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Regional Security in Central Asia

by

Professor S. Neil MacFarlane

(June 1994)

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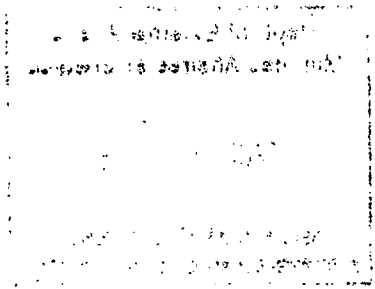
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INTRODUCTION

This paper accompanies a study of the political, economic, and security situation in Kazakhstan, prepared for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in March, 1994. This paper provides a regional context for the Kazakhstan study. The latter serves as a detailed case study of a major regional actor in Central Asia.

In examining the Central Asian region, it makes sense once again to begin with the issue of Canadian interests. First, although Kazakhstan is the only nuclear successor state in the region, there are in the region a number of important production facilities relevant to the Soviet nuclear fuel cycle (e.g. the large uranium enrichment facility in Tadzhikistan). In addition, several of the countries in the area are important actual or potential producers of uranium (notably Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, in addition to Kazakhstan).¹ This has important implications for the establishment of a durable nonproliferation regime in the area and for controlling trade in nuclear materials.² Uranium producing states are also important competitors for Canada in the world uranium market, as well as potential consumers of Canadian mining, milling, and refining technologies.

This is one example of a broader issue. Several countries in the region (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan most notably, but also potentially Kyrgyzstan) are important producers of non-ferrous metals. On the negative side, their entry into world markets in copper and gold, as well as uranium, creates adjustment problems for other producers - such as Canada - forced to adapt to increased supplies and consequent downward pressure on metals prices.³

¹ Although Kyrgyz reserves are not developed, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan each produced about a third of the total Soviet uranium production in the late 1980s. For more detail on Central Asian uranium reserves and production, see David Haglund, S. Neil MacFarlane, and Vladimir Popov, Change in the Former Soviet Union and Its Implications for the Canadian Minerals Sector (Kingston, ON: Centre for Resource Studies, 1994), pp.32, 127.

² It was recently reported, for example, that Libyan officials explored the possibility of obtaining nuclear materials from Tadzhikistan in late 1992.

³ On this point, see David Haglund and S. Neil MacFarlane, "The Former Soviet Union in International Minerals Markets; The Resurrection of 'Strategic Minerals Policy?', Occasional Paper #47 (Kingston, ON: Centre for International Relations, 1994).

On the positive side, the substantial minerals potential of the region, as well as the considerable need for technological modernization of existing mining and refining facilities, create windows of opportunity for Canadian firms in these areas. The same is true in the energy sector in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan. The substantial hydroelectric facilities and potential of Tadzhikistan and Kyrgyzstan constitute similar opportunities for Canadian producers of the relevant generation and transmission technologies.

On a more speculative note, the energy sectors of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in particular are potentially large enough to generate substantial foreign exchange earnings. The possible accumulation of considerable amounts of hard currency, coupled with the low level of development of the light industrial and consumer sectors in both countries and the primitive level of infrastructural development, makes them potentially attractive markets for industrial equipment and consumer goods, and engineering and construction services.

Third, many have argued that the region as a whole is a locus of growing competition and possibility of confrontation among neighbouring powers, among them China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey.⁴ The geopolitical ambiguity that emerged after the collapse of the USSR is both disturbing and attractive for contiguous states.

Moreover, the capacity for instability within the region to spill over into neighbouring countries and *vice versa* is exemplified by the partial merger of the civil wars in Afghanistan and Tadzhikistan. Both the CSCE and the United Nations are increasingly involved in the security affairs of the region, and notably Tadzhikistan. Canada, as a member of both organizations, has an interest in preventing the proliferation of conflict and the emergence of great or regional power confrontation that might necessitate an expansion of the operational activities of these organizations, as well as a general interest in the stability of the CSCE region.

The significance of both threat and opportunity in the region depends to a considerable extent on internal political and economic developments there. This paper, will examine the historical legacy of Russian and Soviet rule, the political and economic situations of states in the region, and the evolving regional system and roles of external actors, before returning to the subject of Canadian policy.

⁴ For reasons discussed in the penultimate section of this paper, I am less concerned about this prospect.

REGIONAL DIVERSITY

Central Asia is frequently viewed in reasonably undifferentiated terms, as a mineral and energy rich region affected by serious ethnic tension and religious fundamentalism, its environment destroyed by the excesses of the Soviet period, ruled by oppressive holdovers from the Soviet era that preside over uniformly disastrous economic performance. However, the region is highly heterogeneous. The countries of the area have a diverse ethnographic profile, some dominated by turkic peoples (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) and some by speakers of Frasi dialects (the Tadjhiks and Pamiris). Some have proportionately substantial European minorities (e.g. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), and some have far less significant populations of Europeans (Uzbekistan, Tadjhikistan). In some, interethnic relations are reasonably good (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) and in some they are actually (Tadjhikistan) or potentially (Uzbekistan) explosive. The impact of Islam varies widely among the different ethnic groups, depending on the period of conversion and the type (rural or urban, nomadic or settled) of culture.

The area's climate ranges from high alpine to desert. Some countries have water surpluses (Kyrgyzstan), and some serious deficits (Uzbekistan). The environmental legacy of the USSR in the region ranges from the catastrophic (as in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) to the reasonably benign (Kyrgyzstan).

Some are hydrocarbon rich (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan) and some are deficient (Kyrgyzstan). Some are significant minerals producers (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan), and some, apparently, have little minerals potential (Turkmenistan). Some have reasonably well developed economic bases (Kazakhstan, for example, in 1991 had a per capita income in the range of Malaysia, an upper tier Third World state). Others are far poorer. Tadjhikistan, for example, in 1991 had a per capita income in the \$1000/year range.⁵ In political terms, the region ranges from the neostalinism (Turkmenistan), through severe (Uzbekistan) and mild (Kazakhstan) authoritarianism, to quasi-democratic (Kyrgyzstan) in its states' approach to governance.

One should, therefore, approach the task of creating a regional profile with caution. Perhaps the real question to be addressed in a regional analysis is what features bring this highly diverse group of states together. Despite their variety, they share certain consequences of Russian and Soviet rule. They face similar economic

⁵ Such differences led one observer to comment recently that "from the point of view of national income alone, Kazakhstan is as different from Tadjhikistan as Chile is from Jordan." Shafiqul Islam, "Capitalism on the Silk Route?", Current History XC, #582, p.155.

and political problems. And they share a specific geopolitical space, poorly organized and fractured by potential conflict within and ringed by potentially competitive powerful states. All four of these shared characteristics that have important implications for regional security.

THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION

A. The Historical Legacy and the Problem of Identity

At the root of many of the political insecurities of the new states of Central Asia is the fact that none has ever in its history existed as an independent state. Historically, the communities of the region were either rudimentarily organized (as with the nomadic Kazakhs and the mountain Kyrgyz), were parts of contiguous empires (viz. the long history of Persian control or influence over Samarkand and Bukhara and the four hundred year Russian occupation of Northern Kazakhstan), or were organized into states the borders of which bear little resemblance to the current territorial dispensation (as with the Emirate of Bukhara).

None of the titular nationalities in the region have a nation state tradition. In some instances, distinctions between them have been weak.⁶ Traditional identities, consequently, are narrower and localistic, based on village, region, clan, or extended family. Prior to the Soviet era, the identities of "Uzbek", "Kazakh", or "Kyrgyz" meant little to the communities of the region.

Soviet nationalities policy did little to promote national consolidation. The Soviet territorial dispensation in Central Asia was arbitrary, leaving large populations of "Uzbeks" in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tadzhikistan, or of "Kazakhs" in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and so on. The border delineations of northern Kazakhstan left a much larger population of Russians in the republic than would otherwise have been the case.

Such actions were deliberate. Russian Turkestan was carved up into pieces in order to prevent the coalescence of any broad turkic identity. The Soviet government encouraged the national cultural development of the dominant nationalities in order that this shattering of turkic identity become fixed. They drew the borders in such a way as to ensure tension between the republics over traditional lands and places.

⁶ For example, until 1926, Kazakh and Kyrgyz were considered one language. See Ronald Wixman, The Peoples of the USSR: An Ethnographic Handbook (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1988), p.108.

Their splitting of populations across republican boundaries assured, finally, that there would always be disaffected minorities within the republics, and that these polities would, consequently, be weaker. The settlement also contributed to interrepublican tensions, because oppressed minorities in one state were often the confreres of the titular nationality of the neighbouring republic.

Migration policies, particularly during the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, exacerbated tensions further by putting in place large and (later⁷) privileged European minorities throughout the region, particularly in urban areas⁸ or in economically significant industrial zones (e.g. Karaganda in Northern Kazakhstan). As is evident from Table I, the proportionately most significant Russian populations are found in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The post-Stalinist devolution of power to republican elites exacerbated political process further, since it permitted the rise of clan politics in party guise throughout the region. Republican parties and governments came to be dominated by large clan or regionally linked patronage networks to the detriment of those groups (both within and outside the titular ethnic group) not sharing the pie.⁹

In short, perhaps the principal sociopolitical problem facing all of the states in the region is weakness of political identity, or, more accurately, the lack of fit between the territorial characteristics of the state and the ethnic characteristics and political consciousness of the populations living in these states. Generally speaking, in an international system perceived to be built on the fundamental building block of the nation state, such societies have two choices in the effort to root the state within society. They can opt for a concept of "civic nationalism" in which membership in the political community is inclusive and based upon birth or residence in a specific territory and acceptance of the legitimacy of the state. In this instance, ethnic affiliation is unimportant as a defining characteristic of citizenship.

⁷ Much of the European settlement of the region in the Stalin area was in penal colonies. These migrants were hardly privileged.

⁸ At the time of independence, all of the republics' capital cities were majority European in population.

⁹ In Kazakhstan, for example, politics revolves around the traditional division between the Great Horde, Middle Horde, and Small Horde. Nazarbaev's affiliation to the first has translated into their being favoured in resource allocation.

Table I. The Ethnic Balance in Central Asia

Kazakhstan: 16.9 million¹⁰

Kazakhs	43.2
Russians	36.4
Ukrainians	5.2
Germans	4.7
Uzbeks	2.1
Other	8.4

Kyrgyzstan: 4.6 million¹¹

Kyrgyz	52
Russian	21.9
Uzbek	12.9
Ukrainian	2.5
German	2.4
Other	8.3

Tadzhikstan: 5.7 million

Tadzhiks	65
Uzbeks	24.9
Russians	3.5
Other	6.6

¹⁰ The Russian percentage is declining significantly (as are the Ukrainian and German) owing to migration. The Kazakh component is rising as a result of outmigration of non-Kazakhs and a generally higher birth rate.

¹¹ Percentages are approximate, again given substantial outmigration of Europeans. One source estimates that 300,000 Russians left Kyrgyzstan between 1988 and 1992, reducing the percentage of Russians in the population to 18%. See Roland Danreuther, Creating New States in Central Asia, Adelphi Paper 288 (London: Brassey's for the IISS, 1994), p.39.

Turkmenistan: 4.3 million

Turkmens	75
Russians	8.1
Uzbeks	9
Kazakhs	2
Other	5.9

Uzbekistan: 21.6 million

Uzbeks	71
Russians	9.7
Tadzhiks	4.7
Kazakhs	4.1
Tatar	2.4
Karakalpaks	2.1
Other	7

Source: The data are CIA estimates.

Or they can opt for ethnonationalism, in which membership is exclusive, its defining characteristic being exactly ethnic heritage. The choice has obvious implications, particularly in diverse societies. Ethnonationalism is a recipe for large scale deprivation of political and human rights, for efforts at ethnic purification, and for civil war.

On the other hand, inclusion on the basis of civic nationalism is difficult when many nonmembers of the titular ethnic group in question have kinship and/or cultural affiliations with groups in neighbouring states, if not residual ethnopolitical, loyalties to those states.¹² Moreover, as shall be seen below, regimes in the region lack legitimacy within their own states, as a result of their roots in the Soviet era, the comparatively unrepresentative quality of their political systems, and the low level of political mobilization and affiliation of their populations (see below). They are

¹² Perhaps the point could be made clearer by analogy. Having a Serb minority is a fundamentally different problem for Canada than it is for Hungary or Croatia. Serbia for us is a long way away and has no history of political and territorial conflict with Canada.

consequently insecure and highly sensitive to internal criticism. Even if it makes sense to pursue a nonethnic, civic approach to nation building, consequently, they are reluctant to eschew the agenda of ethnonationalism, for in so doing, they are vulnerable to criticism for national betrayal.¹³

That is to say, considerations of state survival may lead in a direction antithetical to those associated with regime survival. In terms of the survival and prosperity of the state, inclusive approaches to nation building may make sense. In terms of regime survival, they may not. The result is an internally contradictory, inadequate and potentially threatening patchwork of policies relating to the key sociopolitical issue of membership in the political community.

Related to the question of political identity is that of religion. The threat of Islamic fundamentalism has been one of the more serious concerns of Western analysts of Central Asia's regional security. This may say more about our obsessions than it does about threats to the region. It is also, however, a major headache for the governments of the region (see below).

