



Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests

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Summary

U.S. policy toward the Central Asian states has aimed at facilitating their cooperation with U.S. and NATO stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and their efforts to combat terrorism, proliferation, and trafficking in arms, drugs, and persons. Other U.S. objectives have included promoting free markets, democratization, human rights, energy development, and the forging of East-West and Central Asia-South Asia trade links. Such policies aim to help the states become what various U.S. administrations have considered to be responsible members of the international community rather than to degenerate into xenophobic, extremist, and anti-Western regimes that contribute to wider regional conflict and instability.

Soon after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, all the Central Asian “front-line” states offered overflight and other support for coalition anti-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan hosted coalition troops and provided access to airbases. In 2003, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also endorsed coalition military action in Iraq. About two dozen Kazakhstani troops served in Iraq until late 2008. Uzbekistan rescinded U.S. basing rights in 2005 after the United States criticized the reported killing of civilians in the town of Andijon. In early 2009, Kyrgyzstan ordered a U.S. base in that country to close, allegedly because of Russian inducements and U.S. reluctance to meet Kyrgyz requests for greatly increased lease payments. An agreement on continued U.S. use of the “transit center” was reached in June 2009. In 2009, most of the regional states also agreed to become part of a Northern Distribution Route for the transport of U.S. and NATO military and related materials to Afghanistan. The status of the “transit center” was in doubt after an April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan, but the interim leadership soon stated that the “transit center” would remain in place.

Policymakers have tailored U.S. policy in Central Asia to the varying characteristics of these states. U.S. interests in Kazakhstan have included securing and eliminating Soviet-era nuclear and biological weapons materials and facilities. U.S. energy firms have invested in oil and natural gas development in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and successive administrations have backed diverse export routes to the West for these resources. U.S. policy toward Kyrgyzstan has long included support for democratization. In Tajikistan, the United States pledged to assist in its economic reconstruction following that country’s 1992-1997 civil war. U.S. relations with Uzbekistan—the most populous state in the heart of the region—were cool after 2005, but recently have improved. Since the 2008 global economic downturn, more U.S. humanitarian, health, and education assistance has been provided to hard-struck Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The second session of the 111th Congress is likely to continue to be at the forefront in advocating increased U.S. ties with Central Asia, and in providing backing for the region for the transit of equipment and supplies for U.S.-led stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Congress is likely to pursue these goals through hearings and legislation on humanitarian, economic, and democratization assistance, security issues, and human rights. Ongoing congressional interests are likely to include boosting regional border and customs controls and other safeguards to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), combat trafficking in persons and drugs, encourage regional integration with South Asia and Europe, advance energy security, and counter terrorism. Support for these goals also contributes to stabilization and reconstruction operations by the United States and NATO in Afghanistan. For several years, Congress has placed conditions on assistance to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan—because of concerns about human rights abuses and lagging democratization—which have affected some U.S. security ties. Congress will continue to consider how to balance these varied U.S. interests in the region.

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Most Recent Developments

Uzbekistan continues to block rail transit into Tajikistan. Reportedly, among the hundreds of detained rail cars are those containing food and fuel needed by the citizens of Tajikistan and others containing NATO supplies bound for Afghanistan. Tajik analyst Zulfiqor Ismoilion on May 25 called for Tajikistan to reconsider its membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States' Collective Security Treaty Organization since this organization, headed by Russia, is "keeping mum" about the "economic blockade" (see "Trade and Investment," below).¹

Meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on May 24, 2010, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (a security group composed of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) deflected Iran's request for membership by stipulating that only aspirants that are not subject to U.N. Security Council sanctions are eligible.

The lower chamber of Kazakhstan's legislature approved bills on May 13, 2010, that bestow the title of "leader of the nation" on President Nursultan Nazarbayev, provide him with substantial powers to rule even if he retires, grant lifetime immunity from prosecution to former presidents and their families, and make it a crime to "tamper with the president's pictures or distort facts from his biography." The bills await approval by the upper legislative chamber and signing into law by the President.

On April 28, 2010, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited a drilling platform in the Caspian Sea that had begun pumping oil. He hailed Russia's Lukoil firm for its efforts since 2004 to master the unfamiliar realm of offshore oil drilling.

On April 11, 2010, President Obama met with President Nazarbayev on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC. A joint statement reported that they "pledged to intensify bilateral cooperation to promote nuclear safety and non-proliferation, regional stability in Central Asia, economic prosperity, and universal values." The Presidents hailed the first session of annual bilateral consultations on March 8-9, 2010, in Washington DC, to advance the mutual agenda. President Obama encouraged Kazakhstan to fully implement its 2009-2012 National Human Rights Action Plan. U.S. officials reported that President Obama had raised concerns about the imprisonment of human rights advocate Yevgeniy Zhovtis in Kazakhstan and about the sanctity of U.S. business contracts. President Nazarbayev agreed to facilitate U.S. military air flights along a new trans-polar route that transits Kazakhstan to Afghanistan, and President Obama praised Kazakh assistance to Afghanistan.²

Historical Background

Central Asia consists of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; it borders Russia, China, the Middle East, and South Asia. The major peoples of all but Tajikistan

¹ Open Source Center. *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter *CEDR*), May 25, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-950192.

² The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *Joint Statement on the meeting between President Obama and Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev* April 11, 2010; *Press Briefing on the President's Bilateral Meetings and the Upcoming Nuclear Security Summit*, by Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication, Mike Mcfaul, Senior Director for Russia and the Caucasus, and Laura Holgate, Senior Director for WMD Terrorism and Threat Reduction, April 11, 2010.

speaking Turkic languages (the Tajiks speak an Iranian language), and most are Sunni Muslims (some Tajiks are Shia Muslims). Most are closely related historically and culturally. By the late 19th century, Russian tsars had conquered the last independent khanates and nomadic lands of Central Asia. By the early 1920s, Soviet power had been imposed; by 1936, five “Soviet Socialist Republics” had been created. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, they gained independence.³

Overview of U.S. Policy Concerns

After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, then-President George H.W. Bush sent the “FREEDOM Support Act” (FSA) aid authorization to Congress, which was amended and signed into law in October 1992 (P.L. 102-511). In 1999, congressional concerns led to passage of the “Silk Road Strategy Act” (P.L. 106-113), which authorized enhanced policy and aid to support conflict amelioration, humanitarian needs, economic development, transport and communications, border controls, democracy, and the creation of civil societies in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

U.S. policymakers and others hold various views on the appropriate types and levels of U.S. involvement in the region. Some have argued that ties with “energy behemoth” Kazakhstan are crucial to U.S. interests.⁴ Others have argued that Uzbekistan is the “linchpin” of the region (it is the most populous regional state and is centrally located, shaping the range and scope of regional cooperation) and should receive the most U.S. attention.

In general, U.S. aid and investment have been viewed as strengthening the independence of the Central Asian states and forestalling Russian, Chinese, Iranian, or other efforts to subvert them. Advocates of such ties have argued that political turmoil and the growth of terrorist enclaves in Central Asia could produce spillover effects both in nearby states, including U.S. allies and friends such as Turkey, and worldwide. They also have argued that the United States has a major interest in preventing terrorist regimes or groups from illicitly acquiring Soviet-era technology for making weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They have maintained that U.S. interests do not perfectly coincide with those of its allies and friends, that Turkey and other actors possess limited aid resources, and that the United States is in the strongest position as the sole superpower to

Central Asia: Basic Facts

Total Area: 1.6 million sq. mi., larger than India; Kazakhstan: 1.1 m. sq. mi.; Kyrgyzstan: 77,000 sq. mi.; Tajikistan: 55,800 sq. mi.; Turkmenistan: 190,000 sq. mi.; Uzbekistan: 174,500 sq. mi.

Total Population: 61.3 million, slightly less than France; Kazakhstan: 15.5 m.; Kyrgyzstan: 5.5 m.; Tajikistan: 7.5 m.; Turkmenistan: 4.9 m.; Uzbekistan: 27.9 m. (July 2010 est., *The World Factbook*).

Total Gross Domestic Product: \$319 billion in 2009; per capita GDP is about \$5,200, but there are large income disparities and relatively large percentages of people in each country are in poverty. Kazakhstan: \$182.3 b.; Kyrgyzstan: \$11.7 b.; Tajikistan: \$13.8 b.; Turkmenistan: \$33.6 b.; Uzbekistan: \$77.6 b. (*The World Factbook*, purchasing power parity).

³ See CRS Report 97-1058, *Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 97-690, *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 98-594, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 97-1055, *Turkmenistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol, and CRS Report RS21238, *Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

⁴ U.S. Department of State. Office of the Spokesman. *Remarks: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice At Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005. Perhaps indicative of the boosted emphasis on U.S. interests in Kazakhstan, former Secretary Rice argued that the country had the potential to be the “engine for growth” in Central Asia.

influence democratization and respect for human rights. They have stressed that such U.S. influence will help alleviate social tensions exploited by Islamic extremist groups to gain adherents. They also have argued that for all these reasons, the United States should maintain military access to the region even when Afghanistan becomes more stable. At least some of these views seemed to be reflected in the former Bush Administration's 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States*, which proclaimed that "Central Asia is an enduring priority for our foreign policy." The Obama Administration's May 2010 *National Security Strategy* does not specifically mention Central Asia or the Caspian region.⁵

Some views of policymakers and academics who previously objected to a more forward U.S. policy toward Central Asia appeared less salient after September 11, 2001, when the United States came to stress counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan, but aspects of these views could again come to the fore in debates over U.S. security policy in Afghanistan and Central Asia. These observers argued that the United States historically had few interests in Central Asia and that developments there remained largely marginal to U.S. interests. They discounted fears that anti-Western Islamic extremism would make enough headway to threaten secular regimes or otherwise harm U.S. interests in Central Asia. They also argued that the United States should not try to foster democratization among cultures they claimed are historically attuned to authoritarianism. Some observers rejected arguments that U.S. interests in anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, regional cooperation, and trade outweighed concerns over democratization and human rights, and urged reducing or cutting off most aid to repressive Central Asian states. A few observers pointed to instability in the region as a reason to eschew deeper U.S. involvement such as military access that could needlessly place more U.S. personnel and citizens in danger.

Participating with Members on November 18, 2009, in launching the Congressional Caucus on Central Asia, Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake, Jr. stated that the Obama Administration "has placed a high priority on building partnerships and enhancing our political engagement in Central Asia." Signs of this enhanced engagement include the establishment of high-level annual bilateral consultations with each of the regional states on counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, democratic reform, rule of law, human rights, relations with NGOs, trade and investment, health, and education, he stated. In testimony on December 15, 2009, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Krol listed five objectives of U.S. policy in Central Asia: to maximize the cooperation of the regional states with coalition counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan; to increase the development and diversification of the region's energy resources and supply routes; to promote the eventual emergence of good governance and respect for human rights; to foster competitive market economies; and to prevent state failure in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, including by enhancing food security assistance.⁶

Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair warned in testimony on March 10, 2009, that growing challenges to Central Asia's stability ultimately "could threaten the security of critical U.S. and NATO lines of communication to Afghanistan through Central Asia." He stated that the "highly personalized politics, weak institutions, and growing inequalities" in the Central Asian countries make them "ill-equipped to deal with the challenges posed by Islamic violent

⁵ The White House. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, March 16, 2006, p. 40; *National Security Strategy*, May 2010.

⁶ U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs. Hearing on Re-evaluating U.S. Policy in Central Asia. *Testimony of George Krol, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of South And Central Asian Affairs*, December 15, 2009.

extremism, poor economic development, and problems associated with energy, water, and food distribution.” Although Kazakhstan’s energy revenues had made it a regional economic power, he cautioned that “any sustained decline in oil prices would affect revenues, could lead to societal discontent, and will derail the momentum for domestic reforms.” Similarly, he counseled that the global economic downturn will severely affect Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, because they are “heavily depend[ent] on migrant worker remittances from both Russia and Kazakhstan for a significant portion of their gross domestic product (up to 45% in the case of Tajikistan). Tajikistan, in particular, faces increased threats to internal stability from the loss of these critical revenue streams.”⁷

The Administration’s Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations for FY2011, released in March 2010, states that

FY2011 resources [for South and Central Asia] will focus first and foremost on supporting the President’s comprehensive strategy to help Afghanistan and Pakistan overcome political, economic, and security challenges that threaten their stability and undermine regional stability. Many U.S. assistance programs in the region are designed to encourage and sustain cooperation and support for the President’s strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly in the Central Asian states. Other priorities include ... increasing and broadening engagement with the Central Asian states.⁸

Some critics have raised concerns, however, about whether the funding request adequately reflects these goals.⁹

Post-September 11 and Afghanistan

After the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State B. Lynn Pascoe testified that the former Bush Administration realized that “it was critical to the national interests of the United States that we greatly enhance our relations with the five Central Asian countries” to prevent them from becoming harbors for terrorism.¹⁰ All the Central Asian states soon offered overflight and other assistance to U.S.-led anti-terrorism coalition operations in Afghanistan. The states were predisposed to welcome such operations. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had long supported the Afghan Northern Alliance’s combat against the Taliban, and all the Central Asian states feared Afghanistan as a base for terrorism, crime, and drug trafficking (even Turkmenistan, which tried to reach some accommodation with the Taliban). In 2005, however, Uzbekistan rescinded its basing agreement with the United States. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have maintained their basing support for NATO peacekeeping operations, and Kyrgyzstan for U.S. and NATO operations, in Afghanistan. In 2009, most Central Asian states agreed to facilitate the air and land transport of U.S. and NATO non-lethal (and later for lethal) supplies to Afghanistan as an alternative to land transport via increasingly volatile Pakistan (see

⁷ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Hearing on National Security Threats. *Statement of Dennis C. Blair, Director of National Intelligence*, March 10, 2009.

⁸ U.S. Department of State. *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations for FY2011, Annex: Regional Perspectives*, March 5, 2010.

⁹ Joshua Kucera, “Central Asia and the Caucasus: Obama Administration Adopts Moderate Assistance Stance,” *Eurasianet*, February 9, 2010.

¹⁰ U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. The U.S. Role in Central Asia. *Testimony of B. Lynn Pascoe, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs*, June 27, 2002.

“Security and Arms Control,” below). They also have provided aid and increased trade and transport links with Afghanistan.

Support for Operation Iraqi Freedom

Uzbekistan was the only Central Asian state that joined the “coalition of the willing” in February-March 2003 that endorsed prospective U.S.-led coalition military operations in Iraq (Kazakhstan joined later). Uzbekistan subsequently decided not to send troops to Iraq, but Kazakhstan deployed some two dozen troops to Iraq who reportedly did not take part in combat operations. They pulled out in late 2008.

Fostering Pro-Western Orientations

The United States has encouraged the Central Asian states to become responsible members of the international community, supporting integrative goals through bilateral aid and through coordination with other aid donors. The stated policy goal is to discourage radical anti-democratic regimes and terrorist groups from gaining influence. All the Central Asian leaders publicly embrace Islam but display hostility toward Islamic fundamentalism. At the same time, they have established some trade and aid ties with Iran. Although they have had greater success in attracting development aid from the West than from the East, some observers argue that, in the longer run, their foreign policies may not be anti-Western but may more closely reflect some concerns of other Islamic states. Some Western organizational ties with the region have suffered in recent years, in particular those of the OSCE, which has been criticized by some Central Asian governments for advocating democratization and respect for human rights.¹¹ Despite this criticism, President Nazarbayev successfully pushed for Kazakhstan to hold the presidency of the OSCE (see below).

