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Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia Reassessed

Elizabeth Wishnick Dr.

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FOREWORD

Central Asia is a key theater in the war on terrorism where fragile new states are attempting to consolidate political power, build legitimacy, and stoke economic development at the same time that they face a range of threats with security forces badly in need of reform. While the United States has recognized the pivotal role of Central Asia and greatly expanded its activities there, this is a new venue for America. U.S. policymakers are learning in stride as they seek ways to both strengthen the Central Asian states and to encourage them to undertake badly needed political reforms.

In this monograph, Elizabeth Wishnick builds on the analysis in her important 2002 SSI study, *Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia*. She contends that by highlighting antiterrorism, the United States addresses a symptom rather than the causes of instability in Central Asia; thus it is contributing to the radicalization of political opposition movements and discrediting both democratization and the U.S. commitment to it. Instead, she argues, the United States should do more to address the underlying human security problems in Central Asia, which increase its vulnerability to terrorist movements.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph to help national security strategists better understand the complexities of America's security interests in Central Asia.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

ELIZABETH WISHNICK is a Research Associate at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, and a Visiting Professor in the Department of Political Science, Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science, New School University. In 2003-04 she was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar in the Department of Politics and Sociology at Lingnan University in Hong Kong. She has taught at Barnard College, Columbia University, and at Yale College, and has been a research fellow at Taiwan's Academia Sinica, the Hoover Institution, and the Davis Center at Harvard University. Dr. Wishnick is the author *of Mending Fences: The Evolution of Moscow's China Policy from Brezhnev to Yeltsin* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001) and of numerous articles on great power relations and regional development in Northeast Asia, published in *Asian Survey*, *NBR Analysis*, *SAIS Review*, *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, *Issues and Studies*, and *Perspectives Chinoises*, as well as in several edited volumes. Her current research focuses on transnational threats from China and their impact on regional threat perceptions; human security and Chinese migration to the Russian Far East; and great power relations and the Korean nuclear crisis. Dr. Wishnick received a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University, an M.A. in Russian and East European Studies from Yale University, and a B.A. from Barnard College, and speaks both Russian and Chinese.

SUMMARY

Support for continuing operations in Afghanistan and for antiterrorism has been the driving force for the strengthening of American security cooperation with Central Asia. This monograph 1) explores the military rationale for U.S. security interests in Central Asia; 2) examines the impact of the Iraq war on the sustainability of U.S. forward basing in Central Asia; 3) evaluates the broader consequences for U.S. foreign policy of an American military presence in Central Asia; and 4) assesses the implications for the U.S. Army.

The U.S.-led war in Iraq has introduced new complications into security cooperation between the United States and Central Asia and revealed inconsistencies in the U.S. approach to regional security. The increased U.S. security focus on the region has led other regional powers--especially Russia, China, and India--to compete for influence there more overtly, and a continued American military presence is likely to create tensions in Russian-American relations in particular. Central Asian leaders concerned about the implications of the U.S. interest in "regime change" for their own rule, now have an added incentive to overstate terrorist threats facing their countries, while justifying the persecution of any political opposition and peaceful religious activity.

By highlighting antiterrorism in U.S. security cooperation with Central Asia, the United States addresses a symptom, rather than the causes of regional security; thus it is pursuing a counterproductive strategy, contributing to the radicalization of political opposition movements and discrediting both democratization and the U.S. commitment to it. Instead, the United States should do more to address the underlying human security problems in the region, which increase its vulnerability to terrorist movements. To this end, the U.S. Army should contribute to humanitarian demining efforts and expand training in drug interdiction there.

STRATEGIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE IRAQ WAR: U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA REASSESSED

Almost three years since 9/11 and the October 2001 war in Afghanistan, the U.S. military presence in Central Asia shows no signs of diminishing. To the contrary, the U.S. military has been consolidating existing forward basing in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and maintaining its contingency access to the Almaty and Dushanbe airports. Support for continuing operations in Afghanistan and anti-terrorism have been the driving forces for the strengthening of American security cooperation with Central Asia. This monograph will 1) explore the military rationale for U.S. security interests in Central Asia; 2) examine the impact of the Iraq war on the sustainability of U.S. forward basing in Central Asia; 3) evaluate the broader consequences for U.S. foreign policy of an American military presence in Central Asia; and 4) assess the implications for the U.S. Army.

The U.S.-led war in Iraq has introduced new complications into security cooperation between the United States and Central Asia and revealed inconsistencies in the U.S. approach to regional security. The increased U.S. security focus on Central Asia has led other regional powers—especially Russia, China, and India—to compete for influence in the region more overtly, and a continued American military presence is likely to create tensions in Russian-American relations in particular. Concerned about the implications of the U.S. interest in "regime change" for their own rule, Central Asian leaders now have an added incentive to overstate terrorist threats facing their countries, while justifying the persecution of any political opposition and peaceful religious activity.

Moreover, by highlighting anti-terrorism in U.S. security cooperation with Central Asia, the United States addresses a symptom, rather than the causes of regional security, and is pursuing a counterproductive strategy, contributing to the radicalization of political opposition movements and discrediting both democratization and the U.S. commitment to it. Instead, the United States should do more to address the underlying human security problems in Central Asia, which increase its vulnerability to terrorist movements. To this end, the U.S. Army should contribute

to humanitarian demining efforts and expand training in drug interdiction in the region.

BACKGROUND

To support Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, the U.S. military acquired temporary forward basing rights in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan as well as access to airspace and restricted use of bases in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. All the Central Asian states offered to share intelligence, and U.S. security cooperation with the region has increased substantially since 9/11, involving high-level visits, funding, and training.

After Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited Tashkent on October 5, 2001, Uzbekistan signed an agreement with U.S. officials allowing approximately 1,500 American military personnel to operate out of the Karshi Khanabad airbase in exchange for security guarantees and U.S. agreement to target training camps in Afghanistan known to harbor the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.[1] The agreement also provided for intelligence sharing and U.S. use of Uzbekistan's airspace. By the Karimov government's request, aircraft based at Khanabad were to be used primarily for humanitarian and search-and-rescue attacks.[2] The airbase also coordinates air traffic control for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.[3]

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and Uzbekistan have been cooperating closely, and in December 2001, five Uzbek representatives were posted there.[4] During CENTCOM Commander-in-Chief General Tommy Frank's visit to Uzbekistan in January 2002, CENTCOM and the Ministry of Defense of Uzbekistan signed an agreement to develop military-to-military cooperation through joint seminars, training, and partnerships with U.S. units.[5] In March 2002, the United States and Uzbekistan signed a strategic partnership: in exchange for allowing the United States to remain in Uzbekistan as long as necessary to complete antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan, the United States would "regard with grave concern any external threat to Uzbekistan."[6]

Uzbekistan has played an important role in supplying economic assistance to Afghanistan. Since the beginning of hostilities, more

than 300,000 tons of humanitarian aid reached Afghanistan from Uzbek territory. Uzbekistan also has been supplying its neighbor with electric power and liquefied gas. In May 2003, Uzbekistan offered to provide logistical and medical assistance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mission in Afghanistan, in addition to helping with humanitarian aid deliveries.[7] Germany, a participant in the NATO peacekeeping force in Afghanistan, also continues to operate an air base in Termez, near the border with Afghanistan, and stations 150 troops there.

In contrast to the largely secret agreements the U.S. military concluded with Uzbekistan, on December 5, 2001, the U.S. Department of State and Kyrgyz officials signed a basing access agreement, allowing U.S. forces to use Manas airport, renamed the Peter Ganci airbase in honor of the New York City fire chief who perished in the attacks on the World Trade Center. The agreement allowed for basing rights for Western forces for a 1-year period.[8] The agreement was then prolonged for a second year, and on June 5, 2003, Kyrgyzstan committed to a 3-year extension. Approximately 1,300 U.S. and South Korean troops and 300 Kyrgyz civilians work at the base, which sends aerial tankers to Afghanistan daily, as well as regular transport of food, medical supplies, equipment, ammunition, and coalition troops into Afghanistan.[9] Kyrgyzstan has posted five representatives at CENTCOM since May 14, 2002. The country has played a key role, along with Tajikistan and Russia, in supplying wheat and flour to northern Afghanistan under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) World Food Program.[10]

Because weather problems at times disrupt use of the Ganci airbase, on July 10, 2002, the United States and Kazakhstan signed a memorandum of understanding regarding use of the Almaty airport for emergency landings. Kazakhstan also provided overflight rights and has allowed transshipments over its territory of supplies destined for Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.[11] While the Kazakh Foreign Minister has denied that there would be any permanent U.S. military presence, the United States has increased its assistance for training and equipment for Kazakhstan's military and is renovating a military base at Atyrau in the Caspian Sea to improve the security of the country's energy infrastructure.[12] In September 2003, CENTCOM and the Kazakhstan Emergency Situations Agency

organized an international conference to strengthen the detection, prevention, and elimination of emergency situations in Central Asia, including terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).[13] Three representatives from Kazakhstan have been at CENTCOM since June 2002.