For much, but not all of the region, Islam is a construct of identity predating the era of Russian domination.¹⁴ However, its strength varies along a number of axes (national, urban-rural, class). The Islamic tradition of Uzbekistan is well over a thousand years old and well rooted in the nation's traditional urban centres. Both Samarkand and Bukhara have been centres of Islamic learning for many hundreds of years. By contrast, the conversion of Kazakhs and Kyrgyz is a much more recent process, incomplete until the 19th century. In these areas, recent conversion and strength of pre-Islamic religious traditions in rural areas have produced an amalgam of Islamic ritual (viz. circumcision, marriage, burial) and pre-Islamic belief.

Matters were complicated again by Soviet rule. The Soviets suppressed preexisting Islamic educational and administrative institutions, to a large extent driving Islam underground. The Soviet government and its local agents, however, did not come close to eliminating it. Indeed, owing to the difficulty of penetrating rural non-

¹³ This explains in large part, for example, Nazarbaev's and Karimov's resistance to Russian proposals concerning dual citizenship, or Nazarbaev's acquiescence in making Kazakh the sole language of the state.

¹⁴ In some areas of the region (and notably Kazakhstan), it was a matter of Russian policy in the 18th century to encourage Islamic proselytization. The judgment of Catherine II was that the indigenous population was too primitive to be absorbed into the Orthodox communion and that Islam was a convenient way station on the path to enlightenment.

Russian society, little progress was made outside the principal urban areas in eliminating key rituals such as circumcision, marriage, and burial. Although the Soviets were quite successful in suppressing the clergy and radically downsizing, and imposing control over what remained of, the formal Islamic educational system, informal family and village based religious education remained.

However, Islam in Central Asia did largely lose contact with the centres of the religion in the Middle East. This strengthened the idiosyncratic and localistic character of local religious practice. The fact that the people of the region have been accustomed to a prevalent official ideology (communism) that answered basic questions about their lives and oriented them in their thinking about political and social life predisposes the population to seeking out another such intellectual construct, now that communism has collapsed. Islam does provide such an alternative and is already deeply rooted in the community.

The final point concerning the legacy of the Russian and Soviet era is that there is little if any tradition of independent social and political institutions in the region, as elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. There was no developed party structure that could fill the gap left by the collapse of the communist party. There was no network of social organizations and interest groups capable of aggregating private interests as a basis for effective pursuit of them. More basically, populations were unaccustomed to independent and self-motivated involvement in politics.

This has produced a political process that is inefficient in translating popular concerns into government policies, and has left considerable latitude for the quasi- (and not so quasi-) authoritarian approaches of the incumbent leadership. The down side here, from the point of view of the regime is that if the people lack legitimate intra-systemic means for the expression of aspirations and grievances, as frustrations build the temptation to exit the system (through riots, revolutionary activity, etc.) grows.

B. Economic Conditions

The mention of growing popular frustration brings one to consideration of the economic situation. It is no exaggeration to characterize the economic performance of the five Central Asian republics since their independence as disastrous (see Table II).

**Table II. Economic Performance in Central Asia
1992 and 1993
(% of Previous Year)¹⁵**

	NI		IQ		Py		CPI	
	92	93	92	93	92	93	92	93
Kazakhstan	86	83	86	85	70	86	985	1227
Kyrgyzstan	74	84	73	75	43	51	1006	1288
Tadzhikistan	69	-	76	80	34	74	1013	1392
Turkmenistan	-	111	83	108	87	95	810	1808
Uzbekistan	87	97	94	103	74	119	699	900
Russia	80	87	81	84	64	107	1024	1030

NI = National Income
 IQ = Industrial Output
 Py = Real Personal Income
 CPI = Consumer Price Index

Several factors are immediately evident from the above data. In the first place, all of the republics continue to face massive adjustment problems. Their performance in coping with them, however, varies widely. Of the five, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have made significant progress in reducing the pace of economic deterioration. The other three remain in deep trouble, Kazakhstan's reduction in national income, for example, actually increasing in pace in 1993. By contrast, all five experienced more severe inflation in 1993 than in 1992, in part as a result of uncertainty over the ruble zone through much of 1993, and its collapse and

¹⁵ Data from Vladimir Popov, The Russian Economy: Survey of 1993 and Forecasts for 1994 (Middlebury, VT: Geonomics, 1994), p.66.

replacement with local currencies (with the exception of Tadzhikistan) late in the year.¹⁶ Inflation and declines in output produced significant reductions in real personal income and standard of living in all but one republic (Turkmenistan)¹⁷ in 1992-93.

From the regional security perspective, independence and economic reform have brought little other than the immiseration of the region's population, producing substantial personal insecurity and frustration, as well as mushrooming criminality.¹⁸ The emergence of significant income differentials and conspicuous consumption on the part of a small minority increases the level of popular frustration and resentment. Failure of governments to produce meaningful economic progress draws their legitimacy further into question, as does the fact that throughout the region, the principal beneficiaries of new wealth tend to be government officials or their close associates.

The deterioration of conditions in the countryside and the concentration of wealth in urban areas, meanwhile, has increased tensions between town and country, as well as inducing substantial migration. The lack of capacity of urban economies in Central Asia productively to absorb large numbers of new migrants in turn increases social frustration and ethnic tension in the cities. In short, the economic situation is itself one of the most significant causes of potential political instability in the region.

¹⁶ The incentive to remain in the ruble zone was simple: it meant retaining access to hidden subsidies from Russia, and it allowed the Central Asian states to avoid paying world prices for essential inputs. By September 1993, however, it was clear that retention of membership carried significant costs in economic sovereignty. As one observer put it: "In essence, Russia [was] to take charge of their fiscal and monetary policies." Islam, "Capitalism on the Silk Route?", pp.157-8. Faced with the realization that they could no longer have their cake and eat it, all the Central Asian states with the exception of Tadzhikistan have left the zone.

¹⁷ Turkmenistan has avoided the worst of the economic crisis by having large producing reserves of natural gas that are marketed at near world prices elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. As a result, its real personal income is approaching stability, while its national income and industrial output grew in 1993.

¹⁸ It is noteworthy that the economic reform process, particularly that of privatization of property, has been sporadic throughout the region. The tentative approach of the region's governments can be explained variously. Privatization of uncompetitive industries would produce widespread increases in urban unemployment, increasing social and political tensions further. If seriously implemented, it would also contravene the interests of powerful ex-Soviet elites in the state sector. These constitute a significant portion of the political base of regimes in power, with the partial exception of Kyrgyzstan. Finally, it also risks exacerbation of ethnic tensions in the region, since - if workers and managers of enterprises are favoured in the process, this might result in a disproportionate share of resources being transferred to nonindigenous European populations.

In the longer run, the prognosis for the region is variable. As was argued in the separate analysis of Kazakhstan, the prospects for export-led recovery concentrated in the natural resources sector are reasonably good, assuming that the republic is successful in attracting foreign capital and expertise. The country is resource rich and underpopulated. The same could be said for Turkmenistan, although its potential is far more narrowly concentrated in energy production.