The State Department in 2006 included Central Asia in a revamped Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. According to former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Steven Mann, “institutions such as NATO and the OSCE will continue to draw the nations of Central Asia closer to Europe and the United States,” but the United States also will encourage the states to develop “new ties and synergies with nations to the south,” such as Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan.¹² In May 2007, Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged Asian countries to provide Central Asia with road and rail, telecommunications, and electricity generation and distribution aid to link the region with Asia; to help it combat terrorism and narcotics trafficking; to send technical advisors to ministries to promote political and economic reforms; to offer more military trainers, peacekeepers, and advisors for defense reforms; and to more actively integrate the regional states into “the Asian security structure.”¹³ (See “Trade and Investment,” below.)

¹¹ See also CRS Report RL30294, *Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

¹² U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on International Relations. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. Assessing Energy and Security Issues in Central Asia. *Testimony of Steven Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs*, July 25, 2006. The State Department appointed a Senior Advisor on Regional Integration in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Robert Deutsch, who focused on bolstering trade and transport ties between South and Central Asia.

¹³ U.S. Department of Defense. Department of Defense Documents. International Institute for Strategic Studies - Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Singapore, June 1, 2007.

The European Union (EU) has become more interested in Central Asia in recent years as the region has become more of a security threat as an originator and transit zone for drugs, weapons of mass destruction, refugees, and persons smuggled for prostitution or labor. Russia's cutoff of gas supplies to Ukraine in early 2006 also bolstered EU interest in Central Asia as an alternative supplier of oil and gas. Such interests contributed to the launch of a Strategy Paper for assistance for 2002-2006 and a follow-on for 2007-2013 (see below), and the EU's appointment of a Special Representative to the region. The EU has implemented Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs, which set forth political, economic, and trade relations) with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. An existing Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE) program was supplemented in 2004 and 2006 by a Baku Energy Initiative and Astana Energy Ministerial Declaration to diversify energy supplies. One project involves the proposed Nabucco pipeline, which could transport Caspian region gas to Austria (see "Energy Resources," below).¹⁴

In June 2007, the EU approved a new "Central Asian strategy" for enhanced aid and relations for 2007-2013. It calls for establishing offices in each regional state and assistance of \$1 billion over the next five years. The strategy argues that the EU ties with the region need to be enhanced because EU enlargement and EU relations with the South Caucasus and Black Sea states bring it to Central Asia's borders. The strategy also stresses that "the dependency of the EU on external energy sources and the need for a diversified energy supply policy in order to increase energy security open further perspectives for cooperation between the EU and Central Asia," and that the "EU will conduct an enhanced regular energy dialogue" with the states.¹⁵ Under the strategy, the EU holds dozens of meetings and seminars each year with the Central Asian states on such issues as human rights, civil society development, foreign policy and assistance, trade and investment, environmental and energy cooperation, and other issues.

Russia's Role

During most of the 1990s, successive U.S. administrations generally viewed a democratizing Russia as serving as a role model in Central Asia. Despite growing authoritarian tendencies in Russia during the presidency of Vladimir Putin (2000-2008), the former Bush Administration emphasized that Russia's counter-terrorism efforts in the region broadly supported U.S. interests. At the same time, successive administrations have stressed to Russia that it should not seek to dominate the region or exclude Western and other involvement. Virtually all U.S. analysts agree that Russia's actions should be monitored to ensure that the independence of the Central Asian states is not vitiated.

Soon after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, Russia acquiesced to increased U.S. and coalition presence in the region for operations against Al Qaeda and its supporters in Afghanistan. Besides Russia's own concerns about Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and Central Asia, it was interested in boosting its economic and other ties to the West and regaining some influence in Afghanistan. More recently, however, Russia has appeared to

¹⁴ For details, see CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union's Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin. See also European Union. "The EU and the Countries of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea Regions Agree on a Common Energy Strategy," *Press Release*, November 30, 2006, at <http://www.inogate.org>.

¹⁵ European Commission. *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the Period 2007-2013*, June 2007; Council of the European Union. *Presidency Conclusions*, 11177/07, June 23, 2007, p. 12; European Commission. External Relations. *Joint Progress Report by the Council and the European Commission to the European Council on the implementation of the EU Central Asia Strategy*, June 24, 2008.

step up efforts to counter U.S. influence in Central Asia by advocating that the states increase economic and strategic ties with Russia and limit such ties with the United States. Such a stance appears paradoxical to some observers, since Russia (and China) benefit from anti-terrorism operations carried out by U.S. (and NATO) forces in Afghanistan.

During the 1990s, Russia's economic decline and demands by Central Asia caused it to reduce its security presence, a trend that Vladimir Putin appeared determined to reverse during his presidency (2000-2008). In 1999, Russian border guards were largely phased out in Kyrgyzstan, the last Russian military advisors left Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty (CST; see below) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in part because the treaty members failed to help Uzbekistan meet the growing Taliban threat in Afghanistan, according to Uzbek President Islam Karimov.

Despite these moves, Russia appeared determined to maintain a military presence in Tajikistan. It has retained from the Soviet period the 201st motorized infantry division of about 8,000 troops subordinate to Russia's Volga-Ural Military District. Some Russian officers reportedly help oversee these troops, many or most of whom are ethnic Tajik noncommissioned officers and soldiers. Some 14,500 Tajik Frontier Force border guards receive support as necessary from the 201st division.¹⁶ Russia's efforts to formalize a basing agreement with Tajikistan dragged on for years, as Tajikistan endeavored to charge rent and assert its sovereignty. In October 2004, the basing agreement was signed, formalizing Russia's largest military presence abroad, besides its Black Sea Fleet. At the same time, Tajikistan demanded full control over border policing. Russia announced in June 2005 that it had handed over the last guard-house along the Afghan-Tajik border to Tajik troops. In October 2009, visiting President Rahmon reportedly urged President Medvedev to pay rent on Russia's base facilities in Tajikistan, but Moscow only agreed to consider the issue when the current basing agreement comes up for renewal in 2014.

In a seeming shift toward a more activist role in Central Asia, in April 2000, Russia called for the signatories of the CST to approve the creation of rapid reaction forces to combat terrorism and hinted that such forces might launch pre-emptive strikes on Afghan terrorist bases. These hints elicited U.S. calls for Russia to exercise restraint. Presidents Clinton and Putin agreed in 2000 to set up a working group to examine Afghan-related terrorism (this working group later broadened its discussions to other counter-terrorism cooperation; it has continued to meet under the Obama Administration). CST members agreed in 2001 to set up the Central Asian rapid reaction force headquartered in Kyrgyzstan, with Russia's troops in Tajikistan comprising most of the force (this small 3-5,000-troop force has held exercises and supposedly is dedicated to border protection; in 2009 it was supplemented by a larger 20,000-troop rapid reaction force with a supposedly wider mission).¹⁷ CIS members in 2001 also approved setting up an Anti-Terrorism Center (ATC) in Moscow, with a branch in Kyrgyzstan, giving Russia influence over regional intelligence gathering.

Perhaps as a result of the establishment of a U.S. airbase in Kyrgyzstan after the September 11, 2001, attacks (see "The Manas Airbase" below), Russia in September 2003 signed a 15-year military basing accord with Kyrgyzstan providing access to the Kant airfield, near Kyrgyzstan's capital of Bishkek. The base is a few miles from the U.S.-led coalition's airbase. After Kyrgyzstan

¹⁶ *The Military Balance 1998/99*. London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, October 1998; *The Military Balance 2009*, February 2009.

¹⁷ *CEDR*, February 25, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-950282.

agreed to continued U.S. use of the airbase in mid-2009 as a “transit center” (see below), Russia requested that Kyrgyzstan grant Moscow rights to another airbase near Uzbekistan’s border. Uzbekistan denounced this plan, and it appeared to be put on hold. Besides Russia’s military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it has also asserted its maritime dominance in the Caspian Sea. Russia’s Caspian Sea Flotilla has been bolstered by troops and equipment in recent years.

Taking advantage of Uzbekistan’s souring relations with many Western countries in 2005 (see below), Russia signed a Treaty on Allied Relations with Uzbekistan in November 2005 that calls for mutual defense consultations in the event of a threat to either party (similar to language in the CST). Uzbekistan re-joined the CST Organization (CSTO; see below) in June 2006 at a meeting where the member-states also agreed that basing agreements by any member with a third party had to be approved by all members, in effect providing supreme veto power to Russia over future basing arrangements. Despite rejoining the CSTO, Uzbekistan has appeared wary of Russian intentions in the organization, including by insisting that Tashkent will not participate in the CSTO rapid reaction force established in June 2009.

Many observers suggest that the appreciative attitude of Central Asian states toward the United States in the early 2000s—for their added security accomplished through U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan—has declined over time. Reasons may include perceptions that the United States has not provided adequate security or economic assistance. Also, Russia and China are pledging security support to the states to get them to forget their pre-September 11, 2001, dissatisfaction with Russian and Chinese efforts. Russia also encourages the leaders to believe that the United States backs democratic “revolutions” to replace them. Lastly, Russia has claimed that it can ensure regional security in the face of the recently deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan.

As Russia’s economy improved in the 2000s—as a result of increases in oil and gas prices—Russia reasserted its economic interests in Central Asia. Russia endeavored to counter Western business and gain substantial influence over energy resources through participation in joint ventures and by insisting that pipelines cross Russian territory. After Russia’s economic growth slowed in 2008 as a result of decreasing oil and gas prices and other shocks associated with the global economic downturn, it has appeared that Russia has tried to maintain economic leverage in the region, including by giving stabilization grants and loans to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In other areas, such as commodity trade and the remittances from Russia by migrant workers, Russian economic influence has been reduced, although it is still significant. In contrast, China has appeared to be substantially increasing its aid and trade activities in the region.¹⁸

Obstacles to Peace and Independence: Regional Tensions and Conflicts

The legacies of co-mingled ethnic groups, convoluted borders, and emerging national identities pose challenges to stability in all the Central Asian states. Emerging national identities accentuate clan, family, regional, and Islamic self-identifications. Central Asia’s convoluted borders fail to accurately reflect ethnic distributions and are hard to police, hence contributing to regional tensions. Ethnic Uzbeks make up sizeable minorities in the other Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. In Tajikistan, they make up almost one-quarter of the population. More ethnic

¹⁸ Matt Siegel, “Crisis.... What Crisis? China Spends Big in Central Asia,” *Agence France Presse*, May 24, 2009.

Turkmen reside in Iran and Afghanistan—over 3 million—than in Turkmenistan. Sizeable numbers of ethnic Tajiks reside in Uzbekistan, and 7 million in Afghanistan. Many Kyrgyz and Tajiks live in China's Xinjiang province. The fertile Ferghana Valley is shared by Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The central governments have struggled to gain control over administrative subunits. Most observers agree that the term "Central Asia" currently denotes a geographic area more than a region of shared identities and aspirations, although it is clear that the land-locked, poverty-stricken, and sparsely populated region will need more integration in order to develop.

Regional cooperation remains stymied by tensions among the states. Such tensions continue to exist despite the membership of the states in various cooperation groups such as the CST Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP). The CST was signed by Russia, Belarus, the South Caucasus countries, and the Central Asian states (except Turkmenistan) in May 1992 and called for military cooperation and joint consultations in the event of security threats to any member. At the time to renew the treaty in 1999, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan formally withdrew. The remaining members formed the CSTO in late 2002, and a secretariat opened in Moscow at the beginning of 2004. Through the CSTO, Russia has attempted to involve the members in joint efforts to combat international terrorism and drug trafficking.¹⁹ Neither former Kyrgyz President Akayev nor President Bakiyev apparently requested the aid of the CSTO during the coups that overthrew them (on the latter coup, see below), and the CSTO has appeared inactive during other crises in the region. In September 2008, its members agreed to condemn Georgia's "aggression" against its breakaway South Ossetia region but refused a request by Russia to extend diplomatic recognition to South Ossetia and Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia.

In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed the "Shanghai treaty" with China pledging the sanctity and substantial demilitarization of mutual borders, and in 1997 they signed a follow-on treaty demilitarizing the 4,300-mile former Soviet-Chinese border. China has used the treaty to pressure the Central Asian states to deter their ethnic Uighur minorities from supporting separatism in China's Xinjiang province, and to get them to extradite Uighurs fleeing China. In 2001, Uzbekistan joined the group, re-named the SCO, and in 2003 the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) was set up there. Military exercises have become a major form of cooperation. According to some observers, a major aim of these "anti-terrorism" exercises is to convince the Central Asian states that Russia and China are able to supplant the United States in helping the region to combat terrorism. China also has stressed economic cooperation with the region to build east-west transport routes, and these efforts may facilitate progress toward regional integration.²⁰

In late 2007, the Central Asian states prevailed on the U.N. to set up a Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) to facilitate diplomatic and other cooperation to prevent internal and external threats to regional security. UNRCCA is based in Tashkent and is headed by a special representative of the U.N. secretary-general. UNRCCA's plan for action for 2009-2011 calls for diplomacy to combat "trans-border illegal networks of weapons, drugs and crime and terrorism; environmental degradation, conflicting water and border management; and

¹⁹ Roger McDermott, *Eurasia Insight*, August 28, 2002.

²⁰ Roger McDermott, *The Rising Dragon: SCO Peace Mission 2007*, Occasional Paper, The Jamestown Foundation, October 2007; S. Frederick Starr, ed., *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia* (Washington DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2007).

ongoing instability in Afghanistan.” The plan calls for facilitating common efforts by regional governments to combat these threats, encouraging the peacemaking efforts of the OSCE, CIS, SCO, EU and other regional organizations, and monitoring and analyzing the situation in Central Asia in order to give early warning and make recommendations to the U.N. Secretary General and regional leaders. The UNRCCA has held several regional conferences on such issues as Aral Sea desiccation, water-sharing, and Afghanistan. The UNRCCA special representative visited Kyrgyzstan several times in the wake of the April 2010 coup to discuss U.N. aid to the interim government to ensure peace and stability. During U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s April 2010 visit to Central Asia, Tajik officials urged that the U.N. become more involved in mediating the dispute between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over the former’s construction of the Roghun dam.

The 1992-1997 Civil War in Tajikistan

Tajikistan was among the Central Asian republics least prepared and inclined toward independence when the Soviet Union broke up. In September 1992, a loose coalition of nationalist, Islamic, and democratic parties and groups tried to take power. Kulyabi and Khojenti regional elites, assisted by Uzbekistan and Russia, launched a successful counteroffensive that by the end of 1992 had resulted in 20,000-40,000 casualties and up to 800,000 refugees or displaced persons, about 80,000 of whom fled to Afghanistan. After the two sides agreed to a cease-fire, the U.N. Security Council established a small U.N. Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) in December 1994. In June 1997, Tajik President Rahmon and the late rebel leader Seyed Abdullo Nuri signed a *comprehensive peace agreement*. Benchmarks of the peace process were largely met, and UNMOT pulled out in May 2000. To encourage the peace process, the United States initially pledged to help Tajikistan rebuild. Some observers point to events in the city of Andijon in Uzbekistan (see “The 2005 Violence in Andijon, Uzbekistan” below) as indicating that conflicts similar to the Tajik civil war could engulf other regional states where large numbers of people are disenfranchised and poverty-stricken.