Tajikistan allowed the Pentagon (and later the French military) to use the Dushanbe airport on a contingency basis, mostly for refueling, and granted the United States overflight rights.[14] France deployed transport aircraft to Dushanbe for use in humanitarian assistance and other airlift support. Some 60 percent of international assistance to Afghanistan's power industry is shipped via Tajikistan. Since March 2003 the Tajik Ministry of Defense also has been providing some training for the new Afghan Army.[15]

U.S. STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

In testimony to Congress in October 2003, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs A. Elizabeth Jones stated that the United States currently has three sets of security interests in Central Asia: 1) security (antiterrorism, nonproliferation, combating drug trafficking); 2) energy (ensuring reliable and economically viable access to global markets and the use of energy revenues to promote sustainable development); and 3) internal reform (including democratization and market-oriented changes). The Assistant Secretary emphasized that since 9/11 U.S. strategic interests in Central Asia have focused on antiterrorism, especially the elimination of the influence of terrorist and other destabilizing groups. She also noted that the Central Asian states continue to provide critical air support to U.S. antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan.[16]

In recognition of the importance of Central Asia to U.S. antiterrorism goals, these countries have seen their share of Freedom Support Act funding increase at a time of decline in assistance to Eurasia as a whole. Thus, cumulative aid to Central Asia FY1992-FY2002 amounted to $2.76 billion, or 12 percent of total Freedom Support funds for that period, but the $157 billion in aid requested for Central Asia in FY2004 represents 27 percent of the total Freedom Support Act request for the current year.[17] According to the State

Department, these funds are essential "to sustain efforts begun in the wake of the September 11 attacks to enhance long-term stability in these key front-line states."[18] (Freedom Support programs in the security area include law enforcement, export controls, nonproliferation, and redirection of nuclear scientists and weapons experts to civilian occupations.)

In addition to Freedom Support Act funds, the Central Asian states receive additional antiterrorism assistance from a range of other agencies, including the Department of Defense (DoD), as well as through other State Department programs. The latter include Foreign Military Financing (providing grants for purchases of U.S. military equipment, as well as training in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, and other services to support interoperability in the Partnership for Peace Program), International Military Training and English (funding for English language instruction and other training for Central Asian militaries) and Non-Proliferation, Anti-Terrorism, De-Mining and Related Programs (supporting export controls and border security assistance).

	Kaz.	Kyr.	Taj.	Uzb.
Foreign Military Financing (FMF)	2.9	3.9	0	8.6
International Military Education and Training (IMET)	0.872	1.1	0.34	1.1
Non-Proliferation, AntiTerrorism, De-Mining, and Related Programs (NADR)	8.5	2.5	0.55	3.9
Freedom Support Act Security Programs	4.98	2.5	0.42	3.9

Source: U.S. Department of State, *http: www.state.gov*.

Table 1. U.S. Assistance to Central Asia in FY2003 (in millions of US$).

MILITARY RATIONALE

The military rationale for U.S. security interests in Central Asia follows from new approaches to U.S. national security strategy, developments in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq. Central Asian bases are likely to take on increased strategic importance in the context of ongoing reassessments of U.S. basing policy.

U.S. National Security Strategy.

The October 2001 U.S. DoD's *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) advocated a capabilities-based strategy and emphasized the importance of preparing forward deployed forces for a variety of contingencies worldwide. It did this by expanding basing options beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia and by securing temporary access to facilities for training and exercises in areas where the United States lacks bases. The QDR also called for strengthening U.S. alliances and partnerships by increasing peacetime training and preparations for coalition operations.

Building on the themes outlined in the QDR, the U.S *National Security Strategy* published in August 2002 advocates a preemptive strategy because it "is not possible to defend against every threat, in every place, at every conceivable time. The only defense is to take the war to the enemy. The best defense is a good offense."[19] The document summarizes many of the general principles underlying U.S. security interests, which clearly are underpinning U.S. diplomatic overtures and military engagement with Central Asia: preventing the hostile domination of key areas and preserving a stable balance of power; maintaining access to key markets and strategic resources; addressing threats from territories of weak states and ungoverned areas; preventing the diffusion of weapons to non-state actors; sustaining coalitions; and preparing to intervene rapidly in unexpected crises.

What this means specifically for U.S. security interests in Central Asia is clarified in the Secretary of Defense's 2002 annual report to Congress. The report states that "an arc of instability" spans from the Middle East to Northeast Asia, including weak states that are vulnerable to radical movements. Although emphasizing the

importance of safeguarding stability in Asia, the report acknowledges that "the density of U.S. basing and en route infrastructure is lower in Asia than in other critical regions."[20] Consequently the United States must place a priority on securing additional basing access and signing infrastructure agreements with key states and on developing new forms of security cooperation.

More than 2 years since the attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the war against terrorism continues to be the focal point of U.S. foreign policy. As President Bush emphasized in his State of the Union address on January 20, 2004, homeland defense and worldwide antiterrorism operations remain key American priorities.[21] The antiterrorism strategy outlined by the White House in February 2003 highlighted the importance of creating new partnerships with those willing and able to pool resources to defeat terrorism.[22] In this policy context, where antiterrorism efforts occupy pride of place in American foreign policy, security cooperation with Central Asian states is focused on addressing challenges from domestic and foreign terrorist threats to these countries.

The U.S. Army Transformation Roadmap notes that the national security strategy places considerable demands on the American military.[23] Making virtue out of a necessity, at a time when Army resources are straining to cope with current missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker has portrayed strategic agility as a key aim.[24] U.S. basing access in Central Asia enables American forces to react quickly in case of terrorist threats or other crises in the region. "Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought home an important lesson--*speed* matters," the Secretary of Defense's 2003 report to Congress concludes.[25]

Developments in Afghanistan and U.S. Basing in Central Asia.

Central Asian leaders in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan provided support for the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan due to their own concerns over the potential for instability caused by the Taliban's support for Islamic movements within their borders. They especially were troubled by the armed radical organization, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), then based in northern Afghanistan, and reportedly linked to al-Qaeda. The IMU was

implicated in bombings in February 1999 in Tashkent that nearly killed President Karimov and led armed incursions into Kyrgyzstan in July-August 1999. After further IMU attacks in Uzbekistan in August 2000 during which several Americans were held hostage, in September 2000 the State Department included the IMU in its list of foreign terrorist organizations.[26]

During the U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan, the IMU leader, Namangani, was believed to have been killed, and the organization's activities were disrupted.[27] Nevertheless, in July 2003, Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service Deputy Chairman Tokon Mamytov reported that the IMU had received $400,000 from international terrorist organizations to fund actions in Central Asia. He claimed that the IMU had already joined Uighur groups in establishing a united Islamic Movement of Turkestan and was seeking to establish ties with Hizb-ut-Tahrir al Islami (The Party of Islamic Liberation). While Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a nonviolent political party, it is banned throughout Central Asia due to the group's aim to reestablish the Caliphate and reunite all Muslim lands under Islamic rule.[28]

U.S. officials also believe that the IMU is regrouping, despite its losses in Afghanistan. At a December 2003 press conference, U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Steven Young called the group the greatest threat to U.S. interests in the Central Asian region. He noted that U.S. security cooperation with Kyrgyzstan should be able to counter IMU terrorist activities in the country, and that the U.S. military presence there would remain as long as necessary to address the ongoing terrorist threat in Afghanistan.[29]

The United States declared the end of major combat operations in Afghanistan on May 1, 2003, paving the way for a greater emphasis on reconstruction, although antiterrorist operations are continuing. Secretary Rumsfeld has stated that the reconstruction of Afghanistan could be a laboratory for reconstruction in Iraq, and thus support from Central Asian bases for such efforts will continue to be highly important. Since the conclusion of the war in Afghanistan, U.S. forward basing in Central Asia has played a key role in supporting U.S. efforts to combat remaining pockets of opposition and terrorist operations, establish stability, promote reconstruction, and provide humanitarian aid.