Uzbekistan also has considerable potential for growth based on natural resource development. Although its energy reserves are nowhere near as substantial as those of the republics just mentioned, it is and could remain a small net exporter of oil for the foreseeable future. The republic also possesses considerable potential as a producer and exporter of minerals. Finally, cotton continues to serve as a major source of export revenue.

However, Uzbekistan's population is considerably greater than that of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The future of the republic's cotton sector, upon which the economy as a whole continues to rest, is parlous, given soil exhaustion and fertilizer and pesticide contamination. Agricultural infrastructure is deteriorating rapidly, in part because of underinvestment and in part as a result of dependence on now unreliable former Soviet suppliers of equipment and spare parts. There are substantial transportation problems in the effort to export Uzbek cotton into hard currency markets. And practically the entire sector is dependent on water originating in neighbouring states, creating significant vulnerabilities.

Kyrgyzstan and Tadzhikistan, meanwhile, have substantial potential as minerals exporters¹⁹, but little effort was made to develop this capacity during the Soviet era. Both economies are largely preindustrial. Those industries that did develop in the Soviet era (e.g. electronics in Kyrgyzstan, or uranium refining in Tadzhikistan) were closely linked to the Soviet military industrial complex, and bear little relation to the development needs or capacities of the countries themselves. Both states are losing significant portions of their skills base as large numbers of Europeans emigrate northwards and westwards. Serious reconstruction and development will require substantial capital and technical inputs. In the Tadzhik case in particular, political conditions are hardly propitious for such activity.

¹⁹ Kyrgyzstan may also have some potential as a tourist destination, as the "Switzerland of Asia".

C. Political Process

As was suggested earlier in this paper, political conditions in the region vary widely. In assessing the political prospects of the states of the region, there are four principal vectors of analysis. The first and second, economic conditions and intercommunal relations, have already been discussed.

The third is religion. The fundamental question here is the extent to which Islam in current circumstances causes a threat to the political stability of the regimes in the region. We have already seen that it was far from effectively suppressed under Soviet rule, and that in the politico-ideological conditions prevailing in Central Asia, it is an attractive alternative focus for self-definition. The leaders of these states themselves find identification with Islam to be an attractive political tactic, both for preempting internal criticism and for seeking foreign assistance from other Muslim states.²⁰

Their desire for the legitimacy derived from this religious association - coupled with their fear that a politicization of Islam might well undermine their already tenuous authority - has produced a modulated approach to Islam in most of the states of the region. At the secular end of the spectrum, both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan ban Islamic parties and political movements, but allow the free practice of the religion. Perhaps the most compelling reason for this moderate approach is that, on the one hand these states are the most ethnically diverse ones in the region, while on the other the ethnonationalist fringes of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz communities both embrace Islam as an essential aspect of their ethnicity. All of this said, however, both states have a degree of immunity from the islamization of politics, rooted in the fact that the practice of Islam in the two ethnic communities has tended to be ritualistic, shallow, and blended with non-Islamic traditions and rituals.²¹

At the other end, in Turkmenistan, the regime recognizes Islamic festivals as state holidays, and encourages religious instruction in state schools, although President Niyazov stresses that the state will remain secular. Niyazov's embrace of Islam has to do in part with the strong Islamic affiliation of the Turkmen community, but also with his desire for close relations with Iran, Turkmenistan's outlet to the sea.

²⁰ Martha Brill Olcott notes in this context that Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev "said that if the price was right he would gladly make a pilgrimage to Mecca." See Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia's Islamic Awakening", Current History XCIII, #582 (April 1994), p.152.

²¹ The exception here for Kyrgyzstan lies in this country's portion of the Fergana Valley, largely populated by highly religious Uzbek communities.

In the middle are Tadjikistan and Uzbekistan, in both of which the relationship between Islam and politics is far more complex. Both states have been affected by the activity of the Islamic Renaissance Party and other Islamic political movements. The ouster of the Nabiev regime in Tadjikistan resulted in part from the active participation of the IRP and other Islamic groups in the opposition movement.²² Uzbekistan traditionally was the most Islamized country of the region. The Fergana Valley continues to be a locus of significant Islamic revivalist activity. Karimov has responded by attempting to combine the embrace of Islam as a legitimizing device with the active suppression of any manifestations of Islam in politics (including the IRP), and systematic efforts to subordinate the religious hierarchy to himself. This reflects not only his discomfort with the religiosity of much of the rural population, but also his concern about spillover from the war in Tadjikistan, in which Uzbeks are significantly involved.

By and large, despite the sensitivities of the incumbent regimes, Islam does not appear to be a serious factor threatening their survival. The partial exception here is Tadjikistan, though even here, the role of Islam in the opposition has been overrated, and to the extent that it has enjoyed substantial support, this reflects more the economic frustrations and social insecurity of the population than it does the influence of religious ideas. On the whole, Islamic movements remain weak. When governments in the region have reacted to political Islam, they have generally done so effectively (e.g. the Uzbek treatment of the IRP, or the Kazakh treatment of Alash, the closest Kazakh analogue to an Islamic movement).

In the longer term, however, failure to achieve significant economic development and to create representative and democratic institutions may work to the favour of more radical political ideologies, including Islam, particularly in Uzbekistan and in Tadjikistan. Although the vulnerability of political systems in the region to Islamic revivalism is for the moment low, whether it remains so depends on the political and economic performance of the incumbents and their successors.

This brings up the fourth political vector mentioned above - that of political responsiveness. The responsiveness of a political system to the aspirations and needs of its constituency depends importantly, as noted above, on the effectiveness of political organizations in aggregating interests and in representing them. The inheritance of the Soviet period was inauspicious in this regard.

²² The view that Islam was the key factor in the ouster of the regime is, however, simplistic. The opposition to Nabiev was a loose coalition of Islamic, democratic, and regional (e.g. Gorno-Badakhshan and Garm) forces.

In the Gorbachev period, there was little of the glasnost' related formation of national and popular fronts characteristic of other areas of the union. The party leadership in the Central Asian republics remained in effective control and rather narrowly circumscribed the activity of unofficial political groups. Moreover, change in Eastern Europe did not operate in the same way as, say, in the Baltic states or Ukraine to galvanize the apathetic into political consciousness and the politically conscious into organized activity.²³ The flowering of independent political activity in Eastern Europe was too far away. The limited unofficial political activity that occurred in 1985-91 generally took the form of ethnic rioting (as in the Kazakh rioting against the appointment of Gennadii Kolbin - an ethnic Russian - as first secretary of the Kazakhstan Communist Party in 1986, or the rioting between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh in 1990).

