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**NAVAL  
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**THESIS**

**CHINA'S GREAT GAME IN CENTRAL ASIA:  
IMPLICATIONS TO U.S. POLICY IN THE REGION**

by

Michael A. Peterson

September 2005

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**CHINA'S GREAT GAME IN CENTRAL ASIA: IMPLICATIONS TO U.S.  
POLICY IN THE REGION**

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Captain, United States Air Force  
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requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the last decade China has actively pursued its interests in Central Asia. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the present countries of Central Asia established independent rule. With Soviet control removed, social and international problems that were hidden and suppressed began to show themselves throughout the region. Seeing the power vacuum, the negative effects of smuggling, separatism and terrorism associated with Islamic fundamentalism, and the effect these issues could have on China, Beijing decided to take steps to help address these concerns in Central Asia

Currently the United States is spearheading a war on terrorism, focusing on countries close to Central Asia such as Afghanistan and Iraq. If the United States plans on staying in the region, it must take into account the forces shaping Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia. Possibilities exist for cooperation, but if the situation is misinterpreted or handled incorrectly, there is also a possibility for conflict. This thesis examines Chinese interests in Central Asia, comparing and contrasting them with U.S. interests in the region. It then recommends policy options the United States could implement to enable the United States and China to move towards common goals in the region.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade China has expanded its foreign relations in areas that it previously did not have a large presence. One area that China is now looking at is Central Asia. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the countries of Central Asia were liberated from Soviet rule. With Soviet control removed, social and international problems which were hidden and suppressed during the Soviet administration began to show themselves throughout the region. Because of the resulting power vacuum, the negative effects of smuggling, separatism and terrorism associated with Islamic fundamentalism, and the effect these issues could have on China's bordering Xinjiang Autonomous Region, Beijing decided to take steps to help curb this activity in Central Asia.

In April 1996, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan formed a "security alliance" known as the Shanghai Five. Its purpose was to promote military cooperation and confidence building in the border areas of the member states. In 1997 the group met and signed an agreement to reduce the number of military forces stationed at the border areas to acceptable levels in keeping with border stability. In 2001, the organization invited Uzbekistan to join and formally renamed their organization the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In June 2002, the SCO signed its official charter, with provisions stating that it would promote cooperation in politics, economic trade, cultural education, energy, transportation, and ecological issues among its member states. In August 2003, SCO members conducted a joint military training

exercise known as "Coalition 2003" in the border areas of Kazakhstan and China. In June 2004, it established an antiterrorism training center in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to 9-11, U.S. objectives in Central Asia were to support the economic and political independence of Central Asia and promote regional reconciliation, cooperation, and economic development (as outlined in the 10 March 1999 Congress affirmed Silk Road Strategy Act).<sup>2</sup> However, the events of 9-11 changed those priorities. Currently, the United States is spear-heading a war on terrorism, focusing on countries close to Central Asia such as Afghanistan and Iraq. This war has led to a strong U.S. military presence in both the Middle East and Central Asia. With ongoing conflicts occurring in both Afghanistan and Iraq, there is no clear timetable for a U.S. withdrawal from the region.

If the United States plans on staying in the region, as it currently looks like it will, it must take a more proactive stance in the region. As it appears now, the United States and China have several goals in common. Both want stability in the region and both are actively targeting terrorism. The prospects exist for China and the United States to enhance their political relationship and find ways to work together in the region, but in order for the United States to do so it must take into account what China's goals are in Central Asia. How both countries will interact in the face of similar and competing interests is the question that must be addressed, as there is no clear

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1 Elizabeth Wishnick, "Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interest in Central Asia Reassessed," (Strategic Studies Institute, Army Staff War College, 2004), 29.

2 Wishnick, "Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia," (Strategic Studies Institute, Army Staff War College, 2002), 5.

consensus on the issue. The possibility of cooperation exists, but if the situation is handled incorrectly or is misinterpreted, there is also a possibility for conflict. In order to avoid possible conflict one must take a hard look at the Chinese historical presence in the area, look at China's national interests in Central Asia, look at the international relationships China has formed there, and then compare them with U.S. interests in the region. This thesis examines all of these factors and recommends policy options the United States could implement that would enable the United States and China to move towards common goals in Central Asia. These common goals, in turn, may help the region to become more stable and in the end further U.S. national interests in the region.



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## II. CHINESE HISTORICAL PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA

China's relationship with Central Asia goes back to the Chinese Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - 220 A.D). China's first inroads into the area were a result of trade with the Roman Empire and Central Asian peoples along the Silk Road. During this period, the Han encountered the Xiongnu, a people with ties to the Turkic speaking Huns. During the initial stages of the foundation of the Han, the Xiongnu tribes placed considerable pressure on the western Han border areas, limiting China's presence in Central Asia. However, as the Han Empire's power grew, it eventually expanding into Xiongnu lands where it established dominance over the Silk Road Route and the Xiongnu tribes. Unfortunately for China, its inroads into this area were short lived after the dynasty was threatened by internal conflict. This in turn caused the Han Dynasty to withdraw from Central Asia in 220 A.D.<sup>3</sup>

Expansion into Central Asia did not occur again until the Tang Dynasty (617 - 906), following the reunification of China under the Sui. During this period large numbers of envoys, merchants, and pilgrims traveled to Changan (the Tang capital) from the west. Under the Tang, the Chinese expanded their influence as far west as Kabul and Kashmir, eventually coming into contact with the Muslim peoples of greater Turkistan. However, the Tang's expansionism was halted as its military met up with a coalition force of Arab, Tibetan, and Uyghur tribes and was defeated. Due to this defeat China was forced out of Central Asia and the

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<sup>3</sup> Lyman Miller, "Qin Unification & the Han Imperium," (Class Handout at the Naval Postgraduate School in October, 2004).

Arabs were able to expand their influence into the region and the major trading routes throughout the area.<sup>4</sup>

Chinese expansion in Central Asia did not occur again until the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) under its Manchu rulers. After having conquered Taiwan and Tibet, the Qing moved to reestablish control over Chinese Central Asia (modern day Xinjiang) in 1757. After a series of major campaigns the Qing defeated the Dzungar Mongols and Uyghurs, establishing informal rule over the region. During this period of expansionism the Qing also came into contact with the Russians. Both empires met each other on the battlefield on several occasions, but the last major confrontation occurred in the period 1871 - 1881, when the Russians moved into the Ili region. By the late 1870s the Qing was able to reclaiming control of this area and pressured the Russians to withdraw. A formal settlement was reached in the signing the Treaty of St. Petersburg in 1881, by which the Russian ceded control over the region to the Qing. Three years after the treaties signing in 1884, the area was formally designated the Xinjiang administrative region.<sup>5</sup>

In 1911, the Qing dynasty collapsed and with its collapse China lost control over this border region. From 1911 to 1944, Xinjiang was ruled by various local tribes living in the area. In 1944 this changed when these tribes banded together and formed the Republic of East Turkistan. However, this independent state was short-lived, when the

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<sup>4</sup> Bates Gill, "China's New Journey to the West: China's Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests," (Washington D.C.: CSIS Press, 2003), 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Starr, *Xinjiang, China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk, New York and London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 61-62.

newly formed People's Republic of China (PRC) moved into the region and reestablished military control over it.<sup>6</sup>

Following the formation of the PRC in 1949, China relied heavily on its benefactor the Soviet Union, establishing extensive ties with Moscow. By 1962 this relationship had deteriorated, as the two countries that were once friends became adversaries (within the Marxist camp) in the larger Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union.

On several occasions during the Cold War period, China's border area with the USSR came into conflict and serious military incidents occurred, almost bringing both nations to war in 1969. Based on this adversarial relationship the border areas of western China were closed off and relations between Central Asia (under the control of the Soviet Union) and China were virtually ended. By the late 1980s a cooling off of hostilities between the two nations led to a renovation of friendly relations in 1989 during a Sino-Soviet summit in Beijing. During the initial Soviet visit to Beijing and a reciprocal Chinese visit to Moscow, the two countries issued two communiqués outlining the following points in their future relations:

- 1) Future relations would be based on the "five principles of peaceful coexistence";
- 2) Disputes would be resolved peacefully without the threat or use of force;
- 3) Talks would begin to settle outstanding border issues, cut military forces, and establish confidence-building measures (CBMs) along their shared border;
- 4) Economic trade and cultural and scientific exchanges would be expanded;

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<sup>6</sup> Gill, 4.

- 5) Moscow would support Beijing's position on Taiwan; and
- 6) The two nations would work toward the creation of a new international political order.<sup>7</sup>

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and the countries of Central Asia were liberated from Soviet rule. With Soviet control removed from Central Asia, social and international problems that were suppressed under the Soviet administration began to show themselves throughout the region. Seeing the power vacuum, the negative effects of smuggling, separatism and terrorism associated with Islamic fundamentalism, and the effect these issues could have on China's bordering Xinjiang Autonomous Region, Beijing decided to take steps to help curb this activity in Central Asia.<sup>8</sup>

In April 1996, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan formed a "security alliance" known as the Shanghai Five. Its purpose was to promote military cooperation and confidence building in the border areas of the member states. In 1997 the group met and signed an agreement to reduce the number of military forces stationed in the border areas to reasonable defensive levels only. In 2001, the organization invited Uzbekistan to join, and the organization was formally renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).<sup>9</sup> In June 2002, the SCO signed its initial charter, with provisions stating that it would effect cooperation in politics, economic trade,

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<sup>7</sup> Gill, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Gill, 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Wishnick, "Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interest in Central Asia Reassessed" (Strategic Studies Institute, Army Staff War College, 2004), 29.

cultural education, energy, transportation, and ecological issues among its member states. The charter also addressed security concerns, establishing a means of cooperation in its fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism.<sup>10</sup>

To build on the SCO's call for cooperation in its fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism, China and Kyrgyzstan held a joint counterterrorism exercise in Kyrgyzstan in October 2002--the first of its kind. The following year in August 2003, the SCO followed up with a larger joint military/counter-terrorism training exercise called "Coalition 2003," holding it in the border areas of Kazakhstan and China. Most recently, in January 2004, the SCO established an anti-terrorist center, headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.<sup>11</sup>

On 12 April 2005, The SCO signed a memorandum of understanding between the SCO and the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Shortly thereafter, on 25 April 2005, it signed a second memorandum with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These memorandums established a basis and method of cooperation between the SCO and these organizations in areas of counterterrorism, economics and trade, humanistic and cultural areas, and other mutually beneficial fields.<sup>12</sup>

On 5 July 2005, the SCO met in Astana, Kazakhstan and issued a joint declaration. In the declaration the SCO

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<sup>10</sup> "The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (RATS SCO)," *Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure Website*, available at <http://www.ecrats.com>

<sup>11</sup> Gill, 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Valeriy Agarkov, "Russia Hails Beginning of Official Contacts Between SCO and ASEAN," *ITAR-TASS*, 25 April 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov> and Ron Yan, "SCO and CIS Sign MOU on Cooperation in Counterterrorism, Others," *Xinhua Chinese*, 12 April 2005, available from <http://www.fbis.com>

extended observer status to Pakistan, Iran and India, indicating its willingness to allow these states to join the organization at some point in the future. It also made a public declaration, calling on the United States to set a final timeline for the use of its military bases in Central Asia. The declaration indicated that, due to the apparent drawdown of the active military stage of antiterrorist operations in Afghanistan, the United States should now consider withdrawing its military forces from the region.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Declaration of Heads of Member States of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Astana, July 05, 2005," available from <http://www.sectSCO.org>

### III. CHINESE NATIONAL INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

China's modern history has been filled with one conflict or crisis after another. It is a country surrounded by past enemies and potential future adversaries. To the northeast, China faces a threat of a potential war on the Korean Peninsula. To the east, China faces a past and potential military and economic threat in Japan. To the southeast, China faces a potential all-out war with Taiwan and the United States. Further to the southeast, China faces potential conflicts with Vietnam and other Southeast Asian states over sovereignty rights in the Spratly and Paracel Islands. To the southwest, China faces a growing economic rival in India whom it fought in the past. To the west, China faces potential separatist and instability issues with the Central Asian states. To the north, China faces a potentially strong Russian military threat if the countries relations sour as they did in the past. Finally, on all sides, China faces a perceived soft containment policy by the United States that is spreading its influence throughout Asia as it conducts its war on terror.