The United States still has approximately 11,000 troops in Afghanistan in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Since August 11, 2003, NATO has taken on its first mission outside Europe and has assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the 5,500-strong international peacekeeping force established under a UN mandate. Former NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson noted that NATO would play a key role in assisting Central Asia to combat terrorist threats once it assumed leadership of the peacekeeping force.[30]

While NATO agreed to expand ISAF's activities beyond Kabul, thus far just one provincial reconstruction team has been dispatched. In January 2004 a team of 170 German troops was sent to Kunduz in northern Afghanistan, although the U.S.-led coalition also operates teams in several other cities. U.S. forces provide logistical assistance and training for the Afghan military, but they do no engage in peacekeeping.[31] NATO has been under pressure both to expand significantly its peacekeeping operations across Afghanistan and to take over antiterrorist operations from the United States. A decision on NATO's future role in Afghanistan is expected at the June 2004 summit in Istanbul.[32]

While new NATO commander Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has pledged to make Afghanistan a priority for the Alliance, his predecessor faced considerable difficulty in obtaining sufficient troop contributions.[33] In testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Marine Corps General James Jones noted that more than 5,500 troops would be required to expand the peacekeeping effort, but the Alliance had yet to decide how to pay for them, transport them, or maintain them.[34] Former UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi contended that as many as 10,000 more troops would be necessary to expand the NATO force beyond Kabul, a step UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has been urging for the past 2 years.[35]

Pockets of resistance from Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants remain throughout Afghanistan. Military engagements and rebel attacks occur periodically, as U.S. Special Forces continue to hunt for remaining Taliban and al-Qaeda units.[36] There is evidence that as many as 5,000 fighters, possibly including Osama Bin Laden himself, may have fled to western Pakistan, where a pro-Taliban

coalition of Islamic parties, the Mattahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), was elected in October 2002. Linked by ethnic ties--both the Taliban and these provincial leaders are from the Pushtun ethnic group---as well as anti-Americanism and opposition to the Karzai government in Afghanistan, the new provincial coalition is believed to be providing sanctuary and support to the Taliban, now feared to be regrouping.[37]

Since late 2002, the Bush administration and Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai have been more openly critical of Pakistan's role in the war against terrorism. In January 2003 U.S. Ambassador to Islamabad Nancy Powell called Pakistan "a platform for terrorism."[38] U.S. military commanders have complained about the slow progress in cooperating with Pakistan in the search for fugitives across the border from Afghanistan. In April 2003 President Karzai presented President Musharraf with a list of Taliban commanders allegedly using Pakistan as a base for guerrilla operations against Afghanistan.[39] Tensions increased between Kabul and Islamabad in the summer and fall of 2003 as members of the Karzai government accused Pakistani officials of tacit support for the Taliban and other Islamic militants seeking to destabilize Afghanistan.[40] Musharraf, who has faced a series of death threats including two in December 2003 alone, has been under intense pressure from militant Islamists in Pakistan for his support for the U.S.-led war against the Taliban and now for his scrutiny of the role of Pakistani scientists in nuclear proliferation to Iran. In late September 2003, al-Qaeda issued a death threat against the Pakistani leader, and in a taped message, Osama bin Laden's deputy, Ayman Al-Zawahari, called for Muslims in Pakistan to "uproot" Musharraf for his betrayal of their interests.[41] Nevertheless, in January 2004, Pakistani Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali visited Kabul for the first time since the fall of the Taliban and pledged to improve cooperation with Afghanistan on antiterrorism.[42]

The security of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan also is important to efforts to reduce narcotics trafficking, an important revenue source for terrorist groups. The opium grown in Afghanistan and trafficked through Pakistan supplies 70 percent of the heroin sold in Europe and 40 percent of that sold in the United

States.[43] Despite ongoing U.S.-Pakistani cooperation against narcotics trafficking, drug control remains an uphill battle due to corruption implicating Pakistani intelligence services, the difficulty in policing the border with Afghanistan, and the postwar resumption of opium production in that country. Afghanistan produced 3,400 tons of opium in 2002 and is now the world's leading source of opium.[44] Despite President Karzai's imposition of a decree in January 2002 banning the cultivation, trafficking and abuse of opiates, opium production increased by 6 percent and poppy cultivation by 8 percent in 2003. While the UN, Great Britain, and other donors are assisting Afghanistan to implement a strategy banning opium cultivation within 10 years, currently the drug accounts for more than half of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) of $4.4 billion.[45]

The difficulty of establishing security on Afghanistan's borders points to a more fundamental problem: the central government under President Karzai has yet to establish effective control over the entire country, which continues to be threatened by warlordism and political disintegration. U.S. military and financial support for regional commanders during the 2001 war served to strengthen these leaders and, even after the Taliban's ouster, they continue to undermine central government authority.[46] While the warlords have access to customs revenues, the central government remains underfunded, compounding its weakness and reducing its public support. Despite American military efforts to stabilize southern Afghanistan, aid workers deem the region to insecure to visit. Moreover, this region has been impoverished by persistent droughts, prompting residents to choose opium production over livestock herding.[47]

In recognition of the continuing security problems in southern and eastern Afghanistan, in December 2003 Lieutenant General David Barno, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, announced that American troops will be deployed to those areas in provincial reconstruction teams (PRT). While the PRTs previously distributed emergency relief, now they will focus on improving security by patrolling, training the local police and Afghan security forces. Twelve PRTs will be in place by March 2004.[48]

Although the deployment of PRTs and the *loya jirga's* (grand

tribal council) approval of Afghanistan's new constitution on January 4, 2004, will contribute to the consolidation of control by the Karzai government, the Iraq war is diverting international attention (and funds) away from the country's needs. President Bush's $87 billion aid package for Iraq and Afghanistan allocated just $1.2 billion for security and reconstruction in Afghanistan, only $800 million of which is new money.[49] Moreover, the U.S. Government spends nearly ten times that amount--$11 billion--to maintain American forces in Afghanistan.[50] Members of Congress, the UN, and the Karzai government have been highly critical of what they view as inadequate U.S. efforts thus far to assist Afghanistan's recovery.[51] Indeed, the inability to stabilize Afghanistan serves to compound doubts that the much more complex tasks involved in achieving a secure and economically functional Iraq are likely to be achieved successfully. As one observer noted, "Afghanistan was not supposed to be simply a dress rehearsal for the invasion of Iraq. It was meant to be a premiere, the blueprint for how to rescue a failed state without colonizing it."[52]

The War in Iraq and U.S. Forward Basing Strategy.

After the conclusion of major combat operations in Iraq, Secretary Rumsfeld announced future changes in U.S. basing in the Middle East, including the withdrawal of troops from Saudi Arabia, the shift of the major air operations center from Saudi Arabia to Qatar, and the withdrawal of attack and support aircraft from Turkey.

The U.S. military has sought to relocate its combat air operations center from Saudi Arabia for some time, due to restrictions placed on operations originating there and concerns over the security of American troops stationed at the Prince Sultan base. The United States began using the al-Udeid base in Qatar on September 29, 2001, to position aircraft for use in the war in Afghanistan. In early 2002 the Air Force built a back-up command center at the base, in case Saudi Arabia refused to allow the United States to direct its Iraq installations from the Prince Sultan base. Initially used to direct air operations in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, al-Udeid now directs all regional missions. CENTCOM also established a regional

command post at Sayliya in Qatar, and the heavy equipment prepositioned there was shipped to Kuwait and then used in the Third Infantry Division's invasion of Iraq.[53]

On April 29, 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld and Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz held a news conference broadcast on Saudi television, announcing the withdrawal of the 5,000 American troops stationed there since the first Gulf War in 1991. With the demise of Saddam Hussein's regime, the U.S. rationale for its military mission in Saudi Arabia ended. Only a small training program involving approximately 500 American soldiers will remain near Riyadh. Despite the long-standing security relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia dating to World War II, increasingly Saudi leaders have seen the American military presence as a political liability. They claimed they would initiate democratic reforms upon the U.S. departure and, in fact, in October 2003 the Saudi government announced its intention to organize elections for local councils. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Qatar depends on U.S. security guarantees and has welcomed the increased U.S. military presence on its territory.[54]

The changes in U.S. basing in the Middle East, particularly in light of recent tensions between the United States and Turkey over the use of bases to support military operations in Iraq, could lead to a reappraisal of the role of Central Asian bases in U.S. policy towards the Middle East. Some have speculated that the United States might seek more permanent basing in Central Asia to support ongoing operations in Afghanistan,[55] a move likely to evoke opposition in Russia, as well as in China and Iran. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith has noted that post-Cold War conflicts require rapidly deployable forces since forward-deployed forces are not likely to be fighting where they are located. Citing the war in Afghanistan as an example of global power projection, Feith described how forces from bases in Europe and Asia used Central Asia as a beachhead for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.[56]

In general, the focus of U.S. basing strategy has shifted east, opening discussion of the merits of maintaining long-standing commitments to stationing forces in Western Europe and inviting speculation about new opportunities for basing in the Balkans, perceived as more convenient for operations in the Middle East.