The Incursions into Kyrgyzstan

Several hundred Islamic extremists and others harboring in Tajikistan and Afghanistan first invaded Kyrgyzstan in July-August 1999. Jama Namanganiy, the co-leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; see below), headed the largest guerrilla group. They seized hostages and several villages, allegedly seeking to create an Islamic state in south Kyrgyzstan as a springboard for a jihad in Uzbekistan.²¹ With Uzbek and Kazakh air and other support, Kyrgyz forces forced the guerrillas out in October 1999. Dozens of IMU and other insurgents again invaded Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in August 2000. Uzbekistan provided air and other support, but Kyrgyz forces were largely responsible for defeating the insurgents by late October 2000. The IMU did not invade the region in the summer before September 11, 2001, in part because Osama bin Laden had secured its aid for a Taliban offensive against the Afghan Northern Alliance.

About a dozen alleged IMU members invaded from Tajikistan in May 2006 but soon were defeated (some escaped). After this, the Kyrgyz defense minister claimed that the IMU, HT, and other such groups increasingly menaced national security.

²¹ According to Zeyno Baran, S. Frederick Starr, and Svante Cornell, the incursions of the IMU into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 were largely driven by efforts to secure drug trafficking routes. *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU*, Silk Road Paper, July 2006.

Attacks in Uzbekistan

A series of explosions in Tashkent in February 1999 were among early signs that the Uzbek government was vulnerable to terrorism. By various reports, the explosions killed 16 to 28 and wounded 100 to 351 people. The aftermath involved wide-scale arrests of political dissidents and others deemed by some observers as unlikely conspirators. Karimov in April 1999 accused Mohammad Solikh (former Uzbek presidential candidate and head of the banned Erk Party) of masterminding what he termed an assassination plot, along with Tohir Yuldashev (co-leader of the IMU) and the Taliban. The first trial of 22 suspects in June resulted in six receiving death sentences. The suspects said in court that they received terrorist training in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Russia and were led by Solikh, Yuldashev and Namanganiy. In 2000, Yuldashev and Namanganiy received death sentences in absentia, and Solikh received a 15.5 year prison sentence. Solikh denied membership in IMU, and he and Yuldashev denied involvement in the bombings.

On March 28 through April 1, 2004, a series of suicide bombings and other attacks were launched in Uzbekistan, reportedly killing 47. An obscure Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan (IJG; Jama'at al-Jihad al-Islami, a breakaway part of the IMU) claimed responsibility.²² In subsequent trials, the alleged attackers were accused of being members of IJG or of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT; an Islamic fundamentalist movement ostensibly pledged to peace but banned in Uzbekistan) and of attempting to overthrow the government. Some defendants testified that they were trained by Arabs and others at camps in Kazakhstan and Pakistan. They testified that Najmiddin Kamolitdinovich Jalolov (convicted in absentia in 2000) was the leader of IJG, and linked him to Taliban head Mohammad Omar, Uighur extremist Abu Mohammad, and Osama bin Laden. On July 30, 2004, explosions occurred at the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the Uzbek Prosecutor-General's Office in Tashkent. The IMU and IJG claimed responsibility and stated that the suicide bombings were aimed against Uzbek and other "apostate" governments.²³

The 2005 Violence in Andijon, Uzbekistan

Dozens or perhaps hundreds of civilians were killed or wounded on May 13, 2005, after Uzbek troops fired on demonstrators in the eastern town of Andijon. The protestors had gathered to demand the end of a trial of local businessmen charged with belonging to an Islamic terrorist group. The night before, a group stormed a prison where those on trial were held and released hundreds of inmates.²⁴ Many freed inmates then joined others in storming government buildings. President Karimov flew to the city to direct operations, and reportedly had restored order by late on May 13.²⁵ On July 29, 439 people who had fled from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan were airlifted

²² The IJG changed its name to the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) in 2005.

²³ See also CRS Report RS21818, *The 2004 Attacks in Uzbekistan: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

²⁴ There is a great deal of controversy about whether this group contained foreign-trained terrorists or was composed mainly of the friends and families of the accused. See U.S. Congress. Commission on Security and Cooperation In Europe. Briefing: The Uzbekistan Crisis. *Testimony of Galima Bukharbayeva, Correspondent. Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, June 29, 2005. For a contrasting assessment, see Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijon, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, July 2005; and AbduMannob Polat, *Reassessing Andijan: The Road to Restoring U.S.-Uzbek Relations*, Jamestown Foundation, June 2007.

²⁵ Analyst Adeeb Khalid draws a parallel between the Uzbek government's actions at Andijon and at a large student demonstration in Tashkent in January 1992. In the latter case, Karimov allegedly ordered troops to fire on the marchers, resulting in up to six deaths and two dozen or more injuries. *Islam After Communism* (Berkeley, CA: University of (continued...)

to Romania for resettlement processing, after the United States and others raised concerns that they might be tortured if returned to Uzbekistan.²⁶

The United States and others in the international community repeatedly called for an international inquiry into events in Andijon, which the Uzbek government rejected as violating its sovereignty. In November 2005, the EU Council approved a visa ban on 12 Uzbek officials it stated were “directly responsible for the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force in Andijon and for the obstruction of an independent inquiry.” The Council also embargoed exports of “arms, military equipment, and other equipment that might be used for internal repression.”²⁷ In October 2007 and April 2008, the EU Council suspended the visa ban for six months but left the arms embargo in place. In October 2008, the EU Council praised what it viewed as some positive trends in human rights in Uzbekistan and lifted the visa ban, although it left the arms embargo in place.²⁸ In October 2009, it lifted the arms embargo.

At the first major trial of 15 alleged perpetrators of the Andijon unrest in late 2005, the accused all confessed and asked for death penalties. They testified that they were members of Akramiya, a branch of HT launched in 1994 by Akram Yuldashev that allegedly aimed to use force to create a caliphate in the area of the Fergana Valley located in Uzbekistan. Besides receiving assistance from HT, Akramiya was alleged to receive financial aid and arms training from the IMU. The defendants also claimed that the U.S. and Kyrgyz governments helped finance and support their effort to overthrow the government, and that international media colluded with local human rights groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in this effort. The U.S. and Kyrgyz governments denied involvement, and many observers criticized the trial as appearing stage-managed. Reportedly, 100 or more individuals were arrested and sentenced, including some Uzbek opposition party members and media and NGO representatives.²⁹ Partly in response, the U.S. Congress tightened conditions on aid to Uzbekistan.

The Summer 2009 Suicide Bombings and Attacks in Uzbekistan

On May 25-26, 2009, a police checkpoint was attacked on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, attacks took place in the border town of Khanabad, and four bombings occurred in Andijon in the commercial district, including at least one by suicide bombers. Several deaths and injuries were alleged, although reporting was suppressed. Uzbek officials blamed the IMU, although the IJU allegedly claimed responsibility. President Karimov flew to Andijon on May 31. In late August 2009,

(...continued)

California Press, 2007), p. 155. See also Reuters, January 17, 1992.

²⁶ See also CRS Report RS22161, *Unrest in Andijon, Uzbekistan: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

²⁷ Council of the European Union. *Uzbekistan: Council Adopts Restrictive Measures*, Press Release 14392/05, November 14, 2005. U.S. officials argued that the United States already had been limiting military assistance—at congressional request—because of human rights abuses.

²⁸ Council of the European Union. 2824th General Affairs Council Meeting. *Press Release*, October 15-16, 2007; 2864th and 2865th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meetings. *Press Release*, April 29, 2008; 2897th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting. *Press Release*, October 13, 2008. Some international human rights groups protested against a visit by the head of the Uzbek state security service—who had been subject to the visa ban lifted by the COE—to Germany in late October 2008. He reportedly advised German officials on IJU activities in Central Asia.

²⁹ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). *Report from the OSCE/ODIHR Trial Monitoring in Uzbekistan*, April 21, 2006; Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Republic of Uzbekistan. *Comments on the Report Prepared by the OSCE ODIHR*, April 19, 2006.

shooting took place in Tashkent that resulted in the deaths of three alleged IMU members and the apprehension of other group members. The Uzbek government alleged that the group had been involved in the 1999 explosions and in recent assassinations in Tashkent. In early December 2009, the Andijon regional court reportedly convicted 22 individuals on charges of involvement in the May 2009 events, and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from five to 18 years.

U.S. Designation of the IMU and IJU as Terrorist Organizations

In September 2000, the State Department designated the IMU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, stating that the IMU, aided by Afghanistan's Taliban and by Osama bin Laden, resorts to terrorism, actively threatens U.S. interests, and attacks American citizens. The "main goal of the IMU is to topple the current government in Uzbekistan," the State Department warned, and it linked the IMU to bombings and attacks on Uzbekistan in 1999-2000. IMU forces assisting the Taliban and Al Qaeda suffered major losses during coalition actions in Afghanistan, and Namanganiy was probably killed.³⁰

Former CIA Director Porter Goss testified in March 2005 that the IJG/IJU "has become a more virulent threat to U.S. interests and local governments."³¹ In May 2005, the State Department designated the IJG/IJU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorist, and in June, the U.N. Security Council added the IJG/IJU to its terrorism list.³² In June 2008, Jalolov and his associate Suhayl Fatilloevich Buranov were added to the U.N. 1267 Sanctions Committee's Consolidated List of individuals and entities associated with bin Laden, al Qaeda, and the Taliban. Also, the U.S. Treasury Department ordered that any of their assets under U.S. jurisdiction be frozen and prohibited U.S. citizens from financial dealings with the terrorists.³³

Democratization and Human Rights

A major goal of U.S. policy in Central Asia has been to foster the long-term development of democratic institutions and respect for human rights. Particularly since September 11, 2001, the United States has attempted to harmonize its concerns about democratization and human rights in the region with its interests in regional support for counter-terrorism. According to some allegations, the former Bush Administration may have sent suspected terrorists in its custody to Uzbekistan for questioning, a process termed "extraordinary rendition."³⁴ Although not verifying

³⁰ U.S. Department of State. *Patterns of Global Terrorism* 2003, April 2004.

³¹ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Testimony of the Director of Central Intelligence, The Honorable Porter J. Goss, March 17, 2005.

³² U.S. Department of State. Press Statement: U.S. Department of State Designates the Islamic Jihad Group Under Executive Order 13224, May 26, 2005; U.N. Security Council. The Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee. Press Release: Security Council Committee Adds One Entity to Al-Qaida Section of Consolidated List, SC/8405, June 3, 2005.

³³ U.S. Department of the Treasury. Press Release: Treasury Designates Leadership of the IJU Terrorist Group, June 18, 2008.

³⁴ *The New Yorker*, February 14, 2005; *New York Times*, May 1, 2005; *New York Times*, December 31, 2005; Representative Edward Markey, *Congressional Record*, December 13, 2005, p. H11337; European Parliament. Temporary Committee on the Alleged Use of European Countries by the CIA for the Transport And Illegal Detention of Prisoners, *Draft Interim Report*, 2006/2027(INI), April 24, 2006; and *On the Testimony by Craig Murray, Former British Ambassador*, Working Document No. 5, June 1, 2006.

such transfers specifically to Uzbekistan, the former Bush Administration stated that it received diplomatic assurances that transferees would not be tortured. Several citizens of Central Asian states who were held in U.S. custody at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base have been returned to their home countries.³⁵

Several of the Central Asian leaders have declared that they are committed to democratization. Despite such pledges, the states have made little progress, according to the State Department.³⁶ During Nazarbayev's 1994 U.S. visit, he and then-President Clinton signed a Charter on Democratic Partnership that recognized Kazakhstan's commitments to the rule of law, respect for human rights, and economic reform. During his December 2001 and September 2006 visits, Nazarbayev repeated these pledges in joint statements with then-President Bush. In March 2002, a U.S.-Uzbek Strategic Partnership Declaration was signed pledging Uzbekistan to "intensify the democratic transformation" and improve freedom of the press. During his December 2002 U.S. visit, Tajikistan's President Rahmon pledged to "expand fundamental freedoms and human rights."

During the 1990s and early 2000s, almost all the leaders in Central Asia held onto power by orchestrating extensions of their terms, holding suspect elections, eliminating possible contenders, and providing emoluments to supporters and relatives (the exception was the leader of Tajikistan, who had been ousted in the early 1990s during a civil war). After this long period of leadership stability, President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan was toppled in a coup in 2005, and President Niyazov of Turkmenistan died in late 2006, marking the passing of three out of five Soviet-era regional leaders from the scene.

Possible scenarios of political futures in Central Asia have ranged from continued rule in most of the states by elite groups that became ensconced during the Soviet era to violent transitions to Islamic fundamentalist rule. Relatively peaceful transitions to more or less democratic and Western-oriented political systems have been considered decreasingly likely by many observers. While some observers warn that Islamic extremism could increase dramatically in the region, others discount the risk that the existing secular governments soon will be overthrown by Islamic extremists.³⁷

In the case of the three succession transitions so far, Tajikistan's resulted in a shift in the Soviet-era regional/clan elite configuration and some limited inclusion of the Islamic Renaissance Party. Perhaps worrisome, Tajik President Rahmon has written a "spiritual guide" reminiscent of the one penned by Turkmenistan's late authoritarian president, and has given orders on how citizens should live and dress. In Turkmenistan, it appears that Soviet-era elites have retained power following Niyazov's death and have eschewed meaningful democratization. Kyrgyzstan's transition appeared to involve the gradual consolidation of influence of southern regional/clan

³⁵ House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight. Hearing: City on the Hill or Prison on the Bay? The Mistakes of Guantanamo and the Decline of America's Image, May 6, 2008; Hearing: Rendition and the Department of State, June 10, 2008. At least three Tajiks returned to Tajikistan from Guantanamo were then tried and imprisoned on charges of belonging to al Qaeda or the IMU.

³⁶ U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007.

³⁷ Analyst Adeeb Khalid argues that the elites and populations of the regional states still hold many attitudes and follow many practices imposed during the Soviet period of rule. This "Sovietism" makes it difficult for either Islamic extremism or democratization to make headway, he suggests. Khalid, p. 193. For a perhaps more troubling view of the threat of Islamic extremism, see above, "Overview of U.S. Policy Concerns."

elites until April 2010, when northern regional/clan elites reasserted influence by ousting then-President Bakiyev (see below).

Recent Developments in Kyrgyzstan

After two days of popular unrest in the capital of Bishkek and other cities that appeared to be linked to rising utility prices and government repression, opposition politicians ousted the Bakiyev administration on April 8, 2010, and declared an interim government pending a new presidential election in six months. Roza Otunbayeva, a former foreign minister and ambassador to the United States, was declared the acting prime minister. Bakiyev initially fled to his native region in southern Kyrgyzstan but was given refuge in Belarus on April 19. The interim leadership formed a commission on May 4 to draft a new constitution that reportedly will establish a parliamentary system of governance. A referendum on the draft is tentatively planned for June 27, 2010, and parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 10, 2010.³⁸ Pro-Bakiyev demonstrators occupied government offices in Batken, Jalal-abad, and Osh on May 13-14, but after clashes that resulted in at least one death and dozens of injuries, the interim leadership re-established control. Renewed clashes took place in Jalal-abad on May 19 that reportedly resulted in two deaths and dozens of injuries. Some observers raised concerns about ongoing instability in the country and the risk of anarchy.