In short, the Central Asian Republics came to independence with precious little by way of mass political organization, with the exception of the communist parties, which largely survived in power with a change of name.²⁴ Emerging political parties tend to be small and elite based, with extremely limited resources and tenuous links to the voters.²⁵

The five states differ significantly in their approach to post-Soviet politics. At one end of the spectrum is Kyrgyzstan, which permits more or less complete freedom of action to a wide range of parties, although it has not permitted the formation of Islamic political parties.²⁶ There are currently four significant political movements:

²³ As noted in the other paper, the Nevada-Semipalatinsk anti-testing movement was a partial exception and indeed served as the seedbed for a number of later political movements in Kazakhstan. It is noteworthy, however, that this movement enjoyed official approval.

²⁴ In the fall of 1991, for example, the Turkmenistan Communist Party disbanded and reorganized itself as the Turkmenistan Democratic Party. In December of that year, the recently elected president, former communist party leader Niyazov, signed a degree conferring membership in the TDP to all former members of the TCP. In Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov replaced the Uzbekistan Communist Party with the People's Democratic Party. 90% of the members of the current Oliy Majlis (Parliament) are PDP members.

²⁵ A partial exception are the Russian or Slavic movements for the defence of minority political and human rights.

²⁶ Kyrgyzstan also has the distinction of being the only Central Asian polity that broke substantially with its communist past during the period of transition to independence. In the 1990 elections in Parliament for president, the communist vote was divided between two contenders, both of whom consequently fell victim to a procedural rule that candidates obtaining less than 50% of the vote for

radical nationalists (notably the Free Kyrgyzstan Party and the Party of National Renaissance); national democrats (the Democratic Movement and the Motherland Party); moderates (the People's Republican Party, the Social Democrats of Kyrgyzstan, and the Agrarian Party); and the left (notably the Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan). The state has also adopted a moderate attitude towards ethnic minority movements, in part out of a desire to prevent large scale emigration of the Russian work force. There are no substantial reports of harassment of opposition movements and restriction of their access to media. Nor is there much evidence of manipulation of the electoral process during the presidential election of October 1991, or the January 1994 referendum on the Akaev presidency, in which the incumbent received 96% of the vote.

As explained in greater detail in the related paper, Kazakhstan's approach is more authoritarian. Although a wide range of political activity is permitted, some movements (e.g. the ethnonationalist Alash and Lad) are administratively constrained in their capacity to operate. Moreover, the last parliamentary elections displayed the resolve of the regime in power, whatever its democratic pretensions, to consolidate its authority, legally where possible and through violation of the laws and constitution of the state where deemed necessary.

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan occupy the non-democratic end of the spectrum. In the former, in addition to the Turkmenistan Democratic Party, only one other (the Peasant Party - apparently inactive) has been allowed to register as a party. All others have been denied registration. Helsinki Watch, among others, have described Turkmenistan's political life as one of systematic censorship, suppression of criticism of the government, restriction on the movement of political opponents, prevention of their contact with foreigners, and so on.

Uzbekistan has adopted a still more repressive approach. Although the number of registered parties other than the official People's Democratic Party is larger than in Turkmenistan, those officially registered (e.g. the Fatherland Party, the Peasants' Party, and the Communist Party of the Workers of Uzbekistan) generally are strongly supportive of the PDP and President Karimov. Of the two principal secular opposition parties that were formed in the Gorbachev era, one (Birlik) has been branded a threat to the state and banned, while the other (Erk), despite having been allowed to

president could not run in a second round. This cleared the way for the election of Askar Akaev. Despite the party's loss of executive authority, it is noteworthy that the Parliament elected in 1990 remains in session until 1995. That election was held largely on a single candidate basis, and the body it produced remains heavily influenced by leading former communists.

register, has been prevented from promoting its views. Groups with a more religious bent, such as the IRP, Adolat, and the National Homeland Movement have been denied registration, their members and leaders persecuted, and their meetings banned. Ethnically based movements, such as the Tadjik Samarqand, are also actively suppressed, and their leaders harassed or imprisoned. Karimov's view of the tradeoffs between short term stability and longer term political development is clear. He pursues the former, even if in so doing, he risks radicalization of the real opposition in the future.

By way of summary, it is noteworthy that the political approaches adopted by the various states varies closely with the degree of ethnic heterogeneity of the society in question. The larger the percentage of the population accounted for by the titular nationality²⁷, the more repressive the regime. It also varies with the degree to which Islam is a potentially serious political factor. The greater the actual or potential influence of the religion (as in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), the more authoritarian the regime.

Tadjikistan has thus far been left out of the discussion of internal political systems, because it is in the grip of civil war. None the less, since the Tadjik question is the most disturbing element of Central Asian regional security, its internal situation deserves special attention. The Tadjik Civil War, like so many other problems in the region, has its roots in the Stalin era. Historically, the Tadjik and Uzbek inhabitants of Central Asia were intermingled. The territorial division of the two republics was thoroughly artificial, leaving a substantial Uzbek minority in Tadjikistan and vice versa. Uzbekistan inherited all the major urban centres of the old Bukharan emirate and Tadjikistan was left without a national centre. The geography of the country has conspired to strengthen subnational identities, with Khojent oblast' in the north being part of the Fergana Valley and linked in economic and ethnographic terms to Uzbekistan and separated by mountains from the rest of the country.

Tadjik politics have traditionally been dominated by a coalition of clans from the Khojent and Kulyab regions. This excluded the Kulyabs' southern Tadjik rivals, the Garmis, as well as the elites from the Pamir region of Gorno-Badakhshan. Political power was used to control the distribution of resources with the effect that Khojent received the bulk of development capital to the detriment of the south and east.

The Moscow coup of August 1991 brought opposition challenges to the Khojent-dominated party apparatus and regime into the open. Although ostensibly the

²⁷ As is evident from Table I, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan lead the list here.

struggle was between a communist party in power and an opposing coalition of national democratic and Islamic forces, the real battle was interregional. Massive demonstrations in May 1992 brought substantial concessions on the part of the incumbent government, including an expansion of the government to allow representation of the opposition.

These concessions were rejected by the regional leadership in Kulyab and Khojent, leading to a renewal of insurrection in September. In that month the communist government was overthrown and replaced by an opposition-dominated government. The new government never succeeded in establishing control over its territory.

In November 1992, the Khojent-Kulyabi coalition, assisted by a para-military Popular Front and by the Russian 201st Motor Rifle Division based in Dushanbe,²⁸ regained control over the capital, led now by Imomali Rahmanov. The new government went on the offensive against the opposition, relying on Russian ground forces and the support of the Uzbek air force. By winter 1992-3, the country had descended into a civil war that produced some 15,000-20,000 deaths and a flow of some 80,000 refugees to Afghanistan.