The PRC's perceptions of the international security environment mold its national interests. China is the world's most populous country with the world's largest military. Since its inception it has been threatened by powers much greater than itself. The two largest threats to its sovereignty were the United States and the Soviet Union. From 1949 - 1991, China has allied itself with one power or the other in order to balance against whichever power was stronger at the time. Beijing felt that in order



to keep the world a stable place there had to be a balance of power in the international environment. This balance changed in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed. With its collapse, the United States was the sole remaining superpower and Beijing no longer had any one power it could balance with against the United States.

Since 1991, China has maneuvered in the international arena to utilize multinational organizations to balance against the power of the United States, the largest of which is the United Nations (U.N.). China believes that the best way to limit U.S. power is to utilize the U.N. against the United States and to join and create regional organizations that limit United States involvement in the specific areas where the organizations operate.

To counter and influence the perceived U.S. threat, Beijing has joined several international organizations that strengthen China's regional position and lessen the United States' influence. Examples of such organizations and agreements are the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the 2003 Joint Declaration of the Promotion of Tripartite Cooperation among the PRC, Japan and the ROK.

For China, the largest potential threat to China and its sovereignty is the "separatist activities" of "Taiwan independence" forces. It sees any move by Taiwan towards independence as the most destabilizing and largest threat to peace in the Asia-Pacific region. With the possibility of the United States joining forces with Taiwan in a potential crisis with the PRC, Beijing sees the potential for a war that could easily engulf all of East and Southeast Asia.

Because the Taiwan scenario is the most likely destabilizing factor for China, Beijing must ensure that its strategic backdoor (Xinjiang Province) is safe and stable. If China can ensure that it does not have to worry about its western borders, it can concentrate fully on other more pressing issues, such as its reunification with Taiwan and economic development. This viewpoint is most readily visible in China's 2004 White Paper on National Defense. According to the White Paper, the PRC's national defense goals are:

- 1) To stop separation and promote unification, guard against and resist aggression, and defend national sovereignty, territorial integrity and maritime rights and interests;
- 2) To safeguard the interests of national development, promote economic and social development in an all around, coordinated and sustainable way and steadily increase its overall national strength;
- 3) To modernize China's national defense in line with both the national conditions of China and the trend of military development in the world by adhering to the policy of coordinating military and economic development, and improve the operational capabilities of self-defense under the conditions of informationalization;
- 4) To safeguard the political, economic and cultural rights and interests of the Chinese people, crack down on criminal activities of all sorts and maintain public order and social stability; and
- 5) To pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and adhere to the new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination with a view to securing a long-term and favorable international and surrounding environment.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "China's National Defense in 2004", *Chinese White Paper*,

Based on these national defense goals it can be argued that China is guided by four principal interests when it comes to Central Asia. These interests are: strategic and diplomatic interests; national security interests; demarcation, demilitarization, stabilization of its borders with Central Asia; and economic and trade interests.

#### **A. STRATEGIC AND DIPLOMATIC INTERESTS**

China's overarching goals for Central Asia entail the establishment of a more peaceful and constructive external environment in Central Asia. Beijing seeks to do this by demonstrating its great power responsibility through diplomatic means. These consist of initiating bilateral and multilateral regional relationships that will foster a more peaceful environment and lead to better relations between Central Asian states and China. When looking for the historical precedents for this action in the area, one only has to look back to the treaty established between Russia and China in 1989. For Beijing it became a template treaty for its various bilateral and multilateral Central Asian treaties following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The guiding principles established in China's treaty with Russia, as well as with other treaties it has established with other neighboring states over the previous 50 years, are its emphasis on the Five Principals of Peaceful Coexistence. These principles are:

- 1) Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- 2) Mutual non-aggression;

available at <http://www.china.org.cn>

- 3) Mutual non-interference in their respective domestic affairs;
- 4) Mutual benefit; and
- 5) Peaceful coexistence.<sup>15</sup>

These guiding principles were prominent in the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 between Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. According to the founding declaration, the main goals of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are:

- 1) Strengthening mutual trust and good-neighborliness and friendship among member states;
- 2) Developing their effective cooperation in political affairs, the economy and trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transportation, environmental protection and other fields;
- 3) Working together to maintain regional peace, security and stability; and
- 4) Promoting the creation of a new international political and economic order featuring democracy, justice and rationality.<sup>16</sup>

The formation of the SCO enabled China to have an active role in Central Asia where it did not have one before. In addition, in view of Beijing's overall strategic interests, the SCO allowed China to have a major

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<sup>15</sup> Zhou Qingchang, "Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership," *Beijing Review*, 1989, available at <http://www.china.org.cn>

<sup>16</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2004/01/07," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Peoples Republic of China*, 7 January 2004, available at <http://www.fmprce.gov.cn>

say in regional politics while limiting its largest competitor's action in Central Asia--the United States.

In the geopolitical arena, China is concerned about the U.S. presence in the region and its possible motive to dominate the area. Since shortly after 9-11, the United States has had a strong military presence in the region in pursuit of its war on terror. Initially, the U.S. presence was a welcome force thanks to the success of its war on terror in Afghanistan. This success led to the decimation of pan-Turkic and Islamic insurgent groups operating in the region and forced the remnants of these groups into hiding.<sup>17</sup> For China, the U.S.-led war produced greater security and stability in the region and, as such, benefited China.

Recent events in Central Asia have now changed this perception and have caused Beijing to reevaluate its view of the U.S. presence in the region. The two events that changed this perception were the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, and the Andijan Riots in Uzbekistan in May 2005.<sup>18</sup> In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the sudden removal of its president by the Kyrgyz people led to speculation by Beijing that the United States may have been somehow behind the move in order to put in place a government that was friendlier towards the United States. In the case of Uzbekistan, China suspected that the United States had changed its policy in Central Asia from one

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<sup>17</sup> Chien-Peng Chung, "The Defense of Xinjiang," *Harvard International Review*, (Cambridge: Summer 2003, Vol. 25, Iss. 2), 58.

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter IV under Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan for further details.

geared toward anti-terrorism to one that now espouses democratic reform and "colored" revolutions.<sup>19</sup>

Based on this apparent shift in U.S. policy in Central Asia, China helped sponsor a joint declaration by the SCO on 5 July 2005, in which the SCO requested that the United States set a final timeline for the use of its military bases in Central Asia.<sup>20</sup> Looking at the overall geopolitical landscape, it now appears that China has solidified its leadership role in the region, both bilaterally and multilaterally.<sup>21</sup> However, even with these diplomatic achievements China will not be content with the status quo and will continue to build on both its bilateral and multilateral relationships in the region. For China this region is its strategic backyard, and it will be ever vigilant to ensure that the region remains aligned with China.

## **B. NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS**

China's largest concern in Central Asia is its national security interests in the area, particularly Beijing's fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism (also known as the "three evils").<sup>22</sup> In this fight, it is predominantly concerned with the separatist movements targeting the Chinese government in Xinjiang Autonomous region. Since the region officially became part of the

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter IV under Uzbekistan for further details.

<sup>20</sup> "Declaration of Heads of Member States of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Astana, July 05, 2005," available from <http://www.sectesco.org>

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter IV for further details on China's bilateral relationships.

<sup>22</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2004/01/07"

PRC, it has had security concerns in the region due to the large presence of non-Han Chinese in the area, consisting mainly of Turkic (Uyghurs) and Moslem peoples. Together these groups constitute the majority in the region and are only held in check by the PRC's firm grip in the area. Since the 1950s, China has utilized its historical approach of bringing areas of China under its control by encouraging migration of its Han population into the exterior areas of China. This method has worked successfully in Xinjiang, but at the same time has alienated the native population in the area.

In conjunction with internal instability, the rise of the Central Asian states in 1991 has also caused China much concern. What the peoples of Xinjiang saw was the rise of states based loosely on ethnic population groups--states numbering much less than the Uyghur population in Xinjiang. This nationalization along ethnic lines has only reinforced the separatist movements in Xinjiang. Besides this domestic issue, these separatist movements are increasingly taking on transnational aspects as well. External Uyghur support is being funneled into China from Central Asia. This increased funding and activity has been reflected in terrorist activities, such as the bombings of various Chinese governmental organizations in Xinjiang, as well as Beijing, between 1997 and the present. In 1997 alone, these attacks led to more than 40 small uprisings in Xinjiang and led to a crackdown on the Uyghur population, resulting in the death of 80, the injury of over 200, and the arrest of nearly 800 Uyghurs.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "A Bomb in Beijing," *The Economist*, 13 March 1997; and "China Fears for its Wild West," *The Economist*, 13 November 1997.

Outside of China, terrorist attacks have been on the rise against the Chinese in Central Asia as well, and there are indications that the popular East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in China has established ties to other terrorist organizations operating out of Central Asia. For example, in March 2000, a group of four Uyghur operatives targeted and killed the head of the Uyghur cultural society in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan for not providing sufficient financial assistance. They also ambushed a Chinese delegation in Bishkek, killing an ethnic Uyghur and injuring a Han Chinese official.<sup>24</sup> What these attacks demonstrated to China was that the terrorist issue was not only a Chinese issue, rather a Central Asian issue as well.

To address its national interests, China has been successfully able to utilize the SCO. As part of the SCO's charter, the fight against the "three evil forces" was incorporated into the document. To reinforce this cooperation, two joint anti-terrorism military exercise have been conducted--one between China and Kyrgyzstan in October 2002, and a second between SCO member states in the Kazakhstan and Chinese border area in Aug 2003.<sup>25</sup> To further develop cooperation, the SCO established a counter-terrorism center in January 2004, headquartering it in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. By finding common interest items that could easily undermine any of the Central Asian states authority, China was able to find the critical common ground that enhanced China's overall standing in Central Asia. In this case the issue is the region's war against terrorism, separatism and extremism.

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<sup>24</sup> "Kyrgyzstan, Pleasing China, Sentences Uyghurs for Terrorism," *Times of Central Asia*, 13 January 2002.

<sup>25</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Organization 2004/01/07"



### C. SETTLING BORDER DISPUTES

An area that has affected China since 1991 is the status of its shared borders with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. These conflicts were first addressed by China and the previous respective states during the initial establishment of the Shanghai Five in 1996. At the time, China recognized the greater importance of regional security and decided to place the status of their shared borders on hold. To settle the security issue, the Shanghai Five agreement decreased each country's military border forces to defensible limits only in an area extending 100 kilometers from each of the countries' borders.<sup>26</sup> The reason for this demarcation and demilitarization of the borders was that it allowed each of the countries concerned to go beyond the past threat of military confrontation and to move on to other concerns such as diplomatic issues, internal political problems, other threats to internal state national security, and to allow for more productive cross border trade.<sup>27</sup> Since then, bilateral talks have been held, resulting in the border dispute between China and the three Central Asian states being resolved.<sup>28</sup> With these border issues officially settled China is now able to concentrate its efforts on its other national interest items.