Since 9/11, the U.S. military has reinvigorated its basing presence in a number of countries, including Pakistan, the Philippines, and Singapore, to support antiterrorism operations and other strategic goals in the Middle East.

Assuming a pro-American regime takes over Iraq in 2004-05, some speculation exists that the Pentagon may seek basing rights in Iraq. The Bagdad international airport, Tallil near An Nasiriyah in southern Iraq, the H-1 airstrip in the western desert, and the Bashur airfield in the Kurdish north have been mentioned among possible basing options.[57] Nevertheless, the political costs are likely to outweigh the military benefits of such a move---U.S. basing in Iraq could undermine the new government's efforts to achieve autonomy from the United States and may not be militarily necessary given other basing access in the region.

THE IRAQ WAR AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF U.S. BASING IN CENTRAL ASIA

Opposition to U.S. military intervention in Iraq may serve to undermine regional support for continued U.S. basing in Central Asia. With the exception of Uzbekistan, the Central Asian governments expressed concern that their military cooperation with the United States could lead them to be dragged into the conflict with Iraq and inflame domestic tensions as a result. Nevertheless, these governments have used the Iraq War, like the war on terrorism, as a pretext for further crackdowns against political opposition and Islamic activity.

Central Asian Views of the Iraq War.

With the exception of Uzbekistan, Central Asian leaders were critical of the U.S.-led military intervention in Iraq because of its potentially adverse impact on support for radical Islamic movements and terrorist groups within the region. Like other oil producers, some of Kazakhstan's initial concerns about U.S. military intervention in Iraq stemmed from fears that Iraqi oil would flood the market, lowering the price. In a March 2003 poll of residents of 10 major urban areas conducted by the Kazakh Association of

Sociologists and Political Scientists, 83.5 percent of respondents were against war in Iraq. Of those opposing intervention, 25 percent stated that they believed that the United States aimed to control Iraqi oil.[58] Kazakh military officials also feared that stray missiles or rogue aircraft could place their country at risk. Kazakhstan's air defenses were placed on alert during the Iraq war, and in one instance a U.S. plane was denied the right to fly through Kazakh air space from Karshi Khanabad to Ganci because it lacked proper authorization.[59]

Officials in Kyrgyzstan, a strong advocate of the primacy of the UN in conflict resolution, were concerned that the United States would seek to use the Ganci airbase to support operations in Iraq, provoking renewed terrorist activities in the region and destabilizing of the fragile peace in Afghanistan.[60] In the weeks leading up to the U.S. decision to intervene, some antiwar demonstrations took place in Kyrgyzstan, tacitly supported by the government, according to some reports.[61] The Kyrgyz parliament issued a statement on March 24, 2003, calling U.S. intervention in Iraq a violation of international law and appealing to the Bush administration to resolve the crisis in the UN Security Council. International Affairs Committee Chairman Alisher Abdimomunov noted that Kyrgyz officials were afraid that their country could get dragged into the conflict if planes based at Manas were sent to Iraq.[62] Although the American base commander insisted that Ganci was used exclusively to support the international antiterrorism coalition in Afghanistan, suspicions about U.S. intentions for use of Ganci may have contributed to Kyrgzystan's decision to grant Russia basing rights.

In Kyrgyzstan's more open society, some prominent opposition politicians, such as Topchubek Turgunaliev, head of the Erkindik Party, criticized the Kyrgyz government's opposition to the U.S.-led war in Iraq, which he viewed as a war of liberation against a despotic regime, a process he saw as equally necessary in Central Asia.[63] Nevertheless a poll by Expert in Bishkek and Osh in March 2003 revealed pervasive distrust of U.S. motives in the Iraq War, with 42 percent attributing the American military intervention to Washington's interest in controlling Iraqi oil, and 14 percent stating that the action was taken to reinforce U.S. authority in the world. Some 66 percent of urban residents wanted their country to remain neutral.[64]

Like Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan's leaders feared a resurgence of Islamic radicalism and terrorist activities in Afghanistan as a result of the Iraq war. Given the precarious balance between religion and secularism achieved by Tajikistan's coalition government since the civil war ended in 1997, U.S. intervention in Iraq had the potential to destabilize the domestic situation in Tajikistan as well.[65] Both countries also stood to lose international assistance, as international attention was diverted by major reconstruction tasks in Iraq.[66] Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov called for a rapid end to hostilities in Iraq for fear of a new humanitarian crisis in the region.[67]

Although Uzbekistan refrained from providing any military support for the U.S.-led war in Iraq, Uzbek media consistently reinforced American positions regarding Iraq's possession of WMD. Ironically, the authoritarian regime in Tashkent cited Saddam's Hussein's despotic rule and human rights abuses as a further rationale for military intervention in Iraq.[68] In a meeting of the U.S.-Uzbekistan Security Council in April, Uzbek officials offered to help with reconstruction in Iraq.

While public opinion in Kazakhstan opposed the war, after the U.S. invasion President Narsultan Nazarbaev was quick to praise American efforts in the war against terrorism. Kazakhstan became the first Central Asian country to send a peacekeeping unit: on August 20, 2003, 27 of its citizens traveled to Iraq to help with demining and water extraction, Kazakhstan's first peacekeeping mission ever.[69] The Kazakh government is considering increasing this force.

After the conclusion of major hostilities in Iraq, Central Asians remain skeptical about the benefits of the Iraq war for the Iraqi people and especially for themselves. A June-July 2003 State Department poll of urban residents in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan showed little optimism about the broader regional consequences of the war. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, more respondents stated they did not believe the Iraq war would result in regional stability (46 percent in Kazakhstan, 42 percent in Kyrgyzstan, and 31 percent in Tajikistan, while just 29 percent, 27 percent, and 10 percent, respectively, saw improved prospects for stability in the Near East). Respondents in Uzbekistan

were most sanguine: 40 percent saw improved stability, while 20 percent did not.[70] While majorities or pluralities expressed support for humanitarian aid, they also stated that the UN (rather than the United States) should be in charge. Respondents overwhelmingly disapproved of their own countries contributing troops to the peacekeeping effort in Iraq.[71] This was especially clear in the case of Kazakhstan, where 77 percent of those polled were opposed to sending peacekeepers, compared to just 10 percent in favor, an indication of a public at odds with the government's decision to contribute men to this effort.

The Iraq War and Islamic Terrorism in Central Asia.

There is some evidence, since the onset of the Iraq war, of expanding political activities in Central Asia by pan-Islamic movements such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir and of an effort by the IMU to reactivate their organization in the region, although regional analysts dispute the latter.[72] Hizb-ut-Tahrir also was important in anti-war protests in Muslim states outside the region, such as Indonesia, inviting the possibility that shared opposition to the Iraq war may contribute to inter-regional networking between radical Islamic movements in Central Asia and in other countries.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which first emerged among Palestinians in Jordan in the early 1950s, has a radical political ideology---the formation of a pan-Islamic state that would replace existing regimes in the Muslim world and recreate the Caliphate---but eschews violence. The group primarily focuses on propaganda activities, through the distribution of leaflets and, increasingly, internet use. Despite the group's rejection of violent change, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) accuses Hizb-ut-Tahrir of forming links with separatist fighters in Chechnya, as well as with the IMU.[73] Central Asian security forces and Hizb-ut-Tahrir have exaggerated the membership in the organization for their own purposes. According to the International Crisis Group, a human rights organization that has done extensive research on Hizb-ut-Tahrir, the group is unlikely to have more than 20,000 members throughout the region. Other analysts put the group's membership at 10,000.[74]

The International Crisis Group (ICG) acknowledges that some

Hizb-ut-Tahrir members, particularly in Uzbekistan, are dissatisfied with the group's position on nonviolence, and other regional observers have noted that the Iraq War led to some discussion about the need for a more radical approach to broaden the group's appeal.[75] These appear to be a minority, and Hizb-ut-Tahrir continues to pursue a gradualist program, involving missionary work, such as the distribution of print, audio, and video materials about the group.[76] Moreover, ICG downplays the prospect of any meaningful cooperation between Hizb-ut-Tahrir and other groups, such as the IMU, since its interventions in Kyrgyzstan and routing in Afghanistan proved it to be an incompetent fighting force.[77]