The presence of related Tadjik groups in Afghanistan, as well as the base of support provided by the refugees allowed the opposition to act with impunity against Russian and Tadjik government forces through much of 1993 and into 1994. This has resulted in substantial Russian casualties, hot pursuit by Russian forces into Afghan air space. The Afghan syndrome, coupled with growing concern over the radicalization and Islamization of the opposition as a result of the protracted conflict, has led Russia and Uzbekistan into serious diplomatic efforts to produce a political settlement and pressure upon their local allies to negotiate in good faith.²⁹

²⁸ This change in Russian policy from neutrality in earlier phases of the struggle to open support of the old guard may be explained specifically in terms of Islam Karimov's pressure on the Russian government to do something about the growing influence of Islamic forces in Tadjikistan and by Russian military concerns about the Islamic threat to Russian security. See Dannreuther, Creating States in Central Asia, p.29. See also the discussion of Russian policy below.

²⁹ It was subsequent to the death of 25 Russian border troops in a firefight with opposition guerrillas infiltrating from Afghanistan in June 1993 that led to Russia's public embrace of the need for a political settlement. See Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "Tadjikistan: From Freedom to War", Current History XCIII, #582, p.174.

The Tadzhik case is an extreme example of a problem shared by all the states of the region. The political spectrum of Tadzhikistan has largely served as a veneer for a competition among regional interests unconstrained by any deeply felt sense of national unity. More generally, it is symptomatic of the threats to internal and regional security emanating from the tendency of all regimes in the region (with the partial exception of Kyrgyzstan's) to systematically exclude large sections of the politically attentive public from meaningful legitimate participation in politics.

The economic frustration and ideological anomie characteristic of all of these polities, and the ethnically based uncertainties of several of them are fertile ground on which excluded elites can cast the seeds of civil unrest. Although most of these polities appear, by former Soviet standards, to be quite stable, their deep social and ethnic fractures, the exclusiveness of their politics, the lack of political experience of their publics, and their economic decay and political disorientation all raise doubts about the long term viability of their systems of power. The socio-ethnic interconnectedness of these states, moreover, suggests that it may be difficult to prevent the spilling over of instability from one state to another, as the case of Tadzhikistan demonstrates.

THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF CENTRAL ASIA

A. The Regional Context

This brings one to the interstate level of regional security. This has two levels. The first pertains to relations among the states within the region. Again, on the surface, these relations are quite amicable. Negotiations among them to create an economic union by the year 2000 are a case in point, as is their common adherence to such regional organizations as ECO and the Caspian Basin Initiative, and their common embrace of a regional "turkic" identity (with the exception of Tadzhikistan).

However, there are numerous potential sources of conflict among them and ample evidence of tension between them. First is the issue of comparative size. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are much larger in demographic and economic terms than the rest. There are already significant signs of rivalry between the two for regional leadership. This poses a substantial obstacle to regional cooperation.

In ethnic terms, the Uzbek group exceeds the Kazakhs, the next largest indigenous ethnos, by a factor of two. This has raised fears among smaller peoples concerning the capacity (and the desire) of the Uzbeks to dominate regional politics.

One reason for Turkmenistan's lukewarm attitude towards proposed structures of regional cooperation, for example, is a concern that the Uzbeks would inevitably dominate any such bodies.³⁰ This fear is exacerbated by the clear willingness of the Uzbeks to push their weight around in the less powerful republics.³¹ Uzbek aspirations are probably also evident in the leading role that they played in arranging a multilateral intervention in Tadzhikistan in 1992-3, and the deployment of elements of their ground and air forces to support to Rahmanov government.

This is related to a second point. Relations between several of the ethnic groups in the region (and notably the Uzbeks and Tadzhiks, and the Uzbeks and Kyrgyz) are characterized by significant historically based animosity. This animosity was strengthened by the Soviet territorial dispensation, which has left the region replete with unsettled ethnoterritorial claims. There is clear concern in Kyrgyzstan, for example, that Uzbekistan may claim the Osh District of the eastern Fergana Valley. The Tadzhiks deeply resent the loss of "their" principal urban conurbations (Samarkand and Bukhara) to Uzbekistan in 1924, while Uzbekistan has similar ethnohistorical claims to the Khojent region of Tadzhikistan. Similar problems trouble Uzbek-Kazakh relations, although they are less serious.³²

The territorial question is linked to that of minority rights. As already noted, there are substantial populations of Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Tadzhiks in republics neighbouring their home states. Political uncertainties, as well as the historical legacy of intercommunal relations cause incumbent regimes throughout the region to view these minority populations with suspicion and to seek to constrain their group rights

³⁰ See Boris V. Rumer, "The Gathering Storm in Central Asia", *Orbis* XXXVII, #1 (Winter 1993) on this point.

³¹ The case of Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations is illustrative. Karimov has demonstrated considerable unhappiness with the political and economic path chosen by the Kyrgyz, and on repeated occasions has acted against Kyrgyzstan. One example would be the abduction of Uzbek political activists by Uzbek police in Kyrgyzstan, where they were attending a conference on human rights in 1992. Another would be the cutoff of supplies of gas to Kyrgyzstan as an expression of unhappiness with the Kyrgyz monetary reform in mid-1993. During May of that year, moreover, the Uzbek armed forces conducted exercises on Kyrgyz territory without informing the Kyrgyz government.

³² One Kazakh acquaintance recently related to me a conversation he had with an Uzbek colleague. The latter was pressing Uzbekistan's ethnic and historical claim to the Shimkent area. The Kazakh responded that Uzbekistan could certainly have Shimkent, but only if it recognized the Kazakh historical claim to Tashkent.

and political activity.³³ The temptation on the part of the home government, by contrast, is to seek to defend these rights.

Finally, there exist a number of significant economic and resource dependencies in the region. Perhaps the most notable potential source of conflict in this context lies in the uneven distribution of resources between Uzbekistan on the one hand and Kyrgyzstan and Tadzhikistan on the other. The latter two depend on Uzbekistan for energy supplies. As already noted, the Uzbek government has already used this dependency to political advantage. By contrast, Uzbekistan depends on Kyrgyzstan for hydroelectricity and, more importantly, for water. Almost the entirety of the water supply allowing Uzbekistan to be the fourth largest world producer of cotton comes from the mountains of these other two states. Interference with this water supply would cause the Uzbek agricultural economy literally to dry up.

The initial enthusiasm for regional integration, in short, has given way to the reemergence of longstanding ethnic and territorial tensions and to the manipulation of resource flows for political purpose. There is substantial room for expansion in both of these factors affecting the regional security equation. The fact that states in the region have chosen widely differing paths of economic and political development is likely to exacerbate tensions among them.

B. The International Context

Such tensions increase the incentive of local states to seek external involvement. It was at the insistence of Islam Karimov - concerned at the possible spillover of Islamic revivalism from an increasingly radicalized and strife torn Tadzhikistan - that Russia entered the war in that country. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan seek the support of Russia and other contiguous states in their claims to regional leadership. Smaller states, such as Turkmenistan, seek external support in order to limit the pretensions of these just-mentioned aspiring regional hegemon.