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<sup>26</sup> Xing Guangcheng, "China and Central Asia," in *Central Asian Security*, by Roy Allison and Lena Johnson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 160.

<sup>27</sup> Gill, 21.

<sup>28</sup> "China's Transnational Issues," *Geography About Database*, 9 August 2005, available at <http://www.geography.about.com>

#### D. ENERGY AND TRADE INTERESTS

An area of growing importance, and arguably China's most important interest in Central Asia, is access to natural resources from the region. China's growing need for resources is demonstrated in its rating as the world's number two primary energy consumer, second only to the United States.<sup>29</sup> Due to this interest China has expanded its political and economic interests in countries all over the globe that can help fulfill its energy requirements.

Currently, China derives 40 percent of its imported oil from the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia. Four-fifths of these oil imports travel through waterways traversing Southeast Asia and the Malacca Strait.<sup>30</sup> For Beijing, if a major power were to disrupt this waterway, China would be severely impacted both economically and politically. To address this issue, China recognizes that it must find land-based routes to obtain its natural resources, routes that can only be established through Russia and Central Asia. In the case of Russia, the majority of the routes have already established; leaving Central Asia as the last remaining best option that will answer China's growing energy demands. Currently, China only imports oil from Kazakhstan, accounting for less than one percent of Chinese imports. However, this will change as China has completed an agreement with Kazakhstan to complete a 3,000 Km oil pipeline to China's Xinjiang Autonomous region by the end of 2005.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Gill, 22.

<sup>30</sup> Han Wen, "Hu Jintao Concerned over Malacca Strait Factor in PRC Oil Security," *Wen Wei Po Beijing News Center*, 14 January 2004, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

In addition to natural resources, China also has local trade interests with the countries of Central Asia. China's Xinjiang province is quickly becoming China's most important trading region outside of China's coastal regions, and the potential trade growth for the area is tremendous. To help the area grow, trade must flourish. Central Asia is quickly becoming a conduit through which China can obtain commodities and raw materials, such as iron ore, steel, copper and nonferrous metals that can help upgrade its power and telecommunications grid in Xinjiang. In return, China provides low-cost goods to Central Asia. Additionally, as Central Asia develops, the countries of Central Asia are becoming investment opportunities for China to move into.<sup>32</sup> This mutual trade demonstrates a growing interdependence, furthering China's overall goals of mutual cooperation and growth in Central Asia.

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<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Bransten and Michael Lelyveld, "The Dragon in Central Asia," *Asia Times Online*, 23 November 2004, available at <http://www.atimes.com>

<sup>32</sup> Gill, 28-29.

## IV. BILATERAL SINO-CENTRAL ASIAN RELATIONSHIPS

### A. KAZAKHSTAN

China's strongest relationship in Central Asia is its relationship with Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan shares a 1533 kilometer border with China and China's historical concern has been over destabilizing factors in Kazakhstan that could lead to destabilization in China's neighboring Xinjiang province. Within the framework of the SCO the border areas have been demarcated and relations between both countries have improved measurably. With security and border issues addressed, Kazakhstan is now able to provide for China's remaining interest in Central Asia, its interest in energy and trade.

On 28 June 2005, an aide of Chinese Foreign Minister Li Hui stated that the cooperation between China and Kazakhstan in the energy sphere "has reached the most important of positions" in bilateral relations. He continued that it is of "strategic importance" for both China and Kazakhstan and that there are "many possibilities" for broadening bilateral relations in the energy sphere to the mutual benefit of both countries.<sup>33</sup> What he was referring to was the Atsu-Alashankou oil pipeline that is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2005. The pipeline will be the first between China and Kazakhstan and will transport approximately 10 million tons of oil a year, with plans to bring the capacity up to 30 million tons.

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<sup>33</sup> Yevgeny Solovyev, "China Said Ready to Deepen Interaction in Energy Sphere with Kazakhstan," *ITAR-TASS English*, 28 June 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

At present, oil is shipped via rail and accounts for less than one percent of Chinese oil imports. However, this pipeline will satisfy approximately ten percent of China's oil needs and will provide China with a long-term and stable energy supply, thereby reducing its energy risk in the international market.<sup>34</sup> To facilitate this influx of oil, China is constructing a large oil refinery in Xinjiang. This refinery is part of the two countries' strategic cooperation plans that call for China and Kazakhstan to jointly utilize a total of 20 sets of oil-refining facilities and 12 sets of petrochemical equipment.<sup>35</sup>

Besides oil, China considers trade its next most important economic interest in Kazakhstan. Some experts point to this trade as of minimal importance because it only accounts for 0.4 percent of overall Chinese foreign trade.<sup>36</sup> However, Xinjiang Province's figures reveal a much different picture. Instead, one sees that the overall trade between Central Asia and China accounts for 60 percent of the volume of Xinjiang's foreign trade, equaling four billion dollars in 2003.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, among the countries in Central Asia, Kazakhstan is China's largest trading partner.

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<sup>34</sup> Asiljon Umarov and Dmitry Pashkun, "The Prospects for Chinese Influence in Central Asia," *CEF Quarterly, The Journal of the China-Eurasia Forum*, February 2005, available at <http://www.chinaeurasia.org>

<sup>35</sup> "PRC: Construction of Large Refinery, Ethylene Projects Starts in Xinjiang," *Xinhua English*, 8 February 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

<sup>36</sup> Vladimir Paramonov, "China and Central Asia: Present and Future of Economic Relations," *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, May 2005, available at <http://www.da.mod.uk>

<sup>37</sup> Asiljon Umarov and Dmitry Pashkun, "The Prospects for Chinese Influence in Central Asia," *CEF Quarterly*, 5.

China's "Go West" trade policy with Central Asia is extremely important. If China can improve the livelihood of Xinjiang's population through increased trade in the economic sector, it will likely lessen the tensions between China's central government and the region's people. In so doing, these lesser tensions will help China stabilize the region so that it can extract the resources it needs from both Xinjiang and Central Asia, and also allow China to concentrate on other more important issues, such as its overall economic development.

In 2003, total trade between China and Kazakhstan amounted to 2.856 billion dollars, with Kazakhstan exports amounting to 1.31 billion dollars and Chinese exports amounting to 1.546 billion dollars. Of Kazakhstan exports, over 80 percent of Kazakhstan's exports were attributable to raw materials; 58 percent from energy and 24 percent from ferrous and non-ferrous metals. In China's case, exports were attributable to engineering and metalworking production (approximately 69 percent), foodstuffs (approximately 9 percent) and the remainder consisted of other goods (such as textiles).<sup>38</sup>

Today, 10 out of 16 land ports in Xinjiang are authorized by the Central government to conduct trade directly with Central Asia and an additional 11 land ports are authorized by local authorities to do the same. Of this trade, in 2004, Kazakhstan transported 9.2 million tones of cargo by rail to and from China and plans to increase the amount to 20 million tons by 2010.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Paramonov, "China and Central Asia: Present and Future of Economic Relations," 3.

<sup>39</sup> "Kazakhstan to Boost Railway Freight Transportation with China," *Astana Kazakh TV1*, 15 March 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

Prior to September 2005, Xinjiang had 15 highway transportation ports and 63 international passenger and cargo transportation routes connecting both countries. Recent construction projects increased this number when China and Kazakhstan launched an additional 12 transportation routes between major cities in Xinjiang province and Kazakhstan on 1 September 05.<sup>40</sup>

Future plans for both countries are to establish an "international cooperation zone" along their shared border. This zone would allow free trade between the two countries and would be a good test case for a future SCO-sponsored free trade zone in Central Asia.<sup>41</sup>

For China and Kazakhstan trade is a stabilizing force. If both countries can keep their populations fed and improve their population's economic standing through trade, both countries will be able to quell social unrest in their respective territories. If this strategy is successful and unrest subsides and economic prosperity increases, it will demonstrate to the other members of the SCO that a free trade zone can work in Central Asia. This task will not only help unify the SCO members, it will also move the countries further into China's camp and away from other outward influences such as the United States.

## **B. UZBEKISTAN**

Uzbekistan and China have until recently had minimal relations due to Uzbekistan's alignment with both Russia

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<sup>40</sup> "PRC, Kazakhstan to Launch 12 Transportation Routes in September," *Xinhua English*, 03 August 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

<sup>41</sup> "Japan: China's Economic Ties with Central Asia Growing," *Asahi Shimbun English*, 28 May 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

and the United States, and because the two countries do not share a common border. Uzbekistan permitted the establishment of a U.S. base on its soil and as such demonstrated Uzbekistan's closer relations with the United States. However, to say the relationship between China and Uzbekistan was non-existent would be incorrect. Through the SCO, China has been able to have relations with Uzbekistan, specifically in areas of security.

On the economic front, Uzbekistan has favored its trade with the other Central Asian states and Russia, blocking many Chinese exports into the country. This was due to the fairly harsh protectionist strategy it employed to protect its internal economy from cheap Chinese goods.<sup>42</sup>

Even with this protectionist strategy, trade still occurs but on a limited scale. In 2003, total trade between the two countries amounted to 216 million dollars, with Uzbekistan's exports amounting to 52 million dollars and China's exports amounting to 164 million dollars. Of this total trade, Uzbekistan's exports to China included services (48 percent), machinery and equipment (19 percent), cotton (4 percent), foodstuffs (4.6 percent) and non-ferrous metals (1.5 percent). China's exports included engineering products (48 percent), chemical products (19%) and foodstuffs (9%); accounting for 0.03 percent of China's total trade.<sup>43</sup>

On 25 May 2005, Uzbekistan's relationship changed significantly with China when Uzbekistan President Karimov met with State President of the PRC Hu Jintao in Beijing. This was an historic meeting in which China openly

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<sup>42</sup> Gill, 32.

<sup>43</sup> Paramonov, "China and Central Asia: Present and Future of Economic Relations," 3.



supported Uzbekistan's handling of its 13 May 2005, Andijan riots. Hu Jintao indicated that he "respected the path chosen by the Uzbek people in line with its national condition" and their "efforts to safeguard national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity." At the conclusion of the meeting, the two countries signed their first "Treaty of Friendly and Cooperative Partnership." The treaty focused on promoting cooperation in priority fields such as oil and gas, mining, telecommunications, communications and infrastructure.<sup>44</sup>

On 25 July 2005, after having been told that the United States would likely cut one-third of the \$60 million aid package to Uzbekistan for the year, Uzbekistan announced that China planned on investing 600 million dollars in its oil and gas sector, with the total package (including framework contracts) having an estimated worth of almost \$1.5 billion. The proposal outlined 50 projects in information technology, mechanical and engineering, chemical and electromechanical industries, manufacturing of construction material, and furniture and goods. Of this amount, China has promised to allocate more than 434.2 million dollars in direct financial resources.<sup>45</sup>

On 30 July 2005, Uzbekistan notified the United States that U.S. forces would be evicted from Khanabad air base and that it had 180 days to move its aircraft, personnel and military equipment from the base. This decision was based on two main factors. The first factor was the U.S. perception that Uzbekistan had violently suppressed

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<sup>44</sup> "Hu Jintao, Karimov Stress Boosting Sino-Uzbek Cooperation," *Xinhua Chinese*, 25 May 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

<sup>45</sup> "Uzbekistan Seeks Chinese Investment in Oil, Gas Sectors," *Interfax Russian*, 18 July 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

demonstrations on 13 May 2005 in Andijan in which hundreds of people were believed to have died. The second factor was the decision by the United Nations and United States to evacuate 440 Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan to Romania--refugees that Uzbekistan considered terrorists and criminals.<sup>46</sup> In retaliation, Uzbekistan called for the United States to close its base and move its equipment and forces out within 180 days.