Hizb-ut-Tahrir attracted the largest following in Uzbekistan (approximately 7,000) because it represented the only serious opposition group. After the Karimov regime undertook a major campaign against the group in 1998, mass arrests and show trials took place. Some 4,200 Hizb-ut-Tahrir members were in prison as of December 2002, though the party itself claims that more than 8,000 of its members did jail time at one point or another.[78] According to Human Rights Watch, authorities in Uzbekistan tend to charge religious activists with subversion or antistate activity, punishable with 20 years in prison. The group documented more than 100 cases of torture used against such prisoners in 2002 alone.[79]

In Tajikistan, membership in Hizb-ut-Tahrir is likely to be in the low thousands, according to the ICG.[80] Since 1998, 600 Hizb-ut-Tahrir members have been arrested in Tajikistan and are serving prison terms of 10-15 years for inciting religious hatred, seeking to overthrow the constitutional order, and belonging to a criminal organization.[81] Since the beginning of 2003, more than 20 Hizb-ut-Tahrir activists have been detained in Tajikistan's Sughd Oblast, and two underground printing operations, with computer facilities likely to have been obtained through foreign support, were discovered there.[82] While previously Hizb-ut-Tahrir activities were concentrated in areas bordering Uzbekistan, authorities in Tajikistan are now concerned that the group's influence is spreading southward.[83]

Kazakhstan has relatively few Hizb-ut-Tahrir members, probably no more than a couple of hundred since the group first appeared in 2000.[84] Most of the membership is concentrated in the south of the country. After the onset of the Iraq War, Hizb-ut-Tahrir leaflets in

Kazakh advocating war against the United States were delivered to mailboxes in Shymkent, the South Kazakhstan oblast administrative center. A number of arrests have been made in the oblast for illegal religious activities, including by foreign preachers.[85]

In Kyrgyzstan, Hizb-ut-Tahrir has a membership of 1,000-2,000, according to the ICG.[86] Estimates from Kyrgyz government sources vary widely, from 2,000 (National Security Board) to 3,000-5,000 (Committee on Religious Affairs),[87] with some sources projecting more than 10,000 (Interior Ministry). While the group's activities have mostly been confined to the south of the country, more recently reports have been that Hizb-ut-Tahrir's following had expanded to the north. In the first 6 months of 2003, some 18 activists were apprehended in the north of Kyrgyzstan, in the Chui, Issyk-Kul, and Talas regions.[88] During the same period, law enforcement officials placed a total of 1,500 citizens under observation for their role in disseminating Hizb-ut-Tahrir materials. According to First Deputy Prime Minister Kurmanbek Osmonov, who is also Kyrgyzstan's Justice Minister, Hizb-ut-Tahrir wanted to seize power in Kyrgyzstan and, to this end, had been expanding "its spying and propaganda activities." The group was focusing its efforts on recruiting young people and was forging alliances with other opposition groups, as well as the IMU and Uighur organizations.[89]

Osmonov claimed that Kyrgyzstan's unduly liberal laws and weakly coordinated security agencies make it difficult to prosecute members of the group, while human rights organizations, such as the Geneva-based World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), allege that Hizb-ut-Tahrir members in Kyrgyzstan "are being targeted for their religious and political beliefs, [and] subjected to harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, ill-treatment, and potentially torture."[90] OMCT claims that repression of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir party has increased in Kyrgyzstan since the beginning of 2003, notably in the period prior to and during the conflict in Iraq. The OMCT sent an open letter to Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev on June 24, 2003, calling for an end to official harassment of Hizb-ut-Tahrir members.

Thus Central Asian regimes consider independent Islamic expressions as a political threat and target them widely even though there is little support for a greater role for Islam in these societies. A poll of elites in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan revealed

that 80 percent in each country believed that Islam's role should remain the same (70 percent in Uzbekistan, 49 percent in Kyrgyzstan, 59 percent in Kazakhstan) or be reduced (19 percent in Uzbekistan, 32 percent in Kyrgyzstan, 21 percent in Kazakhstan).[91] Nevertheless, repression of Islamist activity, mass arrests, and mistreatment of prisoners has deepened mistrust between the population and the authorities. As a result, Islamist groups may gain greater support in the absence of other means of channeling political support and in the face of mounting discontent with the pervasive corruption of the Central Asian governments.[92] The U.S. commitment to maintaining and expanding basing in the region puts the United States in the position of appearing to side with weakening authoritarian states seeking to repress societal challenges.

RENEWED GREAT POWER RIVALRY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Regional powers such as Russia and China tolerated U.S. military presence in Central Asia because of its clear role in supporting the war in Afghanistan and the struggle against terrorism in the region. With the end of combat operations in Afghanistan, and especially in light of opposition in Russia and China to the U.S.-led war in Iraq, a long-term U.S. military presence in Central Asia is likely to become a source of friction in U.S. relations with Russia and China. One year after the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, Russia and China have taken steps to reassert their own military presence in Central Asia and to promote regional security cooperation. Moreover, other regional powers--particularly India--have become more active in developing security relations with the Central Asian states. While activities by these powers in the region do not necessarily run at cross purposes with U.S. security interests there in the short run, a long-term American military presence may contribute to a more intensified struggle for influence among regional powers.

Russia's Reaction to Expanding U.S. Influence.

Despite its initial acquiescence to a temporary U.S. military role in Central Asia, of all the regional powers, Russia is the least comfortable with a long-term U.S. military presence in what Russian

officials continue to regard as their sphere of influence. With the election of a more nationalistic State Duma in December 2003, this trend is likely to accelerate. In January 2004, for example, Secretary of State Colin Powell's comments in Moscow about the Pentagon's plans to shift U.S. military bases eastward led to speculation in the Russian media that the Washington would seek permanent bases in the Caucasus in Central Asia. Although Powell contended the United States would only establish "temporary facilities," many Russian observers remained skeptical about American long-term intentions.[93]

Thus far President Putin has accentuated the positive, indicating his support for U.S. actions against the Taliban as well as Russia's readiness to cooperate further with the United States in Central Asia, leaving his ministers to voice Russian displeasure.[94] In the past year, several top Russian officials have indicated their opposition to the indefinite stationing of U.S. military personnel on Central Asian soil. Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov stated that Russia expected U.S. forces to withdraw as soon as the mission in Afghanistan was completed.[95] Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov called for the UN to regulate the time frame for the U.S. military presence in the region, which he stated should be strictly linked to the international peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan.[96] According to First Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov, a former director of Russia's foreign intelligence service (SVR), the U.S. military bases in the region are redundant, given Russia's key security role in the region, and can only be viewed as stabilizing insofar as they contribute to ongoing antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan.[97] Long-standing opponents of the U.S. military presence in Central Asia, such as Chief General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin, assert that Washington is using the war on terror as a cover for its aim to expand its control over Central Asian energy resources and interfere in the domestic politics of the region.[98]

To counter American influence in Central Asia, Russia has taken a series of steps in the past year to strengthen its bilateral and regional security cooperation in the region and to enhance Russian control over Central Asian energy flows. In a reminder that Soviet conceptions of spheres of influence die hard, at an October 9, 2003,

press conference, Ivanov revised the January 2000 National Security Concept, known as the "Putin Doctrine," to allow for Russian military intervention in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to resolve disputes should negotiations fail. Ivanov had already stated on October 2, 2003, that Moscow did not exclude the possibility of preemptive strikes to defend Russia's interests or those of its allies. At the same October 9 conference, held in honor of German Prime Minister Gerhard Schroeder's visit, Putin further asserted Russia's intention to maintain its control over the energy pipeline network in Central Asia, which he characterized as a key Russian national interest.[99] According to a September 2003 agreement on the creation of the Single Economic Space, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus agreed to give up some of their sovereign rights to a supranational body in which Russia has the largest bloc of votes.

