The Khujandi Uzbeks remain excluded, but the similar Islamic private armies leagued together in the United Tajik Opposition were largely integrated into the Tajik army by August 1999. More vital was the gift of certain government departments (such as the Tariff Service), together with their "non-budget" revenue sources, to the former UTO (now essentially preserved and legalized in the form of the Islamic Revival Party).

regiments, a transition that is still not complete. The chief of staff may be the only professional officer in the Turkmen army, while most of the other officers have been drawn from the KGB, MVD and the ruling party. Many of them are preoccupied by the commercial opportunities that the army has offered. Meanwhile, the Soviet army took most of the best equipment when it finally departed. Much of what was left has been sold. In 1997, it was said that there was not a tank or a plane that could move in Turkmenistan.

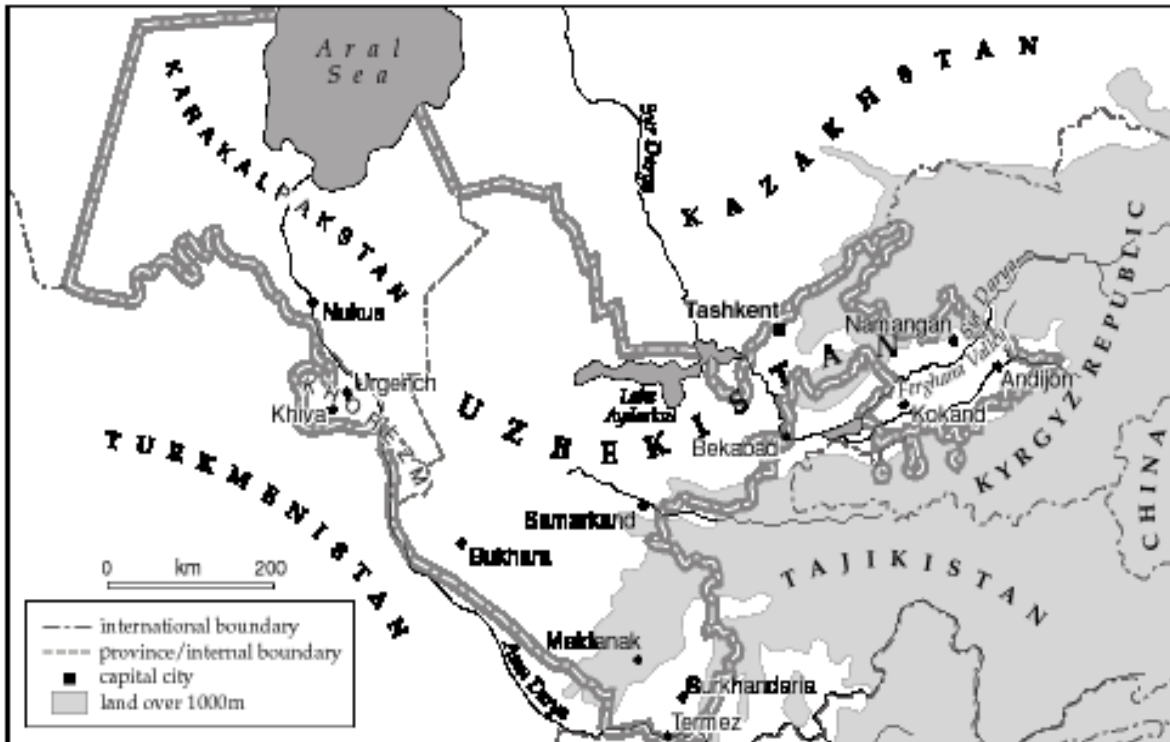
President Niyazov has given the army low priority, resulting in non-payment of salaries, lack of food and bad living conditions. Turkmenistan's endemic tribalism also hinders military effectiveness. A few years after independence, some Tekke junior officers did not feed non-Tekke soldiers, some of whom eventually revolted. In 1998, some soldiers maltreated for tribal reasons broke into the unit armory, seized weapons and headed for the capital. They were stopped only by the MVD.

By contrast, the MVD and the KNB, which is the old KGB renamed, have quite large military forces. In fact, the most competent forces in the country are probably those under the KNB. They are the least corrupt and the most capable in a military sense. The MVD forces do security guard work for foreign companies, as happens in many other such armies, and thus do not depend entirely on the state budget for their income.

Due to its good relations with the *Taliban*, the Turkmen armed forces were little changed after Batken, which did not much affect Turkmenistan. Capability has improved very slightly from the low point a few years ago, with a few of its aircraft now able to fly. Corruption, however, remains a tremendous problem. According to President Niyazov, "breaches of the law have become increasingly frequent" in the MVD and KNB.

E. Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan boasts both the largest population in the region (24 million vs. 15 million for Kazakhstan) and by far the most consolidated population in terms of Asian ethnicity (fewer than six percent Slavs). While large Uzbek populations live in all the other Central Asian states, only the Tajiks have major populations within the borders of Uzbekistan. The country claims a half dozen of the ancient oasis cities (Tashkent, Samarkand, Bokhara, Kokand, Khiva, Urgench, Namangan) and the largest industrial and transportation center (Tashkent). Although each country has ambitions, Uzbekistan is the only power in the CIS other than Russia to have a developed and specific sense of geopolitical destiny



and the desire to become a serious regional power. It therefore has earned a comparably greater degree of attention from U.S. planners.

Unlike Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, Uzbekistan has no common border with Russia or China. Indeed, it is the only Central Asian state surrounded by other Central Asian states. As a result of this central location, Tashkent served as Russia's hub of political, military and communications presence in the region since Tsarist times.

Together, these factors virtually guaranteed that independent Uzbekistan would be the leading candidate to become the regional hegemon in post-Soviet Central Asia, including Afghanistan. However, this prospect evokes serious concern among Uzbekistan's neighbors, which see the country as the successor to the various emirates that dominated the region from the 14th to the 19th centuries.

Uzbekistan's Interests

Uzbekistan's two paramount priorities are, first, to consolidate and sustain sovereignty and, second, to assure social stability.

The three main domestic dangers facing Uzbekistan are:

- Corruption, which is acknowledged to be widespread in both society and the state.
- Centripetal currents within the country that could weaken central institutions and devolve power to local political groupings (“clans”) at the expense of the central authorities.
- The rise of radical Islam and drug trafficking, especially in the Ferghana valley, but also increasingly in the poorer Tashkent suburbs inhabited by recent migrants from the countryside.

Uzbekistan’s leaders perceive their country to be under external threat from many quarters. Some of the threats, such as Iran’s and Saudi Arabia’s mounting hostility to Uzbekistan on account of its ties with Israel, or the activities of foreign criminal gangs, do not seem to pose any immediate or overwhelming dangers. Others present more stubborn challenges, with the three most important thought to be:

- The Islamic radicalism and narcotics that emanate from Afghanistan and reach Uzbekistan via Tajikistan and, to a lesser extent, via the Kyrgyz Republic.
- The private groups in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey and Chechnya that Uzbekistan considers to be involved in funding and training the radical Muslim movements that are increasingly evident within the country.
- Russia’s perceived “imperial hangover,” which finds expression in the attempt to encircle Uzbekistan with states that are tied in with the economic and security structures of the CIS.

Even though Uzbekistan is in principle committed to good relations with its neighbors and to regional cooperation, it considers these threats to be of greater priority than aggressive pursuit of cooperation. To meet them, it has taken various steps at home and abroad:

- First, it has developed and maintains strong mission-oriented structures for security and defense.
- Second, it has sought strong security relations with the United States.
- Third, it joined every possible international structure that can serve as a counterweight to the CIS, including the Central Asia Community, the Economic Cooperation Council, Partnership for Peace and, most recently, GUAM (now GUUAM – Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova). Though it has not rejected the CIS and more recently has drawn closer to Russia, Uzbekistan still wishes to diversify its international relations to the greatest possible extent.

- Fourth, it has also looked to Asian states, notably Korea, Japan, Indonesia and India, for investments and support.

The paradox of Uzbekistan's situation lies in the realm of psychology. While its ambitions and expectations are probably the greatest in the region, they are joined by a profound sense of vulnerability. Its geopolitical position and post-independence policies have endowed it with a stronger basis for security than any other state in Central Asia or the Caucasus; yet it feels deeply insecure and threatened. This has led in part to a growing tendency to exert pressure on its neighbors, leading, in turn, to resentment and intensified diplomatic overtures on the part of the neighbors toward the major powers (namely China and Russia) across their borders. The heightened sense of insecurity after the Islamist incursion into the Kyrgyz Republic in 1999 resulted in a number of incidents between Uzbekistan and its neighbors, and to vociferous Uzbek complaints about the latter's supine response to the threat.

These realities also explain Uzbekistan's readiness to take aggressive measures to participate in security arrangements involving especially the United States and the West generally, backed by policies in many other spheres, ranging from arms procurement to officer training. Where U.S. support was seen to be lacking, Uzbekistan has turned to other outside sources, including a closer relationship with Russia since late 1999. Though seemingly contradictory to its earlier anti-Russian stance, the shift is actually consistent with Uzbekistan's overall strategy to be the designated regional policeman backed by a strong outside power.

The main impediment to these aspirations is the same sense of vulnerability and insecurity that gave rise to them in the first place. The slow progress toward democratization, very cautious moves towards greater openness, heightened pressure on radical Islamists and centralization of authority in Tashkent and the presidential office all give rise to misgivings that Uzbekistan's policies create more internal and external problems than they solve. Were it not for the geopolitical threat perceived from Russia to the north and the spread of Islamic radicalism from the south, it is doubtful that anyone would look with favor on those security arrangements that now exist with Uzbekistan, let alone on their expansion.

Military Profile

The Uzbek army is the most impressive in the region. It has two corps-size military formations, one of them mobile, plus many detached units of brigade size. It has an air force that actually flies and most of its equipment works.

The officer corps went from 90 percent Russian in 1992 to less than 20 percent non-Uzbek today. Russians do occupy higher positions, with most lieutenant colonels former Soviet officers, but most generals are Uzbek. Although there seems to be an intent to purge Russians from the army, many Uzbek general officers come from mixed-blood families, so an ethnic-Russian influence is larger than it appears. Some 5,000 or 6,000 new officers have entered the army since the beginning of 1992, with most coming from military schools, which had become 80 percent Uzbek by 1994. Graduates of those schools are immediately promoted to the rank of captain, jumping very quickly from there to officer ranks. Thus, the officer corps is becoming indigenized very quickly. Finally, it is difficult to believe that there were not officers introduced from the KGB and MVD.

Ethnic Uzbek officers also joined the Uzbek army from the former Soviet army, from an earlier total of perhaps 1,000 to 2,000. Most of those have now returned. Some of them came from the combat arms, including the armored forces. In addition, an active program exists to create non-commissioned officers on the U.S. model. Everyone seems to be paid on time, which is a rarity in the former USSR.

Uzbekistan is making impressive efforts to build its army from what was left there in 1991. Unlike any other regional state, it is establishing a new force structure and new bases in all parts of the country and has announced plans to unify all its security services under the single command of the chief of the general staff. Most of the bases in Soviet Central Asia were along the southern border and, particularly, near the eastern border with China. When Uzbekistan was carved out of the middle of Soviet Central Asia, it was left with a very unequal distribution of bases, just as in the other republics. Unlike them, Uzbekistan is building new bases in the west, in the Ferghana Valley and elsewhere, so that there will be a defense against threats that come from any direction.

The remaining problems of the Uzbek army are corruption, rigid Soviet doctrine, lack of initiative, lack of combat experience and hazing. In addition, many officers are still under-qualified for their ranks. There still are not quite enough apartments to provide housing for all officers. And there is no old Uzbek military tradition – the Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand surrendered to Russian armies after very little resistance. But a new military tradition seems to be arising rapidly.

Why has the Uzbek army been so relatively successful? Unlike the presidents in the other countries, President Karimov gave it a high priority. In

fact, much has been done to make the army prestigious. The cult of Timur, the barbaric conqueror who has replaced Lenin as a role model and national hero, encourages military interests and respect for the soldier. Tremendous coverage is given to the army on Uzbek TV. The state media are used to spreading the idea that being an officer is a very noble calling.

Uzbekistan undoubtedly has the capability to quickly overrun the Tajik and Kyrgyz portions of the Ferghana Valley, southern Tajikistan (including the capital) up to the mountains, the northern and eastern areas of Turkmenistan and, with more resistance, southern Kazakhstan. Over time, and barring foreign intervention, Uzbekistan could probably conquer all of Central Asia. This current and growing disparity is important to consider.

Although the 1999 attacks of Islamists toward the Uzbek part of the Ferghana valley confirmed what the government had long been saying about threats, it produced a major shock in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan carried out air strikes against the Islamic fighters, sent military aid to the Kyrgyz Republic and may have helped in other ways not made public. These operations, and minor operations against small groups of alleged guerrillas within Uzbekistan, gave the Uzbek forces some much needed combat experience. Uzbek forces were placed on alert, and a major program to improve its capability in dealing with such threats began. Exercises dealing with terrorist scenarios gave more realistic training to Uzbek forces prepared for conventional, large-scale war. The doctrine and, apparently, the structure of Uzbek units were changed to give more flexibility in dealing with guerrilla tactics. In all likelihood, the shock of Batken has improved the Uzbek forces more than any other regional military, because they were already good enough to implement some new doctrine and training and to adapt more readily.

The military reassessment after Batken had major international repercussions. Among others, Uzbek forces participated in exercises with Russia and other Central Asian states, and some with U.S. participation. The Uzbek government suggested it might reconsider its withdrawal from the CIS collective security agreement, and ratified a treaty on defense cooperation with Russia in February, 2000. The immediate effect of Batken was not, however, to increase trust among the Central Asian states. President Karimov made public offers of help that could easily be interpreted as threats.

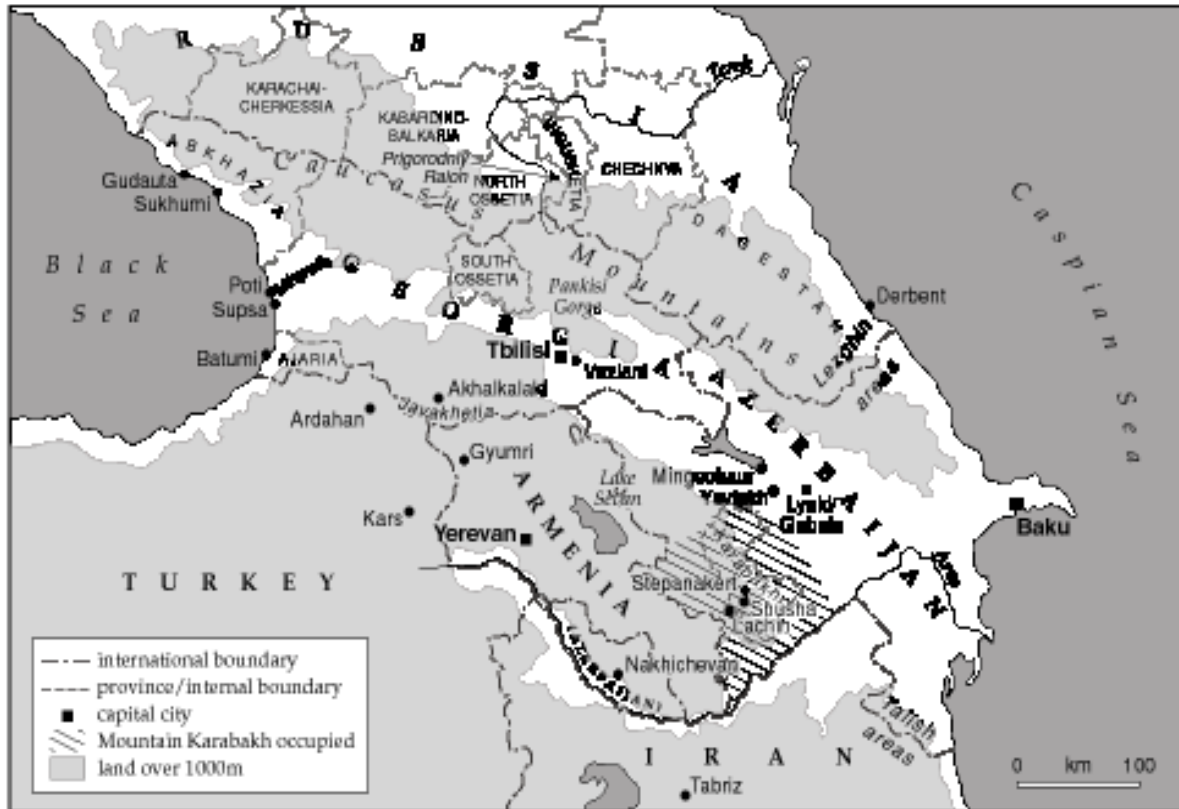
Uzbekistan backed up its rhetoric by brief and limited bombings on Kyrgyz and Tajik territories. Uzbekistan began carrying out a crash program to define and defend its eastern borders, which earlier had remained open,

and undemarcated, as in Soviet times. Neighbors and relatives suddenly found themselves separated by barbed wire. In the course of demarcation, Uzbek forces in uniform put border markers on territory claimed by Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, leading to ugly confrontations. Relationships between Uzbekistan and its neighbors have settled down with time, but the Batken incursion nevertheless sustained fears of Uzbek military power and regional preponderance. A pattern has emerged by which greater external pressure on the Uzbek government has led to greater Uzbek pressure on its neighbors. When a new round of insurgency gripped the region in August, 2000, the rhetoric of common action seemed to exceed the reality, with both the Kyrgyz and Uzbek governments now accusing Tajikistan of giving succor to the militants. Their inroads into Uzbek territory, meanwhile, exceeded prior attempts – attacks were reported in the Surkhandaria region in southern Uzbekistan, in the Izboskan district of Andijon near the Kyrgyz border and in Bostanlyk, about 80 kilometers from Tashkent. The Uzbek government claimed repeatedly that it had the situation under control, but Karimov himself criticized the response of the military, while the incursions continued for several weeks.

F. The South Caucasus States

The South Caucasus states have a basic orientation that is quite different from the five Central Asian republics. In general, the Central Asian republics have based their policies on “the Asian model,” and to a lesser degree, on Russia and Turkey, while their geostrategic focus has moved toward the east and south. Azerbaijan, the only Islamic Caucasus state sometimes considered by Westerners in the same category as Central Asia, has been very secular for more than a century and orients itself toward Europe and states of European origin. (Albulfez Elchibey, the former president of Azerbaijan, sought to emulate Israel.) This orientation is the heritage of multinational, cosmopolitan Baku in the 19th century. Georgia also oriented itself for more than a hundred years toward Europe in order to transcend the culture’s Middle Eastern origins and to escape the unwelcome embrace of Russia, which dominated the entire region until 1991. Armenia’s orientation is somewhat more complicated by the search for a “third force” that would save Armenians from dispersion and subjugation, but it too looks to Russia and the West for religious and cultural kinship.

However, the South Caucasus and Central Asian states share the general problems endemic to all countries of the post-Soviet space, and particularly to



the non-Slavic Republics. They share a common experience, a common working language – Russian – and many distinctively Soviet traits. On the political plane, Armenia, like Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan (for the time being) sees a serious need for the CIS and other institutions or groupings in common with Russia. The other South Caucasus and Central Asian states have been more repulsed by Russian efforts for “reintegration” of the former Soviet space, interference with oil and gas exports, destabilization and the frequent rudeness of its diplomacy. Resentment of Russian heavy-handedness has tended to unify these countries and induce them to seek ties with NATO and other Euro-Atlantic organizations.