Based on the breakdown in ties between the United States and Uzbekistan, it appears that Uzbekistan has found a more willing and supportive partner in China. China has stated publicly that it supports Uzbekistan's handling of its own internal domestic problems, something it posits in all of its bilateral treaties. This burgeoning relationship should help China improve its relationship with not only Uzbekistan but the other countries of Central Asia that may fear that the United States is supporting democratic revolutions within the other Central Asian states. Due to the method by which it handled the Andijan incident, the United States has not only hurt its current relationships, but has also given China the necessary ammunition to further strengthen its own relationships in Central Asia, starting with Uzbekistan.

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<sup>46</sup> Ramanu Maitra, "The U.S. Strikes Out," *Asia Times Online*, 02 August 2005, available at <http://www.atimes.com>

### C. KYRGYZSTAN

China's shares a strategic relationship with Kyrgyzstan because of the presence of two outside influences in the country--the United States with its military deployment of over 1000 military personnel at Manas Airbase, and Russia, with its Collective Security Organization (CSTO) Rapid Deployment Force at Kant Airbase.<sup>47</sup> Due to these two outside influences and China's shared 858 kilometer border with Kyrgyzstan, China must ensure that it maintains good relations with Kyrgyzstan. To do so, China has relied on common problems and has utilized the SCO as its voice. An example of this was seen when the two countries conducted China's first joint counter-terrorism exercise in the border areas of both countries under the auspices of the SCO.<sup>48</sup>

When the United States first entered the region under operation ENDURING FREEDOM, it gained the use of Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan. It was troubling to China but at the same time helpful, as the base was used for anti-terrorism missions and in so doing helped stabilize the region. However, this perception changed in March 2005

<sup>47</sup> Sergei Blagov, "Russia drops an anchor in Central Asia," *Asia Times Online*, 25 October 2003, available at <http://www.atimes.com>. The purpose of the CSTO Rapid Reaction Force is to deter terrorists and extremists from operating in Central Asia. The force was put in place based on two events. The first event occurred in Kyrgyzstan in 1999, in which dozens of gunmen crossed into Kyrgyzstan from neighboring Tajikistan and seized a village, taking six high profile hostages--consisting of four Japanese geologists and a Kyrgyz major-general, Anarbek Shamkeyev, commander of Interior Ministry troops. The second event it was based on occurred in August 2000, when Muslim rebels crossed into Kyrgyzstan and engaged government troops in the Batken district of Kyrgyzstan, near the Tajik-Kyrgyz border. Due to the inability of the Kyrgyzstan government to handle these problems it requested aid from the CSTO, to which the CSTO established its presence in the country in 2003.

<sup>48</sup> "Backgrounder: PLA-related military exercises since 2002," *Peoples Daily Online*, 24 September 2004, available at <http://www.english.people.com.cn>

when the Tulip Revolution occurred in Kyrgyzstan and President Akayev was ousted from power. China believed that the United States may have been somehow behind the move and sought to place a government that was friendlier towards the United States. China was not without options, however, and exercised its power in the SCO on 5 July 2005, when the SCO (to include the new Kyrgyz President Bakyiev) issued a statement requesting that the United States plan for its departure from all of its bases in Central Asia. However, due to quick maneuvering by the United States, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld went to the country in late July 2005 and was able to get assurances from Kyrgyzstan that it could keep its airbase there for as long as the Afghan war required it. It was widely reported that Kyrgyzstan was forced to reconsider due to an offer by the United States to pay double its normal rent and to provide Kyrgyzstan with an interest-free loan of 200 million dollars (accounting to more than 60% of Kyrgyzstan's yearly budget).<sup>49</sup>

Beyond geopolitical concerns, China is interested in the country because it is one of the main transit routes of Chinese goods from Xinjiang province. In 2003, trade between both countries amounted to 96 million dollars. The volume of Kyrgyz exports to China amounted to 23 million dollars (approximately 4 percent of its exports) and the Chinese volume amounted to 72 million dollars. Exports to China included raw material for textiles (mainly leather and wool, 23 percent) and ferrous and non-ferrous metal waste (approximately 60 percent). Exports to Kyrgyzstan included machinery and equipment (approximately 11

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<sup>49</sup> Ramtanu Maitra, "The U.S. Strikes Out," *Asia Times Online*, 2 August 2005, available at <http://www.atimes.com>

percent), foodstuffs and other consumer goods (approximately 65 percent).<sup>50</sup>

China sees the main road from Xinjiang to the Kyrgyz town of Osh as the key thoroughfare for trade between the two countries. Based on this fact, China and Kyrgyzstan have discussed attracting resources to improve the road and to conduct a feasibility study to build a new railway line between Kyrgyzstan, China and Uzbekistan. Another key infrastructural improvement was a 30 million yuan repair project for the road between Bishkek and Manas Airport that the Chinese agreed to fund in February 2005.<sup>51</sup>

China is also interested in Kyrgyzstan because of security concerns regarding drugs, organized crime, Islamic radicalism, and its links to China's own internal terrorist/separatist problem with the East Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIM). This organization is an Islamic extremist group that calls for the creation of an Islamist state in Xinjiang province. The group is recognized by both the United States and United Nations as a terrorist organization and has been linked by Beijing to at least 166 violent incidents in 2003 alone. It has a reported 2,000 fighters operating along the Xinjiang, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan borders.<sup>52</sup>

Recent speculation in the news media has indicated a Chinese interest in building a Chinese base in Kyrgyzstan. Responding to this speculation, on 1 August 2005, the Chinese ambassador to Kyrgyzstan issued a statement that

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<sup>50</sup> Paramonov, "China and Central Asia: Present and Future of Economic Relations," 3.

<sup>51</sup> "China to Fund Kyrgyzstani Road Project," *Bishkek Kyrgyzinfo*, 21 February 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

<sup>52</sup> Cien-Peng Chung, "The Defense of Xinjiang," *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 25, Iss. 2, Summer 2003, 58.

denied any interest. In his statement he said, "China's foreign policy is a peaceful policy and China has never deployed a military base in other states."<sup>53</sup> Although China is interested in rooting out the terrorist problem in Central Asia, Beijing has never before sought to build a military base outside of its own territory. Rather, the speculation might be in regards to recent reports about the SCO planning to set up a base in southern Kyrgyzstan. If this were to come about, China may be willing to base military members in another's state under the label of a joint anti-terrorist unit within the framework of the SCO.

#### **D. TURKMENISTAN**

Since independence, China's influence in Turkmenistan has been minimal because of Turkmenistan's international stance of "positive neutrality." This neutrality has limited Turkmenistan's involvement bilaterally with China and explains its exclusion from multilateral groups such as the SCO.<sup>54</sup> However, on 20 July 2005, this position changed when Turkmen President Saparmyrat Nyyazow and Chinese Vice-Premier Wu Yi signed a historic agreement worth 24 million dollars. The two parties issued a joint statement in which they agreed to cooperate in the oil and gas sectors, to cooperate in technical fields and to work together in other economic areas such as the textile industry. In this agreement President Nyyazow made the following statement that indicated a significant change in Turkmenistan's neutral stance and its overall view of China, "You (China)

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<sup>53</sup> "Chinese Envoy Denies Talks Held on Deploying Military Base in Kyrgyzstan," *Bishkek AKIpress*, 1 August 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

<sup>54</sup> Gill, 32.

are providing assistance to the development of newly independent states, which were part of the USSR. And you do this selflessly, without putting forward any political or other conditions. We are grateful to you for that, the most of what has been created in Turkmenistan during the past 13 years, have been taken from Chinese experience."<sup>55</sup>

Looking at this statement in conjunction with the turn of events in Uzbekistan, it can be seen that a significant shift in the geopolitical situation has occurred in Central Asia in China's favor. There are likely reasons behind this new bilateral agreement. First, China is offering significant financial assistance to help improve Turkmenistan's oil and gas sector and Turkmenistan can hardly afford not to take the generous financial offer. Like any rational state, it wants to improve its internal infrastructure and economic well-being to become stronger. Second, Turkmenistan likely feels threatened by the apparent U.S. support to colored revolutions in Central Asia. Because of Turkmenistan's autocratic government, this potential threat likely contributed to its newly formed relationship with China. It now appears that Turkmenistan is firmly in China's camp and, by doing so, China has now solidified bilateral relationships with each Central Asian state.

Outside of geopolitical concerns, China sees the potential for long-term gains from its investments in Turkmenistan's fledgling oil and gas sector. Diversification is the key for China, and its growing relationship with Turkmenistan now provides another avenue

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<sup>55</sup> "Turkmenistan President Hails China's Potential Friendship," *Ashgabat Turkmen Television first Channel in Turkmen*, 20 July 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

for it to obtain resources. Besides resources, China is also interested in foreign trade. Overall trade between both countries has been rather limited, with trade between China and Turkmenistan being valued at 122 million dollars in 2003. The volume of exports from Turkmenistan to China amounted to 19 million dollars while the volume of imports from China to Turkmenistan was valued at 103 million dollars. Exports to China included main energy sources (approximately 83 percent), cotton, and other types of raw materials for textiles (approximately 5 percent). The range of exports from China mainly consisted of engineering and metalworking production (approximately 60 percent), foodstuffs (15 percent) and other items (25 percent).<sup>56</sup> With relations improving, Turkmenistan and China will likely become more dependent upon each other's market; thereby improving Turkmenistan's economy and strengthening the ties that bind the two countries together.

#### **E. TAJIKISTAN**

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, China's relationship with Tajikistan was established in 1992. However, this relationship was strained due to a civil war erupting shortly after Tajikistan declared its independence. The two countries share a 434 kilometer border in their remote mountain border areas, and until recently, they have not had much cross-land contact due to the remoteness of the area and the lack of funds to maintain the roads and border checkpoints there.

In 2002, the situation between the two countries changed significantly. During the year, leaders from both

<sup>56</sup> Paramonov, "China and Central Asia: Present and Future of Economic Relations," 5-6.



countries met on several occasions, finalizing their relationship and signing an agreement delineating the borders between the two countries. In the agreement, Tajikistan ceded 1,000 square kilometers of the Pamir mountain range to China, while China ceded 28,000 square kilometers to Tajikistan.<sup>57</sup> For China, stability and friendly relations were more important than acquiring the larger amount of the remote border territory, so in order to move forward with bilateral relations it was willing to cede a larger amount of territory to Tajikistan.

Financially, Tajikistan offers little in the way of trade but its location between China and Afghanistan make this a strategically important country for China. China's concerns are centered on illicit narcotics being smuggled into China through Tajikistan as well as the remote area being used by terrorists to move into and or provide support to the ETIM in Xinjiang.