In the early days after independence, there was much speculation that international involvement in the region would revolve around a rivalry between Iran and Turkey. The former's motivations rested in part on a desire to achieve a measure of influence on a hitherto stable but now exposed northern frontier. This desire was fortified by a concern that traditionally unfriendly powers such as Turkey or Turkey's

³³ It is noteworthy that this applies also to Kyrgyzstan. Martial law was declared in the Osh District after the October 1990 riots, and was only recently lifted, to be replaced by a ban on mass demonstrations.

Western allies would seek to flank Iran by taking advantage of the post-Soviet vacuum. In addition, the Islamic orientation of the Iranian state dictated an effort to resurrect Islam in these contiguous states, if not to turn them towards a revivalist Islamic domestic politics and foreign policy.

Turkey, meanwhile, appeared to be turning towards Eastern opportunities as a result of the stalling of its efforts to enter the EU, and the ambiguities associated with its reliance on NATO in a post-Cold War environment in which the fate of NATO was unclear. In addition, pan-turkism was a growing force in domestic politics, while many in the business community felt that propinquity and linguistic similarity gave Turkey advantages in these newly open markets. The first year of independence appeared to confirm these expectations, as Turkish and Iranian delegations crisscrossed the region with offers of credit and projects for economic and cultural cooperation.³⁴

In contrast, little attention was paid to Russia and its policies in Central Asia. This was not surprising, since it seemed clear from the initial phase of establishment of the CIS that the three Slavic former Soviet republics were cutting the others loose and refocussing on the West. Moreover, in the first year of an independent Russian foreign policy, there seemed little definite purpose to or coordination in its approaches to the former Soviet republics. It was these factors that produced the image of a geopolitical vacuum to be filled by others.

However, this schema ignored a number of geographical, political, and economic factors. Important economic dependencies remained. For example, the Orenburg District of the Russian Federation was and is dependent on oil supplies from western Kazakhstan, while eastern and southern Kazakhstan are dependent on oil from Russia's Tyumen' region. The Kuznetsk metallurgical complex depended on supply of Kazakhstani coal from the Karaganda region. The Russian textile industry remained dependent on supplies of Uzbek cotton. The nuclear industry was fundamentally integrated across the former union as a whole, and Central Asian uranium played a critical role in its functioning.

The regions were hardly delinked in security terms either. The nature of the START process fundamentally linked Kazakhstan's policy towards strategic nuclear weapons to that of Russia. Principal Russian space and nuclear testing facilities were located in Kazakhstan. Large numbers of Russian troops were stationed throughout

³⁴ In this, they were joined by a number of other Middle Eastern states, most notably Saudi Arabia, which has contributed substantial funding for the building of mosques and other religious facilities.

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.

Europe, on which construction has begun and should be completed in a reasonably expeditious fashion.³⁶

Iran's approach to local conflicts affecting its northern border (Nagorno-Karabakh, Tadjikistan) has on the whole been moderate and constructive. This has drawn into question the extent to which rivalry with Turkey or Islamic consciousness constitute driving forces in its regional policy. Its concerns seem more practical and limited.

Turkey's entry into the region is also much less impressive than anticipated. Central Asian states are increasingly disillusioned with the apparent incapacity of Turkey to deliver the resources they believed would be forthcoming if they embraced the "Turkish model" and opened to Turkish involvement. The stalling of the Turkish advance may be explained in terms of at least four factors.

First, concern about competition with Iran for influence in the region has diminished as the outlines of Iranian policy become more clear. Second, Turkey lacks the resources to serve as a principal external contributor to regional development. Third, it is increasingly distracted by internal difficulties (e.g. the ongoing counterinsurgency in Kurdistan). These occupy the attention of policy makers to the detriment of external policy, as well consuming an ever larger portion of what public resources exist. Finally, good relations with Russia remain a priority for Turkish foreign in the region. Taking this into account, the increasing rhetorical, economic, political, and military assertiveness of Russia in Central Asia leaves less space than originally thought for enterprising outsiders.

Although other contiguous and nearby states have a stake in the region (e.g. Pakistan and China), and China is developing a significant economic presence in Kazakhstan's import trade, there is little evidence on their part of any systematic effort to penetrate the region politically. Both states' capacity to influence the economic development of the region is limited.

³⁶ Turkmenistan is the focus of Iran's economic efforts, since it is desperately seeking an outlet for its gas exports alternative to Russia. The logical route, given apparently chronic instability in the Caucasus, appears to be via Iran either to Turkey or to the Gulf. Iran also has some promise as an alternative route for the export of oil production in western Kazakhstan. As noted in the other paper, difficulties in negotiating pipeline protocols for the export of Tengiz oil produced by Chevron through Novorossiisk give Kazakhstan a strong incentive to explore other possibilities.

Essentially, this leaves Russia. Given the growing support within the Russian foreign policy establishment and the attentive foreign policy public for a more assertive policy in the region, the extent of leverage that Russia continues to possess there, the relative weakness of other contenders for presence and influence, the coming period is likely to be one of growing Russian influence. This is so not least because key regional actors such as Turkmenistan's Niyazov (who recently accepted Russian demands for the right of dual citizenship for Russophones in his country) and Uzbekistan's Karimov (who requested Russian engagement in the Tadjik civil war) actively desire Russian involvement as a stabilizing factor in regional politics.

The political role that the West is likely to play is that of counterweight, enhancing the flexibility of those such as Askar Akaev and Nursultan Nazarbaev, who accept the likelihood of significant Russian involvement and influence in the region, but seek to maximize their own independence in that context and to blunt the edge of Russian intrusiveness. The economic role of the West is more vital. Although Russia possesses substantial military and political weight in the region, it lacks the resources necessary for the development and modernization of the Central Asian economies. This in turn is essential to longer term political stability.

CONCLUSION

The states and regimes of Central Asia, with the exception of Tadzhikistan have displayed a surprising capacity to survive in the face of a problematic imperial and Soviet legacy, deep economic crisis and profound political and ethnic and regional fractures. This is an impressive achievement and should not be belittled. None the less, they face potentially severe problems of long term political stability if they fail to pursue reasonable policies of economic reform and political opening. The tendency of some regional leaders to suppress opposition may result in the latter's radicalization. Most vulnerable in this regard is Uzbekistan. In addition, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have as yet failed to resolve deep ethnic contradictions that threaten the equilibrium of the state and induce foreign meddling.

In the sphere of interstate relations, although relations among these states have been reasonably orderly, they are seriously divided by territorial issues, by questions of minority rights, and by asymmetrical resource dependencies. Although these have not yet produced substantial conflict, they have the potential to do so, not least because many of them (e.g. the question of minority rights or that of historical territorial claims) are intimately connected to domestic politics at a time when nationalism is one of the few pillars on which leadership of dubious legitimacy can build popular support.