Azerbaijan and Georgia are also connected to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan by Caspian energy politics. The concept of the “Caspian basin” is Western in origin, not local, but Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Georgia found it useful to coordinate their positions on the status of the Caspian and on pipeline issues with Azerbaijan, which had the first Western oil investment. Other West-

ern projects, such as the EU's TRACECA, that seek to revive a "Silk Road" transport corridor through the Caucasus and Central Asia, also tend to bring all these states together, although as yet there is more symbolism than reality in this transport corridor. Finally, the three Caucasian states are all brought into a very important connection with Turkmenistan by their dependency on Turkmen gas for heat and industrial energy and by the fact that none of them have been able to pay for it.

Armenia

Armenians feel depressed and isolated in a Caucasus that is increasingly aligning itself with the West. Georgians and Azeris tend to be guardedly optimistic about the future in spite of many hardships, but according to USIA polls taken in mid-1999, 80 percent of Armenians think things will get worse. A large majority also sees Russia as a bet-

ter friend than the United States. The failure of the Ter-Petrosian presidency, with its innovative orientation, probably contributed to these perceptions, while the recent shifts in a similar direction by President Robert Kocharian have provoked similar reactions. Armenia is, in fact, very isolated. Turkey and Azerbaijan are hostile and their borders are closed. Georgia, though friendly to Armenia, has been careful not to align itself too closely at the expense of its even better relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Armenia's most important partner since independence has been Russia, which was also in visible decline until Putin's presidency. Iran, which shares a border with Karabakh occupied territory, is a sympathetic trade partner but has only recently begun to break out of its own isolation. From an Armenian

The GUAM Grouping

Russia's predominant position in the CIS induced Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova to look for other alternatives modes of cooperation that did not favor bilateral ties with their northern neighbor. The new grouping within CIS, known originally by the acronym GUAM, was created in 1997. The four were not satisfied with the Moscow-coordinated "integration" initiative within the CIS. Therefore, GUAM had a subtext of providing an alternate means of cooperation. The priorities of the alliance include the fight against separatism and regional conflicts; development of the Eurasian and South Caucasus corridors for oil and gas; and integration into Euro-Atlantic and Atlantic defense and economic structures.

Although GUAM members insist that the alliance is not aimed against Russia, the fact that it was set up suggests otherwise in everything from pipelines to defense. Bypassing Russia was clearly important to GUAM members. Moreover, the

viewpoint, the West is constructing pipelines, building Silk Road projects and structuring geopolitical relationships without fully considering Armenia's interests.

Armenia remains, however, a very important actor in the region, most of all because of its military power and strategic location. Efforts to integrate Armenia into Western institutions make sense, but this will be difficult. Armenia is not going to jeopardize its close relation with Russia, which it sees as its guarantor against Turkey, its traditional enemy. Armenia needs Russian support, including

proposed cooperation against "separatism" has a visible anti-Russian motivation: the greatest threat of "separatism" in Moldova and Ukraine is from the Russians of Transdneister and Crimea, while Georgians believe that Russia has supported Abkhaz separatists.

In April, 1999, Uzbekistan, with its significant military power, joined GUAM, making it GUUAM. Significantly, the occasion chosen for the formal announcement was the summit meeting held in Washington to celebrate the 50th anniversary of NATO. Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov drew the obvious conclusion: "How should we understand the fact that the new regional organization GUUAM has been created in Washington during a NATO summit? What aims are pursued by demonstratively creating this organization at the time of the latest events in the Balkans? This is a reflection of the policy of the leaders of the states who make such steps rather than a mere coincidence."

its supply of cheap, modern weapons for Armenian actions in Karabakh. Nor will Iran cease to be important for Armenia.

A settlement in Karabakh would open the Turkish frontier and give Armenia entirely new strategic options. Ter-Petrosian was ousted primarily because of fear of such a settlement, and Kocharian struggles against a similar fate.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are holding private direct talks which have reportedly made progress. But tremendous obstacles, including fragile political climates in both countries, still prevent an agreement.

Military Profile

Armenia has the strongest army in the Caucasus, and unit-for-unit, in the CIS, benefiting from a solid national will, discipline, combat experience and good equipment. Its troop strength numbered 44,000 by mid-2000. Unlike Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Central Asia countries, Armenia and Karabakh have been periodically resupplied by Russia and, most recently, by China with fairly modern weapons: It thus does not rely on the Soviet inventories

transferred under the Tashkent agreements. Armenia has Scud ballistic missiles, but its air force is very small.

In a real crisis, Armenia probably could draw on Russian resupply, advice and drafts from the lower-quality ethnic Armenian enlistees at the Russian garrison. The quality of the army, however, is declining slowly with the decline of fighting spirit and increased politicization. In 1998, President Ter-Petrossian was forced out of office in a veiled military coup. Mean-

while, the architect of the Armenian army, former Defense Minister Vazgen Sarkissian, was assassinated on October 27, 1999, after having aligned himself with the defeated presidential candidate against the president he had put in power. Some politicians from the Karabakh veterans' group Yerkrepah have tried to impeach President Kocharian for alleged complicity in the murder. In 2000, politicization appeared to

increase even further. President Kocharian was able to split Yerkrepah, closely allied with the army, into two factions by promoting a number of senior officers to higher rank. The Armenian public and army ranks today are pessimistic and demoralized, but a crisis of survival surely would bring out more bellicose instincts.

Karabakh's army of 20-25,000 men is known to be even tougher than Armenia's. It also can draw on Armenian forces in any crisis that seems to threaten the Armenian people's survival. But unlike the Armenian army, it is in the course of continuous improvement. It is often said to be the most pro-

Implications of an Emerging Regional Security Agreement in the South Caucasus

Since 1992 the sharpest political fissure in the former Soviet South has been between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thanks to the Karabakh conflict, that split has dominated the region's life and frustrated all efforts of regional coalition in the South Caucasus. In the autumn of 1999, however, the first signs of a change appeared. Realizing it had become a hostage to its Karabakh victory, Armenia took the first steps towards dialogue with Azerbaijan. In turn, at the November OSCE summit in Istanbul, Azerbaijan's president proposed a security pact to embrace the three countries of the South Caucasus and to be endorsed by Russia, Turkey and the United States. Armenia, mindful of events in Chechnya, expressed support for the idea, insisting only that Iran be added to the list of guarantors, which Azerbaijan accepted.

The proposed pact remains inchoate as of this writing and several versions exist. However, most imply a region entirely free of foreign military personnel. In other words, NATO would promise to abstain from direct involvement in the region provided Russia removes its bases.

fessional army in the entire former Soviet Union. The enclave, which declared itself independent from Azerbaijan in late 1991 and has a population of 100,000, is militarily superior to Azerbaijan, which has seven million people. Iron discipline and fervent patriotism characterize Karabakh's people. They also have a century-old military tradition: Karabakh gave the Soviet Union three marshals, one admiral and more than 30 generals.

Surprisingly, all three regional states seem prepared to pursue this notion. However, it is too early to say whether it will come to pass since the Karabakh issue must first be either resolved or set aside on some basis, while Georgia must adequately resolve its internal problems in Abkhazia, Ossetia and elsewhere. It is also too early to know whether Russia will fully support it. To be sure, Russia stands to lose its military presence in the region. Only if such a step were necessary to prevent NATO from gaining a foothold there would Russia find it acceptable as the best fall-back position. But this tradeoff is unlikely given the current consensus in Armenia that supports Russian troops against Turkey.

Similar arguments about the removal of foreign troops may be attractive also to Iran and Turkey, albeit for different reasons. Such an arrangement would not prevent the Caucasus states from developing their own forces sufficient to repel attack, from sending their officers abroad to any country for study, from procuring arms where they will, and from participating in security arrangements involving foreign states. But the removal of foreign troops from Caucasus soil would provide base-line conditions for security that do not now exist.

In spite of more recent political upheaval in Karabakh, including an attempt on the president's life in March, 2000 in which former Defense Minister Samvel Babaian was implicated, the army remains strong. It is probably capable of taking the strategic Yevlakh-Mingechaur area and cutting Azerbaijan in two. Karabakh's military also could pose a real threat to the Baku-Supsa pipeline, planned a few kilometers to the north.

Azerbaijan

In seeking to forge ties to the West, Azerbaijani officials have offered to host a NATO base, and many hope that Azerbaijan could join NATO in the not too distant future. These unrealistic wishes illustrate a common difference between local and U.S. perceptions of U.S. power. Policy-makers in the former Soviet republics tend to believe that the United States and Russia are competing everywhere in a zero-sum quest for greater influence. Local events are frequently attributed to the scheming of Washington or Moscow. Thus, the

regional countries generally expect the United States to be highly activist and feel let down when it is not. Azerbaijani (and Georgian) expectations about bases and NATO membership are likely to be disappointed and could become a source of future misunderstandings.

Nonetheless, Azerbaijan requires a Western presence in the Caucasus in order to enhance its own closer ties to Turkey and Europe. Azerbaijanis and Georgians have been the chief promoters of the “common Caucasian house,” i. e., a Caucasus (often including the North Caucasus) at harmony within itself, with some common political and economic arrangements, and united against outsiders. This approach is consistent with the general U.S. desire for regional cooperation, but confronts the reality of Armenia’s and Russia’s quite different perceptions and interests.

Azerbaijan’s most pressing interest is to settle the Karabakh conflict. The conflict resulted in the loss of significant territory, including the historic Azeri cultural center of Shusha, and the occupation of several other *raions*, totaling about 17 percent of the country. The conflict also produced many thousands of refugees, a continuing military threat to the region, and most of all, a humiliating defeat by a much smaller population. The current Azeri government, however, has little desire to renew the conflict. Yet any possible compromise would be very controversial in both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The Seceded Entities: Abkhazia, Chechnya, Karabakh, South Ossetia

The seceded entities are important because of their prospects for renewed conflict. But information about their armed forces and interests is sparse. Karabakh, together with Armenia, has probably the most capable armed forces in the CIS. The Abkhaz forces are smaller than the Georgian, but probably better motivated. Chechen militias also have significant combat power.

Thus, while not recognized as states, the seceded entities must be included in calculating the regional military balance. They exercise (except in Chechnya) state power over territory; and, in the case of Karabakh, they exert important influence over the policy of Armenia. Humanitarian considerations aside, U.S. interests favor reintegration of the Georgian territories peacefully and *de facto* independence for Karabakh under Azerbaijani sovereignty.

Reintegration may not be possible without using force, and interest in such an option is rising slowly in Georgia. Similarly, the prospects for the use of force by Azerbaijan could increase if oil revenues make it possible for that country to buy more effective long-distance weapons.

Such developments pose a problem for the United States. If it provides the desired military assistance, it will make the military option more likely. And a new war between Armenia and Azerbaijan could be damaging for U.S. interests, particularly if it drew Russia and Turkey in on opposing sides.

Karabakh also is a particular source of friction for Azerbaijan (and potentially Turkey) with Russia and Iran. Azerbaijan feels that Russia, a mediator in the Minsk process, and Iran, a fellow Shi'i Muslim country, supported its enemy, Armenia. President Aliyev has played a long, tortuous game and has gone so far as to hint that Russia could restore its position in Azerbaijan in return for delivering a settlement on appropriate terms.

Choosing isolation or neglect as a policy response, however, also has a downside. In the case of Chechnya, isolation from the world impeded President Maskhadov's attempt to create an effective state administration and furthered the breakdown of order there. Illegal activities are also very important in the economies of Abkhazia, South Ossetia (a center of the drug trade) and Karabakh. High Karabakh officials profit hugely from "customs" on the border with Iran, which may disappear with its revenues as soon as the occupied territories are returned.

Another dangerous development is the possibility that Sunni Islamic radicalism in the North Caucasus will create significant indirect problems for the South Caucasus, though the form this might take is not yet clear. These movements do not have wide support in Chechnya and Daghestan, but this could change as a consequence of Russia's military campaign, which has pushed more otherwise moderate Muslims and ethnic nationalists to side with the extremists. Such tendencies also tend to spread among large, uprooted refugee populations of the kind that are present throughout the region. Should the Northern Caucasus become even further destabilized along these lines, greater pressure may be felt further south with refugee movements, terrorist sanctuaries and supply routes.

As Armenia's patron, Russia has a substantial ability either to facilitate or to block a peace settlement. The same is true of Iran and Turkey, but to a considerably lesser degree. Azerbaijan's interest in joining Western alignments is very real, but dependence on Russia will always serve to keep it limited. Perhaps this is why, as both Azerbaijanis and Armenians believe, Russia has obstructed a settlement, even while serving as a mediator.

Military Profile

At a strength of 69,900 men, Azerbaijan's army is considerably larger than that of its neighbors but faces many internal problems. Overall, salaries are higher and there is more and better equipment than in Georgia. However, national identity is weaker, and morale and corruption are worse. In the Karabakh war, the Azerbaijani army fell apart after initial successes amid political infighting and mass desertions. Peasant conscripts were willing to de-

fend their own village areas, but not others. While President Aliyev restored some cohesion and was able to win back small areas by the time of the truce in 1994, the army continues to lack self-confidence, and society has no confidence in it either. The battlefield losses to a much smaller force in the war exacerbated Azerbaijan's self-image as a non-military people, a nation of traders. As in many of these societies, corruption pervades the army. In one case, the job of a military judge was purchased for \$30,000. These factors leave Azerbaijan highly vulnerable to Karabakh and to Iran, although its officer ranks probably could no longer be as crippled by Russian penetration, as they were in the early 1990s.

Large oil revenues, if they ever come, could provide more funds to modernize the army. However, the basic fact, as in Georgia, is that there is little will to reverse the verdict of the secessionist wars by force. What the Armenians desperately fear is an attack with stand-off weapons, such as aircraft and rockets, that could slowly depopulate Karabakh. This is the post-oil military option most likely to attract Azerbaijan. But it would be very risky. If Azerbaijan initiates it, a determined Armenian offensive would ultimately prevail.

Georgia

Georgia faces two major challenges: to achieve economic recovery and to reunite the seceded areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Dealing with these problems and resettling the large numbers of refugees from these areas requires cooperation with Russia, however distasteful that may be to Georgia's leaders. The South Ossetian conflict is less bitter, and much closer to a solution, but a signed agreement on some federal status is likely to remain elusive. To recover Abkhazia, Georgia attempted to cooperate with Russia, but has failed to achieve much. In part, this is because the Russian government has no wish to return Abkhazia to Georgia. Nor could it earlier, given the close ties of the Abkhaz leadership with Russian leaders in the Duma and the armed forces. Faced with such an impasse, Georgia is seeking to involve the UN, the OSCE, NATO and Western countries in the Abkhaz peace process. But Georgia is likely to be disappointed in the response from these organizations.

More promising is Georgia's "common Caucasian House" formula. It capitalizes upon Georgia's role as common partner to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia would like to extend this formula to the North Cauca-

sus. Georgia is engaged in active diplomacy with North Ossetia (which, strangely, is a formal partner in the South Ossetian peacekeeping arrangements together with the Russian Federation) and Chechnya. Other North Caucasian Republics within the Russian Federation are important to Georgia because of their ethnic ties with Abkhazia and past military assistance to it.

Military Profile

The Georgian army has had many of the same problems as the Russian army, although its nationalism is stronger and morale marginally better. But the state overall is much weaker, and the army's foundations are recent and fragile. The problem is not that the army represents an autonomous organization with a separate ideology, presents itself as a distinct group or serves any particular social interest. The problem is quite different: the army has passed through many stages when it served successive outside political interests, with the officer corps changing with each turn of the political wheel.

The first Georgian army began to develop under Soviet rule, commanded by President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's classmate, the artist and criminal Tengiz Kitovani, who later turned against the president and forced him from power. Current President Eduard Shevardnadze used other warlords to remove and later jail Kitovani, purging the friends whom, in the Soviet and Georgian legacy of clientelism and personal allegiances, Kitovani had brought into the army. The next Minister of Defense, Karakarashvili, and his associates were replaced in late 1993 by the Russian logistics officer, Nadibaidze, who purged more of the nationalist officers and introduced ethnic Georgians from the Russian army. During this period it was widely thought that Shevardnadze was allowing Russia to manage, or at least to neutralize, the army. After the last attempt to assassinate Shevardnadze, with its revelations of army complicity, Nadibaidze was replaced by General Tevzadze, an American-trained nationalist veteran of the Abkhaz war, who has tried to improve the army but who also has appointed relatives to key positions.

Georgia reports a figure of more than 20,000 troops, although it is not clear whether this figure weighs the fact that units are well below strength, and there are many desertions. Conscripts are very unwilling, for the same reasons as they are in Russia. In the winter of 1996, many Georgian troops were without gloves and only the offices of the generals were heated.

The result is that Georgia has very little combat capability, despite modest improvements. The Shevardnadze regime would have collapsed in October,

1993 if not for Russian assistance. In the spring 1999 fighting between Georgian government-supported guerrillas, supported by MVD troops, and the Abkhaz private armies, the Georgians were worsted. As recently as 1998, Georgian military experts indicated that it was still possible for a battalion-sized unit of really capable soldiers to overthrow the Georgian government. It is not surprising, therefore, that the presence of four Russian bases on Georgian territory has kept the country within the Russian military orbit. Russian border guards were withdrawn from Georgia during autumn 1999. Russia then demanded their reintroduction along the border with Chechnya, but was refused. At the Istanbul OSCE summit in 1999, Russia promised to withdraw from two of its four bases in Georgia – Vaziani, near Tbilisi, and Gudauta in Abkhazia – by July 1, 2001. Although achieved under heavy U.S. pressure, this commitment shows that Putin's generally more nationalist government is capable of a cooperative policy toward the other republics of the former Soviet Union. In August, 2000, the Russian army began withdrawing tanks and other heavy equipment from the Vaziani base. Russia argues, however, that the airfield at Vaziani is not part of the base and that Russian troops can remain there in spite of the promise given at Istanbul. The fate of the bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki remains the subject of dispute between the Georgian and Russian governments, while rumors persist that Russia will seek to transfer many of its assets to its forces deployed in Armenia if the Georgian bases eventually are vacated. Meanwhile, Georgia denies other rumors that NATO or Turkey plan to make use of the bases on its territory once Russian troops finally depart.

The Georgian army remains narrowly constrained by the government's inability to collect revenue. In 2000, one-third of the annual national budget voted earlier by Parliament was "sequestered," or withdrawn from the government departments. Consequently, the earlier defense budget of over 20 million dollars has been reduced by about half. This sum would be sufficient to maintain about half of the current legal strength of 20,000, which includes several thousand "dead souls" who are on the rolls but not present. The armed forces are in the process of slow reduction to a more practicable size. Both officers and men frequently go unpaid. Knowledgeable Georgian observers say that the Army and the other armed structures (Interior Ministry, Border Guards and Presidential Guard) could each produce 200 to 1,000 combat-ready soldiers in an emergency.

The debility of the Georgian army is better known than similar cases because it is under greater Western influence than any other Newly Independent States (NIS) army. The Defense Minister, Tevzadze, has accepted in principle a number of reforms assimilating the structure of the army to Western practices, but most of these meas-

ures have not yet been implemented. Tevzadze has created Special Operations units, totaling about 1,000, and a mountain warfare unit, but they are not paid higher wages than other troops. Turkey has donated equipment to arm the 11th Brigade to NATO standards.