Currently, China's relations with Tajikistan are growing in the economic sphere. This is demonstrated by the opening of a security checkpoint at their remotest border, in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in west China and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast in east Tajikistan. This border checkpoint creates a route through Tajikistan to the heart of Central Asia and the Caspian sea area. It will allow trade to flow between both countries, adding an additional market for Chinese goods.<sup>58</sup> Looking at 2003 trade data, total trade between China and Tajikistan

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<sup>57</sup> "China's Transnational Issues"

<sup>58</sup> Sultonbek Aksakalov, "A New Silk Road? Tajikistan-China Border Crossing Opens," *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*, 2 June 2004, available at <http://www.cacianalyst.org>

amounted to 38 million dollars.<sup>59</sup> This low figure demonstrates the potential growth available to China. With the road and checkpoint completed this figure should grow as trade increases between both countries.

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<sup>59</sup> Paramonov, "China and Central Asia: Present and Future of Economic Relations," 6-7.

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## V. THE UNITED STATES IN CENTRAL ASIA SINCE 1991

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the peoples of Central Asia were freed from Soviet rule and were left to their own devices. When this occurred, the United States decided that it was in its best interest to limit Russian influence and to improve its overall standing in the region by building up bilateral relations in the area. Its initial step was to recognize each of the countries diplomatically. Following recognition in 1992, the United States focused on Kazakhstan because of concerns about nuclear proliferation of the remaining Soviet nuclear weapons still located there.<sup>60</sup>

After settling these initial security concerns, the United States concentrated on its secondary interests. These interests were best defined in 1997 by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott during a landmark speech at Johns Hopkins University. These interests were fostering stability and democratization, establishing free market economies, sponsorship of peace and cooperation within and among the countries of the region and the integration of the countries of Central Asia with the larger community at large.<sup>61</sup> Currently the policy has been adjusted and now adds two other key interests; establishing free trade and transport through the Eurasian corridor and ensuring Central Asia adheres to international human rights and standards.<sup>62</sup> To help the Central Asian states solve

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<sup>60</sup> Jim Nichol, "Central Asia's New States: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, 18 May 2001, available from <http://www.ncseonline.org>

<sup>61</sup> MK Bhadrakumar, "Foul Play in the Great Game," *Asia Times Online*, 12 July 2005, available at <http://www.atimes.com>

<sup>62</sup> "U.S. Policy and the Organization for Security Cooperation in

these issues, it supported their admission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program with NATO. What these organizations did was advance America's national interests in promoting democracy, arms control, economic prosperity, sustainable environmental policies and strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The organizations also allowed the Central Asian states to participate in programs bigger than themselves, organizations that could ultimately improve each Central Asian country's way of life.<sup>63</sup>

The United States' next major step in the region was the establishment of the "Silk Road Strategy Act" of 1999. This act was a consolidated appropriation package that heightened U.S. congressional interest in Central Asia and provided enhanced policy attention and aid to Central Asian states 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 Asian states.<sup>64</sup>

On 1 September 2001 the United States' view of Central Asia changed considerably following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The Bush Administration stated that U.S. policy toward Central Asia now focused on three inter-related activities: the promotion of security, domestic reforms, and energy development. In June 2002, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State B. Lynn Pascoe stated that "it was critical to the

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Europe," *Report to Congress*, March 2004, available from <http://www.state.gov>

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Nichol, *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*

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. In a February 2004 visit to the area, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld announced that "it is Caspian security...that is important" for the United States and the world.<sup>65</sup>

America's strategy took the war against the terrorists to Afghanistan under Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. In order to deploy and support forces in the region, the United States needed basing locations that were close to the area. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were the first of the Central Asian states to offer their facilities to U.S. and coalition forces, to which Kyrgyzstan offered the use of Manas airport and Uzbekistan offered the use of Karshi-Khanabad airbase. Additional agreements were obtained to refuel aircraft at Dushanbe and Ashgabat airports and Kazakhstan provided landing rights for coalition aircraft forced to divert from Manas due to inclement weather or technical emergencies.<sup>66</sup> In each case these military privileges were based on the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan only. Of the two main bases, Khanabad is the larger and more important facility as it houses approximately 1,300 U.S. and South Korean troops and 300 Kyrgyz civilians. An additional base at Dushanbe airport in Tajikistan was acquired for use on a contingency basis only. Lastly, in

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<sup>65</sup> Jim Nichol, "Congressional Research Service Issue Brief for Congress, Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implication for U.S. Interests," (Washington D.C.: The Library of Congress, 2005), 3.

<sup>66</sup> "Fact Sheet on Frequently Asked Question About U.S. Policy in Central Asia," *U.S. Department of State*, November 2002, available from <http://www.state.gov>

each country over flight rights were obtained to allow for aircraft flying into and out of Afghanistan.<sup>67</sup>

On 5 July 2005, a strategic turn of events occurred with the United States in the region. At a press conference the key leaders of the SCO pronounced a joint declaration in which it stated that "since the military stage of the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan appeared to be coming to a close, the United States should set a final timeline for its temporary use of the facilities provided to them by the Central Asian states."<sup>68</sup> Due to this unexpected pronouncement, the United States quickly dispatched Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to Central Asia where he met with the leader of Kyrgyzstan, K. Bakiev. Following the meeting, the United States was told that it could maintain its base in Kyrgyzstan for as long as needed for its operations in Afghanistan.<sup>69</sup>

In another significant turn of events, on 30 July 2005, Uzbekistan notified the United States that U.S. forces would be evicted from Khanabad air base and that it had 180 days to move its aircraft, personnel and military equipment from the base. This decision was based on two main factors. The first factor was the U.S. stand that Uzbekistan had violently suppressed demonstrations on 13 May 2005 in Andijan, Uzbekistan, in which hundreds of people were believed to have died. Uzbekistan's stance was that it was suppressing extremists and terrorists who were a threat to the government, and the U.S. stance was that it

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<sup>67</sup> Wishnick, "Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interest in Central Asia Reassessed," 2-3.

<sup>68</sup> "Declaration of Heads of Member States of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Astana, July 05, 2005."

<sup>69</sup> Sudha Ramachandran, "Rumsfeld makes it to first base," *Asia Times Online*, 27 July 2005, available from <http://www.atimes.com>

was a massacre of human life. The second and decisive factor was the decision by the U.N. and United States to evacuate 440 Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan to Romania. For Uzbekistan, it considered these refugees terrorists and criminals whom it had sovereignty rights over.<sup>70</sup> By treating the terrorists as refugees, the United States had worn out its welcome in Uzbekistan. In retaliation, Uzbekistan called for the United States to close its base and move its equipment and forces out within 180 days.

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<sup>70</sup> Ramanu, "The U.S. Strikes Out"



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## VI. U.S. INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

### A. REGIONAL SECURITY AND COUNTERTERRORISM

According to the U.S. Department of State, Central Asia is considered a strategically important area in U.S. foreign policy. U.S. goals for the region are to see the development of independent, democratic and stable states that are committed to the kind of political and economic reform essential to modern societies and to integration into the world economy. This overall strategy in turn is based on the simultaneous pursuit of three interrelated goals. These goals are Central Asian security, the movement toward democratic policies and practices by Central Asian states, and the development of Central Asian economic potential so that it may become integrated into the global economy.<sup>71</sup>

The United States has emphasized that security, stability and prosperity in the region is linked to democratic and economic reforms, a healthy respect for human rights, rule of law, and each states' willingness to work together to solve regional problems. To this end, the United States would like to see the growth of independent media, political pluralism and the development of a civil society. Additionally, the United States believes that these goals can be achieved through a transition to democratic values and a free-market development in each Central Asian State.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Lynn Pascoe, "Uzbekistan: The Key to Success in Central Asia," *U.S. Department of State*, 15 June 2004, available at <http://www.state.gov>

<sup>72</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions About U.S. Policy in Central Asia," *Fact Sheet, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs*

To meet U.S. security interests, Washington has moved forward with a military engagement strategy. According to some experts, U.S. military engagement is viewed as the key mechanism to promote Central Asian integration into Western political-military institutions. This process began in 1993 when the first Central Asian military officials began to receive training at the George C. Marshall Center in Garmisch, Germany. The following year all but one of the Central Asian states (Tajikistan) had joined NATO's PfP program and between 1995 and 2001, the United States hosted several exercises in the United States and Europe with member states in order to help solidify a joint peacekeeping unit (among Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) with the support of CENTCOM in 1995.<sup>73</sup>

Following the events of 11 September 2001, the situation in Central Asia changed drastically and the United States was able to use its military and political ties with the Central Asian states to open up forward basing for military use in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (with additional access to airspace and restricted use of bases in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) in its war against terror in operation ENDURING FREEDOM.<sup>74</sup>

The main security goal for the United States in Central Asia is in the area of counterterrorism and regional security. These two facets are interrelated by concerns over regional stability in the area and the effects that radical Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism could have in destabilizing the region. In regard to

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<sup>73</sup> C.J. Chivers, "A Nation Challenged: Special Forces: Long Before the War, Green Baretts Built Military Ties to Uzbekistan," *The New York Times*, 25 October 2001, p. A1.

<sup>74</sup> Wishnick, "Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interest in Central Asia Reassessed," 13.

counterterrorism, Central Asia is a suitable area for striking against terrorism. First, it is geographically located in an area where known international terrorist organizations come from. Second, it is a strategic location for launching counterterrorist operations under operation EDURING FREEDOM.<sup>75</sup>

The area is home to several regional terrorist organizations with ties to Al Qaeda. The most well known is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The aim of this organization is to topple the Uzbekistan government and ultimately the whole of Central Asia, reforming it into an Islamic state. The group is very active and has been involved in attacks against the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan on behalf of Osama bin Laden.<sup>76</sup>

A second organization is the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), whose goal is to form an independent East Turkistan Islamic state comprising parts of China, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. This organization is based out of China but is reported to have members operating in Central Asia. The ETIM has been implicated in terrorist plots against U.S. interests in the Central Asian region, including a foiled plot to attack the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>77</sup>

The last organization is the Hizbut Tehrir (HT). It is the largest group, reportedly totaling 10,000 followers, and it preaches for the peaceful establishment of an

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<sup>75</sup> Zhao Huasheng, "China, Russia and the United States: Prospects for Cooperation in Central Asia," *CEF Quarterly, The Journal of the China-Eurasia Forum*, February 2005, available at <http://www.chinaeurasia.org>

<sup>76</sup> "Terrorist Group Profile, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, 29 June 2005, available at <http://www.tkb.org>

<sup>77</sup> "Terrorist Group Profile, Turkistan Islamic Movement," *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, 29 June 2005, available at <http://www.tkb.org>

Islamic state throughout Central Asia. Even though it is reportedly a peaceful movement, HT is reported to have a militant arm, with its radical followers being recruited as terrorists with the IMU. HT has been implicated by Uzbekistan (but not by the United States) in several terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan in 1999 and again in 2005, during the Andijan riots in May.<sup>78</sup>

## **B. CONTROL OF ENERGY RESOURCES**

Beyond simple strategic positioning, the United States is also interested in facilitating the exploration and exportation of the natural resource energy reserves in Central Asia so that these resources may be used in the world market and thus help further diversify world energy supplies.<sup>79</sup> The Central Asian states have an estimated oil reserve of 10 billion barrels and 202 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Kazakhstan accounts for two-thirds of the 1.8 million barrels of oil exported from the area per day and has the potential to be one of the five top oil exporters by 2015. Turkmenistan has one of the world's largest deposits of natural gas, estimated at 101 trillion cubic feet.<sup>80</sup> Other energy resources in the area include hydro-power in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (which could contribute to energy needs for Central Asia, Afghanistan and parts of South Asia) and largely untapped oil and gas resources in Uzbekistan.