Recent Developments in Turkmenistan

A constitutional commission unveiled a draft constitution in July 2008 that after public debate was approved by the Halk Maslahaty (HM or People's Council, a supreme legislative-executive-regional conclave) on September 26, 2008. The new constitution abolishes the HM and divides its powers between the Mejlis and the president. It calls for enlarging the Mejlis from 65 to 125 members. An early legislative election was held on December 14, 2008. An OSCE pre-election needs assessment mission raised concerns that "a lack of distinction between civil society organizations, the party, and the State," had resulted in only government-approved candidates running for seats.³⁹ The Turkmen Central Electoral Commission reported that almost 94% of the electorate voted. At least two approved candidates ran in each district. President Berdimuhamedow hailed the election as advancing Turkmen democracy.⁴⁰

Recent Developments in Uzbekistan

The People's Democratic Party, founded by President Karimov and which has 31 members in its faction in the Legislative Chamber (the lower legislative chamber), declared in November 2009 that it is the "minority opposition" party, and that the Liberal Democratic Party (which is also pro-Karimov and has 39 members in its faction) is the chamber's majority party. The latter party is the leader of a "majority democratic bloc" in the legislature that includes two other pro-Karimov parties. The ability to run as an independent (non-party) candidate was abolished in late

³⁸ CRS Report R41178, *The April 2010 Coup in Kyrgyzstan: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

³⁹ OSCE. ODIHR. *Turkmenistan, Early Parliamentary Elections: OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report*, October 20, 2008.

⁴⁰ CEDR, December 19, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950107.

2008, although the Uzbek government had highlighted the 12 non-party members elected to the Legislative Chamber as a sign of democratization.

Legislative Chamber elections were held on December 27, 2009. Over 500 candidates ran for 135 seats, and an additional 15 seats were filled by voting at a conference of the Environmental Movement (a group of NGOs formed in 2008). Turnout reportedly was almost 88% of 17.2 million registered voters. The Central Electoral Commission reported that the Liberal Democratic Party had won 33 seats, the Milliy Tiklanish Democratic Party had won 25 seats, and the Adolat Social Democratic Party had won 16 seats, so that they remained the “majority bloc” in the Legislative Chamber, and that the “opposition” People’s Democratic Party had won 22 seats. Run-offs were to be held on January 10 in 39 districts where no candidate received over 50% of the vote. The OSCE declined to send observers, stating that the electoral environment did not permit a free and fair contest. Some U.S. embassy personnel observed some of the voting, and the embassy stated afterward that the election campaign failed to reflect diverse viewpoints, since candidates from only pro-Karimov parties were permitted to run.⁴¹

Human Rights

The NGO Freedom House has included Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan among countries such as Cuba, Myanmar, North Korea, and Sudan that have the lowest possible ratings on political rights and civil liberties.⁴² In all the Central Asian states, adherents of non-favored faiths, missionaries, and pious Muslims face religious rights abuses, and unfair elections increase political alienation and violence aimed against the regimes.

Since 2001, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has recommended that the Secretary of State designate Uzbekistan a “country of particular concern” (CPC), where severe human rights violations could lead to U.S. sanctions. In November 2006, then-Secretary Rice designated Uzbekistan a CPC. In its most recent report in 2009, USCIRF reported that Uzbekistan had made scant efforts to address religious freedom abuses and should retain its CPC designation. In the case of religious freedom in Turkmenistan, USCIRF recommended in its 2009 annual report—as it had since 2000—that Turkmenistan be designated a CPC.⁴³

On human trafficking, the State Department downgraded Uzbekistan in mid-2006 to “Tier 3” (designating a source country for human trafficking that did not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and was not making significant efforts to do so). No U.S. aid sanctions were reported as a direct result of the Tier 3 designation. In June 2008, Uzbekistan was found to have made some modest progress in addressing human trafficking problems, and was upgraded to the “Tier 2 Watch List.” According to the State Department, Uzbekistan in 2008 adopted an anti-trafficking law and demonstrated modest improvement in its victim assistance and protection efforts. In June 2009, the State Department reported that

⁴¹ OSCE. ODIHR. *Republic of Uzbekistan Parliamentary Elections 27 December 2009: OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report*, October 21-22, 2009; Deirdre Tynan, “Uzbekistan: Tashkent Holds Parliamentary Elections,” *Eurasia Insight*, December 28, 2009.

⁴² Freedom House. *The Worst of the Worst: The World’s Most Repressive Societies*, September 6, 2006; May 9, 2007; May 6, 2008; and March 9, 2009.

⁴³ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. *Annual Report*, May 1, 2007; *Annual Report*, May 1, 2008; and *Annual Report*, May 1, 2009. USCIRF first urged that Uzbekistan be designated a CPC in its 2005 *Annual Report*.

Uzbekistan would remain on its “Tier 2 Watch List” because the country had not made progress in ending forced child labor. In regard to other Central Asian countries, Tajikistan was downgraded from “Tier 2” to the “Tier 2 Watch List” in 2008 and remained on the watch list in 2009 because “the government did not demonstrate progress in prosecuting and convicting officials complicit in trafficking and ensuring that victims have access to protection.” The State Department has averred that coerced child laborers are used to pick cotton in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, as well as in Uzbekistan.⁴⁴

Among U.N. actions, the General Assembly in 2003 and 2004 approved resolutions expressing “grave concern” about human rights abuses in Turkmenistan and urging reforms. The U.N. Rapporteur on Torture in early 2003 completed a report that concluded that police and prison officials in Uzbekistan “systematically” employed torture.⁴⁵ In late 2005, the U.N. General Assembly’s Third Committee approved resolutions critical of human rights violations in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The resolution on Turkmenistan expressed “grave concern” about political repression, media censorship, religious minority group harassment, and detainee torture. The resolution on Uzbekistan expressed “grave concern” about violence against civilians in Andijon and called on the government to permit an international investigation. The Uzbek representative asserted that the resolution contained no credible facts and ignored Uzbekistan’s right to defend its constitutional order against terrorists.⁴⁶ In late 2007, the U.N. Committee Against Torture stated that it “remained concerned that [in Uzbekistan] there were numerous reports of abuses in custody, and many deaths, some of which were alleged to have followed torture or ill-treatment.”⁴⁷

Amnesty International was among NGOs that submitted petitions to the December 2008 session of the revamped U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) alleging ongoing Uzbek human rights abuses.⁴⁸ UNHRC also examined human rights in Turkmenistan at this session. On Uzbekistan, the UNHRC agreed to a report by its working group that called for the government to give accreditation to major international human rights organizations, adopt legislation to promote gender equality, modify the criminal code to establish a definition of torture, take measures to prevent torture, and eliminate forced child labor, among other recommendations. On Turkmenistan, the UNHRC agreed to a report by its working group that called for the government to eliminate the use of torture, protect the human rights of journalists and human rights defenders,

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State. *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2006, June 2007, June 2008, and June 2009. On Uzbekistan, see also *Invisible To The World? The Dynamics of Forced Child Labor in the Cotton Sector of Uzbekistan*, The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2009.

⁴⁵ U.N. General Assembly. *Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, 58/194, December 22, 2003; *Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, 59/206, December 20, 2004. U.N. Economic and Social Council. Commission on Human Rights. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture, Theo van Boven. *Report of the Special Rapporteur Submitted in Accordance with Commission Resolution 2002/38. Addendum: Mission to Uzbekistan*, E/CN.4/2003/68/Add.2, annex, February 3, 2003. U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture, Manfred Nowak. *Report by the Special Rapporteur. Addendum: Follow-up to the Recommendations Made by the Special Rapporteur*, E/CN.4/2006/6/Add.2, March 21, 2006.

⁴⁶ U.N. General Assembly. Third Committee. Draft Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan, A/C.3/60/L.46, November 2, 2005; Draft Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Uzbekistan, A/C.3/60/L.51, November 2, 2005; Press Release: Third Committee ... Approves Text Expressing Deep Concern over Human Rights Situation in Uzbekistan, GA/SHC/3843, November 22, 2005.

⁴⁷ U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Committee Against Torture. *Press Release: Committee Against Torture Concludes Thirty-ninth Session*, November 23, 2007.

⁴⁸ Amnesty International. *Uzbekistan: Submission to the U.N. Universal Periodic Review Working Group*, U.N. Human Rights Council, July 21, 2008.

ensure greater independence of the judiciary, and ensure that opposition parties are permitted to participate freely, among other recommendations.⁴⁹

In recent years, several reporters, human rights activists, and opposition politicians in Kazakhstan have been killed by motor vehicles under seemingly mysterious conditions. In a new twist, prominent reporter Tokhniyaz Kuchukov and activist Yevgeniy Zhovtis were given four-year prison sentences for separate instances in July 2009 of hitting and killing pedestrians. Both argued that there were extenuating or suspicious circumstances surrounding their accidents and that their trials were not fair. In Uzbekistan, photographer Umida Ahmedova received a 2-year prison sentence in February 2010—but immediately received amnesty—for allegedly “insulting and slandering the Uzbek people” by taking everyday photographs that embarrassed the government by showing abject poverty, according to critics of the sentence.

Kazakhstan and the Presidency of the OSCE

Although Kazakhstan lobbied extensively for holding the presidency of the OSCE in 2009, the 15th Ministerial Meeting of the OSCE in Madrid in late November 2007 decided that Greece would hold the OSCE presidency in 2009, followed in 2010 by Kazakhstan. This positive decision was made despite the appearance in early November of the final report of the OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which assessed Kazakhstan’s August legislative election as not meeting OSCE commitments (although the election was considered improved over previous races). Kazakhstan was among several CIS members that called in 2007 for restricting the scope of election observation by ODIHR. Also in late October 2007, Kazakh authorities were alleged to have closed down several independent newspapers and Internet sites.

Foreign Minister Tazhin pledged at the Ministerial Meeting that suggestions made by ODIHR for changes to media, electoral, and political party laws would be submitted for consideration by the Kazakh legislature by the end of 2008. He stated that amendments to the media law would include reducing criminal penalties for libel by the media, setting up “media self-regulation mechanisms” to address libel issues, and easing the registration process for media. He also promised that the Kazakh government would soon move to increase local self-government. He assured the OSCE that Kazakhstan “consider[s] the human dimension to be one of the most important directions of the OSCE activity,” and that in chairing the OSCE, Kazakhstan would ensure that NGOs are able to participate in OSCE events and that ODIHR’s mandate is preserved. He argued that Kazakhstan’s chairmanship would be “a powerful catalyst of the reform process [in Kazakhstan] and an additional confirmation of the rightly chosen path of further liberalization and openness.”⁵⁰ Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE in Astana on June 29, 2008, President Nazarbayev stated that his country’s preparations for holding the chairmanship included the elaboration of a blueprint he termed “the path to Europe,” which envisages Kazakhstan’s integration into Europe in the areas of energy, transport, technology transfers, education, culture, and democratization.

⁴⁹ U.N. General Assembly. UNHRC. *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Uzbekistan*, A/HRC/10/83, March 11, 2009; *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Turkmenistan*, A/HRC/10/79, January 6, 2009; *Draft Report of the Human Rights Council on its Tenth Session*, A/HRC/10/L.11, March 31, 2009.

⁵⁰ OSCE. 15th Ministerial Council Meeting. *Address of Marat Tazhin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, November 29, 2007.

In early February 2009, President Nazarbayev approved changes to laws on the media, elections, and political parties. Political parties that did not gain at least 7% of votes cast in an Majlis election were accorded the right to participate in some legislative affairs, the number of signatures necessary for registering a party for a Majlis election was reduced from 50,000 to 40,000, and requirements for registering media were eased. Critics termed the changes minor.⁵¹ One positive sign was an action by the constitutional court in February 2009 to strike down a proposed law that would have tightened restrictions on religious freedom. In April 2009, ODIHR criticized proposed further amendments to the media law that would restrict access to the Internet. Other changes would bar media reporting that “interfere[s] with election campaigns,” takes place during times when campaign news is not allowed, tries to influence election results, or influences participation in strikes. Further amendments would bar foreign broadcasts from “complicat[ing] or support[ing] the nomination or election” of candidates or parties. The changes were signed into law in July 2009.⁵²

Kazakhstan assumed the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on January 1, 2010. It has followed an ambitious and varied agenda with some emphasis on issues of concern to Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and Russia, including initiatives to support nuclear disarmament; to hold a Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination in June 2010 in Astana; to establish cooperation between the OSCE and the International Fund for Salvation of the Aral Sea (members are the five Central Asian states); to continue the “Corfu Process” dialogue on the future of European security (including discussion of Russia’s draft European Security Treaty); to work toward the entry into force of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty; to appoint a Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman to promote dialogue on protracted conflicts in the former Soviet Union; to strengthen Afghanistan’s borders with Central Asia; to back better governance, cross-border trade, and law enforcement in Afghanistan; to harmonize Russian, CSTO, SCO, and NATO efforts in Afghanistan; and to strengthen counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

While hailing the agenda of the OSCE chairman-in-office, the Kazakh NGO Coalition “Kazakhstan OSCE 2010” published a report in April 2010 that was critical that “there has been no forward movement within [Kazakhstan] toward improved democratic standards or respect for human rights.”⁵³ In May 2010, the chairman-in-office refused to post a report of a visit by a member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to Zhovtis’s prison cell.

Security and Arms Control

The U.S.-led coalition’s overthrow of the Taliban and routing of Al Qaeda and IMU terrorists in Afghanistan (termed Operation Enduring Freedom or OEF) increased the security of Central Asia. According to then-Assistant Secretary of Defense J. D. Crouch in testimony in June 2002,

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch. *An Atmosphere of Quiet Repression: Freedom of Religion, Assembly and Expression in Kazakhstan*, December 2008.

⁵² Human Rights Watch. *Human Rights in Kazakhstan: Seven Months before the OSCE Chairmanship*, Human Rights Watch Memorandum, May 20, 2009.

⁵³ NGO Coalition ‘Kazakhstan OSCE 2010.’ *The First One Hundred Days of Kazakhstan’s Chairmanship of the OSCE, May 2010*; Jacqueline Hale, “On the Path to Europe? Kazakhstan’s OSCE Chairmanship and Human Rights,” *Open Society Blog*, May 12, 2010, at <http://blog.soros.org/2010>; Human Rights Watch, *Kazakhstan: US Should Press for Rights Reform, First 100 Days of OSCE Chairmanship Disappointing*, April 10, 2010.

“our military relationships with each [Central Asian] nation have matured on a scale not imaginable prior to September 11th.” Crouch averred that “for the foreseeable future, U.S. defense and security cooperation in Central Asia must continue to support actions to deter or defeat terrorist threats” and to build effective armed forces under civilian control.