Although non-governmental armed forces no longer exist in public, some of them continue in existence. The Georgian guerrillas in Abkhazia – the Forest Brotherhood and the White Legion – are the best known. Chechen refugees and local Chechen-speaking Kists in the Pankisi Gorge say they have their own “Spetsnaz,” equipped with grenade launchers and machine guns bought from corrupt officials in Tbilisi. Aslan Abashidze, the quasi-independent boss of the Ajar Republic, openly maintains a bodyguard of approximately 100 men and sometimes pays the regular Georgian brigade stationed there. When the mutinied army officer (and former deputy commander of the rebel force in the second civil war) Akaki Eliava was killed by interior ministry forces in July, 2000, he was accused of having an illegal armed formation.

Three Nightmare Scenarios

Given the highly fluid nature of the regional environment, the preceding survey provides only a snapshot of national interests and capabilities. An alternative method to appreciate regional developments is to consider future worst-case scenarios which might affect U.S. interests. The following three scenarios, admittedly extreme and unlikely, are offered for purposes of reflection.

I. Disintegration of Kazakhstan

An economic crisis in Kazakhstan, as it approaches a presidential election, consolidates the opposition, mainly Russian, around former prime minister Kashegeldin or a similar figure. Nazarbayev wins the election with massive fraud denounced by international election observers. Riots begin in Almaty and in Russian cities of the north, egged on by reckless Russian nationalist politicians. The Kazakh army and police disintegrate along ethnic lines (as in Bosnia); many weapons end up in the hands of Russian and Kazakh ethnic militias and criminal gangs. As in Bosnia, ethnic cleansing begins in the Russian and Kazakh controlled areas. People are dying from sniping, rocket attacks and massacres (all reported by CNN). Russian and world opinion is aroused: it looks like Bosnia 2,000 miles wide. Russian volunteers cross the border, disavowed by the Russian government but with the known complicity of the security police, domestic intelligence (GRU) and some provincial governors. A "Russian Republic of North Kazakhstan" is proclaimed at Öskemin (Ust-Kamenogorsk). President Nazarbayev calls for U.S. intervention, and the party out of power in the United States clamors for it.

Such a model of national disintegration in Kazakhstan corresponds to the "ethnic idea" in debates on the future of Russia: that is, the notion that Russia should not be a multinational state, but should unite the Slavic populations in the former Union Republics. It repeats a pattern displayed in Croatian Krajina, Bosnia, Transdniestria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Prigorodniy Raion of North Ossetia and Karabakh. The ubiquity of this pattern under different cultural and political conditions suggests that it is latent in post-communist societies where there is ethnic conflict, competition over privatized resources and disintegration of the state in the presence of strong interested powers that do not wish to intervene openly. It might not require Russian planning or inspiration from the beginning to take place.

The essence of Russia's role in this scenario can be understood by recalling the Serbian strategy in Bosnia. International opinion and the disintegration of the Yugoslav National Army did not allow a classical invasion. The solution — which was happening spontaneously anyway — was propaganda from Belgrade to exacerbate ethnic hatreds, followed by the formation of Serb militias in Bosnia and Croatia, reinforced by semi-criminal armed extremist groups, weapons and professional officers from Serbia proper. Because the militias had limited capabilities to carry out regular warfare or to take prisoners, and because of ethnic hatreds and simple greed for the apartments and possessions of their neighbors, the war's main modality was the ethnic cleansing of non-Serbs from Serb plurality areas. In Abkhazia, the ethnic cleansing of the plurality nationality was carried out by one of the smallest minorities.

Now transfer this pattern to northern Kazakhstan. The Russian (or Slavic) community, essentially equal in numbers to the Kazakhs and used to ruling on an all-Union scale, finds itself displaced from power, treated unequally in employment, privatization and identity issues, and threatened over the long run with a kind of slow ethnic cleansing. The increasingly authoritarian rule of Nazarbayev is denying the Russians the voice that even a minority has in a democracy. The economy is as bad as in Bosnia, creating an incentive to plunder neighbors. The Kazakh army, which has been plagued by recurrent problems of discipline, looting and desertion, is too weak to cope with mass disorder in the north. About 25 percent of the officer corps, including most of the professionally trained officers, are ethnic Russians with ties to local, largely Russian communities. If the army were ordered to shoot down Russian protesters in the streets, it might fragment into ethnic components that would join ethnic militias or give their arms to them, as in Bosnia and elsewhere.

The most important thing, though not the only thing, that has been lacking for such a scenario to develop has been the Russian government. The Russian political elite, though exploiting the issue of Russians abroad rhetorically, has had little interest in their real fate — but also has not yet been presented with a serious challenge along these lines. The scenario assumes an authoritarian Russian government that has embraced the "ethnic idea," perhaps after disappointments with current experiments in "state" reintegration. Russia already has the resources that are necessary to win. There are plenty of skilled officers, equipment and ammunition; when liberated from the decaying carcass of the Russian army and engaged in a genuinely popular struggle, both groups of Russians will show their qualities more effectively. Russia has already organized or aided militia wars in Transdniestria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Prigorodniy Raion, Karabakh and Tajikistan; only in the first stage of the Chechen war was there a total failure. Vicious pa-

ramilitary groups of the (Serb) Arkan type, such as Barkashov's Russian National Unity, exist. Russia has the hidden connections on the ground and with the other sides that were used by Serbia to manipulate the war. Russia does not have to be better armed or organized to carry out this type of policy.

Whatever the outcome, this scenario would pose major dilemmas for the United States. Both the Russian and Kazakh publics would demand the unconditional sympathy of outsiders and would be bitter if it were withheld. There probably would be sympathy with the Kazakhs elsewhere in Central Asia, and perhaps elsewhere in the Islamic world, leading to Islamic fundamentalist volunteer forces as in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. The numerous atrocities and populations at risk would engage Western sympathy, but attempting to translate that sympathy into policy would face all the difficulties of Bosnia, with the addition that Russia is a much larger power than Serbia and that the geography is even more problematical. As in earlier "near abroad" interventions, the Russian role would be deniable. The party most responsible, the Russian government, would also have the greatest power to create (or obstruct) a settlement.

II. Breakdown of the Tajik/Uzbek Order

The Taliban finally defeat Ahmed Shah Massoud and occupy all of Afghanistan, driving tens of thousands of heavily armed ethnic Tajiks from Afghanistan into Tajikistan. Their arrival in Tajikistan overburdens the already fragile economic situation, polarizing the Tajik factions now participating in a fragile peace process sponsored by Russia. Russia is concerned about the strengthening of Islamic forces, but believes it can manage the situation through old covert ties with the Tajik Islamic opposition and with Massoud. The United States becomes involved through humanitarian aid to the refugees. Eventually, the Rakhmonov government tries to repatriate the refugees involuntarily; the peace process breaks down; massacres of Islamic supporters in Qurghonteppa and Dushanbe ensue. USAID employees and contractors are killed by unknown elements. The Islamic opposition and the Tajik refugees unite to overthrow the feeble Rakhmonov government and install a more independent regime. Uzbekistan, meanwhile, has become even stronger and moves to intervene directly to restore order.

Uzbekistan considers a "fundamentalist" government right next door a threat to domestic peace and organizes uprisings in Khujand (as was done not long ago) and Regar that are joined by Uzbek-trained forces of the Movement for the National Renaissance of Tajikistan (under the exiled Khujandi leader Abdulmalik Abdullojonov). These include Uzbek military trainers and planners. In order to defend its vanishing role in Tajikistan, Russia organizes, with Belarus and Armenia, a "peacekeeping force" to "stop Uzbek aggression." Russian airborne forces, flown into Tajikistan, are demoralized, corrupt and unable to hold in wary skirmishes with the invading force, which has now been joined by Uzbek regular forces. Tajikistan is being overrun and Russia ousted. Russia bombs the Uzbek bases and transportation hubs for the invasion (Termez, Uzun, the Bekabad area just south of Tashkent), while ethnic conflict between Tajiks and Uzbeks breaks out into open warfare in Samarkand, Bukhara and across the Ferghana Valley. Uzbekistan and the other members of GUUAM appeal to the UN and directly to the United States for help against aggression, citing the precedent of Desert Storm and Kosovo.

III. Widening of War in the Caucasus

A new round of fighting in Karabakh begins after the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments fail to deliver a peace settlement. Negotiations break down, Armenia attempts to strengthen its hold over the occupied territory outside of Karabakh and announces its intention to seize parts of Nakhichevan. Once fighting begins, Azerbaijani rocket and bomb attacks on Karabakh lead to a widespread fear among Armenians that a strengthened Azerbaijani military aims to depopulate the whole region.

The threat to Nakhichevan sends thousands of Azeri refugees south to the Iranian border, and just as it did when the same occurred in 1993, Iranian troops enter Nakhichevan to keep the refugees at bay. But unlike 1993, Turkey takes a much harder line and mounts its own invasion of western Nakhichevan to expel the Armenian troops, invoking its putative obligations under the 1921 Treaty of Kars to uphold Azerbaijani sovereignty over Nakhichevan. The Russian government, sensing that the situation has fallen out of control, mobilizes its ground and air forces in Armenia and Georgia and begins to plan a major offensive against Turkish incursions into the South Caucasus. This draws Georgia directly into the war, and the fighting between Russian and Turkish troops upsets Georgia's tenuous relations with Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Ajaria. All three regions explode in anti-Tbilisi unrest. President Shevardnadze is finally assassinated in a mysterious operation that is blamed alternately on the Russian and Turkish secret services. At this point, NATO begins serious planning for intervention, due to mounting Turkish losses and a deteriorated relationship with Russia.

III. Interests of Other Powers

The principal neighboring powers with interests in the region are China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey. Afghanistan, though not a major power, is very much at the center of the region and its problems and its interests are therefore also relevant to this assessment. Finally, other powers with key interests in the region deserve mention because their interests tend to complement those of the United States. These powers include the EU, the Gulf States, Israel, Japan and South Korea.

When considering the complementary or competitive interests of other powers it is important to keep in mind that their basic relationship to the regional states is asymmetrical. The major powers' concerns are not equivalent to the regional states' concerns about the role and interests of the major powers. This asymmetry is likely to hold true for the next couple of decades, although it could change if the region becomes substantially more unstable.

The major neighboring powers do not have uniform policies toward the region as a whole and are similarly ambivalent about their own interests. Different groups in each country have different priorities. Even more than the United States, these powers tend to differentiate among countries. For example, Russia considers Kazakhstan to be as important as the rest of Central Asia put together; for Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are much more important than Kazakhstan. For China, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic matter more than Uzbekistan; while for Turkey, the South Caucasus is far more important than Central Asia.

A. China

Although China was quick to establish diplomatic relations with the newly independent states, Chinese foreign policy toward the region developed quite slowly. The most important characteristic left over from the Soviet period was a continuing respect, or at least caution, toward Russian preeminence. China's caution still reflects its priorities:

1. Good neighborly relations with Central Asia in the interest of peace and stability on its own periphery;
2. Prevention of Central Asian interference in its internal affairs, especially with regard to minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet;

3. Good relations with Russia on many international issues, and especially with respect to Siberia, the Russian Far East and trade in military equipment;
4. Development of diversified transportation corridors to and from the region to facilitate trade on a secure basis, especially in energy and minerals;
5. To that end, promotion of the internal stability of Central Asian states, with the assurance that the region is not divided into spheres of influence by the major powers and that major power contention in the region is minimized.

China has cultivated good relations with these states since their independence in order to gain diplomatic influence generally, and particularly to prevent Uighur or Kazakh exiles from organizing themselves abroad. Those relations could become severely stressed overnight, however, should China resume nuclear testing in the Taklamakan Desert, especially atmospheric testing, or if unrest among Turkic peoples continues to mount in Xinjiang. But so long as there is no nuclear testing and no spillover from ethnic nationalism in Xinjiang, China does not represent a threat to the region.

China's role probably will be more pronounced in the economic realm. Here too the Chinese prefer an open-door policy. China now has a greater interest in trade with the region than in Soviet times, when Sino-Soviet trade was controlled by a bilateral clearing account between Moscow and Beijing. The region is a market of over 50 million potential consumers of Chinese products, and a potential source of primary and processed raw materials, from cotton to nonferrous metals. Moreover, China itself provides an important market for traders from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

At present the most important economic focus is on the energy sector. In 1998, China signed its biggest overseas investment contract in history with Kazakhstan, which included a pledge to support a Kazakh-Turkmen-Iran pipeline. This followed economic projections in 1997 that suggested a huge increase in oil imports in the 21st century, as China began looking for sources it might develop abroad so as not to depend entirely on the market, and to diversify sources away from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Many oil experts view the cost of such a long oil pipeline from Kazakhstan through Xinjiang to central China as prohibitively high. Other analysts suggest that if diversifying imports is important enough to China, it might subsidize construction costs of this pipeline. China's other pipeline offer to Kazakhstan, via Turkmenistan and Iran to the Persian Gulf, would be cheaper to build. But would tend to increase China's imports of oil from the Middle East and would not diversify existing transport routes. China is also in active discussion with Russian oil companies over a proposed pipeline from Siberia.

China's readiness to build a pipeline directly from Kazakhstan and the amount of subsidy it might grant should logically depend on two more factors: world oil prices and its own demand. In a buyer's market, China need not compete aggressively for oil, let alone subsidize it. Thus, if the long pipeline is ever built, China is not likely to begin it any time soon and might well wait until a sustained upturn in prices or demand.

For the next couple of decades, China will likely remain a conservative actor, but an ever-increasing presence in this region. Even if its interests grow to a considerable degree, it will prefer an open-door strategy above all others, which means that its relations will be characterized by caution and pragmatism, despite some perceptions to the contrary, especially in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

B. Iran

Iran has long considered itself to be at the heart of Eurasia. Accordingly, its diplomacy considers stable relations with its neighbors and normal relations with the wider world a high priority. Its strategic interests involving this region are as follows:

1. Building relationships that help it escape from international isolation, which it sees as guarded by U.S. global hegemony.
2. Maintaining the security of its borders, which implies a need for stability in neighboring states. Iran's "revolutionary," anti-U.S., anti-Israel policy is expressed only toward the south and west.
3. Developing positive political relations with the states of the region, to include expanded trade and investment, particularly with Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Armenia, although its relations with Azerbaijan are likely to remain professional but strained.
4. Maintaining close relations with Russia and professional, but not necessarily cordial (depending on the fluctuating Kurdish issue), relations with Turkey. At some point (but not currently), Azerbaijan figures more overtly in this relationship, consistent with the position noted in #3.
5. Containing the influence of the Sunni, anti-Shi'a *Taliban*, both inside Afghanistan and beyond its borders, to include support for Hazaras (predominantly Shi'a) and others within Afghanistan.
6. Balancing Pakistan's, Saudi Arabia's and potentially Uzbekistan's presence in the region.
7. Protecting open access to energy supplies, including the development of energy-based industries that complement rather than compete with domestic industry.

8. Continuing efforts to bypass U.S. attempts to thwart Iranian economic influence, with the hope that such attempts will be eclipsed by U.S.-Iranian rapprochement and simple business logic.
9. Improving relations with the EU, China and Japan leading eventually to greater international cooperation.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, patterns have developed in Iran's relations with the region that suggest its priorities. High on the list is a cooperative relationship with Russia, to counterbalance what has long been a hostile relationship with the United States and Iran's weak relationships with other Western countries. Whether this changes as the latter improve is too early to say. Iran's Russo-centric approach toward the region, which flies in the face of traditional Iranian resistance to Russian hegemony, has a pragmatic foundation in the near-term: Iran continues to rely on Russian arms and technology and promotes legitimate and perhaps clandestine trade in goods and services it cannot easily buy in the West; it also prefers Russia's continued influence in this region to any ready alternatives; and finally, Iran's proximity to potential instability in both Central Asia and the Caucasus requires coordination, and more often than not, cooperation, with Russia. This priority has overtaken initial differences in Tajikistan and will continue to strengthen in the mid-term, even if relations with the United States improve.

Equally high on the list is the security of its northern borders. It has good trading and political relations with its only Christian neighbors, Armenia and Karabakh. It is especially careful in relations with Azerbaijan, permitting but carefully monitoring transit convoys from eastern Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan. Relations with the government of Azerbaijan have been hostile but outwardly correct. Allegations of Iranian intelligence surveillance in Azerbaijan abound. Conversely, Iran fears pan-Azeri movements from the north. Religious and family ties are significant, northwestern Iran having a larger population of Azeris (about 15 million) than Azerbaijan itself. But apart from surveillance, Iran seems to be undertaking few if any hostile actions in Azerbaijan or anywhere else in the region.

Iranian security concerns can sound like paranoia to the untrained ear. Iranian officials sound genuinely concerned about "remilitarization of the Caspian." While it is not fully clear what this means, it seems to be based on such developments as the supply of U.S. patrol boats to Kazakhstan, the expansion of Russian naval facilities at Astrakhan and perhaps even totally unrelated NATO Partnership for Peace exercises that include small Central Asian units.

The general U.S. presence in the region reportedly alarms some Iranian officials.

Iran does seek closer economic ties with the South Caucasus, and has made special efforts to trade with Central Asia, especially Turkmenistan. Despite hard times at home, Iran already has made significant investments in a railway link between Mashad and the former Soviet railway system in Turkmenistan, which would connect all five Central Asian countries and Russia to the Iranian network and the Gulf. Iran has encouraged road transport of goods from the Gulf states to Central Asia along with its own exports and those of Turkey. Iranian (and Turkish) trucks are a common sight on the main highways of Central Asia, as are Iranian goods in the markets.

Given its geographic proximity, Iran is also interested in a substantial share of Caspian oil and gas resources, even though Iran has huge onshore reserves of both commodities. Thus, Iran has strongly supported the position which dates back to the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of Moscow in 1921, that the Caspian Sea and its resources should be a common resource for all littoral states. However, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan stand to gain more from a complete division into national sectors, and their position has prevailed. First Turkmenistan and now Russia have accepted the principle of national sectors for mineral resources under the seabed, leaving Iran isolated and without much leverage over the manner by which the Caspian mineral resources are divided. By mid-2000, however, Iranian intransigence began to give way and the positions grew more consistent.

Iran does support the Russian view that all five countries must agree on matters affecting fishing and other environmental concerns. Both countries oppose trans-Caspian pipelines on those grounds (and also to encourage Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to route pipelines through Russia or Iran). What exactly Iran would do to prevent the construction of such pipelines is less clear, especially if Russia acquiesced and the pipeline did not run close to Iran's sector. But opposition by Russia and Iran together would certainly be taken seriously by companies planning to build or finance a trans-Caspian pipeline.

Iran is a key player in the competition over pipeline routes because its Gulf ports offer the shortest pipeline routes from the Caspian Basin to the Indian Ocean. Like Russia, it sees Caspian oil as a rival to its own, but using supplies of oil and gas from the Caspian for domestic consumption might allow Iran to export more from its southern ports. Iran would benefit from the investment, transit fees and possibly the ability to control a competitor's exports. Experi-

ence with oil swaps involving Iran, in which oil is supplied to northern Iran in exchange for Iranian oil exports from the Gulf, has been only mildly reassuring, but could become more lucrative. The possibility of undercutting U.S. sanctions against major projects in Iran also must be an attraction for Iran in promoting pipelines from the Caspian Basin either to the Gulf or to Turkey. But the assumption of some analysts that Iran would be a more reliable pipeline operator than Russia would have to be examined closely, especially if those assuming the risks include U.S. firms.