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<sup>78</sup> "Hizbut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Party of Liberation)," *Global Security Online Database*, 07 June 2005, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org>

<sup>79</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions About U.S. Policy in Central Asia: *Fact Sheet*"

<sup>80</sup> Figures derived from United States Energy Information Administration (EIA) statistics, available at [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)

The United States has promoted the development of multiple export routes for the region since the majority of the region is landlocked. It has contributed to the Caspian Pipeline Consortium for shipping Kazakh oil to the Black Sea, and is helping in the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline from the Caspian to the Mediterranean.<sup>81</sup>

All told, these strategic and economic interests help the United States' overall geopolitical situation in the area by garnering support for its war against terror and its development of other states friendly to U.S. interests through financial, political and military support against destabilizing forces in the region. In so doing, it furthers U.S. economic interests by diversifying world energy resources. This diversification in turn will lead to greater stability in the world energy market so that consumers are less dependent on any one source of energy.

### **C. STRATEGIC POSITIONING**

Looking beyond regional concerns, the United States has several strategic interests in the region. Traditionally, Central Asia has been under the control of the Soviet Union. With its collapse, the United States saw the potential for increasing its geopolitical influence in the area. However, with no historical roots in the area, the United States presence was seen by the Central Asian states as that of an outsider. By providing both financial and counterterrorism assistance, the United States has been able to make inroads into the area. In so doing, it now

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<sup>81</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions About U.S. Policy in Central Asia: *Fact Sheet*"

deflects the traditional Russian influence and growing Chinese influence in the region.

The United States was largely able to promote its interests by setting up bases in both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and as a consequence, providing financial and counterterrorism assistance to both countries. This has led to a closer relationship between all parties concerned. When looking at U.S. interests in Central Asia, one area the United States was willing to overlook (due to the War on Terror) was each countries' lack of progress towards the U.S. goals of democratic and economic reform and each Central Asian states policies on human rights. However, recent events have caused the United States to reassess this policy and with this reassessment the geopolitical situation in Central Asia has changed from support for the United States to that of toleration of its presence in the region. This political shift began to change starting with the Tulip Revolution that occurred in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, in which Askar Akeyev was ousted from power by its people.

At the opening of the Organization of American States Assembly, President Bush stated, "We come together at a great moment in history, when freedom is on the march around our world. In the last year-and-a-half -- think about this -- we've witnessed a Rose Revolution in Georgia, an Orange Revolution in Ukraine, a Purple Revolution in Iraq, a Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, a Cedar Revolution in Lebanon -- and these are just the beginnings. Across Central Asia, hope is stirring at the prospect of change -- and change will come."<sup>82</sup> This speech, in conjunction with

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<sup>82</sup> "The President of the United States President George W. Busch, Opening of the Organization of American States Assembly," *The*

the events in both Kyrgyzstan and the violent suppression of the protestors in May in Uzbekistan, has caused an apparent shift in the geopolitical situation in Central Asia.<sup>83</sup>

These historic events and the apparent U.S. position that it supports revolutions in Central Asia has sent shockwaves through the remaining states in Central Asia, Russia and China. This change in policy, the statements by the SCO calling on the United States to leave the region, and the eviction of the United States from Uzbekistan, demonstrate that a geopolitical power shift is once again occurring in Central Asia, one that is moving away from the United States and closer to China.

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*Organization of American States*, 06 June 2005, available at <http://www.oas.org>

<sup>83</sup> Pan Huang, "The Role of Multilateral Anti-Terrorism in Central Asia," (paper presented at the first Central Asia Regional Security Issues, Economic and Political Challenges Symposium in Monterey, California, 9 August 2005), Hilton, Monterey, California. The author's conclusion was shared by Pan Huang, the current Director of the Center of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Studies, who expressed the same viewpoint during his presentation.



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## VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

U.S. strategy in Central Asia must not be based on the premises of the war on terrorism alone. It must be a comprehensive strategy that accounts for all U.S. interests. It is widely believed that terrorism takes its roots from economic deprivation, political and domestic repression, and overall poverty. If the United States focuses its strategy at the grassroots level and builds up from there, it will help address the causes of terrorism rather than the symptoms of terrorism. Based on this premise, this paper recommends that the United States follow the following prescription in its dealings with Central Asia:

- 1) Support humanitarian, environmental and energy assistance;
- 2) Support internal reform;
- 3) Develop a broader security outlook;
- 4) Work with multilateral organizations in Central Asia; and
- 5) Develop stronger bilateral relations with China.

### A. SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY ASSISTANCE

In order to facilitate a change at the grass roots level, the United States must demonstrate it is committed to helping the people of Central Asia. The easiest and most effective way to do this is to support humanitarian aid efforts in each of the countries of Central Asia. The first method for furthering humanitarian aid could be to

further utilize organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Under USAID's charter for Central Asia, one of its main objectives is to increase public access to quality primary health care and another is to improve the management of critical natural resources in energy.

The main areas USAID could help in humanitarian assistance to Central Asia is by providing medical care, medicine, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, medical supplies, clothing and food. Central Asian countries suffer from malnutrition, poor health care, expensive health care, increasing levels of infectious diseases, acute respiratory infections, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis. By combating these factors, USAID can make a real difference throughout the region. At the same time, USAID and the U.S. government should advertise this kind of help to both the international community and Central Asia. If advertised appropriately, it can improve the overall image of America in the eyes of the people of Central Asia, thereby demonstrating to the people that America is there to help, not just to make war.

In addition to humanitarian assistance, USAID could improve the management of critical natural resources and energy throughout the region. At present, Central Asia has an abundant supply of natural gas and oil but the infrastructure in place is limited and centrally controlled. Where USAID could play a role is in teaching those who control the local energy infrastructure how to properly manage their resources and educating key managers at Western institutions. Additionally, the system that is in place tends to be very corrupt, so teaching the various

nations how to reform their own systems so that they will run more productively and fairly would help tremendously.

Unfortunately, USAID's monetary contributions to the region have been minimal. An example of this poor amount is in the case of Kazakhstan where total aid to the country for 2005, amounted to 26,690,000 dollars.<sup>84</sup> This small amount will hardly make a dent in the programs goals it supports. To allow its mission to succeed the United States must increase funding to the region.

Besides USAID, the Department of Defense could demonstrate goodwill to the Central Asian states through non-military means. Several options are available, such as the conduct of medical capability (MEDCAP) missions throughout the region. Most people think of the military as an arm of war and not peace. By conducting peaceful medical missions the United States could build trust between itself and the people of Central Asia. Typical MEDCAPs provide free medical care to remote towns and villages of a given country. Providing and advertising this free care will help raise the status of the United States in the eyes of the people of Central Asia.

In 2003, total U.S. government assistance in humanitarian aid ranged from 0.5 million dollars in Turkmenistan to 21.8 million dollars in Tajikistan. This assistance included medicines, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, clothing and emergency shelters.<sup>85</sup> The problem is that this aid has not been uniformly distributed throughout

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<sup>84</sup> "Kazakhstan Budget Summary," *USAID Budget*, 2 August 2005, available at <http://www.usaid.gov>

<sup>85</sup> "U.S. Assistance to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan - Fiscal Year 2003," *Fact Sheets, U.S. Department of State*, 17 February 2004, available at <http://www.state.gov>

the countries and consists of mostly donated equipment with little in the way of direct medical aid. If the United States wants to truly reach the populace, it must demonstrate its good will in a fair and comprehensive way. Sending doctors to help train and assist local medical professionals would go a long way in building up good will between the United States and the Central Asian states.

Besides the United States actively pursuing humanitarian aid for Central Asia, it can indirectly provide information or assistance to international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that can directly aid the countries of Central Asia. Good examples of such organizations are the Red Cross/Red Crescent, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. What these organizations can do is actively identify and pursue medical and human rights issues that the United States Government can not deal with directly because of political concerns. An example of how the United States can use these groups is seen with Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch is the largest human rights organization in the United States. This organization conducts fact-finding investigations into human rights abuses worldwide. Following its investigations it publishes its findings and then meets with a country's governmental agencies in order to influence the government to change its policies and fix its human rights issues. The United States can benefit by using these findings as leverage against the governments of Central Asia, possibly withholding U.S. funds from governments who do not follow U.S. policy interests.

In addition to government influence, the United States can also use these INGOs to directly help the citizens of Central Asia. These organizations go beyond what USAID can

do. Where USAID is limited in funds or official backing, organizations such as Red Cross/Red Crescent can further resolve humanitarian issues in areas where USAID is limited in the help it can provide. In addition, the United States could provide assistance to indigenous NGOs, such as the Union for Defense of the Aral Sea and Amu Darya, a local organization that supports restoring water quality and environmental health in the Aral Sea basin.

The idea behind all of these policy prescriptions in humanitarian and environmental support is to further the quality of life of the average citizen of Central Asia. If their lives can be improved and their energy and resources can be harnessed to improve their overall quality of life, the United States will be better able to pursue its own interests by gaining the support and backing of the Central Asian states and people.

#### **B. SUPPORT FOR INTERNAL REFORM**

In Central Asia as a whole, the largest problem affecting the further development of relations between these states and the United States is the nature of the governments in power. Each Central Asian state is ruled by an authoritarian regime that holds nearly absolute power. Based on current policy, in order for the United States to fully accept these states they must move towards a more democratic form of government. The easiest way to demonstrate the importance of democracy and the positive effects it can have on a country are to improve the political processes and institutions present in the countries of Central Asia.

The United States must demonstrate to both the people and installed governments the positive effects of democracy. This demonstration has the greatest effect when it occurs from the top down. The prescription presented in this paper is that the United States government, through the State Department, must take the lead on these initiatives. Currently the State Department is concentrating on the war on terrorism and has effectively placed democratic reforms as a secondary issue. But if Washington is serious about working with Central Asia, it must move forward with its democratic initiatives and encourage reform of the governments of Central Asia in a comprehensive manner.

When one looks at Uzbekistan one can see where this issue comes to mind. Since 2001, the United States government has stated that in order for Uzbekistan to receive continued monetary aid it must demonstrate steps towards democratic reform and continue reforms in the way of humanitarian issues. However, Uzbekistan has done little, believing that Washington will not push the issue because of its need for basing and other assistance in its war on terrorism in the region.<sup>86</sup> The prescription here is that Washington should have enforced a timetable with Uzbekistan from the beginning on meeting specific reforms. When Uzbekistan failed to follow through the United States should have informed Uzbekistan that it would end all aid and move its basing to another Central Asian state such as Kazakhstan.