According to Crouch

- Kyrgyzstan became a “critical regional partner” in OEF, providing basing for U.S. and coalition forces at Manas (in late 2009, U.S. troops and contract personnel reportedly numbered about 1,550).
- Uzbekistan provided a base for U.S. operations at Karshi-Khanabad (K2; just before the 2005 pullout, U.S. troops reportedly numbered less than 900), a base for German units at Termez (in early 2009, German troops reportedly numbered about 163), and a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid via the Friendship Bridge at Termez.
- Tajikistan permitted use of its international airport in Dushanbe for refueling (“gas-and-go”) and hosted a French force (in late 2009, French troops reportedly numbered 240).
- Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan provided overflight and other support.⁵⁴

To obtain Uzbekistan’s approval for basing, the 2002 U.S.-Uzbek Strategic Partnership Declaration included a nonspecific security guarantee. The United States affirmed that “it would regard with grave concern any external threat” to Uzbekistan’s security and would consult with Uzbekistan “on an urgent basis” regarding a response. The two states pledged to intensify military cooperation, including “re-equipping the Armed Forces” of Uzbekistan, a pledge that appeared to be repudiated by Uzbekistan following events in Andijon. Bilateral military ties appeared boosted when Commander of the U.S. Central Command, Gen. David Petraeus, visited Tashkent on August 18 and signed an accord on military exchanges and training.

Although U.S. security assistance to the region was boosted in the aftermath of 9/11, such aid has lessened since then as a percentage of all such aid to Eurasia, particularly after aid to Uzbekistan was cut in FY2004 and subsequent years (see below). Security and law enforcement aid to Central Asia was 31% (\$188 million) of all such aid to Eurasia in FY2002, but had declined to 14% (\$203 million) in FY2007. Of all budgeted assistance to Central Asia over the period from FY1992-FY2008, security and law enforcement aid accounted for a little over one-fifth. Security and law enforcement programs include Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), Excess Defense Articles (EDA), and border security aid to combat trafficking in drugs, humans, and WMD.

A new Defense Department counter-terrorism train and equip program (created under Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2006; P.L. 109-163) provided \$20 million to Kazakhstan in FY2006, \$19.3 million in FY2007, and \$12.5 million in FY2008. It also provided \$12 million to Kyrgyzstan in FY2008. Another new Defense Department program for defense articles, services, training or other support for reconstruction, stabilization, and security

⁵⁴ Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Subcommittee on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. *Statement of J.D. Crouch II, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy*, June 27, 2002.

activities (created under Section 1207 of P.L. 109-163) provided \$9.9 million to Tajikistan in FY2008.⁵⁵

To help counter burgeoning drug trafficking from Afghanistan, war supplementals for FY2005 (P.L. 109-13), FY2006 (P.L. 109-234), FY2008 (P.L. 110-252), and FY2009 (P.L. 111-32) have provided some assistance to Central Asia. The Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009 (P.L. 111-32) provided \$52.89 million for combating drug-trafficking in Central Asia.

In addition to the aid reported by the Coordinator's Office, the Defense Department provides coalition support payments to Kyrgyzstan, including base lease payments and landing and overflight fees (see below). Uzbekistan received a payment of \$15.7 million for use of K2 and associated services. On October 5, 2005, an amendment to Defense Appropriations for FY2006 (H.R. 2863) was approved in the Senate to place a one-year hold on Defense Department plans to pay another \$23 million. Despite this congressional concern, the Defense Department transferred the payment in November 2005. The conferees on H.R. 2863 later dropped the amendment (H.Rept. 109-360; P.L. 109-163).

U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in 1999 became responsible for U.S. military engagement in Central Asia. It cooperates with the European Command (USEUCOM), on the Caspian Maritime Security Cooperation program (similar to the former Caspian [Sea] Guard program). Gen. Bantz Craddock, Commander of USEUCOM, testified in 2008 that the Caspian Maritime Security Cooperation program coordinates security assistance provided by U.S. agencies to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. He stated that U.S. Naval Forces Europe cooperates with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command "to promote maritime safety and security and maritime domain awareness in the Caspian Sea."⁵⁶ Russia objects to the involvement of non-littoral countries in Caspian maritime security and has appeared to counter U.S. maritime security aid by boosting the capabilities of its Caspian Sea Flotilla and by urging the littoral states to coordinate their naval activities exclusively with Russia.

All the Central Asian states except Tajikistan joined NATO's PFP by mid-1994 (Tajikistan joined in 2002). Central Asian troops have participated in periodic PFP (or "PFP-style") exercises in the United States since 1995, and U.S. troops have participated in exercises in Central Asia since 1997. A June 2004 NATO summit communique pledged enhanced Alliance attention to the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and the NATO Secretary General appointed a Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. Uzbekistan sharply reduced its participation in PFP after NATO raised concerns that Uzbek security forces had used excessive and disproportionate force in Andijon (however, it continued to permit Germany to use a base at Termez). Relations with NATO appeared to improve in 2008-2009 (see below).

Kazakhstan's progress in military reform enabled NATO in January 2006 to elevate it to participation in an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). Kazakhstan has stated that it does

⁵⁵ For background, see CRS Report RS22855, *Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress*, by Nina M. Serafino, and CRS Report RS22871, *Department of Defense "Section 1207" Security and Stabilization Assistance: Background and Congressional Concerns*, by Nina M. Serafino.

⁵⁶ House of Representatives. Armed Services Committee. *Statement of General Bantz J. Craddock, Commander, United States European Command*, March 13, 2008. Caspian Sea Maritime Proliferation Prevention aid to Kazakhstan was \$4 million in FY2005, \$5 million in FY2006, and \$7 million in FY2007, and \$8 million was requested for each of FY2008 and FY2009. U.S. Department of Defense. Defense Threat Reduction Agency. *FY2008-FY2009 Budget Estimates: Former Soviet Union Threat Reduction*, February 2007.

not plan to join NATO but wants to modernize its armed forces. According to analyst Roger McDermott, despite Kazakhstan's cooperation with NATO, "the defense relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia has, in fact, substantially deepened."⁵⁷ The Kazakh defense ministry has reported, for instance, that "1,259 Kazakh servicemen are now studying at Russian military educational establishments," constituting a substantial boost over previous years.⁵⁸

According to some reports, during the former Bush Administration the Defense Department was considering possibly setting up long-term military facilities in Central Asia termed Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs; they contain pre-positioned equipment and are managed by private contractors, and few if any U.S. military personnel are present). The Overseas Basing Commission in 2005 acknowledged that U.S. national security might be enhanced by future CSLs in Central Asia but urged Congress to seek inter-agency answers to "what constitutes vital U.S. interests in the area that would require long-term U.S. presence."⁵⁹ According to former USCENTCOM Commander Admiral William Fallon, the Bagram airbase in Afghanistan is the Forward Operating Site (basing intended for rotational use by operating forces with limited U.S. military support presence and possibly pre-positioned equipment) for access to and operations in Central Asia. USCENTCOM's FY2008 Master Plan for infrastructure requirements at its U.S. overseas military facilities reportedly placed a high priority on sustaining long-term access to locations across its area of responsibility.⁶⁰

Closure of the Karshi-Khanabad Airbase

On July 5, 2005, the presidents of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed a declaration issued during a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO; see above, "Obstacles to Peace and Independence: Regional Tensions and Conflicts") that stated that "as large-scale military operations against terrorism have come to an end in Afghanistan, the SCO member states maintain that the relevant parties to the anti-terrorist coalition should set a deadline for the temporary use of ... infrastructure facilities of the SCO member states and for their military presence in these countries."⁶¹ Despite this declaration, none of the Central Asian leaders immediately called for closing the coalition bases. However, after the United States and others interceded so that refugees who fled from Andijon to Kyrgyzstan could fly to Romania, Uzbekistan on July 29 demanded that the United States vacate K2 within six months. On November 21, 2005, the United States officially ceased operations to support Afghanistan at K2. Perhaps indicative of the reversal of U.S. military-to-military and other ties, former pro-U.S. defense minister Qodir Gulomov was convicted of treason and received seven years in prison, later suspended. Many K2 activities shifted to the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan. Some observers viewed the closure of K2 and souring U.S.-Uzbek relations as setbacks to U.S. influence in the

⁵⁷ Roger McDermott, *Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment Of The Trends*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, February 2009.

⁵⁸ CEDR, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950316.

⁵⁹ Commission on Review of the Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States. *Interim Report*, May 9, 2005.

⁶⁰ House of Representatives. Appropriations Committee. Subcommittee on Military Construction. *Statement of Admiral William J. Fallon, Commander, U.S. Central Command, on Military Construction in U.S. Central Command*, April 17, 2007; General Accountability Office. *Defense Infrastructure: Overseas Master Plans Are Improving, but DOD Needs to Provide Congress Additional Information about the Military Buildup on Guam*, GAO Report No. GAO-07-1015, September 12, 2007.

⁶¹ CEDR, July 5, 2005, Doc. No. CPP-249.

region and as gains for Russian and Chinese influence. Others suggested that U.S. ties with other regional states provided continuing influence and that U.S. criticism of human rights abuses might pay future dividends among regional populations.⁶²

Appearing to signal improving U.S.-Uzbek relations, in early 2008 Uzbekistan permitted U.S. military personnel under NATO command, on a case-by-case basis, to transit through an airbase near the town of Termez that it has permitted Germany to operate.⁶³ President Karimov attended the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania, in early April 2008 and stated that Uzbekistan was ready to discuss the transit of non-lethal goods and equipment by NATO through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. He announced in May 2009 that the United States and NATO had been permitted to use the Navoi airport (located between Samarkand and Bukhara in east-central Uzbekistan) for transporting non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan.

Representing the Obama Administration, Under Secretary of State William Burns visited Uzbekistan in early July 2009, and President Karimov assessed his talks with Burns as “positive.” In August 2009, Gen. Petraus traveled to Uzbekistan and signed an accord on boosting military educational exchanges and training. Reportedly, these visits also resulted in permission by Uzbekistan for military air overflights of weapons to Afghanistan. Assistant Secretary Blake visited Uzbekistan in November 2009 and stated that his meetings there were “a reflection of the determination of President Obama and Secretary Clinton to strengthen ties between the United States and Uzbekistan.” He proposed that the two countries set up high-level annual consultations to “build our partnership across a wide range of areas. These include trade and development, border security, cooperation on narcotics, the development of civil society, and individual rights.”⁶⁴ The first Bilateral Consultation meeting took place in late December 2009 with a U.S. visit by an Uzbek delegation led by Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov. The two sides drew up a plan for cooperation for 2010. According to the published Uzbek text, the plan calls for a visit by Secretary Clinton by mid-2010; a visit by the Congressional Central Asia Caucus; Uzbekistan’s support for the United States to participate as an observer at the SCO Summit in Ashkhabad; a visit by State and Defense Department officials to evaluate Uzbekistan’s military equipment and supply needs under the FMF and Excess Defense Articles programs; an expanded IMET program for Uzbekistan (see “Legislation,” below); the seconding of an Uzbek military emissary to CENTCOM in Tampa, FL, and the convocation of an investment conference in Washington, among other measures.⁶⁵

⁶² On growing Chinese regional influence, see Michael Mihalka, “Counter-insurgency, Counter-terrorism, State-Building and Security Cooperation in Central Asia,” *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, May 2006.

⁶³ “U.S. Military Returns to Ex-Soviet Uzbekistan,” *Agence France Presse*, March 6, 2008; “Only Germany Can Use Uzbek Bases Now,” *United Press International*, December 13, 2005.

⁶⁴ U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. *Press Conference of Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake*, October 14, 2009.

⁶⁵ *CEDR*, January 29, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-4019. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) defines Expanded IMET as a group of courses aimed at “educating U.S. friends and allies in the proper management of their defense resources, improving their systems of military justice ... and fostering a greater respect for, and understanding of, the principle of civilian control of the military. The program is based upon the premise that active promotion of democratic values is one of the most effective means available for achieving U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives.... For a country whose international military training program is very politically sensitive, the entire IMET program may consist of Expanded IMET training only.” See DSCA. *What is Expanded IMET?* At http://www.dsca.osd.mil/programs/eimet/eimet_default.htm.

The Manas Airbase

The Manas airbase became operational in December 2001 and uses some facilities of the international airport near Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. According to a fact sheet prepared in early 2009 by the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing of the U.S. Air Force, the Manas airbase serves as the “premier air mobility hub” for operations in Afghanistan. Missions include support for personnel and cargo transiting in and out of the theater, aerial refueling, airlift and airdrop, and medical evacuation. In March 2010, about 50,000 troops passed through Manas, en route to or out of Afghanistan, according to the Air Force, a substantial increase over the average number of troops transiting per month in 2009.⁶⁶

In early 2006, Kyrgyz President Bakiyev reportedly requested that lease payments for use of the Manas airbase be increased to more than \$200 million per year but at the same time re-affirmed Russia’s free use of its nearby base.⁶⁷ By mid-July 2006, however, the United States and Kyrgyzstan announced that they had reached a settlement for the continued U.S. use of the airbase. Although not specifically mentioning U.S. basing payments, it was announced that the United States would provide \$150 million in “total assistance and compensation over the next year,” subject to congressional approval.

In September 2007, a U.S. military officer stated that the Manas airbase was moving toward “a sustainment posture,” with the replacement of most tents and the building of aircraft maintenance, medical, and other facilities.⁶⁸

On February 3, 2009, President Bakiyev announced during a visit to Moscow that he intended to close the Manas airbase. Many observers speculated that the decision was spurred by Russia, which offered Bakiyev a \$300 million loan for economic development and a \$150 million grant for budget stabilization in the wake of the world economic downturn. Russia also stated that it would write off most of a \$180 million debt. The United States was notified on February 19, 2009, that under the terms of the status of forces agreement it had 180 days to vacate the airbase.

The “Transit Center” Agreement

The Defense Department announced on June 24, 2009, that an agreement of “mutual benefit” had been concluded with the Kyrgyz government “to continu[e] to work, with them, to supply our troops in Afghanistan, so that we can help with the overall security situation in the region.”⁶⁹ The agreement was approved by the legislature and signed into law by President Bakiyev, to take effect on July 14, 2009. According to Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev, the government decided to conclude the annually renewable “intergovernmental agreement with the United States on cooperation and the formation of a transit center at Manas airport,” because of

⁶⁶ Staff Sgt. Carolyn Viss, “LRS breaks 2 of their own records,” *376th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs*, April 5, 2010.

⁶⁷ For background, see CRS Report RS22295, *Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol. Perhaps indicating Kyrgyz pressure on Russia to compensate for use of the base, Russia in October 2006 pledged grant military assistance to Kyrgyzstan.

⁶⁸ Lt. Col. Michael Borgert, “Liberandos: Thank You for a Job Well Done,” *376th Expeditionary Services Squadron Public Affairs*, September 9, 2007.

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Defense. *DoD News Briefing*, June 24, 2009. See also U.S. Department of State. *Daily Press Briefing*, June 25, 2009.

growing alarm about “the worrying situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” A yearly rent payment for use of land and facilities at the Manas airport would be increased from \$17.4 million to \$60 million per year and the United States had pledged more than \$36 million for infrastructure improvements and \$30 million for air traffic control system upgrades for the airport. Sarbayev also stated that the United States had pledged \$20 million dollars for a U.S.-Kyrgyz Joint Development Fund for economic projects, \$21 million for counter-narcotics efforts, and \$10 million for counter-terrorism efforts.⁷⁰ All except the increased rent had already been appropriated or requested. The agreement also reportedly includes stricter host-country conditions on U.S. military personnel. One Kyrgyz legislator claimed that the agreement was not a *volte-face* for Kyrgyzstan because Russia and other Central Asian states had signed agreements with NATO to permit the transit of supplies to Afghanistan (see below).⁷¹

Under Secretary William Burns visited Kyrgyzstan in early July 2009 and reportedly stated that “we welcome a new decision of President Bakiyev regarding the set up of a transport and logistics hub in Manas Airport.... [The agreement] is an important contribution into our common goals in Afghanistan.” He also stated that “the new administration believes that we should expand and deepen the level and scope of our bilateral relations” with Kyrgyzstan, and he announced that a U.S.-Kyrgyzstan bilateral commission on trade and investment would be set up.⁷²

Kyrgyzstan had also requested that French and Spanish troops who were deployed at Manas had to leave, and they had pulled out by October 2009. The French detachment (reportedly 35 troops and a tanker aircraft) moved temporarily to Dushanbe. The Spanish unit (reportedly 60 troops and two transport aircraft) moved temporarily to Herat, west Afghanistan, and Dushanbe was used temporarily as a stopover for troop relief flights. France and Spain have since reached accords with Kyrgyzstan and have returned to Manas.