At the level of external involvement in the Central Asian regional system, the much vaunted rivalry between Iran and Turkey to occupy the vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet Union no longer appears as compelling as it once did. The trend currently is for a reconsolidation of the regional influence of Russia. In this effort, Russia is relatively advantaged by the substantial political, economic, and military leverage that it possesses, and by the weakness or comparative indifference of potential competitors.

The consolidation of a stable and prosperous subsystem of states is of interest to the West. Although the prospect of confrontation among neighbouring substantial powers over regional issues is limited, local conflict may result in UN and CSCE involvement. Moreover, the case of Afghanistan demonstrates the existence of some capacity for the overflow of regional issues into contiguous states. To the extent, moreover, that economic privation and political oppression make revivalist Islam an attractive option for opposition forces in the region, political unrest may bring to power groups whose political orientation is problematic. As noted in the introduction, moreover, the political and security situation in the region has important implications

for the START and the NPT processes. Finally, economic collapse and/or civil war in the states of the region is likely to create substantial humanitarian needs at a time when international mechanisms for dealing with such problems are already seriously overburdened.

Developments at the interstate level pose one fundamental problem for Western policy makers. This is the issue of how to respond to Russian regional policy. When the USSR collapsed, its successor states were accepted on equal terms into the international community. Their sovereignty was fully recognized under international law. They became full members of appropriate international organizations of which Canada, too, is a member, such as the UN and the CSCE.

Russian policy, although not apparently directed at the extinction of the independence of these states, is clearly intended to restore substantial influence and circumscribe the other republics' sovereignty, and to enhance ties of dependency linking these states to Russia. Russian military policy here, as in Georgia and in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, is one of fostering resistance to regimes that do not accept Russian primacy and intervening in behalf of those that do. At the very least, then, there is substantial tension between Russian aspirations and policy on the one hand and the stated commitments of Western states on the other. The matter is made more complex by Russian pressure on the international community to acknowledge Russia's preponderant role in the management of local conflicts within the CIS, as in Tadzhikistan.

This poses a number of fundamental dilemmas for the West. First is the tradeoff between order and justice. Although Russia's aims are expansive and her agenda inconsistent with the full independence of other former Soviet republics, the Russian presence does contribute to order. In Tadzhikistan, for example, Russian military power has resulted in a degree of stability that otherwise might well not have emerged.

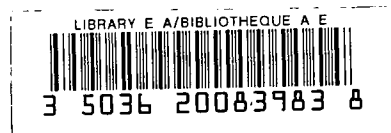
Second is the gap between the ambition of Western objectives and the will to achieve them. Resisting Russian assertiveness in this and other regions would require a level of resources and commitment to the regional security of the area that Western states and international organizations are clearly reluctant to provide. There appears to be no willing alternative to Russia as a promoter of the regional stability that is a prerequisite for political and economic development. In the absence of a willingness to ante up, rhetorical opposition to Russian policy complicates the effort to build a more solid relationship with Russia while doing little for the supposed beneficiaries of the rhetoric.

This suggests a need to develop a middle way between open resistance to Russia and acquiescence. Although there appears to be little that can be done to stem Russian assertion, its modalities may be moderated and its consequences mitigated through efforts to situate Russian "peacekeeping" in a multilateral context. The association of UN and CSCE monitors to Russian peace keeping operations, for example, would add a degree of transparency that might deter excess. It would also accustom the Russians to operating in a multilateral context. The negative implications of Russian assertion of preeminence would also be mitigated by an active policy of assistance to those states willing to accept it (e.g. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) in the area of political development, through the provision of technical and economic assistance, and through promotion of the foreign investment without which these economies are unlikely to stabilize, in short, by the provision of the counterweights that more independently minded statesmen in the region desire.

It seems probable that Canada's role in the military security and arms control fields is best played in multilateral fora such as the UN and the CSCE. Canada has a more direct potential role to play in the areas of political and economic assistance. Its experience in dealing peacefully with problems of ethnic and cultural diversity is of relevance to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in particular. Its technical expertise in the areas of dry plains agriculture and natural resource exploitation has wide applicability in the region. And, as noted in the introduction, the area of natural resources contains considerable potential for Canadian investors and exporters of the relevant technologies.

Finally, given constraints on Canadian resources and the specific characteristics of Canadian expertise, some effort to define priority targets for Canadian involvement is appropriate. On the spectrum of political development, the most appropriate recipients of Canadian assistance are Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, given the diversity of their ethnic makeup and their relative openness to political reform. In the area of economic opportunity, the logical targets are Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. As noted, however, in the study on Kazakhstan, Canada's capacity to define appropriate policies, to pursue the ample opportunities that exist, and to establish presence and personality in the region are dramatically constrained by the thinness of Canadian diplomatic presence.

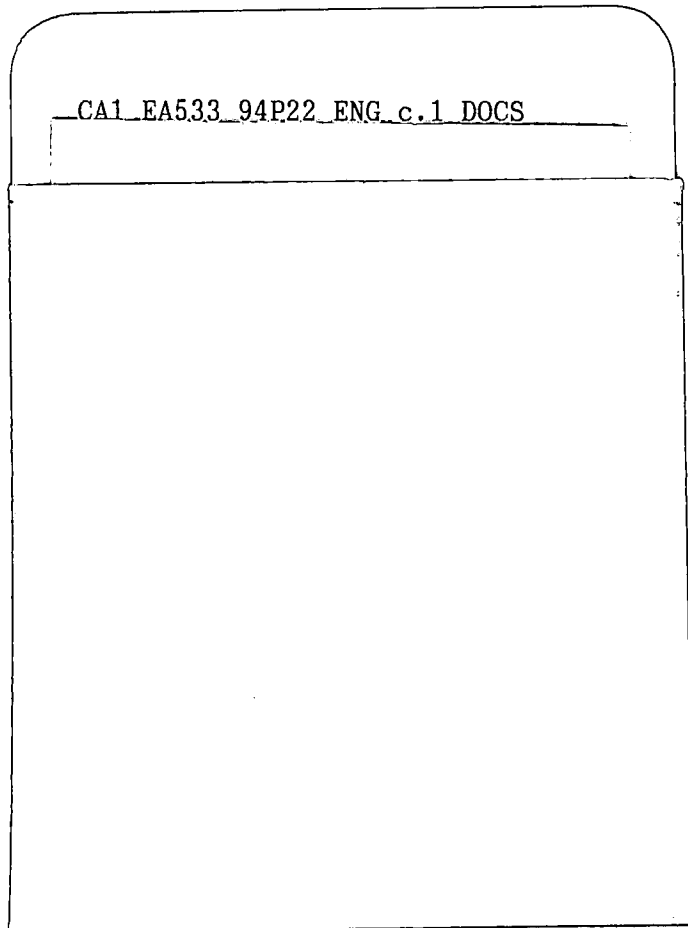
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