With the recent rioting in Uzbekistan, Washington decided it was time to act. It acted quickly by holding

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<sup>86</sup> Wishnick, "Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia," 30.

back financial aid, openly denouncing Uzbekistan's response to the demonstrations, and pushed for an international investigation into the event.<sup>87</sup> The problem with this strategy is the United States quickly acted against Uzbekistan's interests shortly after the demonstrations, where it had seemingly supported Uzbekistan's position previously. This forced Tashkent into a position of following its national security interest of state stability over its bilateral relationship with the United States. Tashkent did not expect the United States to take such a stance on the issue, as the United States had previously demonstrated that it was more concerned with anti-terrorism than with democratic reform and human rights. More importantly, the Uzbekistan regime considered these demonstrators extremists and as such the United States should have supported its position rather than being against it.<sup>88</sup>

The United States must learn from the Uzbekistan experience and conduct its future policies in the region in a balanced way, weighing its goals for democratic reform with its goals to fight terrorism in the region. In the case of Uzbekistan, the United States must ensure that it continues to engage the Uzbekistan government and does not let the relationship lapse. Engagement is the key to

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<sup>87</sup> Robert McMahon, "Uzbekistan: U.S. Official Says Washington to Maintain Pressure on Tashkent," *Radio Free Europe*, 5 August 2005, available at <http://www.rferl.org>

<sup>88</sup> Fu Yong, "Sino-U.S. Interests and Further Cooperation in Central Asia," (paper presented at the first Central Asia Regional Security Issues, Economic and Political Challenges Symposium in Monterey, California, 9 August 2005), Hilton Hotel, Monterey, California. The author's analysis of the Uzbekistan situation was presented at the symposium where Fu Yong, an associate professor of the Institute of Eurasia Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences agreed with his assessment.



dialogue and without it the United States will have little influence while China and Russia's influence will grow, as demonstrated in China's establishment of relations with Uzbekistan in March 2005.<sup>89</sup>

Based on the deteriorating relationship with Uzbekistan, the United States had to readjust its Central Asian position and focus its attention on its last strong ally in the region, Kyrgyzstan. In July 2005, Secretary Rumsfeld's prompt visit to Bishkek following the declaration by the SCO that the United States should set a final timetable for its withdrawal from the region was the key to keeping Kyrgyzstan in the U.S. camp; however, with this limited victory the United States must not be lax<sup>90</sup>. It must continue Talbott's overall policy for the region.<sup>91</sup> Democracy and reform will come, but they cannot be rushed. Kyrgyzstan's society, economy, and institutions need further growth for democracy to be fully realized. If

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<sup>89</sup> "Hu Jintao, Karimov Stress Boosting Sino-Uzbek Cooperation," *Xinhua Chinese*, 25 May 2005, available at <http://www.fbis.gov>

<sup>90</sup> Ramtanu Maitra, "The U.S. Strikes Out," *Asia Times Online*, 2 August 2005, available at <http://www.atimes.com>

<sup>91</sup> MK Bhadrakumar, "Foul Play in the Great Game," *Asia Times Online*, 12 July 2005, available at <http://www.atimes.com>. Talbott's policy was presented during a landmark speech that he gave at John Hopkins University in 1997. As identified in Bhadrakumar's article, the following is the main thrust of the speech that he gave that day, "For the last several years, it has been fashionable to proclaim or at least to predict, a replay of the 'Great Game' in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The implication of course is that the driving dynamic of the region, fueled and lubricated by oil, will be the competition of great powers to the disadvantage of the people who live there. Our goal is to avoid and to actively discourage that atavistic outcome. In pondering and practicing the geopolitics of oil, let's make sure that we are thinking in terms appropriate to the 21st century and not the 19th century. Let's leave Rudyard Kipling and George McDonald Fraser where they belong - on the shelves of historical fiction. The Great Game, which starred Kipling's Kim and Fraser's Flashman, was very much of the zero-sum variety. What we want to help bring about is just the opposite, we want to see all responsible players in the Caucasus and Central Asia be winners."

democracy is pushed too fast on the bureaucracy in place, the will of the people, and the integration between the two will collapse and what was a fledgling democracy may turn into a protracted civil war as one faction or ethnic group fights another for control.

### **C. DEVELOP A BROADER SECURITY OUTLOOK**

When looking at security in Central Asia the first thought that comes to mind is the threat of terrorism. Unfortunately, when most Westerners look to terrorism they see the symptoms and not the cause. As such, currently U.S. policy is set up to combat the symptom of terrorism rather than focusing on the causes of terrorism in Central Asia. As previously discussed, terrorism in Central Asia begins with the lowest common denominator, the people. If the United States wants to truly make a difference, it must contend with the issue at the grassroots level, where terrorism begins.

Currently, the United States has established bilateral relationships with each of the countries of Central Asia, setting up information-sharing processes and methods of dealing with terrorism that affects the United States and that particular country. The prescription this thesis promotes is that the United States must go beyond bilateral relationships and focus on the overall threat to the United States and the countries of Central Asia. Experts believe that terrorism takes its root in the context of political

repression and overall poverty.<sup>92</sup> In the case of Central Asia, this is a systemic problem that must be tackled from the grass roots level.

The United States must begin by stopping the financial flow that reaches the terrorist organizations and provide assistance to raise the social economic level of the average Central Asian person so that he or she sees that there is another way to better themselves, rather than through terrorism.

Terrorist organizations are like a business. They need funds, workers (terrorists), and a product to sell (terrorism). If the United States can disrupt even one of these three, it will likely lessen terrorist actions in the region. Central Asia is the arena from which terrorist organizations receive funding through narcotics trafficking and where terrorists recruit their volunteers. Illicit drugs are largely produced in Afghanistan and are shipped through Central Asia via land routes to Western Europe and the Middle East. An area in which the United States would be most effective is in conducting joint military, police, and federal training with Central Asian states. By working together and acting on domestic as well as transnational issues, the United States will likely be seen more as a beneficial actor than as an exploiter. Funding for these kinds of operations could come from Non-Proliferation, Anti-Terrorism, De-mining, and related Programs (NADR), Freedom Support Act Security Programs, the Central Asian Border Security Initiative (CABSI), Community Action

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<sup>92</sup> Shabnam Mallkik, "11 September 2001: Terrorism and After," *Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies, Terrorism*, 19 September 2001, available at <http://www.ipcs.org>

Investment Program (CAIP) and USAID; as each of these programs provide funding for this kind of training and equipment.

As of 2003, the United States has provided funds to foster apolitical, professional militaries capable of responding to regional peacekeeping and humanitarian needs in the region. It has provided training in both security and law enforcement and has pushed forward with helping the Central Asian states in economic and social reform. In 2003, funding in these areas was between 8.4 million dollars in Turkmenistan to 86.5 million dollars in Kazakhstan.<sup>93</sup> If the United States wants to make an impact, it must allocate more funds in these key areas. Only through education, institution building and bilateral contacts with the United States will the countries of Central Asia be able to learn more about democracy and freedom. China is currently following this model by providing infrastructural investments, public works projects and donations of funds to help the region. If the United States wants to be a beneficial force in the region, it must match China's moves there. If not, China will pull ahead and the region will likely become more beholden to China than the United States.

What this policy prescription advises is that the United States think beyond the conventional idea of external border security and think more in terms of regional and domestic security. As of 2005, each of the countries of Central Asia posed no direct threat to each other; rather, threats were posed to the countries from

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<sup>93</sup> "U.S. Assistance to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan - Fiscal Year 2003," *U.S. Department of State Fact Sheet*.

internal instability, weak institutions and corrupt governments. To effectively counter this threat each state must look inward and as such, so must the United States.

#### **D. COOPERATION WITH MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Thus far the policy prescriptions have covered U.S. actions in bilateral relationships with the individual Central Asian states. However, as discussed at the beginning of this thesis, the United States is new to the region and as such is not fully trusted by the people living there. The two established powers in Central Asia are China and Russia. Russia holds the closest ties with the countries as a consequence of its direct control over them until 1991. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia's influence has declined. Russia still has influence in the region, but for the most part the countries of Central Asia do not want to fall under the control of Russia again, and as such are more inclined to keep Russia's influence at a distance.

China is the newer and more capable complement to Russia in the region. As detailed earlier, since 1991, China has played an extensive role in Central Asia. China and Russia established the SCO in order to facilitate regional cooperation on a number of mutually beneficial issues in the region. In addition to its role in the SCO, China has also established strong bilateral ties with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan--the three countries on China's border. If the United States decides to unilaterally act on its own interests without trying to work with, or even decided to work against China, the

possibility exists for failure, animosity, and/or a deterioration of US-China ties.

For the United States the best method of integrating itself into a multilateral organization in Central Asia is the SCO. The SCO's mission parallels the majority of goals the United States is working towards in Central Asia. Regarding the SCO, its goals are:

- 1) Strengthening mutual trust and good neighborliness and friendship among member states;
- 2) Developing their effective cooperation in political affairs, the economy and trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transportation, environmental protection and other fields;
- 3) Working together to maintain regional peace, security and stability; and
- 4) Promoting the creation of a new international political and economic order featuring democracy, justice and rationality.<sup>94</sup>

The SCO was created to bring all of the Central Asian players together to address regional issues. Since the organization is considered a regional organization, by its nature it binds the region into a single body, thereby blunting the influence of outside actors such as the United States. To work with the SCO the United States must be willing to take small steps. The likely best step is to establish a partnership with the SCO, similar to the partnership the SCO has with NATO.<sup>95</sup> Through this

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<sup>94</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2004/01/07"

<sup>95</sup> Pan Huang, "The Role of Multilateral Anti-Terrorism in Central Asia," (paper presented at the first Central Asia Regional Security Issues, Economic and Political Challenges Symposium in Monterey, California, 9 August 2005).

partnership, the logical first step would be to provide and collect intelligence on terrorist organizations operating in the SCO's territory. This assistance would demonstrate that the United States is interested in helping the organization and region as a whole without giving the appearance that it wants to dominate the region. Other key areas of collaboration could be in law enforcement, counter proliferation, and counter narcotics training and assistance. The United States should limit its initial help to training and information sharing, as this will demonstrate the U.S. willingness to work with, rather than lead the SCO.

The bottom line is that to work with the SCO, the United States must be willing to work as an outsider and take the slow approach. China is the key to the SCO, and if Beijing is angered or insulted by U.S. unilateral or bilateral actions that go contrary to Chinese interests in Central Asia, the United States will likely have a much harder time collaborating with the countries of Central Asia.

#### **E. BUILD STRONGER BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH CHINA**

On the bilateral front, the United States must recognize where its interests converge with China's and where they diverge. From this comprehensive look at China and Central Asia, it can be seen that China is guided by three major forces: regional stability, security and economic development. China sees Central Asia as its strategic back door, and as such it must maintain a positive presence in the region. If Central Asia were to

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destabilize due to terrorism, "colored" revolutions and/or economic deprivation, it would likely affect China's neighboring Xinjiang Autonomous region. Xinjiang has extensive economic and cultural ties with the region and any instability in Xinjiang would in turn disrupt China's national interests of economic modernization and internal stability. For China, if one domino (Xinjiang) were to fall, it could lead to internal stability in China's other regions. This is something China cannot let happen.

On the positive side, if Beijing is able to help stabilize the region through bilateral and multilateral relationships, it can strengthen its strategic back door. This stability in turn will allow China to invest and further develop the region for mutually beneficial needs. China is currently the number two oil consumer in the world, and it needs to diversify its oil imports in case something were to happen to any one of its sources of oil. Central Asia provides for this necessity. Beyond oil needs China needs trade between Xinjiang and Central Asia to flourish so as to improve the quality of life of Xinjiang's inhabitants. As detailed earlier, 60 percent of Xinjiang's trade is with Central Asia. Economic development through trade in both Central Asia and Xinjiang can do nothing but help China's position domestically and regionally, and as a consequence further stabilize the region.