The Status of the “Transit Center” After the April 2010 Coup

Initially after the April 2010 ouster of then-President Bakiyev, some officials in the interim government stated or implied that the conditions of the lease would be examined. Interim acting Prime Minister Roza Otunbayeva warned on April 8 that questions of corruption involving commercial supplies for the “transit center” would be one matter of investigation. On April 12, she stated that she realized that 2010 was a seminal year for U.S. operations in Afghanistan and that President Obama planned on drawing down troops thereafter, and implied that ultimately she hoped there were no bases in the country.⁷³ On April 13, Otunbayeva announced that the lease on the “transit center” would be “automatically” renewed for one year.

Some observers warn that the status of the “transit center” is likely to become a campaign issue in the run-up to the planned October 10, 2010, presidential and legislative elections. For instance, the chairman of the Kyrgyz Communist Party, Ishak Masaliev, and the head of the Zharyk Kyrgyzstan Party, Rasul Umbetaliyev, likely would campaign on an anti-base platform if they run for president. In congressional testimony in April 2010, analyst Eugene Huskey warned that a

⁷⁰ Tolkun Namatbayeva, “Kyrgyzstan Allows U.S. to Keep Using Base,” *Agence France Presse*, June 23, 2009.

⁷¹ See also CRS Report R40564, *Kyrgyzstan and the Status of the U.S. Manas Airbase: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

⁷² “U.S. Welcomes Decision of Kyrgyzstan to Set Up Transport and Logistics Hub,” *AKIpress News Agency*, July 13, 2009.

⁷³ *CEDR*, April 12, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-600.

party bloc might emerge before the presidential election that would campaign on anti-corruption and opposition to the continued operation of the “transit center.” At the same hearing, diplomat Baktybek Abdrisaev argued that Kyrgyz policymakers would not demand the closure of the “transit center” as long as terrorism continues to threaten Afghanistan, since the operations of the “transit center” benefit Kyrgyzstan’s national security.⁷⁴

The Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to Afghanistan

Because supplies transiting Pakistan to Afghanistan frequently were subject to attacks, Gen. David Petraeus, the Commander of the U.S. Central Command, visited Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in late January 2009 to negotiate alternative air, rail, road, and water routes for the commercial shipping of supplies to support NATO and U.S. operations in Afghanistan (he also visited Kyrgyzstan to discuss airbase issues; see below). To encourage a positive response, the U.S. embassies in the region announced that the United States hoped to purchase many non-military goods locally to transport to the troops in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan and Tajikistan permitted such transit in February 2009, Uzbekistan permitted it in April 2009, and Kyrgyzstan permitted it in July 2009 (Georgia had given such permission in 2005, Russia in 2008, and Azerbaijan in March 2009). A first rail shipment of non-lethal supplies entered Afghanistan in late March 2009 after transiting Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.⁷⁵ Uzbekistan’s Navoi airport also reportedly is being used to transport supplies to Afghanistan. Besides this commercial shipping, U.S. military aircraft have been given overflight privileges for the transport of weapons to Afghanistan. At the July 2009 U.S.-Russia summit, Russia agreed to permit such military overflights. Some observers suggested that the commitment was linked to the assertion of some Russian officials that such transport could substitute for U.S. and NATO use of Manas and other Central Asian airbases. Kazakhstan provided for such military-related overflights in xxxx. U.S. officials have reported that two military flights per day are now transiting Russia and Central Asia to Afghanistan.

In testimony on December 15, 2009, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense David Sedney reported that 4,769 containers had been moved through Central Asia to Afghanistan as of the end of November. Most of the containers had entered Afghanistan from Uzbekistan, with a fewer number entering from Tajikistan. Some containers transited the Caucasus countries, the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, while others transited Russia and Kazakhstan, and thence either through Uzbekistan or (far less frequently) through Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. He also stated that the United States supported the building of a railroad to run from Uzbekistan’s border town of Hairaton across the Friendship Bridge over the Amu Darya to Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan.⁷⁶

Some observers warn that Taliban insurgency may increase along the NDN. In early September 2009, two tanker trucks from Tajikistan that were delivering fuel to NATO forces were hijacked

⁷⁴ U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. *Hearing on the Crisis in Kyrgyzstan: Fuel, Contracts, and Revolution along the Afghan Supply Chain*, April 22, 2010.

⁷⁵ *ITAR-TASS*, February 10, 2009; *CEDR*, April 16, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950025.

⁷⁶ U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs. *Hearing on Re-evaluating U.S. Policy in Central Asia*, December 15, 2009. At the same hearing, analyst Stephen Blank called for building “upon the NDN to invest in further large-scale infrastructural projects.... Neither Russia nor China could compete with a truly serious investment of U.S. resources and time” in Central Asia.... We cannot pretend that a geopolitical struggle is not occurring in this increasingly critical region of the world.” *Testimony on Problems in Central Asian Security*.

by Taliban insurgents in Kunduz Province in Afghanistan. After the hijacked trucks had stalled while crossing the Kunduz River, German forces called in a U.S. airstrike, which reportedly resulted in dozens of civilian and insurgent casualties. German media reported in April 2010 that the killers of three Bundeswehr soldiers in Kunduz Province were IMU members from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Chechnya.⁷⁷ Dozens of IMU and other foreign mujahidin reportedly have entered Kunduz in recent months.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Major U.S. security interests have included elimination of nuclear weapons remaining in Kazakhstan after the breakup of the Soviet Union and other efforts to control nuclear proliferation in Central Asia. The United States has tendered aid aimed at bolstering their export and physical controls over nuclear technology and materials, in part because of concerns that Iran is targeting these countries.⁷⁸

After the Soviet breakup, Kazakhstan was on paper a major nuclear weapons power (in reality Russia controlled these weapons). In December 1993, the United States and Kazakhstan signed a Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) umbrella agreement for the “safe and secure” dismantling of 104 SS-18s, the destruction of silos, and related purposes. All bombers and their air-launched cruise missiles were removed by late February 1994 (except seven bombers destroyed with U.S. aid in 1998). The SS-18s were eliminated by late 1994. On April 21, 1995, the last of about 1,040 nuclear warheads had been removed from SS-18 missiles and transferred to Russia, and Kazakhstan announced that it was nuclear weapons-free. The United States reported that 147 silos had been destroyed by September 1999. A U.S.-Kazakh Nuclear Risk Reduction Center in Almaty was set up to facilitate verification and compliance with arms control agreements to prevent the proliferation of WMD.

Besides the Kazakh nuclear weapons, there are active research reactors, uranium mines, milling facilities, and dozens of radioactive tailing and waste dumps in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Many of these reportedly remain inadequately protected against theft. Kazakhstan is reported to possess one-fourth of the world’s uranium reserves, and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been among the world’s top producers of low-enriched uranium.

Kazakhstan had a fast breeder reactor at Aktau that was the world’s only nuclear desalinization facility. In 1997 and 1999, U.S.-Kazakh accords were signed on decommissioning the Aktau reactor. Shut down in 1999, it had nearly 300 metric tons of uranium (some highly enriched) and plutonium (some weapons-grade) spent fuel in storage pools. CTR aid was used to facilitate transporting 600 kg of highly enriched uranium (HEU) from Kazakhstan to the United States in 1994, 2,900 kg of up to 26% enriched nuclear fuel from Aktau to Kazakhstan’s Ulba facility in 2001 (which Ulba converted into less-enriched fuel), eleven kg of uranium in fuel rods from Uzbekistan to Russia in 2004, and 63 kg of uranium from Uzbekistan to Russia in April 2006. In May 2009, the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration announced that CTR funds had been used to remove and transport 162.5 lb. of HEU spent fuel from Aktau to Russia. The

⁷⁷ Open Source Center. *EDR*, April 18, 2010, Doc. No. EUP-36006.

⁷⁸ A Treaty on the Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone entered into force in January 2009. All five Central Asian states are signatories. The Treaty prohibits the development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, or possession of nuclear explosive devices within the zone. See CRS Report RL31559, *Proliferation Control Regimes: Background and Status*, coordinated by Mary Beth Nikitin.

material originally had been provided by Russia to Kazakhstan, and was returned to Russia by rail for storage in a series of four shipments between December 2008 and May 2009. Other spent fuel from Aktau is still being moved to a storage site at the former Semipalatinsk Test Site in East Kazakhstan Region. Although the United States and Kazakhstan agreed in 2006 to use CTR funds to remove approximately 21 kg of HEU from Kazakhstan's Institute of Nuclear Physics (INP) for down-blending at the Ulba Metallurgical Plant, and to convert a research reactor at the Institute to use low-enriched uranium fuel, implementation remains slow.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan hosted major chemical and biological warfare (CBW) facilities during the Soviet era. CTR and Energy Department (DOE) funds have been used in Kazakhstan to dismantle a former anthrax production facility in Stepnogorsk, to remove some strains to the United States, to secure two other BW sites, and to retrain scientists. CTR funding was used to dismantle Uzbekistan's Nukus chemical weapons research facility. CTR aid also was used to eliminate active anthrax spores at a former CBW test site on an island in the Aral Sea. These latter two projects were completed in 2002. Other CTR aid helps keep former Uzbek CBW scientists employed in peaceful research. Uzbekistan has continued to cooperate with DOD and DOE—even after it restricted other ties with the United States in 2005—to receive portal and hand-held radiation monitoring equipment and training.

Trade and Investment

Successive U.S. administrations have endorsed free market reforms in Central Asia, since these directly serve U.S. national interests by opening new markets for U.S. goods and services and sources of energy and minerals. U.S. private investment committed to Central Asia has greatly exceeded that provided to Russia or most other Eurasian states except Azerbaijan. U.S. trade agreements have been signed and entered into force with all the Central Asian states, but bilateral investment treaties are in force only with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In line with Kyrgyzstan's accession to the World Trade Organization, the United States established permanent normal trade relations with Kyrgyzstan by law in June 2000, so that "Jackson-Vanik" trade provisions no longer apply that call for presidential reports and waivers concerning freedom of emigration.

In June 2004, The U.S. Trade Representative signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with ambassadors of the regional states to establish a U.S.-Central Asia Council on Trade and Investment. The Council has met yearly to address intellectual property, labor, environmental protection, and other issues that impede trade and private investment flows between the United States and Central Asia. The United States also has called for greater intra-regional cooperation on trade and encouraged the development of regional trade and transport ties with Afghanistan and South Asia. The reorganization of the State Department in 2006 to create the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs facilitated this emphasis.⁷⁹ At the fifth annual meeting of the Council on Trade and Investment in October 2009 in Washington, DC, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke stressed that the Obama Administration was making a "broad-based commitment ... to deepen U.S. relationships in the region." Kirk announced that mid-year meetings of a TIFA working group would be initiated "to

⁷⁹ *Remarks at Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005; and U.S. Congress. House International Relations Committee. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. *Testimony by Steven R. Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary*, July 25, 2006. See also U.S. Embassy Kazakhstan. *Kazakhstan and the United States in a Changed World*, August 23, 2006.

maintain consistent dialogue on TIFA issues,” and that bilateral meetings would be held on the sidelines of the TIFA session to deal with country-specific issues. Officials from the U.S. Defense Department and other agencies participated in the TIFA session to discuss how the Central Asian states might provide goods and services for U.S. stabilization operations in Afghanistan.⁸⁰ xxxx

All the states of the region possess large-scale resources that could contribute to the region becoming a “new silk road” of trade and commerce. The Kazakh and Turkmen economies are mostly geared to energy exports but need added foreign investment for production and transport. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are major cotton producers, a legacy of central economic planning during the Soviet period. Uzbekistan’s cotton and gold production rank among the highest in the world and much is exported. It has moderate gas reserves but needs investment to upgrade infrastructure. Kyrgyzstan has major gold mines and strategic mineral reserves, is a major wool producer, and could benefit from tourism. Tajikistan has one of the world’s largest aluminum processing plants. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan possess the bulk of the region’s water resources, but in recent years both countries have suffered from droughts.

Despite the region’s development potential, the challenges of corruption, inadequate transport infrastructure, punitive tariffs, border tensions, and uncertain respect for contracts discourage major foreign investment (except for some investment in the energy sector). Cotton-growing has contributed to environmental pollution and water shortages, leading some observers to argue that cotton-growing is not suited to the largely arid region.

The global economic downturn has depressed prices for Tajik commodity exports (mainly aluminum and cotton) and reduced worker remittances. The Tajik currency, the somoni, has lost over one-quarter of its value against the dollar, which has greatly increased the costs of imported food and other goods. The NGO International Crisis Group (ICG) has warned that increasingly serious economic problems will condemn the “desperately poor population ... to yet more deprivation.... To address the situation, the international community ... should ensure any assistance reaches those who truly need it, place issues of governance and corruption at the centre of all contacts with the Tajik government, and initiate an energetic dialogue with President Rahmon on democratization.”⁸¹

Other regional states also reported economic setbacks as a result of the world economic downturn. Kazakhstan announced that it was withdrawing \$10 billion from its sovereign wealth fund for welfare and other needs and was setting up a Toxic Assets Fund. In early 2009, Russia contributed nearly \$300 million to Kyrgyzstan’s Development Fund (formed in 2007) as part of aid and investment reportedly aimed to encourage Kyrgyzstan to close the Manas airbase. The Fund aims to support the construction and repair of energy infrastructure, agricultural reform, and tourism growth. In September 2009, former President Bakiyev appointed his son to oversee the Central Agency for Development, Investment and Innovation, under which the Fund operates, raising concerns among many observers about transparency and accountability issues. Appearances of nepotism and corruption were factors in Bakiyev’s ouster in April 2010.

⁸⁰ U.S. Chamber of Commerce. *United States Trade Representative Kirk Hosts Meeting of US-Central Asia Trade & Investment Framework Council*, October 7, 2009; *Remarks by Ambassador Demetrios Marantis at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce*, October 7, 2009.

⁸¹ ICG. *Tajikistan: On the Road to Failure*, February 12, 2009.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have reported that their economies have begun to recover in recent months from the global financial crisis.

Uzbekistan began to restrict railway transport to and from Tajikistan in February 2010, perhaps to pressure Tajikistan not to build a dam that might limit water flows to Uzbekistan. Reportedly, 2,000 or more railcars have been delayed, including construction materials bound for Afghanistan to support ISAF, materials from Iran for completing the Sangtuda hydropower project, fuel and seeds for Tajik farmers, and materials for road construction in Tajikistan.⁸² Uzbekistan has rejected Tajik assertions that the restrictions are political and has claimed that they are caused by increased ISAF rail traffic to Afghanistan, a backup of railcars headed to Turkmenistan, and track repairs. After the April 2010 coup in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan signaled its displeasure with the interim leadership—most of whom are civil and human rights advocates—by tightening trade restrictions.