The American military foothold in Central Asia made the strengthening of CIS institutions all the more urgent. Although Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Armenia, and Belarus signed a collective security treaty (CST) in 1992, it was not until May 14, 2002, that the members agreed to enhance coordination and integration among their militaries by forming a Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), modeled on NATO. At the CSTO Defense Ministers' meeting in October 2002, the group placed a priority on improving collective defense by establishing a rapid reaction force in Central Asia, with an aviation component stationed at the Kant airbase in Kyrgyzstan. The current force numbers 1,500, but is expected to double in 2004. Most CSTO members will assign one battalion each, with Tajikistan contributing two.[100] Located 20 km from Bishkek, the Kant aviation force is comprised of Russian aircraft (including 5 SU-25 ground-attack planes, 5 SU-27 fighter aircraft, 4 L-39 trainer aircraft, Il-76, Il-18, An-12, and An-24 military transport aircraft, and 2 Mi-8 helicopters) and currently is supported by 400 Russian troops, who have relocated with their families.[101] The number is expected to grow to 500, but the facility could accommodate a much larger group of forces.[102]

In the Soviet era, Kant served as the Soviet Air Force's main aviation personnel training ground. Russia is now funding the reopened base completely, while providing another $3 million

in small arms and other equipment to Kyrgyzstan.[103] Part of Kyrgyzstan's outstanding debt to Russia will apply to the development of infrastructure at the airbase.[104] Thus far Moscow has allocated 79 million rubles to the reconstruction of the Kant base, out of a total of 219 million required.[105] Beginning in January 2004, all CSTO members will also have the opportunity to purchase Russian weapons at domestic prices.[106]

The base is to provide air support to Russia's 201st division stationed in Tajikistan. Although the Kant facility is supposed to be a component of the Collective Security Organization's Rapid Deployment Forces, officially base personnel belong to Russia's Urals Air Force and Air Defense Army. Lieutenant General Albert Druzhinin, director of the Russian Defense Ministry's Administration for Military Cooperation with CIS Member States, noted that the stationing of Russian forces would enable Russia to carry out missions on the territories of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. It is unclear whether the consent of these countries would be required.[107] In talks with President Akaev regarding the opening of the base, Putin noted Central Asia's importance to Russia. "While the situation there is stable, it is not simple. Our military presence is something both we and our CIS partners need," said Putin.[108] After some delay, the Kant airbase opened officially on October 23, 2003, the first time Russia has acquired a new base since the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the opening, Putin stated that the new airbase would help "strengthen the security of a region whose stability is a growing factor in the international situation."[109] The base will operate for 15 years and the lease could then be renewed in 5-year increments.[110]

In contrast to the Kant base in Kyrgyzstan, negotiations regarding permanent basing in Tajikistan have been proceeding with difficulty. For some time Russia has sought basing rights for the 201st Motorized Rifle Division stationed in Tajikistan, but the two countries have yet to reach agreement.[111] In September 2003, Major General Nuralisho Nazarov, first deputy chairman of the Tajik Border Protection Committee, announced that the 201st Division, which patrols the border with Afghanistan, is no longer needed, and that local troops could do job instead.[112] While officials in Dushanbe

disavowed the statement, the 10-year agreement between Tajikistan and Russia regarding the stationing of the division expired in May 2003 and terms for its extension remain under discussion. Now that Tajikistan has joined NATO's Partnership for Peace and has been expanding security ties with a variety of states, including the United States, France, and India, Dushanbe has proven to be a harder bargainer. Although Lieutenant General Aleksandr Markin, the new Commander of the 201st Division, stated that he expected Russian forces to remain in Tajikistan for the next 10-15 years, mostly to combat drug trafficking,[113] a number of issues cloud the Russian-Tajik security agenda. In particular, Tajikistan is displeased with the 50-50 cost sharing for the division and wants Tajik forces to be included in meetings between Russian and Afghan border troops.[114]

In contrast to Tajikistan, which has proven to be less compliant than expected in recent months, Putin has hailed Kazakhstan as "Russia's closest and most consistent ally."[115] Indeed Russia has had long-standing security interests in Kazakhstan, particularly nonproliferation and the security of nuclear facilities located in the country. The Russian uranium industry depends on uranium and other products from Kazakhstan and Russia leases the Baikonur cosmodrome.[116] Moreover, Kazakhstan has been the most active participant in CIS training exercises in the Caspian. A defense agreement with Russia signed in June 2003 provides for training for Kazakh officers at Russian military institutes. Some 800 servicemen from Kazakhstan now train in Russia, one-third of all CIS military personnel receiving training in the country.[117]

The main problem for Russia in Central Asia has always been Uzbekistan, which remains outside CIS security structures and is a member of the pro-American GUUAM (an organization made up of Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova, and using the first initial of each country to make up the name). With Uzbekistan's acceptance of U.S. and German bases on its territory and support for the U.S. war in Iraq, Russian officials have had more reason to be concerned regarding their loss of influence with President Karimov. This may be one reason for the sudden decision to shift the location of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's new antiterrorism center from Bishkek to Tashkent. Russia's main

leverage in Uzbekistan, as elsewhere in Central Asia, continues to be its influence over the region's energy resources. While less than pleased with the new Russian base at Kant, Uzbek officials have been seeking Gazprom's investment in exploring new gas fields in the country and in modernizing its pipeline network.[118]

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the two main powers in Central Asia, and rivals for influence in the region, have been the most wary of the new competition for influence there between the United States and Russia. For poorer and smaller Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, increased attention from Washington and Moscow means more resources and an improved bargaining position. To stay in the good graces of both benefactors, the Kyrgyz government has accentuated the need for Russian-American cooperation in Central Asia.[119] President Akaev insists that his country has no intention playing Russia and United States against each other, and that, to the contrary, Kyrgyzstan has an interest in friendly relations both with Russia and the United States.[120] Despite Russian concerns about its declining influence in Central Asia against a background of rising U.S. clout, CSTO Secretary-General Nikolai Bordyuzha pledged his intention to cooperate with NATO, the UN, and the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in regional antiterrorism and drug interdiction activities and proposed that Kyrgyzstan could be a model for such security cooperation.[121] The United States and Russia already cooperate in the region via the Caucasus and Central Asia subgroup of the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism.

China, the Uighur Issue, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

While Russian-American competition for influence is a relatively new phenomenon in Central Asia, China and Russia have been eyeing each other warily in the region for decades. Even as Russian-Chinese relations evolved into a strategic partnership by the mid-1990s and the need for confidence-building along the border between China and the countries of the former Soviet Union led to the creation of the Shanghai 5 mechanism (the precursor to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization formed in 2001 by Russia, China,

and its three Central Asian neighbors, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, plus Uzbekistan), Russian officials have reacted coolly to China's attempts to expand its influence in Central Asia.

Now that its borders with its Central Asian neighbors have been demarcated, for the most part, China has two primary interests in Central Asia: economic cooperation, particularly in the energy sector, and antiterrorism--both of which have important political, economic, and security implications for the development of China's West, particularly Xinjiang province. Trade between China and Central Asian states has grown steadily during the past decade, but remains small--total turnover between China and all five Central Asian states was less than $30 billion in 2000.[122] Cooperation in the energy sector, however, promises to create long-term economic links between China and Kazakhstan, in particular. China has been a net energy importer since 1993 and is seeking to diversify its supply. While projects in Kazakhstan have faced many obstacles, Chinese companies are seeking to expand their investments in the country and to move forward with long-standing pipeline projects. In an indication of Kazakhstan's importance to Chinese foreign policy, the country was one of the three that China's new president Hu Jintao chose to visit during his first foreign tour in June 2003.[123]

Since the Central Asian states achieved independence, Chinese policymakers have been concerned that Uighur separatists, struggling for greater autonomy in Xinjiang, would seek to use neighboring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as staging grounds for their activities, and that Islamist militants in the region would radicalize the Uighur opposition movement. Consequently, even before 9/11, Chinese leaders made cooperation against terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism a fundamental aspect of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Central Asian states. These efforts have found resonance with Central Asian leaders, who define radical Islamic opposition movements broadly to justify crackdowns on domestic dissent.