The United States wants to secure the area from terrorist influences, encourage democratic reform, and develop each of the Central Asian states in order to integrate them into the global economy.<sup>96</sup> The first goal is complementary to Beijing's goals of stability and security

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<sup>96</sup> Lynn Pascoe, "Uzbekistan: The Key to Success in Central Asia"



in the region. In this area, both countries have made some ground. This was demonstrated when China won recognition of its largely internal separatist/terrorist group (the East Turkistan Movement) from the United States internationally and by the setting up of a permanent FBI office in Beijing to coordinate anti-terrorism issues in China in 2002.<sup>97</sup> However, this area of cooperation is limited and can be greatly expanded upon.

Democratic reform is an area on which China and the United States do not agree. Beijing believes that each country should follow its own path to development and that no outside country should interfere in that development. Because of recent events in Kyrgyzstan, China is now very wary of U.S. actions in support of democratic reform in the region. China sees reform as a destabilizing force that can cause a government to collapse and/or economic development to be hindered. In order for trade to flourish and stability to be retained, the Central Asian states must be allowed to reform their governments at their own pace; otherwise chaos and instability will result.<sup>98</sup>

Where the United States and China could work together in regards to democratic reforms is in the area of economic development in each of the Central Asian States. It is a commonly held belief by political scientists that economic prosperity can lead to democratization. The model based on

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<sup>97</sup> Shirley Kan, "U.S.-China Counter-Terrorism Cooperation: Issues for U.S. Policy," *CRS Report for Congress*, 12 May 2005, available at <http://www.fpc.state.gov>

<sup>98</sup> Pan Huang, "The Role of Multilateral Anti-Terrorism in Central Asia," (paper presented at the first Central Asia Regional Security Issues, Economic and Political Challenges Symposium in Monterey, California, 9 August 2005), Hilton, Monterey, California. The author's conclusion was shared by Pan Huang, the current Director of the Center of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Studies, who expressed the same viewpoint during his presentation.

this observation is the developmental state. Based on this model, it is commonly held that a government that pushes for economic prosperity through industrial and economic development will endeavor to develop full market economies. In turn, this market economy requires sound institutions that will further the countries direction towards capitalism, and from capitalism the state may move toward democratization.<sup>99</sup>

If the United States further develops the region, it will lead to economic prosperity and as a likely result, the Central Asian states may move more toward democratic governments. As an additional benefit, the United States may check China's growing economic influence by furthering U.S. investments in the countries of the region. Overall economic prosperity is a goal for both nations, so in this area both China and the United States could work together to bring economic development to the region.

On the other hand, if the United States decides to push forward with democratic reforms by supporting revolutionary groups or governments, this will likely cause deterioration in U.S.-China ties and possibly lead to U.S. alienation by both China and the Central Asian states, and as a result, lead to closer ties between the two. The United States should move forward on all three fronts comprehensively, rather than favoring one interest over another.

Understanding China's motives and interests in Central Asia will allow the United States to make sound policy decisions when it takes actions in the region. Recently,

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<sup>99</sup> Thandika Mkandawire, "Thinking About Developmental States in Africa," *United Nations University Database*, available at <http://www.unu.edu>

events in Uzbekistan have had negative consequences as the United States has taken the hard line approach to politics in the region by encouraging the perception that it is more in favor of democratic reforms than anti-terrorism and economic development. To diminish this perception, The United States should back off of its confrontational posture and instead follow China's example in the region. It should demonstrate its great power status by helping to develop the region economically and work with the states in a positive direction by helping the states through the SCO in antiterrorism and antinarcotics operations. China currently has the advantage in the region, but things do not have to remain this way. Engagement is the key to unlocking the region, and the United States should ensure that it works in positive ways on the multilateral front as well as the bilateral front in its future dealings with China and Central Asia.

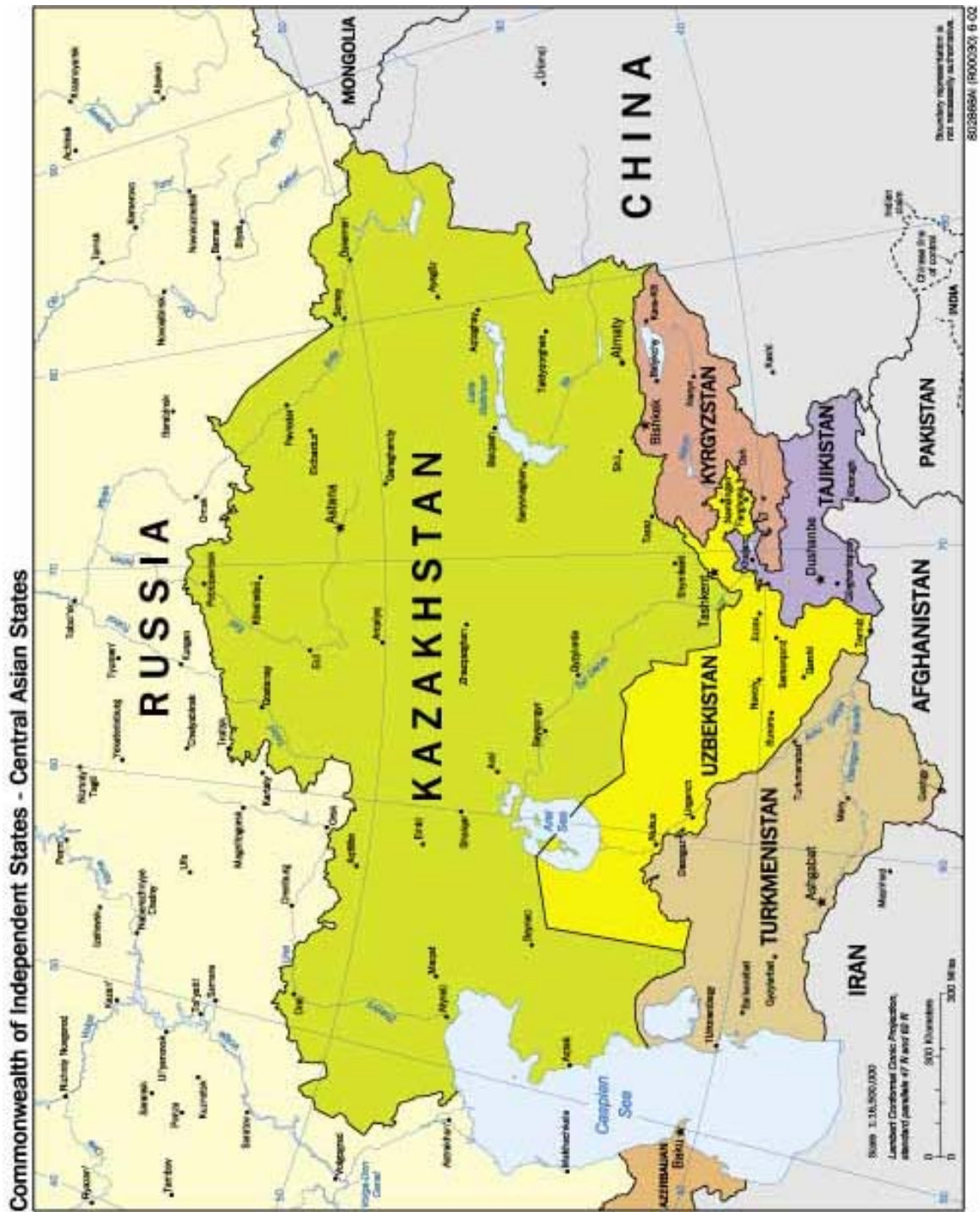


Figure 1. Map of Central Asia

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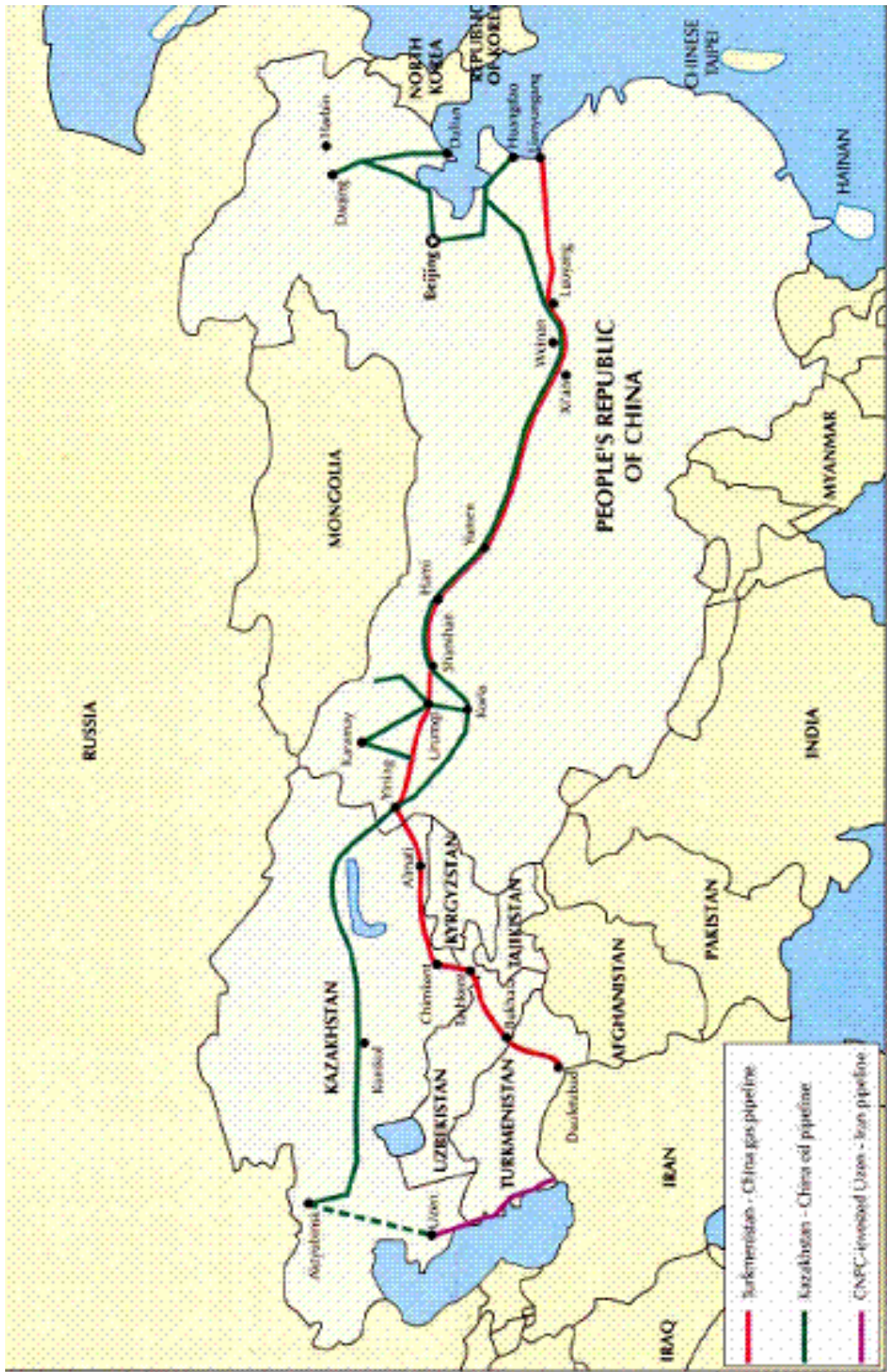


Figure 2. Chinese Central Asian Pipelines

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