Energy Resources

U.S. policy goals regarding energy resources in the Central Asian and South Caucasian states have included supporting their sovereignty and ties to the West, supporting U.S. private investment, promoting Western energy security through diversified suppliers, assisting ally Turkey, and opposing the building of pipelines that transit “energy competitor” Iran or otherwise give it undue influence over the region. The encouragement of regional electricity, oil, and gas exports to South Asia and security for Caspian region pipelines and energy resources also have been recent interests.

Until 2004, the Bush Administration retained a Clinton-era position, Special Advisor on Caspian Energy Diplomacy, to help further U.S. policy and counter the efforts of Russia’s Viktor Kaluzhny, deputy foreign minister and Special Presidential Representative for Energy Matters in the Caspian. After the Administration abolished this post as no longer necessary, its responsibilities were shifted at least in part to a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (responsibilities of a former Special Negotiator for Nagorno-Karabakh and Eurasian Conflicts also were shifted to the Deputy Assistant Secretary). Some critics juxtaposed Russia’s close interest in securing Caspian energy resources to what they termed halting U.S. efforts.⁸³ A post of Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy issues was (re-)created in March 2008, with the former Bush Administration stating that there were “new opportunities” for the export of Caspian oil and gas. In April 2009, Secretary of State Clinton appointed Richard Morningstar as Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy.

The Caspian region is emerging as a notable source of oil and gas for world markets, although many experts emphasize that regional exports will constitute only a small fraction of world supplies. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and BP (for Turkmenistan), the region’s proven natural gas reserves are estimated at over 400 trillion cubic feet (tcf), among the largest in the world.⁸⁴ The region’s proven oil reserves are estimated to be between 17-49 billion barrels, comparable to Qatar on the low end and Libya on the high end. Kazakhstan possesses the

⁸² Konstantin Parshin, “Tajikistan: Repercussions of Tajik-Uzbek Feud May Be Felt All the Way to Afghanistan,” *Eurasianet*, April 1, 2010.

⁸³ *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, May 31, 2007.

⁸⁴ Including the countries of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

region's largest proven oil reserves at 9-40 billion barrels, according to DOE, and also possesses 100tcf of natural gas. Kazakhstan's oil exports are about 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd).⁸⁵ Some U.S. energy firms and other private foreign investors have become discouraged in recent months by harsher Kazakh government terms, taxes, and fines that some allege reflect corruption within the ruling elite.⁸⁶ Turkmenistan possesses about 283tcf and Uzbekistan about 65tcf of proven gas reserves.⁸⁷

Russia's temporary cutoffs of gas to Ukraine in January 2006 and January 2009 and a brief slowdown of oil shipments to Belarus in January 2010 (Belarus and Ukraine are transit states for oil and gas pipelines to other European states) have highlighted Europe's energy insecurity. The United States has supported EU efforts to reduce its overall reliance on Russian oil and gas by increasing the number of possible alternative suppliers. Part of this policy has involved encouraging Central Asian countries to transport their energy exports to Europe through pipelines that cross the Caspian Sea, thereby bypassing Russian (and Iranian) territory, although these amounts are expected at most to satisfy only a small fraction of EU needs.⁸⁸

The Central Asian states long were pressured by Russia to yield large portions of their energy wealth to Russia, in part because Russia controlled most existing export pipelines.⁸⁹ Russia attempted to strengthen this control over export routes for Central Asian energy in May 2007 when visiting former President Putin reached agreement in Kazakhstan on supplying more Kazakh oil to Russia. Putin also reached agreement with the presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan on the construction of a new pipeline to transport Turkmen and Kazakh gas to Russia. The first agreement appeared to compete with U.S. and Turkish efforts to foster more oil exports through the BTC. The latter agreement appeared to compete with U.S. and EU efforts to foster building a trans-Caspian gas pipeline to link to the SCP to Turkey. The latter also appeared to compete with U.S. and EU efforts to foster building a pipeline from Turkey through Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary to Austria (the so-called Nabucco pipeline).

Seeming to indicate a direct challenge to these plans by Russia and the West, China signed an agreement in August 2007 with Kazakhstan on completing the last section of an oil pipeline from the Caspian seacoast to China, and signed an agreement with Turkmenistan on building a gas pipeline to China (see also below).⁹⁰ In March 2008, the heads of the national gas companies of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan announced that their countries would raise the gas

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Energy. Energy Information Administration. *Kazakhstan Country Analysis Brief*, February 2008.

⁸⁶ The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) warned in late 2009 that Kazakhstan has prosecuted myriad foreign investors for evading taxes and customs duties, for environmental pollution, and for other reasons, and can "demand changes in the terms of contracts with private investors [such as Kashagan and Karachaganak oilfield investors] on the grounds of national security." Nonetheless, the EIU argued that "most foreign investors are maintaining or increasing their involvement in the country, despite unattractive aspects of the business environment—albeit with delays or reservations in some cases." "Kazakhstan Economy: Investors Beware, the Rules Are Changing," November 13, 2009.

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of Energy. Energy Information Administration. *Central Asia Country Analysis Brief*, February 2008.

⁸⁸ For details, see CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union's Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin. See also International Crisis Group. *Central Asia's Energy Risks*, May 24, 2007.

⁸⁹ According to a plan published by Russia's Institute of Energy Strategy covering the period 2007-2030, "Russian control over a large share of Central Asian gas needs to be maintained." See Minpromenergo (Ministry of Industry and Energy), Institut energeticheskoi strategii, *Kontseptsiya energeticheskoi strategii Rossii na period do 2030g.*, 2007. As reported by Philip Hanson, "How Sustainable Is Russia's Energy Power?" *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 38 (2008).

⁹⁰ An oil and gas conference involving Kazakh, Chinese, and Russian energy ministries and firms has met annually since 2004 to "exchange views" on possible regional cooperation. *ITAR-TASS*, December 5, 2007.

export price to the European level in future years. They signed a memorandum of understanding on the price with Russia's Gazprom state-controlled gas firm, which controls most export pipelines. According to analyst Martha Olcott, "the increased bargaining power of the Central Asian states owes more to the entry of China into the market than to the opening of [the BTC pipeline and the SCP]. Russia's offer to pay higher purchase prices for Central Asian gas in 2008 and 2009 came only after China signed a long-term purchase agreement for Turkmen gas at a base price that was higher than what Moscow was offering."⁹¹

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran export electricity to Afghanistan. Major foci of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency's (TDA's) Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative (launched in 2005) and USAID's Regional Energy Market Assistance Program (launched in 2006) include encouraging energy, transportation, and communications projects, including the development of electrical power infrastructure and power sharing between Central Asia, Afghanistan, and eventually Pakistan and India.⁹² The Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched a Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM) project in 2006 and approved \$3 million for feasibility and project design studies of the potential for Pakistan to import electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Under the aegis of CASAREM, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan formed an inter-governmental council in 2007. The four countries signed an agreement in August 2008 to launch the Central Asia-South Asia Transmission Project (CASA 1000 Project) to build a 220 kilovolt transmission link between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan by-passing Uzbekistan and a 750-km, 500-kilovolt, transmission link from the Nurek hydropower plant in Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan, which will facilitate export of 1,300 MWs electricity by 2012. About two-thirds of the electricity would be provided to Pakistan and one-third to Afghanistan. The project cost is estimated to be \$935 million. ADB pulled out of CASA 1000 in 2009, but the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and the International Finance Corporation remain committed. Reportedly, the Pakistani and Tajik governments reiterated intentions to go forward with the project in April 2010. Also part of the CASAREM project, a 220-kilovolt twin-circuit power transmission line is being built from the Sangtuda hydropower plant on the River Vakhsh in Tajikistan to the Afghan border town of Sher Khan Bandar. Construction of this line reportedly began in July 2009. It was due to be finished in May 2010 but progress has been delayed. Outside of CASAREM, Uzbekistan inaugurated a 220-kilovolt transmission line to Kabul, Afghanistan in May 2009.

While the Central Asian states have cooperated on some electric power projects, they have failed to cooperate on others.⁹³ For instance, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have accused Tajikistan of illicitly siphoning electricity from the Soviet-era Central Asian Unified Energy System grid. Kazakhstan twice cut off energy flows to the regional grid in 2009 in retaliation, but at the end of the year stated that it had not yet decided to withdraw completely from the grid. Tajik officials have denied the Uzbek charges and accused Uzbekistan of illicitly siphoning electricity. Uzbekistan cut itself off from the regional grid on December 1, 2009. The cutoff severed the

⁹¹ Martha Olcott, "A New Direction for U.S. Policy in the Caspian Region."

⁹² U.S. Trade and Development Agency. *Press Release: USTDA Launches Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative*, October 14, 2005; Joshua Kucera, "Washington Seeks to Steer Central Asian States Toward South Asian Allies," *Eurasia Insight*, April 28, 2006; Joshua Kucera, "USAID Official Outlines Plan to Build Central-South Asian Electricity Links," *Eurasia Insight*, May 4, 2006.

⁹³ Diana Bayzakova, "Gauging Integration Of Electricity Markets In Central Asia," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 28, 2009.

supply of electricity to Kyrgyzstan's southern regions (since the lines cross Uzbekistan) and to some parts of Tajikistan, and prevented Tajikistan from importing electricity from Turkmenistan to address winter weather. The cutoff also has prevented Tajikistan from selling excess electricity to Kazakhstan and Russia during the summer of 2010, further harming its economy. An alternative purchaser, Afghanistan, cannot receive the electricity until the 500 kw line is built.

Another related issue clouding relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is the latter's construction of the Roghun hydro-electric power dam on a tributary of the Amu Darya River. Uzbekistan claims that the dam will limit water flows downstream to its territory, while Tajikistan is spurred to complete the power plant by Uzbekistan's energy policies. In a state-of-the nation address on January 5, 2009, President Rahmon stated that the nation's future prosperity and pride depended on completing the power plant. He called for citizens to cut their living expenses in order to buy shares in the plant and urged all Tajiks and Persian-speakers worldwide to contribute funds. Uzbekistan has received the support of Russia in calling for an international expert commission to examine proposed water and hydropower projects in the region. In January 2010, Kyrgyzstan agreed that its proposal to build the Kambarata dam could be examined by such a commission. In early March 2010, the World Bank announced that it would help fund a consortium to build the Roghun project if the results of a financial and environmental feasibility study were positive. A few days later, Presidents Karimov and Nazarbayev endorsed carrying out such an assessment. During his April 2010 visit to Central Asia, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon likewise called for construction on Roghun to await the completion of the World Bank assessment. The World Bank study could take up to two years, delaying construction.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's main oil export route has been a 930-mile pipeline completed in 2001—owned by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), in which Russian shareholders have a controlling interest—that carries 234.56 million barrels per year of oil from Kazakhstan to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Lengthy Russian resistance to increasing the pumping capacity of the pipeline and demands for higher transit and other fees, along with the necessity of offloading the oil into tankers at Novorossiysk to transit the clogged Turkish Straits, spurred Kazakh President Nazarbayev to sign a treaty with visiting Azerbaijani President Aliyev in June 2006 to barge Kazakh oil across the Caspian Sea to Baku to the BTC pipeline. Kazakhstan began shipping about 70,000 bpd of oil through the BTC pipeline at the end of October 2008. Another accord resulted from a visit by President Nazarbayev to Azerbaijan in September 2009 that provides that up to 500,000 bpd of oil will be barged across the Caspian to enter the BTC or the Baku-Supsa pipeline. When the volumes exceed 500,000 bpd, a trans-Caspian pipeline may be built.

Apparently to counter Kazakh's export plans via Azerbaijan, then-President Putin's May 2007 agreement with Nazarbayev (see above) envisaged boosting the capacity of the CPC pipeline. Despite this Russian pledge to increase the capacity of the CPC, Kazakhstan has proceeded to upgrade its Caspian Sea port facilities and in May 2008, the Kazakh legislature ratified the 2006 treaty. Kazakhstan also barges some oil to Baku to ship by rail to Georgia's Black Sea oil terminal at Batumi, of which Kazakhstan became the sole owner in early 2008. Kazakhstan began barging oil from Batumi to the Romanian port of Constantza in late 2008 for processing at two refineries it purchased. Some Kazakh oil arriving in Baku also could be transported through small pipelines

to Georgia's Black Sea port of Supsa or to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk, although in the latter case Kazakhstan might be faced with high transit charges by Russia.⁹⁴

In addition to these oil export routes to Europe not controlled by Russia, Kazakhstan and China have completed an oil pipeline from Atasu in central Kazakhstan to the Xinjiang region of China (a distance of about 597 miles). Kazakhstan began delivering oil through the pipeline in mid-2006. As of the end of 2008, the pipeline reportedly had delivered about 92 million barrels (well below initial capacity of 146.6 million barrels per year). At Atasu, it links to another pipeline from the town of Kumkol, also in central Kazakhstan. On Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea border, China has finished construction of an oil pipeline from the port city of Atyrau eastward to the town of Kerkiyak. The last section of the route from the Caspian Sea to China, a link between the towns of Kerkiyak and Kumkol, was completed in October 2009. Now that all sections of the pipeline have been completed, it is expected to carry 200,000 bpd to China.

In November 2007, Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement permitting Russia to export 10.6 million barrels of oil per year from Atasu through the pipeline to China. According to Chinese sources, Russia had exported about 5.5 million barrels of oil through this pipeline in 2008. This is the first Russian oil to be transported by pipeline to China.

At the end of October 2008, China and Kazakhstan signed a framework agreement on constructing a gas pipeline from western Kazakhstan (near the Caspian Sea) to China that is planned initially to supply 176.6 bcf to southern Kazakhstan and 176.6 bcf to China. Plans call for pipeline construction to begin in 2010 and to be completed by 2015.

Kazakh officials have appeared to make contradictory statements about providing gas for the prospective Nabucco pipeline. Kazakhstan's Deputy Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Aset Magaulov stated at a Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Security Forum in June 2009 that Kazakhstan would not have a surplus of gas that it could send through the Nabucco pipeline.⁹⁵ President Nazarbayev appeared to support the possible transit of Kazakh gas through Turkey when he stated on October 22, 2009, during a visit to Turkey, that "Turkey ... will become a transit country. And if Kazakhstan's oil and gas are transported via this corridor then this will be advantageous to both Turkey and Kazakhstan."⁹⁶ In late October 2009, however, the Kazakh Ministry of Energy reiterated that "the main problem for our country [regarding the supply of natural gas to Nabucco] is the limited availability of gas" because of existing contracts for projected gas production. It suggested that Kazakhstan might be a potential supplier for Nabucco if gas production exceeds expectations, but that Kazakhstan could not transport any gas via Nabucco until the legal status of the Caspian Sea was resolved, which would permit building a connection to Nabucco.⁹⁷

Turkmenistan

The late President Niyazov signed a 25-year accord with then-President Putin in 2003 on supplying Russia up to 211.9 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas in 2004 (about 12% of production),

⁹⁴ *ITAR-TASS*, May 29, 2008; *CEDR*, December 11, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950096; April 26, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950045.

⁹⁵ *ITAR-TASS*, June 25, 2009.