Since 9/11, however, Chinese officials have sought to gain greater international legitimacy for their efforts to crack down on Uighur separatists. On December 15, 2003, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security formally identified four Uighur organizations as

terrorist as well as the names of 11 wanted Uighur terrorists, the first such "terrorist list" provided by the agency. The list includes the Xinjiang-based Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (which the United States and the UN agreed last year to designate as a terrorist organization at China's behest), the Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization (founded in Turkey in 1996), the World Uighur Youth Congress (founded in Munich, Germany, in 1996), and the East Turkestan Information Center (also founded in Munich in 1996, with an office in Washington, DC).[124] Many international observers dispute Chinese claims linking these groups to terrorism.[125] For their part, Uighur activists contend that Chinese ambitions in Central Asia pose the greatest threat to the region, not Islamic militants.[126] To refute such claims, in May 2003 the Chinese government issued a White Paper on Xinjiang, which denounces separatist claims, while asserting the legitimacy of China's sovereignty over the province and portraying the region's inhabitants as living in prosperity and ethnic harmony.[127]

International observers have speculated for some time about China's purpose in raising the alarm about Uighur terrorism since 9/11. According to retired GRU (the Soviet military's main intelligence service) officer Vladimir Suvurov, Kazakhstan allows some Uighur separatist organizations to operate legally as a hedge against possible future Chinese territorial ambitions. He noted that the Soviet Union helped set up the United Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan in Almaty in 1975--during the heyday of Sino-Soviet confrontation--as a means of subverting Xinjiang.[128] Other analysts argue that China exaggerates the connections between Uighur groups and terrorist activities as a means of preventing them from attracting sympathy in Central Asia and pressuring the leaders there to crack down on the organizations.[129]

According to the *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, Beijing has come to view the Uighur movement as a threat to its political security because these groups, many of which are based overseas, have the potential to question the legitimacy of ethnic integration in China. While questions remain regarding the intensity of the terrorist threat the Chinese government claims the aforementioned Uighur organizations pose, there is no denying the seriousness with which

Beijing approaches the issue. In response to the "Uighur threat," the Ministry of Public Security has established three criteria for identifying a terrorist organization (which may be based in China or overseas): 1) using violent means to harm national security; 2) disrupting social stability; and, 3) harming the lives, property, and security of the Chinese people. Chinese intelligence services reportedly have also stepped up their efforts to infiltrate the Uighur groups in Xinjiang.[130]

China views its bilateral relations with its Central Asian states as a key component of its antiterrorism strategy. The Chinese government has signed agreements with all of its Central Asian neighbors pledging cooperation in fighting terrorism, extremism, and separatism. On October 10-11, 2002, China participated in joint antiterrorism exercises in Kyrgyzstan, the first time the Chinese military has ever taken part in such an activity on foreign soil. China also has begun providing military aid to Kazakhstan, pledging $3.5 million to the country's army in December 2002, as well as more limited aid to Kyrgyzstan. In December 2002, China and Kazakhstan also signed an agreement on preventing dangerous military activities near their borders. Displaying Chinese concern regarding the expansion of U.S. and NATO security interests in the region, this agreement obligates China and Kazakhstan to share information regarding the conduct of military exercises and other military activities on their borders.[131]

More than any other member, China has pinned its hopes of regional influence, particularly over the development of a regional antiterrorism capacity, on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). According to Pan Guang, Director of the Center of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Studies of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, the SCO's failure thus far to meet expectations was the logical outcome of a number of factors. He noted that it was understandable that the United States sought leadership of the antiterrorism struggle in Central Asia in response to an attack against American interests. Furthermore, Pan Guang pointed out that the SCO was not yet operational on 9/11 and, in any case, is not a military organization. Moreover, SCO members belong to different collective security organizations, including the CIS and NATO, and

faced different requests for assistance from the United States.[132] Despite its marginal contribution to the antiterrorism struggle to date, Chinese officials and scholars continue to hail the SCO's promise as a regional security organization.

After signing a charter in June 2002 and agreeing in June 2003 to set up a permanent secretariat in Beijing and an antiterrorism center in Bishkek (since transferred to Tashkent), the SCO has finally moved forward with some activities. In January 2004 the Secretariat formally opened in Beijing and the executive committee for the regional antiterrorism center also began work in Tashkent, although the official opening will not be until later in the spring.[133]

On August 6-13, 2003, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan held a two-phase joint military exercise in Kazakhstan's Ucharal, on the Chinese border, and in Ili, in China's Xinjiang province. More than 1,000 troops from the five countries took part in "Coalition 2003," the first multilateral military exercise carried out by the SCO.[134] Uzbekistan declined to participate, focusing instead on its own exercises in the Surkhandarya region, near the border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.[135] Kazakhstan, which also took part in the Steppe Eagle-2003 exercises with NATO, has stated that it opposes further large-scale military exercises under the auspices of the SCO, which may create a "mistaken impression" in the international community.[136]

A New Role for India.

Great power competition for influence in Central Asia is nothing new, but since 9/11 the number of participants in the "Great Game" has increased. Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan are members of the Central Asian Economic Cooperation Organization, which is focusing on rebuilding Afghanistan. India has emerged as a new player in Central Asia's regional security and is building its first military base outside the subcontinent, 10km northeast of the Tajik capital of Dushanbe. Indian troops will be stationed at the base to provide training and protect India's expanding energy interests in Central Asia.[137] On August 2-5, 2003, India and Tajikistan conducted their first joint staff and airborne military antiterrorism training exercises

at the Fakhrobod training camp south of Dushanbe.

India first became involved in Central Asian security during the 2001 war in Afghanistan by opening a hospital in Farkhor, Tajikistan, which was later moved to Afghanistan after the establishment of the Karzai government. As a result, Tajikistan became India's point of entry into the region and Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes has sought to build on the relationship to develop military-to-military ties.[138]

There are some natural affinities since Tajikistan uses Soviet military equipment, long the staple of the Indian military, and the two countries share overlapping geopolitical concerns regarding neighboring Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan. In the coming year, India will train more of Tajikistan's military personnel than will Russia. While 600 cadets from Tajikistan now study in Russia; in 2004, just 30 will be sent there, compared to 40 in India. Nevertheless, Tajikistan's Defense Minister Zarubiddin Sirodzhev claims that Russia remains his country's strategic partner,[139] and, in fact, both India and Russia now point to Central Asia as an area of cooperation. During the Russian President's December 2002 visit to India, Vladimir Putin and Atal Behari Vajpayee decided to form a joint working group on terrorism and noted the importance of stability in Central Asia.

Despite its initial focus on Tajikistan, India is interested in expanding its security cooperation with other Central Asian states. India and Kazakhstan signed an inter-governmental agreement on fighting terrorism. Uzbekistan produces and repairs Il-78 MAR transport aircraft for the Indian military. India has also been lobbying for membership in the SCO, with Russia's support.

While India and China have been improving their relations in recent months, China has not welcomed Indian efforts to join the SCO, and, in many respects the two neighbors are squaring off as competitors in Central Asia. Indian business views the region as a potential market for India's strongest sectors, such as pharmaceuticals and information technology, as well as consumer goods, which would provide an alternative to the widely available low-end Chinese products. India's political leaders also are keen to promote their model of democratic development in Central Asia both

to prevent the spread of Islamist terrorist movements, with roots in Pakistan, and to counter Chinese efforts to encircle India through strategic cooperation with its neighbors. Russia has supported greater Indian involvement in Central Asia, in part to check China's effort to expand its economic and political influence in the region.

THE BROADER POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF U.S. SECURITY COOPERATION WITH CENTRAL ASIA

Expanding U.S. engagement with Central Asia has done little to promote democratization in the region. To the contrary, Central Asian governments (especially Uzbekistan) have interpreted their new significance to the war on terrorism as carte blanche to repress domestic opponents. Commitment to democratization in Iraq, while relying on authoritarian Muslim regimes elsewhere to prosecute the war on terrorism, reveals inconsistencies in U.S. policy that have not been lost on increasingly skeptical Central Asian publics. While Central Asian support for operations in Afghanistan remain important for antiterrorism operations in that country, human security problems are the most significant for regional stability within Central Asia and the U.S. Army should do more to address these needs.

Human Rights Implications.

In contrast to previous administrations, which have viewed the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict as the key to fundamental change in the Middle East, the Bush administration has focused on antiterrorism and nonproliferation, with the broader aim of spurring a process of democratization throughout the region. The Muslim states of Central Asia have played an important supporting role, by facilitating the routing of al-Qaeda from Afghanistan, but because of their strategic importance in this respect, their own serious lapses in human rights largely have been overlooked. Much like the Cold War era, when the United States cooperated with authoritarian states against communist regimes, today the United States distinguishes between rogue states, destined for regime change and requiring democratization, and coalition partners, such as the Central Asian

states, equally far from the democratic standard.

Uzbekistan has been an especially egregious example of the double standard in U.S. foreign policy. By law, the State Department must demonstrate that Uzbekistan is making progress in human rights and democratization for it to continue to receive U.S. assistance. Human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch have sharply criticized the State Department's evaluation of progress in Uzbekistan and pointed out that significant setbacks outweigh limited progress achieved, particularly regarding the use of torture and religious and political persecution.[140]

In recognition of Uzbekistan's failure to improve its human rights record, in January 2004 the State Department refused, for the first time, to provide the certification required to release assistance for nonproliferation programs under the Nunn-Lugar Act, a move that reportedly angered the Karimov government. Although the State Department finally called attention to Uzbekistan's lack of progress towards its human rights commitments, this was largely a formality because the Nunn-Lugar legislation included a provision for a waiver in case national security considerations outweighed human rights concerns. Since Uzbekistan produces uranium, necessary for nuclear weapons production, President Bush waived the human rights certification.[141] The remainder of security assistance programs for Uzbekistan, provided under other legislation, require additional State Department certification in the spring of 2004, which is likely to be granted.