The key variable that will determine Iran's degree of maneuver in pursuing its economic interests in this region remains its ability to normalize relations with the United States. Normalization might begin to have the following impact:

1. New oil and gas projects in Iran may prove more attractive to foreign firms than new concessions in the Caspian Basin if Iran remains a low-cost producer.
2. The U.S. and other Western governments may still wish to support Caspian Basin pipelines in addition to those to the Gulf since a key advantage to regional development lies in the diversification of production and transport routes. Good relations with Iran can reduce, but not eliminate, the concern of the new Caspian oil producing states about over-reliance on export through the Gulf. From this perspective, the issue involves more than the overall attractiveness of alternative pipelines; rather, it is the need for multiple export routes so the oil-producing countries can solidify their economic independence.
3. Nevertheless, pipelines to the Black or Mediterranean Sea might still be more attractive to British Petroleum and others seeking to market Caspian oil in Europe.
4. An Iranian gas pipeline to Turkey is a more likely result. Whether it would carry gas from Turkmenistan or from Iranian deposits (or both) would depend largely upon commercial cost factors.
5. Trade with and through Iran in non-energy goods and services would develop faster if Iran's own economy began to improve.

The final area of Iranian interest involves cultural, ethnic and religious ties that have kept Iran historically inseparable from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Persian was spoken and written all along the Silk Road and is related to the modern Tajik language. Other ethnic ties remain – in addition to Iran's large Azeri population, about a million Turkmen live in Iran.

Islam, however, seems to be more of a divisive factor. The more religious Central Asians, nearly all Sunni except in Azerbaijan, feel no affinity or loyalty

to Iran's Ithna-Ashari Shi'i faith. Secular Central Asians and secular Azeris are as much repelled by the extremes of Iranian theocracy as they are by the so-called "Wahhabi" threat from Sunni fundamentalists. Iran has supported the Tajik religious opposition, but not on religious grounds. Iran also contributed officially to the Tajik peace process, serving as host for negotiations as well as a counterweight to Russia.

It is not clear whether some more conservative Iranian leaders favor political radicalization of the region along religious lines. If they do, apparently they do not believe the time is right for Iran to pursue it. They recognize that the leadership and a sizable part of public opinion in this region is wary of Iran and its theocracy, and that Iran must take this into account if it wishes to maintain normal relationships.

Such caution within the region about Iranian intentions does not depend on the United States and will not change fundamentally without a major transformation of Iran's clerical regime. If the regime does become more moderate, or noticeably reduces its intelligence and radical religious activities abroad, Iran's legitimate activities, notably large-scale energy-related investment, might be more welcome in some countries, such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, a secular Iranian regime would be more likely to strengthen relations with the regional states, especially Tajikistan and Afghanistan, on the basis of historic ties, which are much greater than Turkey's. But even then, overall Iranian security interests centering around stable borders and open access to markets in those countries would not change fundamentally. The longer-term strategic question centers around the potential for heavier Iranian involvement being perceived to be intrusive or unbalanced, leading to new instabilities.

C. Russia

For all its recent troubles, Russia remains the most visible external presence in the region. Its historical control of most of the Caucasus and Central Asia over the past century and a half, and particularly during the Soviet period, remains its most potent influence. Its behavior continues to be guided by this historic legacy. In spite of its more limited capabilities to determine outcomes, Russia's approach to the region is best characterized by "don't tread on me...or on my backyard." Thus, from the perspective of the smaller countries in this region the risk of a new empire or of constant hegemonic interference from Russia seems very real.

Beyond that perception, there seems to be little consensus among Russian officials (and certainly not among foreign observers) on what Russia's longer-term, vital or even strategic interests are in this region. Many Russian leaders still believe that the former USSR (minus the Baltics) should be an area led and dominated by Russia. But for others that view is purely rhetorical. At a minimum, one may assume that the most vital Russian interest will always be the prevention of threats to the internal integrity of the Russian Federation. No regional state or outside power now threatens Russia itself, but Russia must consider the kinds of threats that might arise in the future. The only risks to Russia's physical security arise from the possible use of these states' territories by outside powers, or perhaps by domestic insurgents, international criminals or other transnational agents. Accordingly, Russia interprets the secessionism in Chechnya as a threat to its territorial integrity and sees international Sunni radicalism, centered in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as its source.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

The immediate threat posed by nuclear weapons and ICBMs in the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union has been alleviated. The region is, in effect, a nuclear weapons free zone. Nevertheless, the area could still become a major conduit for proliferation with the smuggling of fissile material and weapons related technology.

The U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program played a major role in removing nuclear weapons and fissile material from the region, deactivating nuclear test facilities and safeguarding reactors and fissile material production sites. Since 1991, more than \$2.4 billion has been allocated to this program and other countries have provided important assistance as well. In Central Asia, the bulk of the funding has gone to Kazakhstan which inherited the most extensive WMD infrastructure. The CTR funds assisted with the removal of nuclear weapons, destruction of missile silos and nuclear test facilities and safeguarding of reactors and fissile material production facilities. Uzbekistan also has received some CTR funding to help safeguard reactors.

The initial 10-year CTR program has been continued with additional funding under the Expanded Threat Reduction Initiative (ETRI) launched in 1999. The focus of these efforts should be on improving the capabilities of the states in the region to prevent smuggling of weapons of mass destruction technology across porous borders.

To help consolidate the removal of nuclear weapons from the region, all the states in the region joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-weapons states and have agreed to the IAEA inspections. In addition, the five Central Asian presidents signed the Almaty Declaration in 1997, endorsing the creation of a nuclear weapons free zone (CANWFZ). The main sticking point in subsequent UN-sponsored negotiations on the text of the treaty is the concern of some states about how this

treaty should relate to other agreements, including those that establish a Russian “nuclear umbrella” over the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Central Asian states also want to make legally binding positive and negative security assurances by the states with nuclear weapons.

The toxic legacy of the vast Soviet chemical and biological weapons (CBW) program will continue to pose serious environmental and proliferation threats in the region. Several facilities formerly involved in the Soviet CBW programs are located in the area – principally Kazakhstan – and the new governments were not fully aware of the nature of the secret weapon plants on their territory. Furthermore, they were not financially able to assume responsibility for those facilities and their personnel.

Relatively recently U.S. efforts have begun to address the security threats posed by the proliferation of CBW-related materials, equipment and know-how using funds provided under the CTR program. Given the magnitude of threats, arguments can be made for increasing the funding for stemming the loss of CBW technology and know-how from the NIS; upgrading the security of pathogen culture collections; converting former CBW production facilities; destroying the vast CW stockpiles; and halting the brain-drain of WMD scientists and engineers.

Cooperative Defense Initiative (CDI) efforts to develop military-to-military cooperation against WMD in the Persian Gulf area may also be useful in the broader Eurasia region. These efforts include programs to educate and train potential coalition partners about CBW threats, active and passive defenses, consequence management and medical countermeasures. Such military cooperation could go a long way in countering the ability of any aggressor to coerce other states in the region by threatening WMD.

ment at times has used control of pipelines as a lever for controlling the regional states. Such policies have seriously threatened the economies of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and have been denounced as evidence of Russian hegemony. But they also forced the smaller states to

Russian efforts to control these countries or to impose unwelcome demands upon them tend to produce a nationalist backlash and to create precisely the results Russians most fear. Even if the controls or demands tend to work in the short-term, they tend to be counterproductive in the long-term. Unfortunately, a restrained, cooperative approach toward all the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia has yet to achieve consensus in Moscow or be implemented consistently.

Russia's second strategic interest will be to find opportunities to benefit from economic relationships in the region. But its economic strategy is in similar disarray as a result of reactive measures in the Caucasus and with respect to pipelines from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The Russian govern-

Regional Air Defense

During 1999, the regional states took important steps to tighten their coordination under Russia's air defense system. Officially known as the CIS Joint Air Defense System, its headquarters are in Moscow and it is headed by the general in command of Russia's Air Defense Forces. The formal members of the system are Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. The members of the GUUAM grouping — Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova — are not official participants in the joint air defense system, but recently the lines between official and unofficial members have blurred, and in August, 2000 both Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan became part of the Russian joint air defense. In April, 2000 "joint" exercises involving the air defense system were held with Uzbekistan and the official members. The Uzbek government emphasized that the exercises were merely "coordinated" and not truly joint, but there appears to have been little difference between Uzbekistan's participation and that of the other states. Conducted only weeks after the CIS held vast "Southern Shield" "antiterrorist" exercises, the air defense effort focused on air support and defensive maneuvers against hijackings and surface-to-air missile launches. The Russian military has been forthcoming with its assistance to the regional states in such training activities and apparently considers regional air defense to be a key mechanism for controlling cooperation among them.

pursue other options, which may ultimately reduce Russia's influence. Russia still has the power to disrupt development and marketing of Caspian Basin energy or apply economic sanctions, but it can gain very little long-term advantage for its own exports by doing so. The main rationale for such actions would be geopolitical, not economic.

The region's resources will eventually be developed through investments that minimize Russia's monopoly. Even if Russia could stop Caspian exports altogether, it would not gain major price or marketing advantages for very long, because its own exports do not control world energy markets. In short, Russia has more to gain from participating in the development of the resources and economies of its neighbors than from holding them back, although again, the logic of the Russian government has in many cases been based more on political than on business considerations. While there is a natural competition for foreign investment between Russia and the region, especially in developing raw materials, many more foreign investors would eventually be attracted if there were favorable investment climates in both places.

Because many Russian observers do not see matters this way, there has been, and probably will for the foreseeable future continue to be, a blurring of Russian political, military and economic strategies toward the region. Initially, the approach was articulated through wishful thinking over the potential of the CIS. This view originated in the Defense Ministry and had military logic from the standpoint of existing infrastructure, units and plans already in place, and economy of force. The smaller CIS countries would gain much more protection than they would have had on their own. For air defense, which required extensive radar and strategic depth, Russia managed to reach cooperative agreements with most countries, even Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. (See facing textbox.) The concept of common CIS borders for the purposes of controlling entry visas for non-CIS citizens also seemed acceptable to many CIS countries and was most compelling in the Caucasus.

However, the strategic concept of a single CIS external border as the anchor for securing Russia's interests in the region immediately ran into problems. It is hard to find critical terrain or many facilities of strategic value to Russia today in the Caucasus and Central Asia. A radar station in Azerbaijan is still operated by Russian military personnel under agreement; a satellite tracking station in Uzbekistan has unique scientific capabilities, but is no longer critical for Russian defense and may need international help to remain operational. There are other military bases that supported the defense of the former Soviet border or were used during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. But in the absence of a common CIS defense policy, these bases have lost most of their practical military value to Russia. Nuclear test sites in Kazakhstan are environmental problems rather than strategic assets now that Russia has given up nuclear testing. Only the space launch facility at Baikonur remains valuable to Russia. Thus, it is the countries themselves that appear politically and economically important to Russia, and it is for that reason that Moscow persists in promoting some residual military presence there.

Yet this trend also is on the wane. Though the Russians still maintain considerable troop deployments in Georgia, Armenia and Tajikistan, the presence is diminishing everywhere else in the region. Several states, led by Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, found either that they could afford to guard their own borders or that the prolonged Russian presence was too burdensome. In Tajikistan in particular, the Russian presence is considered necessary in the short-term but has become a major source of irritation, not only because of its political symbolism but also because of the heavy involvement of these troops in narcotics and arms smuggling.

In place of the regional border strategy, Russia has turned to a more haphazard and unevenly administered policy of manipulation and intervention. This may continue or worsen into the next decade if Russia's own economic recovery lags, thereby casting suspicion on Russia's efforts to develop more advanced, stable and complementary relationships. Russia's alleged "divide and rule" policy has been visible in Abkhazia, in the war in Karabakh and in other separatist minority problems in Georgia and Azerbaijan. This activity, along with the wars in Chechnya, benefits only those who profit from prolonged instability.

Figure VII
Russian Military Presence

Country	Troops (includes CIS peacekeeping troops & border guards)	Facilities
Armenia	3,100	2 bases
Azerbaijan	none	1 radar facility
Georgia	9,200	4 bases
Kazakhstan	none	1 space launch facility
Kyrgyz Republic	few officers in border guards	none
Tajikistan	8,200 (201 st mrd) & border guards	none
Turkmenistan	none	none
Uzbekistan	none	1 sat. tracking facility

Source: IISS

D. Turkey

Turkey's major interest in the region is commercial. This involves its stake in Caspian Basin energy production and transportation as a participant and as a buyer, and its role as a provider of various retail markets. Beyond that, many Turks believe Turkey has a major role to play in the cultural and religious fate of the region, and they have invested large sums in recognition of this duty. Finally, Turkish leaders believe Turkey is strategically important, particularly in the Caucasus, *vis-à-vis* Russia and Iran.

Like the other major powers, Turkey has given considerable attention to energy development. Turkey can buy oil from the Iraqi pipeline, from Russia or from Iran or others in the Middle East. But it clearly favors a pipeline from Azerbaijan across Georgia and Eastern Turkey to the Ceyhan oil terminal on the Mediterranean coast. Turkey's real interest in the oil pipeline, however, is as a transit country, not as a buyer. Turkey argues that it cannot permit major increases in oil tanker traffic through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles due to the risk of a major accident. Others argue that the long segment of the pipeline from Georgia to Ceyhan would be too expensive, that safety in the Bosphorus can be improved and that oil traffic through the Bosphorus might not increase if oil from Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan replace Middle East oil now transiting the straits from the south. Shorter pipelines to bypass the straits also have been suggested.

The decision, including the strength of Turkey's commitment to the Ceyhan route, will hinge on several factors, namely the overall economic health of the country, the price of oil, the ability to attract the necessary financing and the general political stability of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey itself. Meanwhile, the "early oil" smaller pipeline terminates at Supsa, Georgia and a main pipeline could do so on a permanent or interim basis. Turkey cannot lose with the Azerbaijan-Georgia pipeline anyway, since it has nothing to gain from a main pipeline via Russia to the Black Sea, or via Iran to the Gulf.

Unlike oil, Turkey's main interest in natural gas is as a consumer. The Turkish gas market is very large and said to be the last big energy prize in Europe. Turkey has at least four alternatives: a pipeline from Russia across the Black Sea; a pipeline from Iranian gas fields; a pipeline transiting Iran from Turkmenistan; or a trans-Caspian gas pipeline that then follows the route of the Azerbaijan-Georgia oil pipeline. As a buyer, Turkey has a great interest in the combined production and transport costs of these alternatives.

If the costs are not vastly different, Turkey also must consider which routes might actually be built and in what sequence, and whether reliability of supply might be a problem once a given pipeline is completed. Iran and Russia both occasionally object to the trans-Caspian route for environmental as well as competitive reasons. The U.S. government has promoted it, but more for geopolitical reasons and against the initial unwillingness of the large Western oil companies to pay the substantial costs. A suggestion that a Turkmenistan-Turkey gas pipeline via Iran might be entitled to a waiver of U.S. sanctions apparently has prevailed, since it seemed logical that a dedicated pipeline (i.e., one that would

not supply Iranian customers) would benefit Turkey and Turkmenistan far more than Iran. The pipeline has fewer risks of interruption than proposed oil or gas pipelines to the Gulf, because Iran's main gas fields are in the south and also rather distant from Turkey. From Turkey's perspective, a pipeline from Iran's gas fields, or from Russia, if comparably priced, could serve just as well, except for Turkey's desire to build direct links to the Central Asian countries. That desire itself could also be eclipsed by the growing power of special interests within Turkey, especially its Russia lobby, or enhanced by Islamic sentiment directed towards Central Asia.

Other areas of commercial interest include construction, consumer goods and medium-sized business generally. Smaller Turkish firms receive less publicity than the large multinational firms, but some prominent multinationals (e.g. Coca-Cola) serve the region through their Turkish subsidiaries. Turkish trucking carries a large part of the region's foreign trade, not only with Turkey, but also with Europe, reducing the region's reliance on formerly Soviet railways and long roads through Kazakhstan and Russia. To the extent that foreign trade and investment provide the most effective demonstration of how to do business in a modern market economy, the broad Turkish commercial involvement in the region (including non-Turkic, Christian Georgia) ultimately may contribute most to economic reform.

Turkey's political interests in the region are quite distinct on either side of the Caspian. In the Caucasus, Turkey has a key strategic interest in ensuring a peaceful border with Armenia and Georgia. This interest is connected to the overall state of its eastern borders, including those with Iraq and Iran, which also of course involves its longer-term handling of the Kurdish minority issue. Conflict on these borders drains Turkish military and economic resources and is a source of instability in its regional relations, most importantly with Iran and Russia. These relationships are complicated, flexible and often different from what is generally believed in the West, which tends to presume a simplistic Turkish fear of being excluded from the region by Iranian or Russian power in the Caucasus, thereby cutting Turkey off from Central Asia.

On the other side of the Caspian, Turkey's political relations appear mostly symbolic, but in fact are quite real. Its geographic distance from Central Asia would seem to dictate few important direct political interests there. Yet the disappearance of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact threats was welcome, and the Turkish imaginations were ignited by hopes for close ties with this mostly Turkic-language, Muslim realm that had for so long been largely closed off. Accord-

ingly, in 1992 Turkey was the first country to accredit an ambassador to almost all of the new states of the region, as well as one of the first to open an embassy or to propose high-level visits, introduce satellite TV programs, found schools, universities and similar cultural enterprises. Many institutions endure and play a significant role, and relations today are already quite stable.

Still, the record of these initiatives is mixed. Regular summit meetings among the Turkic states continue, but the regional languages, while clearly related, are only partially mutually intelligible. Uzbekistan slashed the biggest student exchange with Turkey in 1999, complaining about the political activity of Uzbek exiles there. Locally rebroadcast Turkish television proved less exciting than direct satellite programs from elsewhere. Scholars were more anxious to explore their own history and culture than the example of Turkey, which Turks and their friends in the West loudly and often patronizingly promoted as a preferred regional model. Businessmen found more competition, more bureaucracy and more corruption than they had hoped.

Even more important is the fact that Turkey, whatever its pan-Turkic ambitions, must care more about its relations with Russia and Iran than with these states or for that matter, with the Arab world, where it also is still widely resented. Turkey will not let itself be drawn into conflict with either Russia or Iran for the sake of the regional states. Turkish bilateral military contacts began well before NATO's Partnership for Peace provided a multilateral framework for military-to-military relations, and many Turks who still prioritize the country's Mediterranean and Western vocations may not wish Turkey to become NATO's beachhead for proactive involvement in Central Eurasia. In any case, NATO properly shuns such a role, especially when it is urged under questionable premises by regional leaders. For the foreseeable future, the pro-European consensus in Turkey has restrained other constituencies in Turkish politics which support a Turanist or an anti-Kemalist tradition. Turkey's role in Central Asia may thus be positive over time, but its interests will remain limited, in contrast to what may become more serious concerns over Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus generally.

E. South Asia

The interests of both India and Pakistan are directly engaged by events and developments in Central Asia, and more indirectly by those in the Caucasus (by way of the extension of Afghan-linked militancy there). Pakistan, in particular, has sought a link to the region that now has been eclipsed by its major and

highly risky program of sponsorship of the *Taliban* movement. Whether the imposition of the *Taliban's* extreme form of social control was intended by Pakistan's leaders (who disavow it) is not relevant. The point is that some religious parties and elements of the military and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate in Pakistan continue to support the movement and have helped it to obtain additional outside help from Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This policy has brought Pakistan to the front line of geopolitical rivalry in Central Asia and has set a dangerous precedent that may lead to even more serious tensions with Iran, Russia or both. Along with certain uncontrollable forces stemming from religious extremism as well as the arms and narcotics trades, it also has led to severe problems within Pakistan itself. In 1999, Afghanistan became the world's largest supplier of opium, exporting more than all the other sources combined and leading to surging numbers of addicts in neighboring countries. Along with the long-standing Kashmir conflict, now elevated to a nuclear standoff, and India's own preoccupation with China, the overall prospects for long-term peace and stability among the states of Central and South Asia are not bright.

Twice since independence, the Central Asian countries and Russia have perceived a military threat from Afghanistan, while Pakistan has felt the actual impact of conflict. The first occasion was during the Tajikistan civil war, when Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic provided troops in an effort to stop armed guerrillas from crossing the Afghan border. Although only partially successful due to the practical difficulties of closing that border, the effort represented one of the few CIS military interventions with troops from more than one country. The proximity of armed, combat-seasoned Tajik-Afghan factions with ambitious leaders and Muslim credentials to weak and splintered Tajikistan, invited support and intervention. External assistance to various factions in Afghanistan has been a factor in the almost continuous fighting there since the Soviet intervention over 20 years ago. Success by the *Taliban* practically guarantees that its opponents will get more clandestine support from their backers, including Iran, Russia and Uzbekistan, none of which would like to see Afghanistan united under a hostile regime.

The second occasion was in 1998, when the *Taliban* seemed on the verge of taking control of Afghanistan militarily, and their neighbors panicked judging that they would not stop at the northern border but would continue on to "liberate" Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan. While to outsiders this seemed far-fetched, these cities are historically the two most important Islamic

centers in the region. The *Taliban* leadership's general ignorance of modern Central Asia, combined with Central Asia's secular governments' uneasiness about Afghanistan and their tendency to overreact, were enough to suggest a crisis. This is particularly relevant now that a fairly large number of Uzbek opponents of the Karimov regime are based across the border near Kunduz and are widely believed to enjoy *Taliban* support.

All the factions in Afghanistan have more combat experience and skills than Central Asia's military units. But it is unlikely that even a very successful *Taliban* would cross the Amu Darya into Uzbekistan, the Panj into Tajikistan or the desert into Turkmenistan, without much greater external support and without giving priority to consolidating its control of the country. Even harder to imagine is the idea of Central Asians suddenly rallying to ethnic Pushtuns or to the *Taliban's* banner of strict Islam, both of which remain factors in the *Taliban's* success and problems. In short, Central Asians will not stop worrying about Afghanistan, militias and refugees may threaten borders, but a large-scale invasion of Afghans from Afghanistan is not a realistic possibility.

On the other hand, the fate of Afghanistan and the *Taliban* has far-reaching consequences for the entire region, and some could be quite adverse to U.S. interests. If an ambitious and untested *Taliban* leadership manages to take control of all of Afghanistan, or if the fighting continues indefinitely but the anti-*Taliban* factions slowly make their way into Tajikistan or Uzbekistan out of desperation, the Afghan conflict, until now fairly well-contained, could still become regional. This scenario seemed possible when Iran threatened punitive attacks on Afghanistan in 1998 after some diplomats were killed in Mazar-i-Sharif. Speedy UN intervention and Iranian restraint kept the situation in check. But there is reason to suspect that a different outcome might prevail in the future. Some alarmists even imagine the breakaway of Herat and an all-out conflict between Pakistan and Iran that may draw in Uzbekistan, or conceivably, India, which may use the opportunity to take advantage of Pakistani overreach. This scenario is highly remote, even if Pakistan commits regular forces in Afghanistan. But one should not forget that during Soviet times India had close ties to the region, and now sees itself displacing China as the future primary provider of cheap manufactured goods there as well as a major power of the 21st century. Indian ambition in Central Asia is not confined to its rivalry with Pakistan and should not be underestimated.

The Islamist overtones of the war in Afghanistan have spread dangerously to Pakistan and threaten the stability of other places, notably the Caucasus,

which has witnessed a rapid process of interconnection among radical Islamic movements. The source of such movements has variously been described as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or one of the existing international networks with funding from mostly private sources in a variety of Muslim countries. Up to now Islam has been more of a complicating factor in the North Caucasus, and certainly not a primary cause of instability. Conflict there, should it include real Islamist motives, does not depend on the success or failure of Islamic radicalism in this region.

But the distinction between local and religious sources of conflict has begun to erode as a result of the upsurge in momentum created by *Taliban* success in Afghanistan. The network of financial support and armed training for these movements has become more closely linked and provides a more difficult challenge to the regional powers. Russia, Uzbekistan and perhaps other countries will need internal policies that provide more attractive alternatives than Islamic movements. The latter cannot be dealt with primarily through policing and repression, although that is the approach that has been favored so far. They will continue to pose a growing threat and challenge to the stability of the entire region.

As for Afghanistan, a much more attractive option, whether reunited under the *Taliban* or by mutual agreement of the major factions, is peace. Apart from permitting the rebuilding of the country, peace would also hold out the prospect that the country could become an important transportation corridor to the Indian Ocean – and directly to markets in Pakistan and India – for all of Central Asia. In addition to providing key north/south pipeline routes to supply rapidly growing energy demand in the subcontinent, as well as for export, a reunited Afghanistan would provide the prospect of safe road transport for Pakistani and Indian exports to Central Asia. It also would provide Pakistani ports the opportunity of handling Central Asian exports such as cotton.

It is unlikely that this positive scenario will come about any time soon. Rather, continued instability in Afghanistan may spread north, west or even south, and could draw the major regional powers into conflict with Pakistan or with Afghanistan itself. This would present real problems for the fragile Central Asian states. The United States might be able to remain aloof from such a conflict, but would find it very difficult to do so if the conflict involved a nuclear Pakistan, and/or China, India, Iran and Russia.

F. Other Powers

Gulf States

Saudi Arabia's and the UAE's official interests in the region span the economic, cultural and political spheres and are growing, even though most non-state-sponsored missionary activity has declined or gone into underground channels. Together, the sum of these interests is greater than the whole of their acknowledged parts. This suggests that the involvement of the Gulf States is bound to increase in the future, particularly as Israeli and Turkish relations with Iran develop a Central Eurasian vocation.

The Gulf States became the principal entrepôt for high-quality foreign goods sold in Central Asia early on, ahead of rivals Turkey and Pakistan. Day traders from throughout the region established a regular Central Asian presence in Dubai, the wealthy among them coming to serve as unofficial ambassadors. More regularized forms of commerce now are being institutionalized, their growth limited mainly by the weakening of Central Asian currencies. The first major trip by UAE investors around Central Asia occurred in 1999 and is being followed by others. Until Ariana Airlines' flights to Dubai were closed in 1999, the UAE also was a significant trading point for Afghan opium and other smuggled goods.

The cultural interests of the Gulf States in Central Asia focus on Islam, including main-line Sunni, Deobandi, Wahhabi and radical movements, and are championed by wealthy individuals and foundations (*waqfs*) rather than by the states. The scale of these is not known, but Uzbek intelligence specifically listed UAE supporters among backers of the group that organized the February 1999 bombings in Tashkent.

Politically, the Gulf states have taken a cautious role towards the region, in spite of large initial levels of support for the *Taliban*. Only in 1999 did signs of increased official engagement occur, when the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies began a series of programs on developments there and their meaning for the Gulf states.

Israel

Israel is small and far away, so its presence in this region might seem a surprise. It is actually rather predictable. There are at least four reasons for Israel's regional interest. First, Israel is continuing the policy of making friends and diluting enmity in the area beyond the Arab world and Iran. Israel hopes, for exam-

ple, to get supportive votes or abstentions in the United Nations. Second, Israel prizes friendly relations with Muslim states, now that most of the Islamic world has taken sides against it. Both these motives were particularly powerful at the moment of Central Asia's independence, when Israelis as well as Americans feared the spread of Iranian-style fundamentalism to the former Soviet space. Since that time, there was a moment of tremendous hope for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and "normalization" of Israeli life, which tended to reduce Israel's activism at a distance. That activism was both a consequence and a sign of Israel's conspicuously *abnormal* situation. The continuing difficulties of the peace process, and a tougher Labor prime minister, have tended to restore the importance of distant Muslims for Israel.

Third, Israel finds very useful a position on the flank of its great enemy, the Islamic regime in Iran. As a result, Israeli activism in both Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan has been conspicuous. The Israeli presence in Turkmenistan has been dominated by the Merhav Group led by the former high-ranking intelligence official Yosef Maiman. One can assume that Israel uses Turkmenistan for intelligence gathering across the borders of Iran and *Taliban* Afghanistan. Despite signs that this activity has recently diminished, it is likely to resume down the road. As competition intensifies between the reformist and conservative elements in Iran, accurate intelligence will become more important to Israel, as would anything Israel could do to influence the outcome. There is a major debate in Israeli elite circles about the importance of Iran and how that country will develop. Some prominent Israelis, such as the former high intelligence official Uri Lubrani, think that Khatami's reforms, like Gorbachev's, will expand into a crisis that will end the existing system. Such an outcome would offer the possibility of restoring Israel's formerly close relationship with Iran. Finally, Israeli businessmen, like others, seek new opportunities in this region.

On the regional side there are probably three motives for this relationship. First, Israel and regional elites do have common enemies in Islamic extremism. Second, governments such as Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan have sought warm relations with Israel as a way of getting the support of American Jews, whose influence in Washington they probably exaggerate. In fact, a number of Jewish organizations are loosely guided in their work by Israeli policy preferences, and these have given much useful support to Uzbekistan. To the extent that these countries have become aware of the potential dangers of human rights criticism in America, which partly emanates from the same political circles as major Jewish organizations, friendship with Israel serves partially to neutralize this dan-

ger. Third, some governments look to the Israelis for help in areas such as intelligence, military training and covert action.

In sum, both sides have strong motives for working together, and the relationship is one that could develop further in the right conditions. The strengthening of Sunni extremism in Central Eurasia during 1999 and its links to the Arab world give both sides even stronger incentives to cooperate.

Ultimately, of course, Israel's impact is limited by its small size. While Israeli support could be vital in a crisis, the overall relationship will never be as important as those with the major powers. Regional interest in Israeli involvement will, generally, decline if the United States is heavily involved. The very strong Israeli desire for normalization is the enemy of distant activism. If the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is ultimately successful, or if the Islamic regime falls in Iran, Israeli interest will decline markedly.

The OECD Countries

The European Union, Japan and other key developed countries like Switzerland (whose banks in large part finance the regional cotton industry) have carefully limited their role to investment by private firms and both state and non-state support for humanitarian and developmental programs in this region. However, private firms have hesitated to initiate manufacturing ventures there, limiting their role mainly to sales. The exception has been the heavy involvement of British, Belgian, Norwegian, Italian and French firms in the energy sector. German firms have been heavily involved in drafting laws and regulations in many other sectors, while the EU's TACIS program has sponsored many useful projects in education, training and tourism.

The OECD countries played only a modest role in the region's political affairs, no doubt considering them remote from their own interests and likely only to lead to tensions with China and Russia. Current differences with the United States over Iran policy also make their involvement problematic. To be sure, they have played a role in all East-West transportation discussions, but this was partly at the request of the United States. Most OECD governments decided early to balance their non-involvement in political, economic and security reform with a highly active program of humanitarian support. Indeed, they remain the single largest contributors in fields as diverse as medicine, natal care, and disaster relief. However, they prefer to channel their support through the UN and other agencies, or through longer-term EU initiatives such as TACIS or Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), thus keeping a neutral profile.

One OECD member that deserves special mention is South Korea. Until the Asian economic crisis, South Korea was on the verge of becoming the leading Asian economic force in Central Asia. The presence of more than 200,000 ethnic Koreans in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, many of them still speaking Korean in the third generation, has given Korea an advantage that it has seized upon with the establishment of a large Daewoo assembly plant in Uzbekistan, as well as trans-shipment facilities at the Tashkent and Almaty airports. The Asian economic crisis dealt South Korea a blow in Central Asia from which it has yet to recover. Like Japan, Korea will defer to China, Russia and the United States with respect to Central Asian security and will stay aloof from local political issues, even when investment revives, as seems likely to happen.

IV. U.S. Interests

A. Definition of Interests

Before U.S. interests can be placed in order of priority, they first must be defined. There are three main categories of interests: vital, strategic and important. Vital interests are those that affect the national territory and basic welfare of the American people. Strategic interests involve areas of top priority to ensuring that vital interests are secure. These are now Europe, Northeast Asia and the Middle East. Peace and stability in these regions are important to the extent that their absence would risk bringing about a situation that might imperil U.S. vital interests. By extension, effective U.S. relations with China and Russia are key components to furthering those strategic interests. The third level of interests – important – are those that are desirable for the United States but do not directly affect U.S. vital interests. Important interests include economic and/or other ties with Latin America, South Asia and Southeast Asia, as well as humanitarian and related concerns in other parts of the world. These interests are based on normative preferences of the American people and various interest groups. Failure to further them rarely affects strategic interests and almost never threatens vital interests; however, confusing them with either category could jeopardize higher level interests in some circumstances.

B. Key Principles

The following questions serve to place U.S. interests in an appropriate regional context:

1. To what extent are U.S. interests affected by developments in this region?
2. Will the impact of regional developments grow or diminish over time?
3. How do U.S. interests in the region rank in comparison with those in other regions?
4. How do U.S. interests in this region fit in relation to those of other powers?

All these questions should be considered in light of the primary strategic objective for the United States – to ensure a stable region that does not adversely affect vital U.S. interests.

1. To what extent are U.S. interests affected by events in this region?

When all of Central Eurasia except Iran was under the rule of the Soviet Union, few U.S. interests were at stake in what was then considered to be a backwater of the Soviet empire. The existence today of eight newly independent states that share borders with at least five countries that are immediately important to U.S. national security creates, by definition, a basic geopolitical interest. Over time, the U.S. government has supported the sovereignty of the states created in 1991 and their borders as a “postwar settlement.” Other interests involve access to natural resources in the region and the development of successful open societies with market economies that can serve as models elsewhere. However, these latter interests, though real, are not paramount and do not, in themselves, constitute a vital or strategic U.S. interest in the region.

Not all events that may occur in Central Eurasia affect all U.S. interests. Some developments may affect no U.S. interests. The key task for analysts and planners is to forecast which events are more likely to affect the more important interests.

2. Will the impact of regional developments grow or diminish over time?

The consensus reached in this report is that the strategic interests of the United States are likely to be increasingly affected by events in this region for several reasons. First, the major powers that surround the region have become more directly involved in its affairs and are more concerned about it. They have begun to react more frequently to the various insecurities triggered by regional threats. The combination of greater involvement and a heightened sense of vulnerability could lead to more demonstrative, and perhaps more destabilizing, policies over time. Policy-making in Iran and Turkey has grown more fragmented, while China’s, India’s and Russia’s policies have not fully coalesced with regard to this region. The leadership in each country is increasingly less able to determine the outcome of events in this region and has more often delegated responsibility to lower-level actors in the respective bureaucracies. At the same time, the stakes for the major powers appear to be growing, particularly insofar as they are seen to affect their own domestic stability.

Second, developments and trends in the region are increasingly transnational. Political, ethnic and religious movements transcend borders, especially in the Ferghana valley and in the North Caucasus. Also, with the Afghan situation still in flux, cross-border smuggling continues to be a major problem in distorting regional economies and fostering corruption.

Third, the political stability of the region remains tenuous. U.S. policy must not exclude the possibility that the relatively stable first decade of independence may be more of an anomaly than a longer-term reality.

Finally, the profile of the region has risen, not only in Europe and the United States, but also throughout East and South Asia. Interaction will continue to grow. As the number of actors grows, so too will be the need to clarify U.S. interests and how they may compete with or complement those of other states.

3. How do U.S. interests in the region rank in comparison with those in other regions?

U.S. interests in the region are not on a par with U.S. interests in Europe or Northeast Asia, and probably will not be for some time, so long as no major war draws the United States into the region. At present, U.S. interests there are somewhere below those in South Asia, which is to say, limited. But looking ahead ten years, U.S. interests are most likely to be somewhat greater in both places. As Central Eurasia constitutes a higher priority for the major powers and/or a major area of economic activity, then U.S. interests in this region will grow to the point of making it a significant area of strategic concern.

The important thing to keep in mind when assessing a likely level of interest in the future is the overall direction of change. U.S. interests in Central Eurasia almost definitely will grow; though marginal now, the likelihood that they will decline in the hierarchy of mid-term national interests to a level with those in Sub-Saharan Africa or Central America is slight. Thus, the task now is to prepare for this environment.

4. How do U.S. interests in this region fit in relation to those of other powers?

U.S. interests in Central Eurasia are most closely linked in the near and mid-term to U.S. interests in Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. The ties between U.S. interests in this region and those in the Pacific Basin (including China) will multiply, but are unlikely to be as significant as the former linkages for decades, if ever.

The reasons for these linkages are principally political, and secondarily economic and cultural. They stem from the region's own complex set of international relationships. The political linkages involve the developing alliances of convenience and/or necessity in the region between the regional states and the circle of major powers around them. These include relations of Kazakhstan with China and Russia; the Kyrgyz Republic with China and Russia; Turkmeni-

stan with Afghanistan and Iran; Tajikistan with both Iran and Russia; Azerbaijan with Turkey; Armenia with Iran and Russia; Georgia with Russia and Turkey; and Afghanistan with Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan. They all figure into the current regional calculus. The state missing from this formula is Uzbekistan, which is unique in considering itself an emerging regional power. If Uzbekistan were to pursue its regional ambitions at the expense of its neighbors or in reaction to their closer relationships with other major powers, it could pose problems for U.S. interests in the region, especially if the United States maintains a close friendship with Uzbekistan.

Economic linkages will feed political ones but will also evolve independently, based on the growth of energy markets and on the rate of economic recovery in Iran and Russia, the opening of trade routes to South Asia and the Middle East, and the growth of trade with China. Turkey will probably remain too distracted by events in other areas to play a major economic role for the next couple of decades. The economic interests of each of these powers are evolving rapidly and could, in certain circumstances, ignite their own sets of conflicts that would imperil a healthy evolution of normal political relations. Unrestrained competition among the major powers for resources and access is probably less likely to trigger such an outcome than a more *ad hoc* effort on the part of stronger regional states to gain economic advantage over their neighbors through strategic denial and pressures of various sorts, leading, in turn, to reactive overtures to the major powers by weaker regional states.

Just as inter- and intra-regional economic linkages are linked to political ones, so are cultural, religious and ideological ties linked to both. The new states of the region are increasingly conscious of their histories and cultural identities. Both have been integral to nation-building, as well as to nation-destroying by groups hostile to central authority.

C. Key Interests

U.S. interests in Central Eurasia currently are as follows:

1. Vital

There are no vital U.S. interests at stake in this region at present, and it is unlikely that there will be any in the years to come. U.S. vital interests are only likely to be affected or threatened in some manner in the future in one of the following scenarios:

1. One of the regional actors becomes actively and aggressively hostile to the United States and seeks to threaten U.S. territory with ballistic missiles from this region;
2. A large-scale conflict develops between two or more of the major powers over the region, dragging in the United States and/or NATO and thereby directly affecting U.S. vital interests;
3. Submission of the region to the rule of a single hegemon, especially if it is one that decides that an aggressively adversarial relationship with the United States is essential to the preservation of its rule.

Since none of these scenarios is judged to be likely in the next 10 to 20 years, it can be concluded with a high probability that no U.S. vital interests are present in this region in the mid-term future.

However, planners must take care not to overlook the inter-related nature of U.S. interests. Categorical distinctions should not suggest that the various interests are mutually independent. Thus, if the second tier of U.S. interests – strategic – are mishandled, some vital interests could be jeopardized.

2. Strategic

Mid-term U.S. interests in Central Eurasia are more properly situated in the second, or strategic, tier of interests. There are four strategic interests:

1. Peace, stability and independence of the region as a whole.
2. Containment of *intra*-regional disputes, commonly termed “conflict resolution.” The most important include instability in and around the Ferghana valley; in both the northern and southern Caucasus; throughout north and north-central Afghanistan; and along the eastern borders of Kazakhstan.
3. Prevention of *inter*-regional disputes that could complicate U.S. relations with the major powers. Of these, the most important in the mid-term are a potential Russian/Turkish conflict in the Caucasus; a further implosion of Afghanistan that would further draw in India, Iran, Pakistan and perhaps China; and a longer-term Sino-Russian conflict over Kazakhstan; or alternatively, a shorter-term situation in the Ferghana Valley that would draw in China, Russia or both.
4. Prevention or control over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region and, most importantly, over those which could be used against U.S. targets.

The interests themselves should not be confused with the means employed to further them. Peace and stability, for instance, could come about under a

variety of scenarios. What is important is the outcome, not the means used to achieve it, unless the means hinder other key strategic interests. For instance, it is possible but very undesirable that peace and stability in the region could come about by way of the heavy-handed imposition of authority from one or more major powers. This might provide stability in the short-term, but eventually would destabilize the region and would be more likely to curtail the access the United States requires to pursue its other interests. Thus, planners will need to qualify the importance of the four strategic interests over time. The first should take precedence to all; the second is probably more pressing than the third, although they really are inseparable. That is, it is difficult to imagine a policy for containment of a regional conflict that did not include the additional need to prevent that conflict from jeopardizing more important major power relationships. The fourth is a more permanent interest that of course applies beyond this region.

3. Important

There is a range of additional interests in the region that flow from the particular concerns of pressure groups in the United States and among supporters in the U.S. Congress. These include support for one side in a territorial dispute such as Karabakh, concern for “repressed ethnic minorities,” environmental concerns, human rights-related issues, democratic reform, support for religious freedom and the effort to curtail narcotics smuggling and corruption. Any or all of these have the potential to trigger threats to strategic interests if mishandled. They also have the potential to be used as cover or leverage when strategic, or even vital, interests of the regional states are at stake. However important they may be to those who feel most strongly about them, these interests can only be pursued successfully if doing so does not jeopardize any of the four strategic interests.

In particular, secure access to the region’s energy resources in order to supplement Gulf sources is an important interest in its own right, but is not on a par with the four strategic interests. U.S. efforts to pursue this interest – either for its own sake or in pursuit of what it says are the interests of the regional states – are now perceived to challenge directly the interests of the other major powers, particularly Iran and Russia. Confusing the levels of national interest can lead to dangerous outcomes. In this case, the so-called competition over energy pipelines has misplaced a sensible strategic view of the region on the part of not only the U.S. government, but also those in the other major pow-

ers. All are to blame for precipitating a competition that, on balance, has unsettled people in the region and postponed the necessary process of bringing its resources to market. Healthy economic competition rarely succeeds in geopolitically unstable environments where a clear and straightforward negotiation of interests and relationships is neglected or discredited by inconsistent rhetoric.

In any event, under no circumstances should U.S. military assets be used to protect pipelines or other sources of energy when threats to them do not jeopardize the stability of the region or the viability of the host states, particularly when the threats come from the states themselves. Ambiguity on this subject may be useful in areas of greater interest to the United States; but in this region ambiguity on the part of U.S. policy only furthers mistrust on the part of the other major powers. This calculus would change only if much larger reserves are someday discovered in the Caspian, U.S. energy demand requires significantly greater imports and/or the region becomes a large market in some other important resource. But this is not the case at the present time and is unlikely to be for the next decade.

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Planners must not lose sight of the most essential strategic interests. And they must be careful to distinguish empirical arguments from policy preferences, such as the one that suggests that the development of well-governed, open societies that can be a model for others is a strategic interest of the United States. This overly subjective approach to policy-making can suggest a false choice among multiple, sometimes competing objectives; when the real problem is that these objectives have not been given the proper priority relative to the desired outcome. It is probably true that better-governed states will be more stable in the longer term because they will make proper provisions for leadership succession, and the United States should do what it can to encourage their development in quiet, constructive ways. But what the United States can do depends on the particular situation of a particular country. In the most authoritarian states, the U.S. government risks making insistent calls for utopian transformations, including fully free and fair elections, the centerpiece of the U.S. relationship when only more modest changes there are possible in the near future. In the absence of crisis, such policies are ineffective, make U.S. foreign policy hostage to domestic events and tend to involve the U.S. government in misrepresenting how free elections are. In a crisis, U.S. human rights policy can be used by opposition movements as a lever to delegitimize governments, and of

ten to replace them by extremist movements (like the *Taliban*) with even worse human rights behavior. Moreover, weak states that are unable to protect citizens against powerful local bosses, as in Tajikistan or Chechnya, are not necessarily an improvement over strong authoritarian states. Thus the tests of policy on democracy and human rights are effectiveness, adaptation to circumstances and continuity. Where states are emerging from authoritarianism, U.S. policy should encourage them in this direction. Where only small changes are possible in the near-term, U.S. policy should identify concrete goals such as NGO registration and make them U.S. goals. The identification of the United States with democracy and human rights is important and should be maintained; but it needs to be pursued pragmatically and realistically.

Part Two: Courses of Action

In considering how to pursue U.S. strategic interests, planners and policy-makers must identify the type and character of environment which best furthers those interests. Responding piecemeal to events within an existing context provides a tactical solution to a strategic problem. Sound tactics are just as important in diplomacy as they are in military affairs; but also is a clear concept of how tactics fit within an overall strategic plan to remake an environment while adapting to it in ways that best serve U.S. interests.

V. Strategic Concept

The strategic concept that should underpin U.S. policy in Central Eurasia is a regional concert. This means a collective system of relationships and understandings based on mutual self-restraint among large and small powers that emphasizes peace and stability in the region over the particular interests of any one power.

A. Comparison of Alternative Concepts

Essentially, two alternative strategic concepts besides a regional concert could be applied to this region. The first involves a strategy of selective engagement characterized by more passive than active efforts – a balanced approach that does not pick or back a regional power and that addresses the region as a secondary, supporting theater, rather than a primary area of effort. The second strategy involves a more actively enforced balance of power, whereby the United States along with other outside actors seeks to impose an order among regional states by strengthening the weaker against the stronger, or by helping those allied to the United States while containing those which are unfriendly.

The case for treating the region as a secondary or supporting theater is mainly related to the relative priority of U.S. interests and the proportionately greater stakes of the world's other major powers. With the exception of the EU, Japan and the United States, all border this region and are directly affected by it. But a policy that denies the importance of a region because it appears distant on the map and remains largely unfamiliar can be risky and short-

sighted. The British tried and, on balance, failed with that approach – then called “masterly inactivity” – toward this region in the latter 19th century. They realized too late that a global power is affected by events in areas where it is diplomatically engaged as much as it is in areas where it is not. Denial of strategic interests and the need to pursue them seriously is, in itself, a sound strategy in areas of truly marginal geopolitical importance. Central Eurasia is not one of those areas.

Britain curiously also failed in its adoption of the second approach, only partly as a result of Russia’s success. What has come to be called the “Great Game” was actually an ad hoc attempt by Britain to compete with Russia for influence in Persia and Afghanistan by playing one regional actor off against another, although neither of the British policies for the defense of India – then known as “forward” or “backward” – prescribed opposition to Russian interests *per se*. Rather, they differed over where to draw the northern perimeter of Indian defense. In the end, both Britain and Russia protected their core strategic interests by agreeing on certain limits. The interests of both powers were more focused on Europe, and to the extent there ever was real competition between them in the region, it centered on access to the Bosphorus. By 1907, the British and Russian empires essentially called off any pretense of rivalry in this region and partitioned spheres of influence in both Persia and Afghanistan.

Distance and diplomatic style make the United States ill-suited to this type of competitive strategy. It has not worked ideally for the United States in other areas, namely the Middle East and Northeast Asia. There is little public inclination to support the costs that would be incurred in pursuing this role in this region, which, to succeed, would require ambitious security guarantees, alliances involving forward basing arrangements and significantly greater outlays of military assistance. Even if there were some chance of its success, there remains the question of whether the U.S. government is capable of the kind of long-term political consistency required to proceed with an ambitious and costly balance of power strategy. The most likely outcome would be miscalculation or confirmation of the worst suspicions of the other major powers.

Again, the primary strategic objective for the United States in this region is to avoid conflict with those powers. It is easy to imagine how that would come about as a result of a proactive policy that aimed to balance the interests of some against those of others. No successful regional concert has emerged directly from a proactively enforced balance of power without there being a major intervening war. U.S. policy need not be bound to history, but the risk

of an unfavorable outcome resulting from the confusion of tactics with strategy in this instance is very high. There always will be proponents in the West of this kind of forward policy, but the attention it merits ought to focus on ways to restrain or resist the influence of its proponents, both inside and outside government.

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The key question for the military planner then remains one of action: what should the U.S. military do specifically to further a regional concert? The answer is that this is not the military's job. It is principally the job of political leaders and of diplomats. DoD activities must be consistent with and support the strategic concept, while planners should anticipate other scenarios. Yet it is not up to the U.S. military to "level the field" to enable a regional concert. The United States already has an important regional presence – both physical and symbolic – which is now sufficient to permit discussions with the other major powers and the regional states about the steps required to enable a concert. The environment itself remains the chief obstacle. But this is precisely why multilateral diplomacy is so necessary; no single power can change this environment and encourage a concert with the other powers while at the same time acting unilaterally to "balance" the influence of those powers. Once again, placing tactics before strategy in this manner only leads to stagnation, disintegration or worse. This has been the principal and probably unintended consequence of U.S. policy to date.

Since 1992, U.S. policy can be characterized as one of selective engagement, although with a few ambivalent aspects of a competitive, balance of power strategy thrown in. The Bush and Clinton administrations have promoted regional cooperation and disavowed a new "Great Game." At the same time they have pursued what many have perceived to be a competitive strategy in the energy sector through the dogged advocacy of horizontal pipeline routes that proscribe Iran and compete with Russian pipelines. The U.S. government says this is only to provide the countries of the region with more longer-term economic options in ways that undergird their sovereignty. U.S. officials have advocated this approach most forcefully with regard to the pipeline issue, but the effect in the region has gone beyond it.

As often happens with misperceptions, a simplistic reaction to some initiatives has led many observers in the other major powers to conclude that the

United States wishes to pursue a long-term balance of power strategy at their expense. Though this should not be the case, the lack of policy clarity has and will continue to result in confusion. In this light, bilateral or regional initiatives, such as Partnership for Peace activities, aid and assistance, and even official visits take on an entirely different meaning than the benign ones for which they are intended. These activities are only useful to the extent that they support the rationale of a particular strategy. In the absence of a clear strategy, specific policies will risk becoming counterproductive.

Therefore, the U.S. government should make clear that its regional engagement activities are based not on a competitive model of enforcing the interests of some parties against others, but rather on an overall, cooperative model that seeks to improve the capacity of all the regional states to deal with the most pressing internal threats. This model demands restraint as well as prudence – the U.S. government should be sensitive to the concerns of others and be willing to compromise or abstain from engaging in certain activities, in accord with its expectations of the other powers. For example, when the U.S. government presses for the withdrawal of Russian troops from the region, it should also make clear that the United States and its allies do not intend to introduce troops or bases of their own or create clear military surrogates. Diplomacy of this nature would help create a realistic basis for a concert to evolve within a broader, stable environment in which other major powers with interests in the region need not perceive U.S. activities to be directed against them. Though some may argue that these perceptions are inevitable in the real world and can be neither avoided nor assuaged, the U.S. government must do what it can to reassure other governments by stating clear reasons for its activities and ensuring that its diplomatic rhetoric does not contradict actions or interests.

Defining the Concert

Given current levels of resources and the limited commitment of both the U.S. government and the general public to this region, a cooperative model for enhancing stability in this region can take root most effectively through the development of a regional concert. The concert is based on three elements: 1) an understanding among the major powers and the regional states that all shall seek to uphold the concert; 2) a realistic assessment of the hierarchy of interests among major powers and regional powers. The sum of interests of the major powers takes precedence over the individual interests or ambitions of regional powers, or the individual interests of any one of the major powers; and 3) mu-

tual self-restraint among the major powers. Mutual self-restraint is at the core of the tactical implementation of policies designed around a concert. It requires that states make clear that the overall stability of the concert requires them to accept tradeoffs and at times avoid activities that threaten the interests of others.

All three elements must exist for the concert to function effectively. A concert cannot be based on transparency alone. States can be as transparent as they wish, but if they engage in policies that other major powers do not like and seek to oppose, being transparent about them is not going to make much of a difference.

Of course, the preference for a regional concert should change if one or more of the major powers becomes fundamentally hostile to the United States and threatens U.S. strategic interests in Europe, Northeast Asia or the Middle East from this region. At that point, a strategic concept based on a competitive balance of power would be in order and would necessitate a full rethinking of this region's importance.

Such is the risk inherent in not taking the region seriously at the present time. It could make more likely that negative turn of events and could further two opposing misperceptions: that the sovereign independence of the regional states will evolve on its own without the backing in principle of the major powers; or conversely, that the sovereign independence of the small regional states poses an inherent threat to the interests of the other major powers and to the stability of the region as a whole.

The fulfillment of sovereign independence for these states has been a stated objective of U.S. policy since 1992. But U.S. support for sovereignty does not mean guaranteeing the security of states against their neighbors. This would equate the general principle of sovereignty, which U.S. policy strongly supports, with a condition of rivalry that is viewed by local actors to be highly subjective. The sovereign independence of small states can only be advanced within an overall environment that is made stable by the major powers in which the twin pursuits of sovereignty and stability are mutually consistent.

B. Major Uncertainties

The first uncertainty in the region and for the U.S. role there concerns the fate of Afghanistan, on which much of the region's future hinges. The neglect of Afghanistan by the West has been severe in proportion both to the responsibility Western governments – particularly the United States – had in prosecuting

the successful war against the Soviets and to the Western stake in the future of this country. Afghanistan has the potential to export destabilizing influences for a very long time. It has also begun to have a wider impact on South Asia and the Middle East. Peace in Afghanistan is unlikely until the outside powers cease their support for the warring factions. This will not occur so long as the United States and its allies refuse to weigh in more heavily to persuade Russia, Iran and most importantly, Pakistan, to pursue peace there seriously.

The second major uncertainty is whether Russia, once reconstituted as a regional power, will seek to deepen or reestablish its hegemonic relations with these states and the degree to which that will come into conflict with the ability of the states to resist. The assumption that Russia will further erode into an even weaker, truncated failed state is possible, but judged unlikely.

The third major uncertainty involves the relative stability of the Russian-Iranian-Turkish strategic triangle. Each power is wary of the other yet has sought good relations when conditions warranted (as Russia and Iran are doing at the present time and as the Soviet Union and Turkey did in the early part of the last century). But how this triangle will evolve in the future is uncertain and depends largely on domestic developments in each country.

The fourth major uncertainty involves the degree to which problems originating in this region will spread to the east and south, pitting India, China and Pakistan on opposing sides of a regional conflict. This additional triangle is increasingly linked to the future of Afghanistan, the spread of political Islam and the expansion of narcotics traffic.

C. Key Priorities

The first priority is to engage the other major powers and all the regional powers in a higher-level attempt to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan. Until an acceptable solution is found, no real peace or security can exist in the region, even in the South Caucasus, as instability in the North Caucasus has become linked increasingly to the previously unrelated Afghan war.

The second priority is to come to a regional security understanding with the major neighboring powers, namely China, Iran, Russia and Turkey, which takes into account their key interests, while recalling that the region is strategically important to the United States insofar as developments there affect the nature and quality of U.S. relationships with these powers. Pakistan and India have to be co-opted into supporting any major power consensus that develops, as will Afghanistan when it reemerges as a state. The diplomatic challenge will be to make coop-

eration with each power consistent with cooperation among them. At present, full cooperation with the major powers is impossible because of the adversarial relationship between Iran and the United States and the increasingly distrustful ones between both China and Russia and the United States. A priority objective should be to reverse both of those conditions. Although it is unlikely that China, Iran or Russia (or any other power) will be able to exert exclusive predominance in Central Eurasia, they will remain important regional actors well into the future. No serious condition of peace or stability can emerge, not least one based on a regional concert, if they work to oppose it.

The third priority is to pursue activities with the regional states in ways that do not indicate a preference for some over others. That means refraining from any consideration of “strategic pillars” or “tilting” policies. Politicians may occasionally use such language in public for tactical purposes, but it is important to make clear privately and through deeds that the United States will not pursue an explicit balance of power strategy so long as this region remains of secondary importance. If any one of the regional governments turns hostile to the United States, then relations should cool, but not for the purpose of demonstrating favor toward a neighbor. While it may be true in the mid-term that Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and possibly Georgia will remain the states most critical to the overall stability of the region, there is little to be gained by indicating special preference toward them so long as the other states remain friendly. Only in the event of a serious economic downturn that threatens core stability of more than one state at once should special preferences be shown, and only by necessity.

The fourth priority is to use whatever leverage the United States has to encourage the regional states to cooperate with one another. This has become exceedingly difficult because of each state’s seemingly contrary interests, but more active diplomatic intervention with the regional governments, and with the major powers, should serve to offset these trends. Precedents in ASEAN and other areas suggest that regional cooperation is possible even in the most difficult environments. Closer U.S. collaboration with the EU, Japan and others active in the region should also help to counteract existing imbalances.

The fifth priority is to foster U.S. economic and other interests so long as the first three objectives are not jeopardized by such activity. This includes development of the region’s energy resources. Bilateral programs that seek to encourage Western-style democratic and market reforms, and cooperation on a multilateral basis all should continue to the extent that funding is available.

However, they should not be cast as substitutes for the inadequate pursuit of the first four objectives, but as direct adjuncts to them.

D. Measures of Effectiveness

The key measures and indicators of the effectiveness of this strategy will be found in the deeds of regional actors. They provide a baseline for determining threats to the overall security environment and can be evaluated with answers to the following questions:

1. Are the frequency and tone of U.S. dialogues with countries in the region and with the major powers better or worse than they were a year ago?
2. Are cross-border relations and cooperation improving or worsening? Are borders more open or closed?
3. Is there headway towards the establishment of a stable regime in Afghanistan? Are levels of outside support for Afghan factions growing or shrinking?
4. Are the sovereignty and viability of regional states growing? More specifically, can they defend their own borders?
5. Are efforts at improving regional infrastructure proceeding on schedule? If not, are the setbacks primarily political or economic?
6. Are levels of investment and trade greater or lesser than they were a year ago? Are the reasons primarily endogenous or exogenous?
7. Have the Caucasus and Central Asia been on the agenda of high-level meetings between the United States and China, Japan, the EU, Iran, Russia, Turkey?
8. Have the frequency and tone of public mention of the United States in the region changed? For better or worse?

VI. Regional Policy Challenges

A. Accommodating Differences

The dominant theme regarding the security interests of the regional states since they gained independence in 1992 has been their growing differentiation from one another. Initially, they all tried to appear as independent as possible and have not fully embraced cooperative security frameworks sponsored by Russia in the form of the CIS, or by the West in the form of NATO's PfP. But in the meantime, they also have needed to work together to deal with specific security concerns, such as the 1999 kidnappings in the Kyrgyz Republic, and have taken small integrative steps such as the establishment of a permanently staffed Central Asian Economic Community, with headquarters rotating among the four Central Asian capitals. Because of the still unresolved conflict in Karabakh, nothing similar exists in the South Caucasus. The net result has been the further differentiation of interests and diversification of security relationships in spite of discrete cooperation on certain issues.

As this process of differentiation advanced, areas of inadequate cooperation among the regional states came to the fore. These include the following:

Border closings. Heretofore, borders have been ill-defined and poorly marked. Early post-independence policies stressed the easy flow of goods and people across borders, but the rise of Islamic militancy has put an end to this. Uzbekistan has moved to secure its borders against unwanted intrusions from its neighbors, and now the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan have followed suit.

Border defense. Early post-independence policies stressed light internal border defense and collaborative defense of the region's external borders, with Russia as a participant. Now national armies are being developed to take over both tasks. In spite of Kazakhstan's and the Kyrgyz Republic's expanded range of agreements with Russia on defense matters, both have worked quietly to reduce their dependence on Russian arms and to nationalize the patrolling of both national and regional borders. While this process has indigenized border defense, it also has sharpened the awareness of differences among the needs and circumstances of each country.

Visa restrictions. Russia threatened to impose new visa regimes in Georgia and Azerbaijan following the outbreak of the second Chechen war in 1999, and finally did so in Georgia in December, 2000. Concern over drug traffick-

ing and terrorism has led Uzbekistan, and also Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, to consider stiffening visa restrictions on access.

Tariff policy. Conflicts in this area have set Kazakhstan against the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan against both Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic. The work of coordinating tariff policies grows more, rather than less, difficult over time.

Water use. Water is the region's scarcest resource and one of the most serious potential sources of conflict. Tensions over the use of water have set the upstream Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan at odds with all the downstream states, i.e., Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as China.

Development strategies. The countries of the region have pursued sharply contrasting strategies of economic and social development. Uzbekistan has preserved a strong state sector and powerful state mechanism; Kazakhstan has instituted bold reforms, but preserves an authoritarian state alongside the expanding private sector; the Kyrgyz Republic has led the entire former Soviet Union in Western-style reforms, being the first former Soviet state to institute thoroughgoing land privatization and the first to be admitted to the World Trade Organization; Turkmenistan has stressed centralized control and the development of gas resources as a prerequisite to both political and economic reform; and Tajikistan has only now begun to consider its strategy, which will probably most closely follow that of Kazakhstan. The impact of these different strategies is bound to widen over time, setting the general interests of the various states further at odds with one another.

This process of differentiation renders U.S. policy in all areas, including security, more difficult. If U.S. policies are not tailored to the specific needs of each country they will fail. Yet if they are overly specific and ignore the important common interests of the region as a whole they also will fail. The main challenge for U.S. policy overall is to solve this dilemma while doing what it can to foster region-wide consciousness in light of all the issues listed above.

B. Promoting Cooperation

There are no "best coalition" candidates or permanent allies for the United States in this region in a military sense. With the exception of Turkmenistan, which remains committed to its nonaligned stance, every country calculates its own posture on the basis of its reading of what the outside powers might be willing to do in the event of a genuine security crisis (see textbox on page 114). Their warmth or coolness towards the United States in the security arena is calibrated solely on these grounds.

Moreover, all bilateral military relations must be designed with an eye to the actual condition of the government and society they intend to serve. No less, they must be designed in full recognition of the sensitive relations existing between that country and its neighbors, and between that country and the other major powers. These points may seem obvious, but they have serious implications for U.S. policy, particularly given the already described weak record of intra-regional cooperation. This puts even more emphasis on the need to get the major power relationships right, specifically in understanding the perceptions, politics and strategic mindset of other powers. Often their perceptions of the “totality” of developments contrast with U.S. perceptions of the component parts of a policy or of the U.S. reaction to distinct events.

Demilitarization of the Caspian Sea

An idea related to the concert concerns the demilitarization of the Caspian Sea through agreement among the littoral states acting in coalition. Such a step would be important to the success of any security pact involving either the Caucasus or Central Asia alone, for it would reduce the littoral countries' exposure on a long flank. At present the only significant naval presence in the Caspian is Russia, which has recently moved to renovate and expand its main base in Astrakhan and to improve a smaller facility at Derbent. To ensure that no buildups by Russia or anyone else threatens Caspian borders, the relevant littoral states will have to act in concert with one another and with outside powers, forming coalitions that differ in composition from existing arrangements.

Overall, the most important major powers for the United States in this region are Russia and Iran, followed by China, Turkey, Pakistan and India. A preliminary glance suggests that the greatest consistency of interests in the region now exists between China and the United States. There is not a single area, with the exception of the human rights of minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet, where the two countries have significant policy differences with respect to this region. Yet on further examination, the same might be said for Russia and Iran now that their earlier differences over Tajikistan have subsided and negotiations over the status of the Caspian Sea have progressed. Among all the major powers the notion that long-term security will be better served by stronger rather than weaker neighbors is fairly well understood. However, this does not mean that states will not seek to prevent a hostile third country or other out-

side forces from acquiring control over one of these states, or from using their territory or population for military or political advantage.

Most of the powers have chosen to improve their relations with one another directly, while allowing moderate commercial interests to proceed and insisting on the success of “compartmentalizing” specific differences (such as those between Iran and Pakistan over support for opposing forces in Afghanistan). Almost all are more interested in preserving domestic security than in threatening their neighbors or in competing against one another. Until only very recently, Pakistan has been unique among the major powers in seeing the expansion of Pakistani-linked Islamic movements as a domestic asset. However, the “anomaly” could spread: Russia, China, Iran and Turkey all have resorted to war when it suited their purposes. So too have India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

So long as the present-day equilibrium lasts, the regional states have more room to address their common security concerns. They include the need to:

- Prevent the spread of transnational criminal drug trafficking groups and other criminal organizations in the region.
- Prevent the spread of radical forms of Islam that have as their goal the destruction of secularist states and their replacement with theocratic regimes that deny to their subjects the benefits of development and resist integration with the international community.
- Open up unfettered channels of international trade and communications, so far as is compatible with the above, both within the region and with the broader world in every direction, so that the choice among trade ties and routes is determined by market considerations rather than by politics.
- Establish normal inter-state relations with the major powers. However, this largely is predicated on Russia revising its defense doctrine so it does not define its perimeter of defense in terms of the borders of the former USSR.
- Enlist a variety of international actors as supporters of their sovereignty and integrity, without making these states unduly dependent on any one of them.
- Help to establish an environment in which all foreign troops could be removed from the region and to prevent their further introduction there, as well as to diversify the sources of arms and equipment.

U.S. interests are in harmony with every point on the list. To be sure, some present greater challenges to the United States in their implementation than others, with the last three being the most complex.

Regional leaders themselves will continue to proceed with considerable caution in their efforts to forge cooperation with outside powers. They adroitly use links of transportation and trade as surrogates for the security ties they actually seek. By moving actively in these areas, they steadily reorient their countries away from Russia, but without the kind of overt actions that Russia (or any other state) might take as a pretext for intervention. Thus, U.S. policy should aim for a sophisticated assessment of these motivations and their impact, while advocating prudent responses to them. The surest way to fail in this task is to try to do too much, to do it episodically and not to do it well.

The Poor Legacy of Cooperation

Unfortunately, few rulers over the centuries have shown themselves less inclined to cooperate or build and participate in coalitions than those of this region. They have been reluctant to involve themselves either with regional coalitions or coalitions involving outside powers. This is all the more striking in light of the fact that not one of the region's former states enjoyed the luxury of isolation, whether as a result of remoteness, mountain barriers or water. On the contrary, these were all communities of traders engaged in constant intercourse with near and remote neighbors. Nonetheless, a "go it alone" tradition prevailed down to very recent times.

This peculiar situation can be traced to two related realities. First, all the centers of power were oases. Whether built on open deserts (Merv, Herat, Khiva, Kunya Urgench, etc.) or partially protected by hills or mountains (Balkh, Pendjikent, Ghazna, etc.) they all dominated their hinterland through control of a major water source. Such centers could be mainly commercial (Tashkent) or theological in character (Bukhara), but they all were defined by their relation to a single water source and by their control over the hydraulic systems through which that water was dispensed to agricultural users. Characteristically, this gave them an orientation and structure that was strongly centripetal and hierarchical. In spite of constant intercourse with their neighbors and outside powers, on matters of survival they all looked inward for strength. High peripheral walls of mud brick rather than coalitions were the best assurance against enemies.

Second, both the open terrain and seemingly endless streams of nomadic invaders from the East created conditions in which powerful, if short-lived, regional hegemonies could thrive. Whether Parthians, Greco-Bactrians, Sogdians, Samanids, Karakanids, Seljuks, Mongols or Timurids, their method was always the same: to destroy or threaten to destroy an oasis power and then force it to pay tax or tribute. The sheer inequality between the power of the invader and the invaded rendered coalition building pointless. Better to strike a deal and thus survive until the powers of the hegemon wane.

Very different conditions prevailed among the nomads who later filtered into the northern steppe lands but they also discouraged enduring coalitions. True, the organization by horde and family clan gave these societies a loose structure and enabled them at moments to form coalitions, but these were always ad hoc arrangements of short duration. The advantages of mobility and fluidity were always greater than those derived from coalitions.

These fundamentals of life on oases and steppes defined the response both to Tsarist Russian incursions into this region and the imposition of So-

viet rule. With only the partial exception of Kokand, the emirates chose to resist and then to deal with the northern power separately rather than together. Such coalitions as were formed were weak and of short duration. The most substantial resistance came from small bands of guerrilla *basmachi* rather than from more organized efforts; nor did any state or nomad power succeed in entering into effective coalition with an outside power (Britain, Iran or China) to resist the Russian/Soviet onslaught east of the Caspian. (The Caucasus underwent a different experience.)

Yet in both places the years of Soviet rule reinforced a disinterest in coalitions. Moscow's control was strong enough to crush any attempts at collective resistance, and its "divide and rule" policy made such attempts unthinkable. Efforts to carve out spheres of autonomy focused on the micro rather than macro levels. The closest thing to coalition building occurred under Uzbek Party boss Rashidov, who brought the interests of local (i.e. oasis) "clans" into sufficient balance to enable them from time to time to assert themselves against Moscow. Parallel efforts in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan did not bring any discernible benefits. Nor were there any significant efforts at region-wide coalition building, with the exception of the attempt in the late 1970s to unite behind the grotesque proposal to divert the waters of Siberian rivers to Central Asia.

One might argue that the region's peculiar indifference to coalition building or cooperation is evidence of the fact that these were not states in the modern sense but rather city-states and nomadic clans of the sort that had existed since antiquity. If so, one might expect very different set of attitudes to have arisen in the region since the emergence of independent territorial states there. This in fact has occurred.

It has sometimes been argued that the region's leaders did not seek independence, but had it thrust upon them by events in Russia. This misstates the reality. By the 1980s they had grown adept at the small and separate deals that had always been the hallmark of oasis-hegemon relations. Unlike the Baltic states and, to some extent, Georgia, the regional states did not actively seek independence, mainly because no one thought it a realistic option. Then, when the USSR collapsed, Kazakhstan's President Nazerbayev campaigned actively to recreate some form of confederation and all the other leaders without exception fought to keep the "ruble zone" intact.

Once they were pushed out of the ruble zone, a very different dynamic set in across the region: post-colonial assertiveness. Forced to go it alone, they quickly established the institutions and symbols of statehood. Former Soviet

officials began to practice the independent leadership they could not even have dreamt of earlier. Without exception, their highest priority became the protection of their newly gained sovereignty in the face of Russian efforts to re-integrate the so-called "near abroad" with the Russian Federation by means of the CIS. With the exception of Turkmenistan, which reverted to the Turkoman tribes' five-century-long tradition of complete autonomy, the preferred tool by which the new states hoped to achieve this goal was through cooperation. As a consequence, the years 1993-98 were marked by a flurry of coalition building in Central Asia. This occurred both among the region's new states and with powers outside the region. Internal to the region, Uzbekistan organized a campaign to declare Central Asia a nuclear-free zone and used it as a pretext for cooperation. Ironically, when this movement gained its objective in 1999, the anti-nuclear coalition had no further role.

Begun in 1993, efforts to establish a Central Asian "union" or "economic community" (*soobshchestvo*) that was more enduring embraced every regional state except Turkmenistan. Implicitly directed against the pretenses of the CIS, this provides for periodic meetings of presidents and ministers and establishes an Inter-Parliamentary Assembly with a permanent (but geographically rotating) secretariat dealing with tariff and other matters. Significantly, this entity also includes military representatives from the four countries.

The value of the Central Asia Economic Community is that it brings the two regional powers -- Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan -- under one umbrella. Its chief weaknesses are, first, that it does not include the other power center in the Caspian basin, Azerbaijan; second, it has no links (besides observer status) with other states such as Ukraine and Georgia; and, third, it has no way of engaging either outside regional powers like Turkey, China or Iran, or global powers like the United States and Europe, in the affairs of the region. Beginning in 1993 and with increasing urgency thereafter, its member states set about creating coalitions that would address these needs.

Meanwhile, every country was using bilateral trade agreements as a *sotto voce* means of coalition building. Turkmenistan's gas sales to Ukraine, and Kazakhstan's and the Kyrgyz Republic's trade openings with China were intended as anchors to the wind, providing each country with informal commercial coalitions that served to balance one-sided dependence on Russia. Kazakhstan's then foreign minister (later prime minister) Tokaev made clear the strategic nature of these relations in a book published in 1995. When President Nazarbayev launched Kazakhstan's "Consultative Group on Confidence Building Measures in Asia" involving China, India and Pakistan, as well as Russia, he made clear that he was using that group as a kind of surrogate for the coalitions he did not dare set up.

The rush to cooperate in non-military areas continued unabated. At the initiative of Turkey, the four Turkic states of Central Asia have participated in annual "Turkic Summits" since 1993. All five Central Asian states also began participating actively in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in these years, along with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. Since 1998, the so-called "Shanghai Five" (China, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia and Tajikistan) held four meetings, the partial effect of which was to reorient the three new Asian states further towards China. At the last meeting in 2000, Uzbekistan participated as an observer.

The use of trade agreements as a surrogate for security coalitions reached its apogee with the U.S.-sponsored effort to construct east-west pipelines for Caspian gas and oil, as opposed to the established routes through Russia or alternative routes through Iran. It is no surprise that the countries leading the Baku-Ceyhan project--the U.S., Turkey and Britain--are all NATO members, and that the fourteen largest oil firms involved in the Caspian are all from NATO countries. In his Silk Road Strategy Act (2000), Senator Sam Brownback extended the list of participants in east-west activity to include the non-hydrocarbon states of the region. In an indirect approach to military cooperation, this act embraces the field of military education.

Meanwhile, the regional states were eagerly embracing more overt military ties with NATO and the United States through membership in the Partnership for Peace. Their explicit strategy from the outset was to draw closer to the NATO countries and thereby create a counterbalance to Russia and other powers. But this has met with only partial success.

Until 1997, Russia's main efforts to counteract these developments were channeled through the CIS. In that year, however, it entered into a bilateral Treaty of Trade and Friendship with Armenia, followed in quick succession by similar treaties with Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. In each case these have been used as tools for expanding military relations, culminating in Russia's offer in September, 1999, to provide arms and military support to the Kyrgyz Republic in its struggle against guerrilla forces in its south, and in February, 2000 to collaborate with Uzbekistan to the same end. In April of that year, the five Central Asian states met together and announced an even more extensive program of regional consultation and collaboration against the terrorist threat.

Summarizing this situation, the regional countries have to some extent overcome their traditional aversion to intra- and extra-regional coalitions and are actively pursuing whatever links might enhance their ability, individually and collectively, to resist domineering pressures from outside powers and at the same time to fend off incursions from Afghanistan.

Part Three: Recommendations

The main developments over which analysts and policy planners should collaborate are consistent with the key areas of major uncertainty listed above in chapter V, section B.

VII. Planning

To recapitulate, the key areas of focus for planners are:

Afghanistan: Clear coordination of activities that impinge on the neighboring countries' relations with Afghanistan should be undertaken. Regular coordinating meetings specifically devoted to Afghanistan should take place with appropriate UN and regional officials to ensure that U.S.-forward-deployed troops and strategies are prepared to cope with any contingencies that come from this quarter in the near to mid-term future. Simultaneously, the U.S. government should regularly test the *Taliban's* willingness to enter into dialogue.

Iran: The U.S. government needs to begin to think about how to reassess its regional relations in light of an inevitable process of normalization with Iran, which, while its timing remains highly uncertain, will eventually take place. Engaging with Iran will require difficult decisions, not only because of the complex domestic environment there, but also because the process will have an important and direct impact on relationships in the Middle East, namely with Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iraq, as well as Turkey. It is therefore important for planners at CENTCOM to analyze the steps and aspects of this changing relationship and in doing so, to keep in mind the northern dimension of Iranian interests. It will be important to consult EUCOM planners about these plans, insofar as they have an impact on the Caucasus and on U.S.-Turkish and U.S.-Israeli relations.

In the meantime, the U.S. government should continue to proceed prudently with establishment of diplomatic relations with Iran so long as leverage is required to promote the continued moderation of Iranian foreign policy. But economic measures – especially sanctions – make little sense and undo whatever positive diplomatic or rhetorical gestures the U.S. government makes. Economic relationships should be allowed to develop freely. Most importantly, U.S. policy

toward Central Eurasia needs to discard the straitjacket of simultaneously appearing both anti-Iranian and anti-Russian. The regional states should be free to develop whatever economic ties they choose. They need all the trade and investment they can get at the moment.

China and Russia: Both have serious interests in this region, discussion of which should be included in nearly all meetings between their senior officials and their U.S. counterparts. Permanent U.S.-Russian and U.S.-Chinese Strategic Stability Commissions comprising the principal national security officials from these countries and prominent, former officials should be established to ensure that proper attention is paid to the overarching interest of strategic stability, and that lower tier issues are not allowed to jeopardize more important priorities in relations with these powers. A top priority for planners at CENTCOM is to ensure that engagement efforts do not conflict with those undertaken with Russia and China. Likewise, planners at EUCOM and PACOM need to make an effort to keep Central Asia on their planning agenda and to keep aware of engagement activities that take place outside their command, but in this region.