⁹⁶ *CEDR*, October 22, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950337.

⁹⁷ *ITAR-TASS*, October 31, 2009.

rising up to 2.83 trillion cubic feet (tcf) in 2009-2028 (perhaps then constituting an even larger percentage of production). Turkmenistan halted gas shipments to Russia at the end of 2004 in an attempt to get a higher gas price but settled for all-cash rather than partial barter payments. Turkmenistan and Russia continued to clash in subsequent years over gas prices and finally agreed in late 2007 that gas prices based on “market principles” would be established in 2009. Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed accords in May and December 2007 on building a new gas pipeline that was planned to carry 353 bcf of Turkmen and 353 bcf of Kazakh gas to Russia. However, the Turkmen government appeared to have reservations about building another pipeline to Russia. In late 2009, however, it indicated greater willingness to build this pipeline during negotiations on the renewal of Turkmen gas exports to Russia (see below).

Seeking alternatives to pipeline routes through Russia, in December 1997 Turkmenistan opened the first pipeline from Central Asia to the outside world beyond Russia, a 125-mile gas pipeline linkage to Iran. Turkmenistan provided 282.5 bcf of gas to Iran in 2006 and reportedly a larger amount in 2007. At the end of 2007, however, Turkmenistan suddenly suspended gas shipments, causing hardship in northern Iran. Turkmen demands for higher payments were the main reason for the cut-off. Gas shipments resumed in late April 2008 after Iran agreed to a price boost. In mid-2009, Turkmenistan reportedly agreed to increase gas supplies to up to 706 bcf per year.⁹⁸ At the end of 2009, a second gas pipeline to Iran was completed—from a field that until April 2009 had supplied gas to Russia (see below)—to more than double Turkmenistan’s export capacity to Iran.

As another alternative to pipelines through Russia, in April 2006, Turkmenistan and China signed a framework agreement calling for Chinese investment in developing gas fields in Turkmenistan and in building a gas pipeline with a capacity of about 1.0 tcf per year through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China. All three Central Asian states plan to send gas through this pipeline to China. Construction of the pipeline began in August 2007 and gas began to be delivered through the pipeline to Xinjiang and beyond in December 2009.

Perhaps an additional attempt to diversify gas export routes, Berdimuhammedow first signaled in 2007 that Turkmenistan was interested in building a trans-Caspian gas pipeline. Turkmenistan signed a memorandum of understanding in April 2008 with the EU to supply 353.1 bcf of gas per year starting in 2009, presumably through a trans-Caspian pipeline that might at first link to the SCP and later to the proposed Nabucco pipeline. Berdimuhammedow also revived Niyazov’s proposal to build a gas pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India, but investment remains elusive.

On the night of April 8-9, 2009, a section of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Russia exploded, halting Turkmen gas shipments. Russia claimed that it had notified Turkmenistan that it was reducing its gas imports because European demand for gas had declined, but Turkmenistan denied that it had been properly informed.⁹⁹ After extended talks, visiting President Medvedev and President Berdimuhammedow agreed on December 22, 2009, that Turkmen gas exports to Russia would be resumed, and that the existing supply contract had been altered to reduce Turkmen gas exports to up to 1 tcf per year and to increase the price paid for the gas.

⁹⁸ *Iran: Daily Report*, January 21, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-11017; January 24, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950014; April 26, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950049; and May 6, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950052.; *CEDR*, July 12, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950097.

⁹⁹ Open Source Center. *OSC Feature*, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. FEA-844966; *CEDR*, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950339; *ITAR-TASS*, April 3, 2009; Sergey Blagov, “Turkmenistan: Ashgabat Wonders Whether Russia Still Has Deep Pockets,” *Eurasia Insight*, March 26, 2009.

Turkmenistan announced on January 9, 2010, that its gas exports to Russia had resumed. The incident appeared to further validate Turkmenistan's policy of diversifying its gas export routes.

At a late April 2009 Turkmen energy conference, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Krol reportedly stressed that Turkmenistan and other states should continue to diversify their energy export routes.¹⁰⁰ Turkmen President Berdimuhamedow pledged to continue such diversification. At an EU energy summit in Prague in early May 2009, U.S. Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy Richard Morningstar endorsed further development of the "southern corridor" for the shipment of gas and oil to Western markets. However, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan balked at signing a communique pledging the states to back the Nabucco pipeline. Despite this move, Berdimuhamedow asserted on July 10, 2009, that there are "immense volumes of natural gas in Turkmenistan [that] make it possible for us to carry out certain work related to the implementation of various [gas export] projects, including the Nabucco project."¹⁰¹ In September 2009, he further suggested that Turkmenistan could provide even more gas than previously mentioned in 2008 for Nabucco—1.1 tcf per year—because an audit indicated that the South Yoloten-Osman and Yaslar offshore gas fields held vast reserves.¹⁰² Russia and Iran remain opposed to trans-Caspian pipelines, ostensibly on the grounds that they could pose environmental hazards to the littoral states. In May 2010, Morningstar suggested that "some might question whether gas exports from Turkmenistan to China come at the expense of Nabucco or other Southern Corridor projects meant to supply Europe.... It is not yet clear where Turkmen gas for European energy projects might come from, but given the economics, they are much more likely to be supplied with gas from Turkmenistan's offshore blocks."¹⁰³

Some observers argue that Turkmenistan's construction of gas pipelines to Iran and China indicate that it does not envisage a trans-Caspian pipeline to supply gas to Nabucco. Even in the event that Iran eventually becomes a supplier to Nabucco, these observers maintain, it might resist permitting Turkmenistan to have direct access to European customers via its pipelines.¹⁰⁴

U.S. Aid Overview

For much of the 1990s and until September 11, 2001, the United States provided much more aid each year to Russia and Ukraine than to any Central Asian state (most such aid was funded from the FSA account in Foreign Operations Appropriations, but some derived from other program and agency budgets). Cumulative foreign aid budgeted to Central Asia for FY1992 through FY2008 amounted to \$4.7 billion, about 14% of the amount budgeted to all the Eurasian states, reflecting the lesser priority given to these states prior to September 11.¹⁰⁵ Budgeted spending for FY2002

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Vershinin, "U.S. Urges Central Asia to Boost Gas Export Routes," *Associated Press*, April 24, 2009.

¹⁰¹ *CEDR*, July 11, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950124.

¹⁰² The latest estimate based on drilling control wells indicates reserves of 16 tcf in the South Yoloten-Osman field. *Trend News*, May 12, 2010.

¹⁰³ U.S. Department of State. Office of the Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy. *Pipeline Politics in Asia: The Intersection of Demand, Energy Markets, and Supply Routes*, Richard Morningstar, Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy, May 4, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Igor Naumov, "Turkmenistan No Longer Sees Russia as Reliable Partner," *Bizkon-Russica Izvestia*, November 16, 2009; "Energy Agreement between Turkey and Iran Changes Essence of Nabucco Project: Chairman of CSS of Turkey," *Trend News Agency (Azerbaijan)*, November 13, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ In comparison, the EU has reported that it has provided approximately 1.39 billion euros (\$2.13 billion at current exchange rates) in assistance to the region since 1991. Its planned aid of about \$1 billion in 2007-2013 may prove to be (continued...)

for Central Asia, during OEF, was greatly boosted in absolute amounts (\$584 million) and as a share of total aid to Eurasia (about one-quarter of such aid). The former Bush Administration since then requested smaller amounts of aid, although the Administration continued to stress that there were important U.S. interests in the region. The former Bush Administration highlighted the phase-out of economic aid to Kazakhstan and the Congressionally imposed restrictions on aid to Uzbekistan (see below) as among the reasons for declining aid requests. In April 2008, then-Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher stated that another reason for declining U.S. aid to the region was a more constrained U.S. budgetary situation. Aid to Central Asia in recent years has been about the same or less in absolute and percentage terms than that provided to the South Caucasian region.

The Obama Administration boosted aid to Central Asia in FY2010 (See **Table 1**). The Administration stated in FY2010 and FY2011 that it was prioritizing foreign assistance to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (although foreign aid to Kyrgyzstan has appeared to decline, security and other funding has increased). The Administration stated in FY2010 and FY2011 that such aid “will help increase the stability of Tajikistan, situated on the frontline of our ongoing military stabilization efforts in Afghanistan.” In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the Administration stated that aid would improve security, combat drug-trafficking, reform the economy, and address food insecurity.¹⁰⁶

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), created in 2004 to provide U.S. aid to countries with promising development records, announced in late 2005 that Kyrgyzstan was eligible to apply for assistance as a country on the “threshold” of meeting the criteria for full-scale development aid. In March 2008, the MCC signed an agreement with Kyrgyzstan to provide \$16 million over the next two years to help the country combat corruption and bolster the rule of law. The funds have not yet been expended.¹⁰⁷

Congressional Conditions on Kazakh and Uzbek Aid

In Congress, Omnibus Appropriations for FY2003 (P.L. 108-7) forbade FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) assistance to the government of Uzbekistan unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that it was making substantial progress in meeting commitments under the Strategic Partnership Declaration to democratize and respect human rights. The conference report (H.Rept. 108-10) also introduced language that forbade assistance to the Kazakh government unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that it significantly had improved its human rights record during the preceding six months. However, the legislation permitted the Secretary to waive the requirement on national security grounds.¹⁰⁸ The Secretary reported in mid-2003 that

(...continued)

more than projected U.S. aid to the region. European Community. *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013*, June 2007; Council of the European Union. *Presidency Conclusions*, 11177/07, June 23, 2007, p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State. *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations for FY2010*, May 2009, p. 44; *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations for FY2011*, Volume II, March 2010, p. 85.

¹⁰⁷ Millennium Challenge Corporation. *Quarterly Threshold Status Report: Kyrgyzstan*, October 2009 (latest report).

¹⁰⁸ The language calling for “substantial progress” in respecting human rights differs from the grounds of ineligibility for assistance under Section 498(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195), which includes as grounds a presidential determination that a Soviet successor state has “engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” The Administration has stated annually that the president has not determined that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have engaged in “gross violations” of human rights.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were making such progress. Some in Congress were critical of these findings. By late 2003, the former Bush Administration had decided that progress was inadequate in Uzbekistan.

Consolidated Appropriations for FY2004, including foreign operations (P.L. 108-199) and for FY2005 (P.L. 108-447), and Foreign Operations Appropriations for FY2006 (P.L. 109-102) retained these conditions, while clarifying that the prohibition on aid to Uzbekistan pertained to the *central* government and that conditions included respecting human rights, establishing a “genuine” multi-party system, and ensuring free and fair elections and freedom of expression and media. These conditions remained in place under the continuing resolution for FY2007 (P.L. 109-289, as amended). In appropriations for FY2008 (Consolidated Appropriations; P.L. 110-161), another condition was added blocking the admission of Uzbek officials to the United States if the Secretary of State determines that they were involved in abuses in Andijon. Omnibus Appropriations for FY2009 (P.L. 111-8, Secs. 7075 [Kazakhstan] and 7076 [Uzbekistan]) reiterated these conditions on assistance to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Consolidated Appropriations for FY2010 (P.L. 111-117) referenced Secs. 7075 and 7076, but added that Uzbekistan would be eligible for expanded IMET.

Among recent determinations and reports:

- Then-Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte reported to Congress in February 2008 that Kazakhstan had failed to significantly improve its human rights record but that he had waived aid restrictions on national security grounds. He did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so aid restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the affected programs that did not receive funding).
- Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg reported to Congress in February 2009 that Kazakhstan had taken steps forward, but had fallen short in meeting reform commitments agreed to at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid in November 2007 on media, political parties, and elections, and on the preservation of the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). A national security waiver was issued. He did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so aid restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the affected programs that did not receive funding).
- A waiver was issued for Kazakhstan in early 2010.

Besides bilateral and regional aid, the United States contributes to international financial institutions that aid Central Asia. Recurrent policy issues regarding U.S. aid include what it should be used for, who should receive it, and whether it is effective.

Legislation

P.L. 111-117 (H.R. 3288) (FY2010)

Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010. Introduced on July 22, 2009. Signed into law on December 16, 2009. The conference report (H.Rept. 111-366) calls for \$10.4 million in

FREEDOM Support Act aid to Kazakhstan, \$46 million to Kyrgyzstan, \$42.5 million to Tajikistan, \$12.5 million to Turkmenistan, \$8.25 million to Uzbekistan, and \$11 million for Central Asia regional programs. Of the assistance provided to Kyrgyzstan, the conferees call for \$11.5 million to go to the U.S.-Kyrgyz Joint Development Fund. They also call for \$3 million in Foreign Military Financing aid for Kazakhstan, \$3.5 million for Kyrgyzstan, \$1.5 million for Tajikistan, and \$2 million for Turkmenistan. The conference agreement includes a provision which carries forward by reference the terms and conditions of P.L. 111-8 conditioning aid to the governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The House had proposed a limitation only on assistance for Uzbekistan. Aid to Kazakhstan is conditioned on progress in democratization and respect for human rights, including obligations to the OSCE to implement reforms in elections, media freedom, freedom of assembly, and minority rights, and in meeting the commitments it made in connection with its assumption of the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010. The Secretary of State is permitted a waiver on national security grounds. Aid to the government of Uzbekistan is conditioned on its meeting commitments put forth in the U.S.-Uzbek Declaration on Strategic Partnership and on prosecuting the individuals responsible for killings of civilians in Andijon. If the Secretary of State has evidence of persons responsible for the killings of civilians in Andijon, that person is to be deemed ineligible for admission to the United States. The condition may be lifted if the Secretary reports that Uzbekistan has taken concrete and measureable steps to respect human rights. The Secretary may permit such a person to enter for U.N. activities or to further law enforcement. A new provision in FY2010 permits expanded International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance for Uzbekistan. The conferees call for the Secretary of State to submit a report detailing actions by the Kazakh government to implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and other efforts to achieve transparency and accountability in managing revenues from oil, gas, and mining. They also call for a report describing defense articles, defense services, and financial aid provided to Central Asian states and their use by the security forces.

**Table 1. U.S. Foreign Assistance to Central Asia,
FY1992 to FY2010, and the FY2011 Request**
(millions of dollars)

Central Asian Country	FY1992 thru FY2008 Budgeted ^a	FY2009 Actual ^b	FY2010 Estimate ^b	FY2011 Request ^b
Kazakhstan	1,665.55	22.422	18.885	18.3
Kyrgyzstan	953.5	58.932	53.765	46.925
Tajikistan	819.48	35.765	48.299	47.089
Turkmenistan	298.5	8.851	16.35	13.325
Uzbekistan	885.31	8.555	12.04	12.14
Regional	89.18	15.0 ^c	23.4 ^c	19.1 ^c
Total	4,711.52	149.525	172.739	156.879
Percent	14	19	28	26

Sources: State Department, *Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia; Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2011*.

- a. Includes funds from the Aid for Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (AEECA) account and Agency budgets. Excludes some classified coalition support funding.

- b. Includes funds from the Aid for Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (AEECA) account and other “Function 150” programs. Does not include Defense or Energy Department funds, funding for exchanges, or Millennium Challenge Corporation aid to Kyrgyzstan.
- c. Includes only funds from the AEECA account and the State Department’s Child Survival and Health (CSH) programs.

Figure 1. Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan



Source: Map Resources adapted by CRS (08/02 M. Chin).

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