Other states have followed the U.S. lead in focusing on antiterrorism in policy towards Central Asia. British Ambassador Craig Murray found himself in political trouble in London after making a controversial speech accusing President Karimov's government of boiling two political opponents to death.[142] Murray returned to London briefly, allegedly for medical reasons, amid reports that the British government wanted him to resign because his straight talk was causing tensions with Washington. Ultimately Murray returned to his post in Uzbekistan.

Now that the United States and the UN have recognized the East Turkestan Liberation Movement as a terrorist group, Chinese authorities have been pursuing Uighur activists within Central Asia

as a part of their crackdown on Uighur terrorism. Human rights groups contend that Central Asian governments have allowed the Chinese to deport Uighur residents without due process. While the Central Asian states have signed extradition treaties with China, deported Uighurs are likely to be subject to unfair trials, and possibly torture and execution.[143]

Central Asian leaders learn from such behavior that as long as they can play a key part in the struggle of the great powers against terrorism, their patrons will pay lip service to democratization and will not require them to carry out their pledges for political reform. This carries a political price--if Central Asian elites expressed some skepticism about the real motivations of the United States in the Iraq war, in part this can be attributed to the inconsistency between stated U.S. policy goals of economic and political reform in Central Asia and the *realpolitik* driving relations. According to a December 2003 International Crisis Group study, few in Central Asia believed that bringing democracy to Iraq was a real goal of the U.S.-led war (6.4 percent in Uzbekistan, 11.6 percent in Tajikistan, and 4.3 percent in Kyrgyzstan).[144] Thus, 2 years into the war on terrorism, Central Asians have concluded that the U.S. commitment to democracy lags far behind the priority placed on antiterrorism cooperation with authoritarian leaders in the region and on its own strategic interests in securing access to oil supplies.[145]

A REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR HUMAN SECURITY

While the Bush Administration continues to view its Central Asia policy within the prism of the global war on terrorism, many U.S. experts dispute that terrorism is the primary security concern in the region. Instead of focusing on the potential for a resurgent IMU or a violent Hizb-ut-Tahrir, they note that underlying problems in Central Asia, particularly severe poverty in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, narcotics trafficking fueled by corrupt regimes throughout the region, the potential for conflict among the Central Asian states themselves over scarce water supplies and other resources, and the prospect of radicalized populations in the face of the refusal of regional governments to allow citizens greater public participation and accountability could create the conditions for state

failure in which terrorist groups thrive.[146]

Phil Williams, contributing to a RAND study on faultlines in Central Asia, writes of a "criminalizing syndrome" that risks radicalizing an increasingly impoverished and alienated population. The criminalization of the socio-economic environment results from the involvement of the Central Asian states in drug trafficking, the intrusiveness of organized crime in these societies, the scale of the shadow economies in the region, and the prevalence of corruption.[147] The Central Asian states rank among the most corrupt, according to Transparency International's 2003 survey of 133 countries. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan rank 100th, while Kyrgyzstan is 118th, and Tajikistan is 124th.[148]

While the U.S. Government does provide assistance for a variety of socio-economic programs for Central Asia, this has not translated into greater influence over political and economic change in these governments.[149] Moreover, Central Asians remain skeptical that such assistance will benefit them given the pervasive corruption and lack of accountability of their governments. The December 2003 ICG study notes that disappointment with donor aid fuels anti-Western feeling in the region. The group's public opinion polling reveals that significant numbers of Central Asians fear that Western assistance has little positive impact or is being misappropriated (30.1 percent in Uzbekistan, 54 percent in Tajikistan, 27 percent in Kyrgyzstan.)[150]

The focus of U.S. security cooperation, on bilateral relations with the five Central Asian states, faces a conceptual problem. On the one hand, U.S. policy is too narrow, failing to take into account the interconnection between these states and their neighbors in the south Caucasus, South Asia, Iran, Turkey, and western China. In effect, a "greater Central Asia" needs to be the focus of U.S. policy efforts.[151] Thus, without rebuilding the economy of Afghanistan, narcotics trafficking will continue to threaten Central Asian regimes. Sanctuaries for terrorists in Pakistan will destabilize Afghanistan, as well as its Central Asian neighbors. Lack of progress towards democracy in China will reinforce similar trends in Central Asia.

On the other hand, U.S. policy falls short of addressing the real security needs of Central Asian citizens, typically left unprotected from the predation of their own rent-seeking regimes. In contrast to

the U.S. focus on terrorist threats to the Central Asian states, placing a priority on cooperation with the leadership of these countries, the UN Commission on Human Security advocates a policy framework that pays attention to the security of individuals and communities. Based on the principles of the 1994 UN Human Development Report, calling for freedom from fear and freedom from want, the UN commission notes that Central Asians face a series of simultaneous, interrelated political, economic, social, environmental, and military security threats. To address the region's human security needs, the commission argues that the policy agenda must recognize the interconnectedness of these threats and take a long-term holistic approach to them.[152]

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S. ARMY

Prior to 9/11, former CENTCOM head General Anthony Zinni found himself advocating greater involvement in Central Asia than policymakers in Washington were prepared to accept, because he saw the importance of stability in these states for the region as a whole.[153] Currently, as American and NATO operations in Afghanistan continue, the United States faces an open-ended commitment to the stability of the Central Asian region.[154] This is part of general trend toward an expansion of the military's role in regional diplomacy. Increasingly the U.S. military finds itself employed in ostensibly political-diplomatic missions, leading the Pentagon to consider creating a military force dedicated to stability and reconstruction operations.[155]

Notwithstanding the strategic importance of Central Asia as a frontline for operations in Afghanistan, the U.S. military presence in the Central Asian states has consequences of its own for regional stability. The Manas base was already the target of a terrorist attack, foiled by security authorities in Kyrgyzstan in November 2003.[156]

The Iraq War complicates the U.S. military's task in Central Asia by undermining support for the United States among Central Asian publics and elites, and by reducing resources available to complete the mission in Afghanistan, the success of the latter itself of critical importance for Central Asian security. To avoid contributing to the

further radicalization of the population, the U.S. military needs to focus more attention and resources on regional human security needs.[157] While there are limits to what can be done in the absence of a policy framework that is more attuned to the societal underpinnings of terrorism and state failure, the U.S. Army could devote greater attention and resources to two programs with important human security consequences: demining and training in drug interdiction.

In response to attacks by the IMU in 1999 and 2000, Uzbekistan unilaterally mined its borders with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Another 16,000 mines were emplaced in Tajikistan during the 1992-97 civil war.[158] The mines along the borders between Uzbekistan and its neighbors pose a direct threat to civilians living in impoverished peripheries such as Kyrygzstan's Ferghana valley, where radical Islamist groups have made inroads. Civilians require access to these areas for pastureland and wood, as well as to visit relatives across the border. The economic damage is estimated to be almost $150,000, according to the United Nations.[159] The mines have killed more than 200 civilians since 2000, while maiming hundreds more.

The OSCE and the Swiss Foundation for mine action have just initiated a project in Tajikistan to clear mines from 2,500 square km of land and 700 km of roads at a cost of 500,000 euros.[160] Tajikistan estimates that it would require an additional $13.6 million to eliminate the remainder of the mines on its territory.[161]

The United States does not yet offer humanitarian mining assistance to Central Asia. The U.S. Army's participation in such a program would contribute greatly to human security in the region and provide tangible evidence to the population of the positive role the U.S. military can play in improving regional stability for ordinary citizens.

Moreover, a demining program focusing on the mines unilaterally laid by Uzbekistan on the borders with its neighbors would demonstrate to the Karimov government that it cannot achieve its own security at the expense of its neighbors. Some experts note that Uzbekistan's heavy-handed interventions in the region and repression of political opponents at home have contributed to the radicalization of opposition movements in the region.[162]

In addition to demining, the U.S. military should do more to

address the problem of drug trafficking in the region. Since terrorist movements earn their revenues from criminal activities, such as narcotics production and trafficking, such efforts are directly linked to antiterrorism goals. In 2002, the United States allocated $22 million for antitrafficking initiatives. While the United States continues to fund programs for interdiction, experts contend that Washington could do more.[163] Because the United States has small embassies in Central Asia, Washington relies on other organizations such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime to take the lead.[164] Nevertheless, the U.S. Army could expand its training programs for drug interdiction as a part of its other military-to-military cooperation programs in the region.

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