Turkey and Russia: This relationship, if it turns sour, could drive a wedge through efforts to improve regional cooperation. Though it has been discounted in the past, there is always the distant possibility that Turkey and Russia might go to war over the region or become military involved on opposing sides of a conflict (like Karabakh). Planners in both EUCOM and CENTCOM will need to watch this relationship carefully.

South Asia: India-Pakistan problems are so widespread that planners cannot neglect them and related issues. Afghanistan, as already mentioned, is high on the list. In addition, regular consideration will have to be given to the relations each country has to the states of Central Asia, Uzbekistan in particular. The South Asian countries will play an increasingly important role there, which could complicate the interests of both China and Iran.

VIII. Coordination

The growing importance of this region and its rising profile in U.S. national security planning demand a responsible approach to coordinating the strands of U.S. policy. Bureaucratic designations are by definition arbitrary but should be flexible. To their credit, several departments and agencies of the U.S. government already have revised bureaucratic assignments with regard to this region with greater appreciation for geopolitical distinctions. However, in keeping with the evolving strategic environment, some additional steps are now warranted:

- The President should give his Special Advisor on Caspian issues a portfolio that goes beyond promoting specific oil and gas pipelines. This person should oversee an effective interagency process at the NSC that helps to ensure that proper attention is devoted to all the key emerging threats and challenges in this region. In serving as the principal U.S. government interlocutor with counterparts in the other major powers and with the regional governments, this individual eventually will be seen as a valuable resource for understanding the perspectives of other powers, rather than as a mere promoter of energy interests.
- The Joint Staff should reconsider the bifurcation of the region brought about by the assignment of Central Asia to Central Command and the South Caucasus to European Command. This division limits the ability of planners to develop expertise across the entire region and to appreciate the importance of inter-regional linkages. This division also creates the illusion that the Caucasus is part of Europe while Central Asia is exclusively Asian, and that the two are subject to entirely different sets of problems. There may be some analytic merit to this argument, and it may continue to be occasionally useful for diplomatic purposes. But for strategic planning purposes, the United States must be concerned principally with how the region fits into the geopolitical calculus of the other major powers, and hence, how it affects the relations of those powers with one another. In this respect the Caspian Sea is at the center of the broader region and not a line dividing two distinct regions. Therefore, responsibility for the South Caucasus should move from EUCOM to CENTCOM along with the unassigned Caspian Sea. This would minimize dangerous misperceptions about the potential warfighting role of NATO in this region while maintaining ties to Euro-Atlantic structures such as Partnership for Peace to the extent these relationships remain desirable and useful.

The key task for effective military coordination is to ensure that the regional engagement activities of EUCOM, CENTCOM and PACOM do not conflict with one another and with other programs of the U.S. government. This review necessarily resides at the Joint Staff level, but greater coordination should take place with State, NSC and where necessary, the Department of Energy. The coordination process should include regular input from regional military attachés and specifically assigned liaison officers in each Command. Regular meetings of key liaison officers from each of the J-5 staffs should occur.

In addition, the Joint Staff should:

- Devote greater resources to contingency planning for this region. J-5 should establish a specific unit to examine the linkages across the region and to remedy inconsistencies of policy under the separate commands. This group should be tasked with regularly reevaluating regional engagement programs in light of the overall priority of enhancing trust, transparency and mutually beneficial relations with the other major powers.
- Task the intelligence community to produce regular surveys of strategic/military thought on the region. It should be aware of who the leading strategic thinkers in this region are and the views they are promoting. CIA, DIA and the regional CINC staffs also should be tasked to provide a regular set of regional vulnerability studies and a set of reports highlighting the international linkages that might be important in bringing influence to bear on the region.

IX. Implementation

The main constraints on resources for regional engagement include: overall cost, support in Congress and support in the region.

The last constraint must be taken particularly seriously at the level of implementation. Engagement efforts in the region are less likely to succeed, and most likely will be counterproductive, if they are perceived to hinder the interests of other countries. In some cases, local governments want U.S. military aid precisely as a counterpoise to their dependency on major regional powers, particularly Russia. To develop alternative diplomatic and military resources is a normal part of developing sovereignty. But the U.S. government must be alert to the effect this development might have on U.S. relationships with the major powers, which are ultimately more important. In practice, efforts to consult or advise those governments are not useful if they occur on a matter of engagement after a unilateral decision already has been taken to go ahead with the effort.

Having clear reasons for U.S. engagement efforts should help ease the other two constraints – cost and the accompanying need to sustain Congressional support for a U.S. role in the region. However, the U.S. government should resist attempts on the part of individual members of Congress or lobbies to support specific efforts. Though axiomatic, that general rule should be upheld with particular rigor in this region, where every little effort possesses high symbolic value to hypersensitive neighbors.

Accordingly, U.S. regional engagement must rely on efforts that highlight the diplomatic aspects over the military ones. This includes energetic and direct discussions on all major issues, diplomatic coalition building, backing diplomacy with concrete, non-military rewards and sanctions, official and unofficial visits, exchanges and similar dialogue activities. Engagement also needs to be geographically sensitive. It should prohibit activities near areas of known instability or high sensitivity, such as Karabakh, Ferghana or Xinjiang. It also must be carefully coordinated on a region-wide basis, to include appropriate liaison with the other major powers.

Military Engagement: How and With Whom?

Engaging the regional militaries in pursuit of these goals carries its own set of challenges. The military organizations of the region, except for a small number of senior officers and a somewhat larger cadre of younger officers, remain at best partially reconstructed versions of earlier Soviet organizations. They are designed for extensive rather than intensive operations, tactical notions are rudimentary and inflexible, equipment was designed for use in situations very different from those faced today, communications are poor, common soldiers are often demoralized and alienated, and their relationship to the larger society is inappropriate for states that rely on the goodwill of the governed, let alone for democracies. None of this is surprising. After all, until nine years ago, they were part of the same Soviet army that met with disaster in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, most senior officers have realistic views of their own predicaments.

To recapitulate, three kinds of armies, including foreign forces deployed at local bases, exist in the region. First, there is a basic distinction between old and new armies. The Russian 201st division in Tajikistan and peacekeeping forces are “old” armies because they derive from units of the Soviet armed forces established in 1918. All the other armies are new. There is a second, equally vital but less obvious distinction that must be drawn: between armies formed by the state and armies formed by the society itself or parts of it. In U.S. history, the Minutemen of the Revolution and large parts of the Union and Confederate armies were all formed in the latter manner. In this region, the armies of Karabakh, Georgia and Azerbaijan are direct outgrowths of similar militias. The same is true for the military forces in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Chechnya and the Abkhaz and South Ossetian secessionist regions of Georgia.

Even where major conflicts are absent, the type of army on the scene is crucial to the outcome of any situation. For example, during the attempted assassina-

tion of President Shevardnadze in Georgia in 1998, it was discovered that a number of Georgian military units belonging to an elite unit, kept ready for service in Tbilisi, had been told as a matter of scheduled maintenance to drain all gasoline and lubricants from their vehicles, preparing them for replacement the next day. On December 9, the day that Shevardnadze was ambushed, officers went to the supply depot to get the replacement fuel, but were told there was none, which left the units immobilized. Similarly, certain rapid reaction units found that all their weapons were mysteriously locked up. One cannot understand those events, except on the assumption that someone working within the Georgian military, or with direct access to it, wanted to be in a position to seize the capital if Shevardnadze were killed or wounded. In Georgia itself, and in Azerbaijan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, groups who forced changes of government during the last few years did so by openly employing military force. Thus, the nature and capability of the military are crucially important wherever internal instability, secessionism, geopolitical rivalries and weak states exist.

Armies and Society

The utility of conscription varies with the situation: it is a cheap way of raising forces, but only low-quality forces. Under post-Soviet conditions, it cannot be applied fairly to all social classes, and it has the opposite of the “political socialization” or nation-building function sought in countries such as Israel and (until recently) France. In countries such as Kazakhstan, it spreads anti-military attitudes throughout the country, increasing the distance between the army and society.

Armies now have little stake in the existing social order. But as the Soviet experience recedes into the distance, the danger of coups and military rule will grow. It is important therefore to encourage the involvement of the educated middle class in military affairs, particularly in countries long dominated by private armies, with their criminal connections. Some kind of competent reserve structure could serve this purpose, satisfy national pride in a way that small armies cannot and prepare for a future time when classical inter-state war may become more likely.

Types of training

Given these conditions, the United States should focus its energies on building human capital. So numerous and complex are the tasks facing the armed forces that it is vain to think that any U.S. assistance can address them all directly. Instead, the United States should concentrate its efforts on developing officers who will be capable of leading the process of transformation at all levels.

The importance of personal relationships in these societies makes it easier to exert influence on specific officers and units that have been trained or helped. Much of the potential of such relationships is, however, wasted by the U.S. personnel rotation cycle, which carries Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) and other public servants away from a place just when they have built personal ties.

In short, the single most effective measure of bilateral military relations would be a large-scale program of officer training and retraining. One program could be based in the United States. Another could offer scholarships in these countries' universities contingent on enrolling in similar reserve officer training programs, like the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). Over time, the graduates of ROTC-style programs will create a pool of military skills entirely distinct from the criminal world, but available in national emergencies. They will also provide the public and the civilian elite with the general knowledge of military affairs necessary for intelligent defense policy.

Such training should be broadly gauged, so as to build a military culture that is compatible in a range of areas with our own. At the same time, it must produce short-term results in at least the following areas:

- Border defense and drug interdiction
- Management of low-grade conflicts and guerrilla warfare
- Tactical flexibility, with initiative and responsibility shifted downward in the system
- Coordination of command structures within multinational efforts
- Integration of modern communications into command structures
- Programs of education and training for inductees and lower-level officers
- Civil-military relations on the ground
- Use of the military in disaster relief

Clearly, programs of officer training, even on a large scale, do not alone constitute cooperation. But they are the *sine qua non* for the success of any such effort. Moreover, unlike many other possible initiatives, they create self-sustaining change of the sort that any post-Soviet military most desperately needs. A further advantage is that these programs can be extended to other countries in the region at levels appropriate to their needs and U.S. interests. By this means, the United States can soften the intra-regional rivalries and tensions that would inevitably result from a disproportionate concentration on any one country.

International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs therefore should be focused on the most fragile armies and countries, and not be pur-

sued for merely symbolic reasons. In comparison with other U.S. budget commitments to these countries, the amount of money going into these programs is too small for the needs and might at some point require reassessment against overall patterns of U.S. assistance. Of course, it is not easy to find the money for large shifts within the defense budget. But these countries are so desperately poor that modest funds or in-kind contributions can make a great difference. Again, what these armies need is not equipment, but professionalism and training. Given their financial constraints, used Soviet-bloc equipment is probably more appropriate than new U.S. equipment.

IMET programs to date have emphasized non-combat skills such as teaching English. A common language is not a requirement for successful coalitions but a useful tool for strengthening them and in many cases becomes the basis for all other interactions with lasting results. Since the common language of regional militaries up until now has been Russian, this naturally facilitates and reinforces links with Russia and the Russian military at the expense of others.

English already is on its way to becoming the most widely studied foreign language in these states. Besides reflecting the public's preferences, this also is a way of expressing a reorientation away from Russia that has implications for regional security. Even Tajikistan, with its heavy dependence on Russian security forces, defines English as an "international" language (and hence compulsory for everyone) and Russian as a "foreign" language (and hence an elective course in the schools).

Fostering knowledge of English is a significant but not critical aspect of regional cooperation. If participation in common activities with the United States permits an officer to learn English, he is being rewarded with a skill that assures rapid advancement within the armed forces and a remunerative job in civilian life if and when he retires. Moreover, it strengthens a Western and global orientation at the expense of a Russian one, and lays the basis for an eventual shift to English as a regional language for international communication. Hence, English programs constitute an inexpensive and effective adjunct to bilateral military relations.

Such programs are useful, but do not touch the central need of these countries: a small combat-capable force. As noted in the first part of this report, most threats are either of internal origin or will manifest themselves internally. They are likely to involve small private armies which have low fighting capability. To address such internal, as well as external, threats, what these countries most need is one to five battalions of combat-capable infantry.

The more important military forces, often the more trusted and competent ones that are designated the most serious, likely threats – internal security – can lie outside the ministries of defense, in the border guards, internal troops, ministries of internal affairs and security, presidential guards and elsewhere. Therefore a mismatch exists between their needs and the primary capability of the U.S. government for assisting them, which is in the Department of Defense. In order for U.S. military assistance to be effective, those overseeing implementation will need to cooperate with organizations outside the ministries of defense, so long as they have primarily military functions. U.S. military assistance, by contrast, should not be designed to augment the leverage or capacity of any faction or department against others within national bureaucracies. The emphasis above all should be functional. Great care is required to ensure that assistance, particularly when it involves training or financial support, is being used for its intended, military purposes and not for “investigative” tasks or those associated more commonly with domestic repression.

In order to ensure accountability, those overseeing military assistance need to develop a very sophisticated and informed understanding of military and police functions in the various states. This is true anywhere the U.S. government provides assistance, particularly to governments with poor democratic records. For them to qualify for military assistance, the burden will have to be on the regional states to first demonstrate that those specifically targeted to benefit from assistance will use it for its intended purposes and are the most appropriate in-country recipients. The only way some sensible control can be ensured over this process is through tight coordination between DIA and other intelligence departments and agencies and those responsible for overseeing military assistance. Analysts should be particularly rigorous in monitoring the nature and roles of non-MOD forces and coordinate such intelligence with the relevant planning staffs.

In sum, large force structures based on the deployment of the former Soviet army are not desirable. They spread the very limited current resources too thin. The same is true, in general, of high technology weapons just as jet aircraft, ballistic missiles (the SS-20) in Kazakhstan) and sophisticated air defense radars. Some armies cannot consistently maintain tanks and armored personnel carriers either, which also tend to encourage conscripts to fight behind armor and invite ambushes. Only helicopters and good communications equipment are important materiel requirements at the present time. The U.S. government can only help fulfill these needs in a limited fashion.

Likewise, it cannot have great influence on the strategy and military reorganization in most of these countries; but the influence it does have should lead in the right direction.

Figure VIII **Policy Map**

Vital:	None.
Strategic:	Regional peace, stability and independence; Containment of intra-regional disputes; Prevention of inter-regional disputes; Control over proliferation of WMD.
Important:	Promotion of energy markets; Combat of narcotics smuggling; Environmental concerns; Promotion of democratic reform and human rights.

U.S. Strategic Concept:

- Regional concert based on mutual restraint and common interests of other powers.

Key Recommendations:

President and NSC:

- Address the Afghan civil war with greater urgency.
- Implement an approach toward Iran that emphasizes common regional interests.
- Establish bilateral strategic stability commissions with China and Russia which give ample weight to relations in this region.
- Give the special advisor on Caspian issues a broader portfolio beyond the promotion of specific oil and gas pipelines.

Joint Staff:

- Devote greater resources to contingency planning in this region;
- Monitor carefully military assistance programs for utility and value;
- Assign entire region to a single command area of responsibility.

Intelligence Community:

- Produce regular surveys of strategic thinking in region;
- Produce regular set of reports on key international linkages and vulnerabilities relating to the region;
- Assist Joint Staff and CINCs with assessments of impact of military assistance programs.

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES

The Atlantic Council is a non-partisan network of leaders who are convinced of the pivotal importance of effective U.S. foreign policy and the cohesion of U.S. international relationships. The Council promotes constructive U.S. leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in the contemporary world situation. It does this principally by:

- stimulating dialogue and discussion about critical international policy issues, with the intention of enriching public debate and promoting consensus in the administration, the Congress, the corporate and nonprofit sectors and the media in the United States and among leaders in Europe, Asia and the Americas;
- promoting educational and other programs for successor generations of U.S. leaders who will value U.S. international engagement and have the formation necessary to develop effective policies, building on U.S. leadership in the Atlantic community.

The Council's programs include political and economic as well as security issues. They cover Asia, the Americas and other regions in addition to Europe. All programs are, however, based on the conviction that a healthy transatlantic relationship is fundamental to progress in organizing a stronger international system. Examples of important policy challenges addressed by the Council include:

- identifying major issues facing the future of the Atlantic Alliance and transatlantic economic relations;
- examining issues of integration into European structures of the countries of central and eastern Europe, including Russia;
- building consensus on U.S. policy towards Russia, China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan;
- balancing growing energy needs and environmental protection in Asia;
- drafting roadmaps for U.S. policy towards the Balkans, Cuba, Iran and Panama.

Through its diverse networks, the Council builds broad constituencies to support constructive U.S. international leadership and policies. In all its programs, the Council seeks to integrate the views of experts from a wide variety of backgrounds, interests and experience.

The Central Asia – Caucasus Institute

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute is an independent research and policy institution, affiliated to the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of The Johns Hopkins University. It was inaugurated in 1996, as the first center in Washington, D.C. for the study and analysis of Central Asia, the Caspian basin and the Caucasus. It has four primary objectives:

- To conduct impartial research.
- To act as a forum for policymakers both in Washington, D.C. and abroad.
- To act as a “switchboard” of resources and information concerning Central Asia.
- To provide access for its sponsors in business to relevant expertise on the region.

Research and Scholarship

The core group at the Institute comprises the Chairman, Dr. S. Frederick Starr, one of the country’s best-known historians of Russia and an expert on Eurasian security; Director, Dr. Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., a leading scholar of Russian and Caucasian Studies, and an expert on Caspian oil and gas issues; and Deputy Director Dr. Justin BenAdam Rudelson a leading expert on the Xinjiang region of China. Dr. Rudelson edits the biweekly journal *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* (cacianalyst.org).

In addition, the Institute retains a senior scholar-in residence from Central Asia itself, and hosts many guests and experts from the region and elsewhere for short-term visits.

Policy

The biweekly Central Asia Forum held at the institute throughout the year is the center of inter-disciplinary discussion of Central Asian and Caucasian issues in Washington, D.C. It serves as a unique opportunity for dialogue between ambassadors, government officials, businessmen, academics and NGOs. The Institute sets out to focus policy-makers’ attention on the issues of importance to U. S. interests in the region, and benefits in this respect from SAIS’ well-known and non-partisan access to the executive branch, to both houses of Congress, and to the major news media. No other academic center on Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Caspian basin sets itself this practical task, or has better resources to achieve it.

A “Switchboard” of Resources

For too long the fragmented history of these regions has led to a corresponding fragmentation of academic study of them. It is now of the first importance that information on the analysis of the area as a whole be coherently organized and easily available to ensure research and advice of the highest quality. To this end, the Central Asia–Caucasus Institute maintains a comprehensive network of all those with a specialized knowledge of the region throughout Washington, DC, the United States, and the rest of the world. Moreover, through the publication of its research the Institute makes this invaluable network available to the policy, academic, and business communities at large.

Partnership with Business

Central Asia and the Caspian basin are regions in which there is a large and growing interest amongst U.S. firms. They are also, however, complex and often difficult places to do business. Without prior knowledge of the pitfalls of working in some of the least developed of the former Soviet republics, and without an informed assessment of the politics and economy of the region, success is very far from certain. At the Central Asia–Caucasus Institute, we believe that assisting our corporate sponsors in promoting their interests in Central Asia is not only a way of expressing our thanks, but an important contribution to the opening of the region to the world, and the emergence of civil society in the republics through the increased commerce in goods, services, and ideas.