

the Central Asian region, while Russian border troops guarded the external frontiers of the Central Asian states. The Russian government, even had it been willing, would have found it difficult to repatriate these forces, given the lack of facilities to receive them.

The Russian diaspora in Central Asia also tied the region to Russia. The fate of the diaspora quickly became a major issue in Russian domestic politics, which Russian leadership ignored at their peril. Moreover, given its own economic situation, it was nearly inevitable that Russia should seek to prevent or to minimize massive migration from the region back into Russia.

Finally, the political elites of the region were also tied intimately to those of the Russian Federation by the shared experience of participation in the upper echelons of the CPSU. The same was true of the evolving security and defence apparatuses of the new states.

In short, Russia had good reason not to abandon the region, and ample means of influencing policy there should it desire to do so. What changed in 1992-3 was the will of Russian policy makers. For reasons amply explored elsewhere³⁵, the internal debate in Russia evolved in such a way as to marginalize liberal internationalists of western orientation and to produce a more nationalistic, interest-based Russian foreign policy in the CIS, including Central Asia. Critical among Russian concerns, to judge from recent official statements on Russian foreign and security policy, are control of the external borders of the former Soviet Union, the reconsolidation of the former Soviet economic space, the security and rights of the Russian diaspora in the near abroad, and minimizing the political and military presence of potentially hostile contiguous states in the near abroad.

This evolution occurred in conjunction with a clarification of the extent and depth of the Turkish-Iranian rivalry. In the first place, Iran, despite its ideological pretensions, has followed a moderate course in the region, focussing primarily on economic connections and seeking to take advantage of its potential as a major outlet from the region into international markets. Few projects have moved beyond the planning or negotiation stages. Perhaps the most significant is the rail link between Ashgabat and Meshed, linking Turkmenistan's rail net to that of the Middle East and

³⁵ See, for example, S. Neil MacFarlane, "Russia, The West, and European Security", Survival XXXV, #3 (Autumn 1993), pp.